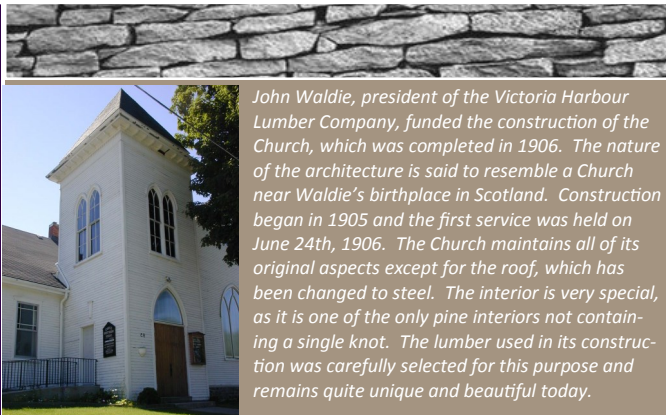


Built in 1900-1901 the first owner of the home was Mr. Eplett, the town butcher. Mr. Eplett, his wife, and their nine children lived in the house. After Mr. Eplett died, Mrs. Eplett and the children lived there, taking in the occasional boarder. In 1954, St. John's United church bought the home for \$4,500. The house was renovated and improved slightly before the minister moved in. Rev. R. Hiltz was the first minister to move into the home. Rev. Hiltz lived there until June 1956. The current Reverend L. Patey and Family moved to the home in 1992 and resided there until June 2011.

Walking Tour # 10 >>>

147 Jephson St



John Waldie, president of the Victoria Harbour Lumber Company, funded the construction of the Church, which was completed in 1906. The nature of the architecture is said to resemble a Church near Waldie's birthplace in Scotland. Construction began in 1905 and the first service was held on June 24th, 1906. The Church maintains all of its original aspects except for the roof, which has been changed to steel. The interior is very special, as it is one of the only pine interiors not containing a single knot. The lumber used in its construction was carefully selected for this purpose and remains quite unique and beautiful today.

Walking Tour # 8 >>> St. Paul's Presbyterian Church

This picture is of the range light at Bergie Point. It is one of a pair constructed by the Federal Government in 1910 to guide ships safely to and from the Port McNicoll Grain Elevator and the Victoria Harbour Lumber Company Mills. What is unique about range lights is that they have to be in pairs to work. One is usually up high on a hill, like the one off of William Street, while the twin is at a lower level. The lighthouse originally housed a kerosene lamp, however an electric lamp was installed in 1951, which has since been removed.



In its fifty-eight years of service, the lighthouse saw only four different light keepers. It was the job of the light keeper to make sure the wicks were lit, especially when the kerosene lamps were still in use. The first light keeper was Mr. Charles Bergie, who was succeeded by Mr. Robert Belcher. Upon Mr. Belcher's death, his brother Ray took over the responsibility for the lighthouse until his death in 1960. Serving as the fourth and final light keeper.

**The structure you see right now looks like a light house, right? Well, actually it is a unique form of light house. It is called a range light. A range light is used to align ships to a safer course for navigating tough waters.**

Walking Tour # 1 >>>

The Range Light

Three homes on Jephson Street were constructed by The Victoria Harbour Lumber Company to house company foremen, hence they have come to be known as the 'Foremen's houses. Although this particular house has gone through many renovations the house two doors down the road is much closer to the original configuration all three of these homes shared. This style of home, reserved by Waldie specifically for his foreman, does not repeat itself throughout the township, adding to their uniqueness and the architectural flavor in the neighborhood.

135 & 137 Jephson St

Walking Tour # 9 >>>



In 1902 the Company Store was built which soon became a popular gathering place. At that time the store carried everything from cookware and kitchen china, to canned goods and clothing.

Workers of the mill were paid partially in vouchers only good at

the store. During hard times, sickness, or lay-offs the store would issue credit to many of the families in the village so they could still get by. The Victoria Mercantile Company ran the Company Store until 1927 when the mills closed down. It was then turned into an automobile repair shop and gas station by John Petroff. In 1944 Bruce Eplett changed the use to a hardware store and gas station. Later the gas pumps were removed and it is now operating as "Victoria Mercantile Company"

Walking Tour 2 >>>

The Company

Store



This house was built by the Stoddard family in 1910, as evidenced by engravings on the rafters. Little is known about the Stoddard family, however, those who built and owned the home spared no expense. The materials used were the best available at the time and the home was extravagantly furnished with High Victorian furniture. Historical restoration is a profession of the current owner and the house is in pristine condition. Every aspect of the building has been resorted to its original condition and it still maintains the original trim, brickwork, doors, floors, and windows.

