

and a picture of the patient face of the old Irish peasant woman came back to me, "she is even older than you are, Mrs. Curtis."

"Yes, but I was in this country long before she was, and she never had to clear up a bush farm. I would like to see her, though, for you said that she was more than a hundred years old. Sometime, maybe, I can go and see her when my health gets better."

"How did you manage to cook before there were stoves?" I asked, changing the subject.

"We cooked in the big fireplace over the hot coals. We baked bread by putting the dough in an iron pot fitted with legs and a tight iron cover. This we set down on the live coals and heaped other coals on the cover."

"But could you make good bread that way?" I asked in some surprise, but I saw instantly that I had touched a sore spot, for the old lady was now really impatient, and regarded the question as a reflection on the cookery of the early days.

"Yes, we could make good bread that way, better bread than you ever get now. They sell stuff at the bakers now that they call bread, but there is more than flour and water in it. It's poor stuff--not fit for to eat."

"What do you find are the chief drawbacks of such an old age as yours, Mrs. Curtis?"

"Oh, it is so lonely. People do not care to talk to an old, old woman, who is hard of hearing, and you can't blame them. But it is lonely. Sometimes I think that it would be better not to live beyond our allotted time, three

score and ten, but those thoughts are not right. The good Lord knows best, and I trust in him. I am glad that you came to talk to me, and I will read what you say about me, for my eyes are real good yet." The old lady arose, and going to a cupboard produced an old fashioned prayer book to show that she was not boasting about her eyesight, and she found no difficulty in making out the quaint text.

I left this old lady, feeling that I had been conversing with one of the heroines, who helped, unostentatiously, but none the less enduringly, to build up this Canada of ours into a magnificently free common-wealth, where the average of happiness is probably higher than any other country, largely through the toil worn efforts of just such people as "Elizabeth Curtis, born in Devonshire, England, the sixth day of October, in the year of our Lord, 1805." The faded face of the dear old lady, who today looks out across the wide fields won from wilderness largely through her own toil, assumes under this feeling a glorified beauty like unto the characters of an heroic past.

(Mrs) Blanche Gilbert Curtis

THE EASTABROOK FAMILY

Late in the year 1824 or early 1825 a family of Eastabrooks took leave of their farm homes in New Hampstead in the County of Devonshire, England, to explore and settle on new lands in Canada.

Joseph Eastabrook and his wife, and daughter, a widow of an English Army Officer who died in a war in India, and Joseph Eastabrook Jr., his wife and two small children, crossed the ocean in a sailing vessel, the trip lasting more than three months. They landed finally at the Port of New York and decided on coming to Canada. They made their first home at Port Stanley, Joseph Jr. working at odd jobs for a short time, while looking for land to settle on. He decided to locate neat the village of St. Thomas and secure land on the creek which wound its way around the village site, and on to Port Stanley.

He then walked to the home of Colonel Talbot to bargain for the land. Colonel Talbot advised him to consider the land to the East of the site he finally bought. But Joseph Eastabrook had a sad experience of the shortage of water in the Old Country, so finally in 1831 had the deeds and lands in his name known as Lots #3 and #4 (south range Edgeware Road now) but the Crown deed the only one in existence for this land names a parcel of land in Upper Canada.

On these lands, they built a log house facing the Edgeware Road, cleared the valley land and sowed wheat and corn. The first returns on their investment was a sale of oak trees to a ship building firm, the stumps some nearly five feet across are still visible on the farm.

In a few years they built two more log houses, one in the valley for Joseph Sr., his wife and daughter, on the site where now stands the St. Thomas City pumping station; on the hill above, the other log house for Joseph Jr. and family.

They were never discouraged with their new venture, they found abundance of wild life to live on, until they established a domestic herd of their own; fish and game were always available. Their crops were good. Wheat sold very high in the late thirties, and Joseph Jr. secured more land for his family. In 1837 he bought two one hundred acre lots west of the town of Strathroy and two more near the town of West Lorne.

They had their heartaches, losing two sons in their early twenties with what was then termed - black diptheria, and at the same time, their oldest daughter Mrs. Ben Axford lost her three children with the same malady.

The Eastabrook children received their education mostly from a Richard Andrews who came from Devonshire, England in the year 1831, settling on land north of the Eastabrook home. He was a close friend of the family in the Old Country and a well educated man. He taught children of the district in his own log house during the winter months.

The Old English Church was a factor in the Eastabrooks settling where they did. Grandmother found it so convenient just to go to Church over the hills. This was the only church in the new country at that time.

Joseph Eastabrook's son Daniel inherited the homeplace and married a Devonshire native, Mary Ann Wickett, and the only son Fred Eastabrook, the fourth generation is still farming the homestead as well as land bought by his Father from the late Judge Hughes estate, and from the Billings estate.

The City of St. Thomas took the water rites by arbitration from Daniel Eastabrook and thirty acres of valley in 1890, and in 1910 the Hydro Electric Commission bought a station site on the original farm and are still taking a parcel of land every year or so to expand their lines and storage rites.

Hazel Eastabrook Archibald
(Mrs. A. Archibald)

Feb. 4, 1952.

