

MAIDSTONE CROSS, ONTARIO, CANADA

The Village of Maidstone Cross is situated at the intersection of No. 3 and No. 114 highways, in the township of Sandwich South, County of Essex, Province of Ontario, Dominion of Canada.

When the early settlers first came to this part of the country, it was all dense forest of very large virgin timber.

It took years of hard labour to root out the trees, so as the sun could shine in so they could grow grain. In those first early days a great deal of valuable timber was burned to clear the land. Around the blackened stumps, they used a drag drawn by oxen if they had one to cover up the seed sown by hand.

These early settlers broke up the soil with hoes. Cut the grain with a scythe or cradle. Threshed it on a hard surface or barnfloor with a flail which was made of two hardwood round sticks fastened together by a leather thong. Then pour the grain from one container to another in the wind to separate the grain from the chaff. They would either have to grind it by hand mills or walk to Sandwich a distance of about fifteen miles. Carry a bag of grain on their backs to the mills along Detroit River. Have it ground into flour, then carry the flour back home lightened only by the toll of the millers fee of flour.

When these early settlers arrived the first thing they had to do was to build themselves a log home. The walls were chinked together, long splinters were wedged between the logs to keep the elements out. The roof was of split logs or boards sawed by hand.

Our No. 3 highway first began as a blazed Indian Trail. Whenever these early settlers had to go to Sandwich they followed this blazed trail which was only a foot path. In places where the ground was low and swampy, trees were cut down and laid side by side to keep the traveller from being mired. In these swampy places they had to carry their shoes and jump from one log to another.

These hardy early pioneers usually had good health and were strong. They wore home woven clothing. Their furniture was crude home made. In time they rode in carts, light waggons or sleigh, often hand made. They had no luxuries of any kind.

Unless the abundance of wild game and fish could be called such. Yet in spite of their hardships, they lived happy contented lives. They were always sociable with their few neighbours. Always ready and willing to help each other with logging bees and barn raisings and building of their homes.

In due time they were visited by a travelling preacher who by almost incredible toil made his way to the "Sheep" scattered in the wilderness. Then in a rude log cabin, the few settlers gathered together to listen to a sermon and pray together, have their children baptized or other solemn rites performed.

Of education there was none. The few settlers were too busy or too poor to be able to have a teacher to send their children to school. Later years the Government tried to help a little.

As we have already told the story of our ancestors Joseph Bennett with his bride Elizabeth Collins, coming out from England after their marriage and settling on 100 acres of land in dense forest on the southwest corner of Cross roads of Indian trails. He built a home of logs in 1834. It was this Joseph Bennett named the village "Maidstone Cross", after the town of Maidstone Cross, England.

In 1835 brothers of Elizabeth, Stephen and George Collins also came out from England. Stephen took up land about 3 miles west of the village along the Indian trail. Later George married a Sarah Nicholson of Detroit and they settled in Oxford County Woodstock, Ontario. Then a sister Sarah Collins also came to Canada. She made her home with her brother George and never married.

In 1849 Charles Collins the youngest brother with his Bride Elizabeth Richards came over and they also settled just east of the village in dense forest.

Stephen Collins of Headley England came over to Canada. In 1835 he married a Miss Mara Rhodes. They spent their lives on the farm west of the village. Later years a big two story brick home was built. The youngest son, George Burton, remained on the Collins farm and took care of his parents in later years. His son and daughters remained on the farm after his death. The son Stanley died also three of the daughters. Just recently the farm has been sold out of the Collins name.

EARLIEST SETTLERS AROUND MAIDSTONE

Following is a list of earliest settlers of Maidstone Cross Ontario and surrounding Community.....

Joseph Bennett, Stephen Collins, Charles Collins, Peter Delisle, Joseph Farough, Peter Farough, John Farough, Joseph Farough Jr. Michael Farough, Glodemere Farough, Nicholas Farough, Lawrence Farough, Charles Farough, Charles McCloskey, Wm. Hicky, Abraham Cole, Thomas Collins, George Collins, George Collins Jr., Richard Halford, Robert Little, Charles Little, Hugh Lennon, John Twomey, Denis Collins, Cornelius Collins, John Greary, Joseph Totten, Michael Kavanagh, Robt. Watson, John Greaves Sr., James Deehan, Robt. Shuel, Martin Burke, Thomas Conroy, Henry Arnold, Charles Delisle, John B. Delisle, Joseph Cock, Timothy Moynaham, Patrick Barrett, Joseph Frysinger Sr., Joseph Frysinger Jr., John Ellis, Samuel Ellis, Thomas Ellis, Wm. Ellis, Patrick Sexton, James Hoolihan, John Driscoll, John Hyland, Charles Carron, Alexander O'Neil, Edward Burke, James Cahill, John Lyons, James Ward, James Devlin, John Costigan, Wm. Morton, Garrett Barry, Patrick Lane, Andrew McCann, Charles Bunn, John Dally, Thomas Ferry, Nicholas Dixon, Thomas Higgans, Charles Cole, John Daniher, Michael Donavon, Charles Rounding, John Holden, Thomas Powers, Edward Exton, John Sexton, Jeremiah Lynch, John Takey, Michael Savage, Denis Downing, Michael Allen, Lawrence Kane, Wm. Kane, Denis Farrettl, Peter McPharlin, Wm. Phillips, Robert Fairburn, Patrick Gallagher, Ignatius Halford, Thomas McCloskey, Wm. McCloskey, Frank McCloskey, James Ellis, William Robinson, David Thoma, Wm. Frith, John Greaves Jr., James Wilson, Edward Kendrick, William Croft, James Delisle.

