

HISTORICAL SKETCHES  
of  
CROSSLEY-HUNTER  
SOUTH DORCHESTER  
ELGIN  
COUNTY

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Round Bar

(C)

LYONS

Highway # 73.

→ To Aylmer →

Tile Yard  
Wilson Mc.Creadie

R.M.Fulerton

Nicholas Brown  
John Felker  
(Roberts Bros)

J.Blaje  
(Russell Moore)  
Matthew White  
John Learn  
(Geo.& Aaron Roberts)

William Smith  
(Syd.Brunsdon)

John Grawburg  
(Fred Booker)

Henry Roberts  
(E.L.Sweet)

David Roberts  
(Jim & Mac Appleford)

Andrew Roberts  
(Karl Wright)

Dave Sherk  
(Cecil Legg)

John Sherk  
(Kenneth Cartwright)

Phillip Ackert  
(G.L.Ackert)

James Brice  
(G.L.Ackert)

Ben Sherk  
(Gordon Pettit)

Jake Sherk  
(Ken Summers)

David Wellington  
(Peter Drabic)

Concession

Concession

Concession

G.C.Finch  
(Geo Greenwood)

James Ballah  
(Geo.Abell)

Robert Brown  
(Alvin Willsey)

Isaac Appleford  
(R.J.Ferguson)

Quarter Road

Crossley-Hunter Church  
Quarter Road

Geo.Appleford  
(Joe Jenkins)

School -

John Luton  
(Joe Leslie)

Edmund Shepherd  
(Roy Legg)

Eighth

Charles Learn  
(Mannings)

Geo.Learn  
(Roy Learn)

Ninth

James Smith  
Geo.Bennett

Sylvester Pettit  
(J.C.Jenkins)

Geo.Pettit  
(Fred Hide)

Geo.Legg  
(Henry Legg)

Tenth

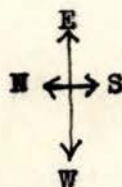
John Taylor  
(Roy Ketchabaw)

Geo.Emery  
(Neil Ferguson)

David Moore  
(Walter Moore)

Wm.Faucett  
(Ross Evert)

Donald Mc.Gregor Duncan Mc.Gregor  
(Roy Mc.Gregor)



Deacons

(Hiram Peer)

← Belmont ←

Highway # 74

→ To Mapleton →

Yarmouth Township

Map. made by  
C.Aleta. Sweet



This brief history of Crossley-Hunter has been compiled by Aleta(Dance)Sweet. We regret that it is far from complete. Our apologies to the families,who are not written up,because information was not made available.

Our gratitude to :- Mr.James Appleford, Mrs.G.L.Ackert (Ann Smith)Miss Sarah Ackert,Mr.and Mrs.Roy Learn(Stella Mc. Gregor)Mr.and Mrs.Roy Mc.Gregor(Florence Finch),Mr.Robert J.Ferguson and Marie Ferguson and Mrs.Ed.Moroughan(Bertha Evert),who furnished us with much of the data.

C.A.(D)S.

Compiled in the year 1950.

## CROSSLEY - HUNTER.

Crossley-Hunter is not a village or even a near village. It is merely a cross roads, with a United church on one corner and a public school on another corner. Nevertheless the neighbourhood is so rich in historical interest, that those living in the immediate neighbourhood, are proud to be classed as residents of Crossley-Hunter.

Geographically, the heart of the community lies on the ninth concession of South Dorchester, where the west quarter road crosses it. The community itself extends, probably a mile and a half to east and west, also to the north and south to the eighth and tenth concessions.

So far as can be learned, this area, at the time when the first settlers came, in the early '30's of last century, was a wilderness, with no human inhabitants.

Much earlier than this date, even prior to 1640, it is known that this tract of land, from Niagara River to Detroit was well settled with a tribe of Indians, known as the Neutrals. Excavations and old ruins give definite evidence that they lived in villages.

