



UPCOMING BRANCH MEETINGS

Branch meetings are held monthly Jan. to June and Sept. to Dec. We would love for you to join us in person; however, we recognize it is not always possible to do so. To that end, the Branch hosts their meetings via Zoom as well as in person. Details can be found on page 2.

Note: Unless otherwise noted, most meetings take place at the

Barrie and District Association of Realtors office



676 Veterans Drive, Barrie at 10:30 am
Please come early to browse the book table

SCAN (Simcoe County Ancestor News) is the quarterly publication of the Simcoe County Branch, Ontario Genealogical Society. SCAN is published in Feb., May, Aug., and Nov.

Submissions for publication are encouraged and can be sent to the editor:

simcoenewsletters@ogs.on.ca

Browse our website at: simcoe.ogs.on.ca

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On the Move



Thomas Rouse on his way to the Dungannon Settlement
Nancy Leveque private collection

When I look at this photo of Thomas Rouse on his way to carve out a home in the Dungannon Settlement (now Bancroft, Ontario), it makes me think me about the resilience and the resolve our ancestors had. Their willingness to strike out for new environs and set down roots. While this photo was taken in the late 1890's, earlier settlers showed much the same gumption, always looking for a better place to raise their families and finding their way through the wooded terrain that covered much of Ontario at that time. I find myself wondering how these people were able to navigate their way. In this issue of SCAN we will explore some of the earliest routes through Simcoe County.

Much like these early settlers, the Simcoe County Branch has also chosen to be on the move. We are excited to announce that in 2025, we will host our monthly meetings, not only in Barrie, but also in Bradford in May, Penetanguishene in June and Ramara in October. Our location in Barrie has also changed and you will find more about that on page 3. As always, we look forward to meeting with everyone.

Branch Executive

Chair	Nancy Leveque	simcoechair@ogs.on.ca
Vice Chair	Victor Brace	simcoevice@ogs.on.ca
Treasurer	Alan Fairchild	simcoetreasurer@ogs.on.ca
Recording Secretary	Sharon Bunn	simcoerecordingsecretary@ogs.on.ca
Past Chair	Tamsin Walker	

Coordinators

Book Table	Bill Soule	simcoepublications@ogs.on.ca
Cemeteries	John Wright	simcoecemeteries@ogs.on.ca
Computer Projects	Vacant	vacant
Education	Kathleen Bacher	simcoeeducation@ogs.on.ca
Library	Lynne Gibbon	simcoelibrarian@ogs.on.ca
Mail Secretary	Bill Soule	simcoepublications@ogs.on.ca
Membership	Cathy Armstrong	simcoemembership@ogs.on.ca
Newsletter Editor	Nancy Leveque	simcoenewsletters@ogs.on.ca
Places of Worship	Kathleen Bacher	simcoeplaysofworship@ogs.on.ca
Program	Vacant	simcoeprogram@ogs.on.ca
Publications	Bill Soule	simcoepublications@ogs.on.ca
Publicity	Liz Barrick	simcoepublicity@ogs.on.ca
Social Media/Web	Cathy Armstrong	simcoewebmaster@ogs.on.ca
Welcome Table	Nancy Pryor	simcoewelcometable@ogs.on.ca

Simcoe County Branch, Ontario Ancestors
PO Box 892, Barrie ON, L4M 4Y6
<https://simcoe.ogs.on.ca>

SIMCOE COUNTY BRANCH MEETINGS

We strive to make Branch meetings accessible to all, both in person or online via Zoom. Registration links for online attendance can be found on the Branch website, Facebook page or in OGS eWeekly. Registration is not required for in person attendance and we welcome all.

Sat. April 12th at 10:30 am ET (Hybrid)

Location: Barrie & District Association Realtor office,
676 Veterans Drive, Barrie

Speaker: Mary Harris, Barrie Historical Archives

Topic: Early Barrie History

Attending online: [Register here](#)

Sat. May 10th at 11:00 am ET (Hybrid)

Location: Bradford West Gwillimbury Public Library
425 Holland Street West, Bradford

Speaker & topic to be finalized

Attending online: [Register here](#)

Sat. June 14th at 10:30 am ET (Hybrid)

Location: Penetanguishene Centennial Museum
44 Burke Street, Penetanguishene

Speaker & topic to be finalized

Attending online: [Register here](#)

Missed a meeting? Recordings are available in the Branch Members Only section: <https://simcoe.ogs.on.ca/>

OGS Monthly Webinar

Thursday, April 3, 2025
7:00 pm ET

Solving Your Picture Problems with Allyson Maughan

Pictures tell a brilliant story about our ancestors. But what do we do when pictures have problems! No writing on the back? Too many conflicting names and dates? Unfamiliar faces? Come learn the antidote to these dilemmas and finally use those pictures in your research.

