

Early History of the Village of Bethany

By MRS. ROSS N. CARR

Bethany is a thriving village on Highway 7A in Durham County and is the council seat of Manvers Township, with an approximate population of 300 people.

Manvers Township was surveyed in 1816 and at that time there was no mention of this village; in fact the road now known as Highway 7A which runs through the centre of the village was not even thought of. Early settlers trekking westward from Cavan Township blazed the trail one mile south of the present highway, between the 6th and 7th concessions, to what is now a county road running north and south, one mile west of the present village.

Here there was a natural pond of water, and here also, James Preston, one of the earliest immigrants, built the first grist mill, which is still in use today, being owned by Allan Gribble. The machinery for the mill came from England to Port Hope and was hauled from there on wag-

ons. It is not known exactly in what year it was built, but according to older residents, it must have been in the early eighteen hundreds.

Graham's Corners

On this same road where the grist mill was established the road was continued south towards the settlement which later became Manvers Station; and north to Graham's Corners (one mile west of the present village on Highway 7A) and so called because a family of Grahams took up some 600 acres of land there. On the north of the Corners, on the farm now owned by Thomas Jennings, the first tiny chapel was built of Methodist denomination and the first cemetery was established. This cemetery is cared for today by the Cemetery Board of the Bethany United Church, and is still called Graham's Cemetery. Here, also, John Grandy, who it was said, was a doctor, who did not practice his profession, kept a small general store.

First Record of Crown Grants

The first record of Crown Grants of Land that we have been able to obtain were vested in the names of Margaret Wait and Jane Wait and they are for lots 23 and 24 on the sixth concession, bearing the dates of November 5, 1817. We have not been able to obtain any information of these two ladies or their descendants. No doubt there were many others who took up land about the same time. According to the Registry Office at Port Hope, much of the first property was not registered until many years after families had moved in. Records of deeds were not considered of as much importance in earlier days.

Names of First Settlers

Among the first settlers we find the names of Arthur Graham, John Staples, Richard Johnston Sr., Joseph Hutchinson, Henry Hutchinson, Robert Fallis, James Fallis, Robert Porteous, James Preston, C. C. Cain, Matthew Hammond, Abijah Morris, John Morton, William Davis Sr., J. Keeley, R. E. Byers, John Smith Sr., J. Peel, T. Thompson, H. Benson, M. Staples. Of all these names mentioned as taking up land on the 6th and 7th concessions, none of the same name remain except that of Weston Hutchinson, who is now the owner of the homestead of his grandfather, Joseph Hutchinson.

First Brick House

The first house on the farm was made of logs and replaced in 1855 by the present brick building, which was the first brick house to be built in the Township of Manvers. The bricks for the house were made from clay on the farm. The Johnston Home-

stead adjoining was divided between Richard Johnston Sr.'s sons, James and Alex. James was Justice of the Peace, and according to Beldon's Atlas "The family had much local influence." James' son, Richard Johnston Jr. continued to farm until he retired to live in the village and this property is now owned by Calvin Reynolds. Another son Josiah became a township constable; Albert moved to Dauphin, Man., and James moved to Rochester, N.Y. Alex's farm is now owned by Addison Scott.

There is no information available as to when the road was actually built between the 7th and 8th concessions (Highway 7A). Rumours of the coming railway encouraged more settlers in the general vicinity and land was gradually cleared for the settlement which later became known as Bethany. Those who owned property in the immediate vicinity which was sold for village lots are listed as M. McAllister, Josias Wilson, William Davis, James Crozier, Robert E. Byers, James Kelly, H. Hunter, T. McGrath, Mrs. F. Bradburn, William Reynolds, David McMullen, John Bigelow, John Smith, Joseph McGill, David Jamieson, Capt. Graham and W. Williams.

Mostly Irish Immigrants

There may have been other early settlers of which we have no record.

All of the aforementioned seem to have been mostly Irish immigrants, landing at Port Hope, moving into Cavan Township and later into Manvers. To the present day, although practically everyone is Canadian born and many of our grandparents were of English, Scottish and French nationalities, the original Irish dialect is prominent in Manvers. It has been said that at least one who moves even ten miles away from this district is still known to have originated here from his manner of speech.

Name of Bethany Chosen

In 1855 a meeting was held at the home of Michael McAllister, who owned the farm now in the possession of Thomas Morton, to decide on a name for the settlement and the new railway station soon to be built. Various names were submitted, "Fellsville," "Plummed Inn," "Grahams-town," "Mullen Hill" and "Mid-dletown" were some of the suggested names. Finally the argument was settled by Mr. McAllister who stated "We have Biblical names all around us; Zion, Hebron, Ebenezer, etc. Let us call this place 'Bethany' for it is said in the Bible that other Bethany, 'A tiny village nestled in among the Hills'."

