

SMITH FAMILY

North Half Lot 14, 10th Concession "Highview Farm", Yarmouth

Leaving the parish of Kilmartin, Argyleshire, Scotland in the year 1831, where his family were millers and farmers, Colin Smith and his wife, Margaret Gillies, spent their first winter in Canada in Glengarry, at the home of relatives. Their son, John, was born the following spring, May 15, 1832. Two children had come with them, their daughter Margaret who was eight years old, and a young boy (a cousin) by the name of James Brown. This boy had hidden on the boat and wasn't discovered until it was too far out from land for him to swim back. Delayed by autumn storms on the Atlantic, the season was far advanced, and the Glengarry cousins would not allow the newcomers to attempt the long journey into Upper Canada.

Reaching Port Stanley where there was no beach formed, Kettle Creek was the entrance into the wilderness, and it is told that the men from the boats sat on the ground and wept. They were terrified of this new land. The trees of the forest were so large and so high and leafy that the sky could not be seen.

On their way to join the Gillies relatives at New Glasgow, they were honored to encounter the renowned pioneer, Nellie Campbell, who drew their attention to the possibilities of North Yarmouth, for she had heard that the land westward was taken up. After visiting in the Rodney district, the Smith family returned to the St. Thomas district and lived four years on the Yarmouth-Dorchester townline, on the farm now owned by Mr. Herbert Thomson.

Colin Smith acquired the Clergy Reserve land, north half of Lot 14, concession 10 "Highview Farm" North Yarmouth in 1837. This land was hard to clear. It had oak trees, lumpy clay knolls and swampy places (which the settlers dreaded on account of the "ague" or "the shakes" akin to the recurring malaria). The son, John, contracted the "ague". Every household in the early days had an ague sufferer. When these clay lands were cleared and drained they made excellent wheat farms.

No other member of the Smith family came to Canada. This pioneer Colin Smith is said to have enlivened social gatherings with his bent for music. He could sing and entertain, and no one could tread a lighter measure in the dance. The Scottish families reserved their best effort to celebrate the "old New Year" January 12th - a day still marked in the Smith family. On this occasion, in earlier years, certain Gaelic songs were sung.

Of the two Smith children, the girl Margaret married Angus Taylor of Belmont, and the son John married Catharine McGregor of the 10th concession of North Yarmouth. The boy, James Brown, mentioned earlier, was the father of the Rev. James Brown, minister of Belmont-Kilmartin 1886 - 1891.

Mr. and Mrs. John Smith had eight children: Colin, Ann, Margaret, Catharine, John, Flora, Mary and Hattie, all but the last named being born in the log cabin. Gaelic was the first language in the home. The children were baptized in Kilmartin Church and all attended the "Glen" School. All spent most of their lives in North Yarmouth.

Colin and Margaret Gillies Smith are buried in the south-west corner of Kilmartin Cemetery, one half mile from the land they cleared.

The farm was later owned by Colin Smith who left it to Bruce Smith. It was sold in 1944 to Lorne Olsen.

In May, 1961, this farm was purchased by D. A. Davis of St. Thomas, who deeded it to his son Keith Davis.

North Half of Lot 16, 10th Concession Yarmouth

100 acres

This farm was purchased from the Crown by Archibald McCallum under patent dated May 27, 1856, for the sum of L. 62 10 s. (The crown deed is in the possession of the Matthews family, the present owners of the farm.) Archibald McCallum lived on the farm until his death. It was he who built the present house over one hundred years ago.

Archibald McCallum was a bachelor and his niece Mary Campbell and his nephew Neil McCallum came to live with him; and of this union a son was born, also named Archibald McCallum. These three occupied the farm after the elder McCallum's death, and as they did not get along very well Mary owned the west half of the farm and Neil owned the east half.

The present barn was built in 1904. In 1922 Neil fell from the hay mow to the barn floor and was killed and at this time his son inherited the east half of the farm. Soon after (in 1925) Mary left the farm to live with Mr. and Mrs. Wm. (Elizabeth) Orris. Soon Archie joined a carnival company and left as well and there was no one living on the farm for about one year.

The Blakeleys, an Irish family, rented the farm for three years and after this Mr. and Mrs. Orris and Mary McCallum moved back and lived there until Mary McCallum's death in the early 1930's. At this time the Orris family left the farm.

The James Drake family were the next tenants.

Mrs. Elizabeth Orris inherited the west 50 acres after the death of Mary McCallum, and after the James Drake family left, the Orris' again occupied the farm. The east 50 acres was later purchased by Wm. Orris from Archibald McCallum. This area was heavily wooded, cleared by Wm. Orris. The two 50 acre lots were united into 100 acres again.

The next tenant to occupy the farm was Frank ^{or} Groot and family, who lived here from 1942 to 1945.