Register here to join in:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZcldeygpzgtHNxpIFqwoyYaBq5yLM9xzdIf#/registration](https://us02web.zoom.us/join/https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZcldeygpzgtHNxpIFqwoyYaBq5yLM9xzdIf#/registration)

Missed a webinar? Log into the OGS website to catch up with past recordings. <https://ogs.on.ca>



We're on the move again



Barrie and District Association of Realtors office
676 Veterans Drive, Barrie Ontario

Simcoe County Branch Executive have deemed the year 2025 as one of change.

Prior to Covid, monthly meetings were held at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on Ferris Lane, where we had been meeting for many years. In 2020, just before the pandemic, Branch Executive felt we should expand our horizon and take our show on the road to ensure everyone could hear our top-notch speakers, have the opportunity to mingle with like-minded people, browse our book table and share stories. With plans to visit Bradford, Orillia and Collingwood that year, we made it to our first stop in Bradford before the world shut down. Since welcoming people back after Covid, in Dec. 2021, our location changed and we met in the Northwest Barrie United Church on Ferndale Drive North, Barrie. With the cost of rent nearly doubling between 2023 and 2024, combined with a serious lack of in person attendance, we stepped back to rethink our strategy. Thus, here we are five years later finding ourselves on the road again. We will continue to meet in Barrie, however, have changed our location where the cost is a little more in line with our budget. That being said, the first three meetings of the year will be held online only as the winter storms bring their onslaught of snow and cold to the County. Come the spring, starting in April 2025, and for the months of September, November and December we will be found at the Barrie and District Association of Realtors office located at 676 Veterans Drive in Barrie. In May we will be at the Bradford West Gwillimbury Public Library. June takes us to the Penetanguishene Centennial Museum and October to Ramara. We look forward to meeting new faces and hearing stories as we travel through the County.

Note that we have also shifted our meetings to the mornings and will begin at 10:30 am. Feel free to come early to chat or browse the book table.

- * Barrie location: Barrie & District Association Realtors facility, 676 Veterans Drive, Barrie
- * Bradford West Gwillimbury Public Library, 425 Holland Street West, Bradford
- * Penetanguishene Centennial Museum, 44 Burke Street, Penetanguishene
- * Ramara Centre, 5482 Highway 12 South, Brechin

Early Travel Routes in Simcoe County

In keeping with our “*on the move*” theme”, I thought it might be interesting to find out about the early routes within and around Simcoe County. My ancestors settled in Innisfil in 1832, before colonization roads were cut through the wilderness. How did they get there and as they were not the earliest settlers to the area, how did those who came before them move about? Let’s explore the options.

As Andrew Hunter has devoted 71 pages in volume 1 of his *A History of Simcoe County*, to the topic of road development in Simcoe County, I do not intend to rewrite it here, but rather would like to reference some of the early routes that would have been important to our ancestors. For those interested in the details, Hunters book can be found online.¹

Hunter says “*the first wagon road in the county was the Nine Mile Portage*”. He goes further to state, and remember, his work was published in 1909, that “*This road, which is now unused and forgotten, was once the most important highway in this northern part of the country. It connected Kempenfeldt Bay with Willow Creek – a branch of the Nottawaga River – and accordingly formed a connecting link of the route from Lake Ontario to Lake Huron ...*”² He cannot identify when the road first opened, but mentions it could date back to the eighteenth century or perhaps earlier and was a portage route used by First Nations people, fur traders and early settlers. He talks of the Gazetteer of 1799 which included a mention of the trail, so it was in existence from at least 1799. He describes the south-eastern terminus of the portage being near the present (in 1909) railway depot in Barrie. The town of course was not yet in existence, the area being a forest wilderness. “*During the War of 1812-15, the portage was widened so that wagons could cross it, to transport supplies on their way to the government posts of the upper lakes. It was about nine miles in length, and hence came to be familiarly known as the Nine Mile Portage.*”³

“*After the termination of the war, the government-built storehouses (in or about the year 1819) one at the southeast end of the portage, the other at Willow Creek. This was done to shelter the supplies transported to the military posts which were still maintained at Penetanguishene, Michilimackinac, and other places on the upper lakes. ... But besides having been used for military purposes, the Nine Mile Portage was the only highway over which traders, settlers, and Indians passed for many years, and was therefore vastly important in the life of the district at that time. ... The portage continued to be the highway over which supplies for the military posts and for the settlers were teamed until the Northern Railway was built to Collingwood in 1855. This was its death blow; it has passed out of existence, and is entirely forgotten by the public except by those grey-haired persons who were residents before it fell into disuse.*”⁴

