

CLAREMONT



PAST and PRESENT

CLAREMONT

PAST AND PRESENT

*Historic Sketch written
upon occasion of the
CENTENNIAL
CELEBRATION*



June 10th, 11th, 12th, 1938

Claremont—Past and Present



THE Village of Claremont with a population of approximately five hundred, is situated in the extreme north of Pickering Township, Ontario County, about thirty miles north-east of Toronto, on the Canadian Pacific Railway. Long before it became a village, Joseph and Joshua Wixon, of English descent, coming from New York, U.S.A., were the first pioneer settlers of the vicinity, settling on the east and west side of the Brock Road, north of the ninth concession. It is said that Joseph cleared about four hundred acres on the west side, between the ninth concession and the townline of Uxbridge. He built his home just north of where the road bends to the east, half way between the four corners of the village and the present railway station. His

brother Joshua took up land on the east side of the Brock Road, his property extending from the C.P.R. on the north to the ninth concession on the south and half a mile east. It is believed that their daughter Ruth (Mrs. Sylvanus Sharrard), was the first white child born in the northern part of Pickering Township, (G. M. Forsyth's farm.) The land on the south-west corner of the corners was originally owned by John Hamilton and that on the south-east by Alexander Spears.

The Courage of the Pioneers.

It must have required considerable courage to settle with their families in a new country such as Canada was at that time, there being no one to welcome them, and no clearance large enough to build their future homes. There were no saw-mills from which to obtain lumber, no stores to furnish them with food, clothing, and other necessities, no doctor to call in time of sickness, and no minister to preach the Gospel, except on rare occasions. Their homes were built of logs (walls, floor and roof), a team of oxen being used to haul the fallen timbers; their furniture was made with the axe, saw, draw-knife and hammer; their food was principally game and fish; and their

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clothing was almost exclusively home-made. The spinning-wheel and loom were common articles of furniture. For many years the grain was pounded into flour in the hollow of a hardwood stump.

The First Municipal Meeting.

There is on record that a municipal meeting was held in 1811, where the officers for the township were chosen. Joseph Wixon and his brother-in-law were appointed to represent the north of Pickering Township. We have no outstanding records of the village until in the early 1830's. About that time the immigrants were arriving in Canada at the rate of from 30,000 to 40,000 a year. It was a journey by sailing vessel of twelve to thirteen weeks from the United Kingdom to Quebec. From Quebec the immigrants were transferred by small boats to Montreal and again their bundles and hide-covered trunks were loaded on Durham boats for the journey up the St. Lawrence from Montreal to Kingston. They could then go either by boat or stage coach to Muddy York. For about ten years the population increased rapidly — the lands were quickly being cleared and settled, and it is said that during that decade there was more rapid and extensive development than at any other time.

Early Families.

Many of the families settled in Pickering Township. In 1832, the Michells, Tracys and Gosticks came to Canada taking up land between the eighth and ninth concessions of Pickering. W. H. Michell, having a business education, did most of the conveyancing for the settlers which necessitated walking all the way to Toronto for the registration of the different documents. He always carried a sword cane for protection. He became the first reeve of the township on the organization of the municipality in 1850. For a number of years he resided on his homestead, then came to the village where he continued his conveyancing business till he lost his eyesight.

The First Merchants.

John C. Michell was the pioneer merchant of Claremont neighbourhood. In 1844 he commenced business a half mile south of the four corners on the east side of Brock Road where

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MRS. SYLVANUS SHARRARD

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he dispensed of his wares for a number of years. In 1847 on the south-west corner of the intersection, the stone building at present occupied by Alfred Mole, was erected by John Hamilton and leased to Thomas Noble who dealt in groceries and other wares. The place was then spoken of as Noble's Corners.

Hotel History.

About the same time a log hotel was constructed and operated by Mr. O'Brien, which was later purchased by Mr. Dowswell. Just a few years later Mr. Dowswell deemed it advisable, in order to supply the needed accommodation, to replace the old building with the larger frame structure which he lived in for a number of years until his death. Since that time it had many proprietors and remained standing until last summer (1937) when it was destroyed by fire, at which time it was owned by Mr. Thomas Sanderson.

