

NEWCASTLE VILLAGE AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER - September, October 1996

Ron Brown who wrote "GHOST TOWNS OF ONTARIO" will talk about his new book "GHOST RAILWAYS" at our next meeting, Monday, NOV 25th, 7:30 p.m. at the Newcastle Community Hall.

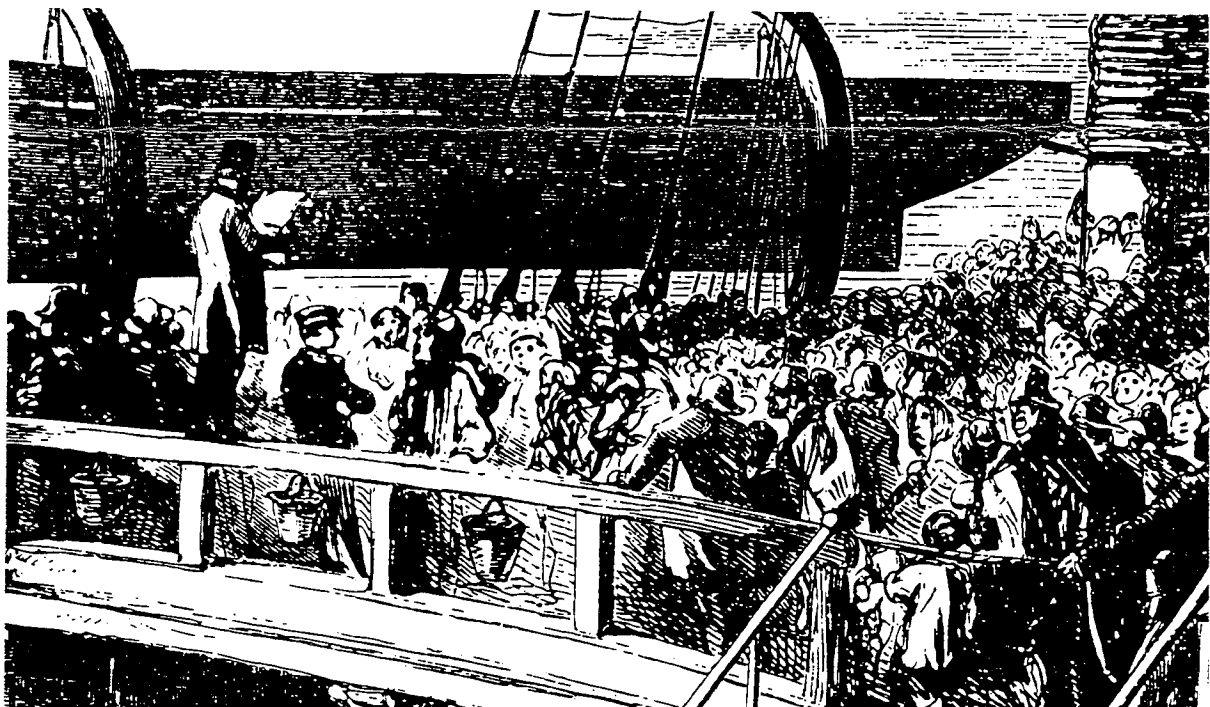
GOD BLESS THE IRISH

The Irish have asked for God's Blessing at times. What was it they would say - locked away in the Canadian bush? - *"dear Lord, look after me, I'm 3000 miles from Home - and a hundred miles from nowhere."*

In 1847 the Irish famine sparked emigration despite a typhus epidemic. Irish immigrants endured 6 to 12 weeks of inhuman conditions in 221 ships to reach Canada - 8000 were buried at sea.

- from THE CANADIAN ENCYCLOPEDIA.

Below: EMIGRANTS - from the ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS - 6 July 1850.



35.00

1832 British North America. Since 1828, Canada's population has increased 50 percent, largely due to Irish immigration.
CHRONICAL of CANADA p.202



Historic collections tell their own story of how it must have been.

