

In 1866, the first Volunteer Company was formed with John Carswell acting as drill sergeant, captained by Mr. John Philpott; Mr. Duncan Decow as Lieutenant; D. Campbell (Ensign) as Corporal; and D. More, Rufus Lumley, Dan Silcox, and the McIntyre Brothers.

They drilled under Mr. T.A. Silcox, who took a course at the Military College at Kingston. The unit became known as Company No. 5, and was attached to the 28th Battalion. It was a matter of pride to have their first efforts away from home, at St. Thomas, rewarded by the receipt of first prize as the best trained company.

In 1861, Mr. Carswell built a large drill shed, which was used as a barracks for the soldiers and later used in connection with the Iona Fair. This building was later sold and moved to the farm of Mr. Harry House, at Fingal.

(1966 - compiled by curator from notes by Miss Victoria Munroe).

A drill shed was built in 1867, and still stands in Iona to mark the dwelling place of the once famous company of Volunteers, known as fifth Company of the 25th Battalion. They were recognized as the star company of the west, and were captained by John Philpott. Mr. T.A. Silcox, still living in Iona, was one of the prominent members, and attended military school in Toronto.

(From the writings of Miss Mary Hamilton, 1896).



First home of Mr. and Mrs. Fred Allen. With Mrs. Allen is her mother, Mrs. Brown, wife of the well known veterinarian.

Mr. Allen came to Iona from England and married Libbie Hatton, a widow daughter of the well known George Brown, who lived on Lot 5, S.W. corner of St. George Street and the Iona Road. She is remembered by her cheerful, outgoing personality, being popular with young and old - a generous woman with a welcoming smile for everyone, who came to her home. One left happier and with courage increased by being with her.

She occupied a small house on Lot 5 on the north side of the Back Street, Dunwick side of Iona with her first husband. One son, George Hatton married Laura Brooks, sister of John Brooks who later bought, I believe, the home where his mother was reared.

Mr. and Mrs. Allen lived in the home on Lot 6, East side of Iona Road, south of main corner, which Mr. Allen, a builder, improved. This was later sold to Mr. Mackenzie Lodge and his second wife Lulu Whalls. The James McLeods later purchased this home and still live there. The Allens then moved to Lot 2 opposite J.O. Lumley's store where he also improved the home there. Both spent the rest of their lives there.

Mr. Russell Fletcher purchased this house from Mrs. Allen whose nurse he had married, and lived there until his death. Mrs. Fletcher (Olive) shared the home with her daughter Margaret and Margaret's husband "Doc" Watson after her husband's death. Both have passed on, but she still remains a beautiful and remarkable woman.

Curator 1962-68.



Mr. and Mrs. Allen in their second home.

ROBERT BARR

About the year 1866 there appeared in the village a lad of sixteen, named Robert Barr, whom the literary world was to know soon afterwards as a writer of no mean rank.

He had left the home on the farm near Highgate in the quest of work, to earn the means of procuring an education which, his intimate acquaintances say, he was determined to have at any cost. This step in itself may be regarded as a fair proof of a conscious, latent intellectual power. He got an engagement on the drill shed, then in the course of erection under contractor Caswell, and when climbing a high ladder, fell with it to the ground sustaining severe injuries. This accident laid him up for some time in Ephraim Lumley's hotel, where he boarded. When recovered he did not proceed home, and his father on going in search of him, found his son at work in the office of the Home Journal of St. Thomas, owned and edited by the late A. McLachlin.

Within two years we see him teaching school in Kent county and at Windsor, his parents' present home. There, while yet in his teens, he gave a short contribution to the Detroit Free Press, entitled "A Dangerous Journey," which lifted him into fame with a bound. He was at once put on the editorial staff of the Free Press, at a salary of thirty dollars a week, for one article long or short.

This position, it is well known, is generally attained by patient, unwearied diligence.

Then he was dispatched to London, England, to exploit the Free Press among the newsdealers of the great metropolis, which he is said to have done in the most satisfactory manner. Again with Jerome K. Jerome he became co-editor of the "Idler," a monthly literary magazine of that city, which has only to be read to be admired.

