

Surveys and Surveyors along the Scugog Carrying Place

By Grant Karcich

Scugog Carrying Place: a frontier pathway is the story of the ancient aboriginal trails connecting Lake Ontario and Lakes Scugog and Simcoe and the Kawartha lakes. My research for the book began as a way to tell the story of how recent developments in the autumn of 2009 were affecting the search for our historical heritage. At that time there was tension between those in favour of building an ethanol plant at the southern terminus of Scugog Carrying Place and those who saw this development as destructive of the area and harmful to the environment. As my research progressed in the winter of 2010, my focus broadened into a story of the regional development of the watershed area of Lake Scugog and other neighbouring watersheds, such as the Beaver River that flows into Lake Simcoe, and the Oshawa and Harmony Creeks which flow into Lake Ontario. The story really is about how we as First Nations and as European settlers took a virgin frontier and changed it, for better or worse, into a place of resources which we harnessed for our own use.

My initial research had begun in the decade before, when I had discovered at the former location of the Archives of Ontario on Grenville Street in Toronto, the first survey map of Whitby Township “C31”, which was completed in 1795 by Augustus Jones. This map had the traditional lots and concessions, but in addition it had one unique feature not seen on other survey maps of the adjoining townships of Darlington and Pickering, that of a trail. This trail was depicted in a reddish brown colour on the map, different from the black ink of the concession boundaries. The trail proved to be that of a First Nations pathway.

This trail was referred to as the Scugog Carrying Place by former premier Leslie Frost. The trail linked Lake Scugog with Lake Ontario to the south and Lake Simcoe to the northwest. The native history of the Scugog Carrying Place is linked with the first surveys carried out in the former townships of Whitby, Reach, Brock, and Thorah, which constitute the modern Regional Municipality of Durham, and stretches from Oshawa in the south to Beaverton in the north. Besides the Scugog Carrying Place, other trails, such as the more famous Toronto Carrying Place, were important in the modern settlement of south-central Ontario.

In the late 18th century, the British ordered various surveys in the area to open up the land for settlement in the region between Toronto and the Bay of Quinte. Beginning with the 1791 baseline survey and followed by other surveys, the 1795 survey of Whitby Township, the Reach Township (today’s Scugog Township) survey of 1808–10, and the 1817 survey of Brock Township, the Scugog Carrying Place was mapped. A number of well known, and not so well known surveyors such

as Augustus Jones, Samuel Wilmot, John Stegmann, and John Edward White were employed on these surveys.

Augustus Jones was assigned to cut his 1791 baseline and mark townships along the north shore of Lake Ontario from the Trent to the Humber River. Through Whitby Township along today’s Bloor Street in Oshawa, he laid the baseline. Jones described as “a vigorous man with an iron constitution, as agile on snowshoes (with a pack on his back) as in



This Ontario County map developed in 1853, cartographer Thomas Devine, is taken from the Atlas containing Maps of Counties of Upper and Lower Canada laid before the legislature of the Province of Canada in the year 1853, produced by the Crown Lands Department.

a loaded birch barkcanoe”¹ trained as a surveyor in New York State where he was born before coming to Upper Canada. Jones had sufficient funds to hire ten chain bearers and axemen to work for seventy-nine days from July 1st to the 17th of September 1791. Jones’ crew constructed the baseline by traversing the shoreline from Toronto to the Trent on foot, while the survey party’s supplies came by bateaux along Lake Ontario.

On entering Whitby Township on August 28, 1791, in his field notes, Jones gives the name of the stream to the east of Wilson’s as *Min-ce-nan-quash* in the language of the Mississauga living in the region. The southern end of this stream marked the starting point of the Scugog Carrying Place. Augustus Jones also noted that a “Mr. St. John lives on the front of this lot [lot 4, Broken Front concession].”² “St. John” is the name Jones used for Jean Baptiste Rousseau, a fur trader who had been established on the south end of the Scugog Carrying Place in order to intercept the Mississauga when they came to Lake Ontario in the spring and autumn to fish and make camp.