At that time, Northern Ontario with Midland as its centre, was the home of the Huron Indians. Upper New York <sup>State</sup> ~~State~~ was settled by Iroquois. The outlet for the Huron fur trade was at Montreal, while the outlet for the Iroquois fur trade was New York. In order to secure the monopoly of the fur trade in the west, the Iroquois, in 1640, came over in large numbers, and ruthlessly exterminated the tribe of Neutrals, who had been friendly to the Hurons.



The few, who escaped alive, fled into Michigan and even farther west. Their purpose accomplished, the Iroquois returned to their homes in New York State and with the exception of an occasional hunter, no human being lived in this area, until after the American Revolution, when a few United Empire Loyalists drifted in and made homes for themselves. Although it is estimated that between forty and fifty thousand Loyalists sought refuge in Canada, most of them went to Eastern Canada. Comparatively few came to these parts, because it was a vast and discouraging wilderness. Toward the end of the eighteenth century, under Governor Simcoe, serious consideration was given to colonization. Shiploads of immigrants were brought over and able Noblemen from the British Isles were entrusted with the administration of the young colonies. Col. Thomas Talbot had charge of 540,000 acres along Lake Erie, spread over what is now twenty-eight townships, including South Dorchester. Following the Napoleonic wars, just at that time, dire poverty and wide spread unemployment in the old countries, provided stimulus for immigration from England and Scotland, to Canada, on a large scale. About that time also a potato famine in Ireland cut its population by a half, so that many Irish settlers came also. During the Napoleonic wars, England's lumber trade with Scandinavian countries had been cut off and England had developed a huge lumber trade with Canada. Hence vessels that went from Canada, bearing cargoes of lumber, returned loaded with courageous immigrants - our ancestors, who pioneered this area, amid unspeakable hardships and privations.



## Chapter II - The Name.

Although this settlement dates back to the early 30's of the last century, it had no special name, until a large red brick house, just north of the corners, now owned by George Abell, was built by James Ballah.



This immense house was three years in the building and was a real show place in those times. The roof is of black slate and inlaid in the west roof, in octagonal blocks of red slate are the words - Maple Leaf Farm - 1885.

About this time, the settlers had made arrangements to get regular mail into their neighbourhood, by meeting a stage coach at Lyons, three miles and a half east, which made regular trips between the towns of Aylmer and Dorchester. Obviously the neighbourhood had to have a name, so Maple leaf Post Office was chosen.

James Meikle, who then owned the farm, now owned by Joe Leslie, used to drive to Lyons, get the Maple Leaf mail and bring it to his home. Often it would lie there for days, before anyone claimed it, as people received little mail then; and were often surprised when a neighbour, in passing, would shout in - "Jim Meikle told me to tell you that he has a letter for you."

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## Chapter III - The Church.

On the first corner, east of Crossley-Hunter, lived Wilson Mc.Creadie, whose wife was a sister to the late Dr.H.T.Crossley ; and in 1890, chiefly through the influence of Mr.and Mrs.Mc.Creadie,the famed evangelists - Crossley and Hunter conducted an evengelistic campaign in the woods,just south of the main corners. It was well organized and well conducted.Jennie Stewart,a talented musician of the community accompanied the singing on a small reed organ.A deeply stirred community with keen religious awakening,was the result.

Before this time,families had attended a Methodist church in Lyons, a Disciple church at Mapleton and a Presbyterian church at Belmont. Immediately following the evangelistic meetings,the need for a community place of worship was recognized and promptly built.



Since it was the outcome of the Crossley - Hunter revival,it seemed natural to name it the Crossley - Hunter Methodist church. The former name 'Maple Leaf' gradually died out.Particularly so,when a rural mail delivery route was established from Belmont,which served this entire community,daily.



So now, the church, the school and the entire community bear the name - Crossley-Hunter.

Robert Brown and his wife came from Glasgow, Scotland in 1843. They went first to St. Thomas. At that time, St. Thomas was a very small village. The Talbot settlement was already pretty well taken up in the vicinity of St. Thomas, so making his way north and east, through well nigh impenetrable forest, Robert Brown secured a 200 acre tract of land, on the corner of which the Crossley-Hunter church now stands. The land upon which to build the church having been given for the purpose by Robert Brown's son Henry, who lived on the farm at the time of its erection.

