

Daniel Abell of Malahide
(1784 - 1868)
'Quaker Cabinet-Maker On The Talbot Road'

Donald G. Anger

From as far back as I could remember, the old pine cupboard had stood in my father's workshop holding the typical odd assortment of jars, cans, and little containers. Years later, after I had developed an interest in both genealogy and early furniture of Upper Canada as an outgrowth from my teaching of Canadian history, it began to dawn on me that the old cupboard then standing somewhat forlornly in my father's workshop bore an uncanny resemblance to early pine cupboards that I had noticed in books about early furniture of Upper Canada. In those books, such cupboards were given the more dignified title of 'Pine Dish Dressers'. They were popularly found in most log or early frame houses from about 1790 to the early 1840s, the era during which most were built. The lady of the house displayed her small collection of pewter or china plates on the open upper shelves while the closed cupboard below contained some of the utensils she used in meal preparations. This solitary pine cupboard, working in conjunction with the nearby open hearth, usually constituted the totality of her kitchen.

As soon as possible after the 'lightbulb' flashed within me, I questioned my father's

knowledge of the old cupboard. His reply was unequivocal. The cupboard had always been in the old Anger Homestead in Bayham Township, the house of his great-grandparents Elisha and Deborah (Kilmer) Anger, and had belonged to them.² It was the same old frame house where my father was born four generations later in 1915. Now, through inheritance, this old pine cupboard stands today in our own dining room, continuing to preside as a silent witness to history.

Our interest now piqued, my wife and I began to examine very carefully every pine cupboard we encountered in museums, historic homes, and antique furniture research. Interestingly, during our research one thing was becoming increasingly clear. Despite all the general similarities of both construction and early artisans' techniques which we found across all of eastern North America, there was one way in which our cupboard was unlike virtually all the others. Ours was 'plain' and the others, to varying degrees, were not. It was puzzling to say the least.

Then, it happened! While preparing for a book on the War of 1812 in the Sugarloaf Settlement on the Niagara Peninsula³ (where the city of Port Colborne and

¹ All information contained in this study of Daniel Abell is abstracted from the following book by this same author: *Daniel Abell of Malahide (1784-1868): Quaker Cabinet-Maker on the Talbot Road* (Toronto, 2014).

² The Anger frame house was built in 1859 on Lot 5, Concession 8, Bayham Township, and replaced a log house built there by Elisha Anger in 1842, the year he was located on that land by Colonel Talbot.

³ Donald G. Anger, *Scruples Of Conscience: The War of 1812 In The Sugarloaf Settlement* (Port Colborne: Port Colborne Historical and Marine Museum, 2008).



Anger Pine Dish Dresser: Much of the Abell Book that I omitted had to do with the various technical occupations that Daniel worked at. I probably spent the better part of a year studying colonial and pre-industrial occupations, with a concentration on cabinet-making. This allowed me to objectively examine in considerable detail the specific tools and methods used in making our pine cupboard. Consequently, even if I had no inkling of the related family story, It can be objectively proven that this cupboard had to have been constructed in the early 1840's.

surrounding area are today), I encountered in my research, on pre-war Niagara, a young school-teacher and carpenter by the name of Daniel Abell who had recently married Annis Bearss and was in the process of acquiring his cabinet-maker's tools just before the war. Curiously, I also discovered that, unlike his wife's male Bearss and Kilmer relatives who had recently joined the ranks of the 3rd Lincoln Militia, Daniel Abell had instead applied to join the Black Creek Quakers almost immediately after the declaration of war. Obviously, this stark

divergence of interests within this family was shaping up as an interesting social experiment in the Sugarloaf Settlement on the eve of war. As further research would soon illustrate, most families on the Niagara Peninsula were about to experience their own severe stress of one kind or another.

Now, several years later following this discovery and after a period of intensive research, the trail of evidence reveals that the 'Anger Pine Dish Dresser' in question was constructed in the early days of the Talbot Settlement in 1843 by Township of



Elisha and Deborah (Kilmer) Anger House - It was situated on Lot 5, Con.8 Bayham Township, close to the township line where the 'Kilmer Settlement' was on the Malahide side. The pine cupboard was in the log house preceding this one from 1843 until 1859; then it was in this frame house from 1859 until 1920 when the frame house was replaced by a brick house which is still there. The image of the frame house is in the form of an oil painting, with the artist using several early 1900's photos (each showing part of the house) to help accurately portray the entire house. Deborah Kilmer was the niece of Daniel Abell.

Malahide Quaker cabinet-maker Daniel Abell as a wedding present for his niece, Deborah Kilmer, who was born in her nearby Malahide home in 1825. Consequently, we now know why our pine cupboard is not like the others. It follows the preferred Quaker esthetic for their furniture: 'Of the best sort, but plain',⁴ a quality and principle which is now 'plainly' evident in this example of the cabinet-making of Daniel Abell and his sons.

In the pages that follow, the spotlight is

placed on some of the powerful societal, religious and political forces in Upper Canada which were set in motion after the onset of the War of 1812, forces which necessarily helped to mould, shape and define the life and work of Daniel Abell. As a result, the reader will find him to be a man who, to his dying day, remained true to his wartime acquired Quaker faith and who worked tirelessly as a leader on its behalf at Black Creek, at Pelham, and finally at Malahide. These obvious leadership

⁴ This phrase, quoted often by scholars studying Quaker culture, was first used on 25 November 1738 when wealthy Quaker merchant John Reynell of Philadelphia ordered two "Black Corner Cubbards, with 2 door to each, no Red in 'em, of the best Sort, but Plain." John Reynell to Daniel Flexney, 25 November 25, John Reynell Letter Book (1738-1741), 6. Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

qualities would eventually thrust him onto a much larger civic stage in the Talbot Settlement. Largely unrecognized to date, the long cabinet-making careers of Daniel Abell and his sons extended over a period of forty-eight years in the Talbot Settlement. Consequently, much of the early furniture produced in Bayham and Malahide Townships must have emanated from the Abell Shop.

Of great assistance in painting the picture of the life and times of Daniel Abell is a remarkable newspaper interview given by Daniel's youngest son, Robert Abell (1828 - 1923). Late in his life, but with a mind still razor-sharp, Robert sat down with a well-known local columnist named Louise Hatch who possessed a historical frame of mind and who wrote under the pseudonym of A. S. Paragus. From that lengthy interview, published on 16 December 1916, and headlined: "ROBT.

ABELL REMEMBERS WALNUT COFFINS AT FIVE DOLLARS APIECE," today we can push back the mists of time and see with an unusual clarity the story of the Abell family as they developed their pioneer home beside the Talbot Road in Malahide Township.⁵

The Trail from Connecticut to Niagara

Preliminary research indicated that Daniel Abell was a native of the State of Connecticut where he was born 22 December 1784 in the village of Middle Haddam; he was baptized on 18 June 1786 in the Congregational Church. With this knowledge in hand, and with our typical sense of adventure, my wife and I set out on a motoring trip to Connecticut. At the small library in Middle Haddam, we soon made the very pleasant discovery that the Abell ancestral house was still in existence and, in fact, was listed on the local historical



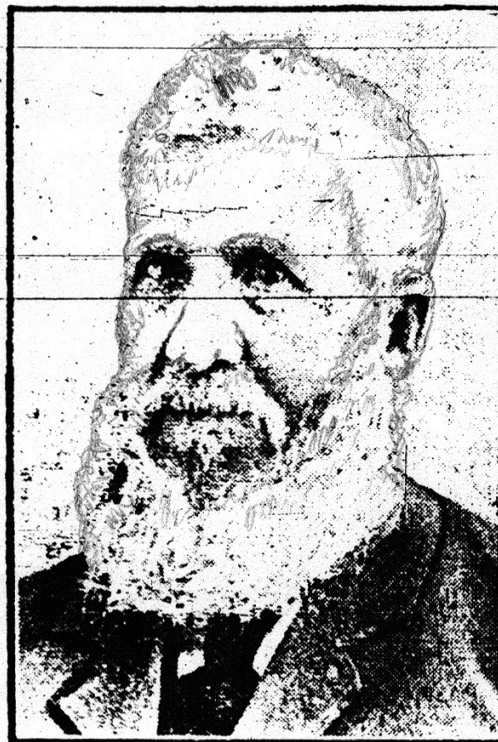
St. Thomas Journal, Dec. 16, 1916 - Shows the headlines and beginnings of the article on Robert Abell.

⁵ A. S. Paragus was the pen name of Miss Louise Dean Hatch (1878-1970). She was descended from the Talbot Settlement pioneering Hatch family of Bayham Township and was a journalist for Tillsonburg and St. Thomas newspapers. This lengthy article about Robert Abell, published in the *St. Thomas Journal* on 16 December 1916, is fairly typical of the nostalgic search for the past in many of her articles.

registry.⁶ And so, armed with a very rudimentary local map showing many small roads twisting and turning through the forested hills and valleys, we headed out to find the Abell House.

