

Jan. 1912 - June 1912 - Rhea Stirling
Sept. 1912 - June 1913 - Gladys Sheppard
Sept. 1913 - June 1915 - Mary Belle McLean
Sept. 1915 - Dec. 1915 - Edith Bandeen
Jan. 1916 - June 1917 - Mary McSorley
Sept. 1917 - June 1918 - Rose McPherson
1918, 1919 - Barbara McCallum
1919-1921 - Mabel Moran
1921-1924 - Mabel Schuler
1924-1925 - Agnes Campbell
1926-1927 - Audrey Sullivan
1927-1929 - Pearl Templeton
1929-1931 - Marjorie Walker
1931-1934 - Margaret Campbell
1934-1935 - Douglas Lusty
1935-1936 - Margaret McLean
1936-1937 - Frances McMillan
1937-1939 - Helen Plyley
1939-1941 - Marion McDonald
1941-1943 - Jean Humpheries
1943-1944 - Doreen Murray
1944-1946 - Catherine Degraw
1946-1948 - Evelyn Oldham
1948-1952 - William McKellar

Written by: Mrs. Peter McCallum

THE EARLY HISTORY OF ALDBOROUGH

Part I - South-Western Section

For the purpose of recording the background for the Tweedsmuir Village Histories, a project undertaken by the Women's Institutes in the various villages, the history of the Township of Aldborough has been divided into four parts: Part I - the South-western section bounded by Lake Erie on the South, the sixth concession on the North, the Town Line on the west, and Kerr Road on the East, to be the assignment of the Rodney Women's Institute; Part II - the South-eastern section of Aldborough, that of the West Lorne Women's Institute; Part III - the North-eastern section of Aldborough, that of the Crinan Women's Institute; Part IV - the North-western section, that of the Clachan Women's Institute.

The Township of Aldborough was named for a town in the County of Suffolk, England, and what is to-day Elgin County, Ontario, was originally called Suffolk County. It was part of a tract of land granted to Colonel Thomas Talbot by the British (English) crown, with the objective of getting settlers for this crown colony.

South Aldborough was surveyed about the year 1811 by Mahlon Burwell, and in 1817 he and Freeman Green of Howard Township were given a contract by Colonel Talbot to chop and clear a road through Aldborough, Orford and Howard Townships. This was the original Talbot Road, and the contract was completed in 1820.

One of the first groups of early settlers in South-west Aldborough arrived in September of 1817, which had come from Scotland under the leadership of Peter McKellar. He was born in Inverary, Argyleshire, in 1784. In his younger days he had been a shepherd in his native mountains, in the kilt, plaid, and bonnet, with his collie, enjoying the bracing and fragrant mountain breezes blown over the heather. After he married, he became a laborer on a farm threemiles from the Duke of Argyle's castle.

In the spring of 1817, while plowing, a friend called on him. The plowing stopped, and although his land-lord called to him to go on with his work, he took the horses to the barn, unharnessed and fed them. He went home and told his wife of the visitor, and declared if there was a spot under the canopy of heaven where he could be his own master, he would go to it.

This desire for personal freedom appears to be quite general among the early emigrants from the Old Country. Not seeing any future in their life where they were, they were willing to take a chance on going to a new country where Dukes and Duchesses had no place, and were willing to endure hardships to find this freedom. Soon the following party was organized to leave for America: Peter McKellar, his wife and one son, Archibald, born February 3, 1816, in Argyleshire; Alex McNab, his wife and their children Duncan, Margaret and Mary; John McDougall and his wife.

This group of ten sailed from Greenock for Quebec in the latter part of April 1817, and were nine weeks on the sea voyage. From Quebec they went in a small schooner to Montreal, and from there they were taken in carts to Lachine in a small vessel until they reached the St. Lawrence rapids, over which they were taken in bateaux, very light boats which were sometimes forced against the stream by men using long poles, and at other times drawn by oxen or horses. After reaching Kingston, they went by schooner to Queenston which was then the western limit of civilization, and arrived there late in August.

At Queenston, all the women and the small boy remained, while all the men went westward through the wilderness to find new homes. In Aldborough, finding some of their countrymen, they decided to cast their lot with them. Land was selected, and they returned to Queenston on foot,

calling at Colonel Talbot's headquarters to enter their names for 50 acres each. It has been learned since that Colonel Talbot kept the remaining 150 acres of each 200-acre parcel.

Back in Queenston, they engaged teams to take themselves, their families and luggage to Fort Erie, then by schooner up Lake Erie and in September landed them in Aldborough at the mouth of Sixteen Mile Creek, so named because it was sixteen miles west of Colonel Talbot's home. The landing was about two miles from the land they had been allotted by Colonel Talbot: Alex McNab and family settled on Lot 2 North Talbot Road, 12 concession; Peter McKellar and family on Lot 6 North Talbot Road; and John McDougal and wife settled on Lot 6 South Talbot Road, 13 concession. The three families were able to build three small log houses and make them habitable before winter set in.

When this above group arrived in South Aldborough, they found two other groups already living there, who had arrived in 1816. These two groups were also from Scotland - one coming via New York State, and one direct. Those who came from New York State had emigrated from Scotland from 1805 to 1808, and included: Gregor McGregor, Thomas Ford, James McLaren, Neil Haggart, Colin Gillies and his two sons Archibald and John, John Menzies, Donald McEwen, and Duncan Stewart.

