



On the Castor, near Vernon, early 1900's

Osgoode Township Historical Society & Museum

Vernon School
P.O. Box 83 - Vernon, Ontario
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Newsletter

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This summer newsletter is a month late and in this issue special events in July will be reported. Katie Campbell and Isobel Lewis are your temporary editors, with a great deal of help from David Gray and Allison Dempsey.

Museum Notes - by David Gray

As we continue planning for the upgrading of our building, we are also thinking about acquiring a barn or equipment shed for the storage and display of the many agricultural implements and other machinery which we have been promised or which we own but have to store in members' barns. If anyone knows of a barn or large shed which might be suitable, and is available, and could be moved, they should contact Harvey Linton (826-2338), chairman of our Board of Directors.

Wanted

The museum would like to acquire an old wooden work bench for use in exhibiting part of our collection of old tools. Ideally it should be relatively old, but in good shape. It could be either a carpenter's bench or a farm work bench. An attached bench vise would be desirable, but not necessary. If you know of a suitable bench, please call David Gray, Metcalfe. (821-2640).

Metcalfe Fair

The Historical Society and Museum is sponsoring and donating the prize money for two new exhibit entries in the Metcalfe Fair this year. In the Hobbies and Crafts (class 44), the new entry is "a collection of related historical items, identified and use described, maximum three feet table space". The second is in the Junior Division (class 48) 13 to 19 years old; "a collection of five old photographs of historical interest to Osgoode Township, mounted on bristol board and labelled". Members are urged to encourage others to enter exhibits in these two new categories.

Tenth Anniversary Celebrations

The society's anniversary was celebrated by about 200 people over the July 1st weekend at the museum. As well as the permanent exhibits, visitors enjoyed special displays set up for the weekend including: genealogical information, quilting, Coral Lindsay's collection of children's playthings, Lorne Wade's harness-making tools, MacArthur Plows, Lorne Craig's old gas engines and wooden pump, restoration of old tools. Special activities included sheep-shearing by John K. Campbell and an illustrated talk on spinning, dyeing and weaving entitled the Rural Web with Edwina Scott of the Osgoode Area as commentator. The well-known Osgoode quilters were busy at a lovely quilt pieced by Alice Craig which will be given to a lucky ticket holder - drawn at Metcalfe Fair. The children especially enjoyed the butter and ice cream making and the working team of oxen brought by the Lowe's of Manotick. Michael Daly now has a booklet printed to tell the story of the 1st ten years of the Historical Society. In it he pays tribute to the three charter members who are no longer here - Miss Louise Stearns, Mrs. H. M. Lee and Mrs. Connie Sallens.

Pioneer Days - July 22 - 24

People who attended these festivities arranged by the Vernon Recreation Association, took the time to visit the Museum and we were pleased to see both old friends and new ones showing interest in our displays. Tea and light refreshments were served by the lunch committee.

Recollections of the Past - from Katie Campbell

Many of the above mentioned displays and activities remind us of farming and house-keeping methods that were abandoned when improved machinery and household appliances appeared on the scene.

Much of Osgoode Township was cleared with the help of the strong and steady oxen. The pioneers pulled stumps and turned over the native sod using their handwrought and simple rudimentary machines. In the log shanty the womenfolk performed their household tasks using the dash churn, the spinning wheel, and other simple gadgets. The fireplace was their source of heat and their cooking utensils were the kind that could be heated over the open fire.

From Isobel (Kennedy) Lewis

My great-grandfathers, James Kennedy and Alexander MacLaren both came from Perthshire, Scotland in the mid-1800's to pioneer in the Vernon and Kenmore areas respectively. When the land was to be cleared on their farms, and the trees were felled for building and logging they relied on the horse to do the work.

My father, Alex Kennedy, born 1875, learned as a lad to drive the horses from dawn to dusk planting and harvesting in those newly-cleared fields. What a difference from to-day's operations with huge tractors! It is interesting to know that there will be horse-drawn ploughs competing in the International Plowing Match near Richmond this autumn.

Summer Memories - North Branch - early 1900's by Allison Dempsey, whose grandfather's farm was along the Castor (lot 22, con. 10).

The road was dusty in summer, muddy after rain, with spots which could become boggy in prolonged wet spells. It brought the public past our gate, neighbors and strangers, in vehicle or afoot; it also brought visitors, some for a social time, some to trade work, others on business, or travellers asking for directions.

