

Indigenous Roots

Waba and White Lake are on the homelands of the Algonquin people, who have ongoing cultural and spiritual connections to this area.

We acknowledge the land and the people who have stewarded it through the generations.

White Lake is an English translation of the Algonkin word 'waba sagaigun'. The term 'white' refers to the white colour of the local rock.

An archaeological assessment in partnership with our indigenous communities would be a valuable asset.

Alexander Ring #8347

Rather than an A-Z about Waba and White Lake, I'm going to go to item Z first, then back to A.

In World War One, a local lad by the name of Alexander Ring volunteered and joined up.

His parents were William and Mary Larone Ring of White Lake.

Through our searches, no photos of Alexander or his family have ever been found.

This following information has been compiled from Alexander's military's attestation papers.

Alexander Ring was born in 1889. He was 25 when he signed on with the Canadian Overseas Expedition Force on September 23, 1914. Alexander listed his profession as a lumberman in Calabogie.

He was single and already had a year's service in the Active Militia of the Canadian Volunteers 42 Regiment. He was promoted to Corporal with the Second Unit when deployed.

His physical examination was done at CFB Valcartier, Quebec. He was 5 foot, 9 inches in height with a dark complexion, brown hair and eyes.

His faith was listed as Presbyterian.

Physically, he had a scar on his left leg.

Alexander Ring's unit sailed on Oct 3, 1914.

In 1915, he endured a sprained ankle.

In March of 1916, he was deprived of his Lance Corporal stripes for creating a disturbance where he was billeted.

Twice in June of 1916, he was hospitalized for the trench ailment of dysentery.

Alexander Ring was killed in action on Sept. 9, 1916.

Alexander's remains or last resting place has never been found. As mentioned, there

aren't any photographs of him.

His military will bequeathed all property and effects to his Mom, Mrs. William Ring of White Lake. Alexander was 27 years old.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission states that he is commemorated at Vimy, France.

His name 'A. Ring' is inscribed on the Vimy monument.

Alexander Ring vanished from memory.

In 2017, the Vimy Oaks Legacy Corporation distributed oak saplings descended from acorns gathered after the battle of Vimy Ridge.

One of the seedlings was planted at Waba Cottage Museum and Gardens.

Now, it is about a 2 meter sapling that is doing well.

Recently, our gardener, Anthony Kellar has planted a 'ring' of poppies around our special little oak tree.

Last year's summer student, Abby Welbanks created a touching video on Alexander Ring.

So when you're in White Lake for any reason – the chip wagon, the fishing, family reasons, or just an outing, please remember Alexander Ring.

Thank you,

Jim Austin

Immigration – Different Waves

McNab/Braeside experienced different waves of immigration. As well as the Scots, there was a German migration in the late 19th century in the area.

A few of these families also settled in the Waba/White Lake area. Why these migrations happened has a number of factors. For the Scots, there were the Highland Clearances, Industrial Revolution, war and strife, the class system, religious animosity and avoiding servitude or indenturement. Unknowingly, many of the same factors were waiting for them here.

Challenges

- use of hand tools
- clearing wilderness
- building shelter
- animal husbandry
- home medicine

- preserving foods
- transportation methods

Geography & Geology:

The waterways and portage routes were trade routes for indigenous people from Lake Superior out to the Atlantic.

These same passages were used to bring settlers and supplies to the Township.

Four season climate

Changing seasons affected both indigenous people and arriving settlers. Basic needs of food, shelter and water change with the different times of the year. Human adaptability in meeting these changes was a matter of survival.

- how to dress
- how to make shelter
- self sufficient farms in tune with the seasons
- how to grow crops
- raise livestock and feed themselves
- many forms of transportation needed for different seasons and terrain – horse, buggy, oxen, sleighs, boats

Geology

- Almost every type of geological feature is found in McNab/Braeside Township.
- The Ottawa Valley is the bottom of an ancient 'graben' or volcanic rift.
- Ancient seas created 450 million years old limestone features.
- 200,000 years of ice two kilometers thick scraped and gouged the land.
- The last one abruptly ended creating cataclysmic flooding which turned the Ottawa Valley into a polar sea.
- This is only twice as far back as when the Pyramids were built.

