

Letters of a Pioneer

Edited by Arthur W. Wright

The following letters were written by Alexander Dingwall Fordyce after his arrival in Canada in 1835. They are interesting and valuable, not only as casting light on details of the settlement of the Township of Nichol, Wellington County, Ontario, but also as showing the actual conditions of pioneer life in Upper Canada at that time, from the point of view of an actual settler, of good education and refined tastes.

The letters are written on thin foreign letter paper, and the writing is often crossed. The writing is very neat. The utensil used was a quill pen of the kind that Mr. Fordyce continued to use all his life. The letters are in possession of his nephew, Mr. Alexander Cadenhead, Toronto, who kindly permits their publication in order that they may be preserved on account of their historical value.

Alexander Dingwall Fordyce bore the same name in full as his father, and was born in London, England. He attended the elementary school of Gilbert Falconer in Aberdeen, then the Grammar School and Marischall College in the same city. When still quite a young man he emigrated to Canada in 1835, settling in Nichol Township, some four miles from Fergus in what was known as the Fergus Settlement, adjoining the Bon Accord Settlement. After a time he removed to Fergus, where he lived for many years. In 1856 he was appointed Local Superintendent of Common Schools for the Northern Division of the County of Wellington. In 1871, under a new law, he became Public School Inspector for the same district and retired in 1878. He was a cultured gentleman, kind and lovable, never robust of frame, but unswervingly devoted to a precise performance of every duty.