

THE GAZETTE, Altomonte
May 3rd, 1890

AN OCTOGENARIAN

Mrs. Mary (Halliday) Fraser Celebrates Her 80th Birthday
An Interesting Sketch of Her Early Life

On Thursday evening last a number of the descendants and friends of Mrs. Fraser, of Martin Street, met at her residence to offer their congratulations on the occasion of her 80th birthday. Her life has indeed been an eventful and interesting one. Through her kindness we are able to give our readers a short account of her early life, which will be read with interest by both old and young, as showing us a bit of heroic history in the lives of the early settlers of this country. Mrs. Fraser is a sister of Mr. David Holliday, our respected townsman. Their father, Mr. John Holliday, was a native of Scotland, where Mrs. Fraser also was born in 1810. Having been chosen by the government as school teacher for the settlement to be formed around our county town, Perth, Mr. Holliday sailed in the steamer "Atlas" on the 15th of July, 1815, and after a voyage of thirteen weeks, reached Brockville towards the end of October. The Governor-General ordered Mr. Holliday and his fellow settlers to remain in the barracks at Brockville all winter. He taught in the barracks there for seven months, the other settlers going on to Perth in the spring some time before he did. He reached Perth in May 1816. The settlers who had preceded him by a few weeks selected a lot for Mr. Holliday where they wished to have their school, as Scotchmen the world over are noted for their love of education. His lot was situated about a mile-and-a-half from Perth, but the school-house has since been moved farther up what is still known as the Scotch Line. When Mr. Holliday and his family reached what was to be his future home his wife sat down at the foot of a big basswood tree until her husband and his neighbors put up a shanty. She had eight children beside her, and one of them only eight months old, who was born in Brockville. Three sons and three daughters were afterwards born to them on the Scotch Line. . It was deeds and suffering like these that gave solidity of character and great powers of endurance to the first settlers in Canada. When Mrs. Fraser and her father came

to Perth there were only a few trees cut down, and one small shanty built to hold the rations for the settlers. During the fall of 1816 Mr. Holliday built a large log building and covered it with bark. Part of this building was used for a school-house. Mr. Holliday died at the patriarchal age of 92, in March, 1870, leaving behind him 8 sons, 4 daughters, 100 grand-children and over 70 great-grandchildren. His noble wife, who was a true mother in Israel, died in 1860 at the age of 78. When Mrs. Fraser's husband, who was the only child of an Inverness Highlander, died, her eldest son, James, was only 17 years of age, and her youngest child three months. Her father-in-law afterwards married Mrs. Allan, a short sketch of whose life appeared in THE GAZETTE a short time ago. With a strong reverence for the memory of her husband and a deep devotion to her fatherless children, Mrs. Fraser remained a widow ever since, devoting the energies of her active life to her church and her children. As she graphically put it herself, she has ever since been entertaining strangers and washing saints' feet. With that indomitable perseverance characteristic of Scotch women of the middle classes, she kept her family together, secured a competency for each, and is now enjoying the fruits of her early labors. She also is a real mother in Israel. She has 4 sons, 4 daughters, 21 grandsons, 34 grand-daughters, 5 great-grandsons and 1 great-grand-daughter. On the evening of the funeral of her late husband, Mrs. Fraser handed her eldest son, James, the Bible and asked him to take his father's place, and he has maintained a family altar ever since. One of her sons, who taught school in Glen Tay for some years, is a distinguished doctor in the United States. After the family married and scattered, she gave up her farm to her son and built a house for herself on one end of the lot, her father living with her during the last eight years of his life. She afterwards moved to Perth, where she resided about four years. She then lived at Spencerville with a son and a son-in-law, Mr Jas Millar, who was a candidate for parliamentary honors at the last election. About four years ago she moved to Almonte in order to be near the Reformed Presbyterian church, of which she is a devoted member, and to whose support she is a very liberal contributor. Mrs. Fraser is yet a marvel of strength and youthfulness in her appearance for one of her age, and we join a host of friends all over the county of Lanark in wishing she may be long spared to enjoy the quiet and rest of old age which she has so well earned.

