

The Surveyor General's City - Peterborough

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George Street, south from Brock Street, circa 1889, LAC 3260673.

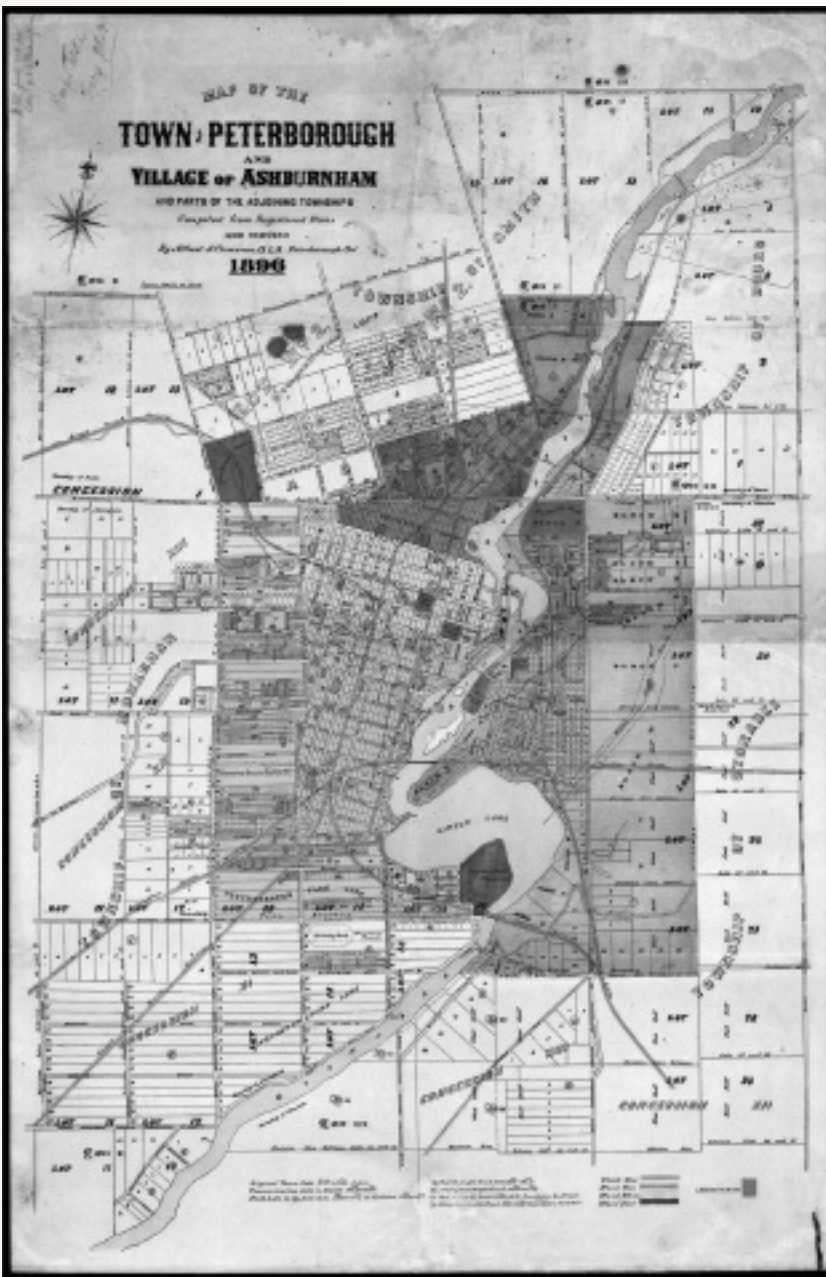
Surveyors have had a long association with the City of Peterborough. It started with Champlain exploring the area in 1615. In the 1820's came the influx of pioneers led by Peter Robinson, soon to be named Surveyor General. The agricultural, logging, industrial and urbanization days followed. As the "knowledge age" begins, we find that the Surveyor General's office has a permanent home in Peterborough. Hopefully the surveyors of today will continue to embrace the city and help strengthen it.

Samuel de Champlain (the father of surveying in Canada) had made friends with the Huron, who were an agricultural society and grew the three sisters –

corn, squash and beans. He travelled to their homeland to set up a trading post. He paddled up the Ottawa River, through Lake Nipissing and down the French River to Georgian Bay. The Huron knew of a shorter way back and took him along the approximate route of the Trent-Severn Waterway; along the Severn River, through Lake Simcoe and the Kawartha Lakes ("bright waters and happy lands"). In 1615 he came down the 11 Km Chemong portage to a settlement on Little Lake at Nogojiwanong ("the place at the end of the rapids") now known as the City of Peterborough and from there he returned via the Otonabee River, Rice Lake and Trent River to Lake Ontario. In 1632 Champlain drew the first map of the Kawartha Lakes. *The 400th anniversary of Champlain coming to Peterborough will be in 2015. It is notable that there is no monument to Champlain in Peterborough.*

Years later the Huron were driven out of their area by the Mohawks who in turn were driven out by the "Anishnaabeg" known as the Mississauga Ojibwa. The Mississauga came from the forests north of the Great Lakes and they travelled by birch bark canoes. The French were also driven out of the area by the British. After the 1763 Proclamation was passed the Mississauga signed treaties with the British. *Two major tourist attractions that remind us of those days are the Whetung Ojibwa Craft and Native Art Gallery at Curve Lake Reserve and the Canadian Canoe Museum.*

In 1817 and 1818, townships in the Peterborough area were surveyed by Samuel Street Wilmot PLS. In 1818 about 30 settler families arrived. In 1819 Adam Scott moved up from Port Hope and built a saw mill on Jackson Creek at Little Lake. Later he built a grist mill and a distillery. For a while the area was known as Scott's Plains. The first village plan was drawn in 1823 by Richard Birdsall, PLS. John Huston, PLS surveyed the remaining part of the village plot of Peterborough in 1833. Today, Lock 19 on the Trent-Severn Waterway, just south of Little Lake in Peterborough, is named Scott's Mills.



