



Trafalgar Township Historical Society
Spring 2021 Newsletter

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Society News & Updates

Trafalgar Township Looking Back

Compiled by Ross Wark

A thriving community once existed where Lion's Valley Park is today. It was variously known as Sixteen Hallow, Sixteen Village, Chalmers' Mills, Trafalgar Mills, and Proudfoot's Hollow (circa 1827).

In its heyday, Palermo was a busy stop on the stagecoach line and also an important supplier of charcoal to factories and blacksmiths in Hamilton.

In 1909, Oakville High School was built on Reynolds Street. In 1946, a new high school district including Oakville and Trafalgar Township was created. The school was renamed Oakville Trafalgar High School (OTHS). In 1992, the school was relocated to Devon Road.

Ephraim Post acquired lots north and south of Dundas Street where Trafalgar Road intersected it. He opened a tavern there. This intersection became known as Post's Corners. The Post home was demolished in 1965.

The first school in the Bronte area was opened by Charles Sovereign in 1815 on a farm owned by his father Philip Sovereign.

Don Juan, a five-year-old horse owned by James and John White and bred at their Woodlands Farm at Merton, north of Bronte, claimed the newly established Queen's Plate in its first running, June 1860.

Bronte School circa 1890

Compiled by Ross Wark

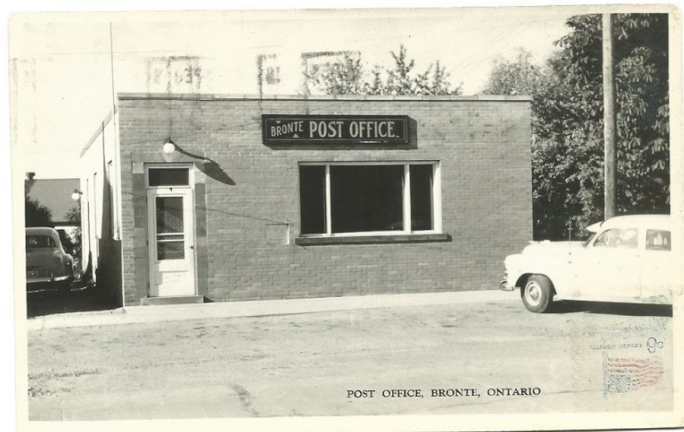


This school, located on lot 16 north of Chisholm Street (now Marine Drive), was built circa 1872 and demolished in 1923.

The photo was given to me by Lorne Joyce, well-regarded historian of all things Bronte.

Bronte Post Office

Compiled by Ross Wark



Allie and Lila Flumerfelt opened the last “stand alone” post office in the early 1950s on Bronte Road. It no longer exists.

In the early 1900s, Joseph Flumerfelt had postcards printed in Germany showing local Bronte scenes which proved popular with tourists. We have several Flumerfelt cards in our Bronte postcard collection.

Changing Times

Compiled by Ross Wark



Skating on a section of Sixteen Mile Creek located under the Anderson Bridge, was a popular winter pastime in Oakville. This photograph was taken on December 29th 1980. When I photographed the same location during this past winter little or no ice was evident...let alone skaters!

Times change, and so does the weather. I wonder if we will ever see this scene again?

Two Stores in Oakville, Ontario; The J & A Beatty Store and the William Creighton Store by Bob Johnson, published March 2021.

Note by A. Choate Little



Several years ago, Bob Johnson began researching a Beatty family who came to Toronto in 1830. James Beatty soon started a “British Woolen Warehouse” business. Bob’s research has resulted in the fascinating history of two downtown Oakville, Ontario stores namely 215 Lakeshore Road East and its Beatty owners, and 184-186 Lakeshore Road East and its Creighton owner, linked below. You will recognize the two stores from these modern photos above.

Seeking to expand his “Warehouse”, James Beatty looked west to buy land on Dundas Street near the corner of Seventh Line (now Trafalgar Road). He quickly decided ownership of a store on the main business street of the town of Oakville was more attractive so in 1835, he bought the “Beatty” store at 215 Colborne St. It was quite an interesting purchase of an existing store spanning land owned by two people. Bob is pretty sure James stayed in Toronto and had a manager run the Oakville store. James was entering financial difficulties, and difficulties in European and North American financial markets as well as the 1837 rebellion exacerbated his lack of hard cash. So, James asked his young cousin William Creighton in 1837 to emigrate and assist. James lost all to his creditors in 1839, the year William Creighton bought his own store in Oakville, across the street and a block away from the Beatty store at 184-186 Colborne St.

