

► **The Peopling of Port Credit**

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FIRST UNITED CHURCH, 151 Lakeshore Road West

Friday, April 30 ▪ 7:30 - 9:30 p.m.

In honour of Port Credit's 175th Anniversary

Sneak Preview:

Next Friday I will attempt to present Port Credit's history in celebration of our 175 years of formative existence. 175 years...a drop in the bucket of time.

But an interesting drop.

I have decided to look at the drop in terms of blood rather than buildings...people in other words. We have had our share of colourful characters...Take Mr. Shaw, whose house still stands on Stavebank diagonal to the Presbyterian Church. Shaw was a blacksmith...builder of schooners...at least the iron part. But he was also a dentist. Apparently he made a tool for pulling teeth. To do so he would put his foot on the chest of the patient...who I assume was lying on the ground...then hook his tooth extraction unit to the tooth and pull hard and fast. His charge for such service was less than the dentists currently doing this in Port Credit.

Lots of characters...Ojibwa leaders...tragic and heroic...stonehookers, rum runners...men who risked their lives to save sailors from shipwrecks...dreamers...Methodists, Catholics...humanitarians...and the great snapping turtle...a different legend of Creation...I saw one the other day up by the railway bridge.

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Beneath our feet are the bones of creatures so ancient that our minds cannot grasp them. Who can possibly fully imagine what Port Credit was like 450 to 500 million years ago? At that time Port Credit was the bottom of a shallow sea located near the equator. And in this sea there were living things. Most living things then were aquatic. How do we know this? Because their fossilized remains wash up on the shores of Lake Ontario regularly, especially on that tiny piece of shingle beach on the western fringe of the new St. Lawrence Park trail. Crinoids, called Sea Lilies, waved their tentacles to entrap their food. And Nautiloid Cephalopods zipped through the shallow waters to consume other living things. All gone now. Although one Nautilus survivor lives deep in the

western Pacific Ocean feeding upon other living things much as his or her ancestors did millions of years ago.

The Lake we call Ontario is a very recent thing when matched with this ancient sea. By the time Lake Ontario was created, Port Credit had moved from the equator to where it stands today. Moved inexorably but steadily and still moving.

Great glaciers came and went...grinding most evidence of life into dusty sand. Huge things were these glaciers. Kilometres thick. When the last one receded some 10,000 years ago, Port Credit was at the bottom of a huge freshwater lake formed from glacial meltwater...the raging water that carved out the Credit River Valley. Our Credit River could never have carved such a valley. As the weight of the glaciers was reduced, the land rose. And Port Credit emerged into a warming sun. Plants grew...trees flourished...ancient animals drifted across the land...mammoths and giant Beaver. Their bones have been found but not here. Glaciers that could grind Precambrian rock into grains of sand had not trouble reducing mammoth bones to dust.

People came next...moving northward in the shadows of the glaciers...tracking the animals as nomadic hunters. Mysterious people of which we know little. Stone age people. Perhaps...likely...the Ancient descendents of the people Europeans first met at the mouth of the Credit River some 400 years ago.

So we are all recent arrivals...including the Mississaugas who migrated south as nomadic hunters just a few hundred years before Europeans 'discovered' American. 'Discovered'!! What a misnomer. North America was already peopled by several million humans. First Nations people ... aboriginal ... native ...Indian...original inhabitants.

The Mississaugas are Ojibwa people ... part of the large Algonkian native group. They came south when the Neutrals disappeared...moved into what had been Iroquois (Haudenosaunee) territory. Came in small bands for they needed much land to survive. The search for food dominated their lives and Port Credit was rich in food...Atlantic salmon filled the rivers, especially our river Credit...and especially at spawning time. So the mouth of the Credit...where we stand today... was their summer cottage country. In the winter they broke into smaller family groups to eke out a living deeper in the wilderness. In spring they tapped the maple trees for sugar and gradually drifted back to Port Credit. Of course our village had no name in those days... or at least not the name we use.

TO BE CONTINUED ON APRIL 30....