
Early Pembroke

(Contributed by Mr. W. R. White, K.C.)

THE TOWN OF PEMBROKE was founded and the first tree cut for a settlement, on the 24th of May, 1828, by the late Peter White. The founder of the Town, like so many other pioneers in Canada, had served his country. He joined the Channel fleet during the year 1812, and in 1813 came to Canada with Commodore Sir James Yeo and five hundred officers and seamen sent out to man the British fleet on Lake Ontario. He served till the close of the war, and then retired from the navy, and, coming to the Ottawa Valley, engaged in lumbering. In 1827, his partner disappeared from Quebec, with the proceeds of the sale of their timber, leaving Mr. White to pay the firm's debts, which he did, leaving him penniless. He, however, determined to continue lumbering, and had no trouble in getting financial assistance. At that time no licenses to cut timber were granted. The lumberman went into the woods, prospected and located his grove of pine, blazed the trees around it, marked the blazes with his initial, and started his lumbering operations.

Mr. White was of Scottish parentage, born in Edinborough, in 1794, and, with the hardy courage of his race, he, in the fall of 1827, started up the Ottawa from what is now Aylmer, to prospect for timber, and, in his explorations, reached what is now the Town of Pembroke, and while waiting in the spring, for a canoe to go down the river, started a clearing on what is now the old White homestead.

As a proof of the physical hardihood and indomitable courage of this pioneer of civilization, it may be incidentally mentioned, that, during the winter of 1827-28, he walked from Aylmer to Pembroke and back again, from Aylmer to Maitland on the St. Lawrence, and back again, and from Aylmer to Pembroke—in all, a distance of between five and six hundred miles.

He moved his family to a home he had built on the site of the now old homestead, began his lumbering operations and prospered fairly. He soon collected round him the workmen necessary for his lumbering operations, started a blacksmith shop, a

sleigh-maker, shoemaker, harness maker, and other mechanics whose works were necessary for the lumberman and settler. He also kept a small store, and, when it became necessary, established a school.

Attracted by the beautiful situation and by the magnificent forests of virgin pine, other lumbermen and settlers soon made their way up the Ottawa, and settled on the fertile lands in the neighborhood, and began to cut down the forests and convert the trees into square timber, which, each spring, was rafted up, and the rafts, with their crews of hardy, adventurous voyageurs, as careless and reckless as sailors, started out for the long and arduous journey to Quebec.

Like Mr. White, many came here to lumber, and made their homes. Others came to work for the lumbermen, and settled on the lands, and carved and burned their homes out of the forests, for Nature had done much to make the place a pleasant land to dwell in.

It would be impossible, within the limited space allotted to me, to give a full and accurate account of all the early settlers. At best, I can only record a few impressions that have left their marks upon my memory as a school-boy, beginning about 1848.

The Dunlops, John, Arumah and Hugh, were lumbering, and settled just East of the Town. D. Campbell Dunlop, another brother, kept a very fine hotel in Lower Town. John Supple, who lived for some years on the Allumette Island, moved into Pembroke and lumbered extensively and became a wealthy man. Christopher O'Kelly also lumbered, and later the Moffats, Richard White, J. & D. Bell, M. O'Meara, Heenan, and others.

The lands now comprised within the limits of the Town of Pembroke were owned as follows: Starting from the East—McNeil, Jardine, Daniel Fraser, Peter White, John Supple, A. Moffat, J. Miller, D. Porteous, and C. O'Kelly. The merchants of the early days were A. & W. Powell, who had a store on Victoria Street, about where the Drill Hall now stands. They did not remain long, but returned to