

Canada is celebrating its Centennial year with many celebrations in many towns and cities. It recalls to mind just a century ago the first Prime Minister of Canada, Sir John A. Macdonald, visited Lindsay and spoke to a large audience from a balcony at the southeast corner of the present Town Hall at Kent and Cambridge Streets.

In linking up with the special centennial edition of the Lindsay Daily Post, facts show the Town of Lindsay saw the "light of day" in 1857? However, records of the past disclose that Lindsay was actually born some 135 years ago when business men of that time questioned the advisability of building the town on what was then virtually a swamp. To use an old quotation the pioneers of over 100 years ago "built better than they knew."

The following will be found extracts from an interesting story on the early days of Lindsay as printed in a Directory of 1877. This article is followed by an interesting historical sketch of Lindsay and prominent citizens dating back 135 years ago and this article will be found of interest to many readers at home and abroad.

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The thriving town of Lindsay, the county seat of Victoria, is pleasantly located on the Scugog River, about midway between lakes Scugog and Sturgeon in the Township of Ops, south of the centre of the county. It is situated in the heart of rich arable country. Having excellent water communication with a long chain of inland lakes extending on both sides of it, by means of quite a numerous fleet of steamers, and being a station on the Midland Railroad, it possesses every advantage for the shipment of the immense quantities of lumber, sawn and square, annually taken from the almost illimitable forests which stretch a way to the rear of the country, and also for an extensive trade in grain and flour, the produce of the fine agricultural country by which the town is more immediately surrounded. Its local trade is excellent, and as the surrounding country possesses great agricultural advantages, it is not likely to decline, but on the contrary to increase yearly as the various townships become more thickly settled, and also on account of its very central position rendering it easy of access from all parts of the country. It is distant from Peterboro, 28 miles; Port Hope 40 miles; Kingston 143 miles; Ottawa, 238 miles; Montreal 307 miles; Toronto 100 miles; but when the extension of the Whitby and Port Perry road is completed to Lindsay, which will be effected during the summer of the present year, (1877) it will reduce the distance to Toronto to 80 miles. The population is about 6,000.

The business streets are lined with many fine blocks and stores devoted to the varied departments of trade and commerce, while numerous elegant residences adorn the suburban portions.

The town is amply supplied with water for emergencies of fire by means of water pipes and hydrants into which the water is forced from the river by the agency of powerful waterous pumps.

Lindsay contains a number of fine public buildings, prominent among which may be mentioned the Court House and Jail, which are generally conceded to be the finest county buildings in the Province, especially in their internal appointments, which are admirably arranged and eminently adapted to the various public

services for which they were erected; the Town Hall and Market House, built of brick in 1863, at a cost of \$3,600; the High School, of brick, erected in 1858, at a cost of about \$4,000; a Separate School house, of white brick, built in 1869, at about the same cost; the Loretto Convent, of white brick, and opened in 1874, which cost, including grounds, etc., \$50,000, together with other buildings of lesser note, testifying to the enterprising public spirit manifested by the citizens of this thriving town.

In her school facilities Lindsay has every reason to congratulate herself on the excellent advantages provided, through the wisdom and liberality of her citizens, for the thorough education of her youth. The school buildings, which are among the finest buildings of the town, comprise a High School and three ward schools, all of brick, thoroughly officered with an efficient corps of teachers, and liberally patronized. There is also a Roman Catholic Separate School, and the Loretto Convent, all in a thriving and prosperous condition.

The Loretto Convent,, located on the corner of Russell and Huron streets is decidedly the finest public building in the town. It is built of white brick, three stories high, with basement and Mansard roof, slated, the dimensions of the main building being 75 x 52 feet, extension of 50 x 30 feet. It was commenced in 1872 and opened in 1874. The schools are in charge of the Sisters of Loretto, and are conducted on the Normal School system. The curriculum includes all the branches taught in the public and high schools, besides fancy work, drawing, wax work, music, etc. There are at present 34 borders,, a select school of 85 pupils, and a free day school of 200 pupils. The building, including grounds, etc., cost \$50,000.

