

The Cowey (Cowie) family reunites

Long, happy lives and family history

COLBORNE CHRONICLE

By Bob Owen
lowen@xplornet.com

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How do you lose track of relatives who are living only 10 miles away?

That was a question the Coweys and Cowies asked themselves as they prepared for their first family reunion July 20.

In 1840, John and Jane Cowey and their five children left an uncertain and impoverished life in Northumberland County, England, for a new life in Cramahe Township in Northumberland County in Canada.

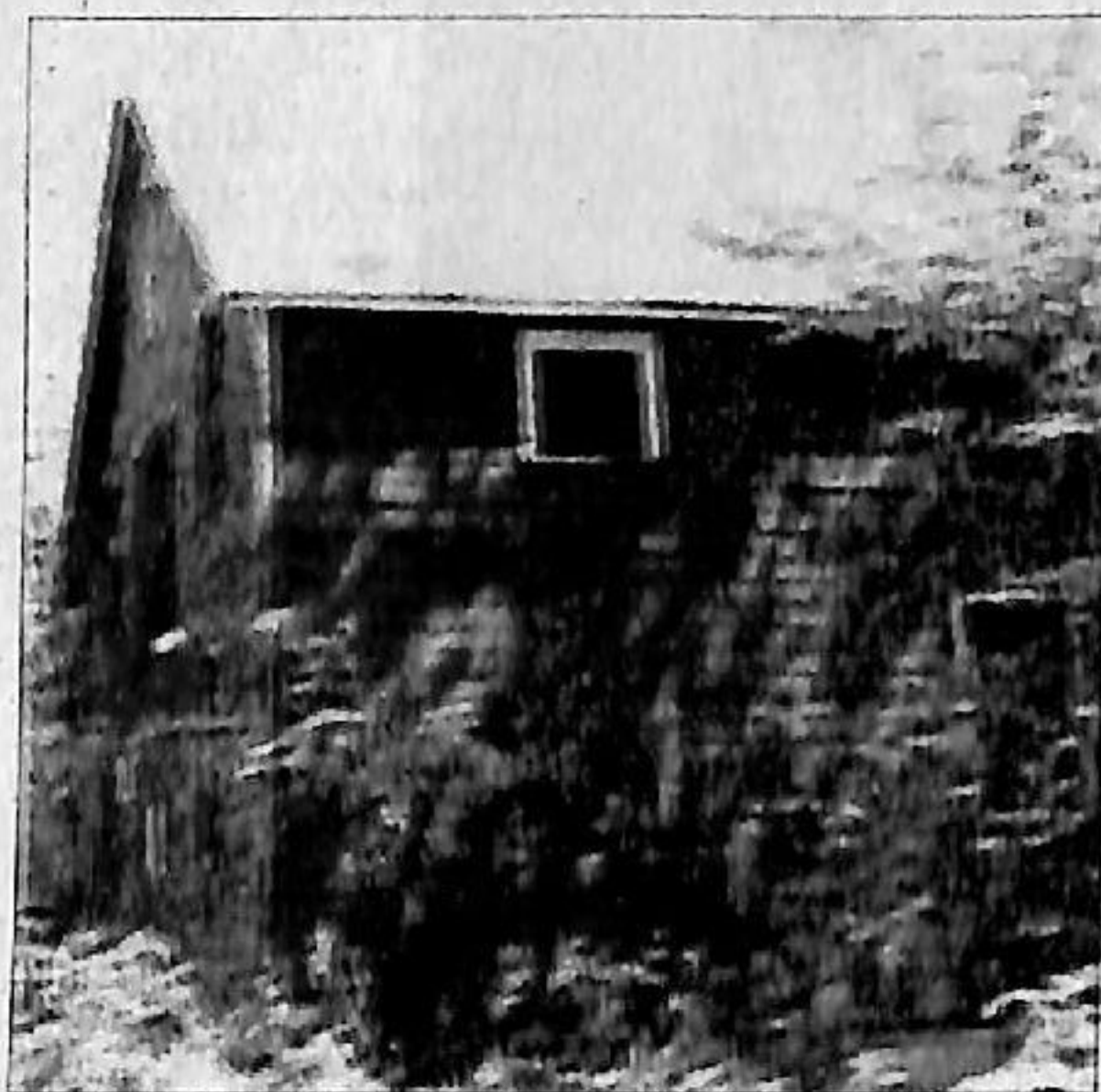
Records researched by Neil Cowie and Jean Kernaghan tell a great deal about the family. They show that John, born in 1800, had been a farm labourer since 1826.

