

FOCUS ON CALIFORNIA

The little community known as California is that section of South Crosby Township which is bordered on the east by the Rideau Canal, on the north by Lake Opinicon and Sand Lake, on the west by the boundary between Leeds and Frontenac Counties, and on the south by Whitefish Lake.

At the present time, the population of this community is approximately 46 people.

Some of the early settlers who cleared the land and built homes to create this community were: Samuel Simpson, Robert Simpson, Adam Simpson, Chester Caird, Robert Baxter, Hiram Baxter, Edgar Stuart, Thomas John Sly, Robert York, Henry York, Freeman Jackson, William Eves, Charles Hutchings, Josiah Ubdegrove, Charles S. Burtch, and Ephriam Churchill.

California Cheese Factory

The early settlers here made their livelihood mostly from dairy farming. In 1898 the late J.R. Dargavel built a cheese factory, named the Rockdale Factory. A statement from this factory, still on record, shows there were 22 patrons delivering milk. This statement was for the month of September, 1901.

The total number of pounds of milk delivered by these patrons for this month was 121,669, for which they received a total of \$967.29. The average price received per hundredweight of milk was 79 cents.

This factory continued in operation until 1955. At that time the supply of milk had become so small it was not possible to keep the factory operating. At the present time there are just two farmers in the area sending milk to a milk plant. The building which had been the Rockdale Factory was sold to George Ubdegrove, who converted it into a dwelling.

California Church

For many years, worship services were held in the school house. In 1904, Rev. J.A. McDonald was inducted into the pastoral charge of Morton, Lyndhurst, California and Ellisville. Following a weekly prayer service in the home of Mr. Chester Caird it was decided to erect a church building. Since there were people of different faiths in the

community it was decided that the church be known as a Union Church.

A committee of three was appointed to solicit subscriptions for the building fund - a minimum of \$600 was agreed upon. The brick used in the construction of the church was purchased for \$7.00 per thousand. Mr. Fred Taber's tender for \$340 for the mason work was accepted and Mr. Luke Wills was engaged to do the frame construction.

Two trustees were appointed to represent each of the four denominations. Lotan Burtch and Samuel Simpson were trustees for the Presbyterians.

Charles Hutchings and Hiram Baxter were Trustees for the Church of England.

Chester Caird and Ephriam Churchill were trustees for the Baptists.

Mrs. Jane Stuart and Edgar Stuart were appointed trustees for the Methodist Church.

The first clergyman who held service in the California Church was Rev. J.A. McDonald in 1905. The Church was used by all four denominations at different intervals. Canon Teskey, now 95 years of age and residing in Newboro, held Church of England services here in the early 1900's.

Following church union of the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches in 1925, services were conducted in California Church during the summer months by students from Queen's Theological College.

During the summers of 1943 and 1944, Rev. H.J. Latimer of Seeley's Bay was the supervising minister and many lay men and women conducted services. Among them were Dr. N.V. Freeman, Mrs. Thomas Pritchard, Mrs. Morley Willows, Mrs. Jennie Moulton, Dr. Stevens and others.

In 1945 the Church was redecorated and wired for hydro service. Rev. R. A. McCrae, the minister at Battersea and Sunbury, held services in California Church following its reopening. Other students who were stationed at Battersea following Rev. McCrae's retirement and who held services in California Church were Fred Rice, Boyd Beckel, Stanley Tose, John Neal, Robin Sharp, William Higham and Ted Davey.

The last regular worship service was held in October, 1965.

Just across the road from the church is the school house where most of the people of California received their primary education. Many teachers taught in this school over the years.

The following are some who served in this capacity: Sadie Bryan, William Booth, George Wheeler, Madge McCann, Bessie Carty, Mabel Kitts, Gerald Cannon, Helen Linette, Blanche Wills, Hazel Fenton, Bertha Sleeth, Beryl York, Celima Clement, Phyllis Bates, Lola Churchill, Madeline Glover, Maude Connell, Reta Freeman, Goldie Perrin, Merton Hill, Lillian Galway and Anna Smith.

With the building of the new centralized school in Elgin, California school was closed in 1965 and the pupils are now transported by bus to Elgin.

The year 1975 will be remembered by the residents of California as an important one in the history of this community. In July of that year a new road was opened, giving much easier access to the rest of the township. Prior to the opening of this new road, travel was through Jones' Falls, over a wooden bridge and the swing bridge over the locks.