¹ *A History of Simcoe County*, Andrew F. Hunter, Volume 1, pages 80 to 151, published 1909 by the Historical Committee of Simcoe County, Barrie Ontario, Reproduced (second) printing 1948 by Martha Hunter
Wikimedia commons: [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/c2/Hunter - A History of Simcoe County %281909%29 Vol 1.pdf](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/c2/Hunter_-_A_History_of_Simcoe_County_%281909%29_Vol_1.pdf)

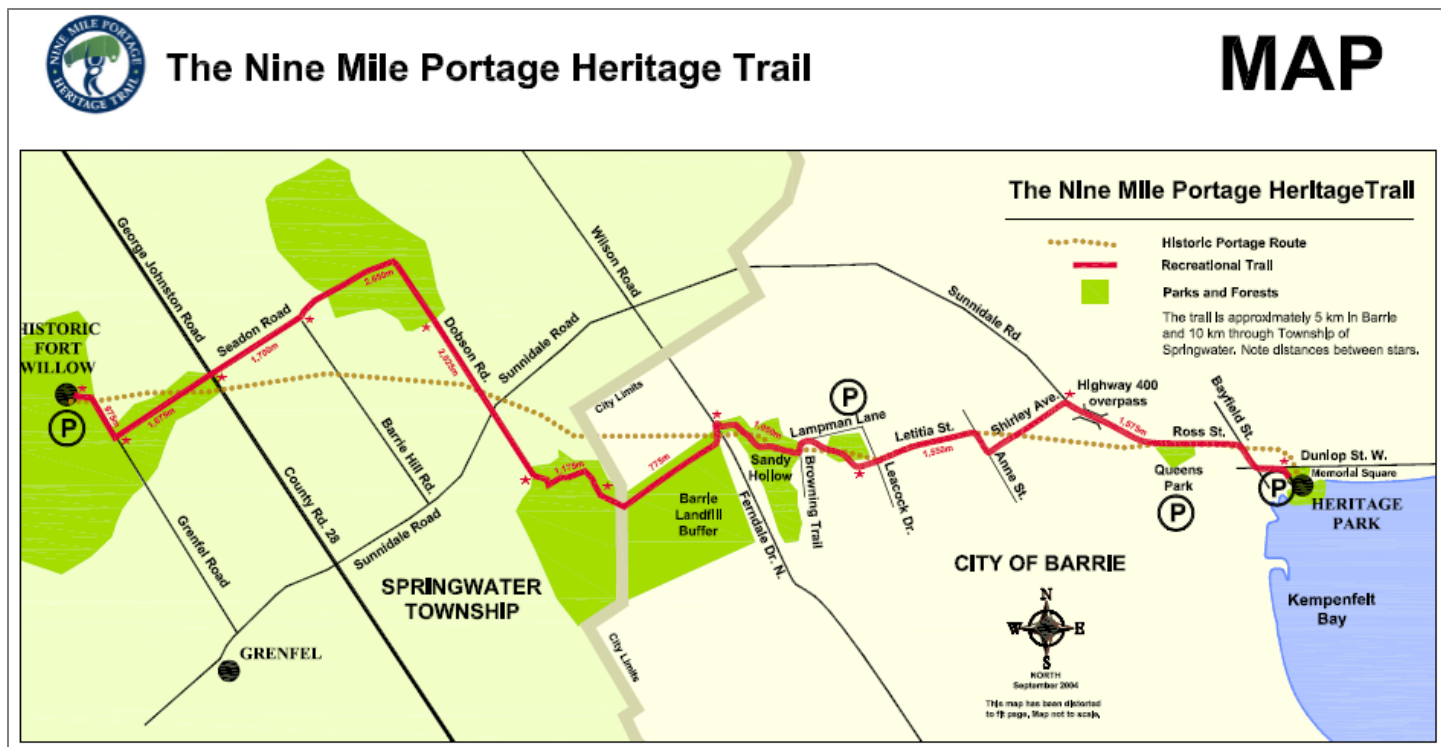
Internet Archive: <https://archive.org/details/historyofsimcoec01huntuoft>

² Ibid, Volume 1 pages 80 & 81

³ Ibid, Volume 1, pages 80 & 81

⁴ Ibid, Volume 1 page 82

I think Andrew Hunter would be pleased to see the renewed interest in the route that has emerged resulting in the development of the Nine Mile Portage Heritage Trail. Many websites devoted to it can be found online including the map below ⁵ which details both the historic portage route and the current public recreation trail which skirts around development and private property.



Wikipedia defines Colonization roads as those “*created during the 1840s and 1850s to open up or provide access to areas in Central and Eastern Ontario for settlement and agricultural development. The colonization roads were used by settlers to lead them toward areas for settlement, much like modern-day highways.*”

It goes further to state that “*The colonization roads of the 1840s and 1850s were preceded by other government-sponsored road programmes going back to the period immediately after the American Revolutionary War.*”⁶

As none of the early Simcoe County roads make it to the Wikipedia list of Colonization Roads, it can be presumed that they fall under the “government-sponsored” category, although Hunter in his work, refers to many as Colonization roads.

