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CHIEF GEOGRAPHER'S PLACE NAME SURVEY

1905-1909

VII. CENTRAL AND EASTERN ONTARIO

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In two previous volumes of CANOMA, two papers on the Chief Geographer's place name survey were based on several circulars returned by postmasters to James White, in the 1905-1909 period; the responses from Northern Ontario were reviewed in Vol. 8, No. 1, and those for Southwestern Ontario in Vol. 9, No. 1. This paper examines the replies received from the postmasters in the remaining part of Ontario: east of Toronto and Georgian Bay, and south of Lake Nipissing.

In the year 1905, Central and Eastern Ontario had 1745 named post offices and way stations, almost exactly the same number as served Southwestern Ontario. On the files of the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names are 556 circulars, virtually the same number as for Southwestern Ontario, thus confirming that only one-third of the postmasters in the southern part of the province responded to Mr. White's request for information on the origin and use of names of post offices in the provinces - a percentage considerably lower than that for the returns from Western Canada.

Some of the circulars returned to Mr. White may have been misplaced over the past 75 years. He himself returned some of them to postmasters if he found their answers incomplete or questionable; some of these may never come back. H.S. Moffatt, the postmaster of Jasper, a hamlet southeast of Smiths Falls, informed Mr. White that the post office name was changed from Irish Creek to Jasper about 1861, although the Canadian Pacific Railway continued to use Irish Creek. The letter was sent back inquiring if the name Jasper were for a person or another place, but the postmaster's second response was more confusing and incomprehensible than the first. So Mr. White sent out a third inquiry and was subsequently informed by Mr. Moffatt that a Mr. Sweetman, the postal inspector, submitted several names for consideration, and that the first postmaster, George Cross, simply selected Jasper. But Mr. Moffatt ended this last reply with the puzzling statement: "I presume it was on acct of the Sanctity of the then residents that name was chosen."

The naming of Tory Hill in Haliburton County is a most interesting tale. The postmaster, John H. Anderson, had planned to submit the name Glen Anderson to the postal authorities. When a Liberal organizer remarked that he had not met a righteous man in the community, and that in his opinion the place should be called Tory Hill, Mr. Anderson submitted both names, and the latter was accepted,

In the reply to Mr. White, it was noted that the business centre had been moved to a valley about 1895 and, therefore, the name, being a misnomer, should be replaced by Glen Anderson. But Tory Hill, given in jest, was taken as a badge of honour, and continues to identify this small community between Haliburton and Bancroft.

Throughout the area of Central and Eastern Ontario there are several names that clearly reveal that they have been transferred from other countries, although some of them may have arrived via titles or places in the United States. Examples are Cornwall, Arnprior, Renfrew, Pembroke, Tweed, Brighton, Moscow and Warsaw. From 1840 to about 1854 there was a post office between Kingston and Napanee called Mill Creek; a British victory at Odessa, in present-day Ukraine, inspired a proposal at a town meeting at Mill Creek to rename the place Odessa. At about the same time the residents of a small community called Monticello, west of Lindsay, decided at a public meeting to choose a new name. From a list they selected Manila, a variant spelling of the largest city (Manila) of the Philippines. The postmaster in 1905, George Douglas, stated that the name had been chosen from a list of United States names, where the names Manila and Manila both occur.

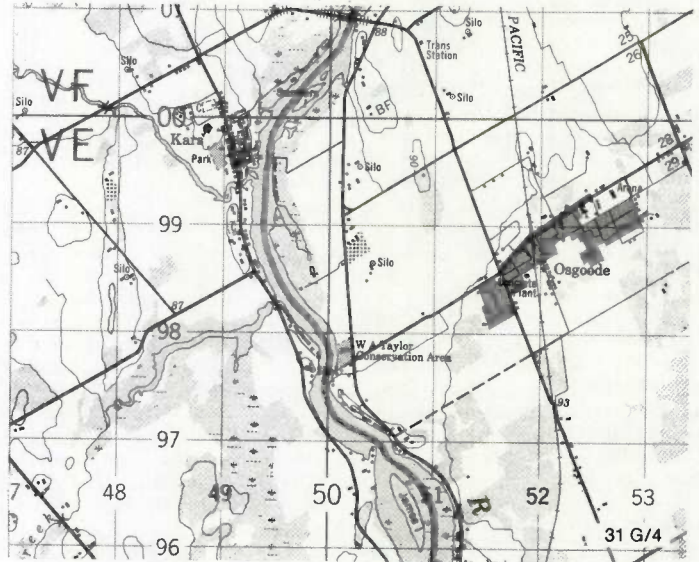


Arnprior, c.1906: McKerracher's store (Horse milliners)

* Alan Rayburn, Executive Secretary, Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names.

