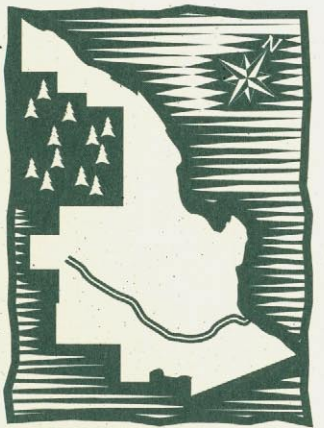




# UPPER MIDDLE DIPPER

A DRIVING TOUR OF THE OPEONGO LINE



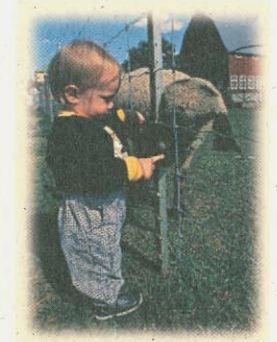
**Castleford** Farrel's Landing and the Village of Castleford were the starting point for the settlers' trek into the Ontario wilds. Nearby is the First Chute of the Bonnechere River, the first major obstacle to water passage into the heart of the Valley.

**Farrel's Landing** This bay on the western shore of Lac des Chats, was once the site of a wharf and hotel operated by an early Irish immigrant — Edward Farrel.

**Renfrew** A bustling town of Scottish origins, this town became the industrial and commercial hub of southwestern Renfrew County— its growth stimulated and assured by the construction of the Opeongo Road. Points of interest include the McDougall Mill Museum, a swinging bridge and many fine examples of 19th and 20th-century architecture.

**Ferguslea** Ephraim Reid, a Scottish settler built a woolen mill here in 1850 by damming the stream that ran from the lake which bears his name. When the Kingston and Pembroke Railway arrived in 1884, travellers would detrain here and overnight at Tom Culhane's Opeongo Hotel.

**Shamrock** Almost non-existent today, this hamlet is at the crossroads of the Opeongo and the road from Calabogie to Douglas. Notice that the farmland becomes marginal as the road climbs through the Opeongo mountains — a rugged and rolling plateau of hardwood forests dotted with lakes and rivers.



**Mount St. Patrick** Named after Ireland's holy mountain, this hamlet is known for its mythic leprechauns. Visit the unique fieldstone church, the holy well and a plaque which honours the original settlers.

**Dacre** Located at a multiple crossroads on the Opeongo Road, this community became the most viable between Renfrew and Barry's Bay, with traffic and trade heading off in six directions.

**Balaclava** Now a virtual ghost town, this once-thriving mill town on Constant Creek boasted a water-powered sawmill and grist mill.

**Esmonde** St. Joseph-on-the-Opeongo Roman Catholic Church marks the remains of this hamlet. From here the road skirts the base of the Opeongo Hills along the southern edge of the Bonnechere Valley.

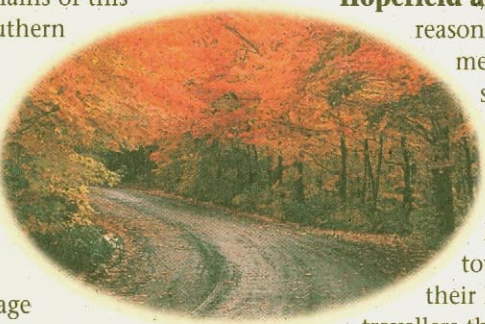
**McGrath and Clontarf** All that remains of the original McGrath settlement is a century farm and a small church — St. John's Lutheran. Historic St. Clement's Anglican Church sits between Esmonde and Clontarf. From here the tall, mixed forests sweep along the edge of cultivated land as the Opeongo continues to climb.

**Cormac** A small detour will take you to this Irish settlement located at the base of Ryan's Mountain, on Cty Rd 512. The annual St. Anne's Parish Pilgrimage is celebrated here on the last Sunday of each July.

**Foymount** From this former air force radar base which was built in 1950 as part of the Pine Tree Radar Line, travellers can enjoy a sweeping view of the Bonnechere Valley. In the 19th century, a section of the route from here was known as the Prussian Line — reflecting the German settlers who migrated here. Today, it's known as Ontario's highest populated point.

**Brudenell** In the 1800s this village, at the junction of the Opeongo and Peterson Settlement Roads, boasted a population of 200, three stopping places, a race track, three stores and two blacksmiths. Remains of an old store and hotel still stand. Our Lady of the Angels Church, just west of the intersection, was the area's first Catholic church.

**Rockingham** This tiny hamlet is worth a visit. The falls at the north end of the village on Rockingham Creek are a must see, as is St. Leonard's Anglican Church, built in 1867.



**Hopefield and Wilno** The steep, stony fields along the roadside give reason for Hopefield's name. Wilno, Canada's oldest Polish settlement, is testament to the remarkable spirit of these hearty settlers. From stoney ground a close-knit community grew around a remarkable catholic church — St. Mary's. From Shrine Hill enjoy one of the most stunning views in the Valley.