Map of the Town of Peterborough and Village of Ashburnham, 1896, Alfred J. Cameron, OLS. LAC 890391.

In 1825 Peter Robinson, a government land agent and the brother to the Attorney General of Upper Canada, arrived at Scott's Plains with about 2000 Irish immigrants. They populated farms in the area and the village. In 1826 the village's name was changed to Peterborough and in 1850 Peterborough became a town. Peterborough celebrates Peter Robinson Day on August 1st each year.

The July 30, 2010 issue of "Peterborough This Week" (pg. 29) included a brief biography of the man responsible for shaping the city. The article noted that Peter Robinson "was appointed Commissioner of Crown Lands and Surveyor-General of Woods and Forests and held a seat in the Executive and Legislative Councils of Upper Canada. He resigned in 1836 as a protest against Sir Francis Bond Head and joined Robert Baldwin and others in urging reform."

The opening of water and rail transportation routes became important endeavours for the next number of years, and agriculture and logging began to flourish. In 1833 Hugh Baird was hired to survey a route and estimate costs for improving navigation on the Trent River to Rice Lake. He went on to survey alternate waterway routes as far as Lake Simcoe. In 1837 Baird was contracted to design and oversee construction of 6 locks on the waterway. In 1843 lock #19 was built on the Otonabee River at Whitlaw's Rapids just south of Little Lake. By 1860 there were 4 steam ships and 2 tug boats working the Otonabee River. There is a display at Lock 19 acknowledging Baird's survey/engineering work.

In 1896 the final stage of the waterway construction started. It was to overcome the rapids which have a drop of over 44 m from Lakefield to Little Lake. Richard Birdsall Rogers, DLS was hired to design and supervise the construction of a hydraulic lift lock similar to those being built in Europe that would replace the need for eight regular locks. It was completed in 1904. He built what is still the highest hydraulic lift lock in the world and one of the largest solid concrete structures (no reinforcing). In 1999 the Lift Lock was designated as a Historical Mechanical Landmark. The Lift Lock and the adjacent Trent-Severn visitors' centre are now major tourist attractions. Rogers Cove on Little Lake and Rogers Street were named for him. Peterborough's Trent University, which is noted for its Native Studies and Environmental Programs, is named after the waterway.

Sir Sandford Fleming, PLS received his survey education in Scotland. He came to Canada in 1845 and lived on Brock Street in Peterborough until 1847. He resided with his second cousin Doctor John Hutchison who was the first doctor in Peterborough. Sir Sandford performed some surveys in the village and drew a map of Peterborough in 1846. He went on to become, amongst other things, the designer of Canada's first stamp, the chief engineer during the construction of the Trans-Canada railway and the designer of Standard Time. The Hutchison House is now a museum that celebrates both Dr. Hutchison and Sir Sandford Fleming. Peterborough's Fleming College is named after Sir Sandford and its Lindsay campus has well

noted cartography and geomatic programs.

The Trent-Severn Waterway was originally intended for commercial traffic but in 1854 the first railway came to town. Thereafter the waterway was used more and more for summer tourists rather than for commercial traffic. There are many old photographs at the Peterborough Museum and at the local Hunting and Fishing Heritage Centre depicting hunting, fishing and summer life at the Kawartha lodges and cottages. More recently the "happy lands" have attracted many retirees. Peterborough is now ranked second in Canada for the percentage of retirees. Surveying properties for visitors, summer homes and retirees continues to be a major part of the local survey business.

Hydro electric power was harnessed from the rapids north of Peterborough before it was from Niagara Falls. The electric power drew businesses to town and as a result urbanization started. The industrial boom was underway. Canada Packers predecessor came to town in the 1880's and by 1890 Edison Electric Company (later GE) was established. Edison-made streetcars were running on the streets of Peterborough within a year. The Peterborough Canoe Company started in 1891. The American Cereal Company (later Quaker Oats) came to town in 1900. Today, the Canoe Co., Canada Packers and the streetcars are all gone but, GE and Quaker Oats are still here. During the industrial and urbanization period many survey firms were located in Peterborough. One such firm was Pierce and Pierce, Ontario Land Surveyors. Both father and son were presidents of the Association of Ontario Land Surveyors, John W. Pierce OLS in 1932 and John G. Pierce OLS in 1962. They were noted for their surveys in the Peterborough area and for surveying the Ontario-Manitoba boundary. A film titled "The Lively One" was made of the boundary survey.

The knowledge age came to Peterborough when Trent University, Fleming College and the Ministry of Natural Resources came to the City. The Surveyor General's office is part of the Ministry of Natural Resources. About 10 years after Peter Robinson resigned, the office of Surveyor General was abolished; likely for political reasons. It wasn't re-established until 1928. The most recent past Surveyor General, Brian J. Maloney OLS, was appointed Director of the Geographic Information Branch. He will be noted for helping move surveying into the knowledge age and for bringing integrated cadastral surveying to Ontario. The new Surveyor General is Susan MacGregor O.L.S. She is the first female Surveyor General in the Province of Ontario.

It appears that the circle has been closed. Surveyor General Peter Robinson was the founder of Peterborough and today the Surveyor General's office resides in the City of Peterborough. This is a city with a rich surveying background and it is indeed the Surveyor General's City.

I retired from the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto several years ago and moved to Peterborough three years ago. I invite the AOLS Council to hold a meeting here and visit the Surveyor General's City.

