

HIGHLIGHTS OF YARMOUTH TOWNSHIP

1810-1877

Yarmouth Township has been called the choice spot in Western Ontario for agricultural value.

In 1875 its 69,628 fertile acres were valued at \$46. per acre. The real personal property amounting to \$3,402,888. a sum exceeding upon the payroll, that of other municipalities in the county of Elgin.

This very creditable, social and commercial progress had its origin in the year around 1810.

The first lots settled were along Talbot Street. In addition to the trials and privations of pioneer life, the men endured for our national existence; the fatigues, vicissitudes and horrors of the war of 1812-13-14. They are worthy of remembrance every one, and in this memorial account may we record their names and their first habitations.

The Drakes, Mandevilles, Rapeljes and one or two other families, settled lots in that part of Yarmouth, now occupied by St. Thomas. Beside these dwellings on the road from Kettle Creek to Catfish, lived Garret Smith, Moses Rice, Edwin Bartow, Garret Oakes, Major Neville, Abraham House, Wm. Merrill, the Secords and the Wilsons. *AND THE STOKES.*

Captain David Secord settled in his new log house a mile east of New Sarum in 1810. One room in his house was reserved for a school in 1818. Moses Rice came in 1810, House and Bartow in 1811, Justice and Wm. Wilcox in 1812.

Bartow, a brave true man was killed in Malcom's Mill in the year 1812. Justice Wilcox built the first frame house and planted the first apple trees and kept a tavern at Yarmouth Heights, a small place east of St. Thomas.

A picture of Yarmouth then and now would present widely different views. To illustrate the trials of the folk of those early days, and the struggles which were endured, to procure common necessities of life, I can not do better than to copy a paragraph from the quaint and vivid "Pioneer Sketches" written by one of the earliest pioneers, Garret Oakes, Esq. who built his home on the east bank of No. 19 creek, adjacent to where the old New Sarum school stands. I quote, "In the year 1810 in the 19th year of my age, I took up a parcel of land in the Township of Yarmouth, at which time my two hands constituted my sole stock in trade."

"In 1813, Col. Talbot sent word to a few settlers that he had wool to let on halves. I hired a horse, went to Port Talbot, got 50 lbs. wool; that was 40 miles travelled. I then hired a horse, took the wool to Port Dover and had it carded, for which I paid \$6.25, returned home which made 100 miles more. My wife spun the wool on a loom I had made for weaving but we had no reeds for flannel. I went 60 miles on foot to a reed maker, but he had none suitable and wouldn't leave his work on the farm until I agreed to give him \$6.50, the price of 2 reeds, and work on the farm in his place while he made them. I returned home with the reeds, my wife wove the cloth and I took

my half to Dover, to have it fulled at the mill. When finished we had for our share 18 yards of flannel for which I paid \$34.75, travelled 140 miles on horse back and 260 miles on foot making 400 miles, and requiring 15 days labor."

As late as 1828, George Page Mills walked to Long Point and carried on his back the first bag of potatoes he ever planted on what is now known as the 7th Concession of Yarmouth.

One thing in common with the nature of those early times is the feeling of genuine good will and friendship with which every man regarded his neighbor. In the words of Mr. Oakes written at his home in New Sarum at the age of 85 years, he says: "The artless simplicity of that people, gave a piece of mind that few are blessed with, in the present state of society, because then every man had his neighbor's interest interwoven with his own, so it was in effect a co-operative community, and I can say from experience that in the primeval forests of Canada for years every settler for five miles was a neighbor in reality. We then enjoyed true contentment, which is a blessing the wealthy often seek in vain."

The history of the settlement of Yarmouth comprises three periods and three portions, the centre, the south and the north.

The Talbot Street settlement of which we have spoken. The settlement by the Quakers or Friends in the south and the Scottish Highlanders in the north.

As we know a large portion of the township was granted to Col. Baby, a British officer. About 1810 he appointed

Jonathan Doan as agent for the sale of these lands. Mr. Doan settled on a farm later owned by Mr. Gunn just west of the Quaker Cemetery near Sparta. He was the forerunner of many of the Quaker families still prominent in South Yarmouth.

Jonathan had 6 sons, Israel, Joel, Joshua, Samuel, John, and Benjamin, the ruins of the old home where the boys were raised stood in front of the Gunn home for many years.

They built a tanner in the early times and on the list of those in the London district, indicted for treason, in the trouble of 1837, may be found the names of Joel P. Doan and Joshau G. Doan, tanners. Israel and Benjamin settled in South Yarmouth and Joel was a physician in the West. Joshua G. Doan died a martyr to his principles, on the scaffold, in the town of London. Those who knew him declare he was a brave true-hearted man.

If Jonathan Doan was the projector and promoter of the settlement of the Plains, his descendants have every reason to be proud of his work. It is now a land of noble farms and good roads, fruitful orchards and rich hospitable homes.

The north section contains many beautiful productive farms, but was not settled until about 1830. In that year and soon after came the Campbells, McIntyres, McKellars, McKays, Blacks, Lockes, Gilberts and many others from Inverness and Argyle.

They erected fine homes of white brick on their lands and the country still speaks of wealth and comfort.

The geography of Yarmouth is favorable to its prosperity

it is free from swamps, gullies and wastelands and its soil of such fertile quality that it is little wonder Col. Talbot selected it as the choice of the lake shore townships.