In 1977, Alan Jones discovered whale bones in Hanson's Gravel Pit, just west of White Lake.

Quality of Land

McNab Township has a variety of landscapes. Depending on good fortune, a settler could end up with a farm on clay silt, limestone shelf, or marble bedrock.

Clearing and cultivating better quality land provided:

- better trees for building, heat, fences

- better cleared land for cereal crops & livestock feed
- a better chance for success and survival

Location:

Located on a pre-Cambrian rock shelf that is mostly marble, Waba and White Lake developed because of their proximity to water.

White Lake is about 16 km long and covers an area of 23 km (8.9 square miles). Its bays reach into several townships in both Renfrew and Lanark Counties.

According to Dave Overholt and Conrad Gregoire of the White Lake Property Owners Association, it was always one big lake and not several smaller lakes that were joined by flooding when the dam was put in.

The WLPOA has an amazing website, newsletters and information concerning the environmental status of the lake.

Waba Creek drains through White Lake, then over to Waba and down the 'mountain'.

Access to the rest of the Township

In early days, transportation in White Lake was either by walking, horse and buggy or sometimes by boat on the lake. In winter, it could be narrowed down to horse and sleigh.

The 'mountain' was an obstacle in the northern direction.

The Madawaska River was an obstacle in the western direction.

White Lake was an obstacle in the southern direction.

It wasn't impossible to get around, but slow and sometimes arduous.

Waba

The small hamlet of Waba lies in the southeast corner of the Township, about 2 km northeast of White Lake Village.

It owes its name to Waba Creek, which winds its way out of White Lake.

Earlier, the settlement was sometimes called Waba Mills or Waba Brook. Alexander Stewart from Scotland utilized the water power of the falls in the early 1840s.

At its peak, Waba had a sawmill, shingle mill, barley mill, cheese factory, general store and post office. By 1899, the Stewart mill in Waba manufactured cheese boxes, made out of elm veneer, for use in cheese factories. Over time, all of these industries either moved elsewhere or burned without being rebuilt. A section of the tall stone foundation wall from this barley mill is the only visible reminder of the original Stewart mills at Waba.

The Lake known as White Lake

White Lake is an English translation of the Algonkin word 'waba sagaigun' (white lake).

In the earliest map of the Township, the lake was spelled "Wabolac." Later spellings were Wabalak or Wabalac.

The term 'white' describes the large marble and calcium carbonate deposits found in the surrounding area. The lake was scooped out by glaciers leaving a 'marl' or finely ground marble gravel on the lake's bottom.

There's an object that came out of the lake. It's at Waba Cottage Museum and Gardens and deserves further study. It is the shell of a hand-hewn log canoe (about half of it).

Its origins are unclear at present. There is the possibility of a dendrochronology test to give a timeline of the artifact.

The Village

Except for suburban areas directly adjacent to Arnprior, White Lake is the largest community in McNab/Braeside Township. Archibald McNab built Waba Cottage on the north shore of White Lake in 1835.

The original house became derelict and lasted until a Sunday morning in April of 1936, when it was blown up. Everyone was in church and out of the way that day. The museum is lucky to have a good collection of early photographs of the original building. Upon close examination, the outline of a small stone chimney can be seen incorporated into the west side of the building. This is a mystery but proves that Waba Cottage was not the first structure in White Lake.

In 1967, the ruins and 8 acres of waterfront were donated by the Box family to McNab Township. A volunteer Centennial committee was formed under the direction of Verna Campbell and Waba Cottage Museum was created. In succeeding years, 3 other log buildings and a display building were added to the site. For the Millennium, more brilliant volunteers designed and created the gardens.

The original village grew between Waba Cottage and John Paris' mill site. The Paris mill was at the bridge when you go to the 4 corners and head north. In the late 1840's, a second village, at one point called Killin, developed near the Paris mill.