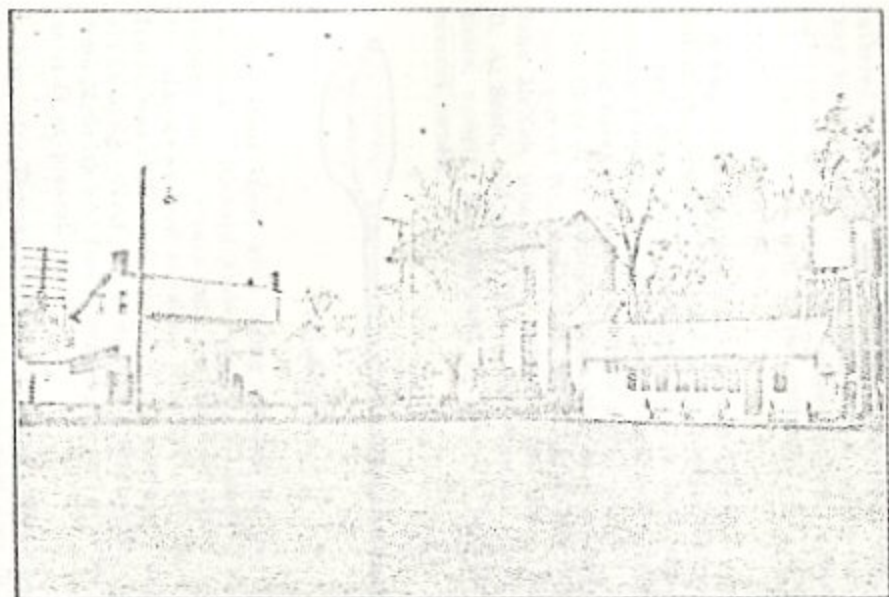
Claremont Named—Post Office Started.

As yet the hamlet had no Post Office. The community, thinking they could no longer do without such a necessary institution, began the consideration of a suitable name, for the place had never had an official appellation. Claremont, as suggested by W. H. Michell, was finally chosen, after Clérmont in France, where his early ancestors had lived. In 1851 it was so named by appointment of Queen Victoria. Mr. T. Noble became the first Postmaster and held the position till 1853 when William and John McNab from Scotland, bought out Mr. Noble's business and John McNab became the next Postmaster and held the position for forty-four years. In 1855 or 1856, the partnership was severed, William's place being taken by another brother, Duncan. The following year they purchased land across the road and moved a frame building from Greenwood, where they carried on business till 1875. This building still stands and today is used as a Post Office.

Storekeeping and Shopping.

In 1851 John C. Michell built the new brick store now occupied by A. W. Wilkinson and there transacted his business until his retirement when the McNabs bought it in 1875 to take care of their increasing trade. It was a strenuous business, there being no railway nearer than Pickering village from

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THE STONE STORE, THE BRICK STORE,
and a View of the BOWLING GREEN

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where all their merchandise was hauled by horse vehicles. Business was largely transacted on twelve months' credit. They handled all kinds of farm produce. Women came to the store dressed in their sunbonnets and long white aprons, full-gathered to the belt that fastened at the back with huge bows. They brought butter, eggs, lard, tallow, tallow candles, maple sugar, cured meats, yarn, and homespun cloth. (Many a blanket and bedspread are still in the community.) They were exchanged for groceries, etc.

A wagon load of eggs was hauled to Toronto every few days, and in one season it is said seven tons of butter were sent. It meant many hard working hours to have this amount of produce properly packed in improvised boxes, there being no packing cases or cartons in those days. In 1899 they retired, when three of the younger generation took over the business—Peter, son of William McNab, and Charles and Peter, sons of John McNab, who carried on for a few years. They sold to D. A. Scott, and since then it has changed ownership several times, namely: Mr. Bertrand, J. Mitchell, L. Tucker, and the present owner.



Warming Pan

The stone store, after being vacated by the McNabs, was occupied by Richard Stokes and C. V. Michell, later by R. P. Hopper and R. Stokes until the death of Mr. Stokes, and then Mr. Hopper carried on alone till 1897. Mr. Hopper's brother David, was the last to carry on the mercantile business in the old building. Next it was used as a blacksmith, for a time, by John McGrath and finally remodelled and used for a pool-room as it is at present.

