

Sinclair Anecdote

"Johnny Sinclair"

My uncle, Walter Parkinson, had a favourite joke, from his youth about "Johnny Sinclair" who had thought that the common field weed, velvet dock (also known as great mullein) was tobacco because its broad leaves were shaped like the tobacco plant but unlike tobacco, they are soft and furry. As a child interested in the names of plants, when I asked about dock, Uncle Walter would say, with a grin, that's Johnny Sinclair's tobacco.

Just who Johnny was and when he made this naive error and if he had tried to dry and smoke the leaves, I cannot say. My uncle was born at Rawdon in 1883 and lived there until 1901. The story perhaps had been passed down to him from an earlier generation.

Crown Agent Alexander Daly reported in 1853 that Ninth Range, Lot 7 North had previously been issued to a James St Clair or Sinclair "which he never took possession of" it was declared it to be cancelled (Upper Canada Land Petitions LAC Microfilm 2827, Bundle 7, #8). James Sinclair does not appear in any other documents I have seen. Perhaps Johnny was part of a family that was briefly in the Township.