

## CHAPTER XI

Settlement of the Easton Road; its early settlers; the coming of David Dewitt as told by his son, M. L. DeWitt: the first school on this road and its teachers: the first church organized.

The Easton Road is one leading from or forming a connection with and running at right angles with the Center Line almost equal distance from the Rockcliffe farm and the road from the junction of the Houlton and Center Line Roads.

It was not settled as early as the Houlton or Center Line Roads by about twenty years, and up to this time I have been unable to satisfactorily learn who was the first settler upon this road.

The Center Line Road runs nearly parallel with the Houlton Road and is noted for its long stretch of very level land, which is also very attractive, productive, easily cultivated and valuable. Hence it was not a matter of surprise that pioneers chose it for their homes and settled there.

Future years and developments have proven the wisdom of their selection. The Easton Road, having no such inducements at the time, the value of the lots and their layout for clearing, drainage, water strength and richness of soil not being seen until later when newcomers in their exploring were forced to push back into the forests where the advantages offered by the rich and fertile lands and the equally fine and promising land chosen and roads made.

It was in June 1858 that David DeWitt and his father, Abraham, made a trip to Aroostook to purchase land for homes and farms. David, after looking over the country more or less and gaining what information he could by inquiries, decided to purchase the lot of George Allen on what is now the road leading from Presque Isle to Easton, owned now by John Fitzpatrick. At that time there was only a roadway cut out thru the woods and difficult to pass over. This, you will remember, was in the summer of 1858. They returned to their home in Wexfield, Penobscot County. In July David, accompanied by his brother Charles, returned to Letter F Plantation. Charles, soon after coming, purchased the lots, now the home of John Erskine, known as the Charles DeWitt farm, one of the best in town. The farm has since been divided into two farms.

After cutting the hay in their small clearings and stoking it, they remained until October. In the meantime they prepared to move their families, house-hold goods, and other belongings to their new homes in the wilds of Aroostook.

October 8th of the same year, four large cart wheels had been secured and a large wagon made of them; the house-hold furnishings of both families had been piled on and four oxen hitched thereto, a teamster secured, by the name of Walter Weymouth to drive the team

to Aroostook. At 1:30 p.m. on Thursday afternoon, the load started down the Passataquis River on the long journey.

"At the mouth of this river, we were taken across the Penobscott River in an old style scow, which had to make two trips to take everything across. After getting across, the boys lined up the cattle and started for Lincoln, followed closely by the ox-team. We reached Charles Davis' three and a half miles above the ferry a little after dark and put up for the night.

"We were on the road five and a half days before reaching Houlton. When passing thru Houlton village, we were overtaken by our parents and other members of our family, and my Uncle Charles DeWitt who had left Westfield with single teams Monday morning following the starting of their ox-teams."

Thus M. L. DeWitt, so well-known in Presque Isle and other towns, now a resident of Westfield, related the story of their trip. He was then but a lad of nine years and his brother George was only thirteen years old. "We drove ten head of cattle. The next morning after our parents overtook us in Houlton, the single teams with the families went on and reached Freeman Hayden's about eight o'clock in the evening.

"It took two days to drive the ten head of cattle thru and two and a half for Mr. Weymouth to drive thru with his ox-team from Houlton; he would have been fully three days had not Granville Hayden taken his father's horse and team wagon and met Mr. Weymouth near Three Brooks in Blaine, and relieved him of part of his load.

"At that time there was a piece of woods between Blaine and Presque Isle called "The Seven Mile Woods" in which there was only one house. This was a little log tavern on the side now owned by Albert Trueworthy in the town of Westfield.

"The tavern was kept by a man named Thomcroft. We all stayed at the Hayden Home one day to rest, after which we moved to the farm purchased the previous June. Uncle Charles and family made their quarters in an old log house, while our family moved into the chamber of Moses Allen's house, then owned by Jonathan Hatch.

"The house was an old style structure and served its purpose for a while. My father had but fifty cents left when we were settled in our winter quarters. Father, being very handy with tools, and a good brood ax man found plenty of work for about a month, for which he took anything in the line of provisions and helped us out as new settlers. After he had finished that kind of work, he and my uncle bought some tools for making shingles and began shaving and bunching for the outside market, so-called. C. L. A. Johnson, David Dudley and J. W. Hines, then the principle traders in Presque Isle, bought them.

"In this way we became accustomed to the habits and living of the true Aroostook pioneers. We remained in the Hatch house about a

year and a half, in which time we built a small one story and a half house, shingled the roof with shaved cedar shingles and battered the cracks in the walls with the same. In this way we lived one winter before any clapboards were put on."

