

HISTORY OF HAMILTON



IN September, 1669, Sieur de la Salle and his adventurous company of explorers were the first white men to set foot upon what is now known as the City of Hamilton. La Salle had started from Lachine with the expectation of reaching the Pacific Ocean through a direct water route. He coasted along the southern shores of Lake Ontario, passed the Niagara River, came west to the Macassa Bay, now Hamilton Harbour, and found no water outlet to the Pacific. Nearly one hundred years passed before the site of Hamilton saw a white man again.

During the war between England and the United States in 1776, we have record of one Robert Land, who then lived in Pennsylvania, desiring to preserve his allegiance to the Mother Land, fled to Canada, and found his way to Niagara. From there he shouldered his rifle, axe, food and bedding and forced his way through the dense wood until he reached Macassa Bay, where he settled and cultivated 300 acres of land, now known as the eastern portion of Hamilton. That was in the year 1778. His nearest neighbors were at Ancaster, where the beginning of a village had been started. Their only roads were deer trails. Soon followed other settlers from the U. S., and in 1791 a deputy land surveyor showed there were 31 families settled here.

The hardships and privations can hardly be described. The rattlesnake and wolf held their own. The ground was unproductive, due to the Indian grass, which is hard to exterminate. Had it not been for the abundance of wild game, which furnished the greater amount of food, we doubt very much if there would have been such a place as our wonderful city to-day.

To illustrate conditions then it may be mentioned that 100 acres of land bounded by Main Street on the south and Barton on the north, Emerald Street on the East and Victoria on the West, being part of a tract settled by one of the early settlers, was sold for a barrel of pork and a yoke of steers. Money was unknown here as late as 1794. All transaction was barter, and it has been said that the price of a pair of boots was an ox; a dress for the wife cost a cow; grocery bills were paid by grain, etc.

In 1812, when war broke out again between Great Britain and the United States, George Hamilton with his wife and child moved here