

STORY OF THE WOOD FAMILY AS TOLD BY ELIZABETH WOOD DODDS

(Elizabeth Dodds died during the summer of 1971 in her 99th year)

My great-grandfather Robert Wood was born in the early seventeen eighties in Peebleshire on the Scottish border. He had one sister, Mary, and, I believe two brothers: James and John. Robert Wood married Janet Brown. Their two sons; James, and Robert were very young when Janet developed tuberculosis and died.

Mary Wood had married and at about this time had sailed for Australia where a brother had gone a short time earlier. There was a great migration to Australia then for the climate was suitable for sheep raising, pasturage was unlimited, and a good market for wool existed in Europe.

The Wood family bought as many sheep as their tickets would permit then their ship halted en route at the Cape of Good Hope. The sheep were of a good strain for growing wool and soon they had a large flock and were prospering in Queensland.

Robert Wood settled up his business in his small town in Peebleshire in the year 1815 and set out with his two little sons for Glasgow with the intention of sailing to Australia to join the other members of the family. But there was no ship scheduled for Australia in the near future when he reached Glasgow and he decided to go to Canada instead as the sailing ship "Baltic" was about ready to embark. A large number of Scottish families were waiting in Glasgow to sail on this same ship.

The crossing took six weeks, which was considered good at that time for sailing ships were dependent on favorable winds.

En route the "Baltic" met a ship returning from Canada and the captains exchanged greetings through trumpets. "What is the news?" the eastbound ship shouted. "Peace all over the world" the "Baltic" replied. It was during a lull in the Napoleonic wars.

Robert Wood and his little sons landed in Montreal where he got work at shipbuilding and married Mary Mahon. But everyone was interested in getting land and in the summer of 1816 Robert Wood set out by water and land to Brockville, and from there to what is now known as Perth, a military settlement at that time.

They and others in their group brought mail with them to Perth and this was the first mail to bear the address "Perth".

The sound of axes felling trees was heard as they approached the settlement. One huge tree lay in such a way that it formed a footbridge across the Tay River. Only one house had been built so far and the group lived in tents on an "island" between two branches of the Tay River, near where the Town Hall now stands.

That summer many people came to Lanark County from the lowlands of Scotland, and a number of disbanded soldiers and their families settled there as well.

The Government furnished each head of a family with 100 acres of land. These were called "lots" because ownership was determined by drawing lots. Before a deed was drawn up, however, each settler had to meet certain requirements. Five acres of his land had to be thoroughly cleared and fenced, and one half of the road bordering on his land had to be cleared. His house was to measure not less than sixteen feet by twenty feet.

The settlers soon got busy clearing their land and their first plantings were potatoes among the stumps. Then came grain. And they got a cow or two, a sheep and some poultry.. Money was very scarce and they lived entirely off the land. Before too long they had milk, butter, cheese, cream, eggs, meat, poultry, maple sugar and syrup. Wool was carded, spun into yarn for knitting, or weaving into cloth. The women braided rye straw into hats for their families.

A little log school was built on Robert Wood's property and since he had a good education, he was chosen to be the teacher. He also helped in surveying land in Lanark County.

Robert Wood sold his farm several years later and bought several hundred acres in Leeds County, in the vicinity of Lombardy and Bass Lake. His sons were young men by then and in need of their own land. Here he and his sons lived to a good old age and many of their descendants still live in this area.

James, the younger son of Robert Wood, my grandfather, married Sarah Ann Tweedy and they had five children: Mary Ann (Mrs. Wills), Robert, James (my father), Jennie (Mrs. Covell), and John.

Sarah Ann Tweedy had come to Canada as an orphan in 1833 with several uncles, aunts and cousins - all Tweedys. Her youngest brother, James, came later with their aunt, Mrs. Doherty, and her husband.

My grandmother, Sara Ann Tweedy Wood, made her home with her uncle Charles Tweedy and his family, who had settled in Leeds County near Lombardy. The Anglican Church in Lombardy was built on their farm. The Wood family was Presbyterian, but since there was no church of that denomination at Lombardy, they attended the Anglican Church and there they met the Tweedys.

My great-grandfather's brother James came to Canada later and settled in New Brunswick. He had a family of several sons. Although these brothers didn't see one another in Canada, they did correspond. There was also an exchange of letters with those who went to Australia. It was known about the year 1880 that a first cousin of my grandfather, perhaps George Wood, had died, and he was the last member of the Australian relatives. My grandfather's brother Robert was married twice, first to a Miss Monroe and second to a Miss Walker. He had a large family. John and Martha (Mrs. Reid) Wood left families and there are several grandchildren and great grandchildren.

The Tweedy family in Peebleshire was originally from Stenhouse in Lanarkshire. These two shires border each other. In the year 1296, Finlay de Twedyn del Comte de Lanark swore fealty to Edward the First of England. His son Rodger settled in Drumelzur on the Tweed near the town of Peebles.

(More, some day !!)

Courtesy of Marion Wood, Elizabeth Dodds Wood's niece.