Free Trip on Train

In 1856 and 1857 the long awaited Midland Railway was constructed through from Port Hope, by way of Millbrook to Lindsay, and with the coming of the railway, new industries opened up and Bethany became quite an active centre. As might be expected, the railroad with "The Iron Horse" was greeted with different emotions; the older people declaring that neither they, nor any of their families would use it. The younger people, like those of today, were anxious and willing to risk the displeasure of their elders and try out the new invention. The railway company gave a free trip to all those who would accept. There were no comfortable coaches such as we have today, nor did the train travel at any great speed. The engine was wood-burning, and at stated places along the route large piles of wood were stacked for fueling.

On the day of the excursion, flat cars were used with cedar branches nailed along the sides and seats placed crosswise on the cars, and many enjoyed the first trip. The railroad for some people as the people soon found out, as they could ship their surplus of lumber, cattle hogs, grain, etc., to other countries, or to other cities which were springing up throughout Ontario. George Price (father of Walter Price of this village) also Mr. Hancock, with his crew of men kept the railroad in repair and safe for trains. His section ran from Kelly's crossing in Cavan township, north to Franklin village.

Up to this time land in the section was easy to obtain. There is one old record of 100 acres of land being bought for a cow! Mail was brought in once a week by rider on horseback from Port Hope.

Grants to Church of England

In Beldon's Atlas (1878) we again find excerpts concerning the vicinity of Bethany, which includes the names mentioned previously and continues. Large grants of property were also made to Bishop Mountain, Church of England Bishop of Quebec in the third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth concessions of Manvers Township, amounting to thousands of acres in 1816.

The families of Argue, Armstrongs, Beamish, Benson, Byers, Cairns, Craig, Touchburn, Wilson, Gray, Johnston, Lyons, Little, Morris, McGuire, McGill, McAllister, Neal, Preston, Russell, Staples, Syers, Ryley, Fallis, Graham, Ramsay, Lee, Porter, Rehill, Sisson, Raper and Pritchard were settlers of more recent date. Col. Williams of Port Hope owns considerable property. There are several families of the Grahams. Capt. Graham of the Durham Artillery is well known. He is also the treasurer of the township. The Patriarch of the family, now approaching his 90th year was one of the very early settlers and helped to cut the present travelled road from Port Hope through to Bethany. He has acquired a competence for his old age and has succeeded in placing the members of his family in comfortable circumstances.

Bethany Town Hall



TOWN HALL, BETHANY, ONT.

The Argues were very early settlers; some of them hold a portion of the land originally granted to Bishop Mountain. The Armstrongs are very numerous and own land all over Manvers. Thomas Benson, better known as "The King of Manvers" is a hale old Irish gentleman of 80 years, a very old settler and has held the position of deputy reeve a great many years and taken an active part in municipal affairs. The Wilsons are another old family with numerous descendants. Josias, residing on the eighth concession (part of his farm sold for village lots) has been several years in the township council and has also been a member of the United Counties Council. Abijah Morris on the seventh concession, a farmer and magistrate is an old settler of respectable standing. James Neal on the seventh concession is another old and respected settler and has long enjoyed Her Majesty's Commission of the Peace.

The Preston family own considerable property on the 7th, 8th and 10th concessions. Members of the family have always occupied conspicuous positions and taken a leading part in township affairs. Isaac is a Captain in the Volunteers. Porter Preston is a prominent man, owner of saw and grist mills and has done his share in aiding in the improvement and progress of the township. The Staples in Manvers are a branch of the highly respectable Cavan family of that name. They are connected with the Grandys and other families of note. Alfred Ryley has been the efficient township clerk of Manvers for many years and has the reputation of being a most useful public officer as well as a good man of business.

The family of Fallis of Cavan have also branched out into Manvers as thriving farmers. The father of Mr. James Kelly (partner of Mr. Grandy) was one of the first settlers in Cavan township and afterwards in the village of Bethany. There are several families of the Sissons on the 7th and 8th concessions; good, thrifty English farmers and noted as the first in the township who introduced an improved breed of sheep.

Thriving Village in 60's

Residents of Bethany can scarcely credit what a thriving village there was in the 1860's. From the memoirs of the late William Davis, we find the following list of those in business: Myers' Blacksmith Shop, Morrison's Implement Shop, White's Tinsmith and Stove Repairs, William McKeown, undertaker and Furniture Store; David Rowan, Tailor and Post Office; Garnet & O'Brien's Dry Goods and Groceries, Mark Graham's Bakery and Grocery; Chas. Reynolds, Undertaker and Furniture; Alfred Staples, Tinsmith; Richard Staples, Butcher; Robert Nyland's Store and Shoe Repairs. (Incidentally Mr. Nyland built one of the first two-storey houses in the village, now owned by Miss Winnifred Nesbitt); Jonathan Bryans Butcher Shop, John Trews was well known as a builder of wagons and a fine rick built at the rear of his shop.

