Exploring Ontario’s southern peninsula

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Ontario’s southern peninsula (roughly from Port Dover along the shores of Lake Erie to Windsor in the west and north along Lake Huron to Southampton, and all points in between) contains a wealth of heritage – diverse archaeological discoveries, structures that chronicle the story of this part of the province, museums filled with artifacts that reflect the region’s development and way of life, inspiring Black history that tells the story of escaped American slaves and the lives they built for themselves here, and breathtaking natural heritage that defines much of the region’s shape and development. I am struck by the tremendous variety of heritage this part of the province has to offer.

This issue of Heritage Matters showcases this rich diversity. The First Nations presence in Ontario’s southern peninsula continues to resonate today. Towns in this part of the province also expanded during times of war, particularly the War of 1812, when forts and ports were established. Afterwards, in times of peace, these towns continued to grow both industrially and agriculturally.

This is a story of thousands of years of human history told by the area’s residents, both native and immigrant. As you read the following articles, you will be struck by the scope of our heritage in this arm of the province. And as we celebrate Heritage Week 2010 in Chatham-Kent, we can continue to remind ourselves of the significance of this heritage in building the diverse province we enjoy today.

Celebrate with us as we journey together through Ontario’s southern peninsula.

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Heritage Matters
Exploring Ontario’s southern peninsula, Page 7

Cover: Point Pelee, Canada’s southernmost point of land (© Ontario Tourism 2010)
In addition to these appointments, Dr. Thomas H.B. Symons, a member of the Trust’s Board of Directors since 2006, has been appointed as the new Vice-Chairman.

**Dr. Thomas H.B. Symons, Peterborough**

Professor Symons was the founding President of Trent University and served as its President and Vice-Chancellor from 1961 to 1972. Appointed Chairman of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board in 1986, he served in that post until 1996.

Professor Symons’ work in education, human rights and heritage conservation has received national and international recognition, including honorary degrees from 14 universities and colleges across Canada and beyond. Now Vanier President Emeritus of Trent, Professor Symons is a Companion of the Order of Canada and a Member of the Order of Ontario.

The Honourable Lincoln M. Alexander, Chairman of the Ontario Heritage Trust, is pleased to announce several new appointments to the Ontario Heritage Trust’s Board of Directors.

**Glen Brown, Toronto**

Glen Brown has served on the Board of Directors of the Manitoba Historical Society, and as Chair of its Historic Preservation Committee, and on the Management Committee of the Dalhousie Museum (Winnipeg). He was also the Vice-President of the founding Executive of the Intrepid Society, which honours the memory and accomplishments of Sir William Stephenson, C.C. Mr. Brown also served on the City of Winnipeg’s Historic Buildings Committee, for which he received the City’s Merit Award.

**Dr. Robert Gordon, Toronto**

Dr. Robert Gordon was President of Humber College of Applied Arts and Technology from 1982 until his retirement in 2007. Prior to that, he was Principal and CEO of Dawson College in Montreal. He is President of the Corporation of Bishop’s University and a Leader in Residence for the Council of Emerging Leaders of the Conference Board of Canada. Dr. Gordon has been awarded honorary degrees by Bishop’s University and the universities of Guelph, New Brunswick and Toronto and is a member of the Order of Ontario.

**Melanie Hare, Toronto**

Ms. Hare is an urban planner and partner with Urban Strategies Inc., a planning and urban design firm based in Toronto. She is an expert in sustainable community planning, with a background in urban policy, strategic planning and urban design. She is a member of the Canadian Institute of Planners, the Ontario Professional Planners Institute and a member of the Board of the Canadian Urban Institute, and is currently involved in city building projects in Toronto, many communities throughout southern Ontario and Saint Paul, Minnesota.

**Harvey McCue, Ottawa**

Harvey McCue co-founded the Department of Native Studies at Trent University. He taught at Trent for 14 years, attaining the rank of Associate Professor. He has served as the Director of Education Services for the Cree School Board, and as Director of Policy and Research and subsequently as Director General of the Education Branch at Indian and Northern Affairs in Ottawa. In 1993, Mr. McCue accepted the position of Executive Director and Director of Education of the Mi’kmaq Education Authority in Nova Scotia, leaving that post in 1995 to become a consultant on Aboriginal issues in Ottawa. He is a member of the Georgina Island First Nation.

