



The Penetanguishene Trail is located on the original road allowance between the former Township of Flos and the former Township of Medonte. The trail is an example of an early roadway surveyed and constructed for the military. It has historical and associative value due to its association with early military activity in Canada.

During the autumn of 1793, Governor Simcoe travelled to Penetanguishene Bay with the view to establish a naval and military station as a base for supplies and for defense. Simcoe was firm on the plan to put Canada in a state of defense. His deputy surveyor made a complete survey of the Penetanguishene harbour and in 1798, the bay and islands were purchased from the Chippewa.

Governor Simcoe had arrived at the bay via the Humber River by portaging through the Oak Ridges to the Narrows, through Lake Couchiching and on the Matchedash Bay. As there were many portages the route was long and inconvenient and another route was needed. There was also the threat of war with the United States that had been looming for some time, and the Treaty of Versailles had plunged the Canadian fur trade into a state of anxiety with passage routes being disrupted.

If the United States took the British fort at Detroit, there would be a bottleneck that would block all shipping to the upper great lakes. Fort Michillmackinac at the north of Lake Huron was strategic to Britain's claim to the west. If Detroit was taken, Fort Michillmackinac would be isolated. Therefore, the Penetanguishene plan was imperative.

In 1811, The North-West Co. suggested the establishment of a road from Kempenfeldt Bay to Penetanguishene and appealed for a grant of land at each end of the route, as boats and property were constantly seized by US Customs officials. Finally, in 1808 Samuel Wilmot, the deputy surveyor of Upper Canada, was instructed to survey a road near the old Indian path leading from Kempenfeldt Bay on Lake Simcoe to Penetanguishene Bay. Yet, despite the survey no actual work had begun on the road at the time of the American declaration of war in 1812. The fall of Detroit in 1813, and the severing of its lines of communication to the west, gave the British the incentive to finally commit men and resources to the endeavor.

General Gordon Drummond saw all too well the urgent necessity of completing the Penetanguishene Road because it was very impractical to transport anything via the route until a road being cut upwards of 30 miles in length was made. It was calculated that it would take 200 men at least three weeks to cut the road before it could be made passable. In December 1814, Dr. William (Tiger) Dunlop was placed in charge of a party and instructed to hack the road from the wilderness. The War of 1812 was over before the road was completed.

However, in its original form the Penetanguishene Road was little more than an uneven stump-ridden trail that became all but impassable after heavy rainfall. Travel along it by wagon was limited to a jarring 12 miles per day at the best of times. Now the route north began at York; Yonge Street to the south shore of Kempenfeldt Bay; across the bay either by raft or sleigh once the bay was frozen. Where there was a log house to stay overnight. Then travelled up the new road, across Orr Lake, again by raft or sleigh, staying overnight at a way-station south of Wyebridge and on to Penetanguishene the next day. Eventually, when the settlers came up the road it deviated at Hillsdale to go around Orr Lake. The original road over the hill towards the lake still remains today.

The property has design and physical value as an early example of construction methods for roadways in the province. There are reports that the logs of a 'corduroy road' are still in place. Despite the improvement to the trail, an alternate transportation route to Penetanguishene from Barrie was established along the 9 Mile Portage, approximately 25 kilometres to the south and west.

The Township of Springwater designated this portion of the Penetanguishene Trail as an official heritage site in 2012.