

## **Founders and First Nations Tradition**

*General Information: Published after 2000*

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The rich glacial till that surrounds the forks of the Thames River, as well as the river's rich aquatic life, drew Natives to this area as early as 9,000 B.C., and also sustained the first European settlers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. With the first cultivation of corn, and later beans and squash, 1500 years ago, the area's original Iroquois-speaking Natives began to live in villages composed of longhouses surrounded by palisades. One group, the Neutrals, who occupied the area until invading Iroquois from south of the Great Lakes wiped them out in the sixteenth century, have left much evidence of their life in locations such as the Lawson Village Site.

### **The Talbot Settlement, 1803-1837**

Most of southwestern Ontario, including London, was settled by a crown land agent with immense powers name Thomas Talbot (1771-1853). His settlers and their descendants, numbering over 60,000 by 1853, were mainly Americans or emigrants from the British Isles. Talbot welcomed Americans even after the War of 1812, because he regarded them as the best kind of settler. Scots were the next largest group made up of Highlanders and Lowlanders. The Scots stayed together in large concentrations partly to support church building and a resident clergy. Emigrants of English origin were the third largest group, most of whom came on their own and whose homes were dispersed throughout the settlement.

### **London Museum of Archaeology**

*1600 Attawandaron Rd (off Wonderland Rd. N)  
519-473-1360*

Discover Ontario's archaeological past by exploring the Lawson Prehistoric Iroquoian Village, Canada's only on-going excavation and reconstruction of a prehistoric site where 1,500 Neutral Iroquoians lived 500 years ago. Next to the Village site is the London Museum of Archaeology where one can explore the past 12,000 years of southwestern Ontario's Native Peoples. The Museum also chronicles the lives and accomplishments of its founders Amos, Wilfrid and Elsie Jury. The Museum's gallery, library, collections and adjacent Lawson archaeological site form an unparalleled facility where visitors can discover more about Ontario's distinctive past.

### **Fanshawe Pioneer Village**

*1424 Clarke Road  
519-457-1296  
[www.fanshawepioneervillage.ca](http://www.fanshawepioneervillage.ca)*

Fanshawe Pioneer Village, opened in 1959, is a 40-acre living history museum with over 30 original and recreated historic structures which tell the story of the origins and development of London and Middlesex County from 1820 to 1920.

Beginning with an early log home and farm site, furnished to represent the first group of settlers north of the Thames, the Tipperary Irish, visitors can follow the development of the farming community around London which soon became one of the most successful wheat producing regions in Canada. Original late nineteenth century farmhouses, churches, a school and even an Orange Hall complete the rural landscape. Other original structures including the Denfield General Store and Post Office, Harmer Sawmill, and the Caverhill Woodworking shop represent a rural crossroads community at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Eldon House & Interpretive Centre**

*481 Ridout Street North 519-661-0333*

Eldon House was built in 1834 for John Harris, a veteran of the Royal Navy, his wife Amelia and their eight children. They came to London only a few years after it had been established as the capital of the London region in 1826, John as District Treasurer, was an important figure in the local government. Their large Georgian home soon become the centre of London society where it remained through four subsequent generations. In 1960, the family donated the house, its content and what is now Harris Park to the City of London.

Today visitors will find many period furnishings and hundreds of decorative pieces reflecting the family's extensive travels and fascinating careers. The halls are filled with spears and shields from the native cultures John's grandson Ronald encountered while working in Africa. Throughout the house is a large collection of 18<sup>th</sup> Century English furniture inherited by George Harris's wife, Lucy, as well as many souvenirs from the family's trip around the world at the turn of the century, particularly from the Far East.

### **Museum London**

*421 Ridout Street North 519-661-0333*

*[www.museumlondon.ca](http://www.museumlondon.ca)*

Museum London's permanent exhibition on the growth of London, The Forest City, recounts the arrival of Governor Simcoe and his search for a colonial capital. It follows the early settlement of the district led by his intrepid former Private Secretary, the engaging and garrulous Thomas Talbot.

