

## EARLY DAYS AROUND EAGLE LAKE

by Susan McKinney

I don't too much about Dad's ( Tom Quirt's ) earlier life except that he was born at Ogdensburg, N. Y. and later farmed on the 4th Luther line, about 5 miles from Arthur, Ontario, not far away from Grand Valley. He was 23 years of age when he married my mother ( Susan Boyle ) whom he had met when she was visiting relatives. Mother was born in Muddy York ( now Toronto ) on Aug. 1, 1845. She attended a log school house on Yonge Street, and apparently the Boyle family were not too happy about her leaving the city to marry a farmer.

Dad had a good farm and raised seven children there. Mother's midwife was always Mrs. Magee, who was Joe Church's grandmother, and they say she never lost a baby. While we were still at Luther, James Church went north and came back with glowing accounts of the beautiful country.

Dad went north in 1883 and built a log cabin just south of the present site of the Stone School House. He also built a barn just big enough for one team of horses.

As the railway only went to Gravenhurst, travel from there on was by road. The north trail went from Rosseau to Magnetewan, Bummer's Roost, Commanda, ( west of Trout Creek ) Nipissing Junction, and North Bay. Because the roads were better in winter than in summer, our big trip was scheduled for February, 1884. Alberta was 14; Charles was 12; Frances was 10; Martha was 8 ; I was 6; Elizabeth was 4, and Harvey was 2. Mary, William and Latham were later born at Eagle Lake.

We took the train to Gravenhurst where Dad met us with a team and bobsleigh. He had put stakes around the sleigh, and put blankets around the stakes to help keep the family warm. As I was only 6, I do not remember where we stopped for the first night. It was probably Rosseau. The second night we stayed with James Church and when we asked where we were all going to sleep he said, " Oh, these little ones... we just put them in a sack and hang them up out of the way!" I recall that I did not like him!

The next day we reached our home by coming east to Park's Corner, and then about a mile north. Dad said we had to have a school and a church. Uplands was 3 miles to school past Park's Corners and that was it for many years to come. Dad worked on the church at the Narrows, which was supposed to be a Community Hall for everyone, but they got a Presbyterian Minister... and Anglicans were not too welcome!

My sister Mary, was born on January 3, 1885 in a log cabin at the Narrows, where we lived temporarily that year, and where we kept a small store. My brother William dies at 8 months old, in 1887. Dad made the coffin, and my mother lined it with silk. When we were refused entry to the Narrows Church, William was buried in a field near Alex Bow's. This was the penalty for being an Anglican in those days.

Dad, Arthur Smythe, John Ardiel and John Ralston later built the St. John's Anglican Church at the head of the lake. They also built a shed to shelter the horses. Reverend Gander was the first minister. Often the neighbours would put on 10¢ socials to help raise funds.

By this time, Dad had picked a location for his new home up on the hill in the maple groves. The barn was built first. A Scotsman, Mr. Woods, was hired to do the stone work on the foundation of the house so the place would have a good root cellar. The house was to be of frame. Mr. Woods had worked on the Royal Balmoral Castle in the old country, and was a fine craftsman. He told Dad that he should build a real good stone house which would be a memorial to him. It was decided to do this. This was the last house Mr. Woods built, and he didn't quite get the gables finished.

Mr. Woods would go out into the fields with Dad and Charlie, pick out a large boulder and then give them blasting instructions to make the cut a straight one. The walls of the house are 24" thick, and all the window sills are of solid rock. The house must have been completed by 1890, as the wedding of Alberta to Tom Towle took place there on December 24, 1890.

Dad planted an orchard and kept adding trees every year. I recall the apple trees he planted - Harvest, Yellow Transparents, Crabapples, Wealthies, Duchess of Oldenbury and Wolf Rivers. This pioneer orchard is in the records of the Canadian Experimental Farm Review. We also grew gooseberries, and red and black currants. Around us there was plenty of wild raspberries and blue berries. Later we grew rhubarb and tame strawberries. The land was full of rocks, and we children had to help build stone fences to keep out the groundhogs. The farm was 200 acres in extent. Eventually 150 acres were cleared and fifty acres left as a sugar bush.

Dad had brought an iron kettle from Luther. To gather sap he made wudden spouts and wooden troughs because there were no buckets to be had. The sap had to be dumped from the trough into a pail and carried on shoulder yokes to the kettle. Mother sealed the syrup in jars, and then boiled it down and poured it into milk pans where it hardened into maple sugar. It was cooled in the snow. The blocks of sugar were then stored in our cupboard. This was our sweetening for the year - for cooking and other use. The blocks of sugar were shaved on morning bowls of porridge. It took a large pot full of porridge each morning to feed the family.

We cured all our meat which was hung in the back shed or the milk house. The root house was always full of vegetables and fruit for the winter. By this time the railroad had come through and South River was our source of supply, but when we first arrived and for some time after, the men had to go to Magnetewan or the Bummer's Roost for provisions. Bummer's Roost was operated by Peter Shaughnessy.

