



Huron County Historical Society

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www.HuronCountyHistoricalSociety.ca

Newsletter March 2022

Executive for 2020-2021

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March Program

The Land Between: An Overview of the Indigenous Archaeology of Huron County, Ontario

with Jim Sherratt M.A., CAHP

March 16, 2022 at 7 p.m.

Huron County is located at the southern end of the traditional territory of the Saugeen First Nation and the Northern end of the traditional territory of the Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point First Nation. This location on the periphery and between two contemporary Indigenous communities has led to the perception that the area was relatively unsettled prior to the 1830s. However, until recently very few archaeological assessments had been completed within Huron County and the majority of the archaeological research was directed at Post-contact settler sites. This presentation will provide an overview of our current understanding of the indigenous archaeology of Huron County and some historical sources that hint the Indigenous archaeological record in Huron County is more extensive than previously realized.

We are delighted to welcome Jim Sherratt to speak to this topic. He is a resident of Bayfield, Ontario and is a licensed professional archaeologist. He has recently returned to the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries as a Cultural Consultant working on guidance for cultural heritage resources under the Provincial Policy statement (2020). From 2018 to 2021 he was the Manager of Planning and Business Development at Timmins Martelle Heritage Consultants.

For getting the zoom link for March 16, 2022, 7 pm, all interested should email hchs1965@gmail.com to be notified of the login details.

Photos, right, from Memories of Tuckersmith 1835-1985 edited by Gwyneth J. Whilsmith.

The House that Henry Ransford built, top, below after extensive renovations and how it looked in 1985

A Salt Landmark Destroyed

It was during our February meeting that members noted the fire the night before of the Ransford home at the Stapleton salt works just east of Clinton.

It is fortunate that copies of Henry Ransford's diary of 1881 survived the generations and owners of the home at Stapleton, named after Ransford's English hometown, and provides insight into both the salt industry and the buildings as well as the life of author.

Fellow historian David Yates provided a wonderful write up of the Stapleton and Clinton Salt works in the Goderich Signal Star, February 23, 2022. Ransford's diary was also noted in the **Memories of Tuckersmith 1835-1985** edited by Gwyneth J. Whilsmith. Henry Ransford was among the early adventurers to wade into the wilds of Huron in 1832. When his wagon broke down, he was assisted by Colonel van Egmond of Hullett Township. Ransford was so pleased with the look of the land that he decided to settle there and purchased 3,400 acres from the Canada Company.

"I fixed on a pretty spot overlooking the river on lots 39 and 40," according to his memoirs written in 1881. Three of four acres were



cleared, house framed and roofed. He engaged a carpenter to floor the house, get the siding on, and make the windows while he returned to England.

In May 1834, he sailed to Canada with his new bride, Frances, hired man, Thomas Walker with his wife and family of four, and all their belongings. After landing at New York they came up the Hudson River by steamer and reached Buffalo via the Erie Canal on June 14. They got a small steamer to Port Stanley and hired wagons to London. The road north of London was nearly impassable but they found a man who was willing to take them on.

Three days later, after upsetting the wagon in a swamp, rebuilding a log bridge over a creek near what is now Lucan, and breaking and repairing the tongue of a wagon, they arrived at Vanderburgh's Corner (Clinton).

The next day Henry walked out to see his house, and found that the carpenter had done nothing but put siding on the east end so the families had to stay at the tavern while Henry 'hurried on the carpenters."

"We got all the siding on, the lower and half the upper floor laid, the doors hung and the unglazed sashed in, when owing to the discomfort of the tavern, we moved in." The Ransfords lived on the south side, and the hired man and his family on the north. "I and my wife slept on half the upper floor which we reached by a ladder that I had to make before we could go to bed."

"We hauled limestone up from the river and burnt sufficient lime to give a good coat of plaster to the inside of the house, which of course had to be lathed. I had brought out trowels and did all the plastering with my own hands, Thomas mixing and bringing the mortar to me."

