

Remembering The Way We Were

by Laura J. Richards
Staff Writer

What do wooden chairs, boats, and finely-honed sewing needles all have in common?

They were once made in the villages and hamlets that dotted the landscape of 19th-century Clarington. Wooden chairs were hand-crafted in Buffalo and boats at Port Granby. A blacksmith at Tricky's Corners was known for fixing broken sewing needles.

Clarington, which is made up of the former townships of Darlington, Clarke and the Town of Bowmanville, was once chock-full of villages, hamlets and other small pockets of settlement.

Some of the areas were merely four corners where a church and sometimes a school were located on a farmer's lot. Others were a more impressive collection of businesses and homes from the 1800s.

Many of the old schools in Clarington have been torn down, but there are a few that are still in existence and have been renovated as

homes. They are perhaps the most visible reminder of the days when bustling villages were the cornerstone of life in this community.

Clarington Mayor Diane Hamre lives in what was the Oak School in the Clarke Township. She says much of the interior of the schoolhouse was saved, thanks to renovators who merely covered over the tongue-and-groove wainscoting, the floors, and the original blackboard.

She says in living in the school house, "there is a real sense of history."

There are also a few churches that have been converted to homes, including one in Newtonville, on Church Street.

A drive through the countryside will take you by many of the crossroad villages that now only hold cemeteries or plaques describing what was once there.

Village Life

Clarington Planning Director Frank Wu says the villages in the 1800s and

Some Villages Time Forgot

early this century were made viable through the fact that they were where the services were located.

"There was usually a general store, a blacksmith shop and other services," Wu said.

"In the 1800s villages were the only type of settlements," he noted. He added that there were plenty of crossroads where usually a school and a church were located.

In Clarington a couple of those four corners include Crooked Creek and Starkville. They are located on Reg. Rd. 18, north of Newtonville.

It was the lack of transportation that allowed villages to grow and prosper.

"People would want to live near the services so they would move closer to the villages. After all, they only had their two feet and maybe a horse and buggy for

transportation," Wu said.

Looking at the current

situation in villages today, Wu says: "Villages will never disappear. Many are no longer what they once were, as people now travel to larger municipalities for their services."

However, as growth takes place and people feel the need to spread out, "villages become a place to live, rather than a place to gather" as were the villages of old.

That is what is happening now in

Clarington as people buy homes in subdivisions and then commute to work in Toronto, Oshawa, or other centres.

Now, let us take you back in time to the era when villages once dotted the Clarington map. You'll notice that many of them lack the populations and commercial enterprises they boasted in the past century. And some, regrettably, have disappeared altogether.

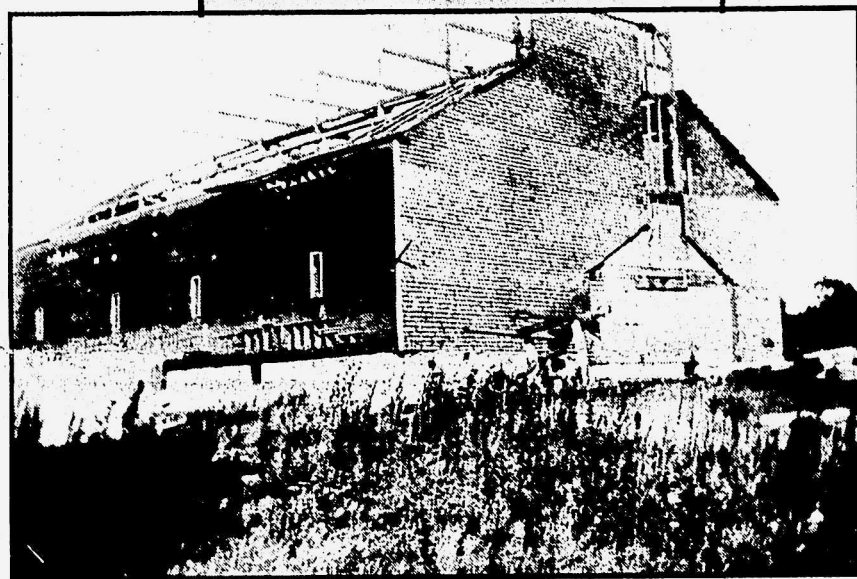
Space does not permit a complete listing of all Clarington's villages, both past and present.

Perhaps that will be the topic for another feature.



This photo was taken in the early 1900s at Scugog St., in Burkton. On the left is the blacksmith shop and between the brick building and the railway tracks is the Loyal Orange Hall. On the right is the general store and post office.

— Photo from 'Picture The Way We Were' and originally from Mrs. Russell Larmer



This is one of the grain elevators built at Bond Head. This picture was taken in about 1926.

— From Jack Gordon's Collection.

Villages of Clarington

Aboriginal Villages:

There are not many references to the aboriginal people who lived among the wooded areas we know as Clarington.