For years Thomas Gibbons carried on a Flour and Feed store and later groceries in the little shop next door to J. Brignall's barber shop. He was succeeded by J. S. Farmer.

The Grist Mill and Lumber Mill.

The first grist mill was owned by Joshua Wixon, situated a little east of the village. John C. Michell operated one for a



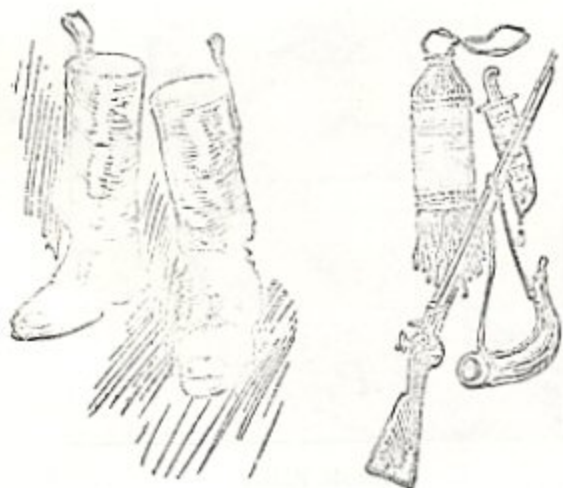
JOHN MICHELL
Claremont's First Storekeeper.

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number of years half a mile south of the village, right near his store. James Russell managed a flour mill and did a flourishing business just opposite the present school. John Barry had a saw mill on the west side of the Brock Road, almost opposite the Michell mill, where thousands of feet of lumber were cut and disposed of annually. He moved to North Claremont later in life and his son-in-law Dan Forsyth continued the business for some time.

Tannery, Shoemakers, Foundry.

Wm. Beal owned a tannery by the little stream on the property now owned by Mrs. Thomas Neal, on the west side of the Brock Road. Another tannery was situated near the site of the present hardware store and was managed by Dougald Taylor, later by Mr. Pengelly.



Manly Equipment

In the early 70's the shoemakers were Dougald Taylor and John Palmer, Sr., followed by John Palmer, Jr., Shackel Palmer, William Reith, Magnus Henderson, Henderson, J. S. Farmer, J. Jobbitt, J. W. Gregg and W. M. Palmer.

The foundry, which stood for many years, one block east of the four corners, was operated in turn by James Forfar, C. V.

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JOHN McNAB,
Claremont's Postmaster for forty-four years.

Michell, Stephen Powell, Robert Ward, and Dodswell & Saunders, when it was eventually burned and never rebuilt.

The Maker of Coffins.

Among the woodworkers were Dan. Gerow, who it is said made many of the coffins out of cedar for the pioneers departing this life. His son George carried on the carpentering as well as a pump factory for a number of years. He was succeeded by Lyman Pilkey who proved to be a successful business man.

The Carriage Shop Changes Hands

William Dowswell owned and operated a carriage shop situated where Jack Brignall's barber shop and pool-room now stands. George Bundy, joiner, cabinetmaker and undertaker, kept a furniture store for many years and was succeeded later by J. B. Beal.



Wooden Spoon



Skillet

Other Business Men.

Claremont in the early days was well supplied with blacksmiths, the first one being Thomas Murray, 1851-1866. Then came James McCausland, Alex. Morgan, Henry Thompson, George Graham and his son William, F. M. Cooper and James Harvey (North Claremont.)

Tailoring was a paying business in the early life of the village, ready-made clothing being unheard of at that time. The known ones are William Watson, T. Johnson, F. Farmer, Mr. Spaulding and W. Rawson.

Robert Bryan was the only tonsorial artist for a number of years.

The early butchers were Peter Rumahr and his son Sherman.

In contracting business were William Leaper, James Paterson and Thomas Paterson, as carpenters, and Jonas Rawson, Richard Gentle, Albert Pawson, George Found, Harry Found, William Anderson and Albert Mantle as masons.