Once an Indian Trail, now our Highway No. 3. When teaming began, this Indian Trail had to be widened so it was built into a plank or cordroy road. The logs had to be split by hand and laid side by side. For a number of years was called the plank road. As these logs and planks wore out they had to be replaces.

I have not been able to get the exact date the stage coach came through Maidstone Cross---soon after 1850. It went from Leamington to Sandwich.

Jemima "Collins" Farough, told of how the drivers would stop at every Inn, change horses, get a glass of whiskey, sometimes they would get very drunk, run and whip the horses.

Mr. Gordon Wigle drove the stage coach in 1860. He moved west in 1888. The last of the stage coaches disappeared about end of 18th century.

To keep this plank road in repair, they built toll gates. There were four gates between Essex Centre and just beyond Oldcastle. A charge was made to pass through these gates. The settlers were charged according to the load they had on, or the number of oxen or horses drawing the load. A round trip to Sandwich through these gates cost as much as 65 cents about a days wage.

The money collected at these toll gates were to be used to repair the road. As time went on the keepers did not keep the road repaired, so one night, some of the settlers from Essex went through removed the keepers belongings, and set fire to the gates and burned them. Then as the planks wore out, the road was resurfaced with gravel. Patrick McAuliffe was keeper of the toll gates at Maidstone Cross in those early days.

HOW THE INDIAN TRAIL WAS NAMED TALBOT ROAD

Thomas Talbot was born in Ireland. When he was twenty one years old, he came to Canada in 1871. The following year he went to Newark as secretary to Governor John Graves of Simcoe. During this time, he had an opportunity of travelling to Detroit.

He was very impressed, loved this most Southern part of Western Ontario. In 1794, he returned to England, served as an army officer in the war between Britain and France. When the war was over, he again returned to Canada to take up farming. He worked alone clearing land of timber. He again returned to England. In 1803 secured a grant of 5000 acres of land to start a settlement, where St. Thomas is now located.

He divided the land into 50 acre farms and for each farm granted to a settler, Talbot was to receive 200 acres of land. Eventually he would receive 20,000 acres of land instead of 5,000 along Lake Erie. It was all very dense forest--no homes or roads.

It was in 1809, he started to plan a road from York to Windsor. Then the war of 1812 broke out. He became a Colonel in this war. His Settlement was plundered and burned. After the war he resorted his settlement, and again continued the construction of his road. By 1837 this first road stretched from Niagara to Windsor.

The first road was a cordroy road. Logs were cut and laid side by side.

Colonel Talbot died in 1823--sixty years after he first named Port Talbot.

This first road was named Talbot road, after Colonel Talbot. In Essex County we also have anorth and south Talbot road, one mile north and south of the main Talbot road. It was in 1924 Talbot Road was paved and became our No. 3 highway.

The other Indian Trail at the Cross roads at Maidstone Cross was named the Middle Road. It was blazed through the forest for the soldiers. When the road was five miles south of Maidstone Cross, the boss was given the money to pay the men. He cleared out with the money, and the men never received their pay. So the road that was to have gone through to Amherstburg was never completed. It was a very bad clay road. In spring it was most impassable. But in due time it was also gravel surfaced. In parts of Essex County, there were plenty of good gravel pits.

In 1925 this Middle road was also built into a hard surfaced road and was named King's Highway No. 2. A few years later the number was changed to No. 98 Highway and the mile between 98 highway and No. 3 highway was given the number of 114.

Today there is a through highway No. 401, also called the MacDonald-Cartier Highway coming into Windsor, Ontario between Maidstone Cross and Windsor and running east across Ontario.

Today 1972 Essex County has a network of good hard surfaced highways and paved and gravelled roads over the entire county.

Denis and Hannah Collins of Ireland came to the township of Sandwich in the Western District on July 18, 1848. These Collins' have no connection with the Collins' from England that are our Ancestors.

He bought 100 acres of land and built his log home on the South-East corner of the Cross roads.

Mr. Denis Collins was the first settler on that corner. He was a waggon maker by trade. He built his shop just east of his house.

Cornelius Collins, brother of Denis was a blacksmith. He built his shop east of the waggon shop. Denis Collins cleared his land of timber. In 1872 Mr. Rush bought a lot off the Collins farm and built a store.

After the death of Denis Collins, his son Jeremiah carried on farming. He built an Inn east of the house. Mr. Collins kept a good Inn and made many friends. As soon as teaming started as the roads were very bad, they would have to put up at the Inn on their way to Sandwich to rest their oxen or horses.

At Jeremiah's death, he gave his farm to his son Jeremiah. The Inn, shops and store were all torn down, and went back to farming land. As time progressed Jerry Farmed and run a dairy route, and in turn at his death, his sons continued to farm. Today the frontage along No. 3 Highway is all built up with new and modern homes. The farm is still in the Collins name, Jerry's son Bernard and family living on the farm, 1972.

Rev. Father Charles Collins, son of late Jeremiah and Ann "Kavanaugh" Collins was ordained in St. Michale's Seminary Aug. 15, 1899. Born in the Village of Maidstone Cross Dec. 3, 1874, he studied for the Priesthood. He taught for the Basilian Order nearly 48 years. He endeared himself to countless students, teaching as far south as Waco, Texas. He was blessed with a jovial personality. Made many friends. Died June 2, 1947.

In 1874 when the present Catholic Church was built, Mr. Charles Kavanaugh bought the old Catholic Church just north of the North-West corner of the Crossroads. He turned it into a blacksmith shop. Mr. Kavanaugh put the irons on a sleight that John B. Farough made himself from timber from his own farm in the year 1877.

