



Harold and Grace Gibson on their wedding day in 1936

## A well educated Scarborough girl moves to the farm...

**By Myno Van Dyke**

In the past, Newcastle Village & District Historical Society videotaped a number of local residents and had them tell their life stories. In November 1999, the late Patricia MacDonnell (former NVDHS President & Archivist) interviewed Grace Gibson. This is Grace's story.

Grace Marion Annis was born in what was then called Scarborough Village on July 21, 1906. Her parents were William David Annis and Elizabeth (Harding). Grace had an older brother, Ross, born in 1900 who only lived for one year. Grace grew up in a historic family home on Kingston Road near the Scarborough Golf Course Road. She called it the Stone Cottage Inn and it was built by her grandfather Jeremiah Annis in 1867. Members of the Annis family lived there until it was sold in 1936 when Kingston Road was widened to accommodate the increase in traffic there. Since then it had been used as

a motel and numerous restaurants and even today it is called the "Olde Stone Cottage Pub."

Grace's father William was very active in local politics. He was a local councillor in 1902 and elected Reeve from 1908 to 1912. He was also the local Scarborough Township Clerk as well as Secretary-Treasurer of the Public Utilities Commission.

Grace attended public and high school in Scarborough. After high school she attended the University of Guelph and in 1929 was one of the first women graduates attaining her degree in Household Science. She then attended the University of Toronto and in 1931 received her Bachelor of Science degree.

She became good friends with Dorothy Gibson who was from the Newcastle area. Grace was invited to a cottage owned by the Gibson family on Lake Ontario at Bond Head. She indicated it was an unusual cottage as it had



William Annis, Grace Gibson's father

originally been built as a large apple display at the Royal Winter Fair in Toronto. Apparently, this won an award for "Best Display" at the Fair in 1910. It was dismantled and turned into a cottage on the Lakeshore Road.

While Grace was visiting there, she locked her keys in her car and Dorothy got her brother

Harold to come and get the keys out of the locked car. "I thought he was good looking," Grace said. They started dating and in 1936 Grace and Harold were married.

Harold and Grace moved to the family farm known as "William's Grove" on the 3rd Concession of Clarke. The first Gibson that lived there was William Gibson (1806-1894) whose family first landed in Clarke Township from England around 1833. William was known as the "Apple King of Ontario."



Grace Annis Gibson, with her mother, Elizabeth (Harding) Annis

"I was never going to live on a farm," Grace said. She said that Harold operated 300 acres but at first only owned 100 acres and it was all apples. She mentioned how one year they had a terrible frost, and the crop was lost so they had to do "other farm work" that year. Grace and Harold raised four children, Betty, Walter, Douglas and David.

Grace was an active member of St. George's Anglican Church. She was part of a bridge group playing the card game with local ladies like Cora Butler and Helen LeGresley. She said in the early days Anglicans would not be buried at Bond Head. One of her card friends would often say "those Methodists!" and hold her nose...

