



The Story of Benjamin Wilson, Our First Settler.

*As typed by **Blanche Meeker** (Niece of Mary Emma Pickell-Baker) in February, 1966.*

Travel to the Oshawa Harbour and instead of turning West to the lovely picnic grounds, let your feet stray as far as the creek on the East. Looking across the narrow stretch of water, we see, high on a hill, a cemetery. There, in that peaceful, well-kept sanctuary on the farm of Lyman Gifford, lies the mortal remains of Benjamin Wilson, our ancestor. Over his grave is a marble tombstone on which is carved "In Memory of Benjamin Wilson, who died March 5th, 1821, in the 89th year of his age".

He was born in 1732, a New Yorker. Benjamin Wilson went to Putney, Vermont. He had become a Captain in Washington's army in May 8, 1770. Thus he served with the Patriot Army during the Revolution. A few years later he refused to serve in the Vermont Militia, although by then he may have become a lieutenant, and he also refused to hire a substitute as was done in those days.

He was appointed "Surveyor of Highways" in Putney. He was later involved in the great land dispute of Vermont, when New Hampshire and New York both claimed jurisdiction over Vermont. New Hampshire won and Wilson being a New Yorker, probably became embittered and left.

He went to Pennsylvania where he married a widow Lockwood. She seems to have had two husbands previous to Wilson. In each case she accompanied her new husband into some uninhabited section of the country with a view of carving a home from the primeval forest. In one case, in the States, it is said her husband was tortured and brutally murdered by Indians. Wilson had also been married before.

*Wilson and his wife left for Canada, in 1790, bringing with them two small sons and two young men, George Lockwood, no doubt Wilson's stepson, and Ransom. They entered Canada by way of Niagara, where he likely secured a boat to carry them on. Wilson consulted Governor Simcoe as to the best land for settlement and was told of an old abandoned French Fort, a log cabin deserted since 1759, which could be used as a temporary home.

It was on the lake front of Lake Ontario, near what is now Oshawa, one half mile East of the present Port Oshawa. The fort had been called "Cabane de Plomb".

They rowed along the shore while the young men walked, driving a yoke of oxen, and four cows. It was slow travelling, the party in the boat keeping close to the shore, watching the boys with the livestock, and all camping at night on the shore.

We are told that Mrs. Wilson had her churn filled with mince pasties to help feed them on the journey.

When one remembers that at that time there were no roads, nor pathways, we realize it was a brave feat. It may be that the feet of Indians had laid out a trail that they followed. The wilderness between York and the Trent River was practically untraversed by white settlers, prior to the time when these pioneer settlers set down their stakes and laid the foundations for a Canadian home on the Lake Shore, near Port Oshawa.

Wilson chose a spot close to the lake, for that was to be his road for many years. Nearby was a beautiful bluff of 100 acres, now entirely or nearly disappeared. Bluff Point which appeared like a floating island in the lake, was less than 1/2 mile East of Wilson's home. In 1790 Bluff Point had 100 acres. By about 1840 it was reduced to 40 acres, and today almost nothing remains.

In the early days this Bluff Point served as picnic grounds for the early settlers, whose pleasures were simple and for whom life was hard.

Later settlers could tell of fisherman Terrill (Terill) who lived at the Point in later years, when he is said to have cultivated a superior quality of fruit and vegetable, caught many fish, even salmon which ran in the creek. The creek was large then, as saw mills, a brewery distillery, a furniture factory and Farewell's Corners, now Harmony, were all powered by the creek. Terrill was finally driven out by the threat of erosion and he moved to Mara. About the middle of the 1800's the Farewells launched schooners very close to this land. The Caledonia was launched there.

Wilson's land was wooded to the water's edge. In 1791 Augustus Jones began surveying and the coastline Indian Trail in 1793 was transferred into a military road from Kingston to Toronto. In 1796 he applied for a deed to his land. He was given Crown Grant, Lot 4, Broken Front Concession, Whitby Township, Home District by the Order-In-Council from York (Toronto) in 1797.

Wilson's cabin was built about 150 yards from the shore of the lake, approximately halfway between Oshawa Creek and the marsh next East, now known as Farewell's Marsh.

As late as the year 1900 the outline of his buildings was still marked by the remaining stones which had formed the foundations. Farewell's Marsh and the marsh at the South of Oshawa Creek abounded in fur-bearing animals and provided marsh grass which served many purposes. In the fall of the year both creeks were full of salmon which ascended there to spawn, and provided an abundance, both of fresh and salted, for many years. Here Benjamin Wilson lived, worked to clear a little of the forest, hunted food for his family, trapped for furs to trade with the Hudson's Bay Company.

This was the favourite hunting ground of the Missagas, belonging to the Ojibway tribe. Another source said it was the Chippeways. They did not take kindly to the invasion. One roving tribe stole all the settler's provisions, (no doubt the food and tools provided each settler), and since the family were unable to obtain more, nor could they exist during the winter without these provisions, they decided to leave. Col. Farewell tells that the Indians told them to go and never return.