Eventually, we found the right forested valley, at the foot of Chestnut Hill. There, before us in a clearing, was the ancient frame house where a young Daniel Abell had lived well over two centuries before. It had been built on that spot about the year 1768 by Daniel Hubbard who was the grandfather of Daniel Abell. Daniel's father, Abel Abell, was a veteran of the Revolutionary War and on 21 December 1783 married Lucy Hubbard. In 1788, Abel and his young family left Hog's Hill in Middle Haddam and purchased the fifty-eight acres of his father-in-law on Pocotapaug Creek. There, only a stone's throw from his house, Abel Abell built a saw and grist mill on Pocotapaug Creek. The mill itself is long gone, its passing marked only by a historical marker beside the creek, but as we peered down into the creek near the marker, clearly visible in the shallow water were the remnants of the mill's stone foundation.⁷

One of the prime reasons for the Abell Sawmill was to provide rough sawn lumber to the shipyards which had been developing since about 1760 at Knowles Landing in Middle Haddam at the edge of the broad Connecticut River. Once the Revolutionary War was over, shipbuilding and commerce prospered and many labourers and craftsmen were needed. By the early 1800s,



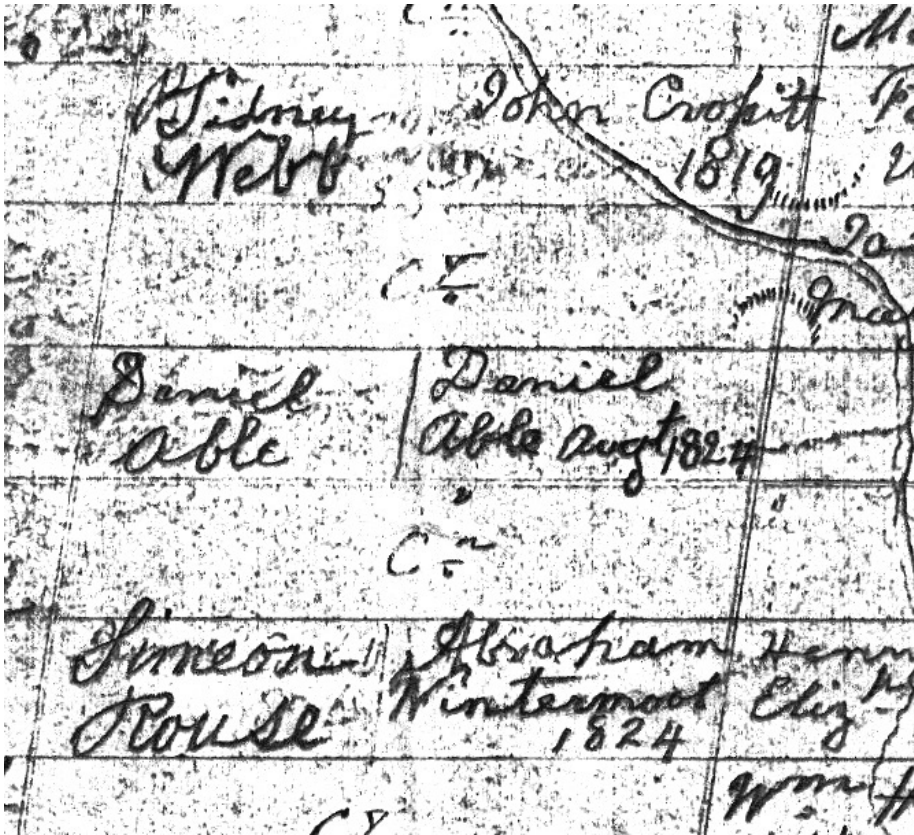
MR. ROBERT ABELL, of Seville, East Elgin, of whose long and useful life A. S. Paragus had an interesting account in Saturday's Journal.

Photo of Robert Abell - Although the image is fairly poor, this picture of Robert Abell was placed in the next issue of the newspaper following the article. Both my grandfather and great-grandfather knew him well. My grandfather kept a daily journal from 1901 - 1912 and it shows that the 'Anger Threshing Outfit' would go into Malahide every year to thresh the grain on the farm of Gus Abell, Robert's son.

one of those men was a teenaged Daniel Abell who was in the process of learning the skill of shipwright. Tragically, at about this time Daniel's brother Jabez sailed on one of these vessels bound for the West Indies; he took sick, died, and was buried in Trinidad. The memory of his brother and

⁶ Middle Haddam Historic District was placed on the U.S. *National Register of Historic Places* in 1984. The layout of this unique village has been largely unchanged for 250 years. Over half of the historic buildings predate 1835 with the earliest house dating from 1732. The Middle Haddam Register contains significant architectural and historical information on the 1768 Abell House.

⁷ Some information on Daniel's early life before coming to Canada is found in Horace A. Abell, *The Abell Family In America* (Rutland, VT: Tuttle Pub. Co., 1940).



Col. Talbot's Map:
This is a scan take
from my copy of
Talbot's large
Bayham map which
now resides in the
Archives of
Ontario.

this traumatic event would long weigh heavily on Daniel's mind.

About the year 1800, the unfortunate death of Daniel's mother appeared to be a pivotal event in his life. Consequently, by early 1803, Daniel had left home "with the consent of his father in the 20th year of his age"⁸ and had arrived in Upper Canada in the Niagara District. Even though not yet twenty years old, Daniel had arrived in his new homeland with several distinct advantages which not many young men heading west at that time would have enjoyed. He was literate; he had inherited a mantle of integrity; he knew intimately the business of the millwright; he had been acquiring the skills and knowledge of the shipwright; he knew from practical experience how to use and wield the large

and small hand-tools of the period and he had almost certainly brought a few of these tools with him. Possibly also, the consent of his father may well have been accompanied by some degree of financial inheritance as Daniel left the family's hearth and home in Connecticut.

An Artisan In Niagara

Within three years of his arrival, and specifically on 13 April 1806, Daniel married Annis Bearss, the twenty-one-year-old daughter of David and Rhoda Bearss. The Bearss family was originally from New Fairfield, Connecticut but had left the state in the early 1790s and, by 1793, had arrived in Niagara with ten children in tow; they soon established themselves in Humberstone Township in the eastern

⁸ Abell, *The Abell Family*, 138.

section of the Sugarloaf Settlement.⁹ In 1805, the large family of Thomas Kilmer had arrived from New York State and settled nearby the Bearss family. Over the next few years intermarriages would occur between children of these two families and, as a result, over the next century these two families would migrate westward together.

The first child of Daniel and Annis Abell was born 18 January 1807. Being a son, he was given the name of Jabez in memory of Daniel's younger brother who had lost his life while sailing. At this particular time, Daniel and Annis were living just over the township boundary in Willoughby Township where, on 12 February 1807, "Daniel Abel of Willoughby, Carpenter" witnessed the signing of a deed for property in Humberstone Township.¹⁰ Three weeks later, he witnessed another deed.¹¹ This was a clear sign that Daniel, despite being of a fairly young age and also a relative newcomer to the area, had acquired sufficient stature and enough recognized literacy to be called upon for lending his signature on such occasions.

The general area that Daniel and his family were living in was inhabited by a sizable number of Quakers, or members of the Religious Society of Friends. This particular body of Friends was called the

Black Creek Preparative Meeting and for these early years it was under the auspices of the more senior Pelham Monthly Meeting. Many of these same people could by now be counted among the Abells' close friends and neighbours.

Within another year, Daniel had moved his family back across the border into Humberstone, probably to reside on the land of his father-in-law while they awaited the birth of their second child. With a growing family, Daniel realized that he needed to upgrade his status from carpenter to skilled craftsman. With this in mind, at some point during October 1809 Daniel went to see a man called Michael Graybiel who lived at the far western end of the Sugarloaf Settlement in Wainfleet Township. He was a skilled blacksmith who had arrived in the Sugarloaf Settlement from Pennsylvania about 1803. At the end of Daniel's several-mile journey on horseback to see this man, the impressive stone house of Michael Graybiel would have finally appeared in front of Daniel beside the lake. It was built in 1805 and exhibited the Pennsylvania-Dutch style, which the Graybiel family was accustomed to in their former country.¹²

As a consequence of their meeting on 27 October 1809, Graybiel established an account in his ledger for "Daniel Able" and

⁹ The Sugarloaf Settlement was a geographical area on the north shore of Lake Erie comprising the lakeshore regions of Humberstone and Wainfleet Townships. It was first settled in the 1780s by Mennonites, Quakers, and Loyalists. Its central feature was (and is) Sugarloaf Hill which lies at the lakeshore between the two townships. In 1833, the newly completed Welland Canal reached Lake Erie and a new village of Port Colborne was begun at the canal's entrance to Lake Erie near Sugarloaf Hill.

¹⁰ Humberstone Deed #1230: *John House of Bertie to Adam Carver of Willoughby*; Wit: Daniel Abell of Willoughby, Carpenter (12 February 1807). Niagara District Deeds, Provincial Archives of Ontario.

