

The History of Passekeag and Bloomfield, Kings Co., N.B.~ by J. Lawson MacVey

The first road through the Passekeag Valley was an Indian Trail. Starting at John MacVey's property, it followed the hillside up to Smith's property where it crossed the brook and continued on through the valley. There are marks of old cellars on the hillside across the brook on the Tom Earle place. The first road to Sussex from Upham, was the Ridge Road. It went over James Matthews pasture and out at the Millbrook Bridge and followed the Harley Road by the Oscar Avanda Wetmore place.

Passekeag is an Indian word meaning "Little Creek". It was first called "Paddy Cake", but was changed to its present name when the railroad was built in 1865. An Indian Chief named John Paul named the place. John lived on my place with nine other Indian camps. They cleared a field that we call "the three-cornered field". A nephew of the chief, Joe Paul, was the first man in the place to receive a dollar a day wage.

The "Woodpecker Hall Road" goes through toward Hampton about two miles. There is in the woods a nice lake called "McManus Lake". The area was settled by the McManus, Smith and Greg families but all is changed and it is now owned by Ora Saunders. Woodpecker Hall Road was never finished because of a bad omen which appeared to two men. They were cutting trees, and two trees lodged together which they took for an unlucky sign. The road and area were so named because of the great number of woodpeckers which frequented the place. An old graveyard can be located but it is in bad condition, covered with trees. Two headstones, marked Dennison and Brown, which have fallen over, are covered with sods and trees. There are a number of people buried there; some of the surnames are Mitchells, Matthews and Moody.

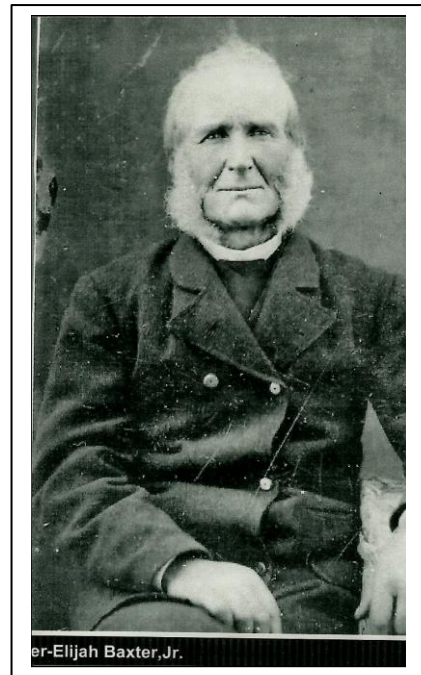
My grandparents are buried at Bloomfield, across the river in the old Presbyterian cemetery. On April 21, 1916, Mr. Nelson Pendergrass and crew tore down the Old Kirk, a landmark of Central Norton for half a century in this Presbyterian cemetery and it was taken to Midland to be rebuilt into a hall. This church had been built when the late Rev. James Gray came out from Scotland. My great grandfather, Elijah Baxter bought the ground from William Crabbe and we have the deed to the ground.



The Old Presbyterian Kirk at Bloomfield

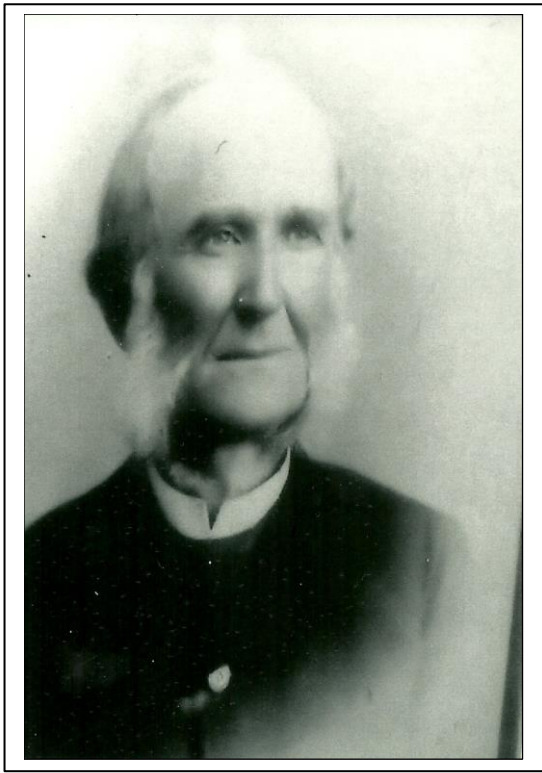
William Daniel McVey 1825-1899 and Charlotte Titus 1832-1887

