



## FERGUS IN THE EARLY DAYS

From the painting by Miss J. Fordyce, in Toronto Public Library  
Buildings from left to right include Mill, distillery, pig pen, granary,  
Webster's store, Baker Walker's house, log school and first church

# FERGUS

THE STORY OF A LITTLE TOWN

By HUGH TEMPLIN



WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

THE FERGUS NEWS-RECORD

1927  
—  
19. 4. 34

Webster's store. Baker Walker's house, log school and first church.

Printed in Canada by  
The Fergus News-Record,  
Fergus, Ontario.

Copyright, 1933, by Hugh Templin.

F

In  
T  
1 T  
2. T  
3 T  
4. A  
5. P  
6. P  
7. T  
8. T  
  
9. A  
10. D  
11 La

## CONTENTS

Introduction	- - - -	Page 9
The Pioneers	- - -	Page 13
1. The Great Highway	- -	Page 15
2. The Arrival of the Scots	- -	Page 29
3. The Founders of Fergus	- -	Page 45
4. A Year of Hopes and Preparations		Page 55
5. Progress and Calamity	- -	Page 67
6. Pioneer Days	- - -	Page 81
7. The Rebellion of 1837 and its Results		Page 93
8. Three Noted Men	- - -	Page 107
(Patrick Bell, Adam Wilson, George Clephane)		
9. A Glimpse of Fergus in 1845	-	Page 121
10. Disruption in the Kirk	- -	Page 131
11. Land Gambling and Incorporation		Page 141
		Page 5

## CONTENTS

12. Kinnettles and Its Mysteries	-	Page 151
13. The Days of the Fenian Raids	-	Page 167
14. The Coming of the Railway	-	Page 181
15. Boom Days and Depression	-	Page 193
16. Toward the Turn of the Century		Page 207
17. The Turn of the Tide	- -	Page 219
18. Fergus After the War	- -	Page 231
19. Schools, Churches and Societies		Page 243
20. Sports in Fergus	- - -	Page 261
21. Newspapers and Bridges in Fergus		Page 273
22. The Industries of Fergus	-	Page 287
23. More Biographies	- -	Page 299



L  
Fergus  
Map of  
The Po  
Adam P  
The Fir  
Church  
Fergus  
Pay Lis  
Bell's F  
Sketch  
Old St  
Old Me  
The O  
South

e 151  
e 167  
e 181  
e 193  
e 207  
e 219  
e 231  
e 243  
e 261  
e 273  
e 287  
e 299

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Fergus in the Early Days . . .	Frontispiece
Map of "The Great Highway" -	Page 14
The Pool Below the Falls - -	Page 28
Adam Fergusson and James Webster	Page 44
The First Bridge over the Grand River	Page 54
Church, School, Tavern and Store -	Page 66
Fergus in 1835 - - - -	Page 80
Pay List of the Rebellion of 1837 -	Page 92
Bell's Reaping Machine - -	Page 106
Sketch Map of Fergus in 1845 -	Page 120
Old St. Andrew's Church - -	Page 130
Old Melvale Church - - -	Page 140
The Old Log School - - -	Page 150
South Side of Fergus in 1865 -	Page 166

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

The "Adam Brown," the First Locomotive	Page 180
Graph of Populations of Towns in County	Page 192
Tower Street in 1895       -       -       -	Page 206
Badge of 153rd Wellington Battalion	Page 218
Melville Hall and Church       -       -	Page 230
Fergus High School       -       -       -	Page 242
Tower Street Bridge       -       -       -	Page 272
The First Industry in Fergus       -       -	Page 286



**F**ERGUS  
 Ann  
 and Jan  
 of settle  
 bration  
 lacking  
 during i  
 At  
 largest  
 accident  
 its beau  
 works a  
 These th  
 endeavo  
 Yo  
 write th  
 that no  
 of it. S  
 time to  
 they ca  
 nor any

Page 180  
Page 192  
Page 206  
Page 218  
Page 230  
Page 242  
Page 272  
Page 286

## INTRODUCTION

**F**ERGUS has recently celebrated the Hundredth Anniversary of its founding by Adam Fergusson and James Webster, and the coming of the first group of settlers from the Lowlands of Scotland. The celebration was a splendid success. Only one thing was lacking and that was an authentic history of the Village during its first century.

At the end of its first hundred years, Fergus is the largest rural village in Ontario. That is merely an accident of population. But Fergus is also noted for its beauty, its thrift, its industries, its sports, its public works and the substantial character of its inhabitants. These things are not accidental, and in this book, I shall endeavor to trace them back to their beginning.

You may wonder why any person would want to write the history of any small town. Tradition says that nobody has ever succeeded in making money out of it. Some prepare local histories because they have time to spare, or because history is their hobby and they cannot leave it alone. I have neither spare time nor any great love for history, but it seemed that a



## INTRODUCTION

History of Fergus is needed right now, and there is no other person prepared to undertake the work.

What are my qualifications? I was born on the edge of Fergus. My parents and grandparents all lived in Fergus or nearby. Other ancestors for five and six generations lived in Fergus, Nichol, Garafraxa and Luther. I am very much a native son, related to many of those families who have helped to make Fergus what it is today.

For fifteen years, I have written the editorial page of the Fergus News-Record and during most of that time I have been gathering scraps of local history and publishing them in the paper. These would fill many volumes, but they have been sorted over and sifted out and the substance of them will be found in these pages. Under the name of "Ephraim Acres" I have written many stories of "Glenlivet," which were based on the Fergus of twenty five or thirty years ago. It fell to my lot to assist the late John Connon to prepare and publish the second half of his "History of Flora." Finally, I was the chairman of the Historical and Publicity committees for the Fergus Centennial in August, 1933.

No attempt has been made to reprint diaries, letters, maps, newspaper clippings or other original material. Some of this has been done by others, and there is such a wealth of material available that it has taken

months just  
attempt to  
interesting  
repeat, in  
when he w  
he lived th  
was buried

Instead  
Fergus dur  
the people  
that will in  
"home," b  
I have tried  
pened and  
th's book to  
and good t

At the  
sources  
either know  
of this mat  
from the tr  
to the pres  
John Conno  
Mount For  
loaned diar  
but I hesita

## INTRODUCTION

months just to read it over. Neither has there been any attempt to go into family histories. After all, the most interesting parts of the Bible are not the chapters which repeat, in verse after verse, that Japheth begat Isaachar when he was thirty and two years old, and after that, he lived thirty and two years more and then died and was buried with his fathers.

Instead, I have tried to tell the story of events in Fergus during the first hundred years, and something of the people who made the town. I hope it may be a story that will interest not only the hundreds who call Fergus "home," but even those who do not know the town. I have tried to tell what happened and also why it happened and what were the consequences. Finally, I want this book to be well printed on good paper, easy to read and good to look upon.

At the same time, I acknowledge help from many sources. Literally hundreds of persons have assisted, either knowingly or unconsciously, in the preparation of this material, and I am indebted to other historians from the time of Fathers Brebeuf and Chaumonot down to the present day, and including particularly the late John Connon, of Elora, and Arthur Walker Wright, of Mount Forest. Members of the oldest families have loaned diaries, letters, pictures and much other material, but I hesitate to name them, lest some should be forgot-

## INTRODUCTION

ten The drawings of the two founders are by Alex. Cameron, the young Fergus artist, and he has done them well. For the frontispiece, I have used a copy of the painting of Fergus by Miss Fordyce, as it is the best picture of the settlement in the first ten years that I have seen. Two drawings by A. D. Fordyce, junior, are reproduced on pages 28 and 80.

Little need be said of the other illustrations. Most of these have been drawn by myself from various old sketches or photographs, or from the modern scenes. I do not claim to be an artist, and this method of illustration has been used instead of half-tones simply because it makes a better looking book.

HUGH TEMPLIN,

Fergus, Ontario, December, 1933.



(Writ  
V  
to cele  
T  
were  
polish  
M  
remem  
munit  
church  
stores  
the m  
know  
men a  
or the  
after t  
was no  
T  
memb  
H  
passed  
but th  
a good  
this tir  
“  
liveth

## THE PIONEERS

(Written for the Centennial Number of the Fergus News-Record.)

We have gathered here to honor the Pioneers and to celebrate the anniversary of their arrival in Fergus.

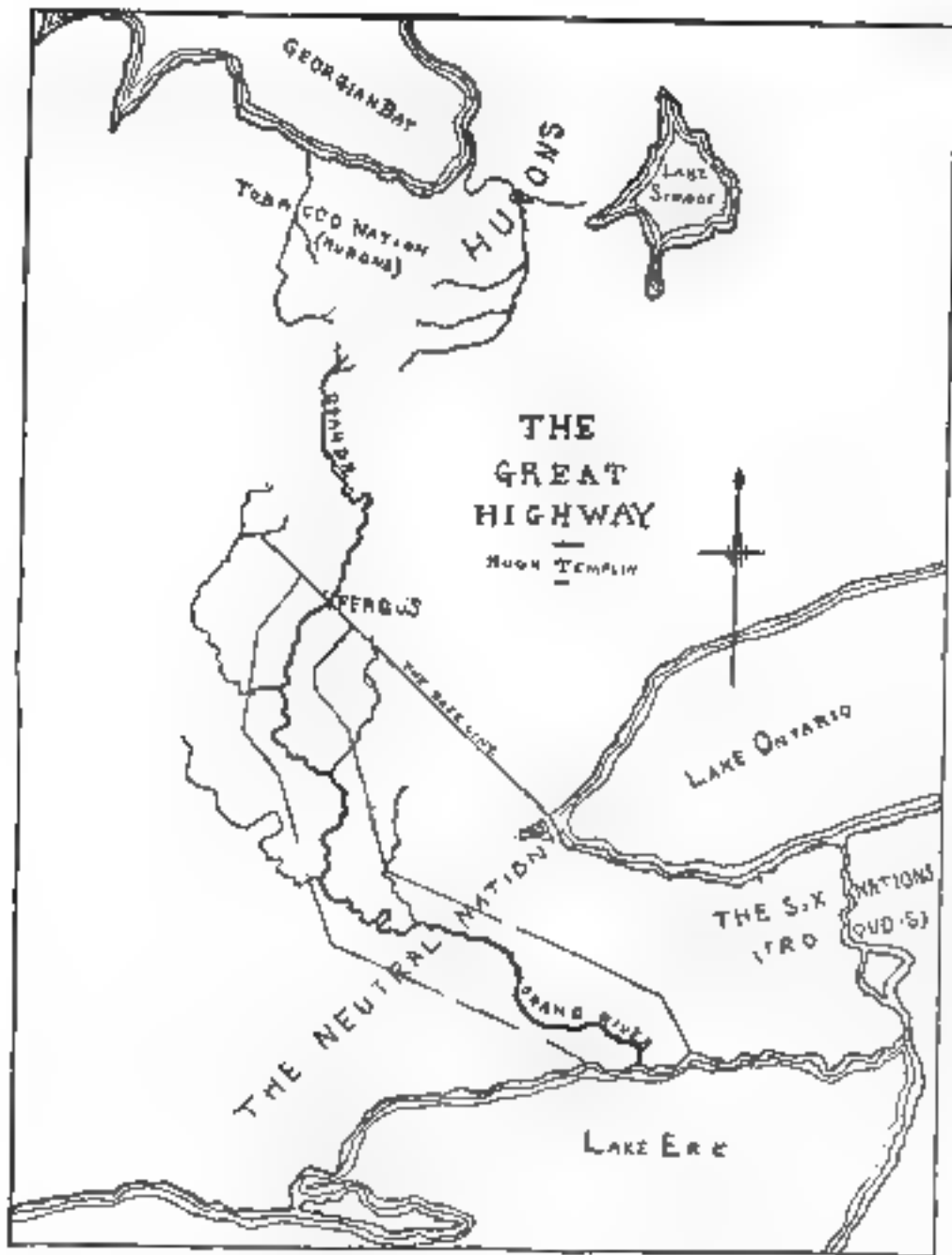
They came in faith, seeking a better land. They were rich men and poor men, learned and unlearned, polished and crude.

Many of them left their mark. Their names are remembered because of what they did for the community. They were the builders, who made the churches, schools, hospitals, homes, factories and stores, the men who wrote books, or founded families, the men who played games, the women who were known for their beauty, or their piety, or both, the men and the women who made pictures with their pens or their brushes, and drew maps, that those who came after them might know that Fergus, even in its infancy, was no mean settlement.

These were honored while they lived, and are remembered now, though they have gone to their rest.

Hundreds of others are forgotten; they lived and passed on, their progeny cannot recall their names but they, too, did their part toward making our country a good place in which to live. We honor them, also, at this time of remembrance.

"Their bodies are buried in peace, but their name liveth for evermore."



Showing early Indian Tribes, the Grand River two portage routes, the Bass Line and the grant to the Six Nations along the river.

THE  
with  
very ex  
offering  
and wi  
valleys,  
ders wo  
farm lan  
B.  
Grand  
landmar  
visited  
years ag  
down th  
walked.  
Ontario  
River, a  
with ad  
"Carte  
et Hydro

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE GREAT HIGHWAY

**T**HE HISTORY of Fergus is very closely connected with the Grand River. Indeed, the town owes its very existence to the river. Had there been no river, offering the promise of water-power for driving mills, and with its tributary streams watering the nearby valleys, there would have been no village and the founders would have looked elsewhere for a townsite and farm lands to buy in large quantities.

But long before Fergus was ever thought of, the Grand River had been more than merely an important landmark. From the time when the first French priest visited this part of Ontario, more than three hundred years ago, the river has been the great highway up and down the course of which all travellers paddled or walked. When few other features of Southwestern Ontario were known at all, the course of the Grand River, at least as far north as Fergus, had been plotted with accuracy. An ancient French map, entitled, "Carte des Lacs du Canada, par N. Bellin, Ingenieur et Hydrographe de la Marine, 1744," shows only some

## FERGUS

few scattered hills and two rivers, one of which is "R. d'Urse ou le Grande Riviere." Thus, even the name is of long and honorable standing.

Any public school pupil, preparing for the entrance examination, can name two nations of Indians who played an important part in the early history of Canada, the Hurons and the Iroquois, but few of them have heard of the powerful Neutral Nation, who owned the Grand River country three hundred years and more ago. The Neutrals never fought against the Europeans, French, English or Dutch, so our historians neglect them and had it not been for the missionary zeal of the Franciscan and Jesuit Fathers, even their name might have been but a legend. What little we know of them and of their villages and their customs is contained in the volumes of the "Jesuit Relations," the annual reports of the missionary work of the Jesuits, sent back to Paris to be preserved among the records of the Society of Jesus. In these volumes, scattered among the lengthy details of missionary work and the conversion of individual savages, are to be found accounts of most amazing adventures, and hardships lightly undertaken and bravely carried through in order to save the souls of Indians they had never seen. There, too, we find in a few brief paragraphs, the stories of the visits of the first Frenchmen to the Grand River country.

Th  
Georgi  
River.  
lived s  
tantly r  
and He  
the En  
mission  
fur tra  
titled t  
crafty  
battle.  
Tobacco  
or Tr  
original  
Bruce  
attacked  
Bay ar  
S  
the He  
lived t  
The te  
Cayuga  
our ea  
apt to  
as a re

*By Hugh Templin*

The territory of the Huron Indians lay between Georgian Bay and Lake Simcoe, south of the Severn River. They were deadly enemies of the Iroquois, who lived south of Lake Ontario, though the tribes were distantly related. From the time of Champlain, the French and Hurons had been allied against the Iroquois and the English, and it was among the Hurons that the missionaries had their greatest successes and the early fur traders built up a profitable business. The Hurons killed the soul to some extent, and seem to have been a crafty people, but they could not match the Iroquois in battle. Closely associated with the Hurons were the Tobacco Nation, the Petuns as the French called them, or Tonnontates, as they called themselves. Their original hunting grounds had been in what are now Bruce and Grey counties but when the Iroquois finally attacked the Hurons, they were living near Nottawasaga Bay and the present town of Collingwood.

South of Lake Ontario, between the Niagara and the Hudson Rivers, and around the "Finger Lakes" lived the Iroquois, the Confederacy of the Six Nations. The tribes were the Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas, Senecas and Tuscaroras. Because we obtain our early Canadian history from French sources, we are apt to gather rather a distorted picture of the Iroquois as a race of half human devils, but they were brave in



## FERGUS

war, cruel as all Indians were, and had worked out a more advanced system of government, which enabled other tribes to come to the assistance of one that might be attacked.

The Grand River country and the nearby shores of Lake Erie belonged to the Neutral Nation, or the Attiwandarons. (There are variations in the spelling of many of these Indian names.) From the Jesuit Relation of 1641, we learn that the Neutrals owned some forty villages and numbered about twelve thousand people of whom four thousand were capable of bearing arms. Their favorite enemies were the Fire Nation, an Algonquin tribe near Lake Michigan, and they burned even their women prisoners, a depth of cruelty to which neither Hurons nor Iroquois descended. They were taller and stronger than the Hurons, covered their bodies with furs and tattooed patterns and cultivated corn, beans and squashes. Hunting was good, for the Grand River valley teemed with fish, deer, wild cats, wolves, black squirrels and beaver, to name only the animals mentioned by Father Brebeuf.

The Attiwandarons were called the Neutrals by the Hurons and the Iroquois, because they were able to keep out of the deadly feud between those nations. The reason is said to be that the Neutrals controlled the supply of flint in these parts, and since it was needed for

arrow-  
dare to  
obtain  
of the  
Neutra  
A  
the rel  
though  
the ear  
appare  
five m  
Danda  
Lake C  
from  
of the  
T  
travel  
Franc  
days,  
Neutra  
tion th  
his m s  
T  
from t  
Father  
be ma

*By Hugh Templin*

arrow-heads, axes and knives, the other tribes did not dare to antagonize them. Later, when the Iroquois obtained fire arms from the Dutch, they were relieved of the necessity of remaining on friendly terms with the Neutrals and open war broke out.

A study of the map on page fourteen will show the relative positions of these three nations of Indians, though the Iroquois country was somewhat farther to the east. The importance of the Grand River is very apparent. It stretched from Lake Erie to within twenty-five miles of Georgian Bay and a portage route up the Dundas Valley linked the river with Burlington Bay and Lake Ontario, while another favorite portage route led from the river near Fergus to the southern boundary of the Petun country.

The first White Man to visit the Neutrals and to travel down the Grand River was La Roche Daillon, a Franciscan friar. He came in 1626 and it took him six days, travelling through the forest, to reach the first Neutral village, but beyond that fact and the information that the country was full of game, he tells little of his missionary journey.

The next Frenchmen to leave a record of their trip from the Huron country to the Neutrals were two Jesuit Fathers. It had been determined that an attempt would be made to Christianize the Neutrals and the lot fell

## FERGUS

upon Father Jean de Brebeuf, whose name is well known to students of Canadian history, and Father Joseph Marie Chaumonot. Father Brebeuf had long lived with the Hurons and knew their language and the kindred dialect of the Neutrals. His companion had come from France only the year before. Starting from Ste. Marie and taking Huron guides, they traveled southward for five days till they came to the first Neutral village. The Huron guides deserted or were sent back and the two Jesuits went on alone in the face of winter. They had set out on November 2nd, 1640, from Ste. Marie and for four nights they slept in the bush, before they came to Kandocho and continued on to Tsohahissen, the town named after the Big Chief himself, and supposed to have been near the present City of Brantford.

Returning homeward by a more southerly route, the Frenchmen encountered snow so deep that they had to stay for twenty five days at the village of Teotongnaton until spring arrived. There they made one true friend. An Indian woman took them to her house and kept them there, in spite of the murmurings of the rest of the inhabitants. She fed them well and when Lent came and they could not eat meat, she caught fish for them. As it was not possible for Father Brebeuf to sit around idle, he learned the intricacies of the language from his hostess and compiled a dictionary.

T  
was no  
but to  
French  
Neutra  
reduce  
fur tra  
the ge  
taking  
but sol  
on at a  
cut off  
French  
they c  
used f  
were a  
dalous  
less th  
deed, t  
T  
was fa  
Iroquo  
The H  
escaped  
who fe  
H

*By Hugh Templin*

The mission to the Neutrals was a failure. This was not due to lack of zeal on the part of the Jesuits, but to treachery back home. The Hurons feared that French traders would follow the missionaries into the Neutral territory and thus cut out the middleman and reduce the profits the Hurons were making out of the fur trade. The Neutrals apparently knew so little of the geography of Ontario that they never thought of taking their furs to the French by way of Lake Ontario, but sold them instead to the Hurons, who passed them on at a profit. Seeing a chance that this trade might be cut off, the Hurons whispered to the Neutrals that the Frenchmen were devils, temporarily in human form, that they carried surveying instruments, which were really used for witchcraft, and that even the pens and inkwells were used in working spells. In the face of such scandalous lying, the Jesuits were helpless and it was little less than a miracle that they escaped with their lives. Indeed, they so recorded it.

The last and greatest of the Indian wars in Ontario was fast approaching. In 1648 and again in 1649, the Iroquois attacked the Hurons and defeated them utterly. The Huron villages were destroyed and only a remnant escaped to Quebec or to Sault Ste. Marie. Among those who fell was Father Brebeuf.

Having routed the Hurons, the Six Nations picked

## FERGUS

a quarrel with the Neutrals. Several causes are given. The Neutrals were accused of sheltering Hurons, which was probably true enough. As the result of a more or less friendly contest with the Senecas, possibly gambling with plum stones or playing lacrosse or some such field sport, the Neutrals left in bad humor taking a Seneca prisoner with them and then they burned him, after the pleasant custom of the time. The Senecas retaliated, capturing the three frontier villages and taking two more towns, one near Burlington Bay and the other farther inland. Then the Neutrals raided the Seneca territory, with some success, but they merely added to their troubles as a result, as the other five tribes came to the help of the Senecas. A picked army of sixteen hundred Iroquois braves crossed the Niagara River and one town after another fell before them, followed by the usual atrocities.

This was too much for the faltering courage of the remaining Neutrals. They turned and fled up the Grand River, making all possible speed, and hoping to join the fugitive Hurons and Petuns near Sault Ste. Marie. Reaching the caves at Flora, they found an excellent place to hide their treasure of wampum beads. There is a natural bridge of limestone rock, forming an unmistakable landmark. A few feet away is a cave about the size of an old fashioned hoghead and there the pre-

cious s  
season.

TH  
sevent  
buried  
knew  
some of  
them  
and oth  
rest fou

AF  
the We  
the M.S

Ca  
of Que  
the Iro  
America  
Nations  
they fol  
been pre  
to settle

Th  
chiefs k  
chose tw  
ing grou  
One of

*By Hugh Templin*

cious strings of beads were stored till a more favorable season. Then they left for the north country and safety.

There is a legend around these parts that, some seventy years ago, two Indians returned to hunt for the buried treasure, but did not find it, and the Eora people knew nothing of it till the heavy rains of 1878 washed some of the beads out of the cave and school boys found them. They were gathered by the teacher, the editor and others. Part of the collection was scattered and the rest found its way to museums.

After 1651, there were no Indian inhabitants of the Western Peninsula, though wandering Ojibways of the Mississauga tribe came here to hunt.

Canada passed into British hands after the capture of Quebec, and thus the wars between the French and the Iroquois were ended. When the United States of America fought and won their independence, the Six Nations remained loyal to the King of England, and they followed the other Loyalists to Canada, having been promised a new home wherever they should choose to settle.

This offer caused some argument. The Iroquois chiefs knew Ontario better than the British did and they chose two locations which they considered better hunting grounds than any other parts of the upper province. One of these was the Valley of the Grand River chosen

## FERGUS

by Chief Joseph Brant and his tribes, the other was on the shores of the Bay of Quinte. As neither would yield, both pieces of land were granted to the Indians.

The Government of Canada has always tried to treat the Indians generously and fairly. There have been complaints that at times the White Man drove too sharp a bargain, but the reverse is also true. In 1784, the Government bought the Grand River Valley from the Mississaugas. How this tribe was able to prove its ownership is not apparent. The original owners, the Neutrals, had joined the Hurons and had crossed into the United States, where the survivors became known as Wyandottes.

The Crown having purchased the land a survey was made to mark out the new home of the Iroquois a strip twelve miles wide, with the Grand River in the centre. Again, the lack of knowledge became apparent. Nothing more seems to have been learned and recorded about the interior of Upper Canada since the old French map was drawn in 1744, some forty years earlier. So a survey line was run starting from in front of the home of Chief Joseph Brant at Waghquata, now Burlington. This line was run northwest, until it touched the river that had been marked by the French as La Tranche, or the Thames. This is the line still known as the "Base Line," and around it the townships and counties of this

part of C  
page fou

It w  
lay to th  
error stil  
ses the  
ready co  
surveyor  
report th  
they kep  
Indians  
land, but  
that they  
could giv

The  
that ano  
of the b  
Conestog  
out the  
began a  
measured  
limits of  
began to  
line first  
being th  
township

*By Hugh Templin*

part of Ontario were built. It is shown on the map on page fourteen.

It was supposed that the whole of the Grand River lay to the south and west of this base line. That is an error still fairly prevalent. Instead, the base line crosses the Grand River at Fergus, and the river has already come thirty miles or more. It is strange that the surveyor, said to have been Augustus Jones, did not report the error to his superiors. Perhaps he did, and they kept the information to themselves. Later, the Indians discovered the mistake and applied for more land, but the Government would not grant it, claiming that they had purchased the land in good faith, and could give no more.

The map at the beginning of this chapter shows that another error had been made. The northwest end of the base line does not touch the Thames, but the Conestogo River, a tributary of the Grand. In laying out the boundaries of the Indian reserve, the surveyors began at the river, where it enters Fergus first, and measured six miles in each direction, thus marking the limits of Nichol township of later years. Then they began to work down the stream, the place where their line first crossed the river, at the bend at Kinnettles, being the exact centre of the first township. Other townships down the river still retain the boundaries



## FERGUS

which belonged to the Six Nations reserve, and the present township of Peel seems to have been added as the "Clergy Reserve of the Six Nations," to comply with the old Clergy Reserves Act.

With in the next generation, land in Upper Canada became much more valuable and greatly sought after. It was not long before prospective settlers and land speculators were able to persuade the Indians that they had much more area than they needed, and so, before the end of the century, Chief Brant had sold several blocks of land, including one of some 28,500 acres to Thomas Clark of Stamford. There appears to have been some hitch in the proceedings, due to "red tape," but in April 1807 the purchase by Col. Clark was confirmed and he gave his bond for £4564 to the trustees of the Six Nations, and the land, which he called Nichol township, was his to sell as he pleased.

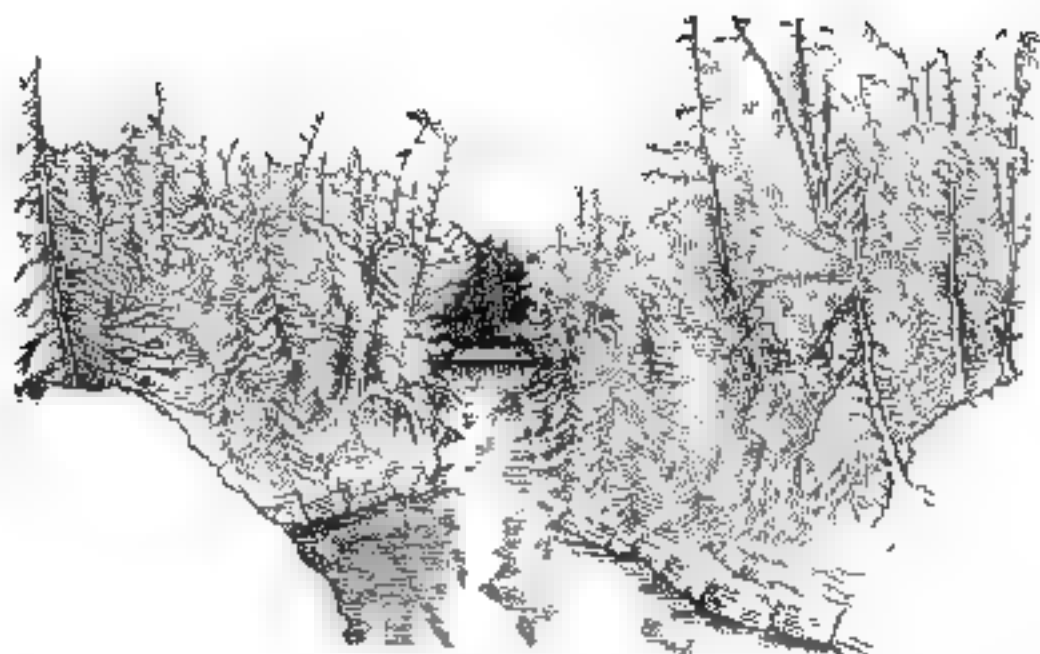
The township was named in honor of Col. Robert Nichol, a gallant gentleman, who distinguished himself during the War of 1812. It is said that Col. Nichol and Rev. Robert Addison, both of the Niagara district, were associated in the speculation for some time, but it was Col. Clark or his executors, and Mrs. Robert Addison who made the important sales of land in the township. In 1832, Captain William Galkison of Brantford, bought half the township, consisting of 13,816 acres, and on

*By Hugh Templin*

it the Captain founded his town of Elora. A year later, in the fall of 1833, Adam Fergusson and James Webster bought more than half of the remainder, being 7,367 acres, stretching from the southern limits of the present village of Fergus to the northern boundary of Nichol township where Cumnock used to be.

After that, the rule of the Indian in the Fergus district was ended. For years, wandering bands made occasional trips up and down the river when the water was high, or set up encampments near the villages and sold their baskets and other wares. They were a peaceful race then, and there are very few stories of trouble between the Indians and the early settlers, except when some native secured an overdose of "fire-water."





#### THE FALLS ON THE RIVER

From the original drawing by  
A. D. Fordyce, Junior, dated  
6th July, 1835, and entitled,  
"Falls of the Grand River at  
Fergus, (From the Bridge,"

IT W  
Upp  
rivers  
was th  
throug  
followi  
gradua  
farther  
bush.

T  
of We  
up the  
trict  
before  
farms  
the fir  
Town  
Matthe  
fering  
of the

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE ARRIVAL OF THE SCOTS

IT WAS NATURAL that the first settlements in Upper Canada should be along the lakes and larger rivers near the lakes, because transportation by water was the only easy way to carry persons and baggage through a wild, unsettled country. But in the years following the War of 1812, the land-hunting settlers gradually worked their way inland in Ontario, moving farther up the streams, or chopping roads out of the bush.

The earliest settlers approached the present County of Wellington from three directions. The first came up the Grand River, still the great highway of the district. Some of them had penetrated into Waterloo before the War, and not long after its conclusion, the farms around Winterburne had been settled. In 1817, the first farmer arrived on Colonel Clark's land in the Township of Nichol. He was the unfortunate Roswell Matthews, who, bringing his family with him and suffering great hardships and loneliness, cleared the site of the future settlement at Elora. Finally, weary of

## FERGUS

the life and hopeless of receiving his promised reward, he moved to Guelph in 1827 and died there soon after. Before he left Elora, the tide of settlement had flowed farther up the stream, and in 1826, the Dobb'n family had come up the river to Garafraxa, with nothing but a blazed Indian trail to guide them the last dozen miles. In the same year, the Headleys and the Felkers reached Garafraxa, apparently up the river trail.

Another stream of settlers was coming from the east, up from York first, by Brampton and Caledon, then over the deep valley of the Credit River and the hills to Erin and so into Garafraxa. It was thus that the McKee family seems to have come from Niagara in 1826, and they settled within eight miles of the spot in the wilderness where Fergus was to be built. Their first house was a mere shack, with no door, except an opening with a quilt hung over it. One night, when Mrs. McKee was alone, a wolf found its way past the quilt. It is doubtful which was more frightened, the lady or the wolf, but the lady was the more resourceful. She caught up some burning brands from the hearth and threw them at the wolf, till he found the doorway and ran howling out into the snow.

By the spring of 1827, the road had been cut from the south, at first from Galt, and then from Dundas, and the Canada Company started the Town of Guelph.

With  
the  
attra  
cers  
the  
and  
sout  
Galt  
pect  
the

way  
trees  
after  
Quee

The  
Socie  
there  
prob  
was  
rural  
ber  
Twee  
gentl

*By Hugh Templin*

With plenty of money behind the project at first, and the energetic management of John Galt, Guelph soon attracted attention. After that year, most of the pioneers coming to Centre Wellington, made their way up the rough road from Dundas to Guelph. Between 1827 and 1833, some of them had found their way into the southeast corner of Nichol and in 1832, Captain William G. Kison, of Brantford, attracted by the excellent prospect of water-power at the Falls, had laid out and begun the town which he named Elora.

To the north there was unbroken forest all the way to Owen's Sound on Georgian Bay, and because trees and land still belonged to the Crown, it was known after the accession of Queen Victoria, in 1837, as "The Queen's Bush."

\* \* \*

Fergus owes its beginning to an idea conceived at the meetings of that distinguished body, the Highland Society of Scotland, at Edinburgh. It was not planned there, but the Highland Society was interested in the problem of emigration from Scotland to Canada, as it was in all problems which concerned the welfare of the rural parts of Scotland. It had been founded by a number of prominent Scots, among them the Marquis of Tweeddale, Lord Greenock, Sir John Hope and a country gentleman of Scotland, Adam Fergusson, of Woodhill.

## FERGUS

an advocate, or lawyer, by training but a gentleman farmer by preference.

During the winter of 1830-31, there seems to have been a discussion at the sessions of the Highland Society about the number of Scots who were leaving every month for Canada and the United States. Most of them were taking a step in the dark, guided only by the hope of bettering themselves, but not knowing exactly where they would settle, what they would need, or how they would live during the first few years. Their case aroused the sympathy of the members of the Highland Society, and it was felt that if one of their number could visit Canada and the United States, make an extensive tour and take copious notes, the result might be very helpful to thousands of others who were thinking over the question of emigrating.

The discussion interested Mr Fergusson and he decided to make the trip himself and report to the Highland Society when he returned. In order to help him in promoting his enquiries, the Chairman of the Society, Pat Murray, was directed to give Mr Fergusson a letter of which we copy the opening paragraph

"The Directors, having been apprized by Mr Fergusson, of Woodhill, of his intention to visit Canada and the United States of America, it has appeared to them that this may afford a favorable opportunity of

*By Hugh Templin*

obtaining such information regarding those countries as may prove beneficial to rural economy and the useful arts at home. The zealous and valuable assistance which the Highland Society of Scotland has received from Mr Fergusson as a Member and Director, and his knowledge and experience acquired in the long and honourable discharge of every duty of a country gentleman, afford an assurance to the Directors that he will be eminently attentive to all such circumstances connected with the state of industry and the useful arts in the rich and magnificent countries which he is to visit, as may tend to promote the improvement of those arts in his own."

There were three more paragraphs to Mr. Fergusson's official letter of introduction, but, even leaving out the adjectives, they would take too much space here. It is sufficient to say that Mr Murray signed the letter and dated it at the Highland Society Hall, Edinburgh, on the 3rd of February, 1831.

Adam Fergusson did his work well. He left Edinburgh, Scotland on the 12th of February. On the way to Liverpool, he had a ride on the world's first railway train, still a novelty. Arriving at New York, he sailed up the Hudson River, the Erie Canal and Lake Champlain into Canada. He visited Montreal, Quebec and Niagara Falls, then turned northward as far as the



## FERGUS

frontier village of Cuelph. Throughout his trip he kept voluminous notes and accurate account books.

When he returned to Scotland, Mr. Fergusson published a book of his experiences. It is said to have been the most valuable one written for the guidance of the emigrants of a century ago, and such a book as only a practical Scotchman could write. He told the price of everything. It cost him £50, 12s. to travel from New York to Niagara Falls, which was half his journey exclusive of the sail of forty days across the Atlantic. Where others saw only beauty and awe inspiring might in Niagara Falls, he saw the possibility of great power development in the future. He learned every tool and implement needed on the backwoods farm and what they would cost. Finally, he dedicated his volume to

"My Lords and Gentlemen of the Highland Society of Scotland." And, it might be added, the book was such a success that a second volume enlarged and with a map of Canada and the adjacent parts of the United States, was published two years later.

Adam Fergusson had made a careful study of the country, but he had done more. He had fallen in love with Canada. He could conscientiously advise others to emigrate for he wanted to do so himself. After two years back on his farm, the life of a Scottish country gentleman seemed dull. He longed for the New Land, and

*By Hugh Templin*

he had a vision of a family seat, established in Canada, headed by the Fergusson family, a model town set in a model township somewhere in the wilds, where land was good and conditions ideal. Even the inhabitants were to measure up to the same high standard. They would be hand-picked men, with character and money, if possible, but with character even if they lacked the money. His vision can be more readily understood in its entirety if one remembers that this was before the Rebellion of 1837, when there was still a chance that a titled class would be founded in Canada.

Mr. Fergusson had not chosen the exact location of his proposed Utopia during his tour of Canada in 1831. Indeed, as it turned out, he had not even seen it, but he was sure it could be found. So he determined to return to Canada, made his preparations and found a young partner, also full of the pioneering spirit and with plenty of money, James Webster of the beautiful Balruddery estate at Inchtute. How it happened that these two men, the one fifty-two years old, and the other only twenty five, became partners is one of the few unsolved mysteries in the early history of Fergus, for James Webster was about the same age as some of Adam Fergusson's older sons. However, it is probable that they were drawn together by a common purpose, and both had been gentlemen farmers at home.

## FERGUS

The stories of the farewell dinners given to these men have been preserved in a copy of the Patriot, printed at York, Upper Canada, in October, 1833. From the Caledonian Mercury the Patriot copied the story of the farewell banquet given by the Highland Society to Adam Fergusson. It is studded with the names of titled men who acted as toastmaster, croupiers or proposed the toasts. But the account of the other banquet given at Inchtate for the young James Webster, and copied from the Dundee Courier, is more enlightening, and so the following paragraph is taken from it.

Mr Webster goes with Mr Fergusson of Woodhall and a number of other gentlemen of property, enterprise and talent to settle on the banks of the upper lakes in America. Mr Fergusson's expedition is a singular one, and it will be most interesting to watch the influence which may be produced on that quarter of the New World by a body of men of such intelligence, information, activity and capital as has not, perhaps, left our shores for America within a century. Mr Fergusson has already gone as far as the Isle of Man, and in him, Perthshire, Scotland, has lost one of her most talented and useful agriculturalists. Mr Bell, the inventor of the reaping machine which now begins to be extensively used in this country which if it quarter fulfils its present promise, may yet do more for the farmer than even

*By Hugh Templin*

the threshing mill itself, which it greatly surpasses in mechanical contrivance, goes with him. Mr. Webster follows in a week or two and the whole sail next month."

Even after allowing something for the exuberance of the editor of the Dundee Courier, it is still apparent that the "expedition" was an important one, and the chief men well thought of in their native land.

It is unnecessary to give the details of the trip across the Atlantic, but plans for the future were discussed in the light of the knowledge that Mr. Fergusson already had. One low-lying tract of land on the shores of Lake Michigan was considered, but was rejected for several reasons, one being that it was not within the Empire, the other because it was too swampy. Since that time, the City of Chicago has grown up on this area which they rejected.

In October, 1833, the party were in Guelph, still in search of suitable land, and without a great deal of hope of finding it near there. However, they were willing to be shown, and on October 6th. they started out in search of Nichol township. At first they went too far east, but Mr. Armstrong, of Eramosa, directed them to the farm of Mr. Dunwoodie, in the lower corner of the township. The story of the next two days is told in Mr. Fergusson's own words:

"By this good family (Mr. Dunwoodie's) we were

## FERGUS

welcomed in a spirit of genuine hospitality, and sat down to a comfortable dinner where excellent sheep's head broth formed an acceptable item. After a glass of good whiskey toddy and being furnished with the aid of Mr. Bryden, a Scotch settler in the neighborhood, as our guide through the forest to Flora Falls, a distance of about twelve miles, we left Mr. Dunwoodie and were soon immersed in the woods. I have seldom seen a better pedestrian than our guide, who dashed away through bush and brake at slapping pace and performed the distance in two hours and forty minutes.

"The soil was rich and the wood of great size and valuable kinds. Flora is in a beautiful situation with most romantic scenery and valuable mill power on the Grand River. A bridge is at present building and extensive mills erecting. Mr. Fraser, who has acted as agent for the Glikson family, insisted upon us taking quarters in the 'Manor House' as the tavern was in rather a rough state. There had been a 'bee' for two days and the jollification had not yet subsided. We got a most comfortable supper, however, and kind reception for which we were sincerely thankful. Some respectable settlers from the adjoining township of Woolwich (now Pilkington) spent the evening with us and communicated much valuable information.

"October 7th—Our host volunteered to ride with

*By Hugh Templin*

us after breakfast up the river to view the object of our search, distant about seven miles. (It will be noticed that the distances have been over-estimated.) The day was fine and the prodigious height of the maples, elms and other trees gave a solemn character to the stillness of the forest. The only trace of a road consisted in blazes or chips taken from the bark of the trees. Occasionally, some immense overgrown trunk blocked up the only passage, and we had nothing for it then but a sporting leap, a performance which the Canadian pony took his own mode of executing, somewhat to the discomfiture of his rider, as it more nearly resembled the feats of a gr. malkin than any equestrian movement we had ever seen.

"The soil was found to be of first-rate quality, a deep, black loam, rather inclining to sand, upon a stratum of limestone, and the luxuriance of clover and other grasses was quite refreshing to look on.

"I had come somewhat rather prejudiced against the district, under an idea that if the soil around Guelph was but second rate, it must be still worse farther back. Never was I more out in my conjecture. The land is of the best description and I was altogether so entirely satisfied with soil, situation and other advantages that since that visit I have purchased a block of seven thousand acres. Upon this, with the aid and co-operation of

## FERGUS

some friends, ere many years have passed, I hope to see a thriving community established. There are some fine falls on the river, which is clear as crystal, flowing over a limestone bed, full of delicious trout, and the forest abounds in a variety of game."

The high hopes of Mr. Fergusson were soon to be realized to a large extent, and it is one of those strange coincidences that, one hundred years to the day after the visit of the Fergusson party to Nichol, this chapter was set into type at the Fergus News-Record office.

