

ALEXANDER AMOS

Spirit Walk June 11 2013

Narrated by Carman Wilson, Nasagiveya Historical Soc.

(Crown: Section B,Row6Lot1 approx., north corner, rear of cemetery)

Amos is not a typical Scottish name, but the Amos family of Wellington County did actually come from Scotland. According to the internet, the Amos name had Jewish origins in the distant past and is synonymous with the Biblical name Moses. In Wales, the surname Amos is associated with the Gwenedd tribe and in the far north of Scotland Amos is connected to clan Gunn which has a Norse patrilineage. These bits of information do give an exotic flavour to the Amos story.

Alexander Amos was born in 1808 in Roxboroughshire, Scotland which lies on the boundary with England, and is known as "The Borders". In the past the clans went in for sheep stealing and cattle rustling back and forth across the border here. Alexander married Jane Tidman, and they had four children, Elizabeth, Isabella, Jessie, and Thomas before they left Scotland.

Unemployment was high in Scotland around 1850. Scottish records indicate that Alexander was a labourer and no doubt lack of work was a contributing factor in the decision to emigrate. He may have been one of the crofters who had earlier been forced off his bit of land during the Clearances, but we have no records to show this. .

When emigrating, the usual practice was for a few families to travel together for mutual assistance in the new land. Amoses came with Fergusons and Reddicks - their destination was North Dumfries. North Dumfries was then being settled almost exclusively by Scots from their home parish, Roxboroughshire and the adjoining parish Selkirkshire. It seems Alexander Amos had an uncle who had already settled in North Dumfries.

About 1855 Alexander Amos and his wife arrived in Canada with three of their four children, Isabella, Jessie, and Thomas. The oldest, 12 year old Elizabeth, got sick just as they were about to sail. Their belongings had been sold, passage booked and luggage already on board ship. There was no turning back, so she had to stay behind.

However, she followed them a few months later - travelling alone - with her destination pinned to the lapel of her coat.

They stayed at Roseville in North Dumfries for a short while before buying a two acre plot in Puslinch on Concession 7, Lot 16, five miles south of Guelph. Alexander worked as a hired hand for neighbouring farmers and did road work on Brock Road. Three more children were born after Alexander and Jane arrived in Puslinch - William, Robert and Mary - seven altogether.

In 1861, Alexander, was 53. He had worked for others all his life but did not yet have a farm of his own. He had three young sons whom he no doubt hoped to get established on their own land someday. He was the sole earner in the household, so probably felt he could never save enough to get land in Puslinch which was nearly all taken up by then, and increasing in price.

Keppel Township in Grey County had opened up for settlement in 1856. Alexander was able to buy land there and his 100 acre purchase was registered in 1861. The terms were one third down in cash, the balance in six equal payments annually. Much of this land was being bought sight unseen, and many a settler, on seeing his land, found it quite unfit for farming. This may well have been the case with Alexander, as it appears that he never lived there. In fact, the 1861 census has him and his whole family still in Puslinch. However, Alexander kept the land for twenty years.

In 1869, Alexander sold his two acres in Puslinch. From the sale of this lot, he was finally able to buy a 99 acre farm with a frame house on Concession 8 Rear, Lot 14. He was 61 years old by then. Here they lived, raised their family, and celebrated their 50th anniversary.

In 1884, Alexander sold his Keppel land for \$600. He made out his will in 1889, and died two years later in 1891 at the age of 88. Scottish tradition held that the eldest son would inherit the land, so Alexander left his farm to his eldest son Thomas, subject to a \$100 a year legacy for his wife. His daughters each received \$20 and his second son William received \$200, to be paid two years after his death.

Alexander also left \$20 each to his widowed daughter Isabella's two children, but it looks like his grandson John McCready Black may never have received his share, because his name was scratched off the quit claim document when the will was processed. John McCready Black was a trapper living in Great Falls Montana, and there are newspaper accounts of him being murdered there about 1905. William Scott Amos, his uncle, travelled to Montana to bring his body back to Puslinch. .

Alexander's third son Robert, who never married, was not mentioned in the will. The family history says that he was a natural born farmer, and that he would have been the best suited to inherit the homestead. But he was said to be fond of drink, which his father frowned on. His fiancé broke off their engagement and little is known of his life thereafter. He left Puslinch, but returned, extremely ill, several years later. He died in 1915 and it is said that he is buried in Crown beside his parents. There is no stone for him. He never married.

Thomas, who had inherited the land, was not really cut out for farming. He lost the farm in 1915, and moved in to Aberfoyle, and later to Guelph.

Elizabeth, the oldest daughter, married William Cockburn. William's health was never good. He had lost an arm in a circular saw accident and his father gave him 50 acres where he built a home for his family. He worked as an assessor, tax collector and constable. His health began to fail and he took a trip to the old country in hopes of improvement, but to no avail. He died in 1869 leaving Elizabeth with a five year old son and an unborn daughter. In her old age Elizabeth was a bedridden invalid for many years, but noted for her beautiful prize winning needlework.

When she was fifteen years old, Isabella, the second daughter, went skating on Aberfoyle pond and fell. She never walked again. She died at the age of 29. It was her two children who inherited \$20 each from their grandfather Alexander.

Although our records indicate that Alexander, his wife, and five of his seven children are buried in Crown cemetery, not all of them have headstones. There is no headstone for Alexander, but records show that his grave is located in Section B., Row 6, Lot 1 in the north corner at the rear.

Alexander Amos and his family had their share of hardship, sadness and adversity. It is fitting that we acknowledge the qualities that brought them through it all, qualities that their descendants can be proud of and cherish.

*"West Puslinch Genealogies" – Betty Ramsaur Ferguson
Amos Family History by Luella Joan Hooks
Puslinch Historical Society files. 2013*



ALEXANDER AMOS
1819-1891