GARRETT OAKES

Tales of a Pioneer

Edited by George Thorman and Frank Clarke

Garrett Oakes : Tales of a Pioneer

Edited by: George Thorman & Frank Clark, 1990

Elgin County Public Library, 1991

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Introduction

Garrett Oakes is as interesting for what we do not know about him as for what we do. Between 1873 and 1879, the final years of his life, he published 31 articles in local newspapers. In addition, George Thorman and Howard Mills have discovered seven other articles which were probably printed in newspapers but which cannot be verified. So Garrett Oakes wrote some 38 articles, yet in all this material he tells us very little about his own life. Most of what we know is based on deduction from the articles and evidence from other sources.

Garrett Oakes was born in New Brunswick on September 10, 1791. We know this from his articles and his tombstone. E. A. Owen, in his *Pioneer Sketches of the Long Point Settlement,* says that John Oaks was a sea captain from New Brunswick who died leaving three sons and one daughter: James; Benjamin; Christopher; and Sarah, who married Daniel Youmans in New Brunswick. According to Owen, the whole group moved to the Long Point Settlement at different stages between 1803 and 1805.[1]

Owen says that James was the eldest son of Captain John.[2] A copy of an obituary found at the Eva Brook Donly Museum in Simcoe says that James Oakes died on May 5, 1856 in Charlotteville Township in the 84th year of his age. This obituary says that James was born in Massachussetts and moved to New Brunswick with his parents when he was about seven years of age. It also states that James came to Charlotteville in 1803.[3]

The above would seem to indicate that James Oakes was born around 1772, presumably the son of Captain John, and that the family moved to New Brunswick in 1779 or 1780. Just to make life interesting, in the "Fragments" chapter of Lorenzo Sabine's *Biographical Sketches of Loyalists of the American Revolution* there is found the following:

Oakes, Garret. Of New York. Retailer of liquors, Cruger's Wharf. In 1776 an Addresser of Lord and Sir William Howe.[4]

In Garrett Oakes November 14, 1873 article, he is identified by the editor of the *Canadian Home Journal* as the nephew of Christopher Oakes, and that both Garrett and the uncle had come to Upper Canada in 1803. So it seems reasonable to suppose that he is part of the above family. In Oakes' article of September II, 1874 he says that he came to Canada from New Brunswick in 1803 with an uncle and his family. They landed at Port Ryerse on July 6, 1803.[5] It is interesting that in none of his writings, which are replete with names, does Oakes specifically identify another member of the Oakes family by name. There is some mystery about his background.

He never mentions a father or mother. None of the available sources list him as a son of James, Benjamin, Christopher or Sarah.

In his article of June 12, 1874, Oakes says that he had very little schooling, three quarters he calls it, by which he presumably means nine months. In the same article, Oakes goes on to state that, in the winter of 1812, he served for one quarter as a teacher in the Long Point Settlement.[6]

The article of September 21, 1877 shows Garrett Oakes in May, 1809 signing on as a sailor to help take a boat load of flour from the mill at Port Ryerse to Chippawa. It is evident from this article that Oakes was an experienced sailor, even at the age of 18 or 19.

In the December 5, 1873 article Oakes states that, in July 1811 he assisted Thomas Curtis to sail a boat with his belongings from Port Ryerse to Kettle Creek. It is reasonable to conclude from the above that Oakes was known by other people to have some ability with sailing vessels. One wonders if he picked that up during his boyhood in New Brunswick.[7]

In the May IS, 1874 article Oakes says that, in July 1810, he went with three other men to Port Talbot to ask Colonel Talbot for land. It is interesting that, when talking with Talbot, Oakes characterized himself as being "alone in the world". We know from the November 14, 1873 article that, in September 1810, Oakes located his land in Yarmouth.[8]

The *Upper Canada Land Petitions* contain Garrett Oakes petition for land dated at Woodhouse, January I, 1811. The petition says that he is from Charlotteville and is desirous of settling on the Talbot Road. A note on the letter says that he was recommended by Thomas Talbot. In the *Early Township Land Papers* for Yarmouth Township there is an Order-in-Council dated February 16, 1811 granting to Garrett Oakes of the Township of Charlotteville in the County of Norfolk, Lot Number 65 on the North Side of the Talbot Road East, otherwise known as Lot 20 in the Nin.thConcession of Yarmouth. Oakes paid the patent and survey fees on February 18, 1811. He was certified as having performed the settlement duties on January 22, 1818, and was granted his patent on January 27 of the same year.[9]

It is interesting that Oakes says that he located his land in September of 1810 and started clearing it, perhaps in the fall but certainly in December of the same year. His Land Petition may well have been a formality. Settlers at this time had two years in which to clear ten acres, build a house or barn, and clear half the road in front of their lot. And Thomas Talbot was fairly strict in enforcining settlement duties. It is an assumption, but it would appear from the December 5, 1873 article that in 1811 Oakes was still living in the Long Point Settlement and spent the summer in Yarmouth doing his settlement duties.[10]

We know that on March 3, 1812, Garrett Oakes married Maria Long at Charlotteville in Norfolk County. It would seem reasonable that he would take his new bride to Yarmouth in the spring or summer of 1812. The November 21, 1873 article implies that he was living in Yarmouth by December of 1812.[11]

Garrett Oakes was no slouch as a woodsman, and was quite able to take care of himself under difficult circumstances. This is evident from the November 21, 1873 article, where he describes surviving in the woods during a snowstorm. And also from the November 2, 1877 article, where he talks about making his way through the bush when injured.[12]

It is quite clear from his articles that the War of 1812 – 1814 was one of the most important events in Oakes' life. As you read the article, he seems to have been in many engagements, but when his service record is examined, one finds that it is very short.

The payrolls of the Middlesex Militia show that Garrett Oakes served in Captain Daniel Rapelje's Company for 31 days in 1813, from October 25 to November 24. In 1814 he again served in the same Company for 31 days in May and June, and for 61 days from August 25 to October 24. He is not mentioned on any of the available lists of men who served in 1812.[13]

The only battle in which Oakes participated was at Malcolm's Mills and it was, as Oakes describes it, a skirmish and a rout as General McArthur outflanked the position. However, he must have been familiar with many of the events of the War. He could have been at Port Ryerse and could have helped Brock's troops over the portage at Long Point. Certainly he had the expertise.

As one reads the many references to the Government's decision to award a gratuity to the veterans of 1812, and the furious anger of Oakes at the Government's stinginess, it is wise to remember the very short service record of Oakes.

However, on October 11, 1875, he was one of the 43 men who had their claims examined by Colonel McPherson, assisted by Colonel Moffat of London and Mr. McDougall and Mr. Case, Members of the Dominion Parliament, and Dr. Wilson, the member of the Provincial Legislature. The veterans were all interviewed by a reporter of the *St. Thomas Journal,* who wrote: "Garritt Oakes Age 84 years; resides in Yarmouth. Served as a private in Colonel Talbot's battalion. Was enrolled in Yarmouth in 1812 and discharged at the close of the war. Was in no regular engagements." Oakes qualified as a veteran and eventually received twenty dollars. The government had allotted $50,000 for the gratuity, but when all the claims were in, it was only sufficient to give each man $20 [14]

Oakes in his articles describes his many skills. He is not exaggerating. In an interview with Frank Hunt in 1878 William J. Collver makes the following statement:

> We were a hardy people? You ask. Yes, we knew how to handle such tools as we had. I framed nearly all the saw-mills in the old times, and built the first piers at Port Stanley. But the nearest man to a genius amongst us was Garrett Oakes. He came very nigh inventing perpetual motion.
>
> It was a wooden wheel with a neatly cut groove in the rim, into which spikes were driven at regular intervals. The motive power was a succession of falling balls – there were eighteen altogether – each of which struck one of the spikes and then, dropping into an elevator, was carried to the top of the wheel to drop into the groove again. But stop. I have seen it run for as much as twenty minutes at a stretch, though. I was one of the only two men ever allowed by Mr. Oakes to see it.[15]

The first article which Frank Hunt wrote was an interview with Garrett Oakes in 1878. It was not a particularly good article, and tells us very little about Oakes. But in 1891 Hunt was an accomplished journalist and in his series of *Pioneer Sketches* he reprints one of Oakes' articles written in 1877. Hunt, in his introduction, states:

> Talbot street, in Yarmouth, was fortunate in having such a man in the person of Garrett Oakes. He was a mechanical genius; there was nothing he could not do that he undertook. He could kill an ox, tan its hide, and make it into boots and shoes. He could make a barrel to hold the beef, and an oven to cook it in. He made watch glasses out of window panes in a brick mould of his own manufacture.
>
> He made almost every article the settlers required when living, and their coffins when they died. The demands on this mechanical genius were so great that he could not pay much attention, personally, to the clearing of his land, after the first three or four years. In his youth he had not been accustomed to manual labor, nor was he aware of the abilities he possessed until time and circumstances brought them to the surface. Getting in debt to a storekeeper in St. Thomas, who was also the owner of a distillery at Jamestown, and being unable to pay, he offered to work it out repairing barrels. He commenced the job, and gave such satisfaction that the merchant paid him cooper's wages, and continued to employ him at this work long after the debt was paid. This was the beginning of his mechanical career which continued for more than half a century. Immediately after this he turned his attention to the manufacture of spinning wheels on a large scale, and the "patent heads" for these, as they are called, which were then just coming into use. Some of his neighbors had no money to pay for this necessary article, but they could chop in Oakes' lot to pay for it, and he could make better progress clearing his land in this way, than if he continued to use the axe himself. Both were benefited, the man who got the wheel and the man who made it. For several winters his output was three hundred and fifty wheels, which were sold over a large territory. He possessed, besides his mechanical ability, great intellectual qualities, and though his early education was limited, he acquired a fund of information possessed by few men of his time. He attended school three quarters altogether, yet with this limited term under instruction, he was called from Yarmouth to the Long Point country in 1812 to teach school, which he

did to the satisfaction of his patrons. All through his long career he was the friend and counsellor of the settlers, who had a high opinion of his judgement. But few men were called upon to endure more than he, the hardships of pioneer life.[16]

Oakes was also an accomplished musician and ventriloquist. His son, Cyrus, was noted for his ability in the latter.

As mentioned above, Oakes married Maria Long in March of 1812. There were eleven children:

1. Cyrus Hammond, born July 4, 1815, died February 22, 1909. He married Tirzah Babcock on November II, 1845. She was born on January I, 1825 and died December 12, 1883. They had 5 children.
2. Harriett, born 1816 or 1817. She married Samuel Deo on October 2,1832 at the Old English Church in St. Thomas. They had five children.
3. Mary Ann, born 1818 and died January 7, 1910. She is buried in the St. Thomas Cemetery. Mary Ann married Jacob Deo in 1849. There were no children. Jacob died in 1904 and is buried in the Baptist Cemetery at New Sarum.
4. Miriam, born 1824 and died January 6, 1916. She is buried in the St. Thomas Cemetery. Miriam married Robert Druillard and they had three children.
5. Elva, born 1825. There is no available death date. She married Minard Mills and had seven children.
6. Satira, born 1826 and died January 12, 1910. Satira married Jacob Wilcox and had two children. She is buried in the St. Thomas Cemetery while Jacob, who died November 11, 1900 is buried in the Orwell Cemetery.
7. Hatfield, born 1828. It is not known when he died or who he married. It is known that Hatfield moved to Iowa and had ten children.
8. Lyman, born 1830. It is not known when Lyman died or who he married. It is known that he lived in New Orleans and had three children.
9. Robert Bruce, born December 25, 1832 and died September 22, 1891. He married Kate Thompson and they had six children.
10. William Wallace. He married Mattie Martell and died in Seattle.
11. Charles Duncombe, born 1837 and died September 6, 1909. He married Juliet Smith in 1868 and they had three daughters. Charles Duncombe is buried in the St. Thomas Cemetery.

Maria Long Oakes died at age 54 on November 21, 1848. Garrett married Julia Hitchcock, the widow of John Parrot, in 1849. She died on May 12, 1869.[17]

Raising eleven children, looking after his farm, and enjoying his friends appear to have been sufficient activities for Oakes. He had no political ambitions and he never served as a councillor for his township. On September 4, 1863 he was made a Justice of the Peace.[18]

The *St. Thomas Weekly Dispatch* of December 26, 1867 had a surprising item that Garrett Oakes was a candidate for Reeve of Yarmouth. In his middle seventies one wonders why he ran for a political position. He must have been furious about something.

Oakes ran against James Armstrong and Charles King. He was defeated in the election and, so far as is known, that was his only foray into politics.[19]

It seems likely that Garrett Oakes was a supporter of the Reform Party, or 'Grits' as they came to be called. This is evidenced by the fact that he named his youngest son Charles Duncombe, after the noted Reformer, one-time resident of St. Thomas, and supporter of William Lyon Mackenzie. It is also supported by Oakes' article on

the 1812 election where he comes out strongly against Mahlon Burwell and the Family Compact.

Oakes is not known to have belonged to any of the Masonic organizations in the area. This is unusual for the time period. He was his own man, a shrewd observer of the world, self-educated, who could write with humour and authority about the foibles of life.

Garrett Oakes died on April 6, 1881 and was buried in the New Sarum Baptist Cemetery beside his wives. By his will dated November 29, 1876, Oakes left all of his property to his youngest son Charles Duncombe, except for five acres adjacent to the twenty- five acres Oakes had sold to his daughter Mary Ann and her husband, Jacob Deo, in 1851. These five acres were for their use during their lifetime. One may assume that Garrett Oakes had helped his other children with various kinds of financial support.

Charles Duncombe Oakes, who had stayed with his father on the family farm, gave each of his daughters parts of the property and left special instructions in his grant to his daughter Polly Cottington that Mary and Jacob Deo were to be supported as long as they lived. [20]

So why go to all the trouble of dredging up Garrett Oakes' articles from the old newspapers, researching and reprinting them? Oakes was one of the very early settlers in Elgin County. His reminiscences are an oral history of the early days in the Talbot Settlement, and they are first hand. In this way they are unique. Garrett Oakes actually did what he talked about. It is wise to remember that all writers make mistakes and, like fishermen talking of legendary catches, they exaggerate and magnify their own importance. We feel that Oakes' articles ring true, especially in his discussions of the mores and customs of the times and of the difficulties of pioneer life.

A word about the text. Garrett Oakes names is variously spelled Garrett, Garret, and Garrit. Oakes actually signed his name Garrit. The *Canadian Home Journal* and the *St. Thomas Journal* spelled his name Garrett. For the sake of uniformity, this spelling has been used throughout.

At the present time, the editors are aware of thirty-eight articles by Garrett Oakes.

They have been able to locate thirty-one of them in newspapers of the time, i.e. The *Canadian Home Journal* and the *St. Thomas Journal.* The other seven came to George Thorman by way of a great-granddaughter of Garrett Oakes, Lulu Victoria Simpson Crossett. The editors have not been able to find these articles in specific newspapers, but this is as much because a great many newspaper issues in the 1870's are missing as anything else. There is no reason whatsoever to doubt that the articles were written by Garrett Oakes.

Every effort has been made to verify Oakes' stories in other sources, and to identify the people he talks about. Any errors or omissions are the faults of the editors.

Frank Clarke, George Thorman, October 1990

Articles by Garrett Oakes

a mind well stored *Canadian Home Journal,* November 7, 1873.

Solomon in all his glory *Canadian Home Journal,* November 14, 1873.

a darkness like that of Egypt *Canadian Home Journal,* November 21, 1873.

getting a home of my own *Canadian Home Journal,* December 5, 1873.

character is formed by circumstances *Canadian Home Journal,* December 12, 1873.

every man that could do it *Canadian Home Journal,* January 23, 1874.

men wants but little here below *Canadian Home Journal,* February 6, 1874.

we exchanged our homespun for good warm coats *Canadian Home Journal,* February 27, 1874.

the index of the heart *Canadian Home Journal,* March 6, 1874.

and a pilot being indespensible *Canadian Home Journal,* March 27, 1874.

an inheritance in the promised land *Canadian Home Journal,* May 15, 1874.

where there's a will *Canadian Home Journal,* May 29, 1874.

represented by a pancake *Canadian Home Journal,* June 12, 1874.

participation in the struggle of life *Canadian Home Journal,* September 11, 1874.

240 miles on foot *Canadian Home Journal,* January 29, 1875.

the better part of valour *Canadian Home Journal,* April 2, 1875.

never had cause to regret *Canadian Home Journal,* May 14, 1875.

Reminiscences *Canadian Home Journal,* October 1, 1875.

The Veterans of 1812 *Canadian Home Journal,* December 3, 1875.

no Long Point any more, but a long island *Canadian Home Journal,* August 11, 1876.

easily acquired wealth often cloys *St. Thomas Journal,* February 20, 1877.

with two drunkards in the boat *St. Thomas Journal,* September 21, 1877.

the only immediate reward was the object of communication *St. Thomas Journal,* October 19, 1877.

to exchange my solitude for one companion *St. Thomas Journal,* November 2, 1877.

honorable dealing and gentlemanly bearing *St. Thomas Journal,* September 2,1879.

the few articles indispensable *St. Thomas Journal,* September 9, 1879.

without one cent of pay *St. Thomas Journal,* September 30, 1879.

frequently ballots were purchased *St. Thomas Journal,* October 3, 1879.

aggrieved at the ingratitude *St. Thomas Journal,* October 14, 1879.

the munificent $20 pension *St. Thomas Journal,* November 25, 1879.

the man with corn on his toes *St. Thomas Journal,* December 2, 1879

Articles whose publication is not confirmed

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The Temperance Band ...binding themselves to abstain...

Some Reminiscences About William Wilcox ...a man of iron...

The Story of a Loaf ...warding off both harm and hunger...

The Story of a Trial ...he was drawn into the act...

An Election Seventy Years Ago ...accustomed to bogus cheering...

Scarcity of Salt ...which they said was “berry salt”...

NOTES

1. Owen, E.A., *Pioneer Sketches of the Long Point Settlement.* (Belleville, Ontario: Mika Silk Screening Ltd., 1972), pp. 211 & 212. See also *Canadian Home Journal,* June 12, 1874; September 11, 1874. According to Owen, the entire family moved to the Long Point Settlement at different times. He states that James and Benjamin, the oldest sons, came in 1804. This date is incorrect, as they were here when the third son, Christopher, and young Garrett Oakes arrived on July 6, 1803.
2. Ibid., Owen, p. 212.
3. See Family History Files at the Eva Brook Donly Museum, Simcoe Ontario. The obituary was copied from the *Christian Messenger* of June 12, 1856.
4. Sabine, Lorenzo. *Biographical Sketches of Loyalists of the American Revolution. With An Historical Essay.* Volume II. (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1979), p. 562.
5. *Canadian Home Journal,* September 11, 1874.
6. *Canadian Home Journal,* June 12, 1874.
7. *St. Thomas Journal,* September 21,1877. *Canadian Home Journal,* December 5,1873.
8. *Canadian Home Journal,* May 15, 1874; November 14, 1873.
9. Public Archives of Canada, Upper Canada Land Petitions, Record Group 1, L1 and L3, '0' Bundle 10, No.2. See also Ontario Archives. Early Township Land Papers. Record Group 1, Series *CN.* MS 658, Reels 529 & 530.
10. *Canadian Home Journal,* November 21, 1873; December 5, 1873.
11. *Canadian Home Journal,* November 21, 1873. The marriage information comes from George Thorman and Howard Mills.
12. *Canadian Home Journal,* November 21, 1873. *St. Thomas Journal,* November 2, 1877.
13. The payrolls for the Middlesex Militia are found in Public Archives of Canada, Record Group 9, Department of Militia and Defence, IB7. War of 1812 Records.
14. *Canadian Home Journal,* October 12,1875.
15. *St. Thomas Journal,* December 17, 1878.
16. *St. Thomas Journal,* November 29, 1878. *St. Thomas Daily Times,* October 17, 1891.
17. All of this family information was collected by Lulu Victoria Simpson Crossett, who was the great granddaughter of Garrett Oakes. Howard Mills, Donald Cosens and George Thorman have added additional material.
18. From a list of Elgin County Justices of the Peace held by the Elgin County Library.
19. *St. Thomas Weekly Dispatch,* December 26, 1867.
20. Information compiled from documents found at the Elgin County Land Registry Office and the Elgin County Surrogate Court Estate Files.

