

## Outdoor Guided Tour – Fletcher Cres.

### 1. Alliston Rotary Club – Pool



In 1905, the first Rotary Club was organized in Chicago, IL by lawyer, Paul Harris, a native of Vermont, USA. Missing the hometown camaraderie in which he was raised, he suggested to a fellow professional that they gather together fellow businessmen from diverse backgrounds to develop friendships and links within the business community without regard to political or religious beliefs. The first meeting of Rotary was held in February 1905. The name Rotary was devised from the practice of meeting in various locations, rotating from one place of business to another.

Locally, in the fall of 1954, several Alliston businessmen met with club representatives from the Beeton and Bradford Rotary Clubs, their future sponsors, and with assistance from the Toronto Rotary Club began the organization of an Alliston club. On February 11, 1955, at a ceremonial banquet with two hundred in attendance, Alliston Rotary Club received its charter, the second service club to organize in Alliston. (Alliston Lions Club was chartered in 1937.)

Since organizing in 1955, Alliston Rotary Club members have spent untold innumerable hours on many impressive projects for the betterment of the community. In addition to all of their local work, members are also committed to supporting projects in the developing world through Rotary International.

### First Project:

- The new club immediately began to plan for its first and admittedly ambitious project in the community - an outdoor swimming pool in Riverdale Park, current site of the outdoor pool. After fundraising through 1955 and after many hours of hard work in the spring of 1956, Rotary members opened the Rotary Pool in July of that year. The pool consisted of a large hollowed out basin covered with a liner and a layer of sand. The area that stretched along the south side was about six feet (1.8m) deep with a dock at each end. Visibility throughout the pool ranged from three to four inches (7.5cm to 10cm) at best. Snapping turtles from the nearby Boyne River liked to occasionally inhabit the deep end underneath the docks. When it first opened, lifeguards were not on site nor was any fencing installed around the pool area. In 1957, Rotary received donations from the Lions Club, Alliston Legion and town council to pay for a supervisor at the pool. Rotary operated the pool until 1975 when the decision was made to turn the facility over to the Town of Alliston. The town was eligible for government grants not available to service clubs such as Rotary. In its twenty years association with the pool, the club spent close to \$200,000 from initial construction to subsequent maintenance and improvements at the facility. Of course, the monetary cost to the club did not include the thousands of volunteer hours members personally committed to the project over those twenty years to provide a safe place to swim within the community. Many fund-raising events and community projects followed the initial pool project.

### Fund-Raising Events:

- In 1957, Rotary offered to take over the annual trade fair, first organized in 1955 by the Alliston Businessmen's Association; Rotary continued to organize the event for several years
- initiated a car draw that eventually became an annual buffet and draw with a grand prize of \$1000, an event that often drew the support of a thousand or more participants from the community
- organized Oktoberfest from 1969 to 1972
- sold roses for Mother's Day, held shopping spree draws and auction and garage sales
- initiated a Christmas Craft Sale in 1980, an annual event that later taken over by the Nottawasaga Inn; renamed Sugar Plum Fair that continues to date
- organized a beef barbecue for the Potato Festival for many years

### Community Projects:

- collected for the March of Dimes, an organization that provided assistive devices and training to those with physical disabilities
- supported the Twilight Club, Alliston's first seniors' group in the early 1960s; in the 1970s, paid the low rental charge kindly offered by the Alliston Women's Institute for the Alliston Public Library meeting room for seniors' weekly get-togethers, renamed Alliston Golden Age Club.
- donated \$3000 to furnish a four-bed ward at Stevenson Memorial Hospital in 1963 & continued throughout the years to generously support the fund-raising efforts of SMH
- spearheaded the annual Canadian Cancer Society campaign for over twenty years

- supported the Arthritis Campaign in the area
- supported Alliston Big Brothers, Alliston Scouts, Alliston Minor Hockey, Alliston Figure Skating Club and sponsored an annual science fair for elementary schools
- provided continuing support to the Alliston & District Training & Employment Centre, (ADTEC later CLASS, Community Living Association of South Simcoe), an adult vocational training centre
- supported Crime Stoppers, CONTACT Information Center, My Sister's Place
- awarded an annual bursary to two outstanding students at BHMS
- organized the Santa Claus Parade for many years before bowing out of the event, later returning as parade organizers
- in 1977, initiated a three-year, \$3000 Beautification of Riverdale Park project: regraded and seeded the slope north of the Rotary Pool, landscaped selected areas, improved parking west of the pool, added a walkway and installed new playground equipment

From its inception, Rotary members have co-operated with the members of Alliston Lions Club, the Alliston Kinsmen and the Alliston Legion in joint ventures, all for the betterment of the community. In addition to the many local projects, Rotary supports numerous international projects in developing countries around the world and has participated in student-exchange programs.

