

A Walking Tour Through Glen Tay Historic Hamlet, in Tay Valley Township, Ontario (formerly, Bathurst Township)

Introduction

Welcome to the historic hamlet of Glen Tay, located five kilometres west of Perth, Ontario, on Highway 7 and Christie Lake Road. This walking tour, and the accompanying map, will introduce you to the heritage buildings and interesting history of our hamlet. Originally called Adamsville, after its founder, Glen Tay is one of the best examples of our local communities that were part of an industrial revolution, which began in the early 1800s and continued to the turn of the century.

The hamlet began in 1821, only five years after the founding of the area as a military settlement, when Joshua and Elizabeth Adams arrived with their family from Perth and built the first mills. This was one of the first mill complexes to be built on the Tay River – which in time totalled over 40 water-powered mills, in 20 locations in the Tay watershed alone. Several of the mill complexes grew into hamlets that remain today – including Glen Tay, Maberly, Bolingbroke, Playfairville and Fallbrook.

Glen Tay Station

Our tour begins at the north end of the hamlet, where Glen Tay Road meets Highway 7, and will continue south through the hamlet on Glen Tay Road, towards the Scotch Line.

At the top of the attached map is the site of the early **Glen Tay Train Station** – located on the present siding, a short distance east of Glen Tay Road. The railroad arrived in 1884, and the station operated from about 1915 to 1977. Once a busy railroad stop, serving communities between Perth, Christie Lake and Sharbot Lake, it is now just a temporary storage area for rail cars and used ties.



The train station was the site of two train wrecks. The most serious occurred in February 1925, when an eastbound train, with boxcars full of paper and fish, ran through an open switch and collided head-on with a freight train standing at the Station. Five Perth doctors and several nurses drove to the scene of the accident to provide first aid to the injured, some of whom were members of an Ottawa hockey team returning home from a game in Hamilton. Four seriously injured men were brought to the hospital in Perth, and the Engineer (David Bourne of Toronto) in the east bound freight train died four days later from his injuries.

The second train wreck at this site was on July 18, 1942, when a freight train crashed into a passenger train at the station, derailing eight cars, injuring 12 people, none seriously, and killing 18 cattle.

Manion Corner

From Highway 7, we travel south along Glen Tay Road to Christie Lake Road, and what was called 'Manion Corner', after a prominent early family in the area. It became the centre of Glen Tay Hamlet activity in the late 1800s, when Christie Lake Road was the main route to Perth. At that time, Manion Corner had a general store, large carriage factory (see below), blacksmith, and the hamlet post office, and was the hamlet's main entrance.

Glen Tay Store

The white house on the north-east corner was an important part of the area community life beginning in the late 1800s. Over the years, the store had several owners, including the Mayberrys, Kearns and Chaplins, and operated well into the 1900s.



General Store, as a private home, in 2012
General Store ca1900

The barn beside the store obviously has character of its own and apparently played a number of roles in Glen Tay's history. According to one source, it had been moved from across the road in the mid-1900s. If so, from 1860 it would have been part of **The Glen Tay Carriage Factory**, described as 'one of the leading carriage builders and largest in the Ottawa region'. The factory employed up to 30 people, and was owned by James Kearns, and, later, David Young until 1903. The barn is also said to have been the first home for Chaplin's Dairy, a business that became the economic centre for Glen Tay from the 1930s to the 1980s. It is also said to have been a theatre at one time, hosting itinerant entertainers.

(The barns in the 2012 photo and ca1900 photo do not appear to be the same.)

Directly across the '**Manion Corner**' intersection is a classic frame, one and half story, heritage home owned at various times by local families Dion, Ferguson, Chaplin (Burton Chaplin family in the mid-1900s), and later Lamarche and Bova. The barn in the photo is now gone, replaced by a modern home on the corner. In the 1990s, this house was moved back on the property.

In 1884, Manion Post Office started here, perhaps to service the new railroad, with David Dion as post-master. In 1893, it moved across to the Chaplin Store, and closed in 1918.



Photo courtesy of Kenn Chaplin

From Manion Corner, three hundred metres to the west along Christie Lake Road are two small apartment buildings. Glen Tay School #3 was located on the west side of this site, from the mid-1800s until 1968, when the present Glen Tay School, on Harper Road, consolidated the area's one-room schoolhouses.