...a mind well stored...

Canadian Home Journal, November 7, 1873.[1]

The writer, Garrett Oakes, Esq., J.P., is one of the first settlers of Yarmouth. Despite the hardship of his younger days, he neglected no opportunities to improve himself mentally, and the result is that he has a mind well stored with youthful knowledge. In conversation he is spritely and intelligent, and his recollections of the past sixty years are vivid and entertaining. The narrative is in his own handwriting: "Seeing the seeming inability of the young men of the present day to travel on foot the distance of half a dozen miles, I tho't I would show what has been done where poverty and perseverance were united, which I will illustrate by an episode in my early pioneer life in the wilderness of Western Canada. In the year 1810, when in the nineteenth year of my age, I took a lot of land in the township of Yarmouth, on Talbot Road, at which time my two hands constituted my whole stock in trade to start with. In the year 1813 Colonel Talbot sent word to the few settlers that he had wool to let, to be made into cloth on halves. I hired a horse and went and got fifty pounds. Here was forty miles travelled. I then hired a horse and took the wool to Dover and got it carded, for which I paid a York shilling a pound, or $6.25. I then returned home, which was 100 miles more. My wife spun the rolls. I had made a loom, but had no reed for flannel. I then went 60 miles on foot to a reed maker's, but he had none suitable, and would not leave his work on the farm until I agreed to give him the price of two reeds, $6.50 and work a day in his place. I got the reed and returned home. Here was 120 miles walked. My wife wove the cloth, and I took my half on foot to Dover to the fulling mill. When finished I had 18 yards, for which I paid $9.[2] Here was 100 miles more. I then took the Colonel's share to him on foot, which added 40 miles more. Thus you will see that I travelled 140 miles on horseback and 260 on foot, which made 400 altogether. I paid $3 for horse hire, $6.25 for carding, $9 for fulling, $6.50 for a reed, and the spinning and weaving was $10 more, altogether $34.75; besides at least 15 days' travel and waiting till the work was done, and the expense of living besides."

Notes

1. A version of this article appeared in the *Illustrated Historical Atlas of the County of Elgin* (Toronto: H.R. Page, 1877).
2. The carding process consisted of combing wool fresh from the sheep into straight fibres. The wool was then twisted or rolled into a soft ball, ready for spinning. It was then spun into yarn, to be used either for knitting or for the making of cloth. From Oakes's account his wife spun the yarn and then wove the cloth. The purpose of fulling was to make cloth shorter, thicker and stronger. It was done by hand in a trough by washing and beating the cloth. The pioneers very often had this done in mills because of the work and the tediousness. See Chapter 3 of Edwin C. Guillet, *Pioneer Arts and Crafts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968). The reed referred to by Oakes is *"a* grating of uniformly spaced fine parallel wires, originally made of natural reeds and thus called a reed . . . . ." It is part of the loom and used in the weaving process. See *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica.* Volume 21. Macropaedia. (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1988), p. 514. See also Audrey Spencer, *Spinning and Weaving at Upper Canada Village* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1968).

...Solomon in all his glory...

Canadian Home Journal, November 14, 1873.

In September, 1810, I located my land in Yarmouth, and intended to chop some the same fall.[1] I had the promise of a pair of shoes, but was disappointed from time to time until December, and as there was no other

shoemaker in the neighborhood I started with my old ones. About the middle of the month my shoes gave out, and I was entirely barefoot. I still worked on until the 24th, intending to start for home on Christmas day, but it snowed on that and the two following days, until the snow was three feet deep, and I fifty miles from home, and barefoot. The owner of the shanty where I was stopping had discarded an old pair because the soles and upper leather had nearly dissolved partnership. I took them and healed the breach by winding them thoroughly with basswood bark, for the want of better material, and I thought when I had them on that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like me, or the Queen of Sheba would have had more to wonder at. But even the leather and bark did not raise me more than one inch in my own estimation. Besides, I was not in fear of hostile Indians, for I knew that they would not dare follow my tracks, not knowing what kind of beast had made them. On the 29th I was joined by three men and we started for home. The snow was so deep that we had to go in Indian file; so the head man would go about fifty rods, then turn out and fall in the rear. In this way we would travel all day, and at night dig away the snow, build a fire, and lay around it until morning. At nightfall on the third day we had only got thirty-five miles from where we started, and had fifteen miles yet to go. We held a council of war, and, although we had not stopped to rest through the day, the decision was to go ahead, which we did. After sunrise on the 1st day of January 1811, we reached home, after three days and one night's travel to go fifty miles. I wore the shoes until I had another pair made, but without taking the old ones for a pattern lest I should be thought fastidious.

(Mr. Oakes came with his uncle from New Brunswick in 1803, and settled at Port Ryerse. It was to his home at Port Ryerse that he journeyed as described above. Ed.)

Notes

1. A new settler had to clear ten acres of land, build a house or barn and clear the road in front of his lot. By cutting down the trees and burning them, Oakes would be able to plant grain and vegetables in the spring of 1811. See the article of December 5, 1873, where Oakes states that he returned to his lot in June, 1811 to do more chopping.

   For a discussion of settlement duties, see Lilian F. Gates, *Land Policies of Upper Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968), chapter 9 and in particular pages 127 to 129.

...a darkness like that of Egypt...

Canadian Home Journal, November 21, 1873.

In the latter part of December, 1812, I went to the Long Point settlement and got thirty pounds of nails and other articles, so that when my pack was completed it weighed sixty-eight pounds. I then bought three sheep, and started for home on the last day of the month. I came ten miles and stopped at the last shanty on the road. At daylight on the first day of January, 1813, I was on the road again. At this time the road was bare, but by sunrise it began to snow, and by night it was twenty inches deep. The sheep wallowed on till an hour after dark, when I found that we had left the road. The night being cloudy, without a moon, and the pine branches over head having caught and retained the damp snow, it produced a darkness like that of Egypt-seemingly a darkness that could be felt. I left the sheep and began to feel for the road, but could not find it. I then thought I would get the sheep together, and lay so as to get some warmth from them to keep from freezing till morning, but could not find them. My fear of freezing was this: The heavy load I had carried all day caused my under clothes to be completely saturated with perspiration, and the damp snow had melted and wet my outside clothes; and as night came on the weather grew colder, so that at this time my outer clothes were frozen as stiff as a board, or seemingly so. I put my load at the foot of a tree, and sat down upon it, but soon began to tremble till my teeth

chattered. Now, let anyone imagine himself in my situation lost in the pine woods in the night, the snow knee deep, not knowing how far he was from a human habitation, and knowing that he must find a house or perish with cold. I think he would not envy me my situation. Well, I thought I might as well die hunting for the road as to sit still and freeze; so I shouldered my pack and started. I went about a hundred yards, when I came against a log. I felt along and found that it was cut off. I then knew I had found the road. But see the hand of Providence in this: Had I gone a few feet to the right or left I should have missed the log, crossed the road, and frozen to death. I knew the log must lay parallel with the road, but being bewildered I did not know which way was toward home. However, I made a choice and started. After walking till I was nearly exhausted, I came to the bank of Spring Creek, where the old line of Talbot Road crossed it at that time. The eastern bank is here 100 feet high, and at an inclination of sixty degrees. The darkness made everything invisible, so that the first intimation I had of my proximity to the creek was finding myself going headlong down the hill, with the pack half the time uppermost. The sensation of delight that I experienced in the descent, I will compare to the feelings of a poor man while reading the letter which informs him that his lottery ticket has drawn a valuable prize; for I then knew that I had taken the right course, and was within half a mile of a shanty at the Little Otter, which I reached at 11 o'clock that night. But the realization of safety unstrung every nerve in my system, and then for the first time I could realize the strain my nerves had undergone while danger was in view.

The next morning I went back and found that it was three miles from the Otter where I left the sheep, and providentially in the twenty rods from where I left the sheep to the log that saved me there was no obstruction to turn me aside, or I should inevitably have perished. I found the sheep, but it took me till two o'clock to break the road and get them to the Otter. As soon as I reached the Otter I left the sheep, and although exceedingly fatigued, I started for home. I waded on through the snow, without a track to assist me, until after dark, when I was seven and a half miles from the Little Otter and six from home. My strength was failing fast, for I still carried nearly seventy pounds weight on my back. I knew that a house had recently been built in the woods somewhere north of where I then was, but half a mile from the road, and that I must find it or lie on the snow all night; for to reach home I could not. I thought that as Providence had protected me thus far I would trust it in this extremity. I started into the woods, and after going about a hundred rods I saw a light shining through the chinks of the newly built log house. I went to the door, but was so exhausted that I had to lay off my load before I could step up on the threshold. After getting in, Mrs. Bradley, the lady of the house, set about getting supper for me; but the scent of the cooking overcame me so that I had to go to bed to avoid fainting, and missed my supper.[1] The next morning, at daylight, I started for home, which I reached at noon.

(This is the most dramatic of Oakes' stories, and it caught the attention of the newspaper editors, who paraphrased Oakes' description to make it more dramatic.)

Notes

1. This would be the home of Asa Bradley, who lived on Lot 86, North of the Talbot Road East, in Malahide Township. This land was granted to Bradley, “a settler located by Colonel Talbot,” by an Orderin-Council dated February 16, 1811. Bradley petitioned for the lot on September 15, 1810, and was apparently living in Woodhouse at the time. He patented the lot on December 11, 1817. Asa Bradley died on October 8, 1818.

   See Public Archives of Canada, Record Group 1, L3, *Upper Canada Land Petitions,* 'B', Bundle 10, No.7.

   Henceforth *Upper Canada Land Petitions.*

   Also, *Estate Files of the Surrogate Court,* London District, No. 71.

   Also, *Elgin County Crown Land Patents Register;* 1795 -1943.

...getting a home of my own...

Canadian Home Journal, December 5, 1873.

In the month of June, 1811, I started from Port Ryerse to go to my land in Yarmouth, to do a few days chopping. But my narration of the distance travelled on foot to accomplish what to me was inevitable without forfeiting my land by not performing my settlement duties by the time given (which was two years) is the ground on which I trust that my veracity will not be disputed. The thought of getting a home of my own produced a sensation of pleasure that twice the distance would not have abated the ardor, and it enabled me to persevere to the accomplishment of my undertakings. But to the narrative: I soon broke my axe and returned; which was 100 miles travel. There was but one blacksmith in the settlement, and he never made an axe; but by the offer of a good price, and a promise on my part to take it as it might be, he consented to try. So he did make something, and called it an axe; but I think he would not have dared to risk his reputation in a philosophical debating society by taking the affirmative with the article on view. For fear of being thought superstitious I accepted it, although I knew I should be alone with it through forty miles of wilderness. I got through safe, however, and have never believed in ghosts or witches since. Well, I had chopped but three or four days, when the axe was broken. I then went back and had it "upset," as they term it. Here was 100 miles more. I ground the axe and returned, but had not chopped five minutes when it broke again. I a third time went back. The axe was pronounced incurable, and another had to be made. When the new one was finished, and had received from its maker the recommendation that was witheld from our mother Eve when presented to her spouse, I returned and finished my chopping. But it appeared to me that the axe had instinctively remained true to its trust lest it should contradict its maker's assertion that it was "very good." I then returned home, making altogether a distance walked of 400 miles, 300 of which, and six days walk, were chargable to broken axes. At this time there were forty miles of the road without a bridge; but I would expect a left handed blessing should I say to the young man of the present day, go thou and do likewise.

In July of the same year Thomas Curtis moved to his new home, and was the second settler where the town of St. Thomas now is.[1] He hired a boat, and I agreed to assist him from Port Ryerse to Kettle Creek. We crossed the Long Point carrying place in the evening, and as the lake was calm, we made up our minds to reach Kettle Creek that night. But after dark the wind rose to a heavy gale; and we dare not land, for the bank was high and the beach narrow. So we made for the Otter Creek. When opposite the creek some men encamped on the beach saw us, and with a torch stood at the mouth of the creek for us to steer to. But when we entered the breakers we lost control of the boat and missed the creek. As soon as the boat struck bottom the breakers rolled over the stern and filled the frail bark. Mr. Curtis and his wife had three children. We each took a child and jumped overboard, but had hard work to get a foothold on the beach, from the force of the receding waves. However, we got on "terra firma" in a sad plight. In a few minutes our cargo was all washed out and strewn along the beach – beds and bedding, chests, trunks, boxes, chairs, tables, barrels of flour and pork, with many other articles were being driven to the shore, and drawn back by the returning waves so that it took several hours in the darkness to get them secured. The woman and children suffered severely, for they had to remain all night and next day till they could get dry without a change of clothes. I then thought that if Jonah was in as bad a plight when he landed from the fish as we were when we landed from the boat, that the citizens of Nineveh could not have pronounced him a dry preacher. Again I thought, perhaps he went to some tavern and exchanged or dried his clothes; but we had no such accommodation in our neighborhood, so that it may be that the ancient missionary had the advantage of us entirely.

Notes

1. Thomas Curtis was granted Lot 47 North of the Talbot Road East, otherwise known as Lot 2 on the Ninth Concession, by an Order-in-Council dated February 16, 1811. The patent and survey fees were

paid to the Receiver-General on February 18, 1811. The settlement duties were certified to have been performed as of May 17, 1819. Curtis applied for the land from Woodhouse on September 26, 1810. It is interesting that the land petition says “Thos. Curtis of Yarmouth”. Curtis patented the lot on May 18, 1819.

See *Upper Canada umd Petitions,* 'C' Bundle 10, No.2. Also, Ontario Archives, Record Group 1, Series C IV, MS 658, *Early Township Land Papers,* (Yarmouth Township). Henceforth, *Early Township Land Papers.*

It is unlikely that he was the second person in the vicinity of S1. Thomas. Daniel Rapelje was the first, and it is probable that David Mandeville settled shortly after Rapelje. Curtis would be the second person on the present-day site of St. Thomas, since Mandeville settled in Southwold. Garret Smith, Aaron Spurgin, and David Secord Jr. Were not far behind. See *op. Cit., Early Township Land Papers.*

Also, *Elgin County Crown Land Patents Register.* 1795 -1943.

Also, Coyne, James H. “The Talbot Papers”, *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada,* Third Series, Volume 1, Section 2, 1908, p. 100. Here Coyne has compiled a list of the early recipients of land along the Talbot Road.

...character is formed by circumstances...

Canadian Home Journal, December 12, 1873.

The first settlement of Talbot road commenced in 1809, when David Mandeville, Daniel Rapelje and David Secord were the only settlers till 1810. In that year Moses Rice made a fourth.[1] In 1811 scores came, and as there was no grist mill nearer than Dover the settlers depended on corn for bread, as that could be manufactured into meal in a mortar.[2] This article was made by cutting a log three feet long and fifteen inches in diameter. The log was stood on end, and fire put on the centre and kept burning till it had formed a bowl-shaped concavity to hold ten or twelve quarts. Into this a quart of corn was put, and with a heavy wooden pestle it was pounded to the required degree of fineness; which process had to be repeated morning, noon and night, or go without a Johny-cake. The mortar was indispensable, although in this way thousands of bushels have been murdered. For those of the present day to realize that character is formed by circumstances, it is necessary that they should be acquainted with the mode of life, the doings and sayings, and simplicity of language of the early settlers of Western Canada, and know the expedients resorted to where necessity called into action the latent inventive faculties, to substitute the useful for the ornamental. Their language, although simple, was pure, unadulterated candor, without egotism or affectation; and my young friends of to-day should be present when we will suppose that Mrs. A. Calls on Mrs. B., and something like the following gossip would take place:

“Good mornin' Mrs. B. Dear sakes alive, poundin' corn! Well, I haint pounded none since I had the ager. I tried it an' it een a'most killed me; so poor John had to leave his choppin' to do it. But, law me, what a nice mortar you have; the bark all off – fit for a parlor! Well, I'll go right home and have the bark off mine, so I will, and I have poke berries enough to stain it all nice. Well, if you haint got rockers to your saptrough, and all so smooth inside. Its the nicest cradle I've seen in the woods. Well, haven't I got nothin' you haint? Have you got a washtub? John sawed a salt barrel in two and made the nicest tub you ever saw.”

Mrs. B. - 'Well Peter dug a trough that does very well, but Johnson makes real boughten one and paints them with maple bark boiled down, and I'll have one if I have to husk corn or dig taters to pay for it.”

'Well, now, Mrs. B., I see you are usin' thorn pins for your clothes. John sent to Long Point and got half a

paper of boughten pins for een a'most nothin' – only two York shillin's. Well, Mrs. B., I come over to tell you our Sally went with Squire Nixon to Buffalo. Now, will you believe it, she says she seen a thing een a'most like a cupboard, an' it would sing as plain as other folks, only it didn't say nothin'; the other people had to say the words, and 'twould stop when they did."

Mrs. B. - "Law me, I should a been skeered into hysterics."

And this is not an overdrawn picture of backwoods life, before education became general for the poor as well as for the rich, which will account for the simplicity of language that I have tried to imitate. But the artless simplicity of that people gave a peace of mind that few are blessed with in the present state of society, or ever will be until they return to that state enjoyed by the first settlers, when every man had his neighbor's interest interwoven with his own, so that in effect, it was a co-operative community. But that bond is severed by the introduction of aristocratical ideas that prohibit equality, which is the basis of contentment in newly organized communities, and is the only state of society where the nearest approach to earthy happiness is attainable. And I can say from experience that in the primeval forests of Canada, for years, every settler within five miles of me were neighbors in verity. This was the only time I ever enjoyed true contentment, which constitutes life a blessing that affluence cannot impart, and which the votary of wealth will seek for in vain.

Notes

1. Daniel Rapelje and David Mandeville applied for grants of land along the Talbot Road in November of 1809. Both received their land by Orders-in-Council dated December 7, 1809. It seems reasonable to suppose that both Rapelje and Mandeville would have gone on the land in either late 1809 or early 1810.

   David Secord Jr. Petitioned for land on the Talbot Road on May 30, 1810. He received Lot 70, North of the Talbot Road in Yarmouth by an Order-in-Council dated August 10, 1810. Garret Smith and Aaron Spurgin also received grants of land along the Talbot Road by Orders-in-Council dated August 10, 1810.

   Moses Rice is a bit of an enigma. He shows up in the *Upper Canada Land Petitions* as petitioning for land in Norfolk, not Elgin County. There is no mention of Rice in the *Early Township Land Papers* for Yarmouth. Moses Rice does appear in the *"Talbot Papers,"* and is listed as having served with the First Middlesex Militia between 1812 and 1814. Mr. Rice shows up in the Elgin County Land Registry Office records. A man by the name of Aaron Spurgin patented Lot 68, North of the Talbot Road in Yarmouth, on June 15, 1816. This lot had been granted to Spurgin in August of 1810. Spurgin sold the lot to Moses Rice on December 9, 1816. Rice, in turn, sold to John Rolph on June 6,1817.

