

Histories :

- Sandwich South
- Maidstone Cross



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by David Weedmark

(Article One)

Sandwich South Township To Leave Legacy For Next Century

Celebrating their 1893-1993 Centennial, residents of the Township of Sandwich South have one more day of activities planned for tomorrow to take them one year closer to their township's next hundred years.

The municipality will be burying a time-capsule December 31st to mark the closing of the Centennial activities, which will be followed by a New Years celebration at St. Mary's Hall in Maidstone.

If tomorrow's event is anything like previous events this year, the hall will probably be packed, wall to wall.

"It's been a fantastic year," said Sandwich South Reeve Alan Parr. "I'm just thrilled to death with what our Centennial Committee has done for the people of this municipality. They went out, heart and soul, to show us what our township is really about. They've done a fabulous job. Our council is very proud of our committee and what they've done."

The township kicked off a year of events and celebrations last January, with a re-enactment of the township's first council

meeting, with many descendants of the original councillors playing the roles of their ancestors. Mike Turton, for example played the role of his ancestor, Reeve Abraham Cole.

Awards were also presented that evening to owners of Century Homes. Century Family Farm Awards were presented to families who have held a farm for a century or more. Township citizens of 90 years and older were made Honoured Citizens of the township.

"We really wanted to ensure this celebration was a celebration of people," said Tim Halford, Co-Chairperson of the Centennial Celebrations Committee. "It was our founding farming families who really built this township. And it's the foundation they built that has made Sandwich South what it is today."

*Please mention
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The township's Homecoming Weekend last July was a great success, said Halford. Activities included a picnic, stage shows with everything from Cloggers to rappers, pie eating contests, horseshoes, carriage rides and fireworks. A baseball game was held between the old Maidstone Shamrocks and the Old Castle Titans, both resurrected for the weekend.

Several township families chose to make the weekend even more of a Homecoming by holding family reunions, with family members returning from as far away as Chicago, Minnesota, and the eastern U.S.

An historical display case, containing photos, township documents and other artifacts was displayed in schools, churches and other locations throughout the year. The township also marked the centennial with the release of souvenirs, and a calendar which contains old and new photos from the township.

The committee, of about 25 members, was comprised of residents from all over the municipality, said Halford.

"We really have to thank all those volunteers," he said. "They put in hundreds of hours to make all these activities possible."

The time capsule will be buried December 31st at Noon at the Sandwich South Public Works Department on Highway 3, east of Walker Road at Old Castle Sideroad.

The location is significant, explained Shaun Fuerth of the Centennial Committee, in that it was the sight of the township's old town hall, which had been torn down in 1980. A plaque and rock will mark the location of the capsule, which will contain photographs, township documents, and variety of other items from t-shirts to a telephone book.

All sandwich South Township residents are invited to come out for the event. Refreshments will follow.

The final event will be the New Years Eve Celebration held at St. Mary's Hall in Maidstone.

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(Article Two)

Early Years In Sandwich South Township

The Township of Sandwich South has a rich history that extends far beyond its incorporation as a municipality in 1893.

Before French explorers reached the area we now know as Essex County, this peninsula had originally been the home of the Iroquois Indians, who had been driven out by French explorers in the 1700's. By 1826, the remaining tribes in the county were the Ottawa, Hurons, and Shawnees.

At that time, Sandwich South Township was nearly all forested, and the land was very swampy. In fact, the area near Maidstone, known as Willow Swamp, was so bad, it was said a man could sink full-length into the mud, as well as the horse he was sitting on.

The first road in the township was Talbot Road, construction of which began in 1818. The first stage coach did not pass through Sandwich South until the 1830's.

By that time, settlement was well under way in Sandwich South, primarily by Irish Catholics who had fled famine and religious persecution in their homeland. Many of the families who first settled here continue live in the township today. A few of

those familiar names today are McCarthy, McAuliffe, Halford, McCloskey, Kavanaugh, O'Neil, McKee, and Downing.

The French also continued to flourish in the area, most of whom had settled in the area of Paquette Corners and Roseland. Some of the familiar names that survive to this day include Ouellette, Dufault, Lauzon, and Dumouchelle.

In the early years of settlement, only Indian trails cut through the forest. Travel could be extremely hazardous, and the threat of wolves and bears were very real in those days.

Despite these dangers, however, early settlers still made the weekly trek to the settlement of Sandwich to attend Mass.

