

# PIONEER LIFE IN GREY COUNTY

### Constable Cook of Ceylon writes of the Early Happenings in Grey.—Personal Experiences of Well-Known Resident Are Related.

One of the early pioneers of Grey County, Ontario, few are left who remember the varied experiences of those bygone days. Circumstances have changed as the years rolled on, and we are now surrounded by comforts and conveniences that were not dreamed of in the middle of the last century.

Attracted by the prospect of free land, many who in the old countries never owned a home came with their families across the sea not realizing what they were facing. Many of these had never swung an axe or felled a tree. After a long sea voyage and a rough overland route, they arrived at their new homes.

On the narrow road just opened by the government, they halted before a thickly wooded, heavily timbered forest. This was their future home which had in the process of time and hard work to be transformed into smooth pasture land, green meadows and waving fields of grain. This was their task from which they did not flinch.

One of these heroic pioneers was Mr. R. H. Cook of Ceylon, Ontario, whose father came at nineteen years of age to Bytown, since Ottawa, and engaged with a lumber merchant who also kept a general store—a Mr. Copeland with whom he worked seven years and, Jacob like, married Mr. Copeland's daughter.

Then he moved to the township of Trafalgar, to learn farming. Robert, though young, remembers friends coming to say goodbye when they were leaving Ottawa.

From Trafalgar, the family moved to the township of Glenelg, Grey County, and settled on a bush farm being lot number seven on the sixth concession. There was not a stick cut on it. He cut logs and with the help of neighbors, built a shanty covering it with cedar clap-boards. A chimney in one end supplied heat, light and cooking purposes. The remainder of the small space served all purposes for the family. All the houses on the line were built on the same plan. The hinges on the door were made of wood and creaking loudly as it opened or shut made a fine burglar alarm which happily was not needed in those days. He brought a load of lumber from Durham, but near home was a swamp over which he had to carry it for the oxen could not get across the swamp. The family lived in Mr. Timmins' shanty until their own was fit to live in.

And now as farming commenced, we will give it in Mr. R. Cook's own graphic description. "When a piece of land was cleared by chopping down and burning the logs and brush, the seed was sown on the new land which had been gone over by a home made harrow or often by the clumsy hoe made by a blacksmith, then a small tree with spreading branches was cut down and the oxen hitched to it, and it was drawn back and forth across the land to cover the seed. Mother earth, rich with the leaf loam of countless years, responded heartily to those efforts, and the seed committed to her keeping, yielded a rich return. The first harrow was made of wood triangular shaped with wooden pins but my father brought some iron pins with him and made a harrow that lasted many a day.

"When harvest time came, every member of the family that could handle a reap hook turned out and cut it and bound it into sheaves. It was said one Mrs. Blair cut twenty shocks in a day. The threshing was done with a flail which was two long sticks connected by a strong piece of leather long enough to allow the heavier stick when swung by the man manipulating the one he held in his hands to strike heavily upon the open sheaves on the floor thus separating the grain from the straw. Mr. Timmins threshed his grain on the floor of his house. To clean the grain after being so threshed, a sheet was placed on the ground on a windy day and the grain spread on it was lifted up and stirred so the chaff was blown away. The wheat was ground in Durham mills.

"After some years, Joseph Firth got an open cylinder machine. It was about the size of our fanning mill. I think it took four yoke of oxen to keep up the speed, and every team was driven by a boy who had to walk with the oxen, and those boys were surely tired at night.

"Later on Mr. Cox got a machine made by A. & A. Cochrane. It was called a separator because it separated the grain from chaff. It was a five team horse-power and a great improvement on the former way of threshing. My father had the first wagon, but he could not use it much, the roads were so narrow, suitable only for the home made sleighs or jumpers.

"When my brother, Thomas, was about fourteen years old, my father took sick, and my mother and we children had to gather in the har-

vest. Imagine a boy of fourteen cutting all the grain on the farm with a cradle! We usually had one and sometimes two days threshing with a machine. The first grain cradle we had was made by Mr. Thibadeau, who lived near the Irish Lake. It was a good one and did us many a year. Wool was much needed for mitts and socks, and the strong home made cloth and flannel. My father got his two sheep supposed to be ewes for breeding. When spring came, one proved to be a wether which he sold for five dollars to a butcher in Durham he delivered at Ritchie's School house for he could not get his wagon any nearer to our home. When the day came for the delivery, my father tied the sheep's legs and put him on the jumper and put me on to hold him while he walked and drove the oxen, so we lost one half day of a man, team and boy to deliver one sheep. The other raised two lambs every spring, so we soon got a fine flock of sheep.

