

Mike Troughton - Remembering a Friend of the Thames



On March 10th, 2007, the Thames Canadian Heritage River Committee lost one of its founding members, Dr. Michael Troughton, to cancer at the age of 67.

Michael had been a part of the Heritage River Project since its inception in 1997 when Dr. Doug Bocking asked him to join a team that would seek the designation of the river. Mike's knowledge of the Thames, including its geography, agricultural history and settlement, made him an essential member of the team.

As a Geography Professor at UWO for almost 40 years, Mike had amassed an incredible knowledge of this region, which he freely shared. He helped write the Thames River Background Document. This document was highly praised by the Canadian

Heritage Rivers Board in Ottawa, and was critical in the final decision to designate the Thames a Canadian Heritage River in 2000.

After designation, Mike's interest in the Thames deepened and he developed his own projects that would tell the story of the Thames. He and Bill DeYoung worked on a mapping project to record all the heritage public buildings, including one-room school houses and churches, in Chatham-Kent, Middlesex and surrounding counties. He was adamant that these valuable remnants of our past not be forgotten.

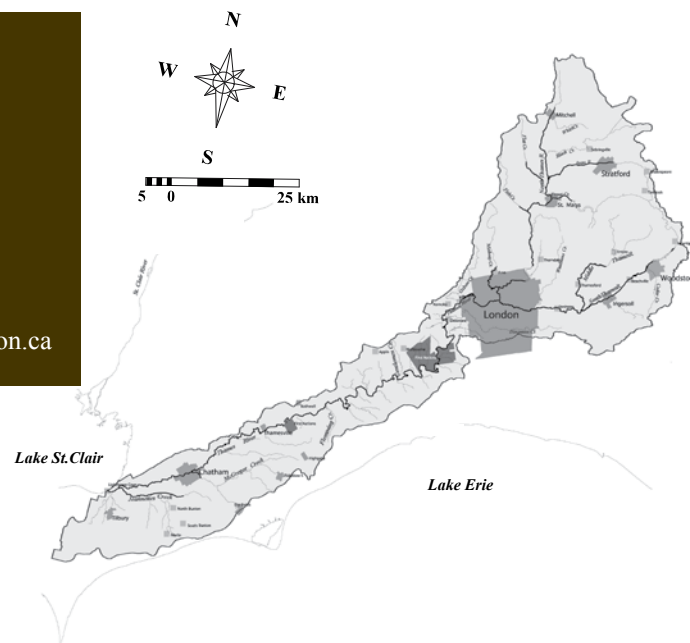
Mike's final contribution was the writing of a Landscape Guide for the Thames Watershed. He worked diligently on this project, drawing from knowledge in his head and interviewing people from around the watershed. He worked on the guide up until his death. Bill DeYoung and the Heritage River Committee are working towards the book's publication, which should be sometime this year. It will be a testimony to a dedicated geographer, historian, and friend of the Thames.

Cathy Quinlan, Thames Canadian Heritage River Committee, Upper Thames River Conservation Authority

Information

This Newsletter was produced by the Thames Canadian Heritage River Committee. To contribute to this newsletter, please contact: Thames River Happenings c/o Upper Thames River Conservation Authority 1424 Clarke Rd, London, ON N5V 5B9 Phone: (519) 451-2800 ext. 234 Fax: (519) 451-1188 E-Mail: quinlanc@thamesriver.on.ca Websites: www.thamesriver.on.ca, www.lowerthames-conservation.on.ca

Goal of The Thames Strategy:
To increase the appreciation, enjoyment and stewardship of the natural and cultural heritage and recreational opportunities of the Thames River and its watershed through community cooperation and involvement.



London Free Press focuses on the Thames

Is the Thames River news? You bet. The London Free Press has put the spotlight on the Thames. From May to September, the newspaper has committed to covering a wide range of stories on and about the river, past and present, natural and cultural, local and watershed-wide.

In his Editor's Note, Paul Berton wrote: "The river is our reason for being. It is our past and our future. But it remains a mystery, embraced and rejected, examined and ignored..." This widely-read paper will surely educate and inspire readers to learn more about the river that runs through their communities and how it ties to their lives.

Hat's off to the London Free Press for bringing the stories home. Recent articles and video clips may be viewed at www.lfpress.com



The Thames Strategy Newsletter, Spring 2008 Volume 8



The Thames,
A Canadian Heritage River

The River Project: 19 London Artists Turn to the Thames

Two years ago, artist and teacher Kevin Bice and a group of 18 other artists decided to use the Thames River as the focus of a collective project. The artists creatively explored the Thames River within the boundaries of the City of London.