Benjamin and his family travelled East, and near Port Hope (Ganaraski), he met the Indian chief Webakischoe (Wab-bok-ish-ego). This chief ruled the Indians from the Humber to the Bay of Quinte. This chief learned what had happened and told Wilson to return to his cabin. They waited until the Indian was discovered prowling around. The Chief sent him to find the Indians who had stolen the goods and they soon appeared, as they did not dare disobey their chief. They returned to Wilson all the goods and tools that were left. Then the Chief told Wilson to take furs from their packs to make up for the missing goods. He thought Wilson did not take enough so he and Peake, the white agent, "Pulled furs" from the packs until Wilson was more than repaid. The chief then hung a wampum peace belt in Wilson's cabin and instructed the Indians to be friends. They never again touched any of his property and in fact aided him in many ways.

The Red Chief had a remarkable way of showing the Indians what would happen if they stole. He held a bundle of sticks in his hand corresponding to the latest census of the tribe. He stood in solemn attitude before them and taking one stick at a time, cast it violently to the ground. When the bundle was much reduced he seized the balance and hurled them to the ground. His meaning was that unless the Indian treated the white man fairly one by one their little band would be reduced until by some final blow they would all be exterminated.

Each settler was given 200 acres of land and three years provisions from the nearest fort to persuade them to come. Wilson no doubt had to trade in his furs and make the long journey either to Toronto or Niagara for supplies to replace the stolen goods.

Benjamin Wilson was anxious to inform his friends in the southern country of the great new land in which he had now settled and ask them to join him. Lockwood and Ransome decided to return to the States and so carried the letters. As a direct result Beagle and Conklin, makers of spinning wheels and skilled mechanics arrived at the Wilson home. These were the pioneers who laid the foundation for the Industrial Oshawa of today.

In 1795 and later, other friends came among whom may have been Samuel Munger, Silas Jarvis, John McGahan, Anthony Rummerfield and others.

In the month of August 1791, Augustus Jones, Deputy Provincial Surveyor, began to log out in the forest the front line of eleven townships fronting on Lake Ontario, between the Trent River and Toronto. Jones called the Township of Whitby "Norwich" and Darlington was called "Bristol". Jones visited his grandparents frequently when the township was being surveyed in 1791. These visits were often referred to by the wife of the pioneer, who survived her husband by many years.

To Benjamin Wilson and his wife was born in 1793, three years after they founded the settlement, a daughter Nancy, who is believed to be the first white child born between Toronto and Kingston. To the Indians the white baby was a never-ending source of wonder. Her birth was always spoken of as taking place 3 years after the settlement and that she married before her 18th birthday. *1811-18 = 1793 1793-3 = 1790.*

Nancy grew into an acknowledged beauty, and gave her heart to a young man whose father had settled not far from them. William Pickell by name.

Ann was born after Nancy and she married a Johnson and later went to live in the States where her descendants were known in 1900. David also returned. Little is known of the family of this first settler and his wife Elizabeth. We know of Nancy and Ann and know of two other daughters mentioned in Benjamin's will, and we also know of David and James.

John, Thomas, Joshiah, Adam, and Christopher Wilson were early landowners here and some of these may have been sons of the pioneer. We are sure of Nancy Pickell, Ann Johnson, Nob Brown, Clancy Lamb, Sally Brown, James and David. James died in 1863, aged 73. David went to the States in 1837. Ann went to the states in 1837. Their descendants were known in 1900. He named 12 in his will.

John Pickell, an early settler from Vermont, came with his wife, one son, and seven daughters to live near the Wilsons in 1794. Another daughter was born, and soon after the mother died leaving John with a family of small children. He married again, perhaps about 1797, and had several sons from that marriage, John, Levi, Wilmot, and George, and these have left many descendants in Oshawa.

William, the oldest son of John, was successful in wooing Nancy, but owing to the fact that Benjamin was now very hard of hearing, had not ventured to approach the subject to him. Knowing that a picnic was shortly to be held at Bluff Point, they planned to ask him then. The day of the picnic in 1810 was beautiful. The couple awaited thier opportunity and when Benjamin became separated from the others by a considerable distance, William approached him, casting an anxious eye around to see that he would have privacy. He loudly spoke into the old man's ear, with the result that is consent was obtained. But the voice of this timid man had been raised to such a high pitch that many of the happy picnickers heard it all.

There was no telegram nor telephone in these early days but before the people in the Wilson and neighbouring settlements had retired to rest the incident was the main topic of conversation.

One year later, October 3, 1811, Nancy Wilson became the wife of William Pickell. Historically this event is of more than ordinary interest. Nancy was the first girl, born of white parents in the township of Whitby, as well as the first bride, a native of the township.

Copied from the records of marriages in the possession of J.P. Lovekin of Clarke, at the time of his death is the following. -Third of October, 1811, married William Pickell of Arlington to Nancy Wilson of Whitby, being first duly published in the presence of William Smith and Waterman and Spencer.

Captian Benjamin Wilson had been given a Crown Grant of Lot 4 in 1797. In 1805 June 24, he leased lot 5 adjoining his old lot from the government. The terms were -payment of eleven shillings (\$2.20) or three and one half bushels of wheat for the first seven years, for the next seven years -twenty two shillings or six and a quarter bushels of wheat, and 33 shillings or nine and three-quarters bushels of wheat for the rest of the term.

In June 4th, 1819, he sold lot 4 to his son-in-law, Nancy's husband. The Memorial was registered and the original is now at the Whitby Registry Offices.

