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## WAINFLEET

Wainfleet is a rural township in southern Niagara Region, Ontario, Canada.

There is a small and growing tourist industry, near and on Lake Erie at the southern area of Wainfleet called Long Beach. Wainfleet is also the home of the Marshville Heritage Village, a living history museum, recreating life in Ontario circa 1850-1910.

With the Welland River to the north and Lake Erie to the south the Township of Wainfleet was surrounded by water on two sides. The first bridge in Wainfleet Township was built in 1797 by John Brown and was called Brown's Bridge. It is quite likely that by this time there were already settlers from the American Colonies settling along the Lake Erie lakeshore. By 1796 there was already a ferry service operating from Black Rock (Buffalo) to Fort Erie.

Initially the settlers would have built crude homes from logs. There were no mills yet in the wilderness however as the settlers became established the log cabins were quickly replaced with brick or wood sided homes.

Wainfleet Township had several limestone outcroppings and from these settlers were able to construct fine homes of limestone. One of these homes that still remains is the Rathfon Estate, built by Michael Graybiel and operated for many years as a country inn along the shores of Lake Erie.

Throughout Wainfleet Township between 1000 and 2000 feet below the surface sits a strata of natural gas. As early as 1920 area farmers had learned to tap into this resource for heat and light. However, on the downside the settlers were unable to obtain clean water from the wells as it had become tainted with sulphur.

Because of Wainfleet Township's close proximity to Lake Erie the new era of the automobile brought new visitors to the area. Many of these people bought waterfront properties and by the time the Peace Bridge opened in 1927 the area had become a popular summer resort for Americans and Canadians alike.

Beachfront properties at Morgan's Point, Rathfon's Point, Camelot Beach, Belleville, and Walnut Hill were quickly purchased and stately summer homes as well as tiny cottages soon sprang up between the farms along the lakeshore.

The Feeder Canal also played a significant role in the development of the Township.

By 1817 there were 72 families scattered throughout Wainfleet Township. The building of the Feeder Canal in 1829 to supply water to the newly constructed Welland Canal brought in lots of labourers who established the community of Marshville.











