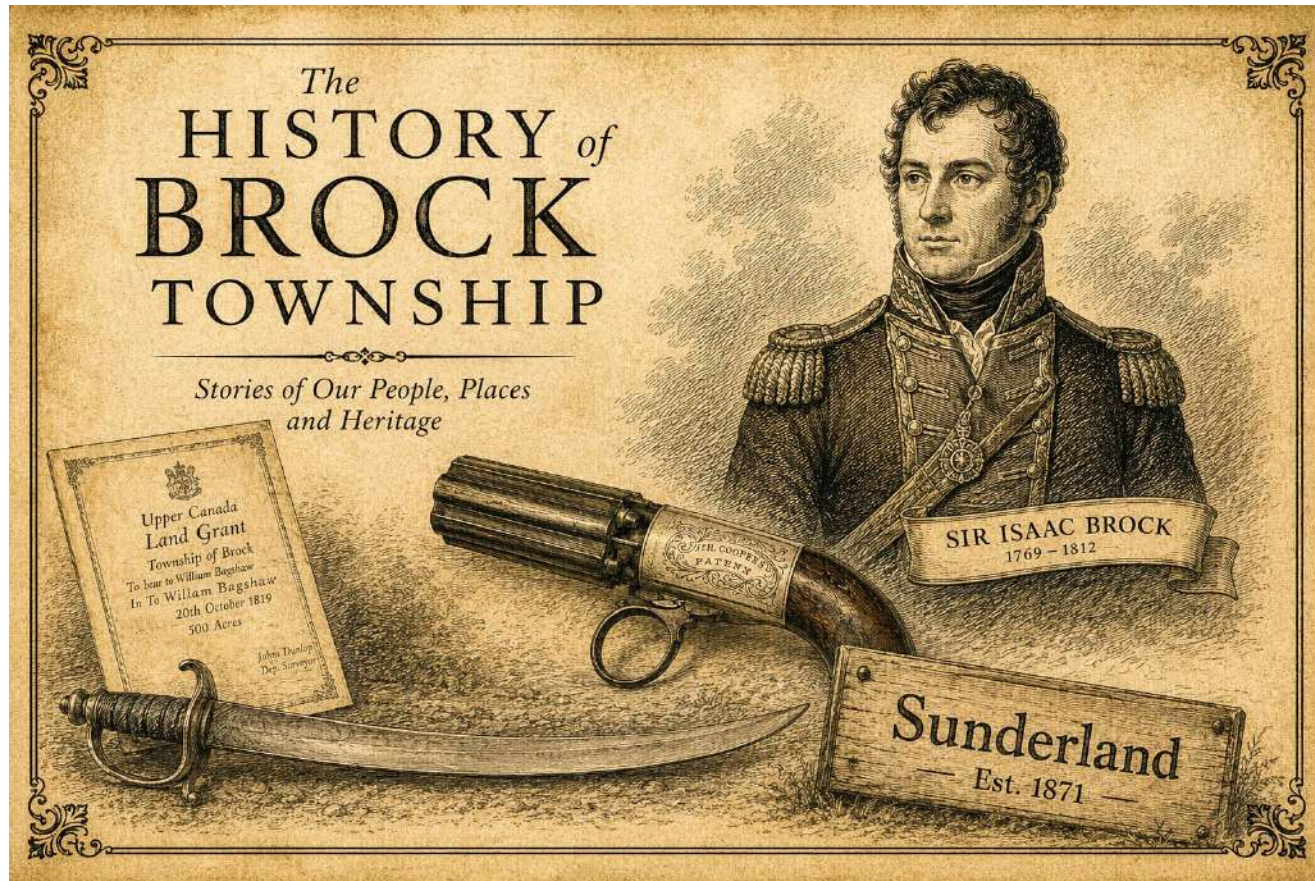


The History of Brock Township



The Sunderland Museum – SunderlandMuseum.ca

1. Locating Old Brock Township

- Old Brock Township was part of **Ontario County** from **1818 to 1855**.
- The township lay within the **Home District** and consisted of **14 concessions** extending north from **Scugog Township**.
- Each concession contained **24 lots of approximately 200 acres**, running west to east from **Lakeridge Road (formerly Old Brock Road)** to **Simcoe Street**.
- A north-south sideroad was established every six lots. Today, **Highway 12** roughly divides the township in half.



