

Historical Sketch of the Presbyterian Church Ashfield, Ontario

The preparation of even a brief history of the congregation of Ashfield Presbyterian Church at once suggests the natural and necessary setting—the arrival and settling of the pioneers. These pioneers came from the Highlands of Scotland, generally bringing with them only the bare essentials for transportation. More they could not bring as honest men. But with the necessities for beginning a new life in Canada, they carried unseen more precious treasures—the essentials of material and spiritual stability and success, namely, sound bodies, well stored minds, unbending wills, faith in the future of Canada, love for the house of God, The Book, Baxter's Saint's Rest, Boston's Fourfold State, The Confession of Faith, and a high sense of the Divine Mission of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. With such a physical, mental and spiritual equipment, they braved the wild, unbroken woods; conquered the hardships peculiar to first settlers; blazed a path through the thick forest, and ever following the gleam, they were led to hope, courage and the things unseen, but to the Highland mind, very real.

We gather from the memory of the passing and present generation that in 1838 Kenneth MacGregor and Donald MacRae came first to the mouth of what was then known as the Baroness Creek, and now Kerry Creek, which empties into Lake Huron directly west of Kintail. The following year they took up land on the lake shore, for they were fishermen and loved to be near the water where fish were plentiful and a very necessary part of the staff of life in these early days. Donald MacRae took up the lot on the Lake Range west of Kintail and now owned by Rodrick MacKenzie, while his companion, Kenneth MacGregor, settled on the farm now possessed by John MacKay.

The same year Alexander Johnston secured the farm now owned by M. Dalton, and perhaps the following year Donald MacGregor took up the town lot, now a part of the property of Dan MacDonald of Kintail. In 1842 the MacKenzie brothers arrived, Colin, Alexander, and Roderick, and with them John MacKay. These settled on the farms now owned by Roderick and Murdoch MacKenzie and Duncan and Alexander MacKay. Then followed Roderick MacDonald; Duncan MacLennan with his sons Malcolm and John; Finlay (Piper) MacLennan with his family; John MacLean with his sons Donald, Alexander and Charlie; Kenneth MacKenzie; Hector MacGregor; John Douglas with his family, who settled on the farm now owned by his son John; and David Stewart, the father of D. M. and Charles Stewart. These all settled on the Lake Range to the north and east of the MacKenzie's. Then, in 1844, John MacGregor arrived, the father of James on the old homestead. During the same year Murdoch MacDonald with his family settled at Kintail on the farm now owned by John and Murdoch MacLeod.

In 1847 there arrived Kenneth, Finlay, straight Donald and lame Donald MacDonald, who settled on the lands now owned by their sons.