The Alliston Rotary Club continues to offer valuable community service to the town, benefiting the community through its many projects.

Post 1991: For the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the club constructed the first-class accessible playground in Riverdale Park at a cost of nearly \$350,000. Many families travel from beyond Alliston to enjoy this playground, often commenting it's a favourite with the many shade trees on the site, a luxury not offered at most playground areas. For its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the club invested \$150,000 including a \$15,000 donation from Alliston Fire Fighters Association and with funds from the Town of New Tecumseth to triple the size of the splash pad area, create a path to the playground area and construct new washrooms at the site. Without the hundreds of volunteer hours spent to complete all three of these projects, the cost to the taxpayers would have been much greater. Both the playground and splash pad are extremely popular.

## 2. Norton's Brickyard



William John Norton, trained as a brickmaker by his father, moved from Bolton to Alliston in 1876, and the following year, established a brickyard just north of Riverdale Park at 123 King Street North and on the adjacent property to the North. Alliston's population grew from 800 residents in 1875 to 2000 residents in 1890. By 1891, Norton's brickyard was listed as the sole supplier of bricks and drainage tile in the area. After depleting the clay supply located on his property, Mr. Norton went out of business in around 1918. The closing of Norton's brickyard ended an era of brick manufacturing in Alliston.

### 3. Museum on the Boyne

The Alliston Agricultural Society built the main building in 1914 as an agricultural exhibit hall where craft and food entries were displayed during the annual fall fair in Riverdale Park. During the First World War, 1914 to 1918, the building was also used as a drill hall and recruitment centre!



In 1937, the Lions Club leased the building from the Town for the annual fee of one dollar and renovated the building into a dance hall. Upwards of one thousand residents attended the inaugural dance on April 27, 1937. Dances were held weekly from April through to the late fall and continued into the early 1940s.

In 1945, the building was leased to the Dorothea Knitting Mill, a knitting mill in Toronto that manufactured berets, scarves, toques, gloves and mitts for the Armed Forces. The sole function of this local mill was to finish gloves and mitts that were shipped from the Toronto mill. The company eventually added equipment to produce men's sweaters. After years of instability due to a faulty heating system, a decline in workers and cheaper imports flooding the Canadian market, the Alliston branch of the Dorothea Knitting Mill closed in 1954.

In 1959, the Town of Alliston passed a by-law establishing a 'Historical Museum' in Alliston. A museum board was established consisting of two people appointed by the Town of Alliston Council, and one person appointed by each of the councils for the Townships of Adjala, Essa, Tecumseth, Tosorontio and West Gwillimbury. The Town of Alliston offered this building and the newly named South Simcoe Pioneer Museum unofficially opened in 1960. Following a very successful first season, a grand opening was held the following year.

After the amalgamation of several municipalities in South Simcoe and the establishment of the Town of New Tecumseth in 1991, the museum board consisted of appointed council members and citizens appointed from the municipalities of Adjala-Tosorontio, Bradford West Gwillimbury, Essa, Innisfil, and New Tecumseth. In 1996, the building underwent major renovations to better protect the artifacts within the building and to meet the criteria for government grants. In 2005, the museum's name was changed to the Museum on the Boyne to better reflect the mandate and to avoid confusion with Simcoe County Museum.

#### 4. McDonald Log House

The 100 acres of the east half of Lot 11, Concession 5 in Essa Township were first leased from the Canada Company in 1859 by Neil McDonald. Between 1859 and 1914 the property was associated with Neil and his sons Alexander and Angus. The log house was built on the property ca. 1865. It is a rare example of a 2-storey log house of this date.

The property and log house were subsequently owned by the Feltis and then the MacKenzie families.

Salada-Shirriff-Horsey Ltd. purchased the property from the MacKenzies and donated the log house to the South Simcoe Pioneer Museum in June 1960. The building was dismantled and moved to the museum site. Rebuilding costs were covered by Alliston Town Council, the Alliston Lions Club, and Baxter Laboratories.

Extensive restoration work was completed in 2000 and again in 2018-2020. It was designated under the Ontario Heritage Act in 2002.



#### 5. Alliston Jail Cell

When the Alliston Town Hall was erected in 1893, four jail cells were installed on the dirt floor in the basement. The jail accommodations were later condemned in part because the basement offered no lighting, ventilation or sanitation facilities and was accessed through a trap door. A small wooden lock-up was erected directly north of the Town Hall. After the building was consumed by flames in October 1914, a new brick and cement block jail with two holding cells and a wood-burning stove was erected on site. The pre-fab metal mesh jail cells complete with a floor and a door were considered escape-proof and fire-proof.



By the 1960s, the jail was rarely occupied and in 1962 Council ordered the demolition of the building. One of the cells was donated to the Museum on the Boyne.

## 6. Jeffery Barn

The barn was built in 1858 in Bond Head. It is completely constructed of white pine, which is Ontario's provincial tree and a chief export at the time. The inside is held together by wooden pegs with hand forged nails securing the outside boards. The large beam down the centre is called the swing beam and is common in English-style barns.

The barn originally belonged to the Jeffery family and was donated to the museum in 1991 by the Keffer family. A barn raising ceremony took place on July 1st, 1991 to commemorate Alliston's Centennial Anniversary. The barn raising took approximately 5 hours to complete.



The barn is listed as a significant building on the Town's Municipal Heritage Register.

## 7. Riverdale Park

The Citizens' Association agreed to convey to the CPR the required amount of land necessary for the line. The first train arrived in December 1906. The Citizen's Association was forced to look a new location for a park.

In May 1907, the Association purchased 15 acres, currently Riverdale Park, for \$1200.00 from the Fletcher family and it was here that they began to create the second fair grounds/park for the community. Isabella Hand held a mortgage of \$500.00 on the property and she was to be repaid \$100.00 annually by the Association. Activities including the fall fair resumed without benefit of a building on site, employing a large tent instead for exhibit purposes.

On June 13, 1911, three years after the initial offer, the town accepted a transfer of ownership for Riverdale Park. By 1913, the town marked out two ball diamonds on the cleared portion of the park. At the same time, the Society members were well aware that in order to hold a successful fair, they needed a track for horse racing events that were so popular with the fair-goers.

In late 1913, impetus to add a track and improve the park in general was initiated by M. G. Beatty and J. R. Hipwell, local druggist and a citizen who was involved over his years with many community

efforts. They organized a canvass of the town and collected over \$500.00, and with the town contributing the same amount, the half-mile race track was built before snowfall. The track was located along the edge of the high bank on the south side of the park and travelled round to the bottom of the slope on the north side of the park. The allotted money was spent before the track was completed but several of the workers, all local residents, agreed to finish the job without further pay. Although the track was a welcome addition to the fair grounds, the Agricultural Society members did not stop there. They needed to replace the tent they had used for display purposes at the fair with a good-sized building similar to the one they had built at the former site. In January, 1914 they voted to turn over their surplus funds of \$700.00 to the town to be applied to a new building and appointed a committee to negotiate with the town over this new venture. By early February, representatives from the Society, the park committee and town council met to discuss a proposed building 48' x 100' with a foundation 9' high to create a basement to house stock during fair days. The second storey was designed as a 10' high structure for a hall. The basement and hall were to be lighted by windows. The main purpose of this building was to provide a facility for the annual two-day fair. The allowable budget was \$3,000.00.

## 8. Stevenson Memorial Hospital



Founded in 1928 by Theodore Pringle Loblaw, the first hospital in Alliston was built with a \$100,000 donation from Loblaw and a \$20,000 pledge (over ten years) from Fred Morrow. (Loblaw of course had founded the grocery store chain, and was a local benefactor, helping to finance the cost of street-paving in 1929, and Morrow had achieved renown in the banking world and been awarded the Order of the British Empire.) Loblaw's only stipulation was that it should bear the name of his grandparents: Stevenson.

