

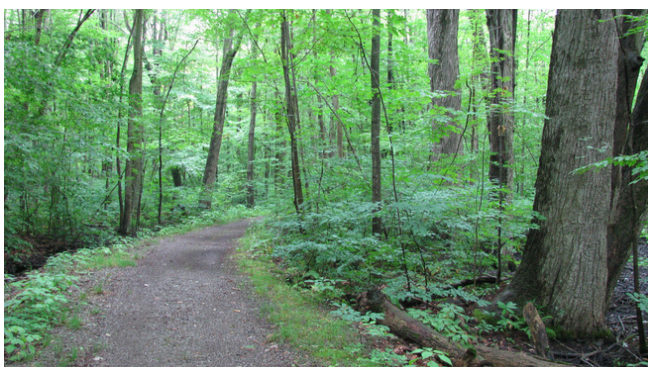
Pathways Newsletter



The Pathways for People newsletter is published twice a year and shares trail stories and updates, events and local news on infrastructure work happening across Norfolk County

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Information on:

- Local Trails
- Advocacy
- Share the Road
- Walkable Communities



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NORFOLK COUNTY - CENTER OF THE CANADIAN CYCLING SCENE

Submitted by Rob Luke
Turkey Point Mountain Bike Club

Cycling had become all the rage in the 1880 and 90's. The newest inventions in transport and technology thrived in the early age of the bicycle. The Canadian Wheelman Association (CWA) 1881-1900, was recognized as the voice and conscience of the cycling movement promoting many social and practical changes to our society from the development of transportation networks to liberation of women. The CWA was the formative authority in promoting competitive cycle racing, instituting racing rules and regulations. It promoted the popularity and advancement for all types and kinds of cycling.

Cycling clubs quickly developed all over North America. The Simcoe Spokes Cycling Club was founded in 1882 and soon became the center of this new exciting pastime. At this time, membership for the club was \$1.00 a year. Women were permitted to participate in this new pastime and many a suffragette has lamented that women would not have achieved the right to vote unless they had first gotten on a bicycle. The club rides were popular because they were chaperoned and offered young people a chance for courtship in very strict Victorian times.



Hal Donly of Simcoe was treasurer/secretary of the CWA and their publication, 'The Gazette', was read and respected around the world. Donly's family owned the Simcoe Reformer and he was the editor at the age of 19. Donly used the Reformer platform to agitate (advocate) for Women's suffrage, better roads in Ontario, and the advancement of cycling. Since he owned the Reformers printing presses, the CWA Gazette was published and printed in Simcoe. \$1.00 is the cost of a yearly subscription. The whole edition from 1884 to 1900 is archived in the Smithsonian Institute.

It is reported in the May 18th, 1896 Gazette that the Simcoe Spokes Cycle Club will don club uniforms. The Club's main concern is that they do not appear to look like the Salvation Army.

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The First Trail – The Simcoe and Port Dover Cycling clubs created the first cycling path between the two communities in 1886 to 1899. The route was situated in the ditches of present-day Highway 24 S and Highway 6. The project was spear headed by Hal Donly and money raised for the project was by subscription. If a citizen gave 25 cents to the trail, they would have their name printed in the Reformer. The club held a Lantern Bike Parade in 1899 on the Queens birthday and solicited funds from bystanders and raised \$33. Cyclists in the parade decorated their wheels and illuminated the twilight parade by carrying glowing Japanese Lanterns. The parade was also meant to raise awareness of the sport to the general public. The crowds were thick in downtown Simcoe and the parade cyclists unfortunately broke into two groups which ruined the desired effect.

“The bicycle path has had during the last year or two, a considerable amount of notoriety through the columns of the Reformer.” (Hal Donly Simcoe Reformer June 8th, 1899).

The First Users Code of Conduct – The trail was not popular among many local residents as the bicycle would spook horses and now the easement had to be shared by different users. To placate complaints, the local municipal councils and bike clubs created rules for users.

Here are the rules briefly:

- Cyclists not allowed to ride faster than 10 mph on path.
- In the case of a dangerous situation or passing the infirm or baby carriages; the cyclist must dismount.
- If a horse becomes restive or spooked by the cyclist; he must dismount and help control the horse.
- No person shall ride, drive, or lead a horse or beast of burden on the bike path except to enter their laneway.
- The Port Dover and Simcoe Bike Clubs must prevent insolent, noisy, and unbecoming conduct by their members.