Early in 1945, Walter Matthews purchased the farm from Mrs. Elizabeth Orris and he and his parents Mr. and Mrs. George H. Matthews moved in and occupied the farm in March.

Walter married the former Beatrice Jenkins in November of the same year and the family continued to live there together until June, 1951 when Mr. and Mrs. George Matthews retired and moved to St. Thomas.

Three children were born to the Matthews. Beth (a nurse in training at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto), Connie and Helen who are presently (1966) attending High School in St. Thomas.

The Elgin County Atlas published in 1877 shows a schoolhouse in the north-east corner of the farm at the junction of the 10th concession and a blind sideroad that formerly ran between the 10th and 15th concessions of Yarmouth. Nothing is known of this school now and the road allowance of the blind sideroad has been incorporated into the adjoining farms.

Beatrice and Walter Matthews, 1966

DUNCAN FERGUSON

N 1/2 Lot 5, Concession 11

In the autumn of 1830, Duncan Ferguson his wife Catherine and five children along with five children of his former marriage arrived in Canada from their farm "Leckuary" situated in Kilmichael, Glassary, Argyllshire, Lochgilphead, Scotland. The present owner of this property in Scotland is Colin Ferguson, a descendant of Iver Ferguson who took possession of the original farm. Iver, who never came to Canada, is a brother to the above Duncan Ferguson. Upon arrival in Canada, the family 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 of Yarmouth Township, or the n 1/2 of Lot 5, Concession 11. The original house, a log cabin, was east of the present one near a small stream. A second house was built and in 1893 the present house was built. In 1882, two barns were put together. The year 1905 saw the erection of the new foundation under the existing barns. adding space for stables. Jim Ferguson, brother to Duncan C. was responsible for getting gravel to the site for this addition. In order for three loads of gravel per day to be brought in, work began at 5 in the morning. This gravel was obtained from the White Oaks Gravel Pit.

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 the possession of a great granddaughter.

When the Ferguson family were in Scotland, they attended church at Kilmichael, a short distance from their home in Kilmichael Glen. Upon settling on the 12th Concession of Yarmouth they attended Kilmartin Presbyterian church. The Fergusons spoke Gaelic, the second generation both languages.

In 1841 Duncan Ferguson wrote to his brother in Scotland telling him that he now had seventy acres cleared. The farm was handed down in succession from father to son. Duncan's son James and wife Catherine Ferguson were the next owners followed by Duncan and Annie Ferguson. Archild (A.J.), great-grandson of Duncan, and his wife Rowena (Rena) were the next generation. Upon A.J.'s death, the farm was passed to his sons Duncan and David, great-great grandsons of Duncan Ferguson.

David along with his brother Duncan and Betty Ferguson live on the property. Duncan and Betty have eight children, namely; Stephen, Stewart, Ann, Jane, Sarah, Mary, David and Ian. Son David who lives at the s 1/2 Lot 4, Concession 12 with his wife Krista and son Mac farms the home farm.

Following is a letter which Duncan wrote to his brother Iver in Scotland dated September 30, 1837 along with a portion of another letter to Scotland dated October 16, 1841, enticing brother Iver to come to Canada.

"Yarmouth, Sept. 30th, 1837

Mr. Dear Brother: -

I have to acknowledge receipt of yours of 15th of 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 trials, especially in the serious 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 off 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 beside. 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.

I got a letter from our cousin Archibald Gillis from Caledonia and he was inquiring for you. He says he has an abundance of the necessaries of life, and he has his family joining together, that is their land aside his own. That wise man says he is surprised that so many of his countrymen are staying so long under the yoke of the highland lairds, when it is in their power to leave them.

DUNCAN FERGUSON

Now brother you want my advice and you shall have that sincerely. It is my advice to you, come. If you had come when I came, you would be an independent man now. I am glad that I came. I was not satisfied with the country when I came and that is the case of a great many but they will soon get reconciled with this new country. I do not urge you to come against your will, but if you have a wish yourself and you must not be reflecting on me again, I am laying everything before you as plain as I can and let you judge for yourself. If you come, you should bring Joyn McGinnis, your son-in-law with you as you would be a great benefit to one another, on the way and after coming. It is very expensive coming here, and after coming till people get settled, and any one that comes here must work hard. The old proverb is in great reality in this country, nothing is to be got for nothing. Be sure to take good care of your money and lay nothing out for any thing but what I mentioned. You will take your passage to New York, it is the safest and best, suppose it is a little dearer at first, it will be cheaper at last. When you come to New York, ask for Buffalo. When you come to Buffalo, ask for Port Stanley; when you come to Port Stanley ask for St. Thomas; when you come to St. Thomas, ask for Mr. Shaw, storekeeper and inquire of him for me and he will give you my address. Your nephew James Ferguson is only three miles from Port Stanley. If you wish to go to see him, you may but you must not take your luggage there. His home is out of your way to come to St. Thomas. You will please have your luggage well secured in strong portable boxes, easily handled between two men, and you will keep a watchful eye over everything, particularly at a stopping place. Be sure to bring as much wearing cloth as possible and be sure to have it made, for the making in this country is very dear. If it is possible you may take some moleskin for summer, the best sythes, pitch fork, spades, grapes adz, hand saw, or any implement that is not heavy, and that you have but do not buy any, as you will get innumerable here for to buy. Take books Gaelic and English bound.