From another member of the exploring party, a few more details are available. Before the site of Fergus was reached, it was apparent that the soil was good, as shown by the trees and other vegetation. Test holes were dug to see how close to the surface the limestone might be. These things being satisfactory, water-power was the great consideration. Mr. Fraser, of Elora, was able to tell them of the "Little Falls," but they wished to see the falls for themselves. Arriving at the future site of Fergus early in the morning, they heard the water falling over the rocky terraces of the river and in the cascade below the falls, but so thick and tangled were the cedar thickets that it took almost half a day for them to break a way through at the right point. Then they stood on the top of the high, rocky bank and watched the water, "clear as crystal, flowing over a limestone

*By Hugh Templin*

bed," and decided that this was the place they had been looking for

One thing remained to be explored. The clear stream which fell over the cliff excited the curiosity of the Scotchmen and they worked their way up it till they came to the fine spring which bubbled out of the bank where the Fergus arena now stands. It gave promise of excellent drinking water, but they regarded it rather as a valuable source of supply for a future distillery. So, having found that the site offered everything necessary for a model Scottish-Canadian village, the explorers turned their faces again toward the newly-founded village of Elora, where, in the "Manor House," they drank to the future prosperity of Fergus and its neighbor down the river.

Adam Fergusson and James Webster were men of action and they soon arranged the purchase of the land from Col. Clark's block, buying 7,367 acres. The name of the new village had probably been decided upon on the way across the Atlantic. There has been some discussion as to whether it was named "Fergus" after Mr. Fergusson or after Fergus the First, King of Scotland. Such an argument leads nowhere. Obviously the name was bestowed in honor of the senior partner and the man who conceived the enterprise. It was probably decided that "Fergusson" was too long a name for the



## FERGUS

village, too awkward in the spelling with the double "s" and probably too personal to suit Adam Fergusson himself, so a compromise was reached by adopting the name of Scotland's first monarch.

Adam Fergusson seems to have returned to Scotland to wind up his business there. James Webster stayed in Upper Canada and made arrangements to begin the work of clearing part of the village site that winter.

The first house was raised in Fergus on December 20th, 1833. The neighbors gathered from Elora, Pilkington and Nichol for the "raising bee." John Connon tells about Martin Martin, the first inn-keeper at Elora, coming to Fergus for the big event. Instead of crossing the river at Elora, where the bridge was completed, he came up the south bank of the stream. Arriving at the high and rocky banks of the Grand River just below Tower Street, he found a solitary log stretched over the canyon and boasting not even a hand-rail. So Martin got down on his hands and knees and crawled across. At night, returning after the raising and the subsequent celebration, and toasts to the future of Fergus, he felt no such nervousness, but walked upright, caring not a whit for the dark, cold December water, flowing in the river far beneath him.

The first house was no more than a crude log

share  
And  
by the  
his  
Will  
Ferg  
who  
who

vice  
an ho  
sages  
Burst  
to pr  
new

*By Hugh Templin*

shanty on the east side of the creek and north of St. Andrew street. It was occupied during that winter by the young James Webster, now well started toward his great adventure, and with him two companions, William Buist, the first man who had faith enough in Fergus to buy a town lot, and "Scott, the contractor," who built the first bridge and some other structures, but who moved away a few years later.

On the following Sunday, the first religious service was held in Fergus. It was simple in the extreme, an hour of Scottish "family worship," with a few passages read aloud from the Bible, and a prayer by Mr. Buist, the oldest of the three men, asking the Almighty to prosper the endeavors of three pioneers starting a new enterprise in the forest.





**THE FOUNDERS OF FERGUS**

Drawn by Alex Cameron.

Hon. Adam Fergusson on the left, James Webster, Esq., on the right. The drawing of James Webster is from a photograph taken about twenty-five years after the founding of Fergus.

W  
wi  
an  
fro  
"re  
Th  
the  
bor  
Th  
in  
thi  
hav  
and  
  
ste  
ma  
wh  
ner  
and

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE FOUNDERS OF FERGUS

WHAT kind of men were these two founders of Fergus? The answer can be given easily and with assurance. Few better could have been found anywhere in Scotland, had the country been searched from end to end. The Dundee Courier called them "men of intelligence, information, activity and capital." They had already made reputations for themselves in the Old Land, and their lives in Upper Canada fully bore out the promise that they were no ordinary men. The only wonder was that two men of such influence in Scotland should have been willing to gamble everything they had in a new country, and that they should have been able to attract so many other men of learning and wealth to their little backwoods village.

At first sight, Adam Fergusson and James Webster seem rather a strangely matched team. The older man was a generation removed in time and had a family whose older members were more like his young partner. His reputation had been made, and he worked and associated with the most noted Scots of his day in

## FERGUS

Edinburgh and the neighboring counties. Not only was he rich enough himself, but he had been married to the heiress of one of the oldest estates in Scotland, the ownership of which could be traced back to 1365. Apparently, he had nothing to gain and everything to lose by changing his place of residence.

His wife had died in 1825, leaving him with a family of seven sons, the smallest of whom was very young. His tour of Canada in 1831 had convinced him that this country offered boundless opportunities for his boys, so he took a chance for himself. Scotland was small and cramped by comparison. Its traditions were fixed beyond the power of one family to alter greatly. That was not true of Upper Canada a century ago. Out on the fringe of civilization, on the edge of the forest, a model settlement might be started, with only such influences at work as the founders desired, and with the location and even the inhabitants chosen with care.

James Webster, the junior partner, was the second son of a well-to-do home. His life still lay before him, and it is not surprising that he chose the adventures of the bush. He was unmarried and had no other ties which could not be easily severed. Not only did he intend to invest his money in the new settlement, but he planned to live right in the wilds, to chop down trees

sho  
sell  
had  
edu  
fam  
own  
Ferg  
Cou  
the  
life  
and  
in C  
ticult  
quire  
villag  
cipal  
the L  
two  
Hous  
tario  
ment  
shire,  
Neil

*By Hugh Templin*

shoot wolves and bears, and, in more prosaic moments, sell portions of his broad acres to kindred spirits.

Yet the two men had something in common. Both had been trained as advocates, or lawyers. Such an education seems to have been a tradition in their two families, but both preferred the life of the rural landowner to the work in a lawyer's office.

Both achieved high honors in Canada. Adam Fergusson became a life member of the Legislative Council of United Canada, being known thereafter as the Honorable Adam Fergusson. He did not centre his life in Fergus, but his work was provincial in its scope, and his chief hobby was the improvement of agriculture in Canada. James Webster devoted himself more particularly to the building up of Fergus, a task which required all his energy for fifteen years. After the young village was well on its way, he took up politics, municipal and county offices at first, and then was elected to the Legislative Assembly, so that, at the same time, the two founders of Fergus sat in the Upper and Lower Houses of Parliament for the Province of Canada (Ontario and Quebec were united with a common Parliament in 1842.)

Adam Fergusson was born at "Woodhill," Perthshire, Scotland, on March 4th, 1781, the eldest son of Neil Fergusson, of Pitcullo. He was educated as an

## FERGUS

advocate, but practised law in Edinburgh only a short time. His first wife was Jemima Johnston, heiress of the Blair estate.

They had seven sons, six of whom came to Canada, the eldest, Neil, remaining on his mother's estate. Adam Fergusson, the second son, became prominent in Canada, being a member of the Legislative Assembly, a County Judge and then a member of the Legislative Council, and thus the second Honorable Adam Fergusson. When his brother died in 1862, he became the heir of the Blair estate and added the surname, Blair, to his own. Returning to Canada, he held many high offices, the greatest of which was the Presidency of the Privy Council. Two of the other sons lived in Fergus. Robert Colquhoun Fergusson owned the farm at Westwood, now within the limits of the municipality. In the early days, it was down the river from the village. He died comparatively young. George Douglas played a much greater part in the history of the village, where he managed the Fergusson interests. More will be heard of him in later chapters. The other members of the family scattered and Robert Colquhoun Fergusson, the youngest, became chairman of the board of the Union Bank of London, England.

(Many of the streets in Fergus bear names commemorating the members of the Fergusson family—

John  
village  
George

in On  
He w  
and h  
breed  
helped  
Canada  
Toron  
the gre  
offered  
ageme

H  
Andre  
Scienc  
Colleg  
howev  
Life A

D  
saw se  
summe  
a Lieut  
13th C  
ton Rif

*By Hugh Templin*

Johnston, Tower, Blair and Colquhoun, while the village of Douglas, now Belwood, was called after George Douglas Fergusson.)

Hon. Adam Fergusson did as much for agriculture in Ontario as any man who ever lived in the province. He was one of the first to import pure-bred live stock and he sent the first of the Shorthorn cattle to Fergus, a breed for which the district is still noted. In 1846, he helped to form the Agricultural Association of Upper Canada and in that year the first exhibition was held in Toronto, an exhibition which has now developed into the greatest annual show in the world. Among the prizes offered in 1846 was the "Fergus Cup" for the encouragement of pure-bred stock breeding in Ontario.

He was also one of the group who brought Dr Andrew Smith to Canada to give lectures in Veterinary Science at Toronto, and to found the Ontario Veterinary College. His interests were not confined to agriculture, however, for he was one of the founders of the Canada Life Association.

During the Rebellion of 1837, Adam Fergusson saw service along the Niagara River. During the next summer, while he was living in Fergus, he was made a Lieutenant-Colonel, and instructed to form the new 13th Gore Regiment, which later became the Wellington Rifles. It was natural that he should choose many



## FERGUS

Fergus men as other officers. Not only were they his friends, but they, too, had been under fire along the Niagara Frontier.

Mr. Fergusson did not live at Fergus, but at Woodhill, on the edge of Waterdown, overlooking the shores of Lake Ontario. He died at his home there on September 25th, 1862, as the result of a paralytic stroke. The unknown writer of his obituary says "By his probity, urbanity and social disposition, he won the goodwill and esteem of all with whom he came in contact."

Since James Webster lived the best years of his life in Fergus and was interested in all community affairs, less need be said of him now. His name will be mentioned again and again in later chapters.

He was the second son of James Webster, and was born at Balruddery, County of Forfar, Scotland, on May 28th, 1808. He was trained as an advocate in Edinburgh, but did not practise. His arrival in Fergus has already been described. After spending the first winter in the shanty with Scott and Buist, he had a fine log house ready in the spring of 1834, and from time to time, moved to larger houses. His courtship and marriage to Margaret Wilson make up one of the first romances of the young village. In July, 1837, he and Patrick Bell, inventor of the first reaper, left Fergus on their way to Scotland. At that time, he was engaged to

Mar  
ing  
pare  
most  
sent  
on M  
n th  
dent  
o'clo  
and  
I ove  
town  
Geor  
gaged  
in 18  
first  
was  
ing M  
been  
and V  
was p  
with  
held  
seem

*By Hugh Templin*

Margaret Wilson, and when he returned in the following spring, he brought her handsome presents from his parents at Balraddery. This story formed one of the most memorable scenes in the Centennial Pageant, presented at Fergus twice during the recent celebration.

James Webster and Margaret Wilson were married on March 6th, 1838. The wedding was a great event in the life of the village and the settlement. The residents gave a dinner, the festivities keeping up till ten o'clock at night. The Fergus Band, consisting of fife and drum, supplied the music, and they played "My Love, She's But a Lassie Yet," which was literally true.

James Webster was one of the three appointed as township commissioners in 1836, the other two being George Wilson, father of the girl to whom he was engaged, and David Glikson, son of the founder of Elora. In 1842, he ran against Charles Allan of Fergus in the first contested election, of which more later. In 1844, he was the Conservative candidate for Parliament, defeating Mr. Durand, the Reformer. This is said to have been the most exciting election ever held in the district and Webster won by a narrow margin. The election was protested on the ground that seven sons had voted with their father as joint owners of one farm. Webster held the seat and thereafter the excitement of politics seems to have been in his blood and he ran several

## FERGUS

times with various success. Once his opponent was the younger Adam Fergusson, and James Webster was elected, but it was proven that his agents had been too zealous and many ineligible persons had voted, so he was unseated.

These numerous election contests, invariably followed by legal actions, required much money and so James Webster's fortune suffered. In 1852, after the death of A. D. Fordyce, senior, it was found that the industrial and other enterprises in which the two were involved, were considerably tangled, and to straighten them out, the Fordyce estate bought the full control of the various businesses and James Webster left the village he had founded and moved to Guelph. Soon after he arrived in that town, the great land boom began and for a time, he made much money, then, like many others, he lost most of it. In 1859, he was elected Mayor of Guelph and later was appointed the County Registrar, a position which he filled until his death on February 6th, 1869, in his 61st year. He had a large family. Two daughters survive, Mrs. R. Saunders and Mrs. McCall, who unveiled the pioneer memorial fireplace at Fergus during Centennial week, August, 1933.

James Webster stands out as one of the great men in early Fergus history. It is probable that no other man did as much for the village during the first twenty

*By Hugh Templin*

years after its founding. He was a tall, powerful man, with a long beard in his later years. Many of the early settlers recalled and noted his kindness, his generosity and his love of children. He pressed no man for a debt and gave away much, so that, though his industries in Fergus were busy and prosperous, he never piled up a fortune. When the first mill burned, it was a great loss to both of the founders, but it was also discouraging to those Nichol settlers who saw their first year's crop all consumed, and themselves facing hunger during the winter. James Webster was one of those who bought flour and grain and helped to keep the settlement alive.

Such were the Fathers of Fergus, two men of whom the community might well be proud.





#### THE FIRST BRIDGE

The curious wooden structure erected by Scott, the contractor, over the Grand River at the foot of Tower street, Fargo, 1834.

A  
T  
They  
from  
selve  
they  
heavy  
next  
ten o

surve  
the fu  
the m  
St. An  
corner  
an "X  
roads  
honor  
St. An  
Hav.n

## CHAPTER FOUR

### A YEAR OF HOPES AND PREPARATIONS

THE SPRING of 1834 arrived at last and found three men still living in the little log shanty by the creek. They had put in most of the winter cutting the tall trees from the village site, and might now consider themselves veterans at the art. The trees were left lying as they fell, for, as yet, they had no oxen to help with the heavy work, and more logs would be needed when the next houses were built in early summer. Only some ten or twelve acres were cleared.

There had been a break in the monotony when the surveyor came to lay out the village lots and to mark the future streets. Roughly parallel to the Grand River, the main street was staked out first, and named after St. Andrew, the patron saint of Scotland. At the main corner, a square stone was erected and on top of it was an "X" with the letter "R" on the two sides where the roads were to be. The intersecting street was named in honor of St. David, and the next two streets, parallel to St. Andrew, were named St. Patrick and St. George. Having thus remembered the patron saints of all the

## FERGUS

countries in the British Isles, family names were chosen next. The street from the future bridge to the site laid aside for the future church, was named in honor of Jessie Tower, second wife of Adam Fergusson, and the large square intended for a future market place, was designated James' Square, the James being Webster himself. One other narrow street ran up the hill between Tower and St. David, which was unnamed for a year or so. During that time, the nickname of "Provost" had attached itself to William Buist (a Provost being the mayor or chief magistrate of a Scottish town) and so the street became Provost Lane.

A survey was also made of the rest of the land belonging to Fergusson and Webster in Upper Nichol and more than one fine winter day was spent by Webster and his companions looking over the land, marking out the course of the streams and the more desirable farms along the Irvine River.

Springtime brought thoughts of sowing, but the land was not ready for a crop of wheat, which would finally prove the worth of the soil, and there were no animals to pull a plow. So a small plot, about fifteen or twenty feet square, was cleared on the banks of the creek beside the shanty, and hoed by hand, and there William Buist, the settlement's first farmer, sowed his little garden and gathered his first harvest.

villa  
to F  
reco  
prog

man  
who  
in th  
fore  
City,  
death  
and  
talk  
been  
in Ju  
seco  
back  
one  
of th

reach  
way  
trust  
other  
learn

*By Hugh Templin*

A great deal has been written about the young village in 1834. During that year, several men came to Fergus, looking for land and at least three of them recorded their impressions. Thus it is easy to trace the progress made in a few months.

The first of these was A. D. Ferrier, then a young man of twenty, born in Edinburgh, and one of the many who had a splendid education and parents who moved in the upper classes in Scotland. Some few years before he came to Fergus, his father had moved to Quebec City, where he was Collector of Customs. Upon his death and the failure of the firm for which young Alexander had been working, the son came to Fergus after talking the matter over with Adam Fergusson, who had been a friend of the family. He stayed only a few days in June, 1834, but while in Fergus, he purchased the second village lot. After a trip to Scotland, he came back to Fergus in 1835 and spent most of his life here, one of the most useful citizens, and the chief historian of the first thirty years.

It was on the fourth of June that young Ferrier reached the vicinity of Fergus, after a crooked walk by way of Eramosa and Nichol. The day was wet but one trusting pioneer loaned him an umbrella and several others gave him food and drink, or dried his clothes. He learned that a bear had carried off a fat sow during the



## FERGUS

previous night, and as the day wore on, he began to wonder if his stout staff was protection enough. At last he reached a small clearing beside the Grand River with a little house on the opposite bank, belonging to William Wintermute. This man was a "squatter" who took up land in the wilderness, and when other settlers arrived, he pushed farther into the bush.

With darkness coming on, the young adventurer started down the river looking for the bridge that would take him across to Fergus, but he missed it, which was not to be wondered at considering the thickness of the cedars along the bank. He walked almost to Elora and then decided to turn back and wade across at Wintermute's. There one of the young men offered to take him the last half-mile. It was now dark and Ferrer had one last mishap falling in the mud on the marshy banks of the little creek that flowed past Wintermute's house. Wet, muddy and cold, he saw a light shining from the two windows of a little house. Knocking he asked if this was "Fergus," and being assured that it was, he was welcomed by James Webster and taken inside, where he was introduced to William Bust, who was snug in bed with a kilmarnock nightcap on his head. James Webster loaned him a suit of clothes, which was many sizes too large and gave him supper and a glass of toddy after which the Provost moved over in the

*By Hugh Templin*

bunk to make room for him, and he was soon asleep.

There were but two inhabited houses on the fourth of June, the one being the shanty by the creek and the other a log house a hundred yards or so farther down the street. Half way between the two, near the corner of St. Andrew street and Provost lane, Charles Allan was building a much better log house, with squared corners, the owner being James Webster.

Two weeks after Ferrier had left to go to Scotland, another young man arrived, hunting for a good bush farm, and attracted by the promise of a church, a mill and a school, as well as the best of land T. W. Valentine had come from Scotland to New York, up the Hudson River and the Erie Canal and across the Niagara River into Canada. On June 20th, 1834, he started out from Guelph, finding the road to Elora without difficulty. The road was bad and grew worse. Near Elora, he met three disgusted prospectors returning, but it did not discourage him, and he picked his way over the causeway of logs that spanned the swamp near the present C. N. R. station and arrived at Elora. From there to Fergus, he found nothing but a trail, but as he walked, he thought it the most magnificent forest scenery he had ever viewed. The sugar maples, elms and beeches were of immense height, perfectly straight, with merely a tuft of branches at the top.

## FERGUS

Mr Webster welcomed Mr Valentine "like a true Scotchman," and they ate up most of a large venison pasty, with the inevitable whiskey toddy, and then sallied forth to look over the town. This did not take long, though much had happened in two weeks. Some twenty acres were cleared and fourteen men were at work, building houses, logging and burning, blasting out a millrace in the solid rock, or splitting shingles and sawing wood by hand with a long whip-saw. The new log house was finished, with seven rooms and costing only £40 currency, or \$160.00. Eleven village lots had been sold and Fergus was booming.

The most important addition to the village had been the tavern. It had been hastily erected at a "raising bee" and rafters and a partial floor put in it. After that, there was time for no more until late in the fall, and though it housed the workmen, they had to sleep on the floor of the one big room, or on boards laid across the rafters. One huge fireplace heated the room day and there were neither tables nor chairs. Their lack was supplied in an ingenious manner. In part of the floor, boards had been left out. When the men sat down, they put their feet and legs through these holes, using the floor behind them for a chair and the floor in front of them for a table.

The proprietor of St Andrew's tavern was rather

an un  
hotel  
holdi  
were  
furn  
left,  
gave  
with  
the to  
and  
and  
the p  
the  
was  
other  
moun  
more  
the f  
west  
  
the t  
do th  
pictu  
g, ss  
Galil  
The

*By Hugh Templin*

an unusual individual to be the landlord of a backwoods hotel. Hugh Black had been the owner of a small land holding in Ayrshire, but he had a large family and times were hard in Scotland, so he sold his land, packed his furniture and brought his family to Canada. Before he left, there were the usual presentations, and his friends gave him a beautiful silver snuff box, heavily carved with entwining grape-vines, and with a gold plate on the top, engraved with an inscription telling of his worth and their loss. He came to Fergus, intending to farm, and bought the hundred acres in the south corner of the present limits of the village, across the river from the Fergusson farm. However, when he arrived, it was at a time when a tavern was needed more than another farmer, and he and his good wife, Elizabeth Gilmour, were persuaded to undertake the task, as they had more furniture than most of the other pioneers. So, for the first few years, Hugh Black kept the tavern at the west corner of St. Andrew and Tower streets.

Mr. Fergusson promised to have a sign painted for the tavern, and commissioned a painter in Dundas to do the work. This ambitious artist decided to paint a picture of Saint Andrew himself, and when Mr. Fergusson called for the sign, he found the portrait of the Galileean fisherman, all dressed up in kilts and tartans. The sign was painted over.

## FERGUS

Strangely enough, the early chronicles of Fergus contain more about Mr Black than about any other person, except Mr Webster. There are several reasons. His tavern became the social centre. There, the great banquets were held on St Andrew's night and on other special occasions, and there, the church services were conducted till the church was ready. Mr Black was energetic. He was the first president of the curling club. He started the first stage to Hamilton and did other things for the village. His name will appear often in the early chapters of the history for he belonged to that select circle of the "Lords," who thought themselves a little better than the rest, and Mr Ferrer pays him the tribute of saying that Hugh Black and his estimable wife were "a deal too good" to be looking after a backwoods tavern. After a few years, Mr Black built the second stone house in Fergus, "Cra ghead" on the high, rocky bank of the river and moved to his own farm. Of his large family, many remained in the district and James McQueen and James Perry married two of his daughters. It was a grandson, James Black Perry who wrote "Yon Toon o' Mine," the toon being Fergus and the characters but thinly disguised, "the Laird of Cra ghead" being old Hugh Black himself, and a great great grandson is writing this history.

In September, 1834 two men came to Fergus as

*By Hugh Templin*

the advance agents of a large body of Aberdonians who wished to take up a block of land together and form a settlement of their own. One of these was George Finsle, a man of learning and an interesting writer who kept a complete record of their travels north of Toronto to Nottawasaga Bay, then to Nagara, along the shores of Lake Erie and up the Grand River. They had heard of Mr. Fergusson's model township and decided to live there, if suitable land could be obtained in large enough quantities.

Once again, the energetic Mr. Webster was the first man met on the borders of Fergus. With him were two of the young Fergussons, all busy with axes, and wearing a minimum of clothing in the September heat. To some extent, their visit was a disappointment. So many farms had been sold north of Fergus that there was no solid block left, and they were advised to go to Elora and see what Mr. Gilkison had north of that village, for, with Elora temporarily at a standstill, very few lots were sold near there. Mr. Gilkison had what they wanted and the Aberdonian group founded the Bon Accord settlement, whose farmers, though nearer to Elora, dealt in Fergus with brother Scots, worshipped at the Fergus church and took their grist to the Fergus mill.

Lest some readers may feel that the pioneers had

## FERGUS

a hard life, devoid of pleasures, Mr Elmslie's story of his evening spent in Fergus in September, 1834, may be worth repeating. He found a few more houses, a blacksmith shop, the mill dam built by James Perry, and Scott's bridge, still in a rather rough state. The tavern was unfinished and he describes it thus:

"When we entered the tavern in the evening, it was swarming like a hive with artizans, millwrights and carpenters, together with several young men with capital, sons of Scotch proprietors, mostly intelligent young men from Perthshire, Dumfries and the south of Scotland, and from all we received a cordial welcome in the genuine Scotch style and in hamely Scotch. On asking if we could be accommodated for the night, we were told 'I kenna what ye il ca' accommodated, but ye'll just get yer share o' the flure—we'll no can do mair for ye—an' yer bite an' sup wi' the lave.'

"The night was jovous. The novelty of the situation—the rudeness of the accommodation—the drollery of the make-shiffts—the mixed, yet entirely Scotch character of the society—the hopes upspringing in the breasts of all—imparted a loveliness, a zest and a joyousness to the conversation such as I have rarely experienced. The hackneyed lines, 'The night drave on wi' sangs an' clatter, An' aye the ale was growin' better,' was not on that occasion a poetic fiction, but a

litera  
'this

were  
the  
east  
acros  
The  
Tow  
"Gra  
"Wo  
with  
farm  
Irvin  
were

sider  
acres  
whic  
not e  
30th  
play  
Ferg  
the  
funds  
hope

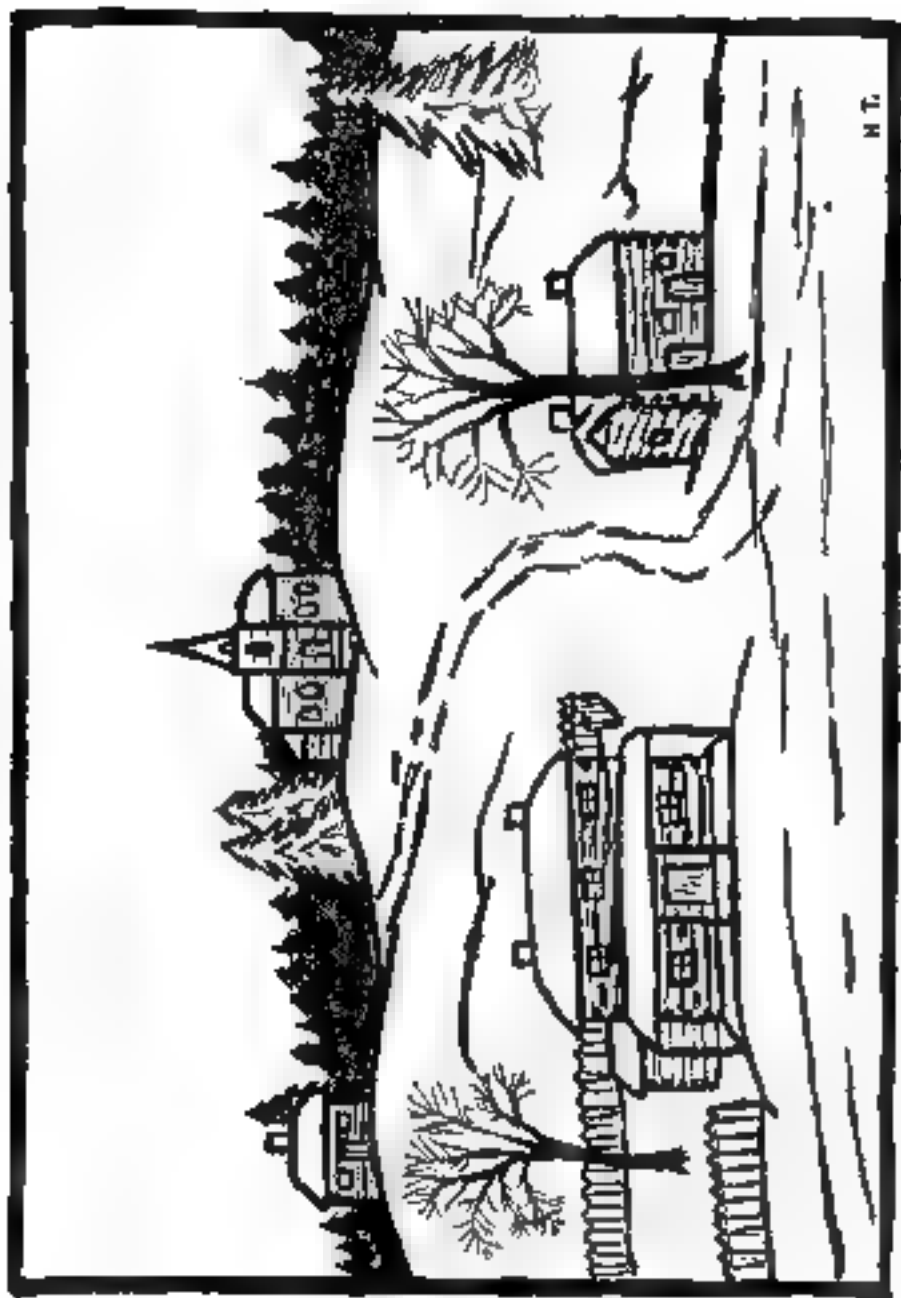
*By Hugh Templin*

literal fact, for, up to that evening I had small liking for 'this Canada'."

As Mr. Elmslie had learned, all the best farm lands were taken near Fergus. Those who came first, had the first choice. Provost Buist chose the part north-east of St. David street. A. D. Fernier bought the land across the river from him, calling his farm "Belside." The Fergusson family owned to the south-west of Tower street, "Westwood Farm." Hugh Black had his "Craighead" south of the river. James Perry owned "Woodside," beyond Garrafraxa street. All are now within the limits of the municipality. Others had the farms farther away, those along the Grand and the Irvine Rivers being chosen first, and until their houses were "raised," they stayed at the tavern in Fergus.

By the end of 1834, Fergus had some seventy residents, besides casual visitors, and three thousand acres had been sold to settlers. The plague of cholera which visited Canada for the second time that year, did not come within thirty miles of Fergus. On November 30th, the St. Andrew's Society was formed, and it played an important part for almost half a century. Mr. Fergusson and his lady came up that day and they laid the foundation of the church and the school. These functions were typical of the time. 1834 was a year of hope and preparation for the future.





CHRISTMAS, 1835

The Log School, Black's Tavern, St. Andrew's Church and Young's Store

AN  
the  
farm  
actu  
he s  
his h

the  
Char  
Ferg  
first  
ilton  
day  
Pusl  
retur  
day

Alla  
had

## CHAPTER FIVE

### PROGRESS AND CALAMITY

ANOTHER winter passed without incident and the spring of 1835 found many farmers waiting for the warm weather that they might move out to their farms and prepare to harvest a crop in the following autumn. Mr. Blust was a year ahead of the others, and he sowed his first crop of wheat among the stumps of his hillside farm.

There were other signs of progress. Early in May, the first child was born in the village, the parents being Charles and Grace Allan, and he was named Adam Fergus Allan and presented with a village lot. On the first of June, Hugh Black started a stage route to Hamilton. His team and wagon left Fergus early on Monday morning and by night reached Black's tavern in Puslinch and by Tuesday night was at Hamilton. The return journey began on Wednesday, and it was Thursday night before the stage was back in Fergus again.

There was much building done this year. Charles Allan had the contract for the church, and in June, he had the steeple on and the plastering finished. The

## FERGUS

frame of the school was raised on the adjoining lot on June 24th, and the store followed a month later, with Thomas Young the proprietor. Not only was he the first storekeeper, but he was made postmaster in 1836 and held that position for a year, Mr. McQueen being his successor. On August 7th, the grist mill was raised with eighty men present, for this was a large frame building, and would be a great convenience to the whole district. A lathe had been installed in the sawmill and, though it wobbled a bit, Mr. Perry did some good turning and because curling stones had been hard to make from the native stone he turned knotted blocks of maple to supply the local club with "stones."

Before the church was ready, the first Presbyterian minister had preached in Fergus. He was Rev. Mr. Gale, of Hamilton, on a missionary journey thus far north, and he preached in the Big Room at the tavern. Other church services were held in the same place by elders who read sermons and prayers. St. Andrew's church was opened on August 23rd, but there was no minister as yet, and services were rather irregular for a time. The little frame church, roughcast in finish, with its bright tin spire, stood on the most prominent hill in Fergus, and for more than ten years was the only church in the community.

There came a heavy frost in late August and the

*By Hugh Templin*

first wheat fields were touched by it, though not so seriously that the grain could not be used for seed the next year. William B. St harvested his crop by hand, cutting among the stumps. In October, the grist mill was opened. The grain from the first farm in Fergus was used and there was a great celebration, for now it would not be necessary to carry wheat to Gueph or Galt to be ground. Mr Fernier describes it as "one of the merriest and funniest frolics I ever witnessed."

George Skene, an Upper Nichol farmer, gives more details. He says "On Wednesday last, we had the first wheat grown on Fergusson's property made into flour by the Fergus mill and baked into biscuits by our Fergus baker. I led the gentry to the mill with the bagpipes (as I did to the founding of the church) and when the millwright gave the water, I at the same time gave wind to the tune of 'The Dusty Miller' to what I must say, would have been a splendid company of about one hundred and ten in the Old Country—the female part especially—all mostly Scotch, and not above a score more than eighteen months in the country. Although James Walker (the baker) made out to give them biscuits on the above day, it will be ten or twelve days before he will be in full operation." And Mr Skene adds that for ten days, he had been dressing the flour mill stones (all French burrs) and that the

## FERGUS

oatmeal stones had reached Hamilton and the barley machinery was expected soon.

But all was not fun and merriment, for death had visited the little village. Early in the summer, James Duncan, a young journeyman millwright, became suddenly ill and died, and his was the first body buried in St. Andrew's graveyard. Then, on the second of July, while his father was still busy putting the fin on the church steeple, little Adam Fergus Allan died at the age of two months and was laid beside the church. Another sad death made the first break in the Bon Accord area. A rifle company had been formed in the fall, and Fergus and Bon Accord pioneers drilled with their own rifles. One of these was Robert Melvin, never a robust young man. One day in late November, when the air was cold, he practised with the rest, starting at the beaver meadow behind the church and running from one tree and stump to another till the tavern was reached. After the heat of the charge, he took cold and began to cough. Friends took him to his new house in Bon Accord, but it offered poor shelter. The chimney was not finished and the rain beat in, and Robert Melvin died on the sixth of December, and a third funeral took place at the new graveyard.

There was a great dinner in the tavern on St. Andrew's night. Adam Fergusson came from Waterdown

as us  
come  
of the  
Scotc  
Fergu  
pleas  
candi  
hard

the se  
the th  
middl  
was n  
preve  
day S  
the S

Scotti  
of Ho  
dar  
of the  
neigh  
and t  
congr  
gus w  
sities

*By Hugh Templin*

as usual, bringing with him his son, Neil, who had come from Scotland to visit his father. The members of the Society sat down to the meal of haggis and other Scotch dainties about four o'clock in the afternoon. Mr. Fergusson acted as chairman, and there was "a most pleasant evening with toasts and speeches," though one candid chronicler confesses that some of them had a hard time finding their way home afterwards.

The winter of 1835-36 was the most severe that the settlers had ever seen. As early as December 2nd, the thermometer registered twelve below zero. By the middle of the month, the mill wheels had frozen, and it was necessary to build great fires to thaw them out. To prevent a recurrence, the wheels were kept going all day Sunday, though, of course, no grain was ground on the Sabbath.

The year 1836 opened with high hopes as the Scottish settlers celebrated New Year's Day, the feast of Hogmanay, the great holiday on the Scottish calendar. Wading through the deep snow on the morning of the first of January, the pioneers went to visit their neighbors and exchange toasts to each other's health and to the prosperity of the settlement. They could congratulate themselves with the knowledge that Fergus was now going ahead rapidly, with all the necessities of an up-to-date Ontario town.

## FERGUS

On the fourth of January, the annual township meeting was held at Cochton's farm in Lower Nichol. These meetings had been held for several years, but up to this time, the Fergus people had not taken much interest. Township officials were elected and a few resolutions were passed, prohibiting pigs from running at large, or allowing them to run, or defining a lawful fence as one "five and a half feet high, well staked and rided," the allusion being, of course, to rail fences. In 1836, the Fergus contingent marched down in a body, with Adam Fergusson and James Webster at the head of the parade. They exerted their influence to elect the new schoolmaster, James McQueen as clerk of the township, a position he held for half a century.

Fergus citizens had every reason to be proud, but they disregarded the warning of the writer of Proverbs in the day of prosperity. Then came the great disaster. During the night of \*January 15th, 1836, one of the residents was awakened by a bright light. The mill was on fire, and with the river frozen over and no equipment to fight a blaze, the building was completely destroyed and part of the sawmill was burned with it. The cause is not stated, but it may be guessed. During the cold

\*This is one date in the history of Fergus about which there is very conflicting evidence. A. D. Fordyce, who is usually reliable, places the fire a year later but the weight of evidence favors 1836.

*By Hugh Templin*

night, a fire had been kept burning to prevent the water-wheels from freezing, and there is little doubt that this was the source of the blaze.

The burning of the mill was a great blow, not only to Adam Fergusson and James Webster, the owners, but to all the countryside. The loss was estimated at £700 and there was no insurance. The only industries were gone, and it was doubtful whether they would be rebuilt. But the loss affected most of the settlers as well. Wheat was their main crop, sometimes their only grain, and most of it was stored in the mill and burned with the building. With most of the grain and flour burned, the whole township faced a famine. The nearest mills were miles away, and the snow lay four feet deep in the bush. Many had used their original supply of cash to buy their farms and have them cleared, and they were depending on their wheat to carry them through till the next harvest. Wolves were heard almost nightly in the bush, and the spectre of famine loomed large. It was a time of crisis for Fergus and for Nichol township.

In the midst of all this gloom, there were a few bright spots. Within a few weeks, the owners announced that they would build a new mill, larger and better than the first. It was a momentous decision, for it meant that the progress of Fergus would not be delayed.



## FERGUS

James Webster went further. He brought in flour, and as spring approached, he imported seed grain. James Walker, the baker, proved that he had a heart of gold. Out of his own resources, which were none too plentiful at the time, he bought as much flour as he could and this he baked into bread and hard cakes, which he gave out freely, mostly on credit. Then when the flour was done, and hungry people were still coming to his door, he could not bear to go out and tell them he had nothing more, so he locked the door and would not answer the knocks. Besides his bread and cakes, he kept a supply of drugs and ministered to the simple needs. Others made the trip down the river to mills in Waterloo and brought back barrels of flour, but during that long, cold winter, there was seldom enough to eat.

Game was plentiful and kept the pioneers alive. The deer had been driven close to the edge of the bush, and those who could not shoot them could buy them. A few bears were shot, and provided a welcome change of meat for bear steaks were highly esteemed. Chopping and logging continued and more land was ready for sowing by springtime. In April, every farmer tapped his sugar bush, for maple sugar was a necessity of life imported sugar being expensive and scarce. There was a good flow of sap that year, some settlers making five hundred pounds of sugar and whether the sap was

*By Hugh Templin*

better or whether the makers were learning the secret, the sugar was lighter in color and better tasting. Some made syrup as well, using it in place of molasses, and even making wine and vinegar out of it.

Having passed the crisis, Fergus continued to progress. In April, the postoffice was opened, with Thomas Young as the postmaster, and no longer was it necessary to submit to the humiliation of having letters addressed to "Fergus, via Guelph." The school was open, with James McQueen teaching everything from the primary to the matriculation class. It was claimed that there was no better scholar north of the Niagara River than the master who ruled for twenty-two years in the old log school. The curling club was now a strong organization and there was a small library formed by pooling the books of the community.

During the summer, the first election took place and it cannot be described better than in the words of A. D. Ferrier, one of the voters, who owned a clear title and was therefore entitled to a ballot. He says, "In the same year, 1836, there was a general election, and all who had votes, numbering some eight or ten in the Fergus settlement, determined to go to Nelson to vote for Chisholm and Shade, the Conservative candidates. Hopkins and Durand being the Reform candidates. As the road was a long one, and very bad besides, we

## FERGUS

started very early from Fergus and breakfasted at the inn in Eramosa, and after that went almost in a straight line through Nassagaweya to Nelson Village. I think it was the worst and roughest road I ever saw, and certainly it was a long journey to make to tender our votes, however, by this time politics were beginning to get very exciting, and the mutterings and growls of distant thunder were beginning to be heard, which finally terminated in the outbreak of 1837.

"We were very glad to get to the inn at Nelson and get some rest and refreshment. I think our tea was hemlock tea, which, although rather bitter, is by no means bad. The polling was to begin the next day, and after a wonderful deal of speechifying it did at last begin, and such a pushing and pulling there was to get up to the little polling booth (for it was just one room) I never saw since at any election. There was the usual fun and joking which prevail on such occasions, and the catechising before your vote was recorded was very tiresome.

"When my friend Drysdale tendered his vote, one of the candidates said it was quite impossible that he could have a vote, upon which friend Drysdale asked him if he meant to insult him, while Mr. Chisholm, a hearty old gentleman, was greatly diverted. Drysdale's lot was a clergy lot, generally sold at ten years' credit.

*By Hugh Templin*

but he had paid it up at once and got his deed but such an event was so uncommon, and in Garafraxa too, that Mr Durand couldn't swallow it. I was just behind and heard the fun, however, the vote was passed and Mr. Durand was quite polite. After hearing some of the 'free and independent' behind me recommend strongly that my hat (a good Edinburgh beaver) should be knocked over my ears, and after handing said hat to a friendly looking constable, who kept the door of the polling place, and after much pushing and pulling, I got in and was also strictly catechised. After satisfying Mr. Durand, I was walking quietly out without giving my vote, when I was called back, and duly recorded the same for Chisholm and Shade."

Little needs to be added to Mr. Fernier's story. Nelson was about thirty five miles from Fergus, and is now only a crossroads. The Fergus contingent all voted Conservative. James Webster was a Conservative and Adam Fergusson a Reformer, but not a Radical. Of the eight or ten who walked so far to vote, at least two were afterwards members of Parliament or Legislature. Fergus was still in the County of Halton.

In the fall of 1839, rain fell steadily for days and the roads became quagmires. As a result, Fergus was completely cut off from the rest of the world for some three weeks, and supplies could not be brought in. This

## FERGUS

happened at a time when the supply of whiskey was low and after a week, with so many men hanging around the tavern all the time, the whiskey gave out altogether, and for two weeks, there was none to be had. As the poet might have said, there was "water, water everywhere, and not a drop to drink." Finally, Hugh Black sent a man, with two yokes of oxen hitched to a wagon down to Guelph, and he brought back a barrel of whiskey, but it cost more to get it through the mud than the original cost of from 45 cents to \$1.00 a gallon.

It was probably this disaster which convinced the founders that a distillery in Fergus was a necessity and one was built the following year. It is recorded that during one of those early winters, Owen Sound found itself down to one barrel of whiskey, but the tavern keeper was crafty. Every time a glass of liquor was drawn off, a glass of water was added at the bung. By spring the drinks were thin, but they had at least a slight flavor. Alexander Barnett, who came to Fergus soon after this, states that a barrel of whiskey was left out on a stump in front of the hotel, and every traveller was allowed to help himself, and he claimed that this was the reason why so many Scots who reached Fergus never went any farther. But his story of the free whiskey is obviously not the description of a regular custom.