**Don Pearson, Alliston**

Don Pearson is General Manager of Conservation Ontario, the umbrella organization representing Ontario’s 36 conservation authorities. Before joining Conservation Ontario in 2005, he served two years as Chief Administrative Officer for the County of Perth, and from 1981 until 2003, as General Manager of the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority. Mr. Pearson has been an active community volunteer for the United Way of London and Middlesex, the 2001 Canada Summer Games, the Southwestern Ontario Travel Association, the Grand Bend Harbour Committee and the London and Middlesex Heritage Museum. Currently, Mr. Pearson is a member of the Ontario Biodiversity Council and recently chaired the Natural Spaces Leadership Alliance.

**Maria Topalevich, Toronto**

Maria Topalevich is the Executive Director of the Guild of Canadian Film Composers and former President and CEO of the Academy of Canadian Cinema and Television (1989-2007). She was previously with the Ontario Arts Council and the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Culture as a Granting Arts Officer. Her current volunteer work includes serving as Vice-Chair of Casa Loma, Vice-President of the Actives Fund of Canada and President of the Faculty of Music Alumni Association at the University of Toronto.
The history of Chatham-Kent

Chatham-Kent’s rich cultural heritage began long before European settlement when large stockaded villages and Neutral Indians dominated the Thames River and the Lake Erie-Lake St. Clair shorelines.

The Thames attracted French and Loyalist settlers as early as the 1780s. Persecuted Moravian missionaries from Pennsylvania also came up the Thames and established the village of Fairfield in 1789. Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe identified the Forks of the Thames (present-day Chatham) as a site of strategic importance and established a blockhouse and shipyard there in 1794. Similarly, the Sydenham River was the site in 1804 of one of Lord Selkirk’s early communities, Baldoon, near present-day Wallaceburg.

By 1812, settlement had developed to such a degree that settlers were able to muster a respectable militia force to defend the region. This progress was set back during the American pursuit of British and First Nations forces in the fall of 1813, which resulted in the burning of mills, the destruction of Fairfield and the death of Chief Tecumseh at the Battle of the Thames.

The destruction of Fairfield and the death of Chief Tecumseh at the Battle of the Thames. The history of Chatham-Kent

Bkejwanong: Sustaining a 6,000-year-old conservation legacy

By Clint Jacobs

Nestled at the mouth of the St. Clair River on Lake St. Clair in southwestern Ontario is the Walpole Island First Nation or “Bkejwanong,” meaning “where the waters divide” in Ojibwe. A legacy of conservation practices cultivated by my people, the Anishnaabe (Potawatomi, Ojibwe, and Odawa tribes) has ensured that the land remains remarkably alive with natural wonder.

Throughout the approximately 6,000 years that my people have lived at Bkejwanong, we have been dependent on Aki, the Earth. The land took care of us; in turn, we were taught that we had the responsibility to reciprocate that care. Land stewardship was instilled in our children through traditional teachings. Familes would harvest materials, medicines and food from the land in a sustainable way to ensure that those gifts were available for future harvests and generations to come.

Today, our community boasts a unique natural heritage of world-class wetlands, Carolinian forests and rare oak savannahs and tallgrass prairies — including over 60 of Canada’s rare and endangered species, some found nowhere else in Canada. With a population of just over 4,000, we have successfully shared our territory for millennia with a diversity of species such as small white lady's slipper, Kentucky coffee-tree, sassafras, dense blushingstar, king rail, spotted turtle and flying squirrel.

During the last century, however, our relationship with the land has eroded. The traditional practice of passing knowledge from elder to youth has been disrupted because of the residential school legacy, technology and modern conveniences that have damaged our symbiotic relationship with the environment. The cultural values and ecological knowledge that have safeguarded our land for millennia are in danger of disappearing.

As a growing community with an historic cultural legacy tied to our ancestral home, how do we continue to protect and sustain our natural heritage in the face of modern social and economic pressures? Is this a question we have been actively addressing as a community for decades through the work of the Walpole Island Heritage Centre and other grassroots initiatives.

