

NEW BOARD ASSURES HALTON'S HISTORY WILL BE PRESERVED



THE LARGE BARN on the Duff Alexander farm will be the site of Halton's first historical museum, and the museum board last week received the key from the county council. Constructed around 1870, it will eventually house many displays of Halton's pioneer life.



THE STONE HOUSE was erected about 1870 and burned down in 1918, then was rebuilt in almost the same form by the Alexanders. Four generations of the pioneer family have occupied the home. The wing at the right has been renovated and will form part of the museum, but most exhibits will be in the nearby barn.



HALTON COUNTY MUSEUM board was recently appointed by county council and the members are meeting regularly to make plans for the opening of the county's first historical museum at the Duff Alexander barn on the Kelso Dam site. Members in front are secretary-treasurer Jim Andrews, Warden Wilfrid Bird of Esqueving, chairman Herb Merry of Oakville, Mrs. David Dills of Acton, and John Milne of Nassagaweya. Standing behind are Keith Barber of Georgetown, Dr. C. A. Martin and chairman Robert Marsh, all of the 16 Mile Creek Conservation Authority, Ralph Wakely of Oakville, Ben Case of Esqueving and Walter Reeves of Burlington. Absent were Jack Pemberton of Oakville, and Alex Cooke of Milton.



ADAM DUFF ALEXANDER, who sold the 200-acre farm to the Conservation Authority after it had been a family possession for 125 years, holds the original deed of the place which was made out to his great-grandfather Adam Alexander in 1836.

Alexander Farmsite is Steeped in History Will Become Museum For Farm Implements

By Roy Downs
In the Milton Champion

Four generations of a pioneer family — all of them named Adam Alexander — have tilled the soil on the 200-acre Alexander farm at Kelso near Milton Heights that is soon to become Halton's foremost recreational and historical centre.

Adam Duff Alexander, who lives there today, is a great-grandson of the Adam Alexander who emigrated to Canada from his native Scotland in 1806 and who purchased the farm in 1836. The farm was first homesteaded (after a crown grant) by Alexander Campbell in 1822.

But in 1860 this farm, that had been an Alexander possession for 125 years, was sold to the Sixteen Mile Creek Conservation Authority. The Conservation officials saw the farm's great possibilities for a huge dam and water storage lake that would avert flooding and pollution troubles further down the stream, and soon the gates of this large dam will be shut to form an 85-acre lake and recreational area.

Open Ski Club
Shortly after the purchase by the Conservation group, a trio of local gentlemen saw the possibilities of an excellent ski club on the slopes of the Niagara Escarpment on the farm, and following much negotiation and much preliminary work, the Glen Eden Ski Club opened its first two trails, club house and ski tow there in December 1961.

The Alexander barn, built in the 1870's, held such an historical interest and was in such good shape that the Conservation Authority felt it would be an excellent location for an historical museum of Halton agriculture. So following negotiations with Halton County Council, the two groups undertook its restoration and this week the key was officially turned over to the new Halton County Museum Board.

Within the walls of this barn the children of today and tomorrow will soon be able to view the tools of the pioneers who gave this County its start. The Museum Board will soon begin collecting pre-1900 articles of pioneer life to be displayed as a memento of Halton's earlier days.

Saw Hardships
The story of the Alexander family is the story of a pioneer family that went through the hardships of helping to mold our county from the barren wilderness of the early 1800s to the growing metropolis of the mid-1900s.

The first Adam Alexander and his son Adam came from Scotland by boat in 1806. They spent six weeks on the perilous ocean voyage, and arrived to find the country infested with cholera. Settling at Dundas, they worked first on helping to build the famed Dundurn Castle at Hamilton, for Mr. Alexander was a stone mason. Then in 1836, they moved out to Kelso to a farm smothered in virgin pine, and built a log cabin which the senior Mr. Alexander called 'my castle' on the site of the present farm house.

Cut 200 Foot Trees
Growing wheat was a problem with so many trees covering the land, and all the grain that was produced for years to come was grown in little patch fields at various places through the bush. As the bush was cleared the flowing grain fields were extended. There is a record of cutting trees almost 200 feet high and four feet thick at the base, around the year 1865.

Around 1870 the house was built, using limestone rock from the property to mould walls 20 inches thick. Most of the stone came off the fields that are now being used for the ski trails. The home was gutted by fire in 1918 and rebuilt later.

It was also during the 1870s that the 40 by 104 foot barn was built.

Water System
An article in the Family Herald and Weekly Star in January 1939 tells much of the life of Adam Alexander the third, the present occupant's father. A successful farmer, he was also a genius as an inventor, and was clever enough to make use of a head of water from the mountain to furnish both the house and barn with electric power.

In 1869 he corralled his own reservoir on the side of the Niagara Escarpment, a quarter of a mile away from the house, and 150 feet above the level of the house.

Better Job
Mr. Alexander claimed water power ran his implements steadier and speedier than the ordinary machines operated by hand cranks. His circular saw, operated by two men, could saw half a cord of wood in 15 minutes, and he claimed his ripping saw would saw wood twice as smooth as the ordinary circular saw could do the job.

He built his own sheaf carrier, using an old carrier for filling silos, driven by a mere half-horsepower motor. Instead of pitching sheaves up into the snow, he could drop the load onto the sheaf carrier, which elevated sheaves so quickly, it took two or three men in the snow to level the sheaves as they dropped off the elevator.

