

May 1949

147

THE ROLPHS AND LOT 41 TALBOT ROAD

Some three hundred years ago, two Frenchmen, explorers and missionaries, pushed their canoe into the waters of Lake Erie near the turbulent Niagara River. They turned their prow westward, and for two hundred and fifty miles paddled along the northern shore of the lake into a strange and unknown country. To their right lay a vast undulating forest, and to their left the blue of the mighty inland fresh water sea. They seemed to have entered a land of enchantment. The autumn had painted the trees with reds, golds and yellows until the maples and beeches, the walnuts and chestnuts were ablaze with color. Along the shore and through the pines and spruces roamed countless herds of deer. The streams pouring into the lake were swarming with fish, and at times the sky darkened with wild pigeons and waterfowl. Galinee, a later explorer, could only describe the country as a "terrestrial paradise", and today we call it the "Sun parlor of Canada".

One hundred and fifty years passed and then another man came into the country - an Irish army officer who retraced the route of the earlier explorers. He too found it to be a good land. The savage Indians who once inhabited the country were gone. The soil was fertile, the climate invigorating, and here he would return sometime to make his home. He petitioned the English government for a large section of land. He chose its location with care halfway between the two great rivers, Niagara and Detroit. One day Colonel Talbot did come back and built his log home on a hill commanding a fine view of forest and lake, a few miles west of the deserted Indian village, Skitteewaabaa.

He surveyed the broad acres into farms, and opened up the country for settlement. A village grew on the east side of Kettle Creek in the valley, and from it to his home a road was cut through the woods. West of the creek upon the rolling uplands of Southwold a succession of farms slowly began to be settled. One of these farms, Lot 41, on the south side of Talbot Road about a mile west of Kettle Creek was given to the Rolph family. On the adjoining lot Abraham King settled.

Dr. Thomas Rolph, a surgeon, and his family came from Thornbury in Gloucestershire England. John, the eldest of four sons and several daughters, was born March 4, 1793. The family came to lower Canada before 1810. Afterwards they moved to the Long Point settlement. One of the sons, Romaine, became a clergyman in the Church of England in Canada. Thomas, also a clergyman, lived and died in England, while George was a lawyer and practiced in Dundas. One daughter, Emma, married Colonel Salmon, who came from the same part of England as the Rolphs. The family were opposed to the marriage of Sarah to George Ryerson, perhaps because of her youth. But Sarah settled the arguments by sliding down a rope from her upper window and eloping.

The Rolphs home at that time was well known throughout Upper Canada as a very attractive household to young bachelors - army officers, sea captains and government officials. The daughters were accomplished and pretty. There was always a bright fire, a good dinner, and a warm welcome. Colonel Talbot's brother William spent much time at the Rolphs and was reported to have sued for the hand of one of the young ladies. Colonel Talbot, himself, who was stationed with his regiment nearby no doubt enjoyed the Rolph hospitality too. A desire to bring about an alliance between him and one of his sisters is attributed to John Rolph according to

the father of Judge Ermatinger, the author of the Talbot Regime. The Rolphs were a distinguished family but such a match would undoubtedly have enhanced their prestige even more. However, the two families were never to be allied by marriage although ^{they} the families always remained friends.

In 1810 the Rolphs moved again, this time to the Talbot settlement where they built their log house on Lot 41 just west of St. Thomas, on the south side of Talbot Road. Dr. Thomas Rolph did not live long in his new home. One day just after the War of 1814 while resting quietly on his sofa he passed away. He was buried on the farm.

Letter to Colonel Talbot from John Rolph announcing his father's death.

My dear Sir;.