The Irish "breast plough" was used for centuries. This cumbersome device was wrongly named - in that it was thrust forward by the force of the hip rather than the breast.

from: OLD DAYS - OLD WAYS by O. Sharkey

Disease spreading, Upper Canada hit

June 16, 1832

PRESCOTT, Upper Canada - The cholera epidemic struck Upper Canada today with the first case reported here. The dreaded fatal disease is following the path of immigrant ships coming from the British Isles, where it had spread from Europe last year. While the first three ships to arrive this spring all lost passengers to the disease, there was no epidemic until the *Carricks* arrived from Dublin, Ireland, earlier this month.

Despite the fact that 42 passengers had died en route, the ship was allowed through Grosse Isle's quarantine station below Quebec. Her passengers sailed on to Montreal on another ship, where the first case of cholera was reported a week ago.

Authorities believe the crowded, unsanitary conditions on immigrant ships, coupled with the fact they're coming from places already under the siege of cholera, are making a bad situation worse. Symptoms include an intermittent slow pulse, a sick stomach, vomiting and colour changes by the entire body, ranging from bluish-purple to deep brown or black, depending on the complexion.

Dr Jean Burnet

We were very pleased to have Dr Jean Burnet with us, at our October meeting, and to hear her comments dealing with the problems that faced Irish settlers who arrived in Canada in the early years of the last century. Dr Burnet grew up in Owen Sound. She received her B.A. & M.A. in sociology at the University of Toronto, and her Ph.D at the University of Chicago. She then taught at the University of Toronto and at York University, from 1945 to 1985. Her special field has been "*race and ethnic relations*" - and in 1994 & 1995 she was on a committee to advise Parks Canada concerning GROSSE-ILE, the quarantine station where thousands of victims of the Irish famine died in the 1840's.

**FIRST IT WAS CHOLERA - THEN THE POTATO
FAMINE**

THE POTATO FAMINE

There was a long spell of wet weather in July of 1845, with no apparent harm to a promising potato crop. Then in August came news of a strange disease attacking the crop in the south of England. It was the potato blight.

The crop all along the eastern seaboard of the United States and Canada had been ravaged in 1842, but this was its first appearance in Europe. In September, the blight was observed in Waterford and Wexford and then spread rapidly until about half the country was affected.

<THE GREAT FAMINE - from the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland.>

The Potato Blight

<also from the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland.>

In 1904-5, James Brown, of County Tyrone, wrote his reminiscences of the Irish famine years: " ... in October 1845 came the first potato blight. We had a field of potatoes that year on the back lane, and in one night they were all struck with the blight and both the tops and roots were blackened. The damage in '45 was only partial — only a portion of the country was affected and the blight did not strike the plants until the crop was almost matured. Only a part could be used for food, the rest were given to the pigs or used to make starch. We put up a small machine to grind them and extract the farina, and for this purpose they still served very well.

"On the night of August 3^d 1846 came the bad potato blight. I remember driving to Bundoran through Co Fermanagh with my sister Bella on August 3^d, and we went seeing the fine crops of potatoes in the fields. We spent three days in Bundoran and, returning, found these same crops blackened and useless. The same state of affairs prevailed practically over the whole of Ireland and in consequence 1847 was the famine year."

1832 IRISH IMMIGRATION & GROSSE ILE

GROSSE ILE (French spelling) GROSSE ISLE (English) - is one of a group of islands in the Gulf of the St Lawrence that are called the ILES DE LA MADELEINE. The islands are close to Cape Breton Island and to Prince Edward Island. They are about 46 K "down river" from Quebec City. Grosse Ile is small - to travel from one end to the other is about the same as the distance from King Street in Newcastle to Lake Ontario.



A Quarantine Station

In 1832 the deserted island became a quarantine station where 51,146 Irish and English immigrants were examined (of the total of 61,800 received in Canada).

In 1833 the station received 21,732 immigrants; in 1834, 30,945 immigrants. Some died of cholera. In 1847 the Irish famine sparked emigration despite a typhus epidemic. Medical superintendent Dr George Mellis Douglas and his team removed some 4500 corpses from the ships and examined 68,106 immigrants, of whom 5452 died. Ships had to be sent to Pointe Saint-Charles, Montreal, where 6000 Irish immigrants died and are buried. Several doctors, priests and nuns died, and many orphans were adopted by French Canadian families.

