

Bruce Mill Story Recalled By Gormley Historian

Century-Old Building Interest Spot In Conservation Park

By George Cober

It is now ten years since the death of Mr. A. D. "Sandy" Bruce. The community and its farm residents have changed a good deal since the old water-powered mill ground up the grain brought in by horse teams. I would like to recall a few of the events surrounding this well-known property and the owner, Mr. Bruce, as I knew him.

In 1907, I started to farm and purchased 62 acres of land from Simeon Wideman. Later, I bought the Christian Gayman farm, about one mile distant from Bruce's Mill. This was the location where, in 1842, Mr. Robert Bruce Sr. purchased the farm and mill from Casper Sherrick. The property was considered to be one of the best in Markham Township.

Most of the pioneer settlers who brought their grain to the mill, were of Pennsylvania Dutch origin and because Mr. Bruce was a Scotsman, a language problem developed. However, Rev. Adam Wideman, a good Mennonite and a fine neighbour who lived on the present Carl Reesor farm, allowed his boys to interpret and Mr. Bruce soon picked up the Dutch language.

I wrote an article in The Stouffville Tribune about 15 years ago on the history of Gormley in the 1800's. It dealt with the Bruce family and this is the information that the late A. D. Bruce gave to me. He was one of the best historians in the area and his information was always very accurate.

Mr. Robert Bruce Sr., his three brothers, two sisters, a sister-in-law and two brothers-in-law, Alexander Duncan and William Hendry, all settled within 1½ miles of each other.

They all came from Scotland in 1842 on the same ship and the Bruce brothers purchased the Sherrick Estate, including the mill and the farm. The property, although vastly changed, still retains the family name.

Mr. Robert Bruce Sr., a staunch reformer, was an outstanding man in municipal affairs and an elder for many years. Mr. John Bruce was one of the first elders in the Melville Presbyterian Church which was organized in 1845. He held this post until the time of his death in 1897. Three members of the Bruce family held elder's positions, John Bruce, Robert Bruce and A. D. Bruce, making a total of 104 years. Mr. A. D. Bruce along with his brothers, were very prosperous farmers and around the year 1890, built one of the best and largest barns in Markham Township. A barn-raising was held in which the majority of community residents helped out. The masons were my uncle, George Sheffer and his son,

Aaron. He marked his 100th birthday on March 1. The wall was ten feet high. The captains chose up sides and the race was on. Mr. D. W. Heise was in charge and following a speech by Robert Bruce, the men went to work. There were no accidents.

A. D. Bruce took a great interest in the church. He was a Sunday School teacher for many years. He was interested in the first telephone of Bethesda and Stouffville. He lived at the mill property until his death. He was a firm believer in the Golden Rule.

Mr. Robert Bruce Jr., a brother of A. D. Bruce, was an excellent farmer. I recall some of his hired men — John Gower, John Nicely and John Wright were good men and fine plowers. He had two boys, William and Alexander. William farmed on the townline and married Florence Wilson. Alexander married a sister of Rev. Mutch, a minister at Melville.

Miss Nettie Bruce, now 94, kept house for A. D. Bruce after his wife died. She still resides at the Bruce home.

I can recall taking grain to the Bruce Mill to be chopped. If you didn't have enough money, which at that time was scarce, Mr. Bruce would take so much chop as his pay. He chopped for 4 cents a hundred and his neighbour, S. B. Lehman did it for 4 cents a bag. It was often the practice for farmers to take huge bran sacks to Mr. Lehman and received back more than their money's worth.

Although in the same business, there was always good feeling between Mr. Bruce and Mr. Lehman. Both were honest men and trusted by everyone.

I remember arriving at the mill and unloading the grain. There was a good shed for the horses where blankets were provided to keep the animals warm. The mill office had a little coal heater where the farmers used to gather and talk about the crops, the roads and the weather.

I have many pleasant memories of the Bruce home. He would never let me leave without dinner. Mr. Bruce always spoke highly of Robson Jewitt, one of his workmen. Mrs. Jewitt is still alive today. She is about 95 and resides at the Fairview Mennonite Home in Preston.

Mr. Bruce's staff included the following men — Henry Staley, Frank Rowbotham, William Stotts, Joseph Lehman, William Bruce, Joseph Sider, Isador Wideman, Joseph Wideman, Harry Forrester and Robert Neil.

But time passes and many of the old favourite buildings have been torn down for the sake of "progress". It will never be the same.



The Bruce farm in Markham Township is now a Conservation Area but the original buildings are little changed. This picture of the mill was taken several years ago. —Staff Photo.

Police College Course Highly Recommended

STOUFFVILLE — In a comprehensive report on the operation of municipal police departments in Ontario, outlined by councillor Tom Lonergan, at Stouffville council, last week, the committee chairman spoke highly of training courses as provided by the Ontario Police College at Aylmer. Councillor Lonergan attended a convention of Municipal Police Governing Authorities held recently in the Park Plaza Hotel, Toronto.

