

MEMORANDUM ON THE EDMISON FAMILY

(as written by J. Alex Edmison, 1950)

The Edmisons in Canada are all descended from Alexander Edmison (1770-1832) and his wife Margaret Drysdale (1768-1867). He was a farmer, altho' in the birth certificate of one of his children he is also described as a "pit owner". He was the member of a family that had lived in the County of Northumberland, England for many generations. His father was John Edmeston (born 1st July 1745) and his grandfather was John Edmeston (born 1725). The last two were described as "Dissenters" in religion, as "yeoman farmers" in occupation, and lived at Bowsden, Parish of Lowick, Northumberland. The name was also, at times, spelled "Edminston". When the family came to Canada they changed the spelling to "Edmison". The kinfolk still in Northumberland use the spelling "Edminson". (I have some correspondence in which the name spelling problem is discussed, with comments like – "As for me I'll always spell the name as my father did...etc")

The Edmisons were almost exclusively border people, living or working in the general area between Newcastle-on-Tyne, England and Coldstream and Kelso in Scotland. They have a long tradition in Berwick-on-Tweed, where from 1666 to 1908 at least four have been Lord Mayor. Since Berwick has changed hands in history 14 times between England and Scotland, ancestral births must be traced in both London and Edinburgh. (During World War II I visited several "Edminson" branches in various parts of Northumberland and received a very warm welcome indeed. They are mostly farmers and tradesman, and almost invariably Presbyterians. A Richard Edminson who has helped me very considerably in the family research has moved to Rhodesia since the war and his discharge from the R.A.F.)

The first Edmison to emigrate to Canada was John (1794-1887), a son of Alexander. According to his obituary notice in the "Peterborough Examiner", April 1887, "he first came to Canada in 1818. His first place of residence was Port Hope, where he remained four years. During that time he located a farm in the township of Smith, now known as the Isaac Millburn (sic) farm, and had some improvements made on it. After four years in Port Hope he returned to England, remaining six years. While there he married Margaret Ann Hall. He returned to Canada, accompanied by his wife and one daughter, in 1828. He again domiciled at Port hope, working on shares a farm belonging to the late Thomas Ward until 1832, when he settled on the farm (on which he lived continuously till his death), lot 11, in the 3rd concession of Smith."

The main Edmison emigration to Canada took place in the month of March, 1832. Alexander and Margaret came with their ten children (and some grandchildren). The other of their eleven children (John) was already in Canada, as noted in the previous paragraph. Alexander did not die at sea, as stated in the inscription on the family headstone in Little Lake Cemetery. He took cholera on the voyage, was disembarked at Port Hope and died there in July, 1832. When his wife Margaret died in 1867 his body was exhumed and buried beside her in The Methodist Cemetery, Peterborough. Both bodies were finally removed to Little Lake Cemetery on December 4, 1885.

Children of Alexander Edmison and Margaret Drysdale – (Not in chronological order as all birth dates are not yet confirmed).

1. Sarah – Her first husband was John Black (a manufacturer in Northumberland). Her second husband was named Tyndall who farmed in Smith. Have recently met descendants of first marriage and will try to complete the record.
2. Margaret - Her first husband was Scott and her second Paul. Many descendants still in Peterborough County. Her son George Scott (born 25 June 1822) came to Canada with his mother and stepfather and there is now a very large Scott connection.
3. Elizabeth – Married Thomas Young. Only 2 of their 5 children survived the cholera on the trip to Canada. Thomas taught the old 4th line school. Elizabeth died in 1841 and Thomas in 1864. There are numerous descendants.
4. Isabel – Married a Mr. Bapty. There are numerous descendants still around Peterborough.
5. Elsie – married a Mr. Wilson. Have no data.
6. Jane – Born 18 December 1813, died 13 February 1904. Buried in Little Lake Cemetery. Unmarried. Lived at 138 Rubidge St., Peterborough.
7. Ralph – Born 1 April 1794. Kept a tavern at Bridgenorth around 1840. Was dead before 1867. I understand that he had two sons, Henry and William, but have no data on them.
8. Alexander - Married Catherine Rankin. Was Beadle at St. Andrew's Church, Peterborough in 1858. No children. His Bible is now in the old homestead owned by Alexander Ivison Edmison.
9. Henry – Listed in Peterborough Directory for 1851 as “General Smith and Steam Engineer”. Settled in Roseneath. Died before 1867. Had 3 sons, Alexander, Israel Black and Henry Jr. from Alexander descended (through his son William) the late Dr. W.C. Edmison of St. Ignace, Michigan and Mrs. Hilda Whitten of Iona, Michigan. Alexander's other son was the late Dr. Albert Edmison of Kenora, Ontario.

