

Title: Alliston History Goes 20 Years Before Confederation. Page 1/2

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Alliston History Goes 20 Years Before Confederation

ALLISTON (Staff) — The history of the town of Alliston goes back 20 years before Canada's Confederation to 1847. It was in this year that William Fletcher and his eldest son John set out from Tecumseth in search of a mill site and after exploring the streams of Adjala, Mulmur and Tossoronto, they crossed over into Essa and on lot 1, concession 1, selected the site upon which Alliston now stands.

The location proved ideal for a mill because in addition to water power there was valuable timber land and rich soil. The stream is now known as the Boyne River.

Later in the same year, Mr. Fletcher and his son erected a log shanty, the first building on the Alliston site and probably not too much unlike the later log building now on exhibit at Riverdale Park here.

FIRST INDUSTRY

The following summer this pioneer, who came to Canada from Yorkshire, England, and first took up land in Tecumseth in 1821, erected a sawmill on the north side of the Boyne and thus established Alliston's first industry.

In 1849 Mr. Fletcher built a large frame residence which was the centre for much social activity of the community for years.

William Turnbull, pioneer merchant, established the first general store about 1856. Located on the site where the Windsor Hotel now stands, the store served the people from a wide area.

After his lumber mill, Mr. Fletcher established a second industry for Alliston in 1853 when he added a grist mill. Among the employees was a miller named Grant who was the father of the first white child born in Alliston, Margaret Grant, born in 1854, married William Banting and became the mother of Allis-

ton's most famous son, Sir Frederick Banting, co-discoverer of insulin.

HOW NAMED

In 1854 the Methodists, who had been holding services at different homes, built a hall on a site by what is now Victoria street west. A year later an Orange Lodge was formed with James Banting as master.

The name Alliston was believed chosen by Mr. Fletcher after his birthplace in Yorkshire, England. Action was taken in 1856 to form a village under this name and in 1857 a post office was opened in the Fletcher home with Mr. Fletcher's second son, George, the first postmaster. A street name in Alliston honors this pioneer family.

The Alliston Star, the forerunner of the present Herald, was started in 1862 with Malcolm McCarthy as editor. The first Presbyterian church and first school were built in that year.

In 1871 the Alliston Star became the Alliston Herald, now edited by Dave Willis, a keen editorial booster for the town and district. Three years later Alliston became incorporated as a full-fledged village with its own council. George Fletcher was the first reeve and his councillors included P. D. Kelly, James Aitkin, John Strachan and Richard Chapell with John Gilbert as clerk and James Drury treasurer.

BECOMES TOWN

Alliston continued to develop and became a town 76 years ago with John Stewart the first mayor and Dr. J. D. Sutherland the first reeve. The year was marked by a disastrous fire which burned a large section of the community. A copy of The Alliston Herald reporting the fire is on exhibit at South Simcoe Museum at Riverdale Park, along with a pick and other tools used by firefighters at the time.

Cement sidewalks were introduced in Alliston 64 years ago. Before that there were mostly footpaths with some board walks. The first CPR train entered the town in 1906.

Two town officials who put in long years of particularly noteworthy service were J. R. Hipwell, treasurer from 1895 to 1942, and William Lockhart, clerk from 1897 until his death in 1916.

The Memorial Library, which was built largely through the efforts of the Women's Institute, was opened in 1924 by Sir Frederick Banting.

The Stevenson Memorial Hospital, in which Alliston residents have much civic pride was opened in 1928. Its origin was made possible by the support of the late T. P. Loblaw, a native of the Burns district, and F. K. Morrow, C.B.E. Mr. Loblaw erected and equipped the hospital and also contributed largely to the cost of the first street paving in 1929. Mr. Loblaw died in 1933.

With Mr. Loblaw, Mr. Morrow contributed much to the building and equipment of Stevenson Memorial Hospital at the time of its founding.