More recently, Anishnaabe-speaking community members and language learners are in the process of integrating our legends and stories into school curriculum and language immersion programs to foster and enable bilingualism. Further, our youth are becoming involved in conservation through the Bkejwanong Eco-Keepers youth environmental stewardship program, providing summer students with opportunities to work on stewardship projects, many of which they design themselves. This teaches conservation ethics and enhances cultural ties to the land, while exposing the students to a range of career opportunities within the environmental field.

As well, our new energy conservation office educates community members on how to reduce energy use and eliminate greenhouse gases.
Partnering with groups and individuals outside the community is another important part of our conservation approach. We have shared and exchanged experiences with people across North America and beyond. For example, in partnership with the Native Territories Avian Research Project, we are creating hummingbird, songbird, and owl banding programs in collaboration with Six Nations Territory and the Chippewas of the Thames to provide bird studies education and training opportunities.

Our community recently celebrated a milestone – the creation of Canada’s first registered Aboriginal land trust, the Walpole Island Land Trust, which aims to integrate formal land conservation with traditional cultural ties to the land. In addition to several tallgrass prairie conservation and stewardship projects (thanks to the generous support of corporate and conservation sponsors), we are also conserving and restoring a 171-acre/69-hectare marsh on Walpole Island with a number of local partners.

Tallgrass prairie is a globally imperilled ecosystem that provides habitat for many species at risk, such as the endangered bobwhite quail. Funds raised for these habitats will also support ecological restoration, research, training and community initiatives that will teach our children sustainable methods of harvesting food and medicine. Youth will be mentored by elders to learn traditional hunting practices, survival techniques and stories that relate our historical relationship with the land – ensuring that they know how to live on, and protect, our territory.

By pursuing natural heritage protection while working as a community to promote and maintain our relationship with the land, our rich biodiversity can share a prosperous future with my people. Simultaneously, it encourages us to look to the future as our elders and ancestors did, a philosophy that has supported my people for more than 6,000 years. We owe it to our ancestors and all our relations – the plants and animals – to sustain our conservation legacy.

For more information, visit: www.bkejwanong.com and www.walpoleislandlandtrust.com

Clint Jacobs is the Walpole Island Heritage Centre’s Natural Heritage Coordinator and President of the Walpole Island Land Trust.

As you roam the highways and waterways of Ontario’s southern peninsula, a tapestry of stories unravels. These stories speak about settlement and growth, a testament to the people and events that helped shape this part of the province. Starting above Lake Erie, the area is inextricably linked to the tobacco industry, as evidenced by the many tobacco sheds that dot the largely agricultural landscape. Aboriginal people were the first to cultivate tobacco for both spiritual and trade-related purposes. By the early 19th century, however, commercial cultivation of the plant was also being undertaken by area settlers. It was not until the First World War, however, that the industry began to prosper in southwestern Ontario. By the mid-1920s, large amounts of land were converted to prosperous tobacco farms, particularly in the area around Tillsonburg and Delhi. The Ontario Tobacco Museum and Heritage Centre in Delhi preserves the history of the province’s tobacco industry – an industry that has declined in recent years, forcing area farmers to diversify their crops and seek creative and challenging alternatives to maintain their livelihood.

Tillsonburg and Delhi. The Ontario Tobacco Museum and Heritage Centre in Delhi preserves the history of the province’s tobacco industry – an industry that has declined in recent years, forcing area farmers to diversify their crops and seek creative and challenging alternatives to maintain their livelihood.
 population exceeds 420,000. The Forks of the Thames now consists of an interconnected series of parks. The area's rich history is reflected in the patterns and names of its streets.

In the mid-18th century, the government of New France realized the strategic importance of an increased presence on the Detroit River. In 1749, it offered land for agricultural settlement on the river's south shore. Together with civilians and discharged soldiers from Fort Pitt (now Pittsburgh), the French established an agricultural community linked to the automobile industry. During and after the First World War, an area known as “Ford City” grew up around the company’s industrial complex. A walking tour of Ford City developed by the Windsor Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee provides an excellent glimpse into Windsor’s industrial heritage, which continues to impact this riverside city.

