

MANSFIELD

Since 1830

Earliest settlers: Harper, Beazer,
Colquohoun, Cauthers and Love.
By the 1850's a log church, school
post office, store, hotel, shoemaker,
blacksmith, saw mill, flour &
woolen mills, carriage & carpentry
shops thrived.

1851



2001

MANSFIELD

Mansfield is located at the junction of the 6th line (Airport Road) and the 10th sideroad. It is generally thought that the name was coined because of the manse in the field on the glebe. Settlers arrived in the area about 1837 and the first resident was Jack Harper, who built his home on the north-east corner. By 1871 the population had grown to over 100. Some of the names on the records of that time were: Abraham, Anderson, Armstrong, Arnold, Black, Brett, Campbell, Colquhoun, Cook, Cowan, Gallagher, Gilbert, Grier, Holdship, Lee, Leggatt, McCracken, McMahon, McMulkin, Morrow, Noble, Silks, Smith, Stinson, Symington, Upton, Wilson, White and Wren. A log church was built in 1844, a glebe of 100 acres was purchased (east half of lot 10, con. 6). This was served by an itinerant Presbyterian missionary named Alexander Lewis. In 1853, the manse was built and Rev. Archibald Colquhoun was the minister. By 1869 a frame building replaced the log church. The earliest marker in the cemetery is 1855 but there are many unmarked graves from 1844 to 1855.

Shortly after Jack Harper settled in, Mr. Cornelius Beazer built a hotel and general store on the same corner and later sold to William Gilbert. Beazer then built a second more pretentious hotel a little further north to serve the travellers going to Bradford or Toronto. It closed and was torn down and the site is now the Anderson residence.

William Gilbert operated the hotel and general store until his death and the business survived under the ownership of his widow who had married William Cotton. Upon his death, the hotel closed but was opened as a general store by Jack Dick. Five months later it burned down.

The first Post Office opened in 1858, on the site of Harper's house and Beazer's hotel. Upon William Gilbert's death, the general store, founded by Beazer and Gilbert, was taken over by his son-in-law, Malcolm Colquhoun and then by Hezekiah Gilbert, a son of William. The store followed the Post Office to M. Colquhoun house and with Hezekiah Gilbert, from there to

the north-west corner its present day location. A second store was built further north across from the new Beazer hotel by John Black. Subsequent owners were William Gallagher and James Reid. This store also suffered a fire and closed.

The first school in the area, Circa 1860's, was a log building, 35 ft X 40 ft, on the 5th line just north of the 10th sideroad. The teacher was William Kiernan. Pupils sat at 2 rows of desks. The enrollment in winter was reported to be about 75 students. This school, built before the settlement was a village, closed in 1872.

The community continued to flourish and soon attracted an apiarist, David Anderson, a flour mill, David Armstrong, carpenter, John Lee, a woolen mill, owned by Joseph Upton & W.H. Wilson, hotel owner, George Cook, shoemaker, Charles Weir, etc. Avon Symington opened a carpentry shop and built many barns and houses in the area as well as the former Perm and Mount Pleasant Methodist Churches. Mr. Howard Thatcher's business sign read: Howard Thatcher and Company, painters, glaziers, paper hangers and shoe makers.

A man of many talents. This passed to Irwin Armstrong and in 1903 to William Cauther. He built a new shop at the east end of the village. Robert Campbell was the first blacksmith, originally located at the north-west corner by later moved to the south-west corner. This shop continued to operate under John Law, Thomas Long and finally David Long until closing in the 1950's. John Abraham was a butcher, harness maker and singing master. In 1888, he moved from Alliston to Mansfield and held very popular singing classes at Rosemont, Stanton and Mount Pleasant Church.

Mr. Mathers set up a tailoring business at the 10th sideroad and the 5th line. He travelled to homes and used homespun material woven by the pioneer women. Mr. Munson was a journeyman tailor and travelled on foot, carrying his supplies. He was a notable fisherman and loved the outdoors. His specialty was

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making double-breasted vests with a rolled collar. There are many photographs to illustrate his design.

Mansfield, then as today, was a sporting community. In 1870, they held a Dominion Day football and baseball game against neighbouring Stanton. Ben Leggatt was the football coach won this game. The baseball team (some names: Mansfield, Sam Noble, Stewart Noble, Archie Noble, Robert Gallagher; Stanton, Wynn Hand, William Hand, Thomas Bates, Thomas Campaign) were defeated by Stanton and had to pay for their supper. Dominion Day tournaments became a family- community tradition and continued into the 1990's.

Some of the original families who cleared land and are still in the area and are proud to trace their roots back to those early pioneers: Hodgson, Stinson, Gallagher, Colquhoun, McKee, Cook and Jamieson.