

LINTON-BELL'S LAKE

As one travels up Highway 27, only those descendants of early pioneers will remember that there once was a settlement of some twenty farms built on the Ridges of King.

This is an area that lies on the highest point of land that runs east and west through King Township, dividing the source of water that runs to Lake Simcoe on the north and Lake Ontario on the south. Around the turn of 1800, the settlement spread to both sides of the dividing road and each of the first twenty families were busy clearing their land and building homes of log out of the dense wilderness.

For many years the early settlers lived in close proximity to each other and thus many intermarriages, having to combat Indians, wild animals and the elements of Nature. However, from their efforts, many more settlers migrated to this area.

One of these was John Lynn, who had come in 1828 from Knochinturn, Ireland, with his young wife to Glengarry County.

In 1848, he migrated to King Township and purchased lot 28, Concession 8 from Joshua Winn for the sum of fifteen hundred dollars and later on lot 20, a corner acre for five hundred and sixty dollars from the farm of John Spencer.

Today, lot 28 is the lovely estate of Mr. and Mrs. John Castel, with a portion of the original brick house still standing and the old silo converted into a windmill guest house. John Lynn divided his land into sections for his sons, Joseph, William and John Jr.

Joseph, in 1858, married his childhood sweetheart, Annie McBain and before they had completed their home, the government asked to establish a post office.

Joseph enlarged his home to accomodate the post office as well as a small store. The store carried yard goods, wearing apparel, sundries and groceries and many of the local farmers brought their cattle to drink at the store's water trough.

On July 1st, 1858, the new post office was offically opened and Joseph Lynn became the first Postmaster and according him the honour due-named it "Linton."

It remained a meeting place and as the mail in the early days came by stage coach, a depository for incoming passengers as well as post office.

By 1890, Charles Duke, succeeding Major Stevenson as stage driver, came regularly with mail, freight and passengers by way



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of Aurora, Kettleby, Pottageville, Schomberg, Lloydtown and ended up his route at Linton. This was terminated in 1902, due to coming of the train to Kleinburg, where mail was left and picked up by wagon and later obsolete in the inauguration of rural mail delivery in 1916. The old post office during the intervening years, had been entrusted to Mrs. Francis Lynn, daughter of Joseph and was closed forever in 1916, with only the store remaining to serve local residents. All the buildings were demolished and nothing remains today of this historic site, which served to carry the Royal Mail, but a small house built there by Orton Lynn, a direct descendant.

The community attended various churches in neighbouring hamlets or the newly built ninth line Presbyterian Church, sometimes called "Linton Church." This piece of land, on which the church sits, was given to the community by James Stewart, being a corner piece of land off his own farm. The Parishoners volunteers worked diligently to build it and the first charge was taken by a minister called "Preacher Adams." The deed for this church is still included in the sheepskin deed for the Stewart farm and is recorded as a free land.

The church still stands, although not used today as a house of worship. Many of the settlers are buried at Bell's Lake Cemetery and it is believed to have received the first committal as early as 1858. The old stones are defaced and illegible and many set aside for posterity, even though many of the graves have been moved to other sites.

However, when the church was active, the congregation donated twenty five hundred dollars to be used for perpetual care care for their cemetery. Today it is still solvent by sound investment and interest remunerations, being administered by a Toronto lawyer.

The children were first educated at S.S. #5-New Scotland School (sixteenth sideroad between the seventh and eighth concessions) and later in 1894, when S.S. #18, was built by volunteer help north of Bell's Lake. At first a log school existed to be later joined by a new brick school house. Many generations were educated here and will no doubt have fond memories of the many teachers who taught them their ABC's. To name but a few such as ; Misses Beatty, Norman Pinkerton, Leonard, Jacks, Holdam, Riddel and Miss Courtney (Mrs. T. Kelly.) The old school as were many others, was demolished in the spring of 1968, having been closed since the new school opened in Nobleton in 1904.

Continuing down the highway to Bell's Lake, one can scarcely believe that this area was once the thriving center of two saw mills, a grist and chopping mill as well as a licensed hotel. In 1870, it was known only as Kingsville, and later as Lock Erin and Bell's Lake..

In the early spring, it was not uncommon after the snow had gone to see the whole lake loaded with logs ready for the mill. All the mills at that time were operated by steam power. The "Iron Block" was the section of road that went over the bridge towards the lake and mills, named after a coloured man, Frank Irons, who lived on the road. Many of the older residents can still recall being left here with Mrs. Irons (white woman) to wait for their parents and she, much to their dismay, pacifying them with bread and blackstrap molasses.

The hotel was built in 1890 by a man named Bell and was later owned by Bob Watson. It was built of wood and very close to the road, so close in fact, that the steps of the verandah extended down on to the roadway. It was capable of handling overnight guests, with a dining room, open bar and a livery to feed and bed horses. Many gala occasions were held here, but none as memorable as the yearly event of the twenty fourth of May. On this date, all the local farmers, drove their sheep to the lake and for the reward of a glass of whiskey, the hired hands washed them down. When the bar licence was revoked, the hotel remained to serve guests and was demolished in 1912 and its lumber was used to build two apartments in the Weston area of Toronto. For when progress facilitated new methods, the mills became obsolete and were soon demolished. Many owners have since operated a business at the lake, one being Ray Boak, who ran successfully for many years, a store and dance pavilion. Even, this day, one can still find a store and tourist resort in operation.

Medical assistance came from the nearby villages and these dedicated doctors journeyed to administer to the sick, by means of horse and buggy or in winter by sleigh.

Some may recall the services rendered of such kindly men as Doctore Burton and Robinson or after 1910, Doctors Kay and Dillane.

As a point of interest, the old road curved dangerously close to the lake and by the efforts of the Women's Institute was changed in 1950 to its present location.

Many of the old farms have changed hands many times, but there are a few that still remain in the family and one can still find descendants living in the area of the first settlers.

Now, as I drive up highway 27, I shall be ever mindful of the courage and hard work of those first settlers and of the many historical sites that once existed and shall be proud to have played a small part in comprising its history for future generations to read.

-Pauline Maher