

The Doxsees of Sophiasburgh

by Sandra Dewar



Curtis Doxsee, (above with his wife Bess Mills) came to own the Century Farm in Sophiasburgh through his aunt and uncle.

When Archelaus Doxsee decided to leave his home in the United States, it wasn't the first time in the family history someone had pulled up stakes to take residence in a new country.

The Doxsee family roots trace back to Germany, but it was from England another family member branched out to America.

By the mid-1700s the Doxsee family was well-established on Long Island, near Brooklyn. Archelaus had married Martha Royner in 1781.

Setting out in 1800 Archelaus, Martha and their family left the United States too late to be counted among the true Loyalists, and Leland his great-great-grandson, says he doubts the move had any political motivation. The family did follow the route of many Loyalists, travelling up to Nova Scotia and then down to Ontario.

They settled on the north-east tip of the island that forms Prince Edward County, at Cole Wharf, 10 miles to Green Point. Leland says this area was the logical choice in Prince Edward County for the immigrants. The area had been settled for many years and there was an active logging and lumber industry where Archelaus could obtain employment.

It wasn't until 1810 that Archelaus Doxsee, then registered as a resident of Holloway Township, petitioned to be land in Sophiasburgh Township, near Cole Wharf.

It was Archelaus' son, Sylvanus

who first settled on the land which remains in the Doxsee name today.

Sylvanus (1786-1865) married Elizabeth Short. They are both buried at the Bethel-Doxsee cemetery. It was his son, Adam Kurtz Doxsee who placed the request to buy the land "he had tilled for many years," in January of 1837.

Adam Kurtz was one of nine children of Sylvanus. His middle name was taken from his mother's maiden name which had been Kurtz before it had been translated from the German to Short. Adam Kurtz's siblings were named Elizabeth, Samuel, William, Mary, Sarah, John, Wesley and Archelaus.

Adam Kurtz was responsible for the development of the land. Not only did it require clearing, it also required extensive draining. The farm borders on and includes some of the area referred to as the Big Swamp. Water was ran off much of the land with a system of drainage ditches.

Married twice Adam Kurtz fathered a total of eight children. With his first wife, Avon Parks he fathered Phoebe, Marshall, Sarah and Charolette. A second marriage to Mary Dingman also produced four children - John Lester, Jasper, Hannah and Susanna (Susie).

A man of religious conviction, Adam Kurtz borrowed money to underwrite the construction of a church in the community. He also lead the congregation in worship on the Sundays the circuit ministers were preaching in other com-



Leland and David Doxsee at home in the kitchen.

munities.

The hard work and spiritual living must have influenced his longevity. Adam Kurtz lived to be 94.

John Lester, Leland's grandfather, left the family farm and purchased a block of land nearer to Gilbert's Mills. He exerted some influence in the area which was then referred to as the Doxsee community. In addition to being the post master for the area, John Lester, served on the township council, was reeve of Sophiasburgh Township and represented the township at the county level.

John Lester never had ownership of the Century Farm. The 50 acres had been left to Jasper and Susie. Neither of them married and the farm was passed into their nephew Curtis' care. Curtis was one of John Lester's seven children by Frances Tillotson.

The farms were joined when John Lester sold his farm to Curtis. Although the property is divided by the concession road the 210-acre farm is essentially all in one block. It is now named Curtilea Farms.

Curtis married Bess Mills and had three children, Leland, Lois and Anne.

Leland moved into the red brick house on the original farm site when he married Dorothy Huskisson; Leland's wife died four years ago and now he and his son David, "batch it together." They also farm together. They milk 27 purebred holstein cows for which they grow their own food, and "are getting along alright" Leland says.

Leland says there have always been cows on the farm. In fact, Jasper was among the first users of the milking machine. He purchased the pump, because he never could hand milk that well. With the hand-

pumped machine he was able to milk two cows at a time. The milk produced on the farm was sold to the many small cheese factories which were plentiful on the island until technological changes rendered them obsolete.

When Leland's father worked the land a large portion of the farm was planted in canning crops. However, the market fell out with the closing of a local canning factory and it was too expensive to ship the produce elsewhere.

Of Leland's five children three have remained quite close to home. David, of course lives, with his father. John lives in what was John Lester's house. He works with his father-in-law in a trucking company. Barbara's house is visible from the kitchen window of Leland's home. Elizabeth lives in St. Catherines and Lynda lives in Aylmer, Ontario.



The church built by Adam Kurtz Doxsee stands kitty-corner to the farm house.

By Terri Richards