Those who arrived from Scotland direct in 1816 were James McKinley, his brothers Duncan and Peter, and a cousin Donald McGugan, Findlay Macdiarmid, Duncan McFarlane, and his brother John, Alex Forbes, Donald McNaughton, Donald McIntyre and John McIntyre.

It is quite evident that these two groups received their land from Colonel Talbot in much the same way as the first group, above. There is more detail found, however, and mention is made that Colonel Talbot gave them their 50 acres on condition that they would settle there and perform some work to open up the road, also that each settler

should clear and sow ten acres of land, and build a house of prescribed dimensions within a period of three years. If he failed to do this, he forfeited his claim. If he performed these settlement duties, he received his 50 acres free, and could procure the remaining 150 acres of the lot on payment of a certain sum of money. These adventurers decided to accept his terms, strenuous as they were, and came to what was afterwards called Port Glasgow.

Another group of early Aldborough settlers sailed from Tobermorey, Island of Mull, on the ship "Mars", July 28, 1818, and arrived at Pictou, Nova Scotia, on September 1, 1818, and at Quebec on September 20. Thirty families came over on this vessel and settled in Aldborough. Among them were the families of Archibald Munroe, Donald McIntyre, Dougal Campbell, Duncan McCallum, Thomas McColl, Duncan MacIntyre, Duncan McKillop, and Alexander Gray.

Dougald MacLarty and James Ruthven also came over with this group, but stayed to visit friends in Caledonia for a few weeks. When they did arrive at Port Furnival (now Port Glasgow) they attempted to come ashore with a boatload of luggage. The boat capsized and both were drowned. The bodies were recovered, and all known means to revive them were used, but to no avail. The bodies of these men were buried beneath two lonely trees on a portion of land that later became Killfinlay Cemetery on Talbot Road. It was later known as the Macdiarmid Cemetery, and now as the Pioneer Cemetery of New Glasgow.

Others who also came in 1817 and 1818 were John McKellar, John C. Gillies, Donald Paterson and sons Donald and Duncan, George Munroe, Neil Campbell, Donald Campbell, and Donald Buchan.

In 1820 Ewin McKinley and James Black came. The latter's name is perpetuated in Aldborough by Black's Lane. James Black lived at this time

on the farm owned in 1953 by Major Black, who was, however, not a descendant. In 1818 this Lane was a trail through the woods which James Black used to travel to the Clachan district to conduct the meetings of Early Disciples, or Scotch Baptists, as they were sometimes referred to in the early days. These meetings were held in the woods, there being no barns or houses available for meetings at that time. James Black was one of the early school teachers.

The man who claimed to be the first child born in this southern part of the township was Mungo Forbes, born in 1816.

The above people, and no doubt many others whom the writer has been unable to trace, were the early settlers and founders of South-west Aldborough.

Once the settlers had their land, the struggle to survive began, and the trials and hardships of their pioneer lives should never be forgotten, for Aldborough's growth and prosperity is based on their heroism.

The early settlers were in a dense forest, with no roads, mills, stores, or any conveniences or comforts of life, and they had no money. Even if they had had money, they could have bought neither food nor clothing. There were none to be had in the settlement. But they had self-reliance, bone and sinew, and with these they encountered and overcame their difficulties. They were all endowed with bodily vigor, hope, and patriotism, and a will to create a future and a destiny in this new world.

They constructed their crude domiciles with a good deal of ingenuity. They had no lumber, but covered their log houses with what they called a trough roof. Tools to work with were very scarce, although some of them brought axes and augers from the States and even from Scotland.

Their worst problem was the scarcity of provisions. Some of them went to the older settlement in Dunwich near Port Talbot, where they could

make small purchases of grain which they brought home on their backs, a distance of 12 miles.

After getting the grain home, there was no mill to grind it, and the first invention for preparing grain for food was most primitive. They stood on end a section of a tree about two and a half feet high, and twelve inches in diameter. In the top of it, they hollowed out a hole the shape of the large half of an egg. The grain was put in this, and with a wooden mallet the same shape as the hollowed-out part, the grain was pounded until the outside covering, the bran, was knocked off. It was then cleaned and used for food. This food product was called Grotag (Scottish for powder).

The next invention to improve the crushing the grain was a hand mill made by Peter McKellar and John Menzies, a stone mason. This was in late 1818 or early 1819. The shell was a section of a hollow buttonwood or sycamore tree approximately three feet long, stood on end. A stone weighing about 100 pounds was fitted into the upper part of this shell with the top, smooth surface about two inches below the rim of the wooden shell. Near the bottom of the shell a small wooden beam was run across on which an iron bar stood; on the upper end of which the upper stone sat. By moving the handle (or the end of the beam) up or down, it raised or lowered the upper stone. A hole was made in the center of the upper stone where the grain was dropped in by hand. The upper end of the hole was placed over the center of the upper stone. The lower end of the pole was placed at the rim of the upper stone, thus forming the crank.

The nearest mill was Doan's grist mill in the Township of Yarmouth, 40 miles distant, and the early settlers were fortunate in having the use of a two-oared yawl brought from Caledonia, New York State, by Mr. John C. Gillies in 1817, when he settled at the mouth of Sixteen