The seasons have changed materially for the last seven years, the winter is considerable longer.

With regards to provision on the passage, you will take oat-cakes as we did, it will last long enough, butter, cheese, and plenty of salt pork or beef, a little wine, brandy, and whiskey, and fine bisuits and potatoes, a good deal of oatmeal, barley, molasses, cream of tartar, castor oil, salts, a little dry fish and herrings.

Angus McIntyre wishes you to tell Duntroon herdsmen that he is much surprised that he got no letter this year. His family is well.

I am sorry to tell you that Solomon McCall died 9th of August last, The rest of the family are well and doing well. Donald McCall is as well as prospect as any that came here penniless. Tell John Munroe that his mother-in-law was here a few nights after your letter came. He is to receive a letter along with this one, his friends are to give him some assistance, but if he should run short, if you will give him some to help him and depend you will be paid. This is a good country, fertile land, mild climate, very healthy, very palatable food, and genteel way of taking it. We have knives and forks on the table at every meal, it is the custom in this country.

Give my respects to Alexander Thompson, Balenanyach and brother and sister. Remember me to Carnasery people, William Todds, Knockalva. I must conclude, I am surprised that you did not mention any more of your family. All my family join in their respects to you, all wishing you a pleasant passage on the Atlantic, etc.

Duncan Ferguson

The number of my lot is No. 5, 11th Concession. Please write as soon as convenient and let us know if you are intending to come or not so that we would be looking for you and have land in view. "

" Yarmouth, 16th October, 1841

My Dear Brother: -

---- The settlers that came here about the time our nephew James Ferguson came have now their ground cleared and orchards planted from which they supply themselves with cider and fruit for tables and this from year to year. And houses are nothing short of the one formerly occupied by the Ruggles family, with regard to comfortableness and hospitality; and these very people when I came here were possessed of no better houses than the one I have at present. After settling here the first year we had a very good crop but the two succeeding years the crops did not prove so satisfactory which was very discouraging and that especially to a new beginner. But we thank God every year since we have been getting on far better or as well as I expected so that I have now seventy acres clear and as many cattle, viz, horses, cows, oxen, steers, calves, sheep, etc. as many as I could wish together with innumerable swine. In fact prices are so low at present time that there is not much profit in rearing them, but as it is the natural wish of the Gael, and the will of Providence to bestow, to have plenty to take and to spare. But, be that as it may, we have enough to eat and to drink and to do our way with, so that to us it is a duty to praise Almighty God for his goodness toward us.

Now we sow here the following grains: winter wheat, spring wheat, Indian corn, oats, peas, potatoes. Indian corn is a very useful plant here for when ground it makes excellent potage (Brochan) and every animal is remarkably fond of it even to the very hen. We sow hay called timothy hay, with which and the oats we feed our cattle and horses. No oats used in our families. With peas we feed our pigs and sometimes with a little Indian corn if plenty. The principal thing we make money of is wheat and pork, except what we keep for our family flour and our family flesh.

DUNCAN FERGUSON

We make part of our money by rearing oxen for sale; in short the poorest man, if industrious and healthy, may fare better than many of our joint stock farmers can do there. Now in addition to the barns that I had before, I have built a new one. It is forty feet long by twenty six feet wide, and sixteen feet high by the side wall. I have now two barns and this last one is of chosen wood. It cost me with the slating and head alone forty dollars. You will observe the slating is of first rate material. This barn along with the other is of great service to me as I need not have any of my produce out. In addition to this I have bought this year a wagon with four wheels, an article of particular use here. They are light and easily drawn, either by horses or oxen for carrying our grain to mill or market. It cost me sixty-six dollars, so just judge for yourself. I have to inform you I have just now completed my winter sowing. I have put eight acres under wheat of new cleared, and the clearing or improving is valued at ten dollars, and if the season proves favourable the produce will be worth more than one hundred dollars at tolerable prices, so that if we work hard we reap benefit. Not as you are, if you do any improvement, you have only the crop whereas we have the crop and the improvement. All my taxes to the Queen only amounts to four dollars yearly. Now my dear brother that the blessing of God may attend you and guide to eternal bliss, is the prayer of your loving brother, while,"

"Duncan Ferguson"

Submitted by Betty Ferguson August, 2005

(typed by Joanne Erickson)