

STRANGE STORE AND POST OFFICE



Robert Rutherford purchased Strange Store in 1895 from a Mr. Brown.

Mr. Rutherford kept bees and sold the honey in his store. In 1922 the house and store were wiped out by fire. This building was replaced by a new house and a store. The store was confined to one room in the new home.

Strange store closed in 1941.

There was also a Post Office for many years and no doubt would be closed about 1926 when Rural Mail Delivery came to Road mail boxes.



Robert Rutherford and his model-T Ford Car taken 1916 in front of Presbyterian Manse - Strange.

WILLIAMSTOWN - STRANGE.

In 1840 William or Squire Wells purchased 100 acres, east half of Lot 9 Con. 6 King, from his father-in-law, Richard Machell, who had received the crown grant in 1839. It was Mr. Wells' ambition to start a town, so he built a store south of laneway in 1841 on the 6th concession road. Some years later he moved the store a few rods north of the site which it occupied until the store and house were burned in 1922.

In the 1840's four other houses were built, one of which included another store which was short lived and torn down in 1880. Mr. Wells' hopes of a town were shattered when the railroad went through King City in 1853. Mr. Wells then took over the farm until 1885 when it was sold to Alexander MacMurchy.

Robert Rutherford purchased the store in 1895 from a Mr. Brown. Mr. Rutherford kept the store well stocked with groceries, hardware, boots, etc. and in exchange hides, calfskins, wool, butter and eggs were brought in. At one time whiskey sold at two shillings a gallon and a tin cup hung on a barrel in the back of the store. A bakery existed one time in the history of the store and the Rutherford daughters carried on a Millinery and Dressmaking business in the home.

This town was first called Williamstown and changed to Strange about 1879, named after Dr. Strange M.D. of Aurora Conservative Leader in North York Riding. The first Post Office in King Township was called King and Donald (Chief) McCallum was it's postmaster on Lot 8, west half of Concession 5. Later the Post Office was at Strange Store and Post Masters were Mowat, Gillies, Chandler, Brown and Rutherford.

Early records state that Francis Attridge established a carriage making business in 1883. Buggies and wagons were made downstairs and a paint shop was upstairs at the east half of Lot 6, Concession 6. Sam Carson, besides being a rural mail carrier, also carried on the wheelwright business. His grandson was the late Jack Carson of Hollywood fame.

Brick yards have been reported on Lots 7, 8 and 9 west side of the 6th Concession.

Daniel O'Brien established a blacksmith shop in 1854 at Lot 7, west half Concession 5. Later he and his eldest son, Joseph carried on their business at the corner of Lot 5, Con. 6 until Joseph's retirement in 1935. Mr. Joe O'Brien or Spurgeon, as nearly everyone called him, kept

posted on all the local news at the "Old Forge".

Mrs. Joseph O'Brien was the first Laskay Women's Institute President.

Malcolm McMillan was the last reported Smithy to operate in a log shop at Lot 10, west half of Concession 5.

Some local names for individual places in and around Strange included - Vinegar Hill, Velvet Hill, Egypt and Scripture Town.

Lot 7, east half of Concession 6, now known as Hawthorn Hills Farm can claim three notable people who have made their mark in the world.

Rev. Herbert Archibald first went out to India in 1913 and spent twenty-seven years in missionary service in that country. Mr. Archibald passed on to greater service in 1966.

Dr. W. W. Baldwin, who graduated in 1930's has been the local practitioner in Brooklin, Ontario, since his graduation, and became the 80th President of the Ontario Medical Association in 1959-60.

Mrs. D. C. Henderson, now residing on the Hawthorn Hills Farm, has had a profound interest in Christian education and refugee work, also a very avid worker of the United Nations Association, Toronto and York Branches.

Mrs. Henderson, a world traveller, a scholar and teacher of a Universal language -- "Esparanto" is also an author of books, including "Greater Glory" and "People Have Power".

