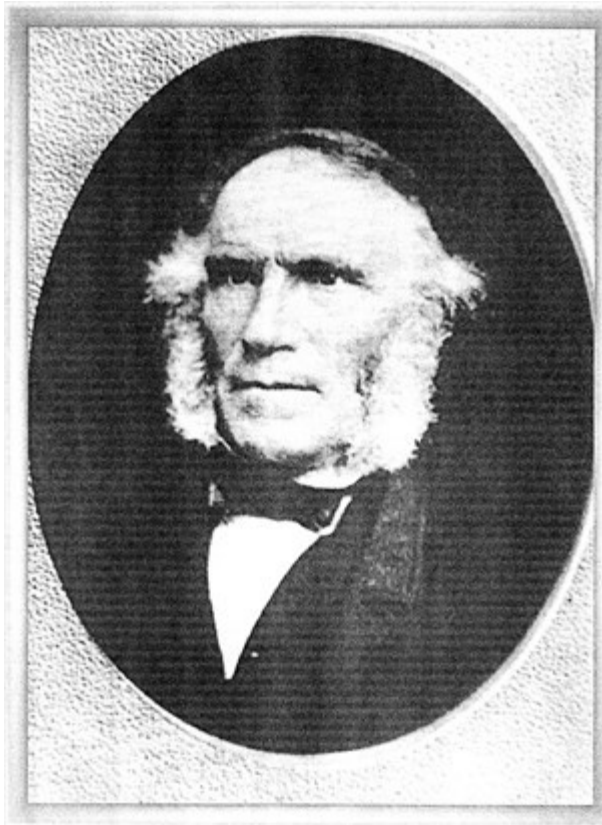


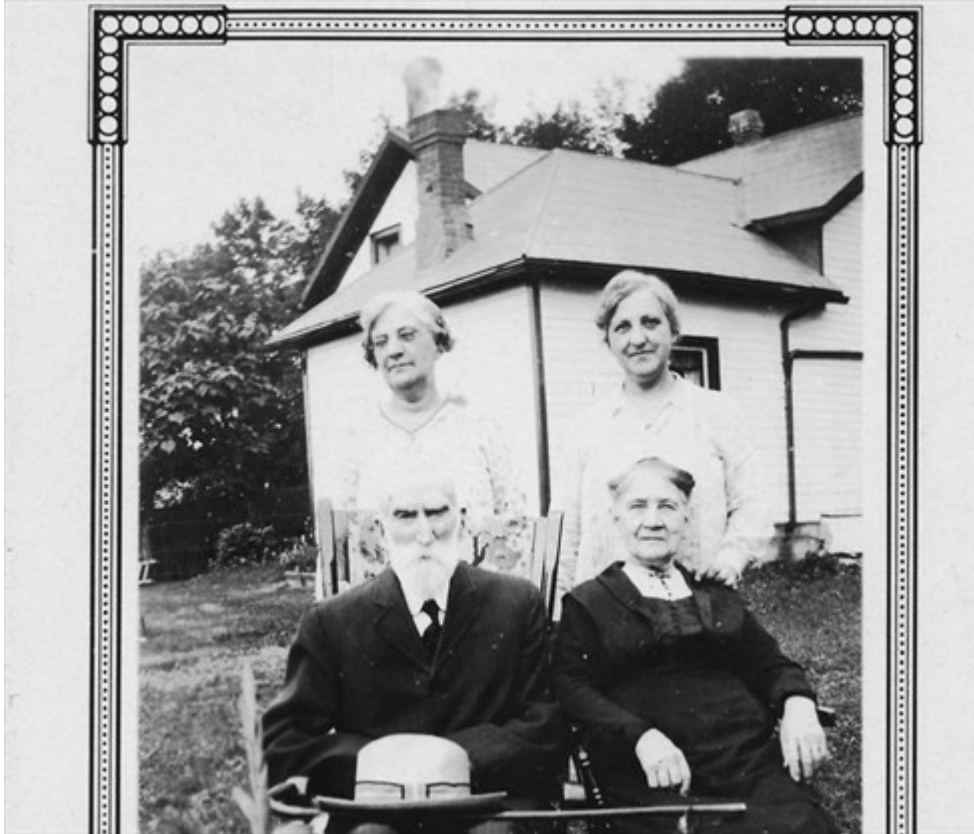
# How did our ancestors end up where they did?