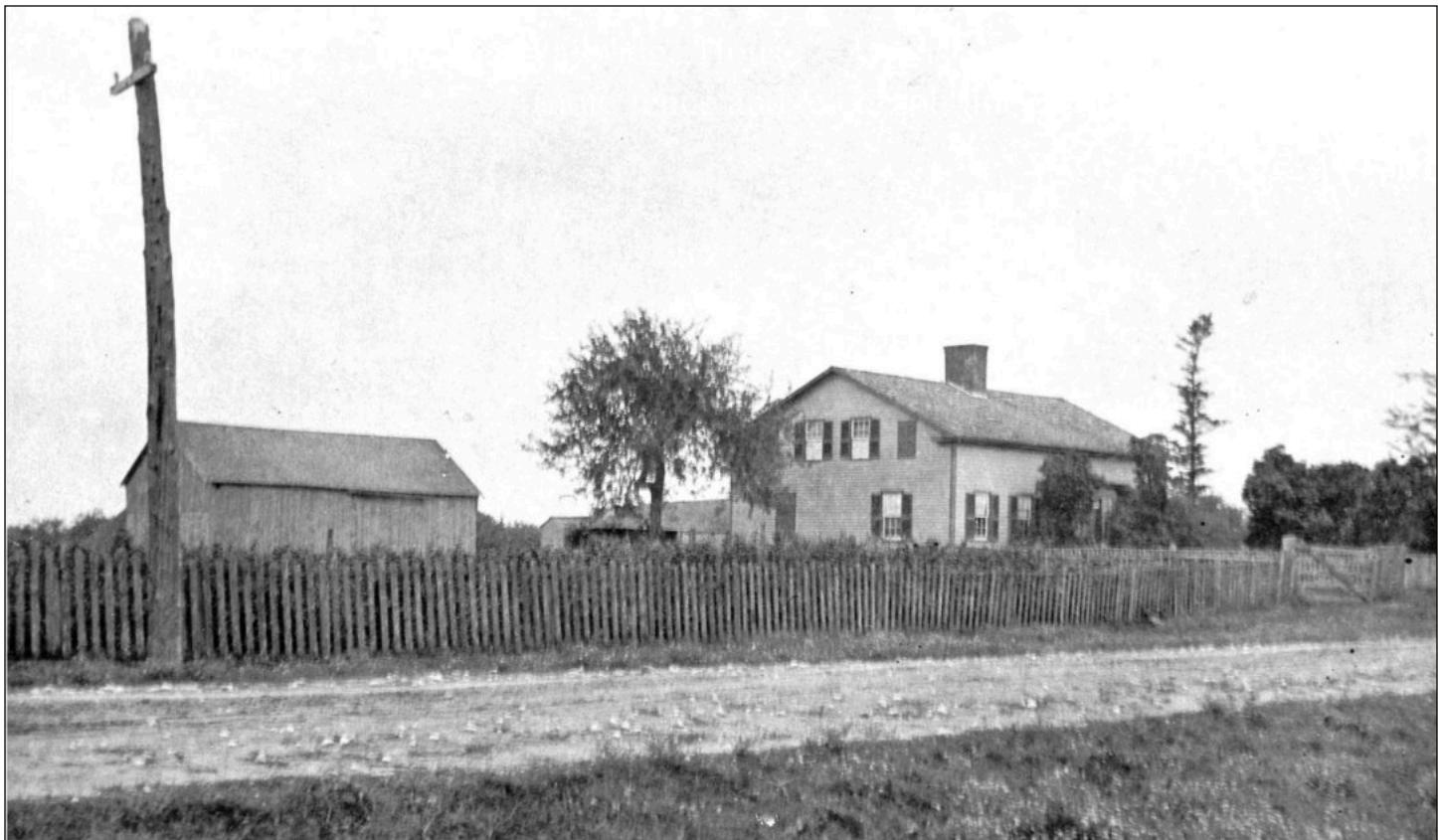
She said that when she had the twin boys, Douglas and David, they were very energetic, and she often had a girl working in the house to help out. One was named Shirley McPherson, and she helped in the house for 14 years. Grace taught Home Economics at Bowmanville High School and continued teaching for about 10 years. She was one of the founding members of both Bowmanville Memorial Hospital and Community Care.

In 1986, Grace and Harold moved to a brick bungalow on Parkway Crescent in Bowmanville. Doug and Dave Gibson took over the farm and changed the name to "Twin Brand Orchards." Harold, born in 1905, passed away August 28, 1991. Grace continued supporting her community. She was an active member of Newcastle Village & District Historical Society, the Newcastle Lioness Club and St. George's Anglican Church. Grace passed away September 24, 2002. In her obituary it stated, "her busy daily life and community service reflected her deep faith and love of people."

*Thanks to David and Mary Gibson for assisting with this article.*



Harold and Grace Gibson's gravestone at St. George's cemetery



The Walbridge house at 483 King Ave. E., Newcastle In August, 1899. (note telegraph pole). The house, built by Asa E. Walbridge starting c. 1819 (exact dates uncertain) is the second oldest house still standing in former Durham County. It is one of only 92 known buildings in Ontario of this vintage. In 2007, thanks to the efforts of the Newcastle Village and District Historical Society, and with the cooperation of the Municipality of Clarington, the house was designated under the provisions of the Ontario Heritage Act.

## Local Heroes – Part 3

By Brian Wilson & Paddy Duncan

*We continue this series with this question: Can the residents of a small village community make a significant, positive contribution to the world? We think they can - consider these various Newcastle and district residents.*

### Asa E. Walbridge

Asa E. Walbridge was another United Empire Loyalist settler, like Sam Wilmot's father, Samuel Street Wilmot, but of quite a different sort: not a member of the established Church of England, he was an elder of the Wesleyan Methodist Church.

