

CENTURY FARM

Allan Gellatly - Lot 16 and part of 17, Conc. 4 (rear of 3rd), King Township

In the year 1857, Peter Gellatly, of Blairgowrie, Scotland, came to Canada. His neighbours, the Wightons, and their son John and daughter Margaret had emigrated the previous year. In 1858 Peter Gellatly and Margaret Wighton were married in Toronto, then called Muddy York. Their son Robert was born in 1859.

About 1860, Peter Gellatly and his brother-in-law, John Wighton bought a 200 acre farm in King Township from a land agent in Toronto without seeing it. The agent said "It was as level as a table". John Wighton got the north 50 acres of Lot 17 and Peter Gellatly got the south 50 acres. This property was completely wooded with huge pine trees, to be cleared with oxen and later a stumping machine. In later years, Robert Gellatly bought the adjoining 100 acres to the south.

Robert Gellatly had 3 sisters, Jennie, the eldest, married Tom Marshall and they farmed just east of Eversley. The two unmarried sisters, Bessie and Maggie, kept the Post Office at Eversley for many years.

Robert Gellatly married Elizabeth Ferguson, only daughter of Thomas Ferguson. Thomas Ferguson and his sons Will and Hugh owned farms, now part of Eaton Hall Farm. Another son, T.K. Ferguson, owned the farm just north of the Green Lane on Con. 3. The five Ferguson brothers were Joshua, John, Will, Hugh and T.K. Ferguson.

We have been told that in the early days, the hills of King produced good straight pine trees and that they were shipped to England and Scotland to be used as masts for sailing ships. On our farm we had at one time about 400 rod of stump fence. The oxen pulled the stumps to clear the land.

Robert Gellatly had three daughters, Clara, Jessie and Mary and five sons, Walter, Harvey, Roger, Ernest and Allan.

Allan Gellatly has two daughters, Carol and Shelia, and three sons, Peter, Brian and Kenneth. Brian is the fourth generation to farm this land.

HISTORY OF THE ANDREW DAVIS AND SON TANNERY

This information has been taken from a book entitled "THE DAVIS FAMILY AND THE LEATHER INDUSTRY" 1834-1934, written by Bruce Pettit Davis and his wife Carrol Langstaff Davis.

Elihu Pease, in addition to his tannery business which he operated on Yonge Street, was a school inspector, and in the course of his duties in connection with his work travelled a good deal throughout the country. On one of these trips through the bush he found himself on the east branch of the Humber River in the township of King, at the place which is now known as Kinghorn. Here he found a good stream of water which he could use for power and an almost unlimited supply of hemlock. He was so impressed with the location as a tannery site that in 1847 he purchased sixteen acres of land on lot six in the fifth concession for his son Edward. At first just one building was erected, as a combined dwelling house and tannery, the tannery being on the ground floor with living quarters above it, and a currying room at the back of the building. The entire payroll included perhaps two or three men. In the meantime a commodious dwelling was built some distance east of the tannery, which, however, was not ready for occupation for some three or four years.

In 1856, Andrew Davis, husband of Elizabeth Pease, purchased the tannery site from his brother-in-law, Edward. Shortly after Andrew Davis took over the Kinghorn factory, he named it the Lowell Tannery for some reason that is now obscure. The name, however, stuck, and from that time on until the business left King "Lowell Tannery" appeared on all letter-heads and other printed documents of the firm.

In the autumn of 1868 Andrew took his eldest son, Elihu James (E.J.) then in his seventeenth year, into business with him. This young man began his career as a tanner on the bottom rung of the ladder, and the next four years represented for him a period of hard physical work in every department of the little factory. In 1872, when he was twenty-one, he became a partner in the firm now known as "Andrew Davis and Son".

Business increased and sales were now made with the rapidly developing wholesale houses as well as private individuals, farmers and shoemakers. However, the distance between these wholesalers and the tannery posed another problem for the owners. At first, the leather was drawn by horse and wagon all the way to Toronto. In 1853 train service was established between Toronto and Aurora, with a station in King. The goods were then hauled two miles to the station for shipment.

With the gradually increased acreage of cleared land in the vicinity, the flow of water in the Humber River began to diminish and no longer provide an adequate supply of water power. A small engine room was built in a separate structure back of the main building and a small steam power plant was installed.

In 1877 E.J. was elected to the council of King Township on which body he served as a member until 1881, when he became Deputy Reeve, being elected to the Reeveship in 1883, and to the office of Warden of York Count in 1884.

On April 1, 1884 Andrew retired from the business and E.J. bought out his father's share to become the sole owner of the firm of Andrew Davis and Son. Some conception of the steady growth of the business since 1868 may be obtained from a memo in Andrew's handwriting in which he lists his original capital at six thousand dollars and the amount in the business in 1884 at thirty-seven thousand nine hundred and three dollars and seventy-four cents.

On the third Sunday of April, Dr. Rankin, then a young preacher on his first or second circuit, but later a nationally known figure in the Methodist Church, was delivering a sermon in the little community church some seven hundred yards from the Lowell Tannery. It was a bright spring day; E.J. Davis and his entire family were present, and the congregation was following the minister through the four steps into which he announced his sermon had been divided. During the second step, however, the door was opened and someone shouted, "The tannery is on fire." The church was emptied in a few seconds and the third and fourth steps remained locked in the mind of the preacher. Despite the willing assistance of the entire congregation, the fire had obtained a tremendous start and the Lowell Tannery was doomed. The buildings were of wood; there was no such thing as a fire department in the community; and fire fighting appliances were non-existent. Consequently it is not surprising that everything was destroyed except stock actually in the vats. Moreover, the loss was only partially covered by insurance, due to the almost prohibitive rates in force on buildings in such a locality.