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TOMMY THOMPSON and PETER McNAB, Sr.

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For a few years Henry Bundy carried on a printing business in the Bundy block.

The tinsmithing business was carried on by Joshua Bundy for a number of years and then by Alex. Dowsell, Chas. Sargent, and F. M. Cooper.

The Graham Horses.

This little story would not be complete without mentioning Richard Graham and sons who held a leading place in the breeding and handling of horses. No name is better known among the stock breeders than the name Graham, and the winning of many prizes, championships and grand championships has brought much recognition of Claremont village throughout the province.



Betty Lamp



Candle Mould



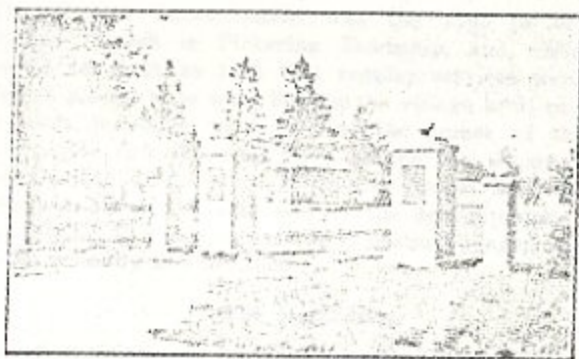
Candlestick

To-day Nelson Wagg has become well known for his ability and good judgment in importing and handling horses. Much credit is due him for owning such outstanding horses as were exhibited by him at C.N.E., and Royal Winter Fair of 1937, and securing six championships.

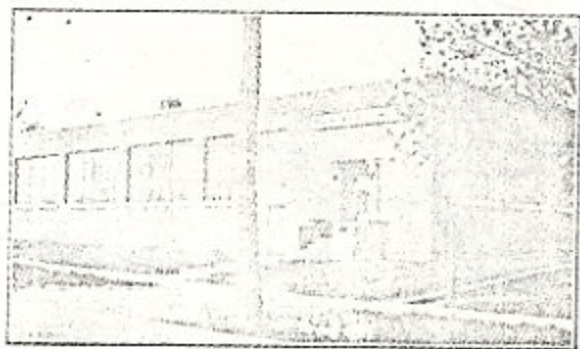
George Stokes supplied the vicinity with vegetables and plants from his well kept greenhouse.

Thomas Dunn, a Claremont resident, held the position of Township auditor for over thirty years as well as doing a great deal of conveyancing and was personally known throughout the township.

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PARK GATE.



H. G. McINTYRE LTD., FACTORY

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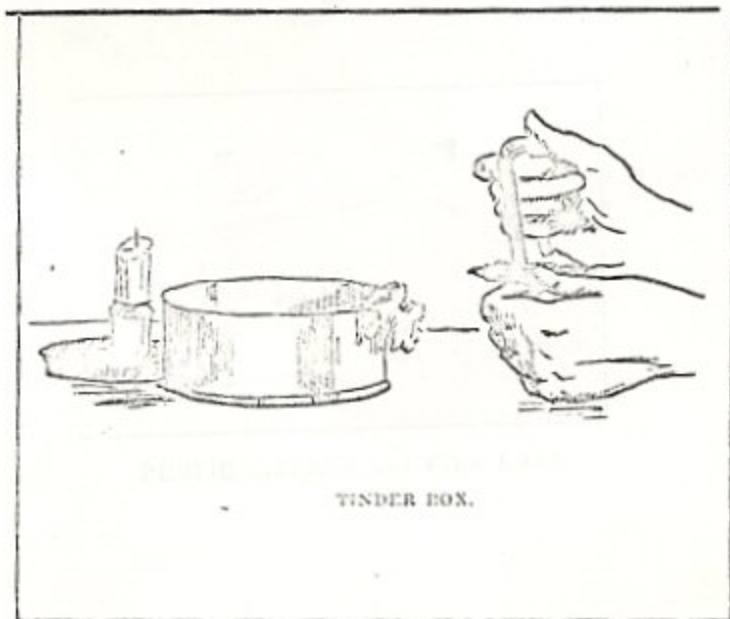
Ira Powell sold agricultural implements.