The postmaster of KARS explained in his letter how that name had been given in honour of the British defence of a Turkish outpost in the 1850s. He did not note in his letter that the community had been previously called Wellington for the illustrious victor of Waterloo. Both names, therefore, reflected on distinguished military exploits elsewhere in the world. Similar names in the area of study are Raglan, Havelock and Bannockburn, and another Wellington in Prince Edward County; Almonte was chosen in 1855 to honour the patriotism of a noted Mexican general and diplomat, Juan Almonte.

The need to avoid duplication or to discourage names similar to others persuaded the residents of Winchester in 1875 to rename the place Chesterville after Chester Casselman, who was appointed the first postmaster. West Winchester, 15 km to the west, then became Winchester. Another place name derived from a personal name is Lombardy.



Kars on the Rideau River ▶

Kars 5th Oct. 1905-

James White Esq
Ottawa

Dear Sir

In reply to your enquiry in re. the name of our Post Office here I beg to say it was established in the early 50's say some time in the year 1851 or 2 and was named after the Turkish fortress of Kars which was captured by the Russians after a long siege during the Russian war of that time. The British General, Williams was the Commandant of the forces at Kars at that time.

My father James Lindsay late of this place, now deceased, was the first Postmaster at this place trusting this may be satisfactory I am

Sir yours very truly
C. G. Lindsay P.M.
Kars
Co. Carleton Ont.

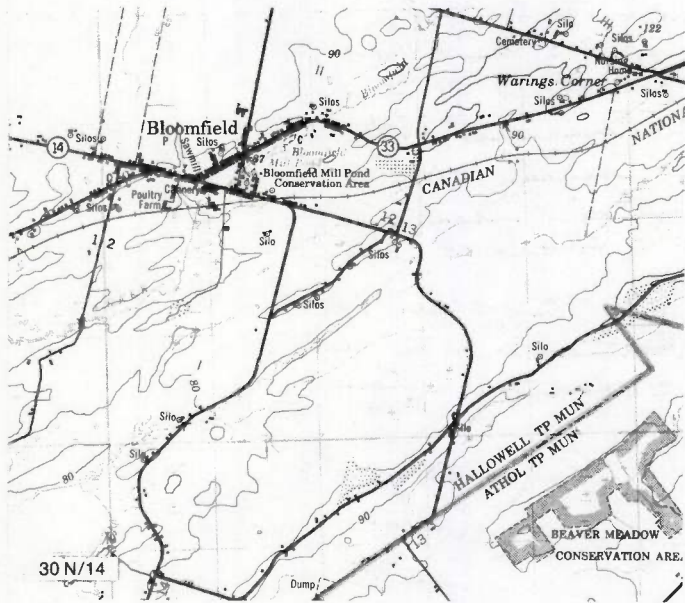
The postmaster, M. Doohar, informed Mr. White in 1905:

"About the year 1873 a number of the people in the village and township asked to have the name [Lombards Corners] changed to Lombardy, which would still retain the name of the first settler [Francis Lombard], and owing to the nice farming country around here, it had a resemblance to the Plains of that name in Itley (sic)."

The community of Collins Bay west of Kingston was laid out in village lots by Sir Henry Smith, M.P., in the 1860s and named Collinsby. On behalf of the postmaster, Mr. M.H. Grass reported to Mr. White in 1906 that "in 1876 Sir Alexr. Campbell owning a Lot here wrote me as Her Majesty's Customs Officer the cause of the two names, and he objected to Sir Henry Smith's name of Collinsby as it had not been properly recommended nor sanctioned by the Post Office Department nor the Grand Trunk Railway Company of Canada. --and thereafter the name became obsolete." The community owes its name to John Collins, Deputy Surveyor General of Quebec, who laid out the townships in this part of Ontario in 1783.

