

Title: Centennial History of the Beeton Fair and the Pioneers. Page 1/21

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Subject: Beeton, Beeton Fall Fair, Pioneer History, Beeton Agricultural Society.

Description: Programme for the Centennial running of the Beeton Fall Fair. Booklet includes a history of the Agricultural Society, photographs of past presidents of the Agricultural Society, Village of Beeton History, Fall Fair History, and Pioneer History.

Publisher:

Contributor: The Beeton World, Record Books, Agricultural Dept. Parliament Buildings, Lovell's Gazetteer, The 1880 Atlas; A History of Simcoe County.

Date: 1956

Type: Artifact

Format: JPEG / PDF

Identifier: 0031

Source: D.A. Jones Vertical File - New Tecumseth Public Library: Beeton Branch

Language: En

Relation:

Coverage:

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1856 - A Century of Progress - 1956

Centennial History *of* Beeton Fair *and* the Pioneers



*As Compiled by JANE COLE
for Beeton Agricultural
Society Executive*

Agricultural Society HISTORY



Survival is the first consideration of newcomers to a new land, and it was therefore most natural that the pioneers in this part of the New World should focus their attention upon growing home supplies for themselves and any stock they may have brought with them. It was not easy, for land had first to be cleared and cultivated, and often only primitive appliances with which to work. It was muscle and brawn that counted in those days, and hard work and long hours, and a lively faith that always looked and saw ahead. Many interesting stories of those early days have come to light, and may be recorded at some future date.

Members of the early communities were bound together in a common cause, and held meetings to discuss their mutual problems pertaining to land culture, stock, and farming in general. Township societies were formed as early as 1845. Quoting from the Annual Report of The Agriculture and Arts Association 1870, we read: "The Directors of the Tecumseth Branch Agricultural Society feel much pleasure in submitting this, the Twenty-fifth Annual Report to the County Board. Your Directors congratulate themselves on the present position of this Society, both as regards financial matters, and also the improvements made in the mechanical and domestic manufactures. The Society held its Spring Show in Bond Head on the 28th of April last, and may

Agricultural Society History

be considered in every respect successful, especially in the way of getting subscribers. The competition in entire horses was very good, and among the number were some imported animals. The farmers in this district are beginning to appreciate the breeding of good stock, as they find it pays best. The Fall Show was held in Clarkesville on the 8th of October, 1870, and may also be considered successful; the day was all that could be desired, and the consequence was a very large crowd of spectators. The various classes were all very keenly contested, with the exception of the mechanical department as may be seen by the amount awarded in that class, we attribute the reason to not holding out sufficient inducement in our prize list. The grain crops in this section for the past year may be considered fully an average, compared with former years. The Root crops are altogether ahead of what they have been for some years past."

Quoting again from the report of Upper Canada, 1858-9: "The Directors are glad to be able to say that the Annual Shows prove the stock of the township to have greatly improved since the introduction of Agricultural Societies. The show of the past year is illustrative of this fact, particularly in regard to horses. From a statistical point of view in 1854, the Tecumseth Society had 39 members. Subscription and entry fees were 18 Pounds, 14 Shillings, 11½ Pe; the government grant was 12 Pounds, 17 Shillings, 5½ Pe; Receipts were 31 Pounds, 12 Shillings, 5 Pe; Paid in premiums 18 Pounds, 10 Shillings, 4½ Pe; general expenses 3 Pounds, 7 Shillings, 5 Pe, and the balance on hand 8 Pounds, 14 Shillings, 5½ Pe."

So it is an established fact that in Tecumseth township and in our own special locale Fairs were held as early as 1845; sometimes these were held monthly

Agricultural Society History

for the sale of stock and produce. Early records, whilst not entirely complete do establish the above facts and it would appear that until 1907, the Society went under the name of Tecumseth and was listed in the electoral district of Cardwell, and this included Albion, Bolton and Cardwell. From 1907 on, it was the Beeton Agricultural Society.

In the early days, the fair grounds were located at the rear of the bank building on Centre Street, and extended to the south and east. There were no buildings on this site. There was, however, a large covered wooden structure 100 x 40 on the bank building site, and this was the natural ice skating rink. There was a pump inside, and when the time came all the work required was to pump water, and kindly old Mother Nature did the rest. This building was used as a storage place for materials when the Methodist Church was being built.

