

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE WINDSOR MAP SHEET AREA, 40 J-G

The Windsor map sheet area embraces most of the land area of Essex, Kent, and Lambton counties, including Pelee Island, the southern-most part of Canada. The terrain is very flat, is sparsely wooded, and has many acres of marshland. The area has a very interesting history and a distinctly bicultural aspect, as it was originally settled by the French.

Surface materials are mainly composed of water-deposited glacial clays and of sands with small areas of till moraine southeast of Chatham and north of Petrolia. Low clay cliffs occur intermittently along the Detroit and St. Clair rivers and larger bluffs dominate the north shore of Lake Erie. The highest elevation is located near Leamington (725 feet above sea level), the lowest being Lake Erie with a mean level of 572 feet.

The shoreland of the area consists of parts of Lake St. Clair, Lake Erie, and the Detroit and St. Clair rivers. Boating access between Erie Beach and Point Pelee is limited by clay cliffs. From Point Pelee westward along the Lake Erie shore and through the Detroit River, access is partly inhibited by cliffs. Rocks, sandbars, high winds, fog, and stone pilings make boating somewhat hazardous on Lake Erie, whereas in the Detroit and St. Clair rivers shoals and weedbeds pose the main problems. Lake St. Clair provides the best boating water in the area, since the only navigational difficulties are sandbars and weedbeds near shore. An additional hazard is the large number of ocean-going vessels that pass through these waters.

The vegetation in the area is predominantly deciduous. The common native species are white elm, red maple, sugar maple, and several varieties of oak and ash. A number of less common species are tulip tree, pawpaw, hop, and sycamore. The many unique varieties of shrubs, cacti, and other plants found on Point Pelee provide the main attraction for the naturalist.

CLIMATE

The climate of the area is moderate, summer temperatures averaging 80°F and seldom exceeding 95°. Winter temperatures rarely drop below 10°F. The average annual rainfall is 30 inches, 8 to 9 inches falling during the summer. The mean annual snowfall is 40 inches, although little of this remains on the ground because of the predominantly mild winter temperatures.

FISH AND WILDLIFE

Fish are plentiful throughout the area, especially in Lake St. Clair, which abounds with walleye, and the Mitchell Bay area in particular, which is noted for its muskellunge. Pike, perch, bass, and catfish are also found in large numbers throughout the waters of the area.

The wildlife viewing and hunting opportunities are excellent. Upland game consisting of many varieties of quail, rabbit, pheasant, grouse, and squirrel, and two large game species, white-tailed deer and brush wolves, provide a major attraction. But the wetland wildlife consisting of ducks, geese, and other waterfowl gives this area its greatest distinction.

SETTLEMENT AND LAND USE

The area was originally part of the territory of the Neutral Indians, who were decimated by the Iroquois about 1650. Later, remnants of the Ottawa, Chipewa, Pottawatamy, and Huron Tribes occupied the area. In the early 1700's development of the area was pioneered by French settlers. Even today, the influence of this first colonization is evident in some of the colorful names in the area, and the large number of original French land titles around Windsor, not to mention the significant number of French-speaking descendants of the early settlers who live in the region.

Throughout the area there are many places of historical interest. The site of the Bois Blanc Blockhouses, near Amherstburg, is one of the most interesting. Probably the most widely known is the grave of Uncle Tom (Josiah Hansen), located near Dresden.

After drainage and tilling, the naturally imperfectly drained soils support a variegated pattern of farming and agriculture is the dominant land use. Commercial fishing still leaves its unique imprint on the shorelands in the form of small dispersed fishing communities, but because of the recent decline of the fishing industry, these communities are fast disappearing. In the vicinity of Windsor and Sarnia petro-chemical industrial complexes are additional attractions for the visitor.

RECREATIONAL CAPABILITY

The nearly level landscape leaves much to be desired in the scenic quality of the upland areas. There are, however, many miles of scenic small boat channels running through the heart of Walpole Island, at the north end of Lake St. Clair. The large number of ocean-going vessels flying the flags of many nations are an added attraction.

Along the south shore of Lake St. Clair and the north shore of Lake Erie there are many miles of good sand beaches. The basic limitations to their use are the localized areas of aquatic vegetation, and the lack of access because of extensive private ownership of the shoreland. Provincial parks at Holiday Beach, Wheatley, and Clay Creek, and Point Pelee National Park provide camping and bathing facilities in the area. These are supplemented by a host of small private parks.