When the new mill was opened there was another

*By Hugh Templin*

big dinner and dance, this time in the hayloft of Black's tavern stables, for even the big room was too small to hold the crowd that gathered to show their appreciation of Messrs. Fergusson and Webster, who had carried out their promise of a church, a school and a mill. On February 22nd, 1837, the church had its first regular minister, services before that time being conducted by Rev. Mr. Gale, of Hamilton, Dr. Bayne of Galt, Rev. Patrick Bell, of Fergus, the inventor of the reaper, and by the elders. Rev. Mr. Gardiner was now inducted as Presbyterian minister in Fergus and there was another dinner at the tavern, and £60 a year was pledged that night as his salary. Another notable addition to the population in that year was Dr. Mutch, who came in October and stayed for many years. Dr. P. B. Henderson had been in Fergus earlier, but did not stay long.

Early in July of 1837, James Webster left for a visit to Scotland and Rev. Patrick Bell went with him. The inhabitants all turned out and marched with them as far as the bridge, led by a fife and drum, and there, near the tavern, they all had a farewell drink and parted with good wishes. The inventor of the reaper never returned to Canada, and Mr. Webster was away when the Rebellion of 1837 brought the next excitement to the little village.



**FERGUS IN JULY, 1835**

By A. D. Fordyce, junior

From a point near St David street, looking towards the church. Black's tavern and stables on left, "Cie-kum" house in centre; Baker Walker's to right of church. Note d p in fence at creak

H  
m  
ca  
  
ha  
pr  
Bu  
sa  
be  
dis  
wa  
  
me  
as  
an  
sa  
tha  
we  
m

## CHAPTER SIX

### PIONEER DAYS

HAVING given some account of the events of the first few momentous years, let us turn for a few minutes to look at the people who they were, why they came, and how they lived.

It is the popular custom nowadays to dwell on the hardships of pioneer life in Ontario. Mrs. Moodie probably began it when she wrote "Roughing It in the Bush," and many other writers followed her lead till such tales were taken as typical of all Ontario. It must be remembered, however, that Mrs. Moodie lived in a district where the land was not good, the neighbors were far from congenial and farming was unprofitable.

These things were not true of the Fergus settlement. Except for a few hazards of pioneer life, such as the danger of chopping trees, the burning of the mill and the early difficulties of transportation, it can be said that the average standard of living was as high as that of the middle class in Scotland. The neighbors were more than congenial. There was a freedom of intercourse that would have been impossible in the



## F E R G U S

Old Country, though, on occasions, class distinctions remained. None but Lowland Presbyterian Scots had been encouraged to buy land, and a few of them rather looked down upon some of their neighbors, even the good Aberdonians of Bon Accord, but they got along well together and lived as comfortably, if not with as much outward show as at home. Even sports were not neglected, while social dinners and dances broke the monotony of the long winters.

There were hardships, of course, but they were common to the whole world of a century ago. Heat from the fireplaces was uneven. If the fire was hot enough, one might scorch in front, while freezing behind. Unless a log house was well chinked or plastered, cold would come in. During very cold spells, water would freeze in a pail in the house. Even with the fire blazing all night, bread, beef and ink would freeze. Even stockings had to be thawed out before they were put on, and it was necessary to warm the axes for fear chips would come off them. It must have taken some courage to climb out of bed in the morning and stir up the fire, and it was no wonder that nightcaps were popular.

In the early summer, insects caused the chief discomfort, even as they do in the bush today. There were mosquitoes at night and black flies in the daytime, but

*By Hugh Templin*

the pioneers soon learned to light smudge fires which helped to fight this plague. Fuel was plentiful, of course, and thousands of fine trees were burned to clear the land. Maple, elm and beech were the most common trees then, as now. They reached a height of well over a hundred feet, sometimes as high as one hundred and thirty feet. There were other trees as well, including cherry, walnut, ash, spruce and cedar but few pines.

Since Fergus was on the edge of an unbroken forest, stretching for uncounted miles to the north, it was but natural that wild animals were abundant. Some of these remain even now in small numbers but the wolves and bears have gone. The wolves were often heard but seldom seen, except by some lonely traveller after dark. They moved and hunted in packs and not only killed the deer, but caused a considerable loss to the farmers. If a sheep was not safely housed at night it was almost sure to be gone in the morning, and even cattle were not always safe in the bush, though the cow bell was probably some protection. Sometimes, the settlers would be stung to action and a great wolf hunt would be organized even the schoolmaster joining and a dead wolf or two would usually be brought back. The bears had a particular liking for fat pork, and sometimes a bear would climb into a pen and carry off a pig, a feat that would have been worth watching. Even as late as

## FERGUS

1870, occasional bears were shot close to Fergus, and their meat was said to be juicy and delicious. There seems to have been no case where either wolf or bear attacked a Fergus resident.

Many of the smaller animals were hunted for game as well as the deer, which were numerous and lately seem to be returning in Wellington, both north and south of Fergus. There were hares and rabbits, foxes, martens, woodcats, racoons and hosts of squirrels, black and red. George Skene says that pheasants, as well as partridges were common. Woodcock were also hunted, besides ducks and wild pigeons. Most of these animals and birds survive in small numbers, becoming increasingly common lately, but the woodcock is almost extinct and the wild pigeons disappeared years ago. At times they came in huge flocks that literally blackened the sky. They were shot by the thousands, and it was possible to stand on some eminence such as the Lover's Leap, at the Elora Rocks, and knock them down with hoes or poles as they flew past. The Grand and Irvine Rivers abounded in bass and trout and the flow of the streams remained fairly constant all year.

The first houses were built of logs and often had but one fireplace. Such a house was not subject to taxation, but each additional fireplace was assessed and so were all other types of houses. The walls of the

*By Hugh Templin*

log houses were "raised" in one day, the neighbors all gathering for a "bee," for man power was used almost exclusively. Logs were cut to the proper lengths and these were raised by hand at first. An expert axe-man stood at each corner, shaping the ends of the logs, so that they fitted as closely together as possible. Around Fergus, the logs were always left round, but in some nearby districts, they were sometimes squared with a broad-axe and the corners dovetailed, a secret that the Scotch never seem to have learned. When the walls were up too high for the logs to be lifted, they were rolled up an incline formed with two or three logs, and pushed into place with long forked poles. The rafters were added later by a carpenter, and the roof covered with cedar shingles, split by hand and shaped with a draw-knife on a shingle-horse. About 1840, Alex. D. Ferrer built the first stone house at Belsyde and Hugh Black's cottage at Craighthead was the second.

Because of the difficulty and expense of transportation, particularly north of Hamilton and Dundas, the furniture of the early houses was nearly all made on the spot, though the Wilsons at Aboyne brought out a piano and Hugh Black brought furniture with him. Most of the houses depended for some years on rude, home-made tables, chairs and banks. Very often, these were built against one side of the room and attached to the wall.

## F E R G U S

The framework would be of poles from the bush, covered with lumber, which came from the Fergus sawmill, or which would be cut out of a log with a whip-saw, with one man at each end, the upper standing on the top of the log, while the other was down in a pit, getting the sawdust in his eyes and hair.

A few pioneers brought small, portable stoves, but the majority depended on the fireplace for their cooking. The hearth was sometimes made of poles, with branches woven back and forth between them, and the whole covered with clay, right up to the roof. With the heat of the fire, this soon baked hard and became fireproof. At Fergus, the majority were made of stone when permanent houses were built. From one side of the stone fireplace was suspended the crane, which swung on two hinges and could be turned in over the blaze, or out into the room. Strung along the iron bar of the crane would be a number of pothooks, usually joined together by a chain. From these hooks hung the iron pots in which the food was cooked.

Baking was done in another type of iron vessel. The oven was a heavy iron pot with a close fitting lid of the same material, and this was buried in the hot ashes. With the bachelors, the frying pan was the favorite cooking utensil. This had a very long handle, and thick scones were cooked in it, as well as meats.

plied  
craft  
into  
gend  
here.  
a sm  
hold.  
With  
driva  
was  
the s  
twist  
dyed  
was  
ber  
ottes  
mill,  
plete  
thou  
migh

homa  
time  
on t  
was

*By Hugh Templin*

Almost all the wants of the household were supplied at home, the women being adept at many handicrafts. The wool from the sheep was carded and spun into yarn by the women. Spinning wheels were of two general types, those with large wheels being common here. The large wheel was turned by hand and it rotated a small spindle. The woman walked back and forth, holding the wool and pulling and turning it into yarn. With the small wheel, the housewife could sit down, driving the wheel from a foot treadle, while the yarn was pulled and twisted by the spinning wheel. After the single-ply yarn was made, several strands would be twisted together to make a thicker yarn, and this was dyed and wound into skeins on an ingenious reel, which was made entirely of wood, but which counted the number of turns and clicked at the fiftieth. The yarn was often made into cloth on a hand loom, or at a woolen mill, and the mother would then make the clothes complete, except the buttons, which had to be bought, though of course, if they were not lost, one set of buttons might do for five or six successive suits of clothes.

Many other household wants were supplied at home. Maple sugar has already been mentioned. Bedtime usually came early, and for many tasks, the fire on the hearth supplied light enough. Where this light was not sufficient, tallow candles were burned, and

## FERGUS

these were made at home, every house having its set of tin candle molds. While the woman spun at night or sewed or hooked mats to adorn the floor, the man might be busy with the shingle-horse and drawknife, splitting cedar shingles, or he might be making an ox yoke, or some other wooden implement, such as a flail for threshing, or a wooden rake or shovel.

As might be expected of a Presbyterian community the Sabbath was fairly well observed even in the earliest times. No work was done, and before the church was finished, services were held fairly regularly in the tavern. Once in a while, some good Scot was scandalized to find his young neighbor out hunting on Sunday, and one writer contrasts this with the Indians who went past his door, walking six miles to church. After the minister came, and church services were held regularly, the Sabbath was more strictly kept. Indeed, the power of the Church grew so strong in the early Fifties, that the church session did not hesitate to summon men and women who were guilty of those sins which the law did not cover, and many an old scandal lies hidden in the records of the kirk sessions.

Any hardships and discomforts were more than compensated for in many cases by the feeling of glorious independence. It is mentioned again and again in the letters of the pioneers. Those who had been rich and

*By Hugh Templin*

lived on estates in the old land did not feel it so much, though even they shared to some extent, but those who had lived on rented land in Scotland and had to have their rent money ready every Whitsunday and Martingnas, or those who had wondered how they would raise a large family "back home" were continually congratulating themselves on the change they had made.

Again a letter of George Skene may be quoted, as typical of many others:

"I have noticed that all, or nearly all, are of a very independent spirit, and no wonder, for I see that in general, the third year of an industrious man upon good land (it is not all good here) brings him to the full enjoyment of all he can wish. But there is another class which, although they be earning wages from \$22 to \$30 per month, without victuals, will never be able to save enough to make a purchase of land. They can get their beloved whiskey at from 22½d to 4s per gallon, so ye might suppose the taste of it were never out of their mouths.

"There is something I always expected to find here, which I begin to feel already, but I perceive it will have more impression on me than I ever did expect to realize, viz. that I now sit quietly in my own house, and if I be granted a common lot with others in this neighborhood, who have been three or four years sett-



## FERGUS

led, I and my family shall be supplied with all the necessities and have the most gratifying satisfaction that there is no man to inspect my work, or say unto me, "what doest thou?" as long as I keep and respect (which I hope I shall ever do) the laws of our country"

Mr Skene had been a tenant farmer in Scotland, but apparently had a keen desire to own land, and this desire was fulfilled in Canada, and this alone gave him the feeling of independence. He was not one of those who came to Fergus with money enough to pay cash for everything, so he paid one-fifth of the price of his land in cash, and the balance spread over four years. The cost of the land in Upper Nichol was four dollars an acre. Very many of the original settlers bought two hundred acre farms.

Many of the pioneers cleared their own land. The work was rather dangerous for men who had no previous experience with the axe, and the trees were almost unbelievably tall. Several men were killed in the first ten years by falling trees, one of them being a deaf man. Those who had money to spare usually hired an expert chopper to clear the first few acres. The price for this work was \$16 an acre for chopping, logging, burning and fencing, so that the total cost of an acre of land, ready to sow, was twenty dollars. The timber was considered of no value, the only possible revenue

*By Hugh Templin*

being from the ashes, which were sold for potash, but, as all woods were not suitable, it was necessary to burn the different varieties of trees in separate piles if the ashes were to be sold. Some men, who had learned a trade in Scotland, found it more profitable at first to live in town and work as carpenters or millwrights and use their wages to pay a man to clear their land, than to do the clearing themselves.

After the first crop was harvested, the pioneers invariably settled on their own land, and completed the work of clearing. Thus we find the sons of Adam Fergusson working as hard in the bush as anyone else. It was a healthy, adventurous and usually profitable life. The workers went out in winter, dressed in homespun woollen garments from head to foot. A picture of A. D. Fernier shows him wearing a long, heavy smock, tied with cords at the wrists and at the waist. On his hands were woollen mittens, pulled up over the ends of the sleeves, while the legs of his heavy trousers were tucked inside the tops of his long boots. The boots were worn several sizes too large, in order to allow for heavy socks, and even then, the aid of a boot-jack was required to take them off. On the head was a woollen cap or sometimes a tam o' shanter. Thus covered, none of the skin was exposed, except around the eyes and nose, for whiskers almost invariably covered the chin.

## UPPER CANADA MILITIA SERVICE

Pay List of Capt. Wilson's Company of Colonel MacNair's Regiment  
of Gore Volunteer Militia, Upper Canada, between 9th December,  
1837, and 24th January, 1838, both days inclusive.

No.	RANK AND NAMES	PERIOD		Days	Rate Pay	Amount		
		From	To			£	s	d
SERJEANT								
1	George Matthews	Dec. 9th	Jan. 24th	47	2, 1	4	17	11
PRIVATE								
1	William Kenny	Dec. 9th	Jan. 24th	47	1/2	3	14	10
2	A. D. Ferrier	Dec. 9th	Jan. 10th	32	1/2	1	17	4
3	Alex Drysdale	Dec. 9th	Jan. 24th	47	1/2	2	10	10
4	Geo. C. Hamilton	Dec. 9th	Jan. 10th	32	1/2	1	17	4
5	Wm. Reynolds	Dec. 9th	Jan. 9th	31	1/2	1	16	2
6	James Black	Dec. 9th	Jan. 24th	47	1/2	2	14	10
7	James Walker	Dec. 10th	Jan. 10th	31	1/2	1	16	2
8	John Valentine	Dec. 9th	Jan. 24th	47	1/2	2	14	10
9	John Marriott	Dec. 10th	Jan. 24th	45	1/2	2	13	2
10	Thomas Grahn	Dec. 10th	Jan. 24th	45	1/2	2	13	2
11	James Gill	Dec. 10th	Jan. 24th	45	1/2	2	13	2
12	James Mair	Dec. 9th	Jan. 24th	47	1/2	2	14	10
13	James Morrison	Dec. 10th	Jan. 24th	45	1/2	2	13	2
14	Wm. Robertson	Dec. 10th	Jan. 24th	45	1/2	2	13	2
15	Robert Pourie	Dec. 10th	Jan. 24th	45	1/2	2	13	2
16	George Gray	Dec. 9th	Jan. 24th	47	1/2	2	14	10
17	A. D. Fordyce	Dec. 9th	Dec. 25th	18	1/2	1	1	
18	T. C. Allardice	Dec. 10th	Dec. 25th	17	1/2		13	10
19	Thomas Webster	Dec. 9th	Dec. 23rd	15	1/2		17	5
20	James Ross	Dec. 12th	Dec. 21st	9	1/2		10	0
21	John Moscrip	Dec. 17th	Jan. 24th	38	1/2	2	4	4
22	James Perry	Dec. 9th	Dec. 13th	5	1/2		3	0
23	John Gartschere	Dec. 9th	Dec. 11th	3	1/2		2	0
						50	16	1

REMARKS— This company is at present attached to the Light Com-  
pany of the Men of Gore, under the command of Captain Poore  
Numbers 17, 18, 19 and 20 left the Company at Galt. Number 21  
joined at Galt, Numbers 22 and 23 left the Company at Geesbich

THOMAS W VALENTINE, 8th Gore Militia.

Lieutenant in Charge,

(Captain Wilson being absent on leave)

Pay sheet by courtesy of Mrs. A. C. Platt daughter of Lieut. Valentine

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### THE REBELLION OF 1837 AND ITS RESULTS

THREE CHAPTERS in the history of Fergus must be devoted to warlike matters, for three times in the first hundred years, wars, or rumors of wars and invasions, have seriously affected the life of the community and have caused large numbers of the young men to enlist and go away to the battle fronts at Niagara, Saratoga, or, more recently, to lands overseas.

Before the Village was four years old, counting from the day the first house was raised, the Rebellion of 1837 had broken out in Lower Canada and then in Upper Canada. Trouble had been brewing for a long period and signs had been apparent at the time of the election in 1836. So Fergus was not caught unprepared for the settlement had a rifle company of twenty-five or thirty young men, well drilled by Sergeant Matthews, a former soldier in the regular army, and the population might be termed ultra-loyal.

But even a community prepared for any eventuality and ready even to fight if necessary, is apt to find itself worked up to a high pitch of excitement when war

## FERGUS

is imminent and rebellion breaks out. And one hundred years ago, there was no telegraph, no telephone nor radio, daily newspapers were unknown and even the arrival of mail was a weekly event. What a hotbed of rumors Nichol township must have been in the early days of December, 1837!

It is probable that an occasional copy of William Lyon Mackenzie's Patriot would be brought to Fergus, but he had no followers in the Village. Over in Bon Accord, the Aberdonians were more or less divided in their views and in Elora, they were strictly neutral. In Framosa, there may have been some leaning toward the Reform party, but the majority in Fergus were strongly Tory and had no objection to the Established Church, the Clergy Reserves or the Family Compact.

Early in December, word reached Fergus that the rebellion had begun. Then came news of a skirmish north of Toronto with the additional rumor that Mackenzie and his men were marching on the city and were going to seize the banks and take all the money. That aroused one young man, James Ross, and he left Fergus as quickly as he could for Toronto, because he had his cash in a bank there. Then a rumor came from Guelph that the Reformers in Framosa were organizing, and that night the local members of the Rifle Company took turns guarding the bridge across the river to prevent a

*By Hugh Templin*

surprise attack, whether from Eramosa, or from the Little Rebel himself, for Fergus was now an important community and the citizens couldn't be too careful.

Then on the night of December 8th, which appears to have been a Friday, the Fergus Company was called to arms. Enlistments began the next day and by Sunday morning, the Company was ready to leave for the south. Tradition has it that every man in the settlement offered to go. The men had to furnish their own equipment, except the heavy Tower muskets and so only the members of the Rifle Company were taken, and it was decided that a few of them must stay, including the schoolmaster, the storekeeper and the older men, for there was still fear of an attack right at home. This left the Company twenty four strong, including Captain George Wilson, Lieutenant T. W. Valentine and Sergeant George Matthews. Most of them were quite young, the average age probably being not more than twenty-one, and in the ranks were graduates of Marschal College and Edinburgh University.

On Sunday morning, the tenth, the Company gathered on the beaver meadow behind St. Andrew's church for inspection. One young man, James Marr had come from Bon Accord, the others from that district having debated the matter, and, since they were fairly evenly divided in their opinions, had decided to

## FERGUS

stay at home. Three others, William Reynolds, Thomas Grain and John Marriott, had come over from Pilkington township, when Elora showed no enthusiasm for the cause. The rest represented the youth of the Fergus settlement, with the few exceptions already noted, and two others. James Webster was away in Scotland and James Ross had not returned from his hurried trip to Toronto. The names of the Company are given in the copy of the pay-sheet, printed on page ninety-two, the original of which is still preserved by Mrs. Platt daughter of Lieutenant Valentine.

After inspection, the soldiers marched into the church, where the Rev. Mr. Gardiner preached to them and prayed for their safe return, and the ladies wept and the young men felt proud and anxious. Then, the service over, they marched out again, and farewells were said, and at ten o'clock on Sunday morning, the Fergus Company of the Men of Gore marched off to Guelph, while a wagon followed them, loaded with provisions and luggage, and the stern old elder, A. D. Fordyce, senior, once a member of Parliament for Aberdeen, went home to write in his diary "I must record their names for their honor," proceeding to write them out from memory, forgetting only five or six.

The Fergus soldiers spent several days in Guelph and were joined there by another company from Lower

*By Hugh Templin*

Nichol and one from Guelph. There James Ross found them and promptly enlisted, though later in life he was to be elected as a Reform candidate. He had gone as far as Woodhill on his trip to Toronto. There, by the lakeshore, he heard more accurate news. Mackenzie and his men had been beaten and the Bank of Upper Canada was safe. Mackenzie was in flight and his whereabouts were unknown. As it happened, he must have passed close to Waterdown while James Ross was there. With this reassuring news, the young man turned towards home, but joined his friends at Guelph.

The Guelph people, or at least the Guelph soldiers, seem to have rather lost their heads. Before the Fergus contingent had arrived, they had gone out through Eramosa hunting rebels, having heard that the farmers out that way had decided not to oppose Mackenzie. Without the least excuse, they arrested James Peters, who happened to be Township Clerk, and many others, some of whom were released on bail, while others were kept in prison. Seven of them, James Benham, Calvin Lyman, James Butchart, William Armstrong, James Peters, James Parkinson and Hiram Dowling were even sent to Hamilton and charged with high treason, but not the slightest evidence was found against them, and it took the jury only eight minutes to decide that they were "Not Guilty."



## FERGUS

After five or six days in Guelph, the Fergus Company went on to Galt. It was not certain what would happen next, nor where it would happen. Two of the men, having been assured that the rebellion was over, left the company at Guelph and went home. In those days, there were no enlistments "for three years, or the duration of the war." Four more, tiring of hanging around Galt, went home before Christmas. Once a few of the others went on a raiding party looking for "rebels," but probably with no more excuse than in the case of the Eramosa yeoman, nor is it mentioned whether they found any.

About Christmas, there was more excitement. Mr Mackenzie had escaped across the border and had gathered a band of followers about him. They were now on Navy Island in the Niagara River, ready to invade Canada and they had a little boat, the *Caroline*, which they intended to use for the purpose. Thus it became definitely known where an invasion might be expected, and the Fergus companies marched off to Drummondville, on the Niagara frontier. What happened there can be told in the words of A. D. Ferner, who was present.

"One of the first people I met in Chippawa was an old Edinburgh Academy boy, who told me that there was to be something stirring that night, and that he was going on secret boat service, and in fact, he was one of

*By Hugh Templin*

the volunteers in the cutting out business." (The Caroline was cut adrift and sent over the Falls, the incident almost causing trouble with the United States.) "We were very poorly treated at Drummondville, did not get enough to eat, and hardly room to sleep. Our food was 'scaldings,' (the juice in which pork is boiled) and pork and bread for breakfast, and pork and bread and scaldings for dinner. Our old friend, Mr Walker, the baker, went down to the ferry landing below the Falls and got some fragments of the Caroline, with which we helped the fire, and boiled the only dish of potatoes I partook of in the lines.

"We went on the thirteenth of December to poor Captain Usher's house, and lived two days in a cellar kitchen. The house was immediately opposite Navy Island. It was a pretty cottage, frame above and with a stone cellar and kitchen. Two round shot were sent through it one of the days we were on duty, and three of us saw them go through the frame as we were in a neighboring field. We 'saw in' the New Year, the first of January, 1838, in Usher's house—about as dismal a New Year's morning as ever I saw. The weather was quite mild, and the ground like pea soup wherever there was a road. After this, we went up the river and were quartered in a good, honest German's house, and here we lived pretty well, that is to say, the pork was good

## FERGUS

and the bread excellent, and we got lots of apples very cheap, and we were out of reach of Navy Island. Our bed was the floor, with an armful of hay for mattress, and our bit blanket (the only clothing I ever got except a haversack from the Government) was our bedding."

By the middle of January, it was quite apparent that the rebellion had fizzled out in Upper Canada. On the tenth of January A. D. Fernier, George Hamilton and James Walker reported to the Sergeant and started for home. Baker Walker, who was perhaps the only one over forty among the privates, had taken cold while in Captain Usher's house and for a time was dangerously ill, but he had now recovered, and walking, or getting rides in wagons, the party arrived in Fergus a few days later. The rest remained some time longer, arriving home on the twenty-fourth. There had been plenty of discomfort, and the pay was less than twenty-five cents a day, but there had been no casualties.

The names of the Fergus volunteers are given in the copy of the pay list. A few words more might be said about some of them. Many became prominent citizens of Fergus. James Mair was from Bon Accord, the part of Nichol north-west of Fergus, some two miles from the village. John Cartshore was from Dundas, but he was erecting a sawmill in Bon Accord and found his wife there. Three were from Pilkington and

*By Hugh Templin*

one, John Moscrip, joined the company at Galt and no more is known of him. The names of A. D. Fernier, James Walker and James Perry are already familiar. Thomas W. Valentine and his brother, John Valentine, had farms near the Irvine. A. D. Fordyce, junior, was their neighbor. George C. Hamilton and Thomas Curzon Allardice also farmed north of the village. Alexander Drysdale was one of those who walked to Nelson to vote, his farm being up the river a mile from Fergus. Thomas Webster was a brother of James Webster and they were partners in the second store in Fergus. James Black was a son of the tavern-keeper. William Robertson was the miller. William Renny and George Gray did not live long in Fergus, the former dying a few years later, and the latter moving on to Australia. James Gill, James Morrison and Robert Pourie were nearby farmers.

From a military standpoint, the Rebellion of 1837 in Upper Canada was a mere skirmish, but it had very important consequences, drawing attention to certain abuses and bringing reforms. It did more than this, however, bringing hard times, upsetting confidence and almost stopping the flow of immigration. As a result, Fergus was at a stand-still. Few new settlers were arriving and supplies of cash were running low. Trade was being carried on largely by barter, and there were

## FERGUS

no more important buildings going up. A few incidents broke the monotony. During the dry summer of 1838, the river bank was burned over, the clumps of cedar disappearing and leaving the bald rock. That year, too, Mr. Fergusson, who was spending the summer in the village, was appointed Colonel of the new 13th Gore Regiment, and instructed to pick his own officers, and those who had served at Niagara found themselves all promoted, and it was not many years before most of them were commissioned officers.

Better times returned very gradually and there was little sign of progress for a few years. Then a small event suddenly stirred the community to new life and fresh excitement, and an unimportant election contest started a rivalry between Fergus and Flora, which was good for both villages at the time, though it lasted for several generations, with rather absurd manifestations at times, and it has not always been a good thing.

In 1842, the new Province of Canada was formed by the union of Ontario and Quebec, and municipal government was changed. Nichol was entitled to elect a representative to the District Council and the election was advertised to be held in St. Andrew's church, the first and only time such a contest was held there. Charles Allan, the contractor who had lived in Fergus for eight years, was persuaded to be a candidate and he

bega  
table  
Jame  
capp  
keen  
voted  
of th  
early  
Allan

Allan  
mean  
capit  
he be  
made  
up a  
store  
wool  
berin  
came  
kept  
final  
Later  
Parlia  
being  
Charl

*By Hugh Templin*

began to make a thorough canvas. He was not acceptable to some of the Fergus people and they persuaded James Webster to oppose him, though he was handicapped by a late entry into the race. The contest was keen and the open voting was exciting. The list of the voters on each side has been preserved and forms one of the most valuable lists of residents of Nichol in the early days. Webster won by three votes, getting 82 to Allan's 79.

The office was not an important one but Charles Allan did not take his defeat kindly and looked for a means to be revenged. He moved to Elora, and with capital supplied by James Ross and other Reformers, he bought out the Gilkison interests around the Falls, made a new dam, and, with the aid of his partners, built up a thriving business. They erected a new bridge, a store, a flour mill and sawmill. Later a carding mill and woollen mill were added. Elora, which had been slumbering since the death of its founder in 1833, suddenly came to life with a vengeance. Unsatisfied, Charles Allan kept up his chase on the trail of James Webster, and finally defeated him and became District Councillor. Later, the two men met in competition for seats in the Parliament of Canada, with varying successes, both being elected, both defeated and both unseated. In 1857 Charles Allan defeated Webster and realized his am-

## FERGUS

bition, only to be unseated and re-elected. By that time, the rivalry between the men was so intense that contests in the ridings and in the courts had almost ruined James Webster, and Charles Allan died of heart trouble a year later. Along with the rivalry between the men, a bitterness had grown up between the towns, which were only three miles apart, and though James Webster had moved away to Guelph before Fergus and Elora were incorporated, the rivalry was kept alive for years, though it has largely disappeared since easy transportation and the mixing of high school pupils in the upper forms have drawn the towns closer together.

Mr. Fernier records that, while he was working in Elora, as book-keeper for Ross and Company, in the late Forties or early Fifties, a prominent resident of Elora was very sick. Mr. Fernier suggested that he call Dr. Match of Fergus, who had a good reputation, but the man was shocked at the idea. "What?" he said, "Call a doctor from Fergus?" "Why not?" asked Mr. Fernier, "You don't think he would poison you?" The patient was finally persuaded to take a chance and he was soon restored to health.

When the railway was to be built north from Guelph, there was a long debate as to which village it would reach first, and moneys were voted on condition that Fergus or Elora be the first station north of Guelph.

*By Hugh Templin*

It seemed for a time as though there might have to be a compromise, with one station at Aboyne, a mile and a half from each village. Then somebody in Fergus discovered that it would be a disadvantage for the town to have the station nearest to Guelph, because, in that case, Elora would be the terminus, for a few years at least, and would have the engine sheds, so Fergus voted a larger bonus and obtained the sheds. That is why the Canadian National Railway line still runs from Guelph to Elora, then turns suddenly toward the east, and again curves at a sharp angle toward the north-west in order to reach Alma, which is directly north of Elora.

Frank Mann Harris, the writer of sport stories, was a native of Elora and he tells that when he was a school-boy in Elora, about the beginning of the century, it was considered an adventure, with a good deal of danger attached, for an Elora boy to be seen in Fergus. By this time, the rivalry was largely confined to sports, particularly lacrosse, and some rough games were played when these two teams met. Now those days are but a memory.







From an old Steel Engraving

Bell's Reaping Machine.

THE  
MACHINE  
IS  
A  
REAPING  
MACHINE  
AND  
IS  
A  
VERY  
FINE  
MACHINE  
AND  
IS  
A  
VERY  
FINE  
MACHINE  
AND  
IS  
A  
VERY  
FINE  
MACHINE

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### THREE NOTED MEN

**A**MONG the early residents of Fergus were three men whose names have become a part of the tradition of the village. Not one of them lived here long or did anything important to help along the growth or welfare of the community, yet all became famous, and there seems to be a never-lessening curiosity about all three. All came from Scotland. One did his greatest work before he came to Fergus with the founders, the second left here as a boy for strange lands and a stranger career, the third did nothing to make himself great and his fame depends on the work of his sister, which she did after he was buried in a Fergus churchyard.

\* \* \*

It will be remembered that Patrick Bell was one of those who left Scotland with Adam Fergusson and James Webster, when they sailed in 1833. It will also be recalled that he returned to Scotland with James Webster in the summer of 1837. He had lived here less than four years, and part of that time was probably spent at Waterdown, for he had been the tutor to the

## FERGUS

young members of the Fergusson family. While in Fergus, he probably lived the life of the ordinary bush-farmer and pioneer, teaching in the Fergusson home in the evenings or on disagreeable days. He preached occasionally, and good, sound discourses they are said to have been.

Patrick Bell seems to have been one of those unfortunate geniuses who fill the wrong niche in life. He may have been a preacher of good, sound sermons, and probably was an excellent tutor, but his fame rests on his genius as a mister mechanic and inventor, though he was a man with little regard for money and had no ambition to pile up wealth or to push the manufacture and sale of his great invention. For that reason, most people would name an American as the inventor of the reaper, though Patrick Bell's claim is beyond dispute.

Patrick Bell was the son of a Fortarshate farmer, and was educated for the ministry at St. Andrew's University, where he distinguished himself particularly in mathematics and physics—a rather strange equipment for a minister. In 1827, while he was still a student, he attacked the problem of inventing a machine to assist in the work of the harvest, for he had often been "most painfully struck with the very severe nature of the toil to which the harvest workers were subjected—a toil made doubly oppressive sometimes by the heat

*By Hugh Templin*

of the weather and always by the awkward position in which they were obliged to stoop when engaged in their work."

For two years, he considered the matter, without result. One summer night, he walked in his father's estate, with his mind "full of mechanics at the time," when he absent-mindedly picked up a pair of pruning shears, which had been left stuck in a hedge. He began to work them with his hands, unthinkingly and then suddenly realized that he had found the answer. If the shears could be worked by hand to cut grass, they might be worked by machinery to cut the grain. First, he experimented with the shears to make certain that they would cut the stalks of wheat, then, having satisfied his mind on that point, he built a model, which showed some imperfections, which he corrected in his second model. His work had been carried out in secret, but now he enlisted the help of his brother and of the village blacksmith.

The first full-size reaping machine was built in an empty out-house on the farm in Forfarshire. At one end stood a work-bench, and there the young student spent his holidays, shaping mysterious pieces of wood, which he carried to the blacksmith shop, where the smith did his best to shape them in iron, probably thinking, all the while that college educations were apt to unbalance

## F E R G U S

the minds of certain young men. The framework and wooden parts were cut out by Patrick himself, and at last the machine was ready to be tested, though not yet ready to be exhibited to curious spectators.

The test was made on a quiet day, when the family and hired help were away from the farm, and there was no one to wonder why young Patrick was conveying earth in a wheelbarrow into the old shed. Before he died, Mr. Bell wrote the story of that experiment, and shortly after his death in 1869, one of his friends of pioneer days gave it to the News-Record. This story tells what the earth was for and the result of the experiment so cautiously carried out.

"When the place between the bench and the rude, but ambitious candidate for the honors of the harvest field was covered to the depth of some six inches, I proceeded to compress the loose mould with my feet. I next went to an old stack that happened to be in the barn-yard, and drawing a sheaf of oats out of it, and carrying it to the workshop, I planted it stalk by stalk at about the same thickness I knew it would have grown in the field. This done, I shut and barred the door and then, going behind the machine, I pushed it forward through my planted oats. As soon as I had recovered my breath, I anxiously examined how the work had been done. I found it had been all well cut, but was

lyin  
have  
how  
by t

and  
wor  
wh  
side  
wer  
also  
nee  
fini  
cha  
vas  
anis  
as c  
mod  
reap

bro  
und  
elev  
eve  
m  
goo

*By Hugh Templin*

lying higgeldy piggeldy in such a mess as would utterly have disgraced me in the harvest field. Upon the whole, however, I was not discouraged, but rather encouraged by this first experiment."

The machine was now a mower, but not a reaper, and, with harvest time fast approaching, Patrick Bell worked harder than ever. He tried a canvas apron, on which the grain would fall, and be carried over to one side. This complicated the mechanism and many tests were made before it worked satisfactorily. A reel was also made, though it was expected that this would be needed only in windy weather. The engraving of the finished machine, published at the beginning of this chapter, shows the reaper complete, except for the canvas apron, which has been removed to show the mechanism behind. Note how many of the features, such as cutting knife, apron and reel, are to be found on the modern binder. The story of the test of the completed reaper is interesting, as Patrick Bell tells it.

"Before the corn was perfectly ripe, a younger brother of mine and myself resolved to have a quiet and unobserved start by ourselves. Accordingly, about eleven o'clock at night on a dark autumn evening, when every man, woman and child were in their beds, the machine was quietly taken from its quarters and the good horse, Jock, was yoked to it, and we trio wended

## FERGUS

our way through a field of tea to one of standing wheat—my brother and I meanwhile speaking to one another in whispers. We reached our destination and the machine was put in position right at the end of a ridge. My duty was to look ahead and my brother's was to guide the horse. I gave the word of command to go on and the implement went, but it had not proceeded above five or six yards when I called upon my brother to stop. Upon examining the work, we found it far from satisfactory. The wheat was well enough cut, but it was lying in a bundle before the machine. For a moment, we were both downcast but, recollecting myself, I had yet great hope and said so, the whole of the machine not being used, the reel or collector having been left behind.

"I ran across the field and brought the reel and everything connected with it upon my shoulders, and adjusted it as well as the darkness of the night would permit. Taking our positions respectively as before, the machine moved forward and now was all right. The wheat was lying by the side of the machine as prettily as any that has been cut by it since. After some pardonable congratulations, we moved the machine back to its old quarters as quickly and quietly as possible."

Dr. Patrick Bell never made money out of his invention and probably never patented it, but he received

honor  
sent  
in c  
Ferg  
it he  
and  
a pla

are  
boy  
king

shire  
his  
mile  
his  
love  
have  
were  
cons  
first  
soci  
were  
new

*By Hugh Templin*

honorary degrees from two universities and was presented with a gift of silver plate and a thousand pounds in cash by the Highland Society. When he came to Fergus, he brought one of his models with him and left it here in care of the Fergus Library. After the "Mechanics' Institute" was formed in Fergus, the model had a place of honor on a table, but somebody stole it.

\* \* \*

Some of the stories told about pioneer settlers are strange and suggest fiction rather than fact, the most romantic of all being the life of Adam Wilson, the boy who went to Australia and had a brief reign as the king of a South Sea Island.

When George Wilson, of Glasgows, Aberdeenshire, came to Fergus in 1834, he chose as the site of his house, the high bank of the river at Aboyne, two miles below the Fergus settlement. A creek ran past his door and the view up and down the stream was so lovely that "Harvey Cottage" was generally believed to have the finest situation in the township. The Wilsons were related to the Fordyces and the Harveys and were considered fairly well-to-do. They boasted one of the first pianos in the district, and their home was one of the social centres, the family loving companionship. They were noted, also, for their kindness and more than one newly arrived family from Aberdeenshire spent days or



## FERGUS

months with the Wilsons until their own shelters were ready for occupation. Mrs. James Skeoch, senior, who lived to be over ninety-three and died less than ten years ago, stayed at the home as a little girl and could tell many stories about the family, and about Mrs. James Webster, who was one of the daughters.

The oldest son, Adam Wilson, was about eight or nine years old when the Wilsons came to Canada. He attended the old log school, being one of Mr. McQueen's brightest pupils. When he was a young man, the family moved to Australia and he went from there to Manila in the Philippine Islands to work for an uncle, Mr. Dyce, of the firm of Martin, Dyce and Company. The firm had a large eastern trade and he went to their branch in Singapore, where he prospered till he was able to buy the "Singapore Times."

Apparently anything could happen in the East in those days. Adam Wilson became a man of wealth, and a very close friend of the Sultan of Brunei, which was the northern portion of the Island of Borneo, the southern part of which belonged to the Dutch. The Sultan got into trouble when an uprising started among his own people and he appealed to Wilson for assistance. The former pupil of the little log school was able to raise an army and fit out ships, and with his help, the Sultan stifled the revolt and gave his friend, Adam W.

*By Hugh Templin*

son, an island in the East Indies, where the young Scot set himself up as king of a black tribe.

This is not fiction, so the story does not end there. The Dutch, still a powerful seagoing people, claimed the ownership of Wilson's kingdom and when he refused to admit their rights, they sent a fleet against him, destroying his vessels and his fortifications. He was glad enough to escape in a small boat. It is said that he complained to the British Government, but received no encouragement, as the venture had been of a private nature. Having given up all hope of regaining his kingdom, Adam Wilson visited his relatives in Canada and went on to England, where he married his cousin, Miss Brand, of Bedford Hill House, County of Surrey. After a few years in business in London, his health failed and he moved to Tangiers, North Africa, where he died in 1892 at Lala Shaafia on November 4th.

\*     \*     \*

Among the sons of prominent Scottish families who came to Fergus while the village was still young was one likeable young man by the name of George Clephane (pronounced "Cleffan"). It is not on record that he ever did much to help the community. He was a "remittance man," receiving regular allowances of money from his father, the Sheriff of Fifehire. Thus he had enough to live on without working, and quite a bit

## FERGUS

to spare for whiskey besides. His farming was on a very small scale, that did not excite the admiration of his more thrifty neighbors, but he was universally popular, for he had a kind word and a cheery smile for everybody, and no person called on him for help in vain. He died an untimely death, at the age of thirty-two, and was buried in a grave behind St. Andrew's church. He would probably be surprised to know that his grave is now better known than any other one in the burying grounds of the community, and every year, hundreds of persons ask their way to the grave of George Clephane, "the lost sheep."

It was probably his fondness for drink which sent George Clephane to Canada. Many a family with a wayward son sent the black sheep of the flock overseas in those days. There was always a sort of forlorn hope that out here in the bush, where so many were striving to better themselves, the young prod gal might reform. Failing that happy result, he would be where he could not disgrace his family before the eyes of the neighbors. Sometimes these hopes were realized, but not often. If the young men had been forced to work for a living their chances of improvement would have been better, but, amply supplied with a regular income they could live in comparative idleness. Such were the "remittance men," though George Clephane was above the average

He  
neve

but  
mor  
had  
a sm  
shar  
the  
com  
was  
last

reca  
a fe  
drin  
bidd  
the  
ther  
Such  
his  
Clep  
on t

educ  
tens  
his r

*By Hugh Templin*

He was a gentleman by birth and upbringing and he never forgot it in the backwoods village.

Why he chose Fergus as his home is not apparent, but it is probable that he had some relative here, or, more likely, that some of the prominent land owners had been friends of his father, the Sheriff. He lived on a small farm north of Fergus, on the Owen Sound road, sharing his log house with a school teacher, who became the Village Clerk in later years. They were congenial companions and got along well together. A girl who was on the adjoining farm at that time, lived to be the last of the pioneers and died only a few years ago. She recalled a typical story of these men. The teacher had a few old cronies in one afternoon, and they had been drinking from the cask that stood in the corner. After bidding them good-bye, the owner returned to find that the last drinker had forgotten to turn off the spigot and there was whiskey flowing all over the hard earth floor. Such a waste wrung his Scottish soul, so he got down on his hands and knees to lap up what he could. George Clephane, coming in later, found his friend dead drunk on the floor, with whiskey all around him.