Churches—Baptist.

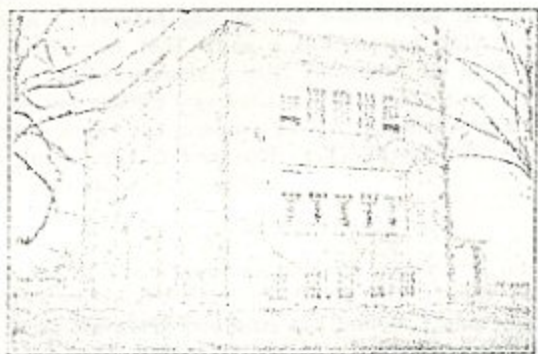
The Baptist Denomination was the first to organize a Christian Church in Pickering Township, and while records show as far back as 1821 that regular services were held at different places, none were held in the village until early in the 30's when meetings were held at the homes of the people. Early in the 60's the need for a church was apparent and in 1866, October 28th, the new Baptist chapel was opened for public worship and is still used by the denomination. Records show that G. P. Frise was the first pastor engaged at a salary of \$250 annually and firewood.

The Methodists.

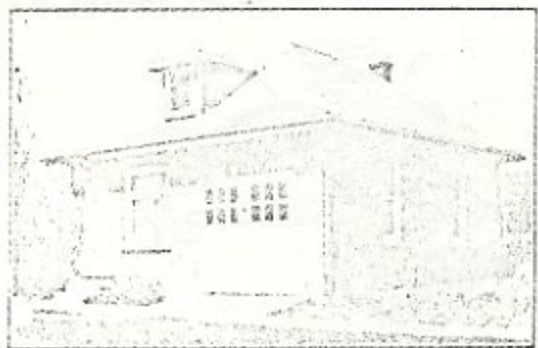
The first Wesleyan Methodist services in Claremont were held in Forfar's planing mill. The first church was built in



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CLAREMONT SCHOOL



PUBLIC LIBRARY and FIRE HALL

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1853 on the lot where Mr. McCullough now resides and was used by the two Methodist congregations after union, till the erection of the present church in 1889. Records of the Primitive Methodism date back to the early 40's when those of that belief of Claremont and district worshipped in a log schoolhouse at Bethel till 1851 when a church was built on the same lot where Bethel cemetery still remains. In 1866-67 a Primitive Methodist church was built in Claremont just west of the four corners under the ministry of Mr. Roadhouse and was used until the union when it was sold to N. Burton who converted it into a harness shop and dwelling.

The Presbyterians.

Those of the Presbyterian faith chose the lot south of the village where the original manse still stands and is occupied by Miss Margaret Graham, and built a frame church under the leadership of Rev. John Baird. It was used for regular services until 1876 when the brick church on the east side of the Brock Road was constructed, and used regularly until the union of the two Christian bodies of Methodists and Presbyterians in 1920. It was sold to be converted into a Community Hall. Rev. A. McLellan was the last minister before union and was



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chosen to continue his services to the United congregations which he did till his untimely death as the result of an accident in 1932.

Schools

The early pioneers valued education and as soon as possible established schools for the instruction of their children. If the records are to be trusted, education received some attention as early as 1825, but nothing definite is known till 1840 when some teaching was done by several local men in a building near the corner where the old hotel stood. The first school, made of logs, was built on the west corner of the Borland farm with rough planks for seats. The first teacher was Patrick Sheriff, who only taught for a short time, he being dismissed by the trustees as having an undesirable character, and Hiram Smith



MRS. T. GIBBONS,
Claremont's Oldest Resident, aged 93 years.

engaged. The records do not give the salary paid but no doubt it was not very remunerative, as a young lady from Claremont, namely Ellen Tracy (Mrs. W. H. Michell) was engaged to teach Glasgow school according to the following contract and presumably the salaries at that time would be similar.

"Article of agreement made and concluded this day of June

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1835 between Miss Ellen Tracy, School Mistress of the one part and the undersigned on the other part.