No.3423 Memorial

Benjamin Willson

to

William Piccle

Registered the 4th June 1819 at 10 O'clock
in the forenoon in Libar. E. Folio 1580 and 1581
S. Jarvis

Registrar.

A Memorial to be

Registered pursuant to the statute in such case made and provided of an INDENTURE of bargain and sale, made at Whitby County of York, Home District in the Province of Upper Canada, by and between Benjamin Willson of the township of Whitby, County of York, Home district of and Elizabeth Willson wife of the said Benjamin Willson of the one part, and William Piccle of the afore mentioned township of Whitby County of York Home District of the other part; whereby the said Benjamin Willson for and in consideration of the sume of One Hundred pounds of lawful money of the said Province, to them by the said William Piccle in hand paid, and the receipt thereof acknowledged, hath granted, bargained, sold alliened, transferred, conveyed and confirmed unto the said William Piccle and his heirs and assigns forever, all that certain parcel of tract of land and premises situate in the Township of Whitby County of York Home District being composed of Lot Number Four Borken Front Concession of said township containing the measurement Two Hundren and Fifty Acres be the some more or less, which said Lot is butted and bounded, or may otherwise be known as follows, (that is to say) Commencing in front on Lake Ontario at South East angle of the said Lot; Thence North Sixteen Degrees West one hundred and twenty-two chains more or less to the allowance for road in the front of the first consession; Thence south seventy - four degrees west twenty chains more or less to the allowance for Road between lot

number 4 and 5. Then South sixteen degrees East to lake Ontario; Then Easterly along the shore of the said Lake to the place of Beginning-----

Together with all houses, out-houses, woods and waters thereon erected, Lying and being, and all and singular, the hereditments and appurtenances to the said premises in any wise belonging, and the reversion and reversions, remainder and remainders, rents, issues and profits therof; and all the estate, right, title, interest, claim, property, and demand and all the estate, right, title, interest, claim, property, and demand and all the estate, right, title interest, claim, property, and demand whatsoever, either at law or in equity, of them the said Benjamin Willson and Elizabeth Willson of, in, to, or not, of the same and every part thereof; under the reservations limitations, and conditions, expressed in the original Grant from the Crown. To Have and To Hold the same, with appurtenances, freed and discharged from all incumbrances whatsoever, unto the said William Piccle his heirs and assigns, to the sole and proper use, benefit, and behoof of the said William Piccle, his heirs and assigns Forever; Of said Province; and which said Indenture is witnessed by John Warner of the Township of Darlington in the District of Newcastle and Province aforesaid Yoeman, and David Annis of Whitby, Yoeman, and this Memorial thereof; is hereby required to be Registered by me the Grantor therein named.

Witness my hand and Seal at York the fourth day of June in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and nineteen.

signed and sealed in the presence of

John Warner

F. Thompson

William Piccle

Seal

John S Warner of the Town of Darlington came before me and made oath that he was present and did see Benjamin Willson and Elizabeth Willson sign, seal, and deliver as their act and deed and Indenture of Bargain and Sale of which the within is a memorial, and also that he was personally present and did see William Piccle Sign and Seal the within memorial for the Registering thereof, and that he is a subscribing witness to the said Indenture of Bargain and Sale-

Sworn before me this 4th day
of June 1819

S. Jarvis

Register

John S. Warner

Benjamin Wilson is considered to be an "United Empire Loyalist" but showed little sympathy for the Loyalist cause in the War of 1812-1814. He and his family had their muskets hid in the walls of the cabin when a search was made of all homes. His neighbours joined the "Darlington Militia" but I do not believe the Wilsons did.

Dr. Kaiser quoted what he called a "well-authenticated" story concerning "David". At that time of the war between England and the United States, in 1812, his sympathies were on the side of his fatherland. Fearing enlistment by the British he shaped a craft from pine log, and with no other compass than the glimmer of the Northern star, he steered across the lake, and remained in Uncle Samuel's domain until the close of the war. Then he returned to his father's home.

I discovered a record that in a dispute between two of his neighbours, Roger Conant, and James Burke, who was a pioneer settler, Wilson appeared as a Crown Witness at the trial which took place in York(Toronto). July 14, 1801.

Benjamin Wilson made his will which was dated April 8, 1820, and registered November 21, 1821, after his death. I had a copy of this will made at the Whitby Registry Office (kindness of Hazel Wofolk)

Register

21 November, 1821 at 11 a.m.

S. Jarvis

Registrar

In the Name of God Amen

I Benjamin Willson of the Township of Whitby in the County of York Home District Province of Upper Canada, being of an infirm state of body but of sound mind blessed by God for his goodness, do ordain this to be my last will and Testament after revoking and making void all others of what soever name or nature may be now existing from the beginning to this present date hereof.

First I do order that my funeral charges be paid from all the removable property that I shall leave behind.

Second I do give Thomas Willson two shillings, Benjamin Willson two shillings, Joseph Willson two shillings, George Willson two shillings, Otis Willson two shillings, Nobb Brown, my daughter two shillings, Mary Willson two whillings, Clancy Lamb my daughter two shillings, Nancy Pickell, my daughter two shillings, Ann Johnson two shillings.