After the blacksmith shop in the old Catholic Church was torn down, Mr. Patrick Donavon erected an Inn. In later years Mr. Hayes, Mr. Peter Sullivan and Mr. Charles Little were all managers in turn. Then in 1910 Mr. Peter Sullivan kept a rooming house, and had a grocery store in the old Bar Room.

In 1927 Mr. Michael John and Mr. George George bought the old building. It was divided into two homes, and moved north of the corner, where the old Catholic Church stood, on what is now No. 114 highway. A large brick garage and Service Station was erected by Mr. John and Mr. George. In a few years was sold to Mr. Thomas Brown. Named Brown's Service Station. In a few years that building was torn down, and the property taken over by the highway.

On the North-East Corner of the Crossroad, in 1857, a Mr. McGee had an Inn built. Mr. Beaton was the first manager following him were Mr. Bain, Mr. Munro and Mr. Webb. It was around 1880 when that Inn was torn down.

At one time all three of these Inn's were carrying on business at same time. All had Bar Rooms.

On January 4, 1910, Sandwich South Township voted on Local Option.

There were 365 votes cast; 111 wet, 254 dry, and has never been allowed to come back again'--1972.

The first store was opened in the Village and owned by Mr. Michael Twomey about 1838. It was located a short distance west of the Cross Roads where the James McAuliffe had his farm.

Charles and Rebecca "Moran" McCloskey came from Ireland in 1847 and settled in Kaidstone Cross in 1855. Mr. McCloskey was a tailor and ran a shop in the Village. He is the grandfather of all the McCloskey's in the section.

His son Thomas was a blacksmith. He was the second blacksmith in the Village. Mr. Corneluis Collins was the first one in 1848. Thomas McCloskey carried on business in the Village until his death about 1885.

His son Charles had learned blacksmithing from his father. He took over the business in 1885 when only sixteen years of age. He continued to blacksmith in his father's shop just a short distance west of the Crossroads. It was most interesting when we went to the Village to stand and watch him shoeing a horse, or heating a piece of iron red hot and shaping it.

Frank McCloskey, a brother of Thomas, was a waggon maker, and an Auctioneer in Maidstone. He made a waggon for John B. Farough about 1875. He gave that waggon to his son Albert Farough. It was well made and well taken care of--was in use seventy-five years.

This waggon shop was just west of the blacksmith shop, where the Michael John Store is now located.

At Frank's death his son Thomas built a grocery store of brick, right where the old waggon shop stood. He carried on a good business for a number of years. In 1915 he sold this store to Mr. Michael John. After Mr. John's death, Mrs. John has continued to carry on the grocery business in 1972. It is the only grocery store left in the Village Maidstone Cross.

Vincent McCloskey son of James McCloskey erected an elevator and chopping mill in 1909. This elevator was located just north of the Michigan Central Railway Station. He ran his business until 1927 when he sold it to Mr. Ross C. Flood of Harrow.

The Ross C. Grain Company is one of the oldest dating back to 1896 when his grandfather started business in Harrow Ontario. In 1931 Ross sold his business in Harrow Ontario, bought the elevator and mill from the McCloskey brothers of Maidstone Cross and moved his family to the Village.

He was not long in gaining respect in his business ability and soon built up a growing business for the farming community. Later he was joined in the business by his four sons Donald, James, Ross C. Jr. and Charles. From their growing business, people began to complain of smoke from burning corn cobs. To combat this pollution, an air induction was installed at a cost of \$20,000.

An incinerator was built. First one in area rising 60 feet in 1962. Also large silos were built for storing and drying grain. Today they handle 1,000,000 tons of grain annually, mostly wheat, corn and soybeans. Besides feeds which are ground and mixed to specifications.

On Tuesday, November 7, 1967, a \$100,000 fire burned the mill and facilities. Flames rose 200 feet high. James was able to save the office records.

Six vehicles were sent from Essex, Maidstone, Sandwich South, Sandwich West and Anderdon Townships to fight the fire.

Fire destroyed the mill on the same site in 1930/

Mr. Ross C. Flood died Jan. 28, 1969. The sons continue to carry on the business in Maidstone Cross Ontario in the same fine business way as their father managed it.

Mr. George Grondin owned and ran another feed and chopping mill in the Village in 1952.

Mr. Milton Hartley of Sandwich South now owns and runs that mill.

POST SERVICE IN THE VILLAGE OF MAIDSTONE CROSS

The first Post Office in the Village was opened in 1838. Mr. John Twomey was the first Post Master. He kept the Post Office in his home in the village of Maidstone Cross just a short distance from the Crossroads.

Mr. Joseph Bennett, who was the first settler to settle on his 100 acres of land on the south west corner of the Indian trail in 1834. He gave the village its name. In 1853 he built his oldest son Charles, who was then 19 years old, a storehouse on his farm.

Mr. Charles Bennett became the second Post Master. The Post Office was in his store. When he was 21 years old, he married Susan D. Whitson of English and Scotch decent. To this union was born five children.

Mr. Thomas Rush came to Maidstone Cross in 1872. He built a store on the old Denis Collins farm, on the south-east corner of the cross roads. This Mr. Denis Collins came from Ireland and was no relative of the Collins' from England that are our ancestors.

Mr. Thomas Rush was the third Post Master in the village. The Post Office was in his store.

On Feb. 1, 1873 Mr. Thomas Rush moved to Essex Centre and opened the first place of business--a general store. That same year Mr. Rush became the first Post Master in Essex Centre. He continued as Post Master until his death in 1910.

He was also one of the first councillors in Essex Centre.

Just north-west of the crossroads Mr. Thomas Moran bought a lot and carpenter McDonald built Mr. Thomas Moran a general store and home combined in 1873. So in 1873 he became the fourth Post Master of Maidstone Cross. Mr. Moran sold this building to Mr. James Gerard. He moved it to Essex Centre.