Asa was born in Canton, Dutchess County (or Milton, Ulster County, depending on source), New York in 1782 to Elijah Zebulon Walbridge and Hannah Holloway Walbridge.

Elijah's older brother Asa, (Asa E.'s uncle) a Loyalist, had moved to New Brunswick after the revolutionary war, and in 1790 moved west to the Bay of Quinte area. In 1800, accompanied by his son William, Elijah arrived in Canada and in 1802 bought 2000 acres of land in



The Danforth Road, between York and Kingston, ON c 1830. Watercolour by James Pattison Cockburn (1779-1847)

Ameliasburg, dividing the land into 5 parcels, which he gave to each of his children, who by 1812 were all settled there, except for one daughter. He also purchased 2 lots on Concession 1, Clarke, Township in 1804 but was never known to have lived there.

In 1809, Elijah's son, Asa E. Walbridge married Hannah Every of Clark Township, in Middleton, NY, and in 1816, he bought 800 acres of land at the far eastern end of what was later to become Newcastle Village. The parcel stretched from the lake shore all the way to Concession 2.

Asa and Hannah's first child, Hannah Catherine, was born in Dutchess County, NY in 1812, followed by two daughters born in Ameliasburg, Prince Edward County (both died as small children), and sons John and Joseph, born in Ameliasburg in 1816 and 1817.

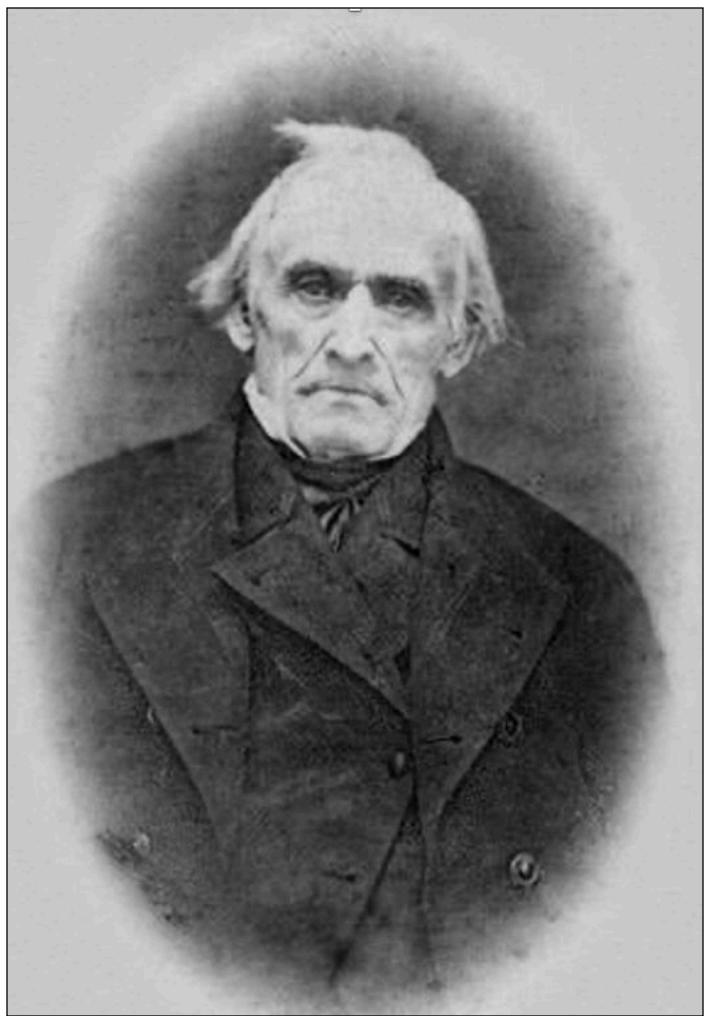
The family moved to Newcastle around 1819, beginning construction on their house on the Danforth Road – now King Ave. E. Completed around 1823, the house is now owned and was restored by NVDHS president Brian Jose and his wife Audrey. Brian is a great-great-great grandson of Asa.

Historically designated in 2007, Beth Hanna, then Director of Heritage Programs and Operations of the Ontario Heritage Foundation wrote about the house, "The significance of this property lies in more than simply its age. The house is associated with the early development of the community of Newcastle, United Empire Loyalist immigration to Upper Canada, and the history of Christian Methodism in the region."

