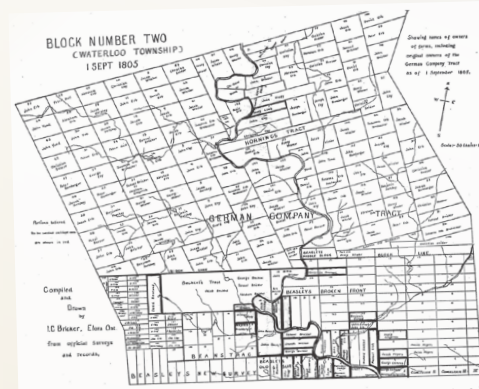


A History of Laurel Creek

The evolution of Waterloo's relationship with the creek

"Now we have the picture of Block No. 2, Grand River Indian lands, in the West Riding of the County of York and Home District in the Province of Upper Canada, at the dawn of the nineteenth century.

A bird's eye view of the whole region must have offered one vast expanse of dense continuous forest, shadowing the fertile soil, covering the land as the grass covers a lawn, sweeping over hill and valley in endless undulation, burying hills and hollows in verdure, mantling the brooks and clothing the banks of the Grand that wound its tortuous way from the far north to the far south. The entire scene was one of rich and benevolent nature, luxuriant, wild, full of promise and having the charm of the picturesque." Waterloo Historical Society, 1934



1798 | Haldimand Tract subdivided into blocks of land. Portions were surrendered to the Crown with the proceeds to be invested for the benefit of the Indigenous Peoples. Block No. 2 would eventually become Waterloo Township.

1784 | Haldimand Proclamation grants to the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois), 10km of land on either side of the Grand River, from its source to Lake Erie.

Through 1700s | Iroquois peoples inhabit the area that will become Waterloo.

c.1600s | Contact | Indigenous communities have been well-established in the region for thousands of years. Early surveyors explore areas in the region that would later become Waterloo.

1700

Prior to colonization, Indigenous groups inhabit the region, with water as a fundamental and sacred part of life. Lifestyles are closely connected to a relationship with, reliance on, and respect for the land.

Into the 1800s-1900s, the agricultural industry firmly establishes in the province and region within the Beaver Creek watershed, upstream of the Township. Removal of forest and changes in land use begin to impact the creek through pollution and increased flooding.

As water-powered industry grows, the creek is rerouted and buried to power mills in the downtown area, with a mill race being constructed from west of Caroline Street, running under King.

The creek was known as Beaver Creek, likely owing to the colonies of beaver that were found in the area and along local watercourses

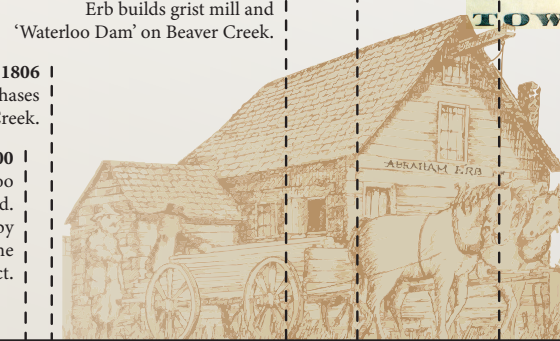
creek as sacred resource

1800

c.1799 | Lands of future Waterloo Township surveyed. First homesteads purchased by Bechtel and Bean.

1806 | Abraham Erb purchases land along Beaver Creek.

c.1800 | Lands of future Waterloo Township surveyed. First homesteads purchased by Bechtel and Bean as part of the German Tract.



1816 | Erb builds grist mill and 'Waterloo Dam' on Beaver Creek.

1829 | Mill bought by Snider.

1869 | Major spring floods cause extensive damage to buildings in Town near the creek.

1915 | Town purchases mill, renames pond "Silver Lake".

1816 | Waterloo Township is incorporated

1857 | Township becomes Village of Waterloo

1876 | Village becomes Town of Waterloo

In the early to mid-1900s, environmental issues with the creek become more apparent. Emerging industries dump waste and material into the creek and it is an outlet for sewage from the growing community. Historic articles begin to describe the "stench" and "disagreeable odour" of the creek.

TREMENDOUS FRESHET!
Houses, Mill Dams and Bridges swept away!
HEAVY LOSS OF PROPERTY!

creek as power for industry



mid-1800s | Remaining Indigenous groups displaced from region. More European settlements establish along the Grand River.

