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A Visit to My Boyhood Farm of 50 Years Ago, Lot 33, Con. 3 Pickering

By Geo. Cober Gormley, Ont.

I recently visited and had dinner with James McGriskin, who bought the farm from Jesse Cober in 1910. My father, John Cober, reared a large family of 13 children, the writer being the youngest. I spent a pleasant day around the buildings and walking out the lane. This brought many pleasant memories back to my mind of all who attended Cherrywood school. I will name those who are left: Wm. Judd, Wm. Sinclair, Russell Davidson, Joseph Burkholder, John Petty, Sandy Gourlie, Joseph Garland, Walter Hollinger and Edward Lintner. My first teachers were Thomas Henderson, F. A. Dales (who later became our family doctor in Stouffville, also a director of the Bethesda Telephone Company), Archie Smith and James Drummond. Their salary was approximately \$300 a year. Miss Ferguson of Sunderland and Alexander MacIntosh were among the first school teachers.

During my school days farmers let their children go to school until they were 18 or 19 years of age (in the winter). They walked barefooted in the summer. The first trustees were James McCreeght, Fred Roach and George Davidson Sr. Later, in my years at school, John Henderson, George Davidson and Noah Burkholder were the trustees.

Everyone had to walk to school. The first bell used to ring at a quarter to nine and then at nine, which made sure we would not be late. We boys used to have the privilege of ringing the bell. At that time the dinner bells were all the go. You would hear them from twenty after eleven until a quarter to twelve. The boys knew everyone, even the horses knew our bell from the rest. At present, this is a thing of the past. The winters were very cold and stormy. A few farmers — namely, John B. Reesor and Noah Burkholder, used to hitch their horses to a bobbed and give rides to the children. Often the box would be filled and all would have a jolly time. The big school would be heated by a

big box stove at the rear end of the school. The front seats where the little children sat were very cold. The boys that I sat with were Joseph Allison, Edward Cober, Walter Henderson, Willie Green and Joseph Garland.

At that time we used to play a game called shinny. We had no hockey sticks. We used to get a branch off a tree with a crook in it. We had no skating rink. I learned to skate with wooden skates. We also played football, baseball and horse-shoes.

Every year Pickering Township had a Union School picnic at Rosebank at Lake Ontario. The children would ride on wagons drawn by fine horses with shining harness, covered with ribbons. The best entry received a prize.

Mr. and Mrs. James Chapman were the school caretakers. He cut some of the best hardwood with a bucksaw and piled it in the woodshed. At that time, Cherrywood was a busy place. Mr. Charles Petty owned a brick and tile yard. As a boy, I saw Mr. Petty's first tile machine. They turned it by hand. Some of the men he hired were George Gates, Charles Lintner, William Norris and George Osland. Mr. Petty also owned a farm store, and several houses. He was a real businessman. Murray Sumnerfelt was the first storekeeper that I recall. Others were Alfred McPherson, John Green and Tom Robins. The store was handy to the school and many a cent's worth of candy was purchased over the counter. Cherrywood also had some first class blacksmiths. Some were William Irvin, James Clayton, Herb Poynter and Robt. Davidson. Nearby was a carpenter shop operated by Nathaniel Burkholder.

We all looked forward to threshing days. One man would tend the engine, two men would feed the machine, one would cut bands, four would work in the mow, one or two would carry boxes, one would work behind the rakers and five or six in the straw mow. It brought a lot of the neighbours together. The women folk provided an excellent meal. The farmer would

hitch his team to the engine and take it to the next place. The thrasher would draw the machine with his team. The young boys would get a real thrill when the engine driver would let them blow the whistle. Everyone enjoyed hearing it blow at 12 and 6 o'clock.

The first threshers I can remember were Nathaniel Burkholder, Peter Cober, Daniel Hoover, and later Walter Hoover and William Reesor. They always threshed 10 hours a day and did a good job. Jesse Reesor and his father Samuel Reesor were also among the early threshers.

Another big day for us children was the big butchering day when every farmer used to kill from four to eight pigs, finished off with pea chop. They would dress about 300 pounds. This took a lot of extra help as the meat was cut up into hams and shoulders. It all was salted and smoked with maple green chips and the fat went into lard and the rest into sausage and liver-worst. This took all day. The best of it was, we had sausage for supper and all who had helped got a taste of it, also some of the liver-worst. This was the best food a man could eat, as it gave him the strength he needed for hard work in the bush.

We also looked forward to the day when we extracted honey. This was a busy day, as we used to have about fifty swarms of bees. All the combs had to be uncapped before they were put in the extractor. We children liked to turn it and see the honey fly out of the comb. Of course, at that time, honey was plentiful and everyone ate to their heart's content. We used to sell the honey for eight or ten cents a pound.

In the spring of the year we used to tap around 150 trees and make maple syrup. We would gather it together in pails with a yoke over our shoulder and then pour it into a big tub and boil it down in a big pan over a fireplace. We usually started at daylight and would keep working until night. Then we would carry the syrup nearly a half mile to the cook house where we had an old-fashioned fireplace, and here

father would boil it down into molasses and sell a lot of it in Whitevale for \$1.25 per gallon. The children always enjoyed the taffy and maple sugar when it was made.

These are some of the memories we don't forget when we get old. Very little money was received for the hard work involved, but everyone was happy and enjoyed life better than today where everything is modern.

