

RODERICK CAMERON (Spirit Walk 2013)

Narrated by Yvonne Richardson

Crown:, C168

There are forty-two Camerons in Crown cemetery, and we have genealogical information for seven or eight generations of Camerons in our archives. We have chosen Roderick Cameron for tonight, as he was the first to come to Puslinch from Scotland.

Roderick Cameron was born in 1776 in Killearan parish in the county of Ross-shire, Scotland. After 1890 this shire joined with another to form the current Ross and Cromarty district. The Cameron name was more common in Perthshire, in central Scotland, that had been home to Crieff's Lochiel Cameron of whisky-making fame.

At some point one of Roderick's ancestors may have moved to Ross from Perthshire. The family was engaged in trade, so Roderick would have travelled about buying and selling his goods, and would have been exposed to outside influences more than most people in Scotland at that time.

Scottish records show Roderick as a merchant. Roderick was likely better off than most thanks to his trade. He would have served an apprenticeship of about five years, which may explain why he was thirty-eight before he married. He belonged to the Free Church of Scotland, and most likely Gaelic was his mother tongue, as was common in the Highlands.

Roderick and his family lived in the village of Ullapool on Loch Broom on the west coast, just across from the Hebrides. Ullapool was built by the British Fisheries Society to provide employment for those who had been displaced from farming in the economic vicissitudes of the times.

Times were uncertain in Scotland in the 1830's, especially in the Highlands, and everybody had big families to feed. Industrialization had thrown many out of work. There was much displacement due to changes in agriculture and the infamous Clearances. Camerons would have heard about others leaving for Canada where free

land was available and Scottish settlers were welcomed. At the same time very little was being done to improve life in the Highlands. Traveller John Knox said at the time that Great Britain considered the Highlands as nothing more than a source for soldiers and seamen. Great Britain was encouraging people to emigrate, as the population had risen by fifty percent in the seventy-five years before 1830, and there was not enough of the traditional diet of oatmeal, cheese and meat to go round. In 1837, the Camerons decided to leave.

Roderick's wife Christiana was twenty-one when they got married in about 1812. We don't know her maiden name. Quite often in the 19th Century women's surnames or even their given names, were omitted in records such as the census, or even on their tombstones. Their obituary might identify them only as Mrs. *John* Smith, for example.

Roderick and Christiana had thirteen born children. In Scotland there was a system for naming children. The first son was usually given the *father's* father's name, the second son was given the *mother's* father's name, and the third son was given his *own* father's name. The first daughter was given the *mother's* mother's name, the 2nd daughter was given the *father's* mother's name, and the third was given her *own* mother's name. If an infant died, their name might be used again for another child that came later. In the Cameron family, there were two Anna's and two Kenneth's in the baptism records, thus the first Anna and Kenneth must have died as infants.

Roderick was not a young man when they left Scotland for the New World, in fact he was almost 60, and Christiana was 46. All of their children were born in Scotland before they left in about 1835. Duncan, the youngest, was three years old when they left Scotland, and the oldest, Roderick was about twenty-two.

Nothing is known of their trip across the Atlantic. However, the crossing took about five or six weeks then. The census of 1837 in Puslinch shows them on Concession 3 Front, Lot 21, a 100-acre parcel. Two years later Roderick and his sons had 12 acres cultivated, two oxen, and a cow. They would have lived in a log house for the first few years, as did most people at that time.

By 1840 Puslinch was filling in quickly and people were getting settled. They wanted schools built so their children could get an education. The men of School Section 5 got together and put up the first school, a frame building, about 1850. In 1865 it was replaced by a stone-built school, the stones having been gathered from neighbouring farms, and the building again put up by the local farmers who also looked after maintenance. Roderick Cameron (this would be the son Roderick) supplied the school with four cords of firewood in 1880 for example. S. S. # 5 closed in June 1965 and was renovated as a home. It is on Road 34, a mile west of the Hanlon.

By 1840 Kenneth, the nineteen-year-old third son, had his own land, Lot 22, Concession 3 Front, a 91 acre parcel right beside his fathers. He had nine acres under cultivation. Roderick's eldest son Roderick took up Lot 30, Rear of the Gore.-

Grain was threshed by flail in the early days, and may well have been the method first used by Roderick Cameron to harvest his crop. By 1835, primitive threshing machines were in use, powered by horses walking in a circle or on a treadmill. About 1855 more efficient machines with fanning mills came into use, and threshing gangs would go from farm to farm, as not everyone had their own threshing equipment. In 1855, Roderick Cameron and his neighbour had over 1000 bushels of wheat, barley and oats threshed by thresher-man A. McCormick.

For a number of years, there was a post office at Aikensville where people collected their mail, but no real village ever really formed in this area. People went to Aberfoyle or Hespeler for what they needed. Apart from Ellis Chapel, no church was ever established either. When Duff's Church was built in 1837, Roderick Cameron was one of the first elders, serving in 1844 and 1845. A Sabbath school was organized in S.S. # 5 in 1857 and conducted there in the summer months.

Roderick died in 1855, at almost 80, and Christiana died in 1858 and the fourth son, Donald took over the farm. Roderick had been here not quite twenty years, and had made a go of it despite being an old man when he arrived, and his sons had been able to acquire farms too. He owned a span of horses, three cows, three young horses, five sheep, eleven pigs, a carriage and agricultural implements when he died.

When Roderick died, he still did not have patent on his land. This was not uncommon. It was not until *after* his son Donald, who took over the farm, died in 1872 that patent was granted to his widow.

Some of Roderick's descendants are traced to North Dakota. His daughter Anna married Andrew Beith and moved to Kinloss in Bruce County. From there, they went west to North Dakota in 1875. Andrew went first and Anna went by train later with their seven children. In 1886 Andrew was thrown from his horse when it stepped into a hole during a buffalo hunt. His leg was broken and had to be amputated, and he died shortly after the accident.

The Crimean War of 1853-6 sent the price of wheat soaring, and Canadian farmers could suddenly make improvements to their farms. In the 1860's, Donald could afford to replace the first crude Cameron home, and he had a fine storey-and-a-half stone house erected, later owned by Hugh Ross, followed by his son Carl. (see picture on handout) This house was plaqued by the Heritage Committee in 2000.



Sources:

"Descendants of Roderick & Christiana Cameron by Lois M. Cameron Stinson
Annals of Puslinch 1850-1950
Puslinch Historical Society files
Puslinch Heritage Committee
"Settlers of Puslinch" by W.F. McKenzie
"Our Home and Native Land", by Marjorie Clark

Children of Roderick and Christiana Cameron all born in Scotland

Ann, b. 1812 Kenneth b. 1813 Roderick b. 1815 John b. 1820
Kenneth 1821-1897 Donald b. 1823-1872 Isabella b. 1825 Anna b. 1826 Elizabeth b. 1827
Angus . 1827-61 Alexander b. 1829 Mary b. 1832 Duncan . 1834-98