Mr. Lonergan said that from information received, it was agreed that inadequate training was the most prominent problem in most municipal police departments. This was followed by personnel strength, office accommodation, police equipment and cell provisions.

The chairman informed the members that training at all levels was provided at the police college in Aylmer at no charge to the municipalities. He said that Reeves and councillors of other towns and townships had recommended the course very highly. He suggested that for Stouffville, a 12-week recruit course would be most beneficial since it provided instruction in English Law, Police Methods, Physical Activities, Traffic



Tom Lonergan

Law and Procedures. SPEND \$55½ MILLION The councillor noted that in 1965, police costs in Ontario exceeded 55½ million dollars. There are 268 municipalities in the Province employing 6,985 constables. The breakdown is as follows: 98 municipalities with a 2 to 5 man force; 103 with from 6 to 10 men; 23 with 10 to 14 men; 111 with 15 to 19 men; 6 with 20 to 24 men; 15 with 25 to 29 men and 12 with 30 to 99 men.

CO-OPERATION NEEDED It was pointed out that the co-operation of the public is needed to assist police in the carrying out of their duties. Mr. Lonergan said, that in many instances, not only in Stouffville but other communities, people are reluctant to notify the police office when they see something suspicious. When, at a later time, information is provided, it is often too late.

ASK SUBSIDY The councillor said that more than 60 municipalities had written to the Ontario Police Commission, requesting a government subsidy on police services; to enable towns and townships to offer improved facilities. Some Reeves expressed dissatisfaction over this grant, feeling the government would be making a move to take the police out of their control. They were assured that the Police Commission had no such thought in mind.

Nobody's opinions are worthless. Even a stopped clock is right twice a day!

Police Reel In 'Fish-tailer' Near Ringwood

STOUFFVILLE — Stouffville Police caught a "fish-tailer" on dry land March 9 and had him convicted in court Friday morning. Allan T. Ogden, R.R. 3, Stouffville pleaded guilty to a charge of reckless driving and was fined \$25 and costs.

P.C. David Hadden of the Stouffville Police told the court that he observed the Ogden vehicle make a "U" turn on Highway 47, and "fish-tail" down the road. The officer testified that the rear of the car swung from the eastbound to westbound lanes of the highway due to heavy acceleration.

The 18 year old youth was granted two weeks to pay the fine.

An accident at the corner of Edward and Main Streets in Stouffville on February 28, resulted in a charge against Kenneth Bisio, R.R. 2, Stouffville of failing to allow one half of the road under section 71-1 of the Highway Traffic Act. Bisio pleaded guilty and was fined \$20 and costs.

Police Chief Orland Keating testified Friday morning that the Bisio vehicle was attempting a left hand turn when the accident occurred and had crossed the centre line of Main Street. The officer said that although no personal injury was involved, damage amounted to \$500.

With Seed Company Back In 1936

STOUFFVILLE — Peter L. Barrie, Manitoba Street, Stouffville passed away on Thursday, March 10 in Sunnybrook Hospital, Toronto. He had been in ill health for several years.

Born in Scotland, he came to Stouffville in 1936 with the Goodall Seed Company, owned by Mr. Ira Aldred. It was located on the site of the present Stouffville Co-operative. Mr. Barrie remained with the firm for 22 years when the business was sold and moved to Port Perry.

Prior to returning to Stouffville in 1934, he lived for a time at Ashburn.

Besides his wife, the former Mary Duncan, he is survived by one brother, Harry of Toronto. Rev. Allan Borland conducted the service in the O'Neill Funeral Home, Stouffville on Saturday, Mar. 12 with interment in the Stouffville cemetery. The pall bearers were — four nephews, J. D. McGowan, Bruce McGowan, Douglas Duncan, Norman Fox, Jim Christie and John McGowan.

Pick-'em-yourself' Crop Paying Off

(Michael Pembry) (Family Herald)

CEDAR GROVE — Selling a crop in the field isn't new. It has been a frequent practice with some strawberry and raspberry growers for some years. Gib Whitmore, of Cedar Grove, has taken this idea a step further. He sells strawberries, raspberries, beans, egg plant, tomatoes and peppers all on a "pick-'em-yourself" basis.

"I don't know whether I could labour to pick them or not," said Gib. "I just haven't set up my operation to harvest the crop this way. If I did, it would be another job, just like planting out my cauliflower. I don't know whether I could get labour if I wanted it. I know some of the other market gardeners have quite a hard time, but the Employment Service people tell us that if we let them know well ahead of the time that we'll be wanting some help, they'll probably be able to do something for us."

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This sign relates some of the history surrounding the old mill. A historical sketch, prepared by Mr. Geo. Cober of Gormley is published here. —Staff Photo.

Retired people who live near tourist resorts could add to their incomes by producing handicrafts for sale. Among souvenirs that might prove popular are knitted articles, small paintings, bird houses and feeders, wood-carvings of animals and birds. Painting or burning the article would make an interesting souvenir.

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