

## Hereford Forest / Viewpoint and Memorial Site 5

### Making a life by the water

#### **Station: Corner of Owen Road and Eliza C. Tillotson Road**

##### **Water: a source of communication, economic development and life in Hereford Township**

Water has played a pivotal role in the development of Hereford Township. It initially served as a route of communication and a transit point sought after by the Abenaki people, as a source of drinking water for the frontier town of Canaan in Vermont, as a means of transporting logs to New England, and as a power source for sawmills.

The idyllic setting of Hereford Township is bordered by two international watercourses: Leach Stream, which you can see before you, and the Hall Stream on the other side of the mountain in East Hereford.

On this side of the Hereford hill, Leach Stream, a tributary of the River Connecticut, rises at Lake Averill in Essex County, Vermont. The Connecticut River is the longest river in New England (409 miles or 659 km). Its watershed of 11,236 square miles (29,100 km<sup>2</sup>) is currently home to around 2.4 million people, almost all of whom live in the United States. It rises near the Canadian border at Pittsburg and flows through New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts and Connecticut.

The main lake in this watershed in Quebec is Lake Wallace, which is divided by the border between Canada and the United States.

The Hall Stream, which was used to demarcate the border between Canada and the United States, joins the Connecticut River at Beecher Falls in New Hampshire, just south of the hamlet of *Comins Mills*, in the municipality of East Hereford, Quebec. Until the late 1970s, Comins Mills was the name used to refer to the East Hereford customs office. The Hall Stream, 40 kilometres long, flows from Saint-Malo in Quebec to Beecher Falls in Vermont, passing through Saint-Venant-de-Paquette, East Hereford and Pittsburg in New Hampshire. In part, it forms the border between Quebec and New Hampshire.

The Hall Stream was the subject of a major international dispute between 1832 and 1835, leading to the creation of the Republic of Indian Stream. An interpretation centre detailing this fascinating episode is located not far from here on Route 253 in East Hereford.

### **The Republic of Indian Stream**

Before the land was surveyed, the first settlers to establish themselves in the region were unsure whether they were in Canada or the United States. Even afterwards, the local population could not agree on the exact location of the border: was it situated along the chain of the three Connecticut Lakes, as Canada claimed, or along the Hall Stream, as the United States asserted? This legal and legislative ambiguity led, in 1832, to the establishment of the Republic of Indian Stream, a free, sovereign and independent state bounded by the two disputed borders. Peace was short-lived, and the dispute continued to cause considerable turmoil. In 1840, the population sided with the United States and founded Pittsburg, New Hampshire. The border, established along the Hall Stream, was definitively sealed in 1842 with the Webster-Ashburton Treaty. The hamlet of Hereford was already well populated around 1820–1830. In 1825, there were 30 families and 146 inhabitants in Hereford Township.

Following research carried out by an archaeologist from the Grand Council of the Waban-Aki Nation, the great-grandmother of Neil Tillotson, donor of the Hereford Community Forest, was identified as Mary Titus, an Abenaki woman from New Hampshire, specifically from the Colebrook area, as stated in the Mikoman Archaeology report dated April 2017.

To make it easier to travel to the Pittsburg area in New Hampshire, a road had to be built. It was Alexander Rea, a landowner, 'justice of the peace' for the District of Saint-François and 'land agent' for Baron David Alexander Grant, who is said to have had a road built running from Leach Stream on the Hereford side to Hall Stream on the East Hereford side: it was given the very descriptive name '*From Leach Stream to Hall Stream*'. This '*From Leach Stream to Hall Stream*' road spared residents the need to travel via Canaan in Vermont to reach Pittsburg (New Hampshire). It was also used to transport the post between the post offices at Hereford, Hall Stream and *Comins Mills* in East Hereford.

The central section of this road was closed in 1924 between the junction with Owen Road and the Lauzon sawmill, situated on Route 253 in East Hereford; part of this section became one of the forest tracks in Hereford Forest, named **Eliza C. Tillotson Road** in honour of Neil Tillotson's grandmother.

