

# Sydenham hosts the summer meeting of United Empire Loyalists Association

With Loughborough Township ranking next to Adolphustown in early United Empire Loyalist settlement, Sydenham seemed an appropriate place for the summer meeting of the Kingston and District United Empire Loyalist Association. Local historians, Betty Roberts, Kenneth Sigsworth and Lawson Orser traced the area's historical highlights.

Kenneth Sigsworth, in speaking on early schools, noted that George Rutledge, who arrived from Ireland in 1819, was the first school teacher. Although Mr. Rutledge became the most prominent early settler, he was not among the first, having been preceded by others in the 1790s.

The first British settler was Michael Sloat, while Lawrence Raile was the first Irish settler, after whom the present community of Railton is named. Other early pioneers were Lawrence and John Sills, Elijah and Moses Spafford, Peter Ruttan, John Amey, Ben Boyce, Hosea Purdy, John Freeman, Henry and James Wood.

Absolom Hornbeck followed George Rutledge as teacher. Later ones were: William Irvine, John Walsh, G. Sharman, James Lakey and James W. Davis.

George Rutledge, an Orangeman, and Lawrence Raile, a Roman Catholic, were lifelong friends, no doubt stemming from their first winter in Canada, when the Rutledge family stayed at the Raile home.

This pioneer teacher was paid \$50 a year. The first log school was on land now owned by John and Fran Willes. When George Rutledge became settled on land in Lot 10, Concession Four, he donated a corner of his property for the building of the first little red frame schoolhouse. The site is now owned by Allan and Shirley Tregenza. The first separate school was built of stone in 1894 at



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Railton, and serves as a rental home today. John Walsh was the first teacher there.

The first public schools were in school section four. The stone school built in 1876 is now the comfortable home of Ronald and Betty Roberts, who as a hobby serve bed and breakfast guests.

It would seem ironic that George Rutledge, who served so long as a local educator, did not live to see the opening in August, 1873, of a new high school in Sydenham, having died in April of that year.

Lawson Orser, a descendant of Charles and Ann Orser, who came from Holland, where they were reported to be relatives of King William and Mary of Orange, told of this family's arrival in Kingston. Fate decreed that only the widow Ann with five sons and two daughters would arrive, the father having died at Sorel, Quebec, during the journey.

The family settled on land which is now the site of St. Mary's Cathedral. They arrived in July, too late to plant anything but turnips, which they did, and grew enough to provide their main food the next winter.

Mr. Orser noted he is descended from Arthur Orser of the first family. James Orser, his great-grandfather, received crown land at Desert Lake in Northern Loughborough Township. He often carried 50 lbs. of flour from the store

to his home on his shoulder. He continued cutting wood well into his 80s.

His grandfather Ambrose Orser was a miner at Holleford, while Ambrose's son, Wellington Orser, father of the speaker, farmed at Keplar, where his son, Lawson Orser, resides today in retirement from a successful teaching career.

Betty Roberts showed a series of pictures of long-standing local homes. An early potash kettle is still used for watering cattle on Gordon Morrison's farm.

The Keeley Inn at Railton is now the spacious home of Michael and Patricia Grainger and family, as well as Michael's mother, Mrs. Irene Grainger.

Chris Graham, immediate past president of the association, was master of ceremonies. Mr. Graham traces his ancestry to Capt. Michael Grass, a prominent early settler in Kingston. His father, Christopher Graham Sr., achieved a unique distinction, so far unmatched by any other citizen. This achievement was serving both as mayor of Kingston (1911) and later as reeve of Kingston Township, and during his time as reeve was warden of Frontenac County in 1926. Charles Young, the association's incoming president, was introduced, as was a special guest, Shirley Gibson Langille, an artist, who expects to paint some of the historic sites.