

From Miller Family Tree:

"Andrew Miller was born in Ulster County in the State of New York, U.S.A. in October 1766. When he was a boy all his people were killed by the Indians and he alone was taken alive by them. In 1779 the Indians brought him into Niagara, a prisoner boy; here he was redeemed from them by John Burch Esq., with whom he lived until he was grown up. He married the daughter of a United Empire Loyalist and with a feeling of deep gratitude toward his benefactor, John Burch, he named his eldest son after him, John Burch Miller.

In 1793 he took up land on the frontier in the county of Lincoln (Welland) Canada; this was on the Niagara River about five miles below Fort Erie at the end of an Indian Trail leading back through the woods to Port Colborne. He did not receive a deed the Crown for this land until the year 1801. Later he took up other lands from the Crown in different parts of the Province.

In June 1809 he was appointed an Ensign in the Third Regiment of Militia in the District of Niagara, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel John Warren. His Excellency Sir Francis Gore was then Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Upper Canada.

Andrew Miller lived on the land he first received from the Crown until he died in January 1843, and his family and descendants will be found on the family tree."

To the best of my knowledge the above is correct.

"Albert Weatherstone Miller," Fort Erie

February 25, 1909.

*Andrew Miller (1766-1843) and his wife, Elizabeth Everitt (1772-1841) were buried under a tree on the property as was the custom in those days, but later removed to the family plot at St. John's Anglican Churchyard, Ridgemount.

ST. JOHN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH, RIDGEMOUNT.

This church was built in 1840 on the old trail when the diocese of Toronto embraced nearly all of the Province of Ontario west of that city and was under the supervision of Bishop Strachan. The Parish of Waterloo covered the township of Bertie and was in charge of its first rector at that time, the Rev. John Anderson, through whose efforts the Church was erected to serve the needs of his rural parishioners. In 1953 after 135 years in the same parish originally known as Waterloo, this picturesque and historic Church, one of the first on the frontier separated from St. Paul's, Fort Erie, and joined with the new All Saints Anglican Church in Ridgeway, under the charge of the same Rector. Many pioneers of the district and their

descendants sleep in the cemetery adjoining the Church, including my immediate family; Millers, Lauries and the Rysons.

"LITTLE AFRICA"

On the side of the trail opposite St. John's Church, there is a negro cemetery called Dunahower and supposedly the remains of the village of "Little Africa" which was entirely populated by Negro slaves who came to Canada by the Underground route from the south, popularized many years ago in Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel "Uncle Tom's Cabin". This village flourished between 1840 to 1875, but after that date, the population dwindled and drifted to other parts of southern and western Ontario where their descendants are to be found today. At the time, the area was rich in black walnut, white oak, maple, ash and hickory. The 200-odd residents labored to cut logs by the thousands, most of which were rafted across the Niagara River and re-shipped from Tonawanda to eastern United States centres. The place was quite prosperous and had its own neighborhood stores and church.

SPLIT ROCK HILL

AT Split Rock Hill on the trail, at the foot of the cliff, there was a spring of clear fresh water which must have been very welcome to travellers from the river to the lake. It was thought that this spring had its source in the lake, the water coming down through the strata of limestone. My cousin, the late A.W. Miller of Fort Erie, historian and Naturalist, says there is something unusual here, as there is a crevice, two to three feet wide and nearly 200 feet long, where the outer edge of limestone seems to have moved away from the main body of rock. He says this large area of rock didn't just tip over sideways, because the walls down in the crevice are straight and parallel and he thinks these rock faces have been together for a thousand years perhaps. At

cotton or lace factory! here is the native abode of innocence and peace. These children never see their parents contending and quarrelling about dogmatical points in religion or politics, for their parents refuse to adopt creeds, and are loyal and true to the government which protects them; willingly obedient to the law, enemies of oppression, the friends of all mankind, charitable and humane. This is the character of a true professor of the religion of Fox, Barclay and Penn".

"Opposite the school-house and fastened to the boughs of the lofty beech and maple trees which surround the area, are placed two swings, made of the bark of the elm and bass-wood, prepared in an ashery; one is for the boys, the other for the girls. I took a turn in one of these machines, was sent aloft in the air, and thought for a few minutes that I had gone back to the halcyon days of youth. Mr. Wilson then took us to see the burying ground of the Society, where these children of peace rest in quiet, awaiting their eternal morning. We retired to dine at Mr. Thomas Moore's, much pleased that we had not missed the Quaker meeting-house.

