

# PIONEER DAYS IN OLD GLENELG

## AN HISTORICAL SKETCH OF S. S. NO. 9

By ELIZABETH SCOTT

It is quite fitting that some historical record of S. S. No. 9, Glenelg, be made this year, as it is its jubilee year, the school having been opened in January, 1863, but as the pioneer community must of necessity precede the pioneer school, I am going to give you first a brief sketch of the early settlement of the section as far as I have been able to obtain it.

Mr. Henry Farr is said to have been the first settler on the 2nd Concession, and was followed shortly after by the James Allen family, Mr. and Mrs. Allen and three small children walked from Fergus, as the road was then unpassable for a wagon. Mr. Bat, Condlin (or Condon) is thought to have been the first settler on the 3rd Concession, he and Mr. James McGirr, Sr., having helped survey this part of Glenelg. Next came Mr. and Mrs. John Matthews, just newly married, and for their wedding trip they walked from Toronto to their new home. As I know everyone is interested in a bride's new home, I will describe it from what I can recall of Mrs. Matthews' own story.

The house was a typical pioneer log shanty; the furniture also belittled the period, the table being a large stump in the middle of the one and only room. They did not receive any kitchen shower, but when Mr. Matthews went to Owen Sound to register for his land he brought home with him an iron pot and kettle. The next spring he, being a cooper, went back to Toronto to work at his trade and Mrs. Matthews was left alone. In the fall she got Mr. Condon to show her the way as far as Durham, this part of the road being only a blazed trail. From there she started alone and walked to Toronto, not returning until some years later.

In the years '48, '49 and '50, the settlement grew rapidly. '48 saw the coming of the Ritchie's, the McGirr's, and the Scotts from Vaughan Township, near Toronto, and Thomas Davis, Sr., from Quebec, the rest of the Davis family following the next year. About the same time came the Whitmores, the Lawrences and the McFadden's, and in the early '50s the Ectors and Nichols. The Weir, Lindsay and Andrews families were also early settlers, but just when they came I do not know.

In the winter of '51, my mother, a motherless child of five years of age, came with her father to this settlement, traveling by sleigh from Fergus to Durham. From there her father carried her to their home on the South Line, where James Brown now lives; much of the road was only a path from one pioneer home to another, part of the South Line, alone, being cleared. She can well remember the difficulty her father had all winter keeping her out of reach of the falling trees as he chopped them down. In the spring, after the clearing was planted in potatoes (she helping, of course, and learning to count at the same time) they started to walk back to Fergus, her father and another man taking turns in carrying her.

In the early days of the settlement the children of the 2nd and 3rd Concessions went to Durham school and those farther east to Bunessan, so this is probably the reason that this is one of the last sections organized in Glenelg. Before a school section could be organized it was necessary to report a certain number of pupils for the proposed section. When the count was made they lacked one of the required number, so Will McGirr's name was put down, although he lacked a year of school age, but on the morning the school opened he and his elder brother and sister, James and Jane, were the first pupils to arrive. Others of the early pupils were: W. Moore, T. McGirr and his brother William, S. J. McGirr, G. Lawrence, M. Scott, James Nichol, the John Matthews children, Thomas Davis, David Davis, Ritchie, Ector, Cook, Andrews, Allen, Pounder, O'Donnell, Carson, Condon and McAssey families. The first School Board consisted of Messrs. James McGirr, Sr., Andrew Lindsay, Sr., and Thomas Culbertson. The first teacher was Miss Sarah Lowther (Mrs. Bradley), still living near Grand Valley.

The site of the first school was a little to the north of the present one, the grounds, one-half an acre, being the gift of Mr. John Ritchie. The school, a log structure, larger than most pioneer schools, was built with gratis labor. It was furnished with

two rows of wooden desks and a stove in the centre of the room. These desks, the product of some local carpenter, were about twice as long as the ordinary double-desk of the present day. The blackboard, a framework of planed wood painted black, about four feet square, is the only relic of the old school still in existence. There was also a library, a rare thing in a pioneer school.

In 1881 the log school was replaced by the present stone building. The new school was of a type very common throughout this part of the country, but was the largest and best of its kind in this locality, none too large, however, for the pupils it had to accommodate then and for many years after. The School Board who superintended the erection of this building were: Messrs. Thomas McGirr, William Smith and John Staples. It was equipped with an up-to-date equipment of that day, but since then many improvements have been added. In the early '90s a large bell was procured; some years later the young people of the section presented the school with an organ, and few rural schools can boast as fine pictures. When the Department of Education offered a diploma to all schools reaching a certain standard in equipment, No. 9, Glenelg, was the first school in South Grey to receive the diploma. With the advent of the railroad to the north of the school it became necessary to enlarge the grounds to more than twice their original size. (Let us hope that the next historian may be able to record this part adorned with beautiful shade trees, but the planting of these is more than an Arbor Day job.)