Returning back, past Manion Corner, we come to the second corner, known at one time as 'Kearn's Corner', for the carriage factory.

Turning south here, on the left - south-east corner – was the site of James Conlon's blacksmith shop, which operated into the 1900s.

Chaplin's Dairy

On our right is the Little Stream Bakery, originally the home of Chaplin Dairy, which operated from before 1935 to the 1980s. This dairy succeeded the earlier Tayside (Miller) Dairy, which operated from the 1920's to about 1935 (we will see it's home further on, at Miller Lane).

Chaplin Dairy was owned and operated by brothers Delbert and Ed Chaplin in its early years. Delbert managed the dairy business and Edgar it's distribution. Delbert's children eventually took over the business, bringing the local Trueman, Korry, and Gamble families into the business. The dairy provided employment for many people in our community.

By the 1970s, brothers Cameron and John Chaplin were running the dairy, and Don managed the farming. In 1977, they sold the dairy to William McConachie. In 1982, home deliveries were discontinued, and, not long after, the dairy was closed. This was the end of an era for Glen Tay – the last of our large businesses.

Moving ahead, the next house on our right was owned by early Chaplin families.

Chaplin's Barn

Past the Chaplin house, is a barn that was moved here by the family for their farm dairy operation. It was originally located behind the large stone house that we will pass soon on the left, known as the Adams home. The barn had other earlier roles in the community; it is said to have been a six-apartment dormitory for Adams Mill employees, housing for which was always a challenge in the 1800s mill communities. The Adams family are said to have also boarded some of the employees in their basement.



After the Adams family, the home was purchased by local entrepreneur Ralph Dodds, and the barn is said to have housed the Dodds Cheese Factory, owned by Ralph and brother Alexander. The factory name is apparently stencilled on several interior boards.

This was one of 10 cheese factories operating at various times in early Bathurst Township.

Tay Miniatures Farm

Ahead, also on the left, we will pass a more recent attraction in our hamlet - the Tay Miniatures farm, which includes over 50 miniature animals owned by the McVeigh family, whose home is just to the south.

Buchanan Home

On our left, at the top of the hill, is a prominent two-story house dating from the late 1800s, built by the Daniel Calvin Buchanan family.

**Former Calvin Buchanan home, ca 1900?
(Photo courtesy Fred Burns)**



Methodist Church site

Next door to the Buchanan house was the Adamsville Methodist Church which operated from about 1866 to 1887, and beside it the cemetery, the property for which was provided by the Adams family. Only the foundation remains of the church building, and the cemetery was closed, and the graves moved, sometime after 1887. A gravestone was seen there as late as the 1940s.

This property along the east (left) side of this street was originally a 'Clergy Lot', which were set aside by the Crown for church use. At times, Methodist church meetings and apparently camps were held in the pasture behind there – and it is said to have had its own 'preacher's hill', now part of the Chaplin Heights development.

Lark Home

Across the road is a home built by William (Billy) Buchanan, originally a log house and expended later, with a wing on each side, by Joseph Lark, an employee of Brown Shoe Co. in Perth (Source: Barbara Jordan)

Adamsville Streets

Further on Glen Tay Road, on the right, is a parking lot for the public beach located at the river. This was originally one of Adamsville's first streets, North Street, which went to the river. Adamsville had been laid out as a town site, in 1868; other streets were Mill Street, South Street, and 'Perth Street', now Glen Tay Road.

The Adams family home, founders of Glen Tay

Across the street, on our left, is the original Adams family home, a beautiful Georgian heritage building, built in the mid-1850s. In addition to the Adams family, it is said to have lodged mill workers in the basement. The original location of the dormitory barn, Dodds Cheese Factory, was immediately behind this home.

Following the 1812 War, Joshua and Elizabeth Adams and family were granted land, and arrived in Perth in 1817, becoming one of the first innkeepers in the town. In

1820/21, they acquired this property on the Tay River from the estate of another veteran and UEL, Abraham Parsall. They probably built the first two mills here in 1821. As usual at the beginning of a settlement, the first mills were a sawmill, for building materials, and a grist mill, to process the new crops – expanding later into other mills.