¹¹ Bertie Deed #1225: *George House of Bertie to Martin Beam of Willoughby*; Wit: Daniel Abell of Willoughby, Carpenter (9 March 1807). Niagara District Deeds, Provincial Archives of Ontario.

¹² This sturdy home, built by Michael Graybiel (1777-1851), is still standing beside Lake Erie. In the second half of the twentieth century it was greatly modified and was known as the Rathfon Inn which catered to tourists, but has since returned to private ownership.

proceeded to fabricate for Daniel "14 Setts of parring irons" for a sizable fee of two pounds and nine shillings.¹³ Paring irons (as we would spell the term today) referred to a generic set of tools including such items as chisels, gouges, plane irons and others which collectively helped to remove, shape and smooth wood in preparation for use in

joinery and cabinet-making. This close relationship between the two men continued for the next three years. On 14 October 1811 Graybiel provided Daniel with a set of special tools which helped chart the course of Daniel's wood-working career for the remainder of his life. This game-changer was a "Set (of) lathe irons"

Date	Description	Cost (Pounds, Shillings, Pence)
1809 October 27	To 14 Setts parring irons	2 9 0
January 1811 22	To Laying axe	0 8 0
March 12	To axe & tools	0 8 0
April 2	To brass band to elender	0 2 0
June 29	To settle bits	0 4 0
October 14	To mending pot and bell	0 2 0
October 18	To Set lathe irons	10 0 0
November 25	To repairing taken set	0 2 0
December 25	To 3 bits and sundries	0 12 0
February 12	To chisel & gouge	0 6 0
March 4	To wheel iron	0 6 0
March 21	To 2 boxes	0 2 0
April 15	To Sundries Made & Mended	0 5 0
	To 3 Spindles and Sundries	10 3 0
		8 6

Graybiel Ledger ('Daniel Able Account') - This page lists the various tools that Michael Graybiel made for Daniel before the outbreak of war. At first glance, the wording appeared to be mainly 'gibberish' to me. However, as I said above, a study of the various occupations such as Turner, Wheelwright, Wagonmaker, Spinning Wheel Maker made the list of items much more meaningful. I have used a couple of paragraphs in my essay on Daniel to hopefully get the general concepts across, versus most of a chapter I used in the book.

¹³ Graybiel Blacksmith Ledger, 181. This ledger, now residing in the L.R. Wilson Heritage Research Archives at the Port Colborne Historical and Marine Museum, was first begun in Pennsylvania in 1791 by Johannes Graybiel, father of Michael. It contains accounts for many Sugarloaf Settlement settlers before and during the War of 1812.

which would have been fairly rare in Upper Canada at the time and which would immediately vault Daniel into the occupation of "Turner." In the United States at this time, where many of the early cultural and industrial influences were coming from, one of the professions which was popularly emerging was the triple combination of 'Turner, Spinning Wheel Maker, and Windsor Chair Maker' all rolled into one, a profession which Daniel was apparently aspiring to.

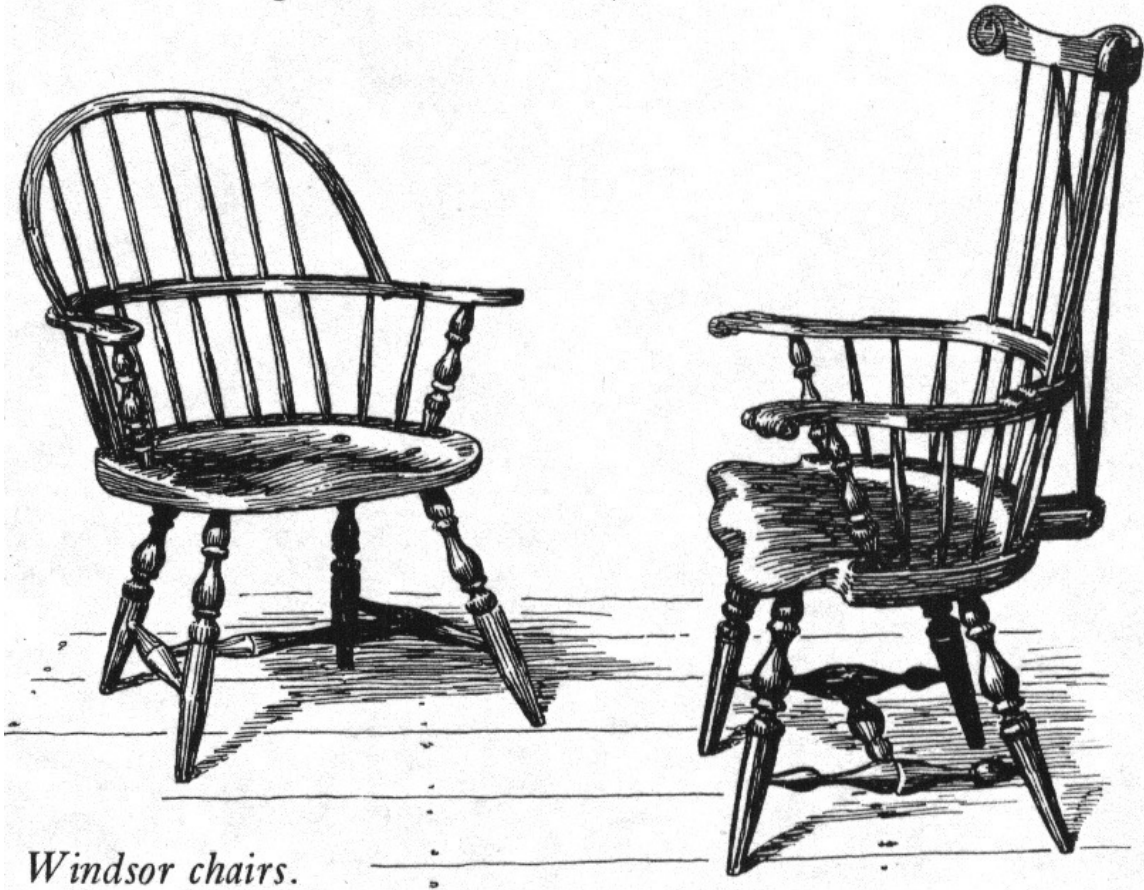
And how did Daniel pay for the lathe irons and other items? Graybiel's ledger indicates that Daniel put his new lathe to work in turning "22 Doz. Sickle handles" for Graybiel which were valued at two pounds and four shillings. The ledger also states that Daniel provided Graybiel with three chairs at a total value of eighteen shillings. These would have been Windsor chairs as contemporary accounts which

exist from this period indicate that six shillings was the going price in Upper Canada at the time and a lathe was necessary to make all the Windsor's 'turned' components. On 19 April 1812 Graybiel provided Daniel Abell with "3 spindles and sundries," thereby indicating that Daniel's spinning-wheel business was in progress at that time. Also, a year earlier, on 12 March 1811 Graybiel listed "To axeltrees" in his account book, followed a year later on 4 February 1812 by "Wheel irons" and metal "Boxes," the latter being used in the interior of wooden wagon wheel hubs. This is clear evidence that Daniel was also now employing the skills of 'Wheelwright' and 'Wagon-maker'.

On 25 August 1810 Daniel had also set up another account with a prominent merchant named James Macklem in Chippawa whose trading empire, using two sailing vessels, ranged as far west as Fort

	182	£	s	d
Contra				
by a balance due		0	4	0
By 22 doz sickle handles	-2	4	0	
By charged		0	2	0
By 3 chairs 6/		2	18	
By cash 12/			12	
		4	3	

Graybiel Ledger (Method of Payment) - This page outlines how Daniel paid for his tools and other items. '22 doz. sickle handles', which required the usage of his new lathe to produce. The 3 chairs he made for Graybiel were undoubtedly of the Windsor variety, which also required the use of a lathe. An analysis of Upper Canadian accounts of that period showed that 6 shillings was the going rate for Windsor chairs while only 3 shillings would get you the more common 'slatback' or 'ladderback' chair.



Detroit. The account in Macklem's ledger was entitled "Daniel Abell - Teacher," indicating that Daniel was at that time exploiting yet another source of income.¹⁴ By the time that the War of 1812 was about to break out on the Niagara Peninsula, the family of Daniel and Annis Abell now included three small children and Daniel, in the interim, had assembled an impressive set of skills to support his family that few men in the Sugarloaf Settlement could hope to match.

*The War of 1812:
'Certain Scruples of Conscience'*

On 18 June 1812, the United States declared war on Great Britain. Within a few days, word of the declaration of war reached Fort George at Niagara. As a consequence, on 2 July General Isaac Brock ordered the 3rd Regiment of Lincoln Militia, comprising 200 troops, of whom about a quarter were from the Sugarloaf Settlement, to march to defend the Fort Erie frontline. In that contingent were three Bearss and Kilmer brothers-in-law of Daniel Abell.¹⁵ In contrast, however, Daniel

¹⁴ James Macklem, *Macklem Trading Ledger (1809-1814)*, 227. This large volume, residing at the L. R. Wilson Archives at the Port Colborne Historical and Marine Museum, contains the accounts of hundreds of settlers and about two dozen military officers before and during the War of 1812.