John Westlake was a carriage-

maker and it is said he built the first reaper used in this country; later, his son, William Westlake owned a blacksmith shop; Strike's Tailor Store, Sadler's Harness Shop; William Graham's General Store; John Grandy, General Store and Tailor Shop; Alfred Ryley's General Store, T. G. Ryley's Drug Store, Dr. C. H. Brereton's office and residence; John Blakeley's Harness Shop, John Richardson's Carpet Weaving; Mrs. Gault, Dressmaking and Millinery; Bradburn's Carriage and Wagon Shop, William White, Blacksmith; William Gardiner, Shoemaker; Robert Kennedy, Blacksmith.

A later survey in 1887 lists many of the above mentioned names and also included John Barnicut, operating a shingle mill; R. E. Byers, Sewing Machine Agent and Repair Work; William Chickley, Shoemaker; Henry Dawkins, Tailor; Thomas Fowler, Carpenter; Francis W. Galbraith, Carpenter, builder and owner of saw mill; George Garnett, manufacturer of sash doors, butter tubs and other wooden ware; Garnet and Parker, General Merchants; J. Geddis, Cooper; Jeffrey Graham's Sawmill, John Hall, Blacksmith; Francis Hamilton, Hotelkeeper; James Johnston, Justice of the Peace; R. Johnson, General Store; C. W. Kelly, Confectioner and Fruit Store; James Lee, Shoemaker; Thomas Lee, Carpenter; Lee and Donaldson, Cabinet Makers; Misses Serepta and Elizabeth Gardner, Dressmakers; George and William McCartney, Carriage Makers; Gregory Nilands, Boots and Shoes; T. N. Pitts, Tailor; Charles Porter, Blacksmith; Mrs. E. Powers, Milliner and General Store; Preston Bros., Flour Mill and Grain Agents; Porter Preston, Justice of the Peace; Staples and Noble, Butchers; William Strike, Tailor; Joseph Thompson Shingles; Touchburn and Preston, Grain Dealers; T. Courtney, Meat Market; Levi Sisson, Grocer. T. J. Jackson purchased the meat market from Mr. Courtney in 1898 and the adjoining grocery from Levi Sisson in 1908, continuing in business for 30 years.

The hotels did a thriving business in the early days and we have mention of Raper's Hotel, Campbell's Hotel, Lang's Hotel, Hamilton Hotel, McKinnon House, Samuel Vance was the proprietor of the Liquor Store.

First School Built in 1862

The first school was built on the corner of the farm owned by Robert Kenney, who gave the land free of charge. The exact date when it was built is not known. An older resident said about 1862. Mrs. Sarah Johnston, a daughter of Robert Kenney who lives in the village and is now in her 83rd year remembers attending the first school, on her father's farm. With the increase in population a larger building was soon needed and in 1876 the new school was built at its present location on land purchased from the farm of James Crozier. Capt. William Graham, David McMullen and Johnston Morton were the trustees. The old school was sold to Alfred Staples and used as butcher shop until 1911 when it was destroyed by fire. The new school had two rooms. In 1929 it was made a Continu-

ation School with grades nine and 10 added. In this past year it has again reverted to the status of a two-roomed public school and pupils are transported to Lindsay Collegiate by bus.

Orange Lodge Organized

The Orange Hall, owned by L. O.L. No. 1022 was first constructed in 1859, the land for the building being donated by Andrew Brown, who organized the local lodge. Mr. Brown was the station agent of the new Midland Railway at that time. Later, during the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway, 1911-1912, the building was moved to its present location on John Street.

The Temperance Hall was built north of the property on which Mrs. Clara Armstrong lives and with the coming of the second railway, it also had to be moved. In later years it was remodelled into the home where Mrs. Isabel Perry now resides.

Township Hall Built

The Township Hall and Council Chambers was built in Bethany about 1877. Previously meetings are listed as being held at Lifford, Ballyduff, Newry and Franklin. Going over old records we find township minutes dating back to the year 1850 while lists William Hunter as Reeve, Robert Touchburn as Township Clerk, William Graham as Tax Collector and Thomas Summerville, Joseph Porter and Aaron Sanderson as constables.