Under Adams and subsequent owners, this became a major industrial complex of the time until the late 1800s. It had a sawmill and tannery on the north side of the river, and grist mill, oatmeal mill, woolen mill, on the south side - as well as those businesses elsewhere in Glen Tay - blacksmith, wagon factory, cheese factory, supporting operations of timber harvesting and farming, and general store and post offices. Presumably, some whiskey was also prepared, at least in the backyard. And said to have employed 400 people. The woolen mill won international prizes for its tweeds.

Adams Grist Mill – a private residence



After Elizabeth Adams died in 1857 and husband Joshua in 1863, the youngest son Franklin inherited the house, but sold not long after. The home had several owners after the Adams, including Ralph Dodds, the Chaplin family, and local artist Garnet Hazzard. This is private property so may be viewed only from the road.

Operating such a complex in changing economic times had more than its share of challenges – not least of which was a major fire that destroyed the woolen mill and several other buildings in 1870. It was rebuilt, but the cost proved too heavy to carry, and it and the other mills changed hands several times. By the 1890s, mill production had largely ceased, except for producing power for the newly electrified Perth from 1895 (as did three other mills along the Tay River).

Adams Woolen Mill, after the 1870 fire



Joshua and Elizabeth raised a large family of 10 children and had a major impact on the community in business, the church, and in civic affairs where he was a Justice of the Peace, Councillor and Warden. Their children and grandchildren continued this community involvement throughout this region and as far as western United States. The Adams family were devout Methodists, and instrumental in building the original Methodist Church in Perth and its Cemetery on Robinson Street, where Joshua and Elizabeth Adams are buried.

After the mill closed and it stopped producing electricity about 1918, the mill and dam were not maintained. In 1926, the dam broke, taking out the bridge, and creating one of Perth's worst floods, especially along Beckwith Street.

The property sat mainly empty until the Drennan family from Toronto bought it in the late 1980s, and beautifully renovated it. This is private property viewed only from the road.

Tay River Bridge

After crossing the river, one can see, through the gates on the right, the three renovated mill buildings, including the grist mill and service buildings.

Miller Corner, early South Street

At the corner, on your right is a Georgian style frame home that dates from 1860, built by another important local businessman, Ralph Dodds, later a co-owner of the cheese factory, with brother Alex, one-time owner of the Glen Tay Mills, and also part of the local innovative macadam road construction company. The home was owned by the Miller family between 1909 and 2018. At the far right is the small Tayside Dairy shed, mentioned earlier, dating from the 1920s.

In 1867, the hamlet's name was changed from Adamsville to Glen Tay.

In Closing

To put these Glen Tay mills into perspective, there were over 40 water-powered mills in this watershed, and Adams mill is one of only five still standing in this township. It is also one of the best preserved, with the Bowes Mill and Allans Mill (on their respective sideroads). Two wood frame sawmills remain in the township – Ritchie and Van Alstine.

Of the 35-plus other mills in the area, there remains little, often not even a foundation. An important part of Canada's industry on which our earliest communities were built has almost completely disappeared (for more details on mills, see 'Mills of the Tay Watershed and Area' at www.perthhs.org)

