

S. S. NO 2 COCKBURN ISLAND (THE BLOCK)

Tolsmaville, a small fishing village on the north side of Cockburn Island, is the largest village here. It was named after Tolsma, a fisherman who is believed to have been the first white man to come to Cockburn Island.

Four miles out in the country is another small settlement know as the "Scotch Block" because of many Scotch people living there at one time. The Scotch Block people living there at one time. The Scotch Block was first inhabited in 1879 by Browns, McCaigs, Reids, McKinneys, Manarys and Goodmurphys. These people brought their "moving" on a small dray drawn by oxen over a very rough road which was not fit to use a wagon on. There are only five families living in the "Block" now. Most of them are farmers, but do considerable timbering during the winter months.

The first Logging Co. and store was operated by Hitchcock and Foster at Tolsmaville. In 1899 the manager, Avis accompanied by a teamster, Paddy Berry, were lost on the ice while crossing from Thessalon with supplies. After being lost for some time they reached Sulphur Island. Avis was able to light the light in the lighthouse by holding a match in his teeth, as his hands were too badly frozen. When the light was seen in Thessalon, men were sent out. They took Avis and Berry to Thessalon Hospital where they both died a few days later from the effects of being so badly frozen.

At this time Monks were keeping the post office, and Wm. Harper was the first mail man from Cockburn Island. He also had a narrow escape when his boat capsized. He was adrift for 3 days when he came ashore at Sulphur Island. He stayed there and ate Winter Green until men came from Thessalon and got him.

Wiggins were operating the first Boarding House on the Island at this time

After keeping store for nearly ten years, Hitchcock and Foster sold out to Brigham who built the first saw-mill at Tolsmaville. Ten years later he sold the store, mill and limits to McAllister. The mill was burned shortly afterwards so McAllister sold the store to Wright Bros.

The Meldrum Bay Co., bought the limits from McAllister's and had the timber towed to Meldrum Bay to be sawed in their mill.

In 1914, Mr. M. Mitchell from Lucknow bought the limits from the Meldrum Bay Co., and built the first hardwood mill on Cockburn Island. At the same time, the Wright Bros sold out to E. J. Smith, the present store-keeper. Mr. Mitchell operated the mill for 4 years then sold to E.J. Smith and L.A. Buck. The mill burned a few years later and was never replaced until the summer of 1943 when Wm. Jones Jr. brought a mill from the Duck Islands and set it up in much the same place as the old one stood.

About the year 1904 there were three mills on Cockburn Island. There were two at Tolsmaville and one at Ricketts Harbour on the south-east side of the Island. There was also a store and boarding house at Ricketts Harbour organized by a company from Owen Sound and operated by a Mr. Lawson. There is, however, no settlement at Ricketts Harbour now.

After monks, McKenneys kept the Post Office until 1914 when it was taken over by R. C. Reed. Mr Reed carried the mail too. He also operated a boarding house which had been built by E.J. Smith in 1909. Fifteen years later, the job of post master and mail carrier was taken over by Chas. Monk Jr. who kept it about eight years. It was then taken over by Alan McMillan who is still post master. Wm. Jones Jr. took the Contract for carrying the mail and has it at present.

Mrs. L. Flood operated the boardinghouse after R. C. Reed. Mrs. Pateman is at present keeping the only boarding house on Cockburn.

The approximate population of Cockburn Island is one hundred and sixteen, not counting Indians or those who are in the armed forces.

There has been about twenty-four young men and one girl from here joined the armed forces in Canada - several of whom have gone overseas. Four of them have been discharged

Dorothy Blackburn, Teacher.



Harold McQuarrie
431 Old Garden River Rd
Sault Ste. Marie, ON P6B 5A7