

# PRINCE EDWARD COUNTY

AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY

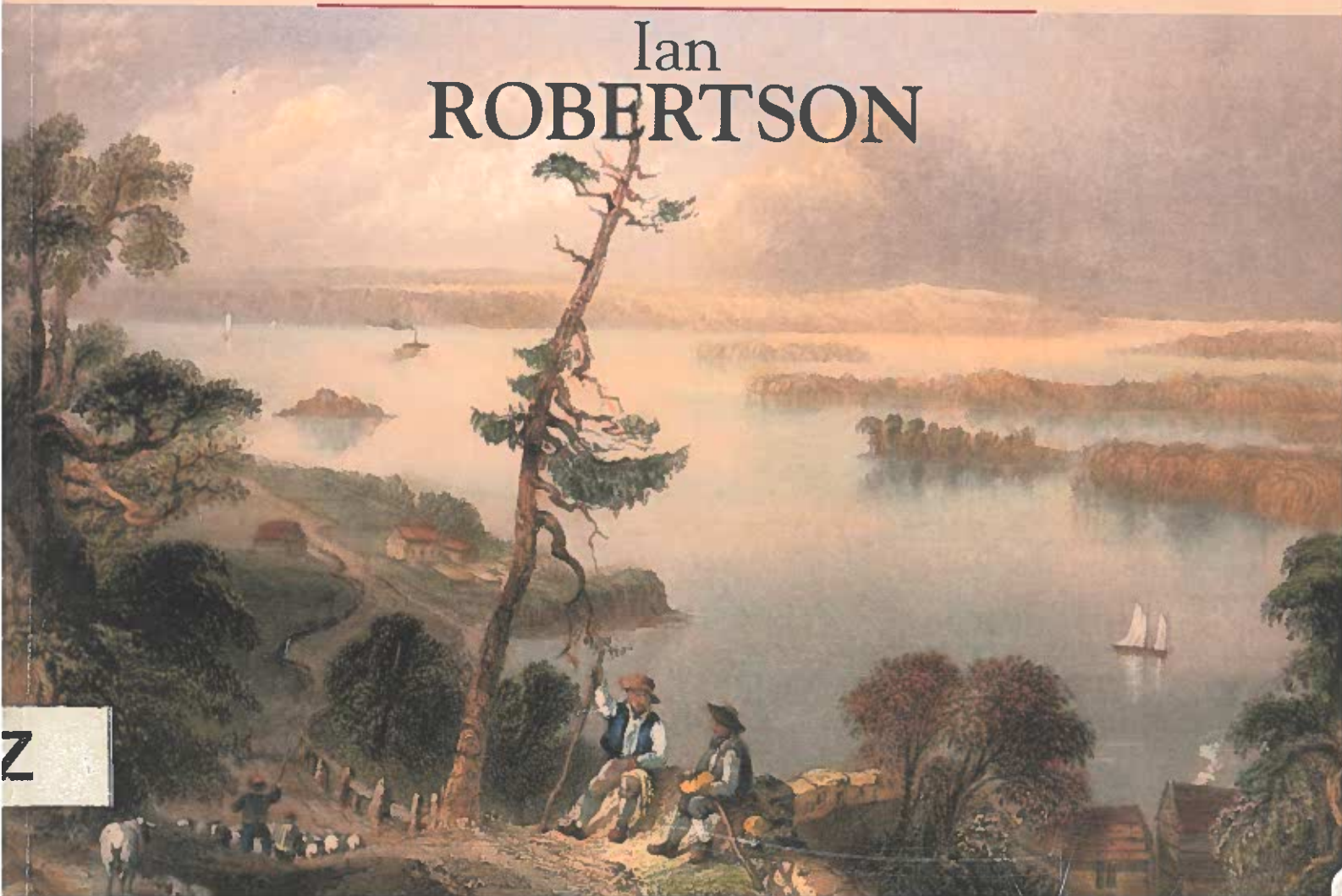
Steve  
CAMPBELL

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Janet  
DAVIES

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Ian  
ROBERTSON



# Dedications

## Steve's Dedication:

Anyone who calls himself a 'Self-Made Man' is a fool.

Everything I am, and everything I've done, is the result of all of my family and friends, who have stood by me through thick and thin, and the almost countless writers and researchers who have given their time and effort freely, in the combined effort to explore the past, present and future of The County, and present it to appreciative readers, so we can live richer lives in our Island Paradise.

## Janet's Dedication:

I was always an unstoppable letter writer, regaling people with stories and assuming they'd be wildly interested in what I had to say.

My family always said I should be a writer, now here I am. Thanks to Steve for this opportunity, to my family for all their cheering, my husband for his love and patience and to my dear old mum who would have said

"That's lovely dear, now brush that hair out of your eyes."

## Ian's Dedication:

Since I was a kid – some say wagons were still rolling west – I enjoyed writing, reading and telling stories, not necessarily in that order. My parents and mum's folks always encouraged me to do what I wanted, as long as I was happy, which sometimes was a good thing. Meeting my pal Steve and his family was a good thing. Working and living in the County several years and, more importantly, returning when possible, continues to be a good thing. Learning about the people, places and soul, then sharing that with others, was another. 'nuff said. Enjoy!

**ISBN # 978-0-9683109-5-3**

## **PRINCE EDWARD COUNTY: AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY**

is published by County Magazine Printshop Ltd.; Steve Campbell, President/Publisher  
P.O. Box 30, 257 Main Street, Bloomfield, Ontario, Canada K0K 1G0  
Tel: (613) 393-3355 • Fax: (613) 393-3960 • [countymag@bellnet.ca](mailto:countymag@bellnet.ca)  
[www.countymagazine.ca](http://www.countymagazine.ca)

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Design and Production: Steve Campbell & Janet Davies, County Magazine

Printed and Bound in Canada

# The Wishing Tree

Legends abound about a tree on West Lake Road that was so large, horse-drawn buggies, then cars, had to drive around it.

The road indeed split on either side. Old photo postcards show couples and families standing at its base, some with horses and buggies, others with 1920s cars.

The Wishing Tree bore a mystique that brought out the best in romantics. Many a lothario is said to have popped the question to the girl of his dreams beneath those spreading bows.

Locals conjectured it took root 700 years before it was dealt a last fatal blow one dark and stormy night during the Second World War.

The trunk reputedly measured seven feet across, with a leafy canopy about 100 feet overhead, with branches reaching half that height again above the road.

The nickname came from Indians, who A.J. Lake, proprietor of the Wishingtree Lodge at the time of the tree's demise, said ventured there two generations earlier. They believed if they made wishes while holding a piece of bark before replacing it, the tree's supernatural powers would make them come true.

When a second lane of the road was built on the other side of the trunk, the giant's roots could not draw enough nutrients, the tree weakened and after the trunk was split by lightning in 1925, only a 15-foot stump remained a decade later.

To protect what was left, Mr. Lake attached a wooden roof to prevent further rot.

But the Wishing Tree had lost its spirit and, when hit by a gale on May 3, 1941, what was

once considered the world's largest sugar maple collapsed around 5 a.m., the sound "like someone blasting," and the scene "a cloud of dust," he recounted later.

Road crews cut up the rotten carcass and hauled it away.

Over the passing years, its stories and romance were still told and - until 1965 - the truth could still be proved to doubters and the curious. That is, until the last vestiges of the trunk were removed for another widening of the road.

The legend may live on, however. Maples drop their keys each fall and perhaps somewhere nearby, an unknown descendant has inhabited the spirit of The Wishing Tree. □

Ian S. Robertson  
and *Striking Times*

