

OUR TOWNSHIP

These German settlers came to Canada from Hesson Darmstadt and Hesson Nassau on the banks of the Rhine in West Germany. They were persuaded to settle in Canada by Christian Nafziger. He took up the immigration question with the British Government and they offered 50 acres for each German family adding that more land could be purchased on easy terms. These people were Lutherans and Roman Catholics who came to avoid conscription into the army. Most of them came to New York and made their way to Buffalo either on foot or by boat and crossed into Canada by ferry at Black Rock. As Mennonites of Pennsylvania were migrating to new land in Canada and were moving all their belongings with them it was not hard for these European Germans to take up with these Pennsylvania Dutch and get transportation and employment up to Waterloo County and eventually strike out on their own. A group of these arrived in the Tavistock area. These people came out to this country to avoid compulsory service in the army and we find they kept little or no record of their activities. A church at Sebastopol was organized in 1835 and from this centre many purchased land settled by Scots or English in Zorra. These British farmers preferred gravel bottom farms as are found in the south part of Zorra and the Highlands of West Zorra, which had natural drainage, while the Germans were more used to the heavy fertile soil of the Rhine Valley much like the land found in the north part of East Zorra and the neighbouring townships.

By the late 1840's in the Maplewood area we find names such as Schaefer, Kalbfleisch, Krug, Blum, Youngblut, Heinbuch, Wilker, Snyder, Hormann, Metz. They never built a church in Maplewood but kept contact with the home Church at Sebastopol. Many of the German settlers changed from Lutheran to Methodist due to the fact that there were very few Lutheran ministers in Canada.

To these German settlers the farmers of this part of Ontario owe much as they brought with them many ideas from the old land that still may be seen today. These German settlers preferred a good barn before a spacious home and consequently we find them introducing large bank barns; they had stone stables beneath the frame structure for their stock and a forebay extending out over the stable entrance which acted as a granery and an entrance which acted as a protection from the weather for the stable openings. The stable opening was usually at the south with a ramp on the north side leading to a threshing floor. Today this type of barn is found over a large part of Ontario.

The German women soon established a reputation for being excellent cooks and dishes as saurkraut, cole slaw, smarkase, doughnuts, waffles and apple butter are products of the German Kitchen.