George Clephane was no drunkard but a likeable educated young man. His farming was rather a pretense, but he had cleared a small patch of land, which his rather critical neighbors looked on as little more than

## FERGUS

a garden. His great passion was for riding, and at a time when horses of any kind were scarce, he had a fine pony, and could be seen riding it any fine day

His death was a sad one, and there are conflicting stories about it. Apparently, he had been out riding on an afternoon in the late Spring of 1851, when a rain came on. Having home, through Fergus, he was thrown from his horse at the culvert over the creek, which flowed through the centre of Fergus in those days, and which still finds its way to the river through underground drains past the present arena and library. He was carried to the home of Dr. Mutch, at the corner of St. Patrick and St. David streets, a stone house that still stands. There he died. One old pioneer recalled an inquest which found the verdict of "death from apoplexy." A more recent investigator believes that death was due to pneumonia, a sickness still unnamed in 1851. The cause of his death is unimportant, he was widely mourned, for he had many friends, and he was buried in the churchyard of the Auld Kirk, and a stone was erected, with a weeping willow tree at the top of it.

His fame came after his death. Back in Scotland, his sister, Elizabeth, wrote poetry, her best-known work being that beautiful hymn, beginning, "There were ninety and nine that safely lay in the shelter of the fold"—a hymn with a rather surprising history, which

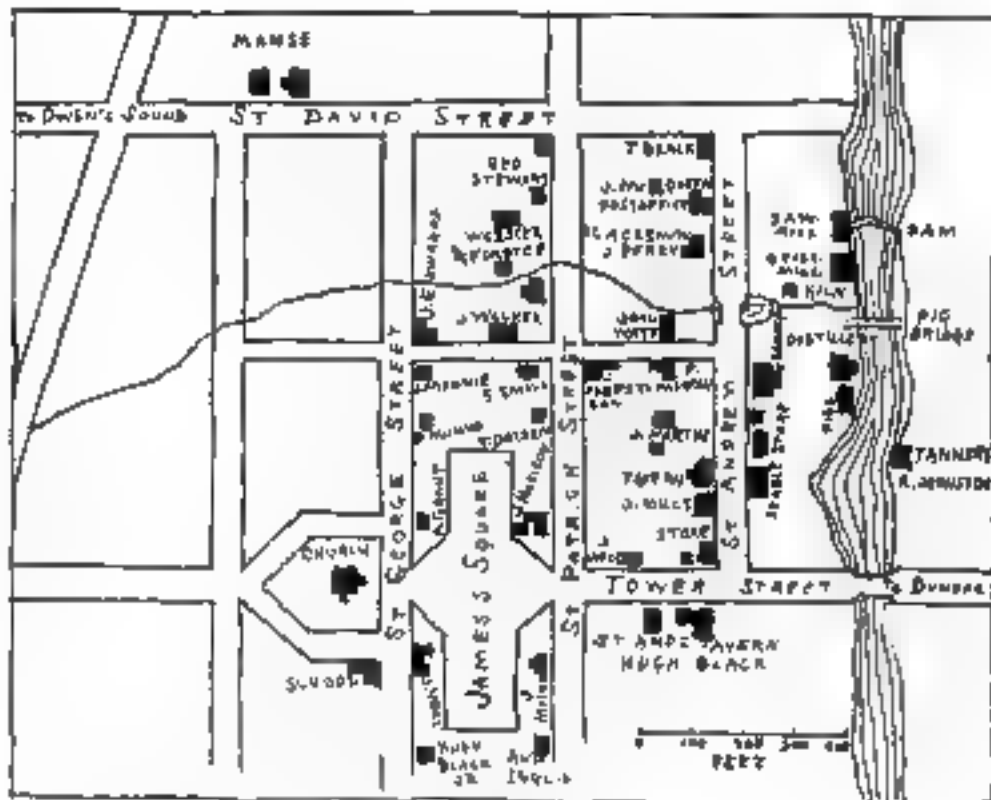
*By Hugh Templin*

need not be told here. It is sufficient to say that it has achieved wide popularity, and it may be taken for granted that Elizabeth Clephane was thinking of her brother George when she wrote the lines

"There were ninety and nine that safely lay  
In the shelter of the fold,  
But one was out on the hills away,  
Far off from the gates of gold,  
Away on the mountains wild and bare,  
Away from the tender Shepherd's care.

"But none of the ransomed ever knew  
How deep were the waters crossed,  
Nor how dark was the night that the Lord  
passed through,  
Ere He found His sheep that was lost.  
Out in the desert He heard its cry,  
Sick and helpless and ready to die."

And that is why so many visitors come to Fergus looking for the square-topped stone, with the picture of a weeping willow, which marks the grave of George Clephane, "the lost sheep."



SKETCH MAP OF FERGLS IN 1845

Showing all the important buildings in the village at the time. Industrial buildings include the sawmill, gristmill, distillery and granary below the dam, the tannery across the river, and the brewery by the creek on St. Patrick street. There are two stores and two taverns. Note shape of the square and the street around church.

THE  
 saw  
 a dozen  
 still on  
 the ha  
 a third  
 village  
 rapid  
 to beg  
 A  
 but the  
 settler  
 but the  
 find o  
 on. A  
 soon,  
 the fo  
 this ti  
 tion a  
 writte

## CHAPTER NINE

### A GLIMPSE OF FERGUS IN 1845

**T**HE FIRST PART of the history of Fergus may be said to end about 1845. The settlement was then a dozen years old. The first settlers were nearly all still on their lands and the industries in Fergus were in the hands of the original owners, though about this time a third man entered the partnership. Since 1837, the village had not grown very quickly, but the period of rapid growth that preceded incorporation was just about to begin. Fergus was passing out of its infancy.

Advancement in the first few years had been rapid, but the period of stagnation came suddenly. At first the settlers had plenty of money, brought from Scotland, but this was nearly all gone, and they were surprised to find out how little actual cash they really needed to live on. Apparently, a feeling that better times were coming soon, caused a new effort about 1845. A large map of the township, with Fergus and Elora, was published at this time, and there are several other sources of information available. A careful historian, depending solely on written and printed information, would probably find



## F E R G U S

as much about Fergus in this year as at any other time in the last hundred.

A rough sketch, copied from the large lithographed map of Nichol in 1845, appears at the beginning of this chapter. It shows, in a surprising way, how few new buildings had been erected between 1837 and 1845, and it is valuable in placing the exact location of the buildings erected in early Fergus. Many of these are already old friends, of the others, something may be said now.

There were two main roads out of Fergus. Tower street was now a part of the road to Guelph. No longer was it necessary to go around by Flora, for James Webster had been elected to the first District Council, and he had persuaded the County to survey a new road from Guelph to Fergus. Two alternate routes were proposed, the one cutting off from Fergus to the south west till it joined the Flora and Guelph road, and the other the Guelph road as it is now. The traveller from the south came over the hill and across the Tower street bridge into Fergus, turning to the right up the main street, and again to the left at St David street if he was continuing on toward the north. As a matter of fact few went very far north. The road was surveyed to Svidenham, or Owen's Sound, but it was a poor road. The other road to the south was better, though it was not until the Guelph and Arthur Road Company was

*By Hugh Templin*

formed and backed by Fergus capital that it became a good road, even by the standards of these days.

There was but one bridge in Fergus yet, and it had been built to replace Scott's first flimsy structure. The funds did not come from the public treasury but were raised by subscription, but bridges were not expensive in those days. South of the river, there was but one building in the village proper. This was Robert Johnston's new tannery, the latest addition to the industries of Fergus. For many years it remained one of the best businesses in the village, lasting until the scarcity of tanbark and a bad depression ended all local tanneries.

Looking up the river from the bridge in 1845, one could see the men working away on the south bank, blasting out the flume which was to convey water from above the dam at the falls, down to the tannery. Beyond St. David street, Mr. Ferrier had his farm cleared now and on it was a log house and, farther up the river bank, a clump of the original trees still stood, partly hiding from view his stone house at Belsyde—the first stone house between Guelph and Georgian Bay. There was another stone house down the river where Hugh Black had built his "Craighhead." Both were one storey houses at that time.

North of the river the little sawmill stood at the end of the dam. It would not have stood up against a

## FERGUS

single Spring freshet of the present day, but floods were almost unknown then, and the ice melted off the face of the dam each year. The new mill was a large building, three storeys high, with two runs of stones operated by a large water-wheel. Flour and oatmeal were made there, and farmers for miles around brought their grain to Fergus, the work being done on shares, and little, if any, grain bought for cash.

Across the creek from the mill, and close to the edge of the water, stood the distillery, with a tall chimney at the end nearest to the bridge. Beside it was a large pig shed, the pigs being fattened to an enormous size on the mash from the distillery. They were allowed to run in a field between the distillery and the grist mill, and they also pastured across the river. A "pig bridge" had been built so that they could cross the gorge. It was of the suspension type and swung when walked on, but in spite of this unpleasantness, and the danger of meeting a fat hog which might dispute the right of way, the "pig bridge" was used by many people as a short-cut.

Three or four other buildings stood on the mill lands. The largest was the big granary, close to the street where the grain was stored. The kiln was in a small building close to the creek, which had a small dam to form a pool of clear water near the road. Webster's general store, the second in Fergus, was farther down

*By Hugh Templin*

the street, where the News-Record block is in 1933, and beyond that was the large hotel stable belonging to the Fergus Arms hotel across the road.

Across the road, Black's tavern was the most westerly building on St. Andrew street. Before 1847, it had been plastered over the original logs, but it still bore its sign with St. Andrew, the fisherman. Across Tower street, where the post office now stands, was the first store, then owned by Watt and McCladdery. The other business places were almost all to be found nearer St. David street. On the corner where the Imperial Bank now stands was a log house belonging to Thomas Black and used as a tailor shop somewhat later. Beside it was James McQueen's post office, with mail from Guelph three times a week now, and then the blacksmith shop. Up Provost lane was Walker's bakeshop and behind that, near the creek, the brewery operated by A. D. For-dyce and James Webster. The other buildings were all houses, either log or frame, except the church and school.

St. Andrew's Church building occupied the most prominent location in Fergus, on top of the hill and looking down Tower street. It was frame with a rough-cast finish on the exterior, and its tower in the centre of the front was roofed with tin. At the side nearest to the school, there was a small porch, through which most of the worshippers entered. Some twenty or twenty-five

## FERGUS

graves were already to be found in the burying-ground behind the church. A new minister, Rev. George Smellie had come from Scotland in December, 1843, and lived in the manse across the Owen Sound road. The manse was a frame building boasting four fireplaces, and surrounded by the only flower garden in Fergus.

Beside the church, the old log school faced on St. George street. Originally, the school-room had been in the front. In the centre was a hallway, with a wicket where mail had been given out and beyond that the residence of the teacher and postmaster, James McQueen. By 1845, Mr. McQueen had moved his family and his postoffice downtown, and later, when the population grew, there were two rooms for a time in the log school.

Further study of the sketch map will show one or two other things. Very few lots had been sold as yet, and the area of Fergus was small. Within the next ten years, growth was rapid and the village spread out. It reached across the river, where a new church was to be built in 1846. Farms belonging to Messrs. Buist, Fernier, Perry, Black and others were to be subdivided later, but in 1845, these farms still seemed far away, and that of James Perry, beyond Garafraxa street, was almost "in the bush."

Even in 1845, a large park space had been set aside on the hill below the church. It was named in honor of

*By Hugh Templin*

James Webster, and was intended as a market place, where the cattle fairs could be held, though the slope of the ground hardly made it ideal for that purpose. Later, it was changed in shape and became one of the many fine parks in Fergus.

Among the records of 1845, which have been preserved, is the account book of a pioneer in the Fergus settlement. For ten months, from the first of January to the end of October, he kept track of all his income and expenditures. He lived simply, with a few luxuries and extravagances, and at an outlay that averaged only ten dollars a month. Articles made locally were very low in price, imported goods cost as much as they do now, or more.

Woollen cloth was made at home, but some cotton goods were bought in the summer months at 7 pence a yard. A spool of thread cost 4 pence and a skein of silk, 3 pence. On one day, he bought cotton warp, 2 shillings, 9 pence, 1 pound of logwood, 7½ pence, copperas, 1½ pence, and a spool of thread. Somebody must have been preparing to do some weaving, the two dyes being used in coloring the cloth. A corn broom at 1 shilling, 6 pence, 2 cricks at 8 pence, half a dozen plates at 2 shillings, and 2 chairs at 12 shillings made up the rest of the furniture and household equipment he bought in ten months.

## FERGUS

Some kind of a building was erected in May, for the farmer bought 63 feet of pine siding for 2 shillings, 10 pence, and 120 feet of hemlock for 4 shillings, 6 pence, and the following day, 24 panes of glass at a cost of 6 pence each, or 12 shillings altogether. As the chairs were purchased a week later, a Sherlock Holmes might deduce that the pioneer had built a back kitchen and furnished it at a cost of 31 shillings, 4 pence, or less than \$6.50, not counting his labor. In computing the costs in those days, it must be remembered that the Canadian £ was \$4.00, and in cases where it is the £ Sterling, it is so specified.

Most of the food was raised on the farm. Some of the necessities were bought, including some that we of 1933 would class as luxuries. For instance, this unnamed pioneer bought his whiskey at the Fergus Distillery in lots varying from half a gallon to five gallons, and paid at the rate of less than two shillings a gallon. He also liked his snuff, a quarter pound costing him 7½ pence and lasting about a month. Tea was far more expensive than whiskey, costing 5 shillings a pound, so that it was no wonder he bought only a pound in six months. Coffee was much cheaper, the cost being only 15 pence per pound, but loaf sugar was an extravagance indeed, at a shilling a pound. These, with salt, pepper and tobacco, complete the regular purchases, any other

*By Hugh Templin*

items being odd needs, such as a shawl, hand-saw, rule and the like.

The houses and other buildings in the village were mostly of log construction, and were scattered more or less promiscuously, few of them being right on the street line. The more elaborate, including the church and one of the stores, had a rough-cast finish on the outside, and others were of frame, the lumber coming from the saw-mill. There were no gardens and no sidewalks, no street lighting of any kind, and only a few trees remained in the cleared portion, though stumps stuck up here and there, even on the streets.

Fergus was ready to emerge from the pioneer stage of development, but it still looked rather crude and had a "backwoodsy" air about it.







D  
ha  
of  
to  
by  
to  
B  
re  
A  
ti  
C  
o  
n  
a  
to  
a  
a  
i

## CHAPTER TEN

### DISRUPTION IN THE KIRK

**D**URING the first ten or eleven years, the Fergus Settlement had its own share of troubles. There had been fatal accidents and sudden deaths, the burning of the mill the excitements and hardships of the Rebellion, early frosts that damaged grains, elections followed by bitterness, scandals which the Church Session undertook to investigate, urging penitence upon the sinners. But Fergus had escaped one thing, there had been no religious differences. There was but one church, St. Andrew's, which belonged (to give its official designation) to the Synod of Canada, in connection with the Church of Scotland. The great majority of the people of Fergus were from Scotland, they had been members of the Presbyterian Church back home, and they saw no need of any other church in Fergus. Most of them attended St. Andrew's church regularly. A few went to the Anglican church, which had recently been built in Pilkington, close to Flora, with regular services once a month. The rest scandalized their neighbors by staying at home or going shooting on the Sabbath.

## FERGUS

Such a happy state of affairs could not last in a community where people took their theology seriously and where more than the minister could elucidate the fine points of doctrine. The trouble really started back in Scotland, where the Established Church was split wide open for reasons that concern this history not at all. The Disruption occurred in 1843, and the two new branches were generally known as "the Auld Kirk" and "the Free Kirk," though, needless to say, those were not the official designations.

The congregation of St. Andrew's church, Fergus, had belonged to the Auld Kirk, the Established Church of Scotland, there being but the one important Presbyterian Church at the time it was founded. There was no hint of controversy during the pastorate of the first minister in Fergus, Rev. Alexander Gardner. He died in 1841, largely because of exposure during his long and weary trips through the bush, for the pioneer minister was one of the hardest workers, physically speaking, in the community. After his death, the pulpit was vacant for more than two years. No session records were kept, services were irregular, and even the register of births and marriages was neglected.

The second minister, Rev. George Smellie, came to Fergus from Scotland at the end of 1843. He was a Free Kirk man in Scotland, but that does not seem to

have  
was  
affect  
of Fe

in Cal  
Synod  
advan  
thoug  
Amor  
Conne  
Smellie

entire  
to bel  
Fergus  
rew's  
with t  
larly c

C  
settler  
fronte  
Dingw  
board  
sonalit  
congre

*By Hugh Templin*

have caused the Kirk Session any concern, for there was no suggestion that the split in the church would affect Canada, and particularly the backwoods village of Fergus.

The causes of the split in the Presbyterian Church in Canada matter not at all now, nor the events at the Synod meeting at Kingston in 1844. The arguments advanced at that time might seem rather trivial now, though they assumed a vast importance in those days. Among those seceding from the "Synod of Canada in Connection with the Church of Scotland" was Rev. G. Smellie, of St. Andrew's church, Fergus.

Mr. Smellie was not taking this step rashly, nor entirely on his own responsibility. He had good reason to believe that he was representing his congregation in Fergus, and it was reasonable to presume that St. Andrew's church, Fergus, would hereafter be connected with the "Presbyterian Church of Canada," more popularly called the "Free Kirk."

One man stood in the way of such an amicable settlement of the religious differences which now confronted Fergus for the first time. He was Alexander Dingwall Fordyce, senior, an elder and chairman of the board of trustees. Mr. Fordyce had a commanding personality, and was the most important member of the congregation, apart from the minister. His son, of the

## FERGUS

same name, but of a meeker and milder disposition, had been among the earliest settlers in Upper Newhol. The father was a Member of Parliament in Scotland. During his election campaign following the passage of the Reform Bill, when public feeling in Britain was running high, an unfortunate incident happened in his constituency which was enough to defeat him. Disgusted and angry, he shook the dust of Scotland from his feet and joined his scholarly son in Canada. Here he soon made his strong personality felt, and he became the first Warden of Wellington County. He had done much to keep the church services in Fergus going with a fair degree of regularity when Mr. Gardner took sick, and after his death, reading sermons and prayers. Finally, he was opposed to Reformers in both Church and State, and he would have nothing to do with this new Free Kirk.

When word of Mr. Smellie's doings at Kingston reached Fergus, Mr. Fordyce sat down and penned a demand that a meeting of the Session be held at once. The session met on July 20th, 1844. Mr. Fordyce opened the battle by moving that the Lord's Supper be postponed from the following Sabbath, but his motion had no seconder and so, as the minutes stated, "it fell to the ground." Charles Allan, who still came to Fergus to church, moved instead that the Session back up the stand taken by the minister and Francis Anderson seconded

it, th  
Ford

He f  
of tr  
of th  
was  
Ford  
had  
churc  
Scotl  
the r  
do, c  
claim  
The  
threa  
he w  
and s  
a new  
won,  
Fergus  
time  
was  
ided  
James  
spoke

*By Hugh Templin*

it, the motion carrying with one dissenting voice, A. D. Fordyce registering his vote against it.

Mr. Fordyce did not know when he was beaten. He found all the other elders against him, and the board of trustees was as nearly unanimous. Three-quarters of the congregation also favored the Free Kirk, but he was not through yet. As chairman of the trustees, Mr. Fordyce notified the minister and the elders that they had no longer any right to worship in St. Andrew's church, because the building belonged to the Church of Scotland. He notified Mr. Smelle that he must sign off the rights to the property, which the minister refused to do, claiming he was the spiritual head, but made no claim that he owned the church building or the manse. The elders again backed him up. Then Mr. Fordyce threatened to take the matter to the law courts, and if he was bluffing, the bluff worked. The minister, elders and dissenting members decided to withdraw and build a new and better church of their own. Mr. Fordyce had won, but at the cost of stirring up such a bitterness as Fergus had not known before, nor, probably, since that time. The controversy had lasted over a year and it was in October, 1845, that the Free Church people decided to withdraw. Eighty years after the late Mrs. James Skeoch speaking to the writer of this story, still spoke bitterly and defiantly. "He forced us out of our

## FERGUS

church," she said, "but we raised the money and built a new one—and a better one than theirs, too."

Though the majority were in retreat, they were defiant, too. Their defiance is expressed in a printed "PROTEST of the Minister, certain Trustees and Elders, the Deacons and vast Majority of the Congregation of St. Andrew's Church, Fergus." The document is long or we would print it here. The preamble alone would take several pages. It concludes in this manner

"A small minority, with one Elder... have put forth certain exclusive claims to the property, and after continued annoyance, have threatened to raise a prosecution at law against the Pastor of said Congregation. And whereas, we, claiming an equitable share in said property—a claim which has however been refused—but desirous of peace, and deferring to the scriptural duty to suffer wrong rather than go to law, have for conscience sake, and in order to bear a more decided testimony to the doctrine of Christ's supremacy in his Church, &c., resolved to quit for the present, the property in which we maintain that we have an equitable right, under protest that we have been unjustly and unwarrantably interfered with, and that it will remain competent for us at any future period to assert our just rights."

The signatures are interesting. G. Smellie heads the

list  
Fergus  
les  
tru  
and  
Ma  
Mo  
we  
one  
tan  
Geo  
Dav  
erts  
Jam  
Ale  
a no  
Dea  
and  
it be  
form  
a t.m  
chur  
Day  
from  
Geor

*By Hugh Templin*

1st Then follows a paragraph with the officers Adam Fergusson, Dr Henderson, Hugh Black, trustees, Charles Allan, George Skene and A D Ferner, elders and trustees, John Munro, Francis Anderson, John Wilkie and William Gibbon, elders, William Clark, Thomas Muir, junior, William Gibbon, F Anderson, junior, J Morice, James Perry, James Richardson, Gavin Caldwell and James Gerrie, deacons. The names of twenty one members are also appended Peter Hay, James Catnach, David Allan, John Gibbon, Andrew Burns, George Muir, John Hay, George Frazer, Francis Esson, David Munro, David Morice, David Black, George Robertson, W Black, Hugh Black, junior, James Moir, James Davidson, Robert Garvan, Alexander McDonald, Alexander Clark and Peter McLaren. To this is added a note "The names of two more Elders and two more Deacons might have been obtained if time had permitted and the names of hundreds of additional Members, had it been thought necessary to print so many."

After the members of the session had decided to form a new congregation, a truce was agreed upon for a time. Both congregations worshipped together in the church. At ten o'clock in the morning, on the Sabbath Day, A. D. Fordyce gathered his few faithful and read from his book of sermons and at eleven o'clock, Rev. George Smellie preached to his people and those of the



## FERGUS

opposition who wished to remain, and it is recorded that his services lasted much longer than an hour

A subscription list was opened to raise the funds for the new church, which was to be called "Melville Church," after a great Scottish Reformer. The list was headed by Hon. Adam Fergusson, who gave a site for the church, ten acres of land for the manse and £25 in cash. Strangely enough, one of the first names in the list is that of Alexander D. Fordyce, senior who donated £10 in memory of his wife, who had died recently, and who had some considerable leaning toward the Free Kirk, as had her son, Arthur. Even at home the rugged old warrior did not have undivided support.

The rest of the chapter is quickly told. The new church was built on the edge of Union Square, south of the river, in 1846. Alexander Munro and Andrew Burns carried out the contract successfully. It was a stone building, with a low tower in front. Later, wings and a steeple were added. Before the church was completed, the first death took place in the new congregation. The oldest son of Mr. and Mrs. Smellie, less than three years old, took a fever and died. There was no burying ground at Melville church, the child was interred under the basement of the tower and among those who assisted at the service was the sole remaining elder of St. Andrew's church, Alexander D. Fordyce.

was  
guss  
next  
hall,  
Rev.  
year  
ville  
cent  
daug  
fami  
Melv  
to th  
was

w.th  
Hugh  
preac  
was p  
Fordy  
years  
took  
comm

*By Hugh Templin*

The new manse for the minister of Melville Church was built on the "glebe" presented by Hon. Adam Fergusson. It was at the southwest end of Union street next to Hugh Black's farm. The house was called "Kirk-hall," and is still known by the same name. There the Rev. George Smellie and his good wife lived for many years, Mrs. Smellie being still there when the new Melville Church was built at the beginning of the present century. They raised a family of brilliant sons and daughters, and the old house was bought by one of the family when Dr. Smellie retired from the pastorate of Melville. Some years ago, a beautiful memorial window to the memory of Dr. George Smellie and Mrs. Smellie was unveiled in Melville church.

After the Disruption, St. Andrew's Church was without a minister until October, 1847, when the Rev. Hugh Mair, D.D., came to Fergus. He was an eloquent preacher and a volume containing twelve of his sermons was published after his death by his warm friend, A. D. Fordyce, junior. He was in Fergus less than seven years. In 1854, while on a visit to New York State, he took sick and died. A tablet in St. Andrew's church commemorates his short but notable ministry.



Old Melville Church.

L  
P  
in  
There  
arden  
worth  
the r  
was s  
had o  
ronto  
old r  
than  
was g  
longe  
sold,  
Fergu  
died i  
Fergu  
Elora  
grade

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### LAND GAMBLING AND INCORPORATION

**P**ROGRESS in Fergus during the ten years following the Rebellion had been discouragingly slow. There must have been many times when even the most ardent citizens wondered whether the effort had been worth while. Here was a village with an ideal site on the river, surrounded by the best of farm land, yet it was stagnant. Adam Fergusson was growing old and had other interests, which kept him at home or in Toronto. James Webster was becoming discouraged. His old rival, Charles Allan was working harder at Elora than he was at Fergus now, and much of the business was going to the village down the river. There was no longer an income from farm lands, which had all been sold, so finally Mr Webster disposed of his interests in Fergus and moved to Guelph in 1852. A. D. Fordyce died in the same year. Even that sturdy champion of Fergus, A. D. Fernier, rented his land and moved to Elora where he was book keeper for Ross and Company.

Those who thought the tiny village on the downgrade guessed wrong. By 1850, Fergus was beginning

## FERGUS

to grow, though so slowly as to be hardly apparent at first. Then it gathered momentum. Its boundaries began to reach out, at first up and down the river, and then farther back. Still there were those who doubted. Others were more optimistic. New tradesmen had come in and a second tannery had started. But the real reason for the sudden optimism was the return of good times. To some extent, the changed conditions were due to the Crimean War, which was sending prices up higher. This was followed by a species of gambling which brought an artificial prosperity to the whole of Centre Wellington, so that everyone was rich, with paper fortunes, and a mania settled on the district which is hard to believe unless one remembers the more recent gambling in industrial shares.

In August, 1854, the first newspaper was published in Fergus. The editor was George Pirie, a pioneer of Bon Accord, and at that time the editor of the Guelph Herald. He called his new venture the Fergus Freeholder. It seems to have been printed in Guelph at first but the editor was a clever man, well acquainted with Fergus from its earliest days, and he printed a good paper. From that time to the present, the files of the newspapers, which are fairly complete, form the great source of historical information.

The land boom probably started in those towns

and  
ing  
to c  
A cl  
thro  
Owe  
pro  
had  
som  
leges  
the  
frar  
distr  
being  
farm  
the h  
He h  
ready  
rise  
puts  
hund  
the s  
in the  
Freeh  
Wedr

*By Hugh Templin*

along the Great Western Railway, which was then being extended through Western Ontario. Rumors began to circulate that other railways would be built at once. A charter was granted a line from Toronto to Goderich, through Fergus. Another line was to go from Guelph to Owen Sound, and again Fergus was likely to occupy a prominent place. It was generally agreed that Fergus had a future, and lots near the centre of Fergus would soon be valuable, while the few remaining water privileges along the river would be almost priceless, when the expected rush of industrialists to found mills and foundaries began. Several of the shrewdest men in the district quietly bought land along the river, one of them being Charles Allan, of Flora, who still owned a bush farm along the Owen Sound road, now being called by the higher-sounding title, "The Great Northern Road." He hired James Perry to build a new dam, which was ready in October, and when the water was allowed to rise in it, "forming," as the inspired writer of that day puts it, "a miniature lake, which at a distance of a few hundred yards, seems to be buried in the dense forest," the stage was set, and the first of the great land sales in the Fergus district was held on October 14th, 1854.

The story of the sale is told briefly in the Fergus Freeholder. "At the Sale of Town and Park lots on Wednesday and Thursday, the largest amount of pro-

## FERGUS

erty was disposed of, and the highest prices were realized, that have yet been known in this vicinity, throwing, in fact, all previous Sales in Wellington or the adjoining Counties entirely into the shade. The small dwelling-house on Mr. C. Allan's recent purchase, with seven and one-half acres of land, and the water privilege attached, brought £1700. Lots containing only one-fifth of an acre ranged as high as £56, and quarter-acre lots up to £52, while park lots at a very considerable distance from the village brought £40 per acre."

These gambling manias are hard to understand. For instance, Mr. Allan had bought his land for £1 an acre. When cleared, it was worth perhaps, \$20 an acre in 1834, yet twenty years later, he sold it by auction for eight times that much, though the land was still far from the village, and is probably outside the municipality eighty years later. But the worst was yet to come in the way of speculation. This sale was but the first of several. Everybody was getting rich. The Crimean War lasted through the winter of 1854-55. At the time of the Battle of Alma, wheat had risen to almost 5 shillings, or one dollar a bushel, a month later it went over 6 shillings, in June, 1855, fall wheat touched the 10 shilling mark. Many a fortune was founded in those hectic days, but many another was lost in rash attempts to get rich quick.

*By Hugh Templin*

Inspired by the example of Charles Allan, several others held sales of lands near Fergus. Alexander Harvey owned the farm at Kinnettes, now the Fergus golf course. In partnership with Absalom Shade of Galt, his wife's uncle, he built another dam down below Fergus, laid out mill races and streets, and surveyed over one hundred lots. Most of these were sold during one big day, when the band came up from Guelph, carriages met buyers at the Guelph station and champagne was added to the free whiskey at lunch time. Another sale at Ennotville, four miles down the Guelph road from Fergus, was rather disappointing. The highest price paid was £31 and the average was not more than half that amount (which is considerably more than anyone would pay nowadays.) Alma was still in the bush, but the lots there sold for a total of \$18,500. Before the boom had ended, all the land between Fergus and Elora, with the exception of one small strip of bush, had been offered as town lots in the "Villages of Kinnettes and Aboyne" and town lots in Fergus were sold a mile up the "Great Northern Road" beyond the limits of the municipality, as they stand in 1933.

The Treaty of Peace between Britain and Russia did more than end the war. It released stores of wheat and reduced the price. Wheat quotations fell steadily till, in February, 1858, the level in Fergus had dropped



## F E R G U S

to 2 shillings and 6 pence, or 50 cents a bushel. Hard times came and the boom burst. Land which had been bought for a payment of one-fifth down and four or five equal payments, suddenly became worth less than the first payment. Nobody would buy it at any price. The mill at Kinnettles was never built, though the dam remained for years. The original owners could not collect the fortunes they had made. The case of Mr. Shade was typical. He seems to have bought out his nephew's share in the Village of Kinnettles, or perhaps he merely made an attempt to collect what Mr. Harvey had despaired of getting. One week, many purchasers of Kinnettles lots received notice that their notes had been turned over to an Eliza lawyer, who would collect the money through the courts. One man replied, but he did it anonymously, saying that the day the cases went to court, Absalom Shade of Galt would be shot. The next day the lawyer received word to drop the case.

A second newspaper had been established in Fergus during the good times, and when the pinch was felt, the two were amalgamated. At the New Year, 1859, the editor of the British Constitution and Fergus Freeholder undertook to sum up conditions in the following editorial: "The season just past has been the most trying of any we remember. There is not only an absolute scarcity of money, but there is a large amount of debt

cont  
In th  
land  
could  
had  
Bub  
whic  
thes  
infl  
beca

state  
depre  
publ  
Vill  
fore  
out-  
Gues  
a cer  
any  
the m

villag  
was  
popul  
as m

*By Hugh Templin*

contracted a year or two ago, when speculation ran riot. In this quarter of the Province, particularly, the price of land rose suddenly without any adequate cause that we could see—and men speculated to a large extent, who had never speculated before. Since the South Sea Bubble, there has been nothing equal to the Mania which raged here for Village Lots. Every man ran to these sales to buy—and many, we suspect, under the influence of whiskey, and a Band of Music, did buy, and became for that day at least, wealthy men.

"The reaction which followed this extraordinary state of excitement produced a corresponding degree of depression. No greater fraud was ever practised upon public credulity than the recent manufacture of Paper Villages! On the day of sale nothing could be done before lunch! Libations of whiskey were freely poured out—and by the time lunch had been discussed, the Guests were well primed. When a man is corned up to a certain degree, he is ready to buy anything and give any price asked! This is a brief but correct account of the manner in which these sales were conducted."

During those exciting days when the area of the village was being increased too rapidly, the population was also growing. By 1854, it was about double the population of 1845, and in the next few years, it grew as much more. By the end of 1856, there was talk of

## FERGUS

breaking away from Nichol township, particularly when news came that Elora considered a similar step. So, at the session of 1857, bills were introduced into the Parliament of the Province of Canada, to incorporate both Fergus and Elora. Under the watchful eye of the local member, they received the first and second readings and were reported from committee. The bill for the incorporation of Elora received its third reading, but something seemed to have happened to the Fergus bill. Foul play was feared and it was said that Elora had stolen a march on Fergus and was to be incorporated first, but the bill turned up and was finally passed.

Fergus became a village on January 1st, 1858. On the following Monday and Tuesday, the first election was held. Alexander Wilkie, blacksmith, received 104 votes and became the first reeve. The Council consisted of W. Robertson Miller, George D. Fergusson, son of the founder, Matthew Anderson, carriage maker, James Grindley, foundry owner, and Robert Johnston, tanner. Six others were nominated, one received one vote, another none at all, not even his own.

The bursting of the land boom may have caused a great shortage of money, but it did not stop the growth of Fergus. New residents were arriving every week and in 1858 the new village had a population of about one thousand, though it lagged behind Elora slightly, and

for  
back  
Arg  
they  
bec  
bu.  
ope  
stay  
the  
185  
unde  
With  
the

had  
from  
fore  
villag  
river  
flow  
just  
ginn  
place  
with

*By Hugh Templin*

for the first and last time. There were temporary setbacks, as when a bad fire destroyed the stores of Messrs. Argo, Ferrier and Michie, with a loss of \$40,000, but they were rebuilt better than ever. Stone buildings were becoming more numerous, and some of the stores then built still stand on the main street. New industries were opening, including Grindley's foundry, McMahon's stove factory and Wilson's mill. The Monkland mill the first part of which was built by James Wilson about 1857, is the only industry of that time still in operation, unless one counts the newspaper office as an industry. Within the next three years, Wilson's oatmeal had taken the first prize at the Provincial Exhibition at Kingston.

While Fergus had grown in size and population, it had lost much of its early picturesqueness, and was far from beautiful to look at. Only two of the original forest giants had been left standing. The rest of the village plot was bare and barren looking. Even the river banks were stripped clean. There were few good flower gardens as yet, though there was a new nursery just outside the village. The old log houses were beginning to disappear and stone houses were taking their place, but these were mostly bare, box-like structures without adornment of any kind.

Fergus had been too busy growing to adorn itself



HUGH TEMBLIN

#### THE OLD LOG SCHOOL

The first school in Ferguson built in 1835, where James McQueen began to teach in 1836 and taught till it was replaced by a stone two-roomed public school.

EVERY  
st  
or wh  
and n  
to be  
Such  
and is  
ial for  
tic tal  
house  
so pe  
town,  
men  
had a  
at tim  
house  
an ide  
the m  
could

## CHAPTER TWELVE

### KINNETTLES AND ITS MYSTERIES

EVERY TOWN has some house with a notable story, some house around which traditions cluster, or which the children pass rather fearfully in daylight and not at all at night. Very often the house is reputed to be haunted, though it may outlive that reputation. Such a house must be very old, if it is large and empty and isolated, so much the better. Then there is material for the novelist, or a chance to built up some romantic tale of adventurous men and beautiful women.

There are several houses in Fergus—old stone houses—which have a glamor about them, but none is so perfect as Kinnettles. It is not actually within the town, even now, but the owner was one of the great men in Fergus, during his time, and the farm always had a very direct connection with the village, especially at times of festivities, picnics and celebrations. The big house stood on the high bank, facing the river, almost an ideal location. At one time, it had dreams of being the manor house of a new village, and from its windows could be seen the new dam and the mill-pond that was

## FERGUS

to bring wealth to the buyers of village lots. Later it looked down on the drillers who were seeking wealth in the rocks across the river. After that dream faded, the stables at Kinnettles sheltered race horses, and down by the bush there was a race track where the horses were trained and where the first lacrosse games were played by Fergus teams. Then tragedy threw a cloud over the family. As luck would have it, no one was seriously hurt and family troubles were patched up in time to prevent anyone from Kinnettles going to jail. When the railway came, and Fergus people were wild with joy, it was to Kinnettles that they went for their games, while the Laird of Kinnettles looked on in his white silk hat—the high-water mark of fashion in the whole history of Fergus.

Hard times came and the house was deserted, but not left in peace to ponder over its happy past. One morning, Fergus had a new sensation. A body had been found near the old house. An inquest was held and the jury decided to return the next day to continue their deliberations. When they came back, the house was empty. The body had been spirited away, and though the inquest dragged on from week to week, and the evidence pointed to one suspect after another, as it does in all good mystery stories, the fate of the body never was officially announced, though now it may be told.

*By Hugh Templin*

With such a history, it was not strange that the children of Fergus looked at the Kinnettes house with wide-eyed excitement. In groups of three or four they might go down in daylight and crawl in an open window to search for the blood-stains which were reputed to be visible on the floor, in spite of all efforts to wash them out. And on cold winter nights, young men and maidens, coming up the river bank on snowshoes looking for the slides down to the river which made Kinnettes popular in winter, would see a ghost slipping through the orchard, though some maintained it was only the snow drifting around the end of the old house, where the wind got a wide sweep from the west. One winter day, a boy, walking down the snowy river bank with his dog, slipped on the edge and caught at a young cedar to save himself. The tree came away in his hand, disclosing a small cave. Inside was a bag, so rotten that it fell apart when touched, disclosing two fancy stirrups and two old duelling pistols, made by "Bales, of Ipswich," and decorated with inlays of gold and silver. Whether the discovery adds another to the mysteries of Kinnettes, or clears up a disputed point is something for the individual reader to decide.

When Fergus grew in recent years till the demand for new houses could not be met, Kinnettes was fitted up once more. In 1933, it has come into prominence



## FERGUS

once again. A golfing enthusiast has given Fergus its first golf course. Nine holes are scattered over the historic acres of the Kinnettles farm, and the house itself is now the clubhouse where the golfers go for a bit of lunch and a chance to hold post-mortems on their golf games, rather than inquests over mysterious bodies.

\*     \*     \*

The Laird of Kinnettles came to Fergus in the dull years immediately following the Rebellion of 1837. He was doubly welcome, being a relative of two of the most noted families, and bringing with him a large supply of ready money, which was scarce that year. He came to the settlement on a splendid hunting horse, with two pistols stuck in his belt and two leather saddle-bags full of gold. Estimates as to the extent of his wealth vary considerably, those who let their imagination have free rein figuring it as high as half a million dollars, which is obviously absurd as that amount of money would have bought the entire settlement, improvements and all. At least, he came to Fergus a rich man.

The Laird married a beautiful wife, who came from the Southern States, and whose uncle was prominent in Galt in the early days. As their family grew, the old house, which was one of many occupied for a time by James Webster, was replaced by a fine, stone house, one of the largest in the county. At the front

of t  
yon  
with  
othe  
a pi  
Ferg  
past  
bov  
tell  
curl  
stor  
long

for a  
drea  
of hi  
of w  
uncle  
endo  
Surv  
town  
Terra  
and  
the b  
mill d  
just a

*By Hugh Templin*

of the house was a garden with lilacs and apple trees. Beyond that was the river, widening out for half a mile with little islands and a gently sloping bank on the other side of the river. The farm was cleared, except a piece of beech forest down by the bend of the stream. Fergus was over the hill, and a path led up to the village, past Westwood Farm, where the Fergussons lived. The boys and girls went to the log school, and any boy could tell you that the girls from Kinnettles, with their long curls, were the finest-looking in the school, though they stood in awe of their tall father, with his white hat and long tail coat and beautiful horses.

After Charles Allan sold his town lots in Fergus for a small fortune, the Laird of Kinnettles gave up his dreams of farming and decided to found a new village of his own, close to Fergus, it is true, but with plenty of water power and a beautiful situation. His wife's uncle from Galt, himself a mill-owner of experience, endorsed the project heartily. Action began at once. Surveyors came on the farm and staked out streets and town lots. Along the edge of the bank ran Cardigan Terrace, the fine residential part of Kinnettles village, and back of that were other streets, named in honor of the battles and the generals of the Crimean War. A mill dam was built on the river, and a bridge was begun just above it.

## FERGUS

The surveying done, large maps were lithographed and distributed where they would do the most good. The preparations for the big auction sale went ahead quickly, and expense was no hindrance. Barrels and barrels of whiskey came from the distillery, and other lighter beverages from the brewery, and wines were brought by the stage from Hamilton. Carriages met the buyers at the Guelph railway station and until they arrived, the local purchasers stood around and listened to the band, or talked themselves into a state of excitement over their cups of liquor.

It was the land boom and the artificial prosperity of 1855 that made the sale of lots at Kinnettles such a success, but it was the depression of the following years that killed this "paper village." The mill was not built, the instalments on the land could not be collected, the one or two little shacks that had gone up rotted away in time and left the big stone house all alone on the broad acres of Kinnettles.

As Fergus celebrated its incorporation as a village in 1858, and followed this up with a commemoration of the founding twenty-five years before, there were those who noted sadly that the old times were changing. No longer was water-power supreme, for the steam engine was challenging the water-wheel. Even the old tallow candle was being threatened by this new "coal

*By Hugh Templin*

oil" which was coming in, though it was expensive, and it was said to be dangerous. In many a family, none but the father dared to light the lamp, while the children huddled in the far corner, always expecting an explosion. But coal oil was making men rich. It had been found in large quantities in Pennsylvania, and in Fennisk Ilen township, in Lambton. Ontario was all excited, and some Fergus people actually moved to Oil Springs, which promised soon to be a metropolis, but which has a population in 1933 of about four hundred.

The search for more sources of coal oil became intense and traces of oil were reported here and there, even in Framosa township. In July, 1862, a wave of excitement spread over Fergus. Oil had been discovered in large quantities, and on the Kinnettes farm, just outside the corporation. It was not near the house, nor on that side of the river, but across on the other bank, on land owned by some men in Fergus. There had been rumors of oil in Fergus for three months, but the exact locality was kept a secret. Then the location leaked out. A spring near the river was so full of oil that the water was unfit for drinking and live stock would not touch it. There was even a chance that the owners might form a company and anybody in Fergus might have a chance to get rich when the coal oil was found.

