

*the history of*  
**NAIRN**



1896 - 1966

by ALBERT CRICK

# HISTORY OF THE TOWNSHIP OF NAIRN

## WE ARE OLDER THAN YOU THINK !!

At the first meeting of the Municipality of Nairn, Lorne and Hyman held in the original log school house on the seventh day of March 1896 presided over by Andrew Dever, the first Reeve, the Proclamation of certification was read.



NAIRN STATION, 1896-1966

It was stated that the Honorable Frederick W. Johnson, Judge for Algoma District did certify that the Townships of Nairn, Lorne, and Hyman had been duly organized, and that Andrew Dever was duly elected as Reeve, and Richard Fensom Sr., R. G. Lee, John Hall and William Hunt were councillors for the said Municipality; and fixing Saturday, the 7th day of March 1896 at the hour of two o'clock in the afternoon at the school house in the village of Nelsonville, for the first meeting of said council.

The minutes were signed by A. Dever, Reeve, and H. L. McLean, Clerk.

## THE DAWN OF PROGRESS

The minutes recorded the fact that the Reeve and Councillors had subscribed to declarations of qualification to office, and By-Law No. 1 was passed appointing Hector L. McLean as Clerk of the new Municipality for that year at a salary of \$50.00—at that time this was quite a valuable job.

The first assessor was Richard Fensom, a son of councillor Fensom, with the munificent "salary" of \$10.00; also he was the tax collector at a further sum of \$15.00. The first Treasurer—the offices of Clerk and Treasurer were separate in those days—was Frederick Summerby, who was the station agent, salary \$10.00 per year with a \$500.00 bond for correct performance of his duties.

When the Algoma branch of the C.P.R. from Sudbury to Sault-Ste Marie was built in 1886, the only buildings were the station, the section house and a few shacks used by trappers and lumberjacks, who found work with several lumber companies, owned incidentally by American lumbering interests, with some Canadian money also invested.

At that time, about 1890, the three townships were covered with a fine growth of virgin pine, and it was this which established the settlement.

The first hotel, then called the Klondike was built about 1890 and managed by Mr. McLean. The present King George Hotel is the original building with additions to the structure. The name was changed to New Klondike, then King George. People were conscious of a name to attract business.



KLONDIKE HOTEL, 1890-1966

In the first year or two of the Townships, it would seem that the appointments of Reeve and Councillors were just formally carried out by the simple process of motions put forward by one of the Councillors, seconded by another Councillor and carried. There is no mention, at that time, of a Municipal Election taking place to take a ratepayers' vote on the matter. However this system soon died a natural death, and legal processes were put into use in the authorized manner, as prescribed by law.

## PIONEERING IN ITS EARLY STAGES

The original lay-out of the village was made by James Bellows Hammond, who had located 80 acres on the southern portion of Lot 2 Concession 4. Plans were made by DeMorest and Johnson, Surveyors in Sudbury in 1902, which is "a sketch showing a subdivision of part of the South half of the North half of Lot 2, Concession 4, Township of Nairn, at Nelson Station in the village of Nelsonville."

The plan shows six streets, each 66ft. wide separating blocks containing 20 lots each; the lots measuring 50ft. x 115ft. Allowances were made for 20ft. lanes in each block. Other blocks were laid out soon after by the McIntyre Mining Corporation on the North side of the railway.

In 1897, By-Law No. 31 called for proper laying out of streets, lanes and public highways.

One of the first inhabitants was Joseph Edwards, Sr., father of Joseph Edwards, who lives in a house on Smith Street built by one Bob Peters, about 1897; originally of log construction, it is now covered with clapboards. Mr. Edwards Sr. was the first section foreman for the C.P.R., and lived for a while in the section house. Originally from Wrexham, North Wales, he came to Canada in 1876, to the Ottawa Valley, near Pembroke; then to Nairn in 1888 or 1889.

## RELIGION CONSCIOUS

The first settlers were far from being unmindful of religion, as witness the fact that three Churches were built in the space of a few years. In 1897, the present Anglican Church, All Saints, was



ALL SAINTS ANGLICAN CHURCH, NAIRN, 1897-1966



ST. JUDE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH, NAIRN, about 1900-1966



THE ORIGINAL METHODIST CHURCH, NOW  
UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA, NAIRN, 1904-1966

built, followed a few years later by a Catholic Church named for St. Jude, about 1900, and a Methodist Church in 1904.

The Bell in use at All Saints Church was donated by Mrs. Hazel Jefferies—it once adorned a C.N.R. engine.

