



GEORGINA

Statute Labour

One of the first Acts of Parliament of Upper Canada, in 1793, was the introduction of Statute Labour. This law was essentially a tax that required male landowners to perform road maintenance in lieu of cash, which was hard to come by in the new Province. The Act required 3 to 12 days in a year, to be calculated based on the value of one's property. The roads in the townships were divided into "road divisions", with each division overseen by a Pathmaster; a Council appointed landowner from within that division that would organize the crew and take their orders from and report to municipal council. For those who could afford to pay, cash was accepted, but oftentimes in early Georgina diaries and Council Minutes, we see these men with means sending one of their hired farm labourers to do the work for them. In the mid-19th century, William Johnson of Pefferlaw was often sending his hired hands to perform the required number of days.

In 1925, Georgina Township Council passed a By-Law abolishing Statute Labour. Instead, Council would "levy such amount as may be necessary upon the rateable assessment of the Municipality to be expended on the construction and maintenance of the roads and bridges...". From this date, the norm was to hire contractors to do the work. In 1935 the going rate was 25 cents per hour per man and they worked 8 hour days.



Early road crews brought teams of oxen or horses to help grade the road. In 1935, if you brought a team with you, your rate of pay was increased to 50 cents an hour. This crew, however, is building a barn.