

St. Thomas

ST. THOMAS,
....CANADA....

A Souvenir of the "Railroad City."



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ST. THOMAS,



HISTORICAL AND
DESCRIPTIVE.



T. THOMAS is one of the oldest in date of settlement, most picturesque in situation, and, withal, most modern and progressive in her present appearance and life, of the cities and towns of Ontario -- paradoxical as the statement may at first sight appear. Colonel the Honorable Thomas Talbot cut the first tree felled by a white settler in the vast region known as the Talbot settlement, on the 21st of May, 1803, at Port Talbot, some twelve miles west of St. Thomas. In 1810 the two earliest settlers of St. Thomas (Daniel Rapelje and David Mandeville) erected houses on either side of the boundary line between the townships of Southwold and Yarmouth, which crosses Talbot Street at the crest of the hill in the west end of the city—and the history of the village, town and present city began.

Among its early vicissitudes was its occupation during the War of 1812-13 by the American General McArthur, with a force of more than a thousand men, who bivouacked on the Rapelje property, and devastated the crops and levied upon the live stock of the settlers.

Daniel Rapelje, in 1821, gave the land where the picturesque churchyard and church, erected prior to the year 1825, are still to be seen. This is the oldest church edifice between the Grand and Detroit Rivers.

Mrs. Jameson, the well-known authoress, in her "Sketches in Canada," gave the following description of the town as it appeared in 1837: "St. Thomas is situated on a high eminence to which the ascent is rather abrupt. The view from it, over a fertile, well-settled country, is very beautiful and cheering. The place bears the christian name of Colonel Talbot, who styles it his capital, and, from a combination of advantages, it is rising fast into importance. The climate, from its high position, is delicious and healthful; and the winters in this part of the Province are milder by several degrees than elsewhere. At the foot of the cliff, or eminence, runs a deep, rapid stream, called Kettle Creek (I wish they had given it a prettier name), which, after a course of eight miles, and turning a variety of saw-mills and grist-mills, etc., flows into Lake Erie at Port Stanley, one of the best harbors on this side of the lake. Here steamboats and schooners land their passengers and merchandise, or load with grain, flour and lumber. The roads are good all round, and the Talbot road, carried directly through the town, is the finest in the Province. . . . The population of St. Thomas is at present rated at seven hundred, and it has doubled within two years. There are three churches, one of which is very neat, and three taverns. Two newspapers are published, one violently Tory, the other violently Radical. I found several houses building, and, in those I entered, a general air of cheerfulness and well-being very pleasing to contemplate. . . . I was very much struck with this beautiful and cheerful little town—more, I think, than any place I have yet seen."

St. Thomas is now known as the "Railway City," but there are citizens who still recall the time when the four-horse stage coach, heralded by a blast from the coachman's horn, dashed up to the "Mansion House," on its way from Port Stanley or London—the event of the day. A larger number remember the opening of

the first railway—the London and Port Stanley Line—and the devastation which it brought, or was charged with bringing, to the business of the thriving little town—how the taxes increased and the population decreased. Though

“The never failing brook, the busy mill,
The decent church that topt the neighboring hill,”

still remained, rows of empty shuttered shops and grassy streets attested the weight of the blow which the former prosperity of the town had received. Not until the seventies, when the rival through lines of railway—Canada Southern and Canada Air Line—came, did St. Thomas revive. Then, indeed, prosperity returned with a joyous rush. The population, a scant two thousand, was quadrupled within a decade, and has since increased to some twelve thousand. Vast railway workshops and station buildings arose, the redundant population had to be housed, and the saw, the hammer and the trowel resounded on every hand, the town spread over vacant commons and fields to the east, mills, factories, schools, colleges, churches and opera houses sprang up, until the St. Thomas of the present day appeared in all its attractiveness.

St. Thomas first became incorporated in 1852, and the old Town Hall, built the previous year by the township of Yarmouth, has done duty as Town and City Hall ever since, though now to be superseded by the handsome new municipal building erected this year. By Act of Parliament passed in 1851, the County of Elgin was created from part of the County of Middlesex, and in 1853 the first Court House was erected on a beautiful site given by Benjamin Drake. Last year this fine edifice was so damaged by fire as to necessitate its being practically rebuilt, with necessary additions, the handsome cut-stone front being, however, retained as a central feature.