PIONEER DAYS

One of the few farms on the 6th of King, still farmed by a descendant of the pioneers, is Lot 15, Con. 6 farmed and owned by Donald Gillies. He has the crown deed that his Grandfather received when he bought the farm in 1850.

The first owner of this land, Lawrie Gillies, was a Scotch immigrant, who had saved enough money from herding cattle in Scotland, to buy a passage to Canada. He started on foot to buy land to settle, walking from Richmond Hill, to find the land, Lot 15, Con. 6.

He started clearing the bush land and lived alone here for two years, then married Jane Craik, a native of Scotland. They had a hard, lonely life, as pioneers did, plenty of hard work and not much money, but plenty of ambition.

The woods were full of wild animals and the supply of food was replenished by walking to Richmond Hill and carrying the groceries home in a pack on the back.

In 1895, the second son, Robert C. Gillies, married and took over the task of clearing and farming this land, where he lived all his life -- 78 years. He died in 1933 and the farm was taken over by his son, Donald.

Lot 16, rear Con. 5 - Gillham Homestead

Mr. George Gillham pioneered the 200 acre farm at Lot 16, Con. 5 (rear) and received the crown grant. The farm later became handed down to Lewis (son), who lived all but nine of his eighty-four years on the homestead. Then his son, William, lived there for about seven years. The Lewis Gillham family lived at an Eversley Farm for seven years, thence retiring to Aurora two years before his death in 1956. Lewis was married to Sarah Jane Ash of Whitchurch Township and they celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversary in 1954.

The following information was given by Wing Commander R. A. Stubbs, who purchased 50 acres of the Gillham farm in 1952 at \$125.00 an acre. The present cement house (40 X 30) was built in 1900 by Lew Gillham. A barn (100 X 40) was built in 1926. There is a cement cistern and a shallow well - stoned. Electricity was installed about 1949. A summer kitchen was renovated with wooden siding in 1926. Ten acres to the north were reforested in 1940 and 4 more acres in 1960. Present acreage - 36 acres in 1960. Taxes in 1950 - \$52.00 -- in 1960 - \$220.00. Name of farm - Wendy Ridge - well named for its location.

KNOLLWOOD FARM

"Knollwood Farm" was acquired and named by the Fraser Grant family in 1936. At times, it has included about 180 acres in the East Halves of Lots 16 and 17 in the Seventh Concession, a few acres in Lot 16 of the Sixth and a stretch of the original Seventh Concession which was "detoured" many years ago to skirt the steel hill over the "watershed" between Lakes Ontario and Simcoe. The lands adjoined "Kelly Lake" and the "New Scotland Sideroad", -so named from the school built in 18 , between the East and West Halves of Lot 16.

The previous owners were several members of the Douglas family, who lived and farmed in the seventh concession. The Grants purchased the East Half of Lot-17, from Clifford Douglas in 1936 and the remainder, at different times, from Frederick William Douglas and his widow, formerly Rose May Jarvis. At that time, the only buildings were a two-story frame house and a stone-and-frame barn on Lot 17, built around the turn of the Century. The wells of those times still serve the properties and the "New Scotland" School; and, conspicuously visible throughout the valleys across to Bolton and the Albion Hills, are the "Hilliard Pines".

Before the Douglas family - and during their earlier tenancies, was an owner of Lot 16, Donald Bowie, by name - who surprisingly disappeared from those parts for a quarter-century, - who cased his rent cheques, ultimately mailed in a Deed to Frederick Douglas, and never returned. About that time Mr. Douglas bought the West half of Lot 17 from his wife's (Jarvis) family. Meanwhile, early in this century, East-Seventeen was acquired by one Joseph Parker, a master carriage builder of Oshawa, who turned to farming because he couldn't believe in the future of the automobile.