At this time the township was divided into five wards. Each ward elected one representative, the five representatives appointed one of themselves to act as Reeve. The council consisted of the Reeve and four councillors. English currency was partially used up to 1860 and in some instances a few years later. Typical of those earlier records is the following By-Law No. 111 of the year 1855: "Be enacted by the Municipal Corporation of the Township of Manvers in Council that for the present year there shall be assessment levied and collected in the said township for the general purpose thereof, the sum of:

For county rate	£	S	D
For school rate	63	0	0
For Assessment	10	10	6
General Purposes	31	0	0
	164	0	0

Council Met In Tavern

The five wards are now replaced by seven polling divisions and we have a Reeve, Deputy Reeve, three Councillors and a Clerk. The year 1857 seems to be the first record we have of where the township meetings were held. It appears the council met at Bushell's Inn, Lifford; William Fallis' Tavern and Benson's Inn, Ballyduff, alternately. Later meetings were held at Hamilton and Campbell's Hotels in Bethany; Sons' Hall in Ballyduff; John Porter's at the village of Newry (this village is now known as Yelverton). In 1865 the township hall was built at Lifford. There are no minute books covering the period of the next thirteen years. The first record of meetings in the township Hall are dated 1878, in which year the Reeve was Samuel Grandy. Alfred Ryley was the Clerk, holding office for a period of 45 years, 1853-1898.

J. J. Preston, who later became the Member of Provincial Parliament (Conservative) for this riding, was appointed as his successor and served in this capacity until 1917, when W. A. Jakeman's name appears, who held the position for 22 years. After his death in 1939 he was succeeded by the present Clerk, J. C. Cummiskey. In 1911 during Bethany's great fire, the township hall was burned. The old building was a brick veneer structure with no basement and a low platform at the front. It had rows of seats similar to a church and was heated by stoves.

The present hall and council chambers was built in 1912, a little larger than the old one with a basement and furnace for heating purposes. It includes the office of the Clerk. Quite modern in design, it has a hardwood floor, is equipped with hydro and has recently been redecorated. Almost all the community gatherings are held in this building.

Early Church Services

Early church services were held in the school, the Temperance Hall and the Orange Hall. It is also recorded that early joint services of the Presbyterians and Methodists were held in Josiah Wilson's barn and some in Lang's Hotel. The Presbyterian group are credited with building the first church in the village on Queen Street in 1870. This has since been torn down and remodelled into the present home of Miss Hannah Staples. An accurate date cannot be found for the building of the first Methodist Church (now United). It was somewhere about 1870 according to older residents. The present structure is the original building remodelled, enlarged and moved to its present site in 1900. St. Paul's Anglican Church was built in 1878.

Many Hardships of Settlers

Typical of the hardships of early settlers in the community was an account which appeared in the Peterborough Examiner of an interview with the late Mrs. Robert Porteous on the occasion of her 88th birthday in December, 1928. Mrs. Porteous, who was the former Ann Jeanne Crozier, came to Canada at the age of three with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. James Crozier, who immigrated from the county of Fermanagh, Ireland, and settled near Bethany. There was scarcely the nucleus of the village in the vicinity then. We quote: "The voyage was made by sailing vessel and occupied six weeks and three days. A baby brother was born during the time at sea, so it was with two children that my parents began the heavy task of establishing their home in the virgin forest, building the first little one-roomed log shanty that was our first home. Bears and wolves were quite commonly seen and indeed at nights would

sometimes come into the clearing around the home, sometimes rubbing up against the door. I remember my father putting the "back log" in place in the wide fireplace, other smaller logs in front of it. Coals would remain in the morning ready to start up a fresh hot fire for the new day's cooking and baking. I remember, too, the big hook with the black iron pot in which soups and stews were cooked, suspended over the flames, and my mother drawing out the red coals on the flat stone which covered the hearth, putting the bake kettle thereon, placing more coals over the lid to bake the bread. Bunks were placed along the sides of the cabin for sleeping purposes and visitors and family alike had this accommodation.

The nearest store was at Cavanville and only a trail blazed through the woods to reach it. Many a time I've walked there for the groceries. Often, too, we walked to Millbrook, carrying cakes of maple sugar to exchange for groceries. Grain was cut with a scythe and we children were given a small hook and set to work to reap around the many stumps while father cut a wider swath in the open parts of the field. A flail did the threshing until one man started going about with an early edition of the modern threshing machine; a team of horses on a treadmill supplying the power, and although it was slow, at least it proved an advance on hand methods and the man was generally employed.

My father would cut 10 acres of wood during the winter with an axe being the only tool employed. I remember helping him clean grain, trying it in bags and loading it on the sleigh ready for

the long drive to Port Hope where it would be sold and needed groceries brought home. The start for town was made while it was still scarcely more than daylight. This was after my father had made a trip to Montreal that took over a week and had brought back his first team of horses." (To be continued next week)

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