   For David Mandeville see *Upper Canada Land Petitions,* 'M' Bundle 9, No. 126 For Daniel Rapelje see *Upper Canada Land Petitions,* 'R' Bundle 9, No. 27.

   For David Secord see *Upper Canada Land Petitions,* '5' Bundle 9, No. 130 and '5' Bundle 12, No. 362.

   For Aaron Spurgin see *Upper Canada Land Petitions,* 'S' Bundle 9, No. 129.

   For Garret Smith see *Upper Canada Land Petitions,* '5' Bundle 9, No. 128.

   See also *Early Township Land Papers* (Yarmouth Township).

   See also *Elgin County Crown Land Patents Register* 1795 _ 1943.

   For Moses Rice see *Upper Canada Land Petitions,* 'R' Bundle 10, No. 46; also op. Cit., *"The Talbot Papers,"* pp. 100,175 & 200; also, Elgin County Land Registry Office records.

2. Thomas Talbot had both a grist mill and a saw mill at Port Talbot from before 1812 until the Americans destroyed them in a raid led by Andrew Westbrook on September 9, 1814. See Charles Oakes Ermatinger, *The Talbot Regime.* (St. Thomas, Ontario: The Municipal World, 1904), p. 40. Fred Coyne Hamil says that the mill was probably operating in 1807. See Hamil, Fred Coyne, *Lake Erie Baron,* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1955), pp. 51 & 52. Probably the next mill in the area was Daniel Rapelje's, the first version of which was erected in either 1815 or 1816. Jonathan Doan had a mill built at Sparta before 1820. See Miller, Warren Cron, *Vignettes of Early St. Thomas,* (St. Thomas, Ontario: City of St. Thomas, 1967), pp. 10 & 11. Also, Thorman, George, ed. *Frank Hunt: Essays on Elgin County.* (St. Thomas,

Ontario: Elgin Historical Society, 1989), p. 48.

...every man that could do it...

Canadian Home Journal, January 23, 1874.

In the fall of the year 1814 or 1815, the American General McArthur with 1500 men, whites and Indians, passed up the River Thames and as far east as Brantford, apparently with the intention of going to Dundas or Toronto.[1] There had been a heavy draught on the sparse population for service at the lines east and west. A call was therefore made for volunteers from Port Talbot to Brantford, when seemingly, every man that could do it, presented himself at Waterford, the appointed place of rendezvous. The number of volunteers reached five hundred. Word soon after came that the bridge at Brantford had been broken up, and that the march of the invaders in that direction was interrupted, and that they were now on our line of road intending to go to Dover. As soon as Colonel Salmon, our commanding officer, could get the men in marching order, we started to meet the enemy.[2] When we reached Malcolm's Mills, we saw the Americans about a hundred rods before us, with the valley between, we on the south bank, they on the north. We thought our force too weak for attack and stood on the defensive. The waste gate to the mill was hoisted, and the bridge across the stream was taken up, so that they could not cross to us. We were from noon till nearly dark quietly awaiting the issue. This was brought to a crisis by the treachery of some one acquainted with the locality who took them to a bridge a mile down the stream where they crossed, leaving a sufficient number of men in our front to make a show. That deceived us. The first intimation we had of their proximity was 'by our sentinels firing and running in. – They continued firing upon us fully ten minutes before we could form into line, but providentially we were far down the hill'side, so that they over shot us, and out of thousands of shots only three took effect, killing three of our men, one of them a sergeant of the regulars that joined us that same day; the second, a neighbor of mine, Edwin Burtow, and one more.[3] As they had the advantage of us in position and numbers we were ordered to retreat, which we did. I thought our commander acted wisely, for we were all raw to the business, without discipline, and armed with no better implements of war than old muskets, rifles, and shot guns which had to be charged from the powder horn and bullet pouch with tow for wadding, a slow process against cartridges. After the race and retreat an acquaintance of mine that I shall not name, determined to be up with the enemy in killing and wounding, while the Yankees were making their camp fires, walked deliberately past their sentinels as one of their own men, took aim and fired at a knot of men. And horses, killing two men and a horse, and then turned upon his heel and got off safe. One of the men was carried on a litter a distance of sixty miles, when he died. In their march from Brantford to Lake Erie they burned every mill except an old one at Vittoria, which they spared on being furnished with a guide from Vittoria to the Talbot Road, sixteen miles. - One incident in the foot race I think worth notice: Mr. Abraham House, a neighbor of mine, 60 years of age, although crippled, went with us on foot 70 miles, and added his mite in trying to repel the invaders.[4] As I stated, it was nearly dark when we dispersed, but it was prematurely so, by the sudden approach of a heavy thunder shower. Well, when Mr. House had gone a little way into the woods he looked back and saw an Indian, tomahawk in hand, in pursuit. He ran, and coming to a log, lay down on the far side and close to the

log, the Indian at full speed jumped on the log and over him. Mr. House immediately rolled himself to the other side of the log. The Indian having lost sight of him returned in haste, jumped on the log, and over him, and away, so that his presence of mind, aided by the darkness, the protection of the log and the haste of the Indian, saved his life. Our Colonel was the only one that was mounted, and he remained in the saddle all day. Some of the men would have it that the object of his being mounted was to carry despatches and report progress at headquarters. Others, that if the horse should get frightened at the enemy and run away, that he would know where to find it. Be that as it may, when it was settled that we should have a race, the Colonel gave the word 'go', and started himself. Now between the mill pond and the left wing of the enemy, there was a space of twenty rods for the men to pass through and a miry ravine to cross. Here the Colonel's horse got mired, and the men used it as a stepping-stone until all had crossed. So the Colonel lost the race, as well as his horse.

George Salmon, an old man from the Township of Woodhouse, on leaving the battlefield went to a stack of pea straw and burrowed into it.[5] On the third morning of his voluntary seclusion, a girl passed the stack carrying milk pails, which he recognized as emblems of peace and plenty. He ventured to show his face at the loop hole of his fortress, not to demand the countersign, but to ask where the Yankees were. On being told, he left his lair, nearly famished with hunger. He said that a small green pumpkin was all he secured by his nightly foraging, and that only served for two meals. Another man ran to the mill pond and found a log with one end to the shore, and reaching out into the pond he walked to the farthest end; he held to the log and let himself down till his head only was out of water. Some time in the night a coon came out on the log. He thought it an Indian, and let go the log to swim on shore. When he saw what it was, he allowed his coonship to depart in peace, and returned to his roost but not to sleep. When morning came he saw the coast clear, and vamoosed. When I left the race ground I went to the saw mill and sat on a log; after dark I saw two men coming to the milldam, one with a large torch, the other with a gun. They called to some men who had hidden under the dam, to come out, but found them unwilling to do so; they then swore they would fire upon them if they did not come immediately. I thought I would spoil their fun; I laid my rifle on a log, cocked it, and with my finger on the trigger, took aim at the man with the torch in his hand. The thought of killing a man under the circumstances made me hesitate lest I might regret the act ever after. I let them take the men away, and they were paroled the same night, with the loss of their firearms. I never since regretted my forbearance.

Notes

1. General Duncan McArthur, with 650 mounted men and 70 Indians, made a damaging raid into Canada between October 22 and November 17, 1814. The Americans burned at least six mills, the first one being Malcolm's Mills at Oakland, where they defeated the Canadian militia. The McArthur force returned to Detroit by way of the Talbot Road, camping one night on Daniel Rapelje's farm. See Stanley, George EG., *The War of* 1812, *Land Operations.* (Ottawa: National Museum of Man, 1983), pp. 271-288. Also, op. Cit., *Frank Hunt: Essays on Elgin County,* pp. 57-62.

2. E.A. Cruickshank has an account of the Battle at Malcolm's Mills on November 5, 1814. Lieutenant Colonel Henry Bostwick, who at that time commanded the Oxford Militia, was in charge of a joint force of Oxford and Norfolk Militia. Colonel Salmon was actually Major George C. Salmon, who was in command of the 2nd Norfolk Militia. Also at the battle were elements of the 1st Norfolk Militia,commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Joseph Ryerson. In total, Bostwick had four or five hundred poorly-armed men scantily supplied with ammunition.

   See Cruickshank, E.A., " The County of Norfolk in the War of 1812", Ontario Historical Society. *Papers and Records,* Volume XX, (Toronto: Ontario Historical Society, 1923), p. 37.

3. According to Cruickshank's account, there were no regular army units at the battle. The professional soldier Oakes refers to was a Sergeant Collins of the 41st Regiment, attached to the militia as an instructor. Edwin Burtow was actually Edwin Barton of the 1st Norfolk. Barton was buried near his home in Charlotteville.

   See Cruickshank, pp. 37 & 38.

4. Abraham House patented Lot 66 North of the Talbot Road in Yarmouth on September 30,1817. He petitioned from Woodhouse for the land on January 5, 1811, and received it through an Order-in-Council dated February 16, 1811.

   See *Upper Canada Land Petitions,* 'H' Bundle 10, No.3. Also, Elgin County Crown Land Patents Register 1795-1943.

5. There were probably two George Salmons living in what is now Norfolk County at the time of the War of 1812.

   George Catchmayd Salmon came to Upper Canada in 1810 from Gloucestershire in England and applied for Crown land. He received a grant of 1200 acres by an Order-in-Council dated May 17, 1811. Salmon paid all the required survey and patent fees for this land. Although Salmon seems to have spentmost of his life in Woodhouse Township, he was granted a number of lots in Yarmouth: Lots 6,7,8 & 9 in Concession 1, and Lots 8 & 10 in Concession 2. George C. Salmon commanded the Second Regiment of Norfolk Militia during the War of 1812. He died on April 10, 1843.

   See "The Church", May 5, 1843; *Early Township Land Papers* (Yarmouth Township); papers at the Eva Brook Donly Museum, Simcoe; *Upper Canada Land Petitions,* '5' Bundle 10, No. 38.

   The other George Salmon was born in Pennsylvania, served as a soldier in the Revolutionary War, emigrated to New Brunswick at the close of hostilities, and moved to the Long Point settlement in 1799.This is probably the Salmon who hid in the stack of pea straw.

   See *Upper Canada Land Petitions,* '5' Bundle 5, No. 58 and '5' Bundle 6, No. 21.

   See also *Upper Canada Land and State Books.* "Minutes of the Land Committee of the Executive Council", Land Book G, Meeting of December 19, 1806, pp. 193-198.

...men wants but little here below...

Canadian Home Journal, February 6, 1874.[1]

In the restrictions laid down to define what constituted our settlement duties, was a requirement that half the road allowance, or two rods in front of each lot of land should have every tree taken out by the roots. With only the help of our primitive axes this was a disheartening job. Col. Talbot sent word to the settlers that those who would open a road from Kettle Creek to his mill should be favored in their settlement duties. The possibility of being relieved from grubbing induced five of us to make the road. This we did by three days' hard labor, lying two nights in the woods with the snow eight inchesdeep.[2] When through, we sent a delegate to learn what favor we were to receive for the job, when the answer came, "I'll see to it that you shall take every tree out by the roots for your own benefit." Then one of the men swore, 'by the hokeys', that he would have satisfaction, if he had to wait for it until the last horn was blown. He resolved that if he had to lose his time and expenses he would prefer

a charge against the Colonel for obtaining our labor under false pretences, and “now, boys”, said he, “I want you to stick to me and remember the date, for if the old fellow don't own the corn, I shall need your evidence.” He suggested that in the meantime we should use the road for milling purposes, as soon as we could get cows to raise oxen to do it. The same winter I gave ten dollars to have twenty bushels of corn taken to the Colonel's mill to be ground. I sold the meal intending to have another grist taken, but before that was done, the dam had broke. The nearest mill then was at Norwich, twenty eight miles distant, with no road to it from Talbot street. The same winter myself and four others started at the west side of Catfish Creek and cut a road to the Norwich mill, and at a small stream midway we built a lodge to serve as a caravansary for benighted teamsters.[3] This took eight days' hard labor, and when the road was finished there was not a team to be hired. I knew someone had said, “where there is a will there is away”, so I thought I would try it. I had a pair of steer calves twenty months old. I made a little sled and a small yoke. I yoked the calves, and took eight bushels of corn to the mill, and got back safe. The second time I went in company with Wm. Teeple, when, on our return, my steers showed signs of giving out.[4] I offered him two dollars to take a bag of my meal to the street, which offer, although overloading himself, he accepted. I got home safe. Here were two dollars gone, and 112 miles travelled to get sixteen bushels of corn ground. The summer following I had an intimation that some flour would be needed. I went on foot to a farmer at Port Ryerse and threshed thirty bushels of wheat with a flail, for which I received two as compensation. I hired a horse and took it to mill. I then hired a horse and boy to take it home. The acquisition of this eighty pounds of flour involved an expenditure of three dollars for horse hire, and 100 miles travel on foot. When at the present day I see so many imaginary hardships to growl about, with mills near, roads good, teams eager for exercise, the owners clad to suit the weather and needing exercise to give a healthy action to the nervous system, I look back with wonder at the contrast between the race of pioneers that from the year 1810 to 1818 settled the Talbot district, and those of the present time. Many of the former had to be content with coats, vests and pants of unfulled flannel, tow and linen shirts, straw hats and naked feet, for boots in the woods were scarcely known, and overcoats were a luxury unattainable. Yet everyone was perfectly contented with his lot, a contentment to which our more refined society appears a stranger. Our more advanced state of society, as we term it, brings with it a multiplicity of wants which when filled seem but to create an appetite for more. Truly, the poet has said, “Men wants but little here below, nor wants that little long.” But there is a hidden mystery in the composition of our nature that induces a man to strive for wealth that neither fills nor satisfies the longings of the soul. He is seldom content with a competency, but when that even is attained, it is often at the sacrifice of health and happiness. The trouble is to get the ambitious to believe it. Take one example: How many lines of steamers would it require to satisfy the avarice of Sir Hugh Allan? To appreciate the worth of the real necessities of life let them do as I have done, when for years every article obtained required a hundred miles travel with a knapsack on the back to carry the purchases home. In this way I carried nails, glass, putty, &c., for my first frame house. The board nails cost two York shillings a pound, the shingle nails two and sixpence, the glass – 7 x 9 – two shillings a light, and all other articles in proportion, and the price of wheat one York shilling a bushel when cash was paid. Witnesses still living can bear testimony to this statement. At eighty-two years of age I am a wonder to myself, especially when I realize what hardships I have passed through, and observe the men of the present day as if unable to walk a half a dozen miles; using spanking teams, light rigs and silver harness to reach mills and markets that we could only visit barefooted, with our burdens harnessed to our backs with basswood thongs.

Notes

1. This article also appeared in the *London Advertiser* of February 12, 1874.
2. It is hard to be sure of what Oakes is talking about here. Even with modem machinery, it would be difficult to build a road in three days. Oakes and his companions probably cut out some sort of a winter sleighing road between Kettle Creek and Port Talbot.

   While the editors do not doubt that Oakes and his companions built a sleighing road, it is unlikely that Thomas Talbot offered them a reduction in their settlement duties. Talbot was famous for insisting on the performance of settlement duties, especially the clearing of roads. It is one of the reasons why the Talbot Settlement was considered to have some of the best roads in Ontario.

   For infonnation on the actual settlement duties faced by Oakes and his compatriots see the Introduction.

3. There were saw and grist mills on Otter Creek in the area of what is now Otterville in Oxford County as early as 1807. See *South of Sodom: The History of South Norwich.* Compiled by the South Norwich Historical Society. (Aylmer, ntario: The Aylmer Express Ltd., 1983), p. 60.
4. William Teeple lived on Lot 76 North of the Talbot Road in Malahide, which he patented on November 13, 1818. Teeple got the land through an Order-in-Council dated April 6, 1813. Teeple was from Stamford in the Niagara District and wrote a petition for land dated at Port Talbot July 11, 1812.See *Early Township Land Papers* (Malahide Township); *Upper Canada Land Petitions,* "I' Bundle 10, No. 26; *Elgin County Crown Land Patents Register. 1795-1943.*

   It is perhaps unfortunate, but certainly interesting, that there was another William Teeple living right across the road on Lot 76 South of the Talbot Road. This William Teeple came from Oxford-on-the-Thames, i.e. Oxford County, and was the son of Peter Teeple, a United Empire Loyalist. He received 200 acres as the son of a United Empire Loyalist by an Order-in-Council dated January 14, 1812. Teeple petitioned for the land on March 12, 1811. This Teeple patented his lot on February 2,1819. It is impossible to say which of the William Teeples Oakes was dealing with.

   See *Upper Canada Land Petitions,* 'T' Bundle 10, No. 14 and 'T' Bundle 10, No. 42; also *Early Township Land Papers* (Malahide Township); also *Elgin County Crown Land Patents Register.* 1795-1943. There is an interesting sketch of Peter Teeple, the father of the William Teeple on the South Side of the Talbot Road, to be found in the *Papers and Records* of the Ontario Historical Society. See Waterbury, W.B., "Sketch of Peter Teeple, Loyalist and Pioneer, 1762-1847," Ontario Historical Society. *Papers and Records.* Volume 1. (Toronto: William Briggs, 1899), pp. 122-131..

...we exchanged our homespun for good warm coats...

Canadian Home Journal, February 27, 1874.