Since then, the two parts have grown together, the "hub" has shifted from the west to the east, and the name Killin has been forgotten.

The Neighbourhood

The Stirling House in White Lake is one of the oldest buildings in the village. It was built about 1844 by storekeeper and postmaster Alexander Stirling. The first house was destroyed by fire.

Today, it is a private home. Over time, the structure has had various uses as a gourmet restaurant, store, public library and post office.

In 1933, the store in the Stirling House was operated by Thomas Jones, and later by Owen Black.

The Box House on the south side of Main Street was built by the Laird's son Allan in 1846. Allan married Rebecca nee Buffam in 1851; the family lived in Allan's new house while Allan's mother Catherine Fisher stayed at Waba Cottage. After Allan died in 1859, Rebecca married Jack Alston, and the house became a hotel and tavern. Rebecca's daughter Violet Alston inherited the house and married Alexander Box.

Next to the beautiful stone St. Andrew's Church, there was a cute little log structure. Now at Waba Cottage Museum and Gardens, "The Temple" was originally built in 1868. It was a temperance hall and reading room by the Good Templars. Over time, it was the Independent Order of Foresters hall, a Baptist church, White Lake Literary Society Hall, a residence, a Women's Institute Hall, Baptist church again, and Beryl Rintoul's "Temple Antique Shop". In 1978 she donated the building to the McNab Museum. It was moved to Museum Park and was restored as the "McNab Community Church".

The building on the north side with the facade of long arched windows was John Lindsay's general store. It later served as Orange Hall. In the 1950's, it was used by the Baptist congregation. Today, it is a private home with distinctive arched windows still remaining.

The current Women's Institute Hall was originally the Presbyterian church. It was built in 1929 by John Box. After the Presbyterians no longer required the church, John Box once again owned the building. He donated it to the Women's Institute in 1963. The structure's facade was significantly changed from a large church window with tower to how it appears today.

As transportation was difficult, essential goods and services needed to be closely accessible. Early stores were like mini-Walmart's carrying items such as tools, food, toys, pots, pans, coffee, ladies' clothing, textiles, etc. For specialty items, early catalogues provided a means of ordering and receiving goods – not too much different than Amazon today.

Ostler's Store

At the NE corner of the village's main intersection, the first store was built and operated by James E. Cuthbert. Later storekeepers were McLachlin, George Bremner, Fred Ostler & Son, the White Lake Sweet Shoppe, and now 'The Kitchen'.

John Hough Jr. worked for Ostler as a clerk from 1900 to 1903. Other clerks were William Donovan and Andrew McNab. Andrew McNab was one of the key figures in the early construction of the museum. His daughter, Fern (McNab) Stewart continued that legacy as a prominent volunteer and White Lake historian.

One memory of Ostler's Store that many residents share was the two scary stuffed birds that were always in prominent display. Today, the museum has the loon and

hawk from Ostler's store.

Other stores were operated by Johnny McLachlin, and by Bill and Edna Stewart.

Tradespeople

Before the advent of the automobile, plumbing, electricity and telephone, there was a high degree of self-reliance in building and domestic skills. Skilled trades such as carpenters, shoemakers and blacksmiths were part of the local scene.

Blacksmith

A blacksmith's main duty was shoeing horses, and it wasn't necessarily a fun job. As well as forging the iron into horseshoes, the blacksmith could be found nailing the shoe onto the horse's foot.

In 1882, Andrew Allison was a blacksmith at White Lake. He was 46 years old, owned village lots 16 and 17 on Main Street as well as other property.

Sandy (Alex.) McGregor was also a blacksmith in White Lake.

The museum has a huge wheelbender from the blacksmith shop in White Lake. It was donated by Tom Farr. As well, the beautiful vintage painted blacksmith sign of Alexander Fraser of Burnstown is on display.

Carpenters

Carpenters had an interesting lot in life. Duties could vary from basic construction to furniture making and coffin making. Coffins were too big and expensive to ship from elsewhere and there was precious little time to wait.