The Crossley-Hunter church has always been an outside appointment of whatever charge, Conference has seen fit to link it up with. It has been in turn attached to Lyons, Sparta, Yarmouth Centre and at the present time, is part of the Springfield charge.

On two occasions, it has been linked with two other small churches, under a student minister. On one other occasion, when there was a growing inclination to close up small rural churches and force families to attend the larger centres, Crossley-Hunter was left without a minister. The local people didn't take kindly to this and after careful deliberation, arranged with Rev. John Veale, a retired Methodist minister, living at Dorchester, to come on Sundays for one service and to look after funerals and weddings, when needed. This arrangement proved very satisfactory for a number of years.

When the Conference was convinced that Crossley-Hunter church intended to remain in action, it took steps to fit her into the set-up again.

Some of the finest ministers of our church, have in their student days, served this charge, Namely :- The Late Rev. Burton Robinson, Dr. A.M. Stuart, the late Rev. E Matthews, Rev. Clayton Searle, Rev. Steven Mathers.

In 1871, when the church was opened, it was part of the Lyons circuit. Rev.



In 1891, when the Crossley-Hunter church opened, it was part of the Lyons circuit. Rev. James Kennedy was the minister. The following year, Rev. S.G. Staples became the minister. Then Rev. Robert Thompson, followed by Rev. C.P. Wells and later Rev. S.C. Edmonds.

Then the Crossley-Hunter church was placed under the superintendency of Sparta, with Rev. S.R. McVittie as senior pastor, assisted first by Rev. Burton Robinson and later by Rev. W.B. Midford.

Next it was linked up with the Orwell church and a preaching appointment in the Kingsmill school house, and was served by the following :- The late Rev. E. Matthews, Rev. James Foster and Dr. A.M. Stuart.

At this point Crossley-Hunter was left unprovided with a minister, hoping that its members would settle themselves among surrounding congregations

As has been stated, Rev. John Veale filled in the breach until 1914, when Crossley-Hunter church was again attached to Lyons, under the following ministers :- The late Rev. Joseph Jones, Rev. G.W. Butt, Rev. J.E. Cook, Rev. Clayton Searle, Rev. T.C. Wilkinson, Dr. Sheldon Bartlet (M.D.) Rev. H.M. Wright, Rev. R.R. Connor, Rev. A.M. Grant and Rev. R.W. Langdon.

In 1929, this church was handed over to Yarmouth Centre, under the following ministers :- Rev. W.A. Finlay, Rev. D.A. Armstrong, Rev. A.C. Moorhouse and Rev. C.W. Morrow.

In 1944 the next move came. This time to Springfield with Rev. J.T. White, then Rev. Chas. Vickerson and Rev. R.C. Copeland.

When the church was opened in 1891, Miss Sarah Ackert was the first organist and served in that capacity, continuously with great faithfulness for forty-seven years, when she was succeeded by Hazel Learn.

The members of the first choir were :- G.L. Ackert, Ann Smith, Wilbur Smith, Bristol Smith, Clara Smith, Almeda Smith, Hiram Pettit, Esther Pettit.

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FAREWELL ANNIVERSARY SERVICE  
Crossley Hunter United Church  
Sunday Sept. 13, 1964 2:30 P.M.

ORDER OF SERVICE

- Call to Worship
- Doxology
- Invocation
- Hymn 402
- Scripture
- Prayer
- Springfield Choir
- History of the Church by Mr. Walter Matthews
- Offering
- Offertory
- Springfield Choir
- Greetings from Elgin Presbytery by the  
Chairman, Rev. Wm. Shaver of Dutton
- Hymn 164
- Introduction of Guest Speaker by Rev. Geo. A. Shields
- Sermon - Rev. Crossley Hunter B.A., D.D.
- Hymn 166
- Benediction - Dr. Crossley Hunter

Our special thanks to Dr. Crossley Hunter, Rev. Wm. Shaver, Chairman of Elgin Presbytery and the Springfield United Church Choir.