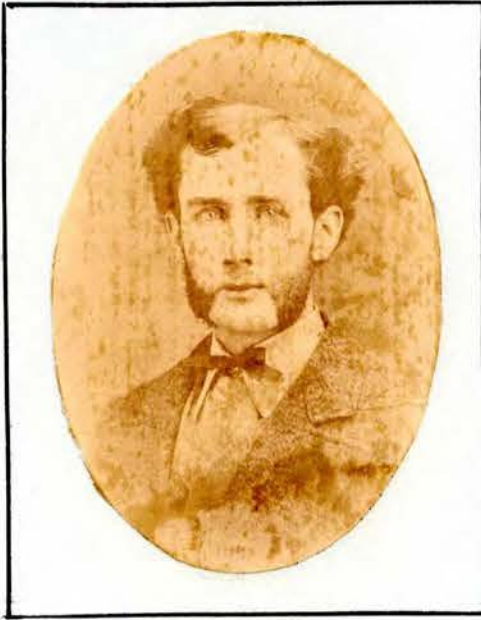
The manuscript of one of his earlier extended works, "In the Midst of Alarms," he offered to American magazines, but it was coldly received. A British publishing house seized upon it with avidity, realizing handsomely.

Mr. Barr was home visiting with his parents last summer with his family.

When Robert was a boy of twelve his little brother was accidentally drowned in a shallow pool near the old Cowal school house, which his father was building.

Mr. Barr was highly esteemed by his fellow literateurs, and the writer has just perused a highly laudatory letter from the pen of Julian Ralph, editor of Scribner.

(From the writings of James W. Brown, 1896)



"The grants to settlers in the area were fixed by the government at two hundred acres, but, through some error of Colonel Talbot, many of them received only fifty acres.

"Some time later, when these acres were settled, a Mr. John Black came into the district to teach school. He saw that the men should have more land and informed them of the proper amounts each should have received.

"A protest was raised by the men along the Back Street between Iona and Wallacetown, but Colonel Talbot seemed disposed to ignore it. Then such vigorous objection was raised and strong threats made, that the Colonel promised each man who had received only fifty acres a further grant of two hundred acres, if the grantee would accept it on the River Thames or the Longwoods Road, and would clear four acres at once and build a house".

From Dr.C.C. Lumley's writing.

Those who had ancestors in this area have heard much of this. The long trek through virgin forests, heavily laden with the absolute necessities of life was too much for many who were forced to turn back.

Others persevered and the beautiful farms on the banks of the Thames River or close by are the rewards to those who came after them.

Colonel Talbot's preference for those whose nationality he favoured is common knowledge. The fine farms and homes north of Lake Erie are evidence that these early settlers may have suffered, but those who succeeded them have benefited. Willey Sideroad bears the name of one family who chose to trek northwards to the River.

(Curator 1962-1968).

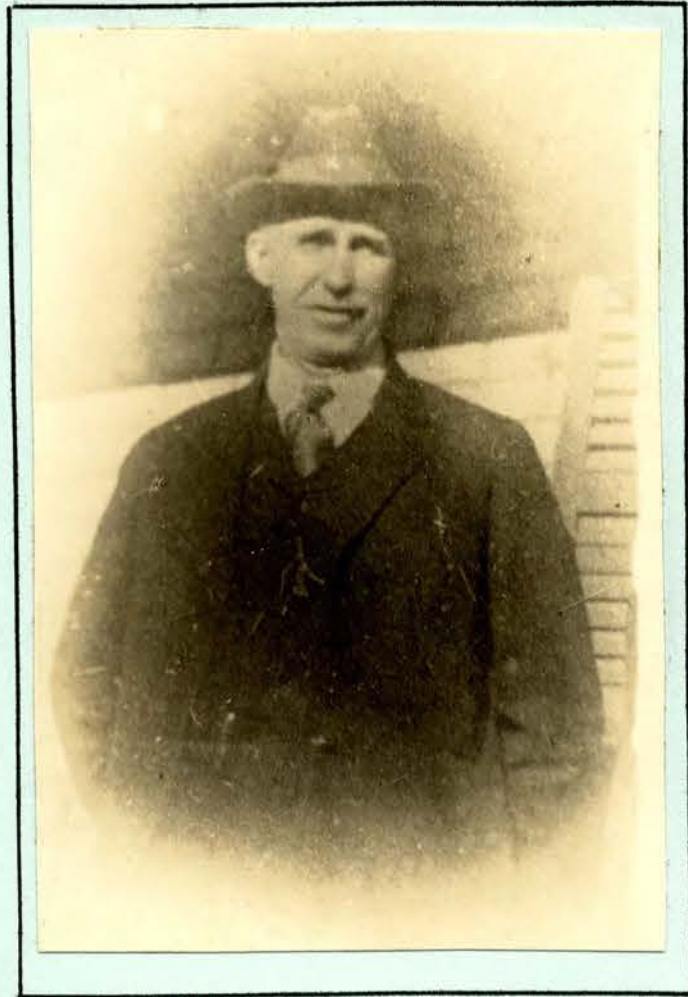
Mr. Westley Britton, who married Miss Ellen Stark, lived on Lot 2 and 3, south side of the Talbot Road, west of Iona's main corner. Mrs. Britton was a milliner who with Miss Reta Payson, were probably Iona's first independant business women. She was born 1889, died 1950.

