

BRAMPTON'S HISTORY

PRE-CONTACT PERIOD

People have been living in this general area for centuries. Archaeological evidence found within our borders confirms that native peoples had hunting camps and small villages along the Credit and Humber river valleys from about 8000 B.C.

EARLY SETTLEMENT PERIOD

European settlers began arriving in Ontario by the early 1780's. But even into the early 1800's Brampton was still wilderness, largely untouched by settlement. To prepare for the eventual influx, lands in Chinguacousy and Gore Townships were surveyed in 1818. Surveyors described the region as low, swampy and covered with dense hardwood forest. Slowly land was cleared, cabins built and fields were ploughed for farming.

The historical heart of the modern City of Brampton has always been the intersection of Queen and Main Streets, later known as the "four corners". This urban focal point has existed since the 1820's. Martin Salisbury opened a tavern on Main Street in 1822 and in the early 1830's William Buffy opened a tavern. The area quickly became a crossroads settlement known to many as "Buffy's Corners". Only a handful of people lived in the community at this time.

Another defining feature of the new settlement was the Etobicoke Creek. The creek played its part in Brampton's development but because it was slow moving and meandering it could never sustain large scale milling operations. The Brampton settlement grew more slowly as a result.

In the early 1820's John Elliott settled in the village. He and another settler named William Lawson, were staunch members of the Primitive Methodist movement and they established a strong Methodist presence in the area. Both were from Brampton, Cumberland, England. In 1834 they had the village renamed to Brampton in honour of their English home. Elliott also had village lots surveyed for sale to help attract other settlers. John Scott established the first industrial venture with an ashery used to produce potash.

By 1846 the village had two stores, a tavern, tannery, cabinetmaker, two blacksmiths and two tailors and the population had reached 150 people.

1853 - BRAMPTON BECOMES A TOWN

In 1853 Brampton was officially incorporated as a village. The population had grown to over 500 people. Several churches were built, along with a grammar school, distilleries, several stores and John Haggert's agricultural implements

factory. The local economy was growing and the village supported the surrounding farms and rural hamlets.

The Grand Trunk Railway constructed a rail line and a station in Brampton in 1856. In the mid Victorian era the arrival of a railway line usually triggered an economic boom and Brampton was no different.

1867 - BRAMPTON BECOMES PEEL COUNTY SEAT

By the 1860's the village was growing fast. In 1867 Brampton was selected as the Peel County seat. The County Courthouse, Jail and other public buildings were constructed. Kenneth Chisholm built Alderlea, a massive estate in the heart of the Village. Large homes were built near the Courthouse. Extensive land holdings surrounding the four corners were subdivided to build houses for the many new arrivals. Brampton was incorporated as a town in 1873 and John Haggert was elected the first Mayor.

MID VICTORIAN ERA - INDUSTRIAL ERA BEGINS

A new industry was emerging in Brampton by the mid Victorian era. In 1860 Edward Dale established a market garden business. His son Harry Dale joined the business and it evolved into a cultivated floral business. Within a few short years Brampton became known as the "Flowertown of Canada" and soon Dale's Nursery (later known as the Dale Estate) was Brampton's largest employer. By the turn of the century hundreds of acres of land were filled with greenhouses growing prize orchids, hybrid roses and many other quality flowers. By 1913 Brampton had the third largest greenhouse complex in the World. Most of these flowers were grown for export around the world.

20TH CENTURY BEGINS

The 20th century brought new industries to the town, mostly along the railway line, including the Williams Shoe factory, the Copeland-Chatterson Loose-Leaf Binder company and the Hewetson Shoe factory. Major banks established branches on the four-corners. In 1907 American industrialist Andrew Carnegie established a library in the downtown and the population reached 4,000 people by 1910.

Brampton's citizens endured two world wars and the Great Depression during the first half of the 20th century. These major world events did take their toll on the local economy. Some factories closed and the flower industry began a slow but steady decline.

POST WORLD WAR TWO ERA

The City slowly transformed after World War Two. In the late 1940's and 1950's the automobile began to change the landscape, as did rapid urban growth in Toronto. New subdivisions began to develop. In the late 1950's Bramalea was created and touted as "Canada's first satellite city". Bramalea was a planned community built to accommodate 50,000 people by integrating houses, shopping centres, parks, commercial business and industry.

In March 1948 Brampton endured a devastating flood when the Etobicoke Creek overflowed its banks. The Etobicoke flooded repeatedly but the 1948 flood was considered the worst. The town launched an ambitious civil engineer project to straighten and reroute the Etobicoke Creek. Construction of a concrete diversion channel began in June 1950. Premier Leslie Frost officially opened it on July 5, 1952.

MODERN ERA

In 1974 the Region of Peel was created and Brampton became a City. Large-scale and leading edge industries located in Brampton. In the 1980's and 1990's large subdivisions developed on lands formerly used for farming. The culturally diverse and vibrant City of today was emerging.

Brampton is now among the largest urban centres in Canada with a population of over 435,000 people. The roots of Brampton's success can be traced to its heritage. The foundations were first laid almost two hundred years ago when a group of industrious people established a small hamlet at the crossroads of Queen and Main Streets.

Take the Brampton Cemetery Walking Tour to find out more information on Brampton's Pioneers. Contact the Brampton Cemetery at 905-874-2997 for a copy of the guide or contact Tourism Brampton at 905-874-3601, or tourism@brampton.ca.

BRAMPTON HISTORICAL TIMELINE

1819 – Chinguacousy Township is surveyed by a team led by Richard Bristol

1819 – 1820 – First settlers arrive in the area

1834 – Mr. John Elliott applies the name Brampton to the land

1853 – Brampton becomes a village with a population of 1000

1856 – First railway opens in Brampton

1873 – Brampton becomes a town

1874 – First town election. John Haggert elected as first Mayor of Brampton

1884 – Mechanics of the Haggert Machine Works formed the Brampton

Mechanics Band known today as the Brampton Concert Band

- 1885 – J.P. Hutton erects the first hydroelectric generating plant in the area, powered by the dam at Huttonville
- 1903 – Gage Park becomes Brampton's first municipal park
- 1911 – Continuous Hydro begins in Brampton
- 1929 – Great Depression begins
- 1936 – The Lorne Scots Militia Regiment forms from an amalgamation of the Lorne Rifles and the Peel Dufferin Regiment
- 1939 – Outbreak of WWII
- 1940 – Civil Guard in Peel forms
- 1948 – The worst flood in the history of Brampton occurs
- 1952 - Etobicoke Creek Flood Diversion Channel officially opens
- 1950's – Bramalea - Canada's first satellite community forms
- 1974 – The Region of Peel is established, Brampton is proclaimed a City with a population of 88,820
- 1999 – Brampton celebrates its silver anniversary as a City
- 2003 – Brampton celebrates its Sesquicentennial year. The City of Brampton purchases "Alderlea" from Branch 15 of the Royal Canadian Legion

All heritage information and references in this publication are supplied by Jim Leonard, Heritage Coordinator, City of Brampton.