

THE ANDREWS FAMILY

Grandfather Richard Andrews was born and raised in the Vicinity of Holsworthy, Devonshire, England and spent the last years there as Minister of one of the two Free Methodist Churches in Holsworthy. He also conducted a private school in a rented building where he boarded with a family by the name of "Slee", and there he married the oldest daughter of Mrs. Slee (a Widow) with a large family.

One of the youngest, a boy named William, came to the U. S. A. about 1866 and settled in Chicago, where he has a number of descendents. I saw him in 1920 when he was 94 years of age and was one of the youngest and alert men of that age I ever knew. He died in 1922. Grandmother never saw him after she left Holsworthy in 1831. They left in April, arrived in New York on June 6th, travelled up the Erie Canal through New York State to Rochester, thence across Lake Erie to Port Stanley and on to St. Thomas.

The first child, (our Uncle John) and Albert Andrews Grandfather, was born there in October 1831.

Some of the McLarty Family have written a history which states Uncle John was born in England, but that is incorrect.

Grandfather had two sisters, who with their husbands and families came on the same boat. They were - Matthew Gilbert, his wife and son William, who was president of Gilberts Bank until he died. His son was President until it merged with the Imperial Bank on Talbot Street East, St. Thomas,- and Richard Penhale and his wife. They arrived in the summer or early fall of 1831.

Grandfather was in the village for two or three years. Uncle John and Uncle Richard were both born in the village of St. Thomas and about 1833 Grandfather took the farm which John Andrews now owns. I have examined the records at the Registry Office and before that always wondered how it was that Uncle John got title to it. Grandfather had never completed his requirements as to receiving the title, although it was assigned to him as a homestead by Col. Talbot, who had charge of those matters until about 1840. After Grandfather died in 1849 Uncle John took over and was the head of the family. Grandmother Mary (Slee) Andrews died in 1855 and Uncle John married a neighbour girl, Isabella McLarty, and my mother, who was the youngest of a large family, grew up with them. Her Aunt Martha Andrews, who was a teacher, graduated from the Toronto Academy of Music, taught and trained my mother, who at the age of 16 years began to teach. Mother took over Aunt Martha's school, in Dunwich, in the fall of 1867 when Aunt Martha was too ill to continue. After Aunt Martha's death that November, my mother taught there until the end of 1869 - I have the original school record book in my safe. It has the written contracts made by the school board and both my Aunt Martha's and my late Mother's contracts to teach there.

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605 Ford Building,
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ANDREWS +++

1966.

The farm settled on by Richard Andrews in 1833, was owned continuously by his descendants, then following the death of great grandson, John was sold to Lloyd Taylor in 1963.

THE BAKER FAMILY

William Baker being born and raised in England became a most successful and prosperous farmer near Bude, Cornwall, in the early part of the eighteenth century, and married Margaret Hicks in the year 1824. Comparing farming of those years with to-day proves to be vastly different in many ways, machinery and powered equipment just did not exist and the haying was done all by hand and stacked in what was known as "ricks". Mr. Baker drew many loads of sea-sand to his farm for fertilization purposes. The Baker home was one of the modern dwellings of those days, and featured sash windows which in that period were an innovation.

On the farm the Baker children (ten in all) had their own duties and chores to carry out daily. Elizabeth and Charlie's summer holiday job was to watch the cattle pasture along the nearby canal, which vantage point commanded an excellent view of the home. The miller was a frequent visitor at the Baker home, and called regularly to get the grist, which he would process and return the following day, with a sack slung on either side of his mule.

As the children grew a little older, William and Margaret Baker were determined to sail for Canada with their ten children. This of course would mean great sacrifices giving up their homeland and farm also it took courage and responsibilities not yet known about the new country. William Baker was most set in his ways and when he said he was going to Canada, that he meant. He got someone to take over the rest of his lease on the farm and prepared to leave for "Merica". Mr. Baker's own sisters were very concerned about him leaving England, thinking him not a very robust man and that he would not live to see his family grow up, let alone roughing it in a new country.