Eventually, Jesuit missionaries would begin to visit the settlers in their own log cabins for services and, in 1823, the original St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church was erected. As soon as the necessary funds were collected this log structure was replaced by a brick church in 1848, located at Middle Road (Highway 98) and Talbot Road. This served the settlers until their numbers grew to require a larger building and construction of the present St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church was under way in the summer of 1874.

Construction plans for St. Stephen's Anglican church began in 1871, located on the 5th Concession. This frame structure was replaced by the present St. Stephen's Church, which was completed in 1912, on Howard Avenue.

Another early church was the Bethel United Church, which was erected in 1850 on Highway #2. Also made of logs, it was replaced by a frame building on the 9th Concession in 1865, until it was

closed twelve years ago.

For a colourful, detailed account of the township's history, you may wish to consult Laura L. Langloix's book, The Township of Sandwich South.

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by David Weedmark

(Article Three)

Beginnings of Sandwich South Township

It was one hundred years ago this year, in 1893, that the Township of Sandwich South was incorporated and its first council elected.

The Township of Sandwich South has its beginnings in the old Township of Sandwich, which in 1861, had been divided in two, creating Sandwich East and West. Thirty-two years later, Sandwich East was again divided, creating the new Township of Sandwich South. In 1966, Sandwich East was divided for the last time and divided between Windsor and Sandwich South. However, Sandwich South also lost much of its western land to the city as well

The first Reeve of Sandwich South was Abraham Cole. Cole was the son of an Irish immigrant, Abraham Cole Sr., who had arrived to British North America in 1820 and had settled in the township in 1830.

Abraham Cole Jr. was an auditor and tax collector and had previously served as a county councillor for twelve years. He served as Reeve of Sandwich South until 1906, including a term as County Warden in 1896. He died at the age of 83, in 1928.

The first council meeting was a busy affair. Several delegations approached the council, including Michael McCarthy, who offered his Oldcastle establishment as a temporary meeting place for the newly formed council. Despite the fact that McCarthy's establishment was a hotel and bar, council accepted his generous offer and would meet there for the next three years.

The first township hall was built across the street from McCarthy's hotel on Talbot Road (Highway #3). The land was donated by Mr. and Mrs. Robert Sylvester and the red brick structure was constructed by John Wrotely at the cost of \$640.00.

What residents today call the "old township hall" was not built until 1927. A red brick hall as well, it was constructed by Morand and Rusette. The cost was \$3038.28.

With the anticipation of new fire trucks, the township constructed a municipal garage behind the old township hall in 1964. The following year, new municipal offices were built next to the garage and the old township hall was abandoned. The old hall was later used as a library and antique store. However, in 1980, plans to expand Highway #3 called for the demolition of the old township hall. Although the land was never used for the highway, the historic hall had been lost forever nonetheless.

The present township municipal building, on North Talbot Road, was opened in 1972. It was ~~built next to~~ the Frith Public School (S.S No. 11), which was later torn down.

Before the Essex County School Board obtained jurisdiction for all township schools in 1967, there had been seven such public school houses in the township and three Roman Catholic

schools.

The first school in Sandwich South was a log cabin built in 1862, the Bethel Public School. (Although in that year it was in Sandwich East.) This school burned down in 1919 and was replaced by a brick structure in 1920.

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(Article #4)

Tom Lavin: Rural Memories

Tom Lavin stands in the field his great grandfather had cleared over a century before and points out the barn built by his father eighty years ago. The memories come alive in an instant.

"You have no idea," he says. "There are just so many memories when you walk around here. You open one door in your mind and sixteen more open after that. So many beautiful memories."

In a nation that is still relatively young, and in an age where most people buy a new house every decade, it is quite rare to be able to step out your back door and to be surrounded by a such a heritage. Rare, that is, except in Sandwich South, a township that continues to cherish its rural roots. There are still many like Tom Lavin who live on the land their families have owned for generations.

Lavin's property, on the 11th Concession in Sandwich South Township, was originally cleared and settled by Lavin's great-

grandfather, Patrick Lavin, an Irish immigrant. The house Tom Lavin was born in, although sold, still stands today, as does the barn his father built in 1912.

"My dad built it himself, with the neighbours' help, of course," said Lavin, 79. "He didn't have any money at the time, so he borrowed twenty-five cents and took the street car to Kingsville. And he went to see Mr. Conklin at Conklin Lumber to get credit on the materials so he could build the barn.