Daughter Alice Maud (McVey) Perkins with flowers



Elijah Baxter Jr.

William Daniel MacVey 1825-1899



Charlotte Titus MacVey 1832-1887



My mother's people, the Robertsons, were born in Titusville, at the place where Clarence Campbell now lives. His mother was Emeline Dunlop.

MacVeys and Robertsons came from Scotland in 1803 on the same boat, the "Roseanna", 300 ton with 300 souls aboard; men, women and children. My grandfather, Robert, was the oldest of the 6 children, 10 years old. Our ancestors were great grandfather, Andrew MacVey with his wife, Mary MacKenzie, and children, and Mother's grandfather, Charles Robertson with his wife, Mary MacPherson, and two children. Twin girls were born to the Robertsons when the boat arrived in Saint John. The voyage took six weeks and three days. Other families on board settled in different places.

Andrew MacVey was a farmer in Scotland. He hired on with a Mr. Arnold of Sussex who was at the port when the boat arrived. He worked for two years with this man, and then bought one thousand acres of land here. It was a wilderness of woods and alder swamps for which he paid 800 pounds. He built a log house near the brook on the farm now owned by Stanley Reid. I remember the farm as the John Waterbury farm. There was no road to Hampton. The only way to reach there was down the creek to the Kennebecasis River to the Hampton ferry where supplies were brought from Saint John on a wood boat, called the "Captain Smith Wood Boat". Andrew MacVey made a boat out of a large pine log and used it to go down the creek and river for rye wheat flour which came from the United States.

Three farms were cleared and divided between Andrew MacVey's two sons and three daughters. My grandfather, Robert MacVey, was given the farm I am living on. He cleared the land and built the house in 1824. He married Prudence Ruth Baxter, a granddaughter of Captain Simon Baxter in 1824. Simon Baxter was the first Loyalist and the first grantee here. His grant was 5000 acres of land from Bloomfield to Norton. I have an account of his life written by Judge J.B.M. Baxter who sent it to me. Three generations have been born in this house.

My mother's great grandparents, the Charles Robertsons, took a grant of 500 acres on the Hammond River in Titusville. Some of the descendents are still living there.

The road past the Dunlop place was known as the Cumberland Road. The British soldiers marched through that road from Saint John to Fort Cumberland which was held by the French near the Nova Scotia border. The fort is still standing. I have not heard of soldiers buried along the Cumberland Road, but they could be. That road leads through to Titusville.

Thomas and Edward Earle's father was William Earle and his wife was a Moore. His place was the Adam Hennegar grant. They lived in a log house situated between what was later Tom's house and the barn. His mother died in the log house. I do not know where they came from. A brother of Tom and Edward's lived in Bloomfield. Edward's house is over one hundred years old. Their sister, Lizzie, died, and the brothers lived together. Tom built his house in the 1860's and rented it to the Rev. Mr. Crockett, a Presbyterian minister. He preached in Salt Springs, Campbell Settlement and Hammond River. Tom married their sixteen year old daughter, Anna, in 1882, when the minister and family moved to Nova Scotia.

The Matthews were Loyalists. John Matthews took a grant of land on the Adam Hennegar grant. There were other Loyalists who took grants of land, built log houses and settled in Passekeag. Many were of Methodist religion.