In the 'thirties, the Grants renovated and enlarged the farm-house and barn and built the steel (Peatty-Brothers) riding-stable, riding-arena, and implement shed in Lot 17, now (1953) owned by Mr. Laurence J. McGuiness. The buildings were erected by the "Saints". -those then famous brothers, Art and Len Saint. As a sample of those remarkable master-craftsmen of King Township,- on Monday they started the excavation for a 110-feet long four-level Council standard steel implement-shed, finished it Friday with time to build a complete new roof on the farm-house and moved their equipment in time to start a new job across the Township on Monday morning. These were giants in the land in those days!

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During the years 1936 to 1953, Lot 17 was used for (a) mixed farming, including various crops; and riding-trails (b) raising, pasturing and training saddle-horses and ponies, and for breeding and pasturing sheep, and for poultry. The "Knollwood" part of Lot 16 was - and still is - used for the family's living cabins, garage, swimming pool, and in the Easterly part, for the home of the farm-manager, and a composite steel barn housing box-stalls, tack-room, garage and storage. Latterly the "ponds" by the side-road have been cleaned, enlarged, graded and seeded. Telephone and electric wires have been put underground. And throughout both lots many thousands of trees were planted, - most of them now full grown - for soil-conservation and for beautifying the landscape. In 1953, Lot 17, including all of the riding-stables, etc., was sold to Mr. McGuinness, who now maintains it for his new residence and his farm.

Lands and buildings of King Township would be dull statistics without the "Stories" of its people. For instance, no sketch of these parts should omit "The Kellys", that amazingly durable father-and-son team, - Archibald, Sr. and Jr., - who named "Kelly Lake", lived by it from the Grant by the Crown until 1935. They almost spanned three centuries and left only one registration on the title, - the will from father to son. Their housekeeper, Margaret Mitchell, survived briefly to eighty-eight. The Kellys told the Douglasses that they had to clear some of the hills for farming because so much of the valley was covered by small lakes and streams. Anti-Conservationists take notice!

Another stalwart character and next door neighbour of "Knollwood" was Mark Gillham, who worked several farms as a widower in his eighties. He fell and broke a hip in his stable yard in sub-zero temperature, was found the next day living on frozen eggs, threw off frost bite and pneumonia and was preparing to go home, when he died of a heart attack.

"Knollwood" Farm throughout its twenty-five years and through three generations has been guided and "cared-for" by its two bachelor "originals", - Clifford Douglas and Victor Cull of the 5th Concession, New Kinghorn. Clifford Douglas died in 1965.

This information was prepared and given to us February 10, 1961 by Mr. W.G. Fraser Grant, 9 Highland Ave. Toronto 1,. In his letter he mentions that his wife's Father, was born in Lloydtown (The Hon. H.C. Schofield) where his Father was a practicing physician and surgeon. He died (Dr. Schofield) as a young man and his family moved to Toronto.



The Marshall re-union at Duncan McMurchy's on July 1, 1914, at which all were present except Will MacCallum.

Standing at back; left

Celin Campbell holding Ruth (Mrs. Tankard), Mary McMurchy (Marwood), Aubrey Marshall, Mrs. Albert Marshall (Jenny), Albert Marshall, Frank Marshall, Mrs. Frank Marshall (Florence), Duncan McMurchy, Mrs. Art Marshall (Elizabeth), Art Marshall.