The Britton home was sold to Mr. and Mrs. Robert Carswell, and the family moved to St. Thomas early in the 1900's. Mr. Britton, who was not content to be idle, operated the incline railroad from the Port Stanley Beach to Inverie Heights.

After Mr. Britton built a home on Dougal Avenue in Windsor, his wife and family joined him. His wife and Roy, his son, have now passed on.

Mabel, a graduate of Alma College, became a successful business woman until her retirement. She is now serving as a secretary in a Windsor Presbyterian Church. She still lives in the family home.

Curator 1962-68.



Mr. Westley Britton
1864-1922

1861 - 1945



Luke Harrison Brown was the tenth child of his father and given his name. Walking two miles to school even in stormy weather was not considered a hardship in those early days and attendance began in the building one mile south of what is now Iona Station, where his father served on the Board of Trustees.

Leaving school as soon as permitted, he took advantage of the chance to apprentice himself to Mr. Robert Beadle who owned a blacksmith, carriage and other wood-working shops in Fingal. This was quite an extensive enterprise.

Having served the time required to complete that apprenticeship, he borrowed two hundred dollars from his father and purchased the building on the north-west corner of William Street and the Iona Road. There was a blacksmith shop at the front, a carriage shop and furniture shop in the rear facing on Mary Street, which had been owned by Mr. Beadle.

With two apprentices, Alex Liddell and John Dundas, a helper, Elijah Keillor and his own hard work, he prospered. His sister Marion kept house for him in rooms on the second floor. The future was seemingly attractive when more than one piece of hard luck changed the picture for a time. Fire destroyed the entire building, he and his sister escaped unharmed, but all their possessions including furniture were lost.

Plans were made to rebuild, brother Henry laying out the plans, but sister Marion had returned to her father's home, where, engaged in a lively conversation, she suddenly leaned over the table and died of an unsuspected heart condition. She had been a popular, attractive young lady with artistic ability - samples of her work remain.

Mr. Brown proved his courage by rebuilding his shop and purchasing the house and lot adjoining on the north, which Mr. Beadle also owned, and resumed his work.

Neighbors presented a sizable sum to him which had been collected. Mr. Brown knew that many had sacrificed more than he could accept, and with thanks and with words of appreciation he returned it all to the givers. He did accept a gift of furniture they gave him later. His spirit of independence so shown has been passed down to his son Vernon and grandson Lyle, both of whom markedly resemble him physically and mentally.

By the early nineteen hundreds, Mr. Brown was ready to take life easily and sold his business with its buildings to Mr. Fred House. The lots as far as the Methodist Church, five acres adjoining the west and a small farm to the north across from his brother Henry's farm (at the corner of Iona Road and Clay Street) were acquired. The old Temperance Hall on Lot 7 was moved to the back of its lot for a barn and a Cascaden barn joined it. The Cascaden house had already been moved away, leaving five wells and conditions seemed ideal for one who enjoyed the care of farm animals, to be content and have an easy life.

However, he soon found so much leisure not to his liking. He wished to give his children all the education they would accept, his taxes had increased to twelve dollars yearly. Mr. House did not find the business so much to his liking, as he had anticipated and was glad to sell it back, but he did continue his farm work in a small degree. His nephew Austin Brown bought the farm opposite his father's place (Henry Brown).

Mr. Luke Brown had strong religious principles, but was tolerant beyond his times. A faithful supporter, as was his father and family, of the Iona Methodist Church, he disagreed strongly with the harshness some of the leaders displayed in dealing with trivial incidents. Leaving his children to attend the Sunday School, in Iona, he was glad to drive his wife to the church her father had helped to establish and which had been moved to Iona Station. He enjoyed the company of the village children who sought him out. One recently told the writer that he had at one time made her the possession of a fortune - in the amount of ten cents. He seemed completely unaware of the wide variety in the status and prosperity of his friends. His honesty and strength of character were unquestioned. At one time he was heard to explain a transaction that did not succeed by admitting the other party wanted too much and he wanted to pay too little.