The Separate School, on Lindsay street corner of Russell,, is of white brick, two stories ,and was built in 1869 at a cost of \$4,000. There are four teachers, with an attendance of 200 pupils. The head teacher is from Ushaw College, Durham, England.

There are seven churches in the town, representing the usual phases of religious belief, viz.: Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, Church of England and Roman Catholic.

The Midland Railway passes through the town connecting at Woodville with the Toronto and Nipissing R.R., at Orillia with the Northern R.R., and at Port Hope with the G.T.R. This town is also the southern terminus of the Victoria Railway, which has been opened the present year (1887) as far as Kinmount, and is rapidly being extended north into the new settlements. This road

will cross the Pacific Railway 118 miles north of Lindsay, and from thence run to the Ottawa River at the junction of the Mattawan, 163 miles from Lindsay. The road is expected to be open to Haliburton by the 1st of April, 1878. This road has been adopted as a Colonization road by the Government, and must prove of great advantage not only in facilitating the settlement of the large area of fertile lands to the rear of the county, but also in adding materially to the commercial importance and prosperity of Lindsay.

The Whitby, Port Perry, and Lindsay Railway will also be completed the present summer, which, too, must assist in developing the industrial and mercantile interests of the town to a considerable degree and extend the facilities for travel and transportation to all points east and west.

Besides her railroad facilities Lindsay has also the advantages of water communication by the Scugog and Trent river waters. Upon these float a marine comprising fifteen steam vessels and about a hundred barges or scows, all, as a rule, actively engaged during the season, and contribut-

ing very materially to the advancement and prosperity of the town. Thus it will be seen that, in her facilities for transportation, both by rail and water, Lindsay is by no means behind her sister towns in the province.

The admirable water and railway situation of Lindsay gives it splendid advantages for carrying on the lumber trade, and in this respect it is

one of the most important towns in the Province. The last few years, owing to the general commercial depression and consequent diminished demand for the products of the forest, the lumber business has been comparatively dull, and the effect has been felt in all departments of trade, but we believe it to be the general impression that the turning

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point of the existing stagnation in trade has been reached, and this important branch of commerce must soon again begin to assume its former proportions, and with Lindsay's improved railway facilities will be carried on much more advantageously than formerly.

### **FIRST SETTLED**

Lindsay was first settled by Mr. David Culbert, in about 1833; the first store was opened in about 1834, by Major Murphy; the post office was established the same year, Mr. Murphy being the first postmaster, from which small beginning the place has continued to prosper until today it is one of the most promising inland towns in the Dominion.

The first steamboat that navigated the waters of the Scugog was the Woodman, Captain Cotton, which plied between Port Perry, Lindsay and Bobcaygeon. Much difficulty was experienced in threading the narrow and tortuous stream, obstructed by fallen trees and half sunken logs, but perseverance was a virtue more largely exercised in those days than in the present, and there was no such word as fail, even though Governments declined or neglected to make the improvements absolutely required for a steadily growing interest.

The locks at Lindsay were in a desperate condition, and the whole passage comprised one series of exasperating obstacles of one kind and another. The Woodman was followed by the Ogeemah, which took to the water near Feneion Falls, and under Captain Wallis, became a favourite. Other vessels followed until the Government were compelled by the growing importance of the interest to do something for the improvement of the navigation of the Scugog. The old locks had been swept away and their place taken by a timber

slide that checked through navigation. In 1869, however, the present substantial locks were completed and the channel was also improved. In 1871 the Vanderbilt was launched by Mr. Walters for Capt. Crandell, and for size, speed and accommodation is entitled to rank next after the first steamers on lake Ontario.

The following sketch of the early history of the town, through the courtesy of the proprietor of the Canadian Post, we have been privileged to extract from a supplement of that journal published in August 1874.