2. Battle of Blenheim (1704)

- One of the key events leading to the settlement of **Brock Township** in 1818 occurred more than a century earlier at the **Battle of Blenheim** in 1704.
- At Blenheim, British and allied forces won a decisive victory over the armies of **King Louis XIV of France**.
- The battle marked **France's first major military defeat in more than 50 years**.
- The victory helped shape the future of the British Empire, ultimately influencing the settlement of Upper Canada, including Brock Township.



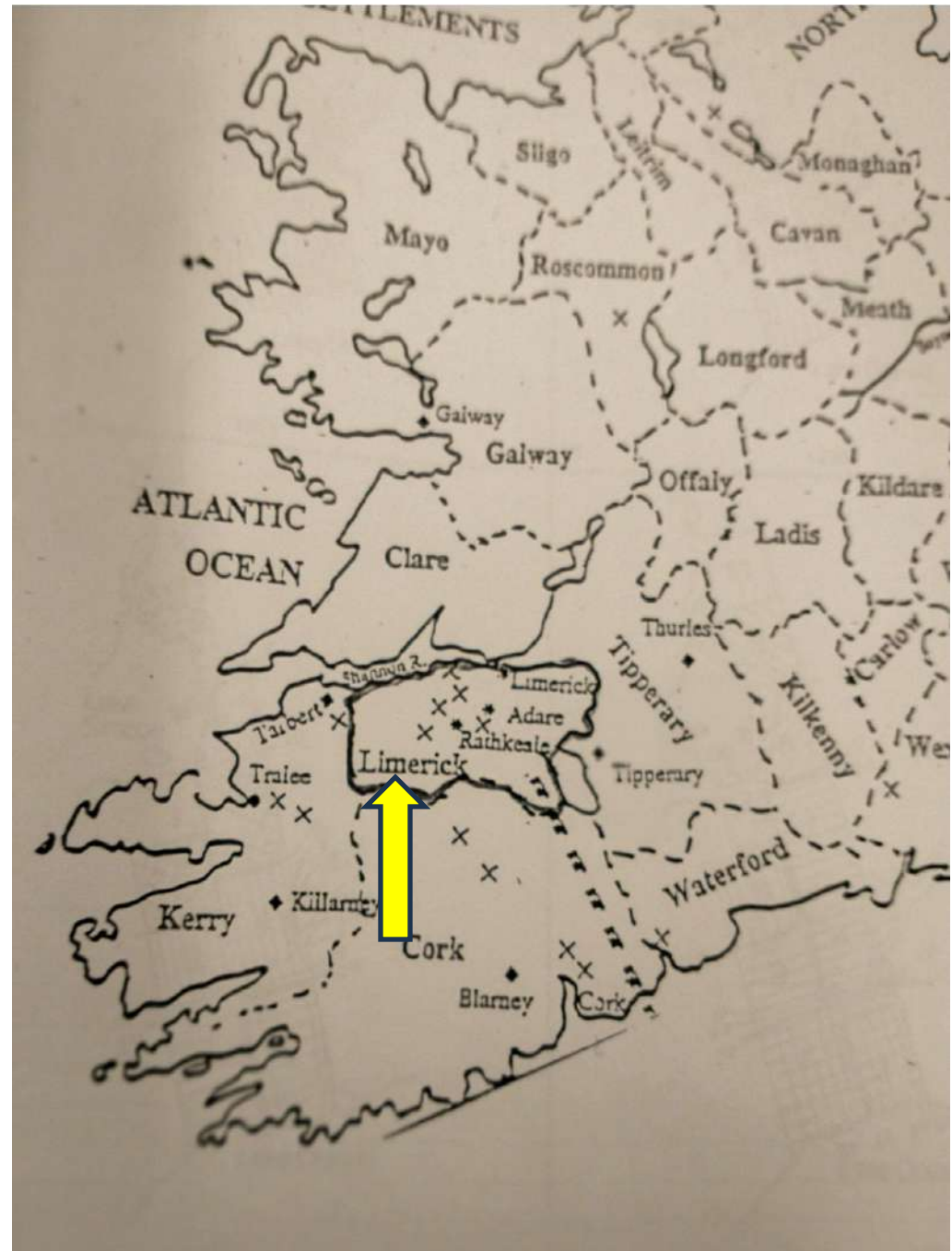


3. From Germany to Limerick

- In **1709**, English transport ships at **Rotterdam** carried more than **10,000 Protestant Palatines** from Germany to **London, England**.
- Many were later resettled in **County Limerick**, in southern Ireland.
- This movement of Palatine families would eventually become part of the longer migration story leading to settlement in Upper Canada, including Brock Township.