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Bicycle Racing in Simcoe

The Race of 1894 – The 1894 CWA Canadian Championship series races were being held in Montreal, Waterloo, Sarnia, Athenaeums (Toronto), and Simcoe. Simcoe was the host of the first series race ever on May 24th, 1894 – the Queen’s birthday. The programme lists a slate of 9 races and info includes railroad arrangements – a note tells that “A special G.T.R. train will leave Toronto at 7am for cyclists going to the meet with their bikes. Leaving Simcoe at 6:50 after the meet. Hotels are all first class in Simcoe. There are eight of them and we can accommodate a great number of wheelmen”.

A Monster Bicycle Meet in Simcoe 1896 – The Simcoe Spokes Cycle Club host the final series race of the 1896 season on Friday August 21st and it promises to be an exciting slate of races. There will be five amateur races and three professional contestants and as the front page of the Reformer headlines states, “All the flyers will be here”. Large crowds are expected because Norfolk’s own flyer, Oscar Blayney, the 1895 CWA’s 25-mile race Champion will be defending his title against the best in the country. The hometown favourite has his work cut out for him as John Davidson of Toronto and R.E. Axton from Paris, the next best riders are after his title.

The ‘Globe and Mail’ comments that Toronto’s own flyer, Frank Moore has been training specifically for the 25-mile Championship showdown in Simcoe. Not to worry as the headlines in the Simcoe Reformer of August 13th proclaims, “R.O. Blayney will uphold the honour of Norfolk County in the amateur race. He will likely capture the 25-mile Championship”.

Editor Donly hypes the race as, “the racing match of the season. Take a day off and come in to see some first class bicycle races. With such a galaxy of racing men, there should be no lack of spectators”. A crowd of 1000 is on hand to cheer and support defending champion and local hero Oscar Blayney. The 25-mile race is 100 times around the 1/4 mile oval and they use riders on tandem bikes to pace the racers hoping that a new record could be set in the process. Oscar Blayney did not win this race.

- Cycle Chat – CWA Gazette Dec. 20, 1897 – “R. O. Blayney has apparently forsaken the racing track for good. He has traded off the tin cups and medals he won as an amateur for a farm at Lynnville, Ontario and is living there”. Oscar Blayney is buried in the Lynnville cemetery.

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The Bikes and the Riders – the evolution of the bicycle had three distinct stages:

1. **The Boneshaker (1860–mid 1870's)** – The Boneshaker as its name implies was not a comfortable ride. The frame was made of wood, and it was held together with wrought iron connections. The tires were wood as well and a strip of iron was circumvented on the outside diameter for the tire tread. There are not many Boneshakers left as many were scrapped for their iron components during World War I. Fortunately, Eva Brook Donly Museum in Simcoe has an intact specimen. It was donated by Frederick Sovereign, an original member of the Simcoe Spokes Bicycle Club.



2. **The High Wheel (1875– 1888)** – The High Wheel proceeded the Boneshaker and was very difficult to mount. The high front wheel did not allow women to pedal in their full length late Victorian dresses. This bicycle was later referred to as a 'penny farthing' because after the modern safety bicycle arrived; it held very little value.



3. **The Safety Bicycle (circa 1889)** – The first modern bicycle was called the Safety Bicycle because it was much safer to mount and ride than the High Wheel bike. All bicycles today are essentially safety bicycles. In 1887, John Boyd Dunlop was tired of watching his son struggling to ride his tricycle over the cobblestones in his native City Dublin so, he wrapped the tires in rubber sheets and then inflated them with air. Hence the pneumatic tire was invented and that changed everything! The new Safety Bicycles were chain driven and made of the newest most fantastic material – steel.



The Victor 'Flyer' of 1893.

Hal Donly purchased the first safety bicycle in Norfolk County for the sum of \$150 in 1889. \$150 was the wages of the average working man for six months. It wasn't until CCM and other bicycle companies started mass production that they became affordable to the average person.

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Scorching – as defined by Sheldon Brown: "A fast, reckless cyclist who scares horses and old folks" (<https://saddleupbike.blogspot.com/2010/09/return-of-scorcher.html>).

In the early days of cycling many people disliked the new cycling contraptions and especially since the new Safety Bikes allowed a person to travel faster and longer than a man on horse. This intimidated and scared some folks as bicycles were quiet and the loud and noisy horseless carriages were very rare yet. Some villages and towns instituted laws that made it illegal to ride a bicycle through their town.

Cyclists saw this as a challenge and affront, and flaunting the law, would race their bike through main streets daring the constabulary to arrest them. They couldn't be caught because they were too fast. It was considered an admirable rebellious act among cyclists, and it was known as "scorching". A very fast rider was henceforth known as a "scorcher". An advertisement in the February 3rd, 1896, edition of the CWA gazette claims that if you buy and ride a bicycle from the Crawford Cycle Company – you will become "KING OF THE SCORCHERS"!