In 1819, the Walbridges were one of only 6 families in Newcastle. Tax and enumeration records indicate that their house was the first "rateable" (taxable) house in the village, although it was listed as "unrateable" up until at least 1821, so there is no certainty on the completion date.

They were pioneers in every sense – in 1820, their lot is listed as "uncleared" and by 1821, there were 78 acres cleared. The settlement of Newcastle itself took over a decade more to start to take shape, with the opening of Stephan Crandell's tavern (in the forest) near what was to become the intersection of King and Mill. At the time, the settlement was known as Crandell's Corners – soon to be renamed Newcastle.

In addition to farming, Asa was a Magistrate in Clarke Township, and a founder and director of the Bond Head Harbour Company. He was elemental in setting up the Newcastle Wesleyan Methodist Church, which gathered originally in his home. Anson Green, the Methodist circuit-rider, stopped into Walbridge's new home on Nov. 3, 1824, where he "left an appointment" – which means



Asa E. Walbridge

he essentially started a Methodist congregation there.

As a devout member of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, Asa was especially interested in the socio-political civilizing policies of the church such as the Temperance Movement (in a hard-drinking society), the movement for state-run free public education for rich and poor alike and the more practical elements of organized-church Christian charity such as food, clothing and shelter for the needy and care for the elderly and infirm.

By 1832, Asa and Hannah had become parents to at least 9 children, with sons Elijah (1819), Elias (1823), William (1825), Asa Fobes (1828) and Joseph (1832) all born in Clarke Township. Both Elias and Joseph died before their 5th birthdays, leaving Asa and Hannah five living children.

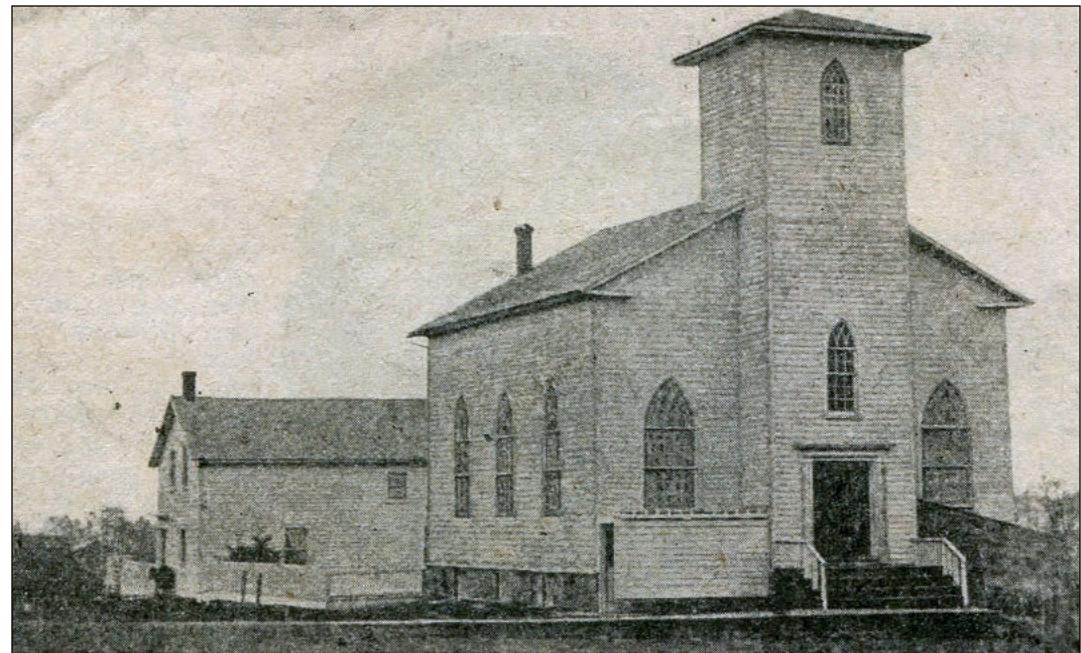
In 1837, Asa E. was appointed as a magistrate in Clarke Twp., and Hannah died in 1838 at the age of 47. Also in 1838, Asa became a founder and director of the Bond Head Harbour Company, and the community of Bond Head was created at the mouth of Graham Creek on Lake Ontario in Newcastle.