After his survey of the baseline through Whitby and the adjoining townships, Augustus Jones returned in 1795 on orders from D.W. Smith, the Surveyor General of Upper Canada. On April 24, 1795, Smith stipulated that “the first Concession line of Township of Whitby (formerly Norwich or No. 8) on the north shore of Lake Ontario, having been already surveyed by you, I need only direct that you proceed there and complete the survey of that Township on the principals upon which it was begun.”³ A year later, on July 17, 1796, Augustus reported the completion of his survey. He and his crew surveyed 114 miles of territory in the township and blazed the corner trees for each concession and road allowance.

Little is known about the First Nations people who worked on the early surveys in Ontario. Augustus Jones while working on his 1791 baseline survey employed a native identified simply in the rolls as Billy a “Delaware Indian”. Jones took a Mississauga wife and his father-in-law, Wabenose or Morning Walker, assisted Jones on his surveys. He worked as a guide for Augustus Jones on the Yonge

Street and Grand River surveys in 1794. Another Mississauga named Ogetanicut is associated with a survey that was completed using the Scugog Carrying Place. In 1804 Ogetanicut was accused of the murder of John Sharp, an English fur trader at the Moody Farewell trading house on Washburn Island in Lake Scugog. On August 15 Chief Justice Henry Allcock ordered the Surveyor General to determine if the location of the Farewell house was in the District of Newcastle and if so to convene the trial of Ogetanicut there. The survey party under John Stegmann left York two days later and in three days’ time they traveled 38 miles and stopped at the northern boundary of Whitby Township, presumably going by way of the Scugog Carrying Place. During the following three days the survey party ran a line to the location of the Farewell trading post on Lake Scugog. The survey determined that the murder took place in Newcastle District and John Stegmann was able to report that, “in obedience to your request instructions bearing date of the 15th Inst: have the honor to report that the same is complied with, That the exact and position situation of the house of Moody Farewell is seven miles eastward of the division line between the Township of Whitby & Darlington”⁴

Stegmann’s original name was Johann Friedrich Stegmann and he was born about 1758 in Kassel, Hessen, which today is a part of Germany. He was part of a large contingent of Hessian troops that came over to Staten Island, New York in 1776 to fight for the British during the American Revolution. After that war, he moved to Canada and changed his name to John, got discharged from the army and married Marie-Ursule Choisy from L’Islet, Quebec in 1784. He started



The first image of Oshawa to be published was released in 1847, artist unknown, from *Smith’s Canadian Gazetteer* (1846-47). Reference: *Smith’s Fourth issue, 1847, Library and Archives Canada.*

¹ Donald B. Jones, “Augustus Jones,” *Dictionary of Canadian Bibliography*, Volume VII 1836 to 1850 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 450-52.

² Augustus Jones, Field Book No. 1, Survey Notes & Diary, 1791-2, Survey Records (L & F) Original Notebook No. 828, January 1791-September 17, 1791/September 7, 1792-October 25, 1792 (Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources). Copyright: 2011 Queens Printer, Ontario.

³ Archives of Ontario, Letter from Augustus Jones, Surveyor, to survey officials, dated Newark October 4, 1794, RG1 A-I-1 Vol. 32: 778.

⁴ Archives of Ontario, John Stegmann MS 1814, August 28, 1804.

surveying in Canada in 1783 working on a survey of the County of Dundas, west of the Ottawa River along the St. Lawrence and later at the Bay of Quinte. After 1790 he carries out survey work in the York area.

He was appointed as a Deputy Surveyor on October 18th, 1790 and went on to survey part of Woford and Montague Townships in 1796; the Townships of Beverly and Flamborough in 1797; Glanford, Burford, Oxford and Blenheim Townships; and the shore of Niagara River from Table Rock to Chippewa in 1798. He was engaged on the surveys of Lake Shore Road and Dundas Street, eastward from York, and he also surveyed the Township of King in 1799; the second, third and fourth concessions on the east side of Yonge Street in 1800 and he examined Markham Township in 1801; Whitchurch in 1802; and in 1803 he surveyed the Townships of Finch and Elmsley.