Thirdly I do give and bequeath to my loving wife Elizabeth Willson all the removable property that I shall have such as grain, hay, horses, oxen, cows, sheep, hogs,

fowls, household furniture of every kind, and description, likewise the sum of two hundred and fifty dollars, due from George Collonas specified and secured by note, which note is in the hand of Richard Lufkin Esq. Which I do ordain and bequeath as fast as payment becomes due they may be paid over to Elizabeth my wife for her own disposal, likewise the lease of Lot No. Five, broken front Concession in the Township of Whitby County of York, Home district to be at the disposal of my wife Elizabeth in conformity of the whole of the formentioned intems.

I have herunto set my hand and Seal this eighth day of April in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and twenty.

Attest

John Warner

Norma Pickell

William Pickell

Sign Benjamin Willson L.S.

Benjamin Willson lived to his 89th year. He had spent 30 years on his Canadian homestead, dying March 5, 1821. His remains were placed on his own land, just a few yards from his original homestead. Thirty years later they were transferred across the roadway to their present resting place, the well-known cemetery on the rising ground to be seen East of Port Oshawa. There a marble tombstone marks his grave. It is thought this tombstone was erected perhaps thirty years after his death as marble was well-nigh unobtainable in 1821.

The tombstone reads:

In Memory

Captain Benj. Wilson

who died

March 5th, 1821

In the 89th year of his age.

Nearby is another stone which reads:

In Memory of James Willson

who died May 17, 1863, son of Benjamin Willson.

Benjamin's wife, Elizabeth, went to live with Nancy Pickell on the third concession of two rod road, north of Farewell's Corner (Harmony). Here she died in 1840, aged 80, and was buried near a school house, said to be only a few minutes walk from the Pickell home. The school houses in those times often served as churches. No

trace of her grave remains. In the late 20's while excavating property on the Kingston Road which property is now owned by the Catholic Church, a number of graves were disturbed. These bones were reinterred in one grave, no doubt in some cemetery. It might be that here was the resting place of Mrs. Willson. There had been a school house on this site.

I quote the names as taken from Willson's will. All or only part may have been their children.

Captain Benjamin Willson
1732-1821 (89)

Elizabeth Lockwood
1750-1840 (80)

1. Thomas Willson
2. Benjamin Willson
3. Joseph Willson
4. Otis Willson
5. Nob Brown, my daughter
6. Mary Willson
7. Clancy Lamb, my daughter
8. Sally Brown, my daughter
9. James Willson, died 1863
10. Ann Johnson went to the States in 1837
11. Nancy Pickel, my daughter 1793-1854
12. David Willson returned to the States in 1837

Dr. Kaiser states that Nancy Pickell had 14 children. Others set it at 10. In the year 1842 a western fever swept over the continent. Canada did not escape it. William Pickell and Nancy with some of their married children as well as some unmarried ones, together with a German family by the name of Freiville, and the Northain Harris family, in all 25 souls, in their 6 double teamed covered wagons left their East Whitby home for the State of Wisconsin. When the procession passed through the newly named village of Oshawa, it created a sensation. The party safely reached their destination. But it is stated as a fact that they would have made a greater success in life had they remained in Whitby.

William Pickell's wife, Nancy, the once reigning belle at the gatherings at Bluff Point, the daughter of pioneer Willson, the first white child born between York and the Bay of Quinte, the first bride a native of the township of Whitby, this woman with her large family about her in her western prairie home, dies near Waterton, Wisconsin, about the year 1854.

She was then in her 60th year.

William Pickell married again and again he desired to travel West, this time his destination being Iowa. Here he died after reaching over 90 years of age, perhaps in 1880.

Three of his sons did not go west with him.

Benjamin Pickell 1815-1880 (My grandfather) *[written by Blanche Meeker, deceased]*

Nelson Pickell 1817-1896

Moses Pickell 1826

Benjamin Pickell 1815-1880. (married twice)

First wife: Abigail Stone. Her children were Emma Baker, Sarah Farewell and a child that died aged 5. Second wife: Elizabeth Stewart, a woman just out from Scotland. Their children were Elizabeth Stewart, Lydia Thompson, Margaret King, Belding Pickell, and Nancy Meeker, (*Blanche Meekers' mother*)

Abraham Farewell's wife was Caroline Stone, a sister of Abigail Pickell
Abraham Farewell adopted Col. Farewell as a small boy.

Nelson Pickell, born October, 1817, married Cynthia Coryell. His homestead on the northern part of Lot 7, East Whitby was regarded as one of the old landmarks of Oshawa. He had a number of children, Abraham who went to the states, Jessie of Wingham, William who died in his youth, David of Oshawa, Deborah Coleman, and Minerva who married Walter Wilson on the old homestead.

Moses went to the States where a long line of descendants claim him. John Pickell, in 1794 settled near the Wilson's home. He was a native of Vermont. He lived until 1829. His oldest son, William Pickell, born 1790 married Nancy Wilson.

The Pickells were believed to have originally lived in Yorkshire, England, going to Holland during the religious upheavals. They lived in Lyden, in Holland, and intermarried, later coming to America.