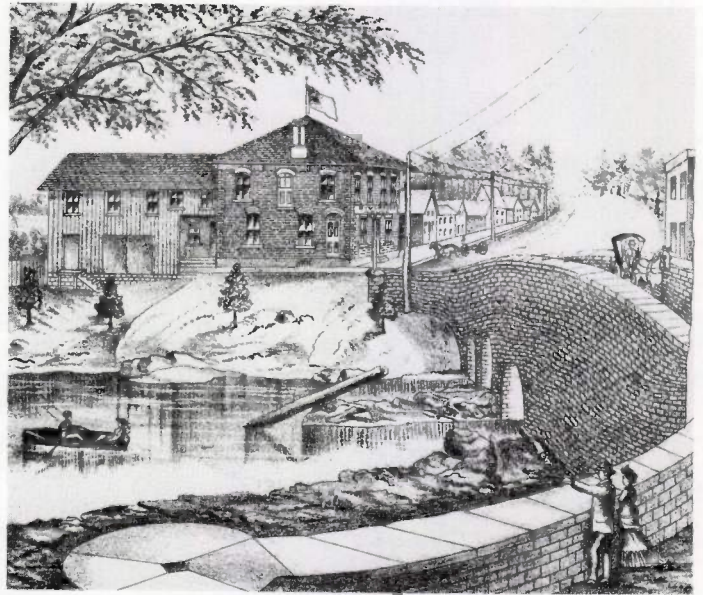
Bloomfield was the name of a post office 12 km south of Peterborough until "1865 when it being found to conflict with a P.O. of similar name in Prince Edward county it was changed to its present name [Bailieboro] after a place in Ireland in the county of Cavan. We have the townships of Cavan and Monaghan side by side as [the counties by those names are] in Ireland and Jas Aiken a former resident here suggested the change in honor of his birthplace in the motherland" (Sidney J. Waterman, May 19, 1906).

The wealth of information provided by Mrs. Jonathan Talcott about BLOOMFIELD in Prince Edward County reveals valuable insight into the social history and cultural geography of the community. Her report that there was a local belief that Lake on the Mountain derived its water from Lake Erie (some 180 km to the southwest) would require a suspension of the natural laws of geography!



Bloomfield, Prince Edward County

The pretty village of Lyndhurst, between Brockville and Smiths Falls, was named in the 1840s by Charles and Jonas Jones. The postmaster in 1905, John D. Roddick, noted: "Signifying Water Fall in the Woods or Grove, which indeed was very appropriate as when I Came here in 1853, it was most beautifully Surrounded by a fine grove of woods." The community was first called Furnace Falls, as a smelter was established there in early 1830s.



Riverside House, Lyndhurst (R.W. Copeland, Proprietor)

(Source: Leavitt, Thad. W.H. (1879): "History of Leeds and Grenville", Recorder Press, Brockville, opposite p. 63)

It is rather rare that a man-made structure suggests a name for a community, but the community of Tincap near Brockville received its name from the unusual covering on its school's tower. The postmaster of Spring Valley (located in Tincap in 1905), explained the origin of the name in a letter to Mr. White:

"Tincap Oct. 5 1905

Dear Sir

The correct name for this place is Tincap although the P.O. is Spring Valley. The latter is about one mile north of here where the P.O. first was & afterward was removed down here & still goes by the name of Spring Valley. Tincap is a little Corners where five roads meet 4 miles north of Brockville consisting of a Post Office; grocery; Blacksmith's shop, school house & several good dwelling houses. The name Tincap originated from the first school house built here which had a cupulo or cap on one end of the roof covered with tin; and it is our intentions to get the name of the P.O. changed to Tincap as soon as possible. There is no lakes or railroads but quite convenient

The name "Bloomfield" was given to this village about 80 years ago. I get my information from the oldest resident of the village, John Bull now in his 90th year. He says he was a lad of ten or twelve years when he went with his father, John Bull, to the only store in the place, where there was to be a conclave of the best men in the place to consider the question of a name for village. It had not been known by any name.