4. Limerick, Ireland

- The Palatine settlement project was sponsored by **Queen Anne**, the Protestant monarch of England.
- Many German Protestant families settled in **County Limerick, Ireland**, particularly around **Rathkeale**.
- While in Ireland, many adopted **Methodism**, influenced by the teachings of **John Wesley**.
- Several Palatine families later settled in **Brock Township**, including the **Shier, Brethour, Baker, Miller, Switzer, St. John, and Rynard** families.
- Protestant militia families connected through marriage also came to Brock Township, including **Acton, Doble, Merrick, and Fair**.



5. Wilfrid, L.O.L.

- In **1702**, **Queen Anne** succeeded her brother-in-law, **William III (William of Orange)**, the Protestant king who had defeated **James II** at the **Battle of the Boyne** in 1690.
- In later years, many Protestant settlers established **Loyal Orange Lodges** throughout the villages and rural communities of Brock Township.
- Brock Township developed a strong Protestant tradition, with enduring loyalty to the **British Crown** and, historically, the **Conservative Party**.
- The Palatines were a close-knit, disciplined people, known as skilled farmers and artisans whose work ethic helped shape the early township.



6. King William of Orange and the Legacy of 1690

- When Brock Township was surveyed, **one-seventh of the land** was reserved as **Clergy Reserves** and another **one-seventh** as **Crown Reserves**.
- Although intended to support Protestant clergy, the Clergy Reserves largely benefited the **Anglican Church**, giving it a privileged position in Upper Canada.
- Religious and political divisions became evident during the **Mackenzie Rebellion of 1837**, when a militia from Brock Township joined government forces to oppose the rebels, many of whom were Baptists, Presbyterians, and Catholics.



7. Protestant Queen Anne, 1702-1713

- Queen Anne encouraged **Protestant settlement in southern Ireland** as part of a broader effort to strengthen Protestant influence there.
- Palatine families were placed on large estates, where their rent was subsidized by the Crown.
- Each settler family was also supplied with a **Queen Anne musket**, linking settlement with local defence and militia service.



8. United Empire Loyalist

- Following the **American Revolution (1775–1783)**, thousands of **United Empire Loyalists** left the United States and settled in British North America.
- Many received free land grants along the **Great Lakes** as a reward for their loyalty to the British Crown.
- After the **War of 1812**, some Loyalist families and their descendants moved north to settle the newly opened lands of **Brock Township**.



9. John Graves Simcoe

- Another key step toward the settlement of **Brock Township** was the construction of **Yonge Street**, begun in **1795** under the direction of **John Graves Simcoe**.
- Yonge Street opened access north from York toward **Holland Landing** and **Lake Simcoe**.
- This route made it easier for settlers to move into the northern townships, including the lands that would later become Brock Township.



10. Sir Isaac Brock

- **Brock Township** was named in honour of **Sir Isaac Brock**, the British general who helped defend Upper Canada during the **War of 1812**.
- Brock was killed at the **Battle of Queenston Heights** on **October 13, 1812**.
- His leadership made him one of Upper Canada's most important military figures.



11. Death of Brock

- General Brock did not expect the American attack at **Queenston Heights**.
- When he arrived, American forces had already captured the British artillery position.
- Brock led a charge up the heights in an attempt to retake the position.
- He was killed while leading his troops, becoming one of Canada's best-known military heroes.



12. Battle of Queenston Heights (1812)

- On **October 13, 1812**, about **1,000 American soldiers** crossed the **Niagara River** by boat.
- The surprise attack allowed them to seize the British artillery position on the heights overlooking the river.
- The battle became one of the most significant engagements of the **War of 1812**.