On July 22nd, 1862, a meeting was held in the

## FERGUS

new St. Andrew's hotel. John Watt, the storekeeper, was the chairman, and in his address he repeated what the whole town knew by this time—that oil had been found at Kennettles. "The surface and other indications," he said, "were such as to leave no doubt of the existence of Coal Oil, but in what quantities can only be ascertained by drilling." Before that could be done a company would have to be formed and stock subscribed. Before they drilled, it might be well to hire an expert geologist simply to make assurance doubly sure.

The audience proved enthusiastic. The chairman was elected president of the new company and the other officers and directors were J. A. McMillan, vice president and Messrs. Ingwood Whyte, McInnes, Michie and Wyle, a list which includes some of the shrewdest business men in Fergus at the time.

The geologist who came to Fergus was R. W. Murphy, from Enniskillen, a man who had wide success at Oil Springs and who was familiar with conditions in Pennsylvania. He was enthusiastic and submitted quite a long report. It was certain there was Coal Oil (the words were spelled with capital letters in those days) at Kennettles. He gave four reasons, any two of which would probably have been sufficient. The rocks, as he pointed out, were very similar to those in the Pennsylvania oil regions; the springs were impregnated with

*By Hugh Templin*

oxide of iron, there were eruptions of gas in the river, and oil was actually visible on the surface of the water. He recommended drilling south of the river at Kinnettles and would stake his reputation on the result.

Fergus people talked and dreamed of Coal O.I. On Sundays, they walked down the river to Kinnettles. A year before, there had been a threat that the race track on the farm would be closed unless local people stopped racing their horses on it on Sundays, but now there was plenty of other excitement. The people looked at the spring and saw the oil making rainbow colors on the top of the water. They sat on the top of the bank and watched the bubbles rising in the water. In their boyhood days, they had thought the bubbles came from the crabs down among the stones, but now they marvelled at their own former ignorance.

The prospectus of the "Kinnettles Joint Stock Mining Company," printed in the columns of the British Constitution on August 8th, repeats many of the things the geologist had said, and ends with this encouraging assertion: "it may, therefore, be confidently stated that as an opportunity of investment, The Kinnettles Joint Stock Coal Oil Company offers advantages greatly superior to the average of commercial speculation."

Stock was subscribed, of course. The first part went to pay Mr. Murphy the geologist. Then a drill

## FERGUS

was set up and the work began. Even in Fergus, on a still day, the noise of the tap-tapping could be heard. By the middle of November, a depth of fifty feet had been reached and several times, small pockets of oil were struck. As the editor said "We have much pleasure in stating that the Kinnetles Oil Springs are likely to surpass the most sanguine expectations of the shareholders."

The drilling continued to a depth of a hundred and fifty feet before the funds ran out. Then the work stopped. Two and a half years later, when coal oil had reached a price of eighty cents a gallon in Fergus, an effort was made to revive the company, but without success. There were some who had more than a suspicion that the whole boom originated in the work of a practical joker, and some even went so far as to mention a foundryman who thought such things amusing. Sarcastic readers of to-day may think that the Fergus people of seventy years ago were easily excited—but down the river, near Kinnetles, there is a spring of water so oily that even the stock will not drink it yet, and any Sunday afternoon when the river is not frozen, little bubbles of air can be seen rising, here and there, from the bed of the Grand River.

The Laird of Kinnetles had nothing to do with the oil boom, though he probably held some shares in

*By Hugh Templin*

the company, for he was mixed up in most of the events around Fergus in those days. He was not so young now, though still far from old, and it was after he had spent more than thirty years, living on the edge of Fergus, that word got around one night that the owner of Kinnettles had been shot. Two old friends had driven him home in their cutter after the hotel had closed for the night. Not more than an hour later, he had reached Dr. Munro's house with a bad wound in his head. He had been shot, there was no doubt about it. The large pistol ball had struck him above the ear and had run along between the scalp and the bone and out again. The wound was not dangerous, but it was the nearest that Fergus had approached to a murder since that dreadful Sunday in October, 1856, when the young Cull boy had been murdered out in Garafraxa by the young fiend, McGarry, who was still in the penitentiary doing a life sentence.

The next morning a twenty-year old son of the Kinnettles household was arrested and tried before the assembled magistrates of Fergus, who heard only five witnesses before committing the boy to stand trial at the next assizes, the charge being "shooting with intent to kill." The assizes took place at Guelph less than a month later, but in that time, all the witnesses heard at Fergus had suffered an amazing loss of memory, with



## FERGUS

the exception of the Doctor, who recalled a few of the events of the night. The father knew only that when he went to look for something in a cupboard, the light went out and something hit him. The mother was sure that there wasn't a firearm in the house, and none of the other members of the family seemed to have heard much about the incident. The boy was not asked to say anything. It was not necessary. The jury took only a few minutes to bring in the obvious verdict of "Not Guilty."

The trial soon ceased to be a subject of discussion, for those were the days when Fergus was bending all his energies to get a railway. When the railway came, there was a great celebration and the new lacrosse game was played at the old race track at Kinnettles. A few years later, the big house was empty and the farm was rented to the man across the road. The family was scattered, some of them having gone north with the railway when the terminus was moved from Fergus. But even though the old house was empty it played a large part in the next sensation.

The winter of 1879 lingered on and on. Toward the end of April, Charles Kay, the new owner of Kinnettles, was walking in a small field down near the bush when he saw a dark bundle lying in a corner where a snowdrift had hidden it for months. Investigation

*By Hugh Templin*

showed that it was the body of a woman, and the Fergus coroner was notified. He gathered a jury along the main street and they went down to the farm. The body was taken to the old stone house and left till the next day, when witnesses would be heard and the inquest would really get under way. After school, a number of boys went down and had a look at the body, as it lay on a raised table in the woodshed of the house, and more than one man, with little else to do, walked to Kinnetles, but if any of them recognized the woman, they kept the knowledge to themselves.

On the next morning, a Thursday, some others went down to see if they could identify the body, that excuse being as good as any other. Opening the back door of the house, they found it empty. A thorough search failed to show a trace of any body, though many had seen it the previous day. The News-Record described the sensation in full, this being one paragraph: "The body was nowhere to be found and the fact of its having been stolen away during the night gave rise to the wildest rumors. A general belief prevailed that there had been foul play, and most people inclined to the opinion that the woman had been deliberately murdered or else had died unexpectedly in the hands of certain parties, who had secretly conveyed the body to the place where it was found."

## FERGUS

The inquest resumed that afternoon with the hall packed full of the living, but no trace of the dead body. After that, it adjourned from day to day and later, from week to week. Instead of establishing the facts, each early session of the inquest merely increased the crop of rumors. All the evidence at first tended to prove that the body was that of an English servant girl, but she was found alive in Guelph. Two men from Elora swore that when the ice went out, they saw the body floating down through the Elora Rocks, so a search was made down the stream, without result. Then the son of the Keeper of the House of Industry let the secret out. Though his father had refused to identify the woman, it was proved that she had been an inmate at the institution. There was evidence of harsh treatment, and it was shown that she had run away before Christmas and had not been found. The night was cold and stormy and she had not gone far before freezing.

The work of the inquest was half done, but there was still no body. A fresh collection of rumors came out each week. It was said that the girl came from East Luther and somebody wanted her out of the way, but the Luther girl also turned up in Guelph. Suspicion was even directed against a Fergus doctor, who had expressed a wish for a human body for dissection purposes, because he intended to teach some medical stu-

*By Hugh Templin*

dents during the summer, but he had made application through the proper channels, and had nothing to do with the disappearance.

After six or seven sessions, the inquest was concluded, but the body was never found. The secret was well kept, but now it can be told. A young man from near Fergus was attending medical college and he needed a skeleton, such things being hard to buy in those days. He enlisted the aid of a number of friends and they stole the body, bringing it into Fergus in the dead of night, and burying it in a manure pile behind a livery stable till the bones could be cleaned. Later, this young man rose to a high government office.

It is hard to imagine such things happening now. If the inquest did nothing else, it drew attention to the House of Industry. Efforts to reform conditions there were blocked for a time by county officials and county councillors, but in a few years, they were literally forced to take action. The next appointment resulted in a great change, and one much needed, for the keeper of that time had acknowledged that three female inmates had run away within a month, in the middle of winter, and no great effort had been made to find any of them.



**LOOKING UP THE RIVER IN 1865**

Bridge at "Craighead" in foreground and stave factory above it. The four churches in upper left, from left to right are St. James' Anglican, Methodist, St. Joseph's Roman Catholic and St. Andrew's Presbyterian. All have been rebuilt since then except St. Andrew's which was new in 1862.

**I**N  
lag  
show  
ahead  
was  
of th  
and  
two  
the  
being  
show  
the  
more  
son,  
from

build  
little  
chur  
same

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### THE DAYS OF THE FENIAN RAIDS

**I**N THE TEN YEARS after incorporation as a village, Fergus had grown rapidly. In 1861, the census showed Fergus with 1133 people and considerably ahead of Elora once more. By 1865, the population was around 1400, and this was a busy town. Most of the new buildings erected at that time were of stone, and Fergus was becoming a typically stone town. The two great elms still stood, one by the Catholic church, the other near Old Melville, and a few other trees were being planted. Fast-growing poplars were beginning to show against the sky-line, and along the river banks, the young cedars were slowly gaining a foothold once more. A few of the citizens, led by George D. Ferguson, were planting young maples and protecting them from the animals and the boys.

The new St. Andrew's church, was the finest building in town, on the finest site. Beside it stood the little stone school and then the roughcast Methodist church. The Roman Catholics had their chapel on the same location as at present, though changes have been

## FERGUS

made in the building, and the Anglicans had their little, plain, stone chapel a short distance to the west. Apart from the other churches, Old Melville stood by itself across the river. Beyond the Anglican church, toward the westward, there was nothing at all except farm land, with crooked rail fences and St. Andrew street, on top of the hill, was a poor, muddy trail of a road that led to Kinnetles. The road to Elora, which was used the most, was the one south of the river. Traffic from the main street followed the river down past the old stove factory and crossed a single-span wooden bridge near Old Hugh Black's stone house.

All the roads were not poor. Northward toward Arthur and southward toward Guelph, stretched the road built originally by the Guelph and Arthur Road Company, financed largely by Fergus capital. Known later as the Great Northern Road, it was a splendid gravel highway, with toll gates every four or five miles. The privilege of collecting tolls was let out by tender, the successful bidders putting up from \$800 to \$1100 a year for the privilege. Along this road, hundreds of teams passed through Fergus every week, carrying the produce of the north to the railway at Guelph or to the mills at Fergus. Hotels were numerous. Fergus had usually nine or ten of them, and there were others every few miles along the highway with stables for the teams.

Th  
on wat  
area.  
still the  
bank a  
driven  
grist m  
woollen  
account  
product  
Ale  
veranda  
posts, fo  
other po  
The first  
coming  
lots, and  
sidewalk  
large sto  
strips of  
windows  
sidewalk  
near the  
brought  
with a r  
the "Co

*By Hugh Templin*

The Fergus factories no longer depended entirely on water power, and so had spread out over a wider area. James Wilson's mills at the upper dam were still the largest, for he had three buildings on the north bank and a sawmill at the other end of the dam, all driven by water. There were now three tanneries, two grist mills, a stave and barrel factory, oatmeal mill and woollen mill, and they served a fairly local territory, on account of transportation difficulties, and they used the products of local farms entirely.

Along the main street, the stores had wooden verandahs out over the sidewalks, and rows of hitching posts, to be used for tying the horses. There were no other poles of any kind, except a few with signs on them. The first oil lamps for street illumination were just coming into use. High board fences hid the vacant lots, and samples of the goods for sale stood out on the sidewalks. There was no plate-glass as yet, but the large store windows were divided into smaller panes by strips of wood. At night, the merchants protected their windows by putting up screens of heavy wire. The sidewalks on St. Andrew street and some other streets near the centre of the village were made of planks. This brought complaints from some taxpayers, burdened with a rate of fourteen mills, and one of them wrote to the "Constitution," protesting against the laying of any



## FERGUS

more plank sidewalks, "which," as he pointed out, "only last two or three years at best, when good gravel walks are so much cheaper and, except for a few very tender or luxurious people, are just as good every way."

The custom of allowing hogs to run on the streets as so brought some protest, and one letter to the paper is worth quoting. A man, signing himself "Thistle," wrote: "It is positively most disgusting to meet the filthy brutes at every turn, and if old Fergus, first king of Scotland, after whom the village is named, was to appear on a sudden in our streets and see the hogs walking about as if the place belonged to them, I think he would soon make an end of the dirty stinking thieving brutes, or else he would destroy the name of Fergus altogether, and substitute 'Hogdom' or 'Pigville' in its place." Such protests finally brought action, and a new constable, Bullock by name, received strict orders to impound every hog wandering loose and to summon every owner into court. Being new on the job he took his advice literally, and some fifty owners appeared before the magistrate. Among the number were three members of the Council, who swore, like all the rest, that their hogs had just broken out, and they were out looking for them when the brutes were caught. Mr. Bullock does not seem to have been constable long.

Wild animals were still fairly plentiful. In some

*By Hugh Templin*

cold winters, wolves came close to Fergus, and when deer became scarce, farmers in northern Garafraxa lost quite a few sheep, though those nearer Fergus seldom had cause to complain. Oxen were still in use on many farms and as late as 1870, five yokes of oxen were sold at one monthly cattle fair in Fergus, the prices ranging from \$100 to \$140.

More variety was being introduced into the sports of Fergus in the Sixties. Skating suddenly became popular and about 1864, the ladies in Fergus began to skate, causing some of the older people to wonder what the girls would try next. Skating was done on the mill dam, and there was an organized skating club. About 1869, the first bicycle was brought to Fergus, but no person would risk his neck on it. Some wag suggested that the members of the Council take turns riding the old high-wheeler, charging admission to see the performance and using the money to help build the drill shed. Only one volunteered, and he said he would do it only on condition that the money raised should be spent in improving the street in front of his house, so the scheme fell through. In that same year, lacrosse was played in Fergus for the first time.

It wasn't only sports that were being invaded by the ladies. In August, 1866, John Ironside hired two girls as clerks in his dry goods store, and the newspaper

## FERGUS

suggested that they would probably be a terror to hard-fisted but bashful bachelors, who would not be able to resist their wiles. In those days, copper-toed shoes for the children were sold in the general stores and every grocery offered a collection of liquors. Prices of goods were seldom mentioned in the advertisements, but a local watchmaker offered "steel broaches at 25 cents to \$2 00," and claimed to have a wide collection set with Cairngorms and Peebles Stones.

The Grand River, besides being the chief source of power, was used every spring to bring down logs for the numerous sawmills from Grand Valley to Elora. In the middle Sixties, a Mr. Colbourne brought a large gang of French-Canadian lumbermen to the Grand River country for the first time. They spent the winters in the bush, felling large trees and squaring timbers. These were brought down the river in huge drives in the spring, taken over a special slide at Elora and down as far as Galt, where they were loaded on the train. A number of the workers were drowned, others thrilled the people of Fergus and Elora by their daring, though local lumbermen were used to breaking up log jams and looking after drives. Some of the Frenchmen rode logs down the chute at the Elora Falls, if tradition is to be credited. In one year five thousand sticks of square timber were taken out of Garafraxa, Amaranth and

Luther  
hardy

is int  
as ye

The

certainly  
ded u

Ham.  
have

as the  
will

people  
direct

ies an  
Guelph

dayh

the F

but I

cause

short  
easier  
tough  
frelan  
Great

*By Hugh Templin*

Luther, all hewn with the broad-axe in the hands of hardy woodsmen.

One more note about the customs of that period is interesting enough to be repeated here. There was, as yet, no railway into Fergus, and no standard time. The town bell, in St. Andrew's Church, was rung at certain regular hours and the whole community depended upon the accuracy of the old bell-ringer, William Hamilton, then over sixty-five years old. He seems to have thought out the principle of daylight-saving time, as the following item from the "Constitution" of 1865 will show "We are not generally considered a fast people in Fergus, but our time just now is a little in that direction. Our respected old bellman sets our mechanics and laborers to work half an hour before seven, Guelph time. He wants them to take advantage of the daylight—not a bad idea."

The great excitement of the time was caused by the Fenian Raids. The trouble originated in Ireland, but Irish sympathizers in the United States planned to cause trouble for Britain by invading Canada. It was shortly after the close of the Civil War, which made it easier for the Fenians to gather to their ranks some tough customers who cared little about the freedom of Ireland, and because of strained relations between Great Britain and the Northern States toward the end

## FERGUS

of the war, there is some reason to suspect that the illegal Fenian preparations for the invasion of Canada were rather winked at. Indeed, some American papers printed news of Fenian preparations and toward the end of 1865, the New York Herald stated that sixty-one Fenians were enrolled in Fergus and there were another hundred in sympathy with the movement, news which caused a good laugh when it reached Fergus.

In March, the Government called for volunteers, and the response was so great that only a small proportion could be taken. A raid was expected on St. Patrick's Day but all was quiet. In April, Fenians began to gather on the borders of Maine and some rifle companies were called out, including the Elora Company, which went to Chatham and returned on May 17th.

These constant alarms kept the nerves of the people rather on edge. The young men were drilling regularly out of doors, as there was no large building for them to use. Several public meetings were held, when plans for a home guard were discussed, but it was decided that there was no need for one. On one or two nights, the bridges were guarded, and when the April excitement was at its height, one man and wife took turns sitting up all night with a pistol, just in case there might be some Fergus Irishman in sympathy with the Fenians and ready to burn down the house of good, honest per-

*By Hugh Templin*

sons. On the Queen's Birthday, May 24th, the usual games were rather neglected and the Fergus and Elora Rifle Companies spent the day in manoeuvres.

On May 30th, the officers of the Fergus Company received word to be ready on short notice. The Fenians were gathering at Buffalo and at Port Huron and an invasion was expected at any moment. They had not long to wait. At eight o'clock, on the morning of Saturday, June 2nd, 1866, orders to call out the Fergus Company were received in the telegraph office, which was in the same building as the British Constitution office. The word spread quickly and the newspaper staff set up a small "Extra" and distributed it without charge, though the editor was home changing into his bottle-green uniform. Fifty others, all over the village, were just as busy and many volunteered to go, but could not be taken along. After falling in on the main street, a number of wagons were secured and the men were driven to Guelph. Before noon, they had met the Elora Company and were on board the train that was to take them to Sarnia.

On that same Saturday, the Fenians had crossed the Niagara River and advanced into the Peninsula. At Ridgeway, they met a small number of men from the Queen's Own Rifles and defeated them, and then began to retreat. The news caused fresh excitement through-

## F E R G U S

out Ontario. All night, some Fergus people sat around the telegraph office or walked the streets. On Sunday morning, news of the battle came to town and again the sole remaining compositor of the newspaper issued an "Extra."

The soldiers reached Sarnia on Saturday night and found the town wild with excitement, and with little to eat. Rifle companies were pouring in quickly and each company had to hunt its own food. Captain Lingwood and a number of Fergus soldiers found bread, cheese and coffee enough for all, but not without great effort. On Sunday, some of the militia went to church, taking their rifles with them. Others commenced to drill. As there had been months of preparation, the men were in excellent order, but they were woefully short of ammunition, and it is said that for over a week, they were almost helpless.

The raid from Buffalo had been quickly over, and things were quiet at Sarnia, for the most part. One day, General Sherman, of the United States Army, came down the river and he was invited to stop at Sarnia and inspect the militia, an invitation which he accepted. About the middle of June, some of the companies were sent home, but the Fergus men were among the three thousand retained at Sarnia. They had created a very favorable impression by their good behavior, and only

*By Hugh Templin*

once was it necessary to send a man to the guard house 'for being slightly intoxicated.'

The Fergus newspapers have always kept a high standard, and have recorded faithfully the life of the community, but the British Constitution, the sole paper of that time, fell down rather badly at the time of the Fenian Raids. Apart from the small "Extras," none of which have been preserved, there was little news of those hectic days of early June. On June 8th, no paper was printed and the issue of June 15th, was a poor affair. A short note explains the reason. The editors were both away. John Watt was at Sarnia and Hugh was at military school. Only one compositor was left, and until he secured help, he could not print a paper single-handed. When the soldiers returned on July 17th, the newspaper returned to normal, and column after column is given over to descriptions of the picnics in Elora and in Fergus, celebrating the safe return of the soldiers, and to the nasty argument which arose as to whether one of the officers had pocketed some money intended for the rank and file.

The names of the members of the Fergus Company are not given in full in any contemporary document I have seen, but the following list, in alphabetical order and without rank, is supplied by James Black Perry, the youngest commissioned officer of the Fergus Com-



## FERGUS

pany during the Fenian Raids, and the only one of the fifty who is still alive:

Robert and Samuel Agnew, John Berry, Philip Bowley, James Bryans, James Brownell, James Borland, John Beattie, William H Crowe, John Cardie, John Deans, Charles Demans, Thomas Gerrie, William Graham, Thomas Gamble, William Gow, James Graham, Thomas Hughes, John Hewett, Joseph Higginson, Samuel Jameson, Robert Jordan, Andrew Kerr, I Kirkfoot, Robert Lingwood, William Lingwood, Robert Laycock, John McMillan, James McMillan, Alexander Moffat, James Mennie, John McEwen, John McHavden, Hector McIntyre, John McNally, Alexander McEwen, G. H. McWilliams, James B Perry, John W Petrie, Alex Robertson, Robert Stewart, T Sherwood, John Templin, James Taylor, William Vickers, Hugh Wilson, John Watson, John Watt, James Wittup. Others who joined the company in July were Duncan Crawford, Joseph Wittup and Thomas Laughton.

Those who lived through later and greater wars may be inclined to regard the Fenian Raid as a mere skirmish. The number of men who enlisted was small, when compared to the number who joined the Canadian Expeditionary Force during the Great War, and there were no casualties. On the other hand, it should be remembered that there was a very real danger in Canada

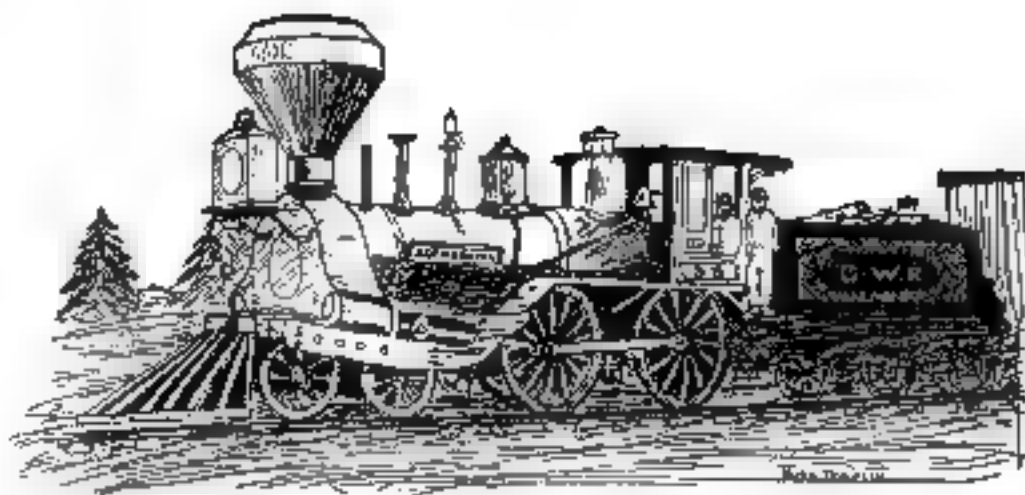
in 186  
of Fer  
T  
time,  
no bu  
Fenian  
street.  
govern  
consid  
provin  
and la  
dignifi  
later, a  
called  
have b  
of M.II  
but it  
archite  
utility

*By Hugh Templin*

in 1866 and never, at any other time during the history of Fergus, was Ontario invaded by a foreign foe.

There was one lasting result for Fergus. Up to that time, the soldiers had drilled outside, because there was no building large enough for them to use. After the Fenian Raids, the "drill shed" was built on St. Andrew street. It was erected by the municipality, not by the government, and Fergus people were proud of it, and considered it one of the best buildings of its kind in the province. It became the scene of local entertainments and large suppers and other social gatherings, and was dignified for a while by the name "opera house," and later, as the "Fergus armories," but to-day it is generally called the "town hall." Changes of one kind or another have been made, when Hon. Hugh Guthrie was Minister of Militia, he added an unfinished tower at one corner but it remains a huge room, with the same style of architecture as a bank barn. Our ancestors built for utility rather than beauty.





#### THE FIRST LOCOMOTIVE

The "Adam Brown," named after the President of the W. G. & B. Railway, was one of two locomotives used on the line. They belonged to the Great Western Railway which operated the local branch.

FE  
n  
into  
Ont  
on  
185  
and  
of  
as  
ing  
was

the  
run  
othe  
fore  
head  
the  
no  
befo

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### THE COMING OF THE RAILWAY

**F**ERGUS had a population of 1600 before it had a railway station, and before the first train pulled into the village. There had been railways in southern Ontario many years before that. Construction work on the Great Western Railway started in 1851 and by 1854, the lines extended from Hamilton to Niagara Falls and Windsor. In 1853, the first locomotive pulled out of Toronto on the Northern Railway, which was open as far as Aurora. The Grand Trunk commenced building its lines in the same year, but north of Guelph, there was no railway at all.

Many lines were planned, with Fergus as one of the important places on them. One of the first was to run from Toronto to Goderich, through Fergus, another was projected from Guelph to Owen Sound. Before 1860, a charter was obtained for a railway company headed by James Ross of Fergus, and at a ceremony on the hillside at Aboyne the "first sod" was turned, but no other work was done, the hard times of the years before Confederation killing the project.

## FERGUS

Fergus owes its first railway to the work of a group of Hamilton men, headed by Adam Brown. They received the whole-hearted assistance of some men from Fergus, particularly George D. Fergusson, James Wilson and Alexander Harvey, who subscribed generously and assisted in the promotion work. Adam Brown was a Scot and made many warm friends in Fergus when he began his work in 1867. He lived until 1926, and died within three months of his hundredth birthday. A short time before his death, he recalled his early efforts to promote the line and remembered that his first meeting here lasted till three o'clock in the morning, when a vote was taken and everybody present endorsed the scheme. Mr. Brown was so pleased that he sat up all the rest of the night with the telegraph operator, sending the news to every paper in the district.

The charter of the Wellington, Grey and Bruce Railway Company had been obtained from Parliament. According to its terms, actual work must begin not later than the 30th of June, 1867, the day before the birthday of the present Dominion of Canada. By that time, at least \$30,000 must be on deposit in the bank and \$100,000 subscribed to carry on the work. The great task of the directors was to raise this money. Of the \$30,000 in cash, over \$20,000 came from Hamilton, more than \$5,000 from Fergus and the balance from

*By Hugh Templin*

Elora. It will be noted that Guelph did not help in any way, instead the people of that town put every possible obstacle in the way, fearing that much of their trade would be cut off if the railway came to Elora and Fergus. Hamilton was ambitious to rival Toronto and was anxious to extend a network of railways throughout the province with Hamilton in the centre of the web. Toronto interests were backing a similar plan, and men from that city had their eyes on Fergus and Elora, but Adam Brown won the loyalty of Fergus and Toronto lost out, so far as Centre Wellington was concerned, the Toronto narrow-gauge railway being built later, on a line farther to the east, turning westward at Orangeville to Arthur.

The charter for the railway was to lapse at the end of June. On June 29th, 1867, actual work commenced at Fergus, when the directors turned the first sod. It was a holiday in Fergus. Down at "Mapleshade," the fine home of George D. Fergusson, there was a notable gathering at noon. Within the house, the Hamilton visitors were enjoying the meal. Outside in the yard, stood a small wheelbarrow of polished wood, with a pick and shovel, and the two sons of Mr Fergusson were carefully trying them out, while keeping a watch that no person came from the house to catch them. They found, to their dismay, that the shovel had made

## FERGUS

a scratch on the wheelbarrow, and left hurriedly, but if it was noticed, no person said anything to them.

Early in the afternoon, a procession formed in front of Whyte's hotel and marched to the field behind the Anglican church, along a street decorated with flags and bunting. At the head of the parade were George D. Fergusson with the highly polished wheelbarrow, James Wilson with the pick-axe and J. M. Fraser, of Elora, with the shovel. They were followed by the Fergus Band in a wagon drawn by four prancing horses, the Hamilton Delegation, the Fergus Rifle Company, the children from Public and Grammar Schools, and the citizens, two by two.

The spot for the ceremony had been chosen by Mr. Shanley, the chief surveyor. It was a beautiful, grassy spot overlooking the whole village. There a square was formed, with the militia keeping back the crowd. Mr. Fergusson called the crowd to order and Rev. George Macdonnell read a passage of scripture and prayed. Mr. Brown stood on a low platform and addressed the crowd in a rousing speech, which ended thus: "Let me say in conclusion that the gentlemen who have promoted this great enterprise will have their names inscribed in the gratitude of their children, while those who have done nothing to help it will soon be forgotten. (Hear, Hear, and laughter.) I occupy today a proud position

*By Hugh Templin*

when I think that all obstacles have been overcome, the enemy routed, his artillery silenced, his dead left upon the field, and we have met here today to fulfil the conditions of the charter by turning the first sod, as I now proceed to do." (Cheers).

After Rev. C. E. Thomson had prayed, Mr. Brown took the pick and shovel and lifted a sod into the wheel barrow and it was wheeled away by Mr. Fergusson. There was more cheering, for work on the railway had begun at last. After a few more speeches and the benediction by Rev. George Smellie, the guests met at the North American hotel at four o'clock, where Mr. Whyte had decorated the walls with mottoes and a painting which bore some remote resemblance to the gathering of the afternoon. Champagne was brought in and many toasts were drunk, though the speeches were short, for the train back to Hamilton left Guelph at 8 o'clock. Up the street, there was another jolly gathering, where the Band were enjoying the ten dollar donation from Mr. Brown, and drinking to the health of the President of the Wellington, Grey and Bruce Railway.

The turning of the first sod was one of the most spectacular scenes in the early history of the railway and it drew one of the largest crowds that had assembled here up to that time, but it had been preceded by many months of hard work, and it was more than two years



## FERGUS

later that the first passenger train pulled into Fergus. During the spring months, a series of meetings had been held throughout Wellington and farther north and money by-laws voted on. Most of them carried. Elora, Nichol and Garafraxa voted on by-laws to grant \$10,000 each. Fergus offered \$10,000 at least, but promised twice as much if the route was changed to come from the east side of Guelph to Fergus, thence to Elora and Alma, but the bribe was refused. Another fifty thousand was subscribed by individuals in Fergus.

When the by-laws were voted on, there was little opposition, except in Garafraxa. Only eight were opposed in Fergus and none in Elora, while Nichol voted by 137 to 20 to grant the money. In Garafraxa, the by-law was defeated by 156 to 62. The survey went ahead at once, and by the end of 1867, the line had been staked out as far as Mount Forest.

A year of uncertainty followed and no work was done in 1868. The plans of the Hamilton men were still being fought by the Toronto interests, and the negotiations with the Great Western were delayed. It was not until March, 1869, that word was received from the two Directors, who were in England, that an agreement with the Great Western had been arrived at, and the rails purchased. The agreement stipulated that the Wellington, Grey and Bruce Company should lay the

line and  
Great W  
stock and  
paying a  
chased by  
way from  
vice from  
of the Ha

The  
March, 18  
was excess  
in place.  
on record.  
threatened  
the end of  
on Septem  
when the

The  
the early  
ilton cont  
town, the  
Rifles and  
were willi  
was comp  
"a great, l  
Ambitious

*By Hugh Templin*

line and build stations and other buildings, and the Great Western would supply locomotives and rolling stock and operate the road in connection with their own, paying a percentage of income until the line was purchased by them. As the Great Western owned the railway from Hamilton to Guelph, this gave a through service from Fergus to Hamilton, and carried out the plans of the Hamilton merchants and promoters.

The building of the railway began at the end of March, 1869, but there were many delays. The autumn was excessively wet and embankments could not be held in place. The winter was one of the longest and coldest on record. Opposition arose in Elora, and a lawsuit was threatened if the bonus money was paid over. But by the end of June, 1870, the rails had reached Elora, and on September 13th, 1870, Fergus had another gala day when the first passenger train drew into the village.

The weather on the opening day was delightful. In the early morning, a train left Fergus to meet the Hamilton contingent at Guelph. As they drew near that town, they were met by the band of the Wellington Rifles and many of the leading citizens of Guelph, who were willing to show their approval, now that the line was completed without cost to themselves. At eleven "a great, long train of cars" arrived with the elite of the Ambitious City on board and proceeded to Fergus. At

## FERGUS

the Elora station, a great crowd had gathered and a short stop was made while the Reeve, J. M. Fraser, read an address. Then, augmented by such of the Elora people as could find a place, the train went on to Fergus.

The celebration that day gave the editor of the Fergus paper a chance to show what he could do in a descriptive way and he did not fall down. The story begins by saying that the ceremony "was not simply a success, but an overwhelming success," and then goes on to give the details. An hour's delay was caused by the photographers who had a great crowd to handle and who insisted that the locomotive be properly placed to one side, with the big arch, with its motto, "Onward to Prosperity," in the centre, and the two bands grouped on either side of the platform where the speakers stood, entirely surrounded by a sea of high hats. To the left were the ladies with their hoop skirts and parasols to keep off the sun, and to the right were the men with their long whiskers, and the boys, with their copper toed shoes. Those boys who had not been able to squeeze a way to the front had climbed up on the passenger cars, most of which looked like box cars with windows.

It was such a gathering that greeted Adam Brown as he stood up to receive the long address of welcome, read by Dr. Orton, to which Mr. Brown replied with eloquence and tact, reaching at times to almost poetical

*By Hugh Templin*

heights as he predicted that "the banks of your beautiful river will soon be musical with the hum of busy industry." There followed other addresses and the presentation of a pair of bronze statues to Mr. Brown. Then the crowds gathered in the new station, north of the tracks, where tables had been set, and the ladies of Fergus, under the direction of Mrs. Alexander Harvey, successfully fed twelve hundred people. This was a far larger number than had been anticipated, and more meats were hurriedly thrust into the bake-ovens downtown, along with the bear hams and other dainties. A slight delay in placing the people at the second table was the only inconvenience suffered, and Fergus people were in no critical mood. Indeed, they would have liked to have punched the gang from Guelph who complained that the Hamilton visitors were given places at the first table. Imagine! Guelph, of all places! But, as one Fergus man pointed out, Fergus would soon be larger than Guelph anyway, and it would only be a few years till the County Council would be thinking of having the county seat moved to Fergus, where it belonged by right of position.

There were speeches and speeches, by directors, mayors, editors and members of Parliament, though when Hon. John Sanfield McDonald was called on, it was found that he had left by special train for Toronto,

## FERGUS

where he had a pressing engagement. There was one other hitch, which caused some disturbance. One of the railway contractors got drunk and insisted on interrupting the speakers. He was put out of the station but some of the railway workers wouldn't have such an indignity to the "old boss" and they shoved him in again, where somebody very thoughtfully struck him over the head with a cane, and he was carried out unconscious, and caused no more trouble.

Those who didn't care for speeches went down to Kinnetles and played games, and in the evening, there was a grand ball in the "drill shed," then newly completed, and considered one of the finest in the province. About a hundred stayed from Hamilton, Guelph and Elora and they danced till midnight, when a "magnificent supper" was served in the hotel across the road, and the dancers, greatly refreshed thereby, were able to continue till four o'clock on Wednesday morning.

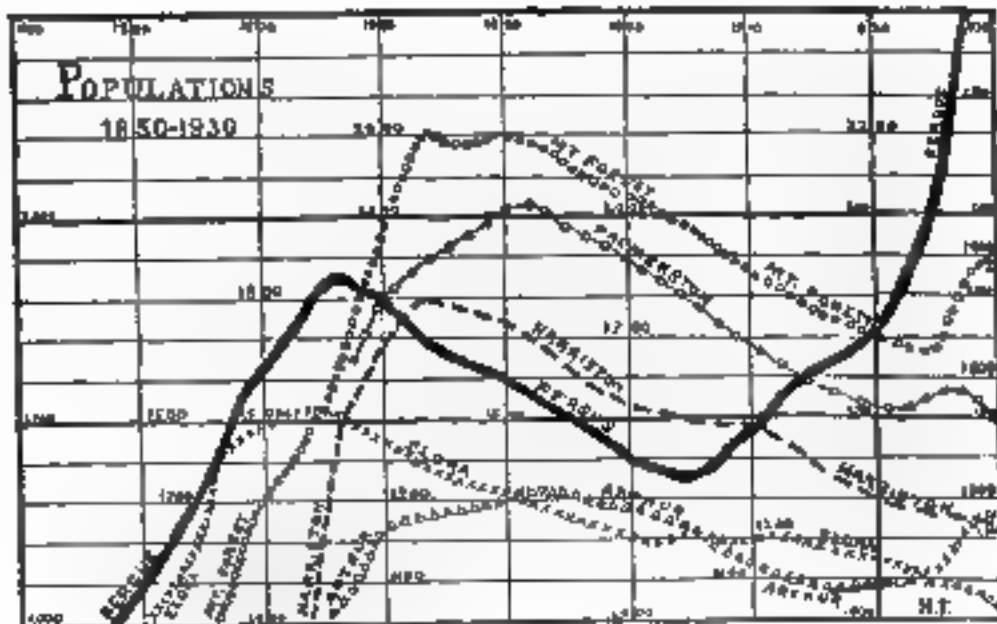
A week after the railway opened, the first excursion to Hamilton and Niagara Falls was held. The train was supposed to leave Fergus at five o'clock in the morning and round trip tickets cost only one dollar. Passengers were warned not to stand on the platforms, nor to get on or off while the train was in motion, and they were absolutely forbidden to ride on the roof. A large number left Fergus, delaying the start for some

time.  
excurs  
the oc  
the wa  
to the  
noise  
over h  
wrecke  
hurt.  
Niagar  
light e  
"Adam  
to back  
were b  
follow  
in railv

*By Hugh Templin*

time. At Elora, there were five more cars, filled with excursionists. The switchman was new to the job, and the occasion excited him, so that he turned the switch the wrong way, and the locomotive carried its train on to the siding and smashed into the standing cars. The noise of the collision was heard in downtown Elora, over half a mile away and several cars were badly wrecked, but by some good fortune, not a person was hurt. There was a delay of five hours and the stay at Niagara Falls was very brief. On the return trip, the light engine, which had been substituted for the heavy "Adam Brown," stuck on several of the grades and had to back down and take a run at them, but the passengers were brought back to Fergus safely at four o'clock the following morning. It was a thrilling first experience in railway travel for many of the passengers.





#### CHANGES IN POPULATION

Showing how Fergus and other towns grew and declined. The rapid growth between 1870 and 1880 was due to the coming of the railway. It was followed by a general decline for 30 years. Fergus is now growing again.

NE  
 1  
 Railv  
 been  
 a del  
 is co  
 mark  
 peop  
 you  
 be lo

came  
 beat  
 to sh  
 Ther  
 ther  
 self,  
 that  
 cour

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

### BOOM DAYS AND DEPRESSION

**N**EVER BEFORE had Fergus grown as it grew in 1870, the year that the Wellington, Grey and Bruce Railway first reached Fergus. Probably, there has not been a similar growth in any year since, though that is a debateable question, and, if the cost of new buildings is considered, certain recent years may eclipse the remarkable growth of that year, when the hopes of Fergus people were realized, and any resident could have told you that Fergus was soon to be a town, and it would not be long before it was a city.

The railway brought prosperity to Fergus, with it came new industries and more people. Some of them beat the railway to Fergus, so that they would be ready to share in the great change that it would bring about. There was no land boom throughout the suburbs, but there was a steady growth within the municipality itself, and it appeared to be a healthy, permanent growth that would make Fergus the metropolis of Wellington county

Even a summary of the buildings erected at that



## FERGUS

time is impressive. Although 1869 was considered a "hard times" year in Ontario, the railway was being built and Fergus was already preparing for greater things. James Wilson built a new sawmill across the dam from his woollen and flour mills, which he enlarged. To assure access to his sawmill, he built the first bridge over the Grand River near the Garafraxa townline. In the village itself, a planing mill, a fanning mill factory, several stores and twenty houses were erected. A new Congregational church was built on St. Patrick street, and the old Methodist Church was replaced by a fine, brick building.

That was but a forecast of far greater progress in 1870. Before the railway track had reached Fergus, a new station had been built, and also an engine house to take four locomotives. Down by the river a large stone factory was going up for the firm of Wilson, Bowman and Company, sewing machine manufacturers. Up at the spring beside the creek, Arthur C. Holland and Company built a new frame brewery on a stone foundation. Henry Lane built a planing mill and Matthew Anderson a blacksmith shop with four forges. One new hotel was built near the station and two downtown hotels were enlarged. James Argo, Charles Powney and A. Taylor built new stores or enlarged their old ones. Finally thirty houses were built, ranging in cost from little five

hunk  
Jame  
Henc  
tion.  
hosp  
facto  
more  
empl  
raw  
were  
Ferg  
to m  
were  
railw  
and f  
the r  
Guel  
Elora  
busy  
Ferg  
over  
assess  
thoug  
figure

*By Hugh Templin*

hundred dollar cottages to the fine stone houses of James Argo and William Grain, and the "mansion" of Henry Michie, all across the river from the business section. Two of them are still fine houses, the third is the hospital.

There were other reasons for optimism. Other factories were being built in the next year or two, and more houses went up. The industries were busy, and employing hundreds of workers, as well as using local raw materials and farm products. Sewing machines were shipped from Fergus, to England and Germany. Fergus oatmeal was going to Scotland and Fergus flour to many countries in Europe. The flour and oatmeal were packed in barrels from a Fergus factory. The railway was taking away the products of Fergus mills and factories, but it was also doing more. All the trade of the great north country, which had gone by teams to Guelph in previous years, now centred on Fergus and Elora, and the Owen Sound and Saugeen roads were busy with a great teaming trade. The population of Fergus was climbing each year until by 1876, it was over eighteen hundred, and a year or two later, the local assessor reported over two thousand people in Fergus, though there were those who doubted the truth of his figures at that time, there being an ulterior motive.

But while Fergus was going ahead so rapidly and

## FERGUS

the future was all colored with rosy tints, there were some small changes taking place, which were to alter the history, not only of Fergus, but of every small town in this part of Ontario. What happened to other towns is no concern of ours just now, but what happened to Fergus makes a tragic story.

