

## History of People and the Coves (side 2 of the Sign)

### 18<sup>th</sup> Century

This old meander of the Thames River was identified by Lt. Governor John Graves Simcoe on his 1793 visit to Rivière à la Tranche, which he renamed the Thames. Simcoe was accompanied by his adjutant, Major Edward Baker Littlehale, his personal secretary, Lieutenant Thomas Talbot and 20 soldiers, as well as Joseph Brant, the paramount Chieftain of the Mohawks, and 20 braves.

*March 2, 1793 – We struck the Thames at one end of a low, flat island enveloped with shrubs and trees. The rapidity and strength of the current were such as to have forced a channel through the mainland, being a peninsula, and formed this island. We walked over a rich meadow and at its extremity came to the forks of the river.* Source: Major Littlehale's Journal, "Gov. Simcoe's Tour through Southern Ontario", London and Middlesex Historical Society, Main Branch London Library.

Simcoe's party would have seen various Ojibwa bands including the Chippewa and Ojibwas of the Askunessippi (the Antlered River, the native name for the Thames), whose traditional territory included the future site of London. Members of the Six Nations used the area also.

### 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries

Throughout most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the land was owned by two pioneering farm families, the MacArthurs and the Bogues. The MacArthur farmhouse, circa 1842, still stands at 7 Paddington Avenue.

From 1918 to 1991, the Jeffery estate was located next to the East Pond (see 1922 air photo). Joseph Jeffery was the first president of the London Life insurance company. His son, James, and his family lived in a house on Orchard Street. Their property extended to the shore of the pond, with mowed lawns, gardens and a tennis court.

### Military History

From the 1860s to 1901, various militia units rented the farmers' lands in the Coves to practice shooting (see air photo). These units included the 26<sup>th</sup> Battalion Middlesex Light Infantry (pictured here), the First Hussars, the 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the London Light Infantry, and the Royal Canadian Regiment. In 1901, the Crown purchased the land for use as a shooting range until 1945. Over the years, thousands of men trained on this rifle range.



26<sup>th</sup> Battalion Middlesex Light Infantry. *Photo source: Eleanor Little*



Captain Thomas Robson of the 26<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Middlesex Light Infantry. His score card from the range, circa 1871, and most of his uniform are in public and private ownership. *Photo source: Eleanor Little*



Coves Range, 1940s. *Photo courtesy of the London Free Press Collection of Photographic Negatives, Western Archives, London, Canada.*