¹⁵ *Muster Roll and Paylist for the 3rd Regt. of Lincoln Militia who were 'On Duty At Fort Erie, Chippawa, and Elsewhere' from 19th June to 24th July, 1814*. List includes: Henry Killmer, Philip Killmer, and Daniel Bearss who were in Captain John Baxter's Company. Library and Archives Canada, RG9 IB7, Vol. 23, 247.

had already initiated a request to join the Black Creek community of Quakers and this became formalized in the Quaker minutes on 1 July 1812: "At our monthly meeting of Pelham held at Black Crick the 1st of the 7th mo. 1812: Black Crick prodused a request for Daniel Abel to Come under the Care of Friends. This meeting appoints George Bradshaw, Jessee Willson, Samuel Taylor & John Cutler to pay him a solid visit and report next month."¹⁶

The most obvious interpretation of Daniel's decision not to join the militia was indeed a simple straightforward one of conscience. Although not yet a Quaker, he certainly knew that Article 27 of the Militia Act of 1808 stated: "The persons called Quakers, Mennonites and Tunkers, who from certain scruples of Conscience decline bearing arms, shall not be compelled to bear arms in the said militia." On the other hand, the fine levied on these men declining to serve was steep, amounting to the sum of five pounds per annum in time of war. Since most Quakers refused to pay the fine, this compelled the government in the person of the local sheriff to come onto that Quaker's land and remove goods equal in value to the fine.

There may have been another reason, perhaps, why Daniel did not want to join the militia. By the time the war began, Daniel had three brothers still living in the United States who were of age to be drafted to fight on the American side and he knew that his brother Robert had already migrated west to Vernon, New York, and the other two brothers would be probably

coming west from Connecticut in the near future. Unfortunately for Daniel and his family, there may well have been whispers going around the Sugarloaf Settlement at this time which questioned the degree of courage of Daniel Abell.

The committee instructed to determine the character and suitability of Daniel Abell to become a Quaker apparently initiated their investigation during July and early August but could not yet complete their final report: "At our monthly meeting of Pelham the 5th of the 8th mo. 1812: The friends to visit Daniel Abel on account of his request not being ready for a full report are Continued to report next month."¹⁷ By this time, with no decision yet forthcoming, the pressure building on Daniel from all sides must have felt immense. Then, as August wound down and the calendar turned to September, Daniel finally received his answer from the Black Creek Meeting: "At a monthly meeting of Pelham held at Black Crick the 2nd of the 9th mo. 1812: The Committee to Visit Daniel Abel report they finde nothing but that the meeting might be safe in receiveing him. This meeting uniteing therewith, he is accordingly received into membership. Isaac & Abraham Laing is appointed to inform him thereof and Request his attendance at next meeting."¹⁸ Daniel was now a full-fledged member of the Society of Friends although his wife and children were not. The minutes of the meeting give no reasoning behind their decision to accept Daniel but one can easily read between the lines and assume that the main purpose of the committee was to determine whether Daniel's request

¹⁶ Pelham Monthly Meeting Minute Book (1806-1834), 78. Quaker Archives and Library of Canada, H-7-3.

¹⁷ Pelham Monthly Meeting Minute Book (1806-1834), 80.

¹⁸ Pelham Monthly Meeting Minute Book (1806-1834), 80.

for membership was simply a ploy to evade military service, given the timing of his request, or whether in fact he held a sincere and well thought out aspiration to become a member of the Society of Friends which had a wide-ranging group of beliefs and expectations extending far beyond just a belief in pacifism. Perhaps it would take the remainder of Daniel's life to ultimately prove to himself and also to some others that the committee had indeed made the right choice. Be that as it may, Daniel Abell had made a commitment to the Quakers that he would never break. Being the introspective young man he was, three years later he wrote a letter to his father in which he outlined his reasons for joining the Quakers. In response, his father wrote a letter dated 10 June 1815 which reads in part: "In your letter you mention that you have become what the world calls a Quaker. Why Daniel, if you will practice what you profess I shall not think you the worse for that."¹⁹

Very quickly Daniel was accepted within the Quaker fold and was assigned or delegated important tasks which it was his responsibility to capably carry out while ensuring always to present a calm demeanour and without giving cause for anger. The War of 1812 soon presented many thorny issues to be resolved, as the following selected example shows. In September of 1813 Daniel Abell and Joseph Marsh were instructed to go to the home of Thomas Rice with the following paper in hand to inform him that he had been disowned: "Whereas Thomas Rice had a wright of membership amongst us but hath so far deviated from the known

prinsaples of friends as to Comply with military requisitions in going with his team when pressed, for which he hath been tenderly treated with but not haveing the desired affect, therefore we disown him from being any longer a member untill he Condemns the same to the satisfaction of this meeting, which that he may be enabled to do is our desire for him."²⁰

Here, in this one case study, was a microcosm illustrating the difficulties faced by all sides during the War of 1812. Several months before, the British Army had been in full retreat back to Burlington Heights and had found it necessary to confiscate or "press" wagons and their teams from local farmers to help transport baggage and armaments. It was usually expected by both parties that the wagon would be accompanied by the farmer himself, thereby alleviating the army from having to find another teamster, and the farmer would then also have at least a fair prospect of getting his team and wagon returned. If he did not accompany the wagon, the farmer knew that his chances were slim to none of receiving anything back other than perhaps a signed certificate issued by the army when the wagon was first taken which acknowledged the loss. If he lost his wagon and team permanently, the farmer knew that his chances of providing adequately for his family would be greatly reduced during these wartime conditions. As Daniel handed this letter over to Thomas Rice, he must have been acutely aware of how much expense and effort he himself had expended just a year earlier to procure his own wagon and how hard it would be to lose it and his own team of horses.

¹⁹ Abell, *The Abell Family In America*, 138.

²⁰ Pelham Monthly Meeting Minute Book (1806-1834), 94.

The Society of Friends, however, was not as hard-hearted as might appear at first glance. Unless the person had committed some act which was so far beyond the pale that it was impossible to receive him back into the fold, there was usually placed into the language of the dismissal an escape clause which would allow the individual to return to the fold if certain conditions were met. In this case, if Thomas Rice reconsidered his action and "Condemns the same to the satisfaction of this meeting," then he may return, "which is our desire for him." After a period of cooling off, Thomas Rice did offer an apology for his actions and was re-instated to membership. Consequently, despite some twists and turns, in the final analysis the system had worked. Thomas Rice was able to retain his wagon and the Quaker Meeting was also able, while using some flexibility, to maintain its strict pacifist standards under extremely difficult circumstances.²¹

The War of 1812 had proven to be a period of considerable anguish for the Quaker Community on the Niagara Peninsula. Just as the war was winding down in 1814, Daniel and Annis Abell's fourth child, Benjamin, was born in Humberstone Township on 5 September 1814. Following the end of the war, Daniel quickly moved into a position of some prominence within the Black Creek Meeting being given the task of presiding officer or 'Clerk', a position which required a set of consensus building skills in order to be an effective leader. Also, probably as a result of Daniel's former profession as a teacher, on 3 January 1816 he was placed on a

committee combining members from both Pelham and Black Creek to address the need for a School House in each meeting.

While he was working on the School House committee, Daniel and Annis decided that the time was now right for Annis and their children to also join the Quaker Meeting. Consequently, the Black Creek Minutes of 6 March 1816 record this event: "The women having concluded to receive Annis Abell into membership according to her request, handed the same to this meeting for its approbation accompanied with the united request of herself and husband for their minor Children Jabez, Lucy, Julia, and Benjamin; which being deliberately considered, this meeting unites with the women's meeting in accepting them."²² It was now done. The entire Abell family had become part of the greater Quaker family.

Life In The Pelham Quaker Colony

As soon as the War of 1812 had finally reached its dreary conclusion, a climate of ferment began to permeate the Niagara Peninsula. Western Upper Canada was beginning to open up and land grants were becoming available to those War of 1812 veterans who could prove their service and also to those children of Loyalists who could prove their parentage. Many Quakers from the Sugarloaf Settlement and elsewhere were also gearing up, ready to move to new Quaker settlements such as Norwich, Yarmouth and Malahide which were about to be carved out of the forest. Among those beginning their preparations to move west were most of Annis Abell's

²¹ Thomas Rice (1757-1861) not only survived the War of 1812, but lived many more years and died at the age of 104. Rice Road in Welland is named in his honour.

²² Pelham Monthly Meeting Minute Book (1806-1834), 132.

