

EARLY DAYS IN PRINCE EDWARD  
SOPHIASBURG

Measured historically it was only yesterday when the sound of the settler's axe first alarmed the wolves and other creatures of the forest on the shores of Muscote Bay. The men who wielded those axes, the log buildings they built, the rugged children that went out from their log cabin homes and nearly all their children's children have passed away. The few grandchildren are aged and infirm, and the old armchairs will soon be occupied by the great grandchildren of the first settlers.

History tells us that this county was the disputed territory between the Hurons and the Iroquois. Champlain helped the Hurons and was the first white man to cross the land.

The first settlers in Crofton were the United Empire Loyalists. Following along the north shore of the Big Bay around Green Point, the sixth township-Sophiasburg, was laid out. A little patch of land was called a "croft" and the settlers named this place Crofton.

When they settled here this land was all forest. Deer, foxes, rabbits, birds, wolves, and wildcats, then known as bobcats, were in this forest. The families had to clear the land and build homes of logs. The Indians taught them to tan skins for clothing and the use of wild rice. This with corn, pumpkins, fish from the bay, and game was their food. The rice beds of Muscote Bay were good places to gather rice. They gathered it in dug-outs, made from hollow logs, and also in birch-bark canoes.

The flint and steel of the old family musket and tinder were the means of kindling a fire; or a live coal got at the neighbour's, sometimes miles distant.

The lights were tallow dips, on a pine stick. The candles were run or dipped. These were the only methods of lighting until about 1860 when the late Reverend W.K. Burr brought the first coal-oil lamp into our county. Coal oil was then sixty cents a gallon.

The first school house in Prince Edward County was erected in 1803. It stood on lot fifty-three, Sophiasburg. Only the simplest lessons were taught, mainly reading, writing and arithmetic. The first teacher to teach school here was Mr. B. Salisbury.

The farm on which I live was bought from the Crown about one hundred years ago by Samuel Munro and handed down to his sons until in 1928 it was bought by Mr. V. M. Bongard.

As the land later became settled they cut pine, oak, and red cedar logs. The logs were hauled to Bluff's Point, rolled down the hill and rafted to Montreal.

In the early 18th. century land was bought from the Munro farm by George Munro who kept an inn on this land. He also kept a store. It is very interesting to note the various prices as taken from a day book of a Sophiasburg general store of 1882.

6 yards of calico, 12 shillings; 1 pair of mitts, 4 shillings 6 pence; 1 pound of sugar, 10 pence; 1 pound of tea; 5 shillings 6 pence; 1 bushel of wheat, 3 shillings 6 pence; 1 dozen eggs, 5 pence.

George Munro sold the inn and store to E. Philips. It was afterwards bought by men in the following order: N. Simmons, A. Moran, H. Covert, T. Bishop, E. Gerow, J. C. Munro and then bought by Ryerson Bovay. H. Covert kept post office as well as an inn and a store. This was the first post office in this district.