“Not many years ago, the site upon which now stands the prosperous County Town of Victoria was but a vast thick dreary swamp, of the most forbidding nature. Such the place appeared to many of those who were the first settlers on the Government reserve, known at the time as Purdy’s Mills. Indeed this was the name by which the Lindsay town plot was designated for a long period after its survey, which took place about the year 1830.”

“The late Mr. Huston, D. P. S., of Cavan, was the gentleman sent by the Government to lay out a town in a swamp; and as years passed afterwards before actual settlers could be induced to venture to purchase the choicest corner lot on Kent Street, even at \$40 many were of opinion that a great mistake had been made in the selection of Lindsay as a place at all suitable for living beings, other than bears, wolves and wild cats.”

“For a long time all that there was of Lindsay, or rather the principal settlement of Purdy’s Mills, was at the lower east end, near the framed grist and saw mill erected by the Purdy family. There were Mr. Purdy’s dwelling, a few shanties for his workmen, a blacksmith shop, Mr. Thos. Sowdon’s little store and a few scattered sheds. There being

no tavern in the place at the time, the Purdy family had to accommodate such wanderers as haplessly strayed into the little settlement."

"In 1834 or '35 Mr. David Culbert and family located on part of the homestead lot now owned by Mr. W. McDonnell, and though close to the river, the cedars along its banks were so close and so thick that while the water could be heard rushing by (the dam was then at the old mill) the river could not be seen two rods back from its margin. About the year 1836 the late Mr. J. Britton settled on the Purdy property and built a very neat log tavern on the corner opposite where the Conway House afterwards stood."

“Subsequently Mr. J. Hutton started a small store and tavern and Mr. D. McBride and others followed, until the boast could be made about the year 1840 that there were nearly 200 souls, all told, within the legitimate bounds of the village of Lindsay. The knowledge of this fact raised some people’s expectations, and a few choice half acre lots fronting on Kent street brought at a sale as high as \$100 cash each. Among the “first families” and principal residents of the place and its vicinity about this period, besides those already mentioned, may be enumerated: Lieut. Logie, R.N., Lieut. C. Moe, R.N., Major Murphy, Mr. C. Ruttan, and Mrs. W. McDonnell. A few years later Mr. Thos. Keenan settled in the village, and afterwards Mr. Hiram Bigelow came and built the principal part of the large stone grist mill now the property of Messrs. Needler and Sadler.”

### **EPIDEMIC**

“Before Lindsay, had, however, fairly got a start in the world it had to undergo numerous drawbacks and afflictions. At the time of the erection of the first wooden lock, fever and ague was very prevalent, and the water of the lakes and rivers having been raised by the erection of dams

at Bobcaygeon, Lindsay and other places, a terrible fever, not unlike the yellow fever, became an epidemic and for three or four years in succession nearly every family in the village or its neighborhood was afflicted to a greater or less extent. So severe was the visitation that for years afterwards strangers were warned against approaching Lindsay. It was called "the sickliest place in all Canada." But now for salubrity Lindsay is considered one of the foremost localities in the whole Dominion."

"Notwithstanding all the drawbacks and discouraging vicissitudes which occurred time after time to retard the progress of Lindsay yet by the pluck and perseverance of its inhabitants it gradually made some headway, and its growth though very slow for a long period, was, however, that of a permanent character."

"By the general census in 1852 it was found that the population of the village of Lindsay was about 450. Ever after this Lindsay was spoken of as a "rising place," so much so that its sister town, Peterboro, began to feel a little jealous and offered opposition to projects which it was supposed might benefit Lindsay to the disadvantage of Peterboro. When the St. Lawrence and Lake Huron railroad project was first urged, the people of Peterboro were most anxious to get Lindsay, Ops, Mariposa, and other northern townships to co-operate."

"That road was to pass from Peterboro to Lindsay, and merchants in the former town were of the belief that Peterboro would therefor secure all the northern trade; but as soon as a direct road from Port Hope to Lindsay was spoken of, fearing that this town would get the business which it was imagined legitimately belonged

to Peterboro, the principal public men of that place did all in their power to prevent the ratepayers in Lindsay and Ops from voting in favour of the bylaw for \$40,000 in aid of the Port Hope, Lindsay and Beaverton road. This opposition was however so transparent that even many over cautious farmers, who might have otherwise voted down a great public improvement, saw through the interested motives that actuated their advisers from Peterboro, and they therefore supported the bylaw."