Now coming back to my father's place. He came from Vaughan Township around 1856 and had a large stone house built, as he had a very stony farm. A mason by the name of John Pearce Sr. built the house, as he did a number of others. This house is just as good as ever. The first jointing mortar is still there. Father built the house in 1858. His brother Jacob did the carpenter work. My father told me they took a ladder up and put a plank on the ladder and then put the stone in the wheelbarrow. Mr. Pearce tied a plow line on the wheelbarrow and pulled, and my father shoved on the handle. This was the way they got the stones onto the scaffold, which was very hard work. Mr. Pearce worked long hours for very little money, as money was scarce in those days.

My father and mother belonged to the Tunker Church. My grandfather was elder for over 40 years and my father held meetings every sixteen weeks in his home for over 40 years. This was discontinued in 1904 when he left and moved to Gormley. He died in 1918 in his 88th year and mother in 1921 in her 83rd year.

The ministers that used to preach were: John Byer of North Markham, Elder Samuel Baker of Gormley, Elder Henry R. Heise of Victoria Square, Peter Baker of Gormley, Fred Elliott of Richmond Hill, Abraham Vinger, Maple, and Peter Steckley of Bethesda. The deacons were: Christopher Heise, Daniel Steckley Sr., David Lehman, John Doner, Reuben Heise and John W. Heise. This official staff were all first class farmers and each took his turn every 16 weeks and preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ free of charge.

They spent much of their time visiting their flock and as many others as possible. These meetings made a lot of extra-work for the women, as they did the baking in an outside bake oven and they always cooked a large ham.

Often, some of the people came Saturday afternoon and stayed all night. They had a prayer meeting at night and the Gospel was preached at 10 o'clock the next morning. Everyone was invited to stay for dinner, and they had a social time together.

Father had a Love Feast in his barn in 1875. They had no churches then, and as mentioned, services were held in 16 different homes until the church was built in 1877. Of course, in those days boys were boys, and at a time like this they would cut up and disturb the meeting.

But father's neighbour, James McCreeght, who was Justice of the Peace, stood up and said, "Gentlemen, I want you to know this is a place of worship and I want all of you to behave yourselves." That stopped it and there was good order all through the services.

I don't want to forget the Methodist Church which I attended for a number of years. I went to Sunday School at 10 o'clock and to church in the evening. The S.S. Superintendents were Fred Roach, James Todd, James Laughlin and Wm. J. Taylor. Christian Stover, Emma Taylor and later Wm. J. Taylor were my teachers. We had a very fine Sunday School. Some of the ministers were: Rev. Vickery Toye Casscadden, Shipman Lunan, Moore Reynolds, James Taylor and James Laughlin were the deacons.

These are some of the families which attended: Charlie Petty Sr.; Fred Roach, James Gilchrist, Francis Judd, John Henderson, George Hodges, James Mainland, Charlie Smith, John Curtin, Wm. Money, Jas. Todd, John Timbers, George Davidson, Nathaniel Burkholder, Wm. Burkholder, Jesse Burkholder, Chris Stover, Ben Stover, Harvey Burkholder, James Ferguson, George Gates, Wm. Norris, George Osland, Ben Carter, Wm. Carter, Joseph Collins, Wm. Pilkey and Wm. Spencer. I always thought they had a very fine congregation. In those days a lot of the people walked, but there was nothing better than a good horse and top buggy for the summer and a cutter with a good string of bells for the winter.

We used to receive our mail every other day. I can remem-

ber when the first daily paper started, the Toronto News and the Toronto World which sold for \$1.00 a year. Tom Hague was one of the mail carriers who went through all kinds of bad roads and weather.

In those days there were two or three tramps who walked the roads. The children were afraid of them. They got their meals and night lodging from the farmers. This, of course, is not seen today.

Let us not forget the old landmarks and those who worked so hard for what we are enjoying today. We are now living in an altogether different world than in the days of our fathers, especially during the last fifty years.

—George Cober Gormley, Ont.

BLOOMINGTON

The January W.A. meeting was held at the home of Mr. and Mrs. P. Brown Thursday afternoon. This was the Annual election for 1960. After the various reports were tabled and approved, the nominating committee of Mrs. J. Winterstein, Mrs. C. Tindall and Mrs. Harding presented the slate of officers, as follows:

Pres., Mrs. Wm. Dougherty; Vice Pres., Mrs. O. T. Harding; Secty., Mrs. C. Lemon; Asst., Mrs. E. Baker; Treas., Mrs. Mur-

ray Barnes; Missionary Treas., Mrs. H. Tomlinson; Pianist, Mrs. W. A. Fockler; Assist., Mrs. O. Baker.

Flower Committee — Mrs. E. Lemon, Mrs. Percy Brown, Mrs. Dayson Burnett; Box and Visiting Comm. — Mrs. V. Wagg, Mrs. C. Tindall, Mrs. Simmons; Social Comm. — Mrs. V. Wagg, Mrs. C. Tindall, Mrs. Wallace Vaughan, Mrs. C. Lemon; Sewing Comm. — Mrs. E. Nesbitt, Mrs. O. Harding, Mrs. E. Lemon, Mrs. H. Burnett; Missionary Comm. — Mrs. Elmer Burnett, Mrs. E. Baker, Mrs. O. Tranmer, Mrs. M. Barnes; Look-out Committee — Mrs. Jos. Winterstein, Mrs. D. Burnett, Mrs. A. W.

Story. Mr. Simmons conducted a short dedication service installing the officers. It was decided to donate the money remaining in the Treasury to the Canadian Mission. Hostesses were Mrs. C. Lemon and Mrs. M. Barnes.

The United States is the largest producer of peaches, with about two-thirds of the total, and also produces about one fifth of the world's cherry crop and the same proportion of the world crop of plums and prunes.

During the Middle Ages and until the Industrial Revolution in England, work from sunrise to sunset was customary.

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