Bearss and Kilmer relatives who were utilizing their military land grants to settle in Malahide Township in the Talbot Settlement

Somewhat inexplicably, however, Daniel Abell was preparing to move counter to the trend. He was in the initial stages of moving his family to Pelham Township in the northern part of the Niagara Peninsula. Why would he choose to do this instead of preparing to head west to homestead on one hundred acres of virgin forest that the family could convert, through hard work, to a farm beyond their present wildest dreams? The simplest answer probably comes in the words of his youngest son Robert Abell a century later in 1916: "My father was more of a machinist than a farmer ... My father made the wheels both for wool and flax spinning as well as oil. If he wasn't at that, he'd be in a mill somewhere. Anything to work with tools or machinery for father, rather than farming."²³ Just as important, however, was the fact that after the war it became illegal for many years for American citizens to purchase or acquire land in Upper Canada. If Daniel had joined the 3rd Lincoln Militia instead of joining the Quakers, he would have been eligible for a militia land grant and his family could have joined his wife's relatives who were heading to Malahide Township. Therefore, sometime during the early spring of 1817 as the Abell wagon transported her family members and furniture to Pelham, Annis Abell must have experienced very mixed emotions over the direction her family was moving.

There is no record existent of exactly where the Abell family resided in Pelham, but it was almost certainly in the then bustling village of St. Johns which was located on the boundary between the townships of Pelham and Thorold in the Short Hills. Many years ago, as a young history teacher, I would lead classes along the pathways winding through this historic valley of the Twelve Mile Creek at St. Johns. Only historical markers and occasional foundations give clues to the once important industries located there two centuries ago. In the early 1790s, three related Quaker families (Canby, Darling, and Birdsall) realized the potential opportunities which existed there. Consequently, Daniel Abell and family were moving to this area at the very interval of history that historian and archaeologist, Colin Duquemin could proclaim: "Thus, by 1817, St. Johns could claim three grist mills, two saw mills, a tannery, a brickyard, two fulling mills, one woolen factory and an established iron foundry to make the locality Upper Canada's leading industrial centre."²⁴ Given Daniel's milling background, it is a very high probability that he was employed in some capacity in one of these fore-listed mills. Lending credence to this is the fact that at some time during their stay in Pelham, Daniel's slightly younger brother Robert Abell came to St. Johns to live. He would eventually become a prominent hat-maker as well as a gifted musician and conductor of both choir and chorus. Robert Abell eventually died at St. Johns on 15 October 1857.²⁵

With little delay following their arrival,

²³ "Robt. Abell Remembers Walnut Coffins At Five Dollars Apiece," 12.

²⁴ Colin K. Duquemin, "St. Johns, Short Hills: From Bloom To Doom." A paper presented by Colin K. Duquemin to the Second Niagara History Conference, Brock University, 12 April 1980, 17.

²⁵ Abell, *Abell Family In America*, 139-140.

and at the meeting held at Pelham on 1 April 1818: "The Committee to bring forward names to fill the Station of Overseer, report their attention and named Jacob Gainer and Daniel Abell for Pelham."²⁶ The Pelham Quaker records reveal a somewhat uneventful next few years for Daniel. He continued for several years as overseer and then, given Daniel's meticulous nature and very legible handwriting and correct spelling, at the Pelham Monthly Meeting held 4 October 1820: "Dan'l Abell is appointed to purchase a Book for the purpose of recording removal Certificates and to report the expence to next Meeting, He is also appointed recorder of Certificates."²⁷ The last mention of Daniel in the Pelham minutes occurred on 5 November 1823 from which minutes read: "This meeting appoints Ambrose Morris Recorder of certificates of Removal in Dan Abel's place who is Released."²⁸ This was the last record entered into the Pelham minutes of the Abell family before they moved west to the Talbot Settlement.

During their Pelham residence, two more members were added to the Abell family and, for the first time, the Abell name appears on the Quaker Birth Register: "Martha Abel, born 15th of the 9th mo. 1817; parents Daniel & Anas Abel, residence Pelham," and also: "Anna Abell, born 11th of 4th mo. 1820, parents Dan'l & Anas Abell, Pelham."²⁹

Westward To The Talbot Settlement

In the spring of 1824, the Abell family were getting ready to head west. In all probability they headed straight to what was becoming known as 'The Kilmer Settlement' in northeastern Malahide Township where Annis Abell's Bearss and Kilmer kinfolk had been migrating over the past several years. Food and shelter would have been available there until Daniel had an opportunity to complete his mission to visit Colonel Thomas Talbot in pursuit of a grant of land. Subsequent history informs us that Daniel Abell must have been successful because Talbot's large township map for Bayham Township still exists and reveals that on that day Thomas Talbot wrote "Daniel Able Augt. 1824" over the space reserved for Lot 20, Con. 9 Bayham Township.³⁰ The location of this land was not ideal from the Abells' point of view. It was still several miles distant from their friends and family across the township boundary in Malahide and was also roughly the same distance away from the centre of the small but growing Quaker population in Malahide. However, for the time-being it would suffice and it was the very first piece of land which Daniel had ever owned.

However, all was not well. It appears that Daniel had experienced some kind of financial reversal in Pelham. This is not surprising since he had neither land nor a house of his own there to provide any buffer against economic adversity. This

²⁶ Pelham Monthly Meeting Minute Book (1806-1834), 176-177.

²⁷ Pelham Monthly Meeting Minute Book (1806-1834), 215.

²⁸ Pelham Monthly Meeting Minute Book (1806-1834), 254.

²⁹ Pelham Monthly Meeting Record of Births, Marriages, and Deaths (1790-1856).

³⁰ The set of large township maps that Colonel Talbot used to scribble on the names of settlers whom he found to be acceptable, are located at the Archives of Ontario where, years ago, this author obtained full size copies of Bayham and Malahide Townships from which the information regarding Daniel Abell was scanned for this study.



Abell House (1980) - This is Daniel Abell's ancestral house near Middle Haddam, Connecticut as it appeared in 1980, prior to being inserted on the Middle Haddam Historical Register in 1984. This is a scan taken of a photocopy made from the Register at the Library in Middle Haddam. consequently the clarity of the image is not the best.

problem surfaced at Pelham on 6 December 1826 when: "The committee to prepare a certificate for Dan'l Abell & family -- Report they find his affairs in such an unsettled situation they were not free to prepare one for him."³¹ By early spring of 1827 it appears that some type of arrangement was being worked out. The unwritten bargain which seemed to be concluded was that if Daniel would continue to work to settle his "outward affairs," in return the Pelham Meeting would provide a removal certificate for Annis and the children. Therefore, at the next meeting of the Pelham Monthly

Meeting on 4 April 1827, "The committee to prepare a certificate for Annis Abell and Family produced one which was read, approved and Signed by the Clerk."³² This certificate was then sent to Norwich Monthly Meeting which oversaw the affairs of the fledgling community at Malahide. As a result, Daniel Abell was at least part way back on his trail of redemption.

Later that fall, on 27 November 1827, Daniel purchased from Isaac Crane one hundred acres comprising the north half of Lot 100 on the south side of the Talbot Road in Malahide Township.³³ It was nearly opposite the land of his brother-in-law

³¹ Pelham Monthly Meeting Minute Book (1806-1834), 299.

³² Pelham Monthly Meeting Minute Book (1806-1834), 304.

³³ Elgin County Deed ('London District' era) #1159: *Isaac Crane to Daniel Abell*, 27 Nov. 1827 (Reg. 3 Dec., 1829).

Philip Kilmer and his wife Martha, sister of Annis, on the other side of the road. It was here on the new Abell farm that Robert Abell, the last of the nine Abell children, was born on 5 April 1828. And it was also here that Robert's first childhood memory of their new house was produced: "The house I was standing in had not a nail in it. The boards went round and round, as in most frame houses, but they had been fastened with wooden pegs."³⁴

The Origins of the Malahide Quaker Meeting

Almost certainly the honour of being the first Quakers to come to Malahide were the Pound brothers, Elijah and John, who were located by Colonel Talbot on Elijah's Lot 105 on the proposed Talbot Road even before the war in May of 1811. These brothers, who would become Daniel Abell's close neighbours when the Abell family arrived, returned to their former home in Bertie Township during the war and then came back to Malahide in 1815 accompanied by their brother David Pound (located Bayham, June 1815) and by their brother-in-law Jeremiah Moore (located Bayham, June 1815), husband of their sister Sarah. At the same time in May of 1815 came the Quaker Laur brothers, John and George, also from Bertie Township who were also members of the Black Creek Meeting. Seven years later, in 1822, history was made in Malahide when George Laur was given permission by Norwich Monthly Meeting to hold a so-called 'indulged meeting' in his own home for the few Malahide Quakers present. It would, however, be years before the Malahide

group was deemed to be large enough and independent enough to be recognized as a regular Preparative Meeting, while still remaining under the protective umbrella of Norwich Monthly Meeting. Arriving at about the same time in Malahide were the various Bearss and Kilmer families, most of whom, at that time, were not Quakers.