You will, I am sure, in a degree participate the sorrow I feel in a very great loss which we have so recently sustained. Indendent, my dear sir, of those feelings which nature has implanted and education improved, a family of such extent as ours must necessarily feel the privation with peculiar severity. I am obliged to you for the concern you have expressed for his illness and lament that it must extend to his death. At present I scarcely know my own feelings, for the last and highest duty I can perform to so valuable a friend is to check my own feelings and direct my exertion for the comforting of disconsolate mother and to protect those in the crisis about to happen who are unable to protect themselves. My father seemed quite unconscious of his approaching dissolution. He expired on the sofa and sunk as he thought, into sleep. It is, I assure you, not a trifling consolation to me that he died with so much ease and without those distressing reflections which a father must experience when about to leave such a retinue behind. Had he lived his life would have been very unhappy during the troublesome times we shall probably witness. He's now much happier, and I even sometimes hope he may occasionally glance upon us from heaven and smile upon a more fortunate issue than the aspect of affairs will allow us to anticipate.

The enclosed letter is the last he wrote and was omitted in the last dispatch to you. I have kept it sacred and send you a relic which I willingly would have preserved myself. Excuse, my dear sir, from sending the particulars you requested. When the awful ceremonies of tomorrow are over, I shall be better able to attend to such duties.

My brother has just arrived from York to follow my father with me to the grave. He desires his respects to you.

With great respect believe me dear sir,
Yours obliged and truly,

John Rolph was then left with the care of a large family. He was only twenty-one years of age. He was slightly below average height but he had a distinguished bearing and a handsome face. A portrait painted when he was forty-three years old is that of a man with regular features, a high forehead and sensitive mouth. Before he came to Canada he studied for the ministry and four years after his fathers death he returned to England to study law at Cambridge. He was called to the bar of the Inner Temple in 1821 and then following in his fathers footsteps he took up the study of medicine under Sir Astley Cooper. The practice of both law and medicine by the same man was not uncommon in Upper Canada in those days. Dr. Rolph returned to Canada to follow both professions. So the log house on Lot 41 became a home, a law office and a doctors office.

He attained considerable distinction at the bar and won enduring fame as a teacher of medical jurisprudence. Sir John Colburne, the governor of Upper Canada at that time, who did not agree with Dr. Rolph politically, once said, however, that "John Rolph was the most talented man in the province" and there was never a man less likely to be influenced by pecuniary considerations."

In 1828 Dr. Rolph threw off his gown and turned to the practice of medicine exclusively. In 1824 he and Dr. Charles Duncombe established the first medical school of Canada west. It was called the St. Thomas Medical School and located at Dr. Lee's Hotel. A notice of its opening was published in William Lyon Mackenzie's paper, The Colonial Advocate.

From Colonial Advocate, August 19, 1824, Advertisement....

Medical School at St. Thomas
in the Talbot settlement, and
under the immediate patronage
of The Hon. Colonel Talbot.

Notice is hereby given that a Medical School is opened at St. Thomas, in the Talbot Settlement, under the direction of Charles Duncomb, Esquire, Liventiate, and the immediate patronage of The Honourable Colonel Talbot, where the education of young men for the profession of Medicine and Surgery will be carefully superintended, and every opportunity afforded them to become intimately acquainted with the structure and physiology of the human body.

Every student before admission is expected to have a complete knowledge of the Latin language, or to give satisfactory assurances of immediately acquiring it; for which purposes a competent teacher will be resident in the village.

Charles Duncomb
will give a course of lectures of the Theory and Practice of Medicine.

John Rolph
is expected to give the first course of Lectures and Demonstrations, during the ensuing season, on the Anatomy and Physiology of the Human Body.

Nothing more is recorded about the school but Dr. Curtis, Sr. says in his book, "St. Thomas Medical Men of the Past", that Dr. Lee's son seems to have been the only student. Possibly few young men in the new colony had the educational background to be eligible for admission to the school.

At any rate, Dr. Rolph was very busy in a new field in 1824. He always had a keen interest in politics and that year he ran for member for Canada West and defeated Colonel Burwell who had represented the District since the first election in 1813. Colonel Burwell was a man of integrity, a capable surveyor and registrar of the Talbot Settlement but possessed none of the suavity, the personal charm and persuasiveness of John Rolph. Instead he was imperious, self-willed and opinionated. So the cleavage widened between the two men. In 1828 Rolph again defeated Burwell but in 1830 Burwell won. Dr. Rolph gave up politics.