The land for the Anglican Church and Cemetery was donated by J. B. Hammond, and that for the Methodist Church by Mrs. Flora McDonnell Hammond, wife of J. B. Hammond. The land for the Methodist Cemetery, originally owned by J. B. Hammond, was deeded by gift to the Trustees of the Methodist Church: now United Church of Canada, in 1932, when it was properly plotted by Sudbury surveyors, Lane and Lane. Mr. Hammond died in 1937, and in his Will, he bequeathed an additional portion of land to enlarge the Cemetery. The writer has not been able to discover how the Catholic Church came into possession of the land for the Church and Cemetery.

It is interesting to note that a goodly number of man hours were given by Protestants and Catholics alike to erect all three Churches. In keeping with the pioneering spirit of this Northern part of Ontario, it is well known that several women of the village went out to the lumber camps, and collected money from the lumberjacks with which to build Churches, the Methodist Church in particular.

The women, God bless 'em!!

#### **GOOD AT HEART**

In spite of the hard-bitten character of those woods workers, the contributions were generous, and no bilingual and bi-cultural problems existed, as the men belonged to different religious groups, some with no professed religious faith, as well as some of several ethnic groups.

#### **ORIGINAL NAME OF STATION**

The railway station, now called Nairn was originally named Nelson, and the village was known as Nelsonville. It is thought that the name Nairn was suggested by an engineer who came from Nairn in Inverness Shire, Scotland, and who was employed laying out the new railway line.

#### **FIRST POSTMASTER**

Andy Dever was the first postmaster, and he carried on in what had been the first general store, a log building built by John Hall on the site of the present store, also built by John Hall about 1890.

#### **EDUCATION NOT NEGLECTED**

The first "schoolmarm" was Mrs. Clara Hall, wife of John Hall, and the 3 R's were taught in a log building, which stood on the site of the 2 room school built in 1926. Now, in 1966, a brand new 3 room school, valued at \$108,000, is under construction on the North side of the C.P.R. tracks.

The 1926 school was built by Levi Pomfrey, a pioneer resident from Sydenham Township, Grey County, at a cost of \$6,000, with an additional \$4,000 spent on equipment.



1926 PUBLIC SCHOOL



THE NEW SCHOOL, 1966

## STORMY TIMES

The Trustees Board at the time of the 1926 school erection had great difficulty persuading the ratepayers of the necessity of a new school. They were even threatened with violence at ratepayers' meetings. The original log school, covered with clapboards, after a few years, served to accommodate the school age children of that period, from about 1895 to 1926. However it was condemned by Inspector Christie as being unsanitary, and too small to accommodate 60 pupils, where room for 40 was all the space available.

## AMBITIONS AND FALSE HOPES

Nairn had ambitions in the early days, as witness an entry in the minute book of 1896, which records that J. B. Hammond was to be paid \$400.00 for four acres of land on the South side, for the purpose of making a station site for the Manitoulin and North Shore Railway "when the Company should decide to occupy same". However the railroad did not come through until 1911—as the Algoma Eastern Railway—and the station was built near the Spanish River, close to Ferry Street, on what is now the Inco roadway to Nairn Falls. So Nairn boasted of two railway stations from 1911 to 1931, during which latter year the rails were removed from Turbine to Espanola.

In 1897, a minute was passed in Council authorizing the expenditure of \$40.00 "for the purpose of requesting in person by H. L. McLean, then Clerk, by presenting a petition for a bridge across the Spanish, and that the Council draft a resolution backing up the petition, and that the same be sent to the Authorities through the Clerk."

As is still the case, in a lesser degree at this time, most of the members of legislature from the South of Ontario did not realize that the Northern part of Ontario was anything more than a snow and ice covered wilderness, inhabited by Indians and Eskimos—therefore the petition was ignored.

## OPPORTUNITY

John Hall came north from Brockville as a prospector, spending some time in British Columbia and the North West. However, prospering lumbering conditions gave him the idea for a store business, and he acted accordingly in about 1890. In those days it was a custom for the male population to gather in the store in the evenings, and they would sit around a pot bellied stove, chewing tobacco and spitting into spittoons; meantime helping themselves to crackers from a barrel and vieing with each other in telling prodigious yarns of incredible doings. "Them were the days" when everything from a paper of pins to a quart of blackstrap molasses straight from the barrel was sold. No packages, or package deals, or stamps.

## POLITICAL LETHARGY AND RED TAPE

In 1907 the Government at Toronto was approached as to building a bridge; especially as there was a lot of lumbering going on,





THE ORIGINAL STORE, 1890-1966

from which a large amount of revenue was being paid. But they could not be persuaded to build one.

However, in 1908 Graves Bigwood and Co. built a wooden bridge at a location known as "Headquarters", where they had established a large set of stables, a cookhouse and quarters for teamsters.