It was spring of 1847 and a seven weeks voyage on the sailing vessel took a great deal of preparations. For the family of twelve hungry mouths, Mother Baker had to pack food enough in the chests for some fifteen hundred meals, everything except bread and water. The old family grocer in Cornwall was most sorry to see the family leave and presented them with a case of ginger snaps for the voyage as a parting token of friendship. The trip was proving uneventful until, exploring about by himself, Isaac made a name for himself by falling down the hatchway. He was quickly rescued by his older brothers, Robert and John and suffered no ill effects from his experience.

The older boys, William, Samuel, Isaac and Robert used to have to get up very early in the morning on the vessel in order to hold a place in the line-up for the

use of the cooking stove, for passengers travelling in their class had to cook their own meals; though occasionally Father Baker was able to get, by special request, something extra cooked by the boat people.

Cabins and sleeping quarters were a stirring scene in those days and Father Baker was easily and constantly coaxed by the children to take them "up above". At least Father thought that they would be "out from under foot" when on deck.

When water was wanted for ablution purposes, a bucket was let down over the side of the boat. Some of the passengers on board washed their linens by trailing it through the water behind the vessel.

After several weeks on ship some of the passengers became dreadfully weary and homesick. Ladies were weeping: "Oh, if only I could once get out of this and back on land beside a dear old hedge again; never would I leave it."

As days and weeks passed weariness grew until one day all the family was taken on deck by Father Baker to witness the most thrilling, exciting moment of the trip, when the "salt water might be meeting the fresh." Seeing this they knew that very soon they would be sighting land. Land was sighted on the 19th day of May, and excitement ran high of all aboard. On seeing land all the passengers stopped complaining and grumbling about the ship's accommodations.

Mother Baker was a firm, strong minded woman of very few words, but the few she did say she meant. When they finally docked, Mrs. Baker said she was never so thankful for anything in her life, as to put her foot on land again and that now she could gather her family together again under a roof of her own in Canada.

The Bakers came as far as Hamilton by water, travelling up the St. Lawrence and across Lake Ontario by lake and river boats. At Hamilton they hired oxen and wagons, loaded up their meagre belongings and started out over corduroy roads through the mosquito-infested bush of Upper Canada. They had no idea of where they were going to settle, they were simply heading for the home of relatives in the St. Thomas area, and after first looking over the farms in this district they intended to choose their home. Most of the route between Hamilton and St. Thomas was followed along the Talbot Road which was surveyed by Colonel Mahlon Burwell, surveyor for Colonel Talbot. The Father and older boys travelled most of the journey on foot to ease the burden that the oxen had to draw over the backwoods roads.

Finally arriving in the village of St. Thomas, the Bakers found lodging at a hotel. Young four-year-old

Thomas looked about the "lounge" and excitedly gave Mother the news:-"We are back home again in the parlor."

The older boys, Robert, John, William and Samuel struck out hot foot the night of arrival at the hotel to surprise Aunt Mary Axford (Mrs. Baker's sister), who lived somewhere out north of the village. The boys became lost and darkness overtook them and they were taken in by a most hospitable farmer of the district for over night. At the break of dawn on the following morning the boys started out again for Aunt Mary's and they were overjoyed to surprise her shortly after breakfast. What a thrill it was for Aunt Mary, a lonely emigrant herself, to get a sister and family from England. The following day the remainder of the family came to the Axford home by ox-team.

A short time after their arrival in the St. Thomas district, the Bakers bought the farm on the tenth concession of Yarmouth, which is still in the possession of the family. Roy Baker the third generation still farms exactly the same land, fifty acres on each side of the road, which was purchased by his grandfather in 1847. Hugh Douglas was the original owner of the land and rather an interesting story is told of how Mr. Baker purchased it. Mr. Douglas was plowing between stumps in a newly cleared back field when Mr. Baker came to the decision to buy the farm and went to the back field to inform the owner of his decision. On learning of this Mr. Douglas took his yoke of oxen from the field without even bothering to finish the furrow he was plowing at the time. The deal was transacted and a day or two later Mr. Baker finished the plowing where Mr. Douglas had left off.