Two years later in 1832 he left the Old Road and sold his farm. It was purchased in 1834 by James Innes, afterwards Sir James Innes, a Scotch gentleman and a brother-in-law of James Blackwood, a well-known man of the community. Mr. Innes at once replaced the old log house with a low red brick building constructed of bricks made on the farm. He lived in it till only 1839. Then

having succeeded to a baronetcy he returned to Scotland.

In the meantime Dr. John Rolph had moved to Toronto. There his ability and medical knowledge were recognized and he began that profession of teaching which brought him so much success in later years. He established the Rolph School of Medicine which later became a faculty of Victoria College, and finally of the Toronto University.

The farm on Lot 41 has changed ownership several times since the days of the Rolphs. Mr. Innes sold it to George Brewer. Mrs. Brewer outlived her husband and married Thomas Treadwell. On their decease the farm was left to their children, Charles, Mary and Fred. They later sold the farm to George Lawton. On his death the property was sold to Jack Ferguson, the present owner.

Gone are the forests, the deer and the wild turkey from the fields. The log house, the ox cart, and the tallow candle have disappeared. The Rolphs with all their ~~other~~ pioneer neighbors who laid the foundation of this great nation, have long since been sleeping in quiet churchyards. But a little way down the lane the old fashioned ^mhoney red brick house on Lot 41 still stands linking today with the earlier years. At the front~~the~~ of the farm the Old Talbot Road still winds its way through the country but now the old mud track through the woods is a paved highway in a rich and prosperous country of broad fields of grain, great herds of cattle and fine homes.

Talbot Road has produced other distinguished men and women who have not been forgotten. ^{But} Not a tablet marks the old home on Lot 41 Southwold where John Rolph, pioneer farmer, scholar, lawyer, physician, legislator, teacher and founder of one of the great medical colleges of the world, lived and worked.

Hazel Gooding Munro (Mrs. Neil A.)

Hazel G. Munro

The Rolph Farm (cont'd) Lot 41

The farm was later owned by Treadwell's, then bought by Jack Ferguson a drover. The cottage was owned by George Lawton, then later by Eddie Marshall.

After Jack Ferguson's death Stewart Brown owned the farm. In the year 1963 Mr. Louis Fodor bought the farm and presently resides there with his wife Francis and four children - Sharon, Kathy, Anne and John.

Edward Burton - Lot 31

Edward Burton married Maria Stubbs - who lived on a farm with her family north and west of Middlemarch. They were married in 1893 and moved to the farm as a bride and groom.

They had five daughters;

Ferne - Mrs William Locke, lived on a farm on Edgeware Rd. and is now retired and living in St. Thomas

Belle - Mrs. Wadland, living in California

Audrey - Mrs. Shepherd, living in California

Kathleen - Mrs. Vernon Bowman, living in Toronto

Hazel - Mrs. Harold Hall, living in St. Thomas

In 1933 Peter McCurdy bought the farm from the E. Burton Estate and moved to the farm with his wife and three sons.

Earl - married Maxine Chapman of St. Thomas

Paul - st. Thomas

Wilfred - lives in Florida.

Mrs. McCurdy died in 1948 and in 1949 Mr. McCurdy sold the house and 100 acres to Bob Dowler. The woods, 100 acres were sold to a Mr. Gordon

Gottrell. *Caughell*

John Kruppe bought the front 100 acres from his uncle Bob Dowler and Lloyd and Robert Fulton presently own the back 100 acres.

(1971)

Andrew Miller was born in Pennsylvania in the United States in October 1766. When he was a boy his people were all killed by the Indians and he alone was taken alive by them. In 1799 the Indians brought him into Niagara a prisoner boy, here he was redeemed from them by John Birch Esq. with whom he lived until he was grown up. He married the daughter of a V.E. Loyalist and with a feeling of deep gratitude toward his benefactor John Birch, he named his oldest son after him, John Birch Miller.