GRAVES BIGWOOD OFFICE, 1906

The cost was \$3,000 and a request was made for a grant of \$1,000 to the Company. This was rejected, unless the Township itself bought a road allowance, from what is now known as "old 17" to the river and some distance on the North side. This was done and the \$1,000 was given to the Council to be paid over to the Company. The bridge was washed away many years later by a big flood.

The Graves Bigwood Company located at Nairn in 1906, having been at Wahnapiitei previously. The woods superintendent or "walking boss" was James C. McCrindle, who replaced James Stirling; the book keeper was Robert Campbell, with Albert Crick as warehouse man in Nairn.

"Hopes renewed and smashed". In later years—1938—the then Reeve Roy MacDonald and the writer, Clerk at that time, attended



TRANSPORTATION ACROSS THE SPANISH RIVER

the Minister of Highways, George Doucett, at a meeting in Sudbury with a request for a bridge. However, when the Minister found that only 7/8 of 1% of the taxes came from north of the river, the request was turned down. The present scow ferry does duty for a vehicle crossing with a road and bridge grant of 75% of the cost of upkeep.

#### BREATHING SPACE

Up to 1908 the village was almost isolated by road in winter-time. There was a big gap west of Nairn, as there were no houses or farms nearer than 5 miles. To the East there was a road of a sort, a tote-road which had been used for railroad construction.

In 1898, Joseph Edwards Sr. was authorized to accompany Wm. Harley to decide on the best location for a road to Worthington.



"OLD 17"—1910

This was the beginning of the road project which finally became part of the "trunk road" from Sudbury to Sault Ste. Marie. He was paid \$2.00 for the job. The road was also built West of Nairn to McKerrow approximately on the location of "old 17" and further West to Webbwood.

#### **PIONEER DOCTOR**

The nearest Doctor was at Webbwood. Dr. G. W. Jones, a C.P.R. Doctor. When his services were needed at Nairn, the Doctor used a speeder on the railway, choosing times between trains. If the doctor was unable to get to the village on time, many a youngster was assisted into the world by one or two local women acting as midwives.

#### **LIBERTY UNLIMITED**

In 1897 a request was made to the Ontario Government to give a grant in aid of a township jail *as the need was very urgent*. Prisoners had to be taken by train to Sault Ste. Marie. However the request, like others at the present time, fell on deaf ears. It was 1904 before the jail was built on Lot 1, Nelson Street, on land donated by J. B. Hammond. The jail had four cells, and during the lumbering days, they were often filled. These were removed about 15 years ago. There was an 8ft. wooden fence around the building, with 6 inch spikes at the top.

However, there is more than one way of skinning a cat, in this case, a way to get out of jail. A prisoner was put in overnight to be taken to Sudbury the next day for trial. The axe for chopping



ORIGINAL JAIL BUILDING, NOW COUNCIL HOUSE, 1904-1966

firewood was left inside by the constable, who also left the jail cell open to allow a bit of freedom for the prisoner. When the constable arrived next morning with breakfast for the prisoner, there was no prisoner to feed. He had chopped a hole in the ceiling, then in the roof, then underneath the board fence to gain his liberty. He was not caught.

Before the jail was built the then constable was hard pressed for a place to confine a prisoner.

At the Eastern end of one of the storehouses for lumber companies a root-house was built, fitted with a chute 16" square used to unload potatoes from rail cars. The chute passed through a 4ft. log and sand wall. When the constable returned next morning to take out his man, the bird had flown! Sympathizers had opened the trap door on the track side and pulled the man through, minus shirt and portions of overalls.

The I.O.O.F. built a 2-storey hall on Front Street, facing the C.P.R. Dances were held there and the Council used it for meetings until they met finally in the jail building. This hall was destroyed in 1918, and was not rebuilt.

Financial troubles plagued the early Councils, testified to by the fact that the Treasurer was authorized to borrow sums of from \$300 to \$400 from whomsoever would lend it, in order to carry on until taxes came in.

Early in the 1900's Hyman was dropped from the triple Municipality, as the revenue from the pine timber, which went to the Provincial Government, was retained by them, and no return

grant given towards roads and bridges. It was requested that Hyman Township be dissolved. In 1909 Lorne Township was dropped from Nairn, as the taxes were very small from Lorne. One quarter of the Township bordering on the Eastern limit of Nairn was retained, so that school taxes from this portion could be used along with those from Nairn. This arrangement is still in force in the new Township School area (which replaces the old Rural School Board) and now has five trustees in place of three.

