

Sprowl family - Halton pioneers

John S. Sprowl was born in 1810 in "Bonnie" Scotland. He came to Canada in 1829 from Paisley, Scotland, and eventually settled near Peru in Esquesing Township. Peru is a small settlement situated on the First Line between the Town of Milton and the Kelso Conservation Area.

On June 15, 1832 John married a widow, Susannah Moore Anderson, who had four children from her previous marriage. This would be considered a big responsibility for a young man aged 22, but not for John Sprowl. This marriage resulted in a further eight children. John and Susannah lived on a 98 acre farm near the village of Peru, now situated immediately south of highway 401.

A family letter relates the farm soil was of a heavy clay "without a stone in sight." After a rain a spike roller was used to break the hardened soil.

The farm was covered with a dense white pine. Apparently some deciduous trees existed as the letter reveals that trees had to be cut to enable animals to eat the leaves.

Susannah died giving birth to her 13th child. John Sprowl married his second wife, Jane Cumming, on April 7, 1845. She was from Nelson Township and apparently met with some family opposition concerning the proposed marriage to Sprowl. A story is told that Jane ran away in a horse and wagon to marry. This wedlock resulted in a family of 10 children.

Jane Cumming Sprowl was a woman of great force of character. She thought nothing, even at 90 years of age, of walking to Acton, a distance of over four miles. A deeply religious woman she read her Bible daily. She was a member of the United Presbyterian Church at Mansewood and very zealous of her connection there.

John Sprowl and family moved from the farm near Peru to a farm immediately south of Acton in 1856. This farm is situated on the Second Line (Highway 25). Speyside Public School occupies one corner of the farm. Mrs. Lorne Mullin, a descendant of John Sprowl still resides on the old Sprowl homestead.

The Sprowls worked the farm and had large herds of beef cattle and some sheep. John Alexander Sprowl, a descendant of John S., was instantly killed by a falling tree on January 20, 1908 at the age of 17 on his father's farm, which was reputed to be the best farm between Acton and Milton. Thirty-five years earlier, James Byers was killed by a falling tree on the same farm.

Evidence of dogs attacking sheep is recorded in minutes of the Township of Esquesing. One entry reads "April 26, 1878; paid 2/3 value of 1 sheep and 1 lamb \$4.66 to John Sprowl. Again, on June 15, 1891 Sprowl received \$10 for two sheep killed.



ROBERT STEVENSON SPROWL poses with a "team" hitched to a sled. He purchased the Third Line, Esquesing farm in 1895, which remained in the Sprowl family until 1968. A subdivision complex is now slated for the property.

At one time farmers were responsible for maintenance of the roads fronting their property. Sprowl received \$24 on January 20, 1868, for road repairs and \$5 on July 16, 1868 for building a culvert.

John S. Sprowl died on January 23, 1887 and is buried with his first wife, Susannah Anderson, at Boston Church cemetery. His second wife Jane Cumming passed away July 12, 1916 and is buried at Fairview Cemetery in Acton.

In 1895 Robert Stevenson Sprowl (the eighth child of John S. and Jane Sprowl) purchased the farm of William Anthony on the Third Line, Esquesing. Immediately south east of Acton. Robert Sprowl was born September 10, 1862, at the Sprowl homestead on Highway 25. On March 9, 1892, he married Amanda Griffin in Erin. Robert supplied stone used for the foundation of the present Knox Presbyterian Church in Acton.

In 1900 Sprowl purchased the Lawson farm which sat immediately south of his farm on the Third Line. During the 1870s this property was a busy industrial settlement known as Glen Lawson. It sat in the hollow near Dolly Varden on the Third Line. H. T. Arnold, of glove-making fame, once operated a tannery here and the Glen Lawson grist mill once attracted early pioneer farmers from as far as Erin.

The Sprowls were one of the first farmers to thresh in the Acton area on August 9, 1906. In 1913, Robert Sprowl had one of the largest barns in the area erected. The barn measured 60 x 88 feet and was ruined by fire in 1972.

In 1914 Robert purchased the 190 acre

Kennedy farm on the Fourth Line, Esquesing. This farm was eventually operated by his eldest son William Griffin Sprowl who had a large dairy herd supplying milk to the Acton area. He sold the farm in 1951 to Clifford Storey and moved to Acton to do carpentry work.