The hunting and viewing of upland game is excellent throughout the area as game is plentiful. Pelee Island has an international reputation for ring-necked pheasants. The many acres of marsh on the shores of Lake St. Clair and Lake Erie provide some of the best shooting and viewing of wetland wildlife in the province. The St. Clair Marsh, in particular, has an international reputation. The major limitation for these recreational activities is the predominant private ownership in the area.

This diversified resource base provides a high capability for a variety of recreational activities. Of primary importance are the opportunities for bathing, hunting, angling, and nature study.

CLIMAT

Le climat de cette région est tempéré. La moyenne des températures estivales se situe autour de 80°F et dépasse rarement 95°F. Quant aux températures hivernales, elles baissent rarement au-dessous de 10°F. La précipitation annuelle moyenne est de 30 pouces dont 8 à 9 tombent durant l'été. L'hiver, le sol reçoit en moyenne 40 pouces de neige; très peu y séjourne longtemps étant donné la clémence de la température.

POISSON ET FAUNE

Le poisson ne manque pas: doré, au lac St. Clair, maskinongé, à la baie Mitchell; brochet, perche, achigan et barbeau en abondance, dans toutes les eaux de la région.

L'endroit fournit les conditions nécessaires à l'observation de la faune et à la chasse. Le gibier des terres hautes adjacentes comprend de nombreuses espèces de cailles, lapins, faisans, lagopèdes et écureuils ainsi que deux espèces de gros gibier: le chevreuil à queue blanche et le loup. La région est réputée pour son gibier des marécages: canards, oies et autres.

COLONISATION ET UTILISATION DE LA TERRE

A l'origine, la région appartenait aux Indiens Neutres, décimés par les Iroquois vers 1650. Plus tard, les survivants des tribus Otaouais, Chipewa, Pottawatamy et Hurons occupèrent la région. Au début du XVIII^e siècle, les Français colonisèrent la région; des noms pittoresques attribués aux lieux, ainsi que de nombreux titres de propriété en langue française en témoignent encore aujourd'hui. Plusieurs descendants de ces colons français habitent encore la région.

On découvre des endroits d'intérêt historique à la grandeur de la région. Le site des blockaus du Bois Blanc près d'Amherstburg, est l'un des plus intéressants. Le mieux connu est probablement le monument élevé à la mémoire de l'oncle Tom (Josiah Hansen), près de Dresden.

Lorsque le drainage souterrain et superficiel est assuré par des tuyaux de grès, ces sols imperfais drainés et à l'état naturel, peuvent servir à des cultures variées. L'agriculture demeure la principale ressource de la région. La pêche commerciale, autrefois importante, n'existe plus maintenant que dans de petits villages de pêcheurs dispersés ici et là sur la côte. Avec l'abandon des pêcheries, on assiste à la disparition des communautés de pêcheurs. Les environs de Windsor et de Sarnia rassemblent des complexes d'industrie pétrochimique pouvant intéresser les visiteurs.

POSSIBILITÉS POUR LA RÉCRÉATION

Le paysage presque uni des terres basses est monotone et se compare difficilement à celui, plus pittoresque, des terres hautes adjacentes. Cependant, de jolis canaux s'étendent sur des distances de plusieurs milles et permettent de naviguer jusqu'au cœur de l'île Walpole, dans la partie nord du lac St. Clair. Les grands océaniques qui battent pavillon étranger et sillonnent ces eaux, ajoutent de l'intérêt à la région.

Plusieurs milles de belles plages de sable longent les rivages sud du lac St. Clair et nord du lac Érié. Malheureusement, la présence d'une végétation aquatique et le très grand nombre de propriétés privées, en rendent l'utilisation difficile. Il est possible de camper et de se baigner dans les parcs provinciaux, aux plages Holiday, Wheatley et Clay Creek ainsi qu'à la pointe Pelee, dans le parc national. Il s'y trouve aussi un grand nombre de petits parcs privés.

La chasse et l'observation du gibier dans son habitat naturel présentent des conditions excellentes sur tout le territoire des terres hautes adjacentes, où le gibier est abondant. Les faisans à colliers de l'île Pelée sont renommés dans le monde entier. Les marécages qui s'étendent sur plusieurs acres le long des lacs St. Clair et Érié, constituent l'un des meilleurs endroits de la province, pour l'observation et le tir du gibier aquatique. A ce sujet, les marais St. Clair semblent être le plus important et le mieux connu. Les nombreuses propriétés privées rendent l'accès de cette région difficile et en limitent ainsi les possibilités récréatives.

Ce périmètre de terre diversifiée offre de nombreuses possibilités pour plusieurs activités récréatives: natation, chasse, pêche, étude de la nature, etc.