Rebuilding the Lowell Tannery seemed such a task that E.J. had first to overcome the natural inclination to abandon his life's work. Having decided to face the problem squarely, the next decision was, where the tannery should be rebuilt. Kinghorn presented many disadvantages,

foremost being lack of fire protection. The railway was two miles away and with an ever increasing volume of business this was proving a serious drawback, especially during spring and fall when the roads were almost impassable. Again, as the business expanded, and the payroll increased, houses had to be built for the employees.

Realizing what the loss of "King Township's first major industry" would mean to the district, the owner of the local sawmill, one Henry Marsh, gave Mr. Davis such a remarkably low figure for the timber that another frame building was erected on the old site. This building was designed to provide at least double the production of the former tannery. In October, 1884 the new building was completed.

In 1872, E.J. Davis married Margaret Johnston, daughter of David Johnston, and they had a family of five sons and two daughters. All of the sons learned the trade. Business steadily increased and additions to the building had to be made from time to time. The executives of A. Davis & Son felt justified in looking to the future with ever growing confidence.

Spring came early to King Township in 1903. In fact, the dust was blowing on the Saturday morning of March 14th, when E.J. and his second son, Aubrey, walked home together for lunch. Suddenly they were startled to hear a few peals of the tannery bell, followed by a short blast from the whistle. Stepping back from the house they saw smoke pouring from the roof of the factory, and by the time they reached the building, flames were raging through the drying flat on the fourth floor. Again the lack of fire protection made the task of fighting the blaze hopeless, and all efforts were concentrated on moving as much as possible out of the reach of the flames. Most of the records from the second floor office were rescued and a small portion of the stock from the building. There was nothing to do but watch the destruction, for a second time, of a generation's work. Within an hour the Lowell Tannery was razed to the ground.

It was now evident that the Kinghorn site must be abandoned. During the last few years it had been necessary to bring in the tan-bark from ever increasing distances, and the Humber River had long since failed as a source of power. All these factors combined to deprive Kinghorn of all those advantages which had so appealed to Elihu Pease a half a century earlier.

The search for a new site culminated in a selection of a plant at Kingston, Ontario. The Kingston establishment was a going concern and enabled them to get back into production with a minimum of delay. The eldest son, Elmer, took charge of this operation.

In 1904, excavation started for another tannery in York County in the town of Newmarket. The name of the firm was changed to the Davis Leather Company Limited. Recently constructed workmen's houses were moved from Kinghorn to Newmarket. Applications began to pour in from the old employees of the Lowell Tannery and when operations actually started on the second of March, 1905, it was a source of gratification to the management to find that practically all the key men were former employees of the old firm.

In 1946, on his retirement, Aubrey Davis purchased the former property from the then owners, Mr. And Mrs. Archie Campbell. He retained Mr. and Mrs. Campbell as caretakers and they still live in the original Davis house. Mr. Davis built himself a cottage on the property. After his death, his son Bruce enlarged this small house into a permanent family home. The property is fittingly named "MEMORY ACRES"

HISTORY OF THE CURTIS FARM - A CROWN DEED FARM

By

Mrs. Fred Curtis

The first settlers to settle on the Curtis Farm, located in Lot 9, Con. 4, King Township, were Mr. William Curtis and his wife, Mary Ann Germain, both English descent, Grandparents of Mr. Frederick William Curtis who holds the Crown Deed.

They were married February 26, 1857. Mr. Curtis bought the 100 acre farm from the Crown May 18, 1857, at a cost of 62 lbs., 10 shillings. That same summer the first house was built at the back of the farm. It was built of logs. Later the farm was cleared and a barn built close to the house.

Farming was started by the use of oxen. There were several beech trees on the farm so from that it was named "BEECH MOUNT FARM"

Mr. and Mrs. Curtis had five of a family and spent their life on the farm until retirement age, when they built a home in King, and lived there, 113 Keele St. S., until their death.

Their son, Arthur William Lonsdale Curtis, took over the farm, in the year 1891.

On February 24, 1892, he married Annie Cicely Ball. The house that still stands was built in the year 1861, and was the birth place of Arthur William Lonsdale Curtis, the father of Frederick William Curtis, Mary Isobelle (Mrs. Ralph Burns) and Josephine Beatrice (Mrs. James Wells) all of whom reside in King City at the present time.

Mr. Curtis did mixed farming. The hydro was installed in both the house and barn in the year 1928. The telephone, known as the King Line, later changed to King and Vaughan line, was installed in the year 1908.

Frederick William Curtis worked the farm with his father. In the year 1940, April 17, at the age of 78, Mr. William Curtis died. The farm was willed to his wife, Annie Cicely Curtis. Frederick William Curtis then worked the farm for his mother.

On June 11, 1941 he married Annie Roberta Ferguson, who came as a bride to the farm. On August 5, 1944, after a lengthy illness, Mrs. Annie Cecely Curtis died. At this time Mr. Frederick William Curtis inherited the farm, stock and implements.

Up until this time a dug well back of the barn watered the stock, and a dug well at the house supplied the house. In 1945 a well was drilled at the back of the barn and water installed in the house and the barn. A bathroom was put in the house.

The barn was a bank barn, stableing underneath and barn above. Up until five years before selling the farm it was all mixed farming. The last years some dairying.

In 1892 taxes on this property were about \$20.00 per year. In 1955 the last year for this farm to be in the Curtis name, the taxes were \$185.00

In March 1955 the farm was sold, to the King Cross Estate.

April 20, 1955 a sale was called and stock and implements disposed of.

Mr. & Mrs. Frederick William Curtis moved to King City, 143 Humber Crescent. They retained the Crown Deed to the farm.







Handwritten text at the bottom of the page, possibly a signature or a note, written in cursive. The text is partially obscured by horizontal lines at the very bottom of the page.