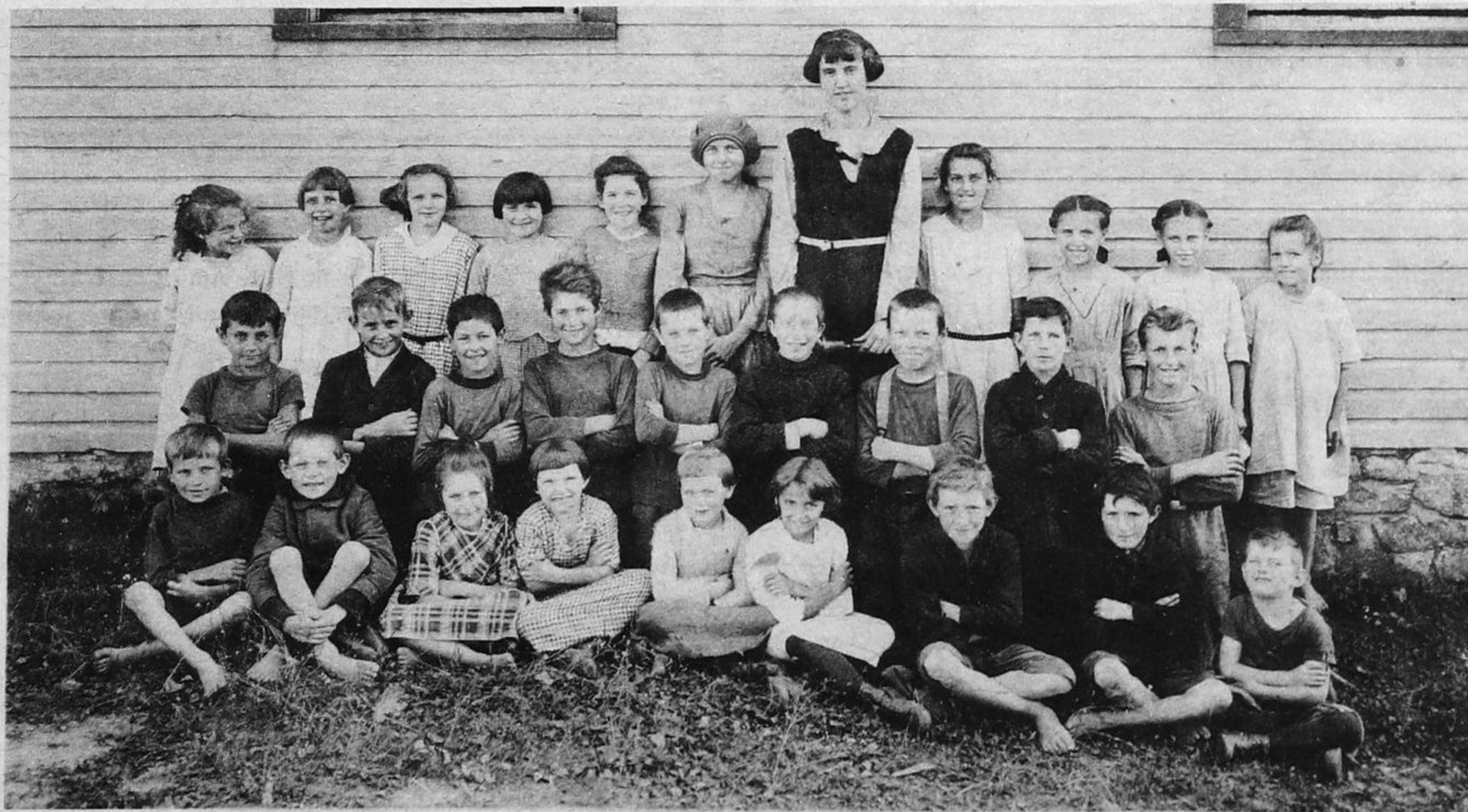
During the winter months, due to slippery road conditions, this often presented many problems ..., while during the boating season, the bridge was swung to allow boats to pass through the locks.

This often caused delays of nearly an hour and traffic was backed up. The swing bridge also could not accommodate loads of over five tons so this created further problems.

The new road covers 1.4 miles and includes two bridges: the Officers' Quarters Bridge, 167 feet in length, and the Smith Bay Bridge, 110 feet.

The population of this little farming community has greatly declined during the past few years. However, during the summer months many American and Canadian tourists come to spend time at their summer homes.

Many lovely cottages are situated on the shores of the beautiful little lakes in this part of the county, as well as along the famous Rideau Canal. The locks at Jones Falls and the Horseshoe Dam have been tourist attractions for many years and will no doubt continue to be for years to come.



California School, 1922:

FRONT ROW (L to R) Bob Wills, Millard Baxter, Rettie Baxter, Susie Burtch, Helena Moulton, Edith White, Hubert Freeman, Joe Freeman and Francis White.

MIDDLE ROW: Clint White, Jack Bryan, Hiram Baxter, Cedric Baxter, Vernon Moulton, Omar Sly, Frank Churchill, Stanley Sly and Carl White.

BACK ROW: Olive Gamble, Letitia White, Lillian Burtch, Millie Hutchings, May Glover, Gladys Wills, Bertha Sleeth (teacher), Mary White, Laeodicea Wills, Beryl Wills and Lola Churchill.