< From the Canadian Encyclopedia. >

THE MIDDAY MEAL

A description of the midday meal in a peasant cottage in Ireland, by John Rolph, of Port Perry. As told to us by Samuel Farmer, in *ON THE SHORES OF SCUGOG*, written in 1934.

Picture a cottage, single story, one room, earth floor, door divided into two halves, as with stable doors. The furniture is simple - a long table on trestles, two long benches. At one side of the room there is a fireplace with peat fire burning. Over the fire, hanging from a crane, is an iron pot in which unpeeled potatoes are cooking. Beside the fireplace is a tub, and in the tub a wire basket.

The housewife tries the potatoes and finds that they are cooked. Swinging out the crane, she takes a cloth and grasps the iron pot by one of the short legs. The contents of the pot are dumped into the wire basket; the water is drained into the tub; and the potatoes are put in little heaps along the big table. Small pyramids of salt appear at intervals. There are no knives or forks or plates. The family (the members of which have been working in the fields) now file in and take their places on the benches beside the table. The potatoes are eaten by breaking them in two and squeezing the edible part into the mouth after having seasoned to taste at one of the little pyramids of salt. Salted herring is passed from hand to hand, each person taking a portion for a relish. For drink there is buttermilk. This is contained in a vessel called a "noggin", which in fact was a small "patten" pail with a long stave for a handle. The "noggin" would hold about a pint. As the dinner proceeded, the potato skins and other scraps would be thrown under the table on the floor.

At the conclusion of the meal two of the womenfolk would take the table and dump from it any remaining scraps. The table and benches were piled up on one side of the room; the bottom half of the door was opened; the pigs and chickens came in and ate up the scraps. After that a birch broom would be used to sweep any remaining rubbish into the fireplace. The housework was done for the time being, and the family were free to work in the fields again.

When asked what the peasants did with the pigs and chickens, Mr Rolph's reply was - "They were sold to pay the tithes to the Established Church of England."

NEW MEMBERS

John Hoyer, whose ancestors, Henry & Johanna Hoy lived in Newcastle 50 years ago, visited Bowmanville and Newcastle this September, and joined our Society. **John** lives in Lewiston, Idaho, and is a combat pilot veteran, who served in WWII, in Korea and Viet Nam. After leaving our area, he and his wife planned to tour the USA, to visit Veteran friends, and attended a reunion of his WWII squadron in Florida.

Henry Hoy died Feb 20th, 1875, and is buried in Bond Head cemetery. His wife Johanna then married William Sims, at one time a soldier in the 45th Battalion. Henry Hoy is found in the Newcastle Village Assessment, in 1870, "a labourer, age 35," owning a house somewhere south of King Street.

Another new member is Janet Bryant of Newtonville. She is interested in the Clark(e) family. Janet has donated a book to our Society called the *FIRST CENSUS OF CANADA CIRCA 1790*. In it we find very early Canadian families, a few who eventually arrived in Newcastle such as the Wilmots and the Walbridges. For example under the name VAUGHAN we find 3 names in a row: RICHARD ,

SARAH, STEPHEN and we assume this is the Bond Head family. and we are pleased to note that for the VAUGHANS, ages are given. STEPHEN, who built the house that Florence and Herb Taylor live in, was born in 1806. (He was a carpenter, and would be age 40 in 1846 when he built Harbour House.) RICHARD (the foundry owner) was probably his younger brother - born in 1809. (STEPHEN's wife Cyrene Bradley, was a sister to Lucina Bradley, the wife of Daniel Massey.) The most interesting part of this information is a comment about SARAH, who seems to be a sister to STEPHEN & RICHARD. The 1790 CENSUS tells us that she married "JOHN MOLSON, BREWER, OF CANADA WEST AND MONTREAL." These details need further investigation.

Donald Clink, of Roehampton Ave Toronto, has joined our Society. He tells us that his great great grandfather was SAMUEL BRYSON, millworker, farmer, stagecoach driver and onetime sailor in the 1840's and 50's in Bond Head. Our 1858 Assessment Records tell us that SAMUEL, age 28, a sailor, lived on the vacant lot, just below Larry & Peggy Carrol's, on the east side

of Mill Street. His landlord was Leonard Soper.