Mr. Moran then had a building built closer to the cross roads. He carried on a general store and Post Office. Sixteen years later Mr. Moran failed in business.

Mr. Ignatius Halford bought this building and business and continued a general store.

On October 9, 1889 Mr. Halford became the fifth Post Master. He held that office for 53 years until his death in 1942.

Mr. and Mrs. Halford were highly respected citizens. They had a family of seven--five daughters and two sons. He successfully carried on his business and Post Office.

At his death he left the business to his youngest daughter Mary, Mrs. John Walker, also the Post Office.

While Mr. Halford was Post Master, our Parcel Post System and Rural Route System started in Maidstone Cross Ontario July 1, 1912.

The First Couriers Were----

R.R. #1 Mr. George Gerard

R.R. #11 Mr. William Lloyd

R.R. #111 Mr. Walker Grant

Mr. George Gerard held that office for 35 years. Mr. Thomas Shannahan took over R.R. #1 and carried on for next 25 years.

Following him Mr. John Walker was R. R. #1 courier, until his death in 1970.

Mr. Paul Chairmaid then took over the route and carrying on in 1972.

Mr. William Lloyd made his home with Mr. and Mrs. Albert Greaves. He was courier for R. R. #2 for many years.

Mr. Ernest Gerard was second courier for R. R. #2. At his death, his son Walter took over.

The first courier for Rural Route 3 was Mr. Walker Grant. The second courier was Mr. Milford Dawson. Following him Mr. John Walker was courier for R. R. #3.

Then Mr. Arnold Axcell was courier for Rural Route 3 from Jan. 1950 until Sept. 20, 1968.

Mr. Ignatius Halford also built a fine large home, west of his store and Post Office. At his death in 1942 his daughter Mary "Halford" Walker, became Maidstone Cross Sixth Post Mistress, and like her father served the public well, both in the Post Office and the store until her death in 1968.

Mr. Arnold Axcell was born Oct. 20, 1912 in Southend on Sea Essex County, England. His father was killed in World War 1. Arnold was brought to Canada when young. He was 9 years old when he came to make his home with Foster Parents Albert and Minnie Farough. In his youth went to school and worked on the farm. Took an active part in Maidstone United Church work and community work. Later years visited his mother in England before she died.

On Jan. 6, 1940 Arnold joined the Royal Canadian Regiment in London Ontario. He served in England, France, North Africa, Sicily and Italy. He held Rank of Sergeant.

January 18, 1943, he married Miss Jessie Allen Gillies of Glasgow Scotland, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Angus Gillies of Glasgow Scotland.

Their first daughter was born Oct. 13, 1943 in Glasgow Scotland, Shona Aaron Axcell.

Sergeant Axcell was wounded at the Sangro Line in Italy Dec. 8, 1943 by a 4" mortar shell, left elbow broken, spent 5 months in 18th General Hospital outside Naples. Arm had to be broken twice and still short. Sent back to London, Ontario May 1944 to Westminster Hospital for Therapy, discharged Oct. 1944. Sergeant Axcell received his honourable discharge July 1945.

His wife Jessie and daughter Shona came to Canada. Arnold bought 30 acres of land, built a home and garage on the Malden road, two miles south of Maidstone Cross, Ontario. A second daughter, Moira Ann, was born Nov. 2, 1950.

Arnold became Clerk of Sandwich South Township Jan. 1950 to Feb. 1960, when clerk and Treasurer office was combined and Bert Bedford took over that office. Arnold was mail courier 18 years.

On Sept. 21, 1968, Mr. Arnold A. Axcell became the 7th Post Master in Maidstone Cross Ontario.

The old building that Mr. Thomas Moran built as a general store and Post Office, later owned by Mr. Ignatius Halford, continued to be a store and Post Office for 97 years, was torn down July 1969. A fine new modern Post Office built and opened Dec. 1, 1969. Maidstone continues to have 3 Rural Routes, apprx. 800 patrons.

It has 162 lock boxes, is fitted with all necessary modern equipment, such as sorting tables, stamping table, filing cabinet, adding machine, parcel racks, bag racks, inside and outside drop boxes, stamp vending machine, air conditioning, electric baseboard heating, tile floors, washrooms and a pressure pump. Arnold is the first mason to hold the office of Post Master. He also has the honour of being the first Post Master in this new Post Office of Dec. 1, 1969, Maidstone Cross Ontario Canada.

Retired October 20, 1977 the day he turned 65.

THE FENIAN RAID OF 1866

Following the Civil War in the United States, between the North and South, many Southerners took refuge in Canada. Some of these made raids in Border towns and villages.

These raids created a bad feeling towards Canada when the war was over in 1866. The Reciprocity Treaty expired, the United States Government refused to renew it.

Canada also suffered from the ill will of the American Government in another way.

On June 1, 1866, a body of ruffians called Fenians belonging to a secret society, having as its object the separation of Ireland from Great Britain, crossed the border and took possession of old Fort Erie. Civilians volunteered from Toronto, Hamilton and Niagara and held them back until Colonel Peacock arrived with his regulars. During the squirmish several were killed. The raiders retreated. A few stragglers were left behind, captured and tried and sentenced to death. Through Clemency of the Crown was changed to life in prison in a penitentiary.

During the Fenian raids along Detroit River as might be expected, excitement was at fever heat, for every civilian was prepared and armed to assist the Militia upon a moments notice.

Old Veteran Companies, volunteers and civilians patrolled every road and concession surrounding the towns and villages along the Detroit River. Attacks were made all along the river, but with the watchfulness of Canadian volunteers, prevented any serious attempt to invade the country.

