The Maintenance of Suburban Autonomy:
The Story of the Village of Petersville-London West, Ontario
1874-1897

by

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Abstract

While the investigation of nineteenth-century suburbs is a relatively new field in North American social history, the study is particularly neglected in the context of Ontario. Frequently historians and antiquarians have deduced that suburban communities opted to be annexed by cities in order to tap into the infrastructure and services offered in the urban setting- services that were out of reach to the smaller municipal corporations themselves. However, such studies have frequently emphasised the influence of financial and service-based inducements at the expense of the social aspects of community development in these outlying municipalities.

The London, Ontario suburb of London West (1874 to 1897) provides an example of a community that strove to maintain its municipal autonomy. Composed of independent wage earners, artisans and small business owners, London West cultivated a separate sense of identity from that of the neighbouring city. While a devastating flood in 1883 devaluated property and greatly soured relations between the village and London, it buttressed community unity in London West. The flood similarly caused the villagers to insist upon the maintenance of certain controls in order to assure the security of their property and families in their negotiations with the city for annexation. After several protracted periods of discussions, the village tenaciously held out against the city until 1897, when conditions were such that ratepayers had little alternative but accept less than satisfactory conditions as meted out by London. While the ultimate decision to join the city in 1897 was based more upon the village's dismal financial situation, London West's protracted resistance to municipal consolidation indicates that nineteenth-century suburbs in Ontario were complex communities in their own right and not simply undifferentiated adjuncts that craved amalgamation with their urban neighbours.

Acknowledgements

This study is largely an outgrowth in my early fascination with local history and the components of community building. More specifically, in the case of London West or Petersville, my interest was sparked by an apparent absence of a comprehensive historical study devoted to the village and its development while engaged in researching the lives of two of its early inhabitants, Edward and Emma Houghton. In a period of provincially-sponsored consolidation when incorporated communities of a century and more in longevity are slated to be amalgamated with their neighbours, the issue of community and municipal independence seem all the more relevant.

Firstly I would like to extend my sincere thanks to my advisor, Professor Roger Hall, who has been a fount of both help and inspiration. His careful reading of the various chapters was invaluable and essential to the completion of this work. I especially wish to thank him for allowing me the opportunity to explore the development of London West, despite his earlier misgivings. Thanks also to Professor Jan Trimble, Professor Bob Wightman, and Professor George Emery for expressing an interest in my subject and providing me with source material. Thank-you also to my colleagues with whom I shared an office, Andrew Thompson and Chris Badenoch, who while in pursuit of loftier truths stopped to give me suggestions and of course much needed encouragement, which hopefully I was able to reciprocate. Thanks is also due to Greg Gillespie and Paul Santolin for their suggestions with regard to this paper. A word of thanks must also be extended to the office staff in the History Department who kindly tolerated and answered my many anxious questions throughout the year. Thank-you also to Jean Dunham of Komoka, Ontario, and Catherine Andrewes of London for sharing with me their thoughts and memories of London West as they knew it. John Lutman and Theresa Regnier of J.J.

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Dedicated to my brothers and sisters,

Jeffery A. Stott, Bradley C. Stott, Janine E. Stott and Paula L. Stott

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Introduction

Lying at the confluence of the North and South Branches of the Thames River, and bisected by three major city motorways -Wharncliffe Road, Dundas Street and Oxford Street- the old village of London West or Petersville* is daily traversed by hundreds of commuters on their way to and from jobs scattered across the city of London, Ontario. The name of London West hardly remains relevant, for the western edge of the city has long extended far beyond the old village boundaries, leaving the community decidedly within the centre of one of southwestern Ontario's leading metropolises. Small vestiges of the old suburb (known sarcastically in some London circles as 'The Frog Pond')[1] remain, if carefully searched out. Perhaps the best view of the old community can be made by travelling north along Ridout Street and descending the hill to the old iron Blackfriar's Bridge, which leads onto what was once the village's main thoroughfare and business district. Careful observation reveals the quiet character of a community within the bounds of a larger and busier city. Its telltale cottages that huddle close to the narrow streets speak of a community of small business persons, artisans, professionals and the general absence of grandiose homes all indicate that London West was home then, as now, to a largely middling strata of society.

In the majority of studies of London and its development, London West and its

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* In a study of this nature there can develop confusion over the nomenclature of the village. The subdivisions of Petersville and Kensington were laid out in 1854 and 1872 respectively. These two communities were united in the incorporated village of Petersville in 1874. The name of the corporation was changed to London West in 1881. The names of Kensington and Petersville were retained, however, and used on occasion to refer to the two main neighbourhoods within the village as late as 1897 when the it was amalgamated with London.

protracted resistance toward amalgamation** to the city has been either ignored or relegated to the status of a mere footnote in the area's evolution. Those general histories that make mention of the village at all, generally devote but a few choice sentences to sum up the experience of this western community. In the historical literature on western urbanization the suburb in the nineteenth century has been ignored or downgraded to the extent that "[t]he suburb . . . is seen as a social mutation . . . [like] a parasitic growth on the urban body politic."[2] The frosty abhorrence that apparently surrounded the study of the development of suburbs in North America, gradually began to thaw with increased interest being expressed in discovering the origins of these often maligned or ignored social structures appended to cities in Canada, the United States and other western countries.

There has been much misunderstanding of the nature of nineteenth century suburbs. Conventional wisdom, at best, has indicated that suburbs during this time period were little more than extensions of the larger communities that anchored them on the landscape without any succinct clarification or definition. Studies recently have come to define the suburb as being "a settlement on the periphery of an urban area that is politically independent and distinct from the city."[3] While it is true that the suburbs were primarily an outgrowth of the larger centre which they serviced, in such neighbourhoods there was usually an emphasis upon community building through an "attempt to compromise the imperatives of the industrial revolution, [and] to re-create the pastoral

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** Two terms were used to describe the joining of two municipal governments throughout the period of this study (1874 to 1897) annexation and amalgamation. While the latter term seems to indicate that there was a form of agreement in the municipal consolidation process, and the former seems to infer that one municipal government acted unilaterally, against the wishes of the other, throughout the period the two terms seem to have been used interchangeably, to refer to a negotiated consolidation. Therefore that use has been retained in this study.

rapport between man and nature . . ."[4] The fact that many of these nineteenth century suburbs were communities, with at least a pretense toward distinctiveness, indicates that the retention of the political independence was not based upon the wholly pragmatic matters of finance and the ability to provide services. As with London West's eastern counterpart, the industrial suburb of London East, it has been said that "[m]unicipal independence theoretically allowed the community to establish autonomy and ensure prosperity . . ."[5]

Certainly in the post-World War II period the explosion of the suburban way of life significantly altered urban landscape of North America and created new social centres where the youth of new generations were being nurtured. The result was that many historians began to look back into the past to find the antecedents and precursors of what, at face value, seemed to be a new cultural and social phenomenon.[6] As Kenneth Jackson discovered, suburbs in North America have existed in one form or another since the dawn of the nineteenth century. While initially the term suburb generally referred to substandard and poor settlements on the outskirts of larger urban centres, as the century proceeded there was a decided shift of middle class families moving out of the city centres to establish more genteel communities such as Brooklyn, New York.[7]

Work by such historians as John R. Stilgoe have taken a broad view of what he termed the 'borderlands,' of American cities, examining the evolution of perceptions of those communities on the outskirts of major cities from collections of disorganized villages to thriving residential suburbs.[8] Other works have explored the implications and frequent resistance of outlying suburbs to municipal consolidation, with the most conspicuous example being Ronald Dale Karr's study of Brookline, Massachusetts, and its successful bid to repudiate Boston's overtures toward amalgamation in 1873. Yet like

so many examples, by the middle of the nineteenth century Brookline was far from being the domain of working people for it had long gained a "well-deserved reputation of wealth and elegance," and its insistence upon retaining its independent status was fuelled by an elite who wished to preserve their community's small town charm and sophistication.[9] Other studies, such as Ann Durkin Keating's look at suburban development in Chicago shed light upon the dynamics of outlying communities and took a generalized view of either the resistance or acceptance of municipal consolidation, but concluded that "[e]ven in retrospect, it is difficult to evaluate the annexation issue clearly." Keating further conceded that a whole range of factors, frequently specific to the locale in question, came into play making generalization difficult.[10]

In Canada, Paul-Andre Linteau's work on the industrial town of Maisonneuve on the Island of Montreal, marked an important development in the study of large industrial suburban communities. Maisonneuve was a burgeoning community, that over the course of thirty-five years developed into a massive industrial and residential adjunct to the City of Montreal. Linteau's work set out to come to terms with the process of urbanization within Quebec and to come to a better understanding of the transition between a rural and urbanized province.[11]

Nineteenth century Ontario was certainly no stranger to the suburbs, which usually arose as small villages on the outskirts of the province's flourishing cities. Down river from Ottawa at the terminus of the Bytown and Prescott Railway grew the village of New Edinburgh under the direction of logging magnate Thomas McKay. As the village grew by the mid 1860's it became increasingly dependent upon large-scale milling establishments within Ottawa itself. Despite this economic dependency, New Edinburgh was incorporated in 1866 and remained independent of the fledgling Canadian capital for

twenty years.[12] Toronto was ringed by a series of suburbs by the second quarter of the nineteenth century including the incorporated village of Yorkville which remained an independent corporation for thirty years until annexed in 1883. Similarly there flourished, for a time, the town of Parkdale which had enjoyed municipal independence for ten years and the short-lived experiment that was Brockton, which from 1881 to 1884 retained village status before being annexed to Toronto.[13] While helpful comparisons might be drawn between incorporated suburbs in both Ontario and Quebec, Ontario's so-called urban experience differed in terms of organization and culturally from that its sister province.[14]

Work on early Ontario suburbs has been largely limited to antiquarians and a few isolated studies of the suburban phenomenon. As for those communities annexed to larger urban centres, it has been generally argued that "[t]he main reason for annexation . . . was the advantages of sharing the costs of providing urban services in a larger unit."[15] Certainly, in his study of London East (London West's eastern counterpart) Ian Ross touted a similar line explaining that as the municipality became increasingly integrated into London's economic framework it "became permanently dependent on the city for basic services and utilities . . ." and therefore opted to join London. In conclusion Ross conceded that "[p]aradoxically, prosperity and a sense of independence were achieved through increased dependence and intercourse with the city."[16] Yet such studies largely examine the political and economic reasons behind incorporation and annexation at the expense of factors such as the general community dynamics and issues of sentiment toward the issue of community independence. Similarly, such studies tend to focus on the suburban elite who governed the community and held positions of influence and power.

It might be correctly argued, that there can be no precise definition of what

constitutes a community. Certainly one might argue that a sense of community can exist in even the smallest collection of homes in an unorganized territory. However, as Richard Harris and Peter Larkham, explain "[t]he most effective forms of community are those that possess their own governmental powers."[17] It is in this sense that the citizenry of London West directed much of their community feeling and sense. While social and religious organizations within the village helped to facilitate social interaction, the matters of village council and the school board helped to focus the attention of the majority of those within the municipality, and helped to direct the village's future course.

London West was a conspicuous example of a nineteenth century Ontario suburban community that strove to maintain its independence and identity. Like its counterparts across the province it became an independent municipal corporation that endured and finally opted to join its larger urban neighbour. However, unlike many of its contemporaries such as Brockton, Parkdale and the closer-to-home, London East, London West retained its municipal autonomy for a relatively lengthy period of time. Indeed, of the seven suburban municipalities annexed in Ontario between 1880 and 1899 only Yorkville, with thirty years of autonomy behind it, surpassed London West's twenty-three year long experiment with municipal independence.[18] It would be erroneous to assume that London West's political and social development failed to conform to many of the prevailing assumptions as to why peripheral villages incorporated and ultimately opted to join their larger municipal neighbours. However, the assumption that London West, like London East and other suburbs, opted for amalgamation based solely on considerations of shared service costs seems increasingly suspect.[19] While such concerns helped to sway the ratepayers of the village of London West into accepting municipal consolidation with London in 1897, such overtures had failed to convince the villagers of the need or

desirability of joining in the preceding decade. It becomes clear that an explanation of London West's adherence to municipal autonomy cannot be made from such a narrow appraisal. Therefore it is imperative that a full assessment of the complexities of the community's organization and the influences that were brought to bear upon it be made in order to determine, with any certainty, the factors that compelled London West's inhabitants to both resist and then ultimately accept amalgamation with London. Perhaps it is only then that a proper evaluation of Ontario's nineteenth century suburbs can be made.

Notes For Introduction

1. Jean Dunham, interview by author, June 23, 1999, Komoka, Ontario, tape recording. Author's possession. Dunham recounted that, "Apparently, at one time, years ago they called it [London West] the 'Frog Pond.' So any time there was any joking or laughing or something it was always [said] that Daddy [James Houghton] had come from the Frog Pond- London West. There was over past Wharncliffe Road an area that was sort of swampy and that's were the Sulphur Springs where . . . of course that area is built up now. But no, they always teased Daddy that he had come from the Frog Pond."; Catherine Andrewes, interview by author, June 24, 1999, London, Ontario, tape recording. Author's possession. While Andrewes had never heard of the term Frog Pond, she did recall that "when I was a kid going to school in Kindergarten, Miss Grant used to take us down Empress Ave to the part of Empress past Wharncliffe . . . and she used to walk us down there to the frogs and the lily pads and all before they drained that . . . after the flood in '37."

2. Gregory H. Singleton,"The Genesis of Suburbs: A Complex of Historical Trends"in The Urbanization of the Suburbs, eds. Louis H. Masotti and Jeffery K. Hadden (Beverly Hills, California: Sage, 1973), 29.

3. Ibid, 32-35.

4. Jeffery K. Hadden and Josef J. Barton. "An Image that Will Not Die: Thoughts on the History of Anti-Urban Ideology." The Urbanization of the Suburbs. Louis H. Masotti and Jeffery K. Hadden, eds. (Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publications, 1973), 79.

5. Ian Christopher Ross. "London East, 1854-1885: The Evolution, Incorporation, and Annexation of a Satellite Municipality." (Unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Western Ontario, Faculty of Graduate Studies, Department of History, 1977), iii.

6. Graeme Davison, "Australia: The First Suburban Nation?", Journal of Urban History 22 (November 1995): 51, 54 and 65. While Davison demonstrates that 'suburbs' have existed in Australia since the first half of the nineteenth century, and that they generally attracted a large number of middle class people, he notes that as for municipal organization, Australian suburbs tended to be relatively small in comparison to their North American counterparts. Similarly, he notes that municipal consolidation did not occur to any great degree in Australia until well into the twentieth century.

7. Kenneth T. Jackson. Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanisation of the United States (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 16-18, 24, 29.

8. John R. Stilgoe. Borderland: Origins of the American Suburb, 1820-1939 (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1988), 78-92. In this particular chapter, Stilgoe examined the changing perceptions of Americans toward villages, first as backward and unimaginative places of both economic and intellectual poverty, to those communities on

the outskirts of larger urban centres imbued with the idealism of social reformers and the middle class who sought them out as idyllic refuges from the urban world. As he explained the village began to be seen as a place that "provided affordable housing for artisans and mechanics working long hours at low pay."; Ibid, 84.

9. Ronald Dale Karr, "Brookline Rejects Annexation, 1873," Suburbia Re-examined, ed. Barbara M. Kelly (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989), 103-110. Brookline was not without supporters to amalgamation with Boston in 1873. However, the proponents of annexation tended to be individuals who owned large tracts of land in the community, and were largely dismissed by their opponents as "a pack of land speculators . . ." In the end the community retained its independence as the annexationists were unable to persuade a majority of voters that amalgamation with Boston was in Brookline's best interests; Henry C. Binford. The First Suburbs: Residential Communities on the Boston Periphery 1815-1860 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 229. Binford explained that concerns about community identity usually emerged during crises surrounding annexation attempts by larger municipalities.

10. Ann Durkin Keating. Building Chicago: Suburban Developers & The Creation of a Divided Metropolis (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1988), 107; James Borchert, "Residential City Suburbs: The Emergence of a New Suburban Type, 1880-1930,"Journal of Urban History 22 (March 1996): 283-307. Borchert's paper, while dealing with suburbs, deals exclusively with large suburbs on the outskirts of large American cities with an emphasis on Cleveland. However, he does discuss how such cities "maintained their political independence from core cities."

11. Paul-Andre Linteau. The Promoter's City: Building the Industrial Town of Maisonneuve 1883-1918, trans. Robert Chodos (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1985), ix; Walter van Nus, "The Role of Suburban Government in the City Building Process: The Case of Notre Dame de Grâces, Quebec, 1876-1910," Urban History Review/ Revue d'histoire urbaine 13 (October 1984): 91- 103. Naturally this essay deals largely with the role of government in the development of Nortre Dame de Grâces and its progression from a village to a town, until its formal amalgamation with Montreal in 1910. The work does discuss the influx of middle class inhabitants, but only as it related to specific enticements drawn up by the community's governing body.

12. Shirley E. Woods. Ottawa The Capital of Canada (Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 1980), 77-79, 118, 134, 136. The village of New Edinburgh also received support from high ranking officials including Governor- General Charles Stanley Monck, Viscount Monck, who helped to raise money for the construction of an Anglican Church in 1868.

13. Elizabeth Bloomfield, Gerald Bloomfield and Peter McCaskell. Urban Growth and Local Services: The Development of Ontario Municipalities to 1981 (Guelph, Ontario: Department of Geography, University of Guelph, 1983), 15, 21, 26; Mary Frances Mallon, "The Village of Brockton," York Pioneer, 71, no. 2 (Fall 1976), 1-11.

14. Bloomfield, 12. Ontario was characterized as having more 'urban' (meaning villages, towns and cities) municipalities than any other province, due to its early attempts to make incorporation a relatively easy process.

15. Ibid, 15.

16. Ross, iii and 14.

17. Richard Harris and Peter J. Larkham, eds. Changing Suburbs: Foundation, Form and Function (New York: Routledge, 1999), 11-12.

18. Bloomfield, 15, 20. The villages of Yorkville, Brockton, and the town of Parkdale were annexed to Toronto in 1883, 1884 and 1889 respectively. The village of New Edinburgh was annexed by the City of Ottawa in 1886 while the village of Allandale was amalgamated with Barrie in 1897. London East was amalgamated with London in 1885 and London West joined the city in 1897.

19. Ibid, 15.

A Map of Petersville and Kensington in 1878. The incorporated village was known from 1874 until 1881 as Petersville, and then as London West until it was amalgamated with London in 1897. (Map reproduced from Illustrated Atlas of the County of Middlesex, Ontario (Toronto: H.R. Page & Co., 1878; reprint Sarnia, Ontario: Edward Phelps, 1972), 56.

Chapter One: The Early Development of London West

It began with a river. Indeed perhaps no other factor would so greatly influence the development of the village of Petersville and London West. The Thames River, would serve it as a natural boundary and barrier, a source of leisure, transport, and communication and perhaps most importantly, and ominously, as a destructive, often deadly adversary. Arising in the central portion of Ontario's southwestern peninsula, the two branches of the Thames wound along the ancient glacial till plain, to converge at a point that would one day serve as the location for two communities; the City of London and the erstwhile village of London West. Certainly, the river made the low lying flatlands immediately to the west of the river's north branch attractive for the purposes of agriculture, and certainly several generations of native peoples utilized the fertile ground for the cultivation of crops, evidence of which persisted as late as 1830.[1]

The most famous, but by no means earliest, European landfall at the Forks occurred early in March, 1793 when Upper Canada's newly arrived Lieutenant-Governor, John Graves Simcoe happened upon the Thames. As his aide Major Edward Baker Littlehales recounted:

> We struck the Thames at one end of a low flat Island, enveloped with shrubs and trees. The rapidity and strength of the current were such as to have forced a channel through the mainland, being a peninsula, and formed this Island. We walked over a rich meadow, and at its extremity came to the forks of the River. The Governor wished to examine this situation and its environs, therefore we remained here all the day. He judged it to be a situation eminently calculated for the metropolis of all Canada.[2]

Littlehales made special note of the numerous attractive attributes that site possessed, including its "central position,-facility of water communication up and down the Thames . . ." and perhaps equally important, its "the soil luxuriantly fertile. . . ."[3] Simcoe's plans came to naught, and during his brief tenure in Upper Canada, the city he proposed to call

London, failed to materialize. Indeed it was to remain the preserve of a few mysterious and fleeting squatters and as a settlement of import it existed only upon yellowing sheets of vellum.[4]

The river that had played host to both native agriculturalists and the earliest of European settlers to the region hardly resembled that which would become the all too familiar nemesis of the western suburb of the late nineteenth century. As one early settler, Thomas Kent, later recalled of the 1820's "The North Branch of the Thames is now twice the width it once occupied at the date of the origin of the Forest City, the volume of the stream then being much more uniform throughout the season . . . ."[5] When the village of London was surveyed in 1826 by Mahlon Burwell, it was explained that "[t]he River at these Forks is two chains Broad about two feet deep where Rapid, and about four feet and a half where Still water. The water rises in the Spring of the Year from six to seven feet. The plains are high and dry, with narrow Flats skirting the River . . ."[6] With regard to his time taken to survey the town plot, Burwell made special note of the river in a report to the Surveyor-General of Upper Canada in which he explained that:

> While on this Survey, I had a good opportunity of ascertaining which is the largest, the North, or East Branches [of the Thames], and am of opinion that the North Branch discharges the most water, though I found the Settlers to differ materially in their opinions on this subject, but I think there are such evident marks in favor of the opinion I have adopted that I do not hesitate to give it frankly . . . [7]

In about 1808 thirty-year old Joshua Applegarth, a relatively recent English immigrant to Upper Canada, described by some as "a non-progressive squatter"[8] arrived at the Forks of the Thames and by 1815 constructed for himself and family a cabin on the flats that stretched to the north-west. Having apparently left his 200 acre grant in

Flamboro East near Hamilton, at the instigation of the government, Applegarth set out to grow hemp on the river flats, a commodity then in heavy demand by the government for the production of rope necessary in the fight against Napoleon's France. However, Applegarth was afflicted by an attack of ague and abandoned his cabin (in the vicinity of the present Blackfriar's Bridge) for a location further south on higher ground.[9] Arguably, Applegarth was the first permanent European settler at the Forks of the Thames, although by 1819, after what appears to have been eleven unproductive years, Applegarth, pulled up stakes and removed to the more settled portions of Westminister Township and thence to Caradoc Township. As for his home above the flats it was left to be occupied by various squatters including some miners from the Lambeth area, perhaps engaged at the Nixon and Hale brickyard which was developed on the flats in the mid 1820's. Besides his dubious and often overlooked legacy as London's first unofficial settler, it was said the most lasting memento of his stay was his hemp, which continued to make a perennial appearance as late as 1903.[10]

Arriving at the site of Simcoe's erstwhile capital in 1823, some four years after Applegarth's removal, John and Mary Kent and their family of some ten children[11] set up quarters not far from the squatter's failed plantation. It was said that at the time of the family's arrival at the Thames that Kent "was very fond of hunting, and as the settler's ax was almost an unheard-of thing in that region, game was abundant, and many were the deer and wild game of all kinds that fell a victim of Mr. Kent's skill."[12] The Kents remained on their "farm on the Flats in the Township of London" until removing to Wardsville, before mid-century, although Kent did not relinquish ownership, parceling it out instead to his ten children upon his death in 1859.[13] As Kent's son and namesake, John Kent Junior, explained some sixty years later:

> At that time the ground occupied by London West now was considered safe and healthy. When he first came to live on the flats their health was not good on account of the luxuriant growth of vegetation. The grass grew so high that a horseman could not be seen at fifteen yards.[14]

With the burning of the Vittoria Courthouse in 1825, it was decided to move a step closer to realizing Simcoe's distant dream by relocating the district seat to the Forks of the Thames. In 1826, some three years after the Kents had located on the western flat lands, Peter McGregor set up a tavern at the intended site of London, while within two years the team of Nixon and Hale established a brickyard on the western flats, some distance below the Kent family farm. While initially the brickyard catered to the needs of the proposed courthouse, it remained in operation until about 1838, making it one of the first non-agricultural endeavours to thrive in what would become London West.[15] On the eastern bank of the Thames McGregor was soon followed by dozens of other families who clustered about the site of the future courthouse, a strange Gothic pile that arose at the river forks, to dominate the woodland that still surrounded it. The chaos and fear of the rebellions of 1837 and 1838 had resulted in an advancement of London's status as the government posted a permanent garrison of British regulars in the village, providing a ready military presence in the district. Complementing its political, social and military functions London soon emerged as the uncontested metropolis of Upper Canada's southwestern peninsula, garnering for itself the status of a police village in 1840 and that of a town in 1847.[16]

Even as the courthouse was still under construction, the citizenry constructed an important link across the North Branch of the Thames; the Blackfriar's Bridge. By and large it was this fixed link that would provide the most important early physical connection to what would one day become London West, and could presumably be held as responsible for the village's very existence. The first in a long string of structures to

bear the name of Blackfriar's Bridge at that location, it was the vantage point from which Reverend Edward Boswell attempted to dissuade travellers from the west from entering London during the infamous cholera outbreak of 1832.[17] It was during the construction of this very same bridge that the young Thomas Kent would later recall a stranger came into town and attempted to cross the unfinished bridge at night, in order to continue his journey westward. Unfortunately, as Kent recalled, the stranger lost his footing and fell on to the gravel below, dying from his injuries within days.[18]

In the early 1840's, there appears to have been at least some settlement on the west bank of the Thames. Certainly a painting by John FitzJohn Harris of Eldon House illustrates that at least two structures dominated the western lowlands. One, located at the western terminus of the Blackfriar's Bridge, was almost certainly the distillery owned and operated by Samuel Peters, London's first butcher and eventual proprietor of Grosvenor Lodge. Immediately south-west of the Peters' operation stood a larger, more imposing building, undoubtably the home of the John Kent family.[19] A surviving map from 1843 illustrates that not far from the Forks, in an area roughly corresponding to the present day Labatt Park, the Nixon family had their barn not far from their brickyard, while further to the north at the junction of Wharncliffe and Western Roads, two buildings, denoted as being a tavern, appeared to serve those travellers coming into the city from the northern reaches of London Township.[20]

Early in the 1850's, London butcher Samuel Peters commissioned his nephew and namesake to construct for his family a country seat on a hill on lands he had procured several years earlier from George Jervis Goodhue in London Township along the Wharncliffe Highway. It was to this commodious manor-like structure that Peters, his wife Anne, and several nearly grown children moved in 1853, officially designating it

Grosvenor Lodge. Having established himself in his rural estate, removed from the cares of the city, Peters' attention was naturally turned toward the low lying lands he had acquired to the south of his home.[21]

That there were people living on the western river flats across from the city seems, by the early 1850's, to be certain, an assumption leant considerable credence by the first registered subdivision. In April, 1854 Samuel Peters commissioned his nephew and namesake, Samuel Peters, the provincial land surveyor to subdivide the lands immediately across the river between the Wharncliffe Highway, Oxford Street and Blackfriar's street. In the final draft of the survey it was indicated that the new community was to be called, appropriately enough, Petersville, although a note further explains that the area was already known better as Bridgetown.[22] The fact that locals appear to have already made reference to the area as "Bridgetown," would seem to indicate that some form of settlement, however meager, had supplemented Peters' distillery and cowshed. The senior Samuel Peters bestowed more than his name upon the village that spread out below his family's country seat, for he seems to have maintained an interest in its development until his death in 1864. The attention apportioned to the village by the elder Peters was continued to a varying degree by both his widow, Anne, and their sons in subsequent years.[23]

Evidently the Peters' survey rapidly attracted the attention of several people who secured possession of a series of lots. While in general such early developments tended to be overly ambitious and slow to develop, as early as 1857 land assessments for London Township indicate that some fifty-three individuals had taken up property in the Bridgetown survey, with well over thirty apparently making it their home.[24] The proximity of these lands to the city, and the ready link offered by the Blackfriar's Bridge

undoubtably made the new subdivision attractive to prospective householders. Complementing the Peters' distillery by the late 1850's, Joseph Anderson, building upon an earlier establishment, had developed both a grist and clothing mill further to the north known as the North Branch Mills.[25] Certainly other speculators- namely the Irwins, Campbells, Moirs and Moores- with lands bordering the Peters soon followed their neighbours suit and began to subdivide their holdings. So attractive did the lands prove that by 1862 about eighty individuals had taken up house lots in and around Petersville.[26] The growth appears to have been relatively steady and the development continuous. By middle of the 1860's the continued population growth had warranted the construction of a school house in the northern reaches of the village, not far from the North Branch Grist Mill. As one correspondent for the *Advertiser* explained:

> The enterprising village of Petersville, just over Blackfriar's bridge, boasts of the neatest school-house, in the County- outside of London. Built of brick, neatly plastered and painted, it is a model of comfort and convenience. With lofty ceiling and ample ventilation, the building seems specially designed for the health of the rising generation.[27]

The schoolhouse was not merely limited to the secular instruction of pupils for, the correspondent explained, 'Petersvilleans' strongly believed that a religious underpinning of their children's education was essential, and so they helped to develop and sustain a Sabbath School, complemented with regular sermons on Sundays. The development of the Sunday School stemmed back to 1857 when developed by one A.J.G. Henderson. As the newspaper correspondent confidently concluded there was little doubt "that some now living are able to trace their reclamation from vice to this Sabbath school."[28] Complementing the educational and spiritual well being of the village a group of residents bonded together to form the Blackfriar's skating rink, somewhere at the western end of the so-named bridge.[29]

In 1871 Petersville was said to boast about four hundred inhabitants, clustered about the Blackfriars Bridge "immediately opposite Litchfield street . . ." So important was Petersville's relationship with the city that besides its relative orientation it was noted that out of the more than seventy prominent men listed it was noted that "[a] number of persons employed in London reside[d] . . ." there including Francis Hoolihan (Hoolahan) the turnkey at the Middlesex County gaol. An Irishman, Hoolihan had made Petersville his home since the early 1860's and would remain there until his death in 1882.[30]

In 1872, some twenty years after the initial development of Petersville, landowners to the south, on land bordering both the North and Main branches of the River Thames, appear to have ventured into the land speculation business. This land had been preserved for agricultural purposes, mainly as remnants of the Kent and Nixon families' vast holdings. Having long since abandoned their brickyard, the Nixons readily turned to cash in on the more speculative attractions their lands possessed..[31]

There were several reasons why the region immediately west of the forks had been largely ignored by developers in the preceding decades. Perhaps the most important factor had been its relative inaccessibility. Until the early 1870's Blackfriar's Bridge provided the sole access point across the North Branch of the Thames River, leaving the more southerly lands largely isolated. Similarly, the lands to the south had been known to be more susceptible to the regular flooding caused by spring freshets.[32] Long time residents could speak with authority with regard to the danger and unpredictability of the Thames. A flood in 1846 had devastated many a local farmer with lands bordering the river as livestock was swept away and carcasses were left to rot down river. It was said that "[a] great many people lost everything they had. Rich men were suddenly made poor."[33] The warnings of previous experiences with the Thames' volatile nature appear

not to have hindered development on its low lying banks.

