

Newcastle Has A Rich History

by Charles Taws

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Newcastle Village has a very interesting past. Many new residents are eager to learn fascinating facts and long-time residents are interested in preserving the past of their community. Newcastle has seen times of growth before and it has been through tough times too. Newcastle's history also includes the community of Bond Head along the shore of Lake Ontario. These two communities grew into the Newcastle we know today and it was here that some of the most important pioneers chose to settle.

In 1796 Richard Lovekin came from Ireland to settle in Clarke Township near where the Village of Newcastle would one day stand. He came to an unbroken pristine wilderness. Large trees obscured the sun at midday and wild animals were plentiful. It is recorded that he had trouble with wolves. After building a log cabin he went back to Ireland to fetch his family. An old book describes the family's arrival to their new home in 1797, "[They were] somewhat astonished, on entering [the] house, to find it already occupied by an old bear, who rushed down the stairs, without ceremony, and jumped through the window. On inspecting the house, it was found, from the quantity of leaves and brush piled up in the corner of the room, that the bear had taken up its winter quarters there." The Lovekin Family still live on their original farm. They have been on this



The hall was built in 1923 by the Massey family and later willed to the Municipality of Clarington. It has housed a theatre, jail cells and council chambers over the years. It boasts a 4 lane bowling alley, available for private parties, small meeting rooms and large main banquet hall. It is also home to Newcastle Historical Society Museum.

land for 215 years! This is the longest tenure of a property owned by one family in Canada outside of the Province of Quebec.

The settlement of Newcastle proper began in 1833 when Stephan Crandell opened a tavern in the for-

est. This was near the present King Ave and Mill Street intersection. In 1935 he was joined by Ezra Shelley who opened up a shop nearby. This little settlement became known as Crandell's Corners and about the same time another community to

the south, Port Bond Head, began to grow. In 1839 work began on a pier by the Bond Head Harbour Company. The directors envisioned a large community with a busy harbour, but it never overtook Crandell's Corners.

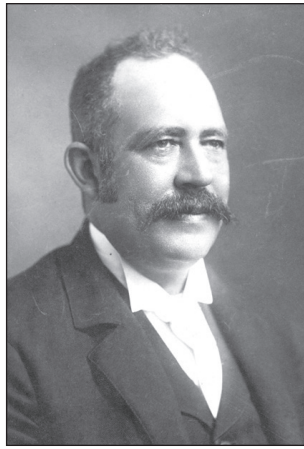
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Looking Back at the History of Newcastle

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Crandell's Corners, soon to be renamed Newcastle, was strategically located on the Danforth Road (present day Highway # 2). This was the main east west thoroughfare. Also, some settlers felt the lake marshes were conducive to fever and sickness and stayed away from the lake front. In 1851 the two communities, Bond Head and Newcastle amalgamated as the Village of Newcastle. Although Bond Head retained its original name, in common usage it was referred to as Port Newcastle or Newcastle Harbour.

By 1845 Newcastle boasted over 300 people, 2 churches, 8 stores, 1 druggist, 2 tanneries, 2 taverns, 1 axe factory, 2 saddlers, 4 blacksmiths, 2 wagon makers, 4 tailors, and 2 shoemakers. The growth was spurred on by the arrival



Dr. Alfred Farncomb, b. Nov. 13, 1859, d. Feb. 23, 1927;

of the Grand Trunk Railway in 1856. Northrop and Lyman, a large patent medicine business, began here (Henry S. Northrop's house can still be seen at 261 Mill St. S.). One of the largest woollen mills in Upper Canada was built here, but it was short-lived. As well, Daniel Massey set up

his implement shop in town and it grew so much that by 1879 they had outgrown the village and moved to Toronto (The main building from the Massey complex is now apartments and is located near the Foodland grocery store). Northrop and Lyman also moved to Toronto. The population of the village had grown to over 1200, but as the larger industries left the population dipped to under 800 people. In 1896 two fires destroyed most of the downtown and Newcastle's future as a sleepy village was ensured.

Newcastle is home to more Provincial Historical Plaques than anywhere else in Clarington. There are four in total and each highlights a specific episode in Newcastle's long history. One is for the Fish Hatchery begun by Samuel Wilmot in 1868. This was Ontario's first full scale fish hatchery and also included one of the country's first Natural History Museums. It was created to save the native salmon from extinction and was located west of the village along Wilmot Creek. Another plaque commemorates the Massey family. It was here that they started a business that would become one of the world's largest manufacturers of farm machinery, Massey-Ferguson. Although they left the village in 1879 they donated, in the 1920's, the beautiful Town Hall which still graces the main street. Another plaque commemorates Joseph Atkinson (1865-1948). He grew up in Newcastle under impoverished circumstances. In 1899 he became manager of the Toronto Star, made it Canada's largest daily newspaper and became a millionaire in the process. Most of his wealth was left to the Atkinson Charitable Foundation. The final plaque deals with Bishop Charles Henry Brent (1862-1929). His father was minister of St. George's Anglican Church and Charles grew up in Newcastle. He was elected first Episcopal Bishop of the Philippine Islands in 1901 and fought to eradicate drug abuse. He later became Bishop of Western New York where he promoted Chris-



Above: Inside outside of Dr. Farncomb's drug store.

Photos courtesy of Clarington Museums and Archives



Clockwise (L - R) 1. Choir Practice at St. George's Anglican Church, Newcastle c. 1895. The Farncomb family helped with the design of this Newcastle landmark by supplying a picture of their family's old parish church in England; 2. Downtown Newcastle c. 1895. The large impressive building on the left is the Windsor Hotel. It was located on the southwest corner of King Avenue and Mill Street. The building was destroyed by fire in 1896; 3. Downtown Newcastle c. 1900, King Avenue looking west. The buildings on the left arose after the fire on the Windsor Hotel site. They are still there today.

tian unity and helped lay the foundations for the World Council of Churches.

There used to be another plaque south of Newcastle for the Baldwin family. Robert Baldwin Sr. Settled here in 1798. He stayed until 1810 when he moved to York (Toronto) to live with his son Dr. W.W. Baldwin. Both Dr. Baldwin and his son, Robert jr., were leading political reformers who brought responsible government to Canada.

Clarington Museums and Archives collects material for all of Clarington. We are

fortunate to have some rare photos of one of Newcastle's leading citizens from the 1800's: Dr. Alfred Farncomb. He was born in 1859 and was the first pupil to graduate from Trinity College School in Port Hope to become a doctor. He studied in Toronto and London and Edinburgh in Great Britain. He opened his Newcastle practice in 1883 in a building where the Town Hall stands today. Later he operated a drug store on the main street. In 1883 Dr. Farncomb had one of 5 telephones then in operation in

the village. He married Miss Mary Coldwell and they had 3 children.

Clarington Museums and Archives has extensive local holdings that cover all of Clarington. Research fees range from \$10.00 per request for visitors to \$25.00 per hour if you'd like us to do the research for you. But, it doesn't cost anything to call our archivist, Charles Taws, to inquire if we can help you with your historical or genealogical research, please call 905-623-2734 or visit www.claringtonmuseums.com



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