Let start by looking at the roads that opened up Simcoe County before 1843 when the District Council came into being.

⁵ City of Barrie, The Nine Mile Portage Heritage Trail <https://www.barrie.ca/media/1338>

⁶ List of Ontario Colonization Roads, Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Ontario_colonization_roads Viewed Feb.3, 2025

The Penetanguishene Road

Governor Simcoe visited the shores of Georgian Bay and discovered Penetanguishene Harbour in 1793. Realizing the harbour was a most suitable place for shipping supplies to Government posts on the lakes, he devised a plan to build a road connecting Lake Ontario with Georgian Bay. The first part of this plan was put into effect fairly quickly as he set the Queens Rangers to open Yonge Street from York (Toronto) to the Holland Landing which was completed in 1796. From this point, the route was by water to the north side of Lake Simcoe. Samuel Wilmont surveyed a route from Kempenfelt to Penetanguishene in 1808, but nothing further was done until a Government reserve, also laid out by Wilmont, was established at Kempenfelt in 1812.

Hunter cites the second edition of Smyth's Gazetteer, published in 1813 which references the proposed opening of the road. Smyth's mentions that *"the tract of land had been purchased from the First Nations and a road was opened allowing the Northwest Company to transport their furs from Lake Huron to York, thereby avoiding the circuitous route of Lake Erie"* ⁷ He also mentions that *"John Galt, in his "Canada's," (p. 168) states that the Northwest Company improved the road."* ⁸

Hunter goes into great detail about the various mentions of the Penetanguishene Road through the very early years, letting us know that *"when the military post at Penetanguishene was removed to the Nottawasaga River in 1815, the road from Kempenfelt was in turn abandoned for the Nine Mile Portage leading to Willow Creek. But when the post was finally taken to Penetanguishene in 1818, it again came into use, and the next year settlers began to locate along it."* ⁹



The Penetanguishene Road shown in red from Kempenfelt Bay to Penetanguishene (Interactive Map - County of Simcoe (GIS) <https://opengis.simcoe.ca> with enhancement in red)

Today, the King's Highway 93, a collector highway, connects the Midland area to Highway 400 in Simcoe County. Currently, Highway 93 begins at the Highway 400 Interchange near Craighurst north of Barrie and continues northerly to the Highway 12 Junction in Midland. Highway 93 closely follows the historical route of the Old Penetanguishene Road.

⁷ A History of Simcoe County, Andrew F. Hunter, published 1909 by the Historical Committee of Simcoe County, Barrie Ontario, Reproduced (second) printing 1948 by Martha Hunter, volume 1 page 84

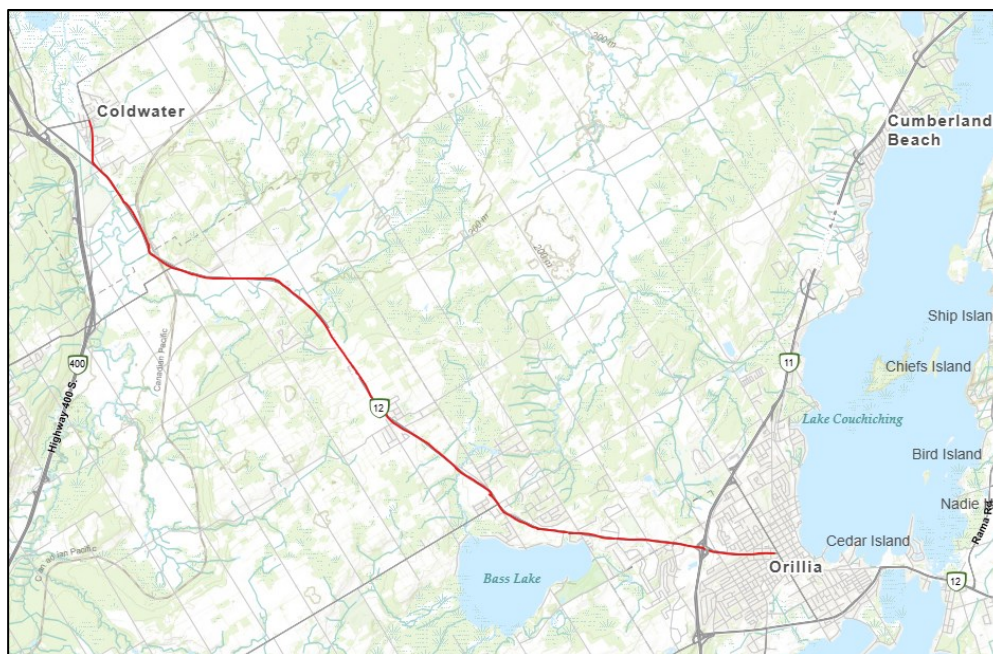
⁸ Ibid, page 84

⁹ Ibid, page 85

The Coldwater Road

The Coldwater Road is said to be hundreds of years old. Initially an Indian portage route from the Narrows on Lake Couchiching to the Coldwater River which flows into Matchedash Bay. Hunter records the length of the route was 14 miles.

