

# THE FOUNDING OF HUNTSVILLE

During the late 1860s a small agricultural settlement, founded largely through the efforts of Captain George Hunt, developed here. In 1870 a post office called Huntsville was established and the following year the Muskoka Colonization Road was extended to this point. Improvements in transportation including the opening of a navigable water route north from Port Sydney to Huntsville in 1877 and the arrival of the Northern and Pacific Junction Railway eight years later spurred the village's growth. With the erection of a tannery and saw, planing and shingle mills by the 1890s, the community emerged as an important industrial centre for the region. Although lumbering enterprises gradually declined during the early 20th century, Huntsville continued to prosper as one of Muskoka's most popular resort towns.





## THE HUNTSVILLE SWING BRIDGE

THE FIRST SWING BRIDGE ACROSS THE MUSKOKA RIVER IN HUNTSVILLE WAS A WOODEN STRUCTURE BUILT IN 1871. IT WAS REPLACED WITH A WOODEN SWING BRIDGE IN 1889 TO ALLOW LAKE STEAMERS AND OTHER TRAFFIC TO TRAVEL THROUGH HUNTSVILLE TO MARY, FAIRY AND PENINSULA LAKES. A STEEL SWING BRIDGE FOLLOWED IN 1902. THREE YEARS LATER, IN 1905, THE PORTAGE FLYER RAILWAY WAS COMPLETED BETWEEN PENINSULA LAKE AND LAKE OF BAYS. PEOPLE AND FREIGHT WERE THEN ABLE TO TRAVEL BY STEAMER AND TRAIN TO LAKE OF BAYS.

THE PRESENT SWING BRIDGE WAS ERECTED IN 1938. DUE LARGELY TO THE INCREASING POPULARITY OF THE AUTOMOBILE, THE STEAMBOATS WERE DISCONTINUED IN 1958. LATER THE SWING BRIDGE MECHANISM OF THE BRIDGE WAS DISMANTLED. HOWEVER, ITS MOST PROMINENT ARCHITECTURAL FEATURE, THE BRIDGE MASTER'S CABIN, REMAINS. A FOCAL POINT OF THE COMMUNITY, THE BRIDGE WAS REHABILITATED IN 2000, THE TOWN OF HUNTSVILLE'S CENTENNIAL YEAR.

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