

# Thanks for visiting Wasaga Beach.

For more information about Wasaga's unique history visit the Wasaga Beach Archives located at 140 Main Street.

Check [www.wasagabeach.com](http://www.wasagabeach.com) for hours of operation or feel free to give us a call at (705) 429-3560.

You can purchase a copy of 'Sharing Memories' by Mary Watson, the present Town Archivist and 'Wasaga Saga', by the Town's first archivist Thelma Morrison at the Archives or by contacting us at [wbhac2020@gmail.com](mailto:wbhac2020@gmail.com).



## Wasaga Beach HERITAGE WALKING TOUR

[www.wasagabeach.com](http://www.wasagabeach.com)

-  Town of Wasaga Beach, 30 Lewis Street, Wasaga Beach, Ontario L9Z 1A1
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-  @WB\_Media or @WasagaEvents
-  wasaga\_beach\_events



# Wasaga Beach HERITAGE WALKING TOUR



Nottawasaga Bay





# Wasaga Beach HERITAGE WALKING TOUR

This short one-kilometre heritage walking tour will take you back in time to learn about the people that shaped this town – Indigenous peoples, soldiers, loggers, fishermen, business people and tourists of every type. You will meet interesting characters and learn about events that placed Wasaga Beach on the pages of international history. The story of Wasaga Beach is one of a special landscape and how people interacted with that landscape over the past two centuries.



## Walking Tour Panels

These colourful interpretive panels can be found at a number of stops along your walk. They provide heritage images and information about Wasaga's rich cultural heritage.

1



### Town of Wasaga Beach Municipal Office 30 Lewis Street

This location provides a good starting point for your walking tour. Some visitor parking

is available here. If you are visiting on a weekday there is an interesting piece of Wasaga's history that you can view inside the Town Hall. The Town Hall is open weekdays from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm.

#### • Student Desk

One of the original student desks from the Wasaga Beach School can be found in the foyer near the Clerk's Department. The provenance of the desk can be traced back to the school that operated from 1939 until 1972. The school building is now the Town of Wasaga Beach Municipal office, and the desk, the original cornerstone for the school and plaque are available for public viewing. The desk was presented to the Town of Wasaga Beach by the Kinsmen Club upon the Town's incorporation on July 8, 1974.

#### • Interpretive Panel – History of Wasaga Beach Schools

The Town Municipal building itself played an important part in Wasaga's past history. In 1973, the Village of Wasaga Beach purchased the old Wasaga Beach School which was built in 1939 on Lewis Street for a nominal \$1. It was converted into a town hall and municipal offices, in preparation for designation as a Town on January 1st, 1974. Wasaga's history includes that of many different schools - the first record is the Van Vlack school in the late 1800s, followed by a school known as S.S.#14 built in the 1930s and located above Eberhardt's Store at the northwest end of the Main Street bridge. Today there are three elementary schools - Birchview Dunes, Worsley and St. Noel Chabanel. It is interesting to note the current school names reflect aspects of Wasaga's important history and natural features.

2



### Northeast Corner of Main Street & River Road East (garden area)

#### • Interpretive Panel – Village of Van Vlack

It was the Nottawasaga River that first brought people to this area. In fact, the name Nottawasaga means "the mouth of the river from which

the Iroquois burst forth". Indigenous peoples used the river for transportation and made their fishing camps along its banks. During the early 1800s the river also became a route for the British fur trade as well as a military supply route to the northwest. By the mid 1800s logging companies were harvesting the large white pine forests and established shingle and lumber mills along the river. The first permanent settlement in the area began when John Van Vlack arrived in 1869. He was a commercial fisherman, built a shingle mill and ran a general store. By 1896, a settlement of around 70 people lived in what was known as Van Vlack village.

3



### Playland Park Square 40 Mosley Street

#### • Interpretive Panel – Playland Park Amusement Area

Playland Park was a permanent amusement area in Wasaga Beach from the 1930s to the early 1980s. It served as a focal point for family fun and



was enjoyed by the thousands of people who flocked to the beach every summer. During the Second World War as many as 100,000 people would come to Wasaga Beach on sunny weekends. Numerous rides, a bowling alley, a miniature golf course, an arcade and refreshment stands gave the area a carnival type atmosphere.

#### • Historical Murals

In the summer of 2017, the Historical Advisory Committee created 8 large photo murals which help depict some of the many activities that took place in Wasaga Beach over the past century.