In the summer of 1814 some farmers living on the Thames made hay at the Rond Eau, and drove two hundred head of cattle there to be wintered. They hired a man named Crawford and his family to attend to them. In January 1815, 300 men from Michigan came up the Thames, crossed to the Eau, and began to slaughter the cattle. Crawford left his cattle, and came to Port Talbot for assistance to drive them back. There had been a heavy draft on the spare population for service on the Niagara frontier, but the Colonel sent an express as far as the present site of Aylmer for volunteers to drive the Yankees back. Before the next morning fifty-two of us were at the Colonel's house, where we exchanged our homespun for good warm redcoats. We butchered an ox, and each man taking a piece and a loaf of bread in his knapsack we were ready to march, with Crowell Willson Esq. As captain.[1] The snow being deep and no road broken we had to go on the lake, but even there travelling was very slow and tiresome, the ice being very slippery. At noon we made fires, and cooked our dinners by putting a piece of beef. On a sharpened stick and holding it to the fire till it was roasted. This made quite a tasty beefsteak, though it had to be eaten without salt. We thought that if the Americans heard that we had fifty-two messes organized – not knowing each man formed a mess they would skedaddle. At night we took supper, and by travelling all night reached our destination shortly after daylight. Mrs. Crawford told us the Americans had left the afternoon before, after killing the last bullock, taking with them every hide and pound of beef. When we found that their force was six to one, we saw that we had been urged on by enthusiasm without discretion. Our motive for travelling all night was to take them by surprise; but we found they had eight double sentries posted, so that this was impossible and that their having completed the butchery saved our little band from annihilation. It is not reasonable to suppose that anyone by reading this narrative can realize the fatigue of travelling all day

and a long winter's night on the ice, as we did. We faced a bleak wintry wind that often brought us to a standstill; each of us carried a heavy rifle, and, even when cooking our food, we could not sit down to rest on account of the depth of the snow. And on our return we were compelled to sit the whole night by the fire, as we had not blankets or overcoats to allow us to lie down on the snow. It will not be a matter, of wonder that, when we returned to Port Talbot, we were so stiffened by walking on the ice that it was only by the greatest effort that we climbed the lake bank. We were thankful, however, for our safe return, which assuredly was not due to our prudence in ascertaining what force we should have to encounter. When the Americans left the Eau, they went to what is known as the Longwood Road, and started for Detroit. Being informed, however, that the Scotch Royals, commanded if memory serves me right by General Riel, were not far off, they marched to what is known as Battle Hill, where a ravine with high and steep banks crosses the road.[2] Here they erected breastworks of logs, and took water from the brook and wet the snow on the hillside, forming a slippery crust. Thus prepared they awaited the assault. Next morning the regulars advanced over one hill, and were ordered to fire and charge the enemy. This order was more easily given than obeyed however, for at every attempt to climb the icy hill they slipped, driving back those below them and causing general confusion in the ranks. Still the General persevered in his routine of tactics until he saw his force so thinned by the deadly fire from the breastwork that he ordered a retreat. But a more reprehensible encounter is hardly conceivable, for had he marched up the ravine a short distance he could easily have ascended the hill and been on an even footing with the enemy. Had he done so, having a considerable advantage in numbers, the enemy would doubtless have surrendered. This shows the fallacy of adhering strictly to the tactics of regular field fighting when in the woods. Any woodsman could have taken those veterans -the Scotch Royals – and have captured the Americans in fifteen minutes, thus preventing the boast they made going home – that they had whipped a force of the celebrated Scotch Royals greater than their own. These same Scotch Royals would cheerfully have engaged double their own number on an equal footing, but this chance was denied them through their commander's reckless persistance in fighting by rule. This battle had its parallel in Braddock's defeat, for when advised by Washington to checkmate the enemy by adopting their own mode of warfare, Braddock made the following reply, “Am I to follow the dictation of a young buckskin? Please mind your own business.” The result is known. The absurdity of persevering in trying to storm the breastwork in front, was still further shown in the fact that not a man of the Americans was hurt, and that after the battle hundreds of pounds of British bullets were cut out of the logs of the breastwork. [3]

Notes

1. This incident probably occurred in late February of 1814, when a detachment of Americans from Detroit came to the Rondeau and drove off the cattle which were being wintered there.(See below} The only companies of the Middlesex Militia who were on duty in January and February of 1814 were those of Captains Leslie Patterson and Gilman Wilson. Garrett Oakes is not listed on their payrolls.

   Crowell Wilson never served in the Middlesex Militia. Oakes may be referring to Gilman Wilson, who was a Captain in the First Regiment of Middlesex Militia and served throughout 1812, 1813 and 1814. In an article published in the *St. Thomas Journal* of November 29, 1878, Oakes says that the Captain was Leslie Patterson.

   Throughout 1813 and 1814 the Americans conducted a number of raids into Southwestern Ontario. Their purpose was to forage for supplies and to make life difficult for the inhabitants.

   See Public Archives of Canada, Record Group 9, Department of Militia and Defence, 1B7, War of 1812 Records. Also, op. Cit. Stanley, *The War of* 1812. *Land Operations,* pp. 271 – 288; also, op. Cit., “The Talbot Papers,” Volume I, Section 2, 1908, p. 200.

2. The Riel Oakes refers to would be Major-General Sir Phineas Riall, who was a British Army officer and served under Sir Gordon Drummond in the Niagara Peninsula. He was nowhere near Battle Hill. See op. Cit., Stanley, *The War of* 1812. *Land Operations.*

3. Oakes has some, but not all of his details right. An American raiding party consisting of 180 men and under the command of Captain Andrew Hunter Holmes left Amherstburg on February 21, 1814 and marched to Point Pelee. From there they proceeded to Rondeau. The Americans were heading for Port Talbot, but when the commander learned that the Canadians and British knew he was coming, he

decided to try to surprise the British post at Delaware. The Yankee raiders crossed the Thames River near Moraviantown and proceeded through the "Long Woods" towards Delaware. On the way, they learned that the British were approaching from the east. Holmes and his men took refuge on a hill three miles east of Wardsville. Oakes is right about the way in which the Americans fortified the hill, and poured water on its slopes. By this time the Americans were reduced to 164 men. The British force consisted of a Royal Scots Flank Company with 101 men; an 89th Regiment Light Company with 45 men; a company of the Kent Militia which was combined with some Canadian Rangers and totalled 50 men; and 44 Indians. They were commanded by Captain James Lewis Basden of the 89th Regiment, a regular army officer. The British came up to the American position about 5 o'clock in the afternoon. Basden ordered a frontal assault on the hill, which was very unsuccessful because of the ice and the American breastworks. This frontal assault was combined with flanking assaults by the Indians and Canadians, but the latter were not well-supported. Eventually, the British had to withdraw after 14 men were killed and 52 wounded. The Americans retreated toward Detroit the next day with 4 killed and 3 wounded from the engagement. Captain Basden was advised by some of the Canadians with him to try a flanking attack. Basden ignored their advice and made the frontal assault his major effort. According to one source, there were two Elgin County residents present at Battle Hill: John T. Doan of Yarmouth; and John Mitchell from Dunwich.

The preceding has been taken from "The Battle at Longwoods," by J.I. Poole. London and Middlesex Historical Society. *Transactions.* 1911 -1912. (London, Ontario: London and Middlesex Historical Society, 1913), pp. 7 – 61. There is some controversy as to whether the Americans actually poured water down the hill to make ice. Neither Holmes nor Basden mention it in their reports. Poole mentions a man named Thompson who was a one of the Royal Scots Flank Company and who later reported the ice. He also cites local tradition.

See above, "The Battle at Longwoods", p. 35

...the index of the heart...

Canadian Home Journal, March 6, 1874.

In the summer of 1814 about fifty mounted desperadoes from Michigan and-Ohio came up the Thames to Westminster, crossed to Talbot Road at Kettle Creek, and started east to plunder.[1] Word came down to Catfish Creek that they had passed Yarmouth Heights without opposition, when Moses Rice, Israel Thayer, William Lee and myself took rifles, and started to meet them.[2] As they were all mounted, and had to keep the road through the woods, our intention was to compel some of them to locate in Canada; for our plan of operation was to lie in ambush for them, and as soon as they had passed, to step into the road and give them a raking fire in the rear, then to change our position and give them the same on their return. We thought that by following this plan, every saddle emptied by our fire would be a horse, saddle and rifle as our booty. But they retreated after one of their men had shot himself while showing his military abilities by breaking all the guns they found. Their hasty retreat placed us in the position Burns describes, when he says, "The best laid plans of mice and men Gang aft agley."

On the way we met and took their look-out, who not being aware of his comrades' retreat, had gone rather far from his support. We confiscated his goods and chattels, namely, a good horse, saddle, bridle, rifle and blanket, after which we sent him to inspect the Government Works at Kingston – the station for prisoners of war, at that time. The last person plundered by this gang was a widow named Pease, whose husband had recently died in the service.[3] Finding a musket here, one of their men broke it across the corner of the log house. But the old weapon,

showing British pluck even in its death struggle, shot its assassin through the body. We can imagine its dying cogitation to have been, Well, I have done my duty: I die content. One more incident is worthy of notice, in this connection. On the morning of the raid, Finlay Grant, a boarder at the house, while charging this musket said, "Take notice Mrs. Pease, this charge is to kill a Yankee," and then left home.[4] When the man was shot, his comrades laid a straw bed on the floor, took off every article of clothing except his shirt and drawers, and laid him on the bare tick. Ordering the woman to attend to the dying man they retreated, taking with them the feather tick and all the bed clothes, and wearing apparel. We were somewhat surprised on entering the house – not being aware of the tragedy - to hear the groans of the dying man, and to see the blood that ran through the bed and formed pools upon the floor. To hear him lament his folly in coming to distress people already very poor – of which his present position gave him a realizing view – was truly a touching scene. Between the paroxysms of pain, he said his name was Peter Wilson, and that he came from Ohio where he left a wife and two children. He would exclaim, "O my dear wife, why did I leave you and come to beggar these poor people. O my God, that I could recall the act, and make restitution.", After imploring God to prosper them whom he and his comrades had distressed, he would again refer to his wife and children in the most pathetic language, such only as the certainty of death inspires. For two acts of his life he evinced the greatest contrition; that is, for making his wife a widow, and his children fatherless, and for the destitution he had brought upon the people whom he had assisted in plundering. These emotions were intensified when he thought of the heartless avarice of his comrades in robbing him of his clothes while he had his senses perfectly to realize their reckless greed. 'If," said he, "they rob a comrade while alive, what may not the settlers expect?" He suffered severly from thirst, and being presented with a cup of water by Mrs. Pease, he, with eyes sufused with tears, cast a look so replete with contrition and gratitude, that we could fully realize that the eye is the index of the heart, and carries conviction of sincerity that words could not express. The raiders on their return, gave loose rein to their brutal natures, by shooting whatever came in their way – cattle, sheep, hogs and fowl, so that in their march from Yarmouth to Detroit they left suffering in their path. Their mode of carrying plunder was to rip open feather and straw beds, throw the contents on the floor, and use the ticks as sacks, then take all the bedding and clothing that was not hidden, with horses, where they could find them, to carry their plunder. Mr. Garrett Smith, living at Kettle Creek, heard of their coming, and took his horse into the woods. Mrs. Smith threw the beds, bedding, clothing, gun and other articles into the well. She then rolled a barrel of flour among the standing oats, afterwards raising such of the oats as had been levelled in rolling the barrel All their goods were saved through this foresight. But one of the rufians, rightly suspecting that Mrs. Smith had money concealed on her person, swore he would have it, if he had to strip her naked; but one of the men, with a little decency which he may have picked up in Canada, interfered, and prevented the exposure.[5]

Notes

1. During the spring, summer and fall of 1814, Western Upper Canada was subject to a number of damaging raids from American marauders. It is hard to be sure which raid Oakes is talking about. Andrew Westbrook, for example, led raids on Port Talbot in May and September of 1814 and there was another one in August. It is reasonable to suppose that Oakes is talking about the September raid, during which Thomas Talbot's mills were burned on September 9. See op. Cit., Stanley, *The War of 1812. Land Operations,* pp. 271-288.

2. In a petition dated at Woodhouse, March IS, 1812, William Bull Lee of Burford asked for land "under Colonel Talbot's care." He received 200 acres through an Order-in-Council dated April 6, 1813. This would be Lot 62, South of the Talbot Road in Yarmouth, which he patented on June 19, 1816. Lee sold the land on October 20,1819 to William Wilcox.

   See *Upper Canada Land Petitions,* 'L', Bundle 10, No. 20. Also, Elgin County Registry Office documents.

   Moses Rice was probably living on Lot 68 North of the Talbot Road in Yarmouth. (See December 12, 1873 article.) Israel Thayer is another man who is a little hard to identify. Israel Thayer petitioned the government for 200 acres on November 21, 1822. In the petition, Thayer says that he had been located on Lot 23 South on the North Branch of the Talbot Road by Thomas Talbot in 1817. Thayer was asking,

in 1822, that the government grant him the land. He eventually patented the lot in 1837.

See *Upper Canada Land Petitions,* 'T' Bundle 20, No. 67. Also, *Elgin County Crown Land Patents Register.* 1795-1943.

3. A book called *Your Beaupre Heritage* says that Elizabeth Lee married Alanson Pease of Syracuse, New York, in 1808. The book claims that they settled in Southwold Township. It says that Pease contracted typhus while serving in the Niagara Peninsula during the War of 1812. He returned home and died. The Beaupre book says that the soldiers who came to Mrs. Pease's house were part of McArthur's army. This is incorrect. McArthur's raid took place in early November. The soldier did attempt to break the musket and had it explode on him. He was buried under an ash tree on the farm. The grave and the tree were later part of a road, and a school house was built nearby.

   Elizabeth Lee was the daughter of Simeon Lee and would be a cousin to William Bull Lee and Hiram Davis Lee. Hiram Lee had Lot 62 North of the Talbot Road in Yarmouth, while William was on Lot 62 South of the Talbot Road.

   Garrett Oakes puts this story in Yarmouth, while the Beaupre book is not clear about where it took place. It may be that the Pease family were living on one of the Lee lots in Yarmouth when war broke out. This would seem reasonable given Oakes' story and the fact that Finlay Grant, who settled on Lot 57,North of the Talbot Road in Yarmouth, was boarding with the Widow Pease. There is no Alanson Pease listed in the *Upper Canada La.nd Petitions.*

   In 1971 *The Ontario Register* published a "List of Orphan Children whose fathers have been killed in action or have died from wounds received or illness contracted on service. - Militia Pension Agent's Office, York, 1st Oct 1817. Edw. MacMahon, General Agent for Paying Militia Pensions." This list appeared in the *Kingston Gazette* of November 25, 1817, and was also found in the Nelles Papers at the Ontario Archives. It says that Alanson B. Pease was a sergeant in the Middlesex Militia and died of disease on January 1, 1814. Mrs. Pease married Christopher Kern in 1815 and moved to Norfolk County. See *The Ontario Register,* Volume 4, Number 2, 1971, p. 81. A list prepared in 1819 of those who served in 1812 also says that Pease died in the service. See Public Archives of Canada, Record Group 9, IB7, Volume 1, "Nominal Return of the Flank Companies of the First Regiment Middlesex Militia on Service in theYear 1812."

   See Irving, Irene Beaupre and Ruth Beaupre Ankenman, *Your Beaupre Heritage. The Beaupre Descendants of Francois-Martial Count De Choiseul and Madeline, Countess Medavy.* (s.l.: s.n., 1983), pp. 55-57. Also, Seaborn, Edwin, *The March of Medicine in Western Ontario,* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1944), pp. 118- 127. Also, a genealogy of the Lee and Kitchen families in the possession of George Thorman.

4. Finlay Grant settled on Lot 57 North of the Talbot Road in Yarmouth, which he received through an Order-in-Council dated May 28, 1811. Grant patented the lot on September 25, 1818. See *Early Township Land Papers* (Yarmouth Township); also, *Elgin County Crown Land Patents Register. 1795-1943.*

5. Garret Smith and his family were on Lot 46 North of the Talbot Road in Yarmouth. Smith was from Charlotteville and received this land by an Order-in-Council dated August 10, 1810. He patented the lot on September 26, 1818.See *Upper Canada La.nd Petitions,* 'S' Bundle 9, No. 128. Also *Early Township Land Papers* (Yarmouth Township). Also *Elgin County Crown Land Patents Register. 1795-1943.*

...and a pilot being indespensible...

Canadian Home Journal, March 27, 1874.

In the beginning of the War of 1812, General Hull invaded Canada with three thousand American troops. His first attempt was to take Amherstburgh, which was guarded by 300 regulars under Colonel St. George. The gallant Colonel after repelling several attacks at last drove them back to Detroit. When the news reached the I Canadian headquarters at Toronto, General Brock called for volunteers to chastise the invaders. The call was responded to by volunteers from the townships north of Toronto to those at Long Point, Lake Erie; and Port Ryerse was appointed a place of rendezvous. Boats were procured to transport the volunteers to Sandwich, and a pilot being indispensible to find the Long Point carrying place, I volunteered as such and as engineer to get the boats across the fifty rods of portage. I found it no easy task to guide the little fleet, as the men were all unacquainted with the management of boats. I was therefore obliged to superintend the rowing of each boat in turn, to accustom the men to pull the oars in concert. Each man was inclined to row on his own account, regardless of what his neighbor was doing, and the steersman would head his boat to almost every point in the compass. They thus managed to keep the boat nearly stationary, giving us the appearance of waiting for a naval engagement instead of going two hundred miles to storm a fort. By the time we reached Port Talbot, however, the men had become quite proficient in the use of the oars, so I left them, and returned seventy miles through the wilderness on foot, without fee or reward except the courtesy shown me by the officers and men. The Americans say that Hull sold his command to General Brock, but anyone considering the circumstances under which the American General was placed will be very unwilling to believe this. Brock with 700 redcoats was preparing to take the fort by storm; the intrepid and sagacious Tecumseh with 600 Indians, ready to follow to the cannon's mouth if he led, was near the fort. It is reasonable, and more creditable to the General to suppose that, rendered timid by age, he concluded to surrender, rather than run the risk of falling into the hands of the Indians, who were uttering the most demonical yells that ever penetrated the human ear. The fact that in surrendering he stipulated that his command should be protected from the Indians, shows that he possessed a wholesome dread of the red skins. And who will say that Brock could not have taken the fort, if we consider what was done at Sebastopol, compared with which the French fort was a mere quail trap. But if crying treason will ease their fall, by all means let us allow them to enjoy the cheaply earned consolation.

...an inheritance in the promised land...

Canadian Home Journal, May 15, 1874.

In July 1810, while living at Port Ryerse, I concluded to go and secure an inheritance in the promised land. Colonel Talbot had promised land to all who would come and accept it, and having been taught to rely on these promises I went without fear or doubting. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob bore me company – not the patriarchs of old, but Abraham House, Isaac Vail and Jacob Shears, whom I accepted as their representatives. Having read of the forty years spent in the wilderness, and not relishing the idea of encountering any fiery serpents that might infest the Canadian wilderness, we concluded to journey by water. So we hired a boat and started for Kettle Creek. The first obstacle we met with was the Long Point carrying place. From here nothing worthy of note occurred until we were nearly opposite Kettle Creek, when we saw an object about a mile from land, and curiosity prompted us to ascertain its composition. On our approach we found it to be a bear, and the “bearing” of his course led us to think he had started on a pleasure trip for Cleveland. When we came near, however, he seemed to change his mind in regard to his mode of travelling, and thought to take passage with us, not knowing we were bound for the promised land. But when he was about to come on board without waiting for an invitation, I spoiled the looks of his phiz with a charge from my rifle. We towed him ashore and drew him up on the beach. The men judged him to weigh three hundred pounds, but as his hide was at that time unusable we allowed him to retain his bearskin overcoat. We stayed that night at the boat. Next morning it began to rain, but

having no shelter we started on our exploration of the promised land. We came to the present site of St. Thomas, which was then Captain Rapelje's farm, and were cordially received and hospitably entertained. The Captain had one acre of land chopped and had erected a snug shanty, which with one by Mr. Mandeville and one by Captain Secord constituted all the improvement between Port Talbot and Long Point, a distance of seventy miles. Next day, though it was still raining, Shears and I started for Port Talbot, and as there was no road we had to follow the surveyor's marks, which were few and far between. When we could not see one ahead, one of us would stand at the last mark till the other found the next so that it was late in the afternoon when we reached Port Talbot.