Old Notable Local Riders

Edgar Cantelon – In 1900, Cantelon, already recognized as Norfolk's premier artist, embarked on a series of paintings of historical landmarks and pioneer buildings in Norfolk County. In all, his collection counted nearly 300 significant interpretations of early Norfolk. Most of the collection is owned by the Norfolk Historical Society and housed at the Eva Brook Donly Museum in Simcoe. Cantelon painted these images on site and rode his bicycle around Norfolk packed with an easel and paint set. Many young children remembered the man returning to Simcoe in late afternoon, covered in dust from Norfolk roads after a painting foray in the countryside. He was a very angular man and with his easel protruding from the back of his bike; he resembled a stork. The kids upon seeing his return would often lament that, "here comes the Stork!"

Edmund Zavitz – In 1905, a young Edmund Zavitz rides his bicycle 160kms from the University of Guelph to the wastelands of Simcoe County, North of Barrie Ontario (and back to Guelph). Lecturing at the University of Guelph, Zavitz writes the "Report on the Reforestation of Wastelands in Southern Ontario, 1909". The Provincial Government finally passes legislation and in 1908, the St. Williams Forestry Station is founded under Zavitz's leadership. It is the first tree nursery in the Province and provides millions of seedlings for planting the barren wastelands in the Province. Adjacent land is purchased at low prices because the soil is barren. The science is new and experimental; but successful, as barren tracts in Norfolk are replanted with Red Pine and a variety of species and the forests start to grow back. Zavitz owns a cottage in Turkey Point and often rides his bicycle to the St. Williams Forestry station to check on his creation. He cycles the Turkey Point area to view and photograph the new forest being planted in 1929–1931.

Overall, Norfolk County has a long history in the cycling scene. We hope you enjoyed reading through this glimpse into the history of cycling in our community.

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2025 SPRING WALK

Submitted by Alex Dobias
Grand Erie Public Health

On Saturday May 3rd at 10am, Pathways will be hosting our Spring Walk at the Long Point Bird Observatory (LPBO) located at 13 Old Cut Blvd, Port Rowan, ON N0E 1M.



This is a guided walk including an introduction to the history of LPBO, bird banding, bird populations, and conservation.

There is parking available across the road from the observatory.

**CHECK OUT
THE POSTER
ON PAGE 11
FOR
IMPORTANT
DETAILS!**

BIKE MONTH - A CELEBRATION OF CYCLING

Submitted by Alex Dobias
Grand Erie Public Health

Bike month occurs every year during the month of June to commemorate and promote bicycling in Ontario. The Ontario legislature passed the Ontario Bike Month Act in 2015, formally proclaiming June as Ontario Bike Month, [Ontario Bike Month Act, 2015, S.O. 2015, c. 16 - Bill 13 | ontario.ca](#). Throughout this month, numerous events occur to promote cycling and the associated physical, environmental, and mental health benefits.

There are additional proclaimed days/weeks within the month of June:

- Bike to school week June 2nd to June 6th
- Bike to work day June 4th 2025

2025 Events in Norfolk County

Silver Spokes Cycling Club Intro to Group Cycling May 14, 21, 28 and June 4, 2025.

To learn more visit, [Upcoming Events | Silver Spokes Cycling Club - Norfolk County Ontario](#).

Turkey Point Mountain Bike Club

- Sunday April 27th Spring Kicker
- Saturday June 7th Take a Kid Mountain Biking Day
- Saturday June 14th EFT
- Sunday September 28th Fall Ripper
- Saturday December 6th, Global Fat Tire Bike Day
- Saturday January 24th Global Fat Viking Winter Endurance Race
 - To learn more visit, [Events | TPMBC](#).

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Events across Ontario can be found here, [Cycling Events in Ontario 2025 - Ontario By Bike](#).

Registration is open for the 2025 Great Waterfront Trail Adventure cycle tour and awareness ride which will be coming through Norfolk on August 14th & 15th (day 7 & 8). To learn more, visit <https://waterfronttrail.org/great-waterfront-trail-adventure/route-itinerary/>.

Community members and event organizers are encouraged to share additional events with Pathways as they are planned. E-mail us at pathwaysforpeople@gmail.com to help spread the word about your upcoming event!

CYCLING SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS SUITABLE IN THE COUNTY OF NORFOLK FROM THE ONTARIO MINISTRY OF TRANSPORTATION

Submitted by Rob Martin
Silver Spokes Cycling Club



It is Up to Both Drivers & Cyclists To Keep Everyone Safe on Ontario Roads.