The Hamilton men, who had promoted the railway, had won a glorious victory over their Toronto rivals. They had joined a new district to the trading centre at Hamilton. Having won one victory, they went on to others, winning bonuses from municipalities toward the north, finally extending the railway to the lake. The benefit to Hamilton can be guessed, but the market in Fergus was ruined. No longer did strings of teams and wagons come to Fergus from the north, for that would have been foolish with other railway stations so much nearer. Fergus stores lost trade and even the local customers developed a habit of slipping away to the city for some of their wants. Because the same thing was happening throughout Western Ontario, Hamilton and Toronto were growing and the railways were killing the smaller towns.

That does not explain adequately the fate of the early Fergus industries. Some of them, like the three tanneries, depended on local materials, particularly tan-bark and hides, and when these became scarce, the

*By Hugh Templin*

owners found their advantages slipping away. Some of the factories were victims of over-production. Sewing machines were as popular then as radios were a few years ago. Too many firms made them, and they produced too many machines. The Fergus factory had a peak production of two hundred machines a week, and in May, 1872, there were two thousand on hand, and it was necessary to lay off forty men. The price of sewing machines had also fallen to ten or twelve dollars each, and it was obvious that the sewing machine industry had killed itself.

It would seem that manufacturers had plenty of troubles in the Seventies, but the Fergus millers added to the burden by taking their differences to the courts, and splitting the people of Fergus into two factions, to their own loss and the detriment of the community. The owner of the upper mill claimed that the owner of the Broomfield mill had built his dam too high, and was encroaching on his water privilege. The courts upheld Mr. Wilson and Mr. Robertson was forced to lower his mill-dam fifteen inches. Mr. Wilson gave an oyster supper at the Wellington hotel, and there was a bonfire that night on the main street. Mr. Robertson's friends were not to be outdone, so they gave a banquet for him in the Fergus Arms hotel. Honors were even, but such competition didn't help to create unity in Fergus.

## FERGUS

There were other misfortunes. The boiler blew up in the stove factory, wrecking the building, though no lives were lost. The Ash, Mair Foundry Company could not carry on and the machinery was sold and removed from Fergus. A planing mill was burned, but it was rebuilt. The sewing machine factory finally closed down entirely. Fergus citizens, at a public meeting, decided to offer free building lots and a bonus of two thousand dollars to new industries, but without result, for other municipalities were making better offers.

As the railway extended toward the north, the need of a junction point became apparent, and Fergus appeared to be the logical place for it. The field, where the great Heatty factory now stands, seemed to have all the requirements, and it was close to the station. The negotiations leading to the purchase were under way when the Directors of the Wellington, Grey and Bruce received a far more attractive offer from the owner of some land on the edge of Minto township. This was another blow for Fergus. The new town of Palmerston quickly sprang up on the land bought in Minto, and so fast was its growth that it was never incorporated as a village, but became a town a few years after it was first surveyed.

Other changes were taking place, though it was years before their significance was noted. The first flood

*By Hugh Templin*

of serious proportions on the Grand River took place following heavy rains in the autumn of 1878, and in a few years, the spring freshets were starting to cause damage and losses. There had always been high water in the springtime, allowing the sawmill owners to bring their logs down from Luther and Amaranth, and the Indians to make their annual excursions down from the north to their reserves near Brantford. In April, 1869, the Irvine River went on a rampage and carried away five or six bridges. After that, each ten-year period saw three or four serious floods, often accompanied by ice jams.

The reasons are obvious enough now. Not only was the land being cleared of its timber for local mills and to supply square timber for Montreal firms, but a large number of farms in Luther had been sold to men who had never seen them. They proved to be low and swampy, and it was necessary to dig great, open ditches to drain off the water, since the sub-soil was a heavy clay that absorbed little moisture. As a result, the early spring rains and melting snow soon reached the river, and as the number of drains increased, the floods grew worse. Fergus suffered little at first, and rather enjoyed the yearly spectacle provided by the ice jams, but the townships had heavy losses as bridge after bridge went out, and larger ones had to be built. The early bridges

## FERGUS

were small, cheap structures and along the Grand, most of them had a centre pier, built of logs, a type of bridge that would not stand even the mildest of present-day freshets. Toward the end of the century, Fergus also began to feel the effects of the steadily rising floods. Gardens along the river, close to the water, disappeared. Twice the townline bridge floated away on the ice, and went over the dams, to sink at last in the deep holes.

That was not the only effect of the floods. Water that came down in spring could not come down in the summer, and the stream flow became uneven, spoiling the water-power, which had once been a great asset of the village. Fishing deteriorated and brook trout were no longer numerous, even in the Irvine, which had once teemed with them.

One of the saddest features of the life of Fergus in those days was the number of drownings in the river. For some years, they averaged more than one a year. Few of them occurred while swimming, but several happened while boys were skating and fell through holes in the ice. Once or twice, a would-be rescuer was also drowned. Many more of the victims were little children playing along the banks, or young men or women taking a short cut across booms of logs at one of the sawmills. But perhaps the largest group of all were drunk men who slipped over the edge, not always with

fatal  
stree  
Strug  
neck  
light  
but d

The  
forese  
the ce  
the ea  
packi  
buid  
house  
artists  
to set  
made  
the st  
the fo  
typical  
beauty  
"

Father  
village  
of tre  
ornam

*By Hugh Templin*

fatal consequences. One drunk fell in below the Tower street bridge during the dark hours of early morning. Struggling to his feet, he found the water up to his neck. For five hours, he called for help and after daylight was pulled out, thoroughly wet and quite sober, but otherwise not much the worse.

Fergus was becoming aware of its own ugliness. The beauty that had belonged to the district when the forest covered the hills had long ago disappeared. Even the cedar trees along the river were gone and many of the early stone houses were no more handsome than a packing box. With more ready money to spend, the builders of the early Seventies were erecting handsome houses, and some of the stone-masons of the time were artists at their trade. These fine houses required gardens to set them off, and about this time, the first attempt was made to lay out modern gardens. A few of these made the streets and vacant lots look worse than ever, and the following letter from the News-Record of 1872 is typical of the awakening consciousness of the need for beauty and adornment.

"Sir— I have often deplored that our Village Fathers were so destitute of taste, and that our fair village, so beautifully situated, should remain so barren of trees, without some action being taken for its ornamentation. The glorious Spring is once more upon



## FERGUS

us, and we all feel invigorated with its genial breezes, and now is the time to plant our streets with trees. Would it not add greatly to the appearance of our nice little town? The expense would be but trifling compared with the comfort and pleasure which we would receive. Take, for instance, our two squares—the one in front of the Free Kirk, and the other on the slope of the hill as you go up to the Auld Kirk, and plant them with Maple-Poplars, Balm of Gilead, Balsams and Shrubs, and I am sure in a few years it would so enhance the appearance of this place that the ratepayers would not grudge any expense incurred in this way. I am, etc., Beauty”

“Beauty’s” letter probably had little effect in itself, but it was a symptom of awakened consciousness. Within a few years, many maples were planted on the streets and later in the parks of Fergus. To-day, the traveller, approaching Fergus in the summer from any direction looks down upon a veritable forest, which hides most of the buildings, and Fergus gardens have a wide reputation for their beauty.

In its early days, Fergus had no crimes. The early settlers were a law-abiding race. Forty or fifty years later, when the village had grown and the character of the newcomers could no longer be closely scrutinized, there were more crimes in Fergus than at any time before or since. They stopped short of murder, so far as

the  
for  
but  
ted,  
of th  
an E  
whis  
river  
killed  
pleas  
twen  
very

and  
four  
vict  
claim  
The  
hard  
the fl  
wind  
was  
shop  
silver  
inclu  
hand

*By Hugh Templin*

the actual limits of the municipality were concerned, for Fergus has never had a murder by Fergus people, but all sorts of other crimes were committed or suspected, and there was a good deal of violence. The leniency of the magistrates causes some surprise. For instance, an Elora hotelkeeper sold three-quarters of a pint of whiskey to three young boys. They took it down the river and drank it, and one fell over the Rocks and was killed. The hotelkeeper, after a great deal of argument, pleaded guilty to selling to minors, and was fined twenty-five dollars and costs, which does not seem a very high price for a boy's life.

In Fergus there were a number of incendiary fires, and once three firemen were hurt, the Council offering four hundred dollars for information leading to the conviction of the guilty person, a reward which was never claimed. The only bank robbery took place in 1873. The branch of the Bank of Montreal, over Powney's hardware store, was looted at night. The matting from the floor was cut into strips, which were nailed over the windows to prevent light from shining out. The vault was broken open with tools stolen from a blacksmith shop, but the safe resisted the efforts to open it. Some silver was taken, and valuables stored there for safety, including an old gold watch of an odd shape, with a long handle. It had once belonged to Hon. Adam Fergusson.

## FERGUS

The constables finally enforced the pig by-law, but some persons considered that they and the magistrates were too lenient, and sometimes the young men took the law into their own hands. In 1873, Fergus had its only tar and feather case. A man was supposed to be abusing his wife and family, till she finally left him, taking the children with her. The husband tried several times to break into the house where she was, so one night, he was ridden on a rail to the village limits, and then coated with tar and feathers. The victim left town and it was not many months till he was in trouble in Mount Forest and was sent to the county jail. A year later, another mob burned a house where a woman and her daughter lived.

Other changes indicated that a new age was soon to arrive. The sensation caused by the first of the high-wheel bicycles has been described in another chapter. Fergus merchants decided a twelve-hour day was too long and agreed to close at six o'clock, instead of seven. Mrs. Kemp installed "a beautiful new soda fountain, second to none in the City of Toronto," at a cost of five hundred dollars. Over a hundred cows and more than that number of horses, as well as numerous sheep and hogs, had been shown in the Fergus assessment figures in the Sixties, but the number was decreasing. A new skating rink had been built, and lacrosse and baseball

*By Hugh Templin*

were added to the summer sports. The number of tavern licenses was cut by law from ten to six.

It was a circus that brought the first electric light to Fergus. In 1880, Pullman and Hamilton advertised their show in the News-Record. The greatest attraction was an arc lamp, thus described "It presents for the first time to the Canadian Public, and nowhere else to be seen, The Great Electric Light, itself an unparalleled exhibition, well worth going 100 miles to see. It cost \$30,000. Requires a 30 H P. engine, a 40 H P. boiler and miles of copper cable conductors. Its Planetary, Constellated Conflagration of Effulgence and Heaven-born Splendor exceeds the full power of 240,000 Gas Lights. It is exhibited both in the afternoon and evening" Accompanying the text was a rude wood-cut of a portable boiler, steam engine and huge arc light. The claims were broad, even without all the capital letters, but the Fergus people were pleased and the editor said "The electric light was all that was claimed for it", and that was quite a bit.

What neither the editor nor anyone suspected was that the coming of electricity was the beginning of the close of the old era when water-power was important, and men were ruined fighting for water rights in the courts of law.



**TOWER STREET ABOUT 1895**

Looking across the river toward  
 St. Andrew's Church on the hill.  
 Tower of two schools on left;  
 bridge in centre. Note the single  
 wire to arc lights, the windmill,  
 newly-planted trees, board side-  
 walks and narrow travelled road

T  
 Th  
 the  
 ter  
 dre  
 be  
 go  
 sor  
  
 the  
 Fe  
 loc  
 188  
 Ro  
 ya  
 lish  
 the  
 and  
 elec

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

### TOWARD THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

**T**HE END of the first half-century in the life of the Village found Fergus definitely on the down-grade. There was no celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the settlement. The high hopes held ten years before, were gone. It was apparent that the dream of a great industrial centre in Fergus could not be a reality, but the village was content to roll over and go to sleep again, perhaps in the hope of dreaming something else as pleasant.

It would not be fair to give the impression that there were no men who still trusted in the future of Fergus. There were some willing to invest their money locally and to start something new. For instance, in 1880, Dr. A. Groves built the fine stone block where the Royal Bank corner is now, and he enlarged it a few years later. The Doctor's next venture was the establishment of an electric light plant in the old tannery on the edge of the river, near the St. David street bridge, and for years he supplied Fergus and Elora with their electricity for street and domestic lighting. James D.

## FERGUS

Wilson built a large stone block on St. Andrew street, and opened an egg-preserving plant that was a success for twenty years or more. Others erected most of the present buildings in the business section, all of good, enduring stone, either from the Fergus quarries, or from the red stone hills by the Credit River.

Three years after the first train pulled into Fergus on the Wellington, Grey and Bruce Railway, there was talk of another railway line between Fergus and Toronto. It was said to have been planned first as a line to Arthur, but an Elora man took out a charter for a railway from Belfountain to Elora, and spoiled those other plans. There was also a proposal for a line from Guelph to Orangeville, which would not touch Fergus. In May, 1871, George Lawlaw and others were working definitely toward a line from Elora or Salem to the Forks of the Credit, and in July, parts of the county voted on a bonus by-law, which was defeated. A year later, another by-law, somewhat changed, was carried, with great majorities in Elora, Fergus and Orangeville and some opposition from the townships.

For several years, no progress was made, but in 1879 William Grant, of Fergus, surveyed the line and work went ahead. There were some untoward incidents before the line was built. A Garafraxa farmer defied the surveyors, keeping them at bay with a shot-gun till they

*By Hugh Templin*

outwitted him. An official of a township used some of the bonus money for his own purposes. He had a contract to supply ties, which were brought down the river, but already the Grand was becoming erratic, and a sudden fall in the water level stranded the ties and they could not be delivered. It was discovered that public money had been used to finance the purchase of the wood and the official went to jail. In December, 1879, the rails of the Credit Valley Railway reached Fergus and on January 16th, 1880, the first train from Toronto pulled into the station. There was no demonstration and no feasting or speeches.

The second railway helped Fergus. It brought competition and lower freight rates. It connected the village with Belwood, Orton, Hillsburg and Erin, and helped local trade to some extent. Later, when the Wellington, Grey and Bruce became part of the Grand Trunk and the Credit Valley was bought by the Canadian Pacific, Fergus had branches of the two great railways in Ontario, and to-day, it has connection with the two remaining transcontinental systems.

After the completion of the Credit Valley Railway, Fergus took part in no great enterprise for many years and entered upon no great public work of its own. The village was content to settle down to the life of a rural market centre, with a few industries, but depending for



## FERGUS

its wealth mainly on the stores. The census statistics tell a part of the story. In 1881, the enumerators found 1773 people in Fergus, ten years later, the number was 1548. By 1901, it was down to 1396, and about 1905, it reached the lowest ebb since before the Fenian Raids. The village was going downhill steadily and so were all the other towns and villages in Wellington county.

At the beginning of this chapter, there is a drawing of Tower street in 1875, which is typical of the village as it was forty years ago. On top of the hill stands St. Andrew's Church, built in 1862. Beside it are the towers of the two schools, built in the Sixties and Seventies. St. James' Anglican Church was being erected in 1895. Three of the old hotels stood on the main corners, but two of them were no longer licensed. Young trees on the street were protected by rough frames. Across the Grand River at Tower street, where the first bridge had been, there was then a spidery steel structure, which no ten ton truck would dare to cross to-day, and there was good reason for the signs at each end, with the warning, "Walk Your Horses." Board fences still hid the numerous vacant lots and board sidewalks adorned the streets near the centre of the village. The single wire on the poles along the left side of the street ran from one arc light to another. Across the street, the telephone poles bore a few wires. All the poles had tin signs tacked on

*By Hugh Templin*

them, advertising patent medicines, and more ambitious signs were painted on the fences. The travelled part of the street was narrow and uncleaned, but a watering cart did its best to keep down the dust, especially on the main street.

Most of the buildings on St. Andrew street, in the business part of Fergus, were the same as to-day. At least, they had the same stone walls. A very few had the new plate glass windows. About the end of the century, the first concrete sidewalks were laid on this street, replacing the planks which had done duty for so long. Sam Marshall, A. E. Nichols and Billy Fitzpatrick had canvas awnings, that could be let down at will, but most of the stores and hotels retained the old wooden verandahs out over the sidewalk, some of them two storeys high. A row of hitching posts stood in front of every store and the horses tied to them would pass the waiting hours by chewing the wood into fantastic shapes. The taller poles were protected by strips of iron wound round them in a spiral that defied the teeth of the horses. At night, illumination was provided by arc lights which swung from arms on two very tall poles, one in front of the Traders' Bank, and the other across from the North American hotel. All up and down the sidewalks were barrels of salt fish, sugar and flour, or piles of other groceries and merchandise. Some of the

## FERGUS

numerous retired farmers, or others with time on their hands, could usually be found perched on some of the barrels, discussing politics or other weighty subjects. A town pump stood at the Wellington Hotel corner, and a drinking fountain, supplied by the brewery spring, was close to the creek. The thirsty horses drank out of its large bowl, and thirsty people used the cup which dangled on an iron chain, usually swinging in the water of the horse-trough, for sanitary drinking fountains were still far in the future.

Fergus had some fine buildings. The Marshall block and the Groves block faced each other across the main corner. Most of the other stores were of native limestone, and fine examples of the masons' art. A few old wooden shacks disfigured the street and there were some vacant lots. Among the names prominent on the signs, and not already mentioned were Hugh Mitchell, James Argo, William Pattison, James Russell, Robert Steele, J. D. Wilson, A. Wyness, Thomson Bros. and Thomas Evans.

The merchants were the prosperous men in those days and they proved it by building a row of fine houses south of the river, each with plenty of ground and an orchard and garden, with ornamental trees and shrubs. Between Union Street and the Grand River stretched a row of grand houses and some particularly fine gardens.

On the  
Many  
Ha',  
merch  
the o  
mill o  
show  
the so  
Street

nearly  
stone  
busies  
the p  
Semp  
earlier  
water  
by G  
electri  
runni  
the st  
way  
made  
indust  
been  
house

*By Hugh Templin*

On the other side of Union street were a few more. Many of them bore their own names. Glencorse, Thistle Ha', Beisyde, Briarlea. Most of them were built by the merchants, but one was owned by a private banker and the one at the east end of the row was built by a saw-mill owner. Fergus of to-day would be hard pressed to show twelve such fine houses and grounds as those to the south of the river, along with a few on Garafraxa Street, in 1895.

The industries at the close of the century were not nearly so impressive. Wilson's mill, with its three large stone buildings, was still the largest and probably the busiest. Across the river, Hugh Black, a grandson of the pioneer, had his sawmill. At the other dam, Andrew Semple had the flour mill which stood on the site of the earliest grist mill. Across the river, and sharing the water power, was Beatty's foundry, an industry begun by George and Matthew Beatty. Dr. Groves had his electric light plant, generating electricity by steam, and running from dark until midnight. At twelve o'clock, the street lights went out and the late traveller found his way home as best he could. Some of the blacksmiths made wagons and sleighs, but that about completed the industries. The fate of most of the others has already been mentioned. Most of the buildings, which had housed tanneries, stave factories, distilleries and the

## F E R G U S

rest, were falling into ruin, and the brewery had gone heavenwards when the boiler exploded. That happened one night when the Royal Templars were holding a special prayer meeting, in an effort to cut down the liquor traffic in Fergus.

At the beginning of the present century, there was a period of building activity, which was of some importance. The largest of the new structures was Melville Church. The old stone church on Union street had become too small after more than half a century of use and a larger building was needed. The south corner of Tower and St. David streets was purchased and the stone building which stood on the site was removed. It was a very central location, but very much down in a hollow. The new church was of Credit Valley stone, and a fine structure. Mrs. George Smellie, widow of the first minister, lived to lay the corner stone of the new church. Old Melville, after standing unused for years, was made into a house, the thick stone walls being as good as ever.

Dr. Abraham Groves, who had already done much for Fergus, building one of the best business blocks and operating a flour mill and electric light plant, opened a hospital in Fergus in 1902. The large Michie house was altered and nurses' living quarters added. It was an excellent hospital for a village the size of Fergus and the

*By Hugh Templin*

Doctor's skill as a surgeon kept it always well filled. The training school was also popular and about one hundred and fifty nurses graduated from it, many of them taking important positions elsewhere. The Doctor named his institution "The Royal Alexandra Hospital," in honor of the Queen. For thirty years, he carried it on successfully and then presented it, with the complete equipment, to the Village of Fergus, which continues to operate it as "The Groves Memorial Hospital," but without the training school.

Toward the end of 1902, a new industry was begun on the edge of Fergus. A number of prominent farmers and town people formed a company for the dressing and packing of meat, commonly called the Fergus Cold Storage Company. A stone building was erected in Nichol, just across the townline, and beside the railway tracks. For about ten years, meat was prepared by this company for export, but changes in the trade to Great Britain ruined the business. Now the building is owned by the Superior Barn Equipment Company, whose most important products are steel stools, chairs and furniture.

In that same year, the News-Record was purchased by John C. Templin, who has owned it ever since. The new proprietor was an ardent amateur photographer, and at Christmas, 1902, the News-Record issued a large

## F E R G U S

Christmas number, profusely illustrated and full of historical information, much of it obtained from the works of A. D. Fernier. It gives an accurate picture of Fergus in the early years of the century. Among the chief advertisers then were Ramsay and Wyness, Thomas S. Armstrong, John Mennie, W. A. Jackson, J. A. Carlton, James Russell, William Watt, John Thomson, Templin's Carriage Works, S. Marshall, James Pattison, David Murray, R. M. Glen, R. Phillips, A. H. Foote, Mrs. Kemp and Armstrong Brothers.

The story of these years rather tends to drag, but it can hardly be otherwise. They were dull years. It was hard to arouse enthusiasm for anything in Fergus in those days. Some of those who tried, and failed, were rather disgusted. They were inclined to blame the retired farmers who formed a large proportion of the population of Fergus twenty five or thirty years ago. These men opposed any great municipal outlays, or anything else that might cost them money, but one can sympathize with their position. They had worked hard on their farms in the hope that their last days might be spent in ease and comfort. Accumulating enough to live on for the rest of their lives, they would move into Fergus, since life in town seemed to offer them what they wanted. Because many of them had no more than they needed, they opposed those things which increased

the  
tax  
was  
be s  
exp  
sett  
wh  
the  
beca  
lose  
wh  
days  
T R  
of th  
in th  
gethe  
out t  
from  
"spu  
along  
secti  
only  
cattle  
their  
but o

*By Hugh Templin*

the cost of living, particularly that which increased their taxes. They were content to have Fergus remain as it was when they moved to town, and it may truthfully be said that when they came, they had little reason to expect any great changes, for Fergus seemed to have settled down to a peaceful old age.

There was a flurry of excitement a few years later when the "spur line" was built. It required a vote of the people and the passing of a by-law, which carried because there was little danger that the village would lose. The venture was backed by the Grand Trunk, which was a powerful and profitable company in those days. The "spur line" was a long switch, from the G. T. R. station to Wilson's mill—practically from one end of the town to the other. The builders of the railways, in their wisdom, had kept the two stations close together on the hill to the west of Fergus, which turned out to be a good arrangement, though it was a long haul from downtown Fergus to the railway yards. So the "spur line" was built down through the old gravel pit, along St. Patrick street, a mere block from the business section, and finally to Wilson's mill, thus helping not only the oldest industry, but also coal yards, turn p and cattle shippers. For those who had a railway track at their front door, it was not so pleasant, but there was but one train a day and the majority desired it.





#### BADGE OF 153RD BATTALION

Recruited during the winter of 1915-1916, the 153rd Battalion was raised entirely in the county and one company trained at Fergus. It contained more soldiers from Fergus than any other single unit.

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

### THE TURN OF THE TIDE

THE STORY of Fergus for the first seventy-five years has now been sketched. There was no celebration to mark the anniversary of the founding, but the curlers were ready to mark their jubilee, and right well they did it with a great bonspiel that marked the end of seventy-five years of sport in Fergus, and the ushering in of a new era, that would see progress in more than sport.

The story of the last quarter century is harder to tell adequately and fairly, for the events are too recent to appear in their proper perspective. They include the awakening of Fergus, the banding together of the more progressive citizens in a Board of Trade, the sudden growth of industry, the Great War and its colossal efforts, a great building boom, the erection of a notable group of public buildings, and an enthusiasm for sport that has made Fergus almost unique among small towns.

It was back about 1910, probably a little earlier, that the turn of the tide came for Fergus. The sleeping giant began to stretch again. Changes that would have been impossible a few years earlier were suggested and

## FERGUS

carried out. Fergus did not hesitate to cross swords with its neighbors, or to battle for what it wanted. The fights did not always result in victories. For instance, when some new county buildings were to be erected, Fergus fought at the County Council to have them put in Fergus, or at least to have a plebiscite of the county taken, but Fergus lost out and Guelph retained the county seat.

At first, the people of Fergus did not realize their own strength, which was natural enough, when civic muscles had been so long unused. They looked for outside aid in their undertakings, and with some success. The Government gave Fergus a new post office on the corner where the first store had been, but where, in more recent years, there had been but a disreputable shack. Because it would have been fatal for a local candidate to favor Fergus above Elora, new post offices were built in both towns. Elora's building was finished first, and then it was discovered that the tower was too low, and Fergus secured an extra ten feet of tower—another victory over its neighbor in days when rivalry was keen.

Then there was the Tower Street bridge. It was built by the County, as a tablet at one side informs all who happen to see it. It must not be thought that it was a consolation prize because Fergus lost the county seat, for the County apparently had to replace the old steel

brid  
of  
the  
rive  
bee  
mor  
kind  
fast  
mud  
inst  
hou  
neg  
mur  
sho  
for  
wate  
pure  
was  
bor  
The  
and  
up  
wate  
thes

*By Hugh Templar*

bridge. The new one was a beautiful concrete arch, one of the first of its type in Ontario. It harmonized with the limestone banks and helped the appearance of the river, though, more recently, the form of the arch has been spoiled by hanging a large pipe from it.

The Carnegie Library was also built with outside money. Andrew Carnegie, the Scottish-American millionaire, tried to give away his accumulated wealth as fast as possible and built libraries wherever he found a municipality willing to bind itself to keep up such an institution. Fergus was more than willing, so the old house beside the creek was torn down and Andrew Carnegie's Free Library was built right in the centre of the municipality.

It was the installation of waterworks that really showed Fergus people that they could do great things for themselves. Before that, the inhabitants drank the water out of wells and springs, some of them none too pure, though each householder knew that his own well was excellent, while doubting the purity of his neighbor's. For fire protection, there was a steam fire engine. The water supply came from the Grand River, and here and there were places where the fire engine could back up against a log and its suction hose would reach the water. In winter, the constable made regular trips to these places, chopping holes in the ice. Back on the

## FERGUS

hills, there were a few cisterns which held a limited supply of the precious water.

The waterworks by-law was not carried till after a stern battle, but it received a good majority. It is said that, when voting day came, even the member of the Council who had opposed the expenditure, voted for the by-law. The work of installation followed, with mains on the streets, and a pumping station over near the hospital. The water came from artesian wells, a pure supply of very hard drinking water, but almost useless for washing purposes, for which reason most Fergus houses retain an old-fashioned cistern.

Hydro-electric power was the next addition to the public utilities. The Niagara system had grown up rapidly, the nearest lines being at Guelph. Officials of the Commission made rather rash promises to Fergus, and another by-law carried, and Fergus and Elora were linked to the Niagara system. Again the old argument arose about whether the line should come to Elora first, or to Fergus, but a compromise was reached when the poles were brought to Aboyne and the line divided into two branches, one to each town, though there were a few who feared that the electricity would not know which direction it should go. The system was officially opened in Fergus, when Grandma Foote, who was then ninety-nine years old, turned a switch, bringing electri-

*By Hugh Templin*

cal energy for twenty-four hours each day, and opened the way for electric irons, washing machines and motors for industrial and home use.

A loan from the municipality to Beatty Brothers was a great help toward making Fergus an industrial centre once more. The firm was the one established by George and Matthew Beatty, and had been in operation in Fergus in a small way for more than thirty-five years. In 1910, the old factory near the river was too small and it was necessary to build another factory, or to go to some other place, where a suitable building might be bought.

An appeal was made to the Fergus Council for a loan, such grants to industries being legal at that time. The by-law was submitted to the ratepayers in 1911, and carried. Fergus never made a more paying investment. During that summer, a splendid factory was erected in the field near the C. P. R. station, which had formerly contained a race-track and which, forty years before, had nearly become the railway yards. In January of the following year the new plant was in operation, as well as the old one, and nearly a hundred employees were making hay tools and barn equipment.

The growth of Beatty Bros. Limited in the last twenty years has been one of the features of Canadian industry. New lines of goods were frequently added

## FERGUS

and competing firms were bought out. Almost every year saw additions to the Fergus factory and more men and girls employed. No other one factor has contributed as much toward the growth of Fergus. Now the factory built in 1911, and then considered large, is all required for office space and experimental work, and the hay tools and barn equipment form a very small part of the firms' total output.

Another loan was made to James Wilson. He was the son of the founder of the Monkland Mills and had carried on the milling business. During the war, he sold it to a large cereal company and retired, but bought it back again later. The mill was burned in one of the worst fires that Fergus ever had, but Mr. Wilson rebuilt it larger than ever, the Council granting him a loan.

These two loans in aid of industry having accomplished their purpose, Fergus was in a mood to continue these aids to industry, but finally the people were nipped. After the War, some promoters came to Fergus with a scheme to start a dye works. They soon stirred up plenty of enthusiasm locally, though a few were doubtful about trusting total strangers. They were outvoted and Fergus gave fifteen thousand to start a dye company in the old sewing machine factory. The result was sad, but probably Fergus needed the experience. After all, the money was not wholly lost. In the building

*By Hugh Templin*

which had been fitted up, a basket factory was opened a few years later by C. J. M. Steele, and has probably been of greater benefit to Fergus than the dye works could ever have been.

The building of the Beatty factory near the two railway stations brought other changes. In the earliest times, the houses naturally clustered around the industries at the Falls, later Fergus spread toward the east, Wilson's mill probably being a contributing factor. As a result, there were few houses west of the corner where the bowling green is to-day, except a row of "balloons" which had been built along the edge of the hill during an earlier period of prosperity. Part of the land along St. Andrew street belonged to the municipality, the field having been bought for the gravel it contained. This suddenly became a desirable area for building and the need for new houses was great. The Fergus Council decided to assist by offering a building lot for one dollar to anyone who would erect a house worth at least one thousand dollars. Members of the Board of Trade vied with each other in offering to build houses and Fergus contractors had several busy summers. Thirty-five or forty houses went up in some years. After St. Andrew street was solidly built up, Kitchener avenue was the first new street to be opened, facing the C. N. R. yards. Others followed till the hill was dotted with houses.



## FERGUS

all of them substantial and most of them attractive in appearance. As the demand grew, other vacant land increased in value and new houses were sprinkled all over Fergus.

Fergus was just beginning to enjoy the new state of affairs when the Great War came suddenly, to turn the energies of the people in a new direction. They were not slow to respond, though Canadians hardly knew what war meant. Within two weeks of the break between Britain and Germany the first contingent of volunteers had left Fergus amid scenes of patriotic fervor. Some of them were born in England or Scotland but about half were young native Canadians. That first small group of volunteers left Fergus on Saturday August 15th, 1914, headed toward Valcartier. They were John Macdonald, James Catchpole, David Gregson, William Thompson, Rex Perry, Fred King, James Ritchie and Frank Wilson. In the same week, Norman Macdonnell joined a Toronto regiment and Argo Craig signed up with the Engineers at Kingston. The others went to the First Battalion. It was not many months till David Gregson had fallen, the first casualty among the Fergus boys.

The story of Fergus in the years from 1914 to 1918 is similar to the story of every other town and city in Canada. It would require a book to tell it fully, and it

*By Hugh Templin*

is hard to say how much to tell and what to leave out. Some day the records of enlistments, casualties and deaths will be completed in full. Each year makes it a little harder to compile, but the work may soon be done. At present, I have not even a list of those who fell in France, Belgium and on other fronts, and without that, it is hard to tell the story of the War as it affected the little town of Fergus. For that reason, the story of the war-time efforts will be told very briefly here.

The boys for the First Contingent were followed in November by those who went to join the Eighteenth Battalion of the Second Contingent. There were four from Fergus, Everard Imrie, Ernest Headley, Bert Keruish and James Edmiston. A thousand people gathered at the station when they went away and the ministers and others spoke.

After that, it is harder to keep track of the enlistments, for no longer were there distinct calls, but rather, a steady need for more men and more boys. At first, the average Fergus citizen thought it rather foolish for all these young people to be going away to camp, when the war would certainly be over before they reached Europe. Our ignorance about war in those days was rather appalling, as we look back on it now.

It was, perhaps, the news of the first casualties among our own Fergus boys, that awakened the average

## FERGUS

Fergus resident to what the war actually meant, and caused the young, native-born Fergus boys to enlist in large numbers. The war had been going on for more than a year by that time, and members of the first three contingents had reached France. Toward the end of 1915, Lieut-Col. J. J. Craig, of Fergus, had received orders to recruit a battalion in North Wellington. This was the 153rd Battalion, the one most intimately connected with the life of Fergus. During the winter, one company was billeted and drilled in town and added to its numbers weekly. It was found that one Battalion was too great an allotment for half the county, so the 153rd became the Wellington Battalion. By the end of February, the Fergus Company was sixty strong, and the whole Battalion had ten times that many.

Others went to join the artillery at Guelph, or enlisted in various other branches of the service where they happened to be living for a time. Those attending college were almost sure to write home, sooner or later that they had enlisted. Never again did so many go in one company as those who left with the 153rd Battalion in 1916, but there were individual enlistments till Conscription came into force near the end of the war, then there were very few left to be taken.

The enlistments marked only one phase of the war. The women were busy, knitting, writing letters, prepar-

*By Hugh Templin*

ing food, and generally working every spare minute. The Women's Patriotic League had no busier branch than the one in Fergus. The older men had less to do, except when some campaign was put on to raise money for war purposes or to gather subscriptions for Victory Loans. Then they gave freely and worked willingly, and Fergus always exceeded its objectives. One day, before the Wellington Battalion left Canada, the colors were deposited in St. Andrew's Church, in honor of Lieut.-Col. R. T. Pritchard, of Fergus, who was the officer in command when the Battalion went overseas. In the last two "Victory Loan" campaigns, Fergus subscribed over half a million dollars.

When the war ended in November, 1918, Fergus went wild with joy, as did much of the rest of the world. Indeed, there were two celebrations, a false rumor being circulated a few days before the armistice was signed. There were parades, bonfires, noises, singing and general rejoicing, in which Fergus and Elora shared, and the fact that many would never come back and the handicap imposed by a deadly epidemic of influenza that swept the world at that time, did not dim the rejoicing.





#### MELVILLE HALL AND CHURCH

Melville Hall is the most recent addition to the church buildings of Fergus. When Wesley and Melville Churches united, the old Sunday School was too small and this fine building was erected, to be used by church societies and organizations.

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

### FERGUS AFTER THE WAR

THE STORY of Fergus since 1918, when the Armistice was signed and the surviving soldiers came back from the War, is a pleasant one and easily told. There has been steady progress for fifteen years and an even growth, which has been checked in the last two years by world conditions. There has been no considerable loss of population, but rather, there is good reason to believe that Fergus is ready to go ahead again very soon. What a difference from the ups and downs of other days!

Assessment figures do not tell the whole story, but they do show the growth in population. At first, this was gradual, and then it rose to fifty a year and after 1920, it was about a hundred a year. By 1925, it was over two thousand and by 1930, well over twenty-five hundred. In the old days, such a population would have resulted in a rush to be incorporated as a town, but Fergus has never bothered. It is still the Village of Fergus. With the towns of long ago shrinking until a few of them have no more than a thousand people, any prestige that went with the name of "Town" has pretty

## FERGUS

well disappeared. Besides, there are certain advantages in remaining a village—larger government grants, less cumbersome and less costly municipal government, and the like. Though no longer predominantly Scottish in racial origin, Fergus maintains the old traditions and prefers a saving in cash to the empty honor of a name.

The growing population brought new problems. Old public buildings and public utilities were taxed beyond their capacity, and changes and extensions were necessary. Fergus already had its new post office and its new library, and could no longer depend on outside aid. As a result, the municipality and private individuals have embarked on a building programme unequalled in the history of Fergus, and probably unmatched by most towns of its size in Ontario.

The rapid growth soon showed that the schools were too small. The buildings were old, anyway, and it was obviously only a matter of time till both would have to be rebuilt. There was some discussion as to which would be built first. The Public School was the older building of the two, but laboratory and other equipment in the High School was hopelessly out-of-date. Because of the number of pupils from nearby townships and towns coming to Fergus, the County would have to share the cost of a new High School, so it was built. The by-law did not carry the first time,

*By Hugh Templin*

and there was trouble later about the choice of a site. Before it had been settled, about half the members of the Board of Education had been disqualified and a new election held. There were two offers of free sites and other inducements by the rival groups, but finally, the trouble was settled, and the new Fergus High School was built beside the highway, on the hill above Victoria Park. It was opened on September 20th, 1928, and it was fondly hoped that it would be large enough for a generation at least. In less than five years, it was taxed to capacity, partly because of the continued growth of Fergus, partly because more scholars were taking work in the higher forms, but mainly because more county pupils were being attracted to Fergus by the more modern facilities.

When the new High School was opened, both of the old buildings were taken over by the Public School, and classes which had been scattered in other buildings were brought together once more. A new building is still urgently needed, as plans for building were checked by the slump of 1929. Some progress has been made. The former Methodist Church building and grounds now belong to the Board of Education and this will provide sufficient room for a new and up-to-date building, which will inevitably come as soon as money is more plentiful.



## FERGUS

Facilities for sports were also inadequate, and Fergus had become keenly interested in both summer and winter games. The old rink, on Tower street, which had seen so many exciting skating races and thousands of curling games, was entirely inadequate for hockey. A new arena was built on the site of the old brewery, over the spring, which had been discovered on the day when the founders of Fergus first viewed the locality. The arena cost over thirty thousand dollars, and was built by a stock company. It provided hockey ice, seating for some fifteen hundred people and separate quarters for the curlers. As it happened, it was finished at a bad time for arenas. After two years with cold winters, there followed two more winters that were so mild that ice was uncertain, hockey schedules disrupted, and operations carried on at a loss. Many rinks failed and were taken over by municipalities, or closed entirely. The Fergus arena was saved from any such fate. By a lucky chance, lacrosse was moved indoors before the first mild winter came. Fergus had good teams, one of them in the senior series. Greater crowds attended the senior lacrosse games than ever went to hockey matches in Fergus, and the revenue not only paid the winter losses, but enabled further improvements to be made. To-day, Fergus has better facilities for indoor lacrosse than any place in Ontario, except the Maple Leaf Gardens in

*By Hugh Templin*

Toronto, now no longer used for lacrosse of any kind.

Acquatic sports were made possible for Fergus when Beatty Bros. Limited erected a public swimming pool near the St. David street bridge. With heated water and splendidly equipped dressing rooms, it is open for six months of the year, and there are few better outdoor pools in the country. With competent instruction given free of charge, Fergus is developing a group of young swimmers and divers who are already beginning to win outside competitions. Better than that, the health of the children is better, and for three years, there has not been a drowning in the Grand River.

Another noted public building was added to the list when Melville Hall was built. It contains the portion of Melville Church devoted to various educational and kindred activities. After Church Union, Melville Presbyterian and Wesley Methodist congregations joined under one roof. Melville Church was adequate, but the Sunday School was not. The new building, with its equipment, probably cost a hundred thousand dollars, and it is one of the most complete to be found anywhere in Canada. Among the facilities are a gymnasium, parlor, chapel, kindergarten, kitchens, and a large assembly hall, and there are few days when the building is not in use for meetings of some kind.

Many other facilities for amusement and sports

## FERGUS

have been provided. S. Fardella's Grand Theatre was built in the same year as the arena, and provides comfortable seating for about five hundred. It is the only theatre showing talking pictures in the district, and the attractive building is a great contrast to the old hotel stables that stood for nearly eighty years in a prominent place on the main street. Victoria Park has been greatly improved, the work providing something for unemployed men in lean years. Other parks are being cared for and lighted tennis courts have been added to the other facilities for games.

The original waterworks system did not make provision for any such growth in population as has taken place, and many changes have been made, with additions to the mains, new reservoirs and pumping equipment. Within the last two years, a sewerage system has been added to the public utilities. The Hydro system has also been widely extended and street lighting improved. In 1925, the first streets were paved at a cost of one hundred thousand dollars. Since then, much other paving has been done, and paved highways now stretch the full length of the old highway from Hamilton to Ower Sound. A second concrete arch was thrown across the Grand River at St. David street when part of the paving was done.

Much of the credit for the present position of the

*By Hugh Templin*

village is due to the type of men who control the industries and otherwise hold positions of influence. They are a temperate, progressive, upright, courageous group, making their influence felt. Not only that, but increasing opportunities have made it possible for the sons and daughters of Fergus families to find a living here. Up to twenty years ago, most of the ambitious young people went to college and never returned, or sought work where jobs were more plentiful. It was a sad loss for Fergus, but it was one which affects most small communities. Now, most of them can stay and help to build up Fergus, and some of those who left years ago have found their way back again. Along the main street, it is by no means unusual to find the second generation in business, and the directors of Beatty Bros. Limited are mainly young men from town who joined the firm when it was small, and grew up with it.

No description of Fergus, as it is at present, would be complete without some mention of the recent gain in beauty. The natural situation of Fergus is good, but no attempt was made in the early days to improve on the opportunities offered. The planting of the first trees has been mentioned. Others have been added, year by year, till Fergus, when seen from a height, looks like a forest, with maples predominating. A recent epidemic of ornamental gardening has been the next step till

## FERGUS

flowers are grown everywhere, even on the railings of the Tower Street bridge. The popularity of rock gardening provided a further stimulus, because Fergus had the natural rock and the slopes that are necessary to make this style effective. The rock gardens of Fergus are famous, five or six thousand people a year sign the visitors' book in the garden along the river bank, owned by the editor of the News-Record. Many others are well worth a visit and more are being planned. Fergus is also well known as a town where good roses are grown.

None of these things are very important in themselves, but the total is impressive. While most other small towns in Ontario have stood still and then slipped gradually downhill, content to hold what was built in the past, Fergus has started ahead again. While other towns look back with pride on boom days long past, Fergus is living in the present and looking to the future.

