

These are excerpts from two history books that Pat Best completed for the Township of Burpee and for the Township of Mills. The books recall the history of the townships through short articles on the first settlers, the building of the schools, churches, halls etc. and by searching the land as to original ownership and following each of these families through generations within the townships.

These books are not available at this time however Pat is taking orders and will have another printing done. Pat can be reached at 705 282 2349 if anyone is interested in ordering one of her books.

History of Burpee Township

By Pat Best

Municipal Government of Burpee

The first council meeting in Burpee was held in Nov., 1881 following an election in which Colin Campbell Sr. was chosen as Reeve, and the four councilors were John Bell, John Keown, Wm. Bailey, and Ernest Taylor. They appointed James Young as Clerk-Treasurer, as well as hiring John Eaton as assessor at the salary of \$10 a year. At a subsequent meeting they voted to assist the McRae Bros. in building a grist and saw mill in this municipality, as well as appointing Jake Scott as constable.

For the next 120 years the citizens of Burpee have looked after their own affairs in a business-like manner. They hired assessors, tax collectors, constables and road supervisors. They built the Evansville school first, the Elizabeth Bay school in 1896, and finally in 1913, the Union school for the children of both Burpee and Mills. They set up school boards to administer them, and millrates to pay for the buildings and their teachers. They opened up roads and graveled them under a system called "Statue Labour" where most people could work off what was owed for roads.

Colin Campbell was in and out of office during the next thirty years, acting as Reeve for about twenty, the last being 1912. He would have been in his eighties by then, and during his last terms did not sign his name, but used a stamp. I can only guess that his eyesight was poor. During this time, there doesn't seem to have been anyone who served as clerk for long continuous periods.

Beginning in 1016, Colin's grandson, Angus (Sharkey) Campbell became Reeve, and again over the next thirty years, he served about twenty years as well. Charles Bell was clerk from 1917 – 23, and then again "31-34. Burl Morrell acted for 7 years in the forties, and then his brother Roy took over and was clerk for twenty years continuously from '49-69', and for seven more in the seventies. Jean Clark worked for about 16 years after that, Bonnie Bailey began in 1997. After several men served for short periods as the reeve, Les Bailey, grandson of Sharkey Campbell, stepped up in 1968, and was Reeve for the next 33 years, a record!

Les was active in the formation of several new Island-wide organizations, such as the Planning Board and the Manitoulin Municipal Assoc., and often chairman of them. In the nineties, he also was one of the instrumental folk to steer the Misery Bay project and road through to actual completion.

In the 1996 the Mike Harris government in Toronto decided that there were too many small municipalities in the province and began to encourage and to force amalgamations. Burpee thought that joining up with Mills, and unorganized township, would be in everyone's best interest. Public meetings were held in both municipalities, and with overwhelming support, proposals were put forward. Even though their proposal did not fit the stated criteria of having a fewer number of organized municipalities, it was accepted in 1997, and the new amalgamated council was elected, to take effect Jan 1, 1998. Hence the new organization is called "Burpee and Mills".

With the help of Heritage and capital grants, some of them available because of the amalgamation, council proceeded quickly to plan a new municipal building, the purchase of a snowplow, and the establishment of their own fire department.

Of course, all of this requires a momentous amount of volunteer effort, and the people of Burpee-Mills stepped up to the plate. The beautiful multipurpose building opened in June 30, 2001. It houses the fire trucks, the snowplow truck, a lovely large community hall with modern well-equipped kitchen, the township offices, and a fitness room and gymnasium upstairs. Along with a permanent outdoor rink outside, which doubles as basketball court, the complex meets all the needs of the community.

Besides the Golden Age club, which can access Trillium grants, the volunteer Fire Dept., and the Recreation Committee, under the auspices of Council, there is an active Garden committee which has done an amazing job of establishing and maintaining both a community garden and a Veterans' garden at the complex. The fitness room is well-equipped, some of it donated, and all of it well-used. About 9 or 10 times a year the volunteers stage a 'Burpee breakfast' which is attended by hundreds of folks for miles around. Yoga classes, Karate, aerobics, parties and wedding dances are some of the activities held in the hall.

History of Mills Township

By Pat Best

War Memorial at Poplar

On Sunday, August 31, 1924 the monument at Poplar Corner was unveiled and dedicated in an impressive ceremony complete with choir and organist, which opened with the singing of the hymn "O God Our Help in Ages Past".

It was the culmination of three years work by the Poplar Women's Institute. The land was donated by the property owner, Sarah Sides. At the base of the monument are two machine guns given to Mills by the Canadian government to honour the large number of young men who went to the Great War from so small a community, claimed by some to be the largest per capita in the whole country.

The names of the 19 young men are inscribed on the monument, with the names of the two who never returned from WW1 listed on the front. Killed were Alden Wilkinson and Joseph Gallagher. The others who went to war, but returned, were Norman Orford, Sidney Dinsmore, William Foster, Arthur Atkinson, Walter Wright, Jack Robinson, Leonard Robinson, Arden Irwin, Herbert Wright, Harvey Robinson, Henry Lee, William Dinsmore, George McPhee, Ted Middleton, Ernest Moscrop, Leonard Wright and Austin Wright.

Also honoured with a plaque on the front of the monument is Lloyd Orford, Killed in action in World War 2 in 1944.

The surviving WW2 veterans listed on the Honour Roll that hung at the school, now at the Township office at Burpee-Mills, are as follows: James Ford, Sherman McCulligh, Carman Middaugh, Dennis Middaugh, Delbert Orford, Chester Robinson, Clifford Robinson, and Wm. (bill) Wright.

As described in "Through the Years", the unveiling was performed by Lieut. Grant Turner of Little Current who spoke with feeling about the soldiers, and of the awful times that they had had to endure, Other speakers and participants were Rev. W.T. Swainson, Rev. Cannon, and Sheriff J Haddow. The service was brought to an end by the sounding of the Last Post.

The Anglican Church and Mills Hall

Known as the Mills Hall in the 1950's, this building was built as an Anglican Church. The first one was erected in 1885; with a better building built in 1894 after fire destroyed the first one. It was constructed on the property of Mr. and Mrs. John Robinson, a great organizer and church lady.....

When the next generation took over the running of the church, son Wm. Robinson (of sawmill fame) was also a mainstay of the church. He raised bees to make honey on his farm down the east road, and he is known to have organized and donated the honey for a "honey social" to make money for the church. He bought the bell for the steeple (which was donated to the Mindemoya School when the

church was closed). The pews which were bought with the funds from the honey social also went to Mindemoya to a church there.

Around the 1920's or '30's, it was no longer used as an Anglican Church, but was taken over by the Mills Women's Institute, and used as a community hall. At this time the Orange Lodge Hall which was in the bush not far away across the road, was no longer needed or used. This Community Hall is remembered in the 1950's as a place where a lot of things happened. There was an occasional dance, an odd movie, lots of crockinole and card parties, and a wonderful Christmas concert each year. For these concerts it was decorated by the school children mainly with a huge tree and lots of red and green crepe paper. The benches that served as the usual seating were augmented with chairs from the United Church which was carried by the school children down to the hall when they went there for the dress rehearsal. Around the 1960 an addition was built on the west side by the W.I., to provide a cooking and kitchen facility for the hall. After the school closed in 1969, the school was purchased as a community hall and a kitchen was created there....