### TRAGEDY

March 12, 1906, a serious train accident occurred just east of the station, on a curve, which has since been reduced. The Soo passenger train No. 7 was approaching Nairn when the entire six cars jumped the rails, and plunged 25 feet down a deep gulley, only the engine remained on the rails. One man was killed at the location and another died from shock after he had been taken to a local hotel—the Nelson House. Among the passengers were J. J. McFadden of Blind River, Ralph Loveland of Cutler, and J. L. Wells of Webbwood. Conductor was Thos. Dreany. Doctors were called from East and West to attend the injured people.

In 1910, a more serious accident occurred at the bridge over the Spanish, some four miles West of Nairn. January 21st was very cold, 40 below 0, when the dining car and first class coach of No. 7 left the rails, and plunged through a foot of ice into the river, after rolling down an embankment. The engine and baggage car, the sleeper and 3 other cars did not leave the rails. Forty-three persons died in the wreck, most of them from drowning. One passenger from Nairn, Lomi Therrien was one of the victims. Conductor Tom Reynolds from Pembroke rescued several persons by diving into the flooded cars. W. J. Bell, millionaire lumberman, after whom Bell Park in Sudbury is named, was one of those rescued by being pulled through the vent in the roof. Mr. Reynolds was awarded the Albert Medal as well as a sum of money for his heroic efforts. It was never definitely established what caused the accident.

### ACCOMMODATION PLUS

In addition to the Klondike Hotel, now the King George, there was one on the South side of Front Lane—the Nelson House. The latter was built by Wm. Hall and later owned by Malcolm MacDonald. Both hotels did a thriving business for many years during the lumbering boom. The original Nelson House burned down, and a new Nelson House replaced it. This was torn down some years ago when the lumber trade had almost vanished. A man named Taylor built a hotel, near the present rail crossing, which proved to be on C.P.R. land; it was about to be removed when it burned down. The survivor is the King George, which was named by Nick Zangari, father of the present Clerk, Gerald Zangari.

## WESTERN TYPE PLEASURES

In the balmy days of the aforementioned hotels, when whisky could be bought for 75c a quart, and many men were waiting between camp closing and river drives to open up, it was quite a common sight to see large scale fist and boot fights outside the hotels. Many a man had his face and body pock marked from contact with river boot caulks.

With time on their hands they would organize dances, which were generally rough affairs. On one occasion, known to the writer, some disgruntled woods foremen, having a grudge against a hiring agent, decided they would make said agent dance to their music—that is, they would shoot close enough to his feet to keep him “dancing” away from their bullets. In those early days 1910 or 1911, men carried revolvers quite openly. It occurred in the bar room of the Klondike.

On another occasion in 1911, the writer had occasion to need a room at the New Klondike. He was shown a room and noticed a hole in the floor near the side of the bed. On enquiring about the hole, the maid said it had been made the previous evening, when the lively customers had made target practice by shooting at the hands of the hall clock, as well as surrounding the clock with broken bottles, and a stray shot went through the ceiling into the bedroom. Cheerful news!

## HORSE RACES

In 1910 Malcolm MacDonald, owner of the Nelson House, laid out a race track on land now occupied by the Trio Hotel. He owned three racehorses. For two or three seasons, races were run on the course. The horses were Jack, Monarch, and Riley B. Old timers probably made a few bets, win or lose.

## BUSINESS ESTABLISHMENTS

There were three General stores in the early days of the village—also two barber shops, two pool rooms and a large boarding house, a butcher shop and a mens' furnishing store. The original store built by John Hall is the only survivor, and is now owned by Roy B. Hall. The others were owned by Phil Chouinard, Alex Clavette and Harry Lesser. There was enough trade to keep them all going at the time.

As business declined, the stores of Mr. Chouinard and Mr. Clavette were torn down and the one owned by Mr. Lesser was burned.

## GENEROUS GESTURES

About 1925, Mr. Robert Campbell, head book-keeper at Nairn for Graves Bigwood and Co. and Mr. George Hilliard, Power Superintendent at Nairn Power House for Inco purchased about an acre of land on McIntyre Street and Minto Street and made a gift of it to the Municipal Council of Nairn, to be used as a childrens' playground and sports field.

Part of the Centennial project will be the improvement of the field and the provision of sports equipment.

Mr. Hammond, in his will, gave two lots of land on Taylor Street to the school trustees to be used as a garden for school children. After a few years, it was made into a skating rink, and equipped with lights.

This will now be transformed into a Park as part of the Centennial effort.

#### BUSY DAYS

From 1890 to 1923, lumbering was carried on extensively by several companies, such as E. Hall, Hale and Bell, W. J. Bell, Cleveland Lumber Company Limited, Sarnia Bay Lumber and Salt Co. and Graves Bigwood and Co., whose head office was in Buffalo, New York.

