

## TYRCONNELL, LOST CAPITAL of LITTLE IRELAND, (cont'd)

over a service that brought them in touch with the outside world by letter and newspaper, three times a week.

It was about 1870 that telegraph line was built into Tyrconnell. In 1905, a telegraph line was strung from Port Talbot to Wallacetown, giving the people of the district their first modern communication system.

As the settlers developed their herds of cattle, the need for a cheese factory became apparent. John D. Pearce supplied that need in 1865. He set up the first cheese factory in the district. Cheese boxes were not even available in Elgin. Mr. Pearce and his men had to drive to Ingersoll and back, with slow moving teams and wagons, to obtain the boxes.

The Pearces were one of the first and most influential families in Little Ireland, choosing their land in 1808 and settling in 1809. The family is still prominently represented by third and fourth generations, with most of the notes for this article compiled by John E. Pearce of Tyrconnell.

With the Pearces to Little Ireland came Colonel Leslie Patterson and Mary Storey in 1808 and 1809; and before them, George Crane, who came with Colonel Talbot himself and settled on Lot 15, Concession 11, in 1807. Then in 1810, the Backus family arrived, headed by the one and only Stephen Backus.

### LOVE OF MUSIC

By modern standards, it was a hard life and a restricted life for the people who lived in Little Ireland's lost capital, but they found mediums and outlets for simple joys and pleasures. There was an inherent love of music among them and considerable native talent. Much of this was discovered and developed under the tutorage of Archibald Duncan a clerk in James Blackwood's store whose father had been quite a famous band leader in the Old Country. The public spirited John Pearce provided the room for musical instruction and there Duncan taught both vocal and instrumental music.

MARK ANNIVERSARY OF TALBOT SETTLEMENT

PLAQUE HONORS ELGIN HERO (1961)

Revival of an annual ceremony after a 57-year lapse celebrating the anniversary of the Talbot Settlement at Port Talbot combined with the unveiling of a historical plaque in the yard of nearby St. Peter's Church, near the John E. Pearce provincial park drew about 800 spectators Sunday afternoon.

For 20 years prior to 1903 a program commemorating the historic establishment was held annually, but for some unknown reason, the event subsided.

The day-long celebrations commenced in the Pearce Park with a tribute to the Talbot Settlement pioneers. A wreath was placed at the foot of the pioneer monument by Mrs. R.J. Fatcher, president, Elgin County Museum, and John E. Pearce.

Guest speaker at the initial ceremony was Dr. J. Gwynne-Timothy, of the history department, University of Western Ontario. The Page quartet, great-grandsons and grandson of one of the settlers of the district, participated in the ceremony at the monument.

Following the ceremony in the park, the McGregor Scottish pipe band, of West Lorne, led an impressive parade of Rover and Boy Scouts through the park to St. Peter's Church for the unveiling of a plaque honoring Victoria Cross winner, Sgt. Ellis Sifton, who resided in Wallacetown.

Nine immediate relatives of the World War One hero were present at the unveiling of the plaque which was placed in the yard of the church by the Archaeological and Historic Sites Board. Two of Sgt. Sifton's sisters, Misses Lila and Ella, unveiled the plaque as members of the hero's battalion, the 18th Battalion Association of London, looked on.

Maj. James Baxter, commanding officer of the 18th Battalion, delivered a tribute to Sgt. Sifton prior to the unveiling. Capt. Edward Shuttleworth read the citation inscribed on the plaque and Rev. John Graham, rector of St. Peter's issued the dedication.

The throng of onlookers created a pilgrimage setting as they followed the day-long ceremonies from point to point behind the pipe band and Rover and Boy Scouts.

At St. Peter's Church Cemetery, dedication of restoration of Col. Talbot's gravesite took place following the dedication of the plaque.

Throughout the day the Talbot Estate, "Castle Malahide," was open to the public for inspection. About 1,000 persons toured the estate which today is very much as it was at its construction 111 years ago.

A fitting climax to the Talbot anniversary observance was a visit to the late Colonel's home at Port Talbot. Now owned by Col. F.I. Ker, C.B.E., of Hamilton, and his son, John S. Ker, who occupies the home, the residence has been modernized only to the extent of making it presentable and comfortable.

Most notable alterations have been made to the big white house on the bluff overlooking Lake Erie. In its present general appearance, however, it dates back to 1848 when two buildings were brought together with a large main hallway in the centre dividing them, with the whole structure under a single roof.

The old verandah along the whole front of the house has been removed, and a patio and low wall around it built at the front. To make the house less drafty and more easily heated, the old shiplap siding was removed, insulation installed and the siding replaced with new material of the same dimensions.

In the hall of the house is a survey of the Talbot Estate, drawn by Mahlon Burwell, which Mr. Ker found in the Archives in Ottawa. It shows where all the early buildings at Port Talbot were situated, including the fort, a cooper's shop, blacksmith's shop, sawmill, grist mill, the earth dam across Talbot Creek, the race, the Colonel's home, his farm buildings, and some others. These were all destroyed in the American raid on the settlement during the War of 1812-15.