On May 1, 2008, the group launched The River Project, a book that illustrates their collective work. The book was funded through grants from the Ontario Trillium Foundation and other contributors. The River Project has been distributed free to several not-for-profit groups who will sell the books for \$20 and use the revenue for further environmental and other works in the Thames watershed.

The art will also tour local galleries including the McIntosh Gallery at UWO,

The Art Exchange on Wortley Road and the Woodstock Art Gallery. The London Public Library System is also showcasing the work and other river-related topics called "Spotlight on the Thames" with displays rotating through the London Public Library branches.

For more information or copies of the book, contact Kevinbice@sympatico.ca.

Museums Meld Cultural and Natural Heritage

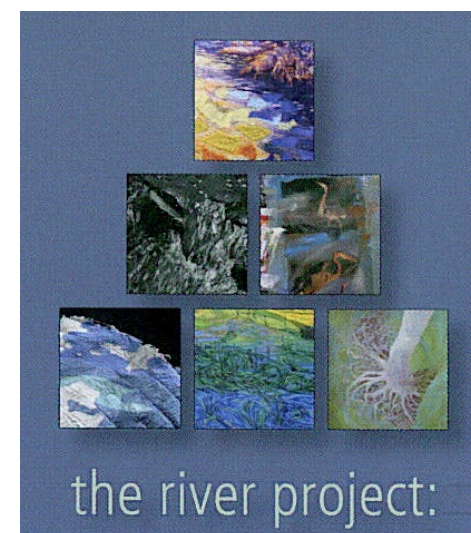
Recently two Thames-watershed museums merged their cultural heritage mandate with natural heritage by naturalizing part of their land. Visitors can now look at the types of native plants that the pioneers and early settlers would have used.

The drought and salt-tolerant grasses and flowers provide nectar for insects, seeds for birds and beauty for humans.



Fanshawe Pioneer Village

The Fanshawe Pioneer Village in north London also planted a 1 hectare meadow using native plants. With funding from the Rea Foundation, the Village engaged the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority to prepare the site and plant the meadow. School groups came out to learn about planting and the importance of native plants.



Fairfield Museum

The Fairfield Museum, on Longwoods Road near Glencoe, restored a strip of lawn into a colourful tallgrass prairie. With the help of students and staff at Ridgeway College, this prairie was planted with local native species.

Thames River Cleanup 2008

Volunteers throughout the Thames watershed cleaned up close to 200 kilometres of the Thames River banks on Saturday, April 19th as part of the 9th Annual Thames River Clean Up/Adopt a River Program and London Clean & Green. Visit www.thamesrivercleanup.ca and www.cleangreen.london.ca for more information.

Ivey leaves \$500,000 to Skunk's Misery Conservation

The Estate of Beryl Ivey recently announced a bequest of half a million dollars to the Thames Talbot Land Trust to support the implementation of their Natural Area Conservation Plan for Skunk's Misery. Skunk's Misery is a large forest and wetland complex bordering the communities of Wardsville, Newbury and Bothwell in southwest Ontario along the Thames River. "Study after study has identified Skunk's Misery as among the highest priority conservation sites in the Great Lakes Basin and it is home to a staggering variety of plants, mammals, insects, amphibians and reptiles, many of which are rare and in decline elsewhere," explains Stan Caveney, Vice-president of the Land Trust.



Aerial view Skunk's Misery

Beryl Ivey grew up in nearby Chatham and was particularly interested in the conservation of Skunk's Misery. Last fall Beryl recorded a message to members of the Land Trust in which she said: "I would suggest to anyone that they join the land trust and learn about the huge contribution they will make to the protection of our natural lands." The natural values found today in Skunk's Misery are a testament to the good stewardship of generations of local residents. The implementation of the Natural Area Conservation Plan will ensure that this legacy endures to benefit future generations. The Ivey Natural Lands Legacy will be used to acquire and manage conservation lands.

Thames Talbot Land Trust President Muriel Andreae says, "We are once again privileged to enjoy the confidence of the Ivey family and our members will work diligently to leave a legacy of healthy landscapes." For additional information about Skunk's Misery and how you can support conservation please visit www.tlt.ca or call 519-858-3442.