We found the Colonel in his office, and the following dialogue took place: “Well my boy what do you want?” “Land, Sir.” 'What is your age?” “Nearly nineteen, Sir.” “You can't have it; it requires an able bodied man to cope with the heavy forest, and you are too young, so you need not press me further.” “True, Sir, but I am alone in the world with no one to assist me, and I wish to get land to make a home I can call my own.” “Ah, that alters the case. Have you money to pay a fee of fifty dollars and hire assistance to do your settlement duties?” “I can pay the fee and my own hands are good for the rest: please give me a trial, Sir.” 'Well, I will enter your name, but I will show no lenity as I am sure you will fail without funds. Remember the settlement duties must be completed in two years or you forfeit all.” “I understand it all, sir, and accept the terms.” The feeling of pleasure and independence it gave me to see him enter my name, I cannot find words to express. It was near night when we left Port Talbot for Kettle Creek. We followed the lake bank through the woods till dark and sat at the foot of a tree, as the rain prevented us making a fire. During the night I became very thirsty, and hearing water trickling in a little ravine towards the lake bank, I followed the sound, kneeled down and took a draught. When daylight came, I found that while drinking my feet had touched the edge of a precipice an hundred feet high, which danger was hidden by the darkness. The sensation produced by the reality of the danger I had escaped caused me for years after, when the incident would recur to my imagination, to reach for some support to draw myself from the danger. An old German by the name of Canute had left for Kettle Creek an hour in advance of us. We were unable to overtake him until the next morning, when we came upon him while dressing himself. He had taken off all his clothes, and through fear of the wolves had climbed a tree and roosted on a limb, naked and exposed to the rain. When asked why he had taken off all his clothes he said he always did it at home. When told that he should have climbed the tree before undressing, he said the rough bark would have injured his clothes. When we returned to the boat, we went to visit our bear and found that the wolves had held a picnic at his expense: that is, they came in the nick of time to pick the bones of a good fat carcass that, with the aid of a French cook, would have made a meal for a city alderman.

Notes

It would appear that Oakes and his companions landed at the mouth of Kettle Creek and followed the present course of No.4 highway to the shanty of Daniel Rapelje, then the Talbot Road, which Mahlon Burwell had surveyed in 1809, to Port Talbot. As there were no settlers along this road, it would not have been cleared of trees and Oakes' party would be following a path through the woods.

For Abraham House see *The Canadian Home Journal* article of January 23, 1874.

There was a Henry Catute who served in the Middlesex Militia in the War of 1812. Catute appears on a list held by the Adjutant-General's Office of those who served in 1812, where it is stated that he joined Captain Merritt's Dragoons. It may be that Catute left the district during the War of 1812. He does not appear in the *Upper Canada Land Petitions.* See Public Archives of Canada, Record Group 9, IB7, Volume I, which is a “Nominal Return of the Flank Companies of the First Regiment of Middlesex Militia On Service in the Year 1812”.

Isaac Vail's name appears in a petition submitted to the Land Committee of the Executive Council by a number of Revolutionary War veterans residing in the District of London in 1806. These men had gone to New Brunswick at the close of hostilities and, after a number of years, moved to Upper Canada. They had been denied the free grants of land in Upper Canada awarded to Loyalists and soldiers because they were late in arriving. The 1806 petition requested that this ruling be changed. The Executive Council recommended against this action. He probably stayed in Norfolk County. There is an Isaac Vail listed in the document: “A Correct Report of all the Arms and Accoutriments

Belonging to 3rd Company 2nd Regt. Of Norfolk Militia and Also the Wheat and Rye they have for Sale, the Number of Acres of Wheat and Rye Sown. *Octr.* 18Th 1814." There is a Jacob Shealer listed in this document, and this may be the man Oakes is talking about in his essay. Isaac Vail also appears on a "Collector's Roll for the Township of Woodhouse in the London District for the Year 1829."

See Public Archives of Canada. *Minutes of the Land Committee of the Executive Council.* Land Book G, 1806-1808, Meeting of December 19,1806, pp. 193-198.

See 1812 *Woodhouse Township Census with Related Documents.* (1814-1836). Edited by William R. Yeager. Second Revised Edition. (Simcoe, Ontario: Norfolk Historical Society, 1978), pp. 13 & 15.

...where there's a will...

Canadian Home Journal, May 29, 1874.

I thought it might not be amiss to state, for the encouragement of new beginners of the present day, some of the hardships and discouragements experienced by the first settlers in the part of the wilderness now known as the County of Elgin, who for years had to exercise their utmost ability, both mind and muscle, to overcome seeming impossibilities. Our first drawback was in being so far from our base of supplies, Port Ryerse, where one store had to supply the Long Point settlement and all the settlers west of it. Of course this established a monopoly, and the extent of it may be learned from the following list of prices of leading articles: Broadcloth $20 a yard, printed cottons $1, steam loom cottons $1, brass buttons a York shilling each, pins 50 cents a paper, green tea $2 per lb., tobacco $1, nutmegs 25 cents each, board nails 25 cents per lb., shingle nails 30 cents, 7 x 9 glass 25 cents a light, and every other article in proportion.

A great drawback to the first settlers was the scarcity of hollow iron ware to manufacture sugar and black salts, the latter being the only article that would command cash. It was made by leaching the ashes obtained by burning the logheaps while clearing the land, and boiling the lye to the consistence of coal tar. It sold for $3 per hundred pounds. When I came to the settlement I brought a twelve quart iron pot. When sugar making time came I went to Long Point and carried home on my back a five pail brass kettle that had been used until it was bottomless. With pieces of tin and sheet iron riveted together I made a bottom for the kettle, calking the seams with flour. In this way, with the little pot and mended kettle, the first season of using I made five hundred pounds of sugar, which to me was a gift to reward perseverance. The first iron kettle that it was possible to obtain held five pails, but it was split in two. For this I paid $10, besides the cost of hooping, and thought myself fortunate at that, as it was brought from near Albany, the nearest furnace to us at that time.

In 1816 I sent by a neighbor to York State for an eighteen pound logging chain, for which I repeatedly refused $18. Now the same article costs but nine cents a pound. During the War of 1812 we suffered from the scarcity of salt, as the lines were closed against us, and but little was made in Canada. What could be smuggled sold at fifty dollars a barrel; while the dealers, by putting their own price on all that came into their hands, led their customers to think they turned the screw once too often. During the war nearly all the settlers had to go to Port Ryerse for their salt, pay $12 a bushel for it, and carry it home on their backs. In the winter of 1813 I went to Long Point and paid $60 for 28 pounds, a neighbor agreeing to take it home in his sleigh. He stayed overnight on the road, but left his load exposed, so that a cow destroyed the salt, killed herself, and caused me to return to replace the loss. This necessitated two hundred miles of travel on foot, and $12 in cash, to realize twenty eight pounds of salt. During an unusual scarcity a peddler came with a horse load. I took fourteen pounds, for which I paid $8. Two of my neighbors, David Brush and Moses Rice, went to Hamilton and paid $75 for a barrel, and allowing for their time, expenses, and team hire, it cost them $100.1 But, a few days after their return, peace was proclaimed, and in a short time salt could be had at Port Ryerse for $12 a barrel.

I am aware that, although I have kept strictly within the limits of truth, the present generation will receive my narrative with incredulity. But the reasons, they know nothing of the effects of war, of which the first settlers had three years' experience; nor the hardships and privations to be encountered in the wilderness when far removed from the ordinary conveniences of life and where necessity will call into action the latent faculties of both mind and body. What would appear to many at the present day as impossibilities, to us of that day was merely considered something extraordinary. And the reason is plain to be seen when we understand the composition, both mental and physical, of the race that dared to face the certainty of hardships and privations incident to a life in the wilderness; where, with many, their two hands and an unwavering determination to succeed was their only stock in trade to start with, but which has often proved the old saying to be true, that "where there's a will there's a way."

Notes

1. David Brush settled on Lot 63, North of the Talbot Road, Yarmouth, which he received by an Order-in Council dated February 16, 1811. Brush patented the lot on June 19, 1816. See *Early Township Land Papers* (Yarmouth Township). Also, *Elgin County Crown Land Patents Register. 1795-1943.*

   Moses Rice is mentioned in Oakes's article of December 12, 1873.

...represented by a pancake...

Canadian Home Journal, June 12, 1874.

Since you have inserted in your paper so much of my scribbling, please allow me to apologize to the readers of the Journal for occupying the space that would have been filled with something more useful and entertaining.

In the first place, I am physically unable, at the age of 82, to divert myself by manual labor; so that my only available recreation is, to exercise the mind by reviewing incidents of the past, and contrasting the past with the present.

The contrast in the matter of education between the privileges enjoyed by the present generation and that of seventy years ago can only be realized by those who have lived in both periods.

I was born in New Brunswick, in the year 1791, and there was not a school kept in our neighborhood until 1800, when they hired a lame boy from Boston to teach one quarter. This school I attended, and it was the last kept in that place up to the time I left for Canada, in 1803. In 1806 I was living near Dover, County of Norfolk, where an old gentleman taught school one quarter, and I put myself under him. In 1808 I received my third quarter's schooling, which completed my education, but without the prefix "classical."

In the winter of 1812 the entire absence of teachers in the Long Point settlement necessitated their calling me from Yarmouth to serve for one quarter as their pedagogue. I filled the place with entire satisfaction to myself. But not being of an inquisitive turn of mind, I never troubled my patrons for their opinion of my abilities as a teacher; for if "a still tongue shows a wise head," in this case I might have been considered a philosopher. They must have appreciated my services, for they never troubled me again, lest my health, patience, or conscience should suffer in their service. So here was the end of my educational career.

Since our school system has been established by law, schools are continuous, and the poor are instructed without cost. A common school education is now as available for the children of the farmer or mechanic as for those of the merchant or money lender. But before schools were established on the present basis, there was

neither system nor regularity in their management. Yet costly they were, the charge was three dollars a quarter, and board and keep for the teacher. In this way I have given at least three years' schooling to each of eleven children; amounting in the aggregate to $396, besides the teacher's board. The money would have been well expended had all the teachers been qualified to give instruction, which they were not.

The *modus operandi* to obtain a teacher was to pass the word that one was needed in a certain locality. Some one, self recommended, was sure to offer his services; and the test of his ability was, to procure signatures for at least twenty-five scholars. If successful he was set at work, only too often to find we had caught a Tartar, when too late to remedy the evil. But they were almost invariably of a retiring disposition, which seemed to operate as an instinctive principle; for, generally they would migrate as soon as they could pocket the dimes, and that without troubling their patrons for a certificate of efficiency.

A young man from the County of Oxford took a school in our section, and while boarding with me, I put this question: “Suppose a man six feet in height to travel round the Globe, which is 24,000 miles in circumference; how much larger would the circle described by the head be, than the one described by the feet?” "That," said he, “does not require figures to answer the question; the two circles are equal, which I will demonstrate to your satisfaction.” Then placing a dinner plate on the table, he held his knife in a perpendicular position and passed it round the outer edge of the plate. "There," said he, “you will see that the two ends of the knife form equal circles.” His demonstration only proved that he tho't the surface of the globe to be represented by a pancake, the outer edge of which it would be dangerous to approach without a support to hold by. But candor compels me to say, that the sample I have here exhibited is the lowest in order of all the incompetent teachers that have obtained our money under false pretences.

...participation in the struggle of life...

Canadian Home Journal, September 11, 1874.

When I take a retrospective view of the progress made in the arts since the year 1800, and try to realize the accelerating speed of their onward march during the last fifty years, which appears to be governed by the same law that accelerates the motion of a falling body by the attraction of the earth I am tempted to envy the coming generation the privileges they will enjoy in witnessing the inventions of the next half century. The inventions that have excited the wonder of the present generation will to the next generation lose all their novelty, and be considered merely as matter of course affairs; but their turn will come to wonder when they witness new discoveries, which in turn will lose their novelty by the succeeding generation, and so on to the consummation of time.

The facilities for travelling enjoyed by those of today are not appreciated as by those that were the pioneers of Canada, who had to make roads through the wilderness and then travel on foot till they could raise a team, which took years to accomplish. But I am aware that any picture I may draw of the hardships and privations, encountered and overcome by those pioneers, it is impossible for those of the present day to realize however willing to do so; for nothing short of actual participation in the struggle of life to make a home in the wilderness can furnish an idea of the reality.

To illustrate the difference in travelling at the present day, and that of seventy years ago, I will give a description of the route that had to be taken between St. Johns, N. B. And Port Ryerse, Ontario, the distance being 1500 miles. I came to Canada with an uncle and his family. We left St. Johns on the first day of May, 1803, on board the *British Queen,* a ship commanded by Capt. Hatfield, and came to New York the distance being 750 miles. We then took passage to Albany with Captain Van Tassel. From Albany we went by team to Schenectady, and there purchased a boat in which we went up the Mohawk river to Fort Stanwix. This fort was situated near the head waters of the Mohawk river, and the locality being remote from the seat of war during the American

revolution, it was made a place of rendezvous where the American volunteers assembled to receive their drill before being placed in the field. This may account for the seeming mystery to those of that day, why the new recruits were as proficient in the field as the veteran troops. From Fort Stanwix the boat was taken by team to the head waters of Wood creek, the portage being the height of land that divides the waters which find their way into the Atlantic south from those that fall into Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence. We then went down Wood creek to the Oneida Lake, across the lake to the Oswego river, down that river to Oswego at Lake Ontario, up the lake to Queenston on the Niagara river, thence by team to Chippawa and up the Niagara river to Lake Erie. Coasting the Canada shore to Ryerse we landed July 6th being two months and six days on the journey of 1500 miles by the zig-zag course which at that time was the only available route.

To be constantly exposed to the inclemency of the weather and to pitch a tent each night, often to be drenched with rain before morning, was our fortune. But now you can start from the same point, sit on your cushioned seat, protected from wind and weather, and land at London in forty-eight hours, fifty miles further than our landing place, and take it as a matter of course accommodation.

Or compare the mode of transmitting intelligence at the present day with that of fifty years ago, when flags were shown by day and lights by night from some elevated stand point – the signals to be watched by telescope from the next signal station, and so on to head quarters. At the present day messages from Asia will cross Europe, the broad Atlantic, and the continent of America with a speed that out-travels the lightning of heaven; not by lights and flags, but in good plain English – the motive power of which is the combined action of electricity and magnetism.

Then there is the power of steam, to serve the purposes required to act as a motive power for navigation, railroads, and manufactories the machinery of which is of the most complicated construction.

But the improvements in the art of printing are keeping pace with the accelerated speed of travelling by steam or the transmission of thought by telegraph. For, compare the facility with which an impression is thrown off by the steam press of today with that of the time when Dr. Franklin worked as pressman in a printing office in Philadelphia, where the screw and lever was the only known mode of giving an impression. The press room required a clear space of twenty-five feet square; the press in the centre, with a ten foot lever. The pressman had to travel a circuit of sixty feet for one circuit of the screw, but it required two circuits to give the impression, a walk of 120 feet travel by one impression, or one mile to get forty-four impressions, or nearly twenty-three miles for 1,000 impressions, with the assistance of a man to place the paper and remove the copy. But as facilities for printing increase the number of readers appears to keep pace with the increased capabilities of the press to furnish reading matter, and that increase appears to advance in geometrical proportion; which statement would not appear exaggerated could the full amount of reading matter that is weekly issued from the presses of our New Dominion be correctly ascertained. The first Upper Canadian newspaper was published at New York in 1784, and its auxiliary the U.C. Gazette was started at Little York in 1800, so that when I compare the product of the progress of 1794 and 1800 with those of 1874 I think my conclusions will appear more favorable.[1]

Postal arrangements have run parallel with the increased facilities of the press, for the first weekly mail between the United States and Canada was established at Montreal in 1800, and that without regularity. But now for years it is my good fortune to see our mails pass my own door twice each day with perfect regularity of time. Who will say, then, that Canada is not a go-ahead country?[2]

Notes

1. Upper Canada's first newspaper was the *Upper Canada Gazette,* first published at Newark (Niagara-on-the-Lake) in 1793. A government-sponsored paper, it would follow the government to York in 1797.
2. There was monthly service between Montreal and New York City connecting with England, by 1764.Forinformation on both of the above see *The Canadian Encyclopedia.* Volume 3. Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1988.

...240 miles on foot...

Canadian Home Journal, January 29, 1875.

Colonel Talbot was notoriously addicted to tantalizing those making application for land. I will mention an incident in this connection that caused me to travel 240 miles on foot, and the loss of eight days' time. In 1814, my wife's father, with his son Abraham, and son-in-law, Eslick, went to get land from the Colonel.[1] They took the number of several lots to choose from, and after a careful

examination made their choice. I agreed to take the chosen numbers to the Colonel for entry. To save time I went on Sunday, but with misgivings that 1 should meet with a deserved reprimand for my disregard of the sacred character of the Day of Rest. I found the Colonel in his garden, made known to him my errand, and began to frame an apology, when he stopped me short with, “I am none of your flying Methodists that go riding on the clouds, singing psalms on Sundays.” The Colonel had given them two months' time in which to commence their settlement duties, but they were disappointed in getting a yoke of oxen; so, they were delayed beyond the time allowed them. The Colonel sent me word to let them know that for their neglect he had given their land to other parties. As I had heard so much about the eccentricities of the old gentleman, and had learned his disposition, I knew that nothing raised a man in his estimation more than to see him have a mind of his own by fearlessly speaking his thoughts. He would frequently speak so harshly that a stranger would cower before him. This would tickle him so much that he would have to turn aside to hide a laugh. I thought I would satisfy myself as to the transaction; and since I knew that an applicant's success depended on his independence of mind and his freedom and boldness in asserting his rights, I determined to bear myself manfully. But to the point, I went and met the Colonel at his door, and told him that my errand was to learn whether the information I received was correct, viz., that he had given their land to other parties. He gave for answer, an emphatic, “Yes I have,” turned short, went into the house, and left me standing in the door, without an invitation to enter. I followed him in, and began to tell the cause of their delay. I had spoken but a few words when he left me and stepped into his office. I followed and finished the apology and explanation. When I stopped speaking, he faced me, and with a look that frightened me, replied, “Did I not tell you I had given their land away?” “You did, sir,” I replied, "but please forgive the intrusion of which I have been guilty and the persistence with which I spoke.” My anxiety overcame my discretion I then bid him good-bye, and started. When about ten rods from the house he called out, “Oakes, tell Abram Long and Eslick to come and do their settlement duties, or I will give their land to the first that calls, but as for old Long, I'll be d__d if he ever gets a foot of land from me.” I then went to Port Ryerse, to let Abram Long and Eslick know the Colonel's decision. When on my return home near Otter creek the Colonel overtook me, mounted. He kept company with me for about a mile, in which time 1 told him that going to let the men know the Colonel's pleasure necessitated my travelling an hundred miles on foot, and I tried to draw a picture of the old gentleman's disappointment and chagrin, when he replied, “It is all his own fault,” and rode off. When about a hundred yards from me he stopped and called to me. I hurried up to him. “Then,” said he, “do you tell old Long to come and do his settlement duties, or I'll be d__d if I don't give the lot to some other man.” To give this information called for another hundred miles' walk, and all this to satisfy a propensity for practical joking. Still few men could have settled at the same time, the poor lands of the Talbot settlement with such good, self-reliant settlers, for he knew at first sight the man that could be made to accept the poor, while the man that would fearlessly assert his rights, was accommodated with the good.

Notes

This article was reprinted in the *St. Thomas Daily Times* of December 12, 1891.

1. Garrett Oakes married Maria Long at Charlotteville on March 3, 1812. She died on November 21, 1848 and is buried in the New Sarum Baptist Cemetery.

   In June, 1815, Talbot settled Samuel Long on Lot 33, North Side of the Talbot Road East, Southwold Township, and John Eslick or Eslich on Lot 34. In July, 1815, Abraham Long settled on Lot 35, North Side of the Talbot Road East in Southwold. These men were still on the land in 1817.

Samuel Long patented Lot 33 on the North Side of the Talbot Road East on April 4, 1844.

John Eslich or Eslick received Lot 34 through an Order-in-Council dated February 9, 1827. He patented the Lot on March 8 of the same year.