"I remember in 1929," said Lavin. "There used to be an airfield back here. We were just kids then, but we'd sneak out of bed at night and hide behind the barn to watch this plane land. Then the cars would drive up to meet it... They were smugglers and they were loading bootleg whiskey into the plane to go into the States."

Lavin's has many such reminders of his family heritage, signposts to days gone by. These include a 1944 Massey Harris tractor, which he bought new. Then there is the sleigh, over a hundred years old, that he used to ride as a child.

"We used to use the sleigh for just about everything you would use a truck or a car for today. We used it to haul logs and to cross the Detroit River in the winter time, and to bring grain to the elevator. We had a team of six horses hitched to it and the brass would all be shined up. It was quite a show, really."

"Just down the road, there was a one room school house. And sometimes we would have a dance there. I remember we would be inside and in the winter, you would listen for the sleigh bells. Everyone's sleigh bells sounded different and you knew who was

coming down the road just from their sound.

"Back in 1929, those were fantastic, prosperous days," he said. "There's never really been a time like it since then. And in the Thirties, times were really tough, of course, with the Great Depression. I remember when someone would buy a new piece of farm equipment, it was really a big deal. You would walk five miles just to see it because nobody bought anything new then.

"Sometimes all the neighbours would get together to cut wood and haul it. It only brought in about thirty-five cents a cord, but it was enough that you could go out that night.

"Things were tough, but we didn't know it."

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by David Weedmark

(Article #5)

Sandwich South Township Today

Today, one hundred years after its incorporation, the Township of Sandwich South stands as a testament to both its rich rural heritage as well as to the staggering changes witnessed in the past century.

The township today, said Reeve Alan Parr, is really three communities in one: residential, industrial, and rural.

"We have a definite distinct difference between those three areas," he said. We've been very fortunate as far as the municipality is concerned to accommodate all three."

With a population of roughly 6200, Sandwich South has a total of approximately 1950 homes. The majority of the residential properties were gained from Sandwich East Township when it was split between the City of Windsor and the Township of Sandwich South in 1966. However, the residential area is certainly not limited to the north end of the township. Approximately 1200 acres of land in Sandwich South have been zoned for residential use, most of which are located in the township's five hamlets: Tecumseh, Maldstone, Old Castle, Baseline, and Howard Avenue.

The Township of Sandwich South also hosts approximately 600 businesses, most of which are light industrial shops. This is an impressive number when you consider that a little over twenty

years ago, that number was practically zero.

With Windsor's annexation of a large chunk of the township's tax base in 1966, the township decided to recover its losses by creating an industrial park, in 1970, in the Old Castle area. Since then, the township's industrial community has grown by leaps and bounds, said Dave Hobbs, the township's Chief Building Official.

"Our industrial base is very good and it's going to get even better," he said. "It is light industrial, the majority being tool and die shops, but it is very diversified."

Indeed, among the companies operating in the township, you will find concrete operations, wood-working shops, electrical shops, warehouses, tool supply companies, window manufacturing, door companies, stair manufacturing, a dry-land marina, a palette manufacturer, a steel treatment plant and several office buildings.

Sandwich South now has 1300 acres zoned for industrial use. The number of people working in the township today exceeds the number of people who live here.

"The one thing we're still looking for is a bank," said Hobbs. "We don't have a bank. There is a very small commercial development. There are no grocery stores, but we do have some variety stores, and several restaurants."

However, the vast majority of township land is still devoted to agriculture, with approximately 24,000 acres zoned as rural properties, including 1900 acres of property surrounding Windsor Airport, which is leased by farmers from the Federal Government.

"We still have the close knit rural community, which started around the Maidstone hamlet a hundred years ago," said Reeve Parr. "Maidstone itself not only had the church, but it had the hall there which was used as the community centre. It's a very close knit group and that's where our sense of community has branched out from. The same families are still here, down three or four generations.

"Windsor hasn't overshadowed Sandwich South as much as it has some other areas because we haven't allowed the strip development that you will find in some of your other close areas. We're the only municipality close to Windsor that isn't all developed."

Parr was quick to point out that this is a policy that was defined by the province and says he is not always certain whether such a policy has been a blessing or a curse.

"You could say I have mixed emotions on that," he said. "It's been a rural community and it hasn't strayed from that. Basically the same families are there that were there fifty years ago. If we had allowed more development, we wouldn't have that... Not that people wouldn't like to have seen the development."

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