

## An Outline of the Early Happenings in and Around Balmer Island

Transcribed by James Austin, May 2005

The next teacher was Miss Agnes McKillop of Bristol, and we all felt that our chains had fallen off when she came. We all came along rapidly and many tears were shed by all hands when she went away.

As to the inception of Balmer Island, I have data stating that on the 5th July, 1856, John Fisher of Burnstown secured from the Crown, lot 14 on the 6th Concession, McNab, and on the 12th November, 1867, John Duncan McNab purchased one acre from Fisher upon which he built and carried on a general store. He was succeeded by Alexander Duff. Mr. Duff afterwards purchased land from Allan Stewart and engaged in store-keeping for any years.

Owing to the great amount of traffic caused by the lumbering operations on the Madawaska River and its tributaries, the late George MacLean in 1800 purchased two acres of bush land from John Fisher and built a hotel.

Another hotel was built by James Mills who was succeeded by Donald Munroe. Those hotels did a rushing business. It was a common sight to see from 5 to 50 teams of horses with loads of pork, flour, groceries, oats, etc., on their way to the shanties and various other places, as all freight was hauled by team.

Now to go back.. a number of years to an incident related to me as a small boy, but which I distinctly recall, by Dannie McIntyre, one of the old timers. He made a trip to Perth on foot by trail through 40 miles of dense forest for what groceries he could carry. On the return journey he was beset by the notorious tinker wolves several times, but worst of all. When within three miles of home, having carried his pack for 37 miles over the trail, and while crossing the Madawaska River at the foot of the long rapids at what is known as "the bay" he broke through the ice and lost his pack, and narrowly escaped drowning. Truly the grit of the breed from which he sprang saved him.

The first blacksmith shop in McNab was built on the lot owned by the late Archie S. Campbell and was operated by John Campbell, grandfather of Archie. This shop was built in the late 20's of last century and cornerstones and small pieces of iron and clinkers can be seen to this day,

A boot and shoemaker shop was built and operated by one John McGinnis in the early 70's. David Leckie also built and operated a blacksmith shop in 1869. He was a skilled tradesman and was considered a good veterinarian as well.

The Presbyterian Church was built in 1874, the carpenters being John R. Fitzsimmons, John Wallace, John Martin, James Robertson and Alexander Robertson - the latter two men plastering the church, Alexander building the