As a necessary prerequisite to the development of the southern portion of the western flats bordering the river was the construction of a bridge connecting at Dundas Street across the North Branch. As one contemporary reported earlier attempts had been made to provide this fixed link, but for want of the necessary political will, fiscal resources or practical know how, the bridge had failed to materialize. It appears that part of the difficulty resulted from a lack of cooperation between officials in the City of London and Middlesex County, for indeed it was members of city council that openly pushed the plan in early 1872. With the estimated cost being $5000.00 the city agreed to fund $2000.00, leaving the rest to private subscription. The backers of the bridge were unable to secure the aid of County Council, however, for as it was explained, "[t]hey oppose it, and are likely to oppose it, for it will deprive them of a certain amount of money they have been in the habit of receiving in the shape of tolls from the graveled roads in London Township entering the city."[34] With the promise of no toll and the hurried completion of the bridge land owners on the western end of the proposed span hurriedly set about securing land. As the *Advertiser* explained:

> One hundred and fifteen acres of choice land have been purchased in London Township, a short distance from the western terminus of the bridge, and is now being surveyed into park and village lots. The plot is to be called the village of Kensington, and will afford beautiful and convenient sites for suburban residences, which may be reached by carriage without paying tolls, and the distance would not be great if traversed on foot. We expect to see rising up in a few years in this locality a pretty and wealthy suburb, of which London will be proud.[35]

Early in October, 1872 the various lots in Kensington were put up for auction, and apparently sold quite well, but in general, it was then too late in the season for householders to begin constructing their new homes. London butcher Mr. Bedford, his

wife and young family, had got a head start on their prospective neighbours and built a small house not far from the river. With their only neighbour being the partially constructed slaughterhouse, owned by a Mr. Morley, the Bedfords apparently took up residence in the middle of winter. Before the month of April, 1873 was a week old the new residents were to be the recipients of an unfortunate surprise. While Bedford and his family slept, the Thames overflowed its banks and made a "watery raid upon his premises." Alarmed, the Bedfords scrambled to the upper floor of their home, but surrounded by the torrents of rushing water were unable to make an effective escape. It was not until many hours had past that anyone on the relatively unaffected city side of the river remembered the family's plight and sent a rescuer to fetch them. Caught in a heavy fog bank it was only the crowing of the Bedford's rooster that managed to lead the rescuers to the marooned household and carry them back to safety. In recounting the bird's heroic deed the *Free Press* felt that surely the rooster had been "enacting a part which should canonise him . . ."[36] The inhabitants further north in Petersville fared slightly better. While some homes were surrounded by water, and Saunby's gravel dam was swept away, it appears that there was little in the way of major damage. However, stern warnings were issued to those villagers who thronged along the water's edge with the hope of "gather[ing] in the avalanche of logs and other combustible materials to replenish woodsheds . . ." following such a protracted winter.[37]

Yet despite the fact that it was noted that even "the oldest inhabitants do not remember a larger flood since their coming to this part of the country," few prospective inhabitants of the Kensington suburb appears to have been dissuaded. Indeed, in the

years immediately following the devastation of the 1873 flood, the western flats appear to have experienced the greatest building boom to that time. One contemporary report of 1872 went on to laud the development of Petersville in such glowing terms as to report that it was "[a] prosperous village. . ." boasting five hundred inhabitants and further explained that "[a] large number of dwellings are in the course of erection, which when finished, will increase its population considerably."[38] With this intensive physical growth there appears to have been a growing semblance of community or at the very least the dawning of a civic consciousness amongst the inhabitants of the Thames' west bank. How strong these feelings were is impossible to tell, but by the end of May, 1874 it became clear that difficulties between the inhabitants of Petersville and Kensington and the municipal council of London Township had sparked open discussion and debate. What emerged from these debates was a clear mandate for municipal incorporation.

Notes for Chapter One

1. Lewis Grant. "The Site of London." A Map produced by Lewis Grant based upon the survey notes of Augustus Jones, 1830. J.J. Talman Regional Collections, University of Western Ontario, CA8ONLON TO34.

2. Henry Scadding, ed. Journal Written by Edward Baker Littlehales (Toronto: Canadiana House, 1968), 12.

3. Ibid.

4. Orlo Miller. London 200: An Illustrated History (London, Ontario: London Chamber of Commerce, 1992), 4.

5. Frederick H. Armstrong, "Thomas Kent's Recollections of Early London," London and Middlesex Historian 17 (Autumn 1990), 30.

6. Grant, "The Site of London."

7. Mahlon Burwell, Surveyor, to Thomas Ridout, Surveyor General, July 21, 1826; Letters received by the Surveyor-General, 1766-1913; RG 1, A-I-1, v. 17, no. 129; Archives of Ontario.

8. Armstrong, ed. "Thomas Kent," 31.

9. Frederick T. Rosser. London Township Pioneers: Including A Few Families From Adjoining Areas (Belleville, Ontario: Mika Publishing, 1975), 20-21; Harriet Priddis, "The Naming of London Streets," Transactions London and Middlesex Historical Society (1909), 26. Priddis noted that it was on Nixon's Flats that "Applegarth tried to grow *flax* [emphasis added] even before Peter MacGregor built his tavern at the Forks." History of the County of Middlesex, Canada [hereafter History of Middlesex] (Toronto: W.A. and C.L. Goodspeed, 1889; reprint ed., Belleville, Ontario: Mika Stuido, 1972), 1097-1098. It seems likely that Applegarth removed his family back to West Flamborough during the course of the War of 1812. By 1819 he removed his family to Westminister Township, apparently living "in the house where Goodhue later kept store . . ." and then settling on Lot 28, Concession 1.

10. Armstrong, ed. "Thomas Kent," 31. Canada West 1851 Census, Caradoc Township, Middlesex County, District 1, 33. Joshua Applegarth was listed as a native of England at the age of seventy-three living with his sixty-five year old wife Betsey, an American, with at least one adult child, John, and several other members of the Applegarth family living in the vicinity; History of Middlesex, 512. According to Robert Summers "After Applegarth left his cabin above the flats, about 1817 [1819] the miners from Lambeth squatted in the one and a-half story log house- a chimney at one end and a window in the upper part on the other end. His daughters were, Marian and Pauline. After the first

settlements were made at London, Dennis O'Brien would call often on Marian, climbing the gable and entering the chamber through the window in Romeo fashion. On one of such occasions a conspiracy to trap him for the purpose of blackmail was put into effect, but the Romeo, jumping from the window escaped." Ibid, 368. The Nixon and Hale brickyard was developed to supply brick to the new courthouse.

11. Wardsville Municipal Cemetery: Complete Revision, 1992 (London: London-Middlesex Ontario Genealogical Society, 1992), 16. John Kent, Esq., died in Wardsville on April 21, 1859 aged seventy-nine. His wife, Mary, followed him quickly, passing away on April 29, 1859 aged sixty-seven years.

12. History of Middlesex, 881.

13. Middlesex County Surrogate Court Register of Wills, v. 3 no. 169 (June 1858 to November 1860), 129-132. In his will Kent divided his lands that straddled the river to his seven sons; John, Charles Water, Thomas, David, Sextus, William and Joseph Ridley, and three daughters; Mary Coombs, Sarah Ann Strathy and Maria Melton.

14. London Advertiser, November 18, 1884.

15. Benjamin S. Scott, "The Economic and Industrial History of the City of London, Canada From the Building of the First Railway 1855 to the Present 1930," (Unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Western Ontario, Department of History, 1930), 337.

16. Miller, 8-10, 35 and 55.

17. Christopher Lawrence Hives. "Flooding and Flood Control: Local Attitudes in London, Ontario 1790-1952"(Unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Western Ontario, Department of History, 1981), 168.

18. Armstrong, ed. "Thomas Kent," 30.

19. Nancy Geddes Poole. The Art of London 1830-1980 (London, Ontario: Blackpool Press, 1984), 2; "Painting Shows Eldon House of 1840," London Free Press, February 2, 1960.

20. Scott, 337; Charles S. Buck, "Thrill of Steeplechase in 1843 Springs to Life in Winner's Letter," London Free Press, January 22, 1966.

21. Frederick H. Armstrong and Daniel J. Brock. Reflections on London's Past (London, Ontario: The Corporation of the City of London, 1975), 23.

22. Samuel Peters, "Petersville\Bridgetown Map," (April 1854), J.J. Talman Regional Collections, U.W.O.

23. Nancy Z. Tausky. Historical Sketches of London: From Site to City (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 1993), 50; London Advertiser, April 18, 1887. Samuel Peters (1790-1864) and his wife, Ann Philips (1795-1887) were both buried in Woodland Cemetery (Samuel's body having been transferred there from the old burial ground in London East). Squire John Peters (died 1897) and his wife, Gertrude Constance Roberts moved to Grosvenor Lodge upon the death of his father in 1864.

24. Michael Doucet, "Speculation and the Physical Development of Mid-Nineteenth Century Hamilton," Shaping the Urban Landscape: Aspects of the Canadian City-Building Process. eds. Gilbert A. Stelter and Alan F.J. Artibise (Ottawa: Carelton University Press, 1982), 177; London Township Assessment Rolls, 1857, St. George's Ward, reel M1614 "Samuel Peters Land."

25. Ibid; Scott, 224. According to Scott the North Branch Mill had been established in 1839. By 1855 the grist mill had "4 run of stone."

26. London Township Assessments, St. George's Ward, 1862;Petersville/Blackfriar's Neighbourhood Association. The Petersville Neighbourhood Project (London, Ontario: Blackapple, 1994), 12.

27. London Advertiser, February 11, 1865.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid, February 25, 1865.

30. Lovell's Canadian Dominion Directory For 1871: Names of Professional and Business Men and Other Inhabitants of the Cities, Towns and Villages (Montreal: John Lovell, 1871), 656; London Township Assessments, St. George's Ward, 1862; Canada 1881 Census, Petersville, Ontario, 51. Hoolihan was 74 years of age in 1881 and lived with his wife, Margaret, and four of their children. Both Francis and Margaret were natives of Ireland and all family members were listed as being Roman Catholics.

31. History of Middlesex, 368.

32. Hives, 14. As Hives illustrates, however, prior to 1883 the regular flooding of the Thames was viewed as a natural and inevitable process over which humanity had no control.

33. London Advertiser, July 11, 1883. Pat Morden. Putting Down Roots: A History of London's Parks and River (St. Catherines, Ontario: Stonehouse Publications, 1988), 27.

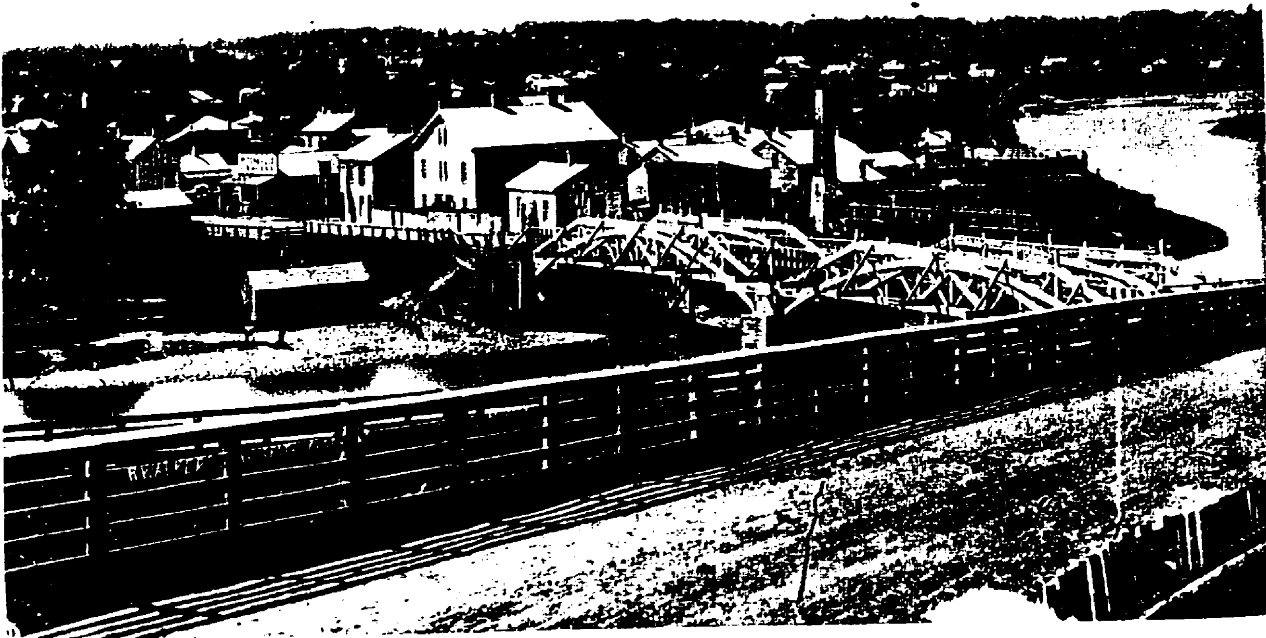
34. London Advertiser, June 29, 1872.

35. Ibid.

36. London Free Press, April 8, 1873 and London Advertiser, April 7, 1873. Goodspeed, 936. It is likely that the Mr. Morley who owned the slaughterhouse in Kensington can be identified as Charles A. Morley a London based "butcher and provision dealer. . ." who had come to London from his native Isle of Wight in 1855. The full name and identity of Mr. Bedford remains a mystery.

37. London Advertiser, April 7, 1873.

38. Cherrier and Kirwin's London and Middlesex County Directory 1872-1873 (London, Ontario: Cherrier and Kirwin, 1872), 123. The directory further explained that William Loughrey was the postmaster and that Miss Mary Bell and William Cooper were the two teachers engaged at the Petersville School.



A view of Petersville (circa 1874) looking west from Ridout Street. In view can be seen the Blackfriar's Bridge which was replaced in 1875 by the present construction. The tall chimney standing beside the bridge is a remnant of the Peters' distillery. *Courtesy of:*

The J.J. Talman Regional Collection
The D.B. Weldon Library
The University of Western Ontario

A view of London West (*circa.*1880) looking west. Running from the very left of the plate is Ann Street. At the top right of the view can be seen the two story Ann Street school, to the left of which is visible the Methodist Church. What is particularly striking about this illustration is the obvious height difference between the east and west banks of the Thames, which runs through the centre of the image. *Courtesy of:*

The J.J. Talman Regional Collection
The D.B. Weldon Library
The University of Western Ontario

Chapter Two: Incorporation and Discord

In 1873 the Government of Ontario revisited the old act governing the incorporation of municipalities within the province, a process that had served it for well over twenty years. The resulting modifications made it easier for unincorporated communities to elevate themselves to the status of incorporated villages, provided that they met the minimum population figure of 750 people, a requirement not strongly enforced. The result was that dozens of communities across the province began to examine and then push for incorporated status, separating themselves from rural township governments. With incorporation a community could not only plot its own municipal development, but ratepayers within the community could theoretically enjoy the leadership of elected officials more responsive to their immediate concerns and needs. Similarly, because the act regarding municipal government subordinated both towns and villages to county councils, these new municipalities could enjoy representation upon this important body and help to direct fiscal policy for the wider community.[1]

For the ratepayers of Petersville and Kensington the provisions of the new municipal regulations provided an opportunity for them to incorporate their two disparate communities into a single legal entity and gain effective control over their own local concerns. While the incorporation of the community in 1874 led to the emergence of an identifiable corporate entity, the process of assuming more localized control over both municipal and educational affairs leant itself to an increased sense of identity and community as individuals and factions attempted to implement their vision for village's subsequent development. It was a process that led to impassioned debate and even the development of deep-seated and enduring animosities. Yet for all of these difficulties the nurturing of the village, following incorporation, transformed the bureaucratic entity of

Petersville into the identifiable community of London West.

The elections for London Township Council on January 5, 1874 caused relatively little stir and garnered only the slightest media attention. Certainly other than for the fact that Squire John Peters of Grosvenor Lodge was the recipient of 856 votes, the largest number ever cast for one candidate in the township's history, there seemed little more to report.[2] There was little in Peters' campaign for a seat on township council that seemed to indicate any particular dissatisfaction with the existing administration, although he admitted he had come to the position reluctantly only having been "guided in the matter by a largely signed requisition, amounting to over 200 names." As it was, Peters' platform had been based upon good leadership for the township and county with the popular insistence that favoured "free tolls and markets." While the ratepayers of St. Lawrence Ward of the township seemed to be upset by a sizeable increase of their 1873 taxes over 1872, there appears to have been no similar complaint levied by the inhabitants of St. George's Ward in which jurisdiction Petersville fell. Certainly their representative, the incumbent deputy-reeve, Thomas Greene, appears to have retained the electors' esteem and "was loudly called for . . ." but declined reelection.[3]

There appear to be no indications of any internal dissension within the municipality of London Township and there certainly were no published references to any difficulties with Petersville. The only attention that was brought to bear upon the village came later in February when it was reported that in separate incidents, two employees of Arkwell's brewery in Kensington were beaten and robbed by unknown assailants. The local media tersely condemned these brutal attacks and lamented how "[r]owdyism appears to be on the rampage just now in the city and suburbs . . ." making it "hardly safe for respectable citizens to appear out of doors after dark where the streets are not

frequented."[4]

One potential source of friction for the residents of Petersville and Kensington was the dangerous physical condition of the Blackfriar's Bridge, a shared responsibility between the county and city. The series of floods in 1873 and 1874 had badly damaged the largely wooden structure causing it to be declared unsafe by both county and city officials. However, it remained a vital connection between Petersville and London. Early in March, 1874 new 'bents' were constructed to help shore up the floor of the bridge and "make it safe for travel until such time as the proper authorities are prepared to erect a new bridge."[5] Despite temporary dressings, the authorities, fearing that the bridge was not strong enough to hold up to regular traffic, not only set up wooden barriers but simultaneously tore up some of the planking to prohibit the crossing of teams of horses. The action infuriated some residents who decried the potential for harm to befall hapless pedestrian traffic. As one unidentified, but angry citizen wrote to the *Advertiser* "[a] person might accidently knock his foot against one of those planks and fall headlong into the river, and in such case it would be almost impossible to avoid either being killed or drowned."[6] Yet, again, no references to any general disaffection of Petersville ratepayers within London Township can be found and no specific calls appear to have been made for incorporation as a separate municipality at this time. It is interesting to note, however, that in the midst of the Blackfriars Bridge controversy one inquiring and unidentified subscriber to the *Advertiser* posed a question to the paper's editorial staff asking what process and regulations governed the incorporation of a village.[7] The insinuation could be that the notion of incorporating Petersville had already begun to circulate amongst the village's citizenry.

The meeting of Middlesex County Council in April, 1874 produced little news

that directly affected Petersville, other than the proposed "rebuild[ing] of the Blackfriars Bridge with stone abutments . . . and iron superstructure . . ." by county and city authorities.[8] The first inkling of difficulties between London Township Council and Petersville ratepayers came at a public meeting held in the village's Temperance Hall on May 26th. The major issue brought to the floor for discussion was labeled the 'Surplus Question.' Initially, those ratepayers who addressed the assembly defended the rights of Petersville's inhabitants to share in the township's unspecified fiscal surplus. As James Daniels explained "Petersville was entitled to a good share of this fund and that the ratepayers must stand for their rights."[9] The 'surplus question' was not limited to London Township alone and caused considerable debate throughout the county. In Lobo Township various motions were proposed at a public meeting which sought to apply the Lobo's portion of the surplus to paying off Middlesex County's debt or at least being set aside for "gravelling the roads and building bridges."[10]

In Petersville the majority of commentators at the Temperance Hall meeting originally seemed to opt for some sort of bargain within the framework of the township government. It was William Nichol who voiced the opinion that the ultimate resolution to these tensions was to weigh the advantages of incorporating the village and directing their own municipal policies, namely "getting a share of the surplus fund and investing it in permanent improvements."[11] Sensing the growing rift within the assembly, Petersville's representative on council, Squire Peters, attempted to counter the proposal for municipal autonomy by explaining that when the issue of the surplus came before council it was utterly certain that a vote amongst ratepayers would direct its use. Concurrently Peters "hoped Petersville would not be overlooked by the Council, as its population augmented the share of London township considerable." Peters' conciliatory

speech failed to mollify the situation and, following his comments, John Evans openly came out in support of municipal incorporation citing the issue of 'insecurity of property,' among other matters that seemed to plague the current political relationship. He further "explained the advantages to be derived from incorporation to the evident satisfaction of the people."[12]

Also in the spring of 1874 a comparable situation suddenly burst upon the scene in London East. As with Petersville there appears to have been a very sudden push toward amalgamation in London East amongst many of that suburb's leading inhabitants and industrialists leaving one historian to conclude that "[t]he motives of these proponents of incorporation were rather nebulous."[13] As more contemporary observers explained, London East's dispersed layout and the persistence of low taxation meant that "not the first whisper was heard in reference to incorporation, and affairs went on prosperously and harmoniously till 1874, when it seemed to strike the London Easters all at once that they should be incorporated . . ."[14]

In Petersville, following Evans' comments, it became clear that the general mood of the meeting supported incorporation and a motion made by James Daniels (and seconded by Evans himself) sought to form a committee that would put forth a petition to Middlesex County Council calling for the incorporation of Petersville. Perhaps fearful that such an action was too impulsive, two other villagers, James Campbell and James McDonald, called for an amendment that merely would have sought to negotiate with London Township Council on the issue of surplus. Apparently the assembly was in no mood to wait upon London Township and the initial motion, unamended, was passed and seven men where appointed to the *ad hoc* committee to approach the county. They did, however, send a committee to London Township demanding a fair proportion of the

surplus be applied toward Petersville "for the purpose of improving the sidewalks in the village."[15]

Matters rapidly came to a head with County Council citing its approval for the incorporation of the village, having appointed John Evans and Gibson Wright to enumerate the community to determine if the proposed village possessed the required population of 750 -- a task speedily completed and accepted, placing the combined population of Petersville and Kensington at 1, 097.[16] Having gained the support of the county, it was left for the ratepayers of the intended municipality to define their boundaries and to settle upon a name for the corporation. The village boundaries were quickly agreed upon, with little dissension, making the corporation encompass some five hundred acres. The boundaries of the village were defined:

> On the east by the River Thames, on the south by the River Thames, on the west by a line drawn between lots 17 and 18, London township, until such line strikes Grosvenor street, and then east until such line strikes Wharncliffe Road, and then north until it strikes the River Thames, and on the north by the River Thames . . .[17]

As to the question of the municipality's name, there appears to have been an overwhelming consensus that the name of Petersville should be retained.[18] In a curious irony, however, one unnamed source "suggested that when Petersville is incorporated, it should start off with a new name, viz, London West. This would correspond with London East at the other side of the city."[19] The suggestion was clear, that at least one element within the community was not partial to the retention of the name of the community's patrician founders, the Peters, and wished to embark upon incorporation with a fresh name unencumbered by past identifications and associations. As far as surviving documents show, the suggestion of a new name was not entertained. It was to be an oversight that would return to haunt the village six years later.

On June 5, 1874 the committee made its final appearance before the county council and orders were given for drafting of a by-law which would formally incorporate the Village of Petersville. On the same day Middlesex County Council drew up a similar by-law that created the municipality of London East. As the *Advertiser* succinctly advised "[t]hese thriving places ought now to go on and prosper."[20] With a mandate given the villages of Petersville and London East set about to plot a course of municipal development separate from the remainder of London Township. Petersville would now have its own council commissioned to collect taxes and direct the development of the village and a reeve to voice the concerns and interests of his community on Middlesex County Council.

With the imposition of de facto incorporation the remainder of 1874 was devoted to the preparation for the municipal elections to take place early in 1875. Walter Lawrence was appointed as the village's first returning officer to oversee the preparations for the transitional elections.[21] The only notable alteration to occur in the embryonic corporation was that of its boundaries in a second by-law issued by county council in August. The impetus for this modification appears to have emanated from within the community, for it was resolved that such an alteration would "comply with the request of the Inhabitants of the said village . . ." The boundaries were clarified as:

> Bounded on the south and east by the River Thames on the West by a line commencing at the River Thames on the south Western limit of a certain survey made by Samuel Peters . . . for one John Walker the plan of which is registered in the Registry Office for the County of Middlesex on the 11th day of November 1872, thence northerly along the westerly limit of said survey till it intersects Walker Street as shown on said survey to the Limit between Lots seventeen and eighteen until it intersects Grosvenor Street as shown upon a plan and survey made by order of the Government showing Park Lots adjoining the Town of London and deposited with the original map of the Township of London in

> the Registry office for the County of Middlesex. Thence easterly along Grosvenor Street until it intersects the Wharncliffe Highway or Proof Line Road. Thence northerly along said Wharncliffe Highway . . . until it intersects the North Branch of the River Thames and bounded on the North by the River Thames which will make the area of the said village of Petersville about Five Hundred acres of Land.[22]

In January, 1875 the ratepayers of Petersville elected their first municipal council with local miller, Joseph D. Saunby, as reeve by acclamation. The four elected councillors were Alexander Leslie, the market gardener, John Bowman the scale-maker, Duncan Campbell, another gardener, and Edward Charlton, a local stock breeder.[23] Other than the initial difficulties and debate over the organization of the new municipality, there was generally little to excite the populous or the London press, which largely ignored the day to day goings on within their western suburb. As the inhabitants of Petersville developed social institutions and the issues surrounding the governing of the municipality became less routine the local media shed its initial apathy toward the community and began to report more regularly on the village. Late in 1877, tax collector Gibson Wright came before council for advice on how to deal with individuals who refused to pay dog taxes, while subsequent meetings of council dealt with the doling out of relief to destitute families and individuals within the corporation.[24] Otherwise politics within the village seemed to be dominated more by personalities than by pressing issues. At the time of the 1878 municipal elections it was noted that "[i]n Petersville . . . the contest was very sharp, being, however, conducted on the grounds of personal preference rather than with any principle of living issue at stake."[25] There would be plenty of opportunities for political issues to come into focus within the community.

The attention of the press increased as the municipality matured, and came into its

own, although only the *Advertiser* appears to have taken an abiding interest in reporting upon daily affairs in the community. Save for the occasional venture into the everyday life of the suburbs, the *Free Press* confined itself to loftier reporting and paid attention to the surrounding villages more often during election time. In view of meeting the demand of an ever increasing school enrolment, the Petersville School Board allocated funds for the construction of a large two storey school on Ann Street not far from Wharncliffe Road which was largely completed by the start of the new year 1878, and plans were made to dispose of the old school property near Saunby's Mill.[26] Not to be outdone by the school board, in the middle of 1878, village businessman and denizen Daniel Collins had begun construction on a new combination commercial and civic centre within the village. As the three storey edifice, by far the largest construction attempted within the village, took shape, interest in it became marked, at times for unfortunate reasons. In the midst of construction a young water boy by the name of Edward Sullivan was fatally injured after falling some forty feet from the scaffolding and landing on a pile of bricks.[27]

As the building neared completion the *Advertiser* treated its readers to a glimpse of Petersville at the close of 1878 indicating that:

> Petersville, a thriving village, is situated on the west side of the Thames, and boasts of two churches -Methodist and Episcopalian, a large public school, a bookstore, two hotels, a broom factory, and about a dozen grocery and dry goods stores. There is also in course of erection an elegant public hall, to be called Collins' Hall, with three commodious stores underneath and rooms for societies on the top story. It is expected that it will be completed before Christmas, and it is intended to celebrate the event by holding a bazaar and concert. There has been considerable improvements and additions made during the past year, about twenty-five new houses having been erected during that period.[28]

With the dawn of the 1880's the citizenry of Petersville became increasingly disquieted about the state of the bridges leading into the village. While the condition of

the Blackfriar's was vastly improved through the completion of the wrought iron replacement of 1875, concerns over the safety of those using the bridge did not abate. The city gas works had begun by 1880 to extend their lines onto the bridge and had even gone so far as to erect lamp standards, which were hoped would provide enough lighting to make it safe for pedestrian traffic. However, it was evident that the speed of these improvements was not fast enough, for early in June, 1880, as the *Advertiser* explained:

> One evening lately a horse and wagon ran away and crossed the bridge at a gallop. A young lady who was coming down the hill [from Ridout Street] heard noise but owing to the darkness was unable to see in what direction the runaway was coming. She became greatly alarmed and jumped over the fence for safety, sustaining in the fall on the other side serious injuries.[29]

For all their frustrations over the state of pedestrian safety, a new and different discussion commenced toward the end of 1880. It was a debate that hinged on nothing so simple or so complex as the name of the village itself. Clearly for the people of Petersville the question of the name was very important and became the stuff of debate and general argument spanning several months in 1880 and 1881. The interest seems to have been largely spearheaded by the incumbent reeve, William Henry Bartram, a barrister from Kensington. Having only come into the office at the beginning of the year, Bartram appears to have secured for himself the general appreciation of his fellow ratepayers, and when rumours that a potential rival would seek to unseat him in the upcoming municipal contest, proved untrue, one journalist concluded that "[t]his is well, as Mr. Bartram has been a very efficient presiding officer, and it would be unfair to oppose him just as he has got nicely into the harness. There will in all probability be no opposition to Mr. Bartram."[30]

As the *Advertiser* noted in December, 1880, "[t]he idea of changing the name of

the suburb from Kensington and Petersville to the appropriate and comprehensive one of 'West London'. . . [caused] several petitions to this [effect] and [they] are being largely signed."[31] As early as November the *Advertiser* had changed the heading for its news from that region from 'PETERSVILLE' to 'LONDON WEST,' which might indicate that the change in name was already seen as a 'fait accompli.'[32] In fact the battle over the village's name had only just begun.

The idea of changing the village's name had, as noted, been suggested over six years earlier at the time of incorporation in June, 1874.[33] This early suggestion had largely been rejected or overlooked as at a meeting of ratepayers held immediately prior to incorporation the name Petersville was given unanimous support.[34] Due to a changing sense of identity the mood six years later was very different.

At an open village council meeting held at Collins' Hall on December 13, 1880 (to discuss the proposed name change) the temperament was far from complacent. As the meeting progressed the general disposition of the assembled ratepayers rapidly became unruly and when Councillor William Smith took the platform, among other things he was quick to criticize "the manner in which certain persons had striven to change the name of the village . . ." He insisted that the issue would have to be taken directly to the voters in order for a legitimate decision to be reached. Smith's comments sparked several conflicting outbursts. One unnamed individual quickly declared that, "The name is no disgrace to us," to which another equally disgruntled voice replied, "Shut up! You're a disgrace to the village." J.B. McDonald was quick to praise Smith's comment and expressed how good it was that some members of council were not willing to allow the people of the village to be 'hood-winked.'[35]

It was Reeve William H. Bartram, one of the proposal's chief proponents, who declared that the matter of the change of name would be left for the voters to decide at election time in January. Apparently a brief scuffle had ensued the reeve's comments, and "a long, noisy and furious discussion took place on the proposed change of name." The debate was temporarily mollified when Joseph Nixon and William Nichol moved and seconded that the entire issue be resolved during the election, and that preference for change would be marked on the ballots. Nichol attempted to make a motion that would allow the change to occur within the year, "but his voice was lost amid the din, and the meeting broke up in great confusion."[36]

Although it is clear that the issue of changing the village's name was a contentious one, there is little real evidence as to why a change in name was proposed let alone desired. Allusions seemed to have been made that for some reason the name Petersville was somehow insulting, and perhaps suggested some sort of vassal status to the Peters Family of Grosvenor Lodge.[37] The Peters had certainly maintained a certain amount of influence over the village, and several of Samuel and Ann Peters sons had taken up residence within it. As well as donating the land for both the Methodist and Anglican Churches, at the end of 1878 Squire Peters "promised a gold medal for the most efficient scholar in the schools next year."[38] After only six years of incorporated status the village had indeed grown substantially[39] by over thirty-percent.[40] It was presumed that the name of Petersville was more indicative of a sleepy rural village and not of a thriving and viable suburb for the City of London. Certainly peripheral communities frequently tended to work toward "protect[ing] an image of dynamic growth . . ." while simultaneously ensuring that their "nomenclature . . . suggested connections with a

metropolis or aspirations to urban greatness."[41] Similarly some of the foremost advocates of the name change, such as Reeve Bartram, hailed from the southern section of the village or the subdivision of Kensington. As it was the Kensington portion of the village, with more open land available, had been growing at a faster rate than the old subdivision set up by Samuel Peters to the north. So great was this growth that by the close of the decade Kensington would be able to claim a bulk of the village's population. With this increased growth it seems that many within Kensington felt that they were not afforded a corresponding degree of control over the affairs of the village. It was perhaps in this context that the push for a more inclusive name for the village was seen as a way to submerge old partisan differences within the community.