Lot 35 on the North Side of the Talbot Road East was granted to Calvin Witt of the Township of Southwold by an Order in-Council dated August 18, 1820. Witt patented this lot on October 24, 1820.

See "Return of Locations Made Under the Superintendence of Colonel Talbot In the London & Western Districts," dated November 10, 1815. Also, "Return of the Present State of the Lands at Port Talbot under the Superintendence of Thomas Talbot Esquire in the London & Western Districts of Upper Canada," dated August 5, 1817. Both lists are found in Public Archives of Canada, *Upper Canada State Papers,* Record Group I, E3, Volume 87. Talbot Settlement 1792-1843.

See also, op. Cit., *Early Township Land Papers – Southwold; Elgin County Crown Land Patents Register.* 1795-1943.

Clearly, Samuel Long and John Eslick stayed on their land while the son, Abraham Long, did not. It maybe that Colonel Talbot erased Abraham Long from his records for not doing the settlement duties.

...the better part of valour...

Canadian Home Journal, April 2, 1875.

In 1814, General McArthur, with 1500 men, invaded Canada from Detroit. He marched east as far as Brantford, and there found the bridge broken up, and a small force of Indians to confront him. At the sight of the Indians he seemed to recollect that he had never been in a position to answer the question, What is the world to a man when his wife is a widow? Not being in a hurry to solve the problem, and being ambitious to establish his reputation as an officer of ability by taking his men through Canada without loss of life or limb, and having heard it said discretion is the better part of valour, he concluded to take a safer road than the one occupied by the Indians. So he left his intended route, and started for Port Ryerse, on Lake Erie.

At Malcolm's Mills he was met by Major Salmon with 500 militia volunteers; but by the disaffection and treachery of the settlers in that vicinity, who were acquainted with the woods, the Americans were taken by a route that enabled them, unperceived, to out flank the Canadians, and as they had the advantage of ground, a total rout was the inevitable result. The General there obtained the information that the main force of the country west of Brantford were on duty at the Niagara frontier and at Amherstburg; so that he could plunder along the line of march without opposition, and prove to a demonstration that Uncle Sam had the boys that understood the tactics of war as far as burning and plundering were concerned. The consequence was that they fared sumptuously on provision, clothing and horse, at the expense of the poor settlers. But their reckless ferocity in burning all the mills in their route, except an old wreck at Vittoria that could not grind a tithe of the grain required to supply the settlement, was an act of vindictive wantonness, as it only distressed the inhabitants without the least advantage to the American Government.

The Americans, before leaving Malcolm's, set fire to the mills and then started for Port Ryerse. But on looking back they saw that the fire had been extinguished, some mounted men were sent back to ascertain the cause, who found three men still throwing water. They renewed the fire and took halters from their horses, put them around the necks of the men, and marched them to the commander. General McArthur told them he would take them to Waterford and hang them, as a warning to others that might be induced to save the other mills. But after the firing of the Waterford mills they were released without remuneration for their big scare.

I will mention one instance where rum assisted in making a hero. When McArthur's army was approaching Brantford they met a stout, powerful and drunken man, (an acquaintance of mine) by the name of Swain Curlis, who ordered them to halt. Seeing them disobey the order, he shouted, “Halt and ground arms, or I'll exterminate your whole army.” Seeing them still press forward he fired and began to reload; but luckily for him, although he was a good shot, he had fired at random, and no one was hurt. So the men in advance rode up and disarmed him. He then charged them with cowardice, and swore that if they would give him a sword and fair play, he would whip the whole army, two at a time. This challenge they said they had not time to accept, and instead they put a halter round his neck and kept him until after the foot race at Malcolm's for the sake of the sport he afforded the Gen. In denouncing the Yankees and charging them with all the rascality of the world as only Swain Curlis could do scientifically. But the proof that the General appreciated the fearless, out-spoken abuse of himself and the whole Yankee nation by Curlis was by his ordering the restoration of his valuable rifle at his dismissal. It might be a dangerous precedent to follow, however, without a Curlis to use the language.

In the beginning of the war of 1812, the settlers on the Talbot road had but little land cleared, and improvements were entirely suspended during the war, so that each one could only raise grain sufficient to fatten his pork, and make bread for his family, without any to spare to his neighbors – which is the excuse I have to offer in presenting the following incident. Before leaving home to meet McArthur at Malcolm's, I had killed my hogs, which filled a two barrel tub, besides the offal. I had not got home from the foot race at Malcolm's, when Gen. McArthur, marching west, passed my place. My wife, being notified of their coming, tried to hide the tub of pork, but could only get it out of the door and turn it against the side of the house. She then put over it a piece of elm bark for a cover, and hid the offal in the woods contiguous to the house. The latter the Americans found and ate, together with a bucket of soap grease: while hundreds passed the tub without lifting the bark, as it had not the appearance of being hidden. There is no doubt that my absence saved the pork, as my hiding would have been of no avail Many of the settlers lost theirs notwithstanding their cleverest precaution, for hunger prompted the men to use seemingly superhuman vigilance in ferreting out something to appease hunger.

Notes

E.A. Owen tells a similar story in op. Cit., *Pioneer Sketches of the Long Point Settlement,* p. 336. In Owen's version, Corliss was the only man who refused to retreat at the skirmish at Malcolm's Mill, kept firing at the enemy and was grievously wounded but survived the engagement.

Charles Ermatinger prints a report from the Loyal and Patriotic Society: “Swain Corliss, of the London District, appeared before the Society and stated that he was severely wounded in a skirmish at Malcolm's Mills with General McArthur's troops, and left on the field and stripped; he has lost the use of his left arm in a great degree, had seventeen balls that pierced his shirt, seven balls that entered his body, three of which still remain in it; he has a wife and seven children.

In consideration of his sufferings and services, the Society vote him fifty pounds, which, with the ten pounds already received, make the whole donation sixty pounds.” - see op. Cit., Ermatinger, CO., *The Talbot Regime,* pp. 343 & 344.

Corliss also appears as a Sergeant in the payroll for a special detachment of the Norfolk Militia which was formed to fight the Andrew Westbrook raiding party in September of 1814.

See Public Archives of Canada, Record Group 9, IB7, Volume 28, pp. 293-299, 315-318.

...never had cause to regret...

Canadian Home Journal, May 14, 1875.

In the year 1814 word passed down Talbot road that a party of American Indians were coming up the river Thames. We had reason to expect that their route would be from Westminster to Talbot road and Kettle creek, to plunder the Talbot settlement; and as I knew that we should be called on duty I concluded to take my wife and two children to Port Ryerse, so that I could leave home without anxiety lest they might be visited by Indians in my absence. And as a request had been made for assistance from the Norfolk volunteers, I thought I could get there in time to return with them. So my wife and I each took a child and started on foot, although we knew there were twenty-five miles of the road without an inhabitant and thought ourselves lucky in being able to do so, as many of our neighbors were tied at home by larger families. But it is not to be expected of the present generation that they can realize the feelings of the poor settlers at the certainty that at any moment they might be visited by Indians while the husband and father might be absent on duty, the likelihood of which kept the women and children in a state of continual fear and trepidation.

But to the point. We walked five miles, and stopped at a house to rest. Before starting again we saw a party of men coming from the east, which, on their arrival proved to be a detachment of the Norfolk Volunteers who were to assist the militia of the Talbot settlement in guarding the pass between Westminster and Talbot road at Kettle creek. The party was under the command of James McQueen, who acted under the Kings commission as ensign, (if memory serves aright) and whose demeanor at that time is as vividly impressed on my memory as though it was an incident of yesterday. I then thought that if a sword could be honored that his gentlemanly demeanor and martial carriage were an honor to his sword, and the sword an honor to him. So I returned home and put myself under his command, and never had cause to regret the act, for I was not deceived by first impressions.[1]

It is not possible without actual participation in a struggle such as the Canadians experienced in trying to hold with a feeble force the amount of territory embraced in Upper and Lower Canada against a powerful state, to realize the disadvantage the Canadians labored under to repel invasions with a sparse population, the militia without discipline, poorly armed, and always sure to meet a force greater than their own, and without the possibility of getting assistance from England through the ungenerous act of the American government in declaring war against England when her hands were tied by the war with Napoleon Bonaparte. But the act nerved the Canadians to use seemingly superhuman exertion to protect the country, although often apparently against hope. And during the struggle it was plain to be seen by the onlooking world that the battle was not to the strong, which the Americans learned to their cost.

I will mention an incident when a party of Americans caught a Tartar, or the mate of one. They came to Port Talbot with the intention of taking the Colonel to Detroit, and extorting a good sum as the price of liberty. But, as fate would have it, the money obtained by the transaction was of no value except to build castles in the air. The party being discovered while approaching the house, the Colonel was on his guard; so putting on an old slouched hat, he took a staff and walked slowly towards the lake bank. The leader of the party called to him to halt, when one of the Colonel's men told him that the old fellow was the Colonel's shepherd, and deaf; so he was allowed to depart in peace. When they found their prize to be a blank they set fire to the mills and turned back, with the consolation that there would be no disagreement in the division of the money extorted for the Colonel's ransom.[2]

The American government, having real or imaginary grievances to lay to the charge of the British government, impatiently waited for a protest to force England to concede whatever they might choose to claim. So as soon as the whole available force of England was required to contest with Napoleon Bonaparte, and Canada left to her own resources to defend the country, they declared war against England. The motive was to take and hold Canada until their demands were granted as a ransom; but the sequel is known, and perhaps I cannot do better in this connection than to detail another circumstance to show how the Americans could act with more discretion than valor when the occasion seemed to require it.

McLeod assisted in setting fire to and sending the steamer *Caroline* over the Niagara Falls for the aid she was giving McKenzie and his party at Navy Island. The Americans at the first opportunity caught him and put him in prison, and his execution was a foregone conclusion. But England was free from war now, and the British minister at Washington was instructed to say: The day that McLeod is executed war is declared by Great Britain against the United States without further notice. Although the conference was not reported, after events

warranted the conclusion, that was to this effect. “Stay, hold your hands, we know McLeod to be guilty, and the public to a man demands his execution. But we will not go to war with England, McLeod shall not be injured, but to appease the people he must stand his trial, and we will accept as proof of his innocence the unsworn evidence of Canadians, taken by commission, and let him prove an alibi.” Which promise was kept to the letter, and McLeod was saved. The British minister's declaration acted like magic on the minds of the American government. Although McLeod's execution was a foregone conclusion, yet the menacing attitude of England instantaneously called forth the solicitude and sympathy of the American government, which induced them to remove McLeod to a place of safety. He was kept in an old dilapidated prison, where he was at the mercy of the populace. Their excuse to the people for the removal was, that they feared a rescue by the Canadians; for had their real motive been known to the public, the transfer could not have been effected, and a national war would have been the result. Hence their solicitude for his safety. And why this concession and sympathy? The answer is: England's hands were not tied by war. So circumstances alter cases.[3]

Notes

1. James McQueen was an ensign with the Second Norfolk Militia. He is said to have been present at the capture of Detroit, and fought at Lundy's Lane. McQueen came to Southwold Township in 1815, settling on Lot 24 South of the Talbot Road in Southwold. McQueen was a farmer and businessman in Southwold until his death on December 11, 1877.

   There were raids by the Americans in January, February, May, August and September of 1814. It is probable that McQueen led his party to this area in September. See op. Cit., Ermatinger, e.O., *The Talbot Regime,* chapter 12.

   See “Return of Locations Made Under the Superintendence of Colonel Talbot In the London & Western Districts,” dated November 10, 1815. Public Archives of Canada, *Upper Ca1Ulda State Papers,* Record Group 1, E3, Volume 87. Talbot Settlement 1792-1843.

   See op. Cit., “The Talbot Papers,” Volume 1, Section 2, 1908, p. 206. McQueen's obituary appeared in the *London Free Press* of December 15, 1877.

2. See op. Cit., Stanley, *The War of* 1812. *Land Operations,* pp. 271-288. Also, op. Cit., Hamil, Fred Coyne, *Lake Erie Baron,* pp. 80-83.

   This event happened during the raid of August 14, 1814.

   Captain Patterson was the person who said Talbot was a shepherd. It was on this raid that Lieutenant Colonel Mahlon Burwell was taken prisoner.

   Oakes is incorrect when he says the mills were burned during the August raid. This happened on the September 9, 1814 raid led by Andrew Westbrook. See op. Cit., Ermatinger, C. O., *The Talbot Regime,* chapter 12.

3. The raid on the *Caroline* took place during the 1837 Rebellion. As far as the rest of the story goes, the editors have no idea of what Oakes is talking about.

Reminiscences

Canadian Home Journal, October 1, 1875.

Although the sketch I shall give of the first settlers I of that part of western Canada known as the London

district – composed of what now forms the counties of Norfolk, Oxford, Middlesex and Elgin – may by many be considered insipid and uninteresting, I am induced to give a few incidents that served to break the sameness of pioneer life in this portion of our country.

About the year 1792 Samuel and Joseph Ryerse with a few other families came from New Brunswick, where they had taken refuge at the close of the American war, and settled at Port Ryerse. In 1795, Hon. Peter Russell was made Lieut.-Gov. Of Upper Canada. In '97 Samuel Ryerse was appointed Colonel of Militia, and in 1800 Joseph Ryerse, father of Egerton, was made a Magistrate and Judge of the County Court by Lieut.-Gov. Hunter, who succeeded Russell. Col. Ryerse built the first mills 70 miles west of the sparse settlement on the Niagara River.[1]

At an early day of the settlement, to break the dull monotony of life, Samuel Ryerse, a son of the Colonel's by his first wife, passed the word that on the following Sabbath there would be a meeting at his father's house. At the appointed time the neighbors arrived and silently took their seats. After waiting a while an explanation took place, and it was discovered that Sam was the author of the hoax. Being summoned to answer the charge, he said that the call was in perfect good faith, as he expected about that time his mother's nose and chin would meet! And when he took a sly look at the fountain head of the joke Sam was commended for his idea, and an afternoon's gossip made all right.

William Hamley, a surveyor, brought the fourth family to the new settlement, he having an engagement to survey the new territory. He brought with him two orphan boys, John and Henry Bostwick, and to John, the eldest, he taught the art of surveying. This was the late Col. Bostwick, founder of the village of Port Stanley. Henry was sent abroad and studied law until he was in a position to wear a gown and plead at the bar. He married, but died young.[2]

As soon as the settlement could muster men enough to form a company Col. Ryerse appointed Peter Walker, a German, to act as captain. Peter offered to give a yoke of oxen if the appointment was altered, but the Colonel was inexorable. He, however, provided his newly made officer with a book so that he might instruct himself and drill the men scientifically. At the first muster, while passing through the manual exercises, Captain Peter came to the order “ground arms” which was done. Then came the next order, “March.” “No,” said the sergeant, “it will not do to leave our arms.” “Put I say you must,” said Peter, “for 'tis so in ter book. Put I spose tis is ter order ven tey are vhipt and hef to run. Put holt on, holt on poys! I hafe turnt ofer two leafs!” As soon as the laugh subsided the men were dismissed, and this was the end of Peter's military career.

Peter lived near Patterson's creek, and had a brother Daniel, a small lad, who frequently saw otters in the creek. One day he procured a gun and engaged Andrew Kelly, an Irishman, to shoot the otters. They went to the creek and sat down to watch, when soon an otter put his head out of the water. Kelly took aim, but hesitated, when Daniel said: “Kelly, why don't you fire?” “Hould yer whist ye blabberin' fool,” said Kelly, “How could I? Don't you see that other bloody thafe ov an otter put his head in the way.” But the otters did not take an interest in the dialogue and disappearing left the hunters to settle their own differences.

Some may say, “Hold on: this is too trifling to reproduce in this age of progress.” True, it may appear a trifling affair to notice incidents like the above. But only take a mental view of a few settlers squatted in the wilderness, where there is nothing to alter the sameness of every day life, and compare it with the facilities for recreation at the present day, and it will appear that the noticing of every trifle that tended even to create a feeling of mirth was excusable as it was enjoyed by the poor pioneers from one limit of the settlement to the other as heartily as an excursion by rail or a provincial show by their children and their children's children in 1875.

Notes

1. For an account of the early days of the Long Point Settlement see Owen, E.A.. *Pioneer Sketches of the Long Point Settlement.* Belleville Ontario: Mika Silk Screening Ltd., 1972. Also, Barrett, Harry B. *Lore and Legends of Long Point.* Toronto: Burns and MacEachern Limited, 1977.

   Oakes is inaccurate here. Joseph Ryerse's correct name was Ryerson. Joseph and Samuel were brothers and the correct family name was Ryerson. Both were Loyalists and served with the British

forces in the American Revolution. Samuel kept the name 'Ryerse' after his name was recorded in this fashion by the British Army during the Revolution. Samuel Ryerse came to the Long Point country in 1794, while Joseph Ryerson came in 1799. It was Samuel who became the first Commissioner of the Peace for the London District in April, 1800. He chaired the first meeting of the Court of Quarter Sessions for the London District on April 8, 1800 and is therefore considered to be the first judge of the District. Joseph Ryerson was the first Sheriff of the London District, serving from 1800 to 1805. It was probably Samuel Ryerse who was the first Colonel of the Norfolk Militia.

For an account of the Ryerson/Ryerse families see op. Cit, Owen, *Pioneer Sketches of the Long Point Settlement,* pp. 62-71. See also Johnson, Enid, *The Men of Norfolk.* Produced for the 175 Anniversary of the Burning of Dover Mills, May 20-21,1989. (s.l.: 175th Anniversary Committee, 1989), p. 31.

The Honourable Peter Russell was Administrator rather than Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada from 1796 to 1799. Peter Hunter was Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada from 1799 to 1805. See Armstrong, Frederick H. *Handbook of Upper Canadian Chronology.* Revised Edition. (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1985), p. 33.

2. John and Henry Bostwick were the sons of the Reverend Gideon Bostwick, who was an Anglican pastor in Great Barrington, Massachusetts. He was involved with Thomas Ingersoll in the early land settlement scheme for Oxford Township in Oxford County. Gideon Bostwick is referred to as “the first nominee for the Township of Oxford,” which presumably means that he was going to take up a church post in Oxford Township when he died unexpectedly in 1793.

   It is a tradition that John and Henry Bostwick were raised by William Hambly, who was an early surveyor in Upper Canada. John Bostwick came to Upper Canada in May, 1797, while Henry immigrated in 1799. John learned surveying and became a Deputy-Surveyor, while Henry became a lawyer.

   John and Henry both received 600 acres of land in Yarmouth Township by Orders-in-Council dated September 18 and 19, 1804. John was given Lots 1 and 2 in Concession 1, and Lot 1 in Concession 2. Henry received Lot 3 in Concession 2 and Lots 1 and 2 in Concession 3.