In 1793 he took up land on the frontier in the county of Lincoln, (Welland) Canada; this was on the Niagara River about five miles below Fort Erie at the end of an Indian trail leading back through the woods to Port Colborne. He did not receive a deed from the Crown for this land until the year 1801. Later on he took up other lands from the crown in different parts of the province.

In June 1809 he was appointed to be an Ensign in the Third Regiment of Militia in the District of Niagara, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel John Warren. His Excellency Sir Francis Gore was then Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Upper Canada.

Andrew Miller lived on the land he first received from the Crown until he died in January 1843. in 1843

Andrew had ten children - one Peter E. Miller - 1793 - 1853 married Deborah Spedding. They had five children - one son Andrew married Eliza Cruikshank. They had one son Andrew who never married.

Peter Miller was given a Crown Grant of land for Lot 26 North side of Talbot Road for service in the war of 1812.

Above information from
Albert A. Miller,
Bridgeburg, Ontario - Feb. 25, 1907

Part of Lots 41 and 42

In 1971 owned by John E. and Mary Futchter

This farm was originally settled by Harry Mandeville.

Albert Nicol lived here for a time and in 1912 sold the farm to G. Nevil then ~~to~~ to John Yates. His wife was Mary Johnston and they had six children; Alice, Maude, Martha and Charles were twins, James and John.

In 1927 James married a Pascall from St. Thomas and lived on the farm. They had one son, Robert who is a druggist in London.

John Lyle bought 80 acres north of NYC tracks and in 1935 Alex Lyle bought

In 1946 Orville Burgess bought the farm from J. Yates. 30 acres south of tracks

He had retired from business in St. Thomas and with his wife, Elva Kirkland, came to the Talbot Rd.

Mr. Burgess died in February 1954 and Mrs. Burgess died in 1966.

The present owner John Futchter and his wife, Mary J. Markle, bought the farm in 1954.

They have three children; Jay, Mary Anne and Mark.

In 1950 Earl McCurdy purchased a small parcel of land on the south-east corner of this farm from Mr. Burgess.

He lives there with his wife, Maxine. They have two children Mary and David.

THE DOWLER FAMILY

15B

In the year 1838 Frank Dowler, (big Frank as the family called him), a half-brother of the late Thomas T. Dowler came from County Lutrim, Ireland to Guelph, Ont. There he clerked in a men's clothing store for a few years and then opened a store of his own. Later opening stores in Brantford and Barrie.

Returning to visit Ireland he persuaded his half-brother, the late R. H. Dowler of London, Ont. and his two half-sisters, Eliza and Fannie to come to Canada.

In 1896 the late Jonathan Dowler of St. Thomas came to Guelph to assist in his half-brother's store. A few years later R. H. and J. Dowler decided to come to St. Thomas and opened the store now owned by Dowler's Limited. R. H. and J. Dowler induced their brother Thomas T. Dowler to come to Canada. Thomas sold the old homestead in County Lutrim, Ireland and came to Canada, bringing with him his wife, family and sister. They arrived at Shannondale Farm on October 1st, 1912.

Thomas T. Dowler married Mary Anne McWilliam in Craghan Church of Ireland, County Roscommon, Ireland. They had three sons and four daughters: Francis John married Dora M. Fitcher and now live in Virginia, Robert Henry married Ella Patrick and live at Shannondale Farm, George William married Winnie Harrison and live at 39 Gravel Rd. St. Thomas, Phoebe Florence married Harold Glover and live at Fingal, Lillian married Ernest Nethercott and live at Arkona, Maudie married Laurence Kruppe, and live at St. Thomas R. R. #1 and Ida married Harold Clarke and live at 62 St. Catharines Street, St. Thomas, Ontario.

There are fifteen grandchildren and three great-grand children.

Thomas T. Dowler passed away Sept. 23, 1937.