**Several families lived along the road known as '*From Leach Stream to Hall Stream*'** between the 1830s and around 1950, the last of these being the family of Thomas W. Marsh. Like many other roads in East Hereford, it was named after its last resident, Marsh; this name was changed and officially registered as Owen in 1993. It is known that the Tillotson family lived on this road, which is also home to the Canaan springs, Andrews School and Old Hereford Cemetery.

## Water serving the thriving frontier industry

### **Log driving – The Van Dyke Log Drive**

Thomas-Henry Van Dyke employed forestry workers and log drivers, whose labour sometimes resulted in timber being transported as far as Boston. During the log-driving season, the logs travelled along the Hall River and the Connecticut River. This waterway, used for timber transport, was commonly known as the *Van Dyke Log Drive*.

The Van Dyke family were already well known in the canton. George Van Dyke, Thomas's brother, kept busy purchasing several plots of land to supply his sawmills on the American side. They were 'well-off', as they say!



On 30 November 1900, all the buildings on Thomas-Henry Van Dyke's farm were destroyed by fire: a modern house, three barns, sheds and shelters, as well as hay, grain and silage, resulting in a loss of \$5,000. This information is taken from the *Coaticook Observer*. Thomas Van Dyke rebuilt. He had a herd of 40 Holstein cows, a three-storey barn (still standing today), a large henhouse housing 1,000 hens, a cheese dairy, a sugar mill, a luxury house (the famous Brick House), a four-car garage, a stable with around forty stalls, and, as ever, a racecourse. He employed at least 8 to 10 people. To provide the energy needed for his operations, he built a dam on the stream that now bears his name. A large building at the foot of the mountain housed the necessary facilities. Not much else is known.

**Groundwater** was a vital resource for nearly a quarter of Canadians.

Writings from the 1830s to the 1910s show that water was a precious and sought-after resource, both for the inhabitants of Hereford Township and for property developers on both sides of the border.

There are said to have been eleven or twelve sources of drinking water along Owen Road. As early as 1835, the earliest contracts found relating to plots on Owen Road mention water sources. The residents of the hamlet wanted to ensure they retained their supply of drinking water, even though, over the years, pipework and aqueducts were built to carry water from the springs on Owen Road to Canaan.

It was essential that the inhabitants – almost all of whom were farmers – had access to water not only for their families but also for their farms and livestock. Some plots had as many as three or four springs. On one plot in particular, several contracts refer to ‘*Pearly Springs*’, named after one of the first owners, Moses Pearly.

### ***Pearly Springs***

In 1831, Paschal G. Blood purchased the southern part of the plot—<sup>1</sup>—which had belonged to the heirs of James Ladd. The buildings, timber and water on the site were included in the sale.

The springs on the plot thus supplied water to a number of residences, including that of Dr Artemus Ward in Canaan, Vermont. Built in 1846, this house is listed on the *National Register of Historic Places* for its distinctive Neo-Palladian style. Today, the house is home to the municipal library (*the Alice M. Ward Memorial Library*) and the Canaan Historical Society.

### **The aptly named *Reservoir Road*<sup>2</sup> , leading to Canaan**

In order to maintain its water sources at the time, the neighbouring town of Canaan used the aptly named *Reservoir Road* (a road that still exists). This road, which can be seen on a 1865 map of the Township, ran up to the junction of Eliza C. Tillotson Road and Owen Road. Eyewitnesses recall that at the end of *Reservoir Road*, there was a large pond along the international boundary.

### **Water: a source of electricity and transport**

The Van Dyke family, of Dutch origin, played an active role in the development of Hereford Township. Thomas (1851–1914), a timber entrepreneur, served as mayor of Hereford Township from 1906 to 1908 and from 1912 to 1914. A prosperous man, Van Dyke had a magnificent brick house and a barn built on Hall Stream Road. He also saw an opportunity to generate his own electricity from a stream not far from his farm, which flows down from the mountain.