The original trail was cleared in the early 1830's, spear-headed by Sir John Colborne, but for the most part, built by the First Nations people of the Chippewa Tri-Council.



The Coldwater Road shown in red from Lake Couchiching to the Coldwater River, Matchedash Bay (Interactive Map - County of Simcoe (GIS) <https://opengis.simcoe.ca> with enhancement in red)

Hunter goes further to say that the *“introduction of a steamer on Lake Simcoe soon after the Coldwater trail had been converted into a wagon road greatly added to its utility as a line of travel to the north.”*¹⁰

Today Highway 12 follows most of the original route with a small section labelled 12B that follows the original route into Coldwater. A monument to the Coldwater Road, on Highway 12 west of Orillia, between Price's Corners and Warminster reads:



“This highway follows much the same route as the ancient Indian portage from the Narrows (Orillia) to Coldwater, the major east-west trail between Lake Simcoe and Georgian Bay. Prehistoric Indians, fishing at the Narrows as long as 4,000 years ago, may have come this way.

Over this trail in 1615 Champlain travelled with the Hurons to winter at Cahiagua (near Warminster). Hurons and Ojibways, French and British used it as a fur-trading route. Later it served pioneer traffic to mills, stores and steamboat landings. The modern road was cleared in 1830 under Indian Agent T.C. Anderson, for the Coldwater and Narrows Indian Reserve situated here 1830-38.”¹¹

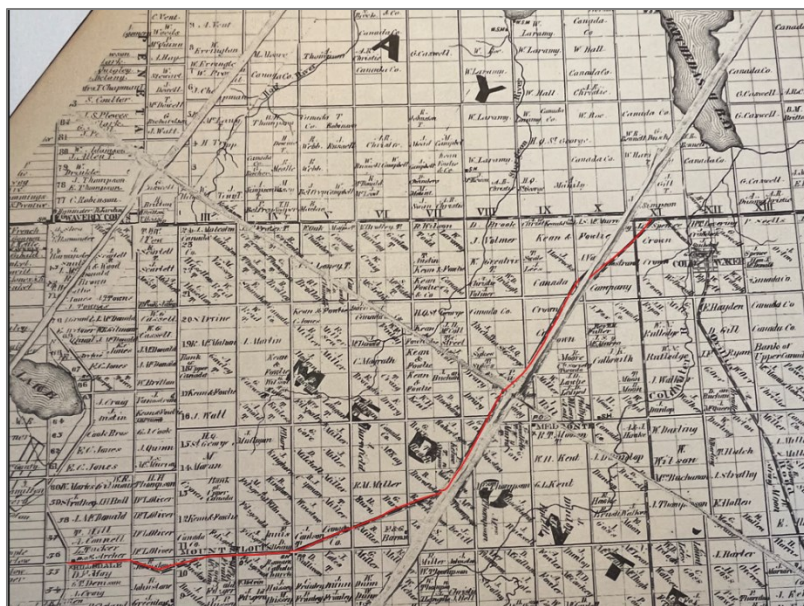
¹⁰ A History of Simcoe County, Andrew F. Hunter, published 1909 by the Historical Committee of Simcoe County, Barrie Ontario, Reproduced (second) printing 1948 by Martha Hunter, volume 1 page 88

¹¹ Orillia Matters, Neglected forgotten monument misses the mark <https://www.orilliamatters.com/local-news/neglected-forgotten-monument-misses-the-mark-elder-video-2525582> Posted June 29, 2020 Viewed Feb. 24, 2025