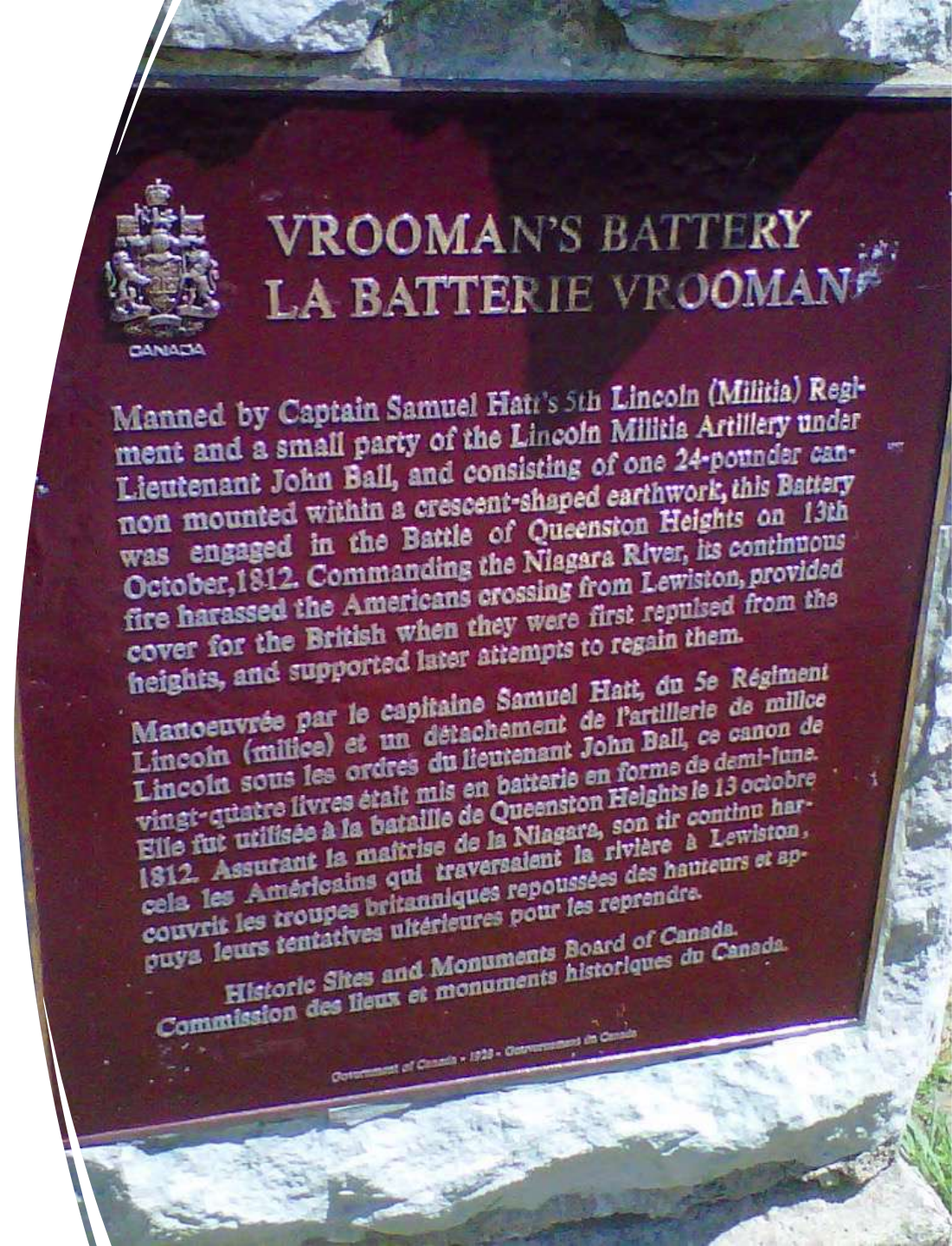
13. Vrooman's Point

- A single **24-pound cannon** at **Vrooman's Point** fired on the American boats throughout the day.
- Its fire prevented approximately **4,000 additional American troops** from crossing the **Niagara River**.
- The cannon helped limit the size of the American force engaged at Queenston Heights.



14. Vrooman's Battery Heritage Site

- Vrooman's Battery is recognized as a **National Historic Site of Canada**.
- The battery played a key role in the **British victory at the Battle of Queenston Heights**.
- Its artillery helped prevent large numbers of American reinforcements from crossing the Niagara River.



15. Brock Township Coat of Arms

- The **Brock Township Coat of Arms** features a soldier and an eagle representing **Sir Isaac Brock's 49th Regiment of Foot**.
- It also includes the **English rose**, **Scottish thistle**, and **Irish shamrock**, symbolizing the three principal cultural groups who settled Brock Township.
- Together, these elements reflect the township's military heritage and the origins of its early settlers.



