

People Make History For County Of Oxford

By MACKAY

Tucked away in the north-west corner of Oxford county is the hamlet of Lakeside, or as it was more properly styled in official survey number 61, made in 1855, the Village of Lakeside.

As the name implies, the hamlet is beside a lake, but neither the lake nor what is beside it achieved the place in the sun envisioned by the persons who were responsible for the survey which shows streets and avenues in abundance.

Though falling short of the visionary goal there are things about the place that are almost, if not quite unique - the hamlet boasts a blacksmith shop and a real live busy blacksmith Arthur Fallowfield - the lake sits comfortably on the spot having one of the greatest, if not the greatest, elevations in Western Ontario. It is 1275 feet above sea level.

But the 1275 foot level is not by any means the loftiest spot in the immediate vicinity. A few years ago the Bell Telephone Company stuck up a microwave tower which added almost another 200 feet to the potential elevation - you can get quite high - in Lakeside.

HISTORIAN SEATON

Other than elevation and blacksmith, Lakeside boasts an historian in the person of Donald Seaton who, besides being unofficially the historian is, officially assessor and tax collector for the township of East Nissouri.

As so often happens in similar communities, the saga of a family, or a few families, is the history of the place. So it is here, the history of Mr. Seaton's family is the story of Lakeside.

It all began about the year 1818 when great grandfather Seaton made his way up from the 'deep south' and found himself on what was even at that time, part of the Col. Ingersoll grant, rubbing shoulders with a few United Empire Loyalists, a few Englishmen, Scotsmen and shortly after, Irishmen.

MIXED GROUP

This pattern of a mixture of nationalities is probably more applicable in the settlement of the Lakeside area than in many of the county's communities and as the years went on, the Mitchells, the Germans, the Harris's, Burdicks, Richardsons, McConkeys, Crothens, Towels, Dawes's, Calverts, Kirks, Baker and many others were added to the diverse congregation.

As with most other settlements, the first houses were built of logs and in many cases even the second, and usually larger, family dwelling was also a log structure, but after some years a brick kiln went into operation.

Co-incidental with the build-

ing of the kiln was the building of the first church by adherents of the Church of England and from the kiln came the bricks for it's construction.

Also from the kiln came the bricks to build a flour mill, a grist mill a sawmill and carriage works. The population rose to an all-time high.

CHURCH STILL STANDS

The mills are long gone but the church stands today as it was - on the same property on which the kiln was built and on the same property from which both the clay and the sand were found to make the bricks. The Reverend J. A. Catling journeys from Thamesford to conduct services and carry on the work at Christ Church.

In the early days of the settlement the mail was drawn by horse from Ingersoll but in comparatively recent times, after the Credit Valley Railway was built in 1886 the mail was delivered once a day from Thamesford - when the mailman could get there. On July 1, 1908, the first train ran on the then St. Mary's and Western Ontario line between Ingersoll and St. Mary's and Lakeside received it's mail in that manner until a few years ago.

For many years there were two passenger trains each day, both ways, stopping at Lakeside. Now there is no passenger service and the railway is used solely for a comparatively small amount of freight service.

WAGONS TO CELEBRATE

Contrasting the manner in which the pioneers took time out for some sort of celebration, with that of the present, historian Seaton has preserved records telling of the jubilation on July 1, 1867, the day of Confederation, when practically the entire population of Lakeside, except those very old or very young, made their way to Woodstock to take part in the celebrations in lumber wagons.

Present population is comprised of 88 'souls'. There is one general store, the blacksmith shop, the Orange hall, the Masonic Hall, a public library, two churches and the remnants of the hotel.

THE 'ROYAL' HOTEL

Like most small communities, Lakeside had for many years a bustling hostelry, the 'Royal' hotel. Rumour and legend has it that at one time this was an extremely busy spot - so busy, in fact, that many persons were 'barred' from it - or 'at' it. But now just the body remains, the soul has departed, not even to be included in the latest Seaton census.

The general store is operated by Al and Mrs. Kennedy and it has preserved tradition to a considerable extent in that there

is just about everything there. All, that is, except one important item, the cracker barrel. Though this item is missing, the atmosphere of neighborliness it represented is preserved in the Kennedy courtesy.

MUD NOW CRYSTAL

A sore spot in some places, the official name of the lake is 'Mud' and that is the name appearing on all the maps. More recently a couple of subdividers found this title an almost insurmountable barrier to their particular type of development. Not being quite as earthy as the early settlers, and certainly no more original, they have dubbed it 'Crystal' and 'Sunova', depending on the taste of the prospect for property.

SERIOUS POLITICIANS

As is also true of the period and the people, Mr. Seaton drew attention to the fact that in the early days people took their

politics quite seriously. So seriously, he said, that at one time there was a violent feud developed in the local governing body. It reached fever pitch and one party to the controversy decided to, and did, burn all the township council books. A man of action, he left the country for a year until the incident was forgotten and the council had some new books. Names in this particular case have been omitted out of deference to succeeding, and innocent generations.

Asked if he had gathered, in his collection of the past, any story of deeds of bravery on the part of the pioneers, he said 'yes' there is one incident, though not recorded.

DARING DEEDS

"Through necessity, these people had to spend a great deal of time in the bush." There was one of the settlers working one day in the woods, hewing some timbers for a new barn and using a large augur to make holes for the pins. "In the evening he started for home and saw a pack of wolves coming toward him. "He lit out for a hollow stump and crawled inside for safety while the wolves sat down around the stump waiting. "Wanting to see what was doing, he thought of his augur and bored a large hole. "When he tried to look out his vision was barred by the tail of a wolf so, with great presence of mind, he grabbed the tail and pulled it through the hole and tied a knot in it, securing the wolf. "He repeated this per-

formance on the remaining three of the pack.

"At this juncture, he was able to extricate himself and go home" - so also, too did this reporter, likewise.