

Aldborough.

Dunwich



MAP of 1877

HISTORY OF THE COMMUNITY

The first telephone line between West Lorne and Glencoe was built by the twin McMillan Brothers, Arch and Duncan, in 1900. It was constructed by a line on the Graham Road Alborough, from West Lorne to Concession 2, Alborough, then east to the Alborough and Dunwich townline, and along the townline to Glencoe. The Central was at the Crinan P.O., with Mrs. Jessie McIntyre as a Central operator.

The first Crinan schoolhouse, a log building, was situated on the South-east corner of the farm owned by James McLean, now the Malcom Livingston farm. The first teacher was Miss Jane Grant, whose home was on the hill a few rods west of the Graham Road. Part of the first house is the Crinan Post Office to-day (1956), and has a postmaster and mailman, Stewart McIntyre, on Lot 24, Con. 1.

The first threshing machine was run by horse power, and was in use before 1867. Mr. Peter D. McCallum operated one of the first, and his son, Philip, operates a power one in 1956.

The first musical training was given in singing schools, held in the schoolhouse in winter months, and attended by young people with a love for music. The instruction was given by men who had some knowledge of music. The "sol fa" system was used. Mrs. John McPherson (Jane Squires) was one leader of the singing schools.

Pioneer Settlements.

Any account of the early settlement of the township of Aldborough without frequent mention of the name of Col. Thomas Talbot would be like the play of Hamlet with Hamlet left out. It will be remembered that Dunwich and Aldborough were the especial charge of Col. Talbot for settlement and for this purpose he issued an invitation to the Scottish Highlanders who had located temporarily in Caledonia in the State of New York.

Col. Talbot was born in the county of Dublin, Ireland in the year 1771. In accordance with custom among noblemen's sons in Great Britain young Talbot was early provided with a Colonel's commission. He was with the 24th Regiment at Quebec in 1790, and in 1791 became attached to the suite of General John Graves Simcoe the first Lieut-Governor of Upper Canada. While in this capacity Col. Talbot became acquainted with this fertile and picturesque belt of country along Lake Erie and for reasons unknown decided to leave the comforts of civilization in the old world and plant a new civilization here.

The progress of settlement for the first few years was slow, although portions of the township of Aldborough along the shores of Lake Erie were settled as far back as 1820, this north-east part familiarly known as the Bend (on account of the great turn in the river Thames) was practically still in its virgin state until 1848-9, only some three or four families having located on the river front some years before that date. Until the year 1846 the only settlers of Aldborough were Scottish Highlanders chiefly from Argyllshire, and Perthshire.

Between 1846-1855 Germany contributed a portion, a part bought their land from the original settlers but the majority settled on un-improved lands bought of the Crown, the Canada Company and of General Airey.

General Airey was a British Officer; he had something to do with the famous order at Balaklava that caused the charge of the Light Brigade when the "Noble Six Hundred" rode into the jaws of death, - he was a nephew of Col. Talbot. He came to this country with the understanding that he was to be heir to the Talbot Estate but through some disagreement or change in the Colonel's mind his portion became the original homestead on the hill in Dunwich and five thousand acres of un-improved land in Aldborough.

The first Presbyterian family as far as known came in 1847. In 1849 three families arrived. In 1850 three, in 1851 eight, in 1852 five, and in 1853 eight. Then in 1855, 6, 7, and 8 a large number arrived and located, so that in 1860 the greater part of the land in the Bend was taken up.

With very few exceptions these settlers were from the Highlands of Scotland and strongly imbued with religious principles. They were men and women with a vision, and to their self-denial and anxiety to have the word of God kept always before their eyes we owe much of the civil and religious freedom we enjoy as a people today.

The great desire and first effort of the pioneer who came to East Aldborough was to secure land he could call his own, - to select an untaken lot either from the Crown, or a Speculator who had bought it previously where sufficient land could be cleared to build his first log house.

Such a home was soon erected by himself and his friends, it was - humble but comfortable, and its occupants were invariably happy. Heated by the large fireplace with its ample supply of wood, with its kettles for cooking swinging on the swee, - it was a cheery home.

What an undertaking for men unaccustomed to the task, and with axes and saws not as efficient as those of later years to clear the underbrush, and then fell the giant trees to prepare a place for their first planting of potatoes, and to clear a larger area for their first crop of wheat. What a pleasure to harvest that first crop, cut by sickle or cradle and the sheaves bound by bands of wheat straw and now ready for the threshing with the flail and some time later by the horse-powered mill.

Plans were then made for building a barn and more commodious houses replaced the first log house. In a few years many acres on the farms were cleared and the settlement thrived.

The pioneers of every country generally locate near bodies of water for domestic and business purposes. Those who came to Aldborough first settled near the river Thames and the Big Creek.