Mr. Ker has kept many old pieces of furniture used by Col. Talbot and probably refurbished down through the years. These include the bed in which the doughty old Irishman slept, and an ancient rocker, a desk used by Col. Talbot when he was forming pacts with his settlers, a washstand, a sideboard, the bed in which Lady Wortley slept while visiting at "Malahide", and an ancient piano said to have been brought from overseas. Also hanging by the drawing room fireplace is the axe with which Col. Talbot cut the first tree on the Talbot Estate.

In 1954 a modern garage was built by Mr. Ker out of timbers from Col. Talbot's blacksmith shop. This building is situated just west of "Malahide Castle."

Members of West Elgin Women's Institutes acted as receptionists at the home on Sunday and also served tea. The proceeds went to the Elgin County Pioneer Museum in which Mr. Ker is keenly interested.

Tea was also served by the ladies of St. Peter's Church in the basement following the service at the cemetery.

## Methodist Church

Among the oldest Methodist Churches in West Elgin was the Tyrconnell Methodist Church. It was built in the summer and fall of 1855. Mr. A. Conn erected the frame and Mr. R. Barr enclosed it and finished off the inside. The church was opened in February 1856.

Long before this, missionaries belonging to the British Wesleyan Missionary Society travelled through here, and held services in the schoolhouse on Mr. Backus' farm. The ministers usually stopped with Mr. Backus or Mr. Conn, the latter being an active member of the Methodist Church. At this time it was a mission with London, and the first missionary was Rev. Mr. Ferguson. The next were Rev. Dr. Evans, Mr. Breden, and Mr. Andrews. It was a mission until 1836, and in this year it became a part of St. Thomas Circuit.

Before there was an organ in the church Mr. George Allen started the music with a tuning fork. The first organist in the Methodist church was Miss Lizzie Bacus, later Mrs. Bam Sifton.

The ministers since have been:

1836- Rev. Conrad Vandusen, John K. Williston.  
1837- Thomas Fawcett, Thomas B. Goodrich.  
1838- James Norris, James Hardie.  
1839- James Norris, Mr. Gilbert.  
1840-1841 H. Montgomery, Solomon Waldon.  
1843-1844 K. Creghton.  
1845- S. Snyder.  
1846-1848 S. C. Philp, A. T. Green, R. Whiting.  
1849-1850 Wm. Pollard, John S. Evens, Edward White.  
1851- John Bredin, Joseph Hugill, D. A. Dewart.  
1852-1853 R. Whiting, J. Hugill.  
1854-1856 Wm. Price, S. Maudsley.

In 1854 Fingal was set off and Tyrconnell became a part of the circuit. The church was after this set off as a mission with Bismark.

The ministers at that time being:

1868- Alex Drennan.  
1869-1870 Benjamin Sherlock.  
1871-1872 Edward Craig.  
1873-1874 Thomas Hanna.

The church then became an independent circuit and joined Dutton.  
The ministers after that were:

1875-1876 Ebenezar Teskey.  
1877-1878 James Watson.  
1879-1881 William McCann.  
1882-1883 John G. Fallis.

At one time the minister lived in Tyrconnell, in the home now owned by Thomas Page. Later the parsonage was moved to Wallacetown, and then to Dutton, which became the head of the circuit. This was in 1884.

The ministers since then have been:

1885-1887 R. D. Hamilton  
1888-1890 E. Middleton.  
1891-1893 C. T. Scott.  
1894-1896 J. E. Moore.  
1897-1900 W. C. Beer  
1901-1903 E. G. Powell.  
1904-1906 George Jewett  
1907- A. L. Brown.  
1909- James Husser.  
1913- J. Kennedy.  
1916- A. McKibbon.  
1917- H. F. Kennedy.  
1920- James A. Snell.  
1921- Henry Godfrey.  
1923- Mr. Rutherford.  
1925- J. Douglas.  
1927- Dr. McDonald

In 1925 Church Union came into force and the Tyrconnell Methodist Church became the Tyrconnell United Church.

In 1928, while the Wallacetown United Church was being rennovated, the people of that church worshipped at the Tyrconnell United Church during the summer and fall. When these people returned to their own church in the autumn some from the Tyrconnell church went also.

There were so few left to carry on the work that finally the Board obtained permission from Elgin Presbytery to sell the church and property.

In the fall of 1930 the church and lot were sold to Mrs. Osborne, to be made into a dwelling, but it was turned into a chicken house.

The last minister was Dr. McDonald.

Record of Ministers, members, and contributions to Missionary Fund of Tyrconnell Appointment, Dutton Circuit, Dunwich Township, Elgin Co.

