

HISTORY OF EARLY SETTLEMENT

Recognizing that the exiled Loyalists needed more than the bare land to give them a start, the British government supplied them with provisions for 3 years: "flour, pork and a limited quantity of beef, a very little butter, and as little salt." Each family was given clothes to last three years - coarse cloth for trousers, Indian blankets for making coats and shoes, seed grain, an axe, a hoe and a spade. Every two families were to have a plough and a cow, every four a whip-saw and cross-cut saw. They were to have lumber and hand saws, glass for their windows, and some nails. Most of the Loyalists who pioneered in Canada had a background of pioneering and farming. Those who came from the long-settled towns and villages in Pennsylvania, New York, Massachusetts and New Jersey had been mostly farmers or craftsmen - their grandfathers or great grandfathers had been pioneers. The others had been pioneers themselves, had only just cleared the land in New Hampshire, northern New York or western Massachusetts. Shattering as it was to lose everything and have to begin again, they knew what to do and they had the skills to do it.

Before the Revolution the British Government had declared this territory around the Bay of Quinte out of bounds to settlers. They hoped to reserve it for the Indians and for fur-bearing animals in great demand in European markets. But now they had promised the Loyalists land, and the only land they knew was suitable for settlement was the land along the north shore of Lake Ontario west of the fort at Catarauqui. Meetings were held with the Mississauga Indians. In October, 1783 an agreement was reached to purchase some lands from them on which a beginning of settlement could be made. The price demanded by the Chiefs for the lands granted was: "that all the families belonging to them shall be clothed and those that have not flintlock guns shall receive new ones, some powder and ball for their winter hunting, and as much coarse red cloth as will make about a dozen coats and as many laced hats." Later in 1787 the Gunshot Treaty was signed at the Carrying Place. There is a cairn at the crossroads in Carrying Place commemorating this treaty signed by Sir John Johnston with the Mississauga Indians. This treaty deeded to the white man all lands between the Bay of Quinte and Etobicoke Creek, and north to Lake Simcoe and Rice Lake. The Indians retained claim to 1200 acres at Massassaga Point, 600 acres in Sophiasburgh, 100 at Wellers Bay and all the islands from Presqu'ile to Gananoque, including those in the Bay of Quinte. They were guaranteed that each year every man would receive certain presents, including a certain weight of gunshot, hence the name "Gunshot Treaty".

The first family to settle in Ameliasburgh Township was the Weese family in 1787. John Weese first drew land in Fredericksburg in 1784, cleared and improved it, lived there for 3 years. As a family man with a wife and 5 children, he was allowed 300 acres more. This 300 acres was given him in lot 89, 1st concession Seventh Town. He moved up and settled here in 1787.

The Dempseys were the second settlers in Ameliasburgh. Thomas Dempsey, his wife and 3 children settled on lot 91, 1st concession in 1789. They brought with them a cow, 7 bushels of potatoes and a French crown. Asa Weller was an early pioneer, the first at Carrying Place. His daughter Sarah was the first white child born in the west end of the county. Asa Weller had a flourishing portage business. In 1796 Colonel Robert Young took up 1200 acres at the Carrying Place. Young had originally taken up his grant in New Brunswick but later decided he'd rather live in Upper Canada. He was a good friend of John Graves Simcoe (lieutenant-governor of Upper Canada 1791-1799). Simcoe tried to persuade him to take his grant on Yonge Street, just north of the village of York, but Young was so certain that Carrying Place (being the geographical centre of the new province) was going to be its capital that he laughed at Simcoe and built a log shanty near Weller's Bay. He was a justice of the peace; people came from all over the county to be married by him.

The Redners were also early settlers in Ameliasburgh. Henry Redner and family first settled at Adolphustown, lived there 13 years, then in 1798 came to lots 76 and 77, 1st concession, where the village of Rednersville now stands. The Pecks came to lot 93, 1st concession Ameliasburgh in 1800, having first settled in Sophiasburgh on Big Island. The pioneer Mrs. Peck in 1825 donated 1 acre of land for a church, school-house and burying ground where Albury church and cemetery now stand. That was how Albury community got its name - from the burial ground where all could be buried. Other early settlers were the Wallbridges (first at Massassaga), Ways, Howells, Brickmans, Spencers, Andersons, Huffs, Allisons, Parliaments, Bonters, Nightingales, Roblins and many others.

For the first 12 years there wasn't a mill in the county. The mill at Catarauqui was the closest until 1787 when a mill went into operation at Napanee. When a mill was built at Glenora in 1796 it was a great boon. In 1804 Mathias Marsh built a grist and flour mill at Consecon. For a time the village of Consecon was called Marshton.

The original settlers used roads very little; water was the means of travel. When roads did develop trails were blazed, cutting through lots from cabin to cabin along the shortest or easiest path. The original Highway 33 from Bloomfield to Hillier was one such road, meandering from farmhouse to farmhouse. It was part of the Danforth Road, built to connect Kingston and York, passing through Carrying Place and Consecon.

Information from "Canada's Settlement of Upper Canada" + "The County" by Richard and Janet Lunn.