The ‘*Brick House*’ was supplied by a well on the west side of *Hall Stream Road*, whilst the barn was connected by a pipeline that ran under the Hall Stream and drew its water from the Carr farm in Pittsburg, New Hampshire. This stream is now known as Thomas-Van Dyke Stream. As a result, the ‘*Brick House*’ was the only house in East Hereford to have electricity in 1943.

But it must be said that the good news of our abundant natural water supply on Hereford Hill spread rapidly across the border! Towards the end of the 1800s, the owners of two specific plots on Owen Road ceded and sold the water rights to their wells to Calvin T. Stoddard and/or his companies.

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<sup>1</sup> Lot<sup>1</sup> 9-A R1 (80 acres), excluding the south-west corner (20 acres)

<sup>2</sup> Reservoir Road on both the American and Canadian sides was officially named on 8 July 1856 by the Hereford Township Council as ‘*Beecher and Rowell Road*’,<sup>2</sup>

Who was **Calvin T. Stoddard**? A machinist by trade and an 'inventor', he lived in Canaan. Local records mention that, as early as 1863, there was a small water supply network connecting a few homes, with pipes running from one house to another. The size of the area comprising Canaan, Beecher Falls and West Stewartstown meant that local wells also supplied residents. Around 1894, the Stoddard Aqueduct Company sought to build a water supply system with reservoirs to serve residents, factories, offices and barns, and to install hydrants.

He joined forces with four partners from Portland (Maine). It was thus that Mr. Stoddard saw fit to acquire water rights on Owen Road. Given the steep gradient towards Canaan, this water had an excellent flow rate and good pressure. The landowners who ceded the water rights on their land ensured that, should they remain in Canaan or West Stewartstown, they would be supplied with water free of charge or for a minimal fee. Receipts held by the Canaan Historical Society show a payment of \$2.50 every three months, payable in advance, and that if payment was not made within 10 days, the water supply would simply be cut off without further notice! As for maintenance of the network, this was to be carried out via the Reservoir Road in Canaan – which still exists today – which joined Beecher and Rowell Road and led up to Owen Road.

It was not until 19 June 1948 that an agreement was reached between the town of Canaan and the owners of the water supply network for the purchase of the entire water supply network. In the months that followed, the town set aside \$25,000 for upgrading works. It was decided that the best source of water to supply the network was from Hereford Hill, the land which was acquired by Neil Tillotson in subsequent years. As for the owner of the water rights to a third plot on Owen Road, it was not until 1965 that he sold them to the town of Canaan for \$1,365. Today, the town no longer uses water from the Owen Road area, having invested substantial sums in recent years to improve its network with local wells, but it intends to retain its rights as a safeguard.

This water flowing from our mountains also feeds numerous watercourses in the Township and has enabled the construction of one or more dams as required. Entrepreneurs saw an opportunity to use this water to establish sawmills and grain mills throughout the area. Examples include Alexander Rea and Charles Green, who set up operations on Leach Stream; Levi R. Dean on Buck Stream; Joseph Weston on the stream that bears his name; John Heath on Wells Stream; and John Johnson on Noir Stream. Indeed, right up until the 1970s, Raoul Tremblay operated a sawmill on the Leach. This stream, which flows towards Canaan and into the Connecticut River, was also used to build several dams and mills on the American side.

And what of our 'blue gold' today? Many property owners acquired water rights from their immediate neighbours in the early years after arriving in the Township. These rights have been passed down from one owner to another and often from one generation to the next. The village of East Hereford has had its own water supply network since the 1970s. A new water source has been drawing water from the surrounding mountains since the 2010s. We cannot overlook the arrival in our area of Ferme Piscicole des Bobines Inc. in 1989, which operates the largest rainbow trout farm in Quebec. Water quality was a key factor in its establishment. Their aquaculture system recirculates 90 per cent of the water, which optimises production without affecting available water resources. Consequently, less than 10 per cent of the water used comes directly from the groundwater table.