Year	Minister	Memb.	Miss.
1868	Alex Drennan	70	
1869	Benj. Sherlock	76	
1870	"	90	
1871	Edward Cragg	105	
1872	"	95	
1873	Thomas Hanna	100	
1874	"	102	\$ 98.36
1875	Ebenezer Teskey	106	94.94
1876	"	92	84.38
1877	James Watson	109	83.10
1878	"	117	139.00
1879	William McCann	120	99.45
1880	"	94	96.27
1881	"	106	59.01
1882	John G. Fallis	125	66.10
1883	"	135	83.46
1884	T.R. Earle	153	105.93
1885	R.D. Hamilton	160	47.95
1886	"	175	78.57
1887	"	175	76.81
1888	E. Middleton	170	89.27
1889	"	170	102.08
1890	"	171	74.03
1891	C.T. Scott (M. Conn)	168	130.37
1892	"	211	54.44
1893	"	233	35.48
1894	J.E. Moore	250	37.91
1895	"	249	68.68
1896	"	250	63.74
1897	W.C. Beer (G. Braddon)	236	67.26
1898	"	234	68.82
1899	"	234	70.00
1900	"	221	131.00
1901	E. Powell	234	85.00
1902	"	231	125.00
1903	"	235	130.00
1904	George Jewitt	254	67.00
1905	"	222	95.00
1906	"	239	65.00

1907	A.L. Brown	241	94.00
1908	"	246	106.00
1909	Jas. Husser	216	171.00
1910	"	212	212.00
1911	"	209	201.00
1912	"	206	185.00
1913	J. Kennedy	206	218.00
1914	"	212	256.00
1915	"	219	320.00
1916	A. McKibbon	231	223.00
1917	H.F. Kennedy	213	261.00
1918	"	208	230.00
1919	"	198	241.00
1920	Jas. A. Snell	196	230.00
1921	Henry Godfrey	195	280.00
1922	"	227	283.00
1923	Rutherford	228	324.00
1924			
1925	J. Douglas		
1926			
1927	DR. McDonald		
1928			
1929			
1930			

## Colonel Mahlon Burwell

The origin of the Anglican witness to Christ in Southwest Southwold and Southeast Dunwich is due in a large measure to Colonel Mahlon Burwell who was born in New Jersey on Feb. 18, 1773. He was the son of Adam Burwell, a United Empire Loyalist, who abandoned his home and farm, when they were confiscated by the Americans, and set out for Canada where he intended to make his home so that he might enjoy the protection of the British flag, for which he had fought during the American Revolutionary War. The Burwell family settled in Bertie Township in Welland County.

In 1809 Mahlon Burwell with his wife (nee Sarah Hawn) and their family, moved to the Talbot Settlement. He was educated as a surveyor, and through the recommendation of Colonel Talbot, was appointed governor surveyor. He surveyed London and resurveyed Chatham, as well as surveying some twenty-two townships situated in the counties of Haldimand, Norfolk, Elgin, Kent, and Essex. In Elgin the townships surveyed by him are Bayham, Malahide, Southwold and North Yarmouth.

In 1811 he was appointed Registrar of Land Titles for Middlesex, which until 1852 included Elgin. In 1825 he set up his office on the Dunwich side of Burwell's Corners, which is now marked by a cairn which was erected by the Elgin Historical Society in 1924. In 1883 this office was moved to London.

There was an early Post Office, one of the few in the county at that time, which was kept by Colonel Burwell in a brick residence at Burwell's Corners where the Dunwich-Southwold Townline is crossed by the Talbot road.

In 1812 Colonel Burwell was first elected to represent Middlesex and Oxford in Parliament, and he continued to represent Middlesex until 1834. In 1836 he became the first representative in Parliament of the town of London.

During the war of 1812-14, Colonel Burwell was taken prisoner by the Americans. He kept a daily record while a prisoner, and it may be seen in the Public Archives of Canada, in Ottawa. A surveyor's chain, used by the Colonel, is now in the Elgin County Pioneer Museum at 32 Talbot Street, St. Thomas. At this museum is also a sketch of the brick residence of Colonel Burwell, believed to have been built after his return as a prisoner, possibly between 1815 and 1820. Being frequently paid in grants of land for his surveying, he acquired a considerable amount of real estate. This put him in a position to donate various properties to the church.

A year after the London District of the Church Society was established by Bishop Strachan in 1842, Colonel Burwell contributed 1,096 acres to it.

The establishment and endowment of Trinity Church at Port Burwell, where his son Leonidas settled, was made possible by Colonel Burwell's gift of 600 acres for that purpose. A similar act of generosity on his part or that of his family contributed to the founding and endowment of the Burwell Memorial Church in Caradoc Township in the parish of Delaware, a rural church, which like a number of others, had to be closed on account of the depletion of the Anglican population there.



Colonel Mahlon Burwell had set aside 200 acres in the township of Dunwich for church purposes. This land was sold and the proceeds placed in a capital fund known as the Dunwich Trust. This money was used in the construction of St. Stephen's Church.

Colonel Mahlon Burwell died on January 25, 1846, aged 62 years, 11 months, 7 days. His wife Sarah, died August 25, 1870, aged 80 years, 9 months, 2 days. Their sons, Edward Burwell and Hannibal Burwell carried on the good work of their father in the work of the church and community.