Students who served Crossley Hunter United Church were:

- The Late Rev. Burton Robinson
- Dr. A. M. Stuart
- Rev. E. Matthews
- Rev. Clayton Searle
- Rev. Steven Mathers

The names of former ministers are:

- Rev. S. R. Vittie from Sparta about 1910
- Rev. John Veale till 1912
- Rev. Joseph Jones
- Rev. G. W. Butt
- Rev. Coole
- Rev. Clayton Searle
- Rev. Q. C. Wilkinson
- Dr. Sheldon Bartlett
- Rev. H. H. Wright
- Rev. P. R. Connor
- Rev. A. M. Grant
- Rev. R. W. Langdon
- Rev. W. A. Finlay 1929
- Rev. D. A. Armstrong
- Rev. A. C. Moorehouse
- Rev. C. W. Morrow
- Rev. J. T. White
- Rev. Charles Vickerson
- Rev. R. C. Copeland
- Rev. N. G. Cook
- Rev. Geo. A. Shields
- Rev. G. G. Heffelfinger
- Rev. Jean Donaldson

From March to July Mr. John Brown and Mr. Don Parsons

With gratitude to all  
Crossley Hunter United Church  
Trustees, Elders and Stewards



Chapter IV - The School. *(Crossley-Hunter)*

No one will ever know how much we owe to those pioneers for their ambition and insistence that their children be educated. How they accomplished it, with so few facilities, in the face of what seemed to be unsurmountable obstacles, is hard to see.

David  
Wellington  
Finch.

In the case of David Wellington Finch, who came from New York State, in 1839, settling first south of Mapleton, where Sam Garten now lives, but moving the following year to the corner north of Crossley-Hunter, now the Peter Drabic farm. There were thirteen children in this family, all of whom grew up.

Before there was any school, for them to attend, the two eldest children were school age. Their parents paid a fee for each child, to a teacher who came to their home to give them their lessons.

There is no record that this was a common practice, but in all probabilities, other families, who had children employed the same teacher. Even after a school was built with teachers who could and did carry pupils along in their studies, farther than High School Entrance requirements, numbers of these young people were sent away to College, to take a business course, to become teachers and to study medicine. Dr. Jim Mc. Gregor in those days became a graduate of Ann Arbor Michigan. Dr. Dan Ferguson, an uncle of Robert, and Neil Ferguson also became a doctor.

The first school was built of logs, in 1860 on the farm of John Learn, a mile west of the present school. Ruth Belchor was the first teacher. A Mr. Widmore succeeded her and remained for three years., during which time, he was not only teacher, but janitor as well. At night, he slept in a bunk, built in the wall at the back of the school room.

Sunday school was also held in this school. 'Par' Deacon was superintendent.

The Deacons lived on the next farm west of the John Learn farm. Both of these farms were long narrow fifty acre strips, the two strips now have



become the west part of the farm owned by George Bennett.

Deacon  
Family

The Deacon Farm buildings were in a little hollow and to this day, older residents know that spot as 'Deacon's Hollow'.

A son of 'Par' Deacon took the farm, now owned by Alfred Connor and a daughter married Roy Learn's grandfather, George Learn about 1856.

In that time, when Pioneer communities were fast coming to life, the demand for a better school made itself felt, and a structure of white brick was built down at the four corners opposite the church, in 1880.

The acre of ground upon which to build it, was purchased from George Learn, for \$ 100.00. The original agreement of sale of this property is an interesting possession of Roy Learn. It contains a clause, that if this land ceases to be school property, it reverts to the original farm. The trustees, whose signatures are on this document are :- Andrew Roberts, George Appleford, George Pettit.