Each Company had a warehouse on the siding of the C.P.R. from which the camp supplies were toted into the different logging operations.

Names such as S. C. Mansfield, John (Danger) McEwen, Robert Campbell, James Stirling, James C. McCrindle, Thomas Thorpe, Thomas Kennedy, James Griffin, Angus Reavie, Alfred Lewis, William Beasley, Robert Brazzil, Oliver Paquette, Jack McGovern, Jerry McGuire, "Bull Dog Regan", Felix Bigelow, Bert Gorman, Tom McGown, Albert Crick, Louis Eano, Thomas Campbell, Dick Neumann and many others, foremen in the woods, bosses on river drives, clerks, cooks, teamsters, scalers, all had their share in what was a mighty lumbering operation, entailing the cutting, scaling, hauling, river driving of many millions of board feet of pine and spruce.

All the foregoing concerns closed up as each block of pine, known as a timber limit, was stripped of timber. The last to operate was Graves Bigwood and Co. who operated mainly North of the Spanish, into the Townships of Hyman, Vernon, Totten, and the logs were driven (or floated) down Vernon Creek (known as Crazy Creek), John Creek and Sutherland Creek, all of which emptied into the Spanish River. Also some on the South side of Wabaghizhik Lake (Vermillion River towards the West End of Penache Lake, and down the Whitefish River to Lake Huron. They closed down in 1923.

In 1914, after a huge fire which swept through several townships North of what is now Agnew Lake and extending North almost to Cartier, the Graves Bigwood Co. opened 14 camps with about 1500 men and 200 teams of horses. This was the largest operation in any one season, and was practically the beginning of the end of the lumbering in this district.

Incidentally, Lake Agnew, named after a high official in Inco, was formed from the Spanish River above High Falls, when the Company raised the height of their power dam at High Falls.

River drives on the Spanish and Vermillion Rivers were the main source of employment during the summer for river drivers, from the end of April to the middle or end of October.

Records show that on the Spanish, about 1909, a drive of 780,000 logs went down to the North Channel, to "sorting" booms, which separated the different Company's logs. Those which belonged to American Companies were "rafted" and towed down to the American mills, at Buffalo and at Sarnia by way of Lake Huron.

Most of the timber nowadays is moved by rail or truck so that river drives of large quantities are almost a thing of the past.

During the lumbering boom from the early 1900's to 1923 many men met death by drowning, accidents such as logs falling off sleighs, breaking of saws, trees falling on men, men crushed as logs were dumped from sleighs on to the river banks, and freezing while snow-bound on a tote road, even to a man getting lost in the woods. One such incident occurred in November 1914, when a camp clerk who had been hunting with another clerk, failed to return to his camp. Although search parties went out over many miles of roads, no trace could be found, until in 1920, an Indian trapper came upon the charred bones of a man. A rifle barrel with the stock burned off, a watch, some cartridges and a few coins laying at the foot of a burned tree told the story. Identification was made by the father from the watch and gold fillings in the teeth. He was buried in the United Church Cemetery by the writer.

#### ENERGY

In 1913 surveys were taken for a site for a power dam at Nairn Falls on the Spanish River for the International Nickel Company Ltd.. formerly the Mond Nickel Co.

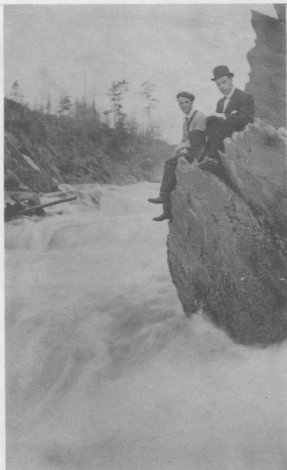
The buildings of dam and power house were completed in 1914 and 1915. Leslie Pomfrey is the superintendent at Nairn Power House.

Three generators are now operating and the power obtained is fed into a trunk line, which takes power from a dam at Wabaghezhik on Vermillion River and a large power house at High Falls, up stream from Nairn, on the Spanish River, and from Nairn itself.

The power generated by the three power-houses is used by the mines, smelters and refineries at Copper Cliff, Garson, Froid, Creighton, Levack, Murray Mine, Crean Hill, Vermillion Lake, Iron Ore recovery plant, Coniston smelter, Little Stobie and Coleman Mine, now in course of construction at Worthington.