John Robert Sprowl (second son of Robert) was born February 3, 1902, on the Third Line farm. On March 24, 1926 he married Beatrice Isabella Melsaac. Mrs. Sprowl is one of the few remaining water diviners. When the Sprowl farm suffered a

water shortage in 1936 she located two underground streams near an implement shed after two unsuccessful attempts by "professionals".

In 1945 John Sprowl and wife commenced a well drilling business which is presently operated by a son Calvin.

Robert Melsaac ("Mac") Sprowl was born November 5, 1927 at the Third Line farm. Mac like his ancestors has taken a sincere interest in the community. From 1959 to 1964 he served on the Township of Esquesing School Board and sought the local Tory nomination federally in 1957 and provincially in 1963. The Sprowls have always been staunch Conservatives. A son of John S. Sprowl once had a dog named "Tory"!!

Mac Sprowl succeeded Andy Frank as Sheriff of Halton County and has served in the Sheriff's office for almost 13 years. The Sheriff is responsible for processing and serving subpoenas, divorce papers, title searches and jury duty letters.

The Sprowl farm on the Third Line was sold in 1968 to the Ruben Corporation and is slated for a subdivision complex.

The Sprowl family has contributed to the agricultural development of the area for almost 150 years and each generation has shown an interest in the community serving on school boards and various organizations. Several descendants of John S. Sprowl live in the area today, too many to list in this short chapter. Mac Sprowl, has, however, compiled an interesting book on the Sprowl Clan which was written 150 years after the birth of John S. Sprowl.

A local history would not be complete without mention of the Sprowl family—early pioneer farmers of the Acton area.



JOHN S. SPROWL (1810 - 1887) came to Canada in 1829 and has left several descendants who have contributed to the agricultural development of the area.

Halton Sketches

by JOHN McDONALD

Notice of Founding Meeting

FOR
HALTON LIBERAL ASSOCIATION
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BEING HELD

Thursday, November 18th

ROBERT LITTLE PUBLIC SCHOOL
AUDITORIUM

Main St., North, Acton

7 p.m. to 10 p.m.



THE SPROWL FAMILY pose for a "likeness" in a typical gallery scene. Back row (l. - r.) Jane, Margaret, Elizabeth, William, Robert, and Rebecca. Front row (l. - r.) Alexander, John, James, Mary. Front centre, Ann.

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WEDDING PICTURE of John S. Sprowl and Jane Cumming. They were married on April 7, 1845. She apparently met with some opposition and ran away in a horse wagon to get married. She died July 12, 1916 at age 93.

Funds cut off but HSC continues

Halton Human Services Council will continue to operate as a volunteer body with a view to co-ordinating statutory human service agencies in the region, despite an absence of funding.

During a recent meeting the council elected Dorothy Craig and Ron Coupland as chairman and vice chairman of the council.

Miss Craig is Nursing Director at Halton Regional Health Unit and Mr. Coupland is Director of Halton Children's Aid Society.

The council was formed about two years ago and was funded by five provincial ministries and the Halton Regional Council.

Need funds
During the recent meeting of HSC the members discussed the need for access to the \$7,000. While members seemed to agree with some of the criticisms levelled at the HSC they continued to feel that the balance of the allocated funds should be released so prepared reports could be distributed and the workings of the council completed.

During the meeting members discussed the possibility of working in concert with the newly formed Halton District Health Council.

Members of the committee have recognized that the District Health Council has a mandate that HSC never had but which would have made its task considerably easier.

Human Services Council is made up of 15 people many of them involved in the delivery of human services in the region.

Policy makers
Founding chairman of Halton Human Services Council John Graham told the council

Hollingworth and Son construction of Thornhill has been awarded the job of installing storm sewers on Churchhill Road North.

Monday night Halton Hills council awarded the contract to Hollingworth which was the low bidder for the work at \$59,475.25.

that members would have to find a way to convey its goals and ambitions to the policy makers in the region.

He noted that this was something that had not been done in the past and he felt it was one of the factors limiting the success of the group.

As it stands the group has no official source of funding and is operating as a strictly volunteer body.

HOUSE HUNTING?

Check the Real Estate Marketplace in today's issue of
The Free Press

Lakeside Chapter I.O.D.E.

Annual Bazaar and Tea

Sat., November 20th
2 - 4 p.m.

Acton Legion Hall
featuring

Penny Table	• Fish Pond
Sewing	• Candy
Knitting	• Baking
White Elephant	• Pantry Shelf
Plants	• Money Tree

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853-0650 ★ 9 MILL ST. E. - ACTON ★ 853-0650