Austin Brown remembers when he purchased this small Southwold farm one mile north of Iona. A man was living in the house who was having difficulty meeting the necessities of his large family. Austin wanted the house to move to the farm he owned on the sideroad, east of the townline, but south of the railroad. His uncle Luke sold it to him on the condition he would not disturb the man there for three years. At the end of that time he bought the land as well, and made his own home upon it.

At the time of the above gentleman's death, his family were still having a struggle. The funeral service was over, his burial place was some distance away and arrangements had been made, but the price for transporting the casket was beyond the family's ability to pay. They came to Mr. Brown who was persuaded to place the casket, covered up, across the back doors of his touring car. (He had not yet obtained his new license plates, as spring was not advanced to the time he was in the habit of using the car again). The journey was made by back roads to avoid trouble and as police were few in those days, they made it without any of the penalties he risked for a final helping hand to an old friend. This throws a side light on his character, which he would rather be unknown. At this late date none of the very few, if any who knew about it, remain.

Mr. Brown passed away in 1945 after two years of great distress to him and to his wife, unaware that their first grandchild, Warrant Officer Robert Luke Brown, R.C.A.F. was alive and on his way home. He had been shot down over Germany and was a prisoner of war amid the hardships of those last months.

Curator 1962-1968.

Below: Times Journal, 1945.



Robert Luke
Brown



Lyle and Bonnie
Brown

OLD RESIDENT OF IONA DISTRICT DIES

Luke H. Brown Was Veteran
Blacksmith

DUTTON, April 16. — Luke H. Brown, veteran retired blacksmith of West Elgin and a member of an old pioneer family, died at his home in Iona, Sunday evening, following a few weeks' illness, in his 84th year. He was born in Dunwich Township, a son of the late Luke and Charlotte Brown. For about 50 years he operated a blacksmithing industry in Iona, retiring about ten years ago. He was an adherent of the Iona Baptist Church. Mr. Brown was very widely known and highly respected.

The widow, who survives, is the former Nancy Silcox of Southwold. They would have been married 50 years in May of this year. Also surviving are a daughter, Mrs. Ray Johnson, Detroit; a son, L. Vernon Brown, 37 Locust street, St. Thomas; three grandchildren, Warrant Officer Robert L. Brown, R.C.A.F., a prisoner of war in Germany; Lyle H. Brown, with the R.C.N.V., R., St. John, N.B.; and Miss Doris Brown, nurse-in-training at the Memorial Hospital, St. Thomas; and a brother, Daniel Brown, Iona; also a number of nieces and nephews.

The remains rest at the residence, Iona, with service Wednesday afternoon in the Iona Station Baptist Church at 2.30 o'clock. Interment in Cowal Cemetery.

Mr. and Mrs. Luke H. Brown were the parents of two children - Elisabeth and Luke Vernon.

The daughter received the education available locally followed by a diploma from the Faculty of Education, Toronto, in 1918.

Her first position was as principal of the Mount Albert Public School. The disastrous influenza epidemic in the fall of that year cut that short. An easier position in Leamington was again interrupted by illness. At home in Iona, School Section No. 5, Dunwich became in need of a teacher for the final two months of the term and she filled the vacancy, happy to be with her parents.

Granted a permanent certificate and with the influence of Dr. and Mrs. Logan Silcox of Hamilton, she was appointed to the Hamilton School Staff. After four years in Hamilton, the course necessary for Commercial Specialist standing was begun.

While visiting in Detroit in 1925, a clerical position became available and she remained in that vocation until 1930 when she married Oliver J. Proteau, who was later killed in an automobile accident.

In 1941 she married Mr. Ray Johnson, a native Detroit of Mennonite descent. He began his career with Park-Davis Company, and except for a stint with the United States Army, he remained in that position until his death in 1950.

When life appeared to be heading in a very satisfactory path, Mr. Johnson was found to have a serious heart condition. He agreed to his wife finding a secretarial position. Her employer had arranged to buy the Thomas Brick and Tile Company and wished her to remain with him. Financial help was welcome and with her husband's help she became a share-holder and Secretary Treasurer of the Corporation as well as its office Manager.