John's second family, John, Levi, Wilmot and George left many descendants in Oshawa. John and Levi followed a sailor's life, Levi on Lake Ontario, John in the Upper Lakes. Pioneer Pickell died in 1829, and was buried on the David Annis farm, some miles West of Port Oshawa, on the lake shore where he had been living during the last years of his life.

References for this story are as follows.

- 1) Dr. Kaiser's book in which he called "The Indians Chippways"
- 2) Col. Farewell's book in which he calls them Missagas.
- 3) Peak was also Peake
- 4) Pickell was spelled, Pickle, Pickell, Piccle, Pickel. Some put the emphasis on the first syllable, some on the last. My mother spelled her name Pickell.
- 5) From Pedlar's manuscript in the Toronto Archives, I received a great deal. Pedlar had talked to Nelson Pickell who was born October 18, 1817, on his grandfather's farm on the lakeshore. He had an excellent memory and spent his entire life in the vicinity of the Wilson homestead.
- 6) Hazel Worfolk of Whitby found and copied for me the bill of sale, and the will.
- 7) I had much information from Gordon Crouse.----- Relatives informed me of the gun story and also about the pasties.----- It has been argued that there was no French fur or trading post. But James Lovekin who lives in Scarborough settled that. He states that it is shown on Danville's map of 1755, in J. Robinson's "Toronto During the French Regime" Reprinted by the University of Toronto in 1965. See page 76

FROM OSHAWA "CANADA'S MOTOR CITY" by M. McINTRE HOOD
Copywrite 1968

Chapter 1 BEFORE THE WHITE MAN CAME

These lines by Longfellow might well have been attributed to the area which in now covered by the City of Oshawa before the white man set foot upon this section of what is now the province of Ontario. The whole district was covered by a dense forest, through which there ran a broad stream which is now known as Oshawa Creek. It knew no human habitation save in the woods to the north, the encampments of the Indians who lived there. Up to about the beginning of the 18th century, these Indians were the only people who travelled the shores of Lake Ontario. They were Indians of the Mississauga tribe, part of the Ojibway nation.

When the Indians came there, is shrouded in the mists of antiquity. They may have been offshoots of the Mississauga bands who were centred on the Credit River to the West, bands which once had ownership of the land on which the city of Toronto is now situated.

The only means of travel known to the Indians were on foot through the dense forest, along trails trodden bare by their feet and in canoes on the lakes and waterways of the district. There was a large settlement of them around Lake Scugog, where Poet Perry now stands, and on Scugog Island. ~~The district abounded~~ in wild animals. Fur-bearing species roamed it at will, with beaver, otter and martin in abundance, fair prey for the Indians Hunters and trappers.

Each spring the Indians came on foot through the forest from lake Scugog to Lake Ontario, carrying their bundles of furs. At the spot where the Oshawa Harbour is now located, they loaded their furs in canoes which were cached there, and paddled along the shore of Lake Ontario to the mouth of the Credit River. At that point, where Fort Credit now stands, was an important trading post. There the Indians met the French, and later the English traders, and bartered their furs for all kinds of supplies to take back to their encampments. In this way there came to be well worn paths through the forest leading north from Lake Ontario to the back areas where the Indians lived.

After the French traders and explorers began to expand their area of operations westward from their settlements in Quebec and Montreal, they found their way

along the shores of Lake Ontario. They were well established in Fort Frontenac at Kingston, which was the main base for their traders. It can well be imagined that these French traders who spread westward from Quebec must many times have looked up at the tree-crowned hill overlooking Lake Ontario, where the creek ran into the lake.

They may have at times have taken shelter from storms behind the Bluff, a high point jutting into the lake just East of the present Oshawa Harbour. In due time the fur trade of the Indians of the district became so important that somewhere around the year 1750, or a little earlier, the French established a trading post near the mouth of the Oshawa Creek.

Here the French traders built a substantial log building, the first white man's habitation to be erected in the district. For some years it was used as head-quarters for trading between the French and the Mississauga Indians from Scugog, who were thus saved the long canoe trip to the Credit River. Some time after the British conquest of Canada in 1759, its use was discontinued and the building was abandoned. The district was left undisturbed by the white man for about 30 years, until the year 1790.

It was then that the white man was to make his first strong imprint on this area, which in due time was to be settled and become the focal point for the establishment of a small community which, with the passing of years, became the prosperous industrial City of Oshawa. About that time, a road, known then and to this day as Kingston Road, was surveyed through the district by Governor Sir John Graves Simcoe. It ran exactly where King Street is located in Oshawa today. And almost simultaneously with the laying out of this road, but from a different direction, came the first white settlement of the Oshawa district.

Note: (All of the above leads up to the first settlers, our ancestors.) F.G.

Chapter 2

At about the same time as the survey of the Kingston Rd. began in 1790, the forest wilderness which is now the city of Oshawa saw the arrival of the first white settlers. They came from the newly-created United States of America. There were six people in the party. They were Benjamin Wilson, his wife and two sons, James and David and two young men L. Lockwood and E. Ransome. They travelled overland from their homes in Pennsylvania to Niagara, and then by boat from the

north of Niagara River along the shore of Lake Ontario.