"My father had the first frame barn on the line, taking out all the timber and shingles himself with very little help. A man named Roswell built a sawmill at what is now known as Hayward's Falls. A man named John Martin formed it. The day of the raising, he was hurt by a fall, so John Travers saw it put up but found the rafters three inches too short. But then we got lumber nearer home.

"In those days, cattle had to hunt a living in the woods where in summer there was rich herbage. Many a long hunt we had to find and bring them home. I remember one morning, my mother got me up on hearing a fearful noise among the cattle and saw a bear hanging on to the tail of a steer. The bear left when he saw her and the dog, but ever after the steer was minus half of his tail. Another steer was never found and was thought to have been eaten by wolves which were numerous at that time.

"The first public school was on the sixth concession and was called Lawrie's School house. My brother Thomas and I were the first pupils. It was taught by one Patrick O'Leary, who was fresh from Ireland. He started the fire in the stove by putting the kindling on top of the green wood and wondered it did not go. We showed him the right way to build a wood fire. He said he never saw a fire made that way in Ireland.

"Our first church was built on a piece of land given by Mr. Thomas Blair who gave one acre for church and cemetery. His own son was the first one buried there.

"Rev. Mr. Buggins, a Methodist minister, was invited and accepted. The people made a bee and got out the material for the building. The preacher called a meeting and preached a sermon on the roadside, the timber being used as seats.

"The minister was head carpenter and soon the church was ready for service. They named it Zion, and though the first building has passed away and a new one takes its place, it is Zion to this day. On the opening day, the first hymn was:

Zion stands by hills surrounded,  
Zion kept by power divine;  
Happy Zion, happy Zion,  
What a favored lot is thine.

"Many a soul was blessed in old Zion. That was where Joseph Edge was converted, who afterwards became one of our greatest preachers. If ever there was a true Christian, he was one. A Sunday School was started, George Cushman being superintendent. He carried on Sunday School and prayer meeting until he left for Kansas. He was greatly missed. I was librarian and secretary until I left Glenelg.

"Leaving Glenelg, I served my apprenticeship as a blacksmith. I worked in Durham with Mr. Horn, then in Markdale, Paisley, Mount Forest and then came back to Durham and finally started for myself in Flesherston Station in 1875. Though but a young man, I soon built up a good business. I was considered a good horseshoer and got much to do in that line.

"In 1876 I married Miss Jane McMullen, only daughter of William and Mary A. McMullen, and sister of J. L. McMullen, Magistrate, who lives near Ceylon. I was captain of the callithumpian procession under the patronage of the Grangers' picnic held in Flesherston in 1876, the largest procession ever seen there. After working at my trade for fifteen years, I was forced to give it up on account of poor health. I went into droving with J. L. McMullen and later with W. G. Pickell. He was one of the finest men I ever worked with. He always tried to do right with everyone.

"While in the livestock business, I shipped to Toronto and Buffalo, I paid out as much as seventy-five thousand dollars in one year, and

stock was not bringing half as much then as it does now. I usually went on the stock train, and there was one night every week I never got to bed. I always looked after my stock and sold it on the market. I was about twenty years in the cattle trade and while in it, I took charge of stock on a cattle boat that was booked for Newcastle-on-Tyne, England. There were two hundred cattle and two hundred sheep. It was no small job reeving and watering them every day. I was relieved when they were unloaded.

"Coming back our boat carried three hundred boys and girls from the Barnardo home. We sometimes had lots of fun with them. We had them wrestling and playing games, and in every way, we tried to make the trip pleasant for the poor little homeless waifs. We had church service every day at 2 o'clock and a dance and concert at night.