This position although financially rewarding, proved very demanding. Clay products were in short supply, the kilns in poor condition. Customers eager to begin or continue their business with the end of the war in 1945, needed building products. Mrs. Johnson, with an interest in the company, had heavy responsibilities - far beyond those expected.

Mrs. Brown had spent winters with her son-in-law and daughter in Detroit, but was glad her daughter resigned and returned to live with her in Iona after her husband's death.

At home after a year of leisure, there was an opportunity to teach at Union School No. 2, Alborough and Dunwich as teachers were scarce. The incumbent was forced to leave at Easter. Mrs. Johnson was requested by this teacher to fill out her term. It was not in line with her training, but the pupils were a great help and asked her to remain. She spent another year with them, finding much pleasure in working with beginners. Summer School in Primary Methods resulted in a Primary Certificate and a position in Talbotville. Five years in the Junior Room in Shedden was a rewarding experience to final retirement.

The years following were full of activities, particularly with the Women's Institute. She served the local branch as Secretary and President; the District in many offices including that of Secretary and the London Area as Convenor of Citizenship and Education.

Being appointed to the Elgin Mental Health Board, she enjoyed volunteer work at the Ontario Hospital, St. Thomas, and convened the Christmas program "Lifting Shadows" there for three years.

She had become a member of the Order of the Eastern Star in Dutton and became its Worthy Matron.

Mrs. Johnson's remarkable memory was a significant asset as Curator of the Iona Tweedsmuir History. Her valuable work has been a demanding, but rewarding task of recording the historical past of the events and peoples of the village and the surrounding district.

Mrs. H. Gould -1968.

1865-1955

Mrs. Brown was a woman of dignity and regal bearing who, because of her integrity and wisdom, was an esteemed resident of Iona from 1885 to 1955. Her father, Henry Silcox and Rebecca Jane Mills were early settlers of Southwold Township.

She was sought out on many occasions by friends and neighbors for council and advice. While usually quite unruffled by problems of wide variety, she developed a serenity in later years, quite evident in public when a group to which she belonged had differences of opinion. A gifted speaker, she was kindly though candid.

Her consistent energy, enthusiasm for life in general, her great sense of humour and interesting conversation could not be matched by many. Her hospitality was without fault, her home open for worthwhile meetings. Many groups of women often rounded a quilt in her spacious parlor with stories and laughter while tiny stitching progressed.

The Iona Baptist Church was one of the first established in this section of Upper Canada. Mr. Henry Silcox had been on the committee when it became necessary to provide a new building and it was moved to the thriving village of Iona. Miss Nancy, his daughter, became a faithful member at an early age, singing in the choir, acting as organist. She was secretary of the Ladies' Aid for many years. In 1950 a very old Record Book of the church was discovered in her home, and being given to the then Church Secretary, Miss Victoria Munro, eventually found its way to a place in McMaster University, where it will be preserved.



She was President of the Iona Institute when needed, was Vice-President of West Elgin in 1917 and 1918. After presiding at the Annual Meeting of the District in 1919, she resigned the vice-presidency but accepted that office in 1921 and became president in 1923. In those days of few automobiles, she declined the higher offices offered her, wishing more time for what she considered duties at home.

During the War of 1914-1918, her efforts as an energetic leader were earnest. There is a story of a pair of socks she had knitted and sent to the central organization in St. Thomas before the Iona group was in action, which appealed strongly to her sense of humor. These socks were returned with a notation: "The tops were not cast off, nor stitches in heels and toes increased nor decreased as regulations decreed, and the legs were too short on these beautifully knit socks". She said the last remark saved her from great humiliation. No socks from the Iona

group were ever faulted again so far as anyone knew. Samples of beautiful knitting and the crocheting, which she told me, engaged her when she was troubled; remain.

Mrs. Brown was thrifty and looked well to her house. I am reminded of an incident which happened in her later life. As most housekeepers of her day, fruit was grown and canned at home, with rows of shelves sparkling with colour in the cellar - containing preserves, jams, pickles and so on. Such was the case with her. One day she heard a strange noise of which she could not determine the cause. Soon a sweet fruit odour permeated the house. She went to her cellar and found her fruit shelf had given away with glass jars broken and whole, their juices running over the floor. The sight that met her eyes was a catastrophe, but when she voiced her consternation to her husband, he said "You had too much fruit anyway", wherewith he proceeded to help clean up the mess.