The above is just a “trailer” to lure you to read the full story as written by Bob, with its surprising twists and turns at this link in the TTHS internet collection:

<https://images.ourontario.ca/TrafalgarTownship/3707339/data?dis=dm>

Bob continues to research the Beatty family as he still has unanswered questions such as finding out who managed the “Beatty” store from 1835-1837 while James continued in Toronto. If you have relevant information, please email bobj(at)kirk.ca – don’t forget to replace the (at) with @. (Using this format for our Newsletter prevents much unwanted spam going to an email address.)

A Look Back at Our Contributions to the Preservation of Trafalgar's Heritage

Please see the heritage report linked below that has photos and information on the Bowbeer house. This is one of the first buildings TTHS fought to save. It was dismantled and recently rebuilt. TTHS started highlighting the significant heritage buildings north of Dundas that needed to be saved when we first started in 2006.

At that time there were no plans to save any buildings in North Oakville and not even an awareness that significant buildings existed North of the QEW. In our short time TTHS has been able to preserve Trafalgar's heritage in street names, plaques, heritage designations, documents and photos but also in many physical structures.

Here is the Heritage Newsletter:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1MIKQFFZtHYZNcOyf1DpA07V65sDJDAdu/view?usp=sharing>

The Dixon Family By William Robert Dixon and Isobel Ruth (Dixon) Taylor (Children of Lorne Ewart and Laura Barbara (Prudham) Dixon)

Published March 2021

In 1816, John Dickson (1790-1874) and his father William Dickson, left the Dickson home in the hills of Scotland, and Northumberland, England for the New World.

Work was plentiful in the New World at that time. John and his father William arrived in Quebec in April 1816 in the town of Stanstead, next to the Canadian-American border. The Erie Canal was under construction through New York State. John was employed clearing timber for the right-of-way, and then worked on the building of the locks.

In 1820, John came to Trafalgar Township in Halton County. He worked first for Robert Ruxton who had a farm and sawmill on Lot 6, Concession 6, Trafalgar Township, a farm John would eventually own.

John was one of the first settlers in this part of Trafalgar Township where he chopped and logged for Jasper Martin that portion of land that is now Milton. None are now living who can personally speak of the hardships of the first settlers here. Grain to be ground had to be carried on foot for miles through the woods and if groceries were needed, travel on foot to Little York, now Toronto, had to be made (then an insignificant village). In character, John was unobtrusive and always possessed of self-control and consequently a kind and respected neighbour. He was a man of an iron constitution.

John met and married Jane Bell (1802-1874), daughter of John and Sarah Bell of Lot 10, Concession 7, west half Nelson Township, Halton County. The Bells came from the Parish of Scotts Place and Drumquin in County Fermanagh, Ireland. Originally from Scotland, the Bells left for Ireland to avoid the Persecution of Dundee.

The Bells donated land for a school, called Bell School, and a Methodist Church known later as Mountain Union Sunday School. Bell School Line is named for the family. Bell Street in Milton was named for

Absalom Bell, Jane's brother. Jane's sisters married into the families of Lucas, Cline, McGregor, Page and Cumming. Absalom married Elizabeth Harrison.

Land began opening up for settlement in Upper Canada in the early 1800s. When the settlers arrived, land was cleared, log cabins were built as were sawmills, blacksmith shops, mills for grinding flour and feed for the animals. Mills were built along the many streams and rivers located in every township and county. Timber was cut from the virgin forests that covered the land.

As John and Jane started their life together, their first child, William, was born in 1829 followed quickly by nine more. The ten Dickson children were William (1829), John (1830), Isabella (1832), Absalom (1834), Jacob (1836), George (1838), Elijah (1839), Jane (1841), Thomas (1843) and Sarah (1845).

Some of the family's earliest properties in Trafalgar Township were Lot 3, Concession 5, Lots 8 and 9 Concession 5 and many more throughout the county.