"Building the chimney was also a big job, as I had to make a stone foundation some eight or ten feet square and 4 feet in height. The stones had to be brought up from the river and some small boulders we found on the land. Clay worked up was substituted for mortar and fully answered the purpose as it has stood for forty-six years. (written in 1881)

"I was lucky to get a bricklayer, Jerry Atkins. After cutting a hole through the roof for the chimney, it set in to rain and snow and I had to sit over it with an umbrella for three or four hours, so that the man should not stop working. The evenings were getting cold and only those who have gone through the same labour, anxiety and toil can enter into the feeling of delight when a blazing fire was roaring up the chimney and we all sat round and enjoyed it."

Henry had only completed plastering their bedroom and making their bedstead two or three days when on October twenty-fifth, his wife Frances gave birth to a baby girl. "Thomas was sent off to Goderich on foot, eighteen miles for the doctor who rode back just in time, but I had to lend him a suit of clothes as he was set through and mud from head to foot. Such was bush life in those days."

One of the features of the home was a large room with big south windows overlooking the river. All the surfaces, floor, walls and ceiling were made of alternate boards of light hard maple and dark cherry wood.

This is only the first part of Henry Ransford's story. Four of his children were born at Stapleton, and four more at the second house, Clifton, in Goderich. The family moved to Goderich in 1841 and back to England in 1846. Thomas Walker and his family

obtained land from Henry Ransford and remained in this area, where many of their descendants still live.

Henry's son Richard returned to Stapleton in 1861. Six years later, Henry instructed him to sink a well at Stapleton to look for oil. At 1200 feet, they came to pure rock salt and brine. A thriving industry soon grew up around the well. There were many sheds for horses and wagons, a cooperage shop, boiler house, engine room, salt pans, etc. A wooden trestle over the Bayfield River was constructed for a tramway connecting the salt works by a switch with the Grand Trunk.

About 1874, Richard restored and made additions to Stapleton house for himself and his new bride Florence 'Forrie' Hale, daughter of Clinton resident Horatio Hale, ethnologist and lawyer, famous for his studies of the North American Indian.

In 1881, Henry Ransford wrote down the story of his life as a keepsake for his children. At that time, six of his children were living in England, and his two sons, Richard and John were living here at Stapleton, running the farm and the saltworks. This book was passed on to John's son Melville and subsequently to the future owners of this house.

From notes compiled by Mary and Bill Hearn, Stapleton owners 1980-1997, submitted by the daughters, Nancy Ross and Linda Street

Membership renewal....

If you received this newsletter by mail, the date shown above your name on the address label is the year to which your membership is paid up, according to our records. Call Elaine Snell if you are not sure or need clarification. If you are in arrears, consider this a reminder that the membership fees are \$20. To reserve your member's hard copy of Historical Notes, keep your dues up to date. **Email us about using e-transfer.** Copies of recent past Historical Notes are available from Elaine Snell at 519-523-9531 (past copies are \$8 to \$10 per copy). To access the **members-only** section for the Historical Notes or to do a search for names or places in the Historical Notes, go to www.HuronCountyHistoricalSociety.ca, open the dropdown menu for Publications, click HCHS Members Login. If you cannot get access using the password, then check if your web browser is up to date.

If the password is lost or not available readily, contact hchs1965@gmail.com or call 519-440-6206

Where to get your local History Books

And back copies of The Historical Notes – Fincher's and The Book Peddler both of Goderich, North Huron Citizen in Blyth, The Book Barn off Hwy 86 between Wingham and Whitechurch, The Village Bookshop, Bayfield and Bayfield Archives.

Need a simple elegant gift?

For a special gift or simply a thoughtful card to send consider using cards featuring some of the iconic artwork of Jack McLaren. Call executive member Mary Gregg 519-524-9372 or check out Fincher's, and The Book Peddler in Goderich.