Nairn never possessed an industry, but in the early years it was a distributing point for beef cattle, vegetables, strawberries and many hundreds of baskets of blueberries. The chief producer and shipper of beef was Richard Fensom in Lorne Township. It was a very familiar sight thirty years ago to see the shipping of several carloads of cattle to Toronto markets, using a cattle chute for loading. The Graves Bigwood Company shipped in a large number of bush horses every season which were all unloaded via the cattle chute.





NAIRN FALLS, 1913

#### **EXCITEMENT PLUS**

An occurrence which caused a lot of excitement several years ago was the chase and final capture of two men who had killed a Sergeant Davis of the Sudbury Police Force as he was investigating a car theft.

The two were named Simonoski, alias Victor Gray, and Ponomorenko. After eluding capture for a couple of weeks during which time they managed to get as far as Nairn by travelling through deserted countryside till they got on to the right of way of the Algoma Eastern Railway somewhere west of the village. The Provincial Police at Sudbury received word as to their location and they were trapped in a rock cut not far from the Spanish River bridge—they tried unsuccessfully to board a freight train and were sighted by Police. With a clear sky, full moon and a crack shot by a Provincial Policeman, Gray was brought down with a bullet through the heart. The other man surrendered, was tried, and hanged at Sudbury.

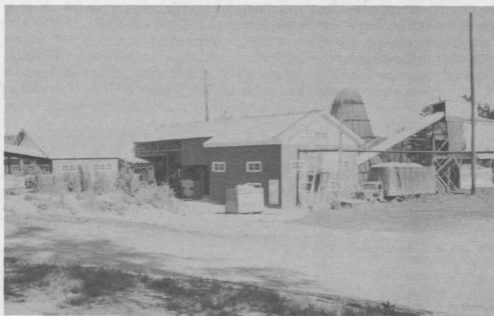
#### **HOPES REVIVED**

When things were at a low ebb here some years ago, a sawmill was established on the river, at the location of the old wooden

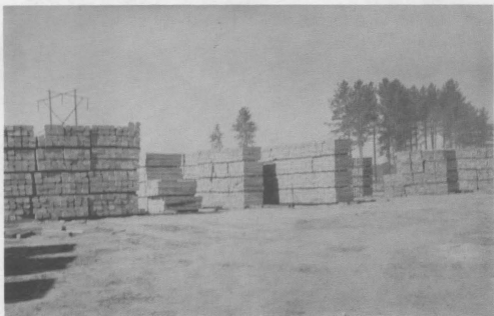
bridge, by Ben Merwin of Sudbury in 1949. Today it is a thriving industry employing 40 men, plus six office staff, working two shifts of nine hours each. This business is known as the Pineland Timber Co. Ltd.



PINELAND TIMBER CO., LTD., 1966



PINELAND TIMBER CO., LTD. MILL BUILDINGS



#### PINELAND YARD

The K.V.P. Company of Espanola and the International Nickel Company of Canada have now bought each a share in the mill. By this arrangement, the Inco gets all the mine timber for several mines, the K.V.P. gets the smaller logs for conversion into paper and paper pulp, and the Pineland manufactures the larger logs into ties, wedges, mine props and smaller timbers and railroad ties. The chips from the processing are loaded into large transports which convey them to Espanola for use in the mill there.

The mill produces 40,000 f.b.m. at each shift, with 2 9hour shifts daily, operates five days a week and is a 12 month operation.

The mine timbers are used at the International Nickel Co. mines at Garson, Creighton, Froid and Levack as well as the mine at Falconbridge.

#### MEMORIES

This article would not be complete without mention of the man who had courage enough to lay out a village site early in the history of Nairn.

He was James Bellows Hammond, postmaster for over 40 years, Clerk of the Township for 17 years, as well as Secretary-Treasurer of the Rural School No. 1 Nairn and Lorne for a great number of years.

A man of many activities, he was a chemist, geologist, astrologist, an assayer, a prospector, and a champion chess player, who could run five games at one time, and win them all.

In his earlier years he studied languages in Europe, and he paid for his studies by teaching English to no less a personage than



J. B. HAMMOND  
with his time and star finder

Kaiser Wilhelm of World War I fame. He could use five or six languages fluently, and held a Diploma in Esperanto, a universal language, which however is not in common use.

Perhaps the best of his activities was the construction of a time and star finder, which could be manipulated to correctly show the position of any star, the sun and moon at any given time of the 24 hours. The machine took 20 years to perfect, and on his death in 1937, it was sent to the Royal Astronomical Society of Ontario in Toronto, where it can be seen. He bequeathed it to the Society in his Will.

He was born at West Meath in the Ottawa Valley. He was twice married, first to Flora McDonnell, a granddaughter of General McDonnell, who defeated an American force at Windmill Hill in the War of 1812. Mrs. Hammond was an artist, a playwright and a writer of historical novels and some fiction. She also was an accomplished linguist and travelled extensively in Britain and Europe.