It was a proud municipality that welcomed visitors by the thousands to its Centennial celebration in August, 1933. Former residents to the number of about fifteen hundred answered the call of the Scotch invitations and registered at the secretary's office. Along streets decorated with Scotch thistles in tubs, a memorable procession, a mile and a half long, passed on Civic Holiday morning. There were sports in wide variety including games played by champions of other days, tattoos and

*By Hugh Templin*

plays, dances and picnics. But the most memorable features were probably the historical ones. Glimpses of past history appeared in the parade. A fireplace, built with stones from pioneer houses and industries, was unveiled and stands in Union Square. A museum with hundreds of pioneer implements and household articles drew many to the old Wesley building. These things gave some hint of pioneer life, but the crowning achievement was the historical pageant, performed first in the park, and repeated in the arena. It was a masterpiece of ingenuity and hard work, all planned in Fergus and all carried out by Fergus people. Miss Janie Craig was in charge of arrangements and L. R. Salisbury looked after the staging, but there were some two hundred performers, directors of scenes, and other workers, and a choir directed by Mrs. Codling, to provide the old songs and incidental music. Many of the stories in this book were perfectly staged, and others were added, going back to the times when only faires, flowers and animals lived in the forests along the Grand River. On two of the days, the Centennial programme attracted more than ten thousand visitors to Fergus.

The end of the first hundred years finds Fergus in a healthy, hopeful frame of mind. The good start received in 1833 and 1834 counted for something, even after a century. Summing it up in one sentence, Fergus

## FERGUS

is a desirable place to live, with most of the luxuries and conveniences usually found only in much larger places, but with the beauty, airiness and true democracy which only a rural village can boast.

It is dangerous to make predictions as to the future. The story in this book has shown that at times when prospects seemed brightest, the slump might come. The people of those other days guessed wrong, and though we may learn something from their failures, there is no reason to suppose that we are wiser than they were.

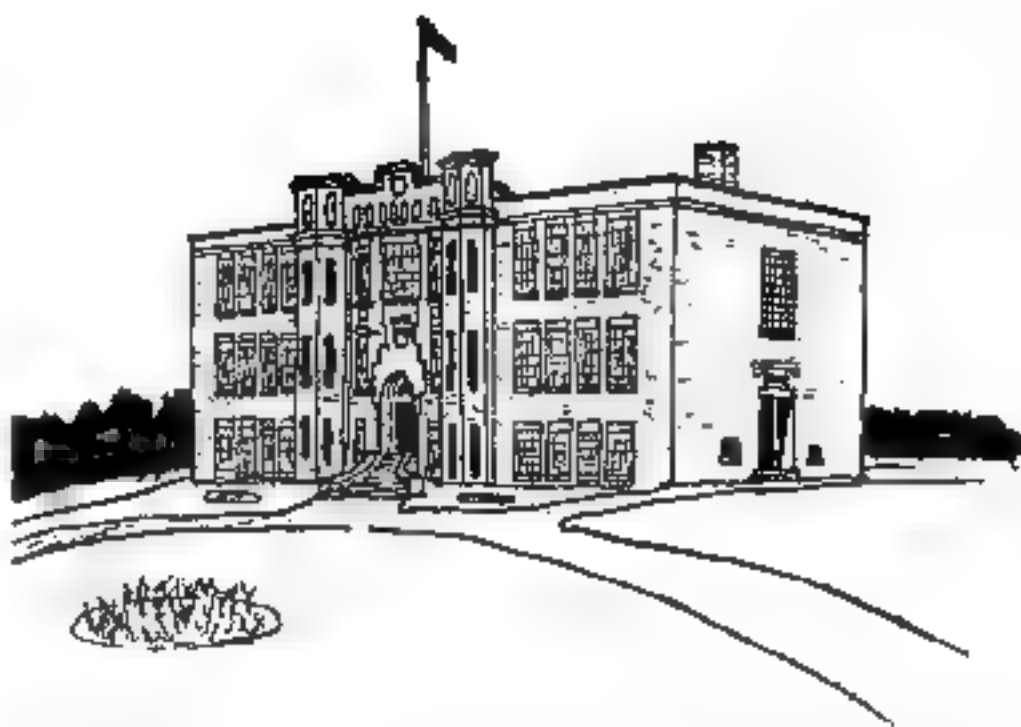
The next great work in which Fergus will have a part will probably be the restoration of the Grand River and the control of its flow until it approximates that of fifty years ago. Already plans are laid for a great dam twelve miles up the river from Fergus, to hold the excess water in March and April and release it gradually all summer, as needed. Fergus men had something to do with the making of the plans, and the advantages to Fergus are obvious. In time, the Commission to be appointed by the municipalities will probably carry out quite extensive work along the river and its tributaries, and the Grand River will become a mecca for holiday parties, if fishing can be restored in part and the natural beauties of the valley made known. Such a co-operative enterprise linking Fergus with the municipalities down the river will probably help in other ways.

*By Hugh Templin*

When a new Public School is built, no more public buildings will be needed for some time. Just what direction the energies of Fergus people will take then is not apparent as yet. It would be a pity to let them lie idle. More streets will be paved, the beauties of the river bank may be exploited, other changes will bring other needs, not now considered necessary, such as civic airports or vocational schools. Who can tell?







#### THE FERGIS HIGH SCHOOL

Opened in September, 1928, the present Fergus High School is typical of the public buildings erected in Fergus during recent years. Fergus has been noted for its schools and teachers for almost a century, since the first log school was opened in 1836.

## CHAPTER NINETEEN

### SCHOOLS, CHURCHES AND SOCIETIES

**T**HOUGH THE STORY of Fergus has been completed in preceding chapters, it seems necessary to add a little more about some of the institutions, industries and men, who have helped to build up the community. Because these details would have spoiled the continuity of the main theme, they have been placed in chapters by themselves.

Take the schools, for instance. Something has been said of the old Log School, where James McQueen taught strictly and well, making an impression on the boys and girls that lasted throughout their lives. The school was opened at the beginning of 1836 and James McQueen taught for twenty-two years. A few years before the end of his term of office, the original log school was torn down and a stone school was built, and for nearly eighty years, it has been a part of the Fergus Public School, and is still in use.

Besides the common school, there were several private schools in early times, for school regulations in those days were not so strict, and attendance at the

## FERGUS

public or common schools was not compulsory. Among these teachers of private schools were Gilbert Todd, Miss Tyler and Miss Unsworth. Until 1865, there was no grammar school in Fergus. Mr. McQueen taught the subjects up to matriculation for those who desired them and some subjects were taught in these "independent" schools. For instance, in 1863, Miss Tyler advertised that she taught "English, French, fancy work, plain sewing, etc." In those days, girl graduates were not headed toward the professions; the height of their ambitions, or the desire of their parents, was that they might be useful wives, with some culture.

James McQueen's successor was A. M. Cosby and some of the other early teachers were James Tasker, Mr. Kidd, Miss Vining, Miss Foster, Miss Slater, Mr. Eastman, Mr. McLaughlin, Mr. Unsworth, Mrs. Bryce, Miss Philp (1874), Miss Graves, Miss McTaggart and Miss McPherson. James A. Young was head master in 1876 and D. B. Hyatt succeeded him. T. S. Webster joined the staff in 1883. Salaries were so low that they seem ludicrous today. Some of the ladies received no more than one hundred and fifty to two hundred dollars. A salary of three hundred dollars was high, though by 1873, the head master, Mr. Gray, had been raised to three hundred and sixty dollars. Many of the men used this position as a stepping stone to some profession and

*By Hugh Templin*

saved enough to start them on their way through the university.

The Fergus Grammar School was opened in April, 1865. Before that, most of those wishing a secondary education went to Elora or Galt. The Fergus school was held in the Temperance Hall, a stone building still standing on St. Andrew street at Maiden Lane. The teacher was Silas Minor, A.B., and his salary was four hundred dollars a year, exclusive of fees. The average attendance the first year was fourteen. Both boys and girls were admitted. Six years later, the name was changed to the Fergus High School and fees were abolished. J. E. Burgess was head master at the time.

Even before the Grammar School was started, it became apparent that a new Public School would have to be built. There were three classes, all over-crowded. Two of them were in the stone school, with the primary room in a rented building near the river, originally used as a firemen's hall. In 1865, the Board adopted elaborate plans, for those days. The editor of the time scornfully refers to them as "a palatial heap." Quarrels arose at the Board meetings and the plans were dropped. A new set of plans was drawn up early in 1866 by Mr. Moffat. They were as simple as possible, with four rooms in a box-like structure with no cellar and the ground floor too low. The estimated cost was only

## FERGUS

\$3,500 and a requisition was made to the Council for the money. The Council raised a good deal of objection but in those days, the Board of Education had the power to levy money directly if the Council refused to do so. If the Board made a levy the entire \$3,500 would have to be raised in one year, and the prospect rather appalled the people, so the Council was brought to time. The building was done in 1866, William Gardner having the contract for the mason work and J. Moffat for the wood-work. As the building began to go up, some of the flaws in the plan became apparent and the Board wanted the mason contractor to make some changes. This he refused to do unless he was paid extra, and the frugal Board would not agree, with the result that three generations of children and teachers suffered more or less.

With the new Public School built and the Grammar School now housed in one room of the old stone school, the Board members probably thought their troubles over for a time, but in 1873 they heard some more bad news. A new law required all high schools to have two teachers. This caused more discussion and many were in favor of abolishing the Grammar School entirely. The truth seems to be that the school had not been a great success. The attendance had not grown. In 1873, John Butler was the teacher and in 1874, he was succeeded by John Thomson, both college graduates, but the

*By Hugh Templin*

attendance had shrunk to ten. Obviously, there was not work for two masters and the Board dodged the issue by appointing Mr Thomson master of the combined Public and High Schools, with the second master teaching the senior pupils of the Public School.

A new teacher brought the solution of the problem. He was Edward Poole, who became headmaster in 1875 and who was nominally head of both schools. He was a very successful teacher and each month, some new scholars were added to the roll, till, by March of 1876, there were forty-two pupils at the Grammar School. In 1877, Miss Shaw was appointed assistant, followed by Thomas Chisholm and A. W. Wright. With an attendance of over sixty, it was apparent that new quarters were badly needed for the High School. The salary of the head master was \$800, with a government grant of \$400 and a county grant of \$300. Up to the time of Mr. Poole, many Fergus boys were going out of town to school, and in one year, five were attending school in Galt, where Dr. Tassie had a great reputation.

Early in 1878, an attempt was made to secure a site for a new High School, but in May, the Board decided, with one exception, to build a new High School on the same grounds as the Public School, and to use the old stone school as part of the building. The estimated cost was \$2,200, and after tenders had been let

## F E R G U S

to Charles Young for mason work, R. Couse, carpenter, Charles Agnew, plastering, E. Phelan, painting, and D. Ramore, tin and iron work, it was found that the total was \$2,799, which seems like close figuring.

The "magnificent new stone building" was opened on Friday, November 22nd, 1878. Rev. George Smelle, the oldest trustee, declared the building open and contrasted it with the old log school, which had one room about fifteen by twenty-five feet. The school children, four hundred in number, marched to the drill shed, where refreshments were served, and other ministers spoke. In the evening, Professor Goldwin Smith spoke in the town hall, followed by William Johnston, principal of the Agricultural College at Guelph, and Mr. Buchan, High School inspector.

Other principals in the Public School have been T. S. Webster, John H. Dick, David Mitchell, Roy Cassie, C. E. Hollingsworth and John Fielding. Perhaps no principal ever had so much influence on the children of Fergus as did Miss Jane Philp, for some forty-five years the teacher of the primary room. She is remembered by literally hundreds of men and women, who learned from her not only their first lessons in reading and writing, but also more advanced lessons in manners and deportment.

The present High School was built in 1928 at a

*By Hugh Templin*

cost of approximately one hundred thousand dollars. A little has been said about the difficulties which arose before the building was begun. After these were settled, the work went smoothly. S. B. Coon and Son, of Toronto, were the architects and G. H. Thomas and Son, of Galt, the contractors. In keeping with the traditions of Fergus, the building was made of native stone. The official opening ceremony took place on September 20th, 1928, with Rev. Canon Cody, former Minister of Education, as the guest of honor. The principal at that time was Dr. Henry Bowers, who later went to the Ottawa Normal School and was succeeded by Hugh Malcolm Campbell, the present principal.

On the evening of the opening day, a great crowd gathered and the auditorium of the new school would not hold half of them. The speeches were continued, but the feature that drew most of the audience was the presentation of a portrait in oils of Peter Perry, greatest of all headmasters of the Fergus High School. Mr. Perry himself was present to speak on that occasion, as he had been present on the closing day in the old school, when he taught his last lesson to a great crowd. He died a few years later, deeply mourned by the graduates he had taught in the old school.

Fergus also has a Separate School. At first, it was held in the church, but in 1875, a frame school was built



## FERGUS

on the lot behind the church, and later it was bricked over, and is still in use. Miss Clancy is the present teacher.

•     •     •

Much has been said about the two Presbyterian churches, which took a considerable part in the early history of Fergus, but the other congregations have not been mentioned. Much more might also be said about St. Andrew's and Melville in later years, so the church history of Fergus will be briefly sketched, beginning about 1847, when there were but the two churches in the community.

After the Disruption, and the building of Old Melville, the congregation of St. Andrew's was left small and weak, but A. D. Fordyce, senior, by his energy and perseverance gradually built it up again. In October, 1847, Rev. Hugh Mair took charge. He was an eloquent and popular speaker and during his six and a half years in Fergus, made a lasting impression on the community. His death occurred while on a visit to the United States in November, 1854. Rev. George Macdonnell, of Waterdown, came in the following May and remained until 1869. During his ministry, the present manse was built in 1856 and the new St. Andrew's Church in 1862. Away back in 1816, St. Andrew's Church, as a part of the Established Church, received a grant of land from

*By Hugh Templin*

the Crown. It was in Garafraxa, not far from Fergus, and it was sold to provide a large portion of the cost of the new church building. The present church was opened on December 28th, 1862. Rev. George Macdonnell preached in the morning, Rev. George Smellie of Melville Church in the afternoon, and Rev. John Hogg of Guelph in the evening. The architect was David Murray, of Guelph.

After Mr. Macdonnell left, there was an interval of almost two years without a minister, when things did not go very well with the congregation. The details need not be given here. Rev. J. B. Mullan, of Woodstock, was sent by the Synod to straighten matters out, and he succeeded admirably, remaining for many years as the minister. Since then, Rev. J. A. Brown, Rev. W. L. Nichol and Rev. A. O. McDonald have occupied the pulpit of St. Andrew's Church. At the time of the vote on Church Union, St. Andrew's remained true to its "Auld Kirk" traditions and stayed with the Presbyterian Church.

Old Melville Church was opened in 1847. When the wings had been added at a later date, the total cost was slightly over five thousand dollars. Rev. George Smellie continued as minister until 1888, when he retired after a pastorate of forty-five years in Fergus. He died on November 14th, 1896. During his ministry, the

## FERGUS

congregation of Melville had grown considerably. He had a parish which extended originally from Fergus to Georgian Bay, and made several missionary journeys, founding new congregations wherever he found enough Scottish people. Nearer home, three congregations owe their beginning to members from Melville Church. As early as 1853, sixty Elora members formed their own Chalmer's Church, with the blessing of the Kirk Session of Melville. St. John's Church, Belwood, was another off-shoot, and some Cumnock members helped to form a church there.

During his last few years in the pulpit, Dr. Smellie was assisted by Rev. J. C. Tolmie. Rev. R. M. Craig was minister for six years. In 1895, Rev. J. H. MacVicar, a former missionary to China, came to Melville, and he was followed by Rev. R. W. Craw, who was minister until after Melville and Wesley churches united.

On June 8th, 1899, Mrs. George Smellie laid the corner-stone of the present Melville Church. On May 13th, 1900, the new building was opened. Many of the churches for miles around closed for the day, and the crowd filled the town hall as well as the church. Rev. J. H. MacVicar was in charge of the service in the church, his father, Principal MacVicar of the Presbyterian College, Montreal, preaching while in the town hall, Rev. Robert Johnston, of London, was the speaker. The cost

*By Hugh Templin*

of the church, without furnishings, was \$17,000. The rise in the cost of building since that time can be estimated, when it is realized that Melville Hall, built a few years ago as an addition to the church, cost about four times as much as the original church and Sunday school combined.

The first Methodist services were held in Fergus about 1850 and the first church was built in 1852. It was a rough-cast structure on St. George street, beside the school. There was no minister settled here in those days and services were rather irregular, ministers coming from Guelph, and later from Elora. Rev. A. Milliken came to Fergus in 1861, the first of a long succession of ministers down to 1926, when the Methodist Church, then known as Wesley Church, united with Melville. The following list is fairly complete, but there may be some inaccuracies, and certain initials are missing: Revs. R. Brewster, J. G. Laird, Robert Fowler, H. McLean, T. I. Wilkinson, R. H. Waddell, James Ross, M. Swann, Broley, J. Colling, Dr. Gifford, W. W. Sparling, Jackson Harvey, Hamilton, C. Deacon, T. L. Kerruish, H. J. Harnwell, N. Hurlbut, R. S. E. Large. Mr. Large became one of the first ministers of the United Church, he and Rev. R. W. Craw continuing a joint pastorate for some months, and Mr. Large continuing the balance of his term in Fergus.

## FERGUS

The old Wesleyan Methodist Church was enlarged in 1868, but both village and congregation were growing so rapidly that a new brick church was built in 1869 and opened on January 13th, 1870. The speaker was the famous pulpit orator of the day, Rev. W. Morley Punshon. The new church had a seating capacity for four hundred and fifty, but seven hundred packed in for that first service, and the collections totalled \$478. Rev. R. Brewster was the minister at the time and Mr. Stafford, of Elora, presided at the melodeon. The cost of the church was about \$4,500.

Since 1926, the Wesley Church building has not been used as a church. The seating and equipment were sold and the building stands empty. Until Melville Hall was completed, some of the United Church Sunday school classes used the basement. The building was then sold to the Board of Education, and will be torn down when a new Public School is built. In the meantime, the Boy Scouts use it for their meetings and once in a while, as during Centennial week, it houses some other attraction.

To some extent, history repeated itself in Fergus in 1925, when votes on Church Union were taken in the Presbyterian churches in Fergus. The proposal was to unite the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational Churches throughout Canada. The idea had been

*By Hugh Templin*

long debated at the gatherings of the various denominations, and everything seemed to be going smoothly, but an influential minority of the Presbyterians held out. As a result, votes were taken in all Presbyterian churches. The old issue which had split St. Andrew's Church in 1845 arose again, but in 1925, legislation was obtained, definitely stating that the majority in each church would retain the property. In Fergus, Melville Church voted, by a large majority, in favor of joining the United Church, St. Andrew's, by an even larger proportion, favored staying with "the auld kirk." As a result of these differences of opinion, some of the minority left each church.

Away back in 1875, the two branches of the Presbyterian Church united in Canada, but the two congregations in Fergus never became one. After the new Church Union of 1925, Melville and Wesley congregations made no such error. They voted on actual union Melville favoring it by 177 to 44, and Wesley by 201 to 54. On March 31st, the two congregations joined for the first time, using Melville Church as their building, and the union has been a happy one.

Those early citizens of Fergus who belonged to the Church of England found it necessary to go to Elora to church until 1858. St. John's Church on the borders of Elora, was completed in 1842 and Rev. J. Mockridge

## FERGUS

was the first settled rector two years later. In 1851, the Fergus Anglicans bought some lots at the corner of St. Patrick and Breadalbane streets, but it was not until 1858, that the Chapel of St. James was built in Fergus on these same lots. It was a plain stone building, with three windows on each side and a wooden porch in front. For ten years, Rev. C. E. Thompson, of Elora, included Fergus in his parish, but in 1868, Rev. A. D. Cooper became the first rector in Fergus. For the list of his successors, I am indebted to the historical pamphlet issued by St. James' Church at its seventy fifth anniversary in October, 1933. They are Revs. H. D. Cooper, E. G. Fessenden, R. C. Caswall, James Morton, F. Du Vernet, Thomas Smith, R. A. Robinson, W. H. H. Sparks, R. A. Hiltz, C. H. E. Smith, Canon Scudamore, F. C. Walling, A. B. Higginson, John Douglas, W. G. Luxton and T. N. Lowe. During the past year, Fergus and Elora have been joined in one parish again.

The present Church of St. James, the Apostle, was built in 1895, while Rev. F. Du Vernet was the rector. It is a handsome, red brick building at the east corner of St. Patrick and Tower streets.

Few records seem to be available regarding the early history of St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church. The first church was built in 1857 on an excellent site, donated by George D. Fergusson. It was a rough-cast

*By Hugh Templin*

building and can be seen in the drawing on page 166. It was on a small, but steep hill facing on St. Patrick street, and had a square tower in front, surmounted by a cross. During the busy year, 1869, the present church was built, a stone structure, considerably larger than the old church and much more ornamental. The tower was surmounted by a tapering steeple, eighty feet high, but this was blown down during a severe storm on Good Friday, 1913. Later, it was rebuilt with a flat top, surmounted by a cross. The present church was opened on Sunday, August 1st, 1869, with Bishop Farrell, of Hamilton officiating.

The surroundings of St. Joseph's Church always created something of a problem and spoiled the appearance of the church itself. The hill in front was gravelly and grew little but moss, and to one side was the deep hole, where the old gravel pit had been. Within the last few years, these difficulties have been successfully overcome. The gravel pit has been filled in, and the hill in front of the church transformed into an excellent rock garden, with stone steps winding up to the front door.

There has never been a resident priest in Fergus, the church here and St. Mary's Church, Elora, having alternate services on Sunday mornings, and the priest living in Elora. Rev. Fathers Demortier, Owens, Lee, Lillis and Lennon seem to have been here prior to 1890.



## FERGUS

Rev. Father Philip Cosgrove was in Elora and Fergus for about twenty-five years and he was succeeded by Rev. Father Sullivan, the present priest.

It is hard enough to obtain the history of some of the Fergus churches still surviving, but it seems quite impossible to learn much about those that passed out of existence years ago. The Congregational Church in Fergus was originally an off-shoot from Speedside, a strong "missionary" church, and the ministers at Fergus also preached at Speedside. In the year 1869, which saw so much church building in Fergus, a new Congregational Church was built on St. Patrick street, near the centre of the village. It was a frame structure which cost \$300, of which \$500 was subscribed ahead of time and another \$175 by a great bazaar and soiree. Rev. Mr. Barker was the minister at that time and seems to have remained for almost twenty years. Rev. Charles Duff was another minister, noted not only for his own ability, but also because his son, Lyman P. Duff, rose to the head of the Supreme Court in Canada. The Congregational Church in Fergus continued till early in the present century, and when it closed, the remaining members anticipated Church Union by joining other Fergus churches.

The Plymouth Brethren have never had more than a handful of members in Fergus, but their history

*By Hugh Templin*

dates back sixty years. In 1873, they rented the Fireman's Hall, which had been used as a schoolroom for a few years. The rent was \$18 a year, which was later raised to \$25 a year. A frame meeting house was built on the corner of St. David and St. Patrick streets, and is still in use. Within the last few years, another body, calling themselves the adherents of the "Four Square Gospel" have held meetings in Fergus, and at present use the upstairs of the old building which started out as a temperance hall and has had many vicissitudes since.

Only a few words can be said about some of the older societies and similar organizations. The first of these was the St. Andrew's Society, founded on St. Andrew's night, November 30th, 1834. In 1867, the English residents formed a St. George's Society. Both are long extinct. A Y. M. C. A. was started in the Sixties and was quite active in the early Seventies, holding religious meetings, lectures and thanksgiving services. The Sons of Temperance had a large membership in early times and did much to combat the heavy drinking of those days. Mercer Masonic Lodge was founded on April 13th, 1876.

The Horticultural Society is one of the oldest existing organizations. It was formed on March 30th, 1857 with A. D. Ferrier as first president and shows were held in July and September of that year. There were fifty

## FERGUS

one members and \$54 was paid in prize money. John Watt and A. Cadenhead were other officers. The beginning of the Agricultural Society is harder to trace, on account of the many names and apparent overlapping of societies, and the way the shows wandered around from place to place. The Gore Agricultural Society was holding shows as early as 1835, and the Wellington District Society in 1842. Another division occurred when the North Riding Show was held alternately in Fergus and Elora in the Sixties and by 1869, it had taken the name of the Centre Wellington Fair, a name which remained until two years ago, when it was changed to the Wellington County Fair. For years, the shows were held alternately in Fergus and Elora till Victoria Park in Fergus, with its agricultural hall in the old rink, provided better quarters than Elora could produce, so a division was made. Since then Elora has held a Spring Horse Show, and Fergus a Fall Fair. After the new Fergus arena was built, the old rink was torn down and a sheet-metal building put up for fair purposes. Since that time, the grounds have been completely renovated. There used to be an East Garafraxa Agricultural Society with a show at Marsville, and the West Garafraxa Society, with shows at Belwood, survived until well into the present century.

## CHAPTER TWENTY

### SPORTS IN FERGUS

**B**EFORE FERGUS had a church, a school or an industry of any kind, the first sporting organization was formed, and after almost a hundred years, it is still alive and thriving. Surely that is a record to be proud of, and it is one which will be fittingly celebrated early in 1934, when curlers from widely separated parts of Canada will come to Fergus and take part in the first Centennial Bonspiel in the history of the province.

The name of Hugh Black, keeper of St. Andrew's tavern, is familiar to readers of this book. Among other qualities, Mr. Black was a great sport, and when the first snow turned to ice on St. Andrew street, he formed the first curling club, early in the winter of 1834-5. He had the hearty support of James Webster and William Buist, and James D nwoodie, of Lower Nichol, was another keen curler, who d dn't mind coming seven miles for a game. Then there were four of Hugh Black's sons, Hugh, William, James and Robert, and two sporting sons-in-law, James Perry and Robert Garvin, and they became the charter members of the Curling Club.

## FERGUS

Winters were long in those early days, and there were few ways to pass the time, so curling became very popular. Even the young Alex. Ferner, who thought of curling as "an old man's game," and who preferred to skate at first, joined the club in 1838, along with Adam Fergusson and many others. Games were played on the Washing Green, the stretch of river below the bridge at Tower street, or on the beaver meadow behind St. Andrew's Church. The members of the club had their secret password, and many a dinner of beef and greens, with the losers paying the cost. Often a bottle of liquor was hidden somewhere at the edge of the ice, and more than one member paid his dues in Canadian whiskey. The story of the keen curling games forms a large part of the plot of J. B. Perry's book, "Yon Toon o' Mine", and no wonder, for Mr. Perry's father was one of the charter members.

In later years, the game became more widely organized and Fergus curlers have taken part in innumerable competitions. In 1865, a rink of Fergus curlers took part in an international match with the United States, often they have won their Tankard group, and more recently, the District Cup competitions, but only once did the Ontario Tankard come to town, when it was won in 1899 by David Mennie, John Graham, Robert Kerr, John Bayne, W. A. Richardson, T. J. Hamilton, John

*By Hugh Templin*

Mennie and H. S. Michie. Other great events have been the celebrations of anniversaries in 1884 and 1909, and another is soon to be added to the list. The club now has comfortable quarters in a wing of the Fergus arena. The floor of the rink is of concrete and it requires only a thin sheet of ice to provide curling, while at one end is the curlers' room, separated from the sheets of ice by plate glass windows. Around the room are relics of the early days, including a wooden "stane" and one carved by hand out of the native stone.

The first team game to be played outdoors in the summer in Fergus was cricket. It had been played in the Old Country by some Fergus residents and early in May, 1858, the Fergus Cricket Club was organized. On the Queen's Birthday, May 24th, the first match was played between two local teams. After that, the game became quite popular and play improved. There were no organized leagues in those days and games were arranged with nearby towns. In July, 1865, Fergus beat Elora by one inning and sixty-two runs and this was the beginning of a long winning streak, which was not broken for six years till Mount Forest defeated Fergus in September, 1871.

Cricket was played more or less regularly in Fergus for many years, but after the coming of the new game of lacrosse, its popularity waned. A town that had lost

## FERGUS

its head over the rough and exciting game of lacrosse could not arouse much enthusiasm over cricket. Before the beginning of the new century, cricket had died out in Fergus, except when the boys of some family with English traditions, played among themselves.

Several years ago, cricket was revived in Fergus. A group of young Englishmen, then living in town, formed a new Cricket Club, and entered the game with enthusiasm. The local club joined the Western Ontario Cricket League and met very strong opposition from a number of city and town teams. The members bought their own equipment, paid their own travelling expenses, and played in a cow pasture. At first, they were badly beaten in every match, but they persevered. Now they have their own pitch in Victoria Park and in 1933, won the county championship, defeating Guelph in two matches.

Skating was the third sport organized in Fergus. From the very earliest times, there had been some skating on the river. A. D. Ferner was the pioneer. The skates were of wood, with a broad, iron blade set into the centre of them. A screw was turned into the heel of the shoe, and the toe strapped on. Toward the end of the century, these were followed by spring skates, made entirely of metal and quickly put on or taken off. It is only within the past twenty-five years that the narrow-

bladed  
come

Fergus  
the G  
people  
meet  
office  
Watt  
Dr G  
"rink  
years  
the  
Wile  
as a  
why  
Ferg  
The  
who  
Blac  
mar  
was  
sm  
exc  
G.  
a v

*By Hugh Templin*

bladed hockey and tube skates, attached to boots, have come into general use.

In the early Sixties, skating became the rage in Fergus, possibly because the ladies began to skate on the Grand River, shocking the more sedate of the older people for a while. In November, 1864, an organization meeting was held and a Skating Club formed. The officers were Robert Lingwood, James Dass, James Watt, H. Michie, Thomas Watson, Andrew Armstrong, Dr. Orton, James Argo and George M. Macdonnell. A "rink" was formed on Robertson's mill dam. Fifteen years later, a rink was built on Tower street, south of the river, by J. and A. Moffat. It belonged to R. G. Wilson at that time, and for almost fifty years, it served as a skating and curling rink. This was one reason why the Centre Wellington Fair moved permanently to Fergus, as the rink was used for the indoor exhibits. The old building saw many exciting nights, particularly when Fergus developed three splendid skaters, Jack Black, John Graham and James Forrester, who beat many of the best racers of their day. The first hockey was played in the local rink in 1913, but the ice was too small and there was no accommodation for spectators, except standing room on the ice. For a year or two, D. G. McGregor operated an outdoor rink for hockey on a vacant lot opposite the town hall, but it was not until



## FERGUS

the new Fergus arena was built that hockey became a major sport in Fergus, and there has not yet been a strong hockey team from the town.

Lacrosse has been the "big game" in Fergus for many years, and in no other sport has Fergus made such a good record. The game came originally from the Indians and Indian teams still rank among the best. The first lacrosse was played in Fergus in 1869, being one of the new sports played for the first time in that notable decade. It had been played in Elora for a year or two before that and the Elora team had become proficient enough to hold a Six Nation Indian team to a three to two score in Elora on May 24th, 1869.

A group of boys made up the first team in Fergus and on July 23rd, 1869, they played their first match. Among the players were two grandsons of Hon. Adam Fergusson, George T. and Adam, the latter being the goal-tender. The others were Percy Mutch, James and William Cardy, William T. and John M. Kelleher, James Black, David Hinds, Edward Moore and Robert Forrester. They used long sticks, much broader than those of to-day, and much more tightly strung. It was the rule that the match should continue till the winning side scored three goals or "games," with a short rest after each score, so that a match might be over in a few minutes, or it might drag on until darkness intervened. The

*By Hugh Templin*

newspaper comment on that first match said: "The game of lacrosse is very interesting and exciting, to the spectators, as well as those actively engaged in it. It is good exercise for boys, but would seem to us to require more running than would be pleasant to men in any amusement." In spite of that prediction, a men's team was formed immediately. On August 20th, which was a public holiday, the men played against the boys, the younger and more experienced players winning by three to one. The match was played at the race-track at Kinnettles and "a large number of persons, amongst whom a number of ladies were visible, assembled at the ground to witness the play, and manifested no small degree of interest at beholding this new feature of our athletic games."

The men learned the game rapidly, and on October 1st, 1869, played their first game against an outside club. Their opponents were Eiora's "second twelve," the Invincibles, and Fergus won by three to nothing, the goals being scored by Charles Perry and George Wilkie. The names of the Fergus players and the positions may be of interest. William Brown, field captain. Fred Channek, goal-keeper, J. Gordon, cover point. John Cardy, jack point, James Cardy, centre field, Charles Perry, putter-in, George Wilkie and William Keleher, homes, William McMullan, John Keleher, Arthur Perry and

## FERGUS

Edward Moore, fielders. On the following 24th of May, they appeared on the field in uniform, with red stockings, black breeches and light colored gauzy shirts, and beat the newly-formed Arthur club. A month later, they sprang a surprise by beating Elora in a game which lasted from 4 11 p.m. to 7 43 p.m. On July 1st, the third anniversary of Dominion Day, they won in Elmira and on September 13th, the day of the opening of the railway, they took the return game at K nnettles.

The history of lacrosse in Fergus is too long and too full of championships to do it justice in this short chapter, so only the high spots can be mentioned. For several years after the game began, it flourished, and then died down. About 1880, the game was re-organized in Fergus, in 1882, the name "Thistles," was adopted, and in 1883, Fergus won the county championship, and a cup donated by the Flora Irvine Park committee. In 1902, the first really important title, the intermediate championship of the C.L.A., was won by a team whose members were W. A. Groves, Michael Bergin, John Graham, John Siep, A. C. Steele (captain), A. Gow, H. Murton, E. Carliss, Norman Kyle, A. Clark, J. Grasley, W. Ramore and J. Carliss. In 1903, they repeated, and enthusiasm in Fergus reached fever heat. In an effort to strengthen the team for the next season some outside players were imported, and the team was never as

*By Hugh Templin*

good again. It was ten years till the next intermediate championship was won by the Thistles in a memorable final game when Niagara Falls was swamped under a huge score at Scarborough Beach, Toronto. In 1927, a Fergus intermediate team beat Buffalo in home and home games for the championship. Numerous other titles have been won in the various age-limit series, the most notable being the victory over Mimico for the first junior championship won by the Thistles in 1931.

The peak of lacrosse history in Fergus was probably reached in the Fall of 1932. The game had moved indoors that year, with the size of the teams cut down, and play considerably speeded up. The first amateur game of "box lacrosse" in Western Ontario had been played under floodlights at Alma in the summer of 1931, and the Thistles took part without much enthusiasm. A few weeks later, the Thistles played their old rivals, the Hamilton Tigers, inside the Hamilton arena in the first indoor amateur game in the district, and both teams enjoyed it so much that Fergus helped to organize a fall league that year, losing the championship to Brampton by one goal in a final game at Preston. In 1932 Fergus entered the senior series, very much the dark horse in the race. With only one loss, the Thistles won their western group championship, Niagara Falls providing the only serious opposition. The finals were played in

## FERGUS

Toronto and Fergus. Mimico won the first game in the new Maple Leaf Gardens by a single goal. Fergus took their home game by eight to nothing, and Mimico again won by one goal in the final at Toronto. After that, the Mimico team easily won the Canadian championship, the other teams from east and west putting up very weak opposition. Another highlight of the 1912 season was the sending of an all-star Canadian lacrosse team to the Tenth Olympic Games at Los Angeles, California. The Fergus Thistles supplied two players, Joe Bergin and Norman Russell, and Fergus people raised enough to pay their expenses. In 1913, the Fergus seniors were beaten again by Mimico, but the intermediates have done well. Three trips to Rochester to play an Indian team in that city have helped to keep up interest.

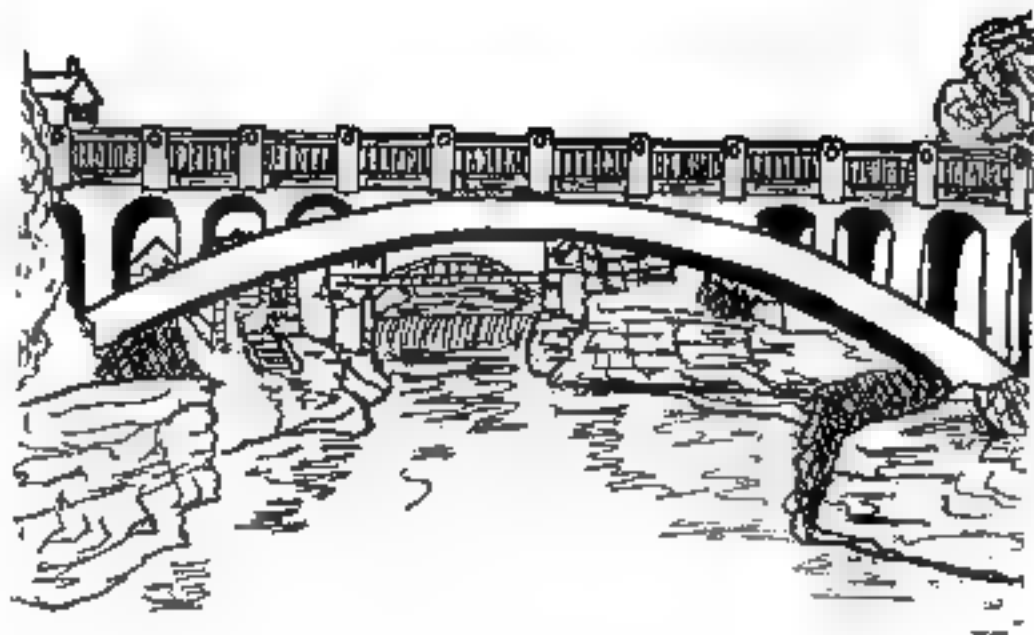
Baseball has not been a great success in Fergus, though local clubs have been formed and local teams won their league championships in 1931 and 1932. The first baseball game was played in Fergus on May 24th 1870, when two local teams met. Two weeks later, the Fergus Victorias beat the Guelph Shoo-Flys by 85 to 54 runs in nine innings. That was before the days of curve balls, when the fielders wore no gloves and the batter had the great advantage. It was also the time when the Guelph senior team was defeating all comers and spreading enthusiasm for the sport throughout the

*By Hugh Templin*

district. Since those early years, baseball history in the village has been very spasmodic, and the game has not been played more than ten years out of the last sixty

In the recent revival of sport in Fergus, almost all popular games are played. Soccer football has been one of the most important, the Beatty football team having several successful years, culminating in the winning of the senior championship of the Western Football Association in 1932. The swimming pool has added aquatic sports to the programme, the bowling club is of long standing, and there are more than a hundred active tennis players. Horseshoe pitching, badminton, and a number of other games have their followers.





#### THE TOWER STREET BRIDGE

One of the most beautiful views in Fergus is that looking up the Grand River toward the Tower street bridge, the lower dam and the bridge on St. David street.

F  
sit  
th  
eq  
an  
w  
st  
h  
as  
tr  
th  
he  
po  
vi  
m  
ha  
it  
w  
n

## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

### NEWSPAPERS AND BRIDGES OF FERGLS

**F**ERGLS had two newspapers before it was even incorporated as a village. That is rather incomprehensible to-day, when few towns or small cities have more than one newspaper, and some have none. Now, the equipment of a newspaper office is expensive to buy, and the running costs are high, eighty years ago, a man with a hundred dollars and a fair line of credit could start a paper. He might have to do much of the work himself, but his unskilled help might be had for as little as a dollar a week, while the boys were "learning their trade," and nearly everything was done by hand. Often, the editor started with nothing except the promise that he could and would write what was pleasing to some political party, and the financial backing would be provided by someone with political ambitions. It was a mild form of slavery for the young editor, and he would hardly make more than a bare living at the work, but it sometimes led to independence or a better job elsewhere. Sometimes these early political newspapers did not last beyond the next election.



## FERGUS

An extended history of journalism in Fergus might not interest many readers, but there are interesting spots, and an attempt will be made to choose some of them. In recent years, the course of newspaper life in Fergus has run rather smoothly, so it can be reviewed very quickly.

In those early times, Elora was often a step ahead of Fergus, so it was not surprising that the first newspaper north of Guelph should have been the Elora Backwoodsman, started in April, 1852. The capital was one thousand dollars, subscribed by Elora Liberals, and the chief editorial writer was Charles Clarke, later the Speaker of the Legislature. It had a more or less regular existence for six years, though occasional issues were delayed till the staff sobered up. After a lapse, it was bought out by J. M. Shaw and became the Observer.

The first Fergus newspaper was the Fergus Freeholder. The editor was George Pirie, a native of Aberdeen, Scotland, later one of the pioneers of the Bon Accord settlement, which was closely related to Fergus in early times. While farming, Mr. Pirie had an itch to write and draw, and the results of his work were often found tacked up on the Bon Accord bridge, though few knew who was the author. At the suggestion of James Webster, George Pirie bought the Guelph Herald, and when Fergus began to feel the need of a newspaper of

its own  
printed  
day, A  
edited  
news  
than  
by th  
tribu  
tor w  
famil  
that  
that  
and  
years  
absor  
Ferg  
your  
bered  
trou  
soon  
upst  
now  
pho  
Aft

*By Hugh Templin*

its own, he gave it the Freeholder, dated at Fergus but printed in Guelph. The first issue came out on Saturday, August 19th, 1854. It was well printed and well edited, but its life was short. Within a year, another newspaper was printed in Fergus and after little more than three years, the Fergus Freeholder was absorbed by the British Constitution.

The first issue of the British Constitution was distributed about the middle of February, 1855. The editor was Thomas Gibbs Greenham, an Irishman of good family. His sister lived with him in Fergus, and it is said that she wrote some of the more breezy editorials, and that she was the one with a violent dislike for doctors and lawyers, sometimes expressed in print. For ten years, Mr. Greenham edited the paper, which, after the absorption of the Freeholder, was the only paper in Fergus, and then, in 1865, sold it to the Watt Brothers, young residents of the Village. To-day, he is remembered chiefly by the brilliant black and white checked trousers he wore when he had his picture taken.

The two Watts were enterprising young men, and soon made changes and improvements. Their office was upstairs in the stone building where Melville Church now stands. In the same building, Hugh Watt also took photographs and there the first telegraph was installed. After the excitement of the Fenian Raids, the publishers

## FERGUS

decided to make a change. They called their paper the Fergus News-Record, a name which it has borne ever since, and published it twice a week. After three months they found out their mistake, and changed back to a weekly paper once more. The Watts were keen business men and extended the subscription list greatly. After three years, they sold the News-Record, in 1868.

The next owners were two more brothers, John and Robert Craig. The newspaper, which had been strongly Conservative under Mr. Greenham, and mildly so under the Watts, now became militantly Liberal. The Craigs were also scrappers in everything else they went into in their young days, and this attitude is reflected in the editorial columns. If they took a dislike to any person, his life was made miserable. Those were the days of virulent editorials and the owners of the News-Record were able to hold up their end in these extremely personal debates.

The first misfortune arrived on a cold February Sunday in 1870, when the office, then on the east side of St David street, was burned. Building and equipment were completely destroyed, as well as the shoe store on the corner where the Royal Bank now stands. One of the firemen was badly hurt and remained unconscious for two weeks afterwards. All the earlier file copies of the Fergus papers were destroyed, a loss which makes

*By Hugh Templin*

it harder for the historians since that time. Finally, the local insurance agent did what he could to keep his company from paying the proprietors.