Here is a true story about "The Fenian Raid". As Jemima grace "Collins" Farough, has told it to me. It was in 1866 when every man was called from the Village of Maidstone Cross Ont. and the surrounding country to help watch along the Detroit River. Not a man was left in any of the homes. The women were frightened to be left alone.

Mr. John Greary a farmer living on his 100 acre farm where the present Catholic Church is now located, decided to act crazy. When they would tell him to do something, he would just act silly, do the opposite he was told to do, or say crazy things.

One day they gave him a pail and told him to go to the river for water. He took the pail, left it at the river, came back without water. So they told him he was no good, he might as well go home, which he did. So the women then had a man with them in the village.

EARLY FORESTS

The Virgin forests of the early 18th century were not like anything we see in these parts today. The trees were very large and tall. All we have to do is examine some of the timbers in our old barns and houses, pieces of old furniture to appreciate the width and height of our native trees.

In those early days so much of the very valuable timber was just cut down and burned so as to clear the land to grow grain and food. Where neighbours were close enough, they made logging bees and helped each other.

Our ancestors and early pioneers had to be Jack of all trades--farmer, veterinery, butcher, hunter, carpenter, tool maker, wassal, shoemaker, blacksmith, cabinet and furnituremaker.

The wife had to care for her home and family, be nurse, candlemaker, soap maker, tailor, spinner of year from the wool of their own sheep, weaver of home spun cloth, milliner, dress-maker. They produced everything for their daily needs. They had only very crude ploughs, wooden harrows, split logs nailed together and weighted down with a large stone or stones, to serve as a drag.

All they had were little wooden hand rakes and hoes. They carried a bag of grain over their shoulders walking up and down the fields broadcasting the grain by hand. Then harrowing it in to cover it. The ripened grain was cut with a scythe or cradle. Threshing took place on a barn floor or other hard dry surface. The grain was beat out with a flail which was two round sticks fastened together by a leather thong. They then poured the grain from one container to another in the wind, to separate the grain from the chaff.

The Government supplied the early pioleers with small hand mills to grind the grain into flour, or as our grandparents did, carry a bag of grain on their back through the swamp to Sandwich to have it ground by the wind or water mills, carry the flour back home a distance of twelve to fifteen miles each way.

All ashes were carefully saved and stored in a dry place to make soap, from fat when they butchered. They made their own syrup and sugar from the sap of our maple trees. It took 12 gallons of sap to make one gallon of syrup.

Their first wells were a big hole dug in the ground, walled up with large stones taken from the land. Big ponds were dug to water the stock. At first water was dipped up by means of a pail on the end of a rope. Later used a pulley. Then pumps were invented. Later deep artician wells were bored into the rock and windmills invented to pump the water to the surface. In the 19th century gasoline engines, then electric engines. So we have gonela long way to ease man's working hours. For many years now, we have running hot and cold water in our home.

CATHOLIC CHURCH AT MAIDSTONE CROSS

There has been no record kept of the exact time the first Catholic log Chapel was built, but the first records of Baptisms were registered in Sandwich in 1846, so they feel safe to conclude it was about that time it was opened.

The first log chapel was built on the north west corner of the crossroads, just back a short distance from what it now No. 3 Highway. It was forty feet long, twenty-four feet wide and ten feet high on the corners, with a pitch roof, surmounted by a cross. Four or five windows on each side, two windows and a door on end.

The construction of the church was simple. Each family furnished a given number of logs. A bee was made, the structure went up in a day or two.

The first pastor of the parish was Father J.V. Jaffra. He ruled from 1847 to 1854. In view of the rapid settlement of the district, the log chapel was suprlanted by a brick church about seventy-five feet long, thrity-six feet wide, twenty-four feet on the corners.

There were five large windows of roman style on each side, a large rose window in the end with double swing doors.

There was a cross six feet high on top the church. A mission cross fifteen feet high in the yard. This church was located seventy-five feet back from the Indian Trail and twenty-five feet from the middle trail. An addition for a vestry was made by Peter McLaughlin. Peter McLaughlin made the brick for both the Church and Vestry, which was erected north of the church. Material for same came from Hugh Lennon's farm. William Kerr did the brick work. Behind the church a belfry thirty-five feet high was erected with a roof over the bell.

Bessie Mooney was appointed organist and directress of the first choir. Her singers were Philip, Richard and Edward Mooney and big Paddy McCann.

The Cemetery was laid out ten rods back from the trail that the soldiers blazed through on the Indian Trail.

This Church was used as a place of worship for twenty-five years, when the Bishop ordered it closed as a place of worship, making it necessary to build the present church.

Plans began for the new church in 1872. Subscriptions for the new building was taken up. The contract let for fourteen thousand dollars.

The construction was placed in the hands of Mr. Moore. The brick was made on Hugh Lennon's farm. Ignatius and John Halford hauled the gravel from Frith's gravel pit.

The corner stone was laid in 1874. A new cemetery was laid out. The grounds beautified by planting maple and spruce trees around and through the grounds.

A new large rectory was built near the church.

Up to 1937, thirty-five Priests have reigned. There is a large dining hall built later. Then a big sisters home. A large school has since been built.

FIRST RAILWAY IN MAIDSTONE CROSS

The old Canada Southern Railway built a branch line from Essex centre through Maidstone Cross to Windsor in 1880.

This was just a one track line. Old Engine No. 66 hauled all the ballast for the Canada Southern Railway in 1880.

The first passenger train run on January 1, 1881. The Engine pulling it was Number 100. It had a red smoke stack.

