



HORSE EVENT AT THE BEACHBURG FAIR

David Beach First Settler In Village

In 1835, a vast stand of pine forest covered Westmeath Township, its continuity broken only by a pathway used as a portage to avoid rapids between Portage du Fort and Pembroke. Following a high ridge of land, this route, at its highest point, was cut by a stream. In 1835, David Beach, Beachburg's founder, decided to make his home at this point.

He and his family had survived a long and arduous journey from their original home in the United States. Of United Empire Loyalist stock, David Beach had travelled to Canada to remain loyal to the crown. With barely adequate provisions the family had, originally made their way to the Iroquois area, where the harsh winter and the death of one horse forced them to postpone further travel.

The following spring saw the family move to Kemptville where David Beach established a sawmill. After being there only a few years, the family moved to North Gower for the next few years. David and his eldest son, Abel, eventually journeyed on foot to the site of the present day Beachburg, where they decided to make their permanent home.

David Beach secured a grant of one thousand acres from the government and brought his family to Beachburg. Their first house, on the site of the present-day Anglican Church, was a log cabin in the old camboose style with an open roof. Using the stream running beside his house as a source of water power, Beach established a grist mill.

Not long after 1835, other settlers arrived in the new settlement. One particular gentleman, a hotelman named James Condie, also secured a land grant of one thousand acres, and started up another grist mill not five hundreds yards from the Beach mill.

SETTLEMENT

The Beach family (Abel, David, Levi, John, Joseph, and four daughters) soon had a settlement firmly established with the building of a hotel, a store, a post office, a tannery, a grist mill and a saw mill. Their control of the hamlet's early industry and commerce caused the settlement to be named Beachburg.

In 1856 Westmeath Township's first Orange Hall was erected. It was rebuilt in 1910 with a ground floor used for dances and social events and the remaining two floors used for the activities of the Enterprise and Orange Lodges. The Orange Order, L.O.L. 349 Beachburg, is the oldest fraternal organization in this part of the country.

1858 saw the first Beachburg Fair held at Beach's Hotel under the title of Westmeath Township Fair. It was held annually until 1867, when John Supple secured the North Renfrew Agricultural Society Exhibition for Beachburg. This annual exhibition was held in the newly acquired exhibition grounds (bought from Joseph Beach, David's son) whose buildings were constructed in 1868. The main hall wasn't built, however, until 1897. The fair built a fine reputation for itself in Eastern Ontario under the early leadership of its original president, Walter Findlay. In 1905, the fair was deemed the best in Eastern Ontario and was awarded a prize of a new building — the secretary's office.

EXPANSION

The next decade brought further expansion. The Town Hall

The Canadian Northern Railroad laid the line of tracks that ran through Beachburg in 1912 as part of their direct line between Montreal and Winnipeg. Canadian National took over the railway shortly after and built a railway station at the southeast end of Beachburg. After it was destroyed by fire, another station was brought from Ottawa on a railway car, just in time to serve as a polling station for an election.

FORMED LODGE

In 1913 the Masonic Fraternity formed Enterprise Lodge No. 516 with Wor. Bro. Albert Munroe as its first master. It is still active and supporting Crippled Children's Hospitals and Blood Donor Clinics. Wor. Bro. Carmen Greer is the present master.

Another disastrous fire struck Beachburg in 1931. Mrs. Maclean living where Arthur Griese now lives, was rubbing gasoline-soaked clothes together in her garage when the friction caused an explosion that sent her sprawling into her yard. The garage was engulfed in flames within seconds. The strong wind spread the fire quickly. It destroyed five houses on the block and all the buildings in the exhibition grounds except the Secretary's Office. Three years later Beachburg's last hotel, owned by Tom Rollins, was also destroyed by fire.

Beachburg celebrated its Centennial in 1935 with band concerts, parades, sports events and street dances.

1937 saw Beachburg move further into the future. Main Street and its board sidewalks were finally replaced with cemented ones. Using a huge steam shovel, construction crews paved Main Street with solid cement and cemented the sidewalks.

The last of Beachburg's three destructive fires struck in 1948. It started in the house on the west side of Riddell's Store at approximately 4:00 p.m. A fortunate wind shift prevented the fire from spreading along Main Street. The fire, however, did destroy two houses behind Riddell's Store, Earl Brown's house, Herman Werle's house, several houses on the west side of Riddell's Store, the outdoor rink, and Joe Beach's house. After the fire of 1948, steps for more adequate fire prevention were finally taken.

LIONS CLUB

In May, 1953, the Beachburg Lions Club was established with George Stevenson as its first president. Since its inception, the Lions Club has devoted much time and effort to community service. They have furnished the Medical Centre, supplied wheelchairs and crutches, maintained the Cenotaph and organized bike-a-thons, etc. Gary White is now the president.

In June, 1953 the Continuation School (Grades 9 - 12) was closed and the students were bussed to Pembroke for their high school education. Mrs. A.R. Singleton and Mr. Murray Belway were the teachers at that time. The Public School expanded with bussing from the rural area to fill all classrooms with Mr. Lawrence Mackay as principal. In 1963 a new wing with three classrooms and washrooms was added. Later a supply room, principal's office and a staff room were added. At the present time, Mr. Art Jamieson is the principal of the seven room school with a staff of eight teachers and 185 pupils from Junior Kindergarten to Grade 8.

