

## SOME EARLY RAMSAY HISTORY

Except for two or three who may have settled at the Great Falls, where Almonte now is, the Township of Ramsay had no settlers until after the completion of the survey dividing the Township into lots and concessions. It was completed in January 1821. In the early summer about 30 families from England Scotland and Ireland arrived and a few weeks later 100 families belonging to the Lanark Society of settlers came from Scotland mostly from Lanarkshire, and settled in Ramsay. They arrived in Quebec in June, came by steamer to Montreal then traveled up the St. Lawrence River to Brockville, then across mostly on foot, to Perth then on to Lanark. Some came by land and some came down the Mississippi to Ramsay. Many families stayed at Lanark; some at Perth, until the men picked their lots and had a cabin built to live in. It was fall when most of the families were established for the winter.

The year before this 1200 settlers, also of the Lanark Society, had come to the northern townships of Lanark County and settled mostly in Lanark and Dalhousie, a few in Lavant, Darling and North Sherbrooke Settlement around Perth had begun a few years earlier but this was the first in the northern part of the county. They came on three ships, the Commerce, the Prompt and the Brock.

The settlers belonging to the Lanark Societies who came in 1821 numbered 1,800 people and came on the David of London, the Earl of Buckinghamshire, the George Canning and the Commerce. Many settled in Ramsay.

The British Government had been persuaded by Lord Archibald Hamilton, the M.P. for Lanarkshire in Scotland assisted by John Maxwell, the M.P. for Renfrewshire, to make arrangements for settling these people on land in Canada. They also provided them with some tools and blankets as well as seed grain. Sufficient money was loaned by the Government to tide them over until the harvest next fall. The people paid their own passage aboard ship.

Many of these Ramsay settlers came by way of the Mississippi River. Many others came by way of the old Perth road which had been an Indian trail for centuries to the Great Falls (now Almonte). This road had been laid out by surveyors across the center of the township past Wolfe Grove, the eighth line was more heavily populated than any other part of Ramsay. This is where the first four churches were built. Four schools were built there too.

Bennie's Corners had a population of 75 before 1851. There was Leishman's store and post office and Glover's Cooper Shop, Cockle's shoemakers, Philip's Blacksmiths shop and a carriage shop. Whitelaw's had a weaving shop and at the ninth line corner was Snedden's Hotel. Greville Toshack had a carding mill. At Otter Glen, Young's had a barley mill and Baird's had a store and a grist mill called Woodside Mill. There was a drying kiln to dry the grain and a conveyer across to another mill where they made oatmeal. There was a Miller's house near the eighth line and two houses for the help. At the South corner of the Baird farm was the Covenanters or Reformed Presbyterian Church. The great fire of 1851 destroyed the village of Bennie's Corners and it was never built up again. Mr. Carswell, the teacher, had a house, as did Banker Jimmy Snedden, who was also a lumberman.

Bennie's Corners was the post office for a large part of Ramsay until the Blakeney post office was started in 1874. This was a new name for the village of Rosebank given in the 1850's. It had earlier been known as Snedden's Mills after the Snedden's had established a grist mill, a saw mill, and a timber slide at Norway Pine Falls which connected the main river with the bay, to aid them in their timber trade. Teamsters found a stopping place famed for its comfort and accommodation at Snedden's Hotel. The Rugged Chute on the Clayton road was called Huntersville because James and Alex Hunter had established a woolen mill of importance there. It employed about 20 people. In 1873 the mill was destroyed by fire with a loss of \$10,000.

There was quite a village of houses here including three double tenements. John Speirs ran the mill later and lived in the Hunter house. He was a master dyer. He scoured, dyed and stretched the cloth and made soap for the scouring by the barrelful. Mr. Croft took over the mill and made beautiful cloth and blankets as well as yarn.

There was a post office in Mr. Speirs' home.