

HISTORICAL FACTS CONCERNING S. S. I7, YARMOUTH.

School Section No. I7 is bounded on the west by Kettle Creek, on the north by Con. 7, best known in later years as Elm Street, on the east by Lot 8 and on the south by Con. 4. Within this boundary, many interesting people have made their homes and many facts will go down in history.

At the north border of the section lies a pretty lake. In 1799 the land surrounding this watering place was granted by the Government to the Hon. James Baby. This was known as the Yarwood farm, the lake as Yarwood's pond. In 1837 Thomas Drake bought Lot 4, Con. 7. Yarwood, Horton and Ermatinger bought 87 acres, the north half of Lot 5, Con. 7, this a Government grant to W. Chaplow in 1859 deeded in 1861 to Thos. Brady and in 1863 to E. M. Yarwood and later to J. Doyle and sold to the City in 1946- now "Homedale". On the north side of the road was a sawmill and Mr. Yarwood built a flour mill, raised the dam and kept it in repair, making from this little stream and pond what was then "Yarwood's Pond". The old Dake House stood on the west side of the road facing the London & Port Stanley Gravel Road. There was an old wooden bridge with sloping sides, the only way of getting into St. Thomas until 1866 when the Wilsons Bridge was built and this was thought to be the centre of civilization.

Where the P. M. shops now stand, there was a pretty little wood filled with young maple, crab and wild apple trees, a perfect picture in Spring and Autumn. Sherrif Munroe built a large ice house here and the ice harvest became a yearly event. In 1898 the land which is now "Memorial Park Cemetery", was bought by Jas. H. Still and for many years a milling business was a money making industry. This

property was also the site of the old St. Thomas fair. In 1903, the year of The Elgin Centennial, the pond was named "Pinafore Lake" for a very popular opera that was on the road at that time and the cairn was erected.

The lands immediately to the north of the 7th Concession, on the west side of the London & Port Stanley Gravel Road, were owned by Colonel C. S. Gossage whose palatial home was set amongst towering pines. It seems ironical that so impressive an estate should have later been used as a slaughter and packing house and still later for cold storage and as an artificial ice plant.

Twenty acres of land, being parts of Lots No. 2 and 3, to the south of the seventh concession road or Elm Street, and on the west side of the Gravel Road, were the property of Colonel George Bannerman. He and Colonel Gossage appear to have been colleagues of Colonel Thomas Talbot. This tract of land, stretching along the brow and down the slope of the hill, was used chiefly for general farming purposes but the southerly portion was a large orchard of a great variety of fruit trees. The estate became known as "Glenbanner" and has retained the name throughout ensuing years. During the early 1870's parts of Lots 2 and 3 were owned by William Francis Campbell, a merchant of the district, and his wife, Annie Haight Campbell.

In the summer of 1874, the Cusack Brothers- Thomas, John and Benjamin, butchers and packers, acquired the property and their home was erected on the brow of the hill. The buildings were destroyed by fire, Cusack Brothers losing their equity in the lands. It is interesting to note that the taxes on these twenty acres for the year 1887 were only \$16.97 and the allocation to School Section No. 17 was \$3.27.

In October, 1889 "Glenbanner" was purchased by James Hales, a wholesale and retail butcher. On the brow of the hill on the site of the old Cusack house, he built a large home, his son C.R.Hales and family being the present occupants of this fine old country residence.

Coming south in S. S. I7 on the west side of the road, we find a large tract of land taken up by George Barman- this is better known as the Titterington and Sam Day property. The Catholic Cemetery was given by Sam Day in 1872 when he was a candidate for East Elgin. Mr. Day was born in Exeter in Devon, England on Dec.1st, 1830. He came to Canada in 1847, taking seven weeks to sail the Atlantic, then by boat to Port Stanley and on to Blackwood's Hotel at the foot of Talbot Street hill, by wagon. For six years Mr. Day was a Trustee at S. S. I7 and at this time, the first brick school was built in 1881. He was Warden of Elgin County in the year 1888, the year the House of Industry was built, the first of it's kind in Canada.