As one heads east from Windsor towards Chatham, a number of sites tell the story of Ontario’s Black heritage. Buxton National Historic Site and Black Historical Museum and Cultural Centre. It offers visitors a chance to learn more about the Underground Railroad and the experiences of Black freedom seekers who escaped from slavery in the United States to settle in this part of Ontario. It is one of many sites in the area that preserve and promote an understanding of the province’s unique Black heritage.

Following the Detroit River north from Amherstburg around the edge of the peninsula leads to Windsor – a city with significant cultural and industrial heritage. Known as the oldest identified site of continued settlement in Ontario, Windsor has a dynamic French heritage that dates back to the 18th century and continues to be reflected in the patterns and names of its streets.

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The St. Thomas Canadian Southern Railway station (CASO) occupies a prominent position on the city’s main street. Perhaps it is the station’s sheer size—many refer to it as a horizontal skyscraper—that contributes to its landmark value. It is easy to see how it would have shaped not only the development of St. Thomas, but also the railways of southwest Ontario, Michigan and New York State. Yet years of abandon, vandalism and neglect led many to believe that its best days were gone.

From 1871-73, 31 railway stations were constructed as part of the CASO project; the one at St. Thomas was the largest. Its status as the international CASO headquarters is reflected in both its scale and construction. The Italianate style, unusual for railway construction at the time, is evident in the station’s tall symmetrical plan and decorative architectural features signifying the importance of the station to this region. St. Thomas was seen as the shortest and most direct route between Detroit and Buffalo and was a regular stop for goods travelling from many American cities. The station became the economic and social centre of St. Thomas.

From the beginning, however, the station was plagued with difficulties. CASO went bankrupt the year after the station was completed and the station was sold a few years later. In 1925, a fire damaged much of the roof and second floor. As the importance of the railways began to decline in the mid-20th century, so did the fortunes of the CASO station. Passenger trains stopped running in the 1970s and, with the last employee leaving the station in 1996, the windows were boarded up and this once magnificent structure fell into a state of disrepair.

The North American Railway Hall of Fame (NARHF), a not-for-profit organization, acquired the station in 2005. They are currently working to adaptively reuse the station by preserving its existing heritage features, while altering parts of the building to allow it to accommodate new uses, ranging from retail and office space to an interpretative centre. Funds secured through a job creation program saw all 160 windows of the building repaired and restored. The Ontario Heritage Trust also committed emergency funds toward a study that focused on repairing the deteriorating soffits and facias.

Restoration of the interior is also underway. The dining hall hosted its first wedding in 2005. The space continues to be rented out for events, allowing NARHF to generate revenue during restorations. Rehabilitating a building of this size is a daunting project, but progress is constantly being made. It now looks as though the station’s best days are still ahead.

Kiki Aravopoulos is the Trust’s Easements Program Coordinator.

Seeing better days

By Kiki Aravopoulos
Southwestern Ontario has an extremely rich and diverse cultural history dating back 11,000 years. We can follow human history and settlement through archaeology in this region. Evidence suggests that nomadic hunters of the Palaeo-Indian period (9000-7000 BC) moved into a tundra-like environment as the last glaciers retreated. Archaeological evidence further indicates that small bands of people followed herds of migrating caribou along the shoreline of glacial Lake Algonquin, from the vicinity of present-day Parkhill to the Collingwood area. Major campsites near Parkhill and Thedford were repeatedly visited over several generations between 11,000 and 10,400 years ago.

The hunters, fishers and foragers of the Archaic period (9000-7000 BC) moved into a tundra-like environment as the last glaciers retreated. The climate warmed enough to permit its growth in this region. The early farmers of the Terminal Woodland period (7500-1000 BC) developed pottery (ceramic vessels and smoking pipes) and the associated trade networks. Regionally distinct cultural groups can be recognized in the archaeological record for the first time. Near the end of this period, certain groups began experimenting with the cultivation of corn as the climate warmed enough to permit its growth in this region. The traders and potters of the Initial Woodland period (1000 BC-800 AD) developed pottery (ceramic vessels and smoking pipes) and the associated trade networks. Regionally distinct cultural groups can be recognized in the archaeological record for the first time.