George Strange Boulton, a lawyer and politician from Cobourg gained control of most of the fledgling village and created streets and divided the property into 1/5 acre lots. About 50 houses were built, there were several hotels and businesses, and plans for a busy harbour. But Bond Head just never quite got off the ground – it was plagued by fears of malaria from the lakefront marshes and the harbour piers were oriented in such a way that the prevailing winds often made it difficult to enter the port under sail.

The nearby village of Newcastle was located on the Danforth Road, which had become passable and by the 1830s was in regular use as the major east-west land route between Kingston and York, spurring more settlement. The arrival of the Grand Trunk Railroad to the north sealed Bond Head's fate and by 1856 most of the houses were empty and the businesses closed.

In the late 1840s, Asa E. sold the northwestern part of Lot 27, Concession 1 to Daniel Massey. It was on this land that Daniel Massey built the Massey Foundry and where the Massey Building (now shops and condos) still stands.

By 1845, the village of Newcastle had grown to over 300 people and in 1846, the Wesleyan Methodist congregation had grown from its humble beginnings in Asa and Hannah's house and started construction on a frame church on the southwest corner of Emily and



**First Methodist Church, Newcastle, Erected 1846**

Prior to the erection of this church, the Methodists of Newcastle used to worship in a school house on Baldwin Street. The old frame church, pictured above, stood on the corner of Church and Emily Streets. Rev. Mr. Adams was pastor. It

was sided and roofed but there were no pews, and blocks and planks were used for seats until 1850 when Rev. J. C. Slater became pastor of the Bowmanville circuit and the church was plastered. It was officially opened and dedicated the First Methodist Church on March 16, 1851.

Church Streets. Completed in 1851, it opened with blocks and boards for pews. The minister at the opening was Reverend Anson Green.

Asa E. Walbridge died in 1860 – but the little Methodist congregation he'd been instrumental in establishing continued to grow along with Newcastle. By 1866, they had bought property at the southwest corner of Mill and Emily, building a new, larger brick church which opened as Newcastle Methodist Church, in 1868.

After the Act of Union, in 1927, the Newcastle Methodist Church became Newcastle United Church, and celebrated the two hundredth anniversary of its founding in November 2024.



Walbridge house today

## Coming Soon...

Watch your email or our website and social media for an announcement of

NVDHS General Meeting  
with speaker in May or June

&

NVDHS General meeting with speakers on the subject of Belmont House in October

# The Cavan Blazers visit Crooked Creek

By Myno Van Dyke

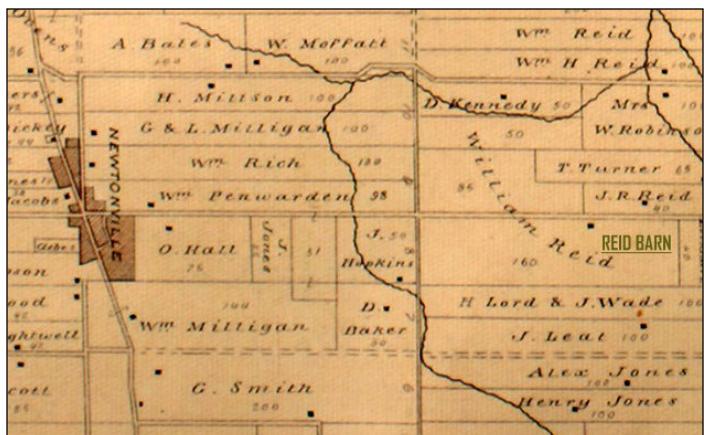
The William Reid family came to Canada from Ireland and in December of 1849 purchased 150 acres of "clergy reserve" land at Lot 8 Concession 3 Clarke Township, near the small village of Crooked Creek.

Soon after, William Reid decided to build a new barn. Reid also provided a lot north of their farm for a new school to be built. This would have been on the east side of Newtonville Road just south of the 4th Concession of Clarke. When the barn was completed, the schoolmaster at Crooked Creek Public School had an idea to stage a play there, performed by the students.

Apparently, the schoolmaster was an Irish Catholic, and the name of the play was "Romul Us". This play was originally called "Romulus" and was first performed in France in 1854. It explored the downfall of the Roman Empire from the perspective of the fictional emperor named Romulus.

