



Residence of Mrs. D.M. Littlejohn

LIEUT.-COL. LESLIE PATTERSON PLAYED PROMINENT ROLE IN
EARLY TALBOT SETTLEMENT

One of the outstanding figures of the pioneer days of the Talbot settlement was the Irish-born earliest residents of south Dunwich, whose home is still a beautiful spot beside the lake west of ^{east} Tyrconnell. (It is nearly) A Patterson and his wife and two sisters, Mrs. John Pearce, with her husband and three children, and Mrs. Mary Storey (widow of Andrew Storey) with her son and two daughters, came from Pennsylvania to make their homes under the British flag.

Seeking such a place, Mr. Patterson and Mr. Pearce had visited the district the year before and when they returned in the summer of 1809 the three families were warmly welcomed by Col Talbot and were allotted the adjoining farms beside the lake which they had selected. Mr. Patterson and his sisters were not long out from Ireland, having come from County Fermanagh only in 1800 and the Irish founder of the settlement would doubtless welcome them on that account, but he would also recognize the quality of these new residents, who brought their axes, spinning wheels and looms with them, and he was not to be disappointed. All established fine homes and played an important part in the development of the community, where many of their descendants still live.

They were to be followed in the next year by Mrs. Patterson's brother, Stephen Backus, who settled on the adjoining farm and in the following year married Anne Storey. The four farms were thus a family community, and although they were by no means self-centred, their interests extending widely, this must have helped considerably in the inevitable loneliness of pioneer days. They were busy days, however, for they set about establishing their homes quickly and vigorously.

In correspondence which has been preserved no mention is made of the cutting down of the trees of the virgin forest and the building of the log cabin homes. Nor is there mention of the sowing of crops, which would doubtless be done on still very rough ground and partly between the stumps of trees. But the very next year, on August 25, 1810, Mr. Patterson had a very favourable account to give when writing to Joseph Backus, Sr., in Erie County, Pennsylvania, his father-in-law.

HAPPY IN NEW HOME

He wrote: "We are all in good health and everything appears to go very prosperously with us. We have had an increase of family. On the sixteenth...

Lydia was delivered of a daughter and had a wonderfully good time. Our crops all look remarkably well. We had a good crop of flax, between three and four acres of excellent corn and I expect to have fifteen or twenty bushels of peas. Our wheat came off lighter this season than it commonly does in this county on account of drought in the beginning of the season, but it is very good and we have got it very well saved, besides a large crop of beans and potatoes and as much as four hundred heads of excellent cabbages.

"I have got a promising young stock. We have another very good cow and for the colt I sold when Stephen was with me I got a very likely pair of two-year-old steers and a pair of year-old bulls. We have got a good stock of hogs. I expect to be able to fat eight hundred-wieght of pork this fall and we have scarce ever been out of venison as good as ever was cut since we have been here."

All of this would be welcome news for the parents back in Pennsylvania, including announcement of the arrival of their new granddaughter, but here the young couple themselves had apparently not heard from home for some time and the writer expresses uneasiness particularly as to "how you are doing with the designing set of speculators you have to deal with about your lands." There was no quick mail service in those days and this letter was being sent with a friend traveling to Erie, John Milliken, and there is an urgent request that a reply be sent by the bearer. Even travellers were not always certain messengers, but the writer was confident in regard to Mr. Milliken, "as he expects to get him a wife and c me immediately back to this county. He has got him a farm and has not lifted his wages from the Colonel so he will be back directly."

This interesting letter was among papers entrusted by Colonel Patterson's granddaughter, the late Miss Alice Patterson, to the present resident of "Sunnyside", Mrs. D. M. Littlejohn, when the late Mr. Littlejohn and his wife bought the farm and the lovely old home with which Mr. Patterson replaced his log cabin comparatively early.

WAR BRINGS DESTRUCTION

Although this letter home is so encouraging and tells of remarkable progress, back of the accomplishment was strenuous labor and all too soon war was to break out in 1812 with heart-breaking destruction in this settlement. A letter to Mr. Patterson from a William Wilson of the former home district in the United States, gives an indirect glimpse of that period.



Residence of Mr. & Mrs. John S. Pearce

Granted by Crown

ELGIN FAMILY FARMS LAND FOR 163 YEARS

1972

TYRCONNELL, Feb. 2 - John S. Pearce, a local farmer, works the same land that his great-grandfather tilled 168 years ago.

In 1808, the original John Pearce obtained his grant from the crown, allowing him to establish a home in the vast, unbroken forest.

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While great changes have come upon the Western Ontario scene, the Pearce farm has continued in unbroken ownership.

