

Alderville's
Historical
Reflections
1837-1987



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OUR ABORIGINAL ROOTS

Tens of thousands of years ago our aboriginal people migrated across the land bridge over the Bering Sea to occupy the great continents of North and South America. This migration proceeded slowly down the west coast, establishing coastal tribes along the way. The continuous mountain ranges discouraged any attempt to leave the friendly coastal waters for the interior. It would have been foolish to look beyond the mountains in any case. The great interior of the North American continent was covered by successive glaciers.

Having reached Mexico and Central America, the climate was much warmer and there were no ice fields in the interior. Our ancestors proceeded inland and early civilizations of Incas, Mayans, and Aztecs were established. There were, however, among our people those who were nomadic and lived by hunting. As the last great glacier slowly receded, the larger animals, mastodons, bear, moose, elk, etc. were hunted by our nomadic ancestors. As the animals moved northward following the receding glacier, the Great Plains and the larger river valleys became home to our far distant relatives. One of the greatest tribes of these hunters was the Ojibways. Of these, the Mississagas became especially numerous and aggressive, so that their "totem", the crane or great Blue Heron, was a familiar hieroglyph on our forest trees.

The Mississauga established themselves as a tribe along the north shore of Lake Huron and the northern reaches of Georgian Bay.

The warring Iroquois had crossed Lake Ontario and by the mid-sixteen hundred (1650's) had all but wiped out the Huron settlements. It was at this time that the Mississaugas left their traditional homeland and pursued the Iroquois along the Severn to Lake Simcoe and then along the Kawartha chain of lakes to the very mouth of the Otonabee River. Numerous battles were fought along the way and each time the Mississauga prevailed. Most desperate fighting there was, and the battlefields were still clearly traceable when English pioneers first broke ground.

The Mississauga were poetic in their names. One chiefs' name signified "He who makes footstep in the sky"; another was Wawanosh, "He who ambles the water". The Rev. Peter Jones, who was later to play an important part in our immediate history, was the grandson of Waubuno, "The Morning Light". Words such as Omemeo, "the wild pigeon" and Otonabee, "Mouth Water" are Mississauga names.

The steady incursion of the white man along the northern shore of Lake Ontario resulted in the first of a series of treaties that seriously affected our woodland ways. The first treaty in this area was known as Treaty # 20 and was signed on the Fifth day of November, 1818 at Port Hope at the mouth of the

Ganaraska River. It was between the Hon. William Clause, Deputy Superintendent-General of Indian Affairs on behalf of His Majesty of the one part; and Buckquaquot, Chief of the Eagle Tribe; Pishikinse, Chief of the Reindeer Tribe; Patosh, Chief of the Crane Tribe; Cahgahkishinse, Chief of the Pike Tribe; Cahgagewin, of the Snake Tribe; and Pininse, of the Whiteoake Tribe, principal men of Chippewa nation of Indians inhabiting the back parts of the Newcastle district, of the other part. The land so described in this treaty was somewhat over one million, nine hundred thousand, acres (1,900,000 Acres) for a settlement of 749 in goods. This payment was to be ten dollars (Spanish) in goods annually to each man, woman and child alive at the time of the sale.

MISSION ON GRAPE ISLAND

Our immediate forefathers were now living along the Bay of Quinte and the shoreline toward Kingston. In 1824 the first session of the Canada Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church was held in Hallowel (Picton) and William Case was transferred from Upper Canada District to Bay of Quinte as Presiding Elder. It was Elder Case who soon became involved with Indian mission work. By 1826 Elder Case, ably assisted by Peter Jones, whom he had befriended earlier at a Methodist camp meeting at Ancaster in 1823, had begun the conversion of many Indians around the Bay of Quinte. It was felt by the Methodists that more generous support from benevolent people and groups could be obtained for their mission if a long-term lease could be made for a permanent site. The Methodists leased Grape Island and the adjacent Sawguin Island from the Indians for the Indians. The treaty of 1818 had not included Islands in the Bay of Quinte, and this was how the Indian ownership was established. Although these islands were not officially leased until October 16, 1826 some of the Mississaugas moved onto Grape Island that fall and spent their first winter in bark wigwams.

In 1827 the main settlement of Grape Island took place. Peter Jones arrived in May and stayed for twelve days. He led in several services of worship at that time the tribe was living on Grape Island and numbered one hundred and thirty (130). Elder Case during this same period conducted Holy Communion for about ninety adults (90). The Island was a busy place; land was being broken and planted and buildings begun. We know that by July, a school and meeting place 25' x 30' had been completed. Before winter a small parsonage had been erected and ten log homes were completed for the Indians. Instruction in farming was given by a Richard Philips. A team of oxen and three cows made up the livestock.