John Matthews' son William, received the home grant which he divided between James, Oliver, and Alfred. James married a sister of Tom and Edward Earle. James' house is still standing, now owned by Elwood Mercer. Oliver built on the Ridge Road, now owned by Al Marr. The house and barn were burned and the place is now in woods. Alfred Matthews, father of Eva (Matthews) Wetmore, built a church on the MacVey property. Eva was born there and after many years the house was torn down and rebuilt in Bloomfield.

The Crockett house was built by Joe Crockett about 1876, now owned by Averd Shaw. He works part time in Saint John. They have eleven children.

The first school was built at the corner, which is the one my father went to. The first teacher was an Irishman, James MacAlnary. I have his school license. "For the Instruction of Youth". It is signed William T. O'Dell and dated October 5, 1842. I also have his return sheet from the Parish School, containing names of the twenty-seven scholars, their age, and number of days in attendance. The school house was built of logs, and contained a fireplace of stone which took up one end of the school room. The seats were placed around the sides of the room and the children sat facing the wall. They used quill pens, and ink which were made by the teacher. The text book was the Bible. A sundial on the corner of the school-house told the time of day, but not to the minute. I have the sundial and some of the inkwells he made. He died in this house in 1851, age 62 years, and is buried in the cemetery at Bloomfield.

Later a new school house was built on the same ground. I do not know the date, but it was in my time. In 1882 the present school house was built by contract by Alfred Matthews for \$300. The men of the settlement actually did the work of the building. The first teacher was David Wagner who boarded with my parents. Later he married and rented part of Tom Earle's house. The first teacher I went to was Jennie Hanson. She boarded at Tom Earle's. Your mother also went to her. The next teacher was Laura Colpitts who later married William Cochrane of Bloomfield.

Mrs. Martha Toland lived alone for a number of years. She was found dead in her house around 1909 or 1910, by a next-door neighbor, John Kennedy, and his daughter. Her husband, John Toland, had died many years before. He had been a Bible agent. They had six sons; Jim, George, John, Sam, Tom, and Bill; all of whom had gone to the United States to live.

Captain Josiah Bettle and his wife, Phoebe Taylor, had four sons, John, Josiah, Henry and Stephen, and five daughters; Eliza, Hannah, Sarah, Rebecca and Mary. Their house was on a knoll on the north side of Passekeag road. John and his wife, Maria (Weir) lived with his parents. Maria died in 1864, leaving a three year old son, Judson. In 1873 he married Charlotte Burns of Upham. In the winter of 1874-1875 the house was burned down with all their possessions. John barely saved the lives of his aged parents and his wife and

son. A small house belonging to one of the Bettle brothers was brought from the woodlands a half-mile away, on timber rollers by ox team to a new location on the opposite side of the road, and became the nucleus of a new house. My father and other neighbors helped to build the new house which included several rooms added to the small building. Later on John's son-in-law added a front stairway, an extra bedroom and a veranda which extended on three sides of the house. John's two sons and a daughter as well as several grandchildren were born here. The house is still standing and is owned and occupied by the descendants of John Kennedy who bought it from the widow of John Bettle in 1906.

Josiah, second son of Captain Josiah Bettle and his wife, Jerusha, lived on the same ground as that owned by the captain, the Adam Hennegar grant. Gordon Tays and family now live on the place. Henry Bettle lived on the south side of the road, near where John built after the fire. He sold the house to my grandfather, Charles Robertson, where he died. Then the place was sold to Judson Bettle and later to Gordon Moody.

Edward Smith, who married Captain Josiah Bettle's daughter, Hannah, bought the John Smith grant and half the Adam Baxter grant, later moved to Glassville, Carleton Co., N.B. and after their family had grown up they went to Kansas, USA where he died.

John Smith, the grantee of 340 acres, and son John D., lived on part of the Adam Hennegar grant. He had a saw mill at the falls, now known as Smith Falls. Tom Smith got half the grant. William Tays and family now live on the Tom Smith place.