Some idea of the importance of St. Thomas as a railway centre may be derived from the fact that five independent railway companies (the Michigan Central, Grand Trunk, Wabash, Canadian Pacific, and Lake

Erie and Detroit) bring some forty regular passenger trains daily into the city, and send as many out. The quantity of freight handled by these roads is enormous, while excursion business is also large. Many hundreds of men are employed in the locomotive and car shops and about the railway yards as well, and these, with the train hands, form a large portion of the city's population. Large flouring mills and manufactories of car wheels and woodenware of various kinds are among the chief industries, outside the railway works. The Collegiate Institute and Public and Separate Schools are excellent, their buildings handsome and well equipped. One of the largest ladies' colleges in the Dominion Alma College draws young ladies from all parts of the continent for intellectual and art training. A Theological College of the Disciples' Church, a Business College and an Art School also carry on successful educational work. A dozen or more churches of various denominations minister to the spiritual wants of the people. The Amasa Wood Hospital and the Thomas Williams Home are institutions for the sick and indigent respectively. An excellent electric railway system provides means of quick transport throughout the somewhat scattered city, while the beautiful Park of about one hundred acres in extent, recently opened by the Electric Railway Company, affords ample means of recreation in summer, as do two handsome Opera Houses in winter for the amusement-loving citizens. Good filtered water is supplied to the people by the City Waterworks, and two bright daily papers furnish them the news.

The chief charms of St. Thomas lie in the beautiful views of valleys and hills which surround it on every side save one, where an expanse of fertile rolling garden and farm land is no less restful to the eye, and the neatly boulevarded, well paved and macadamized streets shaded by noble trees. Driving, riding, wheeling, trolleying and walking in and about St. Thomas afford the keenest enjoyment alike to citizen and visitor.

Such was St. Thomas in the past --such the city of to-day ; its future tinged with brightness.

C. O. ERMATINGER.



BIRD'S EYE VIEW LOOKING SOUTH FROM FIRE HALL.



MUNICIPAL BUILDING.



COURT HOUSE.



OLD COURT HOUSE.



OLD CITY HALL.



FORT TALBOT—SHOWING OLD HOMESTEAD OF COL. TALBOT.



FIRST METHODIST CHURCH.



TRINITY CHURCH (ANGLICAN).



KNOX CHURCH (PRESBYTERIAN).



CENTRAL METHODIST CHURCH.



CENTRE STREET BAPTIST CHURCH.



CHURCH OF CHRIST.



GRACE METHODIST CHURCH.



ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH AND SCHOOL.



OFFICES OF "THE JOURNAL."



OFFICES OF "THE TIMES."



COLLEGIATE INSTITUTE.



HIGH SCHOOL CADETS.



ALMA LADIES' COLLEGE.



BALACLAVA STREET PUBLIC SCHOOL.



WELLINGTON STREET PUBLIC SCHOOL.



SCOTT STREET PUBLIC SCHOOL.



AMATEUR BASEBALL.



MYRTLE STREET PUBLIC SCHOOL.



MANITOBA STREET PUBLIC SCHOOL.



MICHIGAN CENTRAL R. R. DEPOT



MICHIGAN CENTRAL FLYER ENTERING ST. THOMAS.



BRIDGE ON WABASH R. R. NEAR ST. THOMAS.



IMPERIAL BANK.



THE MOLSONS BANK.



MERCHANTS BANK OF CANADA.



UNITED STATES CONSULATE.



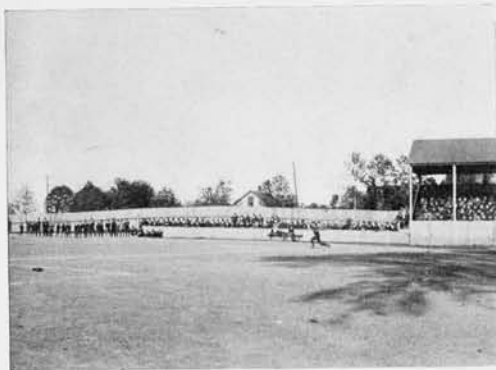
INTERIOR VIEW GRAND OPERA HOUSE.



OFFICES OF ATLAS LOAN AND SAVINGS CO.



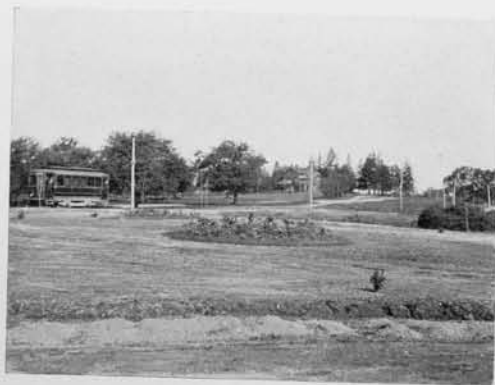
ENTRANCE GRAND OPERA HOUSE.



