

#### THE DEACON MURDER

The Deacon murder occurred around 1868 when the new Township of Clarendon was being settled. In those days such happenings in any community caused a great amount of shock. These things along with other forms of disaster became the subject of folk ballads.

The Deacon homestead was located at the top of the long hill on the Ompah Road about two miles east of what is now the place called Ardoch. The hill still bears the family name.

Deacon had married a Ward girl, the daughter of one of the early settlers who had taken up land in 1867. It is probable that he had met the girl and married before coming to the township. The couple had one son, Jimmy, who was lame from birth. Mrs Deacon had been in poor health and it was for that reason that the services of a younger woman were employed. Charlotte Vankouant was the daughter of an early settler too.

Deacon became interested in the younger woman and apparently together they planned to do away with the sick Mrs Deacon and set up a more respectable relationship. Because of her long illness they may have felt that when her death should occur with the aid of poison no suspicion would be made. Such was not the case.

Deacon set about the task. He made a visit to the home of Bramwell Watkins with the story that he wanted to borrow some strychnin to set out as poison for foxes. Anna, the eldest Watkins family, gave him a small amount. She told her father about his visit and having heard a few rumours he had some private question concerning the motives. Shortly after the visit to the Watkins farm Deacon visited the local general store where he made a purchase of more the drug from Mr. Jacobi. A short time after this Mrs Deacon died.

In those days it appears that a medical examination was not necessary and the funeral was arranged. In the meantime there was much talk about circumstances surrounding the death. At the graveside a man by the name of Munds who lived near the graveyard could contain himself no more and called a halt to the proceeding saying that the coroner should be called to investigate the cause of Mrs Deacon's demise. With this her husband lost his composure and turned to run off. With that he was pursued by some of the local men and easily captured. He was locked up in a chicken coop on the adjacent farm owned by William Hartman.

**Thos. Deacon was held in this school while awaiting trial for murder .**

There he was kept under guard by local men until the coroner arrive. The doctor determined the cause of death to be due to poison and Deacon was subsequently put under arrest.

Deacon was taken to Kingston where he was put on trial for murder. He was convicted and then admitted his guilt asking for clemency. The death sentence was passed and he was hanged for his crime. Charlotte fled to the United States in her distress and was not heard of again. Little Jimmy was taken to live with his grandparents and then eventually he left the community.