

Dr. John Edward Hanna

Written by Helen Hanna and Susan Hanna, who did much of the research.

The 1860's in Ireland were years of strife between Protestants and Catholics, as well as between peasants and landlords. The country was and had been for many years in internal conflict.

Great-grandfather of John Edward Hanna was Thomas Hanna, who must have tired of the situation and decided to emigrate to Canada. Many Irish Anglicans, of which he was one, had settled in Mulmer Township in Ontario. Thomas purchased a store in Rosemont through an agent. Before he saw the new store he purchased, for his wife Mary and young son Tom, he died.

Mary came to Canada despite this hardship to take possession and management of the store. Being a wealthy young widow she did not remain alone for long. In the same year she arrived in Rosemont, she was married to a man named Thomas Henderson. In the assessment records of 1877, a one-quarter acre lot which was part of Mary Henderson's original half-acre is listed to belong to Thomas E. Hanna (her son). He was John Edward's father.

Thomas attended the local public school in Rosemont. His wife, a local girl, Elizabeth Moffat, came from a family that placed much worth in education. Learning was hard to get as Grampa Moffat had pioneered in bush land. He hewed and built the log house by a spring of running water. Because of a 4-mile hike through the bush, they could not attend school in the winter, but school did not end there as Elizabeth's brother who lived in Pennsylvania took them there. All the children had a high school education.

One of these children was John Edward Hanna. He was born in 1891 in Rosemont and received his education in that vicinity. Always a lover of animals, he went to the Ontario Veterinarian College, graduating in 1913, prior to World War 1. He then proceeded overseas where he served with distinction in the British Army in England and France. As a Captain attached to the famous Scots Grays, he was awarded the Military Cross for bravery on the field of action. This decoration was presented to him by King George V.

On his return in 1919, he married Melissa Hunter, to whom he was betrothed before leaving for overseas. They moved to Stayner, which owed its prosperity to the Railway Line that ran between Stayner, Collingwood and Barrie. The surrounding area was a populous farming district, which meant much work for the young veterinarian. Ed and Melissa had 5 boys: Edward, Enos, Douglas, Eric and Jim.

Besides his veterinarian profession, Dr. Hanna served on the local Board of Education and in many offices connected with sports. He was an enthusiastic supporter of hockey and baseball. He belonged to the Stayner Branch of the Canadian Legion and prior to the formation of this Branch, he took an active part in the administration and distribution of the Poppy Fund. He became widely known and highly respected for his skill in relieving suffering in the animals he treated.

Dr. Hanna was in ill health for several years with kidney disease, and died in Barrie Hospital in 1949 at the age of 58.

(This story first appeared in the Fall 2005 issue of our newsletter)