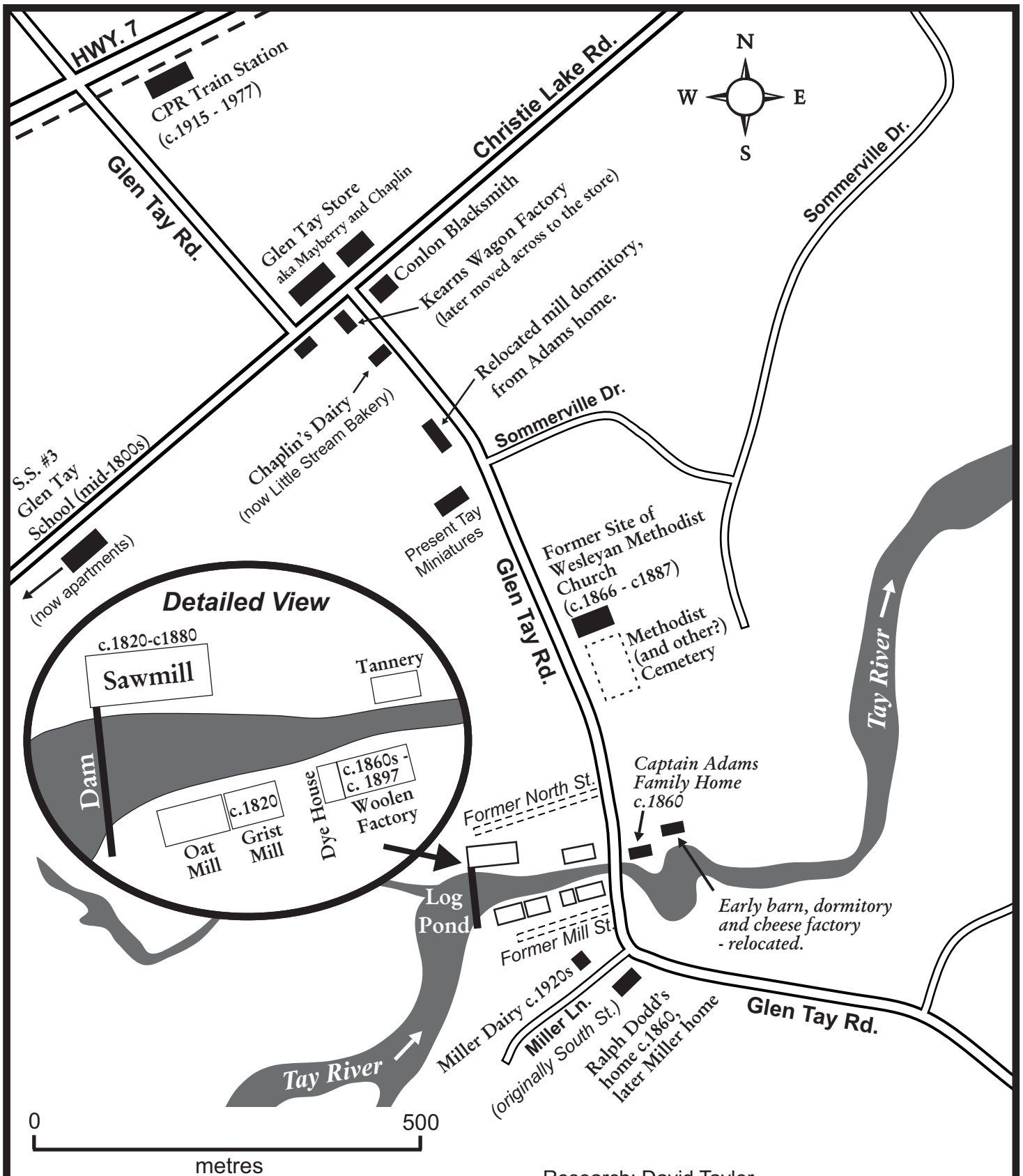
A final comment - we are reminded that the coming of the Europeans was not the first arrival of people to this territory; it had been home for tens of thousands of years to the First Nations. It was their hunting area, and the Tay River their highway, along which, for example, they travelled annually down the Rideau and Ottawa Rivers, to a meeting at what we call Lake of Two Mountains. Some of the trails along the river and camping spots were used by them before our arrival. They also provided help to the first Europeans as they struggled to survive in the early years without summer.

In many ways, we are guests on this river – hopefully we are caring for it appropriately.

Footnote: This tour is based on a number of sources including original research by the author in local newspapers, archives and the land office, as well as 'Glen Tay, Then and Now', by Barbara Jordan, and 'Mills of the Tay and Neighbouring Area' by the undersigned.

'Mills of the Tay' may be seen and downloaded online at <https://www.perthhs.org/documents/mills-of-the-tay-web17.pdf>.

David Taylor, August 21 2021 deftconsult@storm.ca



The Heritage Buildings of Glen Tay Hamlet

(formerly Adamsville)

Research: David Taylor
 Graphics: Ken W. Watson
 Other Sources:
Glen Tay, Then and Now, by Barbara Jordan, 1997
Mills of the Tay, by David Taylor, 2019
 (www.perthhs.org/history/tay.html)