

# Where Were They?

by Jane L. Down

An old family story about the arrival of my Down ancestors in Canada and where they settled was recently brought into question by the discovery of an obituary which presented a different order of events. So far I have been unable to substantiate either version. The old family story stated that Robert Down of Broadwoodwider, Devon, his wife, Susannah, and eight of their children came to Canada in 1846 *'landed at Port Hope and then settled in the Exeter area'*.<sup>1</sup> The story further related that the following year Robert's nephew, also called Robert Down, and his wife Ann, Susannah's sister, and their son John came to Canada.<sup>2</sup> Nephew Robert supposedly went to Exeter alone and lived with his Uncle Robert's family for the winter while they started to clear nephew Robert's land (lot 27 concession 2, Usborne Township, Huron County).<sup>3</sup> Ann and John stayed in Bowmanville and joined nephew Robert in Exeter the following spring (1848).<sup>4</sup> There is a record of a lease that Robert Senior took out on lot 28 concession 2 in 1849<sup>5</sup> and a record of him purchasing the north half of lot 27 concession 3 in 1856.<sup>6</sup> There is also a record of Robert Junior converting a lease for lot 27 concession 2 into a purchase in 1855.<sup>7</sup> Both Robert Down families are listed in Usborne in the 1851 census.<sup>8</sup>

There was no reason to question this story until recently when an obituary was found for Susannah Keddy, Robert Senior's daughter. It stated that she *'came to Canada with her parents in the spring of 1846 settling first in the Township of Darlingford County Durham. In the spring of 1849 the family moved to the section then known as the 'Huron Tract', in this country then being a solid natural forest and settled on lot 28 concession 2 Usborne Tp.'*<sup>9</sup> This story has Robert Senior's family staying in Darlingford (Darlington?) for three years (1846-1849) before moving into the Huron Tract and would contradict the story of Robert Junior going directly to meet his uncle in Usborne in 1847.

So which story is correct? Robert Down is not listed in the 1848 census for Usborne,<sup>10</sup> however, a Robert Down is listed on lot 10 concession 6 in Darlington as a non-proprietor with five in the household, two being natives of Scotland, one Ireland and two Canadian.<sup>11</sup> The Darlington entry would seem not to correspond with Robert Senior's family as they were all born in England but why was he not listed in Usborne? The earliest directories for Huron County are 1863<sup>12</sup> so would be no help. Robert Senior's daughter Elizabeth was the first child to be born in Ontario on December 25, 1846.<sup>13 14</sup> The location of Elizabeth's baptism would help to solve the mystery but no baptism has been found for her in the Wesleyan Methodist records.<sup>15</sup> Her parents were Bible Christians<sup>16</sup> and baptisms that early were often done by 'saddleback preachers'<sup>17 18</sup> or not at all so perhaps a record of her baptism does not exist.

The second story from Susannah's obituary may explain why the first record of Robert Senior leasing land in Usborne was 1849. It has always been a mystery why there is no record of him leasing land in 1846 when he supposedly arrived but perhaps he worked as a labourer until he was able to lease a lot in 1849.

I would like to know where Robert Senior and his family were from 1846 to 1849 and have it substantiated by the records.

### Sources of Information:

1. Norah Down, *Descendants of Robert Down*, handwritten book, June 16, 1971. Copy in possession of Jane Down.
2. William Frank Down (1873-1962), *History of the Down Family*, Hurondale, Ontario, handwritten family history, February 21, 1958. Original in possession of Robert Down, Exeter, Ontario
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid,
5. Record of Lease by Robert Down, Usborne Township, Lot 28 Concession 2, Ontario Land Record Index, Archives of Ontario, 184912, RG Series CC B3, Volume 030, page 507. MS729 3 or 4.
6. Abstract of Title for Lot 27, Concession 3, Usborne Township, Huron County, Land Registry Office, Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations, Ontario Government.
7. Record of Purchase by Robert Down Jr., Usborne Township, Lot 27, Concession 2, Ontario Land Record Index, Archives of Ontario, 18550607, RG Series CC B3 Volume 019, page 492. MS729 Reel 1.
8. Robert Down Sr. and Robert Down Jr. households, 1851 census, Canada West, Huron County, Usborne Township, page 21, Library and Archives Canada microfilm C-11728
9. Obituary for Susannah Keddy (nee Down), who died February 19, 1920, from the Exeter Advocate, February 26, 1920, p.1.
10. Search in the 1848 Census Index for Usborne on December 13, 2006 for Robert Down by Helen Dale, Huron County Branch OGS Research Co-ordinator, found no entry.
11. Robert Down household, 1848 census, Darlington, page 5 line 9. Lot 10, Concession. 6. Farmer, non-proprietor. 5 in household - 4 free Presbyterian and 1 Wesleyan Methodist. 2 natives of Scotland, 1 native of Ireland, 2 natives of Canada. Ages: 2 males between 5 years and 14 year, 1 female between 5 years and 14 years, 1 male married between 40 and 60, 1 female married between 14 and 45.
12. *County of Huron Gazatteer and General Business Directory for 1863/4*. Library and Archives Canada FC 3093.25 U5443 Ref. Usborne Township.
13. Norah Down, op. cit.
14. John Blatchford household, 1901 census, Huron South, Hensall Village, C, page 4, <[www.automatedgenealogy.com](http://www.automatedgenealogy.com)>, lists Elizabeth Blatchford (nee Down)'s birthday as December 25, 1846.
15. Search in the Wesleyan Methodist Baptismal Register Index, <<http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~wjmartin/wm-index.htm>> on December 10, 2006 for the baptism of Elizabeth Down found no entry.
16. Robert Down Sr household, 1851 census, op. cit.
17. Walter E. Creery (gen. ed.), *Between the Fences: Usborne Township 1842-1992*, Usborne Township Council, Exeter, Ontario, 1991, p.80.
18. Bible Christian Rootsweb website, <<http://freepages.history.rootsweb.com/~biblechristian/index.html>>