Teachers who taught in this school were :- George Emery, Harvey Mann, Fisher Ferguson, Emily Mc.Creadie, Duncan Taylor, Alfred Buck, Ernie Kilmer, George Young, Violet Mc.Gregor, Bessie Crawford, Miss Cron, George Smith, Miss Todd, Martha Grease William Ackhard, L. Thompson, Maggie Deacon, Mr. Rapleje, Tena Noble, Herbert Branion, Laura Simpson, Miss Coleman, Miss Abbott, Isabel Mitten.

The new school became a real community centre. Sunday School was held in it. During the year, following the revival meetings while the church was under construction, regular church services were held in it conducted by Rev. Neil Wood. Another highly beneficial project, one whose influence is felt to this day, was a singing school. A competent instructor was engaged and in the long winter evenings, everyone, who could sing, came to singing school. Each one brought a candle, which was the only way to light the room.

This school, although a vast improvement on the first one, eventually had its day. In 1911 it was torn down and a modern new red brick one erected on the





A 1910 picture of Cressley Hunter School

Teacher - Miss Isobel Mitten

Front row - George Jenkins, Albert Ashton, <sup>Melvin</sup> (?) Jenkins, Aaron Roberts,  
(?) Johnson, Lily Betterley, Grace Appleford, (?) Bagnall, Fred  
Grawburg.  
2nd - (?) Jenkins, Henry Legg, Jim Jenkins, Annie Grawburg,  
3rd - Clarence Rogers, Thurman Legg, Clare Appleford, Allen Grawburg,  
Marjorie Ackert, Irene Betterley, Laura Jenkins, Sarah Grawburg,  
Beatrice Ashton.  
4th - Adrian Ashton, Pearl Betterley, Mary Grawburg, Theresa Roberts,  
Ethel Betterley, Ruby Wright, (?) Bagnall.



same site.

The trustees at the time were :- G.L.Ackert, and later Joe Jenkins,  
James Appleford and Arthur Moore.



The teachers who have served the present school are :-

Emma Cline, Ella Cline, Nina Clark, Miss Reid, Jean Harkness, Eva Taylor, Eva Legg,  
Marion Mc.Intyre, Eleatha Davidson, Jane Taylor, Myrtle Brown, Audrey Furse,  
Audrey Gent, Nancy Little, Mrs. Rred Brown, Ardath (Cline) Millard.

In the early days a lady teacher got a salary of from \$200.00 to \$300.00

A man teacher might be able to get as high as \$ 400.00. At the turn of the  
century the status of teaching and also economic conditions had improved  
to the extent that salaries rose, ranging from \$ 500.00 to \$800.00.

Following the World war #1, they rose as high as \$1000.00 During the de-  
pression in the 30's, salaries went away down with everything else, but  
following the world war #2 they rose sharply. In 1950 the teacher here  
received \$2,000.00

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## Chapter V - The Catfish Creek.

One of the north branches of the Catfish Creek crosses the ninth concession, just east of Crossley-Hunter and again crosses the quarter road, a little south of it. Its course is so winding that it touches practically every farm in the neighbourhood. Its winding course with its wooded flats, adds beauty and picturesqueness to the countryside.

Aside from that, it has been of high value economically, as a natural drainage system and as a water supply. Some of the farmers to this day depend upon the creek for watering their stock.



In the spring, as soon as the ice goes out, swarms of suckers come up from the lake to spawn. Farmers have, every year, gone out with lanterns, at night, and picked these very delicious fish off the rapids. Even now,

although our diet is not limited as it was in the old days, they are a real treat. In the old days when their diet was very limited, they were not only a treat but highly beneficial to the general health.

Most of the year, it is quite a harmless little stream, but in a spring freshet or a flood, it has at times become so turbulent as to be terrifying.

In 1893, heavy snow had come early in December. On December 15th, Jennie Ferguson, who was teaching at Martin's school, east of Lyons, held her Christmas entertainment. Several days before it, the weather became very mild, with thawing and heavy rains. The roads were neither suitable for buggies or cutters. The Ferguson family went to Jennie's Entertainment, veriously equipped. Mrs. Ferguson and her two sons, Robert, fifteen years old and