Confirmed Tornado
Windfall, Ontario
July 18, 1851

Date- Local: Friday, July 18th, 1851
UTC: None available
Time- Local: None available
UTC: None available
Location: Windfall (N of Wheatley)
Region: Windsor - Essex - Chatham - Kent
Classification: Confirmed Tornado
Category: None available
Casualties: None
Track Length: 15000 m
Width: 1600 m
Motion: None available
Damage Estimate: None available
F-Scale Rating: F1
Code: TS
Damage Survey: None
Spotter Reports: None
Other Documents:

Article from the April 3, 1980 Windsor Star which provides a good amount of detail about the tornado and the damage caused

Tornado F-Scale Assessment

Brad L. Rousseau
Tornado Data Production Assistant, Environment Canada
February 23rd, 2011

Classification: Confirmed Tornado
Date: Friday, July 18th, 1851
Location: Windfall (N of Wheatley), Windsor - Essex - Chatham - Kent Region

Assessment: F1
F-Code: TS
Explanation of Assessment: Whole trees and limbs were being sucked up into the swirling darkness. A great, black funnel roared out of the sky and touched ground, sucking whole trees and limbs into its swirling darkness. The return of light revealed the devastation - the tornado had cut a swath of destruction 1.6 km wide and 15 km long through the forest.

SJS

County's Windfall was lost with the car's arrival



...en's Institute Hall on the Wheatley Townline

EDITOR'S NOTE — Essex County is dotted with hamlets that once were thriving communities, but have changed with the times. This is another in a series of stories on some of these areas.

Story and photo
by Rob Van Nie
Star Staff Reporter

WINDFALL — The placid farmland north of the sleepy village of Wheatley belies the name of this almost-forgotten community.

On July 18, 1851, "the windfall" struck terror into the hearts of a handful of settlers who had carved farms out of the forest.

For half an hour the mid-afternoon sun was blotted out and it was dark as night.

A great, black funnel roared out of the sky and touched ground, sucking whole trees and limbs into its swirling darkness.

The return of light revealed the devastation — the tornado had cut a swath of destruction 1.6 km wide and 15 km long through the forest.

Fortunately, there were no reported injuries as a result of the storm.

And it proved a boon for the bountiful game which inhabited the forests of Essex and Kent counties in the 19th century: Deer congregated among the broken trees where food could be easily reached, and the sound of ghosts emanating from the forest was caused by the drying branches crackling under the weight of thousands of roosting wild pigeons.

The tale of "the windfall" is contained in the Windfall Women's Institute's Tweedsmuir History, a book compiled by 79-year-old Fennell Foster.

A project of the women's institute, the book was started in 1966. Mrs. Foster said she "worked very hard at it for about three years," and is adding bits of history from the area as they become available.

Windfall is another one of the many area communities which flourished in a small way but, with the coming of the automobile, began a slow but steady decline.

Two reminders from the Windfall area are exhibited in Kent County museums and a 96-year-old former church stands as a monument to the community in the flatlands between Tilbury and Wheatley.

Windfall had a post office between 1879 and 1915, when the mailman often had to leave before daybreak to pick up the mail in a neighboring community because the roads were nearly impassable.

The Windfall Loyal Orange Lodge hall which once stood at Con. 6 of Romney Township and Wheatley Townline was donated in 1969 to the Dresden Museum to serve as Uncle Tom's Chapel.

The 96-year-old hall bears the greatest resemblance to the original chapel at the black settlement near Dresden than any other that could be found in Southwestern Ontario.

The Windfall area has also contributed a 10,000-year-old relic to the Kent County Museum.

In September, 1945, a 65-pound mastodon jawbone was found in a quicksand formation on the William Milne farm, Con. 3 of Romney Township.

The jawbone contained two teeth, but no other bones were found at the site.

Sawmills flourished in the Windfall area while it was still forested, and an oil field operated between Con. 4 and 5 of Romney Township between 1906 and 1910.

The old church which stands at Windfall is used as a meeting place by the women's institute.

The land for the church was donated by David Imeson, a stonecutter from Yorkshire, England, who built a log house on Con. 11 of Mersea Township and was an eyewitness to the tornado.

The church was named Windfall by Imeson in memory of the storm.

The church was Presbyterian, then Methodist until union into the United Church of Canada in 1925.

A dining hall behind the church was built by the Order of Foresters. The hall was on the second floor with room for horses and buggies below.



Fennell Foster and her history book

More regional news on page 10