In the minds of many villagers the chaotic meeting of December 13, however, had done little to settle the issue, and so Councillors William Smith and John Platt convened another meeting -- again at Collins Hall for the evening of Friday, December 17, 1880 with a new bill which they hoped to stop Bartram's apparent reckless and prejudiced bid to change the village's name. On a motion by the Reeve, Squire John Peters, a representative of the Peters family, presided over the assembly, and, initially at least, cooler heads seemed to prevail. Long-time Petersville advocate John Evans cautioned the assembly that both sides should be permitted to outline their arguments. Councillor Smith, who had been one of the ones responsible for convening the gathering, voiced his worry that the vote taken at the last meeting (December 13th) had been somehow unfair. He also felt that the expenses which a change of name would entail (in converting over village accounts, statutes and other legal matters) would not necessarily be refunded by the provincial government in Toronto, despite the assurances of those propounding the

name change. Smith also denounced the way in which Reeve William Henry Bartram had (in his view) in a heavy handed manner declared that the choice of the name 'Kensington' be ignored. Indeed, it had been decided to give the ratepayers of the village only two choices; the retention of Petersville or the adoption of London West.[42]

Reeve Bartram defended his actions and then asked the assembly, "What in the name of common sense would be the use of putting on three names, because 188 had already decided for London West?" He declared that if more than two choices appeared on the ballot it would be impossible to obtain a majority. The implication of Smith's charge seemed to be that Bartram and his supporter on council, watchmaker John Brodie, had been ignoring the interests of their Kensington neighbours by rejecting the inclusion of that community's name on the ballot. Bartram angrily "wondered if he and Mr. Brodie could not look after the proper interests of Kensington without coming as far north as Ann street in order to get Messrs. Smith and Platt to attend to the matter." He then asked the audience if he had been in the right, to which they responded favourably. Bartram also rejected Smith's worries that the cost of changing the village's name would be prohibitive. In fact Bartram remarked confidently that "it would not cost more than thirty or forty dollars, for the House [Ontario Legislature] would most probably refund the money." If not, Bartram added, he calculated that the costs would amount to no more than another ten cents per inhabitant, and could easily be recouped within the year. More heated exchanges and speeches flared and tempers soared, no doubt making Collins' Hall the hottest place in the village. Bartram then announced to the assembly that it was his understanding that Alexander Leslie, market gardener and nursery owner, had resolved to campaign against Bartram in the upcoming municipal elections on the basis of his stand

on the issue of the name. Turning to the chairman of the meeting, John Peters, Bartram hinted that he understood that he had been openly canvassing on Leslie's behalf, an accusation Peters flatly denied, for which Bartram conceded "[h]e would most gladly take his word." It was further reported that "[t]he advantages to be derived from a change of name were then fully set forth . . ." and Bartram insisted that he "was quite willing to contest the election on the change if it were to be made an issue." He then calmed many fears by promising that a change in the corporation's name would not invalidate the deeds bearing the old name. Bartram concluded his remarks with a tirade against William Smith by saying that "Mr. Smith was a nuisance to the Council, and was no benefit to the village."[43] Naturally Smith rose to rebut the reeve's remarks and as the *Advertiser* reported in blatantly partisan terms, Smith predicted that "[t]he Reeve would have to answer for what he had said . . . Going on in eloquent terms, recklessly quoting the Bible, Shakespeare, etc.,etc., he held by the bill, saying that the Reeve could not produce such a piece of work." Smith finished by asking the assembly to reelect him in the coming municipal contest.[44]

Toward the end of the chaotic meeting the chairman, Squire Peters himself, addressed the assembly, declaring the matter of the change of name made little difference to him. A verbal confrontation between the reeve and chairman ensued, over Peters' alleged complicity with Leslie, which he flatly denied, but was forced to partially rescind in the face of much indignant shouting from the floor and soon the *Advertiser* noted that "little could be heard in the hall but hisses, groans and yells, together with the rattling of seats and the stamping of feet." Although Bartram was able to gain minimal control over the rest of the proceedings "[d]isorder reigned and the audience straggled for the door."[45]

Four days after the second meeting at Collins' Hall the *Advertiser* noted that an application for name change had been submitted to the Legislature in Toronto formally to replace the name of Petersville with London West.[46] Whatever animosities still broiled over the issue of name change seem to have been temporarily allayed, or at least did not make the newspaper, which devoted itself more to the upcoming elections, and pre-Christmas festivities. The *Advertiser* had little to say directly about the name issue save to note that "elections were lively to-day," and then to recount how a party of 'roughs' assaulted John Phair and broke windows at Gleason's Hotel on New Year's Eve and Day.[47] The tallying of the votes illustrated that the majority of voters favoured not only Bartram as reeve but also favoured changing the village's name to London West. In a likely correlation, the ardent defender of the name Petersville, William Smith, was defeated at the polls, having placed fourth in the slate of five candidates. Due to the population increase, the village for the first time had as well a, deputy-reeve in the person of John Platt. Yet, as might be expected, the name battle was far from over.[48]

The next wrinkle in the controversy came from outside the village itself. The problem was that the postal authorities felt that the name 'London West' was far too similar to that of London East. The Post Office thus had its own suggestion, asking that the name be changed to 'West London,' which they felt would accommodate their concern and still serve the wishes of those ratepayers who had voted for the change of name. As it was one commentator ventured the belief that "in all probability, the majority of the people would be quite as well satisfied with West London as London West."[49] In an attempt to discern the options and opinions of the villagers, Bartram realized that the name of Kensington for the post office in the southern portion of the village should be

retained. Similarly, after ample discussion, it was determined that the name maintaining the postal name of Petersville in the north had only marginal support. Therefore Bartram finally determined that in terms of the northern post office and the corporation's name, as a reflection of the voter's wishes would be changed to London West.[50]

One sarcastic *Advertiser* editorial noted that on February 14, 1881 a deputation consisting of A.J.B. Macdonald and John Simpson left for Toronto in an attempt to voice their opposition to the change of the village's name before its passage in the legislature and to monitor the actions of their decided opponents, Reeve Bartram, John Evans and G.J. Macguire. The editorial continued that:

> Squire Peters wants the name retained as Petersville, because his name is Peters. Reeve Bartram would doubtless like to have it Bartramville, because his name is Bartram. Ex-Councillor Smith, of course, would go for Smithville, but he and Platt feel dejected because there are other villages and towns of the same name already in the province. This makes it all the more favorable for Mr. Dan Collins, for when the new moved is on foot which bids fair to cancel all others. Mr. Collins is not proud, and will feel quite cheerful over Greenland, Lapland or Iceville, provided Parliament cannot see its way clear to calling the place Collinstown. In the meantime a number of the ratepayers are saying one to the other, Why not leave the name as has already been decided on by the people at the polls, "London West"- by a large majority.[51]

An equally sarcastic article asked the Editor of the *Advertiser* "What would you think . . . of 'Mesopotamia,' the country of the Hippopotamus, as a suitable name for London West?" After lauding the benefits to be had of turning the Thames into a water park for all sorts of amphibious and aquatic life, the writer concluded the introduction of "hippopotamus could be utilized for breaking up ice-jams."[52]

On February 17, 1881 the Bill to change Petersville name to London West passed its third and final reading in the Ontario Legislature, thereby becoming law. With all of the excitement and antics over and the Bill officially passed, one commentator pleaded

that "it is hoped that all parties will bury the hatchet and work together for the best interests of the village."[53]

If the naming debate had proven anything, it was that the internal politics of merely running the municipality could frequently serve to divide the inhabitants of London West and cause widespread dissension amongst the ranks of ratepayers. These divisions formed along various lines and they frequently became most charged when dealing with issues surrounding the all important catalyst of education. London West's geographical distribution meant that it was a highly scattered community, and by the late 1880's its demographics had made a clear shift. Whereas at the time of incorporation, a decade and a half earlier, the northern or Petersville component of the village had constituted the dominant portion of the village with the bulk of the population, the southern portion of the village with a large land area had attracted more of the new settlement. It appears that by this time period the older settled sections of Petersville housed an aging population, while younger families tended to congregate in the newer subdivision of Kensington.

The village fathers had anticipated that the new two story school building on Ann Street with four large classrooms would prove sufficient for the village's growth. While it was true that by and large the village's population growth had been largely truncated following the 1883 flood, there was a continued expansion of the number school-age children. As early as 1882, even before the destructive flood, it had become apparent to school board trustees that in order to meet the growing demand of school facilities and better to serve the interests of those children who lived in the southern portion of the community, a new school would have to be constructed in that quarter. After some four

years of intermittent discussion, in 1886 the school board approached Robert Albert Jones the postmaster for the Kensington Post Office and signed a lease for his hall to be used for a school. While Jones later admitted that he was not overly fond of having his building so employed, he had done so until a permanent building was erected, something he was led to believe would happen in the near future.[54] The southern school was officially opened in 1887 and it rapidly became a popular fixture in the Kensington portion of the village. By 1888 the southern school, while only devoted to the primary grades, boasted some ninety-five students and was filled to capacity.[55]

At the time of the elections for school trustees in January, 1888 there appears to have been rumblings that the London West school board anticipated that it would close the Kensington school, a prospect that alarmed voters there who were determined to see their school maintained and a permanent structure begun. The reasons behind this supposed closure were unspecified and officially the school board appears to have made no statement on the Kensington School at all.[56] As one concerned ratepayer, Robert Hadden, later explained during the campaign one of the incumbent trustees, William Moore, intent upon reelection, had canvassed many of the homes in the southern portion of the village. As Hadden recalled, "I told him [Moore] I would do so if he would be in favour of a school in the south end of the village. He assured me that he was and would be and I then agreed to vote for him and induce other voters in the south end to vote for him on the faith of his assurance."The result, as Hadden explained, was that Moore regained his office by a majority of one vote over that of the runner up, who failed to gain office.[57] It appears that in general the campaign for school trustees had otherwise been a muted affair with more media attention being levied toward the municipal contest.[58]

There had, however, been some agreement within the outgoing school board of 1887 that there was overcrowding occurring in the "higher forms" in the school, a problem that needed to be addressed.[59] Initially at least, the incoming board, apparently following the precedent of their predecessors, and appeared to have continued their silence upon the issue of the southern school. Indeed, the newly constituted board seemed full of vigor and promise and even set up a committee to approach Middlesex County Council for the purpose of "securing a site for a London West High School."[60]

The controversy that soon reared its head served further to divide the village and create a decided uproar. By June, 1888, with all talk of a high school having ceased, the school board voted on a proposal that would have seen a commodious addition made to the Ann Street school, at the expense of the southern school which would be closed in order to redirect funding to the new project. The resolution sought to have two new class rooms and a council chamber with a fireproof vault constructed, ostensibly to combine the resources of the two elected bodies, accommodate increasing numbers of students and provide permanent and rent free quarters for village council. Disgruntled residents soon had a petition drawn up and circulated and then presented to village council asking for a public meeting on the issue. Reeve Robert F. Lacey wrote a considered reply to the petition stating that these "matters that appear to me to be wholy [sic] within the Province of the School Board and I, and I believe my whole council are averse to taking any action that would in any way tend to bring the council and the Board in conflict, I must therefore respectfully decline to acceede [sic] to your request . . ."[61]

Angered by village council's refusal to involve themselves in the matter, many ratepayers, including John Butler Allenby a local merchant tailor, began to suspect some

form of collusion between the school board and village council. Allenby charged that the school trustees had opted to close the southern school in order to justify the cost of construction at the Ann Street school.[62] Another villager, Thomas McGovey, felt that the new addition and school closure "are to be made under the color of producing school accommodation for the purpose of funding a town hall and that it is the intention of the council to incorporate the village as a town."[63] Certainly two of the incumbent trustees, both from the southern portion of the village, shoemaker Edwin Pudney and gardener Alexander Randolph Murdock, had opposed the idea and voted against it, only to be overruled by the four supporting trustees, three of whom resided within close proximity to the Ann Street School. Murdock explained that the construction of a permanent school in Kensington would cost between $1100 and $2000 while the estimated cost of the addition to the Ann Street school would have costs around $4500, and he warned such an estimate did not include the costs of obtaining further land, a requirement under the school regulations. Murdock noted while the Ann Street school had been built for about 250 students its average attendance amounted to a mere 200, and that school served all grades, whereas the southern counterpart was bursting with 95 students for the primary grades only. He was openly suspicious of the complicity of both the board and council.[64] As local artist John Chapman pointed out, should the southern school be permanently closed, many of the young students in Kensington would have to walk between a half a mile to a full mile further to school.[65] In the words of Robert Hadden, a Walker Street cutter, it was feared that "the small children attending it will nearly all be deprived of school privileges owing to the distance they would have to go from their houses to the Ann Street school . . ."[66]

On June 29, 1888 a special meeting of village council allotted the $4500 to the school board, but incurred the wrath of various ratepayers in attendance. As William H. Bartram insinuated "there had been secrecy observed by the Council and School Board in the matter." One other ratepayer accused the village council and school board of duplicity, by attempting to avoid the hostile questioning of angry delegations from the southern portion of the village by moving the meeting ahead by one hour. To the chagrin of many "[w]hen the opposition deputation got there the business was nearly over. Further than that the Council were to meet at 7 [pm], grant the money and then the School Board were to assemble at 9[pm] and do their part of the business by accepting plans and calling for tenders." Yet like many best laid plans, the school board failed to finish this business. The same irate southern elector explained part of the reason was simply because the school board was deeply divided upon the issue because "Murdock and Pudney are against building an addition to the north end school, and Moore, Jefferies and Houghton are for it. Anderson, he's a south end man, but he's under Jefferies' thumb; so he's for it, too. Now you have the whole thing."[67]

Following the conclusion of this fiery meeting Allenby hastily scribbled a letter which appeared in the following edition of the *Advertiser*. In his letter he summed up his arguments and condemned the decision and explanations given by both the school board and council. Especially irksome to Allenby was the flimsy argument made by William Moore who noted that there was simply no available space in Kensington on which to construct a school. An indignant Allenby continued:

> Mr. Moore knows that such is not the case. There are lots to be had now cheaper than can possibly be bought a few years hence. He has stated it would be folly to build a school on water lots. If the water lots are good enough for us to live and pay taxes, they are good enough to have a school in our midst. I hope the Council

will not grant the money until they consult the ratepayers.[68]

In the succeeding days and weeks neither the school board nor the village council seemed willing to accede to the demands put upon them by the disgruntled southern ratepayers. So on July 20, 1888 Allenby and his supporters sought an indictment by the Court of Chancery against the London West School Board as a means of stopping the expansion of the Ann Street school and reallocating those funds toward the erection of a permanent school in the south.[69]

Throughout the summer and autumn of 1888 matters continued to creep to a head as contenders on both sides of the debate grappled continually. Preparations were made for the hearings in court, but the matter was continually delayed. In the meantime with sufficient funds at their disposal the school board went ahead with their plans and began the controversial construction on the Ann Street addition. By December, 1888 the terms of the old school board and village council had virtually passed and a meeting for nominations was particularly heated with numerous candidates for office being met "with a volley of hisses by the rowdy element." While no one made specific mention of the school issue still lumbering before the courts, the mood was clearly antagonistic toward those office holders who sought reelection.[70] As for the court case it was held over well into March as "a remnant from the Common Pleas Division . . ." In reviewing the case and seeing that it had so long stood before the courts Justice Hugh McMahon ruled on March 15th that it should be given priority treatment and be dealt with at once especially since "[t]he action is brought to restrain the defendants from erecting school buildings which are already up."[71] While a particularly virulent outbreak of measles swept the village, the Allenby case finally reached the courts, only to have another major

impediment rear its head in the middle of March, 1889. The school board had become fraught with deadlock, and had made no provisions to heat the newly completed additions on Ann Street. Indeed, the school building had been closed as a result. Similarly, the village's Board of Health, worried about poor ventilation in the much maligned Kensington School stepped in to close it down. To make matters worse, the treasurer reported that there was only $100.00 remaining in his coffers, out of which the wages of the teachers had to be paid.[72]

One aggrieved parent wrote scathingly that the head of the Board of Health had no more jurisdiction to close the southern school in London West than "closing one at the North Pole." Indeed, the indignant parent felt that had the Board of Health's foray into school closure showed a misplaced responsibility for if the board had done its job properly and not been so overly concerned with the apparent lack of proper ventilation in the Kensington school there would surely have not been such a rampant outbreak of measles throughout the village. Furthering his diatribe the infuriated parent demanded an explanation as to why a school room with seven opening windows, two ventilators and doors should be considered unhabitable due to poor ventilation.[73] In response, two members of the London West Board of Health, Thomas Jefferies and Alfred Butler, offered a rebuttal to the angered, and anonymous parent. They argued that the concern had been raised by another parent who had refused to allow their children to attend the school in such a condition. Then, in a poorly veiled attack, they continued:

> but 'Parent' has made a poor attempt at disguising himself, and let us tell him here that he is more to blame in the matter than perhaps any other man. When he was elected by the ratepayers of the village it was to do his duty, but what do we find? Owing to certain pig-headed members of the Board of Trustees, a deadlock is caused either by their entire absence from the meetings . . . or by their studied

obstruction to everything tended to place village schools in sanitary order.[74] Amidst the continued mud slinging the case before the Chancery Court was quietly dismissed, so ending its tortuous existence. On March 18th when the case had been brought before the bench, William H. Bartram, who was acting as counsel for the plaintiff, indicated that he was not yet prepared to go to trial. The judge then simply dismissed the case altogether ordering that costs be paid.[75]

In a belated attempt to make sense of the entire affair "[a] large and influential meeting of the ratepayers of London West was held . . ." to examine the conduct of both the village council and Board of Health. The resulting insults and rancourous accusations were worthy of all previous attempts to deal with the school issue. In an attempt to stave off criticism for having lost the bid to have the Allenby versus London West case go to trial, Bartram explained that the defeat was "owing to certain corrupt influences abroad in our courts [and] that the ends of justice were often defeated." He continued in his tirade condemning undue influence by various members of clergy within the Catholic Church for corrupting the judicial system and influencing the presiding judge "against London West." There was little comment upon Bartram's assertions but it was discovered that irregularities in the manner with which the south end school had been closed left council unanimous in a bid the "School Trustees to do all in their power to keep this school open . . ." Similarly the Board was ordered to ensure that a teacher was secured to keep the school running.[76]

After months of running, and frequently acrimonious debate, and untold expenditure, the citizens of London West were left with the most ironic of compromises. Not only did they now possess the addition to the Ann Street school which had caused so

much hostility in the south, but they had also been guaranteed the continuation of the southern school, at least for the time being, which the addition had been slated to see closed.

To say that London West was incorporated on anything more than a sporadic opportunism, would be to verge dangerously toward overstatement. To a very large degree it appears that the emergence of Petersville as a municipal corporation was due to the actions of a few, slightly disgruntled, taxpayers who happened to represent a constituency that possessed the requisite population to form such an entity. Indeed, the first several years of London West's corporate existence largely reflected this benign even insipid origin of a community that simply continued to go about its regular existence. Yet a very different picture emerges of the same community after a period of six years when the very question of its identity came into question and was debated. What became clear was that for the people of Petersville or London West as it was to become, beneath the regular and plodding monotony that marked their community's daily growth, there thrived a clear and at times ardent sense of being. The long and frequently acrimonious debate that emerged over the issue of name in the winter of 1880 and 1881, however much it was mocked from both within and from without, served to illustrate that the area possessed a population deeply committed to its development and well-being. Similarly the school debates of the late 1880's illustrated that divisions within a community that amounted to less than two thousand souls still had the potential to be fractious, as two differing parties within it vied for the preservation of its own values. If the prolonged, and in the end seemingly ineffectual debate proved anything, it was that the ratepayers of London West possessed a strong and at times vehement need or desire to ensure the success and

preservation of their way of life and by inference, their community as well. In a period of a little over a decade and a half, London West had moved from a legislated amalgam of the two separate neighbourhoods, Petersville and Kensington, differing in their backgrounds and chronologies, to something more cohesive, if at times volatile. The playing out of various minor political dramas in the community's development had resulted in a people who highly prized the control and direction afforded to them by the municipal corporation of London West. This tenuous if impassioned sense of unity would be further tested in the decade to come.

Notes For Chapter Two

1. Bloomfield, 13-14.

2. London Advertiser, January 6, 1874.

3. London Free Press, December 29, 1873. The issue of tolls on London Township roads was a contentious one. The collection of tolls along major roads, including the Wharncliffe Highway, was largely unpopular with many inhabitants. These tolls were not dispensed with until 1882 when the old toll gates were auctioned off to various bidders including Patrick Flynn who explained that, "I intend to plant them [toll gates] right in my orchard, so that my descendants, a hundred years from now, may get a glimpse of the old relics of barbarism, and have a faint idea of what we used to suffer and put up with in the nineteenth century." Goodspeed, 515. The old Petersville Toll Gate was sold to a member of the Stinchcombe family for $75.00.

4. London Advertiser, February 12, 1874.

5. Ibid, March 6, 1874.

6. Ibid, March 7, 1874 and March 9, 1874.

7. Ibid, March 10, 1874.

8. Middlesex County Council Minutes, April 10, 1874; Tausky. Site to City, 78. The major push for the erection of an iron bridge had come from London's Board of Works, and had resulted in a delegation traveling to New York and Pennsylvania to view existing iron bridges. Having come to the agreement that an iron bridge would serve both the city and county a wrought iron bridge was ordered from Ohio and constructed in place of the old Blackfriar's Bridge.

9. London Advertiser, June 5, 1874.

10. Ibid, March 16, 1874.

11. Ibid, June 5, 1874.

12. Ibid.

13. Ian Christopher Ross. "London East, 1854-1885: The Evolution, Incorporation, and Annexation of a Satellite Municipality."(Unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Western Ontario, Faculty of Graduate Studies, 1977), 28.

14. History of Middlesex, 410.

15. London Advertiser, June 5, 1874. The seven men appointed to the committee set up to petition Middlesex County Council were James Daniels, John Evans, Gibson Wright, Duncan Campbell, Joseph D. Saunby, S.P. Leek and James Campbell.

16. Ibid, June 6, 1874.

17. Ibid, June 5, 1874.

18. Ibid. The motion to retain the name Petersville was made by A. Rowe and seconded by William Evans. It was apparently carried unanimously.

19. Ibid, June 4, 1874.

20. Ibid, June 3, 1874.

21. Ibid, June 5, 1874.

22. Middlesex County Bylaws, Bylaw Number 250, August 28, 1874.

23. London Advertiser, January 5, 1875; History of Middlesex, 207. Ed. Charlton was appointed to a committee within the Western Ontario Stock Breeders' Association in 1888.

24. Ibid, November 6, 1877 and January 9, 1878.

25. Ibid, January 8, 1878.

26. Ibid, January 9, 1878.

27. Ibid, August 10, 1878.

28. Ibid, December 13, 1878.

29. Ibid, June 7, 1880.

30. Ibid, December 9, 1880.

31. Ibid, December 2, 1880.

32. Ibid, November 29, 1880.

33. Ibid, June 4, 1874.

34. Ibid, June 5, 1874.

35. Ibid, December 14, 1880.

36. Ibid.

37. Mary Byers and Margaret McBurney. The Governor's Road: Early buildings and families from Mississauga to London (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 282.

38. London Advertiser, January 1, 1879. The award was presented to John S. Moore in 1881. Ibid, February 12, 1881.

39. John H. Lutman. The South And West of London: An Historical Guide and Architectural Guide (London, Ont.: Corporation of the City of London, 1979), 54.

40. This figure is based upon evidence presented in the London Advertiser on February 20, 1882, which was drawn from the census returns of the previous year, which tabulated the village's population at 1,601.

41. Jackson, 46. Jackson noted in his study of nineteenth century suburbs that many communities chose names such as South Chicago as a means of identifying with the greatness of their urban counterparts.

42. Ibid, December 18, 1880.

43. Ibid. Smith had apparently been greatly upset by losing the contest for the chairmanship of the Board of Trade, and as a result Bartram concluded, Smith had done his upmost to disrupt the workings of Council (see also Ibid, February 7, 1880); Tausky, 70. Alexander Leslie purchased 20 acres of land in the vicinity of Centre Street in 1863. He eventually sold off some of his holdings, but maintained his market garden. His home, backing onto the Thames River, still stands with a large portion of its original market garden still surrounding it.

44. London Advertiser, December 18, 1880.

45. Ibid. Smith had traveled to England earlier in 1880 (see Ibid, February 7, 1880), and apparently had been angered that he had lost a bid to chair the Board of Trade within the village, and according to Bartram, had used this as an excuse to berate the village council.

46. Ibid, December 21, 1880.

47. Ibid, January 4, 1881.

48. William Smith v. Petersville, 28 Ontario Chancery 599, 599-605 (1881).
As debate still swirled around the issue of the name, problems with the recent municipal election soon came under intense scrutiny. While Reeve Bartram mediated between postal officials and his constituents another municipal controversy was brewing. Fearing that his election might be contested, Councillor-Elect Peter Grant disclaimed his election prior to the first meeting of the new council. As a result Bartram's old nemesis William

Smith quickly assumed that he would therefore be elevated to the status of an elected candidate. However, viewing the circumstances and perhaps on account of their personal animosity, Bartram ruled against Smith's elevation and called for an new election for the contested seat at which time John Evans had been duly elected. Evidently angered Smith took his complaint before the courts and won an injunction against the village corporation. In the face of possible litigation Evans, following the precedent set by Grant, disclaimed his seat. After a long drawn out court battle, and the issue of the village's name change had been laid to rest, the Chancery Court's verdict vindicated Smith who was "entitled to an injunction against the other defendants with costs."

49. London Advertiser, January 10, 1881.

50. Ibid, January 15, 1881 and February 7, 1881.

51. "Everything in a Name: Shall London West be Called Petersville, Bartramville, Smithville, or Collinstown," London Advertiser, February 15, 1881.

52. "Another Name Suggested 'Mesopotamia' the Best Yet," London Advertiser, February 17, 1881.

53. London Advertiser, February 19, 1881. Thomas A. Hillman. A Statutory Chronology of Ontario Counties and Municipalities (Gananoque, Ontario: Langdale Press, 1988), 331. The name change became effective on March 4, 1881.

54. Affidavit of Robert Albert Jones, July 20, 1888. Allenby v. London West Public School Board, Chancery Court (Middlesex County); Court Records; B312; J.J. Talman Regional Collections.

55. Robert Albert Jones, July 20, 1888. Allenby v. London West Public School Board. Affidavit of John Chapman, July 20, 1888.

56. London Advertiser, January 7, 1888. At the last official meeting of the 1887 School Board there was no record of a report being made upon the state of the Kensington School.

57.Affidavit of Robert Hadden, July 20, 1888.

58. London Advertiser, January 2, 1888. In an editorial the *Advertiser* voiced the opinion that the expense that would be incurred by a municipal election and campaign for the office of London West's reeve was entirely a waste as they saw contender Robert Lacey as both immensely popular and the best suited for the position.

59. Ibid, January 7, 1888.

60. Ibid, January 18, 1888.

61. Robert F. Lacey to R.A. Jones and others, July 17, 1888; Allenby v. London West; Chancery Court (Middlesex), J.J. Talman Regional Collections.

62. Affidavit of John Butler Allenby, July 20, 1888.

63.Affidavit of Thomas McGovey, July 20, 1888.

64. Affidavit of Alexander Randolph Murdock, July 20, 1888.

65. Affidavit of John Chapman, July 20, 1888.

66. Affidavit of Robert Hadden, July 20, 1888.

67. London Advertiser, June 30, 1888.

68. Ibid.

69. Allenby v. London West; Chancery Court (Middlesex), J.J. Talman Regional Collections.

70. London Free Press, January 1, 1889.

71. Ibid, March 15, 1889.

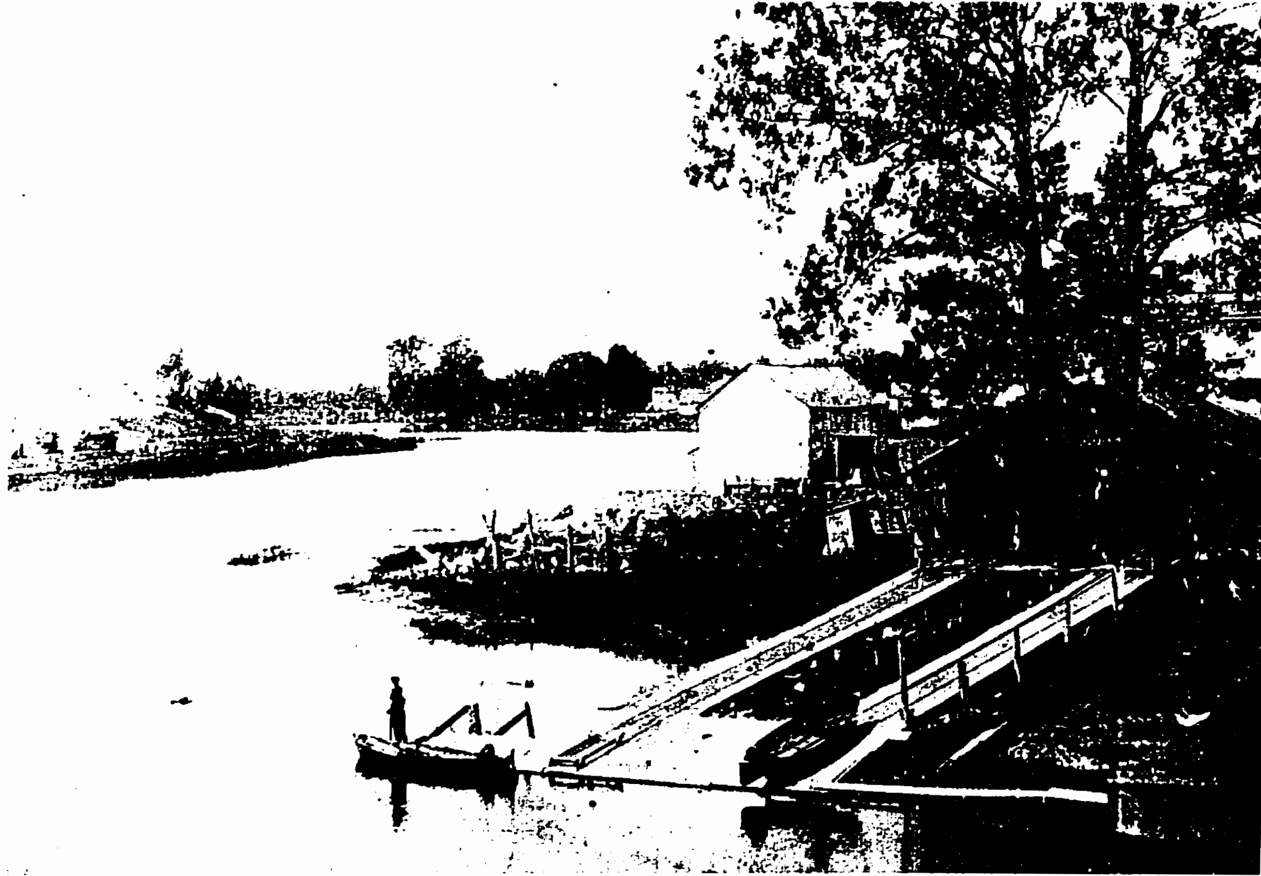
72. Ibid, March 16, 1889.

73. "A Parent," Letter to the editor, March 15, 1889, London Free Press, March 18, 1889.

74. Alfred Butler and T. Jefferies. Letter to the Editor, London Free Press, March 20, 1889.

75. London Free Press, March 20, 1889.

76. Ibid, March 21, 1889.



A view of Mitchell's Boathouse which at the Forks of the Thames, below Dundas Street. Partially visible behind the boathouse is Jerry McDonald's Riverside Hotel. Beyond the barn (pictured near the centre of the image) is visible a portion of the Kensington part of the suburb. While the river seems to be relatively high, the buildings in this view are still strikingly near to the water. *Courtesy of:*

The J.J. Talman Regional Collection
The D.B. Weldon Library
The University of Western Ontario

A view of Blackfriar's Street looking west from the bridge. The photograph was taken by John Cooper on about July 12, 1883 following the flood (which explains the piles of debris in the street). In the centre of the image stands the three storey Collins' Hall which housed both municipal and masonic offices. On the right stands C.B. Armstrong's store. Blackfriar's Street formed the main thoroughfare in the village throughout its earliest years, and possessed the majority of businesses in the community. *Courtesy of:*

The J.J. Talman Regional Collection
The D.B. Weldon Library
The University of Western Ontario

Chapter Three: The Inhabitants of London West

For the most part, during its period of incorporation from 1874 to 1897, London West consisted of two relatively distinct residential areas, Kensington and Petersville, filled with the homes of artisans, craftsmen and small business owners. In between these two communities lay largely open areas that were the domain of small scale agriculturalists. As one former London West resident, A.S. Meaden explained "[m]ost of this land was used for market gardens and small farms."[1] Most of London West's "citizens . . . largely worked and shopped in London." Even those independent gardeners found their greatest markets in the city.[2] While London West's population was dwarfed by that of London, its citizens were nonetheless actively engaged in the process of community building. While the village's inhabitants could claim differing economic and ethnic backgrounds, there was a concerted, even united, effort toward community building. Through the development of social and religious institutions and legislated moral guidelines as set up by the village council, the citizens of London West attempted to create for themselves a strong sense of community identity, shrouded at times in an aura of self conceived respectability. It was an identity that was frequently tried and tested throughout the period of incorporation, but an identity that was not easily surrendered and became part and parcel of the municipal corporation that was the Village of London West.

