

The Founding of London, Ontario

Adapted from The London Middlesex Historical Society

In 1791, Pitt's Canada Act, separating the Provinces, was passed; with John Graves Simcoe as the first Lieutenant -Governor of Upper Canada.

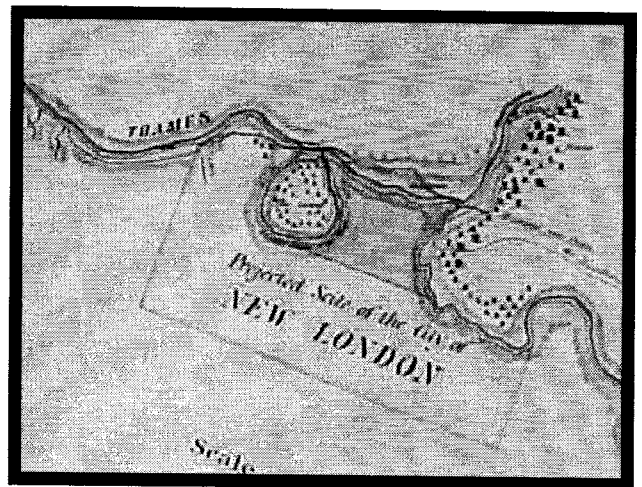
Immediately after his appointment, the new Governor wrote to friend: "I mean to establish a Capital in the very heart of the country, upon the river La Tranchee; the Capital I shall call *Georgina*."

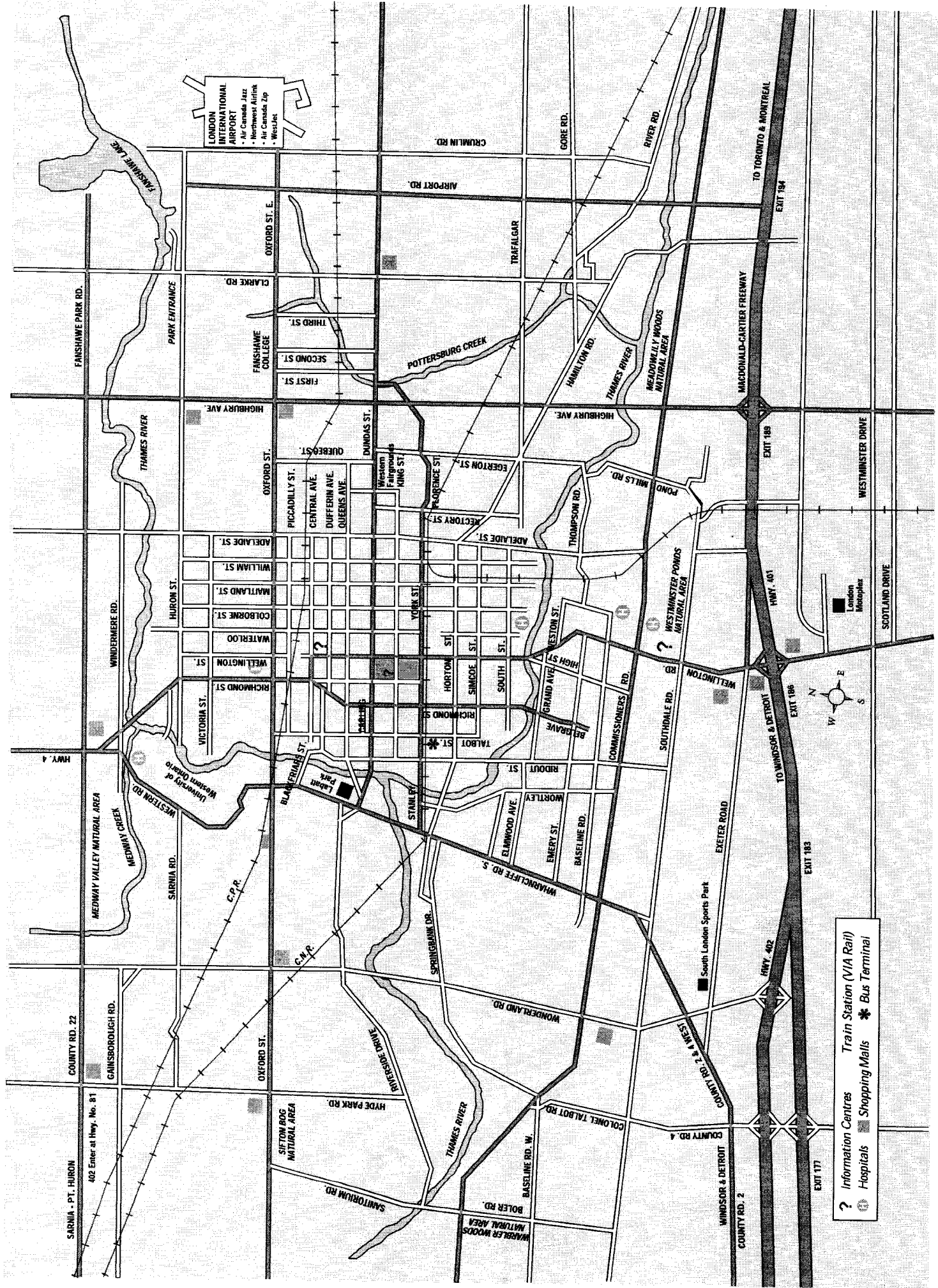
Simcoe was British or nothing, so his democratic Parliament, which first met in 1792, promptly changed the region's names into plain English. It also divided the county into nineteen counties, half of them with English namesakes, and the north and south branches of La Tranchee joined waters in the Country of Suffolk. On the 16th of July of the same year, Governor Simcoe officially announced that the river La Tranchee should be called the *Thames*. In February of 1793, he started on his memorable overland trip (**which passed near present-day Waterdown**) to Detroit with Major Littlehales and Lieutenant Talbot in his train, for which we are devotedly thankful, as one of them kept a diary which he afterwards published, and the other came back to colonize the land.

Dr. Scadding, in *Toronto of Old*, tells an interesting incident of the visit. General Simcoe, in jocose mood, ordered a grand parade of ten men (all he had) and a formal discharge of musketry as a ceremony of inauguration for the Capital, which order was solemnly obeyed by Lieutenant Givins, who also returned to settle.

On 17th of September 1793, the Governor, in writing to the Honorable Henry Dundas, after explaining his idea about the roadways etc., continued:

"They lead to the propriety of establishing a Capital of Upper Canada, which may be somewhat distant from the centre of the present colony. The Capital I propose to establish at *New London*." (What happened to poor *Georgina*?) However, he did not carry out his proposal as York became the Capital, but evidently not with Simcoe's approval for as late as 1796, at the very end of his Canadian career, in a dispatch to Lord Portland, he suggested that in the event of the seat of Government being transplanted to the Thames, "the proper place", the buildings and grounds at York where he was placing the seat of government "for the present" could be sold to lessen or liquidate the debt of its construction.





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- 🚂 Train Station (VIA Rail)
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