

The Wyborn's of Hazel

by: Ernie Bies March 22, 2013

Old timers in Hearst will tell you that the community of Wyborn, just west of town, was once called Hazel. History also records that the first school teacher in Hearst, way back in 1913, was Annie Wyborn. What was the connection and who were the Wyborns of Hazel?

The family can be traced back for centuries but we will start with the marriage of William Wyborn and Ann Coveney in 1850 in Deal Kent, England. They immigrated to Canada, settling near Mitchell in South-

western Ontario, where they raised six children including Samuel

Thomas Wyborn, who was born in Listowel Ontario on April 6, 1853.

Sam's future spouse, Amelia Hay, was born March 8, 1858 in

Pilkington Township,

Wellington County. Sam and Amelia (pictured above) tied the knot in Fergus Ontario on August 4, 1876. Active in the lumbering industry on the Bruce Peninsula, Sam operated a sawmill at Stokes Bay. The newlyweds also lived at Oxenden and Dyers Bay on the Bruce Peninsula and were soon the proud parents of seven children: Albert (Bert) Herbert (1877-1969); Amelia (1887-1956); Caroline Charlotte Carrie (1889-1985); Annie Elizabeth (1892-1983); William Alexander (1894-1977); Thomas Adam (1897-1982) and Samuel Henry (1899-1992).



After some 35 years of lumbering on the Bruce, and as his older children married and left the roost, Sam uprooted the remainder of his family and moved to the newly developing Hearst area.



From left: Annie, mother Amelia, Carrie, Henry, father Sam and Tommy

They settled at Hazel, a rural community at the junction of the National



Transcontinental and the Algoma Central and Hudson's Bay Railways, three miles west of Hearst where Sam and his sons continued in the lumbering business.

Tom Wyborn and Peter McNair Teaming at Hearst, 1913

Edgar Pellow was another prominent lumberman in Hazel whose legacy in Hearst is well remembered. Though no official record of the name Hazel could be found, Frank Pellow, Edgar's grandson, recalls family lore that the name was derived from the hazelnut trees that grew in the area.

The new town of Hearst drew many families to the region and the need for a school was soon a priority. In 1913 the secretary of the newly formed school board for S.S. Casgrain and Kendall No. 1, Mr. E. Jamieson, recruited Sam's daughter, Annie Elizabeth Wyborn to be the first school teacher in Hearst.



Annie Wyborn and Leslie Straiton in Hearst, 1913

Annie taught for two years in a residence on Prince St with an annual salary of \$500 before moving south to pursue her teaching career, spending many years in Wiarton. She married Christian Ernest Dick Byers of Meaford in Blind River Ontario on January 10, 1925 and they raised four children, Annetta, May, Jean and John (Jack).

In 1966, shortly after Annie's 74th birthday the surviving Wyborns held a family reunion at Henry's home in Crescent Beach B.C. where the entire clan gathered for the first time in 52 years.