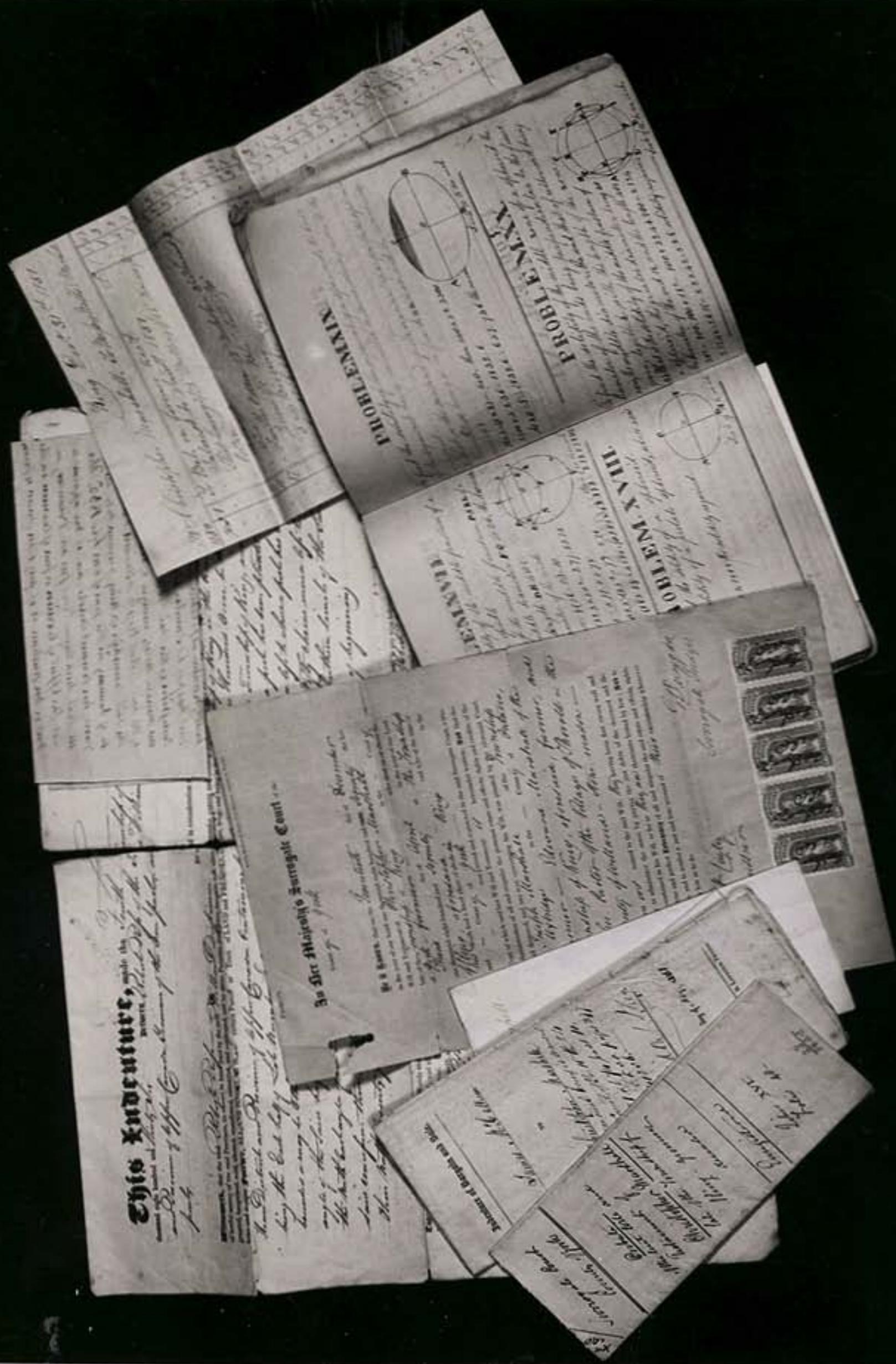
Seated; (left to right)

Mrs. Celin Campbell (Ella), holding Marshall Campbell, Mrs. Neil MacCallum (Louise) holding Irene (Mrs. Geo. Beome) and Kenneth, Edward Marshall, Mrs. Ed. Marshall (Margaret Carson), Mrs. Duncan McMurchy (Annie)

Front Row:

Raymond Marshall, Margaret MacCailum, Marjorie McMurchy, Evelyn MacCallum (Mrs. Ken Jones) Aileen Marshall (Mrs. Jack McDonald) Marshall McMurchy

Absent; Will Mac Callum.