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The historic period from 1650 AD onward witnessed the re-location into southwestern Ontario of lands slated for future development have included the excavation of a large number of 19th-century pioneer homesteads, schools, churches, cemeteries and blacksmith shops. As we sweep through southwestern Ontario – and thousands of years of development – Ontario’s past has left us many indelible clues as to our existence. By studying these artifacts more closely, we are able to paint a more complete picture of the mosaic of our past.

Robert Pearce has been a licensed archaeologist since 1973. He is also the Executive Director of the Museum of Ontario Archaeology.
WALKERVILLE: THE HERITAGE OF A COMPANY TOWN

By Evelyn G. McLean

Visit the City of Windsor’s website for a walking tour of Walkerville (www.citywindsor.ca/DisplayAttach.asp?AttachID=320).

Among the shrinking number of 19th-century company towns, Walkerville – part of the City of Windsor since 1835 – remains an outstanding example of what can happen when a visionary industrialist acquires acres of French farmland for his factory.

This industrialist was Hiram Walker – a farm boy from Massachusetts, an enterprising Yankee grocer and distiller of vinegar in Detroit who looked south across the Detroit River and saw his future in the narrow farms stretching back from the Canadian shore. It is a short step from vinegar to whiskey, and by 1858, Hiram took that step. Hiram Walker & Sons became legendary for its Canadian Club brand.

In 1858, Hiram took that step. Hiram Walker & Sons produced by the distilling process. Developed on the English “Garden City” Plan, the company town provided modest housing for distillery workers close to the industrial hub (Walker Road). The housing consists of parallel streets (Monmouth and Argyle), lined with small cottages, quadruplex row houses and semi-detached housing. It is noteworthy that workers were required to live teetotal; Walker’s police force made sure of that.

The Walker sons’ Walkerville Land & Building Company hired outstanding architectural firms. At the outset, Hiram’s architects of choice were Mason & Rice, a prominent firm from Detroit that built the company’s beautiful administrative office in 1892. The housing consists of parallel streets (Monmouth and Argyle), lined with small cottages, quadruplex row houses and semi-detached housing. It is noteworthy that workers were required to live teetotal; Walker’s police force made sure of that.

Walkerville: The Heritage of a Company Town

With government assistance, Walker built the Lake Erie, Essex and Detroit River Railway to transport farm produce in and out of his empire, as well as to ship liquor across the border (even during Prohibition, thanks to a loophole in the law). At one point, he and his sons developed a summer resort in the town of Kingsville on Lake Erie – the Mettawas Hotel, with its own beautiful sail station designed by Mason & Rice – taking advantage of the desire of Detroiters to get away from the rapidly growing metropolis and kick back on sunny beaches. A private ferry service brought the travellers directly across the Detroit River to Walker’s dock, and then on to the elegant train station on the town’s main street, Devonshire Road (since demolished by the Chespeake & Ohio Railway).

At the heart of the town, in 1904, the Walker sons had a fine stone church built in honour of their mother, and named it in her memory – St. Mary’s Anglican Church. Architects Cram Goodhue & Ferguson of Boston and New York drew the plans, reminiscent of an English country church with modest Gothic elements.

Over the decades, Walkerville has lost some of its fine structures, especially those built for the distillery. But its picturesque charm still draws discerning home buyers looking for old-fashioned architectural beauty – fine houses on large, landscaped lots, and excellence in building materials and construction techniques. It remains Windsor’s most admired neighbourhood.

Evelyn G. McLean was Windsor’s first heritage planner and has been an advocate of heritage in the City of Windsor for years.
the shelf

University of Toronto: An architectural tour, by Larry Wayne Richards

Princeton Architectural Press. Originally built in the 19th century in a pastoral setting outside the city limits, the University of Toronto is today Canada’s largest institution of higher education, with three campuses in and around Toronto. One of the highest-ranked universities in the world, it contains some of the finest architecture in Canada, starting with Frederick Cumberland’s masterpiece, the Norman Romanesque-style University College, of 1856. Other buildings of note include W.G. Storm’s impressive Romanesque-revival Victoria College building (1889), Darling & Pearson’s Gothic Trinity College building, and Hart-House, designed by architects Sprout & Ralph in 1919. In recent years, the university has continued to expand with buildings designed by Lord Norman Foster, Behnisch, Behnisch & Partner, KPMB, Diamond and Schmitt, Saucier + Perrotte, and Pritzker prize-winning Thom Mayne, among many others.

