



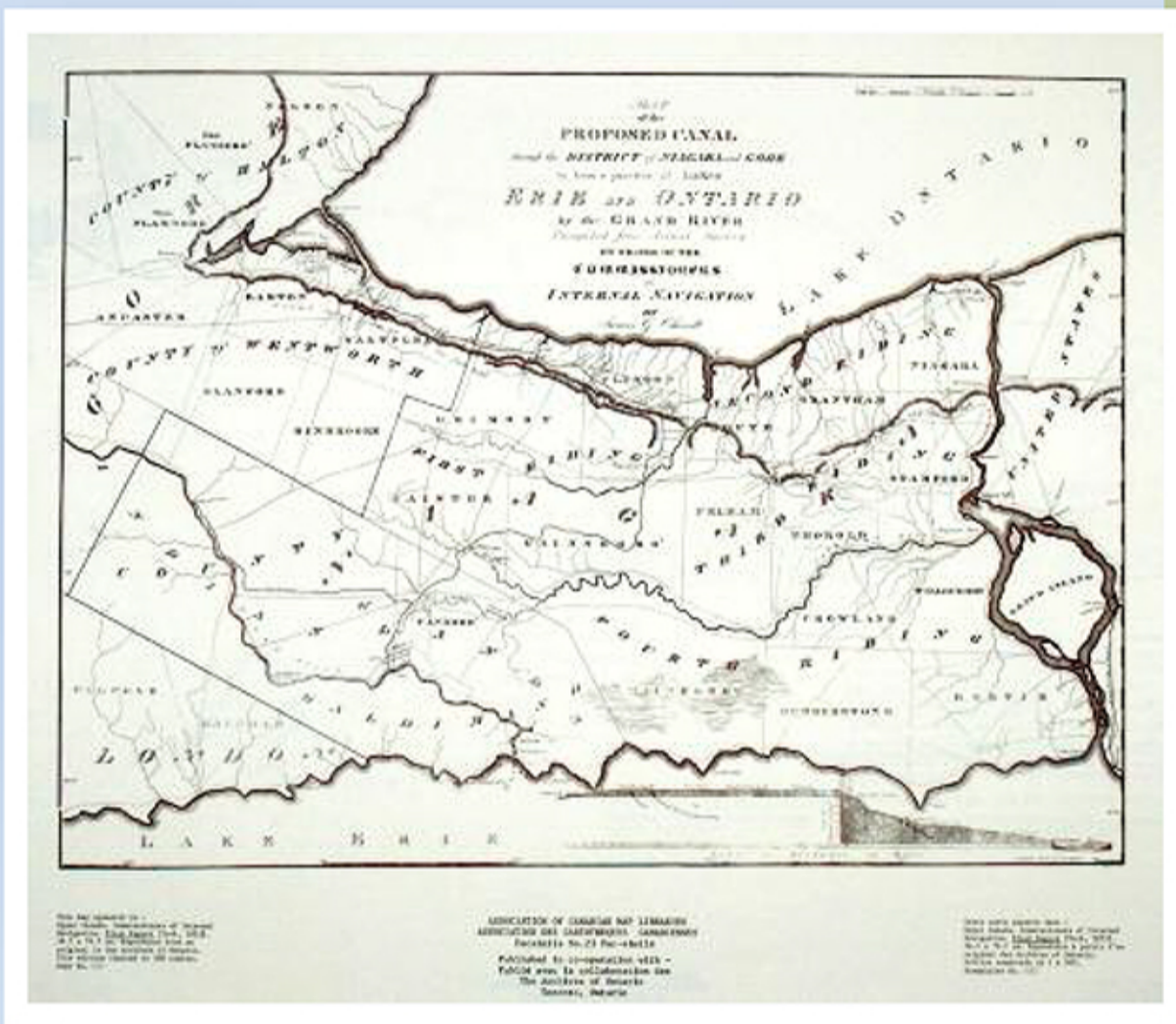
# Legacy of the Grand River



The WCA thanks the Ontario Trillium Foundation for their support of this 'War of 1812' Bicentennial commemorative project.