William Reid gave his permission to have this community event in his barn and the rehearsals began. However, on the day of the performance something very strange occurred. A large group of young men from nearby Cavan arrived on horseback, in Orange regalia, playing their familiar tunes on the fife and drum. They demanded that the play stop immediately.

William Reid immediately went over and spoke to the young men from Cavan and did his best to explain that this was a "harmless" performance. But they insisted that they had come a long way to stop the performance and stop it they did. Many were of course disappointed – especially some of the children who had worked hard to



1878 Clarke Township map showing Reid barn

learn their lines and have their first opportunity to be part of a theatrical event.

William Reid must have also had concerns about the fate of his new barn as the Cavan Blazers were known to burn down barns occasionally.

This area of Clarke Township had many Protestant Irish settlers. The Loyal Orange Association of Canada is the Canadian branch of the Orange Order, which began as a Protestant fraternal organization in County Armagh in Ireland in 1795. It has played a large part in the history of Canada, with many prominent members including four prime ministers, among them Sir John A. Macdonald and John Diefenbaker.

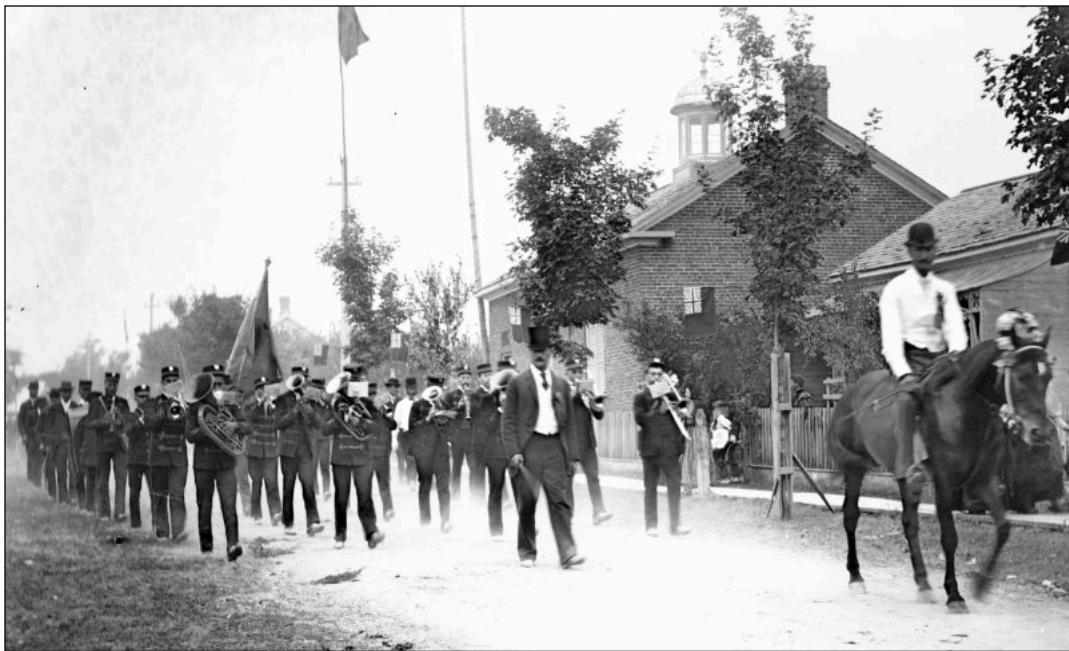
The Orangemen would parade every July 12 to celebrate the victory won at the Battle of the Boyne by William, Prince of Orange, over the forces of the Catholic King James II in 1690. Generally, the parades were led by a man portraying King Billy on a white horse. In the past, in some areas, these celebrations were often disorderly, with a number becoming violent.

The Newtonville L.O.L. (Loyal Orange Lodge) was formed in 1842 and eventually they had two Lodges. In 1855, both Newtonville Lodges were invited to the annual Twelfth of July Walk which was held that year in Orono. From the book, "Out of the Mists" by Helen Schmid and Sid Rutherford, "While marching into Newcastle they stopped and fired off a several gun salute at the 4 corners - however at the final salute one of the Newtonville members, a young man named Swanton, did not slant his pistol sufficiently and the ball entered the head of Mr. Kennedy. The man was killed instantly."