BASEBALL GROUNDS.



VIEW PINAFORE PARK.



VIEW PINAFORE PARK.



INTERIOR VIEW MASONIC LODGE ROOM.



INTERIOR VIEW ORDER RAILROAD CONDUCTORS LODGE ROOM.

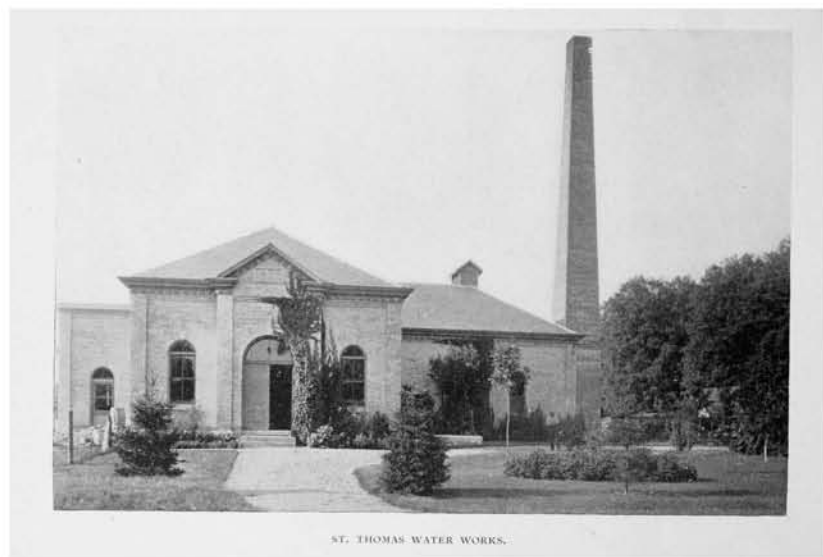


INTERIOR VIEW OF LODGE ROOM (L. O. O. F.) AND K. OF P.



INTERIOR VIEW LODGE ROOM A. O. U. W.





ST. THOMAS WATER WORKS.



WATER WORKS—PUMPING STATION AND RESERVOIR.



IN PISAFORÉ PARK—PAVILION AND BOAT HOUSE.



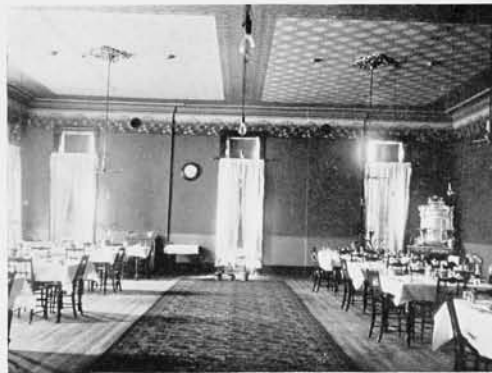
RESIDENCE OF COL. JOHN STACEY.



RESIDENCE OF MR. R. McLACHLIN.



MAIN ENTRANCE AND CORRIDOR GRAND CENTRAL HOTEL.



DINING ROOM GRAND CENTRAL HOTEL.



MAIN ENTRANCE PINAFORE LAKE PARKS.



AMASA WOOD HOSPITAL.



INTERIOR FIRST METHODIST CHURCH.



ON KETTLE CREEK.



BOWLING CLUB.



VIEW ON KETTLE CREEK—SPORN'S FLATS.



VIEW ON KETTLE CREEK.



LYNHURST, NEAR ST. THOMAS.



ENTRANCE TO OLD ENGLISH CHURCH (1823).



GENERAL POST OFFICE.



RESIDENCE OF J. B. MORTFORD.



"BELLAVISTA," RESIDENCE OF C. O. ERMATINGER.



"OAKTON," ERMATINGER HOMESTEAD.



RESIDENCE OF MR. JOHN BAIRD.



RESIDENCE OF MR. E. S. MILLER.



FIRE HALL AND BRIGADE.



FRASER HOUSE—PORT STANLEY.



LAKE ERIE NAVIGATION COMPANY'S STEAMER "URANIA," PLYING BETWEEN CLEVELAND AND PORT STANLEY.



HILL CREST HOTEL.



IN THE SURF—PORT STANLEY.