Mrs. Baker, the mother, carried with her across the ocean in a leather money belt \$1,500.00 in British gold sovereigns, which was used to purchase their new home. The farm, when they bought it, was only partly cleared, and for the first few years the large family lived in a small log cabin which had been occupied by Mr. Douglas. The cabin was on a field east of where the house is situated to-day.

The Baker barn, still in use, was built in 1849 and an addition was made in 1882. These dates are carved in the ends of the two sections of the barn. The Baker farm possesses a unique claim for public interest in that one of its barns hold the only nesting colony of rare cliff swallows in Elgin County. It is one of the largest such colonies in Ontario and is often visited by bird students. The swallows build gourd shaped nests of mud beneath the eaves of barns and are so rare in Ontario at this time that discovering a nesting colony is of unusual interest.

In pioneer days they were a common bird but their well-built nests were always usurped by English sparrows and eventually they became very rare; but here have been protected from their enemies, and now there are about seventy nests in the colony.

By the time William Baker was too old to continue active work, all of his sons except the youngest, Thomas, had left and taken up other farms. Therefore, the original Baker farm was passed on to Thomas, who married Mary Jane Miller, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Miller - neighboring farmers. Subsequently the farm was passed on to their only son, Roy, who still resides there with his wife (formerly Bernice White), and their only daughter Jean and her husband Calvin Watson and their children, Ronald and Carolyn.

Bernice Baker

(Mrs. Roy Baker).

Jan. 20, 1953.

1966. ----

Following the death of Roy Baker, Mrs. Baker, daughter Jean, husband Calvin Watson and family reside on the farm, which was first settled on by William Baker in 1847. Mrs. Baker lives in the mud house built in 1850, while the Watson family occupy their new house built across the lane.

THE BAKER PIONEER HOME

It is not necessary to travel to the adobe villages of Mexico to find houses built of mud and straw, for there are a few of the unusual structures in the St. Thomas district, some of them very close to the city. All of them are old buildings which date back to pioneer times when the settlers had to utilize the materials at hand for the erection of their homes. The log cabin was universal. The old rock homes of pioneer days are still standing in a few districts of the United States and Canada where this building material was available. But there are probably few of the old clay homes still in existence in Canada for it seems to have been rarely used by the pioneers.

Probably what is one of the best preserved of such dwellings in the province is the farmhouse of Mr. and Mrs. Roy Baker and though over a hundred years old it is still in an excellent state of preservation. The Baker home possesses walls of clay and straw which are eighteen inches thick, plastered inside and out to form a housing wall which is more impervious to winter cold and gales than any other type of structure could possibly be. A ditch about an hundred feet to the rear of the house marks the spot where the building clay was dug over a century ago.

This home built about 1850 by William Baker, Grandfather of the present owner, is certainly one of this districts most interesting historic dwellings. At casual glance it appears simply as a smoothly stuccoed house. Until one might notice a lower corner where there is a small patch in which the exterior plaster has broken away, revealing the clay and straw of the wall's interior, a person would never realize that here was a house distinctly different from most others. The interior wall revealed by that patch where the plaster is broken away is brown clay almost as hard as concrete. Coarse wheat straw can be seen mixed throughout the clay, this being evidently added to the mud to give it an adherent quality.

In order to mix the clay properly, - a pit was dug and in this the moist clay was put then straw thrown over the clay and oxen were driven back and forth to do the mixing by their trampling. The mixture was moved from the pit to the scene of the house by oxen and wagon. The house was built just as an ordinary concrete home would be to-day, except the walls were made much thicker. They also are built on a stone foundation. The clay mixture was poured into cribs and the walls raised three feet at a time, when it was allowed to harden for a few days within the board cribs, before this cribbing was removed.

The house is a two-storey dwelling about thirty by forty feet in size. A built-in fireplace of brick with adjoining book shelves erected in the east wall of the front room when the house was originally built is still in use. The Baker family still have in their possession several of the pioneer articles of home equipment, most of which were brought from England when the family emigrated. These include fireplace tongs and kettle racks, old iron kettles, spinning wheels, a cradle and three muzzle-loading percussion cap muskets.

Bernice Baker.

(Mrs. Roy Baker.)



THE BAKER PIONEER HOME

Built in 1850

Modernized and still occupied 1959

1965.