On January 31st, 1979, Beachburg was incorporated as a

building — the secretary's office.

EXPANSION

The next decade brought further expansion. The Town Hall was built in 1862 and two years later, the Wesleyan Methodist Church was built. It is now Conley's Craft shop. The village's first doctor, Dr. Forbes, arrived here in 1865. Between 1870 and 1880, Beachburg boasted two hotels, two sawmills, a dancing school, four general stores, and three carriage and wagon shops.

1875 was another disastrous year in Beachburg's history. An epidemic of diphtheria swept the village, killing six children. Three of the children were Reverend Campbell's. Another disaster was the breaking of Condie's dam. The flood swept away David Beach's mill and dam. Beach did not rebuild. Instead, he sold his property to John Shaw who built Westmeath Flour Mill and the present Anglican rectory for a boarding house for his men.

Beachburg's first brick school was erected in 1876 with Mr. McCoy as teacher, earning \$300 per year. The expansion of the village soon forced the construction of a new school on Main Street in 1892. Even it, however, was too small for all the pupils. Classes, therefore, were held in different places throughout the village — the top floor of the Orange Hall and the Town Hall. A one room portable was erected for Continuation students and used for two years. The present day school was erected in 1923. Elementary classes occupied two classrooms on the lower floor and the Continuation classes occupied the two upper classrooms. In 1923 Miss E.J. Johnston and Miss F.M. White taught the Continuation students while Miss M. Headrick and Miss E. Collins taught Public School.

CHURCH

St. Augustine's Anglican Church was erected in 1883 on the site of David Beach's original house. The next year saw the union of the Methodist Episcopal church and Wesleyan Methodist church. The Presbyterian church was built in 1891. With the union of the Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational Churches in 1925, it became St. Andrew's United Church.

Beachburg Women's Institute was formed in 1904. They contributed many hours of volunteer work to help with the war effort during both wars. They held health clinics in the exhibition hall, helped furnish the schools and light the streets. They continue to dedicate hours of time and effort to aid the community.

The Bank of Ottawa was built in 1906 but was soon bought out by the Bank of Nova Scotia. The North Renfrew Telephone Company installed the rural telephone lines in Beachburg and throughout the surrounding area. The first switchboard was run by the Condie's in the house where the Trecartins now live. A new telephone building was built in 1958-59. The rural mail route was established in 1912 with John Johnson as the first carrier.

At the present time, Mr. Art Jamieson is the principal of the seven room school with a staff of eight teachers and 185 pupils from Junior Kindergarten to Grade 8.

On January 1st, 1959, Beachburg was incorporated as a village. The Department of Public Works donated a new Post Office to mark the occasion. Further community services were added. The Library opened in 1966 in the former Township Garage. In 1967, a new addition containing a booth, kitchen and anteroom was built at the arena. The Medical Centre was completed in 1974 and is now occupied by Dr. G. Woodfine and Dr. M. Jackson, our dentist. A Senior Citizens complex with 12 apartments was officially opened in 1977.

GROWING

Beachburg continues to grow and prosper. One subdivision has been completed and another one started to accommodate the growing population presently at approximately 700.

The community arena has kept pace with progress by adding artificial ice in 1978. A new Bank of Nova Scotia was erected and the official opening was held in February, 1981. The Library has relocated in the old bank building and the Municipal Office has expanded to fill the space formerly occupied by the Library. The offices have been newly renovated. The present reeve is Art Jamieson. Councillors are Jacob DeWal, Hal Johnson, Ron Lowe and Erwin Wilson. The clerk treasurer is Phyllis McLeese, AMCT.

The Main Street of Beachburg now boasts Barb's Restaurant, Riddell's Red and White, E.K. Brown's Electrical Shop, Beachburg Library, Emily Gibson's Studio, Conley's Craft Shop, Martin's Variety Store, Municipal Office, Fire Hall, Vereykin's Hardware Store, Keith's Florist Shop, Johnson's Garage, Wanda's Hairdressing Salon, Orange Hall, Bank of Nova Scotia, Post Office, Taylor's Valley Small Engines, Weedmark's Store, Buchanan's Sand and Gravel, Valley Feeds and Orlin Werle's Insurance and Aluminum Products.

Residents can pursue many activities and interests. The youth can participate in Brownies, Guides, Cubs, Scouts, ball teams, hockey teams and figure skating. For the adults there are teams for ball, hockey and broomball. There are rug hooking and ceramics classes, Rod and Gun Club, Senior Citizens Friendship Club, Horticulture Society, Recreation Society, etc. Services are held in the three churches on Sunday morning — in St. Augustine's Anglican Church with Mr. Lackey; in the Pentecostal Church with Rev. Bombay and in St. Andrew's United Church with Rev. Ballantyne. Mid-week groups are active in all churches.

Village residents expect further expansion and prosperity thanks to the new industry being added to the area — whitewater rafting. The Ottawa River, in the Beachburg area, has proven to be one of Canada's best whitewater rafting rivers. The first rafting operation in the area, Wilderness Tours, is now facing competition from two other rafting operations. These operations are expected to bring thousands of tourists to our area every summer.

Beachburg is moving into the future. The village, fortunately, is retaining its small-town friendliness and warmth despite its growth and modernization.