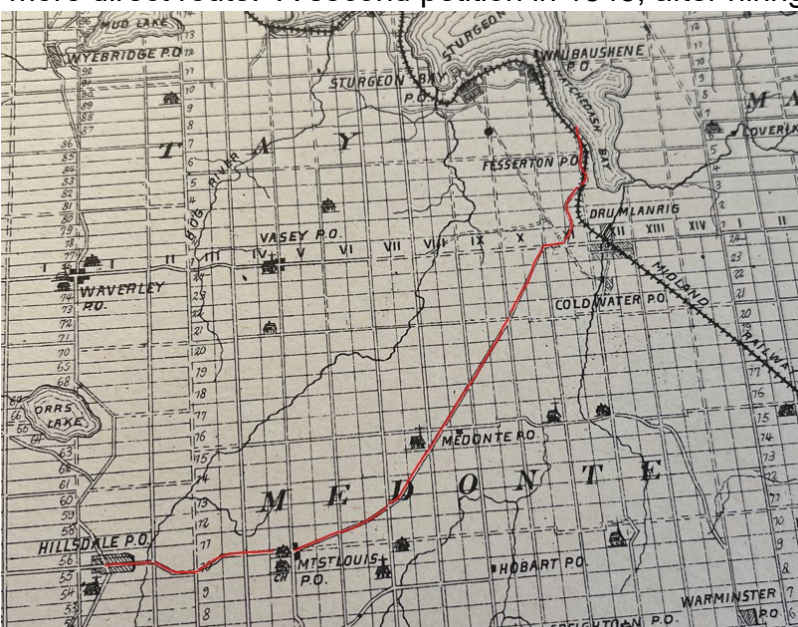
The Gloucester Road

According to Hunter, the Gloucester Road ran from the Penetanguishene Road at Hillsdale to Gloucester Bay, which was the old name for part of Matchedash Bay. In the map that accompanies Hunters chapter on the early roads, Gloucester Road starts at the Penetanguishene Road where it intersects at Hillsdale, however, ends where it met the Coldwater Road. The settlers of the time greatly complained of the track which they claimed it was a *“illegal serpentine and indirect route, and abounded in hills, swamps and rocks, tottering bridges and rotten crossways”*¹²

In 1844, 114 settlers petitioned the newly created District Council to order a new survey of the road. They wanted a safer, more direct route. A second petition in 1845, after hiring their own surveyor (Alex Dunlop) to



Snip of the 1871 Hogg Map showing the Gloucester Road in red



Snip of the 1880 County Atlas Map showing the Gloucester Road in red

determine the practicality of a new route, was successful and Council granted their petition. A report by Thomas Craig, Road Surveyor, in the Council minutes¹³ outlines the proposed road as surveyed by Alex Dunlop.

The 1871 Hogg map, of the new route, shows the road starting at Hillsdale and extending to the Medonte-Tay line.

By the time the 1880 map was drawn for the County Atlas¹⁴, the road had been extended to Matchedash Bay.

Hunter noted in his time, the road was closed except for about 2 miles between Mount St. Louis and the Township Hall.

¹² A History of Simcoe County, Andrew F. Hunter, published 1909 by the Historical Committee of Simcoe County, Barrie Ontario, Reproduced (second) printing 1948 by Martha Hunter, volume 1 page 92

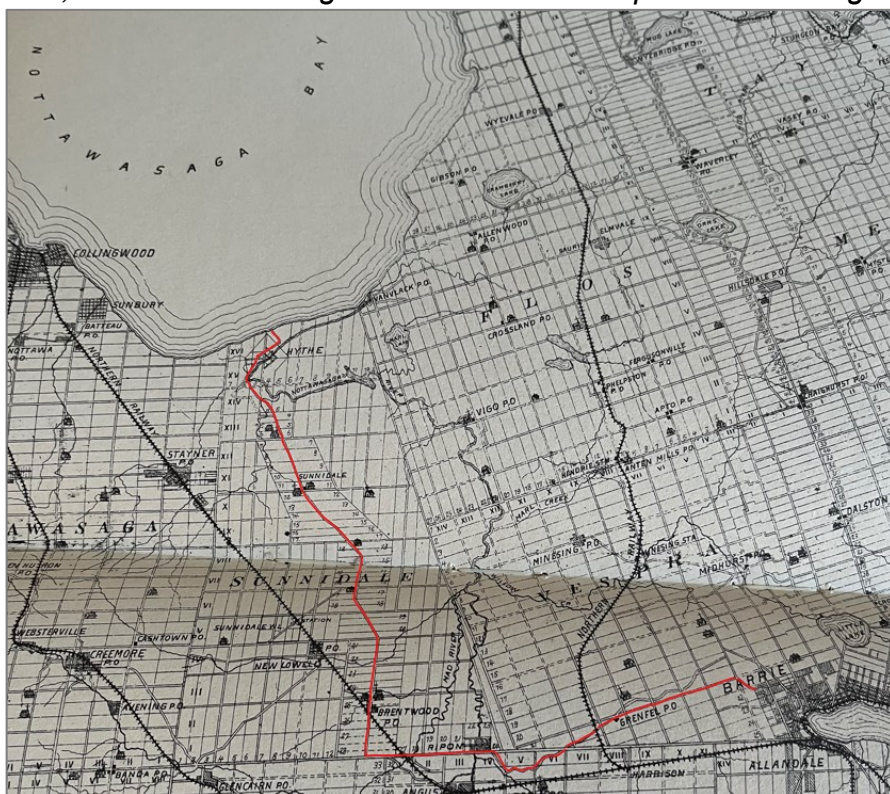
¹³ Simcoe County Council minutes (1843-1999) can be found at the Simcoe County Archives, Record ID #2900, forms part of the Simcoe County Clerk's Office fonds