Our neighbours were John Ardiel and John Ralston and one mile west, old man Bow. At the head of the lake were Arthur Smythe, Cahrlie and Jimmy Joy, The Bensons, George Haugh on the old Waldroff farm, Sam Hawthorne, the Robertsons, The Snows, and the Bottomleys on the South River Road. James Church, Bill Jones and Tom Towle were on the boundary line road. Frances married Jim Hawthorne at the Stone House on May 19, 1897, and they farmed on the shores of Eagle Lake. Charlie married Marion Grinton on January 18, 1899. She was my school teacher at Uplands.

We were all very happy about this as Charlie had always been a real good worker on the farm, up at 5 every morning, and we all liked our school teacher. Incidentally the first teacher at Uplands was Mary McDonald ( Arthur Church's mother). The second was Donald John McMillan. Then came a Mr. Tardiff and then Minnie Grinton.

Joe Church came up from Arthur about 1900, and while chopping wood in the bush on the James Church farm, cut his big toe off. He managed to get to the house. My sister Elizabeth took his shoe off and the toe rolled out on the floor! It is a wonder he did not bleed to death because the doctor was hours getting there. Joe married Martha, my sister, in 1902, at the old Stone House. Then he got a job in Depot Harbour in the dock shed. Elizabeth was the next one to get married - to Leonard Ardiel on March 17, 1907. Before Martha was married, we both went to Toronto to do housework for Mr. Eby. Then we went to Buffalo. We both had to earn our own transportation. In those days it was nice to get away from the hard winters and the gruelling work of the farm.

Martha came home from Depot Harbour in February, 1903, when Marguerite was born. In 1905, Joe decided to go back to Arthur and learn the butcher business from his brother Albert. He was paid \$ 6.00 a month and his food. He rented a small, cold house. We all had troubles that year. Mother and Dad went to Toronto for a visit. The boys were working out. Mollie went to visit Martha in Arthur and Lizzie and I were alone in the house with Latham.

During one night he drank carbolic acid and woke us up with

his moaning. We gave him rich cream as his mouth was badly burned. Lizzie ran to John Ardiel's for help. They got Harvey to go to town for the doctor, and to wire Mother and Dad to come home from Toronto. At the same time Mollie had wired them to come to Arthur, telling them that Martha had typhoid fever, which had caused a miscarriage, and that now Joe had it as well. Mollie's wire arrived just after they had caught the train for home. Harvey met them at South River at midnight and told them the news about Martha and Joe. I decided to take the early morning train to Arthur to help out. Joe's head was shaved and he was a skeleton. Martha was hemorrhaging, but we changed doctors and saved her life.

This happened before Christmas, when I had planned to go to Parry Sound to visit my friend Bob McKinney for the holidays. Instead, I decided to stay and nurse Martha and Joe back to health, so did not get away until March. However, Bob and I did get married on June 24, 1907, at the old Stone House.

Harvey and Charlie went into the sawmill business and opened a mill at the head of the lake. They were quite successful, because they were handy men and jack-of-all-trades. Charlie became known as "Uncle Skip" and Harvey as "Blucher". They really turned out the lumber at their mill!

After all the family had stopped school - except Latham - Dad finally realized his dream and built the Stone Schoolhouse. Along came a handsome teacher by the name of Oswald Dukelow. He came from Beaverton. He married Mollie on August 24, 1917, then enlisted and went overseas. The wedding was a posh affair.

By now we had so many children around the stone house that all the visiting youngsters had to be farmed out, and only adults were invited to the wedding.

We had some hard times and cold winters on the farm, but I am sure that Mother and Dad always did the very best they could for us all. Looking back at the picnics held on Mother's birthday at the lake, every August 1st, we certainly had some wonderful times.

Dad never hunted or fished in all the years he spent on the farm, simply because he did not have time. But when he retired he could not get enough fishing and would sit on the dock all day with a pole.

Mother was dedicated to her family 24 hours a day and lived to be 77 years of age. She always remembered the birthdays of all her grandchildren (at least 50 of them!) and sent them a dollar. Fortunately she enjoyed a few years of retired life at Sundridge and at Burks Falls.

Joe Church persuaded them to move into town in the winter of 1918 as it was difficult to get help or a doctor on the farm. When Oswald Dukelow returned from overseas, he bought a home in Burks Falls, where Mother and Father moved to shortly after.

They bought a Baby Grand Chevrolet which was really something in those days, and Oswald did the driving. They often made the rounds of their big family, visiting North Bay, Orillia and Toronto, until Mother passed away on December 23, 1922, while she was at Martha's in South River.

Editor's Note: The above was written by Susan McKinney, the last surviving member of the old Quirt family. As of this transcription, she was nearing 90 years of age, and is quite ill in a Toronto hospital.

JFH,

Recent Note by Curtis Church:

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In the fall of 1962, I hunted from Chesney Quirt's cottage on East Bay. The old Nipissing Road which used to be the main line from Gravenhurst to North Bay is 16 miles west of South River. Bummer's Roost is now Charlie Russell's farm. The Nipissing Road is travelled south from the old Bummer's Roost, but westward is passable only to one small farm. From there on there is no wheel traffic so we walked it for two miles. This is excellent partridge country.

We also hunted from the school house to Park's Corners, along the route which the children once took to Uplands. Wheel traffic ceased on the road about 1930, and it is now completely grown in.