16. St. John's 175th Anniversary Coat of Arms

- The animal on the crest is a **brock** (badger), a play on the name **Brock Township**.
- The crown honours **Philip St. John**, who became known locally as the “**King of Brock**” because of his extensive landholdings and influence in the early township.
- Following the **War of 1812**, many veterans settled in Brock Township on military land grants.
- A private soldier typically received **100 acres**, while the **estate of Sir Isaac Brock** was granted **1,400 acres** in the township as part of a total award of **12,600 acres**.



Reenactment of the Brock Township Crest at the 175th Celebration at St. Johns Cemetery , Aug. 2014.



17. William Bagshaw's Sword

- Following the **Battle of Waterloo** in **1815**, Britain reduced the size of its army and rewarded many discharged veterans with land grants in **Upper Canada**.
- Free land grants were offered to **United Empire Loyalists** and military veterans until **1827**.
- **William Bagshaw**, a veteran of the Battle of Waterloo, received land in Brock Township. To retain the grant, settlers were required to build a habitable dwelling and clear **five acres** of land each year.
- Landowners were also responsible for building and maintaining the roads adjoining their property. **Clergy Reserves** and **Crown Reserves**, which made up about **28% of the township**, were exempt from this obligation.
- As a result, the early road network was often incomplete, limiting transportation and keeping most farms, sawmills, and businesses focused on serving their local communities.

18. Bagshaw's Pistol

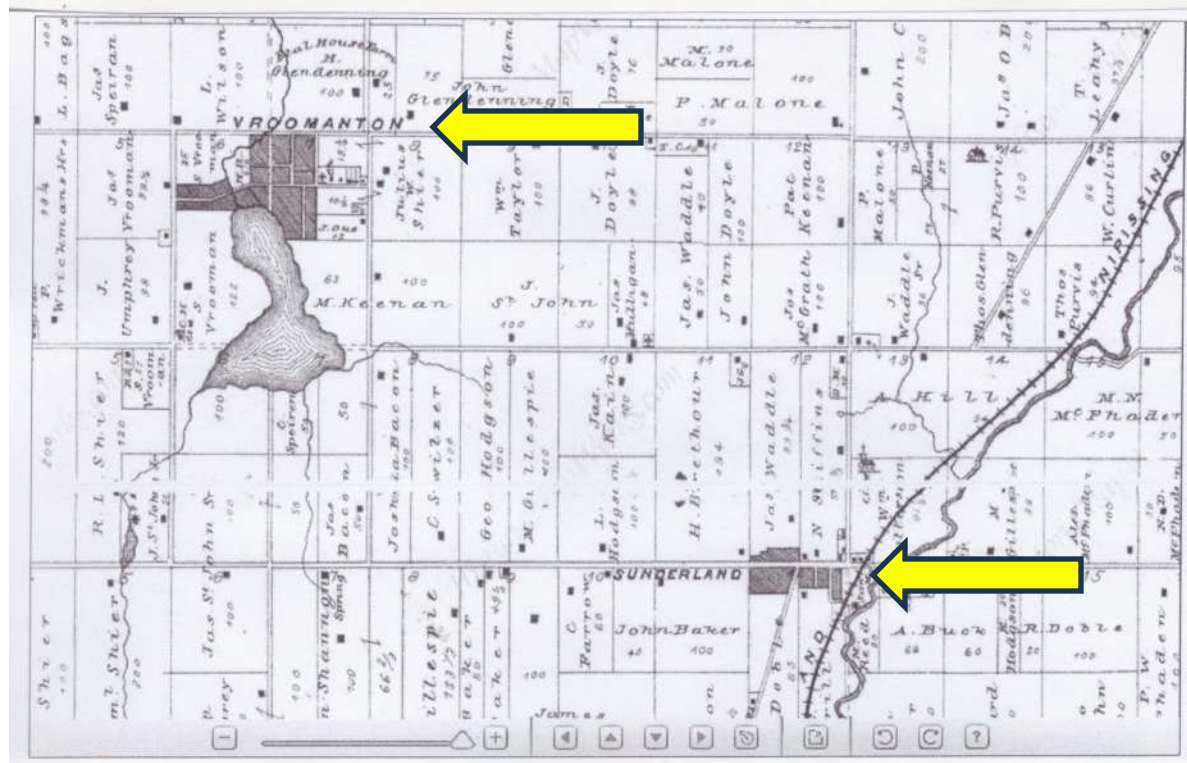
- **William Bagshaw** was a cavalry veteran of the **Battle of Waterloo** who received a land grant in **Brock Township** in **1819**.
- He became Brock Township's **first postmaster** and later served as a **Justice of the Peace**.
- During the **Mackenzie Rebellion of 1837**, he organized the **Brock Society for the Protection of Property and Preservation of Peace** to support law and order.
- His **Waterloo sword**, **pepperbox pistol**, and **1819 land grant** have been preserved in the **Sunderland Museum**, providing a direct link to one of Brock Township's earliest and most influential settlers.