*Don Gordon, Executive Director
Thames Talbot Land Trust*

War of 1812 Bicentennial Commemoration Planning Underway



Civil War Reenactment

Parks Canada has initiated a series of events to commemorate the War of 1812 in several regions of southern Ontario. This commemoration will be a great opportunity to share our collaborative heritage and a 200 year legacy of peace between countries.

A blueprint is in the early planning stages for this celebration - with an overall thematic context in development, as well as an implementation strategy that will include commemorations in subject regions at the provincial/state and national/international level. The sub-region of southern Ontario will study such goals as having a series of legacy projects, date-specific commemorations, thematic programming, special events, and marquee events.

From the perspective of thematic dates, the year 2013, for example, may include among numerous other events, a Battle of Lake Erie related program, Chatham's site specific celebrations of its heritage related to the War of 1812, and the Battle of the Thames. The year 2014 may mark the Battle of Longwoods (which is presently an annual event). Pivotal to these celebrations is the Thames River, a binding force through the historical geography of the region, involving numerous communities then, and now, and central to the theatre of war.

Updates will be provided as the provincial planning and marketing strategies develop for the initiative.

Arthur Pegg, historian, curator, freelance writer and member of the Thames Heritage River Committee.

The Pawpaw Circle - Fanciful Story or Historical Fact?

This story was told to me by the late Shirley Bain, a noted historian from Thamesville, about eight years ago.



Prior to the Kentucky troops leaving Kentucky in the late summer of 1813 to join General William Henry Harrison's attack against the British under General Henry Procter and the native allies under Tecumseh, they gathered unripe Pawpaw fruit (from the native shrub) to take with them in their knapsacks. They figured that by the time they reached Canada, the fruit would be ripe and suitable to eat.

Harrison and his 3000 troops crossed the Detroit River on September 28, 1813 and immediately began to advance towards the Thames River, with Procter, Tecumseh and their men retreating slowly up the Thames towards Chatham. Within a very few days, the Americans, most of whom were mounted, had overtaken the British and Natives and, indeed, had captured much of their equipment that was found in bateaux on the Thames River.

By October 4, 1813 they had fought the Natives and Tecumseh at the future site of Chatham. The Natives had attempted to stop them but were unsuccessful.

The next day, the Americans crossed over from the south side of the Thames to the north side at a place called Howard's Bridge, just outside present-day Kent Bridge. They soon caught up to the 600 British and 1000 Natives, 2 km west of the Moraviantown. After a battle lasting less than an hour the British were routed, captured or in complete retreat. The Natives retreated after a more protracted fight when their leader, Tecumseh, was killed.

The Americans camped the night on the battlefield and some made their way to the home of Lemuel Sherman, who lived along the river to the south of present-day Thamesville. There the Kentuckians, hungry after a long pursuit and battle, sat around a roaring campfire. Remembering that they had brought some Kentucky Pawpaw fruit with them they delved into the delicious food. As they ate the fruit, they threw the pits over their shoulders behind them.

Later the next night, word reached them that a group of Natives was spotted along the Sydenham River (Bear Creek at that time). A group of Kentuckians made their way slowly through the bush to the Sydenham but found no Natives. Near the present day village of Aughrim, behind the Church, they again camped and ate their Pawpaw fruit. The next day they rejoined the army and made their way to Amherstburg, where the Kentuckians again made camp and ate their fruit around the campfire, before making their way back across the Detroit River and eventually to Kentucky.

Years passed when it was noted that there were three remarkable souvenirs of the Kentuckians' visit in the fall of 1813. Growing in three different locations, one in Kent County, outside of Thamesville, another in Lambton County near the village of Aughrim, and a third in Essex County near Amherstburg there were three Pawpaw circles growing. Where the Kentuckians had thrown their fruit seeds, Pawpaw trees sprouted and grew in a circular pattern. The story goes that this was from the nights the Kentuckians sat around their campfires, following one of the major battles of the War of 1812-1814, the Battle of Moraviantown.



Of the three Pawpaw circles found, only one remains to this day, the others being bulldozed. It is to be found in the woodland behind the Anglican Church near the village of Aughrim, on the banks of the Sydenham.

Or, as some believe, the Pawpaw shrub, being a Carolinian forest species, grew up naturally. Which story do you prefer?

Glenn Stott, Historian and Reenactor and member of the Thames Canadian Heritage River Committee.