Mrs Thomas T. Dowler passed away Jan. 31, 1947.

Mrs. Laurence Kruppe.

159

THE TUFFORD FAMILY

By Mrs Rosa Tufford — Lena Tufford.

In the fall of 1908, Mr. Noble Tufford of Malahide Township purchased the McAlpine Farm on Talbot Street moving here with his family the following spring.

Mr. Noble Tufford was one of five sons of the late Rev. John Tufford, an early Methodist minister, and was born at Ingersoll. Mrs Tufford, formerly Lillis Pritchard, was the only daughter of Mr. and Mrs John Pritchard of Luton.

When they moved to Southwold Township the cattle and sheep were turned out on the road and walked while the horses pulled wagons loaded with pigs, poultry, implements, furniture, etc. South of St. Thomas, the sheep became tired and could go no farther. The late Mrs. Alex Anderson noticed their predicament and offered to care for the sheep in his yard until they were rested. This offer was gratefully accepted.

In the summer of 1912, they had the misfortune of losing their house by fire. It was replaced the following year, and in 1939 the barn was destroyed by wind.

Mr. and Mrs Tufford, both deceased had two daughters and five sons, namely: Mrs James Davidson of Muirkirk and Miss Margaret Tufford of Toronto. Ross and Gordon on the farm and Frank in St. Thomas, Dr. Norman who died while visiting in Sweden in 1946 and Firman who died December 15, 1949 at Peterborough.

Dr. Norman Tufford served overseas in World War I as a Corporal. Firman served a short time in World War I and again in World War II as a Flight Lieutenant. Flight Lieutenant Noble Tufford served overseas in World War II for four years.

Mr. and Mrs Ross Tufford have three children: Noble, at home, Mrs Keith McLean of Port Stanley and Mrs Stanley Vince of London.

Mrs and Mrs Frank Tufford have one daughter: Mrs Don Switzer of Hamilton.

Dr. Norman Tufford left two children: Norman Jr. and Carolyn, both of Detroit.

The Tufford Family (cont'd) By Marion R. Tufford

In 1950 Ross and Cora Tufford built a home for themselves across the orchard from the "big house" and in the fall of that year Noble married Marion Ruth Hills of Tara.

The couple have now six children, three boys and three girls - Ruth Ann, Alex, Janice, Owen, Karen and Stanley.

Noble served in township and county council for thirteen years and while he was Reeve of Southwold two brand New buildings were erected in 1964, directly across from each other on the Talbot Road - the Elgin Manor County Home for the Aged (on which he served as Chairman) and The Southwold School NO. 1.

Mrs. Ross (Cora) Tufford remained active in her community and church; finishing a quilt she made for her grandson, Alex, a day and a half before she passed away at her home in February 1962.

162

~~162~~

THE JABEL ROBINSON FARM

In 1939, John Robinson Fatcher bought this 200 acres- Lot 29 - S.T.R.E. from the estate of his aunt, Miss Hattie Robinson. His son Allison, has lived on this farm since his marriage to Kate Folland in 1968. They have five children, Karen and Kevin, Robin, Roseanne and George Robinson.

THE HUNT FAMILY

146

In 1841 Francis Hunt was born of Irish parents in ^{Poultney,} Middletown Springs, Vermont. His parents died when he was very young and at an early age he was apprenticed to a blacksmith. He availed himself of every opportunity to acquire an education, supporting himself by occasional work at the anvil. He attended College and taught school in the state of Vermont at the age of sixteen. He was studying law when the Civil War began and served in the Army of the North. After the war, he came to Canada.

In 1859, he took a position in the celebrated Shieballiend shipyards on the Welland Canal. Then came word of the oil boom at Petrolia and he became a pioneer speculator in that new field, making considerable money at first, but losing much of it in the subsequent slump. A few years of working at his trade in Western Canada followed, then he returned to Ontario, settling in Ingersoll, Ont; where he filled the position of foreman of the Ingersoll foundry for a number of years. There he was a shopmate of the late Joseph Gibson, postmaster of Ingersoll for many years and one of Canada's leading temperance advocates.

