



## **The History of Westport Spring**

Nestled at the head of the Rideau Lakes, Westport was originally surveyed by Reuben Sherwood in 1803 almost thirty years before the building of the Rideau Canal. With the watershed of the Frontenac Arch Biosphere Reserve dividing on the crest of Foley Mountain, water runs over and under this Precambrian shield in unique ways. On one side of the Mountain the watershed flows off towards Ottawa through the Rideau Lakes and River system while the opposite side feeds through the Cataraqui system into Lake Ontario.

In Westport, residents as far back as the very elderly and their families can remember, stories are told about the Westport Spring. Uncertain how much is fact or fiction, we are told the Westport Spring water originates north of Highway 42 and trails underground through town, surfacing at the Upper (or Little) Rideau into the lake system.

It was at this junction that early settlers began to build their homes, confident that the abundance of water, wood, hunting and a hope for industry would build their community in the early 1800s.

Folklore relates the existence of an aboriginal campground at the foot of Spring Street and Fetch Murphy Lane. Through the years, residents of yesterday report finding arrowheads and artifacts in the area. Known originally as Cameron's Spring, Westport Spring for many years was open for some 75 feet as it flowed to the lake. Children delighted in sliding the trough of the Spring as it rushed crystal clear and cold to empty into Upper Rideau Lake.

The original Westport Spring Gazebo was built prior to 1958 and maintained by volunteers (as it is today) from the Women's Institute. The bridge to Goat Island was installed in one piece in 1961 by a crane that slowly positioned the bridge following a slow and careful trip from Concession Street to its current location.

Goat Island was aptly named as the local farmer who owned the property would float his goats over each spring where they spent the summer clipping grass and enjoying a peaceful island.

In Centennial year, the Seniors Group in Westport restructured Westport Spring to ensure a peaceful location to enjoy a beautiful waterfront, sunrises and sunsets.