Progress of any kind was painfully slow among the Malahide Quakers. In September of 1824, Isaac Stephenson, a travelling minister from the Society of Friends in England, made some visitations to remote Quaker settlements in Upper Canada. On September 6th he experienced the following conditions in Malahide: "John Pound and his wife entertained us kindly, yet for want of comfortable lodging and other accommodation I passed nearly a sleepless night... the first night we slept at J. Pound's we had no candle, not even to go to bed by, and our small bedroom had no door to it. But on first day night after we got there, John Pound's wife melted some grease in a frying pan and put it in by spoonful into a pewter or lead mould and this made a candle which rendered us a little more comfortable." Stephenson finished this letter to his wife by listing statistics he had gathered, and concerning the Malahide Quaker group he wrote: "Talbot Street, 25 members, No minister or elders."³⁵

In 1828, a deep philosophical split tore apart Quaker meetings in both the United States and Canada. Those Quakers who wished to separate were known as Hicksites, a name bestowed on them in recognition of one of their spiritual leaders by the name of Elias Hicks. Fortunately for Malahide, it

³⁴ "Robt. Abell Remembers Walnut Coffins At Five Dollars Apiece," 12.

³⁵ Carson Bushell, "Visit of Isaac Stephenson To Upper Canada In 1824," *Canadian Quaker Newsletter* No. 7 (2nd Month 1974), Canadian Friends Historical Association, Toronto.

appears that the majority of their membership voted to separate as a block and so their congregation remained largely intact, but not so for the Norwich Meeting as a whole where the final vote tally was: "Orthodox 240 - Hicksite 126." Annis Abell and all of her children had the Hicksite checkmark beside their names on the tally sheet.³⁶

A special day for Daniel Abell came to pass at the Pelham Monthly Meeting held 4 April 1832 with the following certificate being copied into the minutes: "To Norwich Monthly Meeting: Dear Friends, Daniel Abel having removed within the verge of your meeting requests our Certifycate. This may Certify on his behalf that he is a member of our society and hath settled his outward affairs to the satisfaction of Friends. As such we recommend him to your Christian care and remain your Friends."³⁷

It had taken the better part of a decade to clear his name in Pelham but Daniel Abell had done it. A lesser man would have perhaps taken a much easier path by disowning both his debts and perhaps also his religion and started anew in the Talbot Settlement as many before him and after him would do. But Daniel had a promise to keep, both to himself and also to his now elderly father back in Connecticut who had written these words so long ago: "Why Daniel, if you practice what you profess, I shall not think you the worse for that." From this point forward, Daniel Abell

would become the spiritual backbone of the Malahide Quaker Meeting.

The Rebellion of 1837-38

In early January of 1832 Jeremiah Moore, joined by many local settlers, petitioned Bayham Township for assistance in constructing a new road to Moore's new 'Otter Mills' industrial settlement that he was building in a valley on his property just over the township boundary in Bayham near the village of Richmond.³⁸ Joining in as a partner to the project was Daniel Abell who was about to lease one of the mills which had been recently built. Early the next year, Daniel promoted his business by placing a large and prominent advertisement in the St. Thomas newspaper which read as follows: "D. Abell, Having erected MACHINERY at his OIL MILL in Bayham, for the purpose of carring (sic) on the Turning, Wheelwright and Chair Making business, respectfully solicits a share of public patronage. FLAX SEED WANTED, in exchange for SHOP WORK or OIL. Bayham, 2d. mo. 7th day, 1833."³⁹

During this period, Daniel and Annis and the younger children were living in a house beside the mill in Bayham and the older children including Jabez and Benjamin remained back in Malahide working the family farm. One night a singular event occurred which was recounted decades later by Robert Abell: "I was a little chap about five years old, and had gone to bed with my older brother. We lived on the Jerry Creek

³⁶ Norwich Monthly Meeting Minutes (Book A, 1819-1842), Archives of Ontario, A-2-1, no page reference given; located at end of book.

³⁷ Pelham Monthly Meeting Minutes (1806-1834), p. 351.

³⁸ *Index To London District Road Reports And Petitions, 1821-1841*; Document 53: Petition dated 17 Jan. 1832; also Document 54: Accompanying Map of 'Otter Mills' (undated). Elgin County Archives.

³⁹ Advertisement dated "Bayham, 2nd mo. 7th day, 1833," *St. Thomas Liberal*, 19 December 1833, p. 4, col. 6; Mfm. Roll No. 16, George Thorman Room, St. Thomas Public Library.

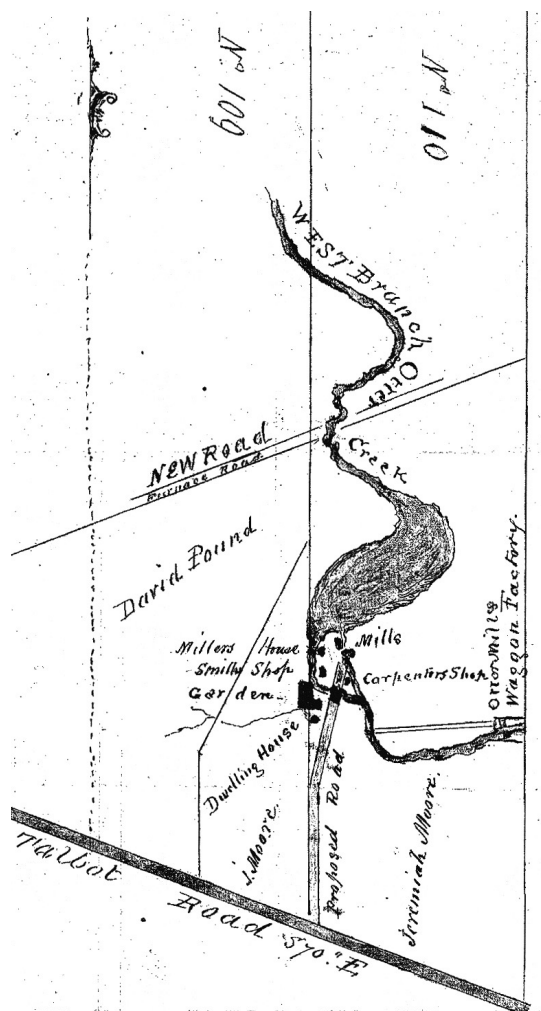
D. Abell,
HAVING erected **MACHINERY** at
his **OIL MILL** in Bayham, for
the purpose of carrying on the
Turning, Wheelwright
AND
Chair Making
BUSINESS,
respectfully solicits a share of public patronage.
Flax Seed
WANTED.
in exchange for **SHOP WORK** or **OIL.**
Bayham, 2d. mo. 7th day, 1833.

Daniel's Advertisement (St. Thomas Liberal Dec. 19, 1833) - This is the advertisement he placed in the newspaper to publicize his business in Bayham Township while in the valley on Jeremiah Moore's property at the newly built 'Otter Mills' complex.

northwest of Richmond at the time, (father had a mill). ...Then I heard voices outside the house, jumped up and went out with the others. They were watching the stars fall. Little Jeremiah Moore, a boy about my size had come running down telling them 'The world was coming to an end!' It was a clear frosty night in December or late fall. I looked up. The stars were falling, all from the zenith and streaking from there down the sky every way you might look. They fell for a long time but when they stopped, the sky was as full of stars as ever."⁴⁰ What the Abell family witnessed that night of 12 November 1833 was the Great Leonid Meteor Shower which made a deep and lasting impression on those citizens of North America who witnessed it at the time

and which has been credited with helping to initiate the intense religious revivals of the 1830s in the United States and Canada.

In actual fact, the meteor shower did presage the coming of an unfortunate event. An economic recession was building in Europe which was about to hit Bayham and Malahide Township with full force in 1836. Along the Otter River and its tributaries in Bayham Township such as



Jeremiah Moore's Map accompanying his 1832 Road Petition - Daniel Abell and his family were living in a house here while operating his milling business from 1832 to 1836.

⁴⁰ "Robt. Abell Remembers Walnut Coffins At Five Dollars Apiece," 12.

Jerry Creek (named after Jeremiah Moore) were dozens of sawmills employing hundreds of settlers and labourers. Due to diminishing demand in Europe and vast oversupply in Upper Canada, the chain reaction was predictable and the economy ground to a halt. One of many casualties was Daniel Abell's wood-working operation on Jerry Creek.