This collection of papers is in possession of Mrs. Irene (Marshall) Folliott, and had belonged to her Grandfather and great-grandfather. The geometry workbook was compiled in 1849 and is in excellent condition. It was highly recommended by a Notary Public - J.M. Walton.

THE MUD HOUSE

I sipped Chinese tea and ate little cakes as I looked across miles of green woodland when recently I had the opportunity of visiting with Blair Acton Burroughs, probably the only woman in Canada who has built her own house, not from bricks, cement or lumber, but constructed of earth from her own property. This unique process is called 'pise de terre,' which means earth rammed between forms until it is hard as stone and rings like a bell.

Miss Burrows had lived in the city for a number of years, when a friend told her about a farm for sale near King. She had not wanted as large a piece of land, but 'just a little plot of land somewhere in this wide Dominion'. On a snowy day she came up to look at it. Soon after, the 50-acre property became hers. It is located on the sixth concession, north of the King sideroad. The problem now arose about constructing a house both durable and economical.

Examples of earth dwellings had been examined in Normandy and Spain, where Hannibal's walls still stand also houses in the Valley of Rhone which are 600 to 900 years old. Miss Burrows found another advantage of the pise de terre construction is its warmth. It prevents absorption of heat in summer and cold in winter. It is much dryer and warmer, and on account of dry earth absorbing moisture, conditions its rooms, which other building materials do not do. After consulting many books on the subject, she decided to build her own house.

Miss Burrows, a carpenter and two boys, set to work in June 1937. All were skeptical but determined. Many vicissitudes interrupted work, such as the carpenter being called on jury duty which lasted five weeks, but the main room was completed by the time snow fell. This was essential as work must be done in dry weather with dry earth.

The fireplace and chimney went up first, along with the foundation, both made of stone from the property. Then forms were set up for the earth. When these were taken down, Miss Burrows went along the wall poking earth into the holes left by the bolts. The walls are twenty inches thick. Trim is wood from the property and the beams in the living room are B.C. fir. Walls were whitewashed according to a government recipe, using skim milk and shutters were painted a French blue. Trim was given two applications of used crankcase oil, coloured with a little lampblack and yellow ochre, creating a deep, rich brown colour. At first the roof was thatched, but when Miss Burrows took up permanent residence, she had the roof shingled in pale grey.

The surprise came when I remarked on the beautiful setting of

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the house among fir trees and how it fitted in so well with the landscape. Miss Burrows told me that it had been a bare hill and all the trees and shrubs had been planted. During the war, she had grown potatoes at the bottom of the hill, but since the new road went through, she had let the underbrush grow up so the view wouldn't be marred by the sight of cars racing along the road. However, the old road remains, curving in front of her house, banked on each side by silver birch and dense foliage. This was, at one time, the road Governor Simcoe used to travel from Toronto to the north, as is explained in the book 'French Regime in Canada'.

"Main advantage in building one's own home," said Miss Burroughs, "is the psychological satisfaction of using materials from your own land and actually putting up walls and trim yourself. Then you know exactly what goes into the house and as you sit back in front of a blazing fire in the stone fireplace, you can remember the stages of building with its joy, sorrows and setbacks and then, the final joy of completion."

After the completion of her home, Miss Burrows wrote a booklet for the Department of Lands and Forests called "Pise de Terre, Rammed Earth Construction", which made it possible for anyone interested in building a home of this type of house to have advantage of her experience. Many houses in South Dakota have been built in this manner because natural resources are plentiful.

As I left the cool interior of the house and ventured in the heat of the afternoon, a breeze blew the delicate fragrance of fir and pine which mingled with the smell of mint as I walked across the plants creeping in profusion over the stone walk. I turned again to wave goodbye and again viewed the white house, set in lovely green trees, with curving stone walks and rustic fences, living again as I drove away, my interesting afternoon with a charming person.

(This article was written by Beverly Smith for one of the local papers).