   As mentioned above, Henry Bostwick became a lawyer. He married Ann Williams on February 11, 1804. Both were residents of Woodhouse Township. Henry was appointed Lieutenant-Colonel of the First Regiment of Oxford Militia in June of 1812. He served honourably during the War of 1812, including leading the militia opposed to McArthur at the Battle of Malcolm's Mills in 1814. Henry Bostwick died at Woodhouse on the 27th of July, 1816. On October 6, 1818, Robert Nichol of Norfolk Countywrote the following assessment of Henry Bostwick to Henry Goulbum of England. “Lieut.-Colonel Henry Bostwick was a young man of very considerable abilities, who had been called to the Bar a short time previous to the late American war. He was selected by the late Sir Isaac Brock to take charge of a very turbulent and refractory district, and was appointed a Lieut.-Colonel in 1812. He displayed great prudence, talent and energy in that command, and became conspicuous on various occasions. ... in the early part of 1816 he died of an inflammatory complaint brought on, I verily believe, by the hardships and privations he had undergone during the war.” John Bostwick was appointed second Sheriff of the London District in 1805. He served as a Captain in the First Regiment of Norfolk Militia during the War of 1812. Bostwick married a daughter of Joseph Ryerson and moved to what later became Port Stanley in 1817. He was an influential man in the Talbot Settlement for many years, as a Deputy Land Surveyor, a Lieutenant-Colonel in the Militia, and owner of some very well-located land. Charles Oakes Ermatinger described him as “a man of high character and undoubted bravery, though of retiring disposition, simple manners and even temper.” Bostwick died on September 9,1849, and is buried at Christ Church in Port Stanley.

   The information on the Bostwicks has been assembled from a number of sources: *Upper Canada Land Petitions,* 'B' Bundle 7, Numbers 34 and 35; *Early Township Land Papers* (Yarmouth Township); *Oxford Militia,* produced by the Oxford County Branch of the Ontario Genealogical Society, ca. 1988, p. 8; op. Cit., Ermatinger, *The Talbot Settlement,* p. 37; *Kingston Gazette,* August 3, 1816; *The Documentary History of the Campaigns Upon the Niagara Frontier in* 1812-14. Volume

VIII. Part IV. 1813. Edited by LieutenantColonel E. Cruickshank. (WeIland, Ontario: Lundy's Lane Historical Society, 1907), p. 186; Cruickshank, E.A., “The Early History of the London District”, Ontario Historical Society. *Papers and Records,* Volume XXIV, (Toronto: Ontario Historical Society, 1927), pp. 147 & 148.

The Veterans of 1812

Canadian Home Journal, December 3, 1875.

Sir, - “Like father, like son,” is an old saying which, if reliable, should apply to nations and their offsprings the same as to individual families. The glory of the British nation is demonstrated by her magnanimity in dealing with the weakest nation as with the most powerful, and in doing justice to the most humble subject as effectually as to the nobles of the realm. Now if this be true of Great Britain, why not expect it of Canada, her legitimate progeny. And the labourer is worthy of his hire, which has been withheld for sixty from her defenders in the war of 1812. But when we compare the dealings of our Government with the veterans of 1812, and that of the U.S. Government with theirs of the same war, the contrast is amusing. Sixty years after the labor performed, the veterans of Canada received their arrearage of pay, (I say arrearage but it was the first cent I ever received for duty done) in one instalment, that is to say, twenty dollars, which gave thirty-four cents a year, or two cents, eight and one third mills per month, a sum that would purchase for one year of the time, six cigars and a glass of rum to drink to the health of our benefactor. In forming character, gratitude is the noblest trait that goes to fill up the sum total of human virtues, yet how has it been manifested by those that have held our deserts in their hands for the last sixty years. But if they are not governed by a sense of justice toward their protectors in the war, let them look at the dealings of the American Government with their veterans of the same war, and blush at the contrast. Where the Americans, notwithstanding a war debt of billions of dollars, have rewarded those that submitted to a two weeks' drill, with a pension of 96 dollars a year, equally with those that bore arms to invade Canada, and each man of the above named classes have received 160 acres of land. When the Americans invaded Canada it was not with the expectation of holding the same if taken, for they knew that even its occupancy must be of short duration, as soon as the war with Napoleon should be ended; but that old democratic hatred of everything English prompted them to make war to gratify the spirit of revenge that rankled in the bosom of the whole nation. With the knowledge of this the Canadians were in terror of their power as compared with their own sparse population; so that it appeared like acting against hope to make resistance, yet they went to work without a murmur, by realizing the fact that desperate cases require desperate remedies, the realization of which, appeared to infuse a spirit of manly determination in each one to do his duty, and to trust in Providence to reward the effort. And was it not a historical fact that the Americans, with all their forces, never effected a permanent stand on Canadian soil, it would not at the present day have received credence. For even to the veterans of that war it appears to have been a miraculous interposition of that providence whose assistance they had invoked on entering the list against a powerful antagonist, but for which service they have been so severely treated. But had the veterans received 288 dollars each, their just due for their years service during the war, they would have dispensed with twenty dollars donation, and the few who still survive might have prayed for a remission of their sin of emission, and dereliction of duty. If our Legislators have deceived the public, the climate of Canada has deceived the Legislature. Circumstances prove that the reward due to the veterans of Canada was withheld to give time for death to settle the account. But thanks to the climate (not to the legislators) there are three thousand witnesses still alive to bear testimony to the ingratitude of those whose thirst for popularity has engrossed their whole attention to the exclusion of justice to a remnant of deserving veterans who have proved themselves to be worthy of the name of Britons.

Notes

1. This appears to be as much a letter to the editor as a story.

   Oakes is perhaps a little carried away here. Each man who served in the militia in the War of 1812 was entitled to a free grant of land, the amount depending on his rank. A large number of veterans applied for and received land, or certificates for land.

   See Gates, Lillian F. *Land Policies of Upper Canada.* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968), p. 131.

   See also, Public Archives of Canada, Record Group 1, C-I-3, Volume 127, "Nominal Return of Troops in the War of 1812". This is a record kept by the Adjutant-General's Office over a number of years. Among other things, it records who had received certificates for land, the number of the certificate, and where the land was located.

   There is another list in this same Record Group, L7, Volume 52. There seems to be no actual title for this list, but it is compilation of all the militia veterans who received land as a result of their service in the War of 1812. This volume gives the name, the corps in which the person served, their rank, their occupation or trade at the time they applied for the land, the date on which the land certificate was issued, the place of residence when the person applied for the land, and the number of acres he received. See Public Archives of Canada, Record Group 1, L7, Volume 52.

   The decision to award land to the militia veterans seems to have been more in spite of, rather than because of, the government. In fact, the Land Committee of the Executive Council wrote a report saying that land had never been promised during the war of 1812 to the men who served in the militia. The process did not actually begin until the Government of Upper Canada received an order from the British government telling them that they had to award land to the militia veterans. Nevertheless, the actual process can be traced through the minute books of the Land Committee of the Executive Council. See "Minute Books of the Land Committee of the Executive Council, Volume K, February 25,1819 to December 27, 1820." In particular, the meetings of April 30, 1819, page 94; June 30, 1819, pages 182 to 184; January 19, 1820, page 354; May 31,1820, page 429. See also *Upper Canada Gazette,* March 12, 1818; March 19, 1818; March 9,1820.

   Pay lists for the different militia regiments still survive. Examining the pay lists is an important means of locating people in the militia regiments and determining where and how long they served. It is reasonable to assume that the men who served in the militia were paid for their efforts.

   See Public Archives of Canada. Record Group 9. Department of Militia and Defence. Records of the Department of Militia and Defence. Series B. Adjutant-General's Office Upper Canada, 1795-1846. Part 7. War of 1812 Records.

   See also, Jarvis, Eric, "Military Land Granting in Upper Canada Following the War of 1812," *Ontario History,* Volume LXVII, No.3, September 1975.

   "In 1875, the Canadian Parliament voted to distribute the sum of $50,000 in $20.00 increments to all Canadian militia veterans of the War of 1812 who were still alive and residing in Canada. Surviving veterans were invited to contact the Department of Militia and Defence, providing details on their service for verification of their eligibility to participate in the gratuity. Over a three year period, the names and personal information of all applicants were published in the *Dominion Sessional Papers* (DSP). The first list, containing 554 names, was published in *DSP* Vol. 8, 1875, (No.7), SP 25, pp. 1-15, and consisted primarily of the names of the applicants with some scant background information. The second list was published in *DSP,* Vol. 9, 1876, (No.6), SP 7, pp. 1-95 under the general heading "Statement Showing the Name and Residence of Militiamen of 1812-15 Who Have Applied to Participate in the Gratuity Granted By Parliament in 1875." The most comprehensive of the lists, this contains considerable background information on the 3024 applicants included, and is arranged in

general alphabetical order by surname. The third and final published list appeared in *DSP,* Vol. 10, 1877, (No.8), SP 76, pp. 1-109, but is essentially nothing more than a financial recapitulation of the second list, arranged by the geographical residence of the veteran and containing only the veteran's name and the amount paid to him. The first two of these lists have been reproduced on the following pages. The third has not, as it contained nothing which did not already appear in the first two lists."

See *Canadian Veterans of the War of* 1812. Edited, with an Introduction by Eric]onasson. (Winnipeg: Wheatfield Press, 1981), p. 15.

The above is a listing of all the people who received the gratuity, compiled by]onasson. The original lists are, as mentioned above, in the *Dominion Sessional Papers.*

The *Canadian Home Journal* of October 12 and 15,1875, lists a good many of the veterans who applied for the cash award in Elgin, Middlesex and Kent Counties.

...no Long Point any more, but a long island...

Canadian Home Journal, August 11, 1876.

As the term "Long Point Settlement" is made use of to designate a certain locality, and many may not be aware of the extent of territory comprising the settlement, I shall describe its limits.

The base of Long Point rested on the Canada shore, at the western side of the township of Walsingham. It was twenty-one miles long, and eastward it recedes from the shore until its farther extremity nearly reaches mid-lake. The Point lies in front the townships of Walsingham,

Charlotteville, and Woodhouse. Now a line drawn from its base northward is the westerly limit of the settlement, a line northward from the shore opposite its easterly end the easterly limit, and a line eastward and westward five miles from the lake shore its northerly limit – comprising in all about one hundred square miles of territory.

But as the population increased the term Long Point settlement lost its original significance by being divided into several distinct localities, as Simcoe, Dover, Port Ryerse, Vittoria, St. Williams, Port Rowan, etc. The original term will soon become obsolete, for it is now only familiar to the small remnant of western pioneers.

Let me tell your readers how the Point became an island. Benjamin Van Norman had a Government contract to construct a ship canal across the isthmus. After making the cut he procured an enormous pile-driver and collected materials to construct piers and wall in the channel. But before he could secure the westerly or windward end a tremendous gale from the west drove the water through the cut, tearing away the works, destroying the machinery and building materials, and widening the channel some twenty rods. Each successive gale since that time has only added to the breach, so that at the present time it is several miles in width. And to avoid wreck on the sand-bar, which is constantly forming, the Government keeps a light-ship anchored at the deepest sounding during the season of navigation. Therefore it is no Long Point any more, but a long island.1

That one gale ruined a harbor that would have been sufficient to protect thousands of ships at one time. Yet vessels frequently run under the lee or Canadian side of the point to ride out a western gale, and so avoid being forced back to Buffalo for shelter. And the proof that had the cut been secured Long Point Bay would have formed the best harbor on the lake is, that, although the western barrier has been destroyed, there never has been a shipwreck between the Point and the Canada shore – the Point alone being a safe protection against western gales.

The first settlers of the Long Point and Talbot settlements suffered from the monopoly of Daniel Ross of Port Ryerse, the only merchant doing business in early times within the limits of those settlements. Mr. Ross was in the mercantile line only ten years; yet when he closed he had the snug sum of sixty thousand dollars drawn from

a less population than is now contained in the township of Yarmouth.2

Mr. Ross must have acted on the Dutchman's idea of percentage. This Dutchman of story, in the early settlement of York State, went to Albany to purchase goods to start a country store. After making his purchase he asked what profit he should make on the goods, and was told that thirty-three per cent would be a reasonable one. On returning to replenish his stock he asked: "Mishter Sthorekeeper, you makes all de peples dinks me grazy mit your per cent, so I coot not efen giff my goots avay at den per cent. But ven I comes down to tree percent, den I sells em."

"But," said the merchant, "you will surely fail at so small a profit."

"Well," said the grave Teuton, "maybe I don't understhand your per cent. But I dells

you vot I toos: vot I giffs von tollar for I sells for tree tollars." After closing business at Port Ryerse Ross settled in Victoria, where his profits melted away in almost one great lump. A man by the name of Wilson living in Houghton, went to the house with his team and stole a small iron safe containing forty thousand dollars. This was the sum proven by the clerk, who assisted in making the deposit. Yet Ross had twenty thousand dollars in money and available securities left.

The realizing of so large an amount as sixty thousand dollars in ten years will not appear an exaggerated statement when we look at the price of goods at that time. Just think of common broadcloth being sold at $20 a yard, calicoes at $1 a yard, steam loom cottons at $1, pins at 75c a paper, and all other articles in proportion!

As it is not generally known, even by their intimate acquaintances, why the brothers Col. Samuel and Col. Joseph Ryerson, who have families of note in the county of Norfolk, should spell their names differently, I will explain.

During the American revolution Samuel and Joseph Ryerson organized a company of militia who were termed Tories, or Loyalists. Samuel was captain and Joseph lieutenant, and in their commission their names were spelled "Ryerse." This spelling Samuel adopted, as did all his descendants, and a harbor being built by the family it was named Port Ryerse. Joseph (father of Egerton) retained his original spelling of the family name, as has his descendants.

Notes

1. There was a plan by the government of Upper Canada to construct a channel or canal across Long Point in the 1830's. Before this could be accomplished, however, a massive storm dug its own channel across the Point in late 1833. Once nature had dug this channel, the government provided money to build cribs and piers to keep it open, and stationed a light ship on the Bay side of the channel. This channel was filled in by another storm in 1906. See op. Cit., Barrett, *Lore and Legends of Long Point,* pp. 105-111.

   The editors have been able to discover no independent evidence that the Van Normans were involved in the construction of the ship canal. For information on the Van Norman family see op. Cit., Owen, *Pioneer Sketches of the Long Point Settlement,* pp. 452-457. Also, McCall, Senator Alexander, *"*Normandale and the Van Normans," Ontario Historical Society. *Papers and Records.* Volume XX. (Toronto: Ontario Historical Society, 1923), pp. 94-97.

2. A D. Ross, Esq., is listed as agent for the *Upper Canada Gazette* at Long Point in the issue of January 16,1817. This continues at least until 1820. The editors have not been able to discover any more information on Daniel Ross

3. It was only Samuel who was misnamed "Ryerse." For an account of the Ryerse/Ryerson families see op. Cit., Owen, *Pioneer Sketches of the Long Point Settlement,* pp. 62-71.

...easily acquired wealth often cloys...

St. Thomas Journal, February 20, 1877.

The people of the present generation cannot realize what the pioneers of the wilds of Western Canada had to endure while wrestling with poverty (for the poor would only face the hardships) to secure a home where, by persevering effort, they might become independent members of society. A written description of incidents in the early life of the backwoodsman loses the force of its reality by the entire absence of the difficulties unavoidable in grappling with the heavy forest. But the expedients resorted to by the first settlers, in the absence of better accommodation, shall be confined to those of my own neighborhood.

The first improvement in this settlement was in 1810. In 1812 the Americans declared war against Great Britain, and Canada was the theatre of their operations, so that improvement in the settlement was suspended for three years. This was a trying time for empty purses and lonely women, whose husbands were on duty to protect a home that was yet in embryo. Yet the thoughts of that home carried to the heart a thrill of pleasure that the wealthy seldom enjoy in the present state of society; for the reason that anticipation stimulated to action for years, or until the object was obtained – whereas easily acquired wealth often soon cloys, so that the gratification anticipated is of short duration.

The first act of the settler was, with axe in hand, to select a spot on which to erect a shanty, then felling the huge trees to a circumference that others could not reach the building when erected. The shanties were of logs, with elm bark for a roof and floor. Then came the furniture, which was invariably of home manufacture. The bedstead was made from poles with the bark taken off, with basswood bark for bed cord. The tools for its construction were an axe and an auger. The table leaf was made from a piece of wood two inches thick, split from the centre of a large log, and holes made with a two inch auger to receive the legs. The seats were tripods, the material and workmanship the same as the table. Their cradles were ready for use by putting rockers to a sap trough.

The mortar was indispensable in each family. This article was made by cutting a log three feet long and fifteen inches in diameter; the log was set on end and a fire kept burning in the centre till it had formed a bowl-shaped concavity to hold ten or twelve quarts. Into this a quart of corn was put, and with a heavy wooden pestle pounded to the required degree of fineness: which progress had to be repeated morning, noon and night, or go without the indispensable Johnny-cake.

Then we had to substitute split timber for sawn lumber, for the nearest saw-mill was fifty miles distant, without a road between.

I think the wealthy of today would envy a pair of the new settlers could they in imagination see them sitting by the bright blazing fire on the hearth of their rudely built log house, discussing incidents of the past and laying plans for the future, while listening to the breathing of their little ones as they lay sleeping in their rude bed, the personification of innocence; or witness the thrill of pleasure with which a hearty “come in” would be given in answer to the knock of a neighbor, who in passing called to spend an hour of the evening to enquire after their welfare, and give and receive an account of the doings in the settlement since they last met. Then the hand-shaking at parting, that carried conviction to the heart that the friendship was sincere and mutual. But the bond of union that for years existed between the first settlers was severed by their inequality in accumulating wealth, by which means each one in time came to act independent of his neighbour.

The dog was a necessary adjunct to each family, for no servant could use the same vigilance, or show the same solicitude for the master's safety, as the dog that would lay all night at the door as a faithful sentinel, that could not be bribed to betray his trust. To the new settlers it appeared as though Providence interposed to dispel the nightly gloom of the forest, where the howl of the wolf added to the solitude by its nightly serenading,

responded to by the solemn hoot of the owl; to counteract which, as soon as an opening was made in the woods, the Whip-poor-will would take possession and each summer night sit near the door and dispel the feeling of solitude with its shrill notes of welcome to the new settler. But this mission of cheering the lonely is ended, and, like the Indians that gave a hearty welcome and ministered to the wants of the first white settlers of North America, are retreating before the destruction of the forests, never more to visit the land of their ancestors.

The hardship endured by the first settlers was a counterpart of the training enjoined on the Spartans of ancient Greece, that made them invincible in war and unrivaled in endurance at labor and the Olympic Games. As proof of which, in 1812, when the American war began, there was in Canada but ten thousand men between the age of eighteen and sixty, yet we find in 1875, or sixty-three years after the beginning of their military service, three thousand five hundred of them applicants for a pension. And here am I, one of them, eighty-five years of age, sixty-six of which have been passed where I first erected my shanty in 1810, on what was called Talbot road, but where the only evidence of its existence was the surveyor's marks.

Now, with the evidence of the veterans still alive, that their early training of muscular energy led them to long life, I dare predict of the present generation, where labor is light and luxuries abound, that the percentage of long life will fall far short of those of the pioneers of the wilderness of Canada: for the reason that effeminacy, the sure reward of indolence, inactivity, or any of the sedentary occupations, is the foe of longevity.

...with two drunkards in the boat...

St. Thomas Journal, September 21, 1877.

In the month of May, 1809, a man by the name of Cunningham came from the Grand River to Port Ryerse with a boat to take flour from the Ryerse mills to Chippawa. He had two men, Winegarden and Scott to row the boat. But Scott left his employer at Port Ryerse, and I afterwards heard him say he knew his life to be in danger with two drunkards in the boat, of which I was not aware when I chanced to meet and hire to Cunningham for one month.

When we had shipped our cargo of flour we had seventy-two barrels, which was ten more than the boat's capacity would warrant for safety in a rough sea. In taking in our naval supplies the only

superfluity was a keg of whiskey. The day following we started for Chippawa. After passing Peacock's point we lay our course for the Grand river point. When about midway between the two points we were five miles from land, and a thunder storm rose in the west with a wind but little short of a hurricane.