"Mr Moore, in 1813, planted in the fall, ninety-nine apple trees on an acre of ground, on an acclivity - they now form an excellent and valuable bearing orchard; this is worthy of imitation."

*Bertie and Humberstone Townships were known as the Quaker townships. This was because the early pioneers from New Jersey and Pennsylvania were members of the Society of Friends, Mennonites, and Tankers (United Brethren).

In the "History of the Society of Friends" by Dorland:

"Among the earliest Quaker pioneers in the Niagara District were Charles Willson and Asa Schooley, whose hospitable homes were places of rest and refreshment for many a weary traveller in first crossing into Canadian Territory and a valuable clue to the Friends in this district was given in the Journals of Joseph Moore and Jacob Lindley, well-known ministers in New Jersey who came to Bertie and Humberstone in 1793 and again in 1797."

The following are some of the names mentioned in Jacob Lindley's Journal of 1797:

"Asa and Sarah Schooley; Charles Willson; Joseph and Ann Marsh; Daniel and Patience Pound; John and Mary Harrit; John Cutler; Obadiah Dennis, William Lundy; Jeremy Moore; John Moore; Thos. Mercer; Adam and Sarah Burwell; John and Ann Stevens, Abraham Webster; Joseph Havens; John Taylor; John Hill and Benjamin Hill."

TOWN HALL IN RIDGEWAY

The trail takes us past the town hall in Ridgeway, which was built in 1874 and was a stone building with a slate roof. The interior of the building was just one large room when built,

with a two foot high platform at the east end. A large wood stove stood inside the front door to provide heat and the old minutes show that a man was paid to light the fires and trim the oil lamps. Many years before the turn of the century a small building was erected to house the township jail. This adjoined the main building but was entered from an outside door until 1928

BERTIE TOWNSHIP COUNCIL:

The township council had come into existence on January 26, 1850, previous to the building of the town hall, when a few residents met at Mrs. Willson's Inn, Cross Road, Bertie To. (Cross Roads is thought to have been at the intersection of Nye and Ridge Roads). George Hardison was the clerk of the meeting and Isaac Haun the townserver or townsreeve (the copperplate writing of the first minutes was not legible.) Others in attendance were Richard Graham, Wm. Reatha and Benjamin House.

Other early meetings were held at various inns and taverns in the Township, including Palmer's, Buck's (Stevensville McWilliams, Lewis's Inn at Waterloo and Faliner's.

It is interesting to note the appointments made at the second meeting of the council. The pound keepers of those early days had to deal with horses, rams, boars and pigs. Fines of one shilling and three pence for the first offence and 2 shilling and sixpence for each subsequent offence were levied on those who allowed animals to roam at large.

After the hall was built, it was used for all manner of meetings, concerts, dances and travelling shows and plays, including "Uncle Tom's Cabin", the popular play of the times. The town hall was renovated in 1961.

CONTINUATION OF THE TRAIL: Again taking up the trail to the lake, past the Indian Cemetery in the gravel pit just out of Ridgeway

the trail turns toward Abino Bay, now Crystal Beach. It was used in the War 1812-14, especially in the last naval action fought on the Great Lakes. This action is commemorated by a plaque in the Queen's Circle at Crystal Beach.

CAPTURE OF THE SOMERS AND OHIO

"On the night of August 12, 1814, seventy seamen and marines, led by Captain Alexander T. Dobbs, R.N. embarked in this vicinity to attempt the capture of three armed U.S. Schooners lying off American held Fort Erie. One of the six boats used had been carried some 25 miles from Queenston, while the others were brought overland from Frenchmen's Creek. Masquerading as supply craft, the forces boarded and seized the Somers and Ohio, the Porcupine alone escaping. Two of the attackers, including their second-in-command, Lieutenant Copleston Radcliffe, R.N. were killed".

CRYSTAL BEACH AMUSEMENT PARK was originally started in 1888 as a religious assembly ground. The purpose of the founder, John E. Rebstock was "for the spiritual and mental uplift of the Common People" and the central theme was to be relieved "by a few choice side-show attractions". It was referred to as a sort of combination camp meeting ground, Chautauqua Assembly and continuous circus. It was modelled after several other communities at the time, such as Cottage City, Martha's Vineyard and Chautauqua, N.Y. It featured several small hotels for the "bowl and pitcher type" tents, lunch rooms, an auditorium and big amphitheatre located just under the ridge where the assemblies were held. The assembly house on the beach front where the bath house is now, was the largest of the hotels and was used for housing the entertainers. Later named the Royal, it was destroyed by fire in 1923.