Ironically, several men from the Reid family were also active in the Orange Lodge. In 1865, Lodge 311 held



Drive sheds on the former Reid farm, possibly the same vintage as the now demolished barn.



Twelfth of July parade in Newtonville (date unknown, but likely early 1900s)

meetings in Newtonville and William Reid was the W.M. (Worshipful Master) and J.R. Reid was his D.M. (Deputy Master). The location of their lodge was in the Village of Newtonville where the original telephone office of Jones was located on the southeast corner of Kingston Road and Newtonville Road.

According to the book "This Green and Pleasant Land - Chronicles of Cavan Township," the origin of the name "Cavan Blazers" is not known for certain, but many feel it began in the old village of Cavanville when the local postmaster and druggist, John Knowlson, much to the shock of the Protestant locals, embraced the Roman Catholic faith.

Knowlson also encouraged a few of his Catholic friends in Peterborough to move to the village and even built several cabins for them to live in. Soon after, there was a big fire, and all the cabins burned to the ground and the Catholic settlers were forced to leave the area.

These Cavan Blazers were all members of the Loyal Orange Association of Cavan Township and one of their objectives appeared to be that they had the "power to resist Papal aggression." In an area where policing was very rare, the Blazers were also known for "correcting persons acting in a manner injurious to the community." They apparently burned down the toll gates at Millbrook and were suspected of burning down St. Mary's Church in Port Hope.

On the other hand, the Blazers were also known to help people in need and do other charitable acts. Several of them fought for Canada during the Fenian Raids, when

members of the Fenian Brotherhood, an Irish republican (Catholic) organization in the US launched attacks on military fortifications, customs posts and other targets in Canada in 1866, 1870 and 1871. The Cavan Blazers were quite active from the 1840s to the 1860s.

In the early days, an Orangeman could be expelled for marrying a Roman Catholic; however, these customs evolved and many of the old feuds and issues disappeared. In 1891, they formed the Loyal True Blue, a national benevolent association and eventually

opened a Home for Orphans in Richmond Hill, Ontario and more recently (1988) a facility that treats people with cerebral palsy and neuromuscular disorders.

William Reid's son William Henry Reid (1846-1912) represented the riding of Durham West in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from 1894 to 1898 as a Conservative Protestant member and from 1898 to 1902 as a Conservative member. He also served on Clarke Township Council and as the Governor for the Cobourg Jail.

The original Reid farmhouse on the east side of Newtonville Road caught fire and burned down about 50 years ago and a newer house has replaced it. The farm is now owned by the Phillips family. The barn where the play was to be held was taken down about 15 years ago but there is a very old drive shed as well as another old shed still on the property that may be from the same era (see photo).

The newest Crooked Creek School that was built in 1923, is now a residence. Elva Reid, daughter of William and Myrtle Reid, resides near Kendal on one of the farms formerly owned by her parents. Elva provided the background for this story with a wonderful letter from Peterborough lawyer Francis Dean Kerr written to Elva's grandfather in 1939.

Kerr's father was Senator William Kerr who grew up near Crooked Creek and was a close friend of the first William Reid. In the letter Mr. Kerr outlined this wonderful story from a time when affiliation to a certain religion caused major issues, even in a little place like Crooked Creek.

# NVDHS in action...Annual Meeting April 12, 2025,



## Newcastle Village and District Historical Society

The Newcastle Village and District Historical Society was formed by a group of citizens in 1981 to preserve and promote the cultural heritage of the former Village of Newcastle and its immediate environs. Today, we have an extensive collection of artifacts, documents and photographs and offer help with research into the history of the area, including its businesses and families.

We are located in the former public library in the Newcastle Community Hall. We have permanent and special displays in the historical room and are open to the public twice a week. We are a registered charity, supported by our members, local sponsors and donors, with some additional assistance from the Town of

Clarington and the Government of Canada (Canada Summer Jobs). We welcome all new members and donors!

20 King Avenue, Unit 3, Newcastle, Ontario, L1B 1H7

Open: Tuesdays & Saturdays, 9:30 a.m. to noon

Website: [newcastlehistorical.ca](http://newcastlehistorical.ca)

Email: [info@newcastlehistorical.ca](mailto:info@newcastlehistorical.ca)

Individual, family and corporate memberships are available for \$15-30/year. Memberships may be purchased or renewed on our website, in person or by mail.