278 Albert St

Walking Tour # 11 >>>

The old library was built in 1914 as a gift to the town from the Waldie's for support in prohibition. This one and a half story clapboard building boasted a steep cedar shingled roof and the interiors had high-ceilinged reading rooms each with their own fire place. The library was completed in 1916 and Miss O'Donahue was the first appointed librarian. In 1926 the library closed standing empty for many years. In 1932 after the fire that destroyed many buildings it was turned into a residence. In 1948 it became the Tay Township Office. During ceiling renovations in the 50's a silver and pewter cup and an old newspaper dating from the building's constructions were found there.

The Old Village Library

Walking Tour # 3 >>>



# Heritage of the past ...

Explore and learn about some of the most important historic sites of our community that no longer exist today.

## The Tay Shore Trail

In 1878 the Midland Railway reached Victoria Harbour from Orillia. It provided rail access for shipments from the 3 Victoria Harbour lumber mills to their southern markets, as well as bringing in supplies and settlers to the area. When it was extended to Midland in 1879, daily train trips between Orillia and Midland, with stops at smaller towns on the way, became a popular attraction. The line was later taken over by the Grand Trunk Railway, then the Canadian National Railway in 1922. By 1927 the lumber mills had closed, but the rail line maintained passenger and freight service until the mid 1960's. The CNR right-of-way between Midland and Waubaushene has been converted into the Tay Shore Trail.

## The Victoria Harbour Lumber Co. Mills

In 1843, a man named Hogg from the military establishment at Penetanguishene, built a small sawmill at the mouth of the Hogg River. Later mills included those of Kean, Fowlie and Company at the foot of Albert St. (1869), the John McDermott mill near Bergie Point, and the Nickerson Brothers mill (later the power Lumber Company).

Schooners frequently called to load lumber for ports in Canada and the U.S. and after the Midland Railway from Orillia reached Victoria Harbour in 1878, rail transport to Toronto and the south was available.

In 1885, Toronto entrepreneur John Waldie arrived to buy the Kean, Fowlie and Power Lumber mills along with hundreds of square miles of timber rights, bush camps, schooners, tugboats, warehouses and yard engines.

All holdings were incorporated under the banner of the Victoria Harbour Lumber Company (1886). (The McDermott mill was acquired about 1900). Log booms were towed to the mills from as far away as Blind River on the north shore. Sawm lumber was loaded onto barges, schooners, steamboats or railcars for shipment. The piling yards started at the former Power Lumber site and stretched to Park St. on the east side of town. When Waldie died in 1907, the Company was producing 200,000 board-feet per day and was the 2nd largest of its type in Canada. By 1920, however, most of the commercial pine below Sault Ste. Marie had been harvested and the company ceased operations in 1927.



The Victoria Harbor Lumber Company Mills, c. 1920.

## A WALKING TOUR >>>

Victoria Harbour is a growing community rich with history. Throughout this walking tour you will discover many homes and sites that provide a glimpse into our heritage.



G.T.R. Station, Victoria Harbor, Ont.

Tay Township Heritage Committee

# Victoria Harbour Heritage

Walking Tour # 7

## 38 Richard Street

This house was built by Charles Gouett, in 1902. He worked as a foreman for the Victoria Harbour Lumber Co. An interesting story associated with the house is that of Amanda, Charles' wife, shortly after they were married and the house was built she was given only 9 months to live.. Miraculously she survived much longer and gave birth to 9 children. She and Charles both died in 1948 but the house remained in the family until 1989. An original stained glass window is still found to the front of the house today.



## A Brief History of Victoria Harbour...

The historic core of the village is centered on the main crossroads of William and Albert Streets. Nearby you will find clapboard cottages, rambling frame houses, stately brick homes and several public buildings, many dating from the 19th century.

Victoria Harbour began with the opening of a lumber mill by John Hogg in 1843. However, the arrival of John Waldie in 1886 is when the village truly began to develop. Waldie began the Victoria Harbour Lumber Company (VHL Co.), which grew to operate three mills along the shoreline of Georgian Bay at Victoria Harbour. At its peak in 1905 it was the second largest milling operation in Canada.

John Waldie had a strong sense of community. He provided his workers with company housing, a company store and a village library. The company houses were all painted in VHL Co.'s colours, bright yellow with white trim, earning the village the nickname of "Canary Towne".

John Waldie was also a religious man, making his last donation to Victoria Harbour in 1906 with the completion of St. Paul's Presbyterian Church. Waldie

**The company houses were all painted in VHL Co.'s colours, earning the village the nickname of "Canary Towne"**

died in 1907 at the peak of VHL Co.'s operations. The mill's prosperity didn't last long as lumber along Georgian Bay became scarce. The mill suffered heavily, eventually closing in 1927. Despite the threat of fire,

several of the original Company buildings still stand today, including the original Company Store and the Library located on William Street. Many of the homes throughout this walking tour will reflect the history of Victoria Harbour's lumber years.

~ Tay Heritage Committee

