

JOSEPH GARDNER

Gardner (1782-1861) was born in Corbridge, Northumberland County, England. He, his wife, Catharine Foster Gardner (c1788-1885), and their five children (Robert, Luke, Mary, Catharine, Joseph) emigrated to Canada in 1818. They endured a three month Atlantic crossing in a crowded sailing ship. In 1819 they settled in Little York (Toronto) where Gardner was a shoe and boot manufacturer. In 1821 he purchased part of Lot 7 First Concession west and in 1822 the family moved to this property to begin farming. A sixth child, Sarah, was born in 1823.



In 1832, he bought Lot 5 First Concession west from William Chisholm for 750 pounds (estimated to be 3000 dollars in silver). It had a house and land that was cleared and fenced. His son, Robert, who married Marietta Holt in 1834, lived here. Gardner acquired a third property (Lot 5 First Concession east) and became a prosperous farmer who raised sheep, pigs, cows, horses, and fowl. His main cash crop was wheat. He had a large McIntosh apple orchard. The crossroad formed by Centre Road (Huron) and Britannia Road was known as Gardner's Clearing until 1862.

Gardner was a staunch Wesleyan Methodist and a member of the local Temperance Society. The Wesleyan Methodist families who had settled the area had built a log church in 1821 on Lot 5 east. One of the early preachers, Robert Walker, married Gardner's daughter Mary. There was a log school on one corner of this farm. Marietta Holt was a teacher here.

In 1833, the Crown granted Lot 3 west in trust to Colonel William Thompson, Reverend James Magrath, and Joseph Gardner, Esquire, J.P., for the purpose of promoting education. Ten acres were set aside for a school and burial ground and 190 acres were rented out. The money raised was used to build a school and pay a teacher. A clapboard school with a cottage room was built on Lot 3 in 1842. Teachers who taught here may have boarded with the Gardners.