

SELF DOING NAUGHT

The Diary of John Albert Michie

1869 - 1899

Edited by Mary Anne (Michie) Richardson

2010

Self Doing Naught
The Diary of John Albert Michie

c 2010 by Mary Anne Richardson

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PREFACE

For a number of years I have been interested in transcribing the diary of my great-great grandfather so that the history of the time would not be lost to future generations. The original diary is in a deteriorating condition and obviously would not withstand numerous readings. This book is the result.

John Albert Michie (b. 17 Oct 1813, d. 15 Feb 1900) farmed at Lot 17, Concession 10, of Reach Township in Ontario. He was born in Aberdeen, Scotland where he attended the local parish school. He married Barbara Agnes Fowlie (b. 30 Apr 1818, d. 24 Oct, 1903) on 2 Dec 1841. It is believed he, his wife and child emigrated to Canada in 1846. Upon reaching Ontario, their daughter died and is buried somewhere near Whitby, Ontario.

According to old stories, they first lived on a farm owned by Peter Leask in Darlington Township and moved to what would become the Michie homestead in Reach Township. They built their own home and cleared the land. Many of the other settlers in the area moved on, but the Michies stayed.

John was a strong temperance man and took a very active role in the local church, being one of the first elders to be chosen in the Presbyterian Church. He was not strictly a Presbyterian and attended services at the local Methodist Church as well, sometimes the family was in church as much as twice a day.

John and Barbara had eight children – William John, Annie, John Andrew, George, Barbara, Margaret, Robert and Agnes Annie. Mrs. Michie was well known in the community as a healer and midwife and her name appears many times in the birth records of the time.

The diary began in February of 1869 and ended March 22 1899. I believe there was a book prior to this date, but it has not been located. John died 15 Feb 1900 and is buried at the Pines Cemetery north of Greenbank. Barbara followed him in 1903.

I have tried, as much as possible, to be true to the original writings. Of course there are a number of places in the diary that are completely illegible, whether it be because of deterioration or the fact that some of the ink has faded beyond reading. If such was the case I have made notes to reflect that [which are enclosed in square brackets as you see here].

Mary Anne (Michie) Richardson

Great great granddaughter,

Lindsay, Ontario.

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First, I must thank my father, Robert Gordon Michie, for his invaluable assistance during this undertaking. He has been my source for explanations of old farming terminology and his memory of the stories of the time and the area has been a great resource. Thanks, Dad!

I must also thank my husband John for his cheerful help with proofreading and being so supportive of this endeavour. Our sons, Robert and Shawn, have also been great sources of computer help when their Mother got into difficulties and have provided many hours of consultation and advice. Thank you guys!

Thank you also to Winnie Wu, for the design of the cover. That is something that would have been beyond my capabilities and I'm grateful for her work.

Finally, I would be remiss if I didn't thank Glen and Mary Jean Till and Mary and Ross Real for their sharing of photos for use in the book, and my friend Lois Magahay for her mentoring me through this entire process.

Above all, thanks to my great-great grandfather John Albert Michie for sharing his life.