1966 -----

Fred Eastabrook lived on this farm which was settled on by his great grandfather, Joseph Eastabrook in 1831, until 1959, when he sold it and moved to St. Thomas.

THE FERGUSON FAMILY

At the close of the fifth century Fergus, son of Erc, high king of Ireland, with a band of Irish Scots came from Ireland to Argyll. Later, in the days of Conall II, a descendant of Fergus in the fourth generation, namely St. Columba, a relative of Conall I, and a disciple of St. Patrick, came from Ireland to preach Christianity to Argyll. He built his monastery on the island of Iona. One of Columba's companions was Diarmid. In the coats of arms of the McDiarmids, the Fergusons, the Campbells of Argyll, and some other families of Argyll, the wild boar slain by Diarmid, the hero of the legend, "Diarmid and Grainne" has a place. Each clan had also a badge, that of the Ferguson being the little sunflower of fox-glove.

In the 8th century, Argyll, with the Western islands and the Isle of Man fell under the power of the Norsemen until the 12th century when Somerled drove them out. His Descendants maintained themselves in Argyll, between conflicting claims of the kings of Scotland, Norway and Man until the end of the 15th century. In 1457 Colin Campbell was created Earl of Argyll by James II and his line has continued to the present.

By the clan system, the clansmen followed their chief. They supported Bonnie Prince Charlie and were defeated at Gulloden Moor in 1745. After this defeat the clans were disarmed and highland dress was prohibited. This did not break the military spirit of the clans, but transferred

it to other fields. The chiefs raised the Highland regiments. These clansmen of the Peninsula and Waterloo returned to glens desolate of men, deserted first by the voluntary emigration of the clans, and later they were forced from their homes in the interest of sheep farming and deer forests.

Duncan Ferguson was apparently one of these veterans, and in the autumn of 1830, he and his wife and five children and five children of a former marriage arrived in Canada from Kilmichael, Glassary, Argyllshire, Lochgilphead, Scotland. They spent the winter with Scottish friends, Macfarlanes near Peterborough. In the spring of 1831, the family came by boat to Port Stanley, bound for the Talbot Settlement. They spent their first night at the home of a nephew, James Ferguson, near Port Stanley on the Union Road. The farm which they chose is located on the 12th concession Yarmouth Township, County of Elgin. Their great grandson A. J. Ferguson now lives on the old homestead with his son Duncan great-great-grandson of the first Duncan. The original house was east of the present one nearer a small stream.

The pioneer, Duncan Ferguson, had been a soldier, likely in the Napoleonic Wars, and always retained his love of his old red uniform and love of his books, which were kept on a shelf behind the kitchen stove. The story is told of the house taking fire one day. When the slight blaze was discovered, the old gentleman, dressed in his red coat hastily gathered up his books and started for the road. His two treasures were safe, some one else might look after the fire. Two silver buttons from the coat are still in possession of a great granddaughter.

When the Ferguson family were in Scotland they attended church at Kilmartin, a short distance from their home, Kilmichael, and on settling on the 12th concession of Yarmouth attended the Presbyterian church situated on the 11th concession, this place of worship being named Kilmartin after the church in Scotland. Many of the early settlers of the district having attended the Kilmartin Church in Argyllshire. This church was moved in 1906 to the 12th concession and known as St. James. An incident which happened in the Canadian Kilmartin church was related by the early settlers. A woman by the name of McDonald who was mentally unbalanced came into church during the service, swinging a branch with an apple on it, and talking aloud, one of the elders, a Campbell, endeavoured to get her to leave. Then there was a scene, as the McDonalds and Campbells were bitter enemies in Scotland after the massacre of Glencoe, which took place in 1692, and Mrs. McDonald did not forget in the new land.

The Fergusons spoke Gaelic, the second generation both languages, and some of the third, who told of their education was the result of a desire to know what their parents were discussing in secret.

The Scottish people made good use of the Education Act of 1696, which provided for the maintenance of a school in every parish by the kirk session, and grammar schools in some towns, judging by the excellence of Duncan's letters written to his brother Iver Ferguson.

Yarmouth, Sept. 30th, 1837

My Dear Brother:

I have to acknowledge receipt of yours of 15th June last, twenty days ago, by which I learned your welfare and the state of your present circumstances. I am happy to hear from you. I wrote you about six weeks ago which I hope will reach you before this, but I have lost no time in answering this one, on account of pressing circumstances as you state, to see if it is in my power to alleviate. I am sorry, my dear brother, for your present trial, especially in the loss of your son. We are all feeling for you, but we must be resigned to the will of the Almighty. I wrote you a letter in 1834 in which I mentioned chopping and clearing of land, and in the one that I sent you five weeks ago I told you what clearance we had and some information respecting the country. It is not for other people that we are working as you are, but for ourselves and family, and suppose we work hard, we know we will have the benefit in the end. Men in that country are only working for their living and nothing else, but while we are working we will make our living and a property besides.

Every one that came here has got land in some shape or other. Every one is doing this way or that way, they have cattle and clearance which is very valuable and equal to a great sum of money in the end. Cleared land will bring from thirteen to sixteen dollars per acre. My son, Donald was offered sixteen dollars for every cleared acre he had but would not take it.