Gypsies with their horse-drawn covered wagons put in an appearance each summer. When we saw them in the distance and let Mother know, she had the same advice each time: "Stay back from the road", advice coupled with a story. It was a story that came from her sister in Saskatchewan. In a community in that far-off part of Canada a family one day missed their little girl. A wide search was made but she was never found, and the concensus was that she had been picked up and carried off by passing gypsies. Such people, it was implied, were not to be trusted, yet we felt a certain fascination. As they went slowly by we stood well back watching the procession, men up front in the wagons, pails and utensils hanging from hooks, children peering from open flaps, extra horses tethered behind. We wondered what life must be like for those children, with a feeling of envy for their freedom: they could move around the country, sleep almost out-of-doors, never bother to go to school, visit places we had only heard about. They often encamped a short distance north of us at the end of a grassy lane where the road turned west toward Metcalfe. There were men who visited them at such stopping sites, for those extra horses were along for trading. The gypsy traders were shrewd and good judges of horseflesh, and yet the general opinion was that they were not shysters; one just needed to be as sharp as they were.

We made a collection of things to be ready for the visit of a Jew from Ottawa. He came along the road with horse and wagon, stopping at homes and timing his arrival so that he could expect to stay for supper and overnight with

us. "Scrap iron, rags, bottles and bones" were the things he wanted, and after he had looked over, weighed and counted what we had on hand, and paid Mother for the lot, he was asked to stay for supper. Father stabled his horse, and our overnight guest came in with a few personal articles and took over a corner of the kitchen where there was a couch. He brought a glimpse of a people that we knew little about except that they were descendants of those we encountered in the Bible. We listened as he and Father and Mother talked at table, getting an impression of a part of the big city and of an ethnic group within it. Later, standing at the top of the stairs, I could hear him reading and reciting prayers before he turned in for the night.

When it became warm enough in the spring we were allowed to leave off our shoes and stockings. We liked the feel of the sand under our feet, not deterred at all by the occasional stubbed toe. The road took us to school along with other barefoot children who joined us on the way, and by the end of June the soles of our feet had become tough and firm. We only reverted to footwear now and then, when we went picking wild strawberries and raspberries, and of course on dress-up occasions, and on Sundays when we attended Sunday School and Church services. In the autumn when we had to be fitted again our parents found that we needed larger sizes in shoes; we were getting bigger, but going barefoot had a share in the matter too.

A visitor, Miss Cadeux, whose home was in Ottawa, used to spend some summer holidays with us. One day while there she wanted to go to Pana, perhaps to meet a person at the train, and she asked me to go with her. I was still a pre-schooler but old enough to be company for her. Father hitched a horse to the buggy and we set off, going north to the first corner, then east to the Osgoode-Russell boundary, where we turned north toward Pana. Just after turning, to her horror Miss Cadeux saw in the distance one of those new inventions, an automobile, coming toward us. She pulled off to the shallow ditch, stopped the horse, and with a solemn voice said to me: "Allison, this is the end". She was sure that when the machine came by the horse would bolt, the buggy would be smashed, and we would be killed. I watched as the automobile, about the length of two fields away, came steadily on, larger and noisier as it neared us. About the length of a field away it appeared and sounded like a monster to us who had seen hardly any automobiles before. Now it was just ahead, and perhaps it was about to happen, this calamity that my companion had predicted. Now it was abreast of the buggy and passing by with a roar and a cloud of dust, and I was tossed between fascination and fear. Then it was past and its noise gradually fading away; and when Miss Cadeux opened her eyes, hardly believing her senses, and realized that we were unmoved and unhurt, she aroused herself and shook off her fright. We set off again toward the station. I don't remember much about the rest of the trip, but when we reached home, Miss Cadeux had to give a running account to Father and Mother, with a detailed description of our close encounter with a machine of a new kind. She had high praise for the horse, surprised that it had not run away. Perhaps the horse, sensing the driver's anxiety and that our safety was in its keeping, had stood unmoved in spite of fear, showing uncommon "horse sense".

LOCATIONS OF PLACES

Scotch School was S. S. No. 12, Osgoode situated at the corner of Con. 9 & Regional Road 4. Now it is a residence. - (so-named because early students were children of Scottish pioneers).)

North Osgoode is the area 2½ miles north of Metcalfe. A stone school S. S. No. 10 was located in the midst of this community.

Babylon and Babylon Road - The road is 1½ miles west of Highway 31 between Dalmeny Road and Springhill Road. The first large frame house (now home of Alex Campbell's) was taking so long to build that the carpenter thought it was like building the Tower of Babylon. Now there are 12 houses in this area.

Maple Grove is located near Concession 1, south side of Regional Road 4. In this south-westerly part of the township, a cheese factory was in operation.

Now Try These - Where are -

Osgoode Centre	Osgoode Swamp
Snake Island	Kennedy's Corner
Herbert's Corner	10th Line ???