The first station was a box car just north west of the railroad at the crossing of the old Indian Trail at Maidstone Cross. The first operator in that station was Mr. Arthur Raines. He later kept a store in Essex Centre.

In 1882, The Michigan Central Railway came through from Detroit and built the Canada Southern, into a double track line. This was called the Michigan Central line.

A new and much larger station was built that same year. Mr. Jack Kennedy being the first station agent for this Michigan Central line.

In 1887 Mr. Charles Churchill became station agent in Maidstone Cross. He continued to be agent until he was pensioned off.. When Mr. and Mrs. Charles H. Churchill first came to Maidstone Cross, they lived for three years in the old brick Rectory of the Catholic Church. It was Mr. Churchill got the first express office in the Village May 31, 1889.

In 1887, just west of the Michigan Central Railway, a Mr. Munro run a saw mill. He had a very large home.

In 1887 William and Matthew Orr rented part of this land and ran a chopping mill.

In 1890, Mr. Churchill bought this land from Mr. Munro. He remodelled one part of the house for themselves which was a lovely two story home with large rooms. He sold the other part to Mr. Jeremiah Collins for thier home. Both homes in good repair in 1972.

Mr. Charles Churchill was the son of Daniel and Mary Ann Churchill, Canadian born, English decent. Mrs. Catharine Churchill was daughter of Edward and Adeline Kelly, Irish decent.

Mr. Churchill learned Telegraphy from James Leich of Ridgetown. His first jobs were relieving other operators. He served six years at Cornell, was married during this time. He moved to Maidstone in 1887, finishing his career there as station agent and operator, and for many years was Windsor Star's Correspondent.

Of his 47 years of service with the Michigan Central Railway, 35 years and 5 months were at his post in Maidstone. Not a single accident at the crossing. Although a Mr. Gilkinson of Kingsville died in the Depot, after his team of horses ran up the tracks, rather than following the road and was struck by a train.

When Charles Churchill first started working, he worked twelve hours a day, including Sundays. Later years operators organized an 8 hour day. He said the Michigan Central Railway used him first rate. He didn't want to quit when it came time to be pensioned.

At one time Maidstone was a busy shipping centre. A great deal of livestock and grain was handled, as well as ticket service.

An amusing incident happened for a motorist. His car collided with a train, then headed up the tracks ahead of the engine. The cowcatcher picked up his back wheels, ran along the tracks, all the way to the first switch. He wasn't severely hurt, only badly scared, altho his car was badly smashed.

Mr. and Mrs. Churchill were active workers in Maidstone Methodist Church. Both were Sunday school teachers for many years. Mrs. Churchill was president of the Ladies Aid for twenty-five years. Mrs. Churchill was born in 1868, died Nov. 11 1955.

In 1936, the Michigan Central Station that was built in 1882 in the village was torn down. It served as a station for 54 years.

The Windsor, Essex and Lake Shore Electric Railway was built from Leamington through Maidstone Cross to Windsor in 1910.

Mr. and Mrs. Ignatius Halford, took their first ride from Maidstone Cross to Windsor Ontario on Christmas Day 1910.

When the automobiles took over our way of transportation, passenger service on trains was discontinued. As in time was the Electric Railway. So buses became the next way of travel, for those without cars. The hard-surfaced highways bringing in this era.

CANNING FACTORY AT MAIDSTONE

Mr. David and Sarah Thomas took up land in Maidstone Township, one mile south of No. 3 highway near the village of Maidstone Cross, at the corner of Maidstone-Sandwich South Townline and South Talbot Road. They raised 4 daughters, Elizabeth, Laura, Sophronia and Mary. One son William H. Thomas.

William grew up, was educated and farmed with his father. He married Grace Ann Farough daughter of John E. and Jemima C. "Collins" Farough. After thier marriage Wm. and Grace took up farming on land joining his fathers.

After Mr. David Thomas' death Wm. took over the farm, being a very successul farmer. They had one daughter Marjorie, and two sons Grant E. and Wilbur D. After educating their family, they too became successful farmers, purchasing more land.

The Thomas Canning "Maidstone" Ltd.

This company was established in the year 1932. As a partnership by Wm. H. Thomas and his two sons Grant E. Thomas and Wilbur D. Thomas started as a home canning plant. Each year the volume of business increased. It became necessary to build a new factory and two more large ware houses.

In the year 1971 over one hundred women and fifty men were employed. This year of 1972, they are building another warehouse. Their Brand name in "Utopia" which is known throught Canada.

They try to live up to their Brand Name. Some years ago it became a Limited Company and specialize in a quality product.... Thomas "Utopia" Brand Tomatoes, Maidstone Ontario Canada. The Thomas' have all been leaders in Maidstone United Church.

SCHOOLS

The first school was built one mile north of the village on the Twomy Creek on Mr. James McAuliffe's farm.

The second school was built 2 miles west of the village, where the old Indian trail first went through the dense forest. It was between the village of Maidstone Cross and Oldcastle. This one was built in 1877, and called the Ragtown School.

The third public school was built in 1891 3/4 of a mile south of the village on the corner of Malden and South Talbot roads. This school was a brick building and had a playground of one acre. A row of maple and oak trees were planted around the outside.

The first trustees were Mr. Charles Collins from England, our grandfather, Mr. John Greaves Sr. also from England and Mr. Jeremiah Collins, Ireland.

The first school teacher was Mr. Jolley. In about 1910-11 a wind storm blew the end of this school in. It was replaced by a much larger brick school that same year. It served the community nearly 50 years, when it became necessary to build a 2 room school. The new school was built on the south west corner of Malden and South Talbot roads, on grandfather Charles Collins farm. This school was named after his grandson living on the farm "The Charles Collins" school.