A month later, the News-Record resumed publication in a building farther up the street, and in 1873, the equipment was moved to a new location on St. Andrew street, east of St. David street. John Craig was the chief editor, and was also a keen Liberal worker and did a great deal of work for the party at each election. It is said that at times, when he was absent at some meeting in the riding, the staff would quarrel among themselves and he would come home to find windows broken and other damage done, which he never blamed on his printers, but always on some mean Conservatives. On one or two occasions, when the Conservatives triumphed at general elections, there would be election night serenades in front of the News-Record office and actual damage sometimes resulted.

About this time, the Craigs met a foeman worthy of their steel. A young man came to Elora as editor of the Elora Standard, a newspaper owned by those two Conservative stalwarts, Messrs. Drew and Jacob. As he is still living in Toronto, the editor's name will not be mentioned, but as it is over sixty years since he came to Elora, it is obvious that he must have been little more than a boy at the time. He certainly stirred up his con-

## FERGUS

temporaries, in Elora and Fergus, and this is the opening sentence of a typical News-Record editorial of that time: "Crazy Acting B., the blowhard who edits the Elora Standard, has for some time past been keeping up a senseless roar, which unmistakably stamps him as an ass." Very polite, the editors of those days were!

Six months later, the young Elora editor left for greener pastures, but his Fergus friends could not forgive him even then. An item appeared in the News-Record under the heading "Reward," stating that the Bailiff of the Division Court would give a suitable reward for such information as might lead to the whereabouts of the "absconding editor of the Elora self-styled light-class paper." Then followed a hint that he had left behind unpaid bills for laundry and the like.

There was no truth in the statement that an award was being offered. It was just another editorial "joke," and Charles Hynds, who worked on the News-Record staff at the time, says it wasn't written by either of the Craigs, but by N. M. Munro, the Fergus lawyer. The young Elora editor had merely gone to Guelph, and he did not appreciate the joke and entered an action for libel against John and Robert Craig.

The story of the libel suit is an entertaining commentary on the way in which politics invaded the lower law courts in those days. John Craig was in Montreal

when  
before  
stand  
Craig  
in Elor  
At his  
every  
kingto  
five to  
when  
the w  
who  
case  
the a  
tried

paper  
Con  
don  
clar  
Ben  
Mr  
mak  
at t  
por

*By Hugh Templin*

when the action was started. Robert Craig appeared before two Elora magistrates, and was committed to stand trial at the next assizes at Guelph. When John Craig returned, he also appeared before the magistrates in Elora, but the Liberals were busy in the meantime. At his trial, nine magistrates were on the bench, being every one available in Fergus, Elora, Nichol and Pilkington. Five of the nine were Liberals and by a vote of five to four, the case against John Craig was dismissed when the plaintiff refused to say whether he had paid the washer-woman or not. Then the Crown Attorney, who may have been another Liberal, declared that the case against Robert Craig had been irregular, and when the assizes came around, there was no libel action to be tried by the Judge.

There were many comments by the party newspapers of both political colors. The Guelph Herald, a Conservative organ, attacked Magistrate Andrew Gordon, of Elora, who had been chairman at the trial, declaring that he was a horse-collar maker, and that the Bench had been packed. The Elora Express came to Mr Gordon's assistance with this reply: "Mr Gordon makes collars for horses, but is willing to try his hand at the manufacture of one for an ass if the Herald Reporter will call and leave his measure."

John Craig received his reward when he was elected

## FERGUS

to the Ontario Legislature, but he died during his first term. After his son, James Craig, had managed the paper for a few years, he died also and the business was sold to J. C. Templin, a teacher in the Fergus Public School. Since that time, great changes have taken place in the publishing business, particularly in the introduction of type-setting machines and automatic presses, and the News-Record has kept up with the procession so well that it has been given second place in the yearly competitions for "the most enterprising weekly newspaper in Canada."

There were other newspapers in Fergus from time to time, but none of them remained for long. The first of these was the Fergus Express, founded in Fergus in 1871, a few months after the railway reached town. It seems a natural time for a second paper to have started, for the town was growing rapidly and looking toward a bright future, and yet there has always been something strange about the Fergus Express, which is not so easily explained. It continued only twenty months, and in that short time had five normal changes of ownership, so that the editors evidently did not find everything plain sailing. The original proprietor was William Pemberton and after taking in some partners, he seems to have retired and left J. M. Shaw in charge. Mr. Shaw had been the editor of an Elora paper until he sold out his

business.  
Fergus  
newspap  
the mid  
the Fer  
wagon,  
used.  
more E  
picion  
Elora p  
Th  
ent typ  
the stro  
he bega  
was the  
paper,  
make r  
so he  
Draytr  
A  
establi  
until  
sold o  
move  
1924  
in Fer

*By Hugh Templin*

business there, and he returned to Elora and took the Fergus Express equipment with him, to start another newspaper in that town. One story says that it was in the middle of the night that the type and machinery of the Fergus Express office left town, and that a farmer's wagon, with the tires wrapped around with hay, was used. During its short life, the Express carried much more Elora than Fergus news, which leads to the suspicion that it was really printed in opposition to the Elora papers of that time, though published in Fergus.

The Fergus Advocate was a newspaper of a different type. Jabez Coram evidently had the backing of the strongly temperance part of the community when he began the paper in 1885, at a time when the Scott Act was the big issue of the day. He printed an excellent paper, with a great deal of local news, but could not make much headway against the old, established journal, so he moved his plant to Drayton and founded the Drayton Advocate.

About ten years later, the Fergus Canadian was established with Conservative backing, and continued until 1902, R. E. Mills being the editor at the last. He sold out to the new owner of the News-Record and moved to Elora, where he edited the Elora Express till 1924. In recent years, there have been no other papers in Fergus, if one excepts an abortive attempt made a



## F E R G U S

dozen years ago, when a paper was distributed for two weeks before the imported editor gave up.

In a town which is bisected by a river, as Fergus is by the Grand River, the bridges necessarily assume considerable importance. Fergus has had many bridges, in various locations and of various types. The width of the river and the high, rocky banks have complicated the problem and added to the costs. As a result, disputes have arisen as to the responsibility for the maintenance of the bridges, which were not settled until the town managed to unload two of them on the county and the third on the province.

When Fergus was founded, one of the first needs was a bridge across the river. For a few months, a single tree trunk spanned the chasm at the narrowest place, behind the present Melville Church. The first bridge was built nearby and the cost was paid by Fergusson and Webster. It was a strange-looking structure, and did not last long, for in 1838, £44 was raised by public subscription and a new one built, with supports and braces of heavy square timber. It lasted for almost thirty years, and when the time came to renew it, an attempt was made to build a stone arch, but when it was almost finished, it collapsed and fell into the river. Another wooden bridge was erected instead.

*By Hugh Templin*

The first bridge at St. David street was also built by private capital, James Webster erecting a double-span wooden bridge in 1850. It had a centre pier of timber, weighted down with stones, and when repairs were needed, the county made grants on three or four occasions. In 1876, the bridge was badly in need of extensive repairs or rebuilding, and the municipality disclaimed responsibility. The County Council refused to assume the burden. Fergus sued the County for maintaining a nuisance, and the case was argued in Toronto, and dragged on for three years. Fergus lost, but threatened to appeal, so a settlement was made. The County assumed the Tower street bridge, and built a spidery, iron structure with high stone abutments at each end. Fergus had to build the St. David street bridge. At first, plans were laid for as cheap a structure as possible, with cedar abutments, but these were changed to stone later.

There was no bridge across the river at the Garafraxa townline until 1869, when James Wilson built one with his own funds. The owner of the mills had industries at both ends of the dam and so he built the first light bridge to provide an easy means of getting across the river at that point. Four years later, one of the Fergus Councillors pointed out that it was in bad repair and suggested that the Council rebuild it, but his suggestion was not welcomed. The next year, Welling-

## FERGUS

ton County assumed the bridge, because it was on a townline road, and built a short, single-span, red wooden bridge at a cost of \$1,125. P. Simpson, of Elora, was the builder. It was carried away about 1899, when the ice lifted off the little bridge at Glen Lamond, a mile up the river, and it came floating down and battered off the Fergus bridge. A fine steel structure was erected at a higher level, but the height of the floods was also rising and the new bridge had a very short life till it also went away on the ice and floated over the dam. The present steel bridge was built about thirty years ago.

Another important bridge in the early days was built across the river at the foot of Johnston street, at "Cra ghead" about the time the village was incorporated. It is shown in the illustration on page 166, and was very similar in type to the bridge at Tower street at that time. In those days, the main road to Elora crossed this bridge and followed the south side of the river. It was never replaced after it fell into decay, though now a light foot bridge crosses the river at that point.

Another bridge is sometimes mentioned in stories of pioneer days, and is marked on the map on page 120. A large number of pigs were owned by Fergusson and Webster, and were fed on the mash from the distillery. In order to obtain green feed, they were allowed to pasture in the field south of the river, and a little sus-

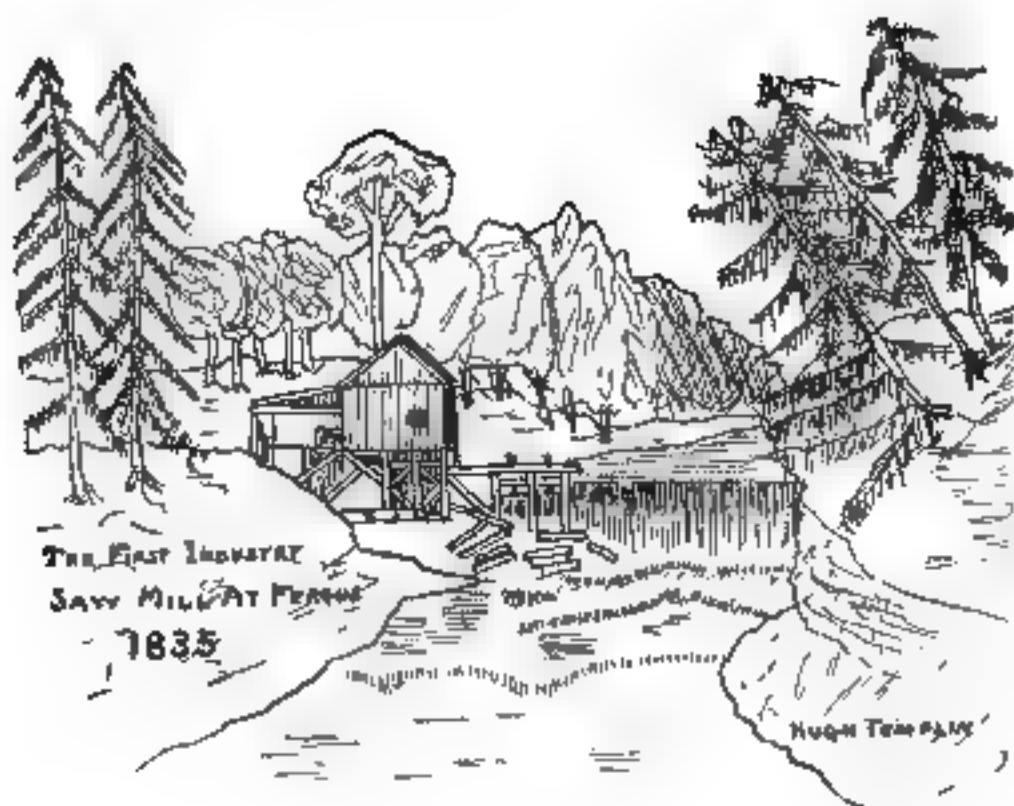
pension  
convent  
a short  
inclined  
the cen  
across  
way to

T  
built a  
was ab  
bridge  
The n  
was be  
ment.  
ent ty  
did not  
the pre  
Part o  
urged  
of rou  
was a  
new  
the ol  
highw  
a new  
quite

*By Hugh Templin*

pension bridge was thrown across the river for their convenience. It was sometimes used by persons wanting a short-cut across the stream, and because the hogs were inclined to dispute the passage, a partition was put down the centre. In later years, when the distillery was moved across the river, the bridge was maintained as an easy way to reach it from the mill property.

Twenty years ago, the first concrete bridge was built across the Grand River at Tower street. The cost was about \$18,000, which is quite a contrast to the first bridge, which probably cost less than a hundred dollars. The new bridge was a truly handsome structure, and was built by the County, in accord with the old agreement. Since that time, a new concrete arch of a different type has been erected on St. David street. The town did not pay for it. There was a move under way to pave the provincial highway from the south, through Fergus. Part of Tower street had already been paved, and it was urged on the Department of Highways that a change of route through Fergus might be advisable, and this was agreed upon. Later, the Department found that the new route was across the St. David street bridge, and the old one would hardly bear the weight of provincial highway traffic, so the Department of Highways built a new and expensive bridge, and so far as I know, was quite sporting about it, and made no complaints.



#### THE FIRST INDUSTRY IN FERRIS

The sawmill beside the falls, the first of the group of industries belonging to Ferguson and Webster. The dam was built on the edge of the falls. In those days, the ice in spring caused little trouble. Early writers mention the tall pine trees below the dam.

C  
INDUSTRIAL  
the history  
offering a  
chosen firm  
the Ferguson  
the industrial  
community  
logs and  
village started  
very direct  
the recent

The  
ed. They  
ster, and  
products  
whiskey  
lers, so f  
brick work  
up around  
possibilit

## CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

### THE INDUSTRIES OF FERGUS

**I**NDUSTRIES have always played an important part in the history of Fergus. Because of the water-power, offering a chance to operate mills, the site of Fergus was chosen first. Because of the mills, many settlers chose the Fergus Settlement as a desirable place to live. When the industries prospered, Fergus grew, and the whole community around felt the results, and sold grain, hides, logs and other products. When the industries failed, the village stagnated. The size of the population bears a very direct relation to the state of the industries, and the recent growth continues to bear this out.

The earliest industries have already been mentioned. They all belonged originally to Fergusson and Webster, and were clustered around the dam at the falls. The products were flour, oatmeal, lumber, shingles and whiskey. These comprised the early wants of the settlers, so far as the district could supply them. Later, a brick works, an ashery and several lime-kilns were put up around Fergus, and when that stage was reached, the possibilities of using local raw materials had just about

## FERGUS

reached the limit. Grain, logs, hides, ashes, clay and limestone were being used. The second stage began with the utilization of steam power and the coming of the railway. Then it was possible to bring in iron and other materials, and factories were no longer confined to the river bank. The year or two after the opening of the railway saw a wider diversity of industries in town than at any other time, before or since, but most of them were short-lived, and the disastrous slump of 1879 put an end to those which had survived other troubles. The latest phase of industry in Fergus opens about 1911 and the growth of Beatty Bros. is the dominant factor.

The tanneries of Fergus are long forgotten, but at one time, they constituted one of the main branches of manufacturing. The first was Johnston's "Cold Water Tannery," south of the river, founded in 1845 by Robert Johnston, and carried on by his sons. A flume brought water from the dam and the tannery was rebuilt and used steam power in 1871. It was closed in 1878 and partly burned the following year. Watson's tannery was above St. David street, on the north bank of the river and had quite an extensive business at one time. Later the building was used by Dr. A. Groves for a flour mill and electric light plant. The building still stands, but is used only as a storehouse. Lingwood's tannery was on the Belwood road outside of Fergus and

leather.  
vincial  
Webster

On  
and for  
business  
on the  
used th  
most of  
essenti  
that th  
satisfy  
distille  
much  
the riv  
bank  
busine  
more.  
and at  
fraxa.  
fairly  
did no  
to eva  
found  
and s  
broke

*By Hugh Templin*

leather from that tannery won many prizes at the provincial exhibitions. Robert Lingwood sold to Henry Webster in 1873.

One of the first three industries was a distillery, and for thirty-five years, other distilleries did a large business in Fergus. The first one was beside the creek, on the bank of the river below the dam, and apparently used the creek water. There was a large local trade, as most of the Scotch settlers regarded whiskey as a very essential part of their diet. Some of them complained that the Fergus whiskey was weak and not nearly as satisfying as the real Scotch mountain dew. The first distillery was a small, frame affair and the next was a much larger stone building, extending into the bed of the river, in the channel below the dam, on the south bank. The first distiller was Peter McLaren, and the business went along quietly enough for thirty years or more. About 1865, there was one distillery in Fergus and another in Glenlivet, just over the border in Carafra. The government was taxing the distilling industry fairly heavily by that time, and the Fergus proprietors did not like paying the taxes and tried all kinds of ways to evade the revenue officers. They invited trouble and found it. In one year, 1869, both distilleries were raided and secret pipes and vats found to be in use and seals broken off. One proprietor paid a fine of \$2200 and



## F E R G U S

received his property back, only to lose it again in a few months. At the other one, some of the employees took the blame at first, but the law soon forced it out of business, and a fire put on the finishing touches.

There was a small brewery, built and owned by James Webster and A. D. Fordyce, as early as 1845. A much larger brewery was built nearby by Dr. Orton and Charles C. Holland, in 1870. It occupied the site now used for the Fergus arena, and within the walls was the splendid spring, some six feet across, and continually bubbling up with clear water. (The same spring still supplies the water for the fountain on St. Andrew street.) The product of the brewery was said to have been excellent, but there was a continually growing temperance sentiment. In 1879, the Fergus brewery was the only busy industry in town, and it was running in full capacity. A boiler explosion finally wrecked the building, and its stone walls stood until cleared away to make room for the arena.

The oldest surviving industry in Fergus at present is the Monkland Mills. The business was founded in 1856 by James Wilson and carried on by him until the end of the century, when his sons took it over. It remained in the family until this year, 1933, when James Wilson, junior, gave up control. During almost eighty years, it had belonged to another firm for only a short

tune.  
once.  
Monk  
rebu.lt  
1897,  
torn a  
been r  
an exc  
J  
mile u  
the st  
built  
flour  
up ne  
the o  
river  
so th  
dustr  
built  
out a  
Oatr  
meal  
Phila  
cons.  
cloth  
at th

*By Hugh Templin*

time. As many as forty men have been employed at once. There have been periods of serious difficulty. The Monkland mills were burned three times, but always rebuilt. The Broomfield mills, bought by the firm in 1897, were completely destroyed by fire, floods have torn away dams, and changing business conditions have been met. Altogether, the record of the firm has been an excellent one.

James Wilson built the mill in 1856, about half a mile up the river from the other industries, the fall in the stream making it possible for another dam to be built at the site. On the north bank, an oatmeal and flour mill was erected, and later a woollen mill was put up nearby, as well as machinery for working flax. At the other end of the dam, a stone sawmill stood on the river bank, and farther up the stream was a lime kiln, so that Mr. Wilson operated a remarkable range of industries. To obtain access across the stream, he also built a bridge. In 1863, the flax machines were taken out and thirty looms were operated in the woollen mill. Oatmeal was shipped to Scotland (as it still is) and the meal won first prize at the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia in 1876. The output of the woollen mill consisted of blankets, flannels, sheetings, winceys, full cloths, unions, tweeds and yarns. About 1897, the mill at the other dam was purchased and it turned out flour

## F E R G U S

and barley products until it was burned. Gradually, the other products were dropped, until to-day, oatmeal and barley for cooking and feeding are the only things made at Monkland Mills.

There were many sawmills around the country in early days. Small creeks, that are completely dry now, seemed to provide enough power to run a sawmill in pioneer days. The Fergusson and Webster sawmill was the first industry in Fergus. Later, James Wilson owned a sawmill driven by water-power. There was also one at Glen Lamond, a mile up the river, where there was another dam and bridge, but it was badly wrecked by one of the first bad spring freshets. The original owner was Lamond Smith, and other owners included William Grain, William C. Reid and William Gow. On the same property, there was a small lime-kiln, and besides Mr. Smith, it was operated by William Gow and James G. Allan, better known to old residents as "Jimmy Giraffe," who had operated a kiln near Ennovenille, and later went to Aboyne. After James Wilson quit the sawmilling business, a large frame mill was built on the south bank of the river, above the Wilson dam, by Hugh Black. He was a grandson of the original Hugh Black, and had operated a shingle mill at Living Springs before coming to town. For many years he ran sawmills in Fergus, in various locations, and sometimes in

part  
second  
at "B  
from  
years  
son a  
sawm  
which  
of the  
stave  
in Fe  
and r  
burne  
was  
the d  
know  
factor  
but 1  
1872  
wreck  
wood  
Lane  
ing r  
and  
man

*By Hugh Templin*

partnership with his cousin, Arthur Perry. He had a second mill farther from the river, on his own property at "Brarlea," and another on the river bank, across from the hospital, and later, one at Speedside. In recent years, small sawmills have been operated by John Watson and Reuben Batho, near the site of the old Black sawmill close to the Garafraxa townline.

As might be expected, there were other industries which used the plentiful supplies of local timber. One of these was the stave factory, manufacturing not only staves, but also complete barrels, to be used by the mills in Fergus. It was owned by M. Anderson and W. Little and rented to a Mr. Hockin, of Guelph. In 1864, it was burned, perhaps intentionally, and the loss to the owners was heavy. B. McMahon built a new stave factory on the edge of the river beside the old swimming hole, known to several generations of Fergus boys. The new factory had a capacity of fifteen hundred barrels a day but its life was short, for the boiler blew up in May, 1872. There was no loss of life, but the building was wrecked, though the walls still stand. There were other wood-working factories in the Seventies, including H. Lane's shingle mill on Queen street, John Watt's washing machine factory, and planing mills belonging to J. and A. Moffat and James Phelan. Four other shops manufactured carriages and wagons, the owners being

## FERGUS

Wilson and Little, Matthew Anderson, John Templin and Thomas Richardson. That founded by John Templin is the only one surviving, his son, George, having carried it on and added fanning mills and other products.

The original flour mill, as built and re-built by the founders, continued to operate under different owners, and with many changes in the buildings and equipment, for about seventy-five years. A D. Fordyce became a partner, and after his death, his executors bought out the other partners and operated the mill. William Robertson was the owner for many years and he sent out one hundred barrels of flour on the first freight train out of Fergus, and one hundred barrels of oatmeal on the second train. The mill was closed during the bad depression of 1878, but was bought the next year by Andrew and James Semple, of West Carleton, who kept it going for years. Andrew Semple became a member of Parliament. Toward the end of the century, it was bought by James Wilson and Sons, and belonged to that firm till it was destroyed by fire. The ruins still stand, and the land belongs to Beatty Bros. Limited.

An industry which had a mushroom growth was the sewing machine factory, a branch of the Lockwood Co., of Hamilton, and operating under the name of Wilson, Bowman and Company. The branch was opened here in 1870, and the large stone building put up at a

cost of a  
employed  
consisted  
and punct  
similar to  
man add  
machines  
soon sub  
was cut  
later, the  
bought  
fluting i  
empty to  
and now  
C. J. M

The  
tance.  
and wa  
bridge,  
The oth  
hall on  
by Ma  
long ex  
does n  
the firm  
had a r

*By Hugh Templin*

cost of about four thousand dollars. Many hands were employed at first. The machinery on the ground floor consisted of lathes, gear-cutting machines, drills, planer and punches. On the top flat, an assembly line was used, similar to those in a modern automobile factory, each man adding and adjusting one part. Three hundred machines a week could be completed, and the business soon suffered from over-production. At first, the staff was cut and then the factory was closed. A few years later, the firm of Brown, McNaughton and Company bought the building and made skates, apple parers and fluting irons for a short time. Then the building stood empty till the plan to start a dye factory, after the war, and now it is the Fergus Basket Factory, owned by C. J. Mastale.

There were two early foundries of some importance. One of these was owned by James Grindley, and was built at the south end of the St. David street bridge, being now a part of one of the Beatty factories. The other was built on the site of the old temperance hall on St. Andrew street, west of the town hall, in 1869, by Mair, Lamson and Co., said to have been "men of long experience in the foundry business." Mr. Lamson does not seem to have remained very long, for in 1871 the firm was known as Ash, Mair and Company. They had a moulding shop in one wing of the building and

## FERGUS

made castings every second day. Upstairs, there was a wood-working shop, and they manufactured horse-powers, small threshing machines, cultivators, ploughs, stoves, shafting and pulleys, and almost any kind of farm implement that might be needed. The firm had a very short life. In 1872, the building was sold to a company from Guelph and the machinery was moved away.

In March, 1874, two brothers, George and Matthew Beatty came to Fergus with the intention of starting a foundry, and the Ash, Mair foundry building seemed to suit their purpose. They asked the Council for an exemption from taxation for five years, which was readily granted, for other Fergus industries were not in a very healthy state at the time, and anybody willing to start a new factory was welcome. The empty building was purchased in April and prepared for foundry work. A general foundry and agricultural implement business was started, similar to that done by the Ash, Mair Company. George Beatty was the practical man and did the designing of the machinery, and one of his greatest triumphs was the Beatty reaper, invented about 1880. His brother, Matthew, did most of the selling until his death ten years after the business was started.

There were ups and down for the firm but the business grew and was moved across the river to the Grindley foundry. When William and Milton returned

from com  
they join  
was limite  
they boug  
gradually  
as litter c  
bowls. Th  
men from  
a large fo  
was forme  
many ne

The  
building  
den expa  
ready bee  
many tim  
company  
in Engla  
important  
things m  
of Beatty  
Canada.

Mos  
have bee  
might be  
ment. Ch

*By Hugh Templin*

from completing courses at the University of Toronto, they joined their father. At that time, their production was limited to a few lines, particularly hay tools. Later, they bought out an opposition firm in Oshawa, and gradually added related lines of farm equipment, such as litter carriers, then steel stalls, stanchions and water bowls. They gathered around them many bright young men from Fergus. When a chance was offered to buy a large foundry in London, Ontario, a limited company was formed. This was a great step ahead, as it added many new lines, such as pumps, churns and ladders.

The story of the loan from the municipality, the building of the new factory on Hill street, and the sudden expansion of the company since that time, have already been told in part. To-day, the Fergus factory is many times as large as the one built in 1911, and the company has branches and stores all over Canada and in England. Electric washers and ironers are the most important products now, but they are only two of many things manufactured in Fergus and London. The firm of Beatty Bros. Limited is now one of the strongest in Canada.

Most of the other local industries of recent times have been mentioned in other chapters, but something might be said of the chick hatcheries, a recent development. Chickens are hatched in huge incubators, which



## FERGUS

are entirely automatic in their action and controlled electrically. Within a day after hatching, the chickens are shipped in special boxes to destinations within a distance of fifteen hundred miles. The pioneers of this industry were two partners, J. D. Johnson and John G. Tweddle. After working together for a few years, they divided and have run their own hatcheries in Fergus for several years. Mr. Tweddle has pushed his business harder and his hatchery has grown till it is one of the largest in Canada. The grade of poultry sold has improved each year, so that farm flocks around Fergus have reached a very high standard.



MUC  
th  
this b  
hundre  
begun  
what t  
Every  
import  
which  
you ha  
M  
becaus  
Many  
of the  
a narr  
after  
part i  
achiev  
F  
was th

## CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

### SOME MORE BIOGRAPHIES

**M**UCH MORE might be written about Fergus and the people who have made it what it is to-day, but this book has already spread over the limit of three hundred pages, which was assigned when the work was begun. The problem has not been what to put in, but what to leave out, for so much material was available. Every item has been subjected to two tests—first is it important? Second is it interesting? Those incidents which survived both tests have been made into the story you have read in these pages.

Many people have been mentioned in this book because of the part they played in the making of Fergus. Many others have been neglected, even though some of them became great, and others missed fame by only a narrow margin. Some of these did their great work after they left Fergus, and therefore they have had no part in this history. Others who stayed in Fergus also achieved greatness, and deserve further mention.

For instance, there was Reginald Fessenden. He was the son of Rev. E. G. Fessenden, rector of St. James'

## FERGUS

Church for six years in the Seventies. His mother, Mrs. Fessenden, is widely known as the founder of the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire, and the person who thought of the idea of Empire Day. Young Reginald was four years old when they moved to Fergus and lived in the Rectory, beside the drill shed. It had a garden that ran back to the Grand River at the Washington Green and when Professor Fessenden wrote his own biography for publication shortly before he died, the things that he remembered best about his life in Fergus were the Rectory orchard, the cedar trees along the river, the school he attended and the Anglican Church decorated for Harvest Home festivals. He remembered also that it was in Fergus he perfected his first invention. Noting that the snow lay long beneath the cedars along the river bank, he made a pile of snow and protected it with cedar boughs, then surprised his comrades by throwing snowballs at them in early summer.

The Fessenden family left Fergus in 1878, and a year later, the Fergus News-Record noted that young Reg had been missing for two days from his home at Chippawa, on the Niagara River but had returned safe and sound. He had taken a notion to walk to Buffalo, and it had taken him longer than he expected, so he had stayed out all night. Shortly after that, he was sent to Trinity College School at Port Hope and there one of

his teacher  
associated

Regin  
and when  
formed, he  
Commissi  
he lived in  
by those  
greatest c  
excepting  
the first p  
the first b  
Atlantic is  
principle,  
aeroplane  
Above all  
ventor of  
the broad  
air. Alto  
listed in

Prof  
who lived  
here, is s  
at Ottawa  
it himsel  
and there

*By Hugh Templin*

his teachers was Peter Perry, who later became closely associated with the life of Fergus.

Reginald Fessenden became an electrical engineer and when the Hydro-Electric Power Commission was formed, he was a member and the only man on the Commission with practical electric experience. Later, he lived in Boston, and before his death was acclaimed by those who knew, as the inventor who had made the greatest contribution to the advancement of radio, not excepting Marconi or De Forest. He is said to have made the first practical wireless telephone and to have done the first broadcasting in 1907; he first spoke across the Atlantic in 1908, and he invented the super-heterodyne principle, relay wireless, the radio compass for ships and aeroplanes, and the tracer bullet used in aerial warfare. Above all, he was proud of the fact that he was the inventor of what he called the Pheroscope, a machine for the broadcasting and reception of moving pictures by air. Altogether, over three hundred inventions were listed in his name.

Professor Fessenden is not the only great inventor who lived in Fergus. William G. Beatty, who still lives here, is said to have more patents registered in his name at Ottawa than any other man. He is very modest about it himself, but the facts have been given out by others, and there is no reason to doubt them.

## FERGUS

William G. Beatty is the elder son of George Beatty, one of the founders of the firm of Beatty Bros. His mother still lives in Fergus and has also exerted a great influence on the community, particularly on its church life. William G. Beatty attended the School of Practical Science, at the University of Toronto, graduating in 1902. Since then, he has lived in Fergus and he is now the President of Beatty Bros. Limited. He has been the chief inventor of the firm for thirty years, and has a genius for reducing machinery to its simplest forms, without sacrificing efficiency. The results are obvious. Not only are manufacturing costs reduced, but household appliances, which are seldom operated by those with a knowledge of machinery, are simplified and become more popular. Mr. Beatty's inventions are a part of the secret of the success of the company of which he is the head.

It is useless to manufacture goods which cannot be sold, as many an industry has found to its sorrow in the last few years. Milton J. Beatty is the younger son of George Beatty, and he also has a university education, but in Arts. The two brothers graduated together and joined their father's firm at the same time and because of their rare combination of talents, the business has grown rapidly ever since. M. J. Beatty started to do the selling for Beatty Bros. thirty years ago, and he is

still the  
among  
ada, wi  
around

No  
a word  
have do  
people  
lievers  
Fergus  
doubted  
the plac  
the buil  
new fiel  
also rec  
one par  
the firm  
Beattys  
first the  
has and  
he has

He  
the tea  
Fergus  
in the  
cept fo

*By Hugh Templin*

still the director of the sales force. Instead of going out among the nearby farms now, he travels all over Canada, with frequent trips to England, and sometimes around the world, visiting other parts of the Empire.

No history of Fergus would be complete without a word about the good things the two Beatty brothers have done for Fergus. They live simply among the people with whom they grew up. They are strong believers in temperance and have done much to make Fergus one of the "driest" towns in Ontario, and undoubtedly, this has assisted the general prosperity of the place. Both are keen backers of certain sports, and the building of the swimming pool opened an entirely new field of aquatic sport in Fergus. Other sports have also received generous assistance from time to time, and one park with playground equipment was improved by the firm, as well as other small ornamental parks. The Beattys have also been strong supporters of the church, first the Methodist and now Melville. Wilham G. Beatty has another hobby, the collection of oil paintings, and he has a large number at his house.

Peter Perry has already been mentioned as one of the teachers at Trinity College School. He came to Fergus shortly before 1890, and taught as headmaster in the Fergus High School for almost thirty years, except for one period of five years, when he was in Water-

## FERGUS

down. Hundreds of scholars passed through his hands, and he exerted a great influence, particularly on the boys. The use of force was entirely foreign to his idea of teaching and "Honour" (spelled with a "u") was the keynote of his system. He seemed to allow his pupils a great deal of freedom, but they were always their own strict judges, and because they knew that they were trusted, they never went beyond a certain point. Some things Mr. Perry hated intensely, and among them were cheating, lying, tale-bearing and ungentlemanly conduct toward the girls. Most of his scholars loved him. It is said that he was a great Latin scholar certainly his system was unique, with little verses for the hard rules but it was because he built character and inculcated a love of learning, that he has a lasting place among the great men of Fergus. One of the most touching scenes in the history of Fergus was the teaching of "the last class," when Mr. Perry presided once more over his former pupils on the last day before the summer holidays in 1928, the last day on which the High School met in the old building. He had been retired for some years because of a painful disease and he did not live for many years afterwards.

Rev. J. B. Mullan is another of the outstanding men who have lived in Fergus. He came to town in 1871, and was then a young man about thirty. It was

no easy task  
serious dis  
time and  
open the  
J. B. Mu  
He soon  
human be  
he had a  
a result,  
of impre  
nothing  
road, eve  
to every  
Smellie,  
He retire  
of St. A  
thinking  
not want

One  
is Dr. A  
a very g  
in Peter  
moved  
Grammar  
new W  
bought

*By Hugh Templin*

no easy task that he undertook, for there had been some serious disturbance in St. Andrew's Church before that time and once the minister sent to preach had to break open the front door before he could hold a service, but J. B. Mullan would hardly have used such a method. He soon brought peace again, for he had a love for all human beings that made them like him in return, and he had a brand of Irish humor that helped him out. As a result, he was a very popular speaker. He was a man of impressive and dignified appearance, but there was nothing distant about him. When driving along the road, even on a dark night, he shouted a kindly greeting to everyone he met. No other minister, except Dr. G. Smellie, ever had such a long term of service in Fergus. He retired about 1907, after thirty-six years in the pulpit of St. Andrew's Church, and went to live in Elora, not thinking it wise to be too near his old congregation, but not wanting to move too far from Fergus.

One of the greatest men who ever lived in Fergus is Dr. Abraham Groves, and he has lived in town for a very great deal of his eighty-five years. He was born in Peterborough, but when he was a boy, his father moved to Garafraxa, and he grew up there, going to Grammar School in Fergus when that institution was new. While attending Medical College in Toronto, he bought the first ticket to Fergus on the day the first



## FERGUS

train came through, but these are incidental, unimportant things, and it is not on them that the fame of Dr Groves rests. He has practised medicine in Fergus since he graduated in 1871, which was sixty-two years ago, which must be something of a record in itself. When he graduated, there were no trained nurses, no hospitals outside of the largest cities, no antiseptic surgery, and medical science was simple in the extreme.

After Dr Groves graduated, he came to Fergus, took a short trip to the United States, and returned to his home town to practise till some suitable opening offered itself elsewhere. He was full of energy then, as now, always willing to take a chance when he was sure of his ground, and he kept abreast of changes in medicine and other sciences by constant reading, and by coaching medical students in the summer months, and learning from them as they learned from him. He did some surprising things. As early as 1874, he removed an ovarian tumor weighing over fifty pounds from the body of a Fergus woman, though he had never seen an abdominal operation in his college days. More remarkable still, he sterilized his instruments by boiling, the first time such a thing had been done in Canada. The patient recovered. A few years later he removed the first appendix taken out in Canada, having been inspired by an article by a famous Birmingham doctor, who had performed several

such operations were successful the years, and call to drive

It is one of Dr. A. G. he has done blocks on the when others first electric of the old to as well. Ele which illum the Hydro c mission. He opened in F from all over Groves was long drives that he coul pital instead bought one driving tim municipal Council ch Hospital, an

*By Hugh Templin*

such operations himself. Other remarkable operations were successfully completed by Dr. Groves throughout the years, and it was not unusual for him to receive a call to drive ninety miles to perform an operation.

It is on his pioneer work in surgery that the fame of Dr. A. Groves rests, but that is only a part of what he has done for Fergus. One of the largest business blocks on the main corner was built by him at a time when others were losing faith in Fergus. He built the first electric light plant and generated electricity in one of the old tanneries, using the building as a flour mill as well. Electricity from his plant supplied the arc lights which illuminated the streets of Fergus and Elora till the Hydro came in 1914 and put his plant out of commission. He built the Royal Alexandra Hospital, which opened in Fergus in 1902, and which attracted the sick from all over the country north of the town, where Dr. Groves was known as a surgeon. He figured that his long drives took time and cost his patients money, and that he could treat more people if they came to his Hospital instead of having him drive to them. Later, he bought one of the first automobiles in Fergus to save driving time. Recently, he presented his hospital to the municipality, with its complete equipment, and the Council changed the name to the Groves Memorial Hospital, and thus the Doctor gained another distinction.

## FERGUS

that of having a memorial to his memory, while he was still alive and active.

Before concluding this volume, a little might be said of the writers, who have lived in Fergus, or have written about the town. They are not numerous and most of them have been mentioned already. The first of all was Hon. Adam Fergusson himself, but his book does not mention Fergus by name, and after he came to Canada, he seems to have been too busy to write and publish books.

The first book about Fergus was probably A. D. Ferner's "Reminiscences of the Early Days in Fergus." Mr. Ferner did not prepare it with the idea of publishing it in book form, but as a series of three lectures in aid of the Mechanics' Institute. Among his audience, there were some who believed the material too valuable to be lost and so the writer of the "Reminiscences" was persuaded to have them printed. The work was done by a Guelph printing office in 1866, and when the little booklets became rare, the "Reminiscences" were reprinted in 1921 by the Fergus News-Record. They are also contained in Mr. Wright's history of Nichol, which is mentioned in this chapter.

Alexander Dingwall Fordyce, junior did a great deal of patient research work, hunting out and recording the history of Fergus and of his own family. His

largest work was his "Fergus Families," published by the Public Schools, with a small introduction by the author, and with this equipment it is a valuable book. It is published by the Church and the

Miss M. A. Fordyce, who has written most of her books, published in 1919. She has published two books, "Fergus and the Land," in progress, and "Rhymes of the

James M. Perry, is still living. After a long illness, she died on the 7th of June, 1919. She was seventy when she died. She was the daughter of the late Fergus, an actual pioneer of the town. She is now in the

Rev. J. O. Fordyce, who has written a biography of the late Fergus, published by the Presbyterian College.

Dr. A. C. Fordyce

*By Hugh Templin*

largest work was a history of the Dingwall and Fordyce families, published in two volumes. When he retired as Public School Inspector, the teachers presented him with a small printing press and some cases of type, and with this equipment, he published a number of small booklets, mostly dealing with the history of St. Andrew's Church and the cemeteries.

Miss Mary Leslie was born in Scotland but spent most of her life in Canada and died in Fergus about 1919. She had a great love for her native land and published two volumes, "Historical Sketches of Scotland," in prose and verse, with many illustrations, and "Rhymes of the Kings and Queens of England."

James Black Perry, son of the pioneer, James Perry, is still alive, and now the oldest of the native sons. After a long and active life, he wrote "Yon Toon o' Mine," while living retired in Toronto, and was over seventy when the book was printed. It describes Fergus of the late Fifties, with many of the characters based on actual pioneers. The story has been very successful and is now in the third edition.

Rev. John H. MacVicar, minister of Melville congregation at the beginning of the century, wrote a biography of his father, Principal MacVicar of the Presbyterian College, Montreal.

Dr. A. Groves has written poetry as a diversion

## FERGUS

during many long drives and in other spare moments of a busy life, and he published a volume of selections several years ago.

Another Fergus doctor displayed a talent for a different type of writing, when Dr. Norman M. Craig finished a war play, "You're Lucky If You're Killed," and presented it to a Fergus audience, with a local cast, in the spring of 1933. The "first night" was a great success, and the play was repeated several times during the Centennial celebration. Among the interesting features were a number of original songs, the words being written by the author and the music composed by his mother, Mrs. J. J. Craig.

Among the journalists from Fergus who have become well known, possibly none had as wide an audience as J. K. Munro, who was born in Fergus, clerked in a store here and then went to the West to teach, becoming a reporter by chance. His witty accounts of the life of Parliament at Ottawa were published in the Toronto Telegram and Maclean's Magazine. He died in 1932 and was buried in Fergus.

Hugh Templin is another newspaper man who has had some success, contributing to Toronto papers. As "Ephraim Acres," he wrote many rural sketches about the people of "Glenlivet" and the neighboring township of "Saxafusa," and these appeared at intervals for

about three  
the Univers  
submitted d  
December, 1  
the News-Re

Among  
name of Ar  
Mr. Wright  
Grammar S  
the time the  
the editor o  
has owned  
been interes  
has publishe  
The second  
recently and  
sources of m  
Wright him  
works. Joh  
completing  
Fergus and  
A. E. Byer  
ago and, w  
some phase  
now and is  
early famil.

*By Hugh Templin*

about three years. Twice he was awarded first place by the University of Toronto, for the best feature articles submitted during short courses in journalism. Since December, 1918, he has written "That Inside Page" for the News-Record.

Among the more recent historical writers, the name of Arthur Walker Wright stands out prominently. Mr. Wright was raised in Upper Nichol, went to Fergus Grammar School and taught in the same school about the time the former High School was built. He is now the editor of the Mount Forest Confederate, which he has owned for thirty years or more. For years, he has been interested in the history of Fergus and Nichol and has published two editions of "Pioneer Days in Nichol." The second edition has been placed on the market very recently and contains a very valuable mine of original sources of information, as well as reminiscences by Mr. Wright himself. He has also published other historical works. John Connon, who died in Elora in 1930, after completing a history of Elora, also gathered much about Fergus and assisted the present writer in many ways. A. E. Byerly was an osteopath in Fergus some years ago and, while living in town, became interested in some phases of local history. He is living in Guelph now and is preparing a volume with the histories of early families and some of the old letters and diaries.