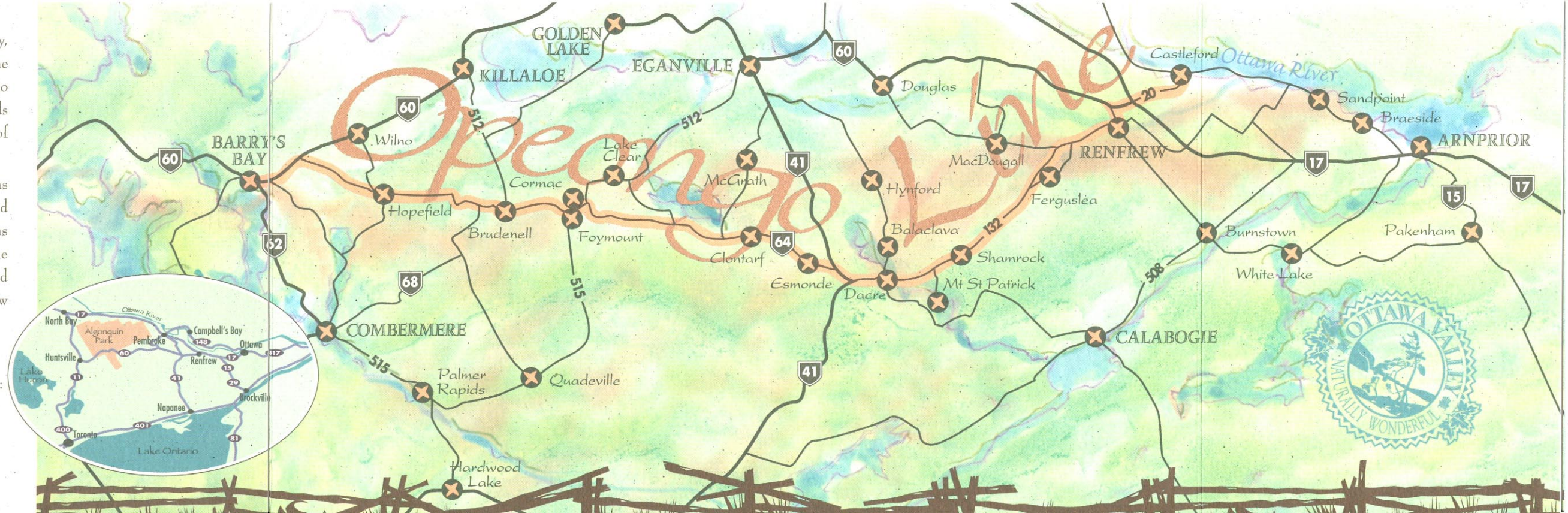
**Barry's Bay** Settled on Lake Kamaniskeg, this bustling town was settled by Irish and Polish immigrants who made their living harvesting the virgin forests. Today, it caters to travellers throughout the Madawaska Valley — stop by the OVTA Visitor Information Centre in the restored railway station on the main street.

In the 1850s, as sawmills and settlements opened up the interior of the Ottawa Valley, the Canadian government developed a series of colonization roads throughout central Ontario. The most significant of these was the Ottawa and Opeongo Road, better known as the Opeongo Line. It followed a westward course in its climb from the Ottawa River to the Madawaska Highlands — linking several wilderness routes along the way to an unceremonious end north of the village of Barry's Bay.

European settlers were lured by land grants, but the challenge proved too difficult — the land was unforgiving. The giant virgin pine stands were harvested, the ever-hopeful pioneers moved on, and forests eventually reclaimed many of the primitive homesteads. Today, some of the original log barns are still filled each summer with hay and grain harvested from the small fields. The remnants of the great hardwood forest still cloak the hills and stand cheek by jowl with areas of cultivated land separated by fences of stone. And while many of the once-bustling communities are now relative ghost towns, the spirit of adventure that attracted our pioneers remains.

A self-guided driving tour audio cassette of the Opeongo Line is available for purchase. For more information, audio cassette, or details on fall accommodation and meal specials, contact:

Ottawa Valley Tourist Association  
 9 International Drive, Pembroke, Ontario K8A 6W5  
 1-800-757-6580 or 613-732-4364  
 www.ottawavalley.org



Offering breathtaking scenery all year round, it is in falltime that this corner of the Ottawa Valley, with its blend of hillside deciduous and coniferous forests turns truly glorious — a natural tapestry of reds, golds and greens. Join us when the colours are prime for our annual Celebration of the Flaming Leaf featuring Rural Ramble and various artisan tours. Take advantage of the special travel packages offered by hospitality operators throughout the region. And be sure to pack the family camera!

Today's visitor can travel *Up the Line* in ease and comfort far removed from that of settlement times. What was once an arduous journey that took weeks, is today a relaxing daytrip which the whole family will enjoy. Head westward from Lac des Chats near Castleford, via County Road 20 to Renfrew, then take Hwy 132 to Dacre. At Dacre travel north one mile to the Opeongo Line and bear west through several small hamlets as you travel over the Iron Hills. Continue westward to Hwy 60 through the Prussian Mountains to Barry's Bay where the Opeongo ends near Carson Lake Provincial Park. Your tour is about 150kms / 2.5 hours in length but be sure to take time for shopping, dining and sightseeing.

The official Opeongo Line Driving Tour, *Up The Line*, is available on audio cassette. To purchase your copy, contact the Ottawa Valley Tourist Association.

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