Before I left England, I went over to Ireland. I spent one Sunday there at a place called Clomas. I attended church and saw three Anglican students ordained. It was a good service. In that village, the houses were all roofed with thatch. I got warmed by a peat fire. I saw about fifty women cutting turf in a bog and men taking it away. They had asses with two large baskets called creels hung across the asses' backs. I also saw four women coming into town sitting on the bottom of a cart drawn by an ass about the size of one of our colts. They had baskets of butter and eggs and all seemed happy. The Irish people all seemed to be enjoying life. I asked one of the men that was ploughing why he put one horse ahead of the other. He asked what other way could it be done? I explained to him the way we did it in Canada. "Why," he said, "sure no horse could work that way, and how could a man drive them?"

"I spent several days in Liverpool and was equally amazed at the way they hitched their horses. I saw as many as four horses hitched one ahead of the other to a dray wagon loaded with one hundred sacks of flour and meal equal to five tons. The dray had tires six inches wide and one inch thick.

"I saw many sights in England and Ireland that I never wish to see again. Little children half naked on a cold day around the coal yards picking up crusts of bread out of the dirt that men eating their dinners had thrown away. I was told the parents were away all day, and the children had to pick up a living or go hungry. I often read of the slums of big cities, but half has not been told.

"Some years later I visited the State of Kansas where my married daughter, Mrs. Cushman, then lived. I visited the beautiful cemetery at Hiawatha where many who left Glenelg years ago and went to Kansas were buried. Old Mr. Lowrie, Mr. McNab, who used to keep the Post Office in Durham, also William Robertson of the fourth of Glenelg and George Cushman, my old Sunday School teacher. Also the grave of Ellen Lowrie, who married a Mr. Gold. Old scenes and memories came vividly to my mind as I stood by her grave. One particular I will give. I and another small boy went to have a bath in a creek nearby. Seeing no one on the road, we left our clothes on the bridge overhead. Ellen, then a grown-up girl, came along and picked up our clothes and went on her way. From a place where we could be heard but not seen, we begged and coo-ed Ellen to bring back our clothes, but she teasingly went on regardless. We got desperate, and soon she heard the pattering of two pair of feet, and the panting breath of two small boys. She dropped the clothes and ran. I told the caretaker of the cemetery the old prank she played on us, and we had a good laugh over it.

"I was appointed county constable about forty years ago and have served the county of Grey as best I could during that time. Many a hard case I have had to deal with. I was often called in the night to go out alone many miles in the dark but never refused to go when the call came; neither was I afraid to do my duty as an officer of the law. I have always stood for temperance and have had the satisfaction of seeing the hotel banished from our community.

"About thirty years ago, I built a brick block in Ceylon, the front part for a general store, the back for a living room and the upstairs for bedrooms. My wife and daughters carried on the store. But soon sorrow entered our home. Our only son, Thomas, who was a brakeman on the C. P. R. for about five years, and one night his train got stuck in a snow bank, and he was sent to guard the rear end of the train. It was a terrible night, and he caught a severe cold from which he never recovered, and later passed away. Some time after, my daughter, Mrs. Cushman, died, leaving two children and her husband. In 1917 my wife, who had been in declining health for a long time, went on before, leaving us sad and lonely. Our youngest daughter, Clara, died 11 months before her mother, July 9, 1916, leaving my daughter, Millie, and myself alone in our home. About two years ago, I suffered a bad attack of flu which has left my heart in bad condition. Life is lonely for us, but we try to be cheerful and enjoy life as happily as we can."

Mr. Cook has told his story well and truly of early pioneer life, and now in declining years, he and his daughter, Miss Millie, live on in their comfortable home in Ceylon or Flesherston Station. Truly they keep open house for their many relatives and warm friends. With ample means to live in warmer climes, they are sometimes tempted, but home ties are strong. Perhaps the strongest bond is the beautifully kept plot in the Flesherston Cemetery where the loved ones are sleeping.

### WATCH FOR HIM; HE IS A BAD ONE

Farmers are asked by the Ontario Agricultural College to keep their eyes open for the Japanese beetle. This pest gained entrance into the United States only eight years ago, but is already exacting heavy annual toll, especially in New Jersey. The adult feeds on the green leaves and stems of many plants, while the larva burrows in the soil, destroying root growth. Altogether it makes a very bad combination. He has moved north as far as Michigan, and entomologists fear he may cross the line any time, extending the 2,500 miles already infested.

