

CITY OF NIAGARA FALLS

The present day City of Niagara Falls is located on land which was originally known as Township Number 2, the second township surveyed after the Township of Niagara. It was also known as Mount Dorchester, named for Governor General Sir Guy Carleton, Earl of Dorchester. The earliest settlers in Township Number 2 were Philip Bender and Thomas McMicken (or McMicking), United Empire Loyalists who, along with their families, immigrated to Canada from the United States in 1782; by the census of 1783, there were ten families living in Township Number 2. The population grew rapidly until all 22,881 acres of land in the Township were claimed by United Empire Loyalists or members of Butler's Rangers. In 1791, John Graves Simcoe, the first Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Upper Canada, gave the name of Stamford to Township Number 2, after the Town of Stamford in Lincolnshire, England. As more people settled in the area, they began to concentrate into little communities. Our City of Niagara Falls is an amalgamation of those early communities which developed in Stamford Township.

Drummondville - 1831

The first community in Stamford Township was the village of Drummondville, a cluster of a dozen houses which was located around the junction of Portage Road (present day Main Street), Lundy's Lane and Ferry Street. This area is referred to as the Village of Lundy's Lane in some old records, but became known as Drummond Hill after the 1814 Battle of Lundy's Lane, in which Sir Gordon Drummond led the British forces. In official records, the name of Drummondville does not appear until 1831, when the area obtained village status with a population of about 150 people.

Village of Clifton - 1832

In 1832, a retired army officer named Captain Ogden Creighton purchased land from the Bender family and laid out lots and streets for a village. This village was named Clifton, after a place of the same name in England, and was located in what is now the Centre area of the City. Creighton did little to promote his village, and it failed to expand until after his death in 1850. At that time, his estate and much of the village of Clifton was purchased from Creighton's widow by Samuel Zimmerman, a American from Huntingdon County, Pennsylvania, who is known as the benefactor of Clifton.

Village of Elgin - 1853

In 1848, the first Suspension Bridge was built at the site of the present day Whirlpool Bridge. A number of workmen's shanties and houses sprang up around the bridgehead, and this collection of people were incorporated into the village of Elgin in 1853, with a population of about 100 people. Elgin was named after Lord Elgin, the Governor General at that time, and who resided in Drummondville in 1849. Also in 1853, primarily due to the efforts of Samuel Zimmerman, the Great Western Railroad was extended from Hamilton to Elgin and, with the opening of a new bridge in 1855, Elgin became the Canadian terminus of the railway.

Town of Clifton - 1856

In the early 1850s, both Clifton and Elgin experienced rapid population growth. The question of amalgamation was put before voters in 1856; the vote was carried and Clifton and Elgin combined to form the Town of Clifton on June 19, 1856. The first mayor of the Town of Clifton was Gilbert McMicking and Samuel Zimmerman continued to be its chief benefactor. The Town of Clifton was the Eastern Terminus of the Great Western Railroad, which was the source of employment for the majority of its 2000 people.

Town of Niagara Falls - 1881

In 1881, by a special Act of Parliament, and at the request of the people of Clifton, the name of the Town of Clifton was changed to the Town of Niagara Falls. The first mayor of the Town of Niagara Falls was R. F. Carter.

Village of Niagara Falls (South) - 1882

In the early 1880s, Drummondville was considering changing its name to the Village of Niagara Falls. On March 13, 1882, the Village of Niagara Falls (South) was incorporated, covering an area of 200 acres and with a population of 979 people. The first reeve of the Village of Niagara Falls (South) was William Russel.

City of Niagara Falls - 1904

By the early 1900s, the boundaries of the Village and Town of Niagara Falls were beginning to overlap, and it became apparent that amalgamation was the best option for the two communities. An Act for the Incorporation of the City of Niagara Falls was passed on June 12, 1903, and the Village and Town became the City of Niagara Falls, on January 1, 1904. This City had a population of just under 7000 people, and its first mayor was George Hanan.

Amalgamation of Stamford Township and City of Niagara Falls - 1963

Both the City of Niagara Falls and Stamford Township experienced rapid post-war growth. As such, they amalgamated on January 1, 1963. The 22,000 people of the old city and the 32,000 people of the Township combined to make Niagara Falls one of the more important cities of Ontario. The City of Niagara Falls now encompassed all of the area of the original Township Number 2 and its first mayor was Franklin J. Miller.