¹⁴ Historical Atlas of Simcoe County, Ontario, 1881, Reprint Edition, 1975, Ross Cummings, Port Elgin, Ontario

The Sunnidale Road

Hunter tells us that the “*first Sunnidale Road was surveyed by Charles Rankin from the Head of Kempenfeldt Bay to the Nottawasaga River, and thence through Sunnidale Township to Nottawasaga Bay in 1833 by Wm. Hawkins.*” He goes further to mention that this road will “*afford a line of communication from Lake Simcoe to Lake Huron where a favorable site is also to be selected for the establishment of a town*” and that “*like all the other pioneer roads, it was a mere wagon track through the forest; for two miles from the head of Kempenfeldt Bay it followed the Nine Mile portage, and then pursued a more southerly direction of its own to the Nottawasaga River near Angus*”¹⁵

George Sneath, in his Notes on the Township of Sunnidale article ¹⁶, written in 1897, gives a first-hand account of his walk along the Sunnidale Road to Sunnidale Corners fifty years earlier. He mentions the various places he stopped along the way, the people he met, the dense forests, the swampy marsh areas, the fear of wolves and bear, and the swarms of hungry mosquitos.



Snip of the 1880 County Atlas Map showing the Sunnidale Road in red

The towns at each end of the Sunnidale Road were Barrie, located on Kempenfeldt Bay and Hythe laid out near the mouth of the Nottawasaga River. The book *Sunnidale Looks at Yesterday* ¹⁷ mentions Hythe “*was surveyed and plotted before the War of 1812, it was to be on the narrow tongue of land between the bay and river, opposite the Fort*”. It further states that it was “*laid out by the government and buildings erected for a military station. A company of the 30th infantry occupied the station for some time. When the barracks at Penetanguishene were ready for occupation [Editors note: in 1818], that station was abandoned.*” ¹⁸. Hunter mentions that plans for the town of Hythe were prepared and registered in 1833, but no settlement ever took place there. It seems that when the lines for the Northern Railroad were run in 1836, it was expected that Hythe would be the termination point, but owing to the shallowness of the Nottawasaga River, the line turned to Collingwood instead.

¹⁵ A History of Simcoe County, Andrew F. Hunter, published 1909 by the Historical Committee of Simcoe County, Barrie Ontario, Reproduced (second) printing 1948 by Martha Hunter, volume 1 page 92

¹⁶ George Sneath, A Few Notes on the Township of Sunnidale as I found it fifty years ago, and my journey to it; 1897; Simcoe County Pioneer Papers, originally published in 1908, Simcoe County Historical Association, 1995 reprint, page 12

¹⁷ Sunnidale looks at Yesteryear, A History of Sunnidale Township, 1984

¹⁸ Ibid, page 7

The Ridge Road

Hunter states that initially the Ridge Road through Oro Township ran from the head of Kempenfeldt Bay as far as Shanty Bay and was one of the first in the district to be opened for vehicles. It was in use some time before 1833 and afforded a means of travel to the Penetanguishene Road for the settlers along the lake shore in Oro.

Further extensions to the road were made through the years until it became the main highway from Barrie to Orillia under the District Council.

Indeed the 1871 Hogg map shows the Ridge Road starting at Kempenfeldt Bay and travelling along the lake shore through Shanty Bay to Orillia and a little beyond. The road was surveyed by Henry Creswicke, Sr. and opened as a public road along the lake ridge in 1848 eastward from Shanty Bay, the westerly part having been opened before.

Today Shanty Bay Road out of Barrie becomes the Ridge Road West which proceeds along the lakeshore as far as Hawkestone where it intersects with Line 11 South and joins Highway 11.