Almost without exception, local historians who have looked at London West have summed it up as having been a 'working class' community. Certainly even into the 1930's, long after London West had become an integral part of the City of London, residents came to think of themselves as being chiefly as blue collar or working class. As one later resident of London West recalled:

> it was sort of a . . . blue collar place. The area, at least where we were at, there weren't a lot of big homes or families with extra money. We all seemed to be in the same level. I know going to school all the children seemed to be sort of in the same circumstances we were; no one had a lot of money, but we were all had plenty to eat, and decent clothes to wear and a decent place to live. So it seemed to me that it was that is was sort of in between rich and poor.[3]

Yet, to a degree, the determination, of 'working class,' serves to mislead and perhaps even distort the make-up of the community, at least throughout its period of incorporation. By popular definition the industrial working class image embodies images of factory workers who inhabited crowded tenements and barely persisted in their struggle for day to day survival. Certainly within the context of nineteenth century sweatshops and the increasingly vigilant campaigning of various social reformers the concept of working class took on both a seedy and at times pathetic visage. These images do not fit the people of London West. Labouring people supported themselves by means of a paid wage, doled out to them by employers, and while many individuals engaged in this practice, a large number did so for a limited time until they could independently establish themselves as farmers or small business owners. In short, wage work "was not the pivot of their social or economic lives."[4] The struggle of unions against industrial magnates was a conflict alien to the majority of Ontario's working people.[5] Such was certainly the case in London West. The majority of the village's inhabitants could probably count themselves as being from the middling strata of nineteenth century Ontario society. They were not independently wealthy, requiring the plying of their trades or the success of their businesses in order to make a living. They largely fell into the category of what historians have termed the 'self-employed' or "those people who held, through ownership or tenancy, the means of producing and distributing goods and services."[6] It was in London West, where property values were substantially less than those of the city that people of

moderate means could, and did establish themselves and at least hoped to retain both property and an existence for their families. While a certain amount of stability could be found in London West, its inhabitants, by virtue of their community's location, were subjected to disastrous downturns in both their security and property values incurred by flooding. While the value of the various properties held by inhabitants varied from citizen to citizen, what was tragically unique in London West, was that following the calamitous flood of 1883, virtually all property owners suffered the same degradation in the value of their holdings, and thus their economic status declined across the board.

A clear majority of the ratepayers and their families lived within their own homes, while a sizable minority appear to have inhabited rental property. A survey of the 1879 voter's lists for the municipality indicate that of the nearly 360 registered voters, an overwhelming majority of some sixty-five percent had earned the right to vote by maintaining freehold on their property (a number that included such individuals as politician and brewer, John Carling and lawyer, Henry C.R. Becher, city magnates who owned property in the neighbouring village). The remaining voters consisted of a diverse array of tenants whose property possessed the necessary leasehold of $200.00 to guarantee the vote. For electoral purposes the village had been divided into two separate polling stations, with the division line running along Blackfriars and Paul Streets. The result was that the bulk of the electorate either lived or owned property in the southern portion of the village with 206 voters compared to the north's 152. Also in 1879, seventy percent of those who lived in the south owned their property as opposed to those in the north where only sixty-percent held ownership. The north being the older settled section, it appears to have attracted a higher number of city purchasers and large sections were retained by members of the Peters family based at Grosvenor Lodge.[7]

While relative estimates for the early 1870's pegged the population of Petersville and Kensington as hovering around five hundred, the official figure established in 1874 had been 1,097.[8] By 1881 the village's population had grown to 1,602, a rather stunning increase of over five hundred people since it had been incorporated seven years earlier.[9] As for the composition of London West's population, there was nothing particularly striking about it. Indeed, it largely conformed to the ethnic and religious make-up of the majority of semi-urban communities strung out across Ontario.[10] It was essentially a British settlement with nearly fifty percent of its inhabitants being of English origin, and another quarter having an Irish background. While a majority of some fifty-six percent of the villagers were natives of Ontario, a large number of these were children of British immigrants (by 1891 the proportion of Ontario born residents had risen to sixty-two percent, while the largest immigrant group, sitting at some twenty-two percent, were the English).[11] There were notable infusions of other ethnic stock, including German, Swiss, French and even Danish immigrants who made the village their home.[12] While in the first seven years of incorporation from 1874 to 1881, the population of the village had increased by over thirty-percent; over the ten year period from 1881 to 1891 (at the close of which time London West boasted a population of 1,916) the rate of growth had slowed considerably, having only increased by sixteen percent. Certainly the community took a severe beating from the catastrophic floods of 1883. While there does not appear to have been a mass exodus, the flooding had caused a severe deflation in property values and inevitably slowed the subsequent growth of the community as potential residents weighed the obvious disadvantages of London West.

Of those English immigrants there were those of long standing in the community such as John and Sarah Bowman, who had made the village their home as early as 1862.

The Bowmans were Methodists and attended the London West Methodist Church. Bowman was a scale maker, and, in the early 1870's, had been employed as the Inspector of Weights and Measures for the district.[13] Other English immigrants were of a more recent arrival, such as Edward Houghton and his wife, Emma Taylor, natives of Northamptonshire, who after a stint in the Imperial Capital had arrived in London West in 1871. A bricklayer by trade, Houghton had built a small brick cottage at the corner of Ann and John Streets and become actively engaged in the affairs of the school board and later, the village council. Like so many other villagers, Houghton and his contracting partner, Abram Bending, found most of their employment in the city, working on such edifices as St. Joseph's Hospital.[14]

The Irish who settled in the village also had a strong hold upon the affairs of the community, with the most notable examples being Daniel Collins and Mary Ann Collins. Mary Ann Collins had been born in County Antrim, Ireland in 1836, and emigrated to Canada when she was eighteen. It was at Hamilton that she met and married Daniel Collins and then, in about 1859, the couple left for London West. Daniel Collins tried his hand at various jobs, including stints as a farmer and hotelkeeper. For the most part, however, he was actively engaged in the ice business and the managing of his impressive village centre, Collins Hall, until his death in 1888. By the time of his passing, Daniel Collins had managed to carve for himself and his family a comfortable niche. While he never appears publically to have contemplated attaining the office of Reeve (perhaps an indication of religious biases in a largely Protestant community) the esteem shown to him on his passing was great. Following a special joint meeting of the village's school board and village council where condolences were unanimously given the assembly adjourned and "marched in a body after the hearse to St. Peter's Cathedral, where mass was

celebrated."[15] Mary Ann Collins, survived her husband until a fall on the ice in 1899.[16]

Perhaps one of the most fundamental attractions of London West as a place of settlement was its lower tax rate and the cheaper availability of land. A simple comparison of London West's property values with those from London's Ward Three, which lay in the south-eastern quarter of the city, indicates the propensity of London West to attract inhabitants of moderate means. Residential Simcoe Street ran through the heart of London's Ward Three, lying south of the Great Western Railway and to the north of Labatt's brewery, and provided homes for some of London's skilled tradesmen and their families. A glance at the occupations of those residents of Simcoe Street shows a remarkable similarity to those of London West. Unlike the situation in London West, however, where a large proportion of householders owned their own property, the vast majority of their Simcoe Street counterparts simply rented, a situation no doubt partly due to the inflated value of the property on the city side of the river. As it was, the typical householder on Simcoe Street lived on property the value of which rarely fell below $400.00, and could go as high as an astounding $1300.00.[17] In London West, on the other hand, on the densely settled Ann Street the two most highly assessed properties belonging to both William Smith and John Bowman were only valued at $550.00 and $650.00 respectively. As for many of their neighbours, even freeholders of long standing, most property values hovered in the vicinity of $300.00 or $400.00, making London West a much cheaper place to dwell.[18]

As one life long resident of the village, in writing a memoir of his days in the village, recalled:

> We see by the paper the Village Council meet to-night at Collin's Hall. which is the large new building on the corners of Blackfriars and Centre Streets. Mr. John Platt is Reeve of Petersville, and Wally Smith and John Evans are some of the Councillors. Mr. Evans keeps A WOOD yard on Blackfriars Street and has a

> steam engine for sawing the wood. He sometimes lends it to the wood yard men up town . . . Luke Jeffries is the Village Constable, and he has to keep order sometimes at the Council meetings, for when Wally Smith and William Moore get discussing matters at the same time, those who have come in to hear the proceedings become rather hilarious. Dan Collins, who owns the Hotel is a nice man and has a large ice house near Blackfriars Bridge, also, another farther up the river, back of the brick cottage, where Mr. Samuel Gibson lives. He kept an hotel on the north side of the street, but his son keeps it now, opposite the new Hall, and he is pulling down the old Hotel, and is going to build cottages out of the material. Mr. Woodward keeps a butcher shop across from the Hall. Mr. Gurd is the village postmaster, and Thos. Barh[a]m keeps a new brick store across the road. Mrs. Tillman has a store opposite John Street.[19]

Village business also catered to those farm families who lived to the west of the village limits in the southern section of London Township. Even as late as the mid-1890's, farm families apparently made frequent trips to the village, especially to the juncture of Centre and Blackfriars Streets where they visited "[t]he John R. Gurd general store, post office, and broom factory." As well, Anna Mary Tillman's general store along with the Finagen General Store, a barber shop, bakery and other amenities catered to the rural shoppers needs. Yet by this time Blackfriars Street had lost its monopoly, if ever it had one, to a similar business section that had begun to flourish to the south at the junction of Dundas Street and Wharncliffe Road.[20] As for Gurd's broom factory, it remained a small but ongoing source of employment in the village; at its height the business operated with about thirty workers.[21]

The North Branch Mills, located in the most northerly stretches of the village had been built in 1848 and 1849 by the team of Jeremiah Hill and Dennis O'Brien on a grant for fourteen acres of land Hill had acquired for £56.[22] It seems likely that in 1856 or 1858 both the flour mill and the adjacent clothing mill had passed out Hill and O'Brien's hands to that of John Wilson of London. In 1862 Wilson placed an advertisement calling for either the sale or lease of his holdings. As it was Wilson explained that together the

Grist Mill and Cloth Factory had sat on an enlarged tract of land amounting to some thirty-four acres. In its current state Wilson explained that:

> The Grist Mill has two Run of Stones, Merchant and Grist Bolts. The Cloth Factory has two Carding Machines, and two sets of Machinery complete for Weaving. There is an abundant supply of water throughout the year. The whole is in excellent order, and has a large run of custom . . .[23]

It was at this time that Joseph D. Saunby, a native of Quebec, and his partner William Hilliard, acquired the mill and worked to build up their flour business. As time passed, Saunby left much of the running of the mill to his partner while he expanded his holdings in the Saunby Grain and Farm Supply Store on York Street in the city. In 1878 Saunby added to his holdings by acquiring the Blackfriar's Mill on the city side of the river, just below Blackfriar's Bridge.[24] Not only had Saunby expanded his enterprise but he had begun to take an active role in the affairs of London West. In 1875 he was elected as the village's first reeve, serving out three terms. Upon his retirement from municipal politics in early 1878 Saunby "thanking the Council for the manner in which they had sup[p]orted him, also stated that in all his actions in the Council he had had the interests of the village at heart . . ."[25]

The village never possessed much in the way of manufacturing beyond milling and Gurd's broom factory. While the village does not appear to have differentiated between residential and commercial tax rates[26] they did make concessions for certain businesses. For example, when R.S. Murray and Company opened a woolen mill on Blackfriars Street in 1882, the village agreed to exempt the firm from payment of taxes for ten years. As the business vacated their premises by 1886 London West's council rescinded the earlier agreement in order to collect taxes from the unused property.[27]

For a short period from the early 1870's to the mid 1880's the Kensington division of the community was home to Robert Arkell's Brewery, but it was an operation that

apparently faltered, and may have remained in operation as late as 1884.[28] Arkell was prosecuted late in 1881 for "allowing vile refuse from the brewery to run into a creek . . .", a charge that clearly infuriated Arkell who threatened retaliation against those who had brought suit against him.[29] Whether Arkell was successfully vindicated was not recorded.

Late in the spring of 1880 the enterprising proprietor, Jerry McDonald, finished work on his new Riverside Hotel that sat precariously south of Dundas Street overlooking the impressive and changeable river forks. McDonald paid for an extension of the gas lights from the Kensington Bridge into his establishment ensuring that the Riverside was "immortalized by being the first house in the village ever lighted by gas."[30] In their compendium on Middlesex County, W.A. and C.L. Goodspeed wrote that Jerry McDonald:

> is thoroughly conversant with all the details of the business, and his spacious dining-room is capable of seating a large number of guests, while the other rooms of the establishment are proportionately commodious and well kept. He has several pool and billiard tables, and his well-appointed bar is well stocked with choice wines, liquors and ales. His establishment is a popular resort as an oyster house and restaurant for the ladies and gentlemen of the city, and his luncheon department is patronized by many.[31]

McDonald, while capitalizing on a magnificent view, did not have a monopoly upon the hotel trade within the village, for by 1883 there were at least two other establishments including Collins Hotel on Blackfriars Street and William Haney's London West Hotel, not far from McDonald's on Dundas Street.[32]

Toward the end of the 1880's it was noted that "[w]hile London West is a pretty place throughout, there are not many residences of a palatial description within its borders."[33] Certainly there was little that was imposing about the village's architecture or housing. Yet there was an air of self-expressed respectability about the community, which

was fostered by the various religious and social institutions as well as that of the village's government. While the industrial suburb of London East seemed resigned, if not eager, to attract disreputable elements from the city to their "seedy taverns and the infamous houses of prostitution . . .", London West seemed equally determined to shut these elements out of their community.[34]

For the majority of nineteenth century working people in Ontario, along with decisions about leisure, religion formed one of the major spheres in which they "possessed the most choice about their lives."[35] Indeed, early in the nineteenth century, a sizeable minority of Ontario's inhabitants expressed no religious affiliation, a number that continued to decline as the century progressed. In a search for some form of equality and freedom, many had steered clear of organized religion, but as time progressed and issues of respectability became increasingly important many gravitated toward the less rigid religious denominations, a feature most frequently offered by Methodism, which tended to be more inclusive. Certainly, "Methodism did provide at least some opportunity for women and children to assert themselves as active individuals both in the home and at religious services."[36]

In mid-September, 1869 a meeting at North Street Wesleyan Methodist Church in London produced a proposal to fund and construct a mission church in the village of Petersville. Worries about a declining attendance to the Sabbath School (held in the Petersville school), prompted the action, buoyed by the hope that a permanent structure would entice increased and regular attendance. At the meeting two individuals heavily involved in the affairs of the western community, Samuel Peters and John Elson moved "[t]hat the Trustees of North Street Methodist Church aid in the erection of a church in Petersville . . . and that a sum of two hundred and fifty dollars be apportioned for that

purpose from the Trust funds." It appears that Samuel Peters was the driving force behind the church's construction for it was left to him to provide the building lot, free of charge, should plans and funds for the construction of the sanctuary begin as soon as possible. A lot was sold to the trustees in early 1870 by the Peters family for the meagre sum of $5.00.[37] Construction appears to have commenced rapidly for the "Methodist Chapel" was reported to be ready for use by July, 1870. However, one indignant resident denounced the condition of a local abattoir across Wharncliffe Road from the church. As the writer explained:

> Respectfully we ask the FREE PRESS to give the information, and if the slaughter house, pig pens, and all pertaining, cannot be kept clean, the sooner their removal the better. We hope to see friends from the city come to the new meeting house, but we sincerely hope that their nasal organs will not be annoyed by the nuisance coming from the west. The first decided step is taken to bring the neighborhood into a proper state of civilization, and if some aged sinners are willing to breathe putrefaction, by all means give the young nature's pure air.[38]

Despite the worries of putrid air scaring away parishioners, the Methodist Church appears to have attracted enough adherents to persist. Indeed, there appears to have been a blossoming of the Sabbath School, an institution that had predated the formation of the mission church, and by 1874 it was reported at the anniversary meeting that "the school shows an increase of about fifty scholars since last anniversary. The number now attending ranges from 100 to 120."[39] So successful was the increase in attendance that, in 1876, the Petersville congregation formally separated from the Queen's Avenue Circuit, to form an independent pastoral charge under the spiritual leadership of Rev. John E. Lanceley. By 1880 the building itself underwent extensive renovations with the addition of a permanent school room.[40] The church remained an essential component of London West society, claiming a large number of villagers amongst its flock.

In 1890 First Methodist Church in London began a small subsidiary church in the

southern portion of the village, known as the Kensington Mission which "did much for Methodism in London West."[41]

The other major house of worship within London West's limits was St. George's Anglican Church. Its origins are relatively obscure, although it appears that a congregation was formed in 1874, led by Rev. Evans Davis, as a mission to St. James's Westminister. Initially the congregation met in the old school house in the north of the village.[42] By the beginning of the 1880's, the congregation had grown significantly to warrant the construction of a small white brick sanctuary at the junction of Wharncliffe Road and Ann Street. As Frederick Andrewes recorded many years later:

> They have a Sunday School in the connection which is held in the brick day school in the west upper room, and if one happens to pass there on a Sunday, at the close of this school, the large boys, who try to get out first, make an awful noise, rushing down the stairs and out into the front yard with a yell . . . On the block where the school and church stand, there are no other buildings. A rail fence surrounds the field, where Mr. Peters grows grain and some sheep pasture in the church yard. On day when Canon [E.E.] Newman was walking in the rear of the church, a ram thought him trespassing and had the effect of causing him to go to bed for a few days. The choir of St. Georges have their ups and downs, the same as most musical organizations . . . Mr. Hardy is sexton of the church and keeps the lamp chimneys nice and clean . . .[43]

In the years ensuing incorporation in 1874 there appears to have been concerted effort made on the part of the villagers to create an abundance of organizations and societies devoted to the improvement of both the individual and the community at large, and as a means of financial security for their various members through insurance schemes. While this process was not necessarily couched in such terms for the London West, there was a quest for respectability. For those organizations that were restricted to men there was an underlying belief that they "expressed the ideals of respectable manhood in nineteenth-century Ontario."[44] There had been a sharp change in attitude

within these growing societies. As it was:

> Fraternal culture offered a sociability and camaraderie that enticed many men away from home and family. In the early years of the century, lodge culture was not much different from tavern culture. Most lodge meetings were lubricated with alcohol . . . Over the course of the century, however, lodges became increasingly interested in respectability, and alcohol was banished from the many all-male social events organized for lodge members.[45]

By 1881 there were three secret societies within the community: King Solomon Lodge No. 78, Maccabees Jabel's Tent No. 18 and the Ancient Order of Foresters Court Excelsior.[46] Earlier organizations such as the Hammond Temple of the International Order of Good Templars were organized catering to both men and women within the village in order to promote abstinence from alcohol consumption. This particular organization was thriving as late as 1882 at which time it had seventy members. It was a society that seems to have encompassed a wide variety of the village's inhabitants, such as Charles Gillespie the cooper, William Moore the grocer, and the broom maker John Lord and his wife.[47] The Court Excelsior of the Ancient Order of Foresters appears to have been active throughout the period of London West's incorporation, taking from the village a wide cross section of its male population including bricklayer, Edward Houghton, plasterer George Stratfold, record-keeper Alfred J. Mansfield and butcher Robert Woodward.[48]

The Knights of the Maccabees of the World had formed in London in 1878,[49] and by 1880 the London West branch, Jabel's Tent, had a membership of around 150 people including "many of whom are leading farmers." It was at this interval that one member, George Fearnley donated a lot on Wharncliffe Road for the construction of a meeting place, which was to named Fearnley Hall. Plans were rapidly drawn up which called for the donation of both timber and labour in order that no expenses be incurred during the

construction of the 'tent.' In addition to the hall itself the society planned to construct two store buildings on either side, "both of which have already been bespoken at a good rental . . ." one by carriage-maker Peter Grant.[50]

There also developed, in connection with the Methodist Church, a Literary Society which by the 1880's was heralded as being a great success.[51] Nowhere was the manifestation for a recognizable sense of respectability more tangible than within the Literary Society where evenings were spent in "readings, recitations and vocal and instrumental music . . ."[52] A decision was made after one successful gathering to stage an open meeting of the society "to show the denizens of the city what they can do in the way of entertainment."[53] The insinuation of this statement was clear; the citizenry of Petersville could provide stimulating intellectual and cultural activities on par with anything the city organizations could boast.

Beyond the Hammond's Lodge and the slightly ambiguous Temperance Lodge[54] within the village, many women found an active social outlet within church related organizations such as the Ladies Aid of the Methodist Church and similar circles and fellowships. The Ladies Aid Society frequently staged entertainments and other functions. Toward Christmas 1880 it was reported that:

> The social in the school-room of the Methodist Church on Tuesday night passed off very successfully. The refreshment and fancy tables were laid out in a very attractive and [i]nviting manner, and were well patronized. The Ladies' Aid Society organized the entertainment, and deserves great praise for the evident pains taken. The refreshment tables were under the charge of Mesdames J.D. Saunby, ex-President; Gibson, Grant and Thomas. The various fancy tables were conducted by Mesdames Bowman, President; Minton and Stinchcombe, and Misses W. Saunby and Purdy.[55]

There developed within the community a sinister view of the adjoining city which residents saw as the source of temptation and moral vice. It was felt that London West's

proximity to the city was such that corrupting influences freely infiltrated the village.[56] Frequently news reports from the village dealt with many reports of vice and violence enacted upon its streets. It is clear that to the more pious and upright of London West's citizenry, not unlike their contemporaries across the province, the root of the problem was rampant intemperance. As a consequence of this perception the village council, in response to pressures from the community, enacted key bylaws aimed at eradicating both public and private displays of indecency and vice. In May, 1876 village council passed a bylaw "for the suppression of disorderly houses and houses of ill fame." The existence of such bawdy houses would simply not be tolerated and:

> any person keeping such disorderly house or house of ill fame or house of immoral character having a tendency to disturb the peace of the public, or any keeper of a house for the resort of prostitutes' and any person in the habit of frequenting such houses, not giving a satisfactory account of themselves, shall upon conviction . . . be liable to a fine not exceeding fifty dollars or to imprisonment in the County Jail for a term of no less than ninety days.[57]

Either council or the village citizenry did not feel that the bylaw went far enough to curb the immoral excesses that supposedly proliferated the streets. Certainly media attention frequently became focused upon the problem of youth congregating on the streets, giving rise to fears that these groups would engage in crime. In December, 1876 council adopted a bylaw respecting "the suppression of Vice, Intemperance, Immorality, Sabbath-breaking and other immoral and indecent acts . . ." Penalties for those caught selling alcohol to minors "without the consent of his or her Parent, Master or Legal Protector. . ." were defined in terms of fines. Similar assessments were to be levied against anyone found guilty of writing graffiti. Penalties of equal fines, with possible jail sentences were enacted for crimes of intoxication, gambling, excessive noise, disrupting religious meetings, vagrancy and indecent exposure which included those who were

found "guilty of bathing or swimming in any public place whereby the public exposure of their persons may be obnoxious to public morals or outrage decency."[58] It seems that for all of the caution, these regulations were frequently broken and village news was filled with references to drunks and vagrants. In December, 1882 Euphemia Richardson caused "[a] disgraceful scene . . ." when she became intoxicated and paraded about the village "and acted in a disorderly manner upon the street."[59] One William Wales was indicted in 1880 for various infringements including indecent exposure and vagrancy "for sleeping in outhouses and barns around the village . . ." [60] As the *Advertiser* complained in August, 1880:

> A disgusting sight was witnessed on one of the principal streets of Sunday morning. A boy about 16 years of age was stripped naked, with the exception of short trunks, in his own garden, it is true, was taking a bath in full sight of passers-by and the neighbors. If the parents of the boy allow a repetition of the offence the neighbors are disposed to try the salutary effect of the Police Court.[61]

The village was frequently faced with other minor crime including the poisoning of village poultry in the autumn of 1880 and of course cases of burglary.[62] The most serious crime to occur in London West involved the shooting death of Patrick DeLargy by his fellow boarder, George Code, in an old rooming house off of Blackfriars Bridge, following an evening of drinking.[63] In order to maintain order and combat crime the village appointed constables who would remove vagrants and lawbreakers to jail and bring them before the local magistrates, including Squire John Peters of Grosvenor Lodge.[64]

There were concerted efforts made throughout the village to find other manners in which people, especially the young, might fill their spare time. During the 1870's, baseball had become an increasing favourite, far outstripping the popularity of cricket. In

1876 the London-based team, the London Tecumsehs, emerged into the professional baseball circuit and played out of a temporary field at the Western Fair Grounds. That all changed the following year when a city china merchant W.J. Reid purchased a plot of swampy land in the south-eastern section of London West. Reid set about improving the land, appropriately named "Tecumseh Park," and developed it into a baseball diamond with extensive seating for fans for the then astronomical price of $3000.00. The expenditure seemed well merited for in that very year of 1877 the Tecumsehs won the International Association baseball championship, and according to legend, invented the curve ball all in one season.[65] When hosting a baseball game, the park served as a venue for various village and city oriented entertainments including fireworks and military bands[66]

While baseball in London West had an enduring and eminent presence, it was certainly not the only sporting activity found within the village. Even in 1865 there had existed a skating rink, in the vicinity of Blackfriars Street, operated by an unspecified group under the direction of a Mr. Cooper. In the evenings lighting was erected and membership dues had enabled villagers and city dwellers to skate at no charge until the end of February, at which time "Mr. Cooper will charge an admission fee of three cents for each gentleman skating on the rink hereafter. Ladies free."[67] Certainly skating continued to be a popular winter time release for many villagers and in the winter of 1881 one London West councillor, John Brodie, indicated that he donated ten dollars toward a competition to be held at the Kensington skating rink. As it was, the event was to be "a big thing on ice . . ."[68] Talk at one time lingered on the hope that a curling club might be

formed within the village, but the outcome of this discussion remains unknown.[69] Whether London Westers had a particular penchant for competition cannot be stated with any certainty, but in January, 1879 a race was organized. As the local paper explained:

> A walking race -ten miles- has been arranged between Mr. [Gibson] Wright, of Petersville, the well known temperance advocate, and Mr. Underwood, late Sergeant Major of the 7th Battalion. Mr. Underwood is sixty years of age and Mr. Wright fifty-five years. A close contest is expected, as both parties are confident of victory.[70]

Unfortunately neither city paper reported the outcome of this event.

In December, 1882, James Daniels, a carpenter, tired of the apparent ineptitude of the village council, which was dominated by various village professionals, claimed to speak on behalf of the village's lower orders when he announced that "they wanted workingmen to represent them not, professional men."[71] While this outburst does not indicate that there was a rampant class struggle within the village, it does point to tensions brought on by the fact that the village could not claim to be economically heterogeneous. While the population of the village was relatively stable, with householders remaining for lengthy periods of time, London West was also home to more transient elements. Frequently these individuals came between census years, did not make the voter's lists or directories, and are found in only passing references in local papers. Some families such as the Patrick family only arrived to have disaster strike:

> An emigrant family named Patrick came to live in the village lately and rented a small tenement house on Walnut street. A few days ago the wife was taken down with fever, and the other day the husband was stricken with the same disease, leaving the large family uncared and unprovided for. This morning the case was reported to Mr. Lacey, chairman of the Board of Health, who in company with Dr. Stevenson, the newly appointed Medical Health Officer, visited the family and found them to be in destitute condition. Upon the order of Mr. Lacey, the woman

was sent to the hospital.[72]

The disparity between various elements within the village was no more readily apparent than dealing with the composition of the village government. Between the election of the first reeve and council in 1875 and the amalgamation of the village with the city in 1897, twenty-three councils were elected to office. Heading these various administrations was the office of the reeve, a position held by ten men who did not reflect the general make-up of the community. In the majority of cases the officeholders were well-established professionals or businessmen. Three reeves, William Henry Bartram, William Weir Fitzgerald and A.J.B. Macdonald, were all lawyers, serving almost continuously between 1878 and 1882 and then again from 1885 to 1886. Duncan C. MacDonald, reeve for the year 1895, was the manager of a city-based insurance company. Prior to moving to London West, MacDonald had been a member of London City Council and mayor of the city from 1875 to 1876. Four of the other incumbent office holders owned and operated their own businesses, almost exclusively in the city. James Campbell, reeve for 1887, owned and operated a coal business, while William Spence, in office in 1894, operated a tinsmithing business selling stoves and other tinware. Robert F. Lacey, reeve from 1888 to 1890, was a leather wholesaler, and Joseph Saunby the first reeve, was in the milling business, with his main offices situated in the heart of the city. Saunby's son, William, who acted as the village's last reeve from 1896 to 1897 worked for the family firm. The only reeve to serve non-contiguous terms in office (1882 to1884 and again from1891 to 1893), John Platt, fit in none of these moulds. He was a farmer, and unlike all other reeves, he did not reside within the village, living across the line in

London Township. However, his family remained influential within the village and he held freehold to the required amount of property, and appeared to have even been supported by the anti-professional naysayer, James Daniels, who frequently sprang to Platt's defence in the face of criticism.[73]

Throughout its period of incorporation, the affairs of London West were conspicuously dominated by men. By and large most of the secret societies and municipal institutions which curried media attention within the village fell almost exclusively within the male realm. Yet London West was, of course, home to hundreds of women whose work and lives left their own imprint upon the development of their community. Certainly there were the conspicuous examples of individuals such as Anna Mary Tillman who owned and operated a grocery store on Blackfriars Street. Tillman had been born in France, and emigrated to Canada with her German born husband, Anthony. Widowed by the early 1880's, Tillman operated her family's business and raised her five children. Two separate business assessments noted Tillman's operation had a capital investment of between $2000.00 to $5000.00 and as having a fair credit rating. Indeed, in a village that boasted seven 'grocery' businesses, Anna Tillman appears to have owned the largest.[74]

One particular villager who received a great deal of sympathy, if one can gauge such things by media coverage, was Mary Long. As the *Advertiser* reported at the end of 1880:

> Mrs. Long, an elderly and respected widow lady, met with an unfortunate accident on Christmas Day. She was walking along the foot-path near the dam at Blackfriars mill when the very slippery sidewalk caused her to fall heavily,

> breaking one of her arms. A surgeon was sent for and set the broken limb. A suit for damages against the village corporation is probable, as the accident was solely due to the disgraceful condition of the sidewalk. The accident is made more painful as the injured lady had to support herself and little boy by her own exertions.[75]

Whether the predicted suit was ever pressed went unrecorded, but Mary Long and her son, Henry, had more misfortune in store. While the flood of 1883 spared both Long and her son, thieves did not. While her home had been damaged Mrs. Long had been absent from the dwelling but upon her return discovered that the few dollars she had left in her house had been stolen.[76]

In November, 1888 the choir at St. George's Anglican hired Anna C. Milligan to be the new church organist. The preceding decade of Milligan's life had been one of turmoil. In the autumn of 1879 her husband, James, had pulled up stakes and left his family and failing woolen mill in Dumfries, Scotland for a decade of wandering in New Zealand and Ceylon. Abandoned with three small children and a fourth on the way Anna Milligan took up residence with her father, an Anglican vicar, in Birkenhead, England. Having supported her young family through the teaching of music, on the advice of friends and acquaintances she decided to make a new start in Canada. In the summer of 1887 she and her four children settled in London, Ontario. By obtaining the post at St. George's, and after nearly four years of scrimping and saving, on May 1, 1892 Milligan purchased a house and surrounding three acres in London West to be closer to her position as organist.[77]

On occasions lesser known women such as the unfortunate, and somewhat maligned Hannah Swinburn, became the focus of a great deal of attention in the village,

where it was alleged her situation had "created considerable amusement." Early in 1885 Swinburn appeared before the Division Court in London having lodged a suit against her former employer and uncle by marriage, John Wattam, a London West bricklayer and former village councillor. Swinburn acknowledged that for a period of two and a half years she had worked as Wattam's housekeeper, and alleged that he had knowingly withheld wages from her when she left her position, which she felt had been an amicable separation. Indeed, when Swinburn apparently approached Wattam about the wages owing to her, their relationship evidently soured and a quarrel developed, leaving her no recourse but to lodge a suit against him. As her testimony was given, it became apparent that there was more to the story than at first met the eye. As Swinburn explained:

> that she wasn't exactly comfortable there [at the Wattam home], as Mr. Wattam wouldn't allow her to entertain company at the house, especially young men, which she wouldn't have objected to doing. She said Mr. Wattam himself proposed to her, but she wanted a younger man. On a letter of hers being read, one of the counsel came across a passage wishing him "happiness with all her heart." She took great exception to this, and could hardly be convinced it was in the letter, and one of the counsel gallantly suggested she couldn't believe it because she had no heart or she wouldn't have treated Mr. Wattam's advances so coldly.[78]

The court called to the stand Wattam's son, William a boy of fifteen. As it was young Wattam noted that, since his cousin's removal from the household, he had taken over her duties such as cooking and scrubbing and apparently felt that he was doing a fair job of it, although he noted he was not yet up to her standards "as he was not a woman yet." The jury then retired and returned a verdict in favour of the plaintiff, awarding her $11.00 and costs.[79]

While the Swinburn case seems to have been an unappreciated case of

harassment, cases of open physical abuse were not unknown to make themselves public knowledge in the village. Perhaps the most notorious of these came in the summer of 1884 when a London West carpenter, W. H. Greenway, came across a small boy lying in the grass at eleven o'clock at night. Greenway woke the child and walked him to his home, but upon arriving there, the small boy "broke away and again lay in the grass." What resulted was a summons for the child's elder brother who it was noted was "in the habit of giving him terrible beatings . . ." causing the child to run away in fear.[80] When the defendant, Albert Brown, failed to answer the summons on the following day a warrant was issued for his arrest. What soon became clear was that Brown's behaviour was not merely limited to his brother, for his own mother testified that "she could do nothing with the older son. One day he had even given herself a black eye."[81] Brown was given a small fine and allowed off, but hardly a week had passed by before he was again found in the news ---this time for disorderly conduct having "assaulted his mother by throwing a large stone at her." Brown was again arrested and brought before Squire Peters who sentenced him to two weeks in gaol.[82]

While it would be misleading to assert that London West was an economically homogenous community, it becomes clear that it was largely the preserve of a generally self employed group of skilled artisans and small business owners. While boasting some ethnic diversity, London West was nonetheless a very British community. It was a community that was home to the relative affluence of such individuals as lawyer, William Weir Fitzgerald, but also to the poverty of those such as Mary Long.

