London at 125

London, Ontario is celebrating its one-hundred and twenty-fifth year as a city this year.

In 1826, the area, around what was to become London, was chosen as the judicial and administrative centre of Upper Canada because there were vast reserves of land available. The same year Peter McGregor built his cabin, which served as the local hotel, and the city of London, Ontario was born.

The area around London was gradually settled by United Empire Loyalists who had left the United States following the American Revolution.

In 1832, London's first industry was born when Labatt's opened its first brewery. The centre was then chosen as military headquarters for Upper Canada and, in 1838, construction began on Wolsely Barracks with the total cost an almost unheard of $150,000.

The barracks became the home of the Royal Canadian Regiment (RCR) and the establishment of the garrison gave a tremendous economic push to the settlement which became a police village in 1840, a town in 1848 and in 1855 a city.

Parks abound

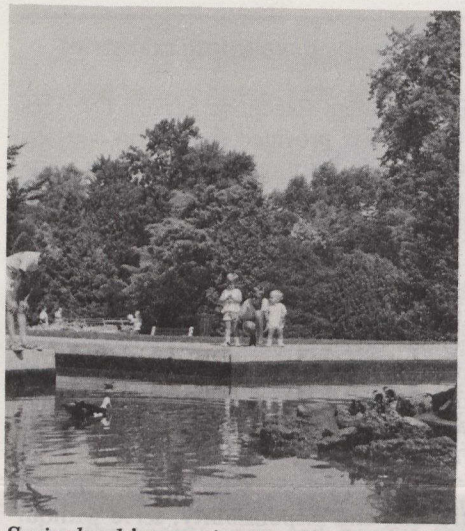
Today the city boasts a network of 73 parks, one of which, Springbank, contains Storybook Gardens.

The gardens comprise a 12.8-hectare make-believe world of famous fairy-tale characters, live animals and animated scenes. Miniature side-wheelers leave the dock at Springbank for summer trips down the Thames River and a tiny train tours the park.

The flavour of the original London is

Office of Tourism of Canada photos

Storybook Gardens features fairy tales.



Springbank's aquatic attractions.

there for the tasting at Eldon House, built in 1834 and preserved in the style of 150 years ago. In Fanshawe Park, behind the Fanshawe Dam, there is an authentic reproduction of a nineteenth-century crossroads village, prior to the arrival of the railroad. The residents, in period costumes, demonstrate such essential skills of pioneer life as candle-making, skimming and weaving.

Grosvenor Lodge, a old country mansion has been turned into the London History Centre. The centre, still in the planning and development stages, offers workshops in geneaology and furniture-making, and plans to teach such traditional crafts as weaving and woodcarving.

Those interested in the period before English settlers arrived, can visit Ska Nah Doht, an entirely reconstructed Indian village in the Longwoods conservation area about 24 kilometres west of the city; the village is a copy of a Woodland Indian village of the Neutral tribe.

The original French explorers noticed that the Neutrals were settled farmers and remained aloof from the steady warring between the Iroquois and Huron tribes. To enter the palisade around the main village buildings one must pass through a maze. Inside the longhouse are the shaman's (medicine man) house and the sweat house (an Indian sauna).

London, home to about 250,000 residents, has a 100-member symphony orchestra, three professional theatre companies and one amateur company, several art galleries, more than 30 clubs, athletic facilities of all kinds, a major harness racing track and one of Canada's largest universities, the University of Western Ontario.

Satellite and turbines form new communications system

Transport Canada has announced that it will establish a communications system for the North using satellites and wind turbines.

Called UNAVCOM, the proposed $10-million system would let Arctic bush pilots talk to air traffic controllers in the south by way of satellite.

The system would use about 35 unmanned relay stations to be scattered across the North.

A Transport Canada spokesman said a pilot flying in the North could find out his location, pass on a distress message or simply make contact with another person by talking to an air controller on the ground.

Today it is impossible for pilots to make radio contact with air controllers in half the airspace above the sixtieth parallel because airports are so few and far between.

Weather testing

A $300,000 experimental UNAVCOM relay station has been installed near Ottawa for all-weather testing.

The station will be iced up, fogged in, pelted with rain and baked by the sun to estimate if such stations can survive the harsh Arctic climate.

The battery-operated electronic station, a nine-metre-high wind turbine and four propane-fired generators, will also have to be efficient enough to operate without routine maintenance.

The wind turbine is designed to recharge the batteries, while the propane generators will do the job in the event of no wind. The scheme is meant to keep remote stations operating between annual check-ups.

In a recent test at the experimental station, a pilot made contact with the airport *via Anik-B*. Such air-satellite-ground contact has been used by the military but this was believed to be the first contact made by civilians.

The broadcast from the plane was picked up by the relay station and bounced up to *Anik-B* then down to a special telephone installed at the station.

The Trans-Canada Telephone System and Telesat Canada lent Transport Canada the satellite time and receiving and transmitting receivers for the year-long experiment.