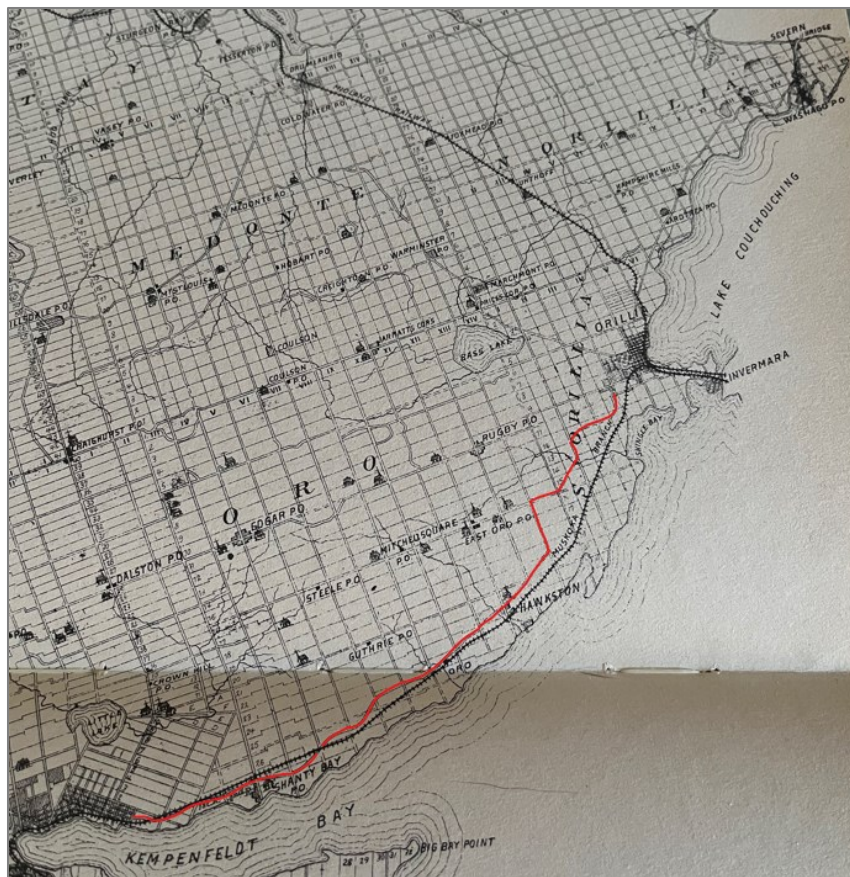
Upper and Middle Crossroads

In the early days, the Ridge Road was also known as the Lower Crossroad.

Two other roads, the Middle Crossroad and the Upper Crossroad, were also forged through Oro and South Orillia Townships.

The Middle Crossroad, also known as the Centre Road, was surveyed late in 1842 or early 1843 and closely followed along, or near to, the road allowance between lots 15 and 16. In 1844 the road was continued to Orillia. The survey began from Lot 15 Con 1, Oro where it connected with the Middle Crossroad of Oro and continued to Lot 10 Con. 3 of South Orillia.

In 1844 settlers petitioned the District Council to employ a surveyor to lay out a crossroad between lots 10 and 11 in Oro Township. This new road, the Upper Crossroad, was opened from the Penetanguishene Road at White's Corners (Dalston). In 1845, it was extended across part of South Orillia to join the Coldwater Road. It then became known as the Orillia Road and was the main stage road of the Barrie/Orillia route before the railroad. Later in 1845, a by-law was passed by the District Council to establish a road across the first three and a half concessions of South Orillia at Lot 10. Two years later, a deviation to the route through Oro between lots 10 and 11, concessions 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 was made due to the numerous hills on the road allowance.



Snip of the 1880 County Atlas Map showing the Ridge Road in red



The Colonization Roads of the County, 1849-50.

(At the time of the change from the " District" to " County.")

Map on page 11 - A History of Simcoe County, Andrew F. Hunter Volume 1 pages 112 & 113 illustrates the original "Colonization Roads of the County, 1849-1850".

Further reading and links:

A History of Simcoe County, Andrew Hunter, vol. 1 pages 112 & 113

Wikimedia Commons:

[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/c2/Hunter -](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/c2/Hunter_-_A_History_of_Simcoe_County_%281909%29_Vol_1.pdf)

[_A History of Simcoe County %281909%29 Vol 1.pdf](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/c2/Hunter_-_A_History_of_Simcoe_County_%281909%29_Vol_1.pdf)

Simcoe County Archives

<https://simcoe.ca/explore/simcoe-county-archives/>

Penetanguishene Road

Simcoe County Historical

<https://www.simcoecountyhistory.ca/order-in-council-begins-settlement-of-the-penetanguishene-road-april-1819/>

Pipe Smoke of the past.com

<https://www.pipesmokeofthepast.com/post/penetang-why-are-we-all-skewed-up>

Highway 93 The Kings Highway

<https://www.thekingshighway.ca/Highway93.htm>

The Coldwater Road

Orillia Matters - Neglected, forgotten monument misses the mark: Elder (VIDEO)

<https://www.orilliamatters.com/local-news/neglected-forgotten-monument-misses-the-mark-elder-video-2525582>

Highway 12B The Kings Highway

https://www.thekingshighway.ca/PHOTOS/Hwy12B_coldwaterphotos.htm

Simcoe County Pioneer Papers

<https://www.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.73866/1>

Simcoe County GIS Map

<https://opengis.simcoe.ca/>

McGill Digital County Atlas Project – Simcoe County

<https://digital.library.mcgill.ca/countyatlas/searchmapframes.php>