What marked both the village's citizenry and development was a guarded sense of

maintaining stability and propriety. Having never developed a vibrant economic base, tied as they were to the city, a large number of London West's inhabitants nevertheless were vigilant in ensuring that their community conformed to various standards of morality, set out by the prevailing religious institutions and friendly societies under the watchful eye of the municipal council. Despite their best efforts at attempting to create a stable and moral community, often in an attempt to stave off the apparent immoral excesses of the city, there were inevitably slips and oversights. While in London West the proliferation of alcohol abuse and petty crime was probably no worse than other communities of a similar size and location, there seems to have been a genuine distaste for such displays. The frequent instances of misdemeanors also illustrate that the morals of the village's hierarchy were not indicative of the entire population. For all its outward trappings of moral superiority, some of the village's leading citizens were not above improprieties as was illustrated by Hannah Swinburn's mistreatment by her employer and uncle, John Wattam.

What is clear, however, is that as various organizations and religious institutions developed within the community and the municipal government attempted to legislate and control the behaviour and actions of its citizens, there became an increased identification amongst the village's people of being inhabitants of the community of London West.

Notes For Chapter Three

1. A.S. Meaden, "Memories of My Boy-Hood Days in London: from my arrival, as a boy, in the year 1872," Western Ontario Historical Notes 9 (September 1951), 91-92. Meaden had moved to London with his parents from Michigan City in 1872, settling initially in London East "which at that time was considered to be out in the country." The Meaden family moved to London West by the time of the Victoria Disaster in 1881.

2. John Lutman. The South and West of London: An Historical and Architectural Guide (London, Ontario: Corporation of the City of London, 1979), 54.

3. Dunham.

4. Paul Craven, "Introduction."ed. Paul Craven, ed. Labouring Lives: Work and Workers in Nineteenth-Century Ontario (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 3.

5. Ibid, 4.

6. David Burley. A Particular Condition in Life: Self-Employment and Social Mobility in Mid-Victorian Brantford, Ontario (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 6.

7. "Voter's List of the Municipality of Petersville For The Year 1879," (London, Ontario: London Free Press Printing Company, 1879), 1-12. Of the 358 eligible voters it was not possible to distinguish whether or not five individuals were either owners or tenants. Polling Station I, Andrew Kenny of 46 Ann Street and Paul Keenan of 2 Wharncliffe Road. Polling Station II, Daniel Delay of 4,6 & 7 Blackfriars south, William Donoughy of 3 Blackfriars south and Henry Dudney of 3 Dundas south.

8. London Advertiser, June 6, 1874.

9. Canada 1881 Manuscript Census, Petersville, Ontario. The information and statistics which follow are derived from an analysis of the census material for Petersville.

10. Peter G. Goheen, "Currents of Change in Toronto, 1850-1900," The Canadian City: Essays in Urban and Social History.eds. Gilbert A. Stelter and Alan F.J. Artibise (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1982), 88-89. While obviously a much larger example, Toronto's population between 1860 and 1900 was overwhelmingly British in origin with the English leading the Irish and Scottish. Similar to London West half of Toronto's citizenry were native born Canadians.

11. Canada 1891 Manuscript Census, London West, Ontario. The information and statistics for the comparative figures are based upon an analysis of the census material for London West. 1881 Manuscript Census, Petersville. The large immigrant population within the village in 1881, not surprisingly, were English, making up one quarter of the population, with those of Irish birth making up the next largest group of immigrants at a

distant seven percent.

12. Canada 1881 Manuscript Census, Petersville, 28-29, 30, 49. Cigar-maker, Paul Vyrtz, aged 48, was a native of Denmark although he adhered to the Church of England, and his wife, Annie, was Irish. The family appears to have only emigrated from the United States a few years before the census was taken. Andrew Zwald, (aged 38) a Presbyterian wood carver, his wife, Catherine (aged 30) and their eldest daughter, Annie (aged 8) were all natives of Switzerland. Mary Wener a 47 year old widow, was a Roman Catholic native of Germany.

13. London Free Press, February 7, 1890. John Bowman died on February 6, 1890 aged about seventy-four. Canada 1881 Census, Petersville, 17; London Township Assessment, 1862 St. George's Ward, 1st Concession North, Petersville. In 1862 John Bowman owned a quarter acre lot valued at $225.00.

14. Greg Stott. "A Bricklayler in Our Barn:" The Story of Edward Johnson Houghton and Emma Taylor and Their Families (Arkona, Ontario: Greg Stott, 1997), 10-15. Edward J. Houghton became involved in the school board in the late 1870's and was elected to village council in 1884 and by 1887 had been reelected to the school board. Abram and Amelia Bending emigrated from England between 1871 and 1874, and made their home on Centre Street in London West. Abram died in 1931 and Amelia survived until 1935. Ibid, 11-12, 133.

15. London Advertiser, April 2, 1888.

16. Ibid, May 22, 1889 and December 11, 1899.

17. City of London Collectors Rolls, 1882. Ward 3, 58.

18. London West Assessment Rolls, 1881. Ann Street North.

19. Frederick Andrewes [?], "The West Side Some Years Back," (Unpublished typed memoir. J.J. Talman Regional Collections, U.W.O), 2-3.

20. W.W. Judd, ed. Annotated Memoirs of Albert H. Dobson (1888-1969) Concerning His Life from 1888 to 1923 in London Township and Petersville, Middlesex County, Ontario, Canada (London, Ontario: Phelps Publishing, 1993), 1-2.

21. Elizabeth A. Vining, "Thriving Towns East and West London Rivals," London Free Press, July 19, 1941.

22. Terrence W. Honey, ed. London Heritage (London, Ontario: London Free Press, 1972),
44; Saunby's Mill Restoration Company. "J.D. Saunby's Mill" A Report to the Committee of Adjustment, City of London. (Submitted April 28, 1972), 3; Scott, 224.

23. (London) Daily Prototype and Western Advocate, January 13, 1862.

24. London Advertiser, March 16, 1915; Saunby's Mill Restoration Company. "J.D. Saunby's Mill. To: The Committee of Adjustment City of London." (Saunby's Mill Restoration Company, April 28, 1972), 4.

25. London Advertiser, January 9, 1878.

26. Petersville/London West By-Law 13, September 24, 1875; By-Law 19, August 7, 1876; By-Law 37, September 25, 1878; By-Law 43, September 15, 1879; By-Law 51, August 2, 1881; By-Law 56, August 1, 1882; By-Law 72, September 24, 1883; By-Law 186, October 6, 1885; By-Law 210, September 13, 1887; and By-Law 283, August 7, 1894. London City Hall. Throughout its incorporation the village council took into account the expenses for both the county and school rates and thereby adjusted the mill rate for the collection of village taxes. There was no distinction made between the rates set for businesses verses residential. London Advertiser, March 25, 1880. However, there were of course differences in the assessment rates as was illustrated by complaints about the 1880 property assessment. As the *Advertiser* reported:
"Previously a large quantity of vacant land in the centre of the village was assessed as farm lands, and adjoining residents were naturally indignant at having to pay as much taxes for a fifth acre lot as his neighbor did for an acre or two. These surveys have been now assessed at something like their value, and the owners are much dissatisfied at the alteration, hence the appeals."

27. London West, By-Law 63, May 2, 1882, and By-Law 191, April 13, 1886; London City and Middlesex County Directory For 1884 (Toronto: R.L. Polk and Co., 1884), 261; London City and Middlesex County Directory For 1886 (London: R. Hills and Co., 1886), 288.

28. Miller, London 200, 134. According to the 1884 survey map of Kensington Heights, a subdivision that lay largely to the west of London West's corporate boundaries Arkell's property was still indicated on the south side of Walker Street. However, five years earlier there is no mention of a brewery at all existing within the corporation in rating of local business operations; The Mercantile Agency Reference Book (and Key) Containing Ratings of the Merchants, Manufacturers, and Traders Generally Throughout the Dominion of Canada: September, 1879 (Montreal: Dun, Wiman & Co., 1879), Petersville; Canada 1881 Census, Petersville, 53. Robert Arkell was a 53 year old native of England who was listed as an Anglican, along with his wife, Maria Theresa Arkell.

29. London Advertiser, November 7, 1881, November 11, 1881 and November 30, 1881.

30. Ibid, May 29, 1880.

31. History of Middlesex, 902-903.

32. London City and County of Middlesex Directory For 1883 (London, Ontario: London Publishing Co., 1883), 146, 147.

33. History of Middlesex, 520.

34. Ross, 27.

35. Lynne Marks, "Religion, Leisure, and Working Class Identity." Labouring Lives: Work and Workers in Nineteenth-Century Ontario ed., Paul Craven (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 279.

36. Ibid, 281-285.

37. Empress United Church Centennial Committee. Empress United Church Centennial: 1870-1970 [?London, Ontario: Empress United Church, 1970], 5; History of Middlesex, 519. The Church property was largely a donation of Ann Peters of Grosvenor Lodge, and the building was officially opened on July 31, 1870.

38. HEBE, "A Nuisance in Petersville." July 27, 1870. London Free Press, July 29, 1870.

39. London Advertiser, January 20, 1874.

40. History of Middlesex, 520.

41. Empress United, 7. The Kensington Mission started on September 21, 1890 at a little house at 79 Dundas Street. It remained open until 1916 when it combined with Empress Methodist Church (the former London West Methodist Church). The mission received relatively little media coverage save for the occasional wedding. London Advertiser, October 22, 1895.

42. History of Middlesex, 301; Frederick Andrewes, 3-4.

43. Ibid, 3.

44. Marks, 308.

45. Ibid, 309.

46. City of London and County of Middlesex Directory for 1881-1882 (London: London Publishing Co., 1881), 77, 78, 79.

47. London Advertiser, February 7, 1874, December 1, 1881 and February 1, 1882; Alvin J. Schmidt. Fraternal Organizations: The Greenwood Encyclopedia of American Institutions (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1980), 146-148. The International Order of Good Templars was organized in 1850 in Utica, New York, and worked largely for the spread of the Temperance Movement.

48. London Advertiser, December 22, 1880; Schmidt, 115-117. The Ancient Order of Foresters was founded in England in 1813. A schism in 1874 found a large number of the Canadian branches reconfigured under the Independent Order of Foresters. The London West branch appears to have remained with the original society.

49. Ibid, 211-212. The Knights of the Maccabees was formed "[i]n a kerosene-lit room of a jewelry store in London, Ontario, [by] M. J. McGloghlon in 1878 . . ."

50. London Advertiser, November 20, 1880.

51. Ibid, February 23, 1880.

52. Ibid, March 27, 1880.

53. Ibid, March 13, 1880.

54. Ibid, July 25, 1878. While various papers make frequent mention of the Temperance Hall, the organization itself seems to have had a chequered past. The Petersville Temperance Reform Club (perhaps associated with the Liberal Party) was 're-organized' in the summer of 1878, suggesting a period when it was in abeyance. There is a strong possibility that the term *Temperance Lodge* in London West was for a time used as an informal reference to the Hammond Lodge.

55. Ibid, December 23, 1880.

56. Ibid, March 20, 1880.

57. Petersville By-Law 17, May 22, 1876. London City Hall. The fine for any inmate of a brothel or such an establishment was apparently to be dealt with in slightly more lenient terms with a fine not to exceed twenty dollars or a prison term of no longer than sixty days. However, in the case of such individuals all fines, should they be unable to pay, would be extracted from the sale of their personal property.

58. Petersville By-Law, 21, December 4, 1876. London City Hall.

59. London Advertiser, December 5, 1881.

60. Ibid, August 20, 1880.

61. Ibid, August 2, 1880.

62. Ibid, July 31, 1880 and October 12, 1880.

63. Ibid, April 17, 1882.

64. Ibid, April 2, 1881. At this time it was reported that "[t]he new village constables report that the village is very orderly, and that the boys are on their good behaviour, but have applied to Reeve Bartram for batons in order to show their official character to all whom it may concern."

65. Morden, 45-47.

66. London Advertiser, August 3, 1882.

67. Ibid, February 25, 1865. The Blackfriars Skating Rink was still operating as late as 1879 when it was noted that due to snowdrifts the rink had been temporarily closed. Ibid, January 6, 1879.

68. Ibid, January 10, 1881. There was "[c]onsiderable disappointment . . . expressed at the postponement of the competition for the medals at the Blackfriars' Rink, which was announced to take place . . ." on January 1, 1879. Ibid, January 2, 1879.

69. Ibid, January 6, 1879.

70. Ibid, January 18, 1879.

71. Ibid, December 16, 1882.

72. Ibid, August 6, 1884.

73. London Middlesex Directory 1883, 146-148; Goodspeed, 725-726, 814-815, 883, 901-902; London City and Middlesex County Directory For 1880-81 (London: R.L. Polk, 1880), 265, 553;
London Advertiser, December 16, 1882; Ibid, June 7, 1880. Squire Robert Francis Lacey had arrived in London West in June, 1880 when he began constructing "a fine two story frame house on Albert [Albion?] street. . ." That same fall Lacey assumed leadership of the choir at the Methodist Church in what was still Petersville. Ibid, October 13, 1880. Early in his tenure in London West, Lacey became active on the school board. Lacey and his wife, Elizabeth, lost three of their six children in the 1883 flood. Lacey died on November 23, 1914. His wife survived until 1922. London Free Press, November 23, 1914; Ibid, February 20, 1922.

74. Dun, Wiman & Co., Petersville, Ontario; Ibid, (July 1882), London West, Ontario; Canada 1881Census, Petersville, 29-30; Canada 1891 Census, London West, 26.

75. London Advertiser, December 27, 1880.

76. Ibid, July 12, 1883.

77. Stott, 43-44; London Free Press, July 15, 1936.

78. London Advertiser, February 2, 1885.

79. Ibid.

80. Ibid, August 19, 1884.

81. Ibid, August 20, 1884.

82. Ibid, August 28, 1884 and August 29, 1884.

Chapter Four: London West and The Thames River

For so many in the village the Thames River had been a constant if not capricious neighbour and had served the villagers in various ways. Beyond merely forming the physical boundary between the village and London, it had proven to be a major form of diversion for its citizenry into the early 1880's in virtually all seasons. Various boating regattas had enthralled citizens of the village and city alike. Villagers shared a love of the river which included the rental of boats from Roger's Boathouse, vessels the owner made himself and let for ten cents an hour. In August, 1880 villagers and city dwellers alike were enthusiastic particpants in "the Regatta" on the river below the Coves. The majority of those who thronged the river banks had come chiefly to see Canada's own shining star. Ned Hanlan, the "champion single Skuller [sic] of the world . . ." With winter, villagers strapped "on our rockers and we are able to skate from Oxford Street to Springbank . . ."[1] As one contemporary report explained "[s]katers in the village are fixing up their old skates, while others are purchasing to enable them successfully to compete on the shimmering crystal."[2] Before the decade of the 1880's had progressed far, however, a series of catastrophes, including the infamous and destructive flood of 1883 would forever alter the relationship the inhabitants of London West enjoyed with the river. These disastrous incidents, perhaps more than any other milestones in the village's development, would shape the course of London West's development and provide for its citizens a rallying point and source of community identity.

While there had been no repeats of the flooding of April, 1873 and January, 1874[3] the increased number of homes built on the lowlands, especially in the area of Kensington made the potential of flood damage far more serious. However, while anxious villagers watched the river during heavy spring freshets (dwellings and outbuildings lying closest

to the bank were not unknown to suffer minor flooding) in general most residents viewed these incidents as more of a nuisance rather than a potential threat. A freshet in early 1880 had washed away the western abutment of Philip's Dam, forcing its complete reconstruction, and a similar flood in February, 1881 did little but attract spectators upon Kensington Bridge. Such incidents had not been enough to deter further development in the village for in the same report it was noted that "[b]uilding operations are proceeding actively in the village. A number of new residences have been built this summer."[4] One more compelling report in the *Advertiser* explained:

> Extensive preparations are being made for building all over the village. In several places the noisy sound of the carpenter's hammer is heard already. A large number of village lots have been sold last fall and during the winter, and the number of houses, especially in the southern division, will be largely increased this year. People are beginning to get tired of paying the high rents and taxes for the privilege of living in the city.[5]

Indeed residents were less concerned by the river than by the undesirable characters who congregated there. Throughout the summer of 1880, residents complained about the presence, and most especially the behaviour, of various boys who loitered along the Blackfriar's Bridge where they were engaged in tendering "rude remarks to persons who visit the bath house . . ." across the river in London. As one reporter warned "[t]he first thing these youths know they will be floating in the river."[6]

Despite the relative complacency with which London Westers held the river, they were not completely unaware of its potential dangers. Such was the case of the near-drowning of one London West girl who had been swimming with friends above Saunby's Mill and "in her sportive frolics tumbled into a deep hole and but for the courage of one of the others . . . she would undoubtably have been lost."[7] Sadly only days after the near tragedy one young villager, Patrick, son of Daniel and Mary Ann Collins, lost his life

while swimming off Saunby's Dam.[8]

The first major catastrophe that claimed many lives and unduly affected London West was the foundering of the pleasure steamer Victoria on May 24, 1881. The vessel had left Springbank park dangerously overloaded with holiday revelers. Oblivious to the danger, the passengers hurried to one side to watch a sculling match between two London West residents, Harry Nichol and Michael Reidy. Immediately the Victoria began to heel dangerously over, and instinctively the terrified crowd surged back from the rail, causing the vessel to overcorrect itself. The steamer's boiler broke loose of its moorings and smashed through stanchions holding up the upper deck, which crashed down, crushing those below and throwing others into the Thames.[9] As one London West youth recalled:

> I was at Springbank that day, and had boarded the Victoria, when the Captain, Mr. Rogers, ordered me off, as he said there were enough aboard without me. I took the boat which followed, and as we turned the bend in the river we saw the Victoria turning over on her side. We pulled to shore; I kicked off my boots, and jumped into the river to help in the rescue of the struggling victims. I stayed there helping all night. . . For years afterwards, when we would go to this spot to swim, we would dive from the boiler which stayed in the river.[10]

The results of the disaster were catastrophic with an estimated loss of 182 people, many of whom were crushed by the collapsing decks, scalded by boiling water escaping the boiler, or drowned in the melee as hundreds of people fought to gain the surface of the river. The vast majority of these victims were women and children.[11] Back in London West, one young resident recalled that for those village youth who had for various reasons been unable to go to Springbank for the holiday, the day had been passed largely at home while they anticipated "the evening with firecrackers and fireworks." Their youthful revelry was soon interrupted for the people of London West were among the first to learn of the disaster since, minutes after the Victoria had capsized, Simon Fawcett "running as though for his life," came rushing into the village shouting the news. There was a great

deal of confusion and anxiety spread throughout the community as apprehensive family members and friends swarmed to the site of the accident in desperate search of loved ones.[12]

Within a matter of hours it became certain that between fourteen and eighteen London Westers had lost their lives.[13] Perhaps the greatest tragedy befell the Stevens family -- Frank Stevens, his wife and four young children all perished, as did Mary Stevens, the wife of carpenter Thomas Stevens and three of their children. Thomas survived the disaster and was seen frantically pacing the bank searching for his family. When he learned that they had all been lost he had to be restrained from drowning himself.[14] Fourteen year old Kitty McPherson, brothers Willie and George Tremeer, aged eleven and fourteen respectively, and John Boone, aged twenty-two, all were listed as lost.[15] Similarly, Annie Mathews, wife of an *Advertiser* reporter, and her young son, George William Mathews, just over two and a half, were lost after their outing at Springbank.[16] With the loss of his own son, Patrick, relatively fresh in his memory, Daniel Collins spent much of his time hauling load after load of ice from his ice house to the Drill Shed in the city were recovered bodies where steadily brought for eventual identification by grieving relatives.[17] When the time for funerals began, one other London Wester, horse dealer George Watson, worked throughout the day with his two rigs moving caskets and bodies, a service for which he would not accept a cent of payment.[18] The foundering of the Victoria marked the beginning of a noticeable change in the relationship London Westers had with the river. Articles emanating from London West, no longer extolled the Thames' virtues as a place of pleasant diversion, but became imbued with a deep suspicion that would only be enhanced two years later.

The early part of July, 1883 had been a particularly wet period with regular

dousings of rainfall leaving the ground in the Thames River watershed drenched. With the increased precipitation there was some concern about the rising river levels, but by July 10th all such fears seemed groundless as the water in the Thames returned to its normal July levels. However, as the people of London West and the city went about their business, the intense humidity that smothered the region indicated that more rain was on its way. Early that evening, around the supper hour, a particularly virulent electrical storm broke out with violent cracks of thunder and lightning, yet by the time people began to drift off to their beds for the night, the storm appeared to have abated and passed off to the east. The ensuing calm was soon broken when the storm unexpectedly "doubled back in a semi-circular fashion . . ." and again lashed out on the communities that bordered the forks of the Thames.[19] Those who lay awake in their beds, waiting for the storm to withdraw could hardly have known that this particularly unusual meteorological phenomenon was visiting an area later estimated to be only twenty by fifty miles. Coupled with the rainfall from earlier in the day, which had failed to be absorbed, with some places upriver reporting upwards of four inches of rainfall, the drains and culverts dumped massive quantities of run-off into creeks and streams that flowed ferociously toward the Thames.

On the eastern bank of the Thames in her room at Eldon House, perched high on the bank overlooking London West, Lucy Ronalds Harris wrote fitfully, "It began to rain at 6 pm . . . Much thunder and lightning[.] It kept me from going to bed till 12. I laid down but could not sleep . . . At one the noise began . . ."[20] While Harris lay awake at Eldon House *Advertiser* reporter William Thompson, on his way back to the paper's offices from having covered an oil refinery fire in London East, decided to take a look at the river, which he thought must have swollen with the amount of rain water. It was now

about 2:00am. Thompson was immediately alerted to a growing noise to the north as he surveyed London West. As the horrified reporter stood helplessly "[t]he tortured bed of the north branch of the river had proved unable to contain the great mass of water poured into it." At that very moment, the water literally seemed to jump the river banks as a liquid wall surged across the low lying land, crashing into the darkened homes of London West.[21] Rising at the astonishing rate of some three feet per hour, water rapidly converted London West into a terrifying extension of the river. The initial surges hit the northern section of the village with extraordinary force, ripping frame houses from their foundations and turning them over or sending them sailing along the streets. By the time the water crested, a few hours after the flooding started, most of Kensington was completely underwater, with families stranded on their roofs, or crowded into the few two-story buildings in the neighbourhood.[22] Back at Eldon House, Lucy Harris pleaded in her diary, "God help the people on the bank of the river . . ."[23]

Village patrician and businessman Daniel Collins and his family were caught completely unaware, as water surged through their home. His wife, Mary Ann, barely escaped with her life as she tumbled into the water, and was saved only when her husband managed to throw her a rope. His business was not so fortunate, for his ice house and all of its equipment and stores was completely destroyed and swept down river.[24]

Some were fortunate enough to be awakened and alerted by the sound of rushing water. Others, such as William Crone, had a more rude awakening. Sound asleep and oblivious to the danger, Crone happened to have dropped one hand from his bed right into the water. He awoke with a jolt, and by the time he stood he was waist deep in water. Fortunately he managed to help his family make good their escape. One unfortunate individual had crawled under a London West barn the night before to sleep. Not

surprisingly, upon emerging the next morning, "he looked more dead than alive."[25] The Maxwell family were only alerted when a group of men came running up the street kicking doors and shouting to the slumbering inhabitants to wake up and run for higher ground. Along with many in the neighbourhood the Maxwells rushed along Walker street, only to be caught by a torrent of water some three feet deep. After much struggling, they managed to gain the hill and safety. Many who made it to this refuge returned to attempt a rescue of those trapped in their homes.[26]

As the river rose and engulfed the village and its residents scrambled for safety, two vital escape routes were ripped asunder. The newly-completed Oxford Street Bridge and the older bridge at Kensington, both collapsed into the swollen river, forcing residents to find alternate routes to safety.[27] Seventy year old Samuel Crockett of John Street:

> was obliged to ascend a tree in order to escape the rush of water, but he had scarcely succeeded in lodging himself securely when a mass of floating ice from Collins' ice house struck the tree and bore it to the earth. The old man jumped for another tree, secured a hold in its branches, and this again was borne down by the floating masses of ice. He then succeeded in reaching the roof of [the] brick kitchen attached to his dwelling. This also was soon carried away, and the old man again took refuge in a tree, from which he finally descended, and by means of floating timber and fences succeeded in reaching a place of safety.[28]

Becoming aware of the danger James Dean, a weigh scales clerk, had the presence of mind to ring the school bell thereby warning many people.[29] Back on John Street, George Stratfold, who had so boldly backed James Daniels in his defence of the rights of workingmen to run their own affairs, worked feverishly to save his family as waters inundated his home. In his hurry Stratfold set four of his children on a fence and then returned into the house to help his wife and the baby escape. By the time he reemerged from his dwelling, he was horrified to discover that the flood waters had swept

his children away. Only the eldest daughter, Ada, then eight, managed to lodge herself in a tree and was subsequently rescued by a boat. Edwin, Martha and Alfred, all under ten, were lost.[30]

Panic naturally overtook some stricken residents.[31] When a boat arrived at the Hopkins home on Maple Street, the rescuers helped Mrs. Hopkins into their small craft, but warned her frantic husband, Thomas, that they could not take him. Perhaps too overcome with fear Hopkins plunged into the boat, which overturned "and the woman found a grave beneath the waters."[32] Another resident lost her life, not by panic, but by a tragic sense of calm. When the flood waters struck the Hutchinson home on John Street, the family hurriedly made plans to escape. They urged the elderly grandmother, Elizabeth Hutchinson to leave with them, but she insisted upon dressing first. Her body was later found under her bed.[33]

In their home on Albion Street, Robert F. Lacey, his six children and a young nephew lay asleep. As the Lacey's nephew, John, later explained:

> It was about 3 o'clock when we first noticed the water beginning to rise, but did not think it dangerous till half past an hour later. Then a house near by pitched heavily over on ours, and we thought ours would go, too. We then decided to make for high land. The water in the street was about four feet deep with a very swift current.[34]

Robert Lacey carried his nine year old daughter, May, while John came up behind him with the youngest daughter, Annie, then only four. Bringing up the rear was eleven year old Florence, seven year old Frances, and eight year old Horatio, helped along by their eldest brother, Frederick, then twenty-two. As John Lacey explained, "Mr. Lacey and I got to safe ground with Mary and Annie with great difficulty, hanging on to posts and fences as best we could. I tell you it was something terrible."[35] As for the four others following along the current became too strong. While Frances managed to join her father

and cousin in safety, Florence, Horatio and Frederick became engulfed. As the *Advertiser* reported, Lacey made a desperate attempt to reach his three children but "a tree borne down by the current struck . . ." him and further separated him. His further attempts were in vain and gradually, Horatio, Florence and Frederick, "sinking together became lost to sight." The bodies of Frederick and Florence were later found in a yard on Centre Street "locked in each other's arms."[36] The body of the third child, Horatio, was found the following day.[37] The tragic irony was that the Lacey home, despite all the swirling water, had remained solidly on its foundation. As one reporter mourned, as "[y]ou [p]ass Lacey's house, one of the best in the neighbourhood . . . you lament at the strong house having been abandonned."[38]

On Ann Street William Onn, "a poor labouring man . . ." but recently arrived from England was alerted to the danger and hurriedly roused his wife and children and attempted to get them to higher ground as the water rushed in. Yet "[w]ithout a moment's warning the whole house had gone to pieces like as a flimsy match box and [was] whirling about in the foaming waters . . ." Stunningly, Onn managed to rescue his wife, and all but one of his children. Martha, aged seven, was lost in the swirling water.[39]

Like hundreds of others, the Malin family, also on Ann Street, was caught unawares by the flooding. Desperate to help his family, Thomas Malin lifted his wife and children into the branches of nearby trees. He quickly took the baby, Emma, and handed her to one of his elder daughters, but at that moment the house was torn from its foundation and slammed into the tree, crushing the infant in her sister's arms. [40]

In the Turville home on Centre Street the widowed H.N. Turville and her five sons found themselves up to their waists inside their cottage. Turville helped her children

up onto the roof. The sight from this higher vantage point was not encouraging as all around them houses caught in the current were lifted from their foundations and streamed past. One of the Turville boys perched by the chimney later confessed to a reporter that, "I thought our house was a goner when the river made a break from the northeast, and the other houses flew by and bobbed about us like so many corks. If our home had . . . lifted we were all lost." As the family huddled together, a house having broken loose on Blackfriar's Street began a rapid voyage bearing down upon them. Fortunately the drifting house jammed into a row of apple trees and stuck fast, sparing the Turvilles who remained on their precarious sanctuary for upwards of six hours until they were taken off by rescuers.[41]

By the afternoon of July 11th, only hours after the waters had so unexpectedly risen, they had largely dissipated leaving in their wake a trail of unprecedented misery and destruction. In all about seventeen people lost their lives in the flood. A majority of the victims appear to have been children, with four women and one man.[42] The worst hit area had been in the oldest section of the village, bordering on the Blackfriar's Street thoroughfare, where it was estimated that over sixty families had been rendered homeless. In Kensington the situation was only marginally better with over three hundred homes left uninhabitable on a temporary basis. Yet what developed in the face of this awful catastrophe was a tangible sense of community solidarity.[43] Surveying the wreckage of his home and tallying the damage at about $400 Frederick Hazelgrove reflected, "I suppose the whole village is like me, and hundreds have been far more unfortunate. The water during the highest floods I have ever known previously did not come within two feet of the floor of my house. Wednesday morning it was nearly six feet in the room."[44] Even Daniel Collins, having lost the larger part of his livelihood, remarked philosophically,

"Well, I saved the wife and children anyhow. There is something left yet."[45]

Certainly those villagers who had largely escaped the affects of flooding and benevolent organizations and citizens of London quickly came to the aid of those whose homes and lives had been devastated. At Eldon House the Harris family took in their very bedraggled 'cow boy' who had survived the onslaught of water. After having cleaned him up and dressed him in fresh clothing, his distraught mother arrived begging for news of her son. After having ministered to the woman's fraught nerves with whiskey and ginger, Harris put the pair up in Eldon House's laundry room for sleep. As Lucy Ronald Harris confided to her diary, beyond merely taking in a few unfortunates and distributing clothing, she worked tirelessly with other city matrons to organize soup kitchens and methodically doled out relief to suffering London Westers.[46]

Beyond the long term worries of salvaging and reconstruction were more immediate concerns. Because the majority of village households obtained their water supply from dug wells, there was a very real threat of an outbreak of waterborne diseases. With virtually the entire village water supply contaminated, Dr. Peter H. Bryce of the Ontario Board of Health immediately set to work securing the provision of a clean water supply to the village. Even though the river had severely damaged the city's waterworks at Springbank, workers made quick work of laying temporary pipelines from that facility to London West. Bryce then set about ensuring that homes would be properly cleaned and rendered habitable and healthy. Wells, filled with polluted flood waters were pumped out and then doused with quicklime to sanitize them. Stagnant water in homes was siphoned out and the walls and floors were then disinfected. As an added enticement for those villagers who carefully followed these procedures, the provincial government paid them five dollars. The results of Bryce's strict and rapid

implementation of the various health guards and procedures helped save the village from a potentially deadly rash of diseases and epidemics.[47] The long process of reconstruction began. Several families and individuals, unwilling to face again the potentialities of flooding, left London West for good.[48] Perhaps the most enduring consequence was that "flooding retarded the development of West London for more than a quarter of a century . . ."[49] Yet for all of those families who did forsake London West and for those who thought twice about locating there, perhaps the most surprising aspect is those families who chose to remain. Despite their horrific losses, both the Stratfold and Lacey families remained in London West for the years immediately following the flood. Indeed, Robert Lacey continued to be active in village politics for many years, and died in the community over thirty years later. George and Amelia Stratfold stayed on in London West with their two surviving children while acquiring four more within eight years.[50] Inevitably, following such a disaster there appears to have been a concerted effort to affix responsibility. While everyone conceded that the tremendous rainfall that had ultimately caused the flooding was largely a freak of nature, they began to search for scapegoats in order to find potential solutions to ensure that such a catastrophe could never happen again. Some began to examine the possibility that rampant deforestation was responsible for the flooding menace, and even made calls for regulation of timber removal.[51] Yet such arguments were generally muted, and people begun to reach for more localized and tangible culprits. As luck would have it they did not have far to go.