19. James Vrooman Plaque

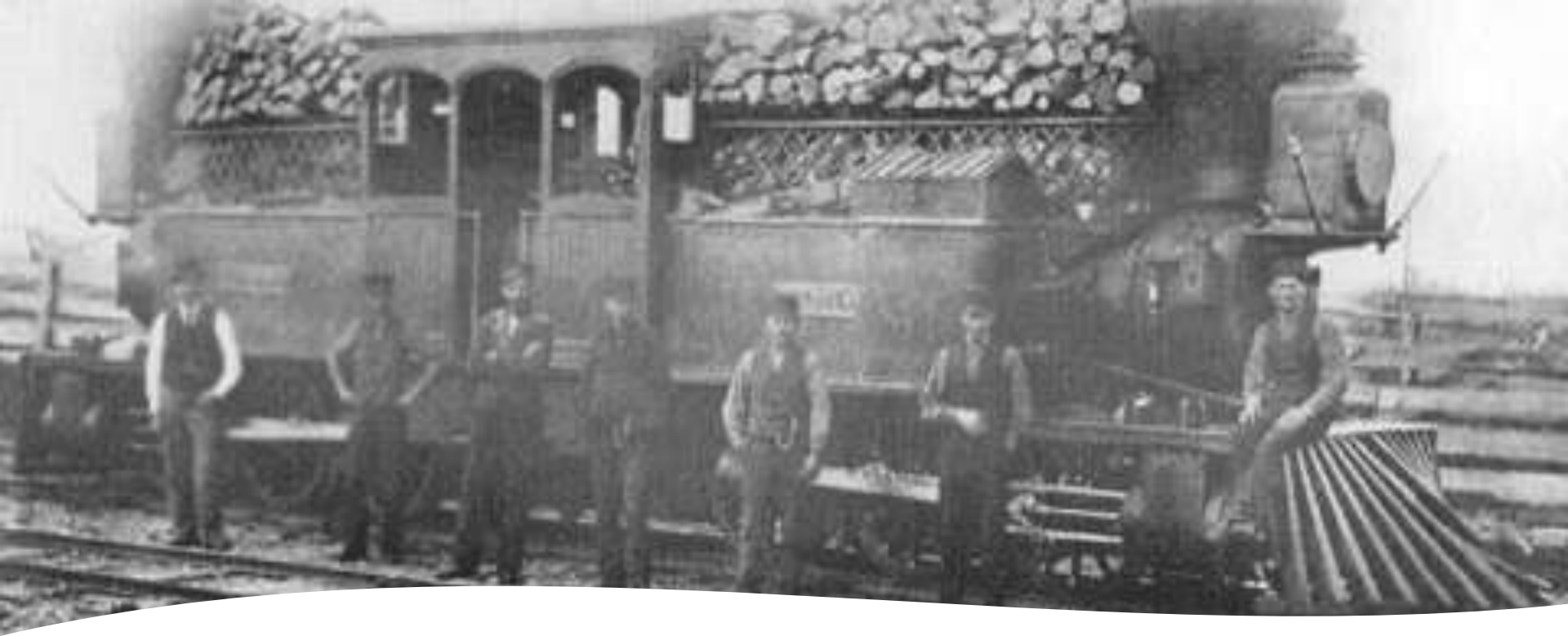
- The **Vrooman** family fought on the British side during the **American Revolution** and, after the war, settled in the **Niagara** region as **United Empire Loyalists**.
- **Colonel James Vrooman**, a veteran of the **War of 1812**, moved to **Brock Township** in **1829**.
- He played a leading role in the development of the thriving community of **Vroomanton**, which became an important early settlement in the township.
- The plaque commemorates his contributions to the growth and history of Brock Township.





20. Vroomanton vs Sunderland (1877)

- **James Vrooman** helped establish **Vroomanton** as one of Brock Township's leading communities.
- Under his leadership, the village grew to include **mills, schools, churches, a post office, blacksmith shops, and carriage shops.**
- During the nineteenth century, **Vroomanton and Sunderland** developed as neighbouring commercial centres, each serving the surrounding farming community.