The present farm house is of 'strawberry' brick. A successor of more primitive pioneer structures, it is a product of these acres.

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"The bricks were made of clay from the farm," said Mr. Pearce. These were also fired on the premises.

"Sometimes I come upon them when I'm plowing," he added.

The Pearce farm has kept pace with the steady progress of agriculture, and a tractor has long since replaced horses.

A pear tree given to the family by Colonel Thomas Talbot, founder of the settlement, grew to be a giant and finally perished. A stump remains of the simple but useful gift.

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But Mr. Pearce does not rest on the memories of the past, as he is too busy with the future.

Yet in these quickly changing times, he is one of the few who can look upon the acres that have been a source of pride for nearly a century and a half.



Residence of Mr. + Mrs F. Smith

PIONEER HOME - This attractive cottage on the Lake Road, Dunwich, about a mile east of Tyrconnell, was the home of Meredith Conn, a pioneer settler who brought his family from Ireland to the Talbot Settlement, in 1823. It is believed to have been built in the late 1820's and served as a schoolhouse as well as a home for a time. In modern times it has been the home of the Smith family and Mr. and Mrs. Frank Smith resided here until just a few years ago when they moved to Wallacetown. (1957) Later the owners were Mr. and Mrs. D. DeGraw. The present owners are Mr. and Mrs. Schipper.



The Page Homestead

Jonas Page, Senior, was born in South Newington, Oxfordshire, England. He married Esther Hiron, and they had one son William, when they came to Canada.

In 1842 they emigrated from England to Canada and settled at Five Stakes, which is now Talbotville in 1843.

Hearing that Colonel Thomas Talbot was the Crown Representative for Land Settlement in the area he decided to go to see the Colonel at Port Talbot. Not being successful the first time, he went again and received a parcel of land in 1845 on the lake road two miles west of Tyrconnell.

Being very anxious to see the land he had purchased, he set out on foot west on the Talbot Road, which is now Number 3 Highway. After walking until mid-afternoon, he decided to turn south to reach Lake Erie. He went south about a mile and came upon a little clearing on top of a hill where a log cabin was built. In front of the log cabin he saw a fine man standing. This was Job Curtis.

Mr. Curtis invited Mr. Page in and asked him to stay the night. Jonas stayed the night and told Mr. Curtis of his plans. Mr. Curtis said he would go with him and help him build his log cabin.

After finishing the job, Mr. Page returned to Five Stakes until the spring.

In the month of March, 1846, he, his wife, and son William, arrived by ex-sled on the trail, and proceeded to his log cabin, which his only neighbour, Job Curtis, had helped him build. This log cabin was built quite a way back from where the present home is, so it was quite near the lake.

After a few days, Mr. Page was looking over his property, which of course was all heavily timbered, when he came upon a camp of Indians, six in all, and they were making maple syrup. They gave him a taste, and that was Mr. Page's first taste of maple syrup.

He liked it so well he decided to make as many basswood troughs as he could for the next season. They were about the size of a large butter bowl and would hold twelve or fourteen quarts of sap. The tapping was done with a wide chisel driven into the tree, pulled out, and a thin piece of wood, about a foot long driven in. The sap ran out on the stick and dropped in the trough. The boiling was done in an iron kettle.

Some time about 1853 a frame house was built. This was quite a way back from the road. In the early 1900's this house was moved much closer to the road, and an addition added. About this time Jonas Page added more acres to his farm.

The first Jonas Page and his wife had eleven children. Those living when this article was written were: William, James, Joseph, Jonas, Sarah, and Ellen. Losing his first wife, Mr. Page married Susan Swisher, whose maiden name was Dawson.

In 1862, Mr. Page started an ashery on his farm which proved very remunerative. It was the first of its kind in the township.

The government, in the fall of 1884, opened a fishery on Mr. Page's property, which has been a great success.

Mr. Page was one of the people who helped start the Tyrconnell Methodist Church. He was also a member of the Elgin Bee Keepers' Association.

After Jonas Page's death, his youngest son, Jonas Alfred, continued the farming operation.

Jonas Alfred Page died January 15, 1939, and his younger son, James Herman Page carried on the farming operation until his death on October 28, 1947. His younger son, John Lawrence Page, farmed for a short period.

The farm is now rented to neighbours for cash cropping. Mrs. Herman Page resides on the farm at present. It is jointly owned by Herman's two sons, Donald Herman Page and John Lawrence Page.

This is a Centennial farm and has been owned by a direct line of descendants since 1845.

The Pages were the first plush makers in England and their plush is still used at Ten Downing Street,