Barely a month after the devastation had passed a proposal initiated by O.N. Williams led John M. Moore to complete a massive survey of the river, with the intention of cutting a deeper channel that would allow increased water flow, hopefully, to avert further flooding. In London West, still reeling from the affects of the disaster, the project

received overwhelming support and a petition began to circulate within the community to restrain Joseph D. Saunby from rebuilding dams at either the North Branch Mill in London West or the Blackfriars Mill in London. Similarly, the petition demanded that the Grand Trunk Railway should be forced to construct "an additional span to the Cove bridge." The thrust of this petition was quite clear. The inclusion of dams upon the Thames River and other encroachments were seen to have been largely responsible for the magnitude of the flooding.[52]

Such accusations were hardly an unlikely outcome of the flood. Conventional wisdom prior to 1883 had held that flooding was a natural and inevitable process over which humanity had little or no control. However, with the flood so fresh in everyone's minds they began to see a strong correlation between the presence of dams and the severity of flooding. What they seemed to fail to notice was that the increased development on the lowlands bordering the Thames had simply increased the amount of property potentially at peril.[53] In the middle of 1884 a widely circulated petition seeking the removal of the Blackfriars Dam, owned and operated by Joseph D. Saunby, was forwarded by London West's Board of Health to the Provincial Board of Health. London West's Board, headed by Robert F. Lacey, arrived at "the conclusion that the dam was a source of danger to the public health, and the clerk was instructed to notify Mr. Saunby to remove the same as soon as possible." Saunby himself went on record as indicating he would fight "the matter to the bitter end."[54] The bitterness that surrounded the entire dam controversy was enough to sponsor widely circulated rumours that a collapse of part of the Blackfriars Dam in early April, 1884 had been a deliberate attempt to blow it up by agitators seeking its removal. Saunby himself openly refuted such wild claims. Indeed, he told a *Free Press* reporter that, "he does not believe he has an enemy in the village."

It was a supposition that was probably well founded, but in the aftermath of the devastation rent by the 1883 flood, whatever personal regard might have been accorded Saunby was not necessarily extended to either of his dams.

Certainly the flood of July, 1883 had been a dreadful benchmark within the village's development, and many from both within and without London West aptly pointed the finger at that occurrence as having been detrimental to the community's subsequent growth. Beyond merely illustrating the unquestionable vulnerability of the village to flooding, it was inevitable that property values within the community took a steep dive, causing alarm amongst many of its ratepayers and inhabitants in general. Although the assessment records for the four year period from 1882 to 1885 have been lost, a comparison of records from both 1881 and 1886 show in many cases there was a considerable drop in the assessed tax value of London West property. One of the most dramatic instances of this can been seen in the property of lawyer William Henry Bartram, whose home along the main branch of the river and adjoining lots had dropped in their assessment by over a thousand dollars from before the flood.[55] In the northern portion of the village, the property of longtime villager John Bowman fell in value by over $200.00, a trend felt by the majority of his neighbours.[56] Two years after the flood the effects were still being felt, and many within the village blamed a great part of the flooding on the city's extensive waterwork's dam. This notion seems to have persisted when village spokesman Robert F. Lacey told a reporter that villagers were seeking compensation from the city because of the:

> Undue depreciation of the value of property. By floods property in London West has been very seriously depressed in price. We consequently lose a great deal of money every year in taxes . . . [and with $20,000 compensation we will b]uild an embankment which will protect the village. Then property will rise again.[57]

London West's council held a series of urgent meetings throughout the autumn of

1884 in an attempt to plan a course of action to stave off the possibilities of further flooding. A series of breakwaters or dykes were planned to be erected along the river at the most vulnerable points. Yet complaints were made as contractors were found to be charging prices beyond the reach of council. A contract made with George Gard to construct a breakwater at the end of Queen Street was hurriedly revoked in October. 1884 because council found his tender to be too high. Councillor Michael Hartmann, viewed Gard's tender as "an attempted fraud." A review of the village's finances showed a looming debt of $3000, which the shortfall in collected taxes, depreciated by plummeting property values, was unable to cover. In short, council was forced largely to curtail further improvements within the village pending the securing of additional funds. One over-zealous city-based contractor had begun dumping clay upon Dundas Street, which Councillor Daniel Collins noted he had not been requested to do. It was therefore the sad, but equally smug, conclusion of council that the contractor "need not expect pay therefore."[58] However, council belatedly awarded the contract for the Queen Street breakwater to bricklayer John Wattam as it was deemed that village coffers would be able to cover his tender of $75.50. In the meantime, as a stopgap measure, several loads of gravel were dumped at the ends of various streets, in the hope that it might impede rising water from flowing into these vulnerable sections.[59]

To a degree the village was championed by Middlesex County Council, which in 1885 proposed that a breakwater should be constructed along the South Branch of the river to help prevent a recurrence of the devastation of two years earlier. Yet little was done, and it was not until a further flood scare in that same year (when water overflowed

into London West's more southerly sections) that villagers began again to clamour for attention. Resolved that action was needed and that there existed a strong potential for a repetition of a disaster not unlike that of 1883, London West's council jerked into motion, promising that over the course of the year it would construct an earthen breakwater strengthened by timbers along the village's side of the river at a cost of $10, 000. By the autumn of 1885 council had managed to have an earthen breakwater built that stretched from Oxford Street to Blackfriars, although the notoriously petulant William Smith had refused to allow workmen access to his property, completing the work on his own.[60]

Despite all of these efforts, difficulties remained, and many within the village continually eyed the City's Waterworks Dam at Springbank Park which lay down the main branch of the river. They argued that this structure more than any other impediment was the main cause for a back-up causing London West's flooding problems. Further flooding in January, 1887, albeit relatively minor, yet again awakened the fears of villagers who looked to various proposals to once and for all alleviate their fears, including plans to correct the problem of "the abrupt angle at the forks . . .", which it was argued caused flood waters to collide and spill back over the western lowlands. To rectify the problem it was proposed that a channel be excavated through Tecumseh Park and thereby divert the excess waters of the North Branch of the Thames from a disastrous collision at the Forks with those from the South. In a community strapped for funds, it was yet another plan that failed to materialize.[61]

Just how greatly people had come to fear the river was illustrated when flood

waters seemed to again threaten London West on January 7, 1885. As the water in the main branch of the river rapidly rose one unnamed family hurriedly hired a drayman and loaded their furnishings and valuables into the wagon to be hauled to higher ground, despite an attempt by their landlord to seize their possessions fearing that he would lose his rent.[62] Flood waters punched a hole in the breakwater in January, 1887 causing relatively minor flooding in a section between Blackfriars and Dundas Streets. Similarly, torrential rainfall in May, 1889 caused light flooding, and the swollen river carried away George Walker's boat house.[63] Flooding was to remain a regular companion and curse for the villagers who chose to live on the western bank of the Thames. Indeed, the menace of flooding would not disappear for over half a century following their eventual annexation to the City of London.

For the most part London Westers' minds never drifted far from the river, especially during winter thaws and spring and summer storms, yet they increasingly took some comfort from behind their patchwork breakwater. Despite all of the potential danger and continued worry and heartache that the menace of flooding presented, the people of London West had developed a particularly poignant fatalism about their situation. In 1889 while the debate over the village's southern school climaxed, one resident, angered by an insinuation that it was foolhardy to build a school upon the flood plain, openly declared, "If the water lots are good enough for us to live and pay taxes, they are good enough to have a school in our midst."[64]

The relationship between London Westers and the Thames River was a decidedly complex one. The threat of flooding had existed since long before settlement had taken

place on the Thames' western bank, and yet it had not been enough to frighten off potential residents. As for the municipal entity that was London West, the Thames formed the convenient and very real barrier between it and the City of London; a barrier that could at times be more real than imagined as the precious communication links formed by bridges disappeared in the swollen flood waters.

Despite the unpredictable and often erratic behaviour of the river, the Thames had long provided the villagers with more than just a convenient line of demarcation between their village and the neighbouring city. For the first several years of its incorporation, the Thames had provided London West a source of diversion and a site of pleasurable excursions, fishing, swimming and skating. It was a relationship that would gradually sour as first the sinking of the Victoria and then the catastrophic flood of 1883 made the Thames seem more of an enemy than friend. Following the tragedy of 1883, the villagers and their municipal council became preoccupied with attempting to control the river and protect their homes. There emerged from this a strange and yet pervasive sense of community solidarity that pitted the village not only against the river, but to a degree against the neighbouring city, which many came to see as being almost equally culpable in the village's misery. As would become clear, this at times uneasy solidarity in their distrust of the river would do more to direct the course of the village's development than any other single factor. The battle to combat the river would put a serious drain upon the village's fiscal resources, dominate, and subsequently hamper its negotiations with the city with regard to the possibility of amalgamation. Paradoxically, however, the same forces that had fostered a resolve amongst London Westers to ensure their continued

safety was inevitably the force that brought them close to financial ruin and compelled them to join the city in order to achieve the security they could not accomplish on their own. The Thames River endowed London Westers with a common purpose and a discernible measure of identity that would persist for decades to come.

Notes For Chapter Four

1.Frederick Andrewes, 1-2.

2. London Advertiser, December 2, 1880.

3. Hives, 30-31.

4. London Advertiser, February 14, 1881 and July 28, 1880. Similarly in August, 1880 it was reported that A. R. Murdock, a market gardener, had purchased a sizeable parcel of land in the westerly reaches of the village for the princely sum of "$3,000 with the intention of removing his nursery and market garden thither." The land lay near the boundary of Woodland Cemetery between Hazel Street and the south side of Walker Street. Philips Dam was also the scene of a practical joke played upon various 'gentlemen' from the city who had ventured along a log to the remnants of the abutment for a good day of fishing. To their chagrin when they went to retrace their steps they found that the miller had removed the temporary bridge and gone home leaving them stranded in the middle of the river.

5. Ibid, March 13, 1880.

6. Ibid, August 30, 1880. The problem did not immediately disappear for, a week later, complaints about the boys at the bridge were still being drawn to the attention of the local papers. Early in September the behaviour of those "crowds of boys who haunt the Blackfriars Bridge, while ladies are using the public bathing house," was still being reported. Ibid, September 6, 1880.

7. Ibid, June 21, 1880.

8. Ibid, June 24, 1880. Collins had walked out along the dam to the apron and then dove off into the water to swim. "He swam for a few seconds after regaining the surface, and then was either seized with the cramps or became tired, and sank after a few convulsive struggles." His friends attempted a rescue but failed to save Collins, whose body was found later that evening.

9. Ken McTaggart. The Victoria Day Disaster (Petrolia, Ontario: Skinner Printing, 1978), 78-80.

10. Meaden, 92.

11. Miller, London 200, 130.

12. Frederick Andrewes, 3. Fawcett's employer J.W.C. Meredith died in the disaster. History of Middlesex, 279.

13. London Advertiser, May 26, 1881. The estimate of London West's victims of the Victoria disaster are somewhat difficult to determine. A "condolatory resolution" passed by the village's school board on the day following the disaster noted that eighteen villagers had been lost. However, reports from May 27 and May 28, list a total of fourteen.

14. History of Middlesex, 279. Mary Stevens, 35, her daughters, Ellen, 12, Mary, 3, and son, Thomas, 5, were all buried in Woodland Cemetery; McTaggart, 85.

15. London Advertiser, May 27, 1881 and May 28, 1881. George P. Tremeer, aged fourteen, years had been born in England. His eleven year old brother, Willie M. Tremeer, had been born in London. Both were buried in Mount Pleasant Cemetery. Mount Pleasant Cemetery Records, May 26, 1881. 172 B. One London West resident made note of the loss of classmate fifteen year old Thomas Wallace, a son of Peter and Agnes Wallace of Albion Street. Most lists incorrectly noted that he was from the city; History of Middlesex, 279; Canada 1881 Census, Petersville, 14; London Advertiser, October 20, 1884. George Tremeer, who had lost his two sons in the Victoria Disaster, bought out a wagon shop in Hyde Park and moved there in the autumn of 1884.

16. Woodland Cemetery Records. Burials for May 26, 1881. S.E. ¼ 282 R. Annie Matthews, 23 years of London West, died May 24th. Husband a Reporter. George William Matthews, 2 years 7 months, of London West, died May 24th.

17. London Advertiser, May 26, 1881.

18. Ibid, June 6, 1881.

19. Hives, 37-38.

20. Lucy Ronalds Harris Diary, July 11, 1883. Harris Family Papers. J.J. Talman Regional Collections, U.W.O.

21. Miller, 132.

22. Hives, 42-43; Frederick Andrewes, 5. The small cottage of a Miss Wright was lifted from its foundation and was floated down the river. Unfortunately Miss Wright remained in the house at the time. "She stood in the doorway with a lamp in her hand, and afterwards was taken from the house by a boat near the Cove."

23. Lucy Ronalds Harris, July 11, 1883.

24. St. Thomas Daily Times, July 11, 1883.

25. London Advertiser, July 12, 1883.

26. St. Thomas Daily Times, July 12, 1883.

27. Hives, 42.

28. St. Thomas Daily Times, July 12, 1883.

29. London Free Press, April 27, 1937, 4. Dean was still living in London West during the April, 1937 flood and recounted his exploits in the flood of fifty-four years earlier.

30. Frederick Andrewes, 6; Canada 1881 Census, Petersville, 56-57. Edwin Stratfold, aged 10, Martha Stratfold, aged 7 and Alfred Stratfold, aged 5, were all buried at Woodland Cemetery in free plots offered by the cemetery for those lost in the disaster. Woodland Cemetery Records. Burials for July 13, 1883. The body of one of the Stratfold boys was found on Paul Street "fully two blocks from the home he lately helped to gladden." The other son was found near the Cove Bridge. London Advertiser, July 13, 1883.

31. Catherine Andrewes. Andrewes noted that family lore had it that early in the morning of July 11, 1883 her father, David Andrewes, then about three had got up in the night to venture out to the outhouse at the family's duplex home on Alexander Street in the southern section of the village. Unfortunately for the youngster at that very moment the flood struck the home and rushed into the room where the little boy was. Terrified the child "peed in the water and yelled 'The water's rising! The water's rising!'" Young David Andrewes parents, David and Catherine Andrewes had moved from London into London West shortly after their son's birth. David Andrewes senior operated a brush factory on the corner of Centre and Blackfriar's Streets, overtop of John Gurd's store. His granddaughter recalled that he would "then go out around the country selling his brushes in a buggy . . ."; London City and Middlesex County Directory for 1883, 146.

32. St. Thomas Daily Times, July 12, 1883.

33. London Advertiser, July 13, 1883; Mount Pleasant Cemetery Records. Burials for July 13, 1883. Elizabeth Hutchinson, a native of England, was 74 at the time of her death.

34. St. Thomas Daily Times, July 12, 1883. None of the published narratives make any account of Robert's wife, Elizabeth M. Lacey (nee Grapes). It seems likely that she was not at home the night of July 11, 1883.

35. Ibid.

36. London Advertiser, July 12, 1883.

37. Ibid, July 13, 1883.

38. St. Thomas Daily Times, July 13, 1883.

39. Ibid, July 13, 1883. Mount Pleasant Cemetery Records, Burials for July 13, 1883.

40. London Advertiser, July 13, 1883; Woodland Cemetery Records, Burials for July 13, 1883. Emma Malin was aged 1¼ years. Her father was listed as being a labourer and an adherent of the Anglican Church.

41. London Advertiser, July 13, 1883.

42. It is difficult to accurately pinpoint the exact number of victims. Perhaps the most accurate list was made in the Chatham Weekly Planet, July 19, 1883, a full week after the flood. However, this list gives a total of *nineteen* victims, three of whom had no names listed. The following are known with certainty to have lost their lives in the 1883 flood:

Frederick Charles Lacey (aged 22)
Florence Mary Lacey (aged 11)
Horatio James Lacey (aged 8)
Martha Onn (aged 7)
Elizabeth Hutchinson (aged 74)
Edwin Stratfold (aged 10)
Martha Stratfold (aged 7)
Alfred Stratfold (aged 5)
Emma Malin (aged 1)
Mrs. Thomas Hopkins
Mrs. Constance

To these eleven named victims must be appended one unnamed woman who consistently appeared in several different lists. The Weekly Planet also listed; three children of D.F. McLean who apparently lived on Blackfriar's Street; infant child of W. Moyland; one child of Mr. Holman and then another unnamed woman and one unnamed child, which brings the death toll to nineteen. It seems likely that the latter two victims did not exist, and were mix-up of some of the bodies of known victims. Neither W. Moyland or D.F. McLean appear in the City of London and Middlesex County Directory For 1883 (London: London Publishing Co., 1883) under London West. The last report by the London Advertiser, July 13, 1883, noted that the report that D.F. McLean had lost three children was then unconfirmed. It is possible that the one unidentified child was a son of William Malin. Ibid.

43. Hives, 47.

44. London Advertiser, July 13, 1883.

45. Ibid, July 12, 1883.

46. Lucy Ronalds Harris, July 11, 14, 16, 19, 1883.

47. Hives, 51-53. Inevitably there were reports of illness following the flood, however, these incidences appear to have been relatively minor and never became widespread.

48. Ibid, 64.

49. Ibid, 58-59.

50. London Free Press, November 23, 1914. Lacey remained active within the community following his retirement from the leather trade in 1903, including membership at Empress Avenue Methodist Church (formerly London West Methodist Church). The Stratfold family moved to Leslie Street and were in London West at the time of the 1891 Census. London West, 1891 Census, 32-33.

51. Hives, 57-58.

52. London Advertiser, August 18, 1883. Ibid, March 16, 1915.

53. Hives, 24.

54. London Advertiser, August 23, 1884, September 2, 1884 and September 8, 1884.

55. London West Assessment Rolls. Beech Street South, Lots 7 to 11, 1881 and 1886. Bartram's experiences with flooding would not to end in 1883. In 1904 his home was again flooded but it was noted that "[t]he lesson taught by the flood of 1883 was not forgotten by some residents of West London. For instance Mr. W.H. Bartram had a large row boat attached to his back door when the waters rose, and all that the members of the family had to do was to step into it." London Advertiser, March 26, 1904.

56. London West Assessment Rolls. Ann Street North, Lots 44 and 45, 1881 and 1886. In 1881 Bowman's property was assessed at $550.00. By 1886 the same property was valued at a mere $350.00. A neighbouring lot owned by John Coombs in 1881 was valued at $300.00, but by 1886 when it was owned by George Bowman (a son of John Bowman) it was assessed at only $125.00.

57. London Advertiser, February 6, 1885.

58. Ibid, October 21, 1884.

59. Ibid, October 24, 1884.

60. Hives, 53, 66-68.

61. Ibid, 70.

62. London Advertiser, January 9, 1885.

63. Hives, 69-71.

64. John Butler Allenby, Letter to the Editor, June 29, 1888. London Advertiser, June 30, 1888.

This view taken by John Cooper on about July 12, 1883, following the flood, shows the badly hit corner of Ann and Napier Streets looking south. Some of the worst damage occurred in this area of the village. The house most prominently shown here belonged to George Bowman, having been wrenched from its foundations. It came to rest in front of the home of James McDonald, which is partially visible behind it. The swath of mud that lies in the foreground, along with the devastated homes speaks to the violence of the floodwaters. *Courtesy of:*

The J.J. Talman Regional Collection
The D.B. Weldon Library
The University of Western Ontario

This photograph was taken by John Cooper on about July 12, 1883 after the flood. The miniature lake pictured here formed just west of John Street, between the homes of John Nichols and Levi Hammond. In the distance can be seen the overturned Lockery home, just south of Blackfriar's Street. *Courtesy of:*

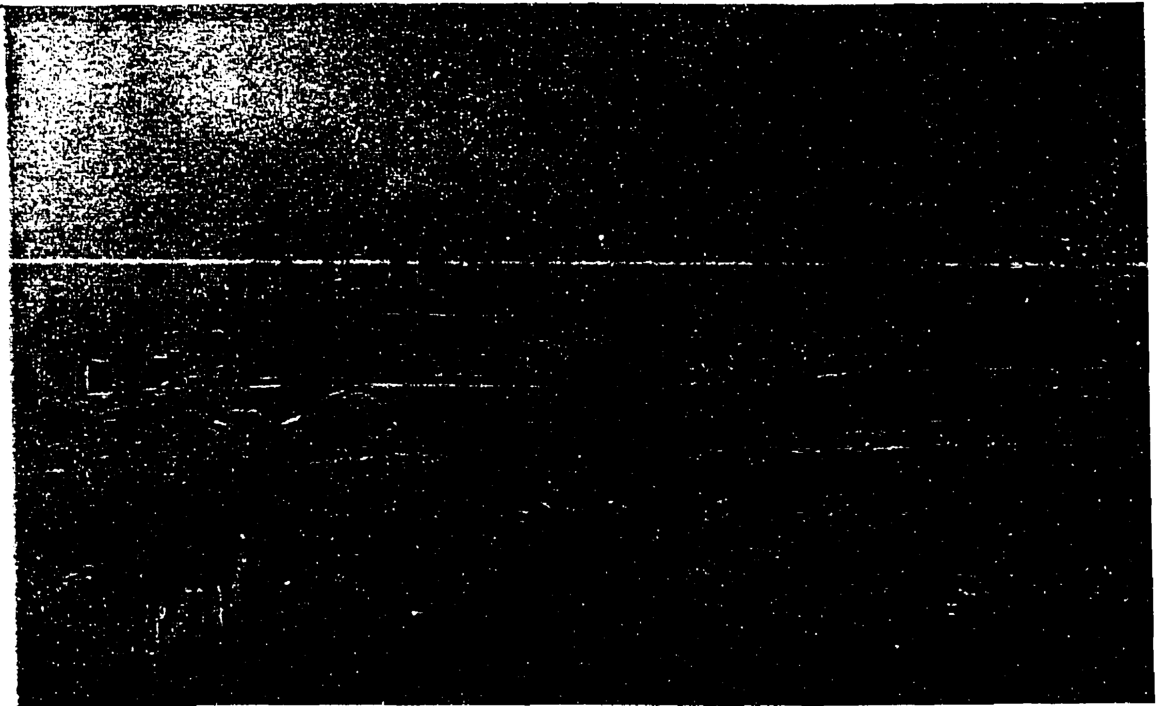
The J.J. Talman Regional Collection
The D.B. Weldon Library
The University of Western Ontario

A view of the western end of Blackfriar's Street at its junction with Wharncliffe Road, looking in a westerly direction. This photograph was taken on about July 12, 1883 by John Cooper following the flood. The house sitting slightly to the right of centre is the home of Mary Long, a London West widow. It appears as if Long's home and those of her neighbours were wrenched from their foundations. The building at the extreme right, facing onto Wharncliffe Road is identified as the Temperance Hall. This portion of the village was one of most seriously damaged. *Courtesy of:*

The J.J. Talman Regional Collection
The D.B. Weldon Library
The University of Western Ontario

While the southern or Kensington portion of London West was flooded on July 11, 1883, it sustained less damage, in that few homes were completely destroyed. This view was probably taken on the day following the flood and shows Walnut Street looking west from Wharncliffe Road. The house on the right, belonging to Richard Hammond, looks comparatively undamaged in contrast with those homes that lay further to the north. It is obvious, however, that these houses did not escape unscathed as is illustrated by the house hold goods that have been hung out to dry. *Courtesy of:*

The J.J. Talman Regional Collection
The D.B. Weldon Library
The University of Western Ontario



A view of Jerry McDonald's Riverside Hotel, following the flood, which appears to have left it relatively unscathed, save for knocking out posts on the verandah. The little two windowed cottage on the right of the image apparently belonged to Miss Wright, and floated down from Blackfriar's Street, coming to rest in front of the hotel. While not immediately obvious, it appears that Mitchell's Boathouse, which had been situated on the left, was completely swept away. *Courtesy of:*

The J.J. Talman Regional Collection
The D.B. Weldon Library
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Chapter Five: London West and Amalgamation

As the 1880's progressed, the Village of London West had seemed to fall short of its auspiciously optimistic motto of *"Per Angusta Ad Augusta"* ("Through Narrow Things to Great Things.")[1] There had undeniably been many perplexing 'narrow' matters that had taxed the morale and internal fiscal responsibilities of the corporation. Chief amongst these catastrophes was the terrible flood of 1883, which more than any other event altered the village's development and security. To be certain nature had dealt London West a vicious hand, and the resulting financial woes would have taxed even the most resourceful and bustling of communities. Yet unlike other communities of comparable size, London West had to contend with the very near and very real presence of an infinitely more populous and powerful and aggressive neighbour, the City of London.

The very existence of London West was, and had always been, dependant upon the proximity of its larger neighbour and namesake. The inhabitants of London West relied upon London as a source of employment and as an important market place.[2] Despite London's vital role in sustaining London West's prosperity, the city could also seem at best a potential adversary, threatening the political independence and integrity of the village. Virtually throughout its entire period of municipal autonomy, London West was confronted with the issue of amalgamation with the larger urban centre. While there appears to have been little dispute amongst the inhabitants of London West and the City of London that amalgamation would one day occur, that seems to have been the extent of the consensus.

The debate over amalgamation frequently served to divide the residents of London West as to whether their welfare might be better served within the scope of the City of

London or by retaining their separate municipal identity and local control. The issue of identity seems to have had a powerful hold upon many of the village's ratepayers for whom the surrender of their autonomy was seen as tantamount to giving away their ability to direct their own civic destiny. There was a paramount fear that should London West join the city a large portion of its inhabitants would neither be able to hold public office or even vote in municipal elections. Despite all of these economic and political factors, the most important and ultimately paradoxical motivation for merging with the city was the Thames River. The river was the destructive agent that scarred the village of London West emotionally and perhaps more importantly, with regard to amalgamation, financially. In the end, unable to fund the necessary provisions needed to protect its inhabitants from recurring ravages, the ratepayers of London West, setting aside old issues of community identity and political independence, opted to join the larger municipal corporation for reasons of security.

In the scope of last quarter of the nineteenth-century thought, the prevailing ideology in the world of business was that bigger was inherently better. This axiom that held so much sway in North American corporate enterprise naturally spilled over into other areas including municipal organization. For many who adhered to the notion that the smaller the size the more inherent the inefficiencies and corruption were likely to be, the nineteenth-century suburbs that had grown up outside larger urban centers seemed prime targets for amalgamation. In the United States, following closely on the heels of the American Civil War, there had been a manifold increase in the number of suburban municipalities being annexed by larger cities. The idea was that such moves, by extending precious infrastructure to backward suburbs, not only served to enhance the living standards of the suburbanites, "but the fact of growth often inspired citizens with renewed

confidence in a community's future and spurred to greater efforts in civic development."[3] Ironically, however, the trend for larger municipal consolidation in the nineteenth century did not reach Canada until into the 1880's by which time south of the border as suburban communities gained both increased confidence and improved infrastructure "the desire for absorption into the metropolis waned, and fewer annexations were unopposed . . ."[4] Indeed, in Ontario while the general rationale behind municipal consolidation tended to focus on "the advantage of sharing the costs of providing urban services . . ." by the 1890's there was considerable slowdown in the number of annexations occurring throughout Ontario.[5]

London Westers' devotion to their municipal autonomy and resistance to amalgamation seems to have differed from that of the citizens London East. London East[6] had long been the powerhouse of industry, and remained a the vital centre of manufacturing throughout the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Its amalgamation was seen as a way to buttress and to enhance the growth and development of local business by increasing the resources available to the municipal corporation for the purpose of further enticing industrial growth.[7] London West, on the other hand, consistently turned down overtures made for amalgamation on the basis that they did not protect the political control of its inhabitants or adequately guarantee the safety of their homes against the threat of flooding.

At best the Village of London West and the City of London observed an uneasy peace with each holding their ground on their particular side of the Thames River. For the larger municipal corporation, there was a general ambivalence toward the petty concerns that erupted from within their western suburb. Certainly within the corporation of London West, there were persistent difficulties that raised the ire of many within the village, with

cries against perceived incompetence amongst the elected officials, who several ratepayers saw as largely to blame for the village's financial woes. A long and incriminating debate had surrounded the changing of the village's name from Petersville to London West in 1880 and 1881, an irony not lost on many who had foreseen the changing of the corporation's names as a means to soothe partisan differences between the two component communities of Kensington and Petersville that had long plagued villagers. In essence it had been hoped that a new name might spell a new start.[8] Throughout the 1880's relations between the city and London West might be described as less than congenial. For example in 1887 an indictment was drawn up by the village's Board of Health against the city for a nuisance caused by their wanton dumping of sewage into the river which was unduly affecting the village.[9]

Discourse between the two municipalities was also marked by continued irritation over more trivial, but equally heated issues. In the summer of 1884 the carcass of a dog floated in the shallow depths of the river not far from the Dundas Street footbridge that connected the city with London West. Though admittedly "not a very pleasant sight to the pedestrians . . .",[10] neither side would concede that the deceased canine rested within their jurisdiction. The question so perplexed both communities that it was finally suggested that "[t]he two Health Inspectors should proceed to the spot and measure the distance,"[11] and once and for all determine which of the municipal councils was responsible for the animal's removal.[12] Similarly, the village levied complaints against the city because of "a large crop of full-blown Canada thistles on the city side between the mill race and the river."[13] The wind, claimed several villagers, carried the seeds across the river and into the lush gardens of London West.[14] Despite Mother Nature's obvious complicity in the matter, London Westers preferred to levy the majority of the blame

upon their urban neighbours.