Labourers, or hinds, were contracted from year to year to work large estates. Often, there were too many available workers. If the working-age children were not hired by the estate, the family would move on to another.

Accommodation was poor, usually a two-room cottage with a dirt floor and prospects were bleak.

News of opportunity in the new world filtered to the estates. The British government saw emigration as a solution to widespread poverty and provided assistance.

In the spring of 1840, the Coweys made the decision. With



The Cowie mill on Salt Creek south of Norham, is a relic of Robert Cowey's time.

the help of the Canada Company, they were off to Canada where they settled on Lot 26, Concession 5, Cramahe Twp. just west of Dundonald.

Life was good to John and Jane. Aside from raising five healthy children to adulthood, and building a prosperous farm, they both lived late into their 90s. The couple was three days short of their 70th wedding anniversary when Jane died May 16, 1896 at age 96.

Sometime during those early years in Canada as the children grew up and left home, the family split.

James, who was already 13 when they arrived in their new country, settled in Lakeport with his bride, Ellen Kerr.

John and Jane's grandson, James, married Lillian Arkles and operated the Cowey Garage in Colborne. Another grandson, Jack, lived in Vernonville where he and his wife, Alice (Grice) ran the garage and store.

The rest of John and Jane's family remained in the area north of Colborne.

Robert was born two years after James in 1829. He married Christina Inglis. The entrepreneurial young man built a dam and grist mill on Salt Creek south of Norham which he operated until he was 52. With lots of adventure left in him, he took his family to Manitoba to homestead.

John Cowie was given his



Mary Cowey Broomfield's son, Mark Broomfield operated the blacksmith's shop in Dundonald. It is still standing at the intersection.



Jane Cowey and her only daughter, Mary, sat for this photo in the mid-1800s.



Mary Cowey Broomfield, daughter of Jane and John.



John Campbell Cowie, son of Jane and John.



Robert S. Cowie, born 1833, son of Jane and John.



Mark Cowey was the only one of John and Jane's children not to marry. He died as the result of a fall of the barn roof at age 77.



John Cowey (Cowie) Sr., married to Jane, lived to be 99. He and Jane were married almost 70 years.

father's name when he was born in 1833. He remained on the original farm, as did his son, Frank, grandson Jack and great-grandson Francis.

Francis and his wife Reta live there today. The original log home is gone. In 1860, the family moved to spot where the Cowies live now. The current brick home was built in 1901.

Sooner or later, if you live in a small area long enough, you are related to almost everyone. John Jr. and his wife Amelia (Bawden) had three children. Their granddaughter married Clare Jones of Castleton.

Mark was the sole second generation Cowey not to marry. He lived with his parents until their deaths and died at age 77 from a fall from the barn roof.

When John and Jane

transferred their holdings to John Jr. and Mark, the records show they sold them for love and affection and \$1.

The last Cowey baby was the only girl. Mary tied the family to the Broomfield clan when she married Robert and moved to Haldimand Township where Robert operated a sawmill on Shelter Valley Creek.

One of their children, Mark, worked in the blacksmith shop in Dundonald. He and his wife, Edna (McDonald), bought the blacksmith shop and later the general store across the road where the McNeely's now live.

But how do the Cowies living north of Colborne become separated from the descendants of James Cowey who lived in Lakeport - so distant they no longer knew they were related?

And why did the Coweys living in the north end of the township change the spelling of their last name to Cowie?

The Castleton Cemetery headstone for John and Jane is spelled Cowie. The graves in the Lakeport Cemetery are spelled Cowey.

Neil Cowey, a descendent of James, wonders if it has to do with the areas where they settled. The settlers in the area north of Colborne had stronger ties to Scotland where the name is spelled with the "ie". In the south, the settlements were more English; they spelled the name with an "ey". But even Neil admits, it's only a theory.

As for how they lost touch with each other, they can only speculate again.

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