A trial was ordered at Presqu'île within the District of Newcastle, but the land route was in poor shape, since the only road, the Kingston Road had had heavy rains and the road was damaged and not passable in places. Therefore, the entire court embarked for Presqu'île traveling east from Toronto on the ship, the Speedy. Though the Speedy was considered unseaworthy by her captain, Lieutenant Governor Peter Hunter ordered that she put to sea and take the trial party to Presqu'île where the Speedy was lost with all on board. Surveyor John Stegmann and the accused Ogetanicut both went down with the ship. Stegmann's daughter married Major Wilmot, who six years later surveyed the Scugog Carrying Place in Reach Township. In 1990 the remains of the Speedy were located on the bottom of Lake Ontario.

The first survey map of Reach Township created by Samuel Wilmot (1774 – 1856), who surveyed Reach Township from November 20, 1809 to March 28, 1810, placed the Scugog Carrying Place north of the ridge, extending from Whitby Township down the slope to Lake Scugog. His map shows fur-trading posts at the mouth of the Nonquon River, which was labeled "Mistake River," and at the mouth of Cawber's Creek, described as an "Indian Foot Path." D.F. McOuat, the archivist of Ontario pointed out that Wilmot's field notes at the time make "four references to an existing Indian Foot Path as follows 3rd Concession 16th Post, 4th Concession 17th Post, 5th Concession 18th Post, and 6th Concession 19th Post".⁵ The trail on the Whitby Township map clearly lines up with the survey map of Reach Township created by Samuel Wilmot a decade and a half later.

Samuel Wilmot began his surveying career by acting as a chain bearer for his father-in-law John Stegmann and later he was employed by the government to survey the route for the main road from Kingston to York. This road was cut four

rods wide and grubbed two rods by Captain Danforth. Sam Wilmot also surveyed Brock Township in March and May of 1817 and returned to complete the survey on November 12, 1817 and his notes describe how difficult such work was. He worked his way north along the Scugog Carrying Place from Whitby with a team and wagons. "Day after day he was forced to turn back to Reach Township, driven there by the rain, the snow and the impassable swamps."⁶ He travelled as far north as Lake Simcoe twice, in May and November. Wilmot completed the survey by the end of 1817. He mapped out the townships of Reach (1809-1810) and Cartwright (1816) around Lake Scugog. He also surveyed Scugog Island which at the time of his surveys was not an island but a peninsula. Later in 1829-1830 a dam at Lindsay raised the level of Lake Scugog which separated the island from the rest of the area. Only a few years prior did the first European settlers arrive in Reach and Cartwright.

In 1821, John Edward White began surveying Thorah Township and he was rewarded with a land grant of 1,700 acres, eventually settling immediately north of Beaverton on Lake Simcoe. White went on to complete the survey of the township with David Gibson in 1827. When Arad Smalley subsequently surveyed Thorah in 1830, he found only two heads of households, namely Donald Carter and Samuel Fransworth in what became Beaverton. Thorah Township residents had no direct link to the rest of the province in the south. Their only connections were either along Lake Simcoe to the Toronto Carrying Place or up the Beaver River and onto the Scugog Carrying Place. Naturally, they requested road links with the south and Arad Smalley was contracted to survey a road in 1827, which he called the Whitby Road and later called the Cameron Road, which followed along the west bank of the Beaver River parallel to the Carrying Place down to where Cannington is today. From there his survey ran due east to the Brock and Mariposa town line, following it for six to seven miles down to the Nonquon River. This allowed settlers to come in from Reach and Whitby Townships. In 1829 Smalley surveyed another road in Thorah along the shoreline of Lake Simcoe from the Township's southwest perimeter north to the Talbot River and down to where Beaverton is situated today, the northern terminus of the Scugog Carrying Place. 

Having grown up along the Scugog Carrying Place route, author **Grant Karcich** has long wanted to bring the story of this forgotten trail back to life. Information about his book, "Scugog Carrying Place: A Frontier Pathway" can be found in the Book Reviews on page 46.

⁵ Trent University Archives, D.F. McOuat, "Letter July 2, 1971 to Leslie Frost," Leslie Frost Fond, 77-024/27/3.

⁶ Archives of Ontario, Samuel Wilmot, "Diary taken on the survey of Township No. 1 immediately in rear of Reach between the 21st of March and 7th May 1817," MS924, reel 4.