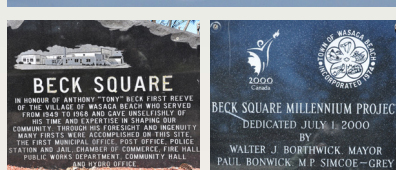
4



### Beck Square, Mosley & 1st Streets

#### • Heritage Plaque – Anthony Beck

In 1949, Wasaga Beach became an incorporated Village and Anthony (Tony) Beck was elected its first reeve. He served as Reeve for 19 years and was awarded a



Centennial Medal in 1968. During his terms the Village saw many improvements with the purchase of its own Hydro system, and building of a Community Hall which housed the Municipal Offices, OPP offices and Post Office.

#### • Time Capsule Monument and Mural on LCBO

The Time Capsule was established in 2000 by Mayor Walter Borthwick and Council to commemorate the start of the new millennium. It is to be opened in 2050. Also, a large mural depicting historic scenes of Wasaga Beach was created by local artist Michelle Matthews.

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### Beachfront & 1st Street

#### • Interpretive Panel – Motorcycle Racing on the Beach

One of the more interesting uses of Wasaga's hard packed sand beach took place in this location between 1935 and 1950. That involved the racing of motorcycles



that could attain speeds of over 100 miles per hour. On August 12th, 1948 the 100 Mile Maple Leaf Championship Beach Race was held here. It was sanctioned by the American Motorcycle Association with many Americans both participating and attending. The course was 2 1/2 miles long with 40 laps and about 12,000 fans watching the race. This would have been a big boost for Wasaga's fledgling tourism industry.

#### • Interpretive Panel – The Grand Hotels of Wasaga Beach

At the turn of the 20th century as railway and roads were improving the character of Wasaga Beach was changing. The focus was shifting from the river to the beachfront and more people were visiting Wasaga Beach each summer. Grand hotels and dance halls with orchestras and bands helped usher in a period of wonderful holiday experiences that included fine dining, dancing, bathing, and picnics on the beach.

6



### Beachfront & 3rd Street

#### • Interpretive Panel – Landing of US Forces, 1814

Wasaga Beach was the scene of a dramatic battle during the War of 1812. On August 13, 1814, three American warships arrived at the mouth of the Nottawasaga River



in the hopes of intercepting and capturing the British supply ship HMS Nancy. The next day the ships anchored offshore and troops landed to carry out an attack on the Nancy which was hiding on the Nottawasaga River. Although the battle, with the British outnumbered ten to one, ended in the burning and sinking of the Nancy, the story does not end there. A short walk to Nancy Island Historic Site will tell how the Nancy was avenged and allow you to see the remains of the ship that are protected and on display.

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### Nancy Island Historic Site 119 Mosley Street

Admission to Nancy Island Historic Site is by donation. The site is open 10 am – 5pm weekends from late May to mid June, daily from mid June to Labour Day and fall weekends until Thanksgiving.



Exact dates are available at [www.wasagabeachpark.com](http://www.wasagabeachpark.com)

#### • Government of Canada Heritage Plaque – THE NANCY

Within weeks of the HMS Nancy's demise the crew led by a brave, young Lt. Miller Worsley mounted a surprise attack and captured two of the American ships. This would avenge the loss of the Nancy and help bring the War of 1812 to a close. The outcome of these events played an important role in forming our nation and determining the borders of Canada as we know it today. Over the next 100 years, sediment in the Nottawasaga River accumulated around the sunken hull to form an island. The ancient timbers of the Nancy now rest in a museum on the island named for her. A visit to the Welcome Centre, museum, theatre and lighthouse, helps retell the story of the Nancy and this important period in our nations history.

#### • Government of Canada Heritage Plaque – THE AYLING & REID FLIGHT

On August 8th, 1934, an event of national significance took place at Wasaga Beach. The first successful non-stop Trans Atlantic flight from Canada to England took off from Wasaga's long, hard-packed sand beach – a perfect runway. After 30 hours and 55 minutes of flying, young pilots James Ayling and Leonard Reid landed at Heston Airport near London, England. This harrowing flight of 3,700 miles was achieved in a small twin-engine plane called "The Trail of the Caribou". A scale replica of the plane was built by a group of community volunteers in 2009 and was installed near the heritage plaque.



Thank You to the Wasaga Beach Archives for use of Heritage Photos