The additional playground was a great boon to the school, for from its earliest days the boys and girls of No. 9 have been baseball players. True, they have a fine fund of other games, both indoor and out, but none of them seems to hold the place of favor that baseball does. In my experience as a teacher I have found that practically every school plays a form of baseball, but some of these forms are as far removed from the real game as to be hardly recognizable with it. But let me say that I have never come across a school

which in its everyday sport, plays a better game of baseball than No. 9. Even the little tots know the rules of the game and can handle a bat and a ball with a dexterity that is often surprising.

The school also has from the first been a social centre for the section. Many a time have those stone walls resounded to the mirth and jollity of its people, both old and young, and not of its people only, but many a guest as well, for the section has an enviable reputation as an entertainer. Its success in this line is largely due to the fact that when its people have decided to do a thing they will see it through to a finish. When they want a program they do not depend on outside talent; they depend on themselves. And lastly, they don't leave the preparation of the program to one or two people; each one feels that he is responsible for doing whatever he can do, and doing it well. They have learned thoroughly the value of united effort and not only does the common work for the common weal accomplish the immediate end it has in view, but it accomplishes something far greater; it establishes among the people a spirit of comradeship and good-fellowship, a spirit of unity that neither time nor distance can sever, and though her children may be scattered far and wide, the interests of the old section are still dear to their hearts and some of the brightest spots in memory centre around the social life of the old school.

I always pity the section which has not made its school a community centre, and unfortunately there are too many such schools. Undoubtedly the Consolidated School System which poses as the successor of our present system has many advantages over the latter, but it has yet to prove whether it will fill the social life of the community as well as the old rural school of the right kind.

The religious life of the community, too, has not been neglected. Shortly after the organization of the section a Union Sunday school was started in the log school by Messrs. Robert Aljoe, Sr., and Andrew McGirr, and continued for a number of years. About twenty years ago a Union Sunday school was again started in the school by Messrs. William Young and John Bell and is still flourishing.

Intellectually, too, the school has a good record, if we can judge by the number of pupils she has sent on to higher institutions of learning, many of whom have proved themselves able students, four being gold medalists.

Many are the girls and boys who

have gone forth from this school since it welcomed the first of them sixty years ago. Where they all are now would be hard to tell. A good number, no doubt, are sleeping their last long sleep; the others each filling his own particular niche in some part of the world.

The farm has claimed, I think, more than any other industry. Mechanical and commercial enterprise has also taken many. Of these the section boasts one railroad superintendent. Professional life, too, has received its quota—twenty-six have entered the teaching profession, five of these coming back as teachers to the home school; there have been also four ministers, one foreign missionary, one deaconess, three druggists, three nurses, two doctors, one chiropractor (two students), one veterinary surgeon and one lawyer.

During the sixty years of the school's existence twenty-six teachers have helped to steer it toward its destiny. Of these, many have ceased forever from their labors, and

Continued on page 6.

## GOOD LUCK

is thought to go a long way, but **GOOD JUDGMENT** goes farther.

To Use **STANFIELD'S UNDERWEAR** is Good Judgment

Call and See Our New Pleated Skirts

C. L. GRANT

Advertise in The Chronicle

The *Ford Motor Company*

OF CANADA, Limited

has authorized a

# Weekly Purchase Plan

by which

# \$5

is all you need to pay down for a

# Ford

## Car, Truck or Tractor

When the weekly payments, together with interest, equals one-third the price of the model you desire we make delivery. The balance can be paid in forty-eight weekly or twelve monthly equal instalments.

Ask us about the Ford Weekly Purchase Plan.

## SMITH BROS.

DURHAM - ONT.

FORD MOTOR COMPANY OF CANADA, LIMITED, FORD, ONTARIO



### Getting More Out of Your Farm

If you could increase your production a little and reduce your expenses even slightly, it might mean the difference between a fair living and failure in some seasons.

Sheep, poultry, hogs, and a regular "milk cheque" have saved the day for many a farmer when his crops have failed.

Shelters from the heat, rain or snow for your live stock and protection from the weather for your outbuildings, machinery and implements, will minimize your losses and reduce your yearly repair bills by many a dollar.

THE ROYAL BANK OF CANADA

TOTAL ASSETS OVER \$519,000,000.

### LITTLE JIMMY



By Swinnerton

### JERRY ON THE JOB



## Maltana

The New Whole Wheat Bread

10c A LOAF

Made in Durham

E. A. Rowe

Baker & Confectioner