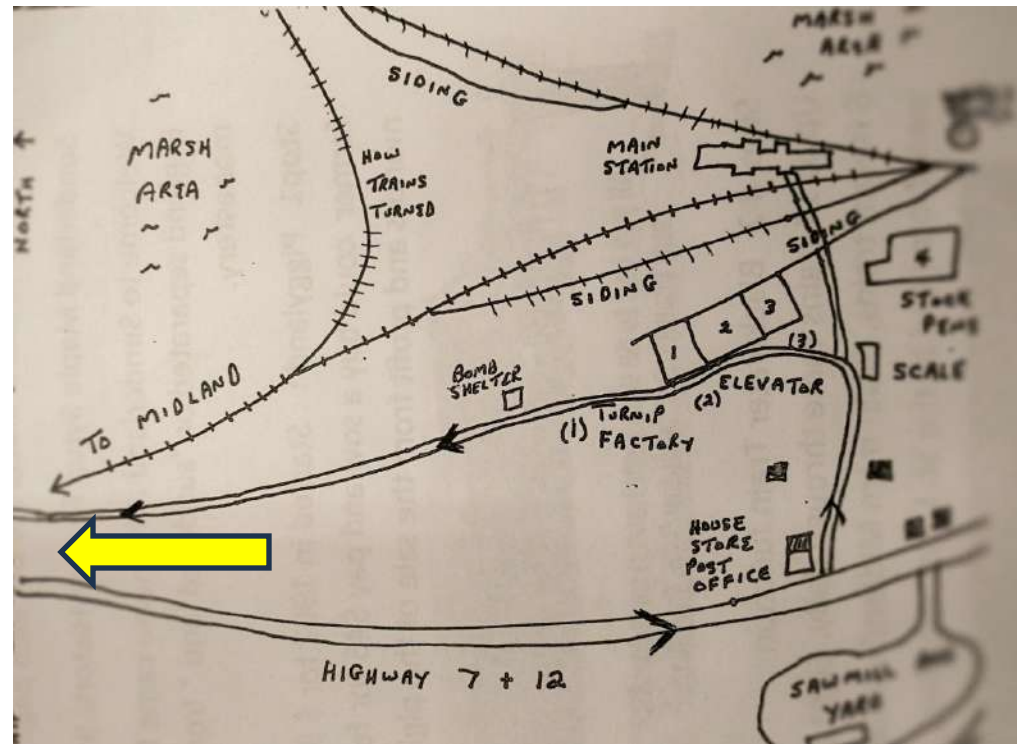


21. Shedden Locomotive

- The **Shedden locomotive** represents the arrival of the **Toronto and Nipissing Railway**, which transformed life in Brock Township beginning in **1868**.
- Until then, travel was difficult, especially in spring and fall, when poor roads and **cedar swamps** often blocked routes north from **Whitby**.
- The railway connected Toronto's **Distillery District** with the timber resources around **Coboconk**, providing a dependable transportation route.
- Timber supplied fuel for Toronto's distilleries, while the railway sparked an economic boom in **Sunderland**, **Cannington**, and the surrounding communities.

22. Blackwater Junction Map

- **Blackwater Junction** became one of the region's most important railway hubs.
- As the rail network expanded, grain from western Canada was shipped to **Midland** on **Georgian Bay**, then through **Blackwater Junction** to the **St. Lawrence River** for export to Europe.
- At its peak, as many as **14 trains** passed through the junction each day—**six freight** and **eight passenger** trains.
- The frequent rail service allowed residents to mail a letter in the morning and receive a reply that same afternoon.
- Farmers also brought livestock and wagonloads of produce to Blackwater Junction, making it a thriving commercial centre.





23. Two Trains at Blackwater

- Before the arrival of the railway, Brock Township's communities were largely **self-reliant**, with local businesses supplying most of the needs of area families.
- Early settlers typically landed at **York** (present-day Toronto) and travelled north along **Yonge Street** to **Holland Landing**.
- From there, they could continue by boat to **Beaverton** and then overland into the southern concessions of Brock Township.
- Others followed Indigenous trails east from **Yonge Street** through **Uxbridge** into Brock.
- Because transportation was limited, Brock's settlements remained isolated and independent, with neighbours often coming together in **work bees** to complete major projects.