The plaque of the Capture of the Somers and Ohio is in the Queen's Circle which was laid out by Charles E. Wood. A few cottages were built in this circle in 1890 and 1900, where Dr. S.S. Green and Dr. Walter Green M.O.H. of Buffalo, Mrs Alice Shepherd and J.E. Rebstock built.

in fair weather or foul for thirteen years until forced out of business by the new Peace Bridge at Fort Erie built in 1927.

There was also at the Point, two Pan-American houses. These houses, purchased at the close of the Pan American Exposition in Buffalo in 1901, were hauled to the Point in hay racks. The house purchased by Henry Dickinson, formerly the Wisconsin State Building at the Exhibition was carried from its original site in Delaware Park in 48 loads. The other, known as the Explorers' headquarters in darkest Africa, was bought by James A. Johnson but was torn down a few years after it was removed to the Point.

HUMBERSTONE TOWNSHIP The old Indian trail along the limestone ridge between Miller's Creek and Point Abino Bay would end at Point Abino when it reached the lake, but for the sake of history other trails will be continued through Humberstone to Port Colborne.

There seem s to be many unusual circumstances surrounding the settlement of Humberstone (Sugar Loaf) Township. Historians have stated that Bertie Township was first settled in 1785, but at least four years prior to that date, Humberstone had received settlers. As early as 1781, Christian Stoner, Abraham Neff and Christian Knisley had brought their families. In 1783 Daniel Knisley, Michael Sherk and George Zavitz had settled in the township, also William Steele and John Near in the same year (1783).

In 1797 the inhabitants of Sugar Loaf had petitioned for a survey:

"That near 100 families are now settled in that quarter (around the point called Sugar Loaf above Fort Erie) on lands not yet surveyed subject from this circumstance to the many inconveniences attending their situation, particularly to disputes about Limits and Encroachments the one on the other.

Therefore most humbly supplicating your Excellency will have the goodness to order a Survey to be made of these lands with such dispatch as you in your wisdom my see fit.

Newark, Mar. 30 17

Signed:

Abrm Laing, Joel W. Morris, Wilson Doan, Eliza Doan, Nathan Havens, Jos. Stevens, Azaliah Schooley, Jehoida Schooley, John Harrit, John Cutler, Peter Carver, Amos Mor Jas. Wilson, Sam'l Wilson, John Braley, Wm Cook, Asa School Christopher Richards, Jas. Edsall, Daniel Forsyth, Michael Sherk, Jas. Edsall, Christian Troyer, Jason Millard, Dan Willard, Heart South, Thos. Millard, Titus Doan, Enos Doan

SHERKSTON: Gary Smith, Welland Tribune, who wrote a history of Peter Sherk founder of "Sherkston" says:

"The small but widely known community of Sherkston, located about six and one half miles east of Port Colborne, undoubtedly drew its name originally from the large Sherk settlement there. It was the family of Peter Sherk, who he moved to Canada at the age of nine, which made up most of this Sherk population. For Peter Sherk, who married three times had ten sons and four daughters and almost all settle in the immediate Sherkston area. It was not an unusually large family for the era, but it was unusual for so many sons to grow up, settle on farms and play such a vital role in the growth of the community.

Peter lived in a log house just north east of the of the present intersection of Sherkston Road with Empire Road. Later he set up his first store in the Sherkston area located almost directly across the road from the present site of the Sherkston Public School."

EARLY MENNONITE SETTLERS:

J. C. Fretz in the Mennonite Review says the Mennonite settle coming into Humberstone Township before 1800 were James and Frede House; John, Abram and Jacob Neave (Neff); Jacob and Adam Bowman and Jacob Huffman. After that came John and Henry Neaffe, John and Christian House, Joseph and Moses Doan, Joseph Haun; Jasper (Casper, Gasper) Shirk, and Christian Knisley.

Those in Bertie Township were Jacob Sevitz who came in 1788. The next year came John and Christian Troyer who continued their journey more than a hundred miles west to Long Point on Lake Erie. Among the hundred names listed for grants of land in 1793 are Peter Carver, John Braley, Enos, Titus and Wilson Doan, and Benjamin Hershey who came from Lancaster County in 1793. Abram and Christian Hersey came at about the same time. The father of Benjamin Sherk, born in Bertie in 1796 came from Lancaster County. (Michael Sherk's Peter Zavitz appears to have been an early pioneer also. Other

names appearing before 1800 are Mathias Horn (Haun), Philip Bender, and Abram Wintemute. After 1800 there came into Bertie Township, George, Benjamin, John and Peter Wintemute, William Haun, Jacob Haun, Frederick House, Jacob Johnson, David Bearss, John Barnheart Peter Learn and Jacob and Benjamin Morningstar.

