

FRANCES ALICIA ROSS  
Curator

When Frances Alicia (Iland) Ross began the task of researching and compiling this book she was in her late seventies. She was proud of the honour bestowed upon her by the Thornloe Womens Institute and called it a labour of love. The actual compiling began in 1967 when she was in her 82nd year.

Some of the earliest research was done by Eliza Miller, Allie's life-long friend and schoolmate, also originally from North Dorchester Township.

Until the time the real task of researching and compiling the book began she lived at her home on the farm at Thornloe with Bob Jr. and Lyda and family, but when she needed a quieter place to work it was agreed she would live with her daughter Kathleen and her husband Foster Rice at Moore's Cove, and Kathleen offered to set up the book and type it. Allie was a perfectionist and no effort was spared to have the work as faultless as possible. The search for material was endless. The letters asking for pictures of the early families, the armed forces, material about the early churches, schools, family interviews, etc., took most of her afternoons and evenings for years. She went to the office of the Temiskaming Speaker and read all the early issues looking for items pertaining to her area of interest.

But there were many interruptions. She went home to the farm for many visits and on one occasion was stricken with a perforated ulcer while there and it took her a long time to get back to work on the book. She and her three sisters usually spent some time together in Florida each winter. In the late 1960's her daughter Vange's obviously failing health and increasing blindness took more and more of her time. She took care of all Vange's clothes, seeing the hems were the proper length, that cleaning and washing was done when needed, besides keeping the kitchen tidy and looking after many other things around the house. During the last six months of illness Vange was in and out of the hospital for six months and it took the combined efforts of Allie, Kathleen and Foster to move her about as she became more and more helpless. When the end finally came and Kathleen and Allie went to see her for the last time Allie said "I wouldn't bring her back if I could".

However, Allie was very deeply affected and as a despondent mood continued all winter Kathleen suggested that they go to Ireland for a trip. Allie said "That was always my dream" and the idea was taken up with a good deal of enthusiasm. Neither Allie or Kathleen had ever been vaccinated so that had to be attended to, and they were both deathly ill. In June with Foster they went to Ireland on a twenty-one day holiday and so in her 85th year Allie stood at last on the seven acre plot of land at Ballymote, Co. Sligo, from which her father fled the potato famine nearly one hundred and twenty years before.

The ruin of the stone and mud wall cottage was still there as was the fireplace with the kettle crane in front of it. The Rodgers family who own the farm now gave her a sheaf of Iland papers they had saved out of the house, burial certificates, deeds, etc. Patrick Joseph Rodgers said "We just kept them all these years in case someone should come looking for them one day". There was a little corner of this farm that was never disturbed when the Ilands lived there--it was where "the little people" were.

They visited Blarney Castle where Allie rushed up nearly three hundred stone stairs to kiss the Blarney Stone, went to the horse races at Curragh where she bet on the winner and won £2, saw the Rock of Cashel where Brian Boru held fort, the hill of Tara, the Killarney Lakes, the Mountains of Mourne, Galway Bay, the roses of Tralea, went to Dublin Castle with its fabulous museum, its relics of St. Patrick, fabulous gold ornaments thousands of years old, and the Ogham Stone with one of the earliest attempts of man to leave a written message, which no one now living can read. Also the most valuable book in the world, the Book of Kells, with its illuminated version of the Scriptures which was begun about the year 600 hundred at Iona and later found in Ireland.

The opportunity was taken while there to look up what could be found about the Iland family in the Rectory at Ballymote. The records went back to the middle 1700's but as time was limited this part could not be fully searched.