Now the conditions of this agreement is such—the said Miss Tracy agrees to teach a school in Forsyth's School House on Lot No. 4, 2nd Concession of Uxbridge—for the term of three months for Six Shillings New York currency per Quarter and board with the scholars of such as wish to have her board with them and those that wish to pay for board she will board her self for five shillings (NYC) per quarter, she will teach reading, writing and sewing and keep such order in her school as she hopes will satisfy her employers—the pay will be required the first day of February, 1835."



Tomahawks



Oaken Basket

The New School

In 1856 it was deemed advisable to build a new school inside the village limits on lot 36 where Mrs. R. Rawson now lives. The contract was let to John C. Michell for £200 and was carefully adhered to. This school, a one-roomed building was used for a number of years till the attendance increasing to well over a hundred, the need for an addition was necessary and services of an assistant engaged. After thirty some years

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of service this school was replaced in 1888 by a three-roomed brick building erected on the same site as the present school. The trustees at the time, W. Scott, D. McNab and George Cooper, received plenty of criticism for the expense of the unused room, but they proved to be far-seeing for in 1909 a Continuation School was added with one teacher, Mr. Hicks.

Leaders of the People.

In a short time another room was necessary, making it a Grade B Continuation School. This has been of great advantage to the young people. Like most rural districts Claremont has produced many outstanding leaders in commerce, politics, education, medicine, religion and others. A goodly number might be mentioned but space does not permit. However, there are three outstanding men—Dr. Fred Tracy, formerly Professor of



Carders



Swift.

Toronto University, and Dr. Donald Rawson, Professor in Saskatchewan University and the late Tom Thompson the distinguished artist who was born on the farm now owned by Morgan Evans.

In 1925 a new school was erected, the former being condemned for use by the Department of Education. The present school is much larger and more adequate for the increased attendance.

Recreation.

As far back as records show there were many forms of amusement namely—taffy-pulls, paring bees, singing schools, dances in the homes, checkers, quoits and cricket. Fishing was a

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favorite pastime indulged in by some of the older folk and it was a common occurrence to see "auld" Tommy Thompson, grandfather of the artist with his old horse and phaeton in company with Peter McNab, Sr. (grandfather of the McNabs and who lived to be 97 years of age), returning from Frenchman's Bay with their day's catch of pike.

The Bands

The first Band was organized in 1875 under the leadership of George Lorimer, consisting of D. Morgan, G. Coates, T. Hopkins, Robert Ward, Josiah Evans, Ed. Evans, E. Booker, T. Stokes, Jas. Evans, Ed. Pugh, F. Farmer, John Gregg and R. J. Howe.

Some years later a second Band was organized under E. W. Evans. Several from the old Band continued with the younger members, namely: John Howe, David Gregg, Thos. Paterson, John Coates, James MacFarlane and Evans Ward.



Leather Pail

Tankard

Baking Pan

Soccer.

Perhaps Soccer has been the most popular game in the village in the last fifty years. In 1885 the first club was organized with John D. Forsyth as captain, William Murdock, treasurer, with Rueben Rawson, W. Michell, Albert Michell, Thos. Johnson, George Burgess, John Morgan, Jas. Underhill, and Robt. Michell as other members. In later years Claremont for two seasons held the championship for South Ontario.

The Skating Rinks

Claremont has had two skating rinks, the first one built by Ira Boyer on the north end of his lot and later a much larger one built by Wm. Leaper, which was popularly patronized by both pleasure skaters and curlers for a number of years.

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The Canadian Pacific Railway.

In 1882-83 the Canadian Pacific Railway Company built a line from Toronto east through Claremont and erected a station one mile north of the Corners, from which the old covered bus carried passengers to and from the village for over twenty-five years. For a number of years Claremont was one of the many centres from which many carloads of livestock were shipped as well as a large amount of freight to and from the surrounding district.

Early Buildings.

Shortly after the line was built John Barry and Alfred Tracy built several houses and later Mr. Barry built a large Public House and store. The store was operated by the late William Henry, later by R. E. Forsyth, followed by L. Pingold. In 1919 the whole block was destroyed by fire.



Broad Axe

When the railway was completed two grain elevators, coal and lime sheds were erected close to the tracks, and operated in turn by T. E. Pugh, Tobias Caster, J. Gregg, T. Condy, and F. Loyst.