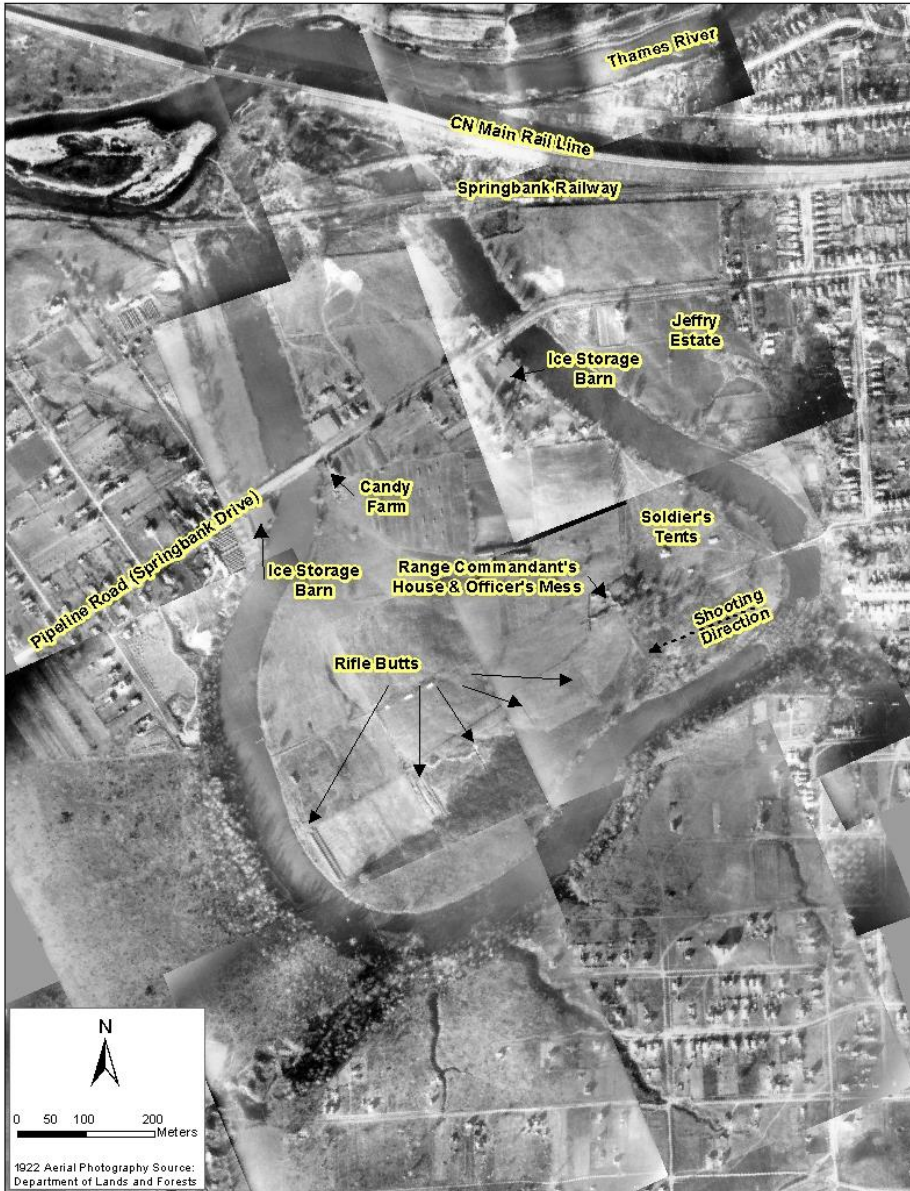


Shinny hockey played on the West Cove (Pond) in 1947. Photo courtesy of the London Free Press Collection of Photographic Negatives, Western Archives, London, Canada.



The Hockey League played on a rink on the Candy Farm just east of West Pond, 1947. Photo courtesy of the London Free Press Collection of Photographic Negatives, Western Archives, London, Canada.

1922 Aerial Photograph of the Coves. Source: UWO Map Library.



## **Recreation**

The Coves were, from earliest times, a popular picnic and recreational destination for skating, hockey, curling, tobogganing, fishing, hunting and boating. The first recorded curling match in this region was played on the East Pond in 1847. In the summer of 1908, a group of boys camped out at the Coves. That fall, they formed what would become Troop No. 1 of the London Council of Scouts Canada.

## **Ice Cutting**

During most of the 1920s and 1930s, a local entrepreneur cut ice from the Coves and stored it in barns next to the East and West Ponds (see air photo). In the summer, he sold the ice to homes in south London to keep food cool in ice boxes.

## **Post War Changes**

After World War II, the federal government decommissioned the shooting range and sold the land to the Wolfe, Ruppe and Tipple families and the German Canadian Club. The Wolfe family began making paint in the 1940s and planted an apple orchard in the 1960s. The paint plant changed ownership several times before closing in 2000. The buildings were demolished in 2004.

Housing developments boomed in the post-World War II era and the ponds suffered from sedimentation due to poor erosion control measures.

Euston Park (see map on other side) is located on the site of a former aggregate pit where local youth target practiced. The pit became a landfill site after annexation in 1960, creating a hill. Capped in 1972, the park provides views over the surrounding residential areas.

In 2000, the Friends of the Coves Subwatershed Inc. formed to assist with stewardship of this unique ESA.





Skating on the Coves, 1964. Photo courtesy of the London Free Press Collection of Photographic Negatives, Western Archives, London, Canada.