

The story of Dunany

By Norman Thorburn

Recently, via The Watchman, I received this letter from a Kingston resident and former summer visitor to our area, Russell H. Bain.

Mr. Bain stated in his letter, that a few years back his wife and he had spent some pleasant summers at Dunany with their children. Now, the family were wondering if they could obtain some information and background material about the area, either through the Argenteuil Historical Society, The Watchman's subscribers, or myself.

For instance, Mr. Bain noted that there is a sea-coast town in Ireland called Dunany, about 40 miles north of Dublin. What he wished to know, is how the name came to be used in the Lachute area.

The letter closed with deep appreciation for any assistance which could be provided, Mr. Bain giving his address as Box 794, R.R. No. 1, Kingston, Ontario, K7L 4V1.

One of my first thoughts on the matter was that, since Dublin was named by the Danish Vikings, and the Irish Dunany also begins with the letters "Du", likely the latter is also of Viking origin, as are the names of three of Ireland's four provinces: Ulster, Munster and Leinster.

Then, just a few days ago, my wife met an aunt of hers, Mrs. Nelson Morrison, in Lachute; it was Mrs. Morrison who was able to tell just how the local Dunany received its name.

It seems Sydney Bellingham was elected Member of Parliament in the Canadian Government, both in 1854 and 1855; however, both elections were declared null and void.

He was later elected in 1856 and '58; also in 1867, 1871 and 1875, sitting as a Liberal, and was a great rival of Sir John Abbott, MP from 1861-63, and prime minister for several months in the year 1893, following the resignation of Sir John A. MacDonal.

This, then, was the political record of Mr. Bellingham; but to come to the matter at hand, one must look a little further back. Sydney Bellingham was

born in Dunany, Ireland, and his residence in Montreal was called "Dunany Place". Eventually, he gave this name to the Argenteuil County Dunany, - a fact not included in Thomas' History, and a significant one at that.

But then, there are a couple of other, rather tongue-in-cheek stories as to the origins of the name, which if not entirely accurate, still make good yarns.

The first occurred when Miss Hanna Smith's father, Major Edmund Smith, drove the Anglican Bishop of Montreal back to Dunany many years ago, over roads that were very bad indeed. The bishop reportedly said, "They haven't done any work on this road since the last time I was here!"

And then, there was an old lady named Annie, who had kidney or bladder trouble, (as many people have), who had travelled to Lachute by buggy with her husband. All went well on the outgoing trip, but on the way back to Dunany, the lady needed relief, so alighted from the rig and went into a dense bush. She was a long time there, and finally, her husband called out, "Are you done, Annie?"

Having mentioned the name of Miss Hanna Smith, it should be noted that the great-great-grandfather of Hanna and E.W. "Ted" Smith, Yorkshireman William Smith, was born in 1775, and came to settle in the vicinity of Dunany in 1815.

He was granted a farm by the Canadian Government, for his help in building a road from Lake Sir John to Dunany, the farm being along the shores of Clear Lake.

When the Dunany Post Office was established, in 1853 (three years after the opening of Lachute's post office), William Smith was made Postmaster of the Dunany office.

The Smiths remained in the mail service until 1922, and through succeeding generations the family increased in size.

William Smith's son Samuel had a family of 12, one of

whom was Hanna and Ted's grandfather, Major James Smith, who died in 1898. Both Major James Smith and his son Major Edmund Smith, (mentioned earlier) were officers in the Argenteuil Rangers, as well as industrious farmers in the region.

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