Immediately north of the corners was the Standard Bank, later being amalgamated with the Bank of Commerce.

The Medical Doctors.

In the last hundred years Claremont has had several medical doctors. Dr. Hall being the first. Drs. Milne, Ferrier, Eastwood, George Brodie, Kidd, Ralph Brodie and Caldwell. Dr. Caldwell enlisted for service in the Great War and for a time Claremont was without a doctor until 1919 when Dr. Tomlinson moved here and has been practising ever since.

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Veterinaries.

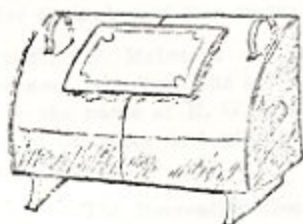
Dr. C. Brodie, graduate of Ontario Veterinary College, began practising in 1875 and continued for over thirty years when he moved to Chazy, New York, where he remained until his death in 1917. Dr. Brewster followed by Dr. Love were the last practising veterinaries.

Fraternal Societies

There have been several lodges, namely: Free Mason, Ancient Order of Workmen, Independent Order of Foresters, Royal Templars, Claremont Circle and Independent Order of Odd-fellows.

The Public Library

Claremont has had a Public Library for nearly half a century, the first the Mechanics' Institute in the building now known as Lewis' Bake Shop. Some years later the books were moved



Oven for Baking Bread in Log Fire



Dash Churn

across the street into a room in the Bundy block under the name of the Public Library Association, and still carried on under the same name in the new combined building of Fire Hall and Public Library. Through the generosity of Miss H. Walker, (who served as librarian for twenty-five years) in the giving of the lot for the erection of the new building, Claremont has an institution of good reputation, and much interest is shown in

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providing the subscribers with good reading. The library is one of the valuable assets of the community to-day.

Claremont Becomes a Police Village.

In 1908 Claremont desiring the right of management of its own local taxation, a by-law was passed by the County Council making it a Police Village. This aroused considerable interest for a time. The first trustees elected were Robert Ward, J. S. Farmer and G. M. Forsyth.

Introduction of Hydro.

In 1927 during the reeveship of G. M. Forsyth, Claremont was desirous of securing Hydro. After many weeks or perhaps months of hard work to secure the required number of signed contracts the line was finally built and in October of that year the current was turned on much to the delight of everyone.

The Bakelite Factory.

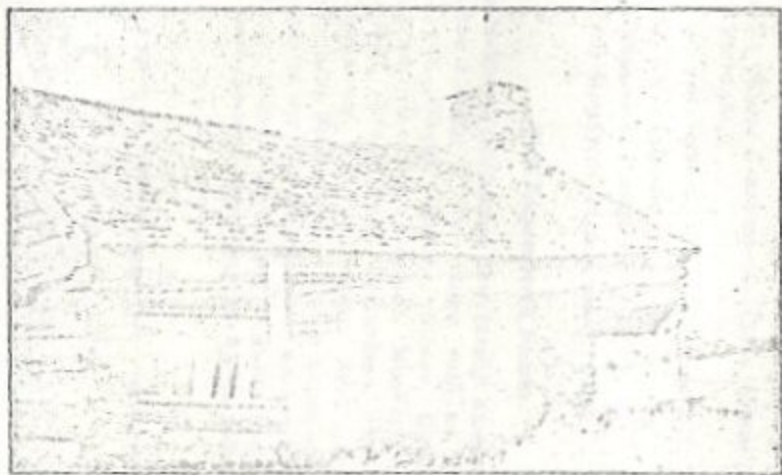
Claremont for some time has had a valuable asset in the small Bakelite factory. This asset was made possible by the energetic and business ability of H. G. McIntyre, who remodelled an old building on his property and has enlarged the plant to its present usefulness. In the past few years he has provided employment for a number of men as well as girls.

Last fall, 1937, Mr. McIntyre sold the business to Col. E. Phillips, of Oshawa, who built the splendid new Bakelite moulding plant under the name of H. G. McIntyre Limited, retaining Mr. McIntyre as manager and giving employment to a much larger number of people.

