



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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1. Making maple syrup and maple sugar in Osgoode Township -

The Good Old Days

*Don't you remember the old sugar bush
Where the sap ran pure and sweet?
The camp where we slept when the work was done,
And the good things we had to eat?
Sugaring - off day when it came around
Don't we remember well,
And the jolly lads and fair maidens there
As all were held in spring's magic spell?*

These lines remind us of the delights associated with the making of maple syrup and sugar in the springtime. It is in March that the sap begins to run, and the first settlers in our township soon learned the value of collecting sap from the hard-maples in the tree-filled woods. The sap was caught in buckets, and the sweet liquid was boiled in open kettles until it became a delicious thick syrup. There were many "sugar-camps" around fifty to a hundred years ago, and only a few remain in operation to-day.

Here are some of the names of the farmers who had sugar-bushes as recalled by some of us who are older residents

On the Rideau River Road - Bill Doyle, the George Harris farm where Hans Fisher now taps about 200 trees, and Archie Davidson; Clark Murdock of Reid's Mills, and Robert Cleland, Osgoode.

Stewart Ferguson, Sandy Stuart, Dave Shaw near Dalmeny; Tom Hoy, Belemeade; Bob Alpen Campbell, Dave Porteous, Charlie Acres, near Vernon,

Along Highway 31 - Charles Dempsey, Peter MacAndrew, Isaac and James York (later Wm. Creighton), the Dow's and Latimer's.

In Golden Valley - Humphrey Hughes, John McDiarmid, Duncan McNab, McTavish's and Alex Fraser.

On the 10th line - John Loney (bush is still in operation), and Bob Robinson (now owned by Mr. McGowan).

Of special interest is this story: At the World's Fair in Chicago about 1883, a display of syrup and maple sugar was exhibited, made by Robert S. McTavish on his farm (now owned by John MacDonald). This entry was prepared by Mrs. McTavish and young Samuel Craig (Lorne's father) and won a prize given by the Grimm Evaporator people. The McTavish grandchildren include Katie Campbell, Robert and John Campbell.

To-day maple-sugar making is a costly production with more expensive equipment such as pip-lines to carry the sap to the evaporator in the sugar shack. At Bellemeade, Dick Linton and son Stuart carry on a modern maple syrup operation. Ian Linton has taken over the running of the Stuart sugar bush where Elizabeth has for many years carried on the tradition of syrup-making and dishing out maple treats to friends and neighbours.

Artifacts of early syrup-making are on display at the Museum.

2. Barn-Building Then and Now

Mr. Norman Cooper from North Osgoode entertained the audience at the April meeting of the Osgoode Township Historical Society with a talk on the structure and rising of barns in our area. He explained the framing of a barn with the help of a model of the barn he had built on his farm on Lot 11, Concession 8. He discussed training of the skilled workmen who prepare the timbers, and also told how the framer made the frame strong enough to "stand up" to the stress to which the barn would be exposed.

Mr. Cooper's skills were learned from his uncle, John Sheldrick. Emigrating from Ireland in the early 1800's, the Cooper ancestors had developed their expertise as stone masons there, and participated in the building of the first Ottawa Parliament Buildings and the Rideau Canal.

Norman Cooper, and five of his brothers and cousins have been engaged in framing barns in the Township. Anecdotes concerning the history of barn building would provide us with interesting reading.

One of the most fascinating barns in the Township is the "round barn" on Charlie Shepherd's farm, Lot 36, Concession 11 (reference Carleton Saga, P. 550). The framer was Joe Taylor of Osgoode. Another Taylor from Maberly framed a barn many years later for Mike Bouris on Lot 28, the Broken Front. Mr. Bouris spoke of the heart-warming kindness of neighbours at the time of this barn-raising.

Some well-known framers of the past were John Lora, Charlie Kennedy, Roger Brisbois, Joe Taylor, Clinton Dalgleish.

At the exciting barn-raising bees, as the shout "Yo Heave" resounded through the barn-yard, many strong arms of the neighbourhood men would push the frame of the barn into place. The women did their share as they set forth a banquet to be served on long tables outside when the barn-raising was completed.

3. Up-Date -

(1) May 3 - Next meeting at the Museum
Topic - Local Cemeteries

(2) 10th Anniversary of the Historical Society will be held at the Museum July 1, 2, 3.

Clarence Cross of Maple Ridge will be present at our week-end - a noted authority on Dundas history. Lynne O'Brien and others from the St. Lawrence Genealogy Society, who are looking for U.E.L. descendants, will also attend.

Plan to attend this very special event.

(3) The Museum will begin opening on week-ends in May.

4. Do you know these places?

Here are the answers from Newsletter No. 1's inquiry:

TOBIN ISLAND

A parcel of land situated in Con. 5 running in a northerly and southerly direction across lot 24, 25 and jutting into lots 23 and 26 surrounded by swamp, those lands have been cleared and drained leaving very fertile farm lands. In the 1879 atlas:

Lot 25 was owned by R. Tobin now owned by Gerry Deschambault;

Lot 24 was owned by Tim Leahy now owned by John Brady;

Lot 23 was owned by Patrick Herbert now owned by Robert Brady;

Lot 26 was owned by R. Tobin Jr.

