

“Three Miles Long and Sixty Six Feet Wide”
A Brief History of Weston, Ontario
by Cherri Hurst, Weston Historical Society

Majestic oak, maple, and elm trees stand tall as they line the Carrying Place Trail. Animals such as deer, bear and wolves roam freely and the salmon struggles its way through the powerful waters of the Humber River. Members of the Ojibwa tribe pay their respects to fallen comrades with two burial grounds.

Then, years later, around 1792, John Countryman, a member of a survey crew sent to map out the Humber River, is so pleased with the oak and pine bush, that he builds a saw mill on the west bank. More settlers follow attracted by the twenty foot drop in the river that affords excellent power for saw and grist mills.

The days turn into years and in spite of fires and floods the hamlet is now an incorporated village. Industries owned by generations of the same family thrive. Schools, churches and a handsome two storey Town Hall attest to the village’s motto “Equal justice for all”. After the turn of the century you can walk down Main Street by the light of the new electric street lamps. You can also peruse the books in the new Public Library or enjoy a round of four hole golf. By 1915, the busy and bustling village is now a town. Time marches on, as do the soldiers that go off to two World Wars. Hurricane Hazel releases her fury on the town in such a way as to mark it forever.

The love and pride that Westonites have for their town, their homes and their neighbourhood has shone through in good times and bad. Case in point would be the formation of the Weston Historical Society. Sparked by an interest in preserving and designating historical buildings within the area, a group of people met on August 20, 1975. In less than a year seventy people attended the first public meeting of the Weston Historical Society and four months later they were deep in the fight to save the Weston Library. Two petitions were circulated. Interviews on radio and T.V. shows took place. There was at least one resignation tendered during the debate but the library still stands.

Today the Weston Historical Society continues to work towards their aim “to arouse and stimulate interest in the story of the people and community of Weston”. The Society is in the process of establishing an archives, organizing the Hurricane Hazel Anniversary Walk, publishing another book and investigating the establishment of a Weston Heritage Conservation District.

The latest endeavour of the Society is this column. Every month there will be a short narrative on a piece of Weston History. We welcome your comments and suggestions, starting with what you think the column should be called. The title that has been used this time is a working one and is in reference to the fact that Weston first developed in a rather long and narrow fashion. Ideas should be sent to ypi@passport.ca or call 416-241-5453.

Weston Historical Society meets every month at Westminster Church at 69 William Street at 7:00 p.m. Everyone is invited and new members are always welcome. For more information call Paula Elphick at 416-241-5453.

Reprinted with permission of the York Guardian.