1900

1915 | Town purchases mill, renames pond "Silver Lake".

early 1900s | Development continues to establish in downtown Waterloo, with industry closely connected to the creek for water power.

1950 | Major flooding in region includes Laurel Creek and impacts are felt throughout the Town. Town hears demands for flood control.

1950s | Conservation authority supports flood mitigation and Town copes with water quality issues, opting to treat the creek with chloride.

1945-46 | With sediment issues caused by local and upstream changes, citizens petition to widen the creek to speed up the flow. Laurel Creek is described as an "open sewer".



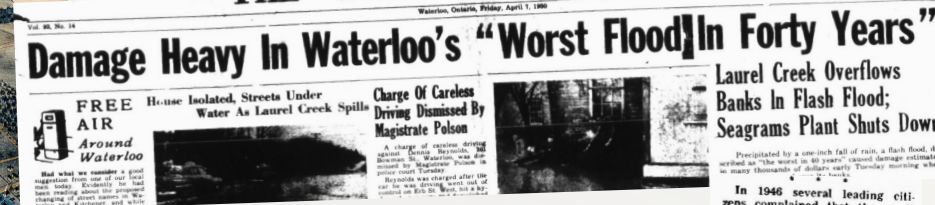
Squirrel "Crazy" 1912. Built by "Tom Miller", Bill Snider, Edy Ross.

\$1,400,000 To Rid City Of Stench

Major flood events in the early 1900s and again in 1950 cause significant impacts to the Town and residents call for infrastructure improvements.

1948 | Town becomes City of Waterloo

creek as nuisance



Laurel Creek Overflows Banks In Flash Flood; Seagrams Plant Shuts Down

In 1946 several leading citizens complained that the small area from Laurel Creek was terrible. A proposal to clean and widen the creek from the park lake to Schneider Road (now University Avenue) was made by the town. Work was expected to start soon, but up to today very little has been done.

The creek could be made into a beautiful stream flowing through the town instead of the eyesore that it is. This has been accomplished through the university grounds from the small lake on Columbia Street to Westmount.

If the city would do less tree cutting and street widening it could use the money to beautify instead of destroying. It's not only your stomach that gets hungry, but your eyes do too.

1960-61 | Laurel Creek is buried in a culvert running from King Street to the east side of Caroline Street behind the Seagram Distillery.

1972 | Pollution from runoff, waste and salt continue to impact the creek.

1976 | Planning for Waterloo Park work includes Laurel Creek restoration.

1980s | Flood mapping completed for Laurel Creek to limit and control development. Conservation initiatives for the creek and upstream lands continue.

2007 | Silver Lake faces ongoing silt issues attributed to stormwater runoff.

1990s-2000s | Water quality issues continue for the creek in Town and upstream. The Laurel Creek Citizens Committee is formed and organizes tree planting and cleanups.

2013 | The headwaters of the Laurel Creek face development pressure at the west side of Waterloo.

2019 | Cultural Heritage Landscape Study notes Laurel Creek as a potential heritage attribute.

2020 | Laurel Greenway Feasibility Study commences. Laurel Creek and Silver Lake rehabilitation begins.

2019 | Conservation of the creek is increasingly viewed as a priority and the environmental value of the creek for Waterloo and the region is a point of contention. Despite this awareness, pollution and water quality issues persist along the creek.

1977, Laurel Creek is buried in culvert between Caroline Street and Silver Lake.

In 1960, Laurel Creek between King Street and Caroline Street is buried in an underground box culvert.

2016 | Construction work uncovers historic corduroy log road and stone culvert. Local historians identify the culvert as part of the former mill race that diverted water from the Laurel Creek, powering mill works.

2019 | Conservation of the creek is increasingly viewed as a priority and the environmental value of the creek for Waterloo and the region is a point of contention. Despite this awareness, pollution and water quality issues persist along the creek.

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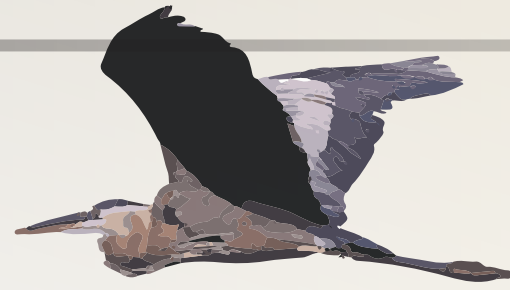
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creek as environmental service