Those who met for this purpose were the following persons. John Bull, senior, John P. Williams, Jonathan Clark, Isaac Beadle, Philip Clark, William G. Clark, Cornelius White, Cornelius Bowerman, James Barker (and John Bull, aged 10) Several names were suggested, James Barker's choice "Bloomfield" was unanimously accepted. The vicinity was rich in wild flowers and is still, and the name was doubtless suggested because of this fact. Bloomfield was named before there was a postoffice here. It sprang up in the heart of the forest. The first clearing was made by Thomas Bowerman and his descendants are still in the vicinity. Next William Christy made a clearing, then came John Bull, Sr., who had come from Dutchess Co. N.Y. three years previous to taking up land, about 1792. There never was for Bloomfield the days of "log houses" reared and found in many counties. The excellent timber and the many streams invited milling industries, 3 saw mills were running in this vicinity 75 years ago. Thomas Bowerman put up the first saw mill and John Bull Sr., followed and some one else; consequently log houses were few in this locality.

The first schoolhouse was "log" and Uncle John who is 91, tells me there were probably 6 log homes stretching over the length of the village. Indians were quite numerous and had their "Campus" pretty well in the heart of the village. A Friends burial ground now covers the spot. Bloomfield was from the first a Quaker hamlet and today the influence of the early Friends is seen in many ways. In fact, 3/4 of the inhabitants today are of Quaker ancestry. We have the greatest natural feature (excepting Niagara of course) on the Continent. "The Great Sand Banks" A wonder to all who have seen them a marvel to the wondering mind- and still a mystery unsolved. The sand has encroached upon adjoining farms, covering acres, swallowing up trees and primitive houses and many a wonder is covered from our sight by these magnificent dunes of sand. That it comes from the bottom of Lake Ontario we know- but the nature of the sand is such as to give rise to various conjectures as to the geological formation of Lake Ontario bed.

We have, just eight miles from Bloomfield, a "Lake on a mountain" quite a lake this, oval in shape, very deep, supposed to be fed from Lake Erie, no visible outlet nor inlet, 200 feet above Lake Ontario- just below it. You can stand near Lake on the mountain and behold Lake Ontario 200 feet below. This lake is at Glenora, a name quite recently (10 years ago) given to the place. Bloomfield is in Prince Edward Co. The most fertile county in Ontario. The most picturesque of all counties in the province. Bloomfield has a population of 600 (not sure) with 3 canning factories, 1 saw mill, 1 flouring mill, 3 Friends churches and a modern M.E. church, a branch of the Standard Bank about to open.

Mrs Jonathan Talcott

Reply to circular: from Bloomfield

to those. I think the name Tincap is familiar all over the British Empire almost. And very often letters come here addressed Tincap, it is known in Ireland Scotland England & in the United States. I assure you it is a wonderful little place; it would take me too long to tell you all. No Whiskey no Gambling no houses of ill fame doors left open day & night I might say. The Wolf and the Lamb lies down together here. Hoping you will be

able to glean enough from these few lines for the information needed I remain resp. yours

G.N. Young."

Seven years later the post office name was changed to Tincap, with Spring Valley remaining as the name of the adjacent community, 2 km to the west.

The name of the small community of Ritchance, 16 km southwest of Hawkesbury, is the result of numerous transformations. The postmaster of L'Original, in noting in 1905 the origins of L'Original and Treadwell, also drew attention to some of the steps that resulted in the middle name of Nathaniel Hazard Treadwell being transformed to Ritchance, the name of a neighbouring community. A road there was called Hazard Street, with the local French-speaking settlers literally translating that into "Rue du Hasard", then into "Rue de Chance", and finally into the corrupted form of Ritchance. It would be difficult to find as many transformational steps in any other name in North America.