24. The Sunderland Fire (1949)



- One of the most significant events in Sunderland's history was the **downtown fire of January 1949**.
- The fire began as a **kitchen grease fire** in **Clay's Restaurant** and quickly spread, destroying an entire block of businesses and apartments.
- At the time, Sunderland had no fully equipped fire department. Its firefighting equipment consisted of **two 25-gallon water tanks mounted on a trailer**.
- The disaster highlighted the need for improved fire protection and marked a turning point in the community's development.

25. Clay's Fire, Sunderland (1949)



- Volunteers cut holes through the ice on the **Beaver River** and relayed water to the fire using a series of portable pumps.
- Their efforts helped bring the blaze under control, although much of the downtown block had already been destroyed.
- In the aftermath of the fire, Sunderland purchased a **modern fire truck**, greatly improving the community's firefighting capability.



26. Piggyland (1962)

- One of Brock Township's most notorious frauds was **Piggyland**, created by **John Laun** in **1962**.
- For about **\$100**, investors were promised ownership of a breeding sow and her future piglets, allowing them to become "armchair farmers."
- Visitors could tour Piggyland, which featured a **swimming pool, dance hall, restaurant, and amusement park**, giving the operation an appearance of legitimacy.
- The scheme eventually collapsed when it was discovered that **the same pigs had been sold to hundreds of investors**.
- Laun disappeared with millions of dollars and reportedly hid from police in a **five-room underground bomb shelter** beside his home near **Blackwater**.

27. Brock Township Cemeteries

Old Brock Township

Cemetery

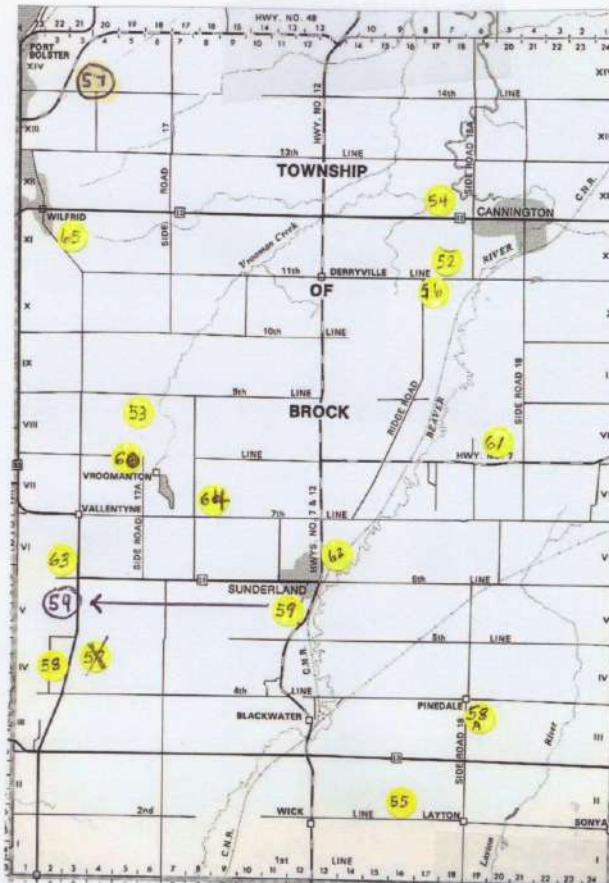
Corrections

57 North Shier

59 St John West Brock

60 St. Malachi

64 Vroomanton United



- Brock Township's cemeteries reflect the **ethnic and religious heritage** of its early settlers.
- **St. Malachy's Cemetery** served the Catholic families who settled primarily along the **7th and 8th Concessions** north of Sunderland.
- Many **Scottish** settlers lived near **Wick** and west of **Manilla** and are buried in the **McNeil, Scotch, and Necropolis** cemeteries. Scottish immigration increased following the **Battle of Waterloo** and later during the **Highland Clearances** and the **Irish Potato Famine**.
- **Palatine** families are buried at **St. John West Brock Cemetery**, while many **Anglican** settlers are buried at **St. James West Brock, Thompson,** and **All Saints** cemeteries.



28. The Modern Township of Brock (1974)

- On **January 1, 1974**, municipal reorganization created the **Township of Brock** within the **Regional Municipality of Durham**.
- The new municipality combined the former **Brock Township, Thorah Township**, and the villages of **Beaverton, Cannington**, and **Sunderland**.
- This reorganization established the Township of Brock as it exists today.