The villages are not numerous or important, commercially at least, since St. Thomas, once a part of Yarmouth is within easy access of the inhabitants.

Union the important stop between London and Port Stanley on the plank road had the agency for the Montreal Telephone Co., drug store, woollen mills, grist mill, general store, hotel and Enos Scott's pork packing plant. Hogs were purchased at 2 to 3 cents live weight when the demand warranted it.

Sparta. In 1854 John Brumpton was the general merchant. G. W. Wood, the medical doctor. Also in 1857, R. L. Sanderson, M.D. settled in Sparta. In 1847, W. L. Bailey was the first to start growing fruit on Concession 4. The innkeeper in 1836 was Wilson Bailey.

Orwell. In 1854, G. O. Clutton started a nursery in the village. Geo. Lale, saw miller and lumber dealer settled in 1856. Walter C. Lewis from 1843 was a gentleman farmer and jobber. In 1868 A. Pilfer manufactured brick and tile. In 1843-44, D. Sutherland kept a post office and ran the general store. Lewis Marshall manufactured pumps as late as 1872. G. W. Wilcox settled in 1851 and was a breeder of fine horses. There were 2 hotels one at each end of the village.

Hotel keeping was a popular occupation in the early days of our township and there was much use for them.

Tired travellers rested their weary teams after long hauls over rugged roads, visited over a friendly glass and after a hearty meal, retired until sun-up.

Port Stanley was the most prominent of the villages in 1820, and we feel no history could be complete without mention of the important role it has played in the development of our own county and Middlesex as well.

Kettle Creek was for many years the unmusical name. It is said the reason for the choice lay in the fact that a potash kettle was lost in its waters. That is possible and it is a certain fact that potash and black salt were the staple commodities then. In 1818 the Zavitz, Minor and Savage families settled on the Yarmouth side of the creek and soon after Col John Bostwick, who named the place Port Stanley lived there until his death. In 1822, he erected a large warehouse and dealt in ashes, grain, and other products. Samuel Shepherd dispersed grain for dollars, and his genial bearing as well as honesty in business made him a favorite with all.

James Henderson was the clerk and bookkeeper in the early 1850 and resided in Port Stanley with his family, the eldest daughter of the family born in Port Stanley was the late Isabel Henderson McKenzie, wife of James C. McKenzie, Grey Manor Farms, Concession 7. In 1853, half million dollars in wheat was shipped from Port Stanley. Prospects are good that this may soon be an important fishing station, as equipment

to the value of several thousand dollars have been purchased and so far results seem to be satisfactory. Up to 1856, fully two million dollars has been expended on the harbour, in 1862 another \$10,000 was added and in 1875 the McKenzie government added another \$10,000. Perhaps it was not all economically expended, however a good safe harbour at Port Stanley was of provincial importance. In 1832, "Thames" and many other steamers ran to Sandusky, Buffalo, Cleveland, also many important ports along our Canadian shore.

The Dominion Transport Co. owned by Eccles, Munro and Wade ran the steamer the "Alma Munro" from the upper lakes to the eastern ports every season with freight. In 1874, Port Stanley was incorporated as a village. Major Ellison was reeve and Col. J. Bostwick was clerk. Mr. C. Thompson established the first general store in 1830. Merchants at the time of writing in 1877 are Messrs. Price, Arkell, Findlay, Pollock and others.

Andrew Hepburn was the prominent contractor and builder settling in 1847. The school built in 1832 created great interest with its teachers Master Brown and Miss Stafford in charge. Also its four churches, Episcopal in '44, Presbyterian in '45, Roman Catholic '50 and Methodist in 1860.

The village is pleasantly situated, yes even romantically so, with hills upon its three sides and the beautiful blue waters at the south.

The "Frazer House" standing proudly on the heights is a most popular summer resort as well as the home of the courteous

Mr. Frazer, who for 20 years was conductor on the London and Port Stanley R. R.

The price of lots are held high in Port Stanley but no industry has been established and the population to date has only reached 900 souls. But on the whole it is one of Yarmouth's greatest assets and there are many good reasons why progress and prosperity should lie ahead.

..Written by Mrs. Russell Axford. (1966)

HISTORICAL DATA OF YARMOUTH TOWNSHIP

- Compiled by Daniel McIntyre
- and embodied in his address -
- at Old Boys Reunion at Yarmouth Centre, June 25, 1910 -

On the 21st of May, 1803, the late Col. Talbot felled the first tree in what has always been known as the Talbot settlement. Yarmouth, although a part of the Talbot settlement at that time, was not then surveyed. It is a source of pride to us to know that the Colonel in making application to the Home Government for a grant of land amounting to 5,000 acres (the very first grant), asked that the location be made in the Township of Yarmouth. He failed to secure the grant, the Canada Company, and Baby family, having received grants already.

There was scarcely any settlement in Yarmouth until 1810, one hundred years ago. The first two families reported in the records are Daniel Rapelje and David Man-deville. That was in 1809.

Yarmouth was surveyed in 1809 by ^{Col.} M. Burwell. It is one of the best surveyed townships in the County. We have in the township 71,000 acres. Yarmouth was called after a seaport town in the county of Norfolk, near the boundry of Suffolk, and also as a compliment to Francis Seymour (Lord Cornway), who in 1703 was made Earl of Yarmouth.

Up to 1840 municipal government was by quarter-sessions.