It was opened in 1958 and closed in 1970. Students then taken by bus to Essex schools. This two room school has been sold to become a Church. The old brick school for a number of years was used for a school for retarded.

THE TELEPHONE SYSTEM

The Telephone System was installed in Sandwich South Township with office in the village just west of Mr. Ignatius Halford's home. It opened Jan. 1, 1910.

The first operator was Miss Madge Sexton, living in the village, where the old Bennett home once was. Other operators were Miss Edith Collins daughter of George and Maria Collins of English Decent, our uncle.

Miss Ann Delisle whose father was James DeLisle.

Mrs. Annie Larkham, widow of George Larkham, became operator and moved into the village in 1923. She was born Aug. 4, 1879 in Maidstone Township, daughter of Thadius and Sarah "McHugh" McGuire of Ireland.

She was left a widow with 8 small children to make her own way in the world.

She held the position of operator of Sandwich South Municipal Telephone System, until the system was sold to the Bell Telephone Company on March 30, 1957.

She was very efficient in her position and did so many acts of kindness for the people of Sandwich South Township.

She was a christian woman of the Catholic Faith of St. Mary's Church in the village, where she was baptized, married and buried. She was also a member of the Catholic League, Altar Society and league of Sacred Heart Society.

As she so often walked to church to pray, she might be heard to say 'number please'--Glory be to God, I'm supposed to be praying not answering "Number Please".

THE FIRST PROTESTANT CHURCHES

The first English Church was built of logs in the earlier part of the 1800, at Oldcastle on the old Nicholson farm, later owned by Stephen Collins of Headley England in 1835 and has continued in the Collins family until just a few years ago.

The St. Stephen and Redeemer Churches were built just south west of Oldcastle.

Even as early as 1823, this was a worship centre when it was still only an Indian Trail. Travelling Methodist Episcopal Ministers went through the district, holding services in homes, where neighbours would gather together to worship, have their children baptized, burial rites or marriage ceremonies performed. We have no record of these travelling ministers.

The first Methodist Episcopal Church was built some years later, soon after 1850. This was a log chapel, built 3 miles east of Maidstone Cross on the Indian Trail, that is now our Talbot Road.

There were very few English settlers around Maidstone as early as this. We do know that our grandparents, Charles and Elizabeth Collins, Joseph and Mary Farough, were the early founders and pillars of that first log chapel. Charles Collins and Joseph Farough were men of stirring worth to the cause of truth and righteousness. They have left us a heritage in this community that will never perish.

In the year 1877, the present Methodist Episcopal church was built, one mile east of Maidstone Cross. Altho the church was built in 1877, the deed of land was not given until 1879. Composed of lot number 292 on the north side of Talbot Road, in the Township of Maidstone, Essex County, Ontario.

DEEDS OF LAND

Essex County number 2940 given for the sum of one dollar. The first trustee's were Chrls Collins, Robt. Little, William Robinson, Arthur Wilson and Charles Bunn. Signed in the presence of William Robinson.

Signed--Alexander Cameron.

In 1907 the Trustees of the church were John Ellis, John Hyland, Thomas Ellis, Albert Hyland, George Bunn, David Thomas, John Farough, Thomas Collins, Charles Greaves, George Greaves, Thomas Greaves, Nicholas Farough, Joseph Farough, and William Hyland.

Deed was drawn up by W. D. Beaman for the sale of more land from Charles and Ida Little.

Part of lot 291 for Church Property.

Signed--W. D. Beaman.

On March 28, 1941, land was again purchased of lot number 291 from Betty Vozir for Church property. Trustees William Thomas, George Ellis, Perry Pomeroy, George Bunn, George Greaves, Walter Farough, Charles Farough, Edward Ellis, J. Charles Collins.

Witnessed by William Thomas.

Signed--Forbes B. Geddes, K.C.

DEEDS OF LAND

On June 17, 1950 land was again bought from Edward and Elizabeth McHugh, from lot 292. Trustees--William Thomas, Perry Pomeroy, George Bunn, Edward Ellis, Walter Farough, J. Charles Collins, Albert Farough.

Witnessed by William Thomas

Signed--Forbes Geddes, K.C.

At the closing of the Wesley Church, the Elford and North Ridge Churches, Gesto once again joins Maidstone and Bethel as a three point circuit, Rev. Hyland being the Minister.

In 1970, as we attended the 93rd Anniversary of Maidstone United Church, we go once again to the little "White Church". It has all been recovered in white asbestos siding in its original colour.

At this service the Ontario Government presented a plaque in recognition of 93 years of Christian Service to the Community of the Maidstone United Church.

Walter Farough, an elder in the church of long standing, received the plaque, from Rev. W. Hyland in a brief dedication ceremony.

In 1971 the congregation filled the church for their participation in the 94th Anniversary Service conducted by their Minister, Rev. H. W. Wonfor.

The men who swung the broad axe have been a power in our land. The happy contented Christian Mothers that loved their children, taught them to love God, taught us how to be good generous neighbours, to lend a helping hand to all in need, and taught us how to pray, and have faith and trust in God.

What do we owe to those who toiled long years,
That we might comfort know.

Gave of their best, their brain, their brawn
Their smiles and tears,
That homes in peace might grow.

We owe them more than we can e'er repay.
We can but do our best,

To carry on the work they handed down.
May we too stand the test.

In 1951 land was purchased from lot 291 from Betty Vozir.
Trustees--William Thomas, Perry Pomeroy, George Bunn, Edward
Ellis, Walter Farough, Albert Farough, J. Charles Collins.

Witnessed--William Thomas

Signed--Forbes E. Geddes, K.C.