This is a stout beetle, a little longer than the common Colorado potato beetle. For the most part, it is colored a bright metallic green tinged with bronze, the head, abdomen, thorax and legs being of this

### CARD OF THANKS

Mr. John Pust and family desire to express their sincere thanks to friends of Durham and vicinity, and especially to the members of the G. W. V. A. for kind expressions of sympathy in the recent death and burial of their son and brother, the late Pte. Anthony J. Pust.

### DISTRICT WOMEN'S INSTITUTE ANNUAL MEETING JUNE 17.

THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE District of South Grey Women's Institutes will be held in the Public Library, Durham, on Wednesday, June 17. Sessions at 10.30 a.m. and 1.45 p.m. Mr. George A. Putnam, Toronto, is expected to be present. COME!!! Durham Branch is asked to provide for dinner and supper to be served in the Library.—M. McElraith, Secretary. 6 11 1925

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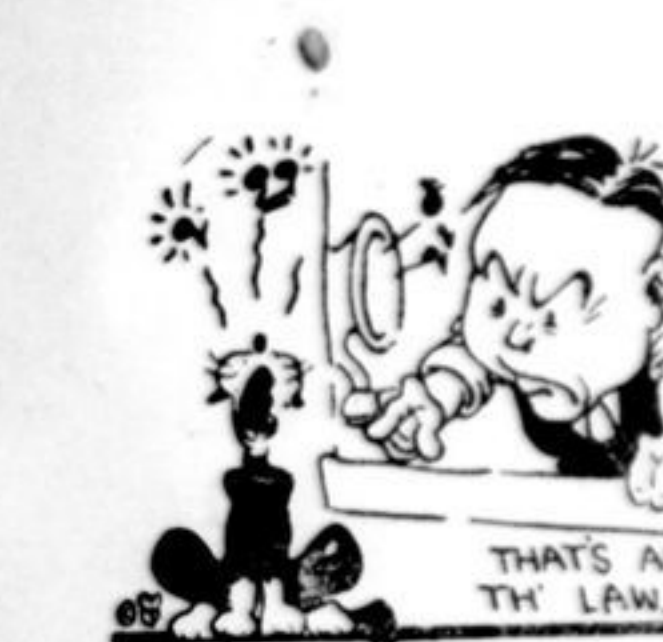
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Amateur radio operators of the American Radio Relay League held their second annual convention at Indianapolis, Ind., July 10th and 11th. A good time was had by everyone, and A. R. R. L. members from all over the country are expected to attend.

Oscillating Receivers. The people in the state of Michigan are tired of listening to those oscillating receiving tubes which radiate and spoil broadcast reception. Radio enthusiasts in that state have become interested in the before the legislature which prohibits any sort of interference.



Extremes Radio Location. The world's most southern station is located in the Antipodes Islands in the South Pacific. The world's highest radio station is located in the Pyrenees Mountains near the Spanish border. The station is approximately 9,500 feet above the sea level. Because of unusual height, this station is expected to furnish some interesting information on both telegraph and telephony.

Two-Way Reception. Now that radio signals are frequently being received on the west side of the earth, it is no longer enough to give the station a chance to fully "do their share."

M. E. B. says: "I follow instructions in the building of a reflex receiver but an unstable in the stations with the high lengths. What is the reason?"

Ans.—It is probable the variable condensers may not have enough capacity even though they have the proper number of plates.

NEWS OF NEARBY TOWNS

### Mount Forest

The residence of Mr. J. J. Fisher was struck by lightning on Monday, May 31, shortly after midnight. All the family were in bed at the time and the electric wires were ruined.

The services at the funeral of Mrs. J. J. Fisher were held at the Mount Forest High School on Thursday afternoon, May 28, at 2 o'clock. The services were conducted by Rev. J. H. Fisher, pastor of the Methodist Church.

A report has been issued by the committee of judges awarding prizes won in the Public Memorial, donated by Mrs. W. H. Price.

The opening game of the district group of the W. J. played in Palmerston on Monday evening, May 27, and a 1-1 tie.

At the regular meeting of the Town Council on Monday, June 1, the motion respecting paving by-law that was the last meeting, was decided. However, notice was given that would be introduced at the meeting. The Bank of Montreal authorized to loan an amount exceeding \$2,500 for expenses. After Mr. Sachs