After perfecting his barn power system, Duff's father turned to the house.

He piped a water line from the barn to the house and attached a small water motor with less than one horsepower. This ran the washing machine, an emery wheel for axes and grindstone for knives, a circular saw in the shed, and a meat-chopper. He ran a pipe and cog wheel to the rear yard and soon had a beautiful spreading fountain.

Lights For Farm
The same system supplied all tap water for the house and barn, and generated a never-ending source of electric light power for the whole farm.

Today this system is still in use and as good as the day it was erected.

Although there were a dozen saw mills within a radius of less than 10 miles, around the farm, the Alexanders took only a slight interest in the timber business. They classed themselves as general farmers, admitting a particular weakness for raising wheat.

About 1880, Duff's father once recalled, "I threshed 570 bushels of wheat off nine and three-quarter acres."

He confessed having no use for farmers who put in a few acres of wheat a year, just enough for feed and bread. He suggested that every farmer should sow a fifth of his total acreage in wheat, believing this to be the method of contending with market troubles.

Walks 25 Miles
People were more hardened in the old days, he recalled, and it was a pleasure to do things the people of today would never consider. He recalled hearing of a nearby farm wife who walked 25 miles by trail to Dun day to buy eavestroughs and fittings for her house.

Besides his success as a farmer and his electrical ingenuity, Duff's father was a marksman of some skill. However, he admitted his wife Eve was almost his equal and had been known to choose a chicken from the flock for dinner and snap its head with a single shot. Adam had more than once driven a nail into a board with a 22.30 rifle, at a distance of 100 yards.

Duff's father died in 1941 at the age of 88. Longevity was common in the family, for Duff's grandmother (whose Christian name was Duff, hence his name) lived to be 99. Besides her own family, she adopted seven orphans, and also raised Duff's cousin Bill, when his mother died during his infancy. Bill also calls the farm home, for he spent most of his life there, and still lives in the house with his cousin Duff.

Occupies House
Duff Alexander never married, so there will be no fifth generation of Adam Alexander. He kept farming the place until the Conservation Authority purchased it, and has been given the use of the house for the rest of his days. Recently he has been helping the Authority renovate and restore the barn.

A few months ago, Duff held an auction sale to sell off the farm equipment he no longer needed. Unfortunately several historic relics of his pioneer family were sold with the other equipment, including the anvil from the blacksmith shop, the ingenious sheaf carrier, and a drilling machine.

Mr. Alexander explained the would have been excellent material for the museum, however, no one had made arrangements to preserve them before the sale and they had to be sold with the rest of the items.

Used to a quiet life of seclusion, Duff Alexander didn't like to sell the farm and see it opened up to strangers and the countless visitors expected to the museum, dam area and ski club. However, with no family to carry it on for him, he had no choice.

Handle Worn Thin

For there in a corner, beside the large forge, stands a giant bellows nearly five feet long. The stout handle, worn thin and shiny, attests to the hundreds — maybe thousands — of hours the Alexanders have stood beside the forge pumping . . . pumping . . . pumping that bellows by hand.

Halton County Council has chosen a fine location for its first historical museum. Surely as the years march by, the memory of the pioneer Alexander family will live on, and the museum will be a permanent monument to all those who moulded our country from the wilderness.

I.O.D.E. Scholarship For Ballet Student

Mrs. W. R. Morrison, Hamilton, President of the Provincial Chapter of Ontario, I.O.D.E., announced at a recent meeting that a new scholarship will be offered this year, 1962, from the Lucy Morrison Memorial Fund for Education, valued at \$300, to a student with at least Grade X standing, and who is enrolled in the National Ballet School of Canada.

Diploma Course
It is a widely recognized fact that the National Ballet is contributing to the cultural life of Canada.

The Provincial Chapter of Ontario, I.O.D.E., offers two other Art scholarships from this fund — one in the artist's diploma course at the Royal Conservatory of Music, University of Toronto, and one at the Ontario College of Art in the painting and drawing course — valued at \$300 each.

Kelso History
The history of the Alexander family ties in with the history of the Kelso community. Duff's grandfather was the first Kelso postmaster after the railway went through the Alexander farm. Once a thriving community, largely dependent on the limestone rock and the lime kilns, Kelso is now only a few houses and a school. The school, incidentally, uses water power from the nearby mountain for a front yard fountain, like the Alexander family.

Looking around the Alexander farm, one can easily tell the hours of hard work that made the place what it is today. You can tell the whole story of the pioneer Canadians who built our country, just by visiting the blacksmith shop on the property.

THE GEORGETOWN HERALD
Thursday, February 15th, 1962
PAGE 5

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If you live in Snowville, think deep about your next car. People who own conventional models often put something heavy in the trunk for extra traction. A Volkswagen owner never bothers. He's got 200-pounds of engine back there sitting right over the drive wheels. His car plows through snow without chains or special tires. On ice, the VW keeps its footing like a penguin.

Look at the underside of a Volkswagen. It's built like a toboggan. The bottom is completely covered with a smooth sheet of metal that skims over deep snow. The wires and rods you'd expect to find are inside, completely protected against sand, salt and slush.

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