

CULTURAL MOMENT FOR JULY 8, 2024

CELEBRATING THE VILLAGE OF KENILWORTH

As we celebrate the creation of the Township of Wellington North in 1999, we look at one of our small but significant settlements. The Village of Kenilworth is located at the crossroads of Sideroad 7 and Highway 6, about 10 kilometres north of Arthur. It was named after a village in England, by an early storekeeper who settled there.

Jesuits established the first Catholic Church there, made of logs, in 1852. The building was condemned as structurally unsound in 1870. The current Sacred Heart building was established in 1902. A Methodist church was founded in 1854, also built of logs. It was later replaced with a red brick church, merged with the United Church and closed in 2001. The Sacred Heart Catholic Church remains strong with dedicated parishioners who maintain their lovely church, as well as a restful green space called Our Lady of Lourdes Grotto.



By 1869, Kenilworth had a general store, tailor, doctor, saloon, wagon maker, hotel and post office. The population was 50. By 1872, the railroad had built a station in Kenilworth as part of the permission to bring tracks northward. By 1910, there was a bank and telegraph office.

The mail had been brought from Fergus since 1848 but when the railroad came through, mail could come all the way to Kenilworth. The first post office was a small log house but later moved to the General Store.

A "new" hotel was built in 1885, but it was probably not the first hotel in Kenilworth. This hotel was built by Thomas O'Donnell and remained open until about 1920 when it was made into apartments. A shoe factory was established in Kenilworth in 1909 but there is no record of when it closed.

The Epoch family was a business-minded family. From selling automobiles, two brothers, Wilfred and George opened a garage. George became well known after he patented a machine called a grubber for removing brush and debris.

At one time Kenilworth had three general stores but the onset of gasoline-powered vehicles made possible the fast arrival of goods, and those stores gradually closed.

The Lynes Blacksmith Shop is a local landmark and a relatively rare double forge that was operational from 1885 to 1955, and the building remained undisturbed for 60 years. James Lynes Sr. and James Lynes Jr. were the blacksmiths. James Jr's son, Dr. Frank Lynes and Frank's daughter Kryisia donated the shop and property, which includes the original house, to the Township of Wellington North in 2017. Since then, the Lynes Blacksmith Shop Committee have been working hard to restore and retain this building. The project has its own website where you, too, can volunteer to help with the restoration work.

Many villages, towns and cities in Southern Ontario began in the same way as Kenilworth. Many factors determined which ones grew bigger and which remained charming villages like Kenilworth. The residents of Kenilworth continue to thrive and innovate with several well-established small businesses while enjoying the surrounding pastoral farmland.