Before 1890, Gesto joined Maidstone as a two charge circuit.
I can recall Jemima Collins Farough telling of going over to
Gesto sometimes to special services, but before 1900. Two
circuits were made, the North Ridge and Elford Churches joined
with Gesto to form a circuit.

While churches at Bethel and Wesley joined with Maidstone to
form a three Church circuit.

The first Trustees of the Maidstone Methodist Church were
Robert Little, Charles Collins of England, William Robinson,
Charles Bunn and Arthur Wilson.

The first Secretary-Treasurer was John Greaves Sr.

The first Organist was Mary Greenaway.

All through the years that have followed, the descendants
of our ancestors have continued to help to carry on the work in
the church and community, that the early pioneers began, in a
new country that was dense forest.

When church union went into effect The Methodist Church of
Canada became a part of the union of churches, we became The
United Church of Canada.

From 1877 this country church was a land mark, known as the
little white church of Maidstone Cross.

In 1949 it was completely changed when it was covered with
insul brick, many of us had a feeling of sadness, not to see it
as the little white church of Maidstone.

In earlier days when Maidstone United Church became a circuit of
three churches, Bethel and Wesley joining Maidstone, at that time
the manse was over at the Wesley Charge. Later the old Robert
Little home was bought across Talbot Road from the Maidstone Church
for the manse.

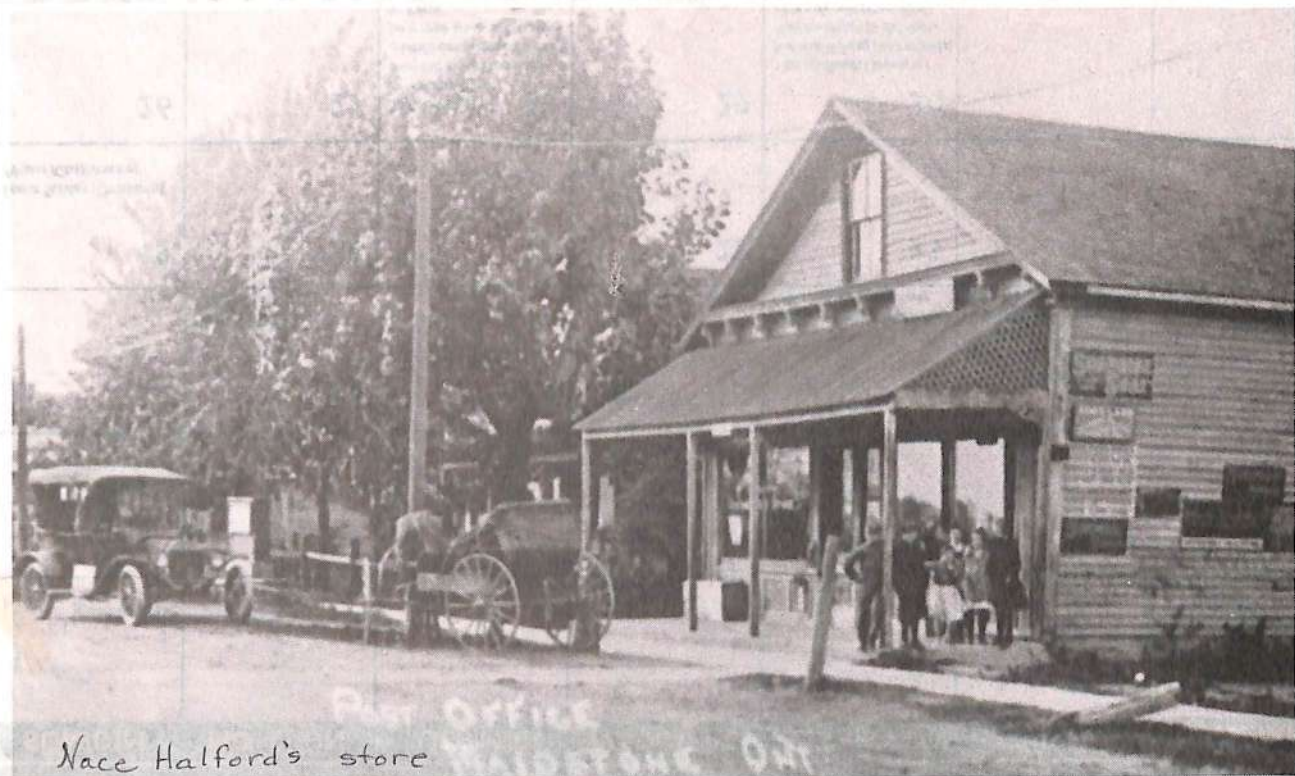
A tornado wind storm blew one end of that home in so it was torn down and a new house built.

A new entry room was built on the church. A choir loft with basement was also added. A beautiful memorial window was placed in this new part, dedicated to the Founders of the Church. The Sanctuary was re-decorated, new pews and furnishing donated as Memorials.

In this church community, there is a history, if it had all been recorded, would be interesting indeed, and would furnish us with a religion of gratitude. It is the history of the pioneer in all his lines.

The monument of that history is this community, in which we as descendants live and have been a part in carrying on what our Pioneer Ancestors began.

Our Ancestors came to Maidstone Cross as piineers to build.
They came to build and building a mighty structure grew
And ever as we builded, builded better that we knew,
And through the darkening wilderness, Lo!
We were led in might,
Our log heaps made a smoke by day,
A pillowed flame by night,
Now, when across the Continent,
We've seen our task expand,
To our Childrens children,
And their childrens children,
We bequeth is land.



Nace Halford's store

Main street in Maidstone

La rue Principale à Maidstone