COMMUNITY Mar 23, 2018 by Larry Doble, president of the Sunderland and District Historical Society Brock Citizen

Lyn Downer of the War of 1812 Veteran Graveside Recognition Project joined Wally Vrooman, Regional Councillor Ted Smith, John Henderson (a family member of Vrooman's), Carol Doran-Sproule and Larry Doble for the installation of a plaque honouring Colonel James Vrooman in 2014. - Scott Howard - Metroland file photo



John Doble arrived in 1824 with three brothers, three sisters, his wife and three children. He was one of the soldiers from the County Mayo Militia that sought out a new homestead in Brock Township on the 200 acres of land granted for military service. - Photo courtesy of the Sunderland and District Historical Society



George Shier who is the youngest son of Richard Shier and Cathering Shier that came to Canada in 1822, then came to Brock in 1831. - Photo courtesy of the Sunderland and District Historical Society



This stamp highlights the presence of United Empire Loyalists after they came to this area after the War of 1812. - Photo courtesy of the Sunderland and District Historical Society

How you ended up in a particular area depended mainly what free land was opening up when you first arrived and/or where your earlier relatives had settled. As a newcomer you needed to have a friendly foothold or safe base of operation until you became ready to start out on your own.

Several historical events led to the settlement of the lands from Holland Landing to Lindsay.

First of all, John Graves Simcoe organized the building of Yonge Street from Toronto north to Lake Simcoe in 1796. This road opened up the northern townships for settlement.

Lord Simcoe made Toronto (then called York) the new capital of Upper Canada and it became a major trade centre and entry point for all the new settlers arriving from the British Isles.

After six to eight weeks of travel on crowded ships, the surviving immigrants headed north up Yonge Street to Holland Landing to reach their new homes in Ontario. Many of these settlers had been granted free land because of their military service in the British army.

After the battle of Waterloo in 1815, Britain greatly reduced its standing army and gave land in the colonies to its decommissioned soldiers. Britain needed to build up the population of Upper Canada in order to make it more defensible from future attacks from the United States.

Around 1818, Brock Township opened up for settlement and many soldiers who had lived on the U.S.-Canada border during the War of 1812 moved into the township from the Niagara Region. Col. James Vrooman moved his family here about that time and established the prosperous town of Vroomanton near Vallentyne.

Also about this time a group of Protestant German settlers called Palatines moved from parts of Ireland to Canada.

They had been given tenancy on estates in southern Ireland by the Protestant Queen Anne of England around 1709 and they farmed there for several generations until their Catholic landlords raised the rents to unsustainable levels.

These families are now common in Georgina and Brock townships. The names Brethour, St. John, Miller, Shier, Lowes, Rynard, Baker, Switzer and Williams all have been in those areas since about 1820.

With them came many soldiers from the County Mayo Militia and names like Doble, Merrick, Fair and Acton. They sought out a new homestead on the 200 acres of land granted each for military service.

Philip St. John, a prominent Palatine leader, recruited more than 200 families from the United States as he moved north from New York state to settle in Brock Township.

Many other settlers who headed north were United Empire Loyalists who were persecuted after Britain lost the War of Independence in 1776 and after the indecisive War of 1812.

In Georgina, named after George III of England, the township was generally closed to normal settlement, but the government decided after the War of 1812

with America to give the land south of Lake Simcoe to settlers with a military background so that they could readily form a local militia unit to defend the area.

At Holland Landing, settlers could travel by boat across Lake Simcoe to Beaverton and then walk south into Brock or move east via Indian trails through Georgina into Brock.

Lindsay and Ops Township were settled around 1828 and many of those early families were Irish Roman Catholics having family names like Hazelton, Miller, Pyne, Hyde and Kelly. Ops is believed to have come from the Latin "Ops," the Goddess of Plenty, indicative of the rich farmlands in the area.

Families and relatives came by the shipload in distinctive groups and settled together so that they could support each other in nature's hostile environment.

In Brock, a band of Catholic families lived east from the church and cemetery of St. Malachy in Vroomanton and farmed north of Sunderland. Names like Doyle, Keenan, Malone and McNenly cover the early maps in this east-west zone.

Scottish families settled in Brock east of Sunderland toward Mariposa and Manilla.

The McDonald, McPhadden, Campbell, McLean families built Presbyterian churches and laid to rest their ancestors in Scottish burial grounds near Wick and Manilla. Specific cemeteries were the resting place for generation after generation of connected religious and ethnic groups.

Husbands like William Bagshaw, a veteran of Napoleon's Waterloo, came out alone and it was many years before he could clear the land and build a cabin so that his family could follow.

In these early times families were often quite isolated and the local church became the focal point for many social activities and the link joined families by marriage.

A quick search to discover when your family arrived in Ontario as well as a knowledge of their cultural and religious persuasion will readily help you determine historically how you ended up in your current location.

Local historical societies have gathered up and organized the data you need to trace your roots. Now that cemetery records and pictures are online, a researcher can easily trace the location of their relatives from their own home.