In 1859, the question of building a school house was agitated; many of the people in the DeWitt and Whittaker neighborhood got together to make plans for building. Some agreed to furnish nails; others, windows, and still others, shingles for the roof. In the neighborhood were two men, by the name of Ross, who came from Nova Scotia. They had no money with which to purchase any of the materials for a schoolhouse, but had spruce timber standing in their wood and owned what they called a whip-saw. They said, "We want a school and are willing to contribute our part of the building in boards."

This was agreed by the others, so accordingly they set to work and arranged some skids on a side hill, rolled on some logs, lined them on the sides with chalk and line the right thickness for boards. Then one would stand on the top of the log, and the other under it, and with the whip-saw, they sawed their proportional part for the building which was known as the DeWitt Schoolhouse.

In the spring of 1860, the schoolhouse was near enough completion to have a school started. Arbilla, daughter of Deacon Cleaves, was employed as teacher. Miss Cleaves later became the wife of Walter Deekinduff.

Some of the other teachers who taught later were: Jefferson Sawyer, then of Castle Hill; Lillian Graves, Emma Greenwood, M. L. DeWitt, Joseph Winter, formerly of Carthage, Maine at the time of Easton. Still later, we are told, James McGlaughlin taught here.

In the winter of 1859 and 1860, Rev. B. Barker and Christopher Pratt, members of the Christian denomination, came to the neighborhood and held some revival meetings in private houses. These services were crowned with success. There were several conversions and a good religious interest awakened.

#### THE FIRST CHURCH ORGANIZED

As a result of these services by Rev. Baker and Mr. Pratt, a Christian church was organized at this (DeWitt) schoolhouse a little later after its completion, and all meetings were held there for some years.

For a number of years, Rev. C. G. Pitcher of Monticello was its pastor and held regular services once a month. Other clergymen would occasionally preach during Rev. Pitcher's absence. Among them were Rev. Samuel G. Wheeler of Boston; Rev. F. Nugent, Baptist Rev. Morton and Turner, and Rev. Daniel Stickney.

The Haydens, DeWitts, Whittakers, and the Smiths who came from Washington County; the Benjamins, Wetts, and the Rosses - some of all their families are residents of Presque Isle or nearby towns.

Their meetings were largely held in this and the Cook School-house on the Houlton Road. This was especially true of their quarterly meetings which were largely attended and did great good among the early settlers.

## CHAPTER XII

The settlement of the Gardiner Road and its early settlers; a road laid out; the first schoolhouse and its teachers; three successful and prosperous young men; the Elliot, Burlock and Whitney neighborhood.

While the Gardiner Road cannot claim to have been laid out or even cut out as early in the town's settlement as either the Reach Houlton, or Center Line Roads, it can claim to have had a settler, one whose influence and leadership was only a little behind that of John I. Goss, for Col. and Alanson Rackliffe were co-workers with the Goss family so near together that discrimination seems to make the distinction in time invidious. The same is true also of the Beniah Pratt family, who were the nearest neighbors of the Goss family. They were together in plans, in work, in experiences, in hardships, and in the deprivations which nearly every pioneer of the forties experienced.

The Rackliffes came in 1842 or in 1843. It was as we can easily imagine, a great pleasure, and exceedingly great satisfaction; a new companionship such as could only be appreciated, and the joy of which could be realized by a family, surrounded by wilderness in every direction. They were neighbors in many ways unusual to its common acceptation. Together they talked by each other's firesides; they talked and planned about the need of a road by their dwellings; and after Beniah's family (Pratt) was added to this circle, they ventured upon the proposition of a schoolhouse. Upon this they were agreed. They also agreed that they would carry the matter of a direct road to the village rather than be forced to lug and haul all their merchandise and farm products around by the Fort Road. They went to their village neighbors who agreed upon the question of a schoolhouse. They taxed themselves. They asked the aid of old country residents. The boys and perhaps the girls of the village, and the children from the first families on the Gardiner Road attended school here for some years. It was indeed a real center of association of public usefulness. Here business was transacted for Plantation Letter F.

### THE ROAD LAID OUT

Strange as it may seem to us of the present day, this road was not laid out until David Dudley, David DeWitt, and Silas Ireland were selectmen of Presque Isle. This could not have been before the early sixties, for David DeWitt did not become a resident of Presque Isle until 1858.

We have it from good authority "that in 1860 Bartholomew Jenkins came to Aroostook from Stetson and settled in Easton for a few months less than a year." There he bought the Thomas Miller claim or place on what has long been called the Gardiner Road, where the Jenkins parents afterward lived and died.



There was at this time only one family beyond the Jenkins home in Presque Isle. On the road to Easton there was then pioneer settler Alanson Rackliffe, father of the late Francis Rackliffe who came to Arcostook from Corinna, Maine in 1842.