A brass plaque is located in the United Church at Nairn to their memory.

Mr. Hammond is buried in Nairn and his first wife is buried at Iroquois, on the St. Lawrence Seaway, her paternal home.

His second marriage was unsuccessful—one might call it a gamble as it was only of three week's duration.

#### LINKS WITH THE PAST

Mr. Hammond was the son of the Reverend Richard M. Hammond, of Belleville, whose father was one of those famous lumber barons who operated in the Ottawa Valley in the early part

of the 19th century, and who sold much timber to the British Government, for use in their navy yards.

Rafts of timbers, squared by expert \*"scorers" and "hewers" were guided down the Ottawa River by a hardy breed of men who would just as soon fight as eat, and they did plenty of both. Mr. Hammond told the writer that midway in the last century the rafts were re-assembled in the St. Lawrence River and towed across the Atlantic to England. However, this was rather wasteful both in material and time and the timbers were then sent by steamer.

### THE ORANGE HALL

An Orange Hall was erected in 1925 on McIntyre Street. Co-operation was shown by members of the three religious groups with many free hours of labour. Levi Pomfrey built the Hall.



ORANGE HALL, 1925-1966

Levi G. Pomfrey came up from Gray County in 1888 or thereabouts by boat from Owen Sound, to Cutler, which at this time was a port-of-call—thence by the newly built C. P. R. to Nairn. He was 21 when he settled here, then he returned several years later with his wife—the former Caroline Jane Nixon—and one baby girl, Violet, who became Mrs. J. B. Frank of Bala. Mr. Pomfrey was born near Wisbech, Cambridgeshire, England and was brought to Canada at three years of age.

\*A scorer was a man who cut into the sides of a log. A hewer was a man who hewed to a chalk line, removing the chips from the scoring. A broadaxe was used for hacking - the finished product was a squared timber.



LEVI G. POMFREY

#### PERSONALITIES

Louis Oliver Paquette, a son of Oliver Paquette, born here and educated at the old school, became famous as an airman, who with a man named Kramer, charted an air route from Chicago to Europe about 1920. They were ditched in the North Sea and Louis's overalls were found on the Norwegian coast. No other trace was found of them.

Louis Oliver Paquette also, (before he made the historic flight which cost him his life) was a radio operator aboard the Canadian ships which carried mail and supplies to outposts in Hudson Bay once a year.

In contrast to the intolerance shown to negroes in some states of America, one of Nairn's citizens who was a negro named Robert Stitt, from Alabama, settled here in 1914 as a barber with a small restaurant. He stayed here for twenty years before returning to his native Alabama. He was a son and grandson of a slave, and could relate some gruesome stories of his early days. He was known as the whitest man in Nairn, and was a great favourite with the younger generation.

#### PATRIOTS

Worthy of note is the fact that in World War I, soldiers to the number of 35 went from this little village, about 12% of the population.

In World War 2, about 18 or 19 went from Nairn—a fine contribution.

One Nairn boy was killed in the first conflict, Roy Harmon. In the second War, Lloyd Martin, a son of Joseph and Annie Martin, with the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada, was killed in Holland, and was buried in the Grosbeck Cemetery, a few miles east of Nimegan, Holland.

James Smith, only son of Hilliard and Viola Smith, a Flying Officer in the R.C.A.F. was killed in a crash near Harrogate, Yorkshire, and is buried in the Airmen's Cemetery at Stonecliffe near Harrogate.

#### **DANGER FROM FOREST FIRES**

Several times during the past 60 years, the village has been threatened with destruction from forest fires. The year 1906 was a bad year, when fires came on east and west sides; 1909 saw another threat from the north; 1916 was another dangerous year. In 1919 fire threatened the village and came up from the west as close as the swamp on Spencer Lane, 200 yards from the school. Everybody who could handle a broom or a stick, or a bucket of water was on the job, from children to old men and women. The school was closed to allow the pupils to do their bit. Again in 1963 and 1964, fire came very close to wiping out the village. Men and equipment from Pineland Co. were used to good effect and every available man was out on the job, as well as the Lands and Forests men with their equipment.

#### **FROM RICHES TO RAGS—AND BACK AGAIN TO RICHES**

In spite of all the set-backs and near collapse at times, the village has survived and courage has been shown by the village fathers.

One can truly say Nairn has come from affluence to poverty and now enjoys a fair amount of prosperity once again.

Let it not be forgotten that the International Nickel Co. pays over 60% of the local taxes, without which the ratepayers would be under a hardship to survive.