The adjoining land owned by Hugh Martin & Son was purchased from the late Senator Wilson who was born in the year 1829 and died in 1912. Dr. Wilson was the true type country doctor, often riding his chestnut mare up and down the snow blocked roads of Yarmouth to bring new life and to bind up the wounds of the unfortunate. His wife, a Port Stanley girl, was the first President of The Womens' Historical Society.

The Axford, Weldon and Mc.Lean farms were in the east block south of Pinafore Park and are now owned by Mc.Manus, Cassidy and Ellwood. East of this lies the land granted by the Crown to Hilborne Bros. later purchased in 1880 by J. C. Mc.Kenzie who was born in Picton, N.S. to Scottish parents. He later moved to Glencoe and married Isabella Henderson of Port Stanley, whose father Malcolm Henderson,

was one of the first book-keepers in the grain elevator and warehouse at Port Stanley. At this time, as much as 300,000 bushels of wheat was shipped annually from this port by boat. This business started to decline in 1873 when the London & Port Stanley Railroad was taken over by the Great Western and quicker transportation was afforded.

J. C. Mc.Kenzie was Trustee of S.S.I7 for many years and an Elder in Knox Presbyterian Church for 28 years, dying in the church of a heart attack at a preparatory service in October 1909.

There are four farms in S.S.I7 still holding only the Crown deed-the land owned by Ben Parish, Thomas Parish, the late Frank Maynard and Simons Bros. The Parish property has been in the family since 1821.

Much of the land lying in the east side of the section, was taken up by Mr.Ferguson, later being purchased by Hepburn, Baker and Hunt. Sym Todd, father of the late James Todd, owned part of the land where the Ontario Mental Hospital now stands. This was later owned and farmed by Jas. Todd and his wife Jennie Livingstone Todd, who taught the old school for many years. The Todds were respected and beloved by all who knew them. Although an invalid for 15 years, Mrs. Todd was well known by every school child. Her kind remembrance at Christmas time of teachers and pupils, will always be connected with her memory.

South of the 5th Con. stood the old hotel "The Dutchman's Tavern" owned and operated by the Weiner family. Along this much travelled thoroughfare, many hotels were situated where the weary oxen and more weary farmer might quench their thirst. The old hitching rail and watering trough was as much a part of the hotel as was the bar and shelves laden with the odd shaped bottles, which enabled the man who could not read, to tell the barmaid the kind of liquor he preferred.

In those days, whiskey was sold by the barrel and it was not uncommon to see patrons drive away with a 5 gallon demijohn, a large green glass, straw covered jug in the back of an open cart.

Mitchell Hepburn, grand-father of the Hon. M. F. Hepburn, was also an old pioneer of this settlement on land in Lot 8, Con. 7 and also in the southern part in Concessions 5 and 4. He was a patriarch of a clan, a man of untiring energy and commanding appearance, standing 6 feet 3 inches in height with broad shoulders and an erect carriage and despite advanced age, his mind was clear up until a few days before his death. He was born in Newburgh, Fifeshire, Scotland in July 21st, 1833 of Highland Scottish parentage and was a descendant of the family to which Sir. William Wallace belonged. Mr. Hepburn sailed from Dundee for Canada with fourteen relatives on July 18th, 1843 landing at Quebec. From there the pioneer party continued their journey by portage and boat over Lake Ontario and Lake Erie, reaching Port Stanley in October 1843. This thriving town of international importance, looked good to the new settlers because St. Thomas at that time, was a hamlet of half a dozen shacks a general store and a tavern in the woods. Soon after reaching this locality, the families purchased land for themselves on the Gravel Road and erected homes. South Yarmouth owes much of it's development to these sturdy Scotch people who married and settled here and increased their race.

Robert Hepburn, uncle of Mitchell Hepburn, and Randolph Johnson, his father-in-law, were among the township's earliest road builders and at one time owned and operated the gravel road as a toll road. Mr. Hepburn's grand-father, the late Andrew Hepburn was the second white man to be buried in the St. Thomas cemetery.