This guide captures the university’s three campuses and buildings in colour photographs and detailed maps, following its history from the 19th century to the present day.

Belleville: A popular history, edited by Gerry Boyce. Dundurn Press. Belleville is a treasure trove of stories — “glorious and not-so-glorious” — embodying the history of the city of Belleville and its beautiful surroundings. Gerry Boyce, the dean of the area’s historians, has done a masterful job of pulling together the best of Belleville’s storied past, episode by episode, decade by decade: here one learns about the Native roots of the place, its debatable “discovery” by Champlain, its hot-headed pre-Confederation politics, its involvement in Spiritualism in the 1850s and the roots of the place, its debatable “discovery” by Champlain, its hot-headed pre-Confederation politics, its involvement in Spiritualism in the 1850s and the rise of the financially crippling news of secret payments made to the players. Gerry Boyce does a masterful job of bringing the city’s history — its events, places and personalities — to life, reminding us that our history, be it local or national, is much more lively and intriguing than we often realize.

This Old Haus: A Place in Time, by Susan MacFarlane Burke with Kenneth McLaughlin and Stephanie Kirwood Walker

Friends of Joseph Schneider Haus. This Old Haus: A Place in Time is a large-format, lushly illustrated book on the Joseph Schneider Haus Museum. The book combines the story of the Pennsylvania-German Schneider family who arrived in the forested heart of today’s Kitchener early in the 19th century with a detailed analysis of their c. 1816 “Mennonite Georgian” vernacular house and its characteristic outbuildings. The lively text offers an engaging account of the museological practices that transformed the homestead into a “living museum” during the last decades of the 20th century. The authors have emphasized the restoration projects and community vision that preserved this much-loved property, and have detailed the vibrant heritage and arts programs that sustain it. Artifacts that have won wide respect for the museum’s material culture collections are discussed and illustrated throughout the book. High standards in the Haus and high praise from the community endorse what has become a National Historic Site charged with representing the ethnic German cultures of Canada.

An architectural tour, by Larry Wayne Richards

In the coming months . . .

This Old Haus: A Place in Time

The Ontario Heritage Trust regularly hosts or attends events that impact our rich and unique heritage. From provincial plaque unveilings to conferences, we are busy year-round with activities that promote heritage conservation in Ontario.

Here are some of the events and activities occurring over the next few months. Visit our website at www.heritagetrust.on.ca for more details!

February 12, 2010 – The Ontario Heritage Trust launches Heritage Week 2010 at the Armoury in Chatham. The launch event will include special presentations, performances and a Heritage Expo.

February 15 to 21, 2010 – Heritage Week 2010. Dozens of community activities and events will be held throughout Ontario during this celebration of the province’s rich history. For listings, visit www.heritagetrust.on.ca.

Spring 2010 – Premiers’ Gravesites Program marker unveiling to commemorate The Honourable Sir James P. Whitney. Born in Dundas County in 1843, Whitney was the sixth premier of Ontario. He first won public office in 1888 in the riding of Dundas, and would hold the seat until his death. A respected orator and strong opposition leader, Whitney successfully won the premiership in 1905. Under his tenure, public utilities were further developed and growth in northern Ontario was encouraged. He died in Toronto on September 25, 1914.

April 24, 2010 – Launch of Doors Open Ontario 2010 in Guelph. From April to October each year, communities across the province open their commercial buildings, places of worship, gardens and other heritage sites to the public free of charge. Visit www.doorsopenontario.on.ca for details on upcoming events in your area. To order a copy of the printed guide (available in April 2010), call 1-800-ONTARIO (668-2746).

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Opening doors to Ontario’s heritage

Coming in April 2010

www.doorsopenontario.on.ca

Let our heritage venues inspire you

www.heritagetrust.on.ca

Explore the heritage of faith

Ontario’s Places of Worship inventory

www.heritagetrust.on.ca/placesofworship

Come to our Cabin

Uncle Tom’s Cabin Historic Site
Dresden, Ontario

www.uncletomscabin.org