

Excerpt from the Introduction of "A Bibliography of the Natural History of Hamilton to the Year 1950" by W.W. Judd, published by the Hamilton Naturalists' Club as a Supplement to Volume 13, No. 5 of *The Wood Duck*. January 1960. pp1-3

Before the coming of Europeans the district about Hamilton was occupied by the Neutral Indians. They inhabited villages around the area, one of which was Kanducho by Lake Medad. Their trails traversed the site now occupied by Hamilton, one following the present route of York Street around the head of the lake and another following the present course of King Street and leading southwestward toward the Grand River. The Neutrals provided flint or chert for manufacture of weapons by the warring Hurons and Iroquois. They left no written records, but collections of arrowheads, pottery, beads, etc have been made at the sites of their villages. Between 1650 and 1652, the Seneca tribe of the Iroquois annihilated the Neutral Indians and thereafter occupied the district.

The westward advance of French conquest brought explorers and missionaries into contact with the Indians in this region early in the seventeenth century. Étienne Brûlé probably visited the district in 1615 and Father Hennepin called the area of the Dundas Marsh "Little Flanders." In 1669 LaSalle visited the head of the lake, and Galinee, a Member of his expedition, described the habits of rattlesnakes: "There are a great many of them at this place, as thick as one's arm, six or seven feet long, entirely black, The rattle that they carry at the end of the tail, and shake very rapidly, makes a noise like that which a number of melon or squash seeds would make, if shut up in a box."

Following the passage of power in Canada from French into British hands in the eighteenth century settlers arrived at the site of Hamilton. Richard Beasley, a United Empire Loyalist, settled in 1777 and in 1780 Robert Land built a cabin on what is now Barton Street. Other settlers followed and in 1813 Hamilton was established as a village. Brief accounts of animals and plants in the region are to be found in diaries and reminiscences of early travelers and settlers during this period. Mrs. John Graves Simcoe visited the vicinity of Hamilton in 1796. She records that seven hundred rattlesnakes were killed near Burlington Bay during the summer of 1795. She noted deer by a pond, and on the mountain slopes she gathered several wild plants, among them ginseng, enchanter's nightshade and wild turnip. On a visit to Mr. Beasley's house she viewed the Dundas Marsh, then

known as Coote's Paradise after a Captain Coote of the 8<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Foot in the garrison at York, who hunted waterfowl in the marsh. During her visits with settlers she was treated to meals of salmon, boiled squirrel, and "tortoise". Charles Durand who was born in Hamilton in 1811 lived on a farm on the border of the Dundas Marsh. In his time the marsh was the resort of otter, muskrats, bullfrogs and turtles and in the stream which flowed through it salmon were caught in abundance. Foxes, wolves and bears were numerous in the woods surrounding the farm.

In 1847 Hamilton became a city, having at that time a population in excess of 6,000, and various public institutions were developed. Among these was the Hamilton Association, founded in 1856, which included in its membership several enthusiastic naturalists. Between 1884 and 1923 the Association published its "Journal and Proceedings" in thirty volumes including therein papers on the local fauna and flora. Notable among the contributors were Thomas McIlwraith who wrote on the birds of Ontario, Judge A. Logie who compiled lists of plants found in the vicinity of Hamilton and J. A. Moffat who collected insects about Hamilton during the last three decades of the nineteenth century. In 1919 the Hamilton Bird Protection Society was organized to further the cause of conservation of wildlife and later its successor, the Hamilton Nature Club continued this work and today is actively engaged in studies of the local fauna and flora. Members of the club have published several papers and notes on the plants and animals of the Hamilton region, many of them appearing in the Canadian Field-Naturalist. In 1941, the Royal Botanical Gardens were established in Hamilton and recently the members of its staff have embarked upon a programme of studies of the conservation and management of wildlife in the properties of the Gardens. Since the establishment of the McMaster University in Hamilton in 1930, staff members and students in the Departments of Botany and Zoology have undertaken studies of the wildlife of Wentworth County.