## FORGING AHEAD: DEVELOPMENT OF THE WATERSHED

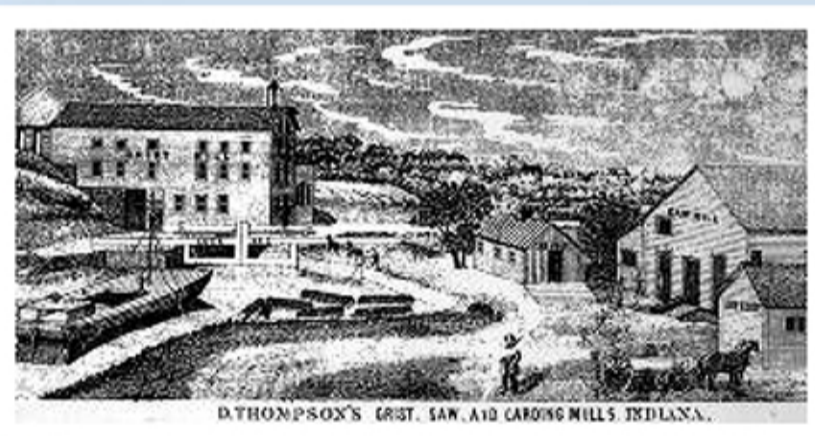
Innovations of the late 1700s—many of which relied upon machines powered by water—led to unprecedented productivity and economic growth around the world. Known as the Industrial Revolution, this period of history had a profound social, economic and political impact worldwide. The Grand River Watershed played an important role in the Industrial Revolution in Canada. All along the river, flourmills, textile mills, foundries, and distilleries emerged, driving economic growth in the region. The establishment of the Grand River Navigation Company led to a new utilization of the river's natural resources. Although the company was short-lived due to the introduction of railways, it had an immediate and lasting impact upon the region with the creation of five locks, five dams, two canals, as well as the growth of several settlements such as Caledonia, Dunnville and the City of Brantford.



### ◀ The Grand River Navigation Company.

When the first Welland Canal officially opened in 1829, attention was focused on the Grand River as a route to transport goods from the fertile watershed to markets in Dundas (Hamilton) and York (Toronto). William Hamilton Merritt, one of the key figures in the development of the Welland Canal, proposed building an 11-lock link between it and the Grand River. Negotiations with the Six Nations—the owners of much of the needed land for the canal—were undertaken with Lieutenant-Governor Sir John Colborne. It was expected that the development would lead to increased land values, and thus improve the living conditions for Six Nations people. Locks and dams were constructed around some of the navigational obstacles at Indiana, just North of Cayuga, Caledonia and at Brantford. Under the direction of William Merritt and David Thompson, the canal was officially opened in 1841 with additional work continuing for the next few years. The project was not completed until 1850. With the coming of the railway four years later, the need for the Grand River Navigation Company ended. The enterprise never made money for investors and in 1859, the company could no longer pay its bills. One of its major creditors, the City of Brantford, sold the company's remaining assets in 1871, at which time the Grand River Navigation Company ceased to exist.

Proposed canals in District of Niagara (1823). Source: The Gibson Library (Brock University).



▲ Great hopes for prosperity, resulting from the construction of locks and canals undertaken by the Grand River Navigation Company, led to the development of the town of Indiana, just north of Cayuga. All that remains today are a few cuts in the soil and David Thompson's estate at Ruthven.

The D. Thompson grist mill at Indiana. Source: Ruthven Park (National Historic Site).

▶ Built in 1857 on the corner of Erb and Caroline Streets in Waterloo, a controlling interest in the mill and distillery was purchased from William Hespeler by Joseph Seagram in 1864. The main business of the mill was flour, but by the early 1900s, the production of alcohol had become the main focus. A merger took place in 1928 with the Bronfman family of Montreal and soon, a global reputation for high-quality whisky was established. The Waterloo distillery closed its doors in 1990. Seagram Distillery. Source: Public Domain (Waterloo Public Library).



▶ Joseph E. Seagram c. 1880. Source: Public Domain

▶ With the coming of the railway in the mid-1850s, Berlin—re-named Kitchener in 1916—grew rapidly, taking full advantage of the rich agricultural land on the banks of the Grand River. By the turn of the 20th century major industries had been established in the city. The Kaufman Rubber Company was just one of these, producing footwear for the global market. The business thrived and by 1907, three rubber factories were established, all under the control of Kaufman.

Kaufman Rubber Company card. Source: Doors Open Waterloo Region (2012)



*Our Grand... truly a Canadian Heritage River for all seasons.*

