

TALBOT ROAD.



PARALLEL with the shore of Lake Erie, at a short distance therefrom, runs the Old Government Colonization Road, known as Talbot Street. The work of the late Colonel Talbot, and forming part of a general scheme for the colonization of the several southern lake counties, its construction through Kent County dates from the year 1816. There and then its path lay through unbroken forest. Whilst Talbot settlers had been for some years established on the lake front of Elgin townships, whilst U. E. Loyalist settlements in Gosfield and Colchester had already made commendable progress under a record commencing as early as 1775, and whilst the clearings of the Thames River under a score of years of history had become both numerous and extended, the tract of country bordering on the Erie shore in Kent County, and which the Talbot Road traversed, formed, until the period mentioned, part of the eternal bush prevailing between the lake and river. A tract of debatable land, it had no roads and was but barely accessible by a few devious and ill-defined Indian trails, along which, alone, venturesome persons made the journey from the one settlement to the other.

It was practically without white inhabitants. A few fearless adventurers indeed had already made a home in its forests depths. As early as 1809 one Crawford had located himself on or near what is now the farmstead of Mr. Joseph Patterson, Lot 99 Talbot Street, and was ekeing out an isolated and precarious existence in clearing his claim, in trapping wild animals, or raising and tending cattle for river settlers on the prairie expanses surrounding the Eau. One Dickson, an American hunter, had esconced himself on the Pointe aux Pins, and was enjoying a trapper's rich fur harvest until his existence was cut short by the rifle, rumor (sometimes faulty rumor) has it, of a wicked person, whose own miserable death and criminal doings in after years is yet fresh in the memory of the older Morpeth inhabitants. On the Soper farm, at the Rond Eau shore, Ramsay, once the owner of 1200 acres in the neighborhood, lived a pre-historic life in what we shall term a domicile, but what old settlers styled a cave or dug-out, and he himself a ground hawk or hog. Towards the beginning of the year 1812, Jos. and Ed. Hackney had established themselves at a point a little east of what is now the Village of Raglan—a creation of the enterprise of the late E. L. Stoddard—where, amid desperate surroundings, wolf-feared haunts and snake-infested marsh, they commenced the pioneer life which they shortly after led in the more desirable locality on Talbot Road, just west of what is now Morpeth. If the story be true, it was one of the Hackneys who found the still warm remains of Dickson's body and gave it sepulchre in the sands near the Eau beach, at a place yet pointed out by some of the older settlers. But beyond these exceptions, and the camps of a few families of Pottawattomie Indians long afterwards resident in the woods south of Blenheim, the tract was devoid of inhabitants.

But, if untouched by the settlers' axe, Talbot Street was nevertheless the scene of several interesting events. Along its shore General Broek and his plucky and patriotic troops rowed, to measured time, by forced bateau marches in order to form a conjunction near Amherstburg with the Kent Militia then being called to arms along the Thames by Quarter-Master