William Strowger, age 40, was "Innkeeper" on "lot 28" at the time. This is a puzzle because we don't think of there being a hotel on the west side of Mill Street in Bond Head. However, on 18 Feb 1853, Robert Strowger bought what was called "1/2 acres" from Geo S. Boulton.

Robert was called a Village of Newcastle, yeoman, & for £49 he bought two lots, nos.26 & 27, on the west side of Mill Street which is opposite the present day home of Florence and Herb Taylor. The Taylors live in Harbour House - on lots 26, 27 & 28 on the east side of Mill Street.

We mention the Strowgers, because in 1865 Robert Strowger was a sailor, and he is listed next to Leonard Soper, farmer, freeholder, (age not given) as living in Bond Head, again on the west side of Mill St <1865 VILLAGE ASS'MT RECORDS>

Leonard Soper is in the Clarke census of 1842. He is called a farmer, there are 6 in the family, one adult probably born in England, one probably born in the USA, and 4 children - one boy under age 5. These guesses are made because our Society's copy of the census is not complete.

ANDREW JOHNSON TRAMPS ALONG THE NEWCASTLE WATERFRONT

< from THE SETTLEMENT OF CANADA in 1869, by William Canniff. >

It is too bad that Mr Canniff didn't ask for a description of Bond Head and Newcastle in the days when Andrew used to walk from Kingston to York. Andrew was a native of Gainesborough, in New York State, and came to Canada with his father in the early days of settlement in Upper Canada. He was known as an unusually rapid walker and in the early 1800's he was engaged to carry mail from Kingston to York. He walked from Kingston - to Adolphustown - to Carrying Place - and along the shore to York. He forded streams as best he could, sometimes on a fallen tree, sometimes by swimming. He spent 5 hours in York and then started back to Kingston. And he did this every two weeks. He ended his days at Bath, near Kingston, where he ran a tavern. One wonders how many letters he carried. Did he ever deliver to the Lovekins, or the Baldwins? Did he ever stop in at John Every's in Bond Head to rest his feet - or get dry after swimming Wilmot Creek and Graham Creek?

NEWCASTLE IRISH

Newcastle has never had a large Irish population. Our first principal merchant, George Ansley Jacobs, commission merchant, dealer in produce, lumber and timber - who bought the first village lot on King Street - was born in Ireland. Another early merchant in our village was John Beavis, born in Ireland in 1810. Henry Karr, shoemaker, and his wife Mary, who lived in Dr Chris Love's house in Bond Head were both Irish born as were Newcastle farmers John and Mark Lawless and seven members of their families. They farmed where the Marina is today.

Many of our Irish villagers were labourers or servants. Both Henry Hoy, labourer, and his wife Johanna were born in Ireland. The Walbridges often had young Irishmen working for them - Michael Welsh, Irish, age 21 was working on Asa Walbridge's farm in 1861. Tom Hayes and John Maham, both 22, both Irish, worked for our village bailiff Elijah Z. Walbridge, also in 1861. And Daniel Mangin, age 16, an apprentice blacksmith, worked for Blacksmith Brant in 1861.

THE ONTARIO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Rob Lebery, from the Ontario Historical Society, was present with us at our last meeting on October 7th. We were very pleased to have Rob bring us up to date on recent activities. We remind members that as members of the OHS we receive copies of the OHS BULLETIN and ONTARIO HISTORY.

**COMMUNITY HALL
NEWCASTLE, ONTARIO**

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**50th ANNIVERSARY
Commemorative Book
1923 - 1973**

Our Society has a number of copies of this booklet, and one copy will be auctioned off at a SILENT AUCTION at our next meeting on November 25th.

"Somebody's time ..."

The Irish have always been story tellers and many years ago, an Irish story would start with the words - "There were good times once, not your time, or my time, but somebody's time..."

God Bless the Irish!

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Annual Membership: SINGLE \$8.00; FAMILY \$12.00

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