There are a very few of the original inhabitants still living here: Roy B. Hall, Mrs. Evelyn Hewitt, Leslie Pomfrey, Angus Hall, Hazel Jefferies, John Edwards.

Among the pioneer women of the village, without whom the men could not have carried on were: Mrs. Caroline Jane Pomfrey, Mrs. Emily Smith, Mrs. Ada Duret, Mrs. Annie Crawford, Mrs. Margaret Edwards, Mrs. Joseph Edwards Senior, Mrs. M. MacDonald, Mrs. Elsie Spencer, Mrs. John McEwen, Mrs. Oliver Paquette, Mrs. F. M. Hammond, Mrs. Mona McQuillan, Mrs. Ruth Campbell, Mrs. Florence A. Hall, and Mrs. Edith Hall—the latter three of whom are still living.

During the depression years of the '30's old wooden sidewalks were torn up to be replaced with cement, providing work for quite a number of men who would otherwise have been unemployed.

A Relief Office was set up and vouchers were issued for food and clothing.

Some work was done on Township roads, with men earning 15 cents an hour. This was a commonplace occurrence in other parts of the Province.

The village streets have been greatly improved since 1964 by means of a chipped stone topping and there is a system of electric lights all through the village. Electricity was inaugurated here in 1948 and the street lights followed in 1960.

A contrast in the amount of money expended on roads and streets in the early years of the Township is shown as \$600 in most years compared with \$14,000 in 1966.

School expenses in the 1900's were less than \$1,000 yearly—today they amount to \$14,000.

Some nice new houses have been erected in the past six or seven years, and there are now no run-down dwellings as were common 25 years ago. A new sub-division has been opened south of Highway 17.

#### TOURIST ACCOMMODATION

The main east-west Highway No. 17 runs through the village on the southern edge, and travellers miss the main part of Nairn. There are two service stations, Pomfreys' and Robinsons', one restaurant, Robinsons' and a new hotel on the highway. A number of cottages and Clark's motel are available for tourists. Several tourist camps with boating facilities, camping grounds, cottages, hunting lodges are available outside the village itself.



ROBINSON'S RESTAURANT, 1966





TRIO HOTEL, 1966

Sand Bay Camp, located about seven miles north of Nairn on Agnew Lake is easily accessible for tourists. One may hire boats and canoes and rent camping space, and there is a small store supplying camping and fishing equipment. There are expert advisors as to where the real thrillers may be caught. Owner is Walter Squires.



POMFREY'S SERVICE STATION, 1966



MCCUTCHEON'S GREENHOUSE, 1966

Some two miles east of Nairn on the Spanish River there are some delightfully situated cabins, near "Tiadly Creek,,," where the tired business man from the City may relax and laze around to his hearts' content. These are owned by August Kaurinoja.



CLARK'S MOTEL

West of the village a number of tourist cabins, owned by Clarence Rooney offer good accommodation for tourists.

The Spanish River east and west of Nairn provides good sport for fishing pike, pickerel, bass and perch, and an occasional "muskie."

#### MUNICIPAL PERSONALITIES

During the 70 years of Nairn's existence, eighteen Reeves handled the Town's affairs.

After serving the Township from 1937 to 1955 as Clerk-Treasurer, Albert Crick resigned and A. O. Berry succeeded him, followed in 1958 by Gerald Zangari, who is the Clerk-Treasurer at this time,

Following are names of the Reeves who have served the Municipality: Andy Dever, J. L. McDermott, Levi Pomfrey, J. H. Hammond, A. J. Jordan, George Hilliard, Peter San Cartier, Roy MacDonald, Maxwell Pomfrey, George Thurlow, Brodie Cumming, Leslie Pomfrey, Mrs. Evelyn McCutcheon, Henry . Beer, Myron G. Austin, Lyle Hall, Thomas McCutcheon and Chas. Robinson. A perusal of the above list will show that a father and two sons were Reeves—Levi, Max and Leslie Pomfrey. Mrs. Evelyn McCutcheon was the second woman Reeve in Ontario.

The writer served under eight of these Reeves.

The present Council and Reeve are: Reeve, Henry J. Beer; Councillors: Mrs. Essie Wulff, Thomas Campbell, Nick Wasylew, Walter Squires.



Mrs. McCUTCHEON  
Second woman Reeve in Ontario



A. CRICK, 1883-

Born Manchester, England, educated in Bridgewater, Somerset at Eastora Elementary and High School, and Art and Technical School. Came to Canada 1907—to Nairn 1913-1956. The writer of this article.

*Compliments of  
Henry J. Beer.  
Warden.*