

The McQuarries

of Concession 3, Eldon Township, Kawartha Lakes



Isabel McQuarrie, nee Campbell
c.1917

Lauchlin and Isabel McQuarrie were well-known figures in Argyle for over seventy years.

Though he died in 1922, no one seems to know exactly when Lauchlin came into the world. His monument in the Argyle Cemetery says 1836. Other sources place his birth year closer to 1840 or 1844, and a census taken on the Scottish island of Iona suggests that he was born on Christmas Day of 1845. Regardless of when he was born, there can be no question that Lauchlin would have had living memory of making the voyage across the Atlantic with about four other siblings and their parents, James and Catherine McQuarrie. They – like many Scottish and Irish migrants – were fleeing the effects of agricultural famine in the old country, and arrived in Canada sometime between 1850 and 1852. By the middle of that decade, they had settled on the Third Concession of Eldon Township.

In 1874, Lauchlin married Isabel Campbell (1848-1918). Isabel came from a line of Campbells who had settled between Lorneville and Argyle. Lauchlin, too, already had family in the community; his Aunts Catherine and Euphemia McQuarrie had arrived in the southern reaches of Eldon Township sometime prior and married into the McInnis family.

Lauchlin and Isabel would go on to have eight children, raising them in a log house on the Third Concession of Eldon. Their kids all led remarkably different and interesting lives.

First up was Catherine, better known as Kate (1875-1941). She married Charles Lyon and settled on the Lyon farm in neighbouring Thorah Township, where she reared three daughters.



Lauchlin on Carriage

Kate was followed by Duncan (1877-1936), a life-long bachelor who devoted his life to breeding horses, farming, and ranching. He was found deceased in a rainwater cistern at 59 – whether he died of natural causes or had taken his own life was the subject of much debate in Argyle for decades thereafter.

Lauchlin and Isabel's third child was Christena, known to everyone as Tena (1879-1964). Though she was unmarried, evidence suggests that Tena McQuarrie had a brief romantic relationship with a Vancouver-based labourer for a few years in the early twentieth century. She spent most of her adult life in Toronto, working for over thirty years as a saleslady at the Robert Simpson Co. department store. James McQuarrie (1881-1936) entered the picture two years after Tena. Trained as a schoolteacher, he spent his entire career in the automotive sector – most notably as the Russell Motor Car Company's senior salesperson. In this capacity, James travelled across Canada to establish dealerships, and also played a key role in securing the RMCC a contract to supply the Department of Militia and Defence with armoured vehicles when the First World War broke out in 1914.

Isabel, known to family and friends as Belle (1883-1953), went to work with her older sister Tena at the Robert Simpson Co. Store in Toronto. Described as both fat and obnoxious, Belle nonetheless had a charming side to her and was famous (or perhaps infamous) for the “smothering kisses and hugs” that greeted her nephews whenever she went to visit the family farm back home in Argyle.

Lauchin and Isabel's youngest daughter was Effie (1885-1967). A lifelong educator, she taught in Bexley, Dunsford, and Peterborough for a few years before moving to Toronto in 1912.



John, Effie and Jim McQuarrie,, c. 1915

Effie would spend the remainder of her teaching career in the city, save for a year spent abroad in 1923-1924, when she and three other Toronto-area teachers travelled to New Zealand on teaching exchange. Gregarious and apparently great fun to be around, Effie was a prolific postcard-writer and photographer.

Lauchlin and Isabel McQuarrie's youngest two sons were Dan (1887-1970) and John (1894-1963). The former enrolled at the Lindsay Model School in 1908 and emerged as a qualified schoolteacher – but would also try his hand at lay-preaching as a Presbyterian catechist and worked in automotive sales before being appointed as Victoria County's Register of Deeds, around 1930. Dan later became the Industrial Commissioner for the Town of Lindsay and would devote his life to his community, serving on the Board of Education, as President of the local Red Cross, and as President of the Lindsay Rotary Club. John McQuarrie went to work at the Bank of Hamilton's Toronto branch when he was in his early twenties before being "taken on strength" as a Lieutenant of the 109th Battalion of Victoria Haliburton Counties, in 1916. While on active service in France, John had the misfortune of being gassed and shelled – injuries that would affect him for the remainder of his life. Following the war, John worked for the Canadian Pacific Railway, de Havilland Aircraft Company, and later for Massey-Harris.

Only three of Lauchlin and Isabel's eight children went on to be married and have families of their own. These included Kate, who became the mother of Isabel, Catherine, and Jean Lyon; James, who married Nell Rear and begat Kenneth and Helen McQuarrie; and Dan, who with his wife Adaline McCurdy had a family of five: Jack, Jean, Allan, Jim, and Eleanor McQuarrie. Lauchlin and Isabel's grandchildren led interesting lives, entering the fields of education, housekeeping, law, manufacturing, and veterinary medicine, among other professional pursuits locally and elsewhere.

Lauchlin and Isabel's descendants continue to contribute to their communities across Ontario and as far away as British Columbia, Texas, and England. And to think it all began in a lowly log house on the Third Concession of Eldon Township, here in Kawartha Lakes!

Submitted by Ian McKechnie

