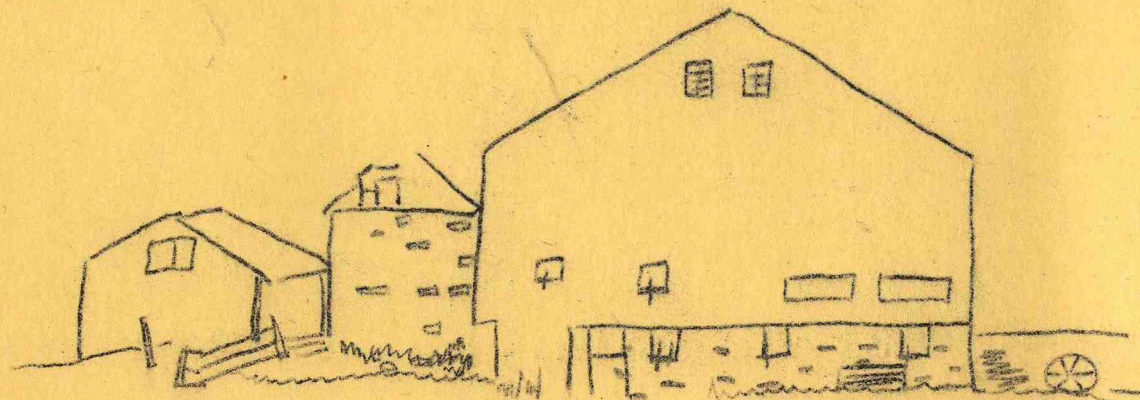


C.Y.W.I.

FARM HISTORY



SKETCHES OF CENTRAL YARMOUTH

-by Mrs. Angus McKenzie-

In compiling these sketches of Central Yarmouth, it seems most imperative that we begin by recording the most important data concerning our township "Yarmouth" from which we derive our name.

"Yarmouth", Elgin County's largest township, was named by the pioneer settlers for their home in Suffolk, England. The Indians called it "The Plains" from which Plains Baptist Church derives its name.

Yarmouth was given its status in 1850, and in 1852 became a part of Elgin County, which previous to this date had been part of Middlesex.

Our township covers 70,000 acres of rich fertile soil, lying directly north of Lake Erie and census show at time of writing (Jan. 1956), 7,000 people exclusive of the hospital area south of St. Thomas between the fifth and sixth concessions, where some 2,200 patients reside.

St. Thomas, the capital of Elgin County is bounded on three sides by the Township of Yarmouth, and before it was incorporated in 1852 was part of the township. Yarmouth Township hall was built in Stanley Street in 1851 and in 1852 was purchased by St. Thomas for the village hall.

It was here, the pioneer settlers came to elect their council and attend to road work and other municipal matters. Each land owner drew a stated number of loads of gravel

each year according to the amount of land he owned, in this manner "Statute Labor"--the roads were kept passable. More traveled thoroughfares were supported by toll,

The part of the township we know as "Central Yarmouth" lies between concessions four and seven, bounded on the west by the old London and Port Stanley Gravel Road, now known as Highway No. 4 and on the east by the road leading from Johnstown proper, to Sparta. This road too, is an original ox-trail, now a splendid black top County road. A few of the fine productive farm lands are still in the hands of the families of the original owners. Some dating back to fourth and fifth generations.

Gone are many of the familiar names of old pioneers to whose splendid courage, fortitude and co-operation we owe our fine heritage. Let us mention a few of these familiar names--Shephard, Penhale, Russ, Sanders, Courser, Baker, Pound, Fisher, Rapelje, Davis, Mann, Mills, Martin, Glover, Brady, Kipp, Axford, Maynard, Parish, Hilborne, *HEPBURN* Couse, McVey, Marlatt and Doan and to those we have overlooked we ask their pardon.

Beginning at the east end of Concession 7, we start with Lot 19, Concession 7--the James Lewis homestead acquired in 1862.

LOT 10, CONCESSION 5, YARMOUTH

-by Mrs. Harold Parker-

The late Richard and Harriett Axford, whose maiden name was Curtis, bought this portion of land consisting of 100 acres from a squatter and obtained the Crown deed from the government on November 14, 1863.

Richard Axford and Harriett Curtis were married on April 6, 1840, in Devonshire, England, and left the same day in a sailboat to come to Canada. They were accompanied by Mr. Axford's five brothers and seven sisters. The Atlantic crossing taking nine weeks as they were blown into Newfoundland for a time; the boat finally landed at Port Stanley.

For a time they lived on the farm owned by Joshua Parrish latterly known as the William Van Horne farm. Then they moved to the present Axford homestead between the 4th and 5th Concessions of Yarmouth Township.

They had a family of eleven children--two dying in childhood, Samuel at the age of 12 and John in infancy, both being buried in the Seminary cemetery. The remaining members were Richard, Elizabeth, Rebecca, Mary Jane, Jack, Charles, Harriett, Edgar and Arscott. Arscott is the last living member of his family at the time of writing. (1956).

The most exciting experience the family remembers is going back to the sugar bush with the oxen on a sleigh, when a bear came out of the bush frightening the oxen, who immediately started to run away and all had to make a dash