William E.S. Wetmore's grandfather, Justice Wetmore, built the house on the hill at Bloomfield. He also built the foot bridge at the point or bend in the Kennebecasis River, where Edward Bettle, son of Judson, and family now live. It was the first bridge over the river. There was a book written on the Wetmore Loyalists and O.A. Wetmore had it.

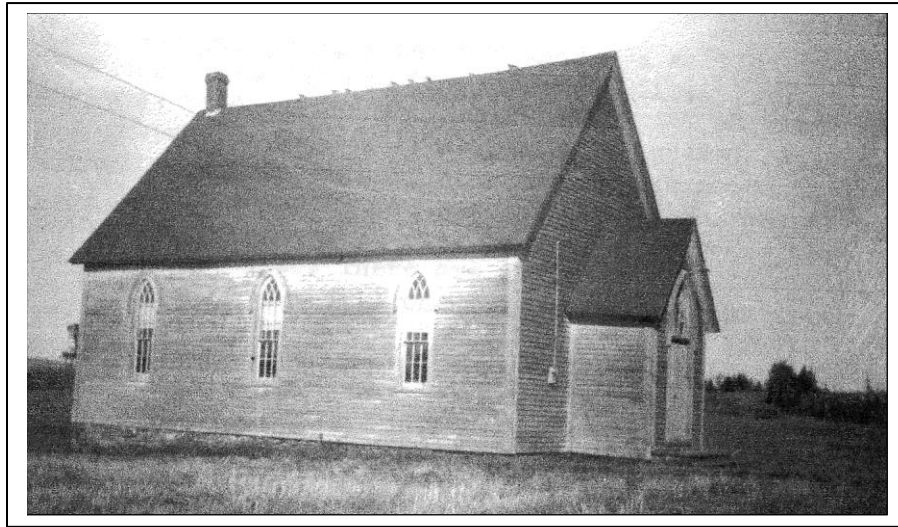
The old house across the railroad tracks at Bloomfield Station is the oldest house in Bloomfield. It was built by Captain Simon Baxter. I know nothing more about the origin of that house.

Bradford Williams of Gagetown opened the store below the tracks in Bloomfield in the 1890's. The first one known to live there was John Cochrane, brother to Harry Cochrane. Bradford Williams, who had married a Spanish lady and raised a family there, built the veranda and the spiral stairway on the outside.

Henry Watts' great great grandfather, Moses Fortune, was a slave belonging to Captain Simon Baxter who secured for him a grant of 100 acres. Henry had one brother, Norman, and two sisters, Sarah and Ruby. Henry lived with his mother, Ann. She died in their house at what was known Bloomfield Corner.

The Bloomfield wooden bridge was the first road bridge, but I do not know the date that it was built. The present steel bridge was built in 1911. My brother, Andrew, was the Bridge Engineer for this bridge. The steel construction was from New Glasgow, Nova Scotia.

The first church built in Passekeag was built on the first road over the hill, where the old burying ground is, in the year 1820. The first minister was Rev. William Tweedale, a school teacher, land surveyor and layman. He taught school one time in Titusville, at Burnt Corner. The building was torn down, and rebuilt in 1845. In 1882 a new Church building was built in Passekeag which still stands, but has been closed since 1961. It was sold to be torn down but the MacVeys bought it. It was later sold to someone and taken to Japan.



The Old Methodist Church at Passekeag

Barbara Stackhouse and Sophia Kelly would lead the service in the 1880's when Rev. Tweedale from Titusville could not make the journey. They were known locally as "Moody and Sankey" after the famous American Evangelist, D.L. Moody and the American Gospel singer, Ira D. Sankey.

This Church now resides in Japan, having been sold by the MacVey family when it was no longer in use. Every board, window, piece of trim, shingles etc. were numbered before dismantling and shipping.

By J. Lawson MacVey
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