We at once made for the land; but as the boat was too deeply laden to run with her side to the wind without shipping the heavy seas, we had to take an oblique direction that would necessitate a run of seven miles to reach the shore. When half the distance was run, the wind with unabated violence veered to the north-west, which caused the sail to jibe or change sides, and the sheet rope took overboard a barrel of flour and a barrel containing our provisions and cooking utensils, but we should have been pleased had the loss been ten barrels, to lighten the boat. Fortunately I had loosened the sheet rope, so that the sail was eased without breaking the mast, which was merely a basswood pole, with fifty yards of canvas in the sail, and as our lives depended on the mast it kept me on the alert to ease off the sail at each heavy blast.

My attention was drawn to the captain who was handling the steering oar, by hearing him exclaim, “M y God, we are all lost!” I was frightened when I saw him; he looked like a corpse. I immediately changed places with him, but ceased to wonder at his exhausted appearance as I found that he must have used seemingly superhuman strength to keep the boat headed so that the sail would draw to take us to land; for had the boat been allowed to come up into the wind she would instantly have foundered. So I called to Winegarden (who sat stupefied with

terror from the time the gale struck us) to run out an oar through a loop made for the purpose, when it took our united strength to keep the desired course till we made a landing at a place called Horse Shoe harbor. And none too soon, for in a few minutes after landing the wind veered to the north, so that a short delay would have sealed our fate.

When the gale began a vessel lay about a mile from us, but when we landed she was out of sight. When we reached Fort Erie the captain of the vessel said they predicted that we should never reach land with the wind in that direction; but my experience in the management of a boat enabled me to take every available advantage of the wind, or we should surely have foundered with our over-loaded boat, for both the other men were making their first attempt at management. Had they been left to their own exertions and management of the boat in such a gale, they would have foundered without redemption.

While at the Fort our captain contracted with Hugh Alexander, a merchant of that place, to take one thousand barrels of flour to Chippawa, which transaction so elated him that with the assistance of Winegarden they relieved the keg from all further responsibility in guarding the whiskey. I will here premise, that at this time, and for years after, I was a consistent teetotaler, (although Temperance organizations were at the time unknown) the benefit of which the sequel will show.

After replacing our provisions lost on the lake, we went to Chippawa and discharged our cargo; which done, we went to Macklem's tavern, where the captain got drunk and remained so day and night a whole week. After that we got him into the boat, went to Fort Erie, took in a cargo of flour, and returned to Chippawa, discharged our cargo, returned to the tavern, and soon saw the captain drunk again. After waiting another week I formed the resolution to leave when opportunity should offer. Luckily a neighbor of mine came to Chippawa with a boat load of flour, who agreed to let me work my passage home. I went to Cunningham for my wages, which he refused to pay, as my month had not expired. After I left, the captain hired a dissipated fellow in my place; they went to Fort Erie, took a boat load of flour, and started down the river. The wind, blowing heavily up the river and meeting the current caused a heavy swell, which the boat by being heavily laden was unable to ride. So she foundered, and the boat and men went over the Falls together, while I was safe at home.

Yet my safety I attribute to my aversion to drink and drunkenness. Had it been otherwise, I should have remained in his service and have shared his fate, which fate some would call the will of Providence; for too frequently Providence has to father the evil effects of our indiscretions, where that better judgement that is intuitive in man is disregarded and Providence charged with the result.

Notes

Garrett Oakes would be in his nineteenth year when he took this job. He was the son of a sea captain and he must have been raised beside the water in New Brunswick. This would account for his expertise in the handling of a boat. See op. Cit., Owen, *Pioneer Sketches of the Long Point Settlement,* pp. 211-214.

...the only immediate reward was the object of communication...

St. Thomas Journal, October 19, 1877.[1]

In the year 1803 Colonel Talbot, with seven families, settled in the Township of Dunwich, near Lake Erie, and to the location he gave the name Port Talbot. At this time he made application for, and received a government grant for ten thousand acres of land, in Dunwich, and bordering on a concession called Talbot road. He stipulated to give each actual settler two hundred acres, but he gave fifty acres only, retaining one hundred and fifty of each two hundred, contrary to the intention of government. He thus kept possession of 7,500 acres; yet for the services by him rendered in settling the townships now comprising the County of Elgin, and

considering the low price of land at the time, it was but a fair compensation. Few men could have settled all the land in the same period, for he knew at sight the man that could be made to take the poor land, while the good land was sure to be taken.[2]

In 1804 the Colonel had a grant of one thousand dollars from the government to make a road from Waterford to Port Talbot. He engaged John Bostwick, a surveyor at Woodhouse, County of Norfolk, to make the road who hired an Indian acquainted with the whole route of sixty miles. By this means they were able to shun the marshy and difficult places. Mr. Bostwick, while opening the road, measured and marked a tree at the end of each mile with the number of miles from Waterford. This was a satisfaction to travellers and land hunters, who had to use the road for years until the Talbot road was opened and made available for use. When Bostwick had finished the road the Colonel gave him two hundred acres of land, at Kettle Creek, in addition to a thousand dollars, and on this land in after years he founded the village of Port Stanley. But before that time Bostwick had risen from the ranks, in the militia, to hold a Colonel's commission.[3]

Now, keeping in mind what Bostwick received for making sixty miles of road, fifteen of which was across plains where all the labor was to chain and mark the way, I will show what has been done where the only immediate reward was the object of communication with the outer world. In December 1810 David Brush, James Brown and myself made a road from Talbot road to the mouth of Catfish creek, ten miles in length, which took five days to accomplish; sleeping without shelter, with four inches of snow on the ground. In the winter of 1811 the same hands, with the assistance of one man, made a road from Kettle creek to Port Talbot, fourteen miles. In 1812 the same men were guided by William Wilcox, who with a pocket compass, took us straight to the Norwich Mills, while carrying our provisions, twenty-eight miles. Although his survey of the route was through a dense forest, to a place he had never visited, our confidence in the correctness of his course was so implicit that we made the road, as we followed him, at the rate of from two to three miles a day. Such confidence would have appeared unwarrantable to all but those who, like ourselves, were acquainted with his sagacity as a hunter, since it risked the loss of our labor; but our trust was not in vain, for there was not the deviation of a furlong from a straight line to the mills. So the aggregate of the three sections of road we had made was fifty-two miles, and but eight less than Bostwick's road, for which he received one thousand dollars and two hundred acres of land.[4]

But should anyone of the present generation be required to travel the fifty-two miles that took twenty hard days labour to construct, nothing short of a spring carriage with fast horses would induce him to undertake the journey. Truly, there is a falling off from the energy of the pioneers of Canada, for we had the whole distance to travel on foot, and with axe and handspike in hand, to clear a road before us at the rate of from two to three miles per day, with the discomfort of sleeping by a winter's campfire in the snow.

Our summer vehicle in those times was made from a pole, by splitting the large end about five feet up, then parting the split part in the shape of the letter V on which to nail boards, with stakes to hold the load. Then, when the small end of the pole was put in the ring of the ox yoke, the extreme ends only of the split part would touch the ground, and this for years was our only substitute for wheeled carriages. Yet, in the woods, such a conveyance had its advantages, as it would go over any log the oxen could cross, so that the forest could be traversed in any direction with a full load regardless of roadways.

One trait in the character of the first settlers was their faculty of being content with small things. I will give one example. First, I will premise that there is not a span of horses in the county of Elgin that can give to the owner that heart-felt satisfaction of pride and independence of feeling that I experienced, while driving my little team of yearling steers fifty-six miles, in going to and returning from the Norwich Mills, through the deep snow, with eight bushels of corn on their little sled, and a small bunch of hay to feed them with on the road. To this day I can realize the sensation of pleasure I experienced while watching the little fellows enjoying their lunch, with the keen relish that is the reward of exercise in man or beast, more especially where the labor of the poor is spiced with the anticipation of coming independence.

I will relate an expedient resorted to by one of the first settlers, where labor and perseverance overcame the necessity of waiting for a saw-mill to supply a much felt want. George Lawrence, living where St. Thomas now is, being on the beach one mile east of Kettle creek, found a plank twelve feet long and two inches thick, afloat in the lake. He took it on his shoulder and carried it home, the distance being eleven miles, and all this merely for lumber to make a table. Of this there are witnesses still living. [5]

The first death on Talbot road was that of a young woman, daughter of Abraham House, in 1811; when Captain Secord gave boards to make a coffin which boards were in use as shelves, and had been carried on their shoulders by men from the mouth of Kettle creek, seventeen miles away.[6]

Notes

1. This article also appeared in the *London Free Press* on October 23, 1877.
2. Oakes has the right idea but the wrong details. Thomas Talbot settled at Port Talbot in May of 1803, but only with a few hired men, not seven families. The details of Thomas Talbot's landholdings, and his efforts to acquire land, have long been a subject of controversy. Talbot's original grant in Dunwich Township was 5000 acres. For details on how he built up this grant the reader is best advised to consult op. Cit., Fred Coyne Hamil's book, *Lake Erie Baron.*
3. There was a government grant in 1804 of 250 pounds to be spent on roads in the London District. Thomas Talbot, William Spurgin, John Bostwick and Nathan Barnum were appointed Commissioners to oversee the expenditure of the money. They wrote and submitted a report to the government dated September 14, 1804 describing the state of the roads in the district, primitive, and requesting permission to layout a new road from approximately Burford to the western edge of Aldborough. Permission was granted and between April 18 and August 28, 1805, John Bostwick surveyed and laid out a road which appears to have run from the Long Point settlement to somewhere in the Talbot Settlement. The Commissioners spent 249 pounds Halifax Currency on this work, of which sum John Bostwick received 74 pounds. The rest went for men, provisions, and the hire of a team of oxen. See Public Archives of Canada, *Upper Canada State Papers,* Record Group 1, E3, Volume 87, Talbot Settlement, 1792-1843, pp. 1-25. Also op. Cit., Hamil, Fred Coyne, *lAk£ Erie Baron,* pp. 52 & 53; op. Cit., Ermatinger, Charles Oakes. *The Talbot Regime,* pp. 36 & 37.

   John Bostwick was granted 600 acres of land in Yarmouth in 1804, but this would be before he did any work on the road. See Oakes's article of May 21,1875 for details on the Bostwick family.
4. It should be noted that Bostwick was surveying for a permanent road, while Oakes and his companions were probably cutting out winter sleigh roads. See Oakes's article of February 6, 1874. James Brown patented Lot 61 North of the Talbot Road in Yarmouth Township on June 19, 1816. William Willcox settled on Lot 66 South of the Talbot Road in Yarmouth. Willcox, or Wilcox, is described as being from Wainfleet in the County of Lincoln, and received his land by an Order-in-Council dated August 23, 1810. Willcox patented the lot on December 4, 1817. See *Early Township Land Papers (Yarmouth Township);* also *Elgin County Crown Land Patents Register. 1795-1943.*
5. George Lawrence settled on Lot 48 North of the Talbot Road in Yarmouth, which he received through an Order-in-Council dated April 6, 1813. Lawrence patented the lot on November 30, 1818. See *Early Township Land Papers (Yarmouth Township);* also *Elgin County Crown Land Patents Register. 1795-1943.*
6. For information on David Secord see Oakes's article of December 12, 1873. For information on Abraham House see Oakes's article of January 23, 1874.

...to exchange my solitude for one companion...

St. Thomas Journal, November 2, 1877.[1]

In the year 1811 I went on foot to Port Ryerse and hired a canoe to carry flour and other articles, to the amount of 660 lbs. Weight, from Port Ryerse to Catfish Creek. When I had reached the Long Point carrying place, being alone, I had to carry my cargo across the forty rods of point; then the canoe, that ordinarily required four men to take it across, had to be taken by myself or give up the enterprise. But at that time I had not learned to look for impossibilities. So, by persevering efforts, I had my canoe afloat on the other side, and I reached the Catfish Creek in safety.

Now came the tug of war to get my cargo taken home; but as 400 lbs. Of it was flour in bags I had it taken on horse-back by the only horse in our settlement, owned by Capt. Secord, for which service I paid him $2.2 At that time there was not a yoke of oxen in the settlement. The other 250 lbs. I carried on my shoulders, which took four journeys with sixty pounds weight per load. This required eighty miles travel, forty of which was with sixty lbs. Weight on my back, and on which transaction at this late date I can look back and realize the feeling of independence I experienced as I deposited each successive load in my shanty.

But a lonesome time I had of it as my shanty was situated fifty miles from the outer world, and five families within the limits of eight miles composed our settlement. So let sages proclaim the charms of solitude; let the hermit declaim on the opportunity for devotion by leading the life of a recluse; or let the misanthrope shun his fellow-man. Yet as I was not twenty years of age at the time of which I write, I found that nature had denied me the boon of believing in their logic; so that I longed to exchange my solitude for one companion, and that one to be of the gentler sex. As proof of which, before I had reached the age of twenty-one years Providence directed me into the harbor of matrimony, where I found a mate to take charge of, to us, the precious cargo as it accumulated on board the ship while sailing through the sea of life, so that before we reached the end of our voyage we counted eleven young sailors with their names registered as assistants, until the old ship should be laid up and dismantled.3

But to return. The canoe had to be taken back; so I had to go on alone, and as it would take a whole day to go from Catfish Creek to Port Ryerse, I started in the afternoon and stayed that night by the canoe. But before leaving home I had cut my foot with a hoe, and during the night inflammation set in. The foot began to swell and the pain kept me awake all night. Still at daybreak I started – the foot still swelling so that I could not stand to pole the canoe, consequently I had to sit and use the paddle, a slow process in comparison with the poling. After passing the Otter Creek the wind rose so that I was forced to land, the foot still swelling and the pain still increasing. I went on shore and lay down to wait for the wind to fail, but by this time the foot had swelled out of shape and the livid color was turning black, and I feared mortification if I should remain all night without something to relieve it. When I thought of the carrying place, and knowing that I could not get the canoe across in my crippled state, I determined to start for the nearest house, which was at the Long Point bay, sixteen miles distant, and through the woods without a road.

Nothing short of the certainty of death by remaining would have braced me up to the starting point, so I wrote with red chalk on the paddle “Please don't take this away, as I shall return for it soon.” I then climbed the bank, went into the woods, cut a staff about five feet long to be used by both hands to lessen the weight on the lame foot, and started. After walking a short distance I found my only chance of getting through was to go fast, by taking a short step with the lame foot and a long one with the other in quick succession so that with the help of the staff I made good time as long as I could endure the pressure on the foot; then lay down on my face to let the blood gravitate to lessen the inflammation; then rise and repeat the same mode of locomotion then take my resting spell at the end of each mile.

Thus, by alternately resting and walking, before dark I had reached the house. As soon as I opened the door I lay down on the floor. Mr. And Mrs. McFick, the proprietors, looked at my foot and pronounced it “gangrene.” They assisted me to bed, and Mrs. McFick made a large poultice to cover the whole of the swelling, which eased the pain, so that before midnight I fell asleep and in the morning found the swelling nearly gone. In two days I could travel with comfort. I then went for the canoe. I had the sixteen miles of woods to pass through to where I had left it, and then I could realize the seemingly superhuman perseverance requisite to accomplish the task of travelling sixteen miles in my suffering condition. But the canoe had been taken away, so that I had to travel twenty-five miles to get home, and pay ten dollars for the canoe into the bargain.

Notes

1. This article was later republished in the *St. Thomas Daily Times,* October 17, 1891.
2. Captain David Secord was a captain in the Middlesex Militia in the War of 1812. *The Early Township Land Papers* record a grant to David Secord the Younger of the Township of Charlotteville, "Gentleman," dated August 10, 1810. This was for Lot 70 on the North Side of the Talbot Road, otherwise called Lot 25 in the 9th Concession of Yarmouth. See *Early Township Land Papers (Yarmouth Township),*
3. Oakes married Maria Long on March 3, 1812 at Charlotteville. She died on November 21, 1848. Oakes's second wife was Julia Parrott, a widow, who died on May 12, 1869. Garrett Oakes passed away on April 6, 1881. All three are buried in the New Sarum Baptist Cemetery.

...honorable dealing and gentlemanly bearing...

St. Thomas Journal, September 2,1879.[1]

In the year 1809, two young men, John and Seth Dunham, from the State of New York, came to Dover, County of Norfolk, Canada, to work at their trade as house builders. In 1812 the American war began. Now, during their three years' stay at Dover, from 1809 to the commencement of hostilities, they had, by their honorable dealing and gentlemanly bearing, earned and realized the good will and esteem of a large circle of acquaintances, so that when the militia were organized for immediate service in the field, Seth, the younger brother, was appointed Sergeant-Major in a regiment of the Norfolk Incorporate Militia, which regiments were governed by the same code of military laws that were in force in the regular army – corporal punishment excepted, which was substituted by imprisonment. The other branch of the militia were termed "Flankers," and the number of men required for immediate service were taken from the different Flank Companies by draft, and those drawn were liable to fine or imprisonment for absence or insubordination until dismissed.

Now, during Seth's two years' service in the field he had secured the good will and confidence of his superiors, so that his promotion was but a question of time. At this time (1814) John, having no property in Canada to protect, concluded to go to York State and remain until peace should be restored, but unwisely persuaded his brother Seth to do likewise, who, having a large number of relatives to go to, induced him to leave his regiment at his brother's solicitation, but went without settling their accounts, so that in a short time their wants induced them to return to settle all their business transactions and bid farewell to Canada.

At this time the road between Fort Erie and Dover lay along the shore of Lake Erie, and on this road, a few miles east of Dover, there lived a man by the name of Francis, who had served as captain in the British service during the American revolution, who, being too old at this time for military service, diverted himself by taking his old musket, stopping travellers, and marching them back to Dover to be tried by court martial as spies. So the Dunhams, on their return, when passing his house, were met by Francis with his old musket, and taken back to Dover to be tried as spies, for the reason that they had attempted to return without a pass from the proper authority, which had constituted them spies according to the rules of warfare; so that the court that tried them without dereliction of duty and an evasion of the law, were powerless in regard to exercise clemency, so they were found guilty. When asked what they had to say against the finding of the court, Seth, in a touching plea, showed the absurdity of even the thought of their coming as spies, as it was plain to the mind of everyone

acquainted with the profile of the sparsely settled country west of the Niagara river, of which the Long Point settlement was the western limit of its population, that it was without a fortress to betray, without Government store for the enemy to plunder, or a standing guard to surprise. Where the opposition to be met where they would weaken, the Canadian forces would be a hasty collection of the flank militia that constituted the defence of the settlement which if collected would avoid an engagement and waylay them on their return through the wilderness, of which the Americans would be well aware. And had they been spies, as charged, they would not have allowed an old man to take them back to Dover, but trusted that their two years' untiring obedience to the orders of their superiors, while in the field, even when led to face perhaps members of their own family to shed each other's blood, would warrant their acquitta1.But although his plea carried conviction to the mind of the court, that treachery was not intended, yet they were powerless in regard to a mitigation in their sentences, pleaded with an eloquence that seemed to be inspired by the desperation of their situation for the life of his brother John, that he might be spared for his family's sake (a wife and two children), even if he should lay in irons till the end of the war. But, as the pardoning power was at Quebec, the distance so great, and travelling dangerous, where a surprise by the enemy was looked for at every turn, there was no alternative but to carry out the sentence, so they were hanged forthwith. But if the spectators at the trial had not been a law-abiding people, their sympathy for the culprits would have been tangibