

Ancient Atlas, Found by Perth Clerk-Treasurer, 1957 Shows First Warden Was Appointed 100 Years Ago

Free Press Stratford Bureau

STRATFORD, April 4 — An atlas outlining historical data of Perth County describes the Canada Company as the "most unconscionable and unscrupulous ring of land grabbers which this country has any knowledge of."

The atlas was dug out of a Perth County vault by County Clerk-Treasurer Fred Armstrong this week when County Warden William O. Gaffney, of Logan Township, told county councilors in session here that it was just 100 years ago this April that Perth's first warden was appointed.

The warden's casual mentioning of the century-ago appointment—not an election—roused a momentary wave of local patriotism among councilors who suggested that Perth should have some sort of compiled history for reference and something to which future developments could be added.

Women Doing Job

Clerk-Treasurer Armstrong said the Perth County Women's Institute organization had taken upon itself the compiling of a county history. It's a long and tedious task, but the women are getting material together.

But after the brief discussion in county council chambers Mr. Armstrong remembered that he had seen an old book, left by his father, the late Robert Armstrong, which contained a history of Perth in its early days.

The book, published in the early 1870's, lists the first appointed "provisional" Perth County Council named in 1851. The appointed body of nine members met in the old Union Hotel at Stratford. The Union Hotel was on what is now Ontario street just west of Waterloo street.

First Council

The nine members of the first appointed provisional council were: Thomas B. Guest, representing Blanshard Township; William Smith and Andrew Monteith, Downie Township; Alex Hamilton, North Easthope Township; Sebastian Fryfogel, South Easthope Township, who was named warden; Andrew Gourlay, representing Ellice and Mornington townships; James Hill, Fullarton Township; Robert Donkin, Hibbert Township; John Hinks, representing Logan, Elma and Wallace Townships.

Perth at that time was part of the Huron-Bruce-Perth combined constituency for governing pur-

poses with Goderich as the seat of government. In 1855 Stratford had its first representative on the council and St. Marys representatives sat on the county council from 1864 to 1863 when the town became a separate municipality. Listowel's first representative, D. D. Hay, was elected to council in 1867.

The "provisional council" governed Perth until 1853 when the county became an officially recognized constituency.

Along Huron Road

Back in 1841, according to the atlas, Perth was a sparsely-settled area with most of the people living along the Huron road, now Highway No. 8, leading westerly to Goderich. In the 1841 election there were only six voters in the townships of North and South Easthope. They went in a body to Goderich to elect a representative to the then Canadian Parliament.

There is a brief mention of "advancement in education," when an 1871 census showed Perth's total

population 46,536 of whom there were 444 male and 472 female adults who could not read and 727 male and 952 females who could not write.

The atlas publisher takes a sly jab at a road-building program in which \$88,000 was spent to build the northern gravel road from Stratford north to Milverton, a total of 17 miles. The same amount of money was sufficient to build about 66 miles of county roads in other sections of the county. Other roads, which the first council borrowed \$88,000 (£22,000) to build, were: The Huron road from the Waterloo County boundary west to Caronbrook which is now Dublin; the Downie road, south to St. Marys, and the Mitchell road, from Mitchell to St. Marys.

Backed Railway

According to the atlas the Town of Stratford invested \$100,000 in bonds to help finance the Buffalo and Lake Huron Railway. Those bonds were sold for \$88,000 to build

the road to Milverton, now part of Highway No. 19. "Where all that money went in 17 miles of road is something no man can understand," according to the atlas publisher. Some years later Perth County paid the Town of Stratford \$7,000 for the Milverton road, the county to look after maintenance.

Members of this year's county council are: Warden William O. Gaffney, Logan Township; Reeve Lincoln J. White, Blanshard; Reeve James Holmes, Downie; Reeve D. W. Hyde, North Easthope; Reeve J. J. Krug, South Easthope; Reeve Michael Messerschmidt and Deputy Joseph Walsh, Ellice; Reeve Elgin Smith and Deputy James R. Smith, Elma; Reeve J. W. Brown, Fullarton; Reeve Frank Allan, Hibbert; Reeve Roy Walker, Mornington; Reeve Harold Cosens, Wallace; Reeve Lawson Cross and Deputy Lloyd E. Bean, Listowel; Reeve J. J. Vosper, Mitchell; Reeve Clarence Mogk, Milverton.



Fred Armstrong, clerk-treasurer of Perth County, guards an atlas, containing an early history of Perth County, as jealously as he guards the records of county council proceedings. He found the book in effects left by his late father, Robert Armstrong. Mr. Armstrong, centre, here displays the book for inspection by County Warden William O. Gaffney, left, and Reeve J. J. Krug, of South Easthope Township. (Photo Free Press Stratford Bureau.)