From Israel Black (waggonmaker in Bobcaygeon in 1871) descended Margaret, who married a Mr. Hamilton in Omaha, Nebraska. (Her son, George Hamilton, is or was Vice-President of the Union Pacific Railway.) The Edmison family now living in Brantford, Ontario, are descended from James, son of Israel Black Edmison.

Henry Jr. settled in Snowden Township around 1859. He afterwards went to the U.S.A., and has many descendants there. His grandson, Fred C. Edmison, an executive of the Food Machinery Corporation of Los Angeles, California, is known to me and is very much interested in family lore.

10. Thomas – The following is his obituary notice appearing in the “Peterborough Examiner” in March, 1895: “Another of the pioneers of Smith Township passed away this morning, in the person of Mr. Thomas H. Edmison, who departed this life at the advanced age of 89 years. He has been ill for about a month of a kidney affection. Mr. Edmison was born in Northumberland, England in 1806. He came to this country in 1832, first settling in Peterborough. Here he remained till his marriage, on February 28th, 1838, to Miss Mary Bickerton, when he removed to Smith township, where he settled on a farm on the Communication Road. His wife died last August at the age of 79 years. Mr. And Mrs. Edmison’s union was blessed with nine children, all of whom are deceased except two, Mr. R. J., Edmison, who lives on the homestead, and Rev. T. J. Edmison, of Wellington, Prince Edward County. Mr. Edmison was in politics a Liberal and in religion, a Methodist. He lived a life of uprightness and piety which earned for him the high respect of all who knew him. The funeral will take place on Tuesday at 2 o’clock from the family residence, Communication Road, to the Little Lake Cemetery.”

In the “Examiner” in August, 1894, there was this obituary notice of his wife: “It is with great regret that the death is announced of Mrs. Thomas Edmison, who has for three-quarters of a century been a much esteemed resident of the township of Smith. Her death, which took place on Wednesday, August 8th, was due to the weakness of old age and an illness which involved the heart. The deceased lady was a native of Northumberland, England, where she was born 79 years ago. At the age of three years she came to Canada with her father, the late Ralph Bickerton, and settled on the farm, lot 5, Communication Road, where she passed seventy-six years of her life. In 1838 she was united in marriage to Mr. Thomas Edmison, who survives her. To this union nine children were born, of whom only two are living, Mr. R. J. Edmison, who occupies the old homestead, and Rev. T. J. Edmison, of Wellington, Prince Edward County. Mrs. Edmison was a member of the Methodist church from her girlhood days and her death removes a personage highly esteemed in every relation of life for over seventy-five years. The funeral takes place tomorrow from the family residence to Little Lake Cemetery at 3 o’clock p.m.”

Their son, Robert, had four children – Norman, Harry (killed in World War I), Mina (Sanderson) and Arthur.

Their son, the Rev. Thomas J., had six children – (Dr.) Bickerton, Marion, (Rev.) Alex., (Dr.) Ralph, Helen and Marjorie.

Note: The descendants of Thomas – and of his brother John (below) – are all of record. Since this is only a brief guide to Edmison genealogy, I am limiting the description of the descendants of these brothers to only the first or second generation, with just enough information to indicate family groupings.

11. John (1794-1887) – The following is his obituary as appearing in the “Peterborough Examiner”, April, 1887:

“Thousands of the people of this district will hear with regret of the death of one of the oldest, if not the oldest resident of the county, and one of the most widely known and the most highly respected, Mr. John Edmison, Sr., who passed away at his homestead residence, Smith, on Tuesday, April 19th, at the age of 93 years. The deceased was born in Northumberland, England, in 1794. He first came to Canada in 1818. His first place of residence was Port Hope, where he remained four years. During that time he located a farm in the township of Smith, now known as the Isaac Millburn (sic) farm, and had some improvements made on it. After four years in Port Hope he returned to England, remaining six years. While there he married Margaret Ann Hall. He returned to Canada, accompanied by his wife and one daughter, in 1828. He again domiciled at Port Hope, working on shares a farm belonging to the late Thomas Ward until 1832, when he settled on the farm (on which he lived continuously till his death), lot 11, in the 3rd concession of Smith. He followed farming with marked success, adding one farm after another, but for the past 20 years he has lived a retired life on the old homestead. The deceased gentleman was a most exemplary character, enjoying to the fullest extent the respect and reverence of all who knew him. He was an earnest Christian, and fully exemplified in his daily walk, the virtues of the faith he professed, and the full beauty of the Christian character. He never took an active part in municipal or political affairs generally. He never sought nor accepted any secular office. For over 50 years, however, he was an active elder of St. Andrew’s Church. He took an active part in the erection of the old St. Andrew’s, at the head of Brock Street, and wrought at its erection not a little, with his own willing hands. He was an elder in the church at the time of his death. Mr. Edmison was not a working politician. Always staunchly Liberal in his politics, he never was a biased partizan; still in profession and practice, he always upheld the principles of the Reform party – even to the time of his death, for his last political act was voting for Mr. Stratton in the December elections, and for Mr. Cox in the February elections. In November, 1885, Mr. Edmison lost the partner of his joys and sorrows for 60 years, and since that time the attraction in a better world loosened his hold on earth, and his decline in health dated from the time of the death of his wife, at the age of 83. His death was a triumphant vindication of the reality of the Christian religion. He died in sure and steadfast hope of a blissful immortality. Mr. Edmison was peculiarly happy in his family relations. He was blessed with five sons and five daughters, all of whom survive; all married and the heads of families; all in good health; all in prosperous worldly circumstances; all enjoying the respect of the community. His descendants, including children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, may be numbered by the score. He never had to mourn the death of a son or daughter, or son-in-law or daughter-in-law, something remarkable in the life of a man who reached the ripe age of 93 years. “the memory of the just is blessed”, and long will Mr. Edmison’s

memory be cherished, as a just man in every relation of life, a faithful provident husband, a loving parent, a loyal friend, a kindly neighbour, in fine, a man of solid Christian character, concerning whom, using a familiar phrase, “too much that is good can hardly be said”.

John Edmison and Margaret Ann Hall (1803-1885) had ten children:

1. Margaret – Born 1826. (Mrs. Robert Fleming of Sioux Falls, South Dakota). Three sons and two daughters. (Margaret was born in England. The other nine children were born in Smith Township, Peterborough, Canada.)
2. Sarah – Born 1829. (Mrs. Hutton of St. Mary’s, Ontario) Mother of Fred Hutton and Annie (Mrs. Bryan).
3. Alexander – Born 1832. One of his sons, Percival, is the father of Alex I., now the owner of the old homestead of John Edmison, Sr. Allen Edmison and his sister Sadie of Peterborough are the children of George – another son of Alexander.
4. George – Born 1834; became Judge in Peterborough. Father of Ann, Maude, Herbert, Margaret (Mrs. Brodie) and of George (Calgary). Mrs. Ann Hope Brown of Toronto is a daughter of Herbert.
5. John – Born 1836. Had one son (Rev.) John Hall and 2 daughters, Carrie (Crowe) and Margaret. He inherited the old homestead on the death of his father.
6. (Rev. Henry) – Born 1839. Father of (Rev.) George of New Jersey, (Dr.) John, Maude, Annie (Mrs. Duckworth), Bella (Mrs. McArthur) and Etta (Mrs. Pickard).
7. Mary Ann – Born 1842. Married Joseph Milburn. Mother of George, (Dr.) Alfred (Vancouver), (Dr.) Henry (Vancouver) and of Margaret and Eunice (Chemong Road). Mrs. Milburn died in her 102nd year.
8. Percival Hall – Born 1844. Settled in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Father of J. P. Edmison of the “Indianapolis Star”, of George (South Dakota) and of Margaret (Mrs. Rush Brown).
9. Elizabeth – Born 1846. (Mrs./Dr./Beatty of Owen Sound). Mother of Percy Beatty (Oshawa), Carrie (Mrs./Dr./McDonald), and Lily Bell (Mrs. McLeod).
10. Isabella – Born 1848. (Mrs. Andrews of St. Mary’s). Mother of William Andrews (St. Mary’s), Margaret and Lily (Mrs. Cummings).

The above memorandum is of the briefest possible nature and is intended only to indicate family branches and their relationships. If time and circumstances permit, I should like to have published in booklet form a more comprehensive story of the Edmisons in Canada. There are old letters and documents in my possession which make such interesting

reading that they should be made available to the whole family connection. From Edmison family records we can derive a rather vivid picture of the pioneer life in what one of our forebears described as "The New World of Canada West in British North America".

I should be pleased to receive any more data or clippings which would assist in rounding out the Edmison story. It is one in which my late father (the Rev. John Hall Edmison D.D.) was very interested.

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