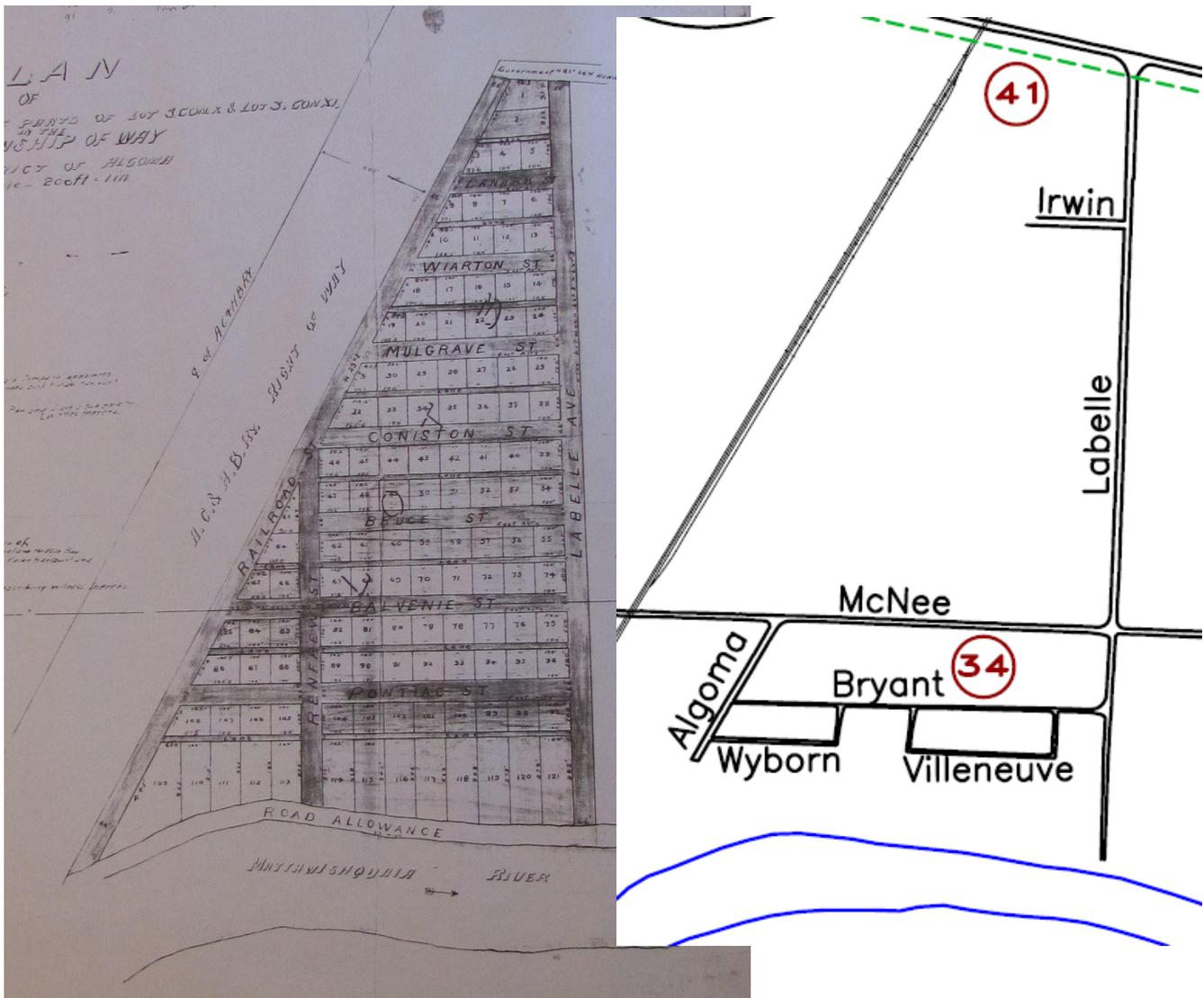
Remembered by her granddaughter Jean Byers as being very religious, tough and fearless, Annie unfortunately suffered fractures to both her hips in a fall and required the use of a wheelchair in her later years. She spent her remaining years with her son Jack and his family in Wiarton and passed away on June 16, 1983.



The Wyborn Legacy in the Hearst area was not limited to Annie's pioneering in education.

The rural community of Hazel was also expanding and the Algoma Central and Hudson's Bay Railroad sold off a triangular piece of property just east of the rail line bounded by the Mattawishquia River on the south, the Government Road (now Highway 11) on the north and Labelle Ave which still exists today as Labelle St on the east. A survey of the subdivision of parts of Lot 3 Concessions X and XI in the Township of Way was completed by Lang and Ross in August 1914 providing 121 lots for settlers. These original settlers influenced the naming of the streets remembering their origins in the Ottawa Valley and the Bruce Peninsula with street names like Renfrew, Lanark, Pontiac, Wiarton and Bruce. The road bordering the railway was named Railroad St and a portion of it exists today as Algoma St. Double tiers of