FIRST MENNONITE CHURCH

This church is on the old Sherkston Road which is said to be an old Indian trail, and now Brethren in Christ Sherkst. The church property at Sherkston was deeded by Samuel Sherk to the Mennonite Society in 1828 with George Zavitz and Peter Sherk, Trustees. It is clear that soon after the deed of property was received in 1828, by the Mennonite minister and deacon, who were Trustees for the congregation at Sherkston, a log church building was erected. This became the first Mennonite house of worship in Bertie Township and served for thirty years. This was replaced by a brick church in 1853, and then by a cement block structure in 1917.

In 1828 or soon after there was also a place of worship on the Niagara River Road not far from Chippawa, and a log church west of Stevensville was known as the Black Creek Church. It is also said that all denominations used these churches in the early days

HUMBERSTONE VILLAGE (STONEBRIDGE) : Before the construction of the canal, a creek passed through the site of this village and the settlers sank stones in the water to make a crossing. Another name given was Peterburgh. The village was more prosperous than Port Colborne, as the first settlers came in 1781 and by 1817 it boasted of eighty-five houses, one grist mill, a saw mill and was thriving until 1832 when the first lock of the canal was built. However, in 1850 when the harbour at Port Colborne was enlarged and later when railway facilities improved, Pt. Colborne out-stripped Humberstone.

THE GREAT CRANBERRY MARSH.

During the 1974 Christmas holidays while writing I remembered that Cranberry Sauce was always on the Christmas tables long ago at my Grandmother's and also at home. The berries came from the Cranberry marsh in the townships of Humstone and Wainfleet. In 1854 it was estimated that there were about 13,000 acres of waste land in the townships. The County annually spent large sums in draining the marsh lands, which were sold in tracts convenient for settlers as fast as they became arable.

SUGAR LOAF AND PORT COLBORNE

The patent from the Crown for land on which the town is built was given to a man named Robinson. Gravelly Bay was named for the amount of gravel found along the beach and became the southern terminal for the canal.

Sugar Loaf Hill, a lofty, conical, well wooded sand hill upwards of 150 feet in height and resembling a loaf of sugar was a well known land mark in early days. At one time it had an observatory on the top from which a fine view of the lake and surrounding country could be seen.

In 1832, the first lock of the canal was built and a village of shanties sprang up and several boarding houses opened in what is now Port Colborne. A large force of men were needed to excavate the earth and lay the lock as no machinery was used in those days. They had their problems as Asiatic cholera broke out among the labourers and many died and the work had to be suspended, but when winter came the cholera disappeared.

In 1834 W.H. Merritt purchased most of the land and surveyed it into lots. A post office was established and the name Port Colborne was given in honour of Sir John Colborne.

"British North American Hotel" was opened.

Many members of Parliament came to visit the canal accompanied by Lord Elgin. They crossed Lake Ontario on the "Chief Justice Robinson", came to Thorold by carriages and to Port Colborne by steamers. They had to camp for the night as there was no accommodation in the village.

The village grew as vessels often had to wait to be locked through the canal or for favorable winds to waft them across the lake and this afforded opportunities for the captain and crew to purchase food and clothing. A great trade for ship chandlers and a fine market for the farmers opened up and they brought their produce to Port Colborne rather than Stonebridge. Steam tugs were needed and several people built and operated them out of Port Colborne.

On January 13, 1854, the Buffalo, Brantford and Goderich Railway was opened and in 1858 the Welland Railway was extended to Port Colborne as its southern terminus.

In 1870, Port Colborne was incorporated as a village and picnic grounds added, which was and is a great tourist attraction. The deepening of the harbour in 1885 admitted vessels drawing seventeen feet, and made Port Colborne one of the best harbours on the Lake.

Thus ends the story of the old Indian Trail (Ridge Road) between Niagara River and Abino Bay and others that run through the townships.

January 8, 1974.

For Christopher, Michael and Lynda Laurie, my Grandchildren, who may at some time be interested in the trail where so many of their ancestors settled in early days.