Some White Lake carpenters were:

John McRae 1857-58

Until 1903, Donald McLaren was casket maker and undertaker

William Cram, cabinetmaker

Shoemakers

Shoes and boots were either locally made or catalog ordered. To get as much wear as possible, shoe makers were a necessity.

John Hough Sr. (1849 – 1922) was a shoemaker at White Lake. His tools are on display in the Waba Cottage Museum.

John A. Hough, son of the shoemaker, was born in 1884. He quit school at age 14 to work on a farm for 50¢ a day. He worked in lumber camps, became a carpenter at White Lake and operated the White Lake post office from their home with his wife Emma. He built flat-bottom boats for use on White Lake.

For 30 years John Hough served as caretaker and treasurer of St Andrew's Presbyterian Church, White Lake. He helped to build the Waba Cottage Museum which was opened in 1967.

Tailors, Weavers and Tanners

In 1857 Archibald Yuill was a tailor at White Lake.

Mills

In 1851, John Paris owned a water-powered stone grist mill on Waba Creek, just north of White Lake village (where the bridge is). When John Paris died in 1883, his son James (1850-1917) took over. The grist mill was destroyed by fire in 1912.

After that, the site became Deacon's Saw Mill.

In some documents, it mentions that there was also a woolen mill (carding mill) on Waba Creek, at or near the same location around 1858. It was operated by William Parkhurst, who may have been an employee of John Paris.

Tourism

White Lake is known for its pickerel and bass fishing.

With the advent of the automobile, tourism bloomed throughout White Lake. Many Americans from Pennsylvania have properties along the lake that go back generations. Within White Lake, there is a history of lodges, tourist campgrounds, fish guiding services, boat repair and marinas.

Churches

Churches provide comfort, support and a sense of belonging. White Lake has had a few churches over the years. The site isn't known but the first church was an 'Auld Kirk' congregation in a building about a mile west of the present United Church. As the site was inadequate, a new frame building was built on the present site of St. Andrew's at the 4 corners.

Construction of St. Andrew's Presbyterian (now United) Church in White Lake began on June 28, 1881.

In 1929 White Lake Presbyterians formed their own church. The building became the White Lake Women's Institute in 1963.

The first manse, on the north side of Main Street, was purchased in 1873 for \$380 from Alexander Stirling.

In the 1920s and 1930s, Rev. Thomas McNaught and his family occupied the manse.

In 2007, sons, Herbert and R.J. McNaught reminisced about growing up in White Lake with a video tour of the area.

White Lake area Methodists sometimes went to the Methodist church built in 1913 on the Bellamy Road.

The White Lake Baptist congregation was organized in 1873. The church was a large brick building that was erected in 1880. It could hold 250 worshippers. It was destroyed by fire in 1924 and never rebuilt.

The few Anglican families living in the White Lake area attended meetings at the Ellis School on the Bellamy Road.

Those of Roman Catholic faith go to church in Braeside or Arnprior.

Cemeteries

White Lake Cemetery can be found just west of the village on McLachlan Road.

Originally a pioneer cemetery, it is still in use today.

Archibald McNab's housekeeper, Catherine Fisher was buried there in an unmarked grave.

In 1975, a gravestone was installed to mark her resting place and son Allan by the McNab Heritage and Museum Committee.

Schools

There were two early schools in town.

The third (and last) school was built in 1889.

White Lake School Section #1 had two classrooms and also offered a junior high school program. It stood just north of the Paris/Deacon mill on White Lake Road.

The museum has a video tour of White Lake by two brothers who lived there in the 1930s. The anecdotes about the school are priceless.

The school was closed in 1968 when busing began to McNab Public School. The old school building was converted into a wood working shop but was destroyed by fire not too long after.

White Lake Women's Institute

Women's Institutes began in Stony Creek, Ontario in 1897. They quickly grew as a cultural phenomenon with branches in Burnstown, Goshen, Glasgow, Clay Bank, Pine Grove, Waba, Stewartville and White Lake. Over the years, some branches have consolidated into the present White Lake Women's Institute Hall. This year, the White Lake Women's Institute is celebrating their 110th anniversary.