

HERITAGE CORNER



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This gorgeous New Year's card from 1910 is from the Moore Museum archives.

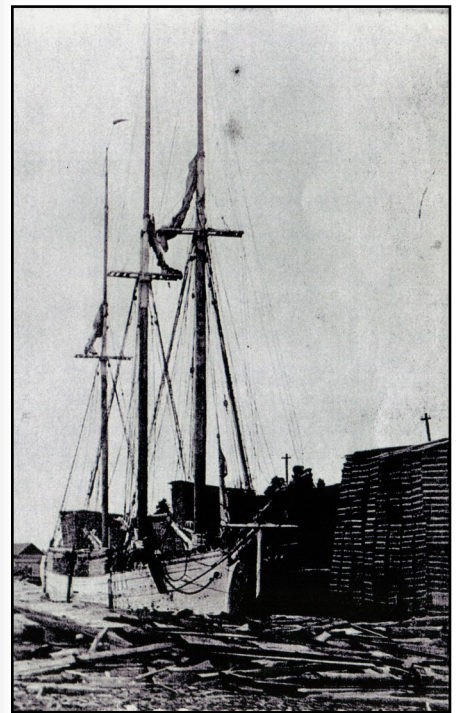
Historical Tidbits you may not know

A hamlet north of Shell Canada docks is one of the communities that recently received a shiny new sign, courtesy of Heritage St. Clair and St. Clair Township. Froomefield was founded in 1834 by Froome and Field Talfourd.

Froome Talfourd built an Anglican church there in 1840 and he ran a grist mill on the creek. He, along with Baxter, Bertrand, and Stone sold cordwood to passing steamer ships.

The place where Stone's dock once stood is now part of the Shell dock facility.

This tidbit is taken from the 1973 issue of the History of Lambton County, published by the Lambton County Historical Society.



This vintage photo from the Heritage St. Clair files show the docks at Corunna where cordwood was bought to keep the boilers stoked.

Spooky experiences wanted

The Sombra Museum is seeking information about "happenings" in the houses, businesses and other buildings there. Anyone with stories to share can 519-892-3982, email sombramuseum@hotmail.com or contact us on social media at [facebook.com/SombraMuseum](https://www.facebook.com/SombraMuseum) or sombramuseum.webs.com

MORE HERITAGE CORNER

Heritage St. Clair Committee a history buff's dream

-By David Pattenden, Chair, Heritage St. Clair

In the late Spring, we presented part of our railroading story for St. Clair Township. At Brigden, and later that day in Courtright, we unveiled two new storyboards featuring the old CASO/MCRR/NYCRR dream of a railroad from New York City to Chicago. The route ran from New York City to Buffalo, New York, over the Niagara River to St. Thomas, Ontario, onto Courtright, and over



MCRR depot and ferry dock
Courtright

the St. Clair River by ferry, then on to Chicago. It was a dream that never reached its full potential. The line built from St. Thomas to Courtright, passed through Brigden. Our towns of Brigden and Courtright owe their existence to this railroad.

These communities were expected to offer lodging, supplies and workers to make this railroad route possible. Although the railroad was removed in 1963, Brigden and Courtright still exist today and, if you look hard enough and know where to look, you can still see signs of this once great effort to connect New York City to Chicago through St. Clair Township. As you drive around St. Clair Township you will see the start of a new roadside sign initiative. The idea, envisioned by Heritage St. Clair member Al Anderson, was to tell the story of early township communities. These early hamlets, communities and villages, now mostly vanished from the landscape, were instrumental in the survival of early settlers to the area. The hamlets offered stores, schools, churches and camaraderie to early settlers. Small hamlets, like Duthil, Beecher, Froomefield and Kimball are now marked by new heritage roadside signs, which include the date of their establishment. The committee has four more ready to put up, and although their locations are being kept a secret, I encourage you to take a drive in the spring to look for them.

Along with the new hamlet road signs, we are also putting pictures and stories of these early hamlets on our web site, <https://stclairtownship.ca/heritage/>. This added information helps to bring these communities to life. There is also a committee from HSC working on the Abandoned Cemeteries of St. Clair Township project. These often forgotten and rundown cemeteries are in need of some tender loving care. The project group has been developing plans to improve their appearance and tell their stories. Look for more on this in 2020.

What is Heritage St. Clair up to in 2020?

We are continuing with our early hamlet roadside sign project for the next few years. It is hard to believe but there were originally about 30 of

these early communities within the township. We plan to mark the locations of each one to keep their memory alive. This will be a three- or four-year effort, so look for more news on this effort as the months progress.

Railroading is again in our plans. Another railroad, significant to the township, is commonly known as the C & O. At one time this rail line ran from Sarnia to Chatham and then on to Blenheim. Its journey took it through Froomefield, Corunna, Mooretown, Courtright, Sombra and Port Lambton, which all had passenger stations at one time. There was also a connection with the CASO at Courtright; you could get on a train in Corunna, transfer at Courtright and travel to New York City. Storyboards will soon be mounted along this route as well.

Another exciting project we're working on involves the world-famous magician Stewart James. He was a township resident and he will soon be receiving the exposure he so richly deserves. Stewart's story is amazing and, along with the plaque that has already been installed in his honour, the committee will be releasing some fascinating and surprising additional insight into Stewart's life.



World famous magician
Stewart James of Courtright

The Heritage St. Clair committee is trying to increase its on-line presences. We now have the help of a knowledgeable volunteer who will be helping us accomplish this. Everything we install in the community is equipped with a "QR" code. At any location, anyone with a device that can scan these codes and log into our website can look at all the stories and pictures we have collected about these and many more projects. We are especially grateful to the St. Clair Township Council and Staff for all the support they have given us in these and the many other projects we undertake. The County of Lambton, through the Creative County Fund, has also been a valuable supporter of these efforts. We thank them all.

If any of these projects and ideas interest you and you would like to take part in some of them, please contact Heritage St. Clair. It's as easy as going to our website <https://stclairtownship.ca/heritage/>. We are always looking for individuals with a curious nature to help out.

Don't be bashful, sign up.

Beacon Bits

Life's greatest pleasures are the simple ones; it's like seeing the driver who just raced by you on the 402 pulled over by the police three miles down the road.

-Anonymous