The French names of Eastern Ontario are examined by André Lapierre elsewhere in this number of CANOMA. In his book on the French toponymy of Ontario¹; he also wrote

¹ Lapierre, A. (1981): "Toponymie française en Ontario", Éditions Études Vivantes, Montréal, p. 15.

about the origin of the name Pointe au Baril on Georgian Bay, pointing out that there was no documentation that traced the name to the French regime. The postmaster there in 1905, S.E. Oldfield, reported that a French halfbreed told him in 1873 that, when his father was young, an accident occurred in a channel there when a canoe laden with supplies bound for Mackinac Island overturned, losing the supplies, including a barrel of whiskey. The following spring a party of traders, while stranded on an adjacent island, discovered the barrel, and had a prolonged spree. Thereupon they hung the barrel on a pole as a beacon, resulting in the place being called in French Pointe au Baril. Mr. Oldfield stated that the "baril" was still there in 1873 when he passed through Pointe au Baril Channel.

Also adjacent to Georgian Bay is the summer resort community of GO HOME. As pointed out by Mr. Wright in his letter to James White, the name of the post office was derived from the name of a bay, a river and a lake that provided more direct access to the Muskoka Lakes than the main outlet of Go Home Lake, Musquash River.

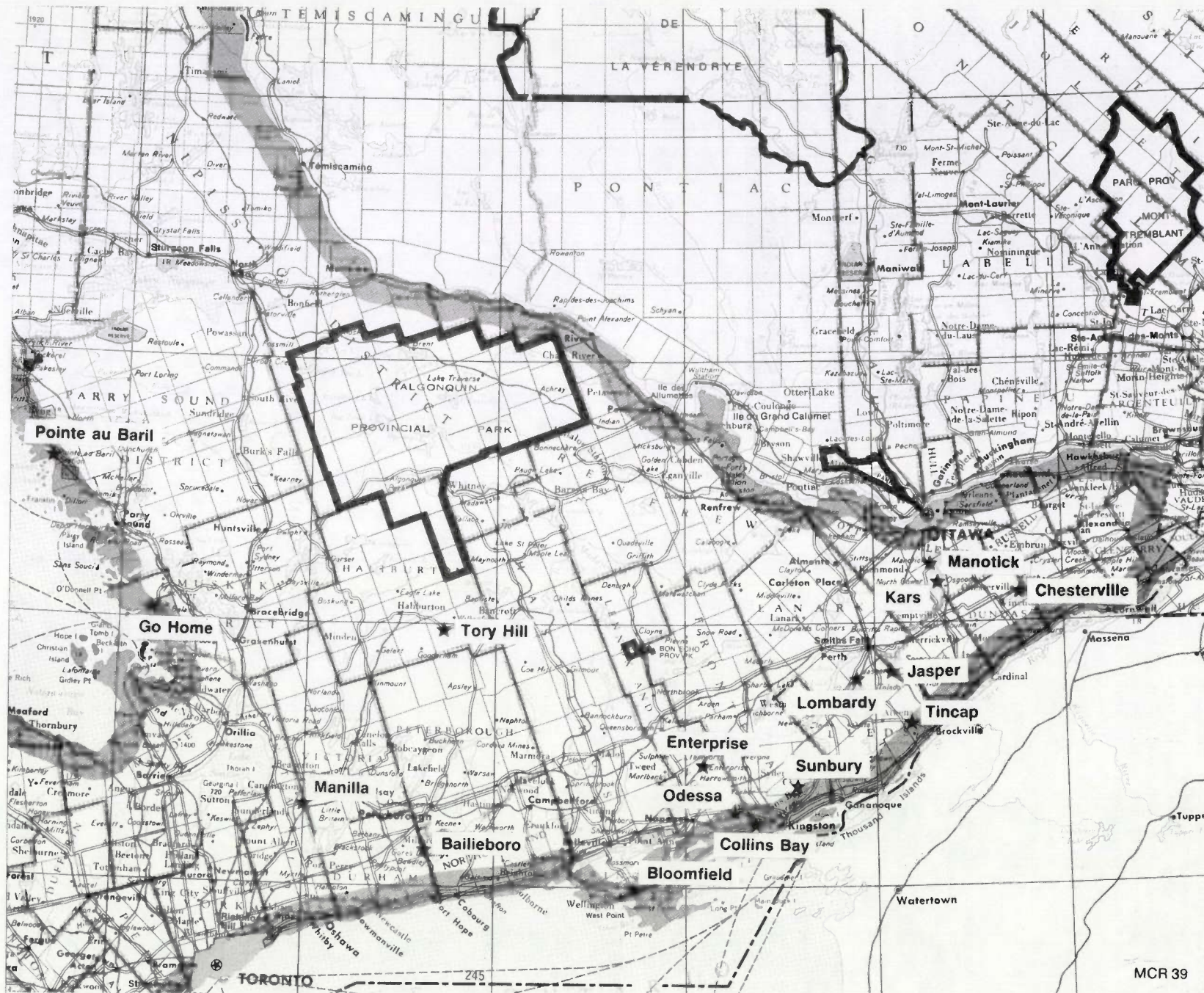


School of Practical Science
Souda Sept. 27, 1906

Dear Sir —

From the above sketch you will notice that there are two outlets to Go Home Lake. As the North outlet was the easier and more direct route out for the Indians when going home they called the river *ka-wa-ne-wah-ning*. Hence the name for the river - bay and afterwards the Lake. After a good deal of trouble Principal Galbraith secured the above from me from some of the older Indians -