Squire Hunt and Mr. Gibson appeared often together on the public platform, Squire Hunt as a clear-thinking champion of the Labor cause. He identified himself in the organization of the Nine-Hour ^{League} ~~League~~, the first Labor organization in Canada, and was vice-president of the League for several years.

Squire Hunt married while he was working in Ingersoll. His wife was Mary Ellen James, daughter of Joshua James of Norwich. They were married in Dereham Centre, Oxford township, on Jan. 4, 1864.

Squire Hunt followed booms. He came to St. Thomas with the railroad boom in this city, arriving here in 1872 when the Canada Southern Railway, now the Michigan Central, was under construction. He worked for some months with that company, then entered the service of the Great Western Railway (now the C.N.R. Wabash Division) which was then building. He was formen of the local blacksmith shops for several years.

Squire Hunt's star of destiny changed its direction one day with the arrival in St. Thomas of a youthful newspaper man. That man was the late Edward E. Sheppard, founder of the Toronto Saturday night and a native of South Dorchester township. Mr. Sheppard came here and acquired the old St. Thomas Journal. He sought out Frank Hunt, whose political articles he had read in several Canadian and American newspapers, and they became partners with Mr. Hunt a reporter and editorial writer. The newspaper was a great success but the cost was great for the health of both partners was broken, and they were forced to sell the business. Mr. Hunt suffered a serious pulmonary condition and he turned to agriculture, acquiring the old Shone farm on the Gravel Road and later the Mandeville farm on the old Talbot Road. He continued living on his farm until he completely regained his health, when he disposed of the farm and returned to the city to engage in the contracting business on a modest scale until his appointment as County police magistrate in 1885. He held this position until his death in 1929.

In returning to St. Thomas to reside, Squire Hunt in his unflinching desire for action and public service, turned to municipal politics and was a member of the town and city councils for a number of years. He was Chairman of No. 3 Committee of the City Council when the site of the present fire-hall was secured and the hall built. He also purchased the city hall which was christened "Big Frank" in his honor. He was a member of the Board of Education for several years, being on the committee that had charge of the erection of the old Collegiate Institute, and also the Scott and Myrtle Street Schools and part of the Balaclava Street School.

Even during his comparatively short period on the farm, Squire Hunt identified himself with municipal politics and was elected to the Southwold Township Council, later representing the township at the County Council board as deputy reeve and as reeve. He was on the committee that had charge of the building of the courthouse, the building in which he later administered justice for such a long and eventful period.

When not on court duty, one generally could find Squire Hunt in his office, buried in some weighty tome from the Elgin Law Library. Legal men

used to say if a book was missing from the law library, they knew where to find it--in Frank Hunt's office. No man was more familiar with the contents of that law library.

Squire Hunt was predeceased by his wife in 1927. They had five children; Maggie (Mrs George King) Talbot Road; Dolly (Mrs Salathiel Curtis), Middlemarch; Arthur, St. Thomas; Edward, Detroit (deceased); and Frederick, Cleveland.

Mrs King has one daughter Mrs Edna Silcox. Her children are Harold and Rose-Marie.

Mrs Curtis has three daughters and two sons; Dorothy married W. Ayearst of St. Thomas, they have three sons; William, John and Richard; Frank married Dorothy Chambers and they have two sons; John and Robert; James married Eva Johnson and they have two daughters and one son; Josephine, Wayne and Ann; Florence married Mr. Gugino of Rochester N.Y. and they have three sons: Joseph, Charles and Gerald; Nora is at home. -

Arthur married Sarah Robbins. They have two children. R. H. Hunt and Constance (Mrs Morley Bentley).

Edward married Gertrude McCutcheon of London. They had five children.

Frederick married Jean Brown. They have one child: Donald Hunt.

Mrs. John Mc. Ewen

*Note - Nora married Reg Luston
in Sarnia, later moving back to
St. Thomas.*