The hard times of 1836 were a natural lead-in to the Rebellion of 1837-38 in Upper Canada. Although many in Upper Canada resorted to the use of arms, Daniel Abell was under no illusion. His sympathies were definitely with the Reformers or 'Liberals' as they were termed in their day. However, as a Quaker he was forbidden to bear arms or to encourage others to do so. Despite the provocations directed his way, Daniel remained true to the same decision he had made over two decades earlier during the War of 1812. Daniel's son, Robert, had a front-row seat to the rebellion and he remembered clearly his father's political leanings during that turbulent time:

I was somewhere around eleven years old when the Rebellion broke out, which was in an autumn. ... Well, it didn't last very long, and there was no fighting about here. A good deal of excitement and some threats was the most of it. My father was a Liberal, of course, but

he refused stoutly to have anything to do with the Rebellion. I remember Finlay Malcolm, he was one of the famous local leaders from out Tillsonburg way (I guess he went afterward to Van Diemen's Land) coming out privately and trying to win father over.⁴¹ But with all father's loyalty, he was suspected and treated by many as a rebel just the same. When the breakout finally came, old Captain Summers came along with a parcel of volunteers and said every Radical house had to be filled. He was pretty sassy about it, too, and ordered mother to get their suppers. I was little enough, but it roused me all over. She got pancakes and they laid them away, I tell you, as fast as she could bake.⁴²

Despite the antagonism generated by both sides in local communities during this period, there was fortunately room for reasonable men to try to co-exist. Robert Abell related one such situation: "I remember we had a neighbour, old Reuben Kennedy, who was as hot a Tory as father was a Liberal. Nevertheless, they were, and remained, particular friends. One night old Reuben came to the door and calling father out, told him not to be going out around nights. It was dangerous. There was 'Injuns' prowling about. There were no Indians, of course, as we knew. Father always took it as

⁴¹ Finlay Malcolm was a key leader in the Rebellion from Bayham Township. He probably went to Malahide personally to try to recruit Daniel because Malcolm had been a next door neighbour to Daniel Abell and family in Bayham from 1824 to 1827 before the Abells' move to Malahide. Malcolm was ordered to be sent to Van Diemen's Land for fourteen years but a technicality in British Law freed him in Britain in 1839 on the stipulation he never return to Canada. However, years later he is recorded on the 1851 Bayham Census.

⁴² "Robt. Abell Remembers Walnut Coffins At Five Dollars Apiece," 12.

a friendly warning that someone had been threatening his life.”⁴³

Daniel Abell: Malahide Politician

Quakers believed that Christ’s words “Swear not at all”⁴⁴ were to be followed to the letter of the law and so in the early days of Quakerism the membership was discouraged from competing for public office because not only would they have to take an oath themselves but they would also have to administer them to others. This all changed with the Act of 1833 by which the British Parliament allowed Quakers to make an affirmation rather than having to swear an oath.⁴⁵ With the Act of Union of 1841, Canada West was established in place of Upper Canada and the Municipal Act was passed which made allowance for duly elected Councils and replaced the old form of township government. Since open voting rather than secret ballot was the usual method of registering a voting preference, elections often became very raucous events where those coming to vote expected to be fed, given drink, and often entertained at the candidate’s expense. We do know that most of the afore-mentioned behaviour was not acceptable to the local Malahide Quaker membership. For example, at the Malahide Preparative Meeting in August of 1854, the minutes read: “Complaint handed to meeting against William Laur for reprehensive Conduct at Election, abusing a neighbour, treating

drunken men and drinking himself, which is directed to the Monthly Meeting.”⁴⁶

Into this democratic maelstrom Daniel Abell put his hat in the ring in the fall of 1841 to compete for the first District election which became effective in 1842. Could a man who was perceived to have been on a certain side in the Rebellion hope to receive votes from neighbours who had a different way of thinking during the crisis? Would citizens at least give consideration to a man who was a member of a religious group which comprised a small minority of the voting public, and thereby vote on the basis of the personal qualities of the candidate and the current issues instead? The results spoke for themselves. Daniel was elected as one of the two Malahide Councillors and represented Malahide at the township level as well as at London where the London District Council meetings were held. It was a long and lonely ride to the council meetings in London and at the very time that Daniel first appeared on the scene there, the construction of the new jail was nearing completion and one of the newly-elected councillors was needed to spearhead its prompt completion and the provisioning of its contents. This important job was delegated to Daniel and the county records show that Daniel was appointed “Chairman of the Committee on the Gaol and Court House Furniture,” and he continued to report to District Council until the project was completed.⁴⁷ The continuing existence

⁴³ “Robt. Abell Remembers Walnut Coffins At Five Dollars Apiece,” 12.

⁴⁴ Matthew 5: 34-37.

⁴⁵ “Act of Affirmation of 28 August 1833: An Act to allow Quakers and Moravians to make Affirmation in all Cases where an Oath is or shall be required,” *The Law Magazine or Quarterly Review of Jurisprudence; For August 1833; and November, 1833*. Vol. X, (London: Saunders and Benning; Law Booksellers, Fleet St., 1833), 462.

⁴⁶ Malahide Preparatory Meeting Minutes (1845-68), 26 August 1854.

⁴⁷ *London District Reports To Council (Journal 1842-1859)*, 9 February 1842. University of Western Ontario Archives.



Old London Gaol (1842) - While he was part of the London District Council in 1842, Daniel Abell was given the responsibility for ensuring that the new Gaol was suitably provided with furniture, etc. Part of the jail is today used as a museum, the remainder as a municipal building behind the old 1830 Courthouse.

of this very historic structure in its newly renovated capacity behind the old 1830 Courthouse at London bears witness to merely one facet of Daniel's civic duties over 150 years ago.

Daniel continued to represent both his ward at the township level and Malahide at the county level until 1849 when District governments were replaced by the new County system. The political phase of Daniel Abell's life was nearly over by 1850 but it would still continue for a while at a much slower pace. The *St. Thomas Weekly Dispatch* of 26 January 1854 also lists him as a Justice of the Peace for Malahide Township. In sum, the longevity of Daniel Abell's political contribution was rarely matched in early Elgin County history.

'First Rate Cabinet Makers'

In 1806, Thomas Clarkson, a non-Quaker at the time, wrote *A Portraiture of Quakerism* in which he summed up the Quaker position: "The choice of furniture, like the choice of clothes, is left to be adjudged by the rules of decency and usefulness, but never by the suggestion of show." As he acknowledged, "The poor, we know, cannot use any but homely furniture. The middle classes are universally in such habits. As to the rich, there is a difference in the practice of these."⁴⁸

Traditionally, Quakers had owned serviceable furniture which had followed the Quaker esthetic, "Of the best sort, but plain."⁴⁹ However, in some urban colonial settings such as Philadelphia, as wealth grew, some Quaker cabinet-makers had

⁴⁸ Thomas Clarkson, *A Portraiture of Quakerism* (1806), Vol. 1: Peculiar Customs; Ch. 2: 'Quaker Furniture', p. 1. Clarkson, who was born in 1760 in Cambridgeshire, England, was an abolitionist contemporary of William Wilberforce and as such had much contact with Quakers who he admired greatly and was an observant student of their customs and values.

⁴⁹ See Frederick B. Tolles, "Of The Best Sort, But Plain," *American Quarterly* 2, no. 4 (1959): 484-502.

begun to add flourishes and fancy touches beginning around 1750 and were producing pieces typical of the Chippendale style for wealthy Quakers. As the eighteenth century developed, more focus was placed on strict adherence to the Discipline. As a result, Quaker cabinet-making would never be the same again as some members were disowned for owning decorative furniture and some pieces had the decorative patterns removed. The sons of some prominent Philadelphia cabinet-makers necessarily moved to other occupations to make a living. Edward Hicks, a Quaker minister and uncle of the reformer Elias Hicks, did some ornamental artistry on carriages and sign painting to help pay the bills but gave up painting for two years beginning in 1815 because some of his Quaker brethren complained that his work was too ostentatious.⁵⁰

Daniel Abell had become a Quaker and cabinet-maker at this particular time and this would ensure that the Quaker esthetic of 'plainness' would influence the design of Daniel's furniture. As previously mentioned, this can be readily seen in the design of the 'Anger Pine Dish Dresser'. It contains no scalloped valance, no in-laid patterns, no carved floral or other design work, no eye-catching fancy mouldings, no ethnic features (such as did the Pennsylvania Dutch) or shapely legs or intricate brass hinges or handles. Despite this, the cupboard still manages an air of quiet elegance and its precise mortise and tenon joints reveal the work of a highly skilled craftsman.

In the 1916 newspaper story, Robert Abell stated: "He (ie: Daniel) and my older brother (ie: Benjamin) were first-rate cabinet makers. People used to come to them for coffins from all around. ... a good walnut coffin brought about five or six dollars. But that was about as much of an undertaking as to raise a hundred is now."⁵¹ Soon after Daniel purchased his Malahide farm in 1827, he constructed a sawmill on a creek on the back of his property, a mill which would begin to furnish the lumber Daniel and his sons needed to construct the wide range of wooden products and furniture they would eventually produce. Decades afterward, as late as 1861, the census stated that Daniel's sawmill still produced a yearly total of 500 logs comprising 25,000 feet of Clear Lumber and 27,500 feet of Common Lumber.⁵²

A careful analysis of the census and land records indicate that for about two decades after moving to Malahide in 1827, Daniel Abell and his sons had the cabinet-making field exclusively to themselves in their extended geographic area of eastern Malahide and western Bayham. The Malahide Census of 1851 reveals that the growing village of Aylmer, several miles to the west of the Abell farm, by then listed 'Walker, John & Son' as cabinet-makers resident in Aylmer. By this time, the days of the artisan cabinet-maker, working on a single piece of furniture made to order for each individual customer and using fairly primitive hand-tools almost unchanged since colonial times, was fast drawing to a close. Steam-driven mills and planers were

⁵⁰ Carolyn J. Weekley, "Edward Hicks: Quaker Artist and Minister," in eds., Emma J. Lapansky and Anne M. Verplank, *Quaker Aesthetics: Reflections on a Quaker Ethic in American Design and Consumption*, (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 212-236.