Yours sincerely
C.H.C. Wright



Central and Eastern Ontario: showing communities for which details of replies to James White's circulars are discussed

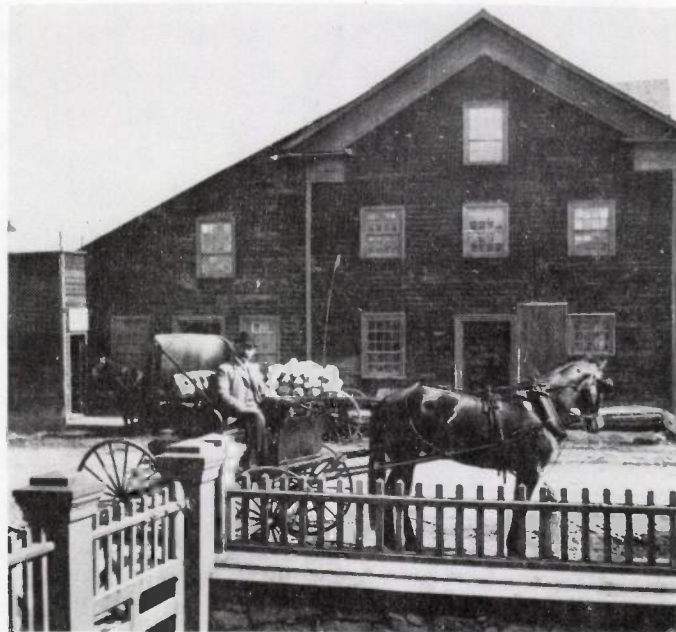
From several postmasters all across Canada, James White received some quite elaborate and lengthy responses to his circulars. The postmaster of Sunbury provided three tightly written pages on the settlement of that community north of Kingston. Campbellford's postmaster sent in over two pages on the origin of that community's name, and Norwood's postmaster gave Mr. White two well-written pages on establishing that community and selecting the name.

With sardonic humour, the postmaster of Enterprise, wrote how the first storekeeper, a Mr. Thompson, imposed his preference for a name on the community:

"He was a temperance advocate and spoke often in public in the community. On one occasion speaking of the sentiment to be raised against the intemperance of the rough lumbering & primitive agricultural population, he autocratically introduced a new name for the village, and in rhyme at that -- 'all other names we will despise and call the village Enterprise'."

There is a higher proportion of names of native origin in Central and Eastern Ontario than in Southwestern Ontario. Ottawa, Muskoka, Oshawa and Gananoque are most prominent, but there are also Cataraqui, Iroquois, Algonquin, Coboconk, Bobcaygeon, Omeme, Magnetawan and Powassan. The postmaster of Manotick noted that M.K. Dickinson named that place, using the Ojibway for "island", as his mill was adjacent to Long Island.

James White received a number of replies from postmasters in Quebec. These circulars will be examined in Volume 11, Number 1 of CANOMA.



Bobcaygeon, c.1904: Mr. W.T.C. Boyd's horse, buggy and grist mill.

(Photo: Public Archives Canada, C21191)