By the same token co-operative ventures between both the City of London and London West (with significant aid and direction from the County of Middlesex) often seemed to be a source of contention. For London West the joint maintenance of Blackfriar's Bridge, which connected the two municipalities, was chief among these difficulties. In fact, the village often seemed perplexed by what it saw as wasteful expenditure by the city. In November, 1881 complaints were made that the city had dumped several loads of gravel on the Ridout Street hill descending toward the bridge. As village critics observed this was a "useless expense, as the first heavy rain will wash it all down the hill and into the river."[15] The frugal villagers were not only quick to condemn this wasteful enterprise but to also suggest that "[g]ood broken stone is what is wanted."[16]

Periodically the call for London West's amalgamation with London appeared in the local papers, both of which incidently were based within the city. As early as March, 1880 the question of annexation became hotly contested. At least one villager voiced the opinion that annexation to the city would be beneficial in that police protection would be stepped up against those "roughs [who] get drunk in the city and come over the bridge to indulge their circuses . . ."[17] Others rejected this view, noting that the village was growing rapidly and that the interests of the various ratepayers were far better served "by persons solely responsible to the electors of the division which they represented. . ." than by the larger city council.[18]

Barely a year later, in 1881, a few disgruntled villagers noted that London West had only $525. 00 in its coffers and could not afford to set up a proper fire brigade for the village's protection.[19] One local merchant, Daniel Collins, though not endorsing

annexation, went to so far as to offer the City Fire Brigade a sum of $100.00 to come to his aid should the need arise.[20]

A year and a half later the issue again was raised. A.J.B. McDonald voiced his opinion that, due to what he viewed as inept government in the village, the time had come to face the inevitable and join the city.[21] McDonald argued that it was necessary for prompt action to secure favourable terms for amalgamation.[22] Many others, however, appear not to have shared McDonald's outlook, viewing the ability to control and influence their own local affairs as a strong incentive for maintaining their independence. Certainly this seems to have been the driving conviction of one particularly "violent anti-annexation type," George Stratfold ,who "created an uproar of considerable dimensions." While Stratfold's arguments were not clearly reported, his comments -whatever they might be- were quickly followed by those of James Daniels who claimed to speak on behalf of the village's majority by declaring that "they wanted workingmen to represent them not, professional men." Daniel's comments were a clear assault upon the aspirations of those men such as barrister William H. Bartram, who had lamented his loss of the position of reeve the preceding year.[23]

Perhaps the most compelling reasons why the people of London West resisted amalgamation with the city was due largely to a combination of the provincial regulations governing municipal elections and the effects of flooding which had degraded property values in the village. The statute that governed municipal incorporation, passed in 1873, had set out a series of guidelines and regulations for the establishment and maintenance of municipal government. For the people of London West the most important elements dealt with mandatory property qualifications which were ranked according to municipal status. In an incorporated village, such as London West, to be able to run for a position

upon council it was necessary for that individual to own at least $600.00 worth of property, or lease property valued at $1200.00. Similarly, in order for a ratepayer to be eligible to vote in a municipal election he (or she in the case of a widow or unmarried woman) was required to possess or lease property not valued under $200.00.[24] As it was the statutes created a tiered system ranging from townships to cities. In urban municipalities such as London the regulations stated that the required freehold or leasehold for office holders was to be $1,500.00 and $3000.00 respectively.[25] Even without the reduction of property values within London West following the 1883 flood, a large number of inhabitants would not have been able to hold office within London City Council. With the deflation of the value of property across the village after 1883 a significant number of ratepayers would have even been ineligible even to vote in municipal contests within the city. Therefore while villager John Evans agreed that annexation might increase the value of London West's property he felt that "in case of annexation to the city the villagers, with very few exceptions, would not be eligible for a seat in the City Council."[26]

On May 1, 1890 the old suburb of London South was formally incorporated as Ward Six of the City. The actual move toward annexation had been troubled by a series of debates with supporters of annexation lauding the benefits of tapping into the city's water supply, school system, fire protection and gaining increased political representation as a ward within the city rather than as part of a rural township. The chief worry of the opponents of annexation was that they would suddenly become heirs to a massive city debt that was not of their making. Such fears were mollified when the city made a generous overture which assured that for fifteen years London South would be given a preferential tax rate, lower than the rest of the city.[27] The absorption of London's

southern suburb meant that London West was the only significant community left on the city's boundaries.[28]

By the middle of May, 1890 the situation within the village seemed particularly grim. London West's financial resources had been so seriously eroded by the continued expenditure upon improving the breakwater and "by law expenses and other useless expenditures . . .", that many ratepayers seemed to be the opinion that the only rational response to the dire fiscal situation was quite simply to "escape in amalgamation with the city, where, indeed, most of them get their employment."[29] Sensing the underlying mood within their westerly neighbour and bolstered by their recent success in enticing the people of London South into a formal union, the city appears to have put forth various terms for amalgamation, tailored specifically to the needs of the western suburb. As a direct result of these seemingly generous overtures which sought to adopt the village debt and work toward flood protection, and the lethargic manner in which the village council entertained the proposition, in May, 1890 a petition signed by some 235 ratepayers within the village was brought before the council requesting that a by-law calling for amalgamation to the city be passed. Citing technical irregularities in the recommendation, Reeve Robert F. Lacey declined to act upon it. Angered by the reeve's refusal to entertain their petition in such a "high-handed manner," several ratepayers within the village sought to compel the council to act by applying for the issuance of a mandamus.[30] It was an action that seems to have forced the hand of London West's reticent council, for within a month negotiations with the city were well underway.

In a gesture of goodwill the city offered up a slate of generous terms laced with a warning for village negotiators "that there was not a place situated as was the village which did not finally come to the conclusion that they could not run a show so close to a

larger one . . ."[31] A committee was therefore set up to look into the possibility of London West joining the city. As with all of their previous discussions on the matter, the people of London West were adamant on the maintenance of certain controls over their own affairs. Initially, the city seemed more than willing to hear their concerns and at least entertain the demands that many villagers put before the delegation. Similarly, the city resurrected an earlier proposal from the preceding year which, from their perspective in any case, had been particularly generous toward the outlying suburb.[32] Attempting to gauge the sensibilities of the village ratepayers with regard to a possible merger with the city, the village council sponsored a meeting at Collins' Hall on May 20, 1890. Having laid out the issue before the assembly they then opened the floor to comments and criticisms by allowing Deputy-Reeve Duncan C. Macdonald (McDonald) to take the stand and address his fellow townsmen. Demonstrating that within the framework of Middlesex County Council the village received barely enough stipends to maintain the existing infrastructure, he lauded the benefits of joining with the larger fiscal system that was embodied by London. Recalling the calamitous flood of 1883, Macdonald worried that should the village face another such catastrophe, they had not sufficient resources. As it was, Macdonald warned, "the village was a laughing stock to everybody, and our property was below par."[33]

Angered by Macdonald's apparent infatuation with the idea of annexation former, Reeve William H. Bartram loudly condemned the deputy-reeve's outlook and reminded him that should London West opt to join the city they would become heirs to London's considerably larger debt which was not of their making. Similarly he was quick to remind the meeting that in his view a large portion of London West's own sizeable debt was due in no small part to the negligence of the city. He argued that the failure of the

city to respect the situation in London West, and put again the point that their persistence in creating dams and other contrivances upon the river had been partially responsible for the for the scourge of flooding.[34] He argued also that when the Court of Chancery had ruled against the city forcing it to pay damages to the village on account of the Waterworks Dam at Springbank, the moral victory had quickly given way to disillusionment as the village council did not persist in extracting the payment of these damages, even though London "in reality, owed London West this money."[35]

Others quickly jumped in to counter Bartram's assertions, for as William Smith (Bartram's longtime nemesis) lamented, "the village at one time was in a prosperous state . . ." and that early in its period of incorporation it had cost a mere thirteen mills on the dollar to run. This he mourned had long since given way to the higher value of some twenty-two mills on every dollar. He denounced the mismanagement of the relief funds following the 1883 flood and decried the $32,000 spent on erecting the breakwater, claiming that a greater part of the allotted money had been "wasted by jobbery, negligence and incompetent work . . ." Smith concluded his remarks with a call for amalgamation as the only viable solution to the many financial woes that plagued the community.[36] Others disagreed with Smith and worried that a merger would mean a loss of independence and an increased financial burden upon the ratepayers. A "Mr. Garratt thought if the village elected good, economical representatives in the Council and the School Board we should be able to run the village at a less rate of taxation than if we amalgamated with the city."[37]

After a series of further meetings to discuss the proposed annexation, the committee developed a potential agreement which was brought before their respective councils. The proposal delivered to both councils indicated that should London West be

admitted into the city it would be designated Ward Seven, with its own aldermen representing it on City Council. Beyond the generally mundane issues of the merging of the various assets and liabilities of the two communities, and the extension of "water, light, fire and police protection . . ." there was an agreement in principle regarding the control of the Waterworks Dam at Springbank. London West, citing its susceptibility to flooding, demanded that following amalgamation that they be granted some control over the running of the dam. Therefore the negotiators hammered out an agreement whereby a section of the offending dam be outfitted with 'stop logs,' which could be removed when it appeared necessary to allow an outflow of excess water or subject to the demands of aldermen from the proposed ward that was London West in consultation with the City Engineer.[38]

While this agreement seems to have found initial acceptance amongst both parties, the reception within the village soon became decidedly hostile, as its citizens insisted upon the inclusion of further demands and safeguards. As negotiations continued into the summer of 1890 one London West resident, calling themselves simply "Amalgamationist," wrote to the *Free Press* of his pleasure at seeing steps being taken toward the annexation of the village to the city. Yet carefully qualifying his enthusiasm he explained:

> [W]hen some cranks want to give the village away just for the sake of getting into the city, I, like the majority of ratepayers, will put my foot down solid. If the scheme suggested by our council can possibly be carried London West will be West London in a very short space of time. If the city gives us a differential rate a few years will soon pass away, and then we shall all be on an equal footing. We are near the centre of the city, and do not need so much as outlying wards. For instance we need little police protection; we do not need a fire station for our houses are well isolated and be insured at the lowest rates.[39]

While the initial proposal had gone some way in addressing many of the pressing

concerns of villagers, as the weeks dragged on it became clear that the villagers wanted more safeguards. The negotiators from London West returned to the table with additional requests, for in addition to control over the waterworks' dam they demanded the construction of a breakwater at the base of Dundas Street, as well as the straightening and dredging of the riverbed, which the City Engineer estimated would result in a total expenditure of some $17, 000.00. Similarly the London West delegation confronted the city representatives with a further demand that, upon amalgamation, London West be guaranteed a differentiated rate of three mills for a period of fifteen years.[40] Perhaps inevitably, London City Council, while accepting the terms of the first basis of agreement with minor alterations, refused to entertain the more stringent and exacting demands made in the second proposal.[41] Decrying the absurdity of having compiled two separate agreements, several council members voiced hostile opinions toward London West. As city alderman, John Boyd noted "it was absurd for London West to think it was in a better position than the city. It was quite a boon for London West to have the city offer them the privilege of joining."[42]

Village Councillor William Spence, a local tinsmith, informed his urban counterparts that the terms "were not at all suitable to the villagers." Angered by the suburb's apparent arrogance, city spokesman Alderman George Taylor further reiterated London's terms and warned Spence in return "that every citizen he had talked with thought London West would be a burden." Citing the fear that the villagers would be swamped by the city's debt, Deputy-Reeve William Scarrow received a similar response when an agitated Alderman Taylor, recalling London West's own dismal fiscal outlook, retorted that that was precisely the city's concern: that they should be encumbered by London West's financial mismanagement. As the debate drew to a close about the only

thing that all of the delegates seemed to come to any semblance of an agreement upon was that fact "that there had been too much law and not enough common sense in the recent bitterness."[43]

Continuing in their negotiations with City Hall, one of London West's representatives, Councillor William Duff, argued that if annexation were to be acceptable for London West it would be necessary for the village to be able appoint their own tax assessors for fifteen years after they joined the city.[44] This was immediately rebuffed by city officials who said such a provision would be impossible. At the same time, city aldermen expressed concern that acquiring London West would mean an increased burden upon city taxpayers.[45] Despite the city's confidence that "the terms so amended would be fair and square and as favorable to London We[s]t as the terms granted to London South . . ."[46], this attempt at annexation - like all previous bids - was "not suitable to the villagers."[47] Further negotiations also failed to bring about any agreement between the two parties, especially when the city refused to entertain other demands made by the village.[48]

Discussions continued to drag on through much of the summer of 1890 when the issue of amalgamation was addressed at various joint meetings held at city hall. In spite of all the conciliatory rhetoric that was voiced, the matter seems to have stalled. While there appears to have been some further, and frequently favourable, discussion with regard to annexation, it appears to have become increasingly muted and further from the collective agenda of either the city or village.[49] In London West, other internal matters creating an equal amount of discord came to the forefront as a feud between the village council and the school board came to a head when village councillors were refused admittance to the council chamber in the school house.[50] By the close of 1890 all talk of

amalgamation had ended.

Talks toward the goal of amalgamation reemerged early in 1892 when the idea was again broached at meeting of London City Council.[51] As in 1890, following some initial consultation, a committee comprising representatives from the two respective councils was created and discussions began in earnest. By November, 1892 a bargain was reached. While this draft did not encompass all of the demands made by London West two years earlier, it was nonetheless a relatively generous document, which would have seen the village retain a semblance of autonomy as London Ward Seven. In a similar overture, City Council also agreed that London West's current rate of taxation would be maintained for ten years after it entered the city.[52]

Some of the ratepayers in London West seem to have been enamoured with these proposals, and, wary that any future terms might be less favourable, a large number clamoured for the acceptance of the agreement. However, like earlier discussions on the subject, opinion was still widely split, with a sizeable number of villagers opposing the accord. At a particularly stormy nomination meeting for village council at the close of 1892 the issue of amalgamation easily divided the assembly, with various candidates for village office emphatically stating their stand on the issue. As the election campaign got under way there was no question that the only issue in people's minds was that of annexation.[53] The resulting elections, on January 2, 1893 were aptly described as having been "a lively time all day . . ." as ratepayers emerged to cast their ballots. As the *Free Press* correspondent explained:

> For the past few days considerable opposition has been engendered to the passing of the scheme owing to some supposed unsatisfactory terms in one or two of the clauses. Both sides were busy late on Saturday night [December 31, 1892] distributing literature on the question, and the several candidates for municipal honors were busy putting forward their claims.[54]

In the four way contest for the office of reeve, three of the candidates stood in the pro-amalgamation camp, while the sole 'anti-amalgamation' candidate was Robert F. Lacey. Despite the three way split in the pro-amalgamation camp, the incumbent Reeve John Platt emerged with an overwhelming lead of 152 over both his compatriots who managed to garner 70 and 58 votes each. As for the anti-amalgamation candidate, Robert Lacey came in with a dismal 54 votes.[55]

With an apparent mandate from the electors of the village, the new council quickly set about to see that annexation came closer to reality and submitted to London City Council a copy of the by-law which would have seen the merger of the two communities.[56] Bolstered by an apparent sense of optimism, the *Free Press* praised the decision of both councils and further explained that:

> The amalgamation no doubt will be mutually advantageous. To start with it will terminate a long existing feud between the two corporations relative to the waterworks dam and the sewage question. For the last few years the village has spent an enormous amount of money in needless litigation, which now will be ended. Then it is patent to every one that keeping a municipal government with assessors, collectors, council, school board clerk, treasurer, etc., requires much oil to run the machinery and has always been a costly piece of business to the London West ratepayers. To belong to the city will give the village a better standing both financially and socially, as now the inhabitants can command all the superior advantages enjoyed in the city.[57]

After such a promising start, however, things began to turn sour. By the middle of March, at a special meeting of City Council, various portions of the village by-law were repudiated including provisions that would have found the city bound to maintain the breakwater and the much-touted section that asserted that London West would maintain a different assessment level for a period of ten years.[58] Angered by this about-face, one of London West's most ardent proponents of the agreement, D.C. McDonald (Macdonald) scathingly wrote:

> We, that is, the supporters of the scheme, argued that no municipality, with any show of decency, would go back, or attempt to go back, on their well-considered bargain; but in this we have been mistaken, and must confess that our opponents knew more of "the ways that are dark and tricks that are vain" of the ordinary city alderman, than we could by any possibility be aware of.[59]

With continued opposition to the by-law emerging amongst several aldermen, City Council delayed submitting the necessary legislation to the Provincial Legislature for ratification. In the meantime opposition from another corner of the city mounted an attack upon the proposed agreement. The Board of Trade openly condemned the basis for amalgamation, and one member went so far as to indicate that "the assets of London West would be a detriment to the city, rather than a benefit." The Board feared that London West's inclusion in the city would only burden the rest of the city and hinder progress. Angered by the idea that London West should form a ward of its own, the Board continued to assail the proposed legislation.[60] Questioning the validity and morality of Board of Trade's attempt to reverse a decision endorsed by two elected bodies, Deputy-Reeve William Scarrow of London West soundly denounced the actions of the Board as unscrupulous and contrary to the British way.[61] Other commentators also called the Board's actions into question and assumed that such an assault, even if justified, was "a little late in the field . . ."[62] However, like all previous attempts to generate a formal union between the two municipalities, after more than a year of discussion and consultation, this attempt too faltered and died.[63]

By the close of 1896, despite the hopeful reports of fiscal solvency by Deputy-Reeve William Moore, the village of London West had acquired a massive debt of some $44, 640.00 due largely to increased expenditure upon the breakwater, which some councillors regularly condemned for having been poorly executed. The several thousand dollars in uncollected taxes and other apparently minor expenditures had also helped to

create this large debt that seemed to hobble the corporation.[64]

For several years the cost inherent in the duplication of services had become an increasing concern for many of the village's elected officials, who had made various attempts to procure agreements with various city councils, with limited success. In 1893, despite the failed attempt at gaining favourable terms for entry into the city, the Everett-Moore Syndicate who owned and operated the London Street Railway, had negotiated a thirty year contract with London West's council to extend their services into the village. The contract had provided for continuous service from the Kensington Bridge along Dundas Street and up Wharncliffe as far as Oxford Street, where cars would then turn about and retrace their path. The difficulty was that the City of London had refused permission for the London Street Railway Company to link the main lines west of Richmond Street with the branch in London West. So until permission was finally granted in 1897, anyone riding the transportation system had to disembark at the Kensington Bridge and walk into the city to the corner of Dundas and Richmond Streets in order to board those street cars on the city side of the river.[65] Certainly the issue had weighed heavily upon then village reeve, William J. Saunby, who had been engaged in a turbulent negotiations to link up the street railway service. The difficulty as he saw it was simply that "there were three parties to fight- the city, the street railway, and the county." Saunby hoped that at last a settlement suitable to all parties would result in the linking of London West with the larger city service in the near future. Indeed, Saunby dared go even further with the prophetic closing statement declaring that "he was in favor of going into the city."[66]

It had been over three years since the last discussions for amalgamation had collapsed. In that period much that had come into play in the 1893 discussions had

changed. There appears to have been a distinctive sense that time had at last worn down the resistance of those oppositionists in London West. Overtures from City Council appear to have been initiated toward the village in May, 1897 regarding the old perplexing issue of annexation. Certainly the goal of London West's council to improve the links with the London Street Railway and the mounting village debt seemed to play right into the hands of those advocating amalgamation.

The demographics of the city had altered considerably. At the time of the major negotiations in 1890 and 1893, London's population had been just over 30, 000. By 1897 its population appears to have topped 35, 000.[67] The significance of this population change for London West was profound. While negotiators from the village met with the special amalgamation committee set up by City Council, it became clear that the older agreements set out by the city in 1890 and reinstated in 1893 were no longer tenable for city officials. As the *Free Press* explained "[t]he question of the amalgamation of London West is one of dollars and cents among the wise men at the City Hall. Sentiment has no part or parcel in it."[68] Indeed, conventional wisdom held that small suburbs were both inefficient and frequently misgoverned by a series of amateur politicians. Indeed, "the cry of efficiency was a mask for the desire to exploit and to control . . ."[69]

The old basis for amalgamation had set out the promise that London West would be made into its own city ward, just as London South had been. However, a simple comparison of London West and London South in 1897 showed glaring inequalities. The estimated assessment for London West was a mere $300, 000 while that of London South, or London's Ward Six, was $1, 300, 000, still the lowest of any city ward. It was the opinion of many in City Hall that "the addition of the village to the city is not something to be so ardently desired, because it amounts to comparatively little, here or

there." London South was deemed a much more viable and enticing component for the city. As to the question of London West entering as an independent ward within the city, one alderman refused to entertain the idea explaining that "If they [London West] had three fellows over there they would always be pulling for more than their share . . ."[70]

There was little question that the optimum time for amalgamation had long since passed. With insufficient bargaining power left there seemed little to do but to garner the best terms possible and delay no longer the merging of the two municipalities. While villagers were caught up in the euphoria surrounding Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, their elected officials met with their city counterparts to hammer out a deal.[71] After a careful analysis of the village's accounts, the city came forward with an agreement that after annexation, London West "would pay a rate of 25 mills on the dollar for a period of ten years . . . [and] be allowed three mills more every year for streets and breakwater improvements than would be expended in the other six wards . . ." Seeing little other option and assuming that the terms were as good as could then be expected, the village councillors asked only that the they be charged the rate of 25 mills for seven and not ten years. To this modification the city agreed.[72] While there had been no question of letting London West form its own ward, "it was constituted into two distinct polling subdivisions, presumably to sustain the apparent accessibility of the West London electorate and also possibly to assure its representation on City Council." In short this concession allowed the village a semblance of legal separateness with two inclusive divisions within its old municipal boundaries. Similarly, it was perhaps hoped that such a concession would force aspiring candidates for London's City Hall to be more responsive to the former village's concerns, as their success would hinge on carrying these two stations.[73] Save for a minor dispute as to which ward London West should be appended,

the basis for amalgamation passed through London City Council on May 31, 1897 by a margin of one vote. All that was left was for the matter to be taken to the ratepayers of London West.[74]

The vote was held on June 28, 1897, although only a bare majority of 332 of the 600 eligible voters took the opportunity to exercise their prerogative and, as the *Advertiser* explained:

> There was not much interest manifested in the vote on amalgamation in London West today. Ratepayers straggled into the polling booths . . . recorded their votes and departed without much discussion either of the question or the possible result. The general impression among the workers was that the majority in favor of amalgamation would be large.[75]

An overwhelming majority of 297 of those ratepayers who did choose to exercise their vote, voted in favour of amalgamation with a tiny minority of 35 voting against.[76] The *Free Press*, in its final hard-nosed assessment of the saga that had been London West, declared that it should never have opted for municipal independence twenty-three years earlier, labeling the entire experiment a waste of time and money. As with "[a]ll small local municipal governments being detached afford[s] strong inducements for extravagant and unnecessary expenditure . . ."[77] The *Advertiser* offered a more considered assessment, by speaking of the numerous and long standing personal and business ties that already linked the two communities and how "by the union any little municipal friction will be prevented and the united community will be the better able to make the most of its energies."[78]

With the stroke of midnight, on Monday, December 20, 1897 the village of London West was no more. Some young men in the community made straight for the school and clambered up into the belfry and the sound of the bell could be heard ringing out the village's death knell across the night. As the *Free Press* revealed that "[t]hey had

first consulted some of the school trustees hence prosecutions are not likely to follow."[79] In fact, the enthusiastic bell-ringers were overly hasty, as formal amalgamation did not occur until three rigs left City Hall at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, and hurriedly made their way across the Kensington Bridge. The party from the city then slowed their pace "to one more becoming to the importance of the occasion."[80] It was an end of an era to be sure, but it seems to have had little impact upon the former villagers, only some of whom turned out on the streets to witness the tiny procession make its way through their community. When they had completed their tour, the party of dignitaries made their way to the schoolhouse where head-master W.H. Liddicoatt greeted them. Later, the new school chairman, A. Greenlees addressed the pupils, informing them that though he understood their examinations made it impossible for them have the rest of the day off, he declared that with the cession of "their work on Wednesday, they could have the balance of the day to themselves." It is not surprising that this announcement was met with wild applause.[81] The dignitaries then proceeded to collect the financial and municipal records of the former village before they made their way back across the river and on to City Hall.[82]

The first political contest following London West's fusion with the City of London, came with the municipal elections on January 3, 1898. It was to be an ill-omened affair that cast a pall over the entire set of proceedings, and seemed to be a harbinger for things to come. As election revelers gathered on the second floor of London's City Hall in the wee hours, without warning, a large section of the floor suddenly gave way, casting about two hundred and fifty stunned residents to the floor below. A large safe weighing some five hundred pounds toppled in after, crushing many victims to death. Of the twenty-three fatalities, at least four hailed from London West, while another four of their

co-citizens suffered injuries.[83] It was an inauspicious beginning to London West's inauguration within the larger urban centre.

Many of the fears that were expressed by London Westers over losing their municipal independence appears to have borne fruit. While the former village had been permitted to have two polling subdivisions within its boundaries, its inclusion within Ward Two, had limited its representation upon City Council. In fact the ratepayers of London West had been reduced from being represented by a council of five members with two eligible to sit on Middlesex County Council, to a sole representative in City Hall, George Jolly.[84] The general lack of control was only too soon to become readily apparent. Convening early in 1898, the London City Council resolved that there was a need to rename many of the former village streets to avoid duplication with those found within the older sections of the city. To simplify matters, members of council decided the most expedient and from their stand point, gratifying, measure would be to rename many of the streets after themselves! Having exhausted the names of city aldermen, the decision then came to rename streets after various patron saints. Generally Protestant residents of Queen Street were upset when council decided to commemorate St. Patrick with the changing of their street's name. Angered by this imposition, which was apparently affected by Alderman Stephen O'Meara, the inhabitants and ratepayers of St. Patrick quickly organized to petition council to change the name yet again to something more palatable to their Protestant sensibilities. They received a general rebuff not only from O'Meara but council as well, and as late as 1909 they persisted in their endeavour to have the apparent indignity reversed.[85]

London West's amalgamation with the city does not seem to have unduly stifled a sense of community belonging in the old suburb. As one resident of London West in the

1930's recalled there persisted within the former village a pervading "community feeling," especially with the persistence of both St. George's Anglican and Empress Avenue United Church (formerly London West Methodist). Thinking back she recalled that:

> Neighbours were very friendly and close to each other and we knew all our neighbours in the area, and of course further afield after we were in school and so forth. And I think particularly after I got to highschool, those of us who went up to Central Collegiate, we felt that we were sort of a group; a London West group. . . . I know we mingled with others and met others, but we'd say, 'Oh, yes they live London East," or "Yes, those folks live London North."So you know there was a sense of community amongst the young people and I'm sure amongst the adults too.[86]

Gradually, in the years immediately following annexation, London West (or West London as it had unofficially been renamed)[87] was the recipient of increased access to city water, hydro and belated linkages to the London Street Railway. Yet perhaps the most important consideration that had governed the decision to join the city was the assurance that with access to the wider resources of the city they would be better protected from the perennial problem of flooding.[88] It was, however, a problem that did not go away nor did the frequency and destructiveness of the flooding abate. Serious breaches in the breakwater resulted in March, 1904 as London West was again inundated by the rampaging Thames.[89] While the city did make allowances for further work on the breakwater, the worst was yet to come.[90] As for the people of London West it was said that they "were not a wealthy lot, and most of their money was tied up in their submerged dwellings."[91] The worst flooding to hit London West would come in 1937.[92] The security London Westers sought within the City of London would not be assured until 1952, with the completion of the Fanshawe Dam, fifty-five years after they had joined the city.[93]

Notes For Chapter Five

1. Village of Petersville and Village of London West. By-Laws. Numbers 1-340. 1875-1897. City Clerk's Office, City Hall, London, Ontario. The imprint of the village's seal is found throughout the bylaws.

2. Lutman, South and West, 54; London Free Press, May 21, 1890.

3. Jackson, 144-145.

4. Ibid, 147.

5. Bloomfield, 15. In the 1880's there had been five municipal amalgamations, while the 1890's saw only two.

6. John Lutman and Christopher L. Hives. The North and the East of London: An Historical and Architectural Guide (London, Ontario: Corporation of the City of London, 1982), 59-60. London East had been incorporated in 1874 at the same time as London West. Unlike its more westerly counterpart however, incorporation seems to have been championed by industrialists and entrepreneurs who remained a driving force in London East. It was well over twice as large as Petersville (London West) with some 2,416 inhabitants. This growth accelerated so that by 1880 it boasted 3,651 inhabitants and in December, 1881 it was officially granted the status of a town.

7. Ross, 97.

8. London Advertiser, December 2, 1880.

9. Ibid, April 8, 1887.

10. Ibid, July 30, 1884

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid, August 8, 1884.

14. Ibid. The problem of thistles seems to have been a recurring theme in village life. In August, 1881 several villagers were threatened with legal action "for allowing Canada thistles to grow on their property . . ." despite repeated warnings by the village council. Ibid, August 22, 1881.

15. Ibid, June 4, 1880

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid, March 20, 1880.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid, April 8, 1881.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid, March 20, 1880. There seems to have been a recurring consensus among many villagers that annexation would one day be inevitable, but that to join the city too soon would hurt the villagers and lessen their voice in the political arena.

22. Ibid, December 16, 1882.

23. Ibid. George Stratfold was a plasterer who lived on John Street in London West. During the 1883 flood Stratfold and his wife lost three children. London Advertiser, July 13, 1883; History of Middlesex, 725-726. A native of Gloucestershire, England, William Henry Bartram emigrated to Canada as a child, volunteered to fight the Fenians in the late 1860's and moved to London in 1867 where he commenced his legal studies. As well as establishing his own law firm, Bartram became the registrar in the Law Department of the fledgling Western University, and was reeve of London West from 1880 to 1881. He moved to London West in 1876. Lutman, West and South, 59.

24. Statutes of Ontario. 1873, 36, Vic. 48, c. 212-215.

25. Ibid, 213.

26. London Advertiser, December 16, 1882.

27. Lutman, South and West, 9-10.

28. By the 1890's, clustered north of Huron Street at the large bend formed by the Thames River had begun to form the community known unofficially as Brough (later Broughdale). Broughdale remained a relatively small settlement until the extension of the London Street Railway up Richmond Street right into the community caused something of a building boom. While it did grow rather significantly it was never incorporated and while it was rumoured that London had laid a covetous eye on the land as early as 1905, Broughdale was not annexed to the city until 1961. In the 1930's fearing the possible amalgamation by the city, the residents of Broughdale had even toyed with the idea of opting for incorporation, a move that residents thought would help to stave off annexation. A.J. Shawyer. Broughdale: Looking For Its Past: A History of a Residential Neighbourhood within the City of London, Ontario (London, Ontario: Broughdale Community Association, 1981), 45, 159-160.

29. London Free Press, May 21, 1890.

30. Ibid, May 21, 1890; Henry Campbell Black. Black's Law Dictionary (St. Paul, Minnesota: West Publishing, 1979), 366; Daphne A. Dukelow and Betsy Nuse. Dictionary of Canadian Law (Scarborough, Ontario: Thomson Professional Publishing, 1991), 608. A mandamus is "[a] prerogative writ which compels the performance of a public duty, often used to compel an inferior court to exercise its jurisdiction."

31. Ibid, June 30, 1890.

32. Ibid, May 21, 1890.

33. Ibid.

34. Hives, 64-65. After 1883 there were calls from London West for the removal of the Springbank Waterworks Dam, a call that was only intensified after a severe ice jam in 1884 nearly inundated the village again.

35. London Free Press, May 21, 1890.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid.

38. London, City of. Proceedings of Municipal Council 1890 (London, Ontario: R. Southam Printer, 1891), 63. J.J. Talman Regional Collections, U.W.O. The meeting was held on July 7, 1890.