"Lindsay was incorporated as a town in the year 1857. Soon afterwards the railroad from Port Hope was completed to this place."

"From this period until the year 1861 the progress of Lindsay was rapid, and its population by the census then taken was 1,907, more than quadrupled in less than ten years. The year 1861 was a remarkable one in the annals of Lindsay. The great fire that took place on the 5th July laid nearly the whole town in ashes. The estimated loss of property at the time was \$286,000, upon which there was about \$80,000 of insurance, and the loss of property without any insurance was nearly \$90,000. This terrible disaster was severely felt by many, and to others it was almost ruinous. In alluding to this fiery visitation, an extra of the Victoria Herald, of July 5, 1861, said: "As there are scarcely any stores left unconsumed, hundreds of the inhabitants have not a roof to cover them. The few houses left standing are crowded. Many will have to pass the night in the street." Several persons from the country however acted nobly in rendering assistance. The farmers of Ops and Mariposa brought in provisions, which were distributed to a large number of the sufferers."

"Though the disaster had almost annihilated Lindsay, yet the inhabitants of the town were in a manner compensated to some extent by the vote for the separation of the counties of Peterboro and Victoria which took place on the Monday following the great

fire. Peterborough as usual was working in opposition to the measure, but this opposition only incited the friends of separation to greater activity. Their exertions were crowned with success, and Lindsay established as the chief town of the County of Victoria."

"Nine miles to the south and west is Scugog Lake, at the head of which is situated the flourishing village of Port Perry, interspersed with islands with all their pristine decorations of field and forest; and at about the same distance to the north is Sturgeon Lake, which offers to the invalid and sightseer both cool and invigorating air, and scenery of the sublimest description."

"Beyond, to the northward, are Fenelon Falls and an almost endless chain of lakes and rivers, extending to the far north-west. To the eastward is another chain of lakes, and the classic Otonabee, sweeping

with its rapid current ever onward through a most romantic region, passing settlements and private villas, meandering through the pretty town of Peterboro with a pleasant murmur, until at length, after miles and miles of wandering and mingling with other kindred streams, it is lost in the embrace of the "bright Ontario." Fish and game are plenty in their seasons, and the means of communication from almost any point are available to rich and poor, to the robust and invalid, without trouble and at reasonable rates."

"Sturgeon Point, on Sturgeon Lake about 11 miles north of Lindsay, has of late years become a popular rendezvous for pleasure seekers, and invalids. Here an excellent hotel has been erected and fitted up with all modern accommodations, croquet and cricket grounds, pleasure boats, billiard tables, natural and artificial baths, etc., etc. It occu-

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sity; Professor J. Smale, Toronto University; J. Blckett Robinson, publisher of "The Canadian Post"; George H. Wilson who with F. W. Wilson founded The Lindsay Daily Post Dr. Thomas Kirkconnell, principal of LCVI; Dr. Watson Kirkconnell, retired as president of Arcadia University Wolfville, Nova Scotia.

James W. Ross, railway promoter and donor of the Ross Memorial Hospital; Hon. Leslie Frost, former premier of the Province of Ontario; Sir William McKenzie of Kirkfield railway magnet and financier; Hon. Albert Matthews, former Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario.

Ernest Thomas Seton spent his boyhood on a farm in Ops and attended school in Lindsay. He became a naturalist

to the Manitoba government and published over 40 books on animal lore.

Area residents include Lady Eaton of Omemeë; Mosom Boyd of Bobcaygeon who built a vast lumbering empire and John Campbell of Mariposa who gathered international fame as a farmer and stock-breeder in the late 1800's.

These are but a handful of the notables who were either born in Lindsay or area or who spent a portion of their lives in Lindsay or Victoria County.