Nassagaweya Properties: John Dickson owned Lot 5, Concession 5 East from 1847 to 1868. The Nassagaweya book published in 1981 (Campbellville Historical Society) notes there was a steam-powered sawmill on Lot 5, Concession 5 during the 1850s into the 1870s. The Dixons took timber from this property, known for its large stand of virgin pine. Cedars were split for rail fences. It is probable that some of the materials for Sprucedale came from this property. The Dixons were known for managing their stands of timber, and did not clear-cut.

The 200 acres located on Lot 14, Concession 4, Trafalgar Township became the Dixon home called "Sprucedale" (See the 1877 Halton County Atlas).

A log home was built first, then a framed home and then the beautiful brick home built in 1861. This 200-acre farm became the Home Farm, boasting its own carpentry shop, blacksmith shop, machinery shop, and two large windmills. Machinery was manufactured along with wooden water pumps. A large bank barn was eventually constructed.

Most of the Dixons were devoted Church of Scotland members, and helped establish the Church of Scotland in Milton, and later Knox Presbyterian Church. Elijah Dixon was a founding trustee of the Methodist Church, now St. Paul's United Church in Milton.

As the need for a road running to the east from the village of Milton arose, Jacob Dixon gave the full width required to extend what is now Main Street East from the 3rd Line (Thompson Road) to the 4th Line (now James Snow Parkway). In 1978, Thompson Road was named for Frank Thompson, great grandson of John and Jane Dixon. (We were told at the time that the road couldn't be called 'Dixon Road' – seems the name had already been used somewhere else close by!)

Through the years as the family matured, they became involved in the timber industry. Elijah, with his two brothers William and Thomas, ran a successful lumbering operation. They bought and sold thousands of acres of timber from Lake Erie to Algonquin Park, over to Lake Huron, west to Wisconsin and east to Peterborough. In some areas, they owned their own mills.

They were involved with local families by the names of Martin, Cumming, Harrison and Orr. Shipments of timber, especially oak masts for ships were sent to the United Kingdom. Farm machinery manufactured

by the Dixons was shipped to western Canada and the United States. The Dixons were also agents for other farm machinery manufacturers.

The Dixons and the Martins were involved in the lumbering business for many years throughout the province. One mill of note was at Hillsdale near Barrie where J. Cumming worked for Elijah Dixon. The mill was eventually sold to Jasper Martin's son, Jasper Martin Jr. and some of the Martin family remained in Hillsdale, and are buried in the Hillsdale Cemetery.

Elijah was president of the Halton Agricultural Society in 1892. He was instrumental in the founding of the Mechanics Institute in Milton, forerunner of the Milton Public Library. Elijah was active in the St. Clair Masonic Lodge #135, serving as Master in 1886 and 1888. He was president of the Halton Agricultural Society in 1892. Elijah was a Liberal and secretary-treasurer of the Halton Reform Association in 1891. Elijah also acted as magistrate for the Town of Milton. He owned Lot 10, Concession 7 East in Nassagaweya as shown in the 1877 Halton County Atlas.

When Thomas graduated from Osgoode Hall Law School, and was called to the bar, he changed the Scottish spelling of Dickson to the English spelling, Dixon. Thomas began his law practice in Milton in 1868 (Bastedo & Dixon), then practiced law in Durham and Walkerton where he was appointed Crown Attorney for the County of Bruce, a position he held from 1875 to 1905. Thomas was a veteran of the Fenian Raid of 1866, being a member of the Queen's Own Rifles of Toronto, and was awarded a medal for his service. Thomas served on Milton Town Council in 1870.

Children of John and Jane married into local families by the names of Ford, Forrest, Alton, Storey, Featherstone and MacKay.

Grandchildren of John and Jane married into the families of Hume, Crozier, Butts, Harbottle, Downs, Sitzer, McCann, Bousfield, Learmont, Thompson, Lindsey, Earl, Robinson, Hornby, Ford, Coyne, Clifton, Arthur, Fisher, McLaughlan, Rogers and Brocklebank.

Sisters of John came to Canada to join him in 1836; Mary (Mrs. Joseph Brown) lived on Lot 5, Concession 1 Trafalgar, Sarah Jane (Mrs. George Clarke) lived in Haldimand County. A brother William came the same year. John's other two sisters married to Messrs. Anderson and Cowan and they remained in Northumberland.