39. London Free Press, June 26, 1890.

40. Proceedings 1890, 63.

41. Ibid.

42. London Advertiser, July 8, 1890.

43. London Free Press, June 30, 1890; London City Directory 1883, 146, 148. Councillor William Duff was a brushmaker who lived on the north side of Dundas Street in London West. William Spence sold "stoves, tinware and lamp goods . . ." on Talbot Street in the city, but resided on Napier Street south of Blackfriar's Street in London West.

44. London Free Press, June 30, 1890.

45. Ibid.

46. Ibid, July 8, 1890.

47. Ibid, June 30, 1890.

48. Ibid, July 8, 1890.

49. London Advertiser, July 17, 1890.

50. Ibid, July 9, 1890.

51. Proceedings of Municipal Council 1892: January 18, 1892 to January 9, 1893 (London, Ontario: R. Southam Printer, 1893), 20. The matter of amalgamation with London West was discussed briefly at the third council meeting on February 15, 1892.

52. Ibid, 244. Along with the major concessions listed there was the usual provisions for the London assuming London West's debt as well as paying off the village's portion of Middlesex County's debt. Other notable portions of the basis for amalgamation included stipulations for the extension of various services such as water and electricity. The latter was to receive no expenditures above the level at which the village was currently spending.

53. London Free Press, December 28, 1892.

54. Ibid, January 3, 1893.

55. Ibid. Besides John Platt the two other pro-amalgamation candidates for reeve were John Chapman and long-time annexationist D.C. McDonald. A similar stance had been taken by the two candidates for the office of deputy-reeve. In this case, however, the race between the incumbent William Scarrow and his anti-amalgamationist opponent A. R. Murdock was fought with a narrow margin of 144 and 122.

56. Ibid, January 10, 1893.

57. Ibid, January 11, 1893.

58. Proceedings of Municipal Council 1893: January 19, 1893 to January 15, 1894 (London, Ontario: Jones and Lawson, 1894), 83-84.

59. London Free Press, March 31, 1893.

60. Ibid, April 24, 1893.

61. London Advertiser, April 27, 1893.

62. London Free Press, April 28, 1893.

63. Municipal Council 1893, 114, 121. After the middle of the year there appears to have been no more discussion of the amalgamation deal.

64. London Advertiser, December 29, 1896. Ibid, May 22, 1897. It is difficult to make a full assessment of London West's debt at the dawn of 1896. However, it appears to have made a relatively stark comparison with the debt incurred by London East prior to its annexation to the city in 1885. London East's debt amounted to $61, 806.88 while in 1896 London West's stood at $44, 640.00. When one considers that London West's population in 1896 was roughly about 2, 000 and London East's population in 1885 was about four thousand, the debt in London West, if divided amongst its inhabitants was profoundly higher. London East estimated its assets as amounting to $88, 999. 40. London West's remaining assets in 1896, valued at $16, 000, seemed comparatively negligible. For while London East could boast the ownership of three schools and a town hall, London West possessed only one school which was also used for their village meetings. Similarly London East had $40, 000 tied up in a waterworks and adjacent land, something London West never possessed; Ross, 93, 96; Bloomfield, 156.

65. Lutman, South and West, 55.

66. London Advertiser, December 29, 1896.

67. Bloomfield, 156. The population of London in 1891, the year after the failed negotiations with London West, was listed as 30, 062 (that number included the annexed suburbs of London East and London South). By 1901 the population had risen to 37, 976 a number that included London West that had been annexed four years earlier. Because London West's population appears to have barely topped 2,000 at the time it was annexed, the number 35, 000 is an estimate for London's population in 1897.

68. London Free Press, May 31, 1897.

69. Jackson, 144-145.

70. London Free Press, May 31, 1897.

71. London Advertiser, May 22, 1897. At a special meeting of London West's School Board on May 21, 1897 it was resolved that they would organize their own celebration of Queen Victoria's auspicious milestone. As not to conflict with other commemorations planned throughout the city, the board decided they would stage a programme of sporting activities and a musical and literary concert on June 18th at the school house on Ann Street. In the meantime it was ordered that the flag would be hoisted on May 24th in honour of Her Majesty's birthday.

72. Ibid.

73. Jeff Leunisson, "London's Ward System 1840-1986: An Exploration in Municipal Electoral Geography"(Unpublished Senior Undergraduate Thesis, University of Western Ontario Department of Geography, 1987), 29.

74. London Free Press, June 1, 1897.

75. London Advertiser, June 28, 1897.

76. Ibid, June 29, 1897.

77. London Free Press, June 29, 1897.

78. London Advertiser, June 29, 1897.

79.London Free Press, December 20, 1897.

80. Ibid.

81.London Advertiser, December 21, 1897.

82.Ibid.

83. Miller, London 200, 152; London News, January 4, 1898. Amongst the dead were W.H. Dell, a baker from Blackfriar's Street, W.H. Bartlett, John Burgess, a labourer from Wharncliffe Road, and James Spry, a packer for Pigott and Bryan. All four were from London West. The four other former villagers injured in the calamity were Dennis Collins, William Durnion, Walter Beechy and William Moore. Moore had clung to a door as the floor gave way.

84. London Advertiser, January 24, 1910. London Free Press, January 24, 1910. George Charlwood Jolly died in London on January 23, 1910. He represented London West for two years on City Council.

85. Priddis, 26-27. Heading the list of renaming the old village Centre Street was named Wilson Avenue after the incumbent Mayor Dr. John Wilson, and a from there the list continued with councilors bestowing their names in wholesale fashion in West London. Ironically the only council member who lived in London West, George Jolly, declined to have his named affixed to any street, especially considering that the proposed name of *Jolly Row* would become not only the laughing stock, but too great a temptation for local boys to refrain from engaging in fist fights. The streets in old Kensington had been largely given the names of local tree species such as Pine and Birch. In deference to old imperial families and connections to royalty they were renamed Guelph and Cavendish Streets respectively. Oak Street was christened Forward for an elderly resident on the street, one of the few concessions made to commemorate villagers themselves, other than the retention of names such as Gunn, Irwin and Saunby for other early village families.

86. Jean Dunham, June 23, 1999.

87. London Advertiser, December 20, 1897.

88. Leunissen, 29.

89. Rediscovering London's River: An Historical Documentation of the Thames (London, Ontario: Public History Students Project at University of Western Ontario, 1996), 52.

90. Ibid, 53.

91. Hives, 82.

92. Ibid, 110-114. It was estimated that the 1937 flood left five to six thousand people temporarily homeless.

93.Lutman. South and West, 57; Rediscovering London's River, 58.

Conclusion

The general indifference displayed by historians toward nineteenth century suburbs, especially in Ontario, appears to have been based largely upon an assumption that these appendages to the larger urban body were merely physical and political units that possessed little in the way of a separate sense of identity, justifying the observation made that suburbs were merely "a parasitic growth on the urban body politic."[1] However, such a conclusion can only be based upon hasty and even reckless generalizations. If a study of London West brings to light anything, it is that the internal political and social organization of an individual suburb in the nineteenth century were as complex as they were at times turbulent. Similarly, what emerges from a study of London West is that suburbs that were largely the preserve of wage earning artisans and small business people were not necessarily dominated by or guilty of kowtowing to the cities that they surrounded.

The very process of incorporation had taken two small villages, Petersville and Kensington, and forged them into a single municipal entity that would become London West. London West's largely middle class residents worked toward the creation of a community of respectability by means of social groups, religious institutions and meagre business developments. The catastrophic flood of 1883 seriously impinged upon the village's ability to fend for itself in the face of chronic deflation of property values, yet served to give the village a sense of unity of purpose that had eluded it in its earliest years of being. In conjunction with the new solidarity that arose in the village the flooding also served to antagonize relations between London West and the City of London. As villagers set out on their vehement quest to ensure the security of their property and families, deeply held hostilities toward the city frequently impeded negotiations and delayed

London West's entry into the city for several years. For the largely middle class ratepayers of London West, dependant upon the city for their economic security and their livelihoods, and subject to the violent whims of the Thames River, the retention of their community's municipal autonomy remained an important sphere of control in their lives. It was in the realm of village politics to varying degrees that the ratepayers could help to control and direct one aspect of their lives-- it was in this sphere, where they at least nominally free from the economic and social elites that dominated other aspects of their lives (this is evidenced to by the villager's rejection of the Peters family's symbolic suzerainty in the chaotic name debates of 1880 and 1881). The corporation of London West allowed them an arena for expression and debate where they might have an opportunity to influence decision making.

Beset by seemingly impossible financial burdens and unable to continue their struggle against the Thames River alone, the ratepayers of London West opted to exchange their municipal independence for the apparent security offered by the City of London. While there had been little doubt in the minds of many within the community that amalgamation with the larger urban centre was inevitable, they had been unwilling to see such an arrangement occur without various guarantees securing their political prerogatives and a semblance of autonomy for their community. Perhaps their greatest fault was their tenacity, for it was this that had caused them to reject various overtures from the city, that in retrospect might have secured them a better political position than the ultimate agreement they accepted with little enthusiasm, or indeed choice. Certainly within a few years London West came to enjoy many of the benefits of belonging to the larger corporation, including the extension of water and hydro and other amenities that the larger tax base of the city could provide. The hope that joining the city would finally

guarantee the security of their property and lives from the dangers of flooding, proved to be largely elusive, and some of the worst flooding to strike London West would come several decades after it had joined the city. As for a sense of community, the amalgamation of London West into the city appears to have hardly eroded the neighbourhood identity. Separated from the rest of the city by the Thames, and continually subjected to flooding, if only for these unwelcome reasons, London West continued to cultivate a distinctive sense of community.

Ironically, the flood, which had done so much to strengthen the resolve of ratepayers to maintain their municipal autonomy and insist on continued guarantees of local autonomy within the city, was the ultimate reason for London West's passive, if not grudging acceptance of London's final bid for consolidation in 1897.

Notes for Conclusion

1. Singleton, 29.

Appendices: Interview Methodology

It became apparent in the course of my research that although the municipality of London West ceased to function in December, 1897 the community itself continued to function long after, as a perusal of various newspapers in the succeeding years clearly indicates. In an attempt to come to a better understanding of London West in the early decades of the twentieth-century, I decided to conduct two interviews with individuals who had resided in that portion of the city prior to World War II. The selection of interview subjects was not an arduous task, as one of the subjects, Jean Dunham, was known to me. However, I felt that basing any conclusions on London West in the post-annexation years on only one interview would be suspect, and therefore decided to try to interview at least one other subject, with which my supervisor, Professor Roger Hall, concurred. Earlier in my research I had contacted St. George's Anglican Church in hopes of tracking down records and was referred to the Miss Catherine Andrewes, a life-long London West resident. I therefore approached her and she was agreeable to the interview. I went into both interviews with only a few possible questions with which I hoped to entice both subjects into describing as much about the community of London West in the 1920's and 1930's as possible. In both cases these questions were hardly necessary, as both Mrs. Dunham and Miss Andrewes were more than willing to share their remembrances of their days on the west bank of the Thames. Both interviews were taped recorded. Unfortunately, in the instance of my interview with Miss Andrewes, my tape recorder malfunctioned and the latter portion of the interview was lost, however, I was subsequently able to reconstruct some of what was said through written notes that I took during the course of the interview. I transcribed both of the interviews, both of which are found in the following appendices. Following each transcript is a copy of the release form that both narrators signed, allowing me permission to include them in the final form of this thesis.

Appendix One: Interview with Jean Dunham

Narrator: Jean Dunham (nee Houghton)
Interviewer: Greg Stott
June 23, 1999
Lobo Township, near Komoka, Ontario

G.S.: What were your family's associations with London West?

J.D.: Well my father was born in London West- 17 Argyle Street [formerly John Street]. He was born in the house that his father built and when we came from the west in '29 his sister owned the house and she rented to Dad, and so it was like coming home, because he had been out west since about 1912 or so.*

G.S.: How would you describe London West during the time you lived there?

J.D.: Well, as I said once before to someone, it was sort of, as many people said, a blue collar place. People, at least where we were living, there weren't a lot of big homes. I don't think a lot of families with extra money. We all seemed to be in the same level. I know going to school all the children seemed to be sort of in the same circumstances we were; no one had a lot, and yet we all had plenty to eat and decent clothes to wear, and a decent place to live. So it seemed to me that it was in-between what you would call rich and poor.

G.S.: Was there as sense of community there, or an identification as being from London West?

J.D.: I think there was. Particularly . . . well we were a community as far as school because the area we lived in we were all in Empress School, and either St. George's Anglican Church or Empress Ave United, and we were in Guides and Scouts and those kind of things, so I think there was a real community feeling. Neighbours were very friendly and close to each other and we knew all our neighbours in the area, and of course further afield after we were in school and so forth. And I think particularly after I got to highschool, those of us who went up to Central Collegiate, we felt we were sort of a group; a London West group. And I know we mingled with others, but we'd say "Oh, yes they live London East," or "Yes, those folks live London North." So you know there was a sense of

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* James Houghton (1884-1963) was the ninth child of Edward Johnson Houghton (1843-1895) and Emma Taylor (1840-1903). Edward Houghton was a bricklayer and sat for several terms as a London West school trustee and was also on village council. The family home had been left to his third daughter, Emma Houghton (1870-1941). James married in 1913 to Florence J. Lutman (1881-1969), daughter of London's Assistant Health Inspector. They lived in Winnipeg until 1918, Prince Albert until 1927 and then Medicine Hat until moving back to London in 1929 with their four children, Gordon, Margaret, Jean and Bill.

community amongst the young people and I am sure amongst the adults too.

G.S.: When you say your Dad had grown up in the community and there were neighbours, was there a lot of continuity; had families been there along time?

J.D.: Yes a good many of the families because when Mother and Dad came back to London in '29 there were a good number of people there they we were so glad to see and so glad to see them, because there were so many families that had been there when Dad was young, and he had grown up with so many of them, and so many of them still were in that area, people didn't seem to move around so much, or leave home and go so far away as they do these days.

G.S.: Now you spoke of the school. Which church did you belong to?

J.D.: We went to St. George's Anglican. Of course my grandparents had and my aunts and uncles and so forth had all been Anglicans, so we belonged to St. George's.

G.S.: You have a story about your grandfather, Edward Houghton, with regard to the church.

J.D.: Ah, yes with regard to the brickwork? Yes my grandfather was a bricklayer, and the story goes that Dr. Sage was our minister for over fifty years at that church, and when my grandfather was laying some of the bricks above an entrance to the church, Dr. Sage's daughter, came along- I am not sure how it would have been, because the story goes that it was a doll's head- anyway she gave him the doll's head, and he worked it in above in the brickwork above the one entrance to the church.

G.S.: Was it there when you remember?

J.D.: Yes it was. I often wonder lately if it is still visible, of course I haven't been back to St. George's for years, but it was pointed out to us.

G.S.: Now you said you went to Empress School, now were there a lot of teachers that had been there for a while?

J.D.: Yes there were. Two teachers were there that had taught- I'm not sure about Miss Sarah Lawrence- but Miss Platt, Miss Ada Platt, had taught my Dad in school, and I had her for a teacher. And Miss Sarah Lawrence had been there for years, and I am not exactly sure if she was there when Dad went to school or not, but she had been there for a good number of years. And then the principal, Rex Fowler and Dad knew each other well, because they had grown up together in London West- the Fowlers were an old London West family.

G.S.: Was there much in the way of business in the community?

J.D.: Not really in our area, but at the corner of Wharncliffe and Oxford there were stores on each corner- there was Fowler's grocery store, Winter and West's

grocery store, Botros Meat Market on one, and there were other small grocery stores. We always went to Mr. Nicholl's grocery store up the end of Blackfriar's, up by the bridge, the Blackfriar's Bridge. That was the main thing although there was Dexter's Mill down Gunn Street, and down there by the river was Dexter's Mill, and further out the end of Wharncliffe there was May's Dairy, but other than those sort of things in that area there were really more just small stores or that kind of thing.

G.S.: You spoke of a Miss Collins?

J.D.: Oh, yes Miss Collins. Collins' store was up at the end of Argyle and Blackfriar's there, and that was another grocery store, so that meant, really that there was the one over there on Wharncliffe and Paul Street, so that it meant really that we had a lot of grocery stores in the area. But of course we had to buy things -probably meat and milk, oh well we had milk delivered, meat we had to buy everyday so that it was handy for everyone to have these smaller stores close to us.

G.S.: Were there any particular recreation activities going on in the community that you remember?

J.D.: Well, not too much outside of school and church. Well in later years there was the Kensington Park up Charles Street there, or Kensington Ave, and I think that was more-or-less in later years run by the city, as playgrounds are run these days, but we were never involved with those, but we were involved in anything going on at the school, and we were involved with the Guides and the Scouts through St. George's Church, and the ones that went to Empress [United] there were some youth organizations and that type of thing. There was also through the Anglican Church the Young People's Association, the A.Y.P.A. , and so we involved with that kind of thing but it was mainly through the church or the school that we were into any of those kind of things.

G.S.: Did your parents belong to any organizations?

J.D.: Well, there again through the church. They belonged to the women's and men's groups and so forth in the church, and other than that, no I can't really think of any other groups that they belonged to.

G.S.: Now obviously a major event in the community was the 1937 flood. Had there been flood scares before that you remember?

J.D.: Not that we remembered, but the earlier in the day of the flood, my aunt who owned our house, had phoned Mother (she was up London North then) and she said "Oh, don't worry, they say the river's rising," and she said, "The odd time years ago we had a bit of water in the basement of the cottage," but she said "You don't need to worry about it. And that's all that's ever happened to us." So Mother felt well, there was going to be some, and maybe some water in the basement and that type of thing, but we certainly weren't expecting anything that did come.

G.S.: How quickly did you realize there was trouble?

J.D.: Well when I was coming home from school- Central Collegiate- my friend and I walking over the Blackfriar's Bridge, the water was right under the floor of the bridge, it wasn't over the bridge, we didn't get our feet wet, but it was right under and in that way that sort of made us like a little bit, but still it hadn't gone over the banks then and we walked right home without getting wet. But it seemed to me then that it came up pretty quick after that.

G.S.: How badly was your house affected?

J.D.: Well it was up between four or five feet, and course just being a cottage everything was on one floor. I can remember before we left Mother and my brother shoving things- there was just a small hole to get up to the attic, a hole in the bathroom ceiling- and I can remember them shoving the dining room chairs and putting them up there, and I am sure there were other things maybe that we put up and setting things up on the dinning room table and that kind of thing, but in the end the water came up above that, so that didn't help much.

G.S.: Did you stay in the community after that?

J.D.: We got out of course, and went up to my grandmother's place on Wellington Street North, and we had to come back and clean up the mess, and it was a horrible mess, and as we said we found "Flood Mud" on things months afterward, but we didn't stay in the house, my aunt felt that she would rather sell the house and get rid of it after that and Mother and Dad weren't in any position to buy it so we had to rent. We did go up to a house on King Street for the rest of that spring after and through the summer I guess. But they wanted to get back to London West, so they found a house to rent, 199 Wharncliffe Road, so we were away just a few months.

G.S.: Did the community change after that?

J.D.: No, I don't think so, that much. Of course I was growing up more then and getting away when I went teaching, but no it seemed to pretty much the same community around, as far as we felt anyway. We still had our connection with the church and with other neighbours and so forth in the area. It seemed to me that it didn't change that much.

G.S.: Did many people leave that you knew of?

J.D.: I never really knew too much, I can't think of too many of my friends or people I knew that left the church. I am sure there must have been some of course, but I can think of neighbours around Empress and Argyle there and that and they still seemed to back there in their houses. I don't think it really changed a lot. There were of course probably some.

G.S.: Did the flood help to create a sense of community?

J.D.: Oh, I think so too, especially when we first went back and had to clean up and everyone was in the same situation, and you knew that everybody had to do about the same thing, and lost so much. The Red Cross came along and gave us new mattresses and I know a we got a kitchen table and chairs through the Red Cross; I can't think of too much else. My brother always remembers the upholstery furniture being put out on the lawn, of course it was soaked through, and the Public Health coming along and slashing it all so that it couldn't be used again, because it wouldn't be very healthy taking that stuff even if you thought you had it dried out, back into the house. So that sort of thing we had to buy new, upholstered furniture.

G.S.: Now, I understand that your sister had a run in with the police.

J.D.: Yes, we always laugh about that. She was teaching up at Lorne Ave school out London East, and when she heard what was going on in London West she was anxious to get home, and her principal drove her down Oxford Street to the Oxford Street Bridge. When she got there, of course the police were there and they were saying they wouldn't let anyone across the bridge. "Oh, nobody can go across." I don't know if the water was above the bridge then or not, but anyway they weren't allowing anyone over. So she argued with the police, "No, no you can't go over," but she said, "But I live over there," and she just took off and ran right across. So she did get home with us too before we left.

G.S.: I've heard you say there was a nickname that people in the city gave to the Village of London West.

J.D.: Apparently, at one time, years ago they called it the 'Frog Pond.' So any time there was any joking or laughing or something it was always that Daddy had come from the Frog Pond- London West. There was over past Wharncliffe Road and area that was sort of swampy and that's were the . . . Sulphur Springs where, because Daddy knew they were there, because he had had to go over and get sulphur water for his father before he died, it was supposed to be good for rheumatism, and he would go over as a young kid and bring back sulphur water everyday. And those sulphur springs were there when we first got there- of course that area is all built up now. But no they always teased Daddy that he had come from the Frog Pond.

G.S.: Do you ever go back to London West?

J.D.: Oh, not that much. I have been back to St. George's Church a couple of times for funerals- the church has changed the front of the church was moved out, and it looks a little different, but the main part of it is quite the same to be in. There is another part built on to the Parish Hall that we never had. I have been over, actually, I had my grandchildren with me, we went to the Children's Museum. We drove down past 17 Argyle to show them where I had lived. A young woman was outside raking, and she came over to the car wondering if we were looking for some place, and I said, "No, we're actually just looking at the house. This is the house I was brought up in, and it was built by my grandfather." And she was very

interested. "Oh," she said, "My husband is interested in the house, and knows it must be an old house," and oh she would like to talk to us, and she said, "Would you like to come into the house?" And of course I would really like to go in, so she took us in. It had been changed a bit inside, in fact somebody said it had had three apartments in it at one time, I don't know it seems strange for a small cottage. Anyway she took us in and we looked around and of course it was quite familiar to me, even if some changes were there. The one thing, the basement had never been finished off, in fact it was just a dirt floor when we were there, and I guess it was just the same, and while I was looking around and said, "Yes, there's the door to the basement." And she said , "You know, I have often wondered, would there be anyone buried in that basement?" And I said [laughing] well I had never heard of any, and I really don't think there are any, but I think she just thought it just a bit scary because it was dark and there weren't any windows out from it, and it was dark with a dirt floor and everything, but I told her I didn't think there had been any bodies buried down there.

G.S.: Well, thank-you very much that was very helpful.

J.D.: Okay. Thank-you.

I [signature] hereby give permission to Greg Stott to use the taped interview of my experiences in the community of London West, London, Ontario and the resulting transcript in his Masters Thesis on the Village of London West.

NARRATOR [signature]

ADDRESS [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

Date [illegible]

INTERVIEWER [signature]

ADDRESS [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

DATE [illegible]

RESTRICTIONS [illegible]

Appendix Two: Interview with Catherine Andrewes

Narrator: Catherine Andrewes
Interviewer: Greg Stott
June 24, 1999
London, Ontario.

G.S.: Hello, it is June 24, 1999, I'm Greg Stott and I am interviewing Miss Catherine Andrewes regarding London West. I am here in London, Ontario. It is quite an interesting place once you get delving into it. What were your family's associations with London West? How long had they been there?

C.A.: Oh, golly I can't tell you that, but my father was born there - no he was born on the corner of St. James and Colborne, I think. And then they moved over there and at the time of that flood in 1883 he was about three years old or so. And they were over west then in the double house on what was Mount Pleasant, and then the older son married and lived in the other half of that house and then moved up here on Oxford Street, later.

G.S.: What were your grandparent's names?

C.A.: David and Catherine.

G.S.: David and Catherine Andrewes?

C.A.: Yes.

G.S.: Did they talk much about the 1883 flood?

C.A.: Not a great deal, but I remember them saying that my father went around and couldn't get out - in those days they had outhouses- he couldn't get out and he peed in the water and yelled "The water's rising! The water's rising." It was in the house. I heard them saying that. He was about three then because I think he was born in about 1879.

G.S.: I suppose that he wouldn't have known what was going on. My understanding is that it hit very quickly. So they didn't have much of a chance.

C.A.: And when I was a kid there was a dirt road along that west side of the river and cars could go up and drive along there.

G.S.: Oh, really? Along the top of the breakwater?

C.A.: Well the breakwater wasn't there then, it was an earthen affair when I was a kid, and the road you could drive up from Roger's Ave., where I lived, and drive along to the Dundas Street Bridge.

G.S.: So when did they build up the breakwater with cement? Do you remember that?

C.A.: Not particularly, I think it was after the flood there in 1937. I think it was after that the cement breakwater went in.

G.S.: How would you describe London West when you were growing up as far as the people were concerned? Were they mostly working class?

C.A.: Oh, they were working class.

G.S.: Where they are a lot of blue collar workers?

C.A.: I guess there were. Like my dad was a railroader, and my Uncle Jim worked on the Express, the C.N. Express- it was the Grand Trunk, and he worked in the Express. He was head of the Express, and two of his brothers, Bob and Archie, they both worked under him on the Express.

G.S.: Oh, so quite a railroad family then. What did your grandfather do?

C.A.: He had a brush factory. On the corner of Blackfriar's and Wilson, upstairs over - was it Gunn?

G.S.: Or. Gurd?

C.A.: Gurd.

G.S.: So he ran the broom factory?

C.A. No he had a brush factory and then would go out around the country selling his brushes in a buggy I guess.

G.S.: Did you know your grandparents fairly well?

C.A.: Oh, yes. We used to go there every year at Christmas, and then my Uncle Fred who was the eldest brother who used to live next door and then he moved up here on Oxford Street. It's up here at Platt's Lane, the last one before Platt's Lane. And that was all his property- he had four or five acres. They took part of it away to widen Platt's Lane, right back here to the gully in those days. These new apartments are built were the gully used to be.

G.S.: I have heard that there used to be a nickname for London West. Some people apparently called it the Frog Pond. Have you eve heard this?

C.A.: No, I've never heard that. Well, when I was a kid going to school in Kindergarten, Miss Grant used to take us down Empress Ave to the part of Empress past Wharncliffe- because I went to the old school, that faced Empress Ave to start with- and she used to walk us down there to see the frogs and the lily pads and all before they drained that, and they didn't drain that until after the flood in '37. And when I was a kid, we lived down on Rogers, and I used to walk down Charles Street and the city had a skating rink there all winter and

constructed an adjoining shack.

G.S.: What was the old school like that you used to go to?

C.A.: Well I suppose it has gone to the archives, but they did have a picture of it over at the church . . . It was a white-brick school, and then when it got so large they needed a couple of rooms at the back, and . . . Oh, I forget what they called that, and that was Grade Five and Six and the two Beacom girls taught over there. There used to be a Beacom, on one side there and Miss [Sarah] Lawrence taught Grade 2, and Miss Harvey taught Grade One.

G.S.: I have heard of Miss Ada Platt. Did she teach there?

C.A.: She taught my father and she taught me. She taught Grade Four. And Miss Proudfoot- you know the Proudfoots up here- there is Proudfoot Lane- she taught Grade Three. I can remember both she and Miss Platt always wore glasses, and Miss Proudfoot always wore these pinch-nosed ones, and she had a gold chain that came down and hung over her ear.

G.S.: Was it just that the old school got crowded?

C.A.: Too crowded and all. And there was an entrance off Empress and an entrance off the playground at the back, and I can remember Mr. Wheable - you know Jeff Wheeble that ended up as superintendent of the schools- he was the principal- and Leslie was his one son, he had a couple of sons and a daughter- and he used to stand there and he was quite a stout man, fairly heavy as I thought of him as a kid, and he would stand there and yell, "Left! Left, right, left!" and we marched in off the two stairs. And the stairs coming in off the side playground went up and Miss Jeffery was right at the top, and she was over here on St. James Street, she was right up at the top, and then Mr. Dealy was there later on, and then one of the Beacoms was this way and Miss Platt's room and Miss Proudfoot's was down there through the back stairs. Mr. Wheeble had quite a booming voice and he would say "Left! Left, right, left!" And so the one coming in this door and going up that stairs and those coming in the front, you could hear him all over the place.

G.S.: It sounds like you would have to make sure you did what he said. No you said you went to St. George's Church.

C.A.: I was baptised there eighty-six years ago this month. My father and mother were married ninety-three years ago in January, only they were married in January and they didn't heat the church in those days, in the winter you were married in Doctor Sage's office that he had at home.

G.S.: Doctor Sage he was there for quite some time.

C.A.: Fifty years.

G.S.: Did you know him quite well?

C.A.: Oh, yes, we all knew him. He baptised us and was the head of us when we were confirmed. He taught at the University.

G.S.: Theology?

C.A.: I guess, I don't know, I know he was at Huron College and all. And Mrs. Sage's sister, Miss English always lived with them. She had been Miss English before. Miss English was tall and thin and Mrs. Sage was short and heavy.

G.S.: I had heard a story once that after the '37 flood Miss English was crossing the Blackfriar's Bridge and she turned and shook her finger at the river and said, "You naughty, naughty river."

C.A.: It would likely be the same one. But she always lived with the Sages.

G.S.: Now the church hall that is there now, was that always there that you can remember?

C.A.: No, it was built in 1923. The hall before was one of the original churches, that was down were Empress School is. That's where I first went to Sunday School [it was torn down when the school was built]. And right were the school is there is a little rise there, and the people in the church and the girl's in the club, just were the rise is they had clay tennis courts, and after that the hall was built at the back, and brought the tennis courts up to my Uncle's property and put them in at the back. They had two or three tennis courts there.

[Unfortunately at this time the tape recorder stopped recording properly and the rest of the interview was lost, unbeknownst to myself. Miss Andrewes continued to discuss various businesses in the community, especially the grocery stores and butcher shops in the vicinity of Oxford Street and Wharncliffe Road. She spoke at length about her experiences during the flood in April, 1937. At that time she said she and her brother lived in the family home on Rogers Ave, and she recalled that there had been talk of the river rising. A neighbour from three houses down, who had two small children, came to the door and asked Catherine if they should go and see what the river was doing. So they walked to the end of the street to the river's edge, and were shocked to see that the water was running level with the bank. They decided that they should return home, and as they crossed over Wilson Ave something in the corner of eye caught Andrewes' attention. When she turned her head she was shocked to see water flowing down from Blackfriar's Street. The two hurried along stopping at the Andrewes' home where they rolled up the carpets and took cushions off of the chesterfield and chairs and took as much as possible to the second floor. Then they rushed down to the neighbour's home and did the same there, before leaving London West as the water rose higher. When Catherine and her brother returned home they found quite a mess. On the pillar of the front porch they found a large mark part way up, which they later learned had been made by a rescue boat, manned by a family friend, who said the post had stopped the boat from crashing through the front window. Once inside the home Andrewes recalled wondering why she had bothered saving all the cushions as the chesterfield and chairs were completely ruined. She recalled that her brother secured a large brush used to sweep out stables, using it to

push all of the grime and sludge out of the house. On a humourous note Andrewes noted that on the day the flood struck she had made a jello for that evening's supper, and left it on a pantry shelf. Upon reentering the house she found the jello sitting undamaged in the middle of the dining room table, having apparently floated from the pantry to its rightful place all on its own accord.

Andrewes also spoke of how when she was a child she and her brother would go down to meet their father at Tecumseh Park to watch a baseball game between the Tecumsehs and a visiting team. Old Mr. Bentley who lived near the gates always sold admissions and when Andrewes and her brother got there he would give them a big smile and tell them to go right on in as their father was already there or that he would tell him that they had gone in when he finally arrived].

I, Catherine Andrews hereby give permission to Greg Stott to use the taped interview of my experiences in the community of London West, London, Ontario and the resulting transcript in his Masters Thesis on the Village of London West.

NARRATOR Catherine Andrews

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Date July 21, 1999

INTERVIEWER Greg Stott

ADDRESS R.R. #1

Arkona, Ont.

N0M 1B0

DATE July 21, 1999

RESTRICTIONS None CA

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