In 1828, Elder Case and Peter Jones were both on the island and it seemed as though the Mission was flourishing. In a two week period of that year the workmanship of the Indians had manufactured 172 axe handles and 415 brooms. In spite of this rapid progress there was not enough combined acreage on Grape and Sawguin Islands to support a growing agricultural community. A deputation of some of the recent converts, John Sunday, John Simpson, William Beaver, Jacob Shippegaw and John Pigeon, accompanied Peter Jones as interpreter, and met with Indian Agent, Colonel Givens in York. (Toronto) This determined group of men, through their Chief, made a strong case for more land, and in particular asked that the claims on Big Island be clarified.

At first it seemed as though they were going to be heard. The following day Peter Jones was called to the Attorney-General's office of Dr. Strachan and informed that unless they renounced their Methodist leadership they could not expect government help. They were told they must come under the Church of England, of which Dr. Strachan was a staunch supporter. In reply to this ultimatum John Sunday said: "We have heretofore made out to live from year to year even when we were sinners, and shall not the Great Spirit whom we now serve take care of us and preserve us from all harm?" They returned to Grape Island undaunted and the Mission and the school there continued to grow.

William Case spent part of the year of 1828 in the United States and enlisted subscriptions to aid the Grape Island Mission. John Sunday and Peter Jones joined him in New York and although John Sunday spoke in the Ojibway or Chippewa language, he moved the large audience. Much material was donated, as example, enough ticking was provided to make up twenty straw beds back home at the Mission. Two lady missionary teachers returned with Rev. William Case. Miss Eliza Barnes and Miss Hester Ann Hubbard. Miss Hubbard married William Case and settled on Grape Island. She died an early death and William Case then took Eliza Barnes as his second wife. It is she who is in the picture hanging in the Alderville Church.

John Sunday and Peter Jones travelled far afield and was quick to tell other gatherings of the success of the Grape Island Mission. It was on these journeys and especially to the Rice Lake Indians (Hiawatha) that he become familiar with the territory around the Rice Lake area. At that time, also, William Case became Superintendent of Indian Missions and was officially titled Rev. William Case. He had now settled on Grape Island and had the Indians busy planting and harvesting crops. That year alone, they grow 300 bushel of potatoes. Some interesting population figures were given for the thriving Mission on Grape Island.

Belleville Indians 25 families, totaling 116 members and Kingston Indians 20 families, totaling 92 members. Thus Grape Island now had 45 families and 208 Indians. They were receiving \$2,320.00 of goods annually as payment for the surrender of their lands to the Crown. It was obvious the Mission was thriving. There were a total of five white workers at the Mission. Besides Rev. and Mrs. Case, there was Mr. Robinson, blacksmith; Thomas Hale, teacher; and Nancy Brink, teacher. Grape Island Mission had now 23 whitewashed dwellings, a chapel a schoolhouse, a hospital, a general store-house, blacksmith, shop and a trades building.

In 1831 Peter Jones spent the year in England and Rev. Case as Superintendent was called away to other Missions. It was at this time there were a disturbingly high number of children dying. It is believed measles and whooping cough were two of the causes of these premature deaths. For this reason and because some of the Kingston Indians had gone back to their own enchanted lands the Mission was losing membership. Part of the problem may have been in having their farm lands scattered over Grape, Sawguin, Goose, Huff and Everett Islands. By 1833 their population was down to 81. This decrease in population was troublesome but the same decrease was noted in other Missions, as well. The following years the population at Grape Island was 65. In 1835 John Sunday was appointed as Missionary for Grape Island. Although there was no increase with Rev. John Sunday as Missionary, at least there was no further decline. In 1836, at the annual Methodist conference in Belleville it was decided to join the Rice Lake Mission and Grape Island Mission into one pastoral charge. Rather than have the one day travel between the two Missions and also to make more land available to the Grape Island Mission it was decided to move the Grape Island Mission to a new settlement on the south shore of Rice Lake. Rev. William Case was to return to assist in this move. John Sunday was also to assist but apparently was not able to give much assistance. This may be because as a Missionary, he travelled a great deal. In 1837, one hundred and fifty years ago, 3600 acres was assigned to the Indians of the Grape Island Mission in the Township of Alnwick. Rev. William and Mrs. Case (Eliza Barnes) came to reside with them and remained until their deaths.

Six years later, Rev. William Case describes the Alderville community as follows: "The number of families settled here are about 40, and contain a population of 200 souls. They occupy a plot of 3600 acres assigned them by Sir John Colbourne, surveyed into lots of 50 acres each on which are erected 36 comfortable dwelling houses. These are situated on either side of the street a mile and half in length, with Chapel, Parsonage and school rooms in the centre. They also have 400 acres cleared by their own hands and under cultivation." The Manual Labour School which stood beside the Church was a centre where the girls were taught reading, writing, arithmetic and geography along with house-keeping, spinning, needle work and dairy. The boys were taught the same academic subjects plus English grammar. On the model farm provided the boys learned, chopping, ploughing, harvesting and the care of cattle. This was surely one of the first if not the first agricultural school in Upper Canada. If the means to support the school had been forth-coming it would seem it could have doubled its enrolment. How do we explain its future lack of success?

Grape Island Mission