Benjamin Wilson was born in Putney Vermont, in 1737. (my notes say 1732) In his early life he had moved to Pennsylvania. There he met and married a widow named Mrs. Lockwood. Her first husband had been cruelly put to death by the Indians in the Indian warfare which ravaged the state. Wishing to better their fortunes, and to return to a British country after the American Revolutionary War the Wilsons decided to come to Canada.

Their journey was long and arduous. Travelling was slow, because they brought with them a yoke of oxen and four cows. After leaving Niagara by boat, the oxen and cows had to be driven along the shore by the two Wilson boys. Sometimes they had to go a long distance into the dense forest to find a trail. Finally they reached the location which had been recommended to them by officials at Niagara, and settled on what was known as Lot No 4, Broken Front, just East of the location of the present Oshawa Harbour.

Here they found , as if waiting for them as a place of refuge, the old log cabin left there by the French traders. It was in fairly good condition, although requiring some repairs. Benjamin Wilson and his family and friends made it snug and comfortable and lived in it while they built a more pretentious house on the land on which they settled. There was good reason to settle on the land to which the Wilson family came . It was between what were later known as the Farewell Marsh and Oshawa Creek. These abounded in fur bearing animals. They provided abundant marsh grass which served many purposes. In the fall of the year, the creeks were full of salmon. This provided an abundance of fish, both fresh and salted, as food for winter. The location also appealed to Benjamin Wilson as a place of great beauty, although the passing of time has removed the forest and with it much of the natural beauty of the scene.

Settled temporarily the old French cabin, the Wilson family quickly built its new home. It was high on ground about 150 yards back from the lake shore. It was a strongly built frame house, but no traces of it are left to-day. Here Benjamin Wilson and his little family lived , and year by year, cleared a little of the forest. He trapped for fur to trade with Hudson's Bay Company. In this house was born a daughter, Nancy Wilson, the first white child to be born in the Oshawa district.

This daughter, Nancy was also the first bride to be married to a settler in the district.

About the year 1794, on the invitation of Benjamin Wilson, John Pickell with his family and one son, William and seven daughters, arrived from Vermont to join the settlement, and built his home close to that of the Wilsons. On October 30, 1811, Nancy Wilson became the wife of William Pickell, and they were the ancestors of many distinguished citizens.

B. Wilson was very fortunate in his dealings with Indians of the district. Notwithstanding the fact that he was trespassing on land which was one of their favourite hunting grounds, they never committed any violence against the pioneer settlement. It is a matter of historical record that the Indians of some marauding bands of Mississauga stole some of the settlers' provisions. As soon as their grand old chief, Web-bok-ish-ego learned of these offences, he ordered the immediate return of the stolen provisions. Everything was returned that had not already been eaten. He caused a "Wampum Belt" to be hung on the settlers' cabin, and from that day on, the Indians committed no more offences, petty or otherwise. The Indians, indeed, became frequent and welcome visitors as they traversed the wilderness from Lake Ontario to the back lake country.

Benjamin Wilson prospered in their new home but they missed their old friends in the United States. He became anxious that some of them should come over and join him in developing a country so rich and full of promise. There were no steamboats plying the lakes then, nor were there any railways. There were some rough wagon roads and Indian trails, but no open roads so it was difficult to communicate with the outside world.

He took advantage, however of the fortunate circumstances that the two young men, Lockwood and Ransome, who came over with them, decided to return to the States. They were entrusted by Wilson with a number of letters to old friends in the States.

It was a result of this that John Pickell came to settle near him. They arrived in 1794. Pickell, his wife and eight children. Later another daughter made a family of eleven.

They made progress and were soon comfortable in their Canadian home. However, the wife and mother died in 1797. After a few years, John Pickell married a second wife by whom he had four sons, John, Levi, Wilmot and George. Wilmot and George left home and settled in Western Ontario. John and Levi become sailors on the great lakes.

William Pickell, who had married Nancy Wilson, settled on a farm on the third concession of what was later Whitby Township. It was on what is now known as Harmony Road North. After the death of Benjamin Wilson, his widow went to live with her daughter and died about the year 1840, in her 80th year. She was buried in a small plot of ground near a school house which stood only a few minutes walk from the Pickell farm. (Harmony Cemetary)

Benjamin Wilson lived over 30 years after settling in the Oshawa district. He was in his 84th year when he died on March 7, 1821. He was buried near his home. Some 30 years later, his remains were transferred to the little cemetery on the pine-crested hill overlooking the harbour. His gravestone can still be seen there. It bears the inscription: "In memory of Captain Benjamin Wilson, who died March 7, 1821 in his 84th year."

Of the members of Wilson's family, James, the eldest son, died in 1873. His remains rest beside those of his father in the little cemetery overlooking Oshawa Harbour. David, the youngest son, left Canada about the year 1837 and went to the United States. The other daughter Ann also went to the States, where her descendants and those of David reside to the present day.

The Oshawa Harbour Cemetery was the first in Oshawa. Comparatively unknown to many residents of the district it is located to the East of the Oshawa Harbour on a high rise of land which is part of the farm of former Mayor L. Gifford. Overlooking Lake Ontario and completely surrounded by farmlands, the cemetery is not easily accessible, a grove of pine trees being the only landmark which establishes its position.