There was a small race track, too, in connection with the Fair Grounds in the rear, and the late Dr. Watson rode in the first race, in a high sulky behind a horse named "Black Nettle." Mrs. Watson also drove a single harness on this track. This item was related by Beeton's grand old gentleman with the long memory, Mr. D. W. Watson.

For some time feeling had been growing that the then present Fair Grounds were inadequate and at a meeting held in Coulter's Hotel, February 12th, 1897, Messrs. Cross, Bell and Somers were appointed a committee to see what could be done about securing suitable land for a new Fair Grounds. In January 1898, Messrs. Somers and Bell were authorized to offer E. A. Calhoun \$500.00 for the property now known as the Park. The deal went through, the amount being secured by a mortgage held by Mrs. Catherine E. Kerr, dated April 13th, 1898, payable \$100.00 annually. Messrs. Richard-

Agricultural Society History

son and Thomas Bemrose had the contract for leveling the land, and Mr. G. B. Robinson rented the grounds for pasture at a rental of \$60.00 per annum and contracted to make necessary repairs to fences, etc., and have cattle off the grounds one week before fair time.

It was decided in 1898 to erect a building, cost of which was not to exceed \$1,000.00, and Mr. A. Goldsmith received the contract on a tender of \$963.00 for a building 40 x 70. The new hall was opened the day of the Fair in 1898. Mr. T. A. Chapman was very active in his efforts to beautify the Park, by planting trees and shrubs, and levelling the land. Mr. Chapman served his community long and faithfully, he was on the village council for 22 years, and died in Alliston Hospital on February 1st, 1937, in his 78th year.

In 1925, negotiations were being carried on by the village council with the Society for the purchase of a portion of their agricultural park grounds for a recreation park, and after careful consideration the Society decided to accept the \$500.00 offered by the Village for that portion of land fronting on Prospect Street and extending 300 ft. north. This measurement was later found to take in the Hall and also seven feet to the north. Considerations and adjustments have from time to time been made and always to the mutual benefit of both the Society and the Village.

In May 1941, a group of young potential farmers met with the Beeton Agricultural Society to discuss plans for the formation of a Calf Club. Bruce Jackson, Donald McKnight, Joseph Rivett, Billy McAdam, Victor Wilcox and brother, Jack Culgin, Allan Glassford and Ivan Lacey were the boys present, and the matter was thoroughly discussed with the president, S. R. McKelvey and members of the Beeton Agricultural Society.

Agricultural Society History

The idea was favorably received and the boys then took charge of the meeting and elected as their first president, Joseph Rivett, vice-president Donald McKnight, secretary Jack Culgin, club leader Dr. S. R. McKelvey, and Mr. Lashley, the government representative who was present, promised to help in every way possible. The movement has proven most popular and has spread to other fields of endeavour, swine and root crops, etc.

In 1942, the Agricultural Society sponsored the Field Crop competition which was held for Cartier Oats. The Black and White (Holstein) Show was also in this year.

For the past three years arrangements have been made by the Agricultural Society to have the general exhibits to the Fair displayed in the spacious Memorial Arena, and this being Centennial Year, it is expected that space will be at a premium. The cattle and livestock shows as usual will be held in the Agricultural Grounds.

The Memorial Archway marking the Main entrance on Prospect Street, was erected to the memory of local boys who paid the supreme sacrifice in the wars of 1914-18 and 1939-45. The Beeton Women's Institute was instrumental in making this memorial possible. The granite pillars are four in number, 2 ft. square and 7 ft. high, on either side of the wide driveway, and supporting pillars on either side 21 inches square, and 5 ft. high. Further beautifying this entrance are the pillars erected this year by the Agricultural Society, marking the first One Hundred Years in the history of the community.

We have the names of some of the men and women who down through the years have put forth their best

Agricultural Society History

efforts to help build and maintain a healthy, happy and prosperous community. Life today in 1956, is easy compared to 100 years ago, when living was at real rock bottom. Let us not forget though, that we too, are pioneers for the future generations that will follow after us.

