

Lot 19 NDR: The Workman Family

Peter Meyler

Philemon and Clarrisa Workman were raising their three small boys on Lot 19 on the north side of the Durham Road. Five-year-old Philemon Junior, four-year-old Benjamin, and two-year-old Samuel had plenty of room to roam on the expansive property. In 1851, the Workmans had planted one acre with barley, while two more produced 40 bushels of potatoes.

Philemon and Clarrisa Workman had migrated from the United States sometime before 1841. There are references in historical records to both Pennsylvania and Virginia in their past. Philemon was probably born in Virginia and moved at some later time to Pennsylvania. From there he made his way to Ontario. It is likely that he met and married Clarrisa Ann Johnston in Canada. In 1841, they were living in Wellesley Township, just east of Waterloo. They were part of the Queen's Bush Settlement, which was home to a large number of settlers of African descent. However, they could not get title to their land and faced economic hardships.

In 1843, Canada's government received a petition from the inhabitants of the Queen's Bush. They stated that the settlement lands had not been surveyed and that regular roads were nonexistent. It was fifteen miles to the nearest mill. They were "extremely poor" and petitioned to receive land grants. Philemon Workman was one of the petitioners. He did not receive land, however, and by 1848 had moved north to Artemesia. The Old Durham Road Registry of Glenelg Township, 1848-1851, states that Philip (sic) Workman, Clarisa (sic), Philemon and Benjamin arrived April 28, 1849.



The Workman property now forms part of the Grey Highlands landfill site at the corner of Grey Road 14 and the Old Durham Road.

The Workmans were later to be found in Woodhouse in Norfolk County. The marriage records show 23 year-old Philemon Junior marrying Nelly C. Anthony, 21, of Gene County, Alabama, on November 17, 1870. The 1871 census does not include Clarrisa's name, but only lists "Phelamon", age 23, and "Philomore", age 62. By 1880 Philemon Junior and his wife had migrated to Ohio, finally settling in the Cleveland area. There is no record of the whereabouts of Philemon Senior.



Lots 18 and 19 North of the Durham Road
Map: Grey County GIS