

The Braden family – The Irish Connection

My paternal grandmother, Addie Braden is buried with my Grandfather, George Sonley in the first plot as you enter the Pinedale Cemetery via the pedestrian gate. Her youngest sister, Florence Mabel Braden married Archibald “Archie” Johnson and they are also buried in Pinedale cemetery.

As part of the Sonley family, Addie represents the Irish connection. The family immigrated from Northern Ireland according to family lore from County Fermanagh. One of the charming aspects of genealogy is discovering the differences between family oral history and documentation in the archival record. Linda Haney’s research has located documents that the Braden family hailed from County Tyrone adjacent to Fermanagh. The genealogical record traces the lineage back to Great, Great, Great Grandfather John Braden born in 1758 in Screeby, Kilskeery, County Tyrone, Northern Ireland. It’s possible that the oral record remembered that John, 1st cousin to Great Grandfather James, was born in County Fermanagh and immigrated to Kings County, New Brunswick.

Although the family came to Canada from Northern Ireland, if you dig further back in Irish history, one suspects that they must have migrated from either Northern England or the Scottish lowlands to what was known at the time as the Ulster Plantation. The Ulster Plantation was established by King James the 1st of England, also known as King James the 6th of Scotland. He is perhaps best known to us as it was during his reign that the King James version of the Bible was published.

King James had difficulty controlling the unruly Celts and Irish Catholics so began a colonization of the area around Ulster to anglicize and civilize the ‘savage’ Irish. English lords and war veterans were rewarded with Irish owned land and encouraged to offer portions of their land free to protestant families to settle and provide a more loyal base for the King of England & Scotland. The Bradens seem to have accepted the free land offer and so began the Sonley family connection to the Irish troubles.

James Braden, the 5th grandchild to John, was born to William and Lucinda Braden in Glasmullagh, Kilskeery, Co. Tyrone, Northern Ireland. He is the Braden in our direct line who immigrated to Canada. Born somewhere between 1833 – 1838, he died in Brock Township in 1922. Historical records indicate he sailed from Liverpool aboard the Rappahannock on the 17th of June, 1851 and landed in New York. There are conflicting dates for his arrival in Canada but in 1862 he is recorded in the census as married to Sarah Ann Penrose of Peterborough and living in Mariposa township, Victoria County.

Penrose is listed as one of the families that settled in the centre of the township beginning in 1831 when the major influx of settlement began. [Aside - If you look at the headstone for Lloyd and Lorna Sonley which is adjacent to Addie and George, you will notice that Lloyd’s middle name is Penrose. For years the Sonley family had a Penrose cream separator and his loving brothers and sisters used to tease him that he was named after the cream separator. You can rest in peace, Lloyd. We have set the record straight.]

Based on my uncertain memory the farm may have been on the 14th concession of Mariposa, east of the road leading from Coulters Corners (which we know as Manilla) north towards Woodville which marks the northern boundary of Mariposa township. Years ago, I travelled the roads of Mariposa but wasn’t able to identify the farm.

In 1901 James and Sarah are reported to be living in Brock Township. This would be the farm on the 4th concession of Brock owned by Manfred Lott in my time.

It's said that James Braden was a bit of an entrepreneur. He used to take a load of wheat by horse and wagon to Peterborough where it was ground into flour and then brought back to be made into bread. When asked if the trip was dangerous, he is reported to have said, "Not really. But you have to be careful passing through Lindsay. That's where the Catholics are. You don't want to drive through Lindsay without your shillelagh." Ironically, James and Sarah are buried in Riverside Cemetery in Lindsay, the only dangerous place on the trip to Peterborough.

They had 11 children, nine of them girls. It has been noted that on the 1st Sunday that they came to Pinedale Church, as those attractive girls paraded in and sat in a row near the front, all the Sonley boys in the back row, sat up straight and were quiet for a change. Apparently, George sat up the straightest for he married the 10th girl in the line, Ada "Addie" Maude Victoria Braden. It does sound English rather than Irish, doesn't it?

George and Addie acquired the farm across from Pinedale church and raised 8 children. Many of you might recognize these names: Evelyn, Frank, Kathleen, Ernest, Lloyd, Audrey, Madeline and Doris. They were born between Oct. 9th, 1911 and Nov. 11, 1922. 11 years, 1 month and 2 days. She was a strong woman. That was almost 14 years of her life either pregnant, breast feeding or both.

I don't remember too much about Grandmother Sonley. She and George retired to Uxbridge and we used to visit them on a Sunday evening. It was a special visit because they had a 12 inch black and white television and we would plan to be there for the Ed Sullivan show. I remember September 9, 1956 when Elvis Presley 1st played the Sullivan show. After the performance, Grandmother said, "That's just terrible." Grandfather leaned over, patted her on the shoulder and said; "Don't worry Addie, he'll never catch on."

We are fortunate to have the Braden family bible which contains a hand written genealogical chart. There is also a Braden family photo with a handwritten copy of the names that have been inscribed on the back of the photo. Based on the apparent age of baby Madeline seated on her sister Kathleen's lap (McLeod) in the left front row, it is likely that the photo was taken in 1922 just before Great Grandfather James died. Some of us are charmed to see our fathers, Lloyd, Frank and Ernest as the three little tow-headed boys on the right hand side of the first row. They were likely about 5, 7 and 6 at the time of the photo. Others will remember sister Audrey seated on Grandmother Addie's lap in the 2nd row.

These little anecdotes give us an inkling of the heritage, life and personality of those who are buried here at Pinedale Cemetery. It helps us to remember them when we visit from time to time and once a year as we enjoy the memorial service. It is not only with sorrow that we remember those who have gone before.

Submitted by James Sonley