Early records of 1868, show the following have held the office of president: John Mitchell, G. McManus, John Allen, William Hannah, R. Allen, William Crawford, Joseph Wright, Thomas Phillips, William Walker, W. R. Fenton, Harry Kitley, W. J. Bell, Thomas Hammell, William Cross, W. H. Hammell, George Lisk, Earl Hammell, George G. Pringle, Fred McCarthy, F. Wilcox, S. R. McKelvey, William H. Westlake, Erwin Letts and Wallace Hayes.

The following have held the office of Secretary since 1868: John Allen, W. H. Dickson, George Everall, G. P. Robinson, Joseph Wright, N. W. Brawley, F. C. Pierson and Harry Cross.

Among those who have served on the Board of Directors, we find the following names:

Chas. Andrews, Mrs. H. M. Aitken, W. E. Baycroft, J. T. Barton, Dr. Brewster, Chas. Broom, Norval Brawley, J. Brethet, Mrs. E. C. Bell, Mrs. N. W. Brawley, H. A. Baycroft, Robert Brown, John Colwell, James Carswell, Levi Card, Wm. Cross, W. J. Bell, Wes Cross, T. A. Chapman, Thos. Cross, Miss Bertha Camp-
lin, Mrs. John Carlton, John Carlton (for 20 years as Treasurer of the Society. Retired in 1943), Harry Cross, Mrs. Harry Cross, Ben Dorsey, Cyrus Dunham, James Earley, R. M. Ellison, D. B. Evans, Ed Ellison, Ted Elmer, N. B. Ford, Geo. Ferguson, Thos. Goodeve, Jackson Glassford, Charles Hammell, A. Halbert, Thos.

Agricultural Society History

Harvey, S. Hastings, Mrs. W. C. Hammell, Mrs. W. Hammell, D. K. Harvey, Earl Hammell, Mrs. Earl Hammell, Mrs. Ernest Hannah, Mrs. Clayton Heuchan, W. H. Hammell, Samuel Hayes, Calvin Ireland, James Jardine, Wm. Kettle, Mrs. J. Keys, Mrs. F. Key, Mrs. S. R. Kearns, Phil Keogh, E. A. Letts, Chas. Lisk, Mrs. Chas. Lisk, Mrs. LeQuelenec, Miss Ada Letts, Erwin Letts, Mrs. Erwin Letts, Mrs. George Lisk, Frank Lisk, Mrs. Frank Lisk, William McKay, Fred McCarthy, A. McDermott, Mrs. W. D. Morton, S. R. McKelvey, Mrs. S. R. McKelvey, O. McQuay, Wilfred Mitchell, Mrs. D. Morrissy, Jack Mason, Jos. Pearson, Robert Philp, Elwood Nichol, Vernon McQuay, Mrs. Vernon McQuay, Jack Nodwell, Mrs. J. Nodwell, George McCague, Mrs. George McCague, Dan Kearns, James Riddell, R. J. Robinson, R. J. Robson, Mrs. G. E. Reynolds, Milton Reynolds, Wm. Ritchie, W. S. Robinson, Russell Reynolds, A. R. Robins, Mrs. W. E. Ritchie, Mrs. W. S. Robinson, Hilton Robinson, Jack Runnalls, Mrs. Jack Runnalls, Cecil Reynolds, Mrs. Cecil Reynolds, G. Smart, R. Stevenson, W. F. Strangways, Stewart Smart, Mrs. W. F. Strangways, Miss Stinson, Harold Service, Mrs. Wilfred Service, Mrs. Harold Service, Wilfred Service. Joseph Wright, John Williams, E. Wallwin, Frank Wilcox, D. W. Watson, Miss Wallwin, Fred Westlake, Mrs. J. D. Williams, Henry Williams, Edgar Williams, Mrs. Harold Watson, Clarence Watson, Mrs. Clarence Watson, Ed Williams, Mrs. William Westlake and Mrs. Garnet Westlake.



Agricultural Society History



WILLIAM WESTLAKE
President 1947 - 1949



Dr. S. R. McKelvey, Pres., 1941 - 46 President 1922 - 1940 (18 yrs.)



L. A. T. FRANK WILCOX



EARL HAMMELD, President, 1950 - 1951



GEORGE LISK

President, 1952 - 1953

Agricultural Society History



WALLACE HAYES

President, 1956



HARRY CROSS

Sec'y-Treasurer, 1948 - 1956



ERWIN LETTS

President, 1954 - 1955



LATE FRED C. PIERSON
Secretary, 1923 - 1948 (25 yrs)



The Pioneers

It is well to remember that the populace of any town or village is recruited from the surrounding rural districts, and any history of the pioneers of a locale, or any movement affecting the lives and times of those early settlers must reach out beyond the confines of the town or village being considered. Beeton was a potential village long before its formal incorporation in 1884-5. Many adventurous souls had come to this New

Agricultural Society History

World, settling here and there and afar off. They laid the foundation for the well being and privileges we enjoy today. We find familiar names on the old records, and there are doubtless many whose names have been lost in the march of time, but who, never the less, have made their contribution to the future by having cast in their lot with the pioneers.

Among the first to arrive in this part of the New World was William Hammell, Sr., from Ireland in 1827. He located on con. 8, lot 7, and at one time served as Home District Counsellor for Tecumseth. He died in 1854. Frederick Stevens arrived prior to 1837, he was a magistrate and also served as Home District Counsellor for 1847-8. James Hammell was a native son and was born in Simcoe County in 1838. John Nelson and Selby Evans both arrived prior to 1836, and Walter Evans was born on the Beeton site in 1845.

Other settlers recorded are Henry Willoughby, William Wilson, William Williams, Jeremiah and Joshua Travers, Alec Stevenson, Robert and William Sprowle, James Smith, William Rose, the Rorkes, John, Richard and Edward, George Ramsay, who settled on con. 8, lot 19, was about the first settler in 1822. He was a magistrate and performed the first marriage ceremony in his settlement, the contracting parties being Henry Morris and Miss Margaret Kidd. Then we have James McDermott, Philip Phillips, Hiram McCarty John Molloy, Thos. Hurst, Hugh and John Moore, Richard Gray, William and Adam Graham, William Chamney, William and Ed Carter, William Beard, William Armstrong, Charles Broom was born in Canada in 1835 and settled on con. 9, in 1862. Thomas Baycroft, a native of England, born 1828 also settled on con. 9, Francis Cook farmed 150 acres con. 9, lot 8,

Agricultural Society History

born in Ireland 1840, and came to Simcoe with parents in 1842. Sam Anderson, con. 8, lot 4, farmed 100 acres. Robert Hannah, born in Ireland 1844, farmed 100 acres con. 9, lot 6, did not arrive in Simcoe until 1873.

One of the early pioneers we must mention is Robert Atkins who came to Canada from Ireland in 1827, he settled in Toronto, later moved to West Gwillimbury, where he died in the 60's. His son, Thomas Atkins figures largely in the story of Beeton for he was the first reeve after its incorporation as a Village. Thomas Atkins filled many important offices during his life time. He was a member of the West Gwillimbury township council, Deputy-Reeve in 1866-7, Reeve in 1870-1-2-3, Warden in 1874, and again in 1880-1-2 and 3, County Auditor in 1885-6. He served as Reeve of the Village for two years, but was in poor health during his last term of office and died in January 1887. His son, Thos. Atkins II taught in Hammell's School in 1877.

A Robert Clark arrived on the scene in 1825, and it is recorded that he brought the first wagon into Tecumseth township, and a George Clark settled on con. 8, lot 3.

On February 12th, 1856, there is recorded the deed of a Crown Land Grant to Robert Clark "in consideration of the sum of 22 Pounds and 10 Shillings to the Commissioner of Crown Lands all of the south quarter of lot 10 in the 8th concession of Tecumseth, his heirs and assigns for ever." This deed is dated at Toronto, January 28th, 1856, Joseph Caution, Commissioner, and E. Meredith, Secretary. And on this site today (1956) stands the prosperous Village of Beeton. Robert Clark was now owner of a tract of land mostly forest and swamp, there were a few clearings, and some buildings,

and the place was dubbed by some as "Clark's Mud-hole"—but that was in 1858. Clark sold off portions of the land from time to time and gradually the settlement began to take on an orderly formation.

Many names appear in the list of sales and transfers of land. John Miller, James Douglas, Robert Douglas, Robert Gummerson, Hugh McCracken, James Gibson, William H. French, Robert Mitchell, and significantly, October 5th, 1864, there was sold to David A. Jones of Whitechurch, part of the S.W. quarter lot 10, con. 8, one acre for \$850.00. On July 21st, 1865, Hugh McCracken sold his holding of one-quarter acre to D. A. Jones for \$425.00. Other transactions involved James Lowery, William Root, John Irwin, William Robinson, William Prest, Arthur Reede, William J. Shaw, Joseph Watson, John Sprowle, Henry Silvester and Abraham Hipwell.

It was these pioneers who laid the foundation of this village, but those who came afterwards built well and truly. Chief among these was David Alanson Jones whose name appears so often in the early land transactions of our village, and who is rightly called the founder of Beeton. He was born in Whitechurch township in 1835 and in 1864 he came with his brother (afterwards Senator L. M. Jones) to Beeton, and together they started a general store at the N.W. corner of Main and Centre streets. After a time, L. M. Jones went to Brantford, leaving D. A. Jones with the Beeton store and property. He then started the apiary business from which Beeton derived its name, and gained him the title of the "Bee King of Canada." The Company was known as the D. A. Jones, Limited, and a large factory was erected for the purpose of manufacturing all kinds of bee supplies and sashes and doors. Employ-

Agricultural Society History

ment was given to a number of men the year round. Several apiaries were located in various parts of the township and in 1885 his crop of honey was 20 tons.

During certain seasons the bees were moved to "Jones Island" on the east shore of Georgian Bay. In the meantime, Mr. Jones travelled extensively, making a trip to Palestine and Cyprus to study the condition of the bee culture. He was the first to import the Italian queen bee to America, and also shipped to all parts of the world. Students came from all parts of Canada, the United States and the Old Country to study the management of bees. He was the sole exhibitor of honey at the Industrial Exhibition at Toronto, and was a past president of the Canadian Bee Association. He also published *The Beeton World*, *The Canadian Bee Journal* and the *Canadian Poultry Journal*.

At one time a vineyard ran west from the store on Main Street and was guarded by a 6 ft. wooden fence. This was removed after a fire destroyed the store property. Mr. Jones rebuilt on the same site and extended the buildings along Main Street, in all six stores and dwellings. The tons of gravel excavated for these buildings was used as fill for the swampy land to the north, extending to the first bridge on Centre Street north. He planted the beautiful shade trees on Centre Street and in other parts of the village, indeed his whole aim in life was given to the building up of the town. How much the community owes to D. A. Jones it is impossible to estimate.

In politics he was a strong Liberal, and on several occasions conducted exploring parties for the government into the far northern country, penetrating the wilderness from the main line of the CPR, Hudson's Bay, and to Baffin Land. He was a Presbyterian and

contributed largely to the erection of the Presbyterian Church in Beeton. He also gave the site for the CNR Station in the village.

The settlement had first been known as Clarkesville for Robert Clark, the first settler, later Tecumseth and finally Beeton in 1879, in honor of the man who had done so much to help build up the community and bring it into prominence. He was postmaster for 46 years, and also publisher of The Beeton World. We might note here that earlier newspapers published in the community were "The Tribune" and "The Chronicle," published by George Everall. The Beeton World dates from about 1879-80 and has continued to this 1956.

D. A. Jones died of angina pectoris at his residence in Beeton on Sunday, November 10th, 1910. He had married twice, his first wife, Miss Jessie Macpherson of Montreal, PQ, came as a bride to Beeton in 1864, they were married in Whitby, Ont., and she died in April, 1908, leaving besides her husband, a brother Crawford in Prescott, and Alex in Whitby, also two sisters, Mrs. W. H. Dickson and Mrs. Turnbull of Toronto. The funeral service was from her residence, Main Street, Beeton, Thursday, April 19th, by GTR to Stouffville, where she rests in Bloomington Cemetery.

D. A. Jones remarried about a year before his death to a Miss Frances Barton of Toronto. His funeral service was conducted by the Rev. H. D. McQuaid, Rev. Crawford Brown, St. Andrew's Church, Toronto, the Rev. J. W. Fox, and the Rev. W. J. Nurse of Beeton. Interment was made in the Presbyterian Cemetery, Beeton. Pallbearers were Messrs. W. J. Bell, J. T. Barton, R. J. Barton, William Camplin and W. J. Anderson.

Agricultural Society History

The second Mrs. Jones died in Hamilton Hospital after an operation for goitre in 1918 and rests in the Yonge Street Mausoleum.

In the Gazetteer and Simcoe County of 1873-4, we find the following: "Tecumseth, now Beeton is located in the midst of a country unsurpassed in the County for fertility, and having the station of the NWR, it possesses an advantage which in a few years will give it a place among the most flourishing towns in the County." Among the business men are: Messrs. D. A. and L. M. Jones, Henry Silvester, general merchants; Francis Hammell, shingle factory; R. Hammell, blacksmith; H. Ruffman, harness maker; W. H. French, shingle manufacturer; John Johnson, carriage maker; R. Nichol, butcher; C.R. and H. Teuch, sash and shingle factory; R. Switzer, cabinet maker; John Smith, saw mill; John Sprowle, saw mill; Isaac Owen, cooper; Jacob Owen, showman; W. H. Dickson, clerk of the Division Court and Insurance Agent; C. Baxter, hotel keeper; W. Steele, hotel keeper; Dr. Watson, druggist; J. Lowery, blacksmith; H. Robins, teamster.

The foregoing is but a glimpse of the pioneer life of our ancestors. We have pride in, and praise for, the sturdy stock of brave, far-sighted men and women who ventured forth to seek a new life in a new and unknown land. Those were the brave old days of adventure, hardship, co-operation and courage. They were men and women of vision, and that is why we, today, live in a land which to our ancestors would be a land of miracles.

The following have served on the Village Council since incorporation:

Joseph Wright, Geo. N. Clark, Wm. G. Stephens, Jas. Melross, Wm. Parkins, W. H. Mitchell, Wm. Lilly,

Agricultural Society History

Jas. Riddell, Walter Evans, Thos. Camplin, R. J. Todd, W. J. Bell, John Willoughby, P. McCarthy, W. H. Hammell, Dr. Cheffy, Robert Scott, Smith, J. Young, T. B. Bell, J. R. McDonald, H. Law, S. Wray, G. B. Wray, Hunt, W. Steele, John Sprowle, G. E. Reynolds, S. Hayes, J. Carlton, W. C. McCutcheon, W. E. Baycroft, M. L. Aitken, Chantler, W. J. Bemrose, G. Carr, W. T. Stewart, Wm. Hammell, T. A. Chapman (member for 22 years), B. C. Heuchan, H. E. Camplin, B. Dorsey, A. R. Prentice, C. E. Allison, William Stocks, J. W. Rowe, R. T. Calhoun, G. A. Ferguson, R. C. Kearns, Frank Allen, Roy Law, G. Pegg, A. L. Fachnie, W. S. Robinson, Jas. Wilson, S. R. McKelvey, H. Galbraith, W. Baker, R. A. McCague, H. A. Baycroft, H. E. Pettigrew, Wm. Butler, L. O. Thornton, Miss Anne Willoughby, Roy Coleman, Wm. Ritchie, James Thompson, Ernie Letts, Howard Lavin, Garnet Speck and Fred Rushton.

The following is a list of the names of men who have guided the affairs of the Village of Beeton since its incorporation in 1885.

Thomas Atkins, Joseph Wright (6 terms), Somers (2 terms), Steele, W. H. Mitchell, Scott, H. J. Law, Levi Card, W. T. Stewart, G. E. Reynolds, Harry Camplin, John Carlton (19 terms), W. S. Robinson, George Ferguson, S. R. McKelvey, W. L. Lilly, W. E. King, James Thompson, Roy Coleman and Thomas E. Little.

Secretaries serving through the years: W. H. Dickson, George Everall, H. G. Wigelsworth, Joseph Wright, Britton Wright and W. S. Robinson.



Agricultural Society History

The information presented here has been gathered from sources: The newspaper files of THE BEETON WORLD; RECORD BOOKS, the AGRICULTURAL DEPT., Parliament Buildings, Toronto; LOVELL'S GAZETEER, THE 1880 ATLAS; A HISTORY OF SIMCOE CO., and many residents who had private records in their possession, also friends of Beeton in other centres.

JANE COLE