Tips For Cyclists on HOW TO STAY SAFE

- Under the law bicycles are considered human powered vehicles thus all laws applying to motorists also apply to cyclists.
- Always signal your intentions & respect all traffic controls.
- Plan your routes carefully to minimize exposure to traffic, especially during morning & afternoon commutes.
- Be predictable, deliberate & consistent, but always safe in your actions.
- Ride straight & keep a safe one meter distance from curbs or the roads edge. Be mindful of obstacles & hazards.
- Cyclists should keep one meter away from parked vehicles. Be mindful of opening doors as well as vehicles about to move. The drivers presence, tail & backup lights are good indicators.

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- Utilize designated traffic lanes for turns & through routes. Signal your intentions but ensure motorists have noticed & slowed before “taking the lane”.
- If still uncomfortable where vehicles are concentrated; dismount and walk to your destination.
- Avoid riding on sidewalks especially in shopping areas. Be considerate to pedestrians; dismount & walk your bike!
- Utilize a white front light & red rear light if riding ½ hour before sunrise or sunset. The use of flashing daytime lights highly recommended.
- Avoid riding towards the sun when low in the sky. Following motorists may not be able to see you!
- Avoid wearing earphones, texting or using a phone when riding.

Specific tips & advice from the MTO on safety, handling skills, road signs, traffic signals, the law & cyclists as well as riding in traffic can be found on the following link, <https://files.ontario.ca/mto-young-cycling-skills-en-2021-09-16.pdf>

Be alert, be heard, be seen, always ride sober, always wear a helmet.

WATERFORD HERITAGE TRAIL ASSOCIATION

Submitted by Frank Woodcock
Waterford Heritage Trail Association

Birds are serenading, branches are budding and the itch to be outdoors increases, all signs of Spring Fever. The antidote is simple and self-diagnosed – get out and enjoy.

Spring is our busiest time of year. We have spent the Winter ruminating on our 2025 plans and the time has come to act.

In the Trail business we all want to be hands-on but there are also the tedious organizational meetings. We rely on memberships to fund our activities and now and again we have to organize a membership campaign. Volunteer hands don't rise to jump on board like they do for good old trail building projects. Such is life.

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We are building trail again this year. The fishing lane that ends just after the Black Bridge is part of the old rail line out to Hwy 24 and beyond. It is overgrown. Our plans are to brush-cut to Hwy 24 followed by a bulldozer and a grader to expose the old gravel. Once this is accomplished we will seek partnerships with local landowners to explore developing trails on their properties.

Our second plan is to follow the route of the old LE&N RR from College St. to Conc 7 to develop trail with a dozer and grader. Once this is accomplished we will approach the County to use their road allowance to join the old LE&N with the paved TH&B line making a loop.

Our third plan is to signpost the Memorial Grove behind the Museum, add 4 trees donated by the Historical Society, add topsoil and grass seed, create a quiet zone with a graveled and tiled sitting area with two metal benches and an old fashioned rotary dial phone for people to have a private conversation with a departed loved one.

Three plans, lots of volunteers, one plan pending on a show of more hands.

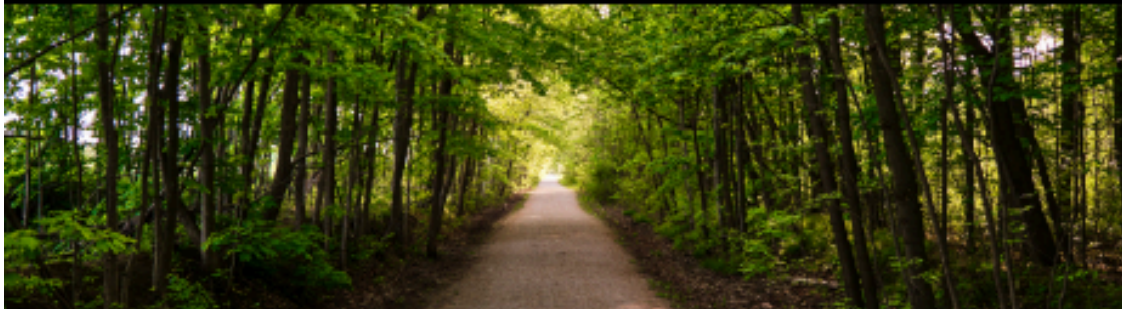


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SPRING WALK POSTER

WALKERS WANTED!

Join our Spring Walk, guided through the trail at the Long Point Bird Observatory



**Saturday,
May 3, 2025**
from 10 to 11:30 a.m.



**Long Point Bird
Observatory**
13 Old Cut Blvd,
Port Rowan ON
N0E 1M0

- Learn about the history of the observatory, bird banding, bird population, and conservation
- A minimum donation of \$5 per person to the Long Point Bird Observatory can be provided the day of the walk for entry.

Please park in the lot across the street from the station.



Questions?

Contact Alex Dobias
519-426-6170 x 3367
adobias@geph.ca



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