



PLACES FROM THE PAST-Terrance and Muriel Lyons (above) have fond memories of Terra Cotta when they were both growing up there. Mrs. Lyons recalls taking the train to Georgetown high school while Mr. Lyons remembers the haul through the snow to public school down the road from the farm his dad owned. The public school is still standing at the corner of the 22nd Sideroad and Fifth Line. (Herald photo)

## Tall tales at Terra Cotta general store

Living in Terra Cotta in the old days had its drawbacks.

Terrance Lyons, 91, remembers the patience required to make a phone call on a party line.

"Some of the old girls were so long-winded, you'd have to wait almost a half-hour," he said.

"You had to get accustomed to

your ring so you knew when to pick up the receiver," said his wife, Muriel, 86.

In those days, people made long distance phone calls by relaying messages across different counties, from family to family, Mrs. Lyons remembers.

Mr. Lyons grew up in the area of

Terra Cotta and attended the old stone school which is still standing at the corner of the 22nd Sideroad and Fifth Line.

"It was about a three mile walk for some," he said. "Kids from Terra Cotta paid for their education, alright." Sometimes they had to walk through snowbanks up to their ears to get to school, he recalls.

Muriel Lyons took the train from Terra Cotta to Georgetown high school, catching a ride with the morning shipment of milk, bound eventually for Toronto dairies.

When he was growing up, Mr. Lyons could visit a well-stocked general store, with boots, dry goods, "everything you'd ever need."

There was a brickyard, run with electricity generated from a dam and dynamo. The town used to be called Salmonville, for the abundance of fish in the Credit River. The name was changed in 1891, Mrs. Lyons said.

The ladies of Terra Cotta used to have a sewing group called the Thursday Thimblers. They put on a dinner once per month for \$5 which was very popular with the townsfolk. Euchre games followed dinner.

The general store was a social centre for the men. "We'd sit down beside the pot-belly stove and spin yarns all night," Mr. Lyons said, grinning.

"You couldn't mention anything that wasn't talked about; local sports, politics, local happenings," he said. Checkers was a favorite game of the men.

Dances held at the Terra Cotta hall cost 50 cents. Local musicians would play the fiddle, drums and piano. "We'd have a real hoe-down for 50 cents a couple. The ladies provided the cake. You have more fun and it cost you nothing. You'd have ten times as much fun as you could have today for less money."

In the old days more people worked in Terra Cotta. There was employment in the local flour mill, brick yards and farmers would hire out during certain times of the year, Mr. Lyons said.

Terra Cotta had a hockey team which played other villages in friendly competition in the winter. The mill pond ice was cut into 400 blocks in the winter to serve locals during the warmer months to cool down food, he said.

## Town first named Salmonville

Terra Cotta is situated on the Credit River, which flows into Lake Ontario. The first inhabitants were the Indians. We know this because many residents of Terra Cotta have found arrow heads on their property. It is probable that the first white man was Champlain who may have come up the Credit River in search for a passage to the west. Also, Radisson and Groseilliers could have followed this river in search of furs.

The village was formed sometime between 1820 and 1828. Its first name was "Salmonville" because it is said that the river was so full of salmon at one time that you could take a pitchfork and take them out by the fork full.

John Davis was given lot 26 Concession 6 west, by the Crown in 1828. McLeods were also among the first of the settlers in the area, and they settled on the 5th Line above the Credit River. Mr. Ken Pearson now lives there and part of the old apple orchard still remains standing. George Campbell took over Lot 27 and 28. These settlers had to carry their grain on their shoulders to Toronto or Port Credit and bring back the supplies that were needed in the same way.

**ROADS:** The 5th Line and the 6th Line were surveyed and roads were put through. There was a wagon trail from the 5th to the 6th Line but only a foot path from the 4th Line to the 5th. The road from the 4th to the 5th was surveyed many times but a road was not put through properly until 1880. Simon Plewes was the main man responsible for getting the road put through.

In 1859, Simon Plewes came from England and started a grist mill for the settlers to grind their grain for

the cattle and to make flour. This mill was across from where Rutledge's place now is. There also was one at the bottom of the 6th Line hill, near where Shepherds now live. The owner of this one was Josiah Townsend, known as Sile. He also had a handy pair of pliers he used to pull offending teeth. All power for the grist mills was made from the two dams across the river and from the water wheels. East of the grist mill, there was a saw mill operated by Redpath Stringer.

Mr. Plewes was the first Postmaster and built a store on the corner of Rutledge's place. Jane Smith worked for him and built the present day store. Mr. Plewes also gave land for the Methodist Church. The men of the village built it, and it was first affiliated with Campbell's Cross and later with Norval and Glen Williams. The church was closed at the time of the "Church Union", 1925. Interested folk have kept the Sunday School going. The Union Presbyterian Church met in the homes in 1833.

Ben Parr was the first carpenter and built many of the early houses of the village.

In 1870, there were two hotels. One was by the present day store and the other across the road. One hotel is still there and is now used as a house by Miss Laughton.

About 1877, a railway went through. The first station built was just a box car. After the box car they built a small station and a stand on the north side for loading milk. A shed was built by the farmers to leave their horses at while they were loading their milk on the train. The last passenger train went through in 1960.

The name "Salmonville" was

changed to "Terra Cotta" in 1880. The name was changed through the railway men. The name came from the colour of the shale. This shale was used for bricks.

The Pressed Brick Company was formed in 1903 and it owned 175 acres. This plant adjoined the railway station. Twenty-five men were employed. Robert Gibson who later moved to Hamilton, was the Superintendent. The Brick Company had a power plant on the Credit River. They used the power to drive the machinery and to light the plant and Superintendent's house. This house is now owned by Rutledges.

The Halton Brick Company was started in 1909 and was one-half mile west from the station. This company thrived until 1936. Edward Townsend was the manager. In 1919, Les Icam reports wages were ten cents per hour for a ten hour day. Saturday was a short day so he only had to work nine hours. Plants' Brick Company was started on 27 sideroad about one-half mile east of the 10th Line. It only ran for a short time. Schools were overcrowded for many people of various nationalities came to work at the brick yards. In 1920, there were over fifty children attending the No. 3 school. Miss Cheyne was the teacher.

**STONE QUARRIES:** The first stone quarry was started between 1840 and 1850 on the 5th Line. It was owned by a Mr. James. Later the Townsends started quarrying. To take the stone down the hill they used a small tramway. They would load the cars at the top with stones and as these went down the others were pulled up from the bottom.

—From the Terra Cotta Women's Institute Tweedsmuir History Collection.

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