⁵¹ "Robt. Abell Remembers Walnut Coffins At Five Dollars Apiece," 12.

⁵² *1861 Census of Malahide*, 71.

being brought to Aylmer and everywhere else by the Industrial Revolution. Nevertheless, Daniel Abell was still listed as a 'Miller' on the 1861 census at seventy-six years of age. His son Benjamin was continually listed as a 'Cabinet-Maker' for assessment purposes up to his death in 1872. Robert, although listed as a 'Cabinet-Maker' and 'Wheelwright' in earlier years, by the census of 1871 still owned a 'Saw and Shingle Mill' and the previous year of 1870 had seen the construction of the new 'Malahide Cheese Manufacturing Company' on the Abell farm with Robert Abell as one of the firm's directors. Therefore, counting the years beginning in 1824 when Daniel Abell first entered Bayham Township from Pelham as a 'Turner', and then proceeding through the years until Benjamin Abell died in 1872 while still actively pursuing a cabinet-making career, in total the Abell family spanned a period of forty-eight years working creatively with wood in the Talbot Settlement.

Abell Leadership In The Malahide Meeting

After the Great Separation of 1828, the Malahide Quakers continued to be a satellite group affiliated with the Hicksite Norwich Monthly Meeting for the next several years and used the houses of various members for their meetings. Meanwhile, preparations were beginning in earnest for the building of a new meeting house and burial ground in Malahide. The minutes of 2 February 1842 reported that an acre of land was available for \$75 and it was proposed that a meeting house of twenty-four feet by forty feet be erected

there on the corner of the lot immediately to the west of Daniel Abell's property on the south side of the Talbot Road. The Quaker burial ground would be located immediately behind the meeting house. On 20 August 1844 the minutes proclaimed "the establishment of a meeting for worship and a preparative meeting at the new meeting house in Malahide to be known... [as] the Malahide Preparative Meeting and to be held the last fourth day in every month."⁵³ Meanwhile, Daniel continued to play an active role within the Malahide Meeting.

On 24 April 1850, at age sixty-six, Daniel was appointed Clerk of Malahide Meeting, a position he kept for several years. On 25 February 1852, for the first of many years to come, his son Benjamin Abell was to "keep the meeting house with pay of six dollars for one year."⁵⁴ Actually, this made sense for everyone since Benjamin's cabinet-making shop was virtually next door to the meeting house and he could easily provide scrap for firewood in abundance from their adjacent sawmill.

On 26 July 1854, at seventy years of age, the minutes in Daniel's own handwriting recorded his final moments as Clerk for the Malahide Meeting: "The Clerk's time having expired and he having requested to be released, Charles Hill is appointed for one year."⁵⁵ Unfortunately for the reader today, the legibility of the handwriting of many Quaker clerks of the time, including the newly appointed Charles Hill, could not match that of Daniel Abell. The years now quietly passed. Daniel's name entered the

⁵³ *Norwich Monthly Meeting Minutes, Book No. 2*, 2 February 1842, 11. Archives of Ontario Mfm. C-3-33.

⁵⁴ *Norwich Monthly Meeting Minutes, Book No. 2*, 25 Feb. 1852.

⁵⁵ *Norwich Monthly Meeting Minutes, Book No. 2*, July 26, 1854.

Quaker records for the final time on 30 May 1860 at age seventy-six when he was requested once again to attend the Norwich Monthly Meeting. In Daniel's place, Benjamin Abell began to pick up the mantle of leadership where his father was clearly failing and became the alternate clerk when necessary. He also continued to look after the meeting house year after year and by 1863 he was being paid \$16 per annum.

On 11 July 1865 Daniel's life irreversibly changed when his eighty-year-old wife and soul-mate Annis died. The couple were in their sixtieth year of married life. As difficult as the death of Annis would have been for Daniel, adding to his sorrow was the news which arrived a few months later from Illinois concerning the death of his son Jabez on 6 March 1866 as the result of his service in the Civil War "from disease contracted therein."⁵⁶ Two years later, Daniel died on 8 December 1868, within two weeks of his eighty-fourth birthday, and was buried in the Quaker burying ground behind the meeting house beside his wife.

Soon after the death of his father, Benjamin Abell was appointed full-time Malahide Clerk in 1870 and this continued into early 1872. During the meeting of 28 February 1872 Benjamin did not appear at meeting: "The clerk not present, David M. Bearss appointed for day."⁵⁷ One week later we find out why. Fairly suddenly, Benjamin Abell had been taken gravely ill, he had his will completed on March 8th and he died two days later on 10 March 1872 at the relatively young age of fifty-eight. Now it was up to Benjamin's widow Huldah (who

continued to look after the Meeting House) and also Robert, to carry on the Abell name in the Malahide Meeting. As the Malahide Preparative Meeting Women's Friends records show, Huldah Abell was an active member until 1883 at which time the Preparative Meeting at Malahide was discontinued or 'laid down', although the meeting for worship was apparently continued informally for several more years by a few of the faithful. The 1891 census shows that 'Huldy Abell', at age seventy, and of the 'Friends' religion, was still at least nominally pursuing her chosen faith. Huldah Abell died on 16 July 1898. Robert Abell remained listed as a Quaker on the 1891 census but by 1900 he had become listed as a Baptist along with the rest of his family, probably following the death of his sister-in-law Huldah. Robert Abell died on 13 February 1923, nearly reaching his ninety-fifth year of age.

The Malahide Quaker Heritage Along The Talbot Road

The historical time interval of the Malahide Quakers in Canadian History was very short, spanning only about seventy-five years in total, and the only visible reminder today is the small Quaker Cemetery in Malahide Township lying just south of present-day Highway No. 3 (Talbot Road) at the hamlet of Seville.

Smith's Directory in 1846 stated that "there was a fair settlement of 160 Quakers, most living just east of Aylmer."⁵⁸ Their numbers, consequently, had grown six-fold since 1824. This may, however, have represented the high-water mark in Quaker

⁵⁶ Abell, *The Abell Family In America*, 179.

⁵⁷ *Malahide Monthly Meeting Minutes*, 28 February 1872.

⁵⁸ This quote and reference is cited in the preamble to the cemetery transcriptions of the Malahide Quaker Cemetery (village of Seville) made by Elgin County Ontario Genealogical Society (June 1983).

membership as fifteen years later, in 1861, we find that there were 42 Quakers listed in Bayham and 116 Quakers in Malahide for a total of only 158 souls. By the census of 1891, the total number of Quakers was reduced to 66 and many of these consisted of the elderly men and women in families in which the remainder of the family were listed as belonging to some other religious persuasion.

As to the fate of the meeting house itself, in 1948 a local historian wrote: "About twenty years ago this old Meeting House, a landmark on Talbot Street, was sold and moved away. The money from the sale was placed in the hands of a trustee to be used for the upkeep of the burying ground which surrounded the Meeting House."⁵⁹

How should we look back historically on the influence and importance of this small group of Quakers along the Talbot Road? In 1927, in his landmark volume on the history of the Quakers in Canada, Arthur Dorland attempted to answer that question with regard to the Society of Friends as a whole in Canada. Following is a paraphrasing of some of his selected thoughts on that subject, which can also be directly applied as a retrospective on the Quakers of Malahide:

Quaker meetings in Canada were in rural districts and these people were, in the main, a simple agricultural folk. Estimating their historical importance is difficult because they left few records behind and generally shrank from publicity. Nevertheless they were pioneers in the communities in which they

settled. Their influence though real was, however, of the unobtrusive, intangible kind which it is difficult for the historian to estimate precisely. Though the Society of Friends has never been more than a handful in numbers, the number of people who can trace their Quaker ancestry is surprisingly large. To an increasing degree, many traditional Quaker values have become part of the everyday common life in society today: a quickened social conscience, the larger role given to women in the church, and the growth of pacifism are but three important examples.⁶⁰



Malahide Quaker Cemetery (Seville) - All that remains of the Malahide Meeting is the largely vacant field in which the few remaining stones were gathered together on a cement pad in the middle of the field.

⁵⁹ Bayham Women's Institute Lady Tweedsmuir Library, 'The Ancestors & Descendants of Andrew Moore of Bayham', by Mrs. Elgin Hatch, 9 Sept. 1948. Reprinted in *Talbot Times*, Elgin Co. O. G. S., September 2001.

⁶⁰ Arthur G. Dorland, *A History Of The Society Of Friends (Quakers) In Canada*, (Toronto, Macmillan Co. , 1927), 29.