The next family on the road going east was the John Knight family on the farm later known as the Almon Bridges farm. Almon Bridges now lives in Easton, a Presque Isle veteran of the Civil War.

There was Joseph Pike and his son David, who was, quite early in the history of the town's incorporation, Post Master for eight or ten years. He was also a member of the school committee for several years. Joseph Pike brought up two boys, one being Warren Tifield, the other Benjamin Buck, both of whom went into the army in the early sixties. Warren Tifield never came back, but Benjamin Buck did and lived in Westfield where he died.

Reuben Bartlett and his son Charles lived on this road opposite the Harrison and Reuben Buck place, where now the new schoolhouse is located.

In what is now known as the Allen neighborhood, there was then living Samuel Wilson and Isaac Bartlett, husband of Sophrenia Bartlett so well known by early settlers, a woman very useful during her lifetime and of blessed memory; and aunt of Mrs. Nellie Chandler Bishop of this village. In this neighborhood lived also David Blunt, another of the well remembered, unique characters, whose wife was Lucinda Bregdon; also Charles Small.

#### FIRST SCHOOLHOUSE

The first schoolhouse in this district was built by Elbridge Gardiner in about 1868 and was paid for by district assessment. In this schoolhouse there were forty pupils in attendance. Among these were: Henry Jenkins and his sister Mrs. Mary Kennedy, Mrs. Louise Allen, Mrs. Eugene Sweetzer, Mrs. Nellie Bishop, Mr. and Mrs. Rufus Fifield, Mrs. Julius Chandler formerly of Mapleton, now of Portland. Henry Rackliffe, late of Easton, taught this school for three terms. Of all these pupils that attended school there, there are but six living: Henry Jenkins, Mrs. Mary Kennedy, Mrs. Louise Allen, Mrs. Sweetzer, Mrs. Nellie Bishop, and Mrs. Julius Chandler. That Henry Rackliffe was a strong and very successful teacher for those days is evident from the fact that was kept in the same school for three consecutive terms.

Another teacher who merits special mention as one who was reared and educated in the school district, who for years previous to her marriage was one of Presque Isle's very sufficient and sought for teachers was Mrs. Louis Wilson Allen. She taught at different times several of the settlers on this road in the time of the Civil War, its elevation, love of country, and loyalty to it in their enlistment in the ranks of their army and their bravery in many of its fiercest battles for its defense. The list included: Barthomerd

Jenkins, Warren Fifield, Benjamin Buck, Almon Bridges and Elbridge Gardiner now living in Presque Isle a member of the G. A. R.

The next farm was that of Calvin Elliot, whose son Eliphae Elliot made and lived upon it until his death; and where his son Victor lived until his death in early manhood in the winter of 1913 and upon which his widow and only son now live.

The next above the Elliot farm on the opposite side of the road is the Frederick Wade farm, now the Nelson Pierson and Walter Libby place. Hubbard Foster on the farm which is now the home of Charles Sweetser.

#### THREE SUCCESSFUL & PROSPEROUS YOUNG MEN

In this neighborhood three young men, now independent and successful have made their work as tiller of the soil. These young men commenced with comparatively little, but by their industrious economic habits and strict attention to business have accumulated an independent competence, educated their children, have valuable farms, and are the owners of homes in our village.

These are Alex McPherson, Arthur E. Hoyt, and Peter L. Hoyt, now among our foremost citizens.

This is now a fine section of our town, as an agricultural section with good homes, having lived up to the expectations of its pioneer residents.

#### THE ELLIOT, BURLOCK & WHITNEY NEIGHBORHOOD

Contiguous to, and almost a part of the Easton and Fort Fairfield roads is the neighborhood of the Elliot, Burlock and Charles Whitney settlement. The road through the settlement connects on the Easton Road with the most direct and most traveled road to Fort Fairfield.

The first settler in this neighborhood was John Elliot, who died several years ago in Easton, and whose wife now lives in that town... They settled upon the farm now owned by Arthur E. Hoyt, which afterward became the home of the well known and public spirited citizen, Deacon Charles Whitney of the Baptist Church of Presque Isle, to whose family attendance at church from miles distant was steady Sunday after Sunday. This he continued and his family were among the pillars of the church. He was a well-read man upon the question of the day and his children were well educated. His daughter will long be remembered as a successful teacher in town...one of them married the Rev. H. L. Gaulkins (Charlene), for eleven years pastor of the Baptist church, member of the school committee, who was efficient in systemizing and grading our schools which was the real foundation of our valuable school system of today. Rev.

Mr. Caulkins is now partor of the Baptist Church in Danville,  
Massachusetts. The youngest daughter, Evelyn, married a Mr. Sawyer  
and lived on the farm now owned by Lewis Duncan, Houlton Road.