Another practical result of the letters which Benjamin Wilson sent to his friends in the United States, materialized when in 1793 two skilled mechanics named Beagle and Conklin, arrived to settle in the small community. They were Oshawa's first manufacturers. They made spinning wheels, hand looms and other equipment for house and farm. They were the pioneer mechanics of 170 years ago. It can be said to have laid the first industrial foundation for Oshawa. They little dreamed of the great development of manufacturing which would follow in their footsteps. But as long as shaft and pulley revolve in Oshawa's busy factories, the names of Beagle and Conklin should be kept in mind.

End of chapters pertaining to our great ancestor.

Benjamin Wilson married to Elizabeth Lockwood thier daughter, Nancy Wilson married William Pickell October 3rd.1811. They had 7 sons and 7 daughters. of these only two remained in Canada as of 1921.

* 1) Benjamin Pickell, married Abigail Stone, January 18,1837. They had 2 daughters.

- 1) Sarah who married Captian George Farewell
- 2) Mary Emma, who married Henry John Baker.

2) Nelson Pickell married Cynthia Coryell their children were -

- 1) Abraham - United States
- 2) Jessie of Wingham
- 3) William, deceased
- 4) David, Celina Street, Oshawa
- 5) Debora, married to G. Coleman
- 6) Manerva, married to Walter Wilson

Abram Farewell, born 1812, married Caroline Stone, January 18, 1837

The above were aunt and uncle to Mary Emma Pickell (great grand daughter of Benjamin Wilson and Elizabeth Lockwood)

* Mary Emma Pickell, married John Henry Baker who had two children, Sarah and Caroline.

- 1) Sarah
- 2) Caroline Baker married Lawson Omar Clifford who had four children. Frances (Frank), Florence Emma Louise, Aubrey, and Ronald.
 - 1) Frances (Frank) Clifford: deceased bachelor.
 - 2) Florence Emma Louise Clifford married Edward Felix Gabourie deceased. They had eight children and numerous grandchildren and great grand children.
 - 3) Aubrey Clifford died as a young child around the age of four.
 - 4) Ronald Clifford, deceased, had one son Gary from first marriage. His second marriage to Francis Dolen.

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DATE

13 March 1974

SUBJECT
OBJET Willson, Benjamin (Wilson)

A search of the various indexes and logical sources in our custody has produced the following references to the name Benjamin Willson:

1. We have a marriage bond of Benjamin Franklin Willson of Kitley Township and Ruth Adams of Edwardsburgh Township, dated 5 March 1836 (RG 5, B 9, Vol. 32, Bond No. 5537, microfilm reel C-6785).
2. The name Benjamin Wilson of the Home District appears on the Loyalist List maintained by the Ontario Crown Lands Department (MG 9, D 4, Vol. 9, pp. 261-262; reel C-2222).
3. The following references were taken from the index to the Upper Canada Land Papers:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Reference</u>	<u>Reel</u>
Willson, Benjamin	1796	Whitby	RG 1, L3, W 2/59	C-2950
"	1797	York	RG 1, L3, W 3/49	C-2950
"	1797	Bertie	RG 1, L3, W 3/52	C-2950
"	1811	Talbot Road	RG 1, L3, W 10/9	C-2952
"	1812	Willoughby	RG 1, L3, W 10/57	C-2953
"	1817	Yarmouth	RG 1, L3, W 11/116	C-2953
"	1819	York	RG 1, L3, W 12/149	C-2954
Wilson, Benjamin	-	-	RG 1, L3, W 1/26	C-2950
"	1796	Lake Erie	RG 1, L3, W 1/23	C-2950
"	1796	Bertie	RG 1, L3, W 2/66	C-2950
"	1799	Whitby	RG 1, L3, W Leases/3 (1801-1807)	C-2967
"	1818	Whitby	RG 1, L3, W 11/97	C-2953
"	1819	Darlington	RG 1, L3, W 12/15	C-2953
"	1831	York	RG 1, L3, W 16/89	C-2957
"	1817	Southwold	RG 1, L3, W 11/155	C-2953
" Benjamin G.	-	-	RG 1, L1, Land Book E, pg. 355	C-102
" Benjamin	-	-	RG 1, L1, Land Book L, pg. 513	G-104

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4. References were also located in the index to the British Military "C" Series (RG 8 I, "C" Series):

<u>Name</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Regiment</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Volume</u>	<u>Pages</u>	<u>Reel</u>
Willson, Benjamin	Private	1st Lincoln Militia	1812	C 1701	128,143	C-3839
"	"	Ensign	1812	C 1202	164 8	C-3519
"	"	"	1813	C 682	41	C-3173
"	"	"	-	C 1717	83	C-3840
"	"	"	1815	C 89	46	C-2646
Wilson, Benjamin	Private	1st Batt. New Jersey Volunteers	1781	C 1854	92	C-3874

(Mrs.) Janet Feldman

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matically, "unofficial" settlers, such as Benjamin Wilson, were required to fulfill strict terms in order to gain ownership. On February 7, 1792 Governor Simcoe had issued a proclamation, which was smuggled into the western frontier of the United States, and which offered free land to all who would cultivate it and would sign an oath of loyalty to the King. The only charge entailed would be the various clerks' fees which were kept at low level by a published fee list. Farms were to be granted in 200-acre lots, but could be increased to 1,200 acres at the discretion of the Executive Council.²⁰