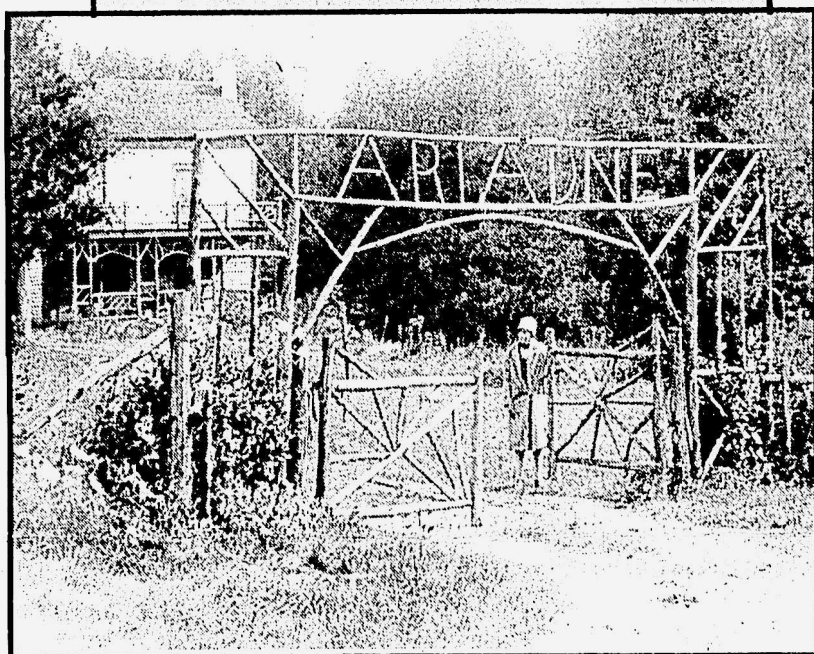
In a Women's Institute history book at the Clarke Museum and Archives, the author reported: "There was an early Indian settlement in Clarke, most of whom died of smallpox. At Bond Head, numbers of Indian graves were found and many relics are picked up from time to time."

If you do find any so-called relics, such as broken pottery shards or arrowheads, contact the provincial government who will send out an archaeologist to do a survey," says Mark Jackman, the Curator of the Clarke Museum and Archives. "If there are lots of pieces of pottery, then the area may have been a camp."

Bethesda

Bethesda had a church, where now a chapel sits at the Bethesda

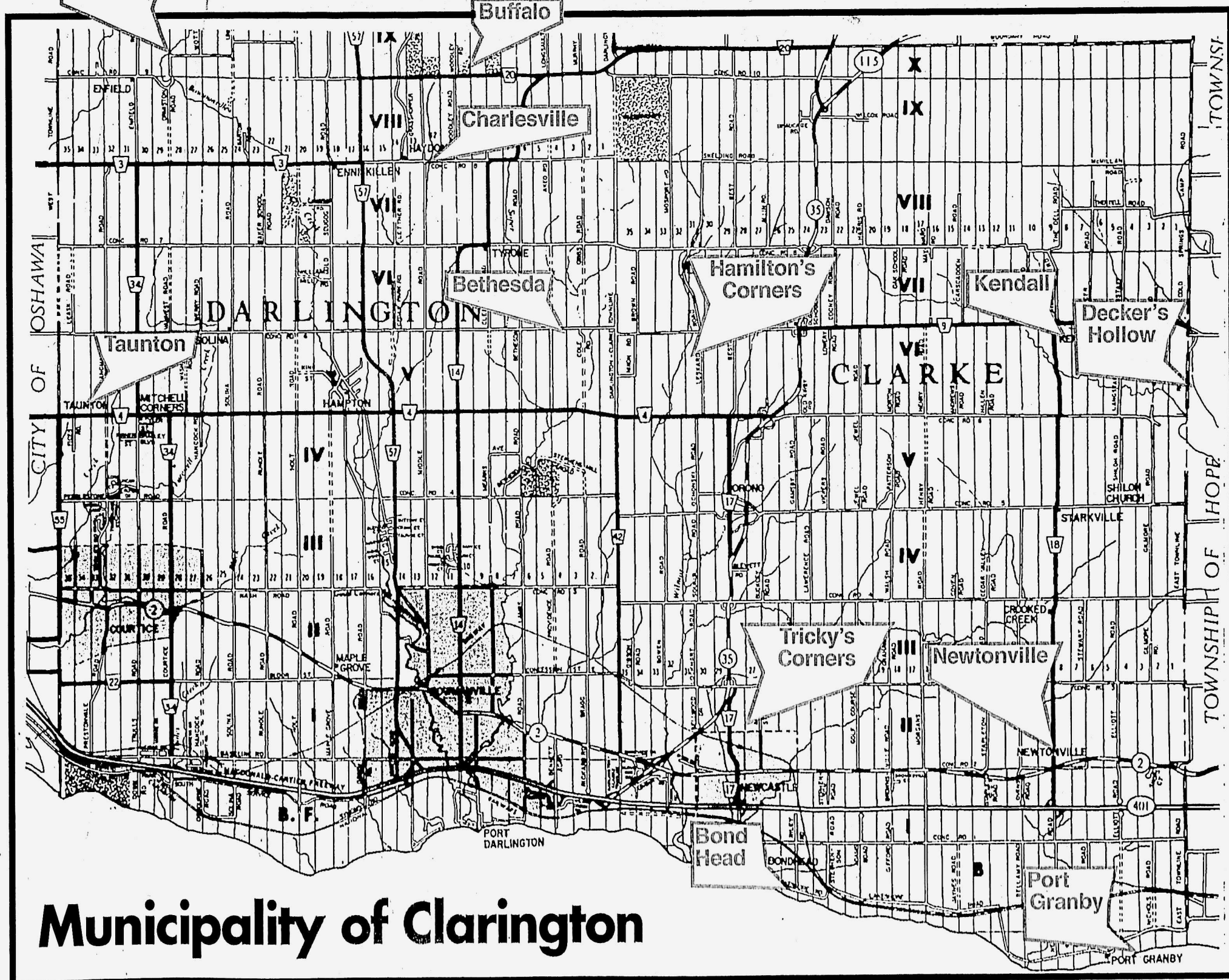
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This is the entrance to "The Glen" at Bond Head. The building was originally the 'Ariadne Hotel' which was later cut into three sections and used for cottages. The Glen is situated on the east side of the 's' curve heading up to the bluff area of Bond Head. The name 'Ariadne' was taken from a schooner that made regular calls at Newcastle Harbour.

— From Jack Gordon's Collection

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Municipality of Clarington