

FAIRPLAY AND BETHEL

The communities of Fairplay and Bethel are not centralized at any particular crossroad or site. Generally, the two surround the Baseline Road and received their titles from Bethel United Church built in 1888 on Baseline Road, and from the first post office established in 1897 in that area. The post office was originally situated in the home of Mr. Dennis Perrin, which a Mr. Robert Hurst had named 'Fairplay', and thereby gave the community its name.

The mail was picked up every Tuesday and Friday from Tecumseh and taken to Mr. Perrin's home. Mr. Perrin himself delivered the mail until 1909, at which time it was moved to the home of Sam McKenzie, and delivered by James Quick until rural mail delivery started from Maidstone in approximately 1912.

In 1895 the 'Union Cheese Factory' was built on a corner of the Fairbairn property, located just off of the Baseline Road and close to the Maidstone-Sandwich South townline. It was closed in 1906 but reopened in 1908, finally being torn down in 1927 after going out of operation for the second time. Mr. Wood was an early president of the cheese factory and Dennis Perrin was Secretary.

One popular personality of the Fairplay community was Louisa Payne. Louisa lived with her parents as slaves in the United States until they found freedom in Canada in the early 1800's. The family came to Sandwich South at the turn of the 19th Century, and built a log house on the east side of the 9th Concession in 1807.

Miss Payne remained in this house until she died of pneumonia in 1937 at the age of 97 years. She was buried in the Fairbairn Cemetery.

Miss Payne was best-loved by the children of the Fairplay Community.

*She grew beautiful flowers and although the house and surroundings were just ready to topple over, she was always ready to show the school children passing by, who stopped to chat with her often, her lovely things [including stored period costumes] and perhaps give them a rusti-coated apple, and let them play with the many dogs and cats around. She was a big person and had a heart and voice just as big.*84*

In 1913, Mr. Thomas Fairbairn willed one acre of his land to Sandwich South township to be used as a cemetery. Upon the township's refusal to accept the land, it was granted to Bethel United Church, which honoured the Fairbairn request, and turned it into a private cemetery. Many of the area's older residents have been buried in the Fairbairn Cemetery located on Baseline Road.



Louisa Payne pictured here outside her sided log home which was originally built in 1807. Louisa was a resident of the Fairplay community and had escaped as a slave from the United States with her parents. Miss Payne died in 1937 at the age of 97, a well-known and beloved lady.

Mrs. Crowder.

Jean Hill - His. of Fairplay 1951.

On April 21, 1905 gas and oil was struck, and a well established on the farm of Ed. Dunn at Fairplay; followed on May 19 of the same year, by the finding of gas on the John Hayes Farm, Canal Street, at a depth of 123 feet. His farm was also part of the Fairplay community. However, neither well proved significantly productive.

Typical of all the other settlements in the area, several of its residents have 'Crown deeds' to their lands and many of the farms have been passed down to the fifth generation. Ures, Frith MacKenzie, O'Keefe, Plant, Perrin, Lavin, Ferry, Marshall, Fairbairn, Hurst, Quick, Croft, Nagorsen, St. Louis, Watson, Copeland, Mooney, Hill and Robinson are names linked to the Fairplay, Bethel settlement.



The Robinson homestead, established by Harold Robinson in 1873, and pictured here as it appeared in 1910.

The farm is located on the eighth concession near the Baseline Road.