John and Jane ensured their children received a good education, which helped tremendously in the beginning and formation of Milton and Central Halton. John worked hard for 54 years and set up family on productive agricultural farms. The Dixon Family was involved in the leadership of local churches, the Masonic Lodge, and local businesses. John was a trustee on the first Milton School Board. The first log school was situated on Lot 14 on the bank of the Sixteen Mile Creek, near the Milton Pioneer Cemetery, where widow Elizabeth Harrison taught.

The Dixon Family celebrated 200 years in the Milton area in 2020. And, 2020 saw the birth of the latest member of the Dixon Family, Carter William Keith Dixon, a boy who carries the name of the first Dixon to arrive in Canada in 1816, more than Two Hundred Years ago – Carter is the Gr. Gr. Gr. Gr. Gr. Grandson of William Dixon Sr.

Lorne Dixon (Carter's Great Grandfather) was the last Dixon to use the fields for summertime pasture in the 1930s and 1940s. Cattle were driven from Limestone Hall, 6391 Walker's Line, Burlington, along No. 10

Sideroad, (now Derry Road), north on Bronte Street to Main Street, then east on Main Street to Third Line and to the Sprucedale farm.

This route was taken to avoid the plank bridge, which crossed Sixteen Mile Creek west of Highway 25, as cattle refused to cross such a structure.

Those who drove the cattle to Sprucedale farm must have been hardy souls – they, along with their herding dogs. In the fall, when the cattle were ready for market, they were loaded onto rail cars at the Milton rail yards of the CPR and sent to the stockyards in Toronto.

Harvey Dixon, son of Jacob, was the last Dixon to live at Sprucedale (1880–1960). He was a bachelor, and often said everyone should have a little recreation – away from the everyday drudgery of farming. His enjoyed baseball – he never missed a ball game at the old baseball park located on Dundas Street in Toronto. Apparently, the Dixons weren't all work and no play!

On a sad note, Sprucedale was demolished in 1991, a tragedy to be sure. See *The Canadian Champion*, November 27, 1991 “Fight to Preserve Historic Home on Thompson Road ends in Demolition” (Reference on pg. 1 & 2).

There is a small walnut tree shown in the picture of Sprucedale, in the 1877 Halton County Atlas (page 50), located in front of and just west of the front entrance to the beautiful old home – today, that tree, very mature, still stands just west of where the magnificent Dixon home called Sprucedale once stood. My, what stories it could tell! To recognize this historic family in this area there is a Dixon Drive and Sprucedale Lane.

Notes:

Page 1: *William Dickson Sr.'s dates of birth and death unknown. He is not mentioned as arriving in Trafalgar with his son, John. John's mother, Isabella (Nichol) Dickson is assumed to have remained in Northumberland, dates of birth and death unknown.

John Dixon Sr. and Jane Bell were buried in Milton Pioneer Cemetery on Bronte Street, as was his sister Mary (Dixon) Brown who died on the same day as John. (John, as one of his first tasks for Jasper Martin Sr., was to log and clear the land for the cemetery.) The family later erected another tombstone in Milton Evergreen Cemetery to the memory of The Senior Dixon Family, who are interred in the Pioneer Cemetery.

Switzer House, 2507 Dundas Street West Updates

TTHS was able to speak to deferring the new building. We are happy that the proposal seeks to save and restore the Switzer home but without adequate parking to make any business in the building viable, we have concerns. The developer agreed at the council meeting to make adjustments that included consideration of TTHS recommendations.

Upcoming TTHS Events

Open Houses - Archives Research (Postponed temporarily - any donations or information should be directed to Michelle michelle@opnc.ca)

Location: Old Palermo Schoolhouse, 2431 Dundas Street West from 1:30pm to 3:30pm

All are welcome in joining us in researching family and community histories. Do you have something to donate or contribute? Bring your precious documents and artifacts to one of our open houses and we would be happy to learn about your story! We can scan your documents and add them to our archives so that others can enjoy and engage in research.

Guest Speakers & Meetings (Currently being held as Zoom Meetings)

Location: Old Palermo Schoolhouse, 2431 Dundas Street West from 7:00pm to 8:00pm

All are welcome to attend our guest speaker evenings to learn more about North Oakville, Trafalgar Township through informative and interactive discussions. Light snacks and refreshments are provided.

Have an idea for a guest speaker? Please contact Michelle at michelle@opnc.ca!