The institution was very progressive, despite its size and rural location. The Hospital -- often referred to as the Old Cottage Hospital - was equipped with 30 beds and had the most up-to-date equipment and care available in the county. One of the interesting facts about the original hospital was that the nurses' quarters were in the basement. Ironically, the hospital's first 'official' patient -- for the hospital was being utilized for several weeks before it was officially opened -- was Theodore Pringle Loblaw himself

who was thrown from his horse and was required to be hospitalized. In 1928, Stevenson Memorial Hospital was described by an American medical journal as being the most modern hospital for its size in all of North America.

The Old Cottage Hospital unfortunately could not accommodate the sudden influx of patients because of the growth in the Alliston area. On April 24, 1963, construction began on a new hospital at a projected cost of \$1.5 million dollars. Construction was completed on June 28, 1964, when the new hospital was officially opened. The Old Cottage Hospital remained vacant for two years then in June of 1966 it became a nursing home.

In 1973 the Old Cottage Hospital had to be torn down as it could not meet the new strict regulations set by the Ministry of Health. Presently, the old nurses' quarters, which stands next to the current hospital and was opened in 1939, has been converted into the Mary McGill Mental Health Centre.

Stevenson Memorial Hospital to this day has continued to provide the Alliston area with superb medical services as it has expanded to meet the needs of its changing community.

## 9. 73 Fletcher Cres.

An Edwardian Style brick house, it belonged to Mayor W.J. Cunningham. Cunningham bought the electric light plant from the Fletchers in 1890, and when it was closed, he used reclaimed bricks from the plant to build this house in 1946, when he was 76 years old. Through the marriage of his daughter, he was related to the Thompson family.



## 10. 62 Fletcher Cres.

This is an example of the Classical Revival style 2 ½ storey brick house. To be noted is the strange roofline, which was a money saving measure. This roof is like 73 Fletcher, because they were built by W.J. Cunningham. Additionally, this house was built in 1912 with reclaimed brick from the electric light plant.



## 11. The Fletcher Family – The Founders

In 1821 William and his brothers (Dickson) and settled on Lot 15 Conc 3 Tecumseth Township.

William married Margaret McGirr in 1828 (Prominent Tosorontio Family)

It is believed that William Fletcher, our founder, was aware that a grist mill was needed closer to the farming community. With the Boyne River offering a ready source for water power and with potential customers close at hand, the Fletcher family made the decision to establish a mill operation on the banks of the Boyne. Mr. Fletcher and his three sons moved here in 1847, living in a small cabin on the south side of the river. Mrs. Fletcher arrived the following year from their former home in south Tecumseth. Building a house was their first priority. To provide the necessary wood, they began clearing the land and erected a saw mill on the north side of the Boyne in 1848. In 1849, just north of the saw mill, they built their new home, (remains standing at 44 Fletcher Crescent). With the sawmill and house complete, they began their plans for a grist mill. They built a dam to generate water power and hired a builder to erect the mill. In 1853, Fletcher's Mill opened for business. The farming community welcomed this new service close to their farms and the business thrived. With the milling and lumbering businesses established, other families arrived to provide additional services to the farmers and the settlement of Alliston grew and prospered as the hub of the farming community.

## 12. 44 Fletcher Cres. "William Fletcher House"

Built in 1849 by William Fletcher, this is the oldest house in Alliston. William Fletcher was born April 1, 1791 in England, and along with his wife is regarded as the founder of Alliston. They settled the area in 1847 and built a dam along the Boyne River, which they used in 1853 when they built their sawmill.

Fletcher and his wife, Margaret Jane McGirr from Ireland had three sons, John, Joseph and George. In 1859, George as the postmaster likely operated from his parent's home, before moving the post office to various locations along Victoria Street.



### **13. 18 Fletcher Cres. "John Fletcher House"**

Original owner was John Fletcher, son of William and Margaret Fletcher, who was the sawmill proprietor. His brother George, and George's son William also lived there for a time. Built about 1861, it is a 2-storey clapboard Georgian style house. On the inside much of the original hardware and plaster remain, the house originally had 3 chimneys.

John Fletcher was quite the landowner, and had: 620 acres, 11 village lots, 4 dwelling houses, 2 factories, stores, 2 barns.