### **Grosvenor Lodge & Coach House**

*1017 Western Road 519-645-2845*

Samuel Peters and his wife Ann, builders of Grosvenor Lodge, emigrated in 1834 from Devon, England to London where he established a butcher shop and a distillery. He accumulated a large amount of land west of the forks where he cleared a large farm site and eventually built a large mansion in 1853. Designed in Tudor Gothic style, the front façade features two matched gable panels with stone finials and parapets. Occupied by the family until 1974, the house, largely unchanged, is now a reception facility with offices. The Ontario Genealogical Society houses resources for family history research, which resides in the Coach House.

## **Middlesex County Administrative Building & Gaol**

*399 Ridout Street*

*Formerly the District Court House and Gaol*

London's oldest remaining building was opened in 1829 as the District Courthouse and Gaol. It was designed by architect John Ewart on the model of Malahide Castle, the ancestral home in Ireland of Colonel Thomas Talbot, the district's powerful land agent and the head of the building committee. Originally facing the river, the main door was re-located to the Ridout Street side of the structure when a separate gaol building was attached on the west side in 1846. In 1877, the front tower was added, and in 1911, a law library was added on the south side. During the restoration a block of cells was retained in nearly original condition, including a solitary confinement cell.

### **Founders Walking Tour**

Despite extensive urban renewal in the late 1960s, glimpses of early London can still be had in the streets surrounding the District Courthouse (Middlesex County Building, 399 Ridout Street North). Walking north one can find the homes of several of London's early business and political leaders including Josiah Blackburn, founder of the Free Press, Elijah Leonard, a pioneer iron founder and builder of Western Ontario's first stream engine, John Harris, a district administrator and James Hamilton, one of the community's first artists. Also nearby is the home of Dr. A. Anderson, one of several Georgian buildings, now a National Historic Site, which were rescued from demolition in the late 1960s by J. H. "Jake" Moore, president of Labatt's, and served as the brewery's corporate offices for over 30 years.

Downtown, several mid 19th century Georgian commercial blocks still stand near the Market, which has been located on the same site since 1845. The present market building reflects the shape of the original market house built in the 1850s. Further south are the sites of two early tanneries and a coal-gas plant where gas for the 1850 street lights that still stand in front of Dr. Anderson's house originated. Near the river a small frame church at 275 Thames marks the site of the city's early Black community founded by fugitive slaves and Freedmen in the early 1830s.

### **Famous People**

*John Kinder Labatt*

*519-850-8687*

Purchased control of the London Brewery in 1853. His son and grandsons ran the company until the 1960s. his plaque is on the brewery site at 150 Simcoe Street. Call to book a tour.

*Benjamin Cronyn*

The first Church of England bishop to be elected anywhere in the British Empire. Established over 100 churches during his episcopate. A plaque is next to St. Paul's cathedral.

*Josiah Blackburn*

Came to London in 1852 and bought the ailing Canadian Free Press. Launched a daily edition of the renamed London Free Press in 1855. A plaque is in front of his house at 76 Albert Street.

## **Famous Collections**

Genealogists interested in the records of early settlers can visit three locations:

*Ontario Genealogical Society, London & Middlesex County Branch Library*

*519-645-2845*

1017 Western Road, in the Coach House, Grosvenor Lodge

*The Ivey Family London Room – London Central Public Library*

*519-661-2410, 251 Dundas St.*

The London Room is a research facility for genealogy and local history, housing a wealth of original and secondary source materials on the counties of Elgin, Middlesex, Norfolk and Oxford, with an emphasis on the City of London.

*The University of Western Ontario Archives & Research Collections Centre*

*519-661-2111 ext. 81111*

Archival materials for the University, London and surrounding area including maps such as Tremaine's map of Middlesex County, 1862; the Talbot Maps, London District/Middlesex County Surrogate Court wills, 1800-1979; Records for London, Middlesex County and Region such as, assessment rolls, by-laws, minutes, voter's lists and court records for Criminal Court and Chancery Court; also Middlesex County Coroner's Inquests (indexed for 1831-1900). And John Howard's letters on traveling to Canada and building his farm, 1858-59.