While Simcoe's proclamation immediately attracted thousands of American-born settlers northward, it was not an open invitation, nor were settlers allowed to "squat" where they pleased. The key to Simcoe's administration was order and a careful attention to duties. Thus because Benjamin Wilson had not followed directions to settle in an "open" township, he was not able to apply for a location ticket until July 4, 1796, some six weeks after Whitby had been seized from William Willcocks.²¹

In order to receive ownership of a farm it was necessary to perform certain settlement duties. One such list of duties required that:

They must within the term of two years clear fit for cultivation and fence, ten acres of the lot obtained; build a house 16 by 20 feet of logs or frame, with a shingle roof; also cut down all timber in front of and the whole width of the lot . . . 33 feet of which must be cleared smooth and left for half the public road.²²

Moreover, the payment of fees to all the clerks and officials tended to discourage settlers from getting final title (the patent) to their lands. In Wilson's case the patent was not received until February 17, 1819.²³

For Pickering and Whitby, therefore, in the early years far more land was held by Loyalists, the military and self-seeking officials than was received by settlers intending to make their home in Ontario County. After Major Smith's military grant of 4,800 acres in 1795, there followed a whole series of large grants to officials and their relatives. A list of the grants made in Ontario County in 1796 shows the extent of this practice:

<i>Grantee</i>	<i>Area (acres)</i>	<i>Township</i>	<i>Date</i>
Captain George Hill	1,200	Pickering	May 6, 1796
William Holmes	1,200	Pickering	May 28, 1796
Hon. John McGill	1,000	Whitby	Nov. 11, 1796
Catherine (Mrs. John) McGill	1,200	Pickering	Nov. 11, 1796
Elizabeth Russell	800	Whitby	Dec. 15, 1796
Rev. Thomas Radenhurst	600	Whitby	Dec. 31, 1796
Anthony Neverville	1,200	Whitby	Dec. 31, 1796
Meredith Melvil	1,200	Whitby	Dec. 31, 1796
Alexander Burns	700	Whitby	Dec. 31, 1796

the closest open township to the rapidly growing Town of York. As soon as Uxbridge was surveyed in 1804, large numbers of applicants began patenting lands. Unlike those taking lands in Pickering and Whitby, almost all patentees in Uxbridge received only 200 acres. In 1804 alone, fifteen of these 200-acre patents were made.

Despite the rapid spread of land ownership in Pickering, Whitby and Uxbridge, settlement progressed very slowly in the area. Few of those receiving lands were interested in farming them or settling in the area, with the result that large tracts of vacant lands discouraged those who might have settled near them. Nonetheless a few hardy pioneers did begin to purchase lands from the patentees to whom it had been given and to build a small community in the southeast corner of Whitby Township. Early records show that by 1801 settlers including Elizar Lockwood, Adam and David Stephens, John McGahn (or Magahan), David Lloyd and Abraham Townsend, had joined Benjamin Wilson, L. Lockwood and Ebenezer Ransome in the Oshawa-Harmony area.²⁷ In the next few years these were joined by Levi Annis, Thomas McGahee, Joseph Wiley, Matthew Terwilligar (or de Willigar), Acheus Moody and William Farewell, Jabez Lynde (the first settler west of the Town of Whitby) and William Pickle.

The first settler in Pickering Township was William Peak who settled near the mouth of Duffin's Creek about 1800. Peak was joined immediately in Pickering by other settlers near Duffin's Creek as well as by a few settlers who moved across the northwest boundary from Markham Township. Such names as Judson Gibson, John Majors, David Crawford, Peter Crawford and Anthony Rummerfeld appear on early lists of municipal officers, and by 1805 these were joined by Samuel Munger, David Spicer and David Thatcher.²⁸

Though settlement was progressing, the spread was slow chiefly because most potential settlers preferred to go to areas where land was free rather than purchase that already patented. By 1805, nearly fifteen years after Benjamin Wilson's arrival, Whitby's population was only 104 (28 men, 23 women and 53 children). At the same time Pickering's population had grown only to 96 - 27 men, 18 women and 51 children. By contrast, in 1805, Markham's population was 889, York Township's 494, and that of Whitchurch, 348.²⁹

The assessment summaries for 1805 show how slowly agriculture had developed in Ontario County. In 1805 only 263 acres were under cultivation in Whitby and 104 in Pickering. In Whitby there were 11 horses, 26 oxen, 50 milk cows, 47 young cattle and 20 swine. In Pickering there were 7 horses, 29 oxen, 40 milk cows, 39 young cattle and 5 swine. Pickering had the only sawmill, possibly that of Timothy Rogers on Duffin's Creek which is reported in 1810.³⁰

Between 1805 and 1810 the process of land alienation (patents being taken out by absentee "official" grantees) which had begun in Uxbridge in 1804 was completed in that township, and continued on in much of Scott.³¹ By December 31, 1809 a total of 36,812 acres in Uxbridge (the entire area not

Doug

The information from the book
"Canada's Motor City" was copied by
my mother, Leland Sabourie.

The story of Benjamin Wilson - Our First
Settler was compiled by Blanche Meeker
my great grandmother's niece.

Hope the information is of interest

Regards
Rasmus Payne

From Doug Wilson
2/2010