MURPHY LEAP

The year 1858 Jack Murphy's so called leap took place on the Bytown Prescott Stage route in con. 3. The leap was not a voluntary one and he should not be given credit for having performed a great feat by virtue of any special prowess. A big windstorm blew down a large elm tree which stood near the road. Then the tree fell, its great roots were pulled out of the ground leaving a big hole. It became necessary to cut the trunk about half way up the tree in order to clear the road. Murphy and others were cutting the tree just as the trunk was about to be severed, Murphy stood up on the trunk side. When the trunk was finally severed, the weight of the great roots caused them to sink suddenly into their cavity, the trunk on which Murphy was standing shot into upright position hurling Murphy, as from a catapult, forty feet through the air. He landed with the axe still in his hand. He was rather shaken up but was alright again in a few days. For many years the spot became known as Murphy Leap and also a sort of meeting place for the young men of the district.

BEAN ISLAND

Located to the west of the bridge over the Castor at Kenmore, Bean Island could be found between the bridge and the cemetery on the bank of the Castor = more or less opposite the Kenmore Cheese Factory. During the 1920's Indians from the Cornwall Area occupied the small house on the island and carried on their basket industry. Woods in the Kenmore area were good sources of "basket ash" trees.

CROW'S NEST BRIDGE

Crow's Nest Bridge crosses the Castor east of Vernon on Con. 8. Tradition "has it" that when one of the earlier bridges was being built so many crows had built their nests in the trees along the river banks that the people began calling it Crow's Nest Bridge. The present bridge may be the fourth or fifth bridge in that location.

THE BLUEBERRY MARSH

The Blueberry Marsh - a marsh famous for its splendid crops of wild blue and huckle-berries attracted berry pickers by the hundreds before and after the turn of the century. They came by horse and buggy and every other design of horse-drawn vehicle from north, south, east and west. Horses were tethered to the trees or fences on both sides of Spring Hill Road. Their owners trekked to the marsh hoping to fill milk pails with the berries to be taken home and stored as canned fruit, to add variety to winter diets. The marsh covered a thousand acres of land between the fifth and sixth lines of Osgoode.

The SWALE - THE SWALE SCHOOL

The Swale School was located in the centre of the district known as the Swale, south and west of Vernon where the Fifth Line of Osgoode meets the boundary between Osgoode and Mountain Townships. At one time in the past history of the school section, a bitter controversy over the location of the school arose. One group wished to move the school to the north another group wanted the school to remain in the Swale. One dark night the school burned to the ground ending the disagreement.

THE DOYLE ROAD

Situated between Lot 20 and 21, Con. 1. In June 1847, Anthony Doyle and his wife Elizabeth Murphy sailed from County Carlow, Ireland, with their two sons James, and Patrick and their daughter Mary. Mary died on board ship and was buried at sea. The family settled on Lot 20. Son James married Bridget Doyle and settled on Lots 21 - 22. A part of lot 20 still remains in the Doyle name.

YORK'S CORNER

York's Corner is located on the tenth line two and one half miles east of Metcalfe and about two miles north of Kenmore. The York family, after whom the corner was named, were among the very early settlers in Osgoode Township. The first wedding in Osgoode Township took place near York's Corner.

SKUNKS MISERY

Situated in Con. 4 and 5 in the swamp land on the north side of regional road 6. Sure'n this is the way it was told to me:

The wild life were so miserable in that swamp that the skunks came out in the fall of the year, wiping their tears away with their paws, begging the farmer to put them up for the winter.

PIGS ALLEY

A short strip of road starting at what is now Parkway Road and ending at what was known as the Metcalfe Highway (Highway 31) at the old Stanley Hotel and Randalls Blacksmith Shop at Greely. (Greely was first known as Rossiter Corners). The second Russell County Fair was held in Greely in 1860. It was also a toll gate center. A Mrs. Ryan was the Gate Keeper. The fee for a single horse and buggy was 5 cents; for a team and express wagon was 10 cents.

COLD SPRING

Cold Spring Corner is now often called Metcalfe Corner - on Highway 31, where one turns off the highway to head into Metcalfe. A natural spring of icy cold clear water bubbles up west of the corner. The first Roman Catholic cemetery was near this corner when Osgoode Township was becoming settled in the 1820 - 30's.

NOTES OF INTEREST - ENNISKERRY

Tiny Hamlet of Enniskerry is back on the map again in Osgoode Township. Once one of Osgoode Townships thriving Irish settlements the name Enniskerry disappeared from local maps some years ago but last December, regional road crews erected two new brilliant blue signs, proclaiming Enniskerry's long awaited hamlet status which had been approved by Regional Council in October 1981.

(Reference, 1981 News Letter Vol. 7 No. 3; The Story of Irish Hamlet.)

Michael Daley researched this information.

Now try these:

Where are

Scotch School

North Osgoode

Babylon and Babylon Road

The Swale

Maple Grove ????

Joint editors for this newsletter were Katie Campbell, Isobel

Lewis and Michael Daley