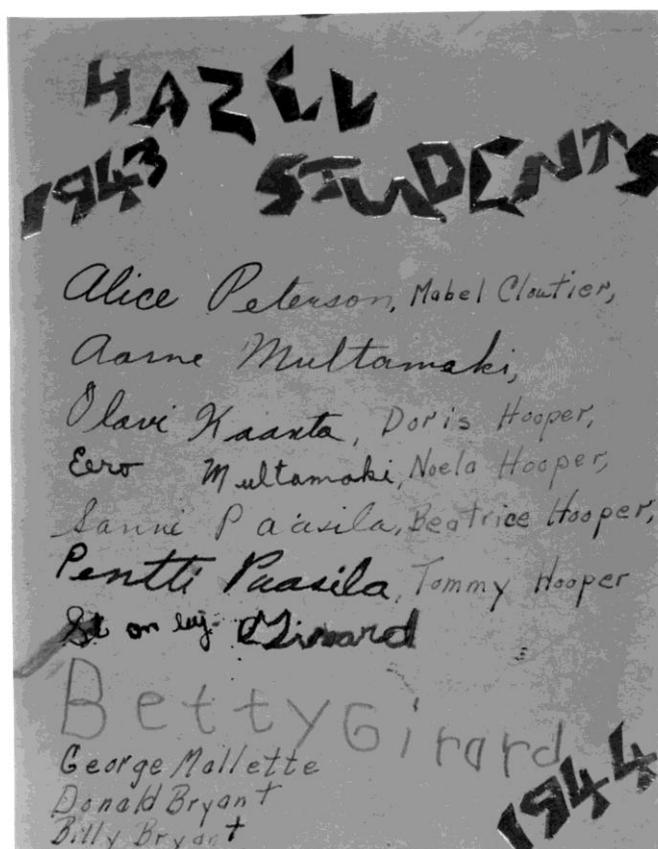
100 by 100 foot square lots extended northward from Pontiac (Bryant) St. to the Government Road. Each double tier had a 10 foot wide internal east west lane and they were separated by seven standard 66 foot wide ROWs for east west streets, namely Pontiac (now Bryant), Balvenie (now McNee), Bruce, Coniston, Mulgrave, Wiarton and Lanark (now Irwin). Twelve 100 x 100 foot lots were laid out on the south side of Pontiac Street separated by another 10 foot lane from the thirteen riverside lots numbered 109 to 121. These prime riverside lots were generally 100 feet wide and 200 to 300 feet deep. These details can be seen on the excerpt plan of Subdivision M51A, below left and current town map on the right.



The growing community requested its own Post Office which was established on May 22, 1915. Following protocol of the day it was named after the first Post Master, Sam Wyborn, Annie's father. Original names die hard and many of the settlers continued to refer to the community as Hazel though it was eventually officially named Wyborn.

An example of this resistance to change is evidenced in a letter dated August 28th 1923 from J.L. O'Donnell, Notary Public and Secretary of the Hearst Board of Trade to C. C. Hele, Parliament Buildings, Toronto. The Hearst Board of Trade had passed a resolution requesting that a trunk road be built immediately from Hazel to Coppell, a distance of 12 miles, along the Algoma Central and Hudson Bay Railway. The purpose of this road was to provide the settlers in Coppell with access to town to get supplies and to deliver their pulpwood. The Minister of Lands and Forests, James Lyons, rejected this request owing to the fact that trunk roads were already laid out to serve the district.

The Hazel name lived on informally for decades. Another example can be found where, though the S.S. No. 1 Way School Board contracts named the school Wyborn Public, teacher Mary Poberezec referred to it as Hazel in her 1943-44 class list. Mary was originally from Cochrane and taught in Wyborn for three years.





This school dates back to the 1917-18 school year when E.O. Allen was School Board Secretary. The first teacher was Myrtle Heatle at a yearly salary of \$500. M. McKay was board secretary for the next three years then Hebert Bryant held the post

from 1921-22 to June 1943, a total of 21 years. His daughter Elsie still lives in Hearst. Mrs. R. Olver then served as school board secretary for the next 9 years till 1951 when the school was closed and the students were bussed to Hearst Public School. The last teacher, in 1951-52, was Catherine Spennato, daughter of Hearst Mayor George McNee. Some of the other teachers who also taught at other schools in the area were Isobel Wade, Ruby Reid, Una P. Harris and Connie McKay.

Although the Wyborn subdivision is now part of Hearst, Google maps



and GPS still show the location of Wyborn with some of the original street names. Only a few of the surveyed streets were constructed and still remain, now named Algoma, Bryant, McNee, Irwin and Labelle St. The original buildings are long gone and new houses were built along the Mattawishkwia River. The first lane from the original survey north of the River was upgraded to form two new streets named Wyborn

and Villeneuve. A short section of Renfrew Street remains connecting Wyborn to Bryant. For orientation purposes the civic address of 19 Wyborn St. Today, the home of Krista and Tony Joanis, corresponds to Lot 110 of the 1914 survey

Wyborn Street itself, less than 500 feet long, is all that remains of the original Wyborn family legacy though the current residents still refer to their neighbourhood as Wyborn and even have an unelected Mayor who presides over their barbecues and parties.

The senior Wyborns retired to Hazel Dell Saskatchewan to be near their oldest children, Bert and Amelia, where Sam passed away on March 18, 1920 at age 66, followed by his wife Amelia on Dec. 25, 1928.

Ironically Sam's final years were spent in Hazel Dell Saskatchewan, a town similar in name to the original town of Hazel Ontario, that was renamed Wyborn in his honour.