



Preserving, promoting and developing Wellington North's unique cultural resources to build a vibrant community and a prosperous economy.

January's Cultural Moment recognizes the hotels along the Owen Sound Road

Let's take a look back at our beginnings of the Owen Sound Road as it meanders through Arthur Township on its way north from Arthur to Mount Forest. The year is 1861 and the road is finally passable. As we leave Arthur, we get to Petherton where the 1st of 6 hotels are conveniently located at the side of the road. One was run by a William Ludlow and another, just south of Kenilworth was run by John Bradley, a farmer and hotel keeper.

Kenilworth is the next stop with an establishment run by Ab O'Neill. It was just north of the Lynes Blacksmith Shop if horses needed tending. John Tracey was a tavern keeper at Riverstown and three miles south of Mount Forest was the Nightingale Inn. Two hotels were opposite each other on the Maitland Hill just south of Mount Forest. The Blue Bonnet Tavern was run by Mrs. Horsburgher on the west side and on the east side was another hotel run by a man named Bridgeport.

Taverns and inns played an important part in the early development of our communities. These innkeepers were very popular, not only with travelers but with the local people for food, rest and entertainment. They also were used as community gathering places to hold elections, political meetings, social gatherings and dances. By 1871, with the increase in traffic and settlers to the area, the number of hotels and taverns had increased to 15.



The Nightingale Inn, pictured above, was a 2-storey red brick structure with 6 bedrooms, a parlour, a dining-room, a bar room, a kitchen and a woodshed. The front of the building had a row of hitching posts and a frame barn behind the hotel served as a stable for the horses of travelers who needed overnight accommodation. This was the closest hotel to the tollgate set up to pay for the upkeep of the newly graveled Owen Sound Road.

Submitted by Bonny McDougall Wellington North Cultural Roundtable