The Recreation Ground

In 1922 the village purchased five acres of land for a Recreation Ground to be known as Claremont Memorial Park. A few years later after the union of the Presbyterian and Methodist churches, the Presbyterian church was purchased by the Park Board and remodelled for a Community Hall. One of the tireless workers on the Board and present chairman is Dr. N. Tomlinson, who has not only followed his profession successfully, but has always been interested and given his loyal support to everything that is beneficial to the village. It is through

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Typical Log Cabin with Stone Fireplace.

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his efforts along with the secretary, A. Pretty, and other members of the Board, that this Centennial celebration is being sponsored. The Community and Masonic Halls are at the disposal of the public for all entertainments and social events, including badminton.

The Bowling Green.

Another beauty spot is the attractive bowling green where many happy hours are spent.

Claremont To-day

- Grocers—C. A. Overland, Ed. Lewis, H. Boose, A. W. Wilkinson,
H. C. Brooks, Mrs. G. Connor.
Bakeries—Ed. Lewis, Mrs. G. Connor.
Garage and Hardware—C. A. Cooper.
Barbers—H. Porter, J. Brignall.
Beauty Parlours—Mrs. A. Pretty, Mrs. J. Mundell.
Pool Room—A. Brignall, A. Mole.
Post Office and Stationery—A. Pretty.
Woodworking Shop—T. Paterson.
Blacksmith—L. Lye & Son.
Druggist—L. Douglas.
Creamery—H. Davies (successor to F. Evans.)
Painters and Decorators—E. Shirk, J. Briscoe.
Canning Factories—F. Loyst, W. Symes.
Greenhouse—T. Lenson.
Elevator—(flour, feed, lime, coal, etc.), J. Farr.
Horse Breeder and Importer—N. Wagg.
Carpenters—R. Lynn, R. Beelby, W. Thompson.
Apiarists—W. Birkett and A. Mantle.
Optician—R. E. Forsyth.
Clerk of 2nd Division Court—Thomas Gregg.
Butcher—B. Kilpatrick.
Fruits and Vegetables—H. Boose.
Manager of Bank of Commerce—L. Hooley.
Dentist—Dr. N. Smith.

With toiling hands and simple tools
Our grandsires hewed a wilderness of trees,
That smiles to-day with fields of green,
Dotted with happy homes,
Where comfort reigns,
And love-lit eyes look out
Upon a world of wonder.
That was the gift our fathers left,
A gift of industry and sacrifice.

To us the call has come—
What shall we do with this
Our heritage of power and great delight?
Shall we to future sons hand on
A richer, nobler, cleaner world?
Or shall we prodigal our wealth,
And, selfish, throw our tools away
While greed and crime control?

Great is the gift, and great
The field of opportunity.

NOTE—This poem and the pioneer illustrations were kindly loaned
by the author of "On the Shores of Seugog".

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Housefurnishings—Mrs. M. Chandler.

Ministers—Rev. J. Glover (United), Rev. P. D. Augustine (Baptist).

Lawyer—E. Fetzer.

Medical Doctor—Dr. N. F. Tomlinson.

Librarian—Mrs. T. Gregg.

Police Trustees—J. McCullough, W. Thompson, A. Pretty.

Continuation School Teachers—O. Clark (Principal); M. Dickson (Assistant.)

Public School Teachers—E. Hosie (Principal); L. Linton (Asst.)

C. P. R. Agent—I. Dopping.

Home Telephone—A. Pretty.

Bethesda and Stouffville Telephone—E. Shirk.

Well Remembered Names

We would like to mention a few family names well remembered in the history of the village, such as, Bell, Bennett, Brown, Evans, Forgie, Gibbons, Gibson, Gostick, Graham, Gregg, Cooper, Hamilton, Hubbard, MacFarlane, Middleton, Morgan Pilkey, Palmer, Pugh, Richardson, Scott, Strathearn, Forsyth, MacDonald, Ward and Wixon. Such splendid types of pioneers who have bequeathed to us our homes and such splendid memorials as our schools, churches, are not to be forgotten and, no greater respect can we pay to them than to endeavour to uphold their teachings and keep our homes godly.