The first settlers at the river were Elijah Sutton and John Shaw. Those at Big Creek were the Harder and Grant families. These remained only a few years when they went to Michigan. Then began the stream of immigrants from Scotland. In 1849 came Christopher McRae and Peter Johnson. In 1850 James Stalker, Donald McEachren, Archibald McEachren, James McLean and Donald Currie. In 1851 and 1852 a still larger number, - Duncan Stalker Peter and Dugald Stewart, Gilbert Stalker, the McMurchy family, Neil and Duncan McEachren, McMillans, Campbells, McCallums, McKeiths, McGills, Montgomerys, Sellers, Jamiesons, McNeil, McColls, Mathesons, and many other noble men and women, most of them from Kintyre, Argyllshire, Scotland, until all the available land in East Aldborough was taken.

Many of them were neighbors and warm friends in the old land and they brought their friendship, generous acts and kindly deeds into the new land. These characteristics helped them to overcome the difficulties of pioneer life, and to carry on amid conditions that were not familiar.

The name Crinan was given to the post office by Peter Mc Neil, a citizen of the community, in honour of the place from which he came in the old land. The name afterwards attached itself to the school and the entire community. Duncan McIntyre had a small store and tailor shop near the school and there the first post office was located. The mail was brought from Wardsville once a week over roads that were often hard to travel. Usually the trip was made on horse back. Neil McEachren, later of Buffalo told many stories of the difficulties encountered in crossing the Thames when in flood, while he carried the mail in those years. When the railway was constructed and West Lorne established the mail was brought from there several times a week.

The durable material in many of the suits made by Mr. McIntyre was of fullled cloth prepared from the wool of the sheep, carded, spun into yarn and then woven into cloth on the looms many of the industrious women had learned to operate. Blankets and spreads were also woven, some of them were very beautiful and are still in use.

There was a blacksmith shop near the Post Office and opposite it Mr. McColl, a shoe maker, lived. A few years later a cheese factory was built opposite the church by Robert McMillan. 1869 The corner was quite a centre of industry in those days.

Money was scarce as it would be sometime before the settler would have much to sell. Many of the men could be seen on a winter morning leaving their homes with axe, saw, wedge and maul to make staves from the oaks in the forests. These were taken to the river and sold to the timber merchants, then in the spring floated in rafts to Chatham to make some money for necessary expenses and implements. Logs were also brought to the river bank, and marketed in the same way. We marvel how the first settlers maintained an existence during the first years of pioneer life, but they were resourceful and the sturdy young men and women were evidence of sufficient nourishing food.

A wonderful community spirit of friendliness and affection existed in the settlement. They gladly shared with others more needful, helping one another at the logging bees, the barn raisings and wherever possible.

They had their happy social gatherings, often in the winter the young people walked miles to the singing school when someone with a knowledge of music could be secured to teach the Tonic Sol-fa system. This training was helpful in the congregational singing in church where the precentor raised the tune by getting the key with his tuning fork.

When sickness came to a home clever kindly women accepted the responsibility of helping, and often skilfully and always graciously, brought care and comfort to the needy.

The women learned the art of dyeing by using the juice of the bark of some trees and plants like the Golden Rod, and hooked rugs in colourful designs. Soon near the doorway the lilac bush, the yellow and red rose, the Sweet Mary and the red Peony were planted. Orchards of apple trees were planted on each farm and in a few years the fruit was ready for use.

Our Pioneers were men and women of marvelous faith, magnificent courage, tremendous zeal and undaunted valour.

This is our Farm.

This is the woodman's axe he knew and wielded,
This is the haying scythe he honed and swung,
Back is the fragrant days of far-off summers,
Back in the time when he was strong and young.

This is the walking plow he held and guided
With care and skill till he was eighty - four
And in the stable still is idly hanging,
The heavy yoke, his patient oxen bore.

This is the fagging stick, and this the sickle,
With which he cut his barley, oats and wheat,
That is the flail his cunning fingers fashioned,
And trimmed till it was balanced smooth and neat.

The flail his bent old fingers clasped and fondled,
The friendly flail it pleased him well to swing,
There was no hour when he was busy threshing
Out in the barn we could not hear him sing.

These are the fertile fields and pleasant meadows,
He cleared of crowding bush of stumps and stone,
That is the fruitful orchard (Pear and Apple)
He wisely planned and planted all alone.

This is the house, four square at last he builded,
Brick after brick was well and truly laid;
These are the things today we prize and cherish,
This is our farm,- the home for us he made.

FIRST WOMEN JURORS IN ELGIN COUNTY

On September 14th, 1953, when sittings of the Supreme Court of Ontario opened in Elgin County Courthouse, women took their place alongside the men to serve on the jury panels. It was the first time that women were called to jury duty in Elgin County.

The following eleven women were called:

Mrs. Mary Andrews, RR 5, Dutton.

Mrs. Agnes J. Campbell, Iona Station.

Mrs. V. Gillies, Rodney.

Mrs. Mary Downie, Rodney.

Mrs. Jean Turner, Dutton.

Mrs. Dorothy Mills, Sparta.

Mrs. Vivian Howey, Eden.

Mrs. Jean E. Foster, 52 Queen St., St. Thomas.

Mrs. Audra Elliott, Sparta.

Mrs. Louise C. Patrick, 58 Malakoff St., St. Thomas.

Mrs. W.C. Wheaton, Port Stanley.

(the two latter named serving on the grand jury)