

Title: Early History of Alliston. Page 1/2

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The first Fletcher house was built of logs. The roof was clapboard fastened with small wooden pegs. The flooring was rough lumber. The chinks between the logs were filled with split cedar and moss. It stood where the Canadian Tire Store is now. He built and ran a sawmill.

The Fletcher's nearest neighbours were at McMulkin's Hill, on the east, at Sharpe's Hill; on the south near Beeton and to north at West Essa where the Ruthvens, Stevensons and Turnbells had settled.

In 1849, Mr. Fletcher built a fine frame residence on what is now Fletcher Crescent and it still stands, little altered from the days when it was famous for its gracious hospitality. Doubtless the lumber all came from his own mill.

A general store was opened in 1856 where the Windsor House now stands. In 1853 Mr. Fletcher had expanded his business by building a grist mill.

The first miller was a Mr. Grant and he was the father of the first white child born in Alliston. His house was where Guild Interiors is now located. (That house was offered to the town before it was demolished.) The child was Margaret Grant, born on April 21, 1854. She married William Banting and one of her sons was Sir Frederick Banting.

Church services in those early days were often held in private homes but as population grew, churches were built. The first was the Methodist Hall, in 1854 but in 1872 a new church, now St. John's, was built. St. Paul's was formally opened in 1877. The cornerstone of the first Anglican Church was laid on November 5, 1875. It cost \$1,500. The present church was built in 1927. The first Knox Church was built in 1862.

An Orange Lodge was formed in 1855, with James Banting, Master.

During 1856 there was a move to give a name to the settlement and Alliston was chosen. The origin of the name is in some doubt but it is said that it was the place where Mr. Fletcher was born in Yorkshire, England. A post office was opened the next year which made it easier to get mail.

Schooling was a problem and classes are said to have been held here and there. However when the Methodist Hall was built, classes were there. As need for schooling grew, a school was built in 1862 or 1863 at the corner of Victoria and Boyne Sts. where it remained until 1885 when a school was built on Albert St. The main part of the original school was moved in 1886 to a location on Victoria St. W. where it was used as a showroom for carriages and buggies. It is next door to the present P.U.C. building.

In 1862, George Fletcher established "The Alliston Star", the first editor being Malcolm McCarthy. In 1870, that paper became The Alliston Herald. In the early days of the paper it was printed on a press operated by hand, on which it was possible to print 120 sheets (not complete papers) an hour.

A foundry was built in 1868, located where the Brewers' Warehouse is now. In 1873 Masonic Lodge 285 was established with Thomas Sargent the first Master.

The 1870's were busy, progressive years. Alliston was incorporated as a village. The Reeve was George Fletcher and the clerk was John Gilbert, who was paid \$50 a year.

Oddfellows Lodge 171 was opened in 1875 with N. Dickey as the First Noble Grand.

About 1875 the village of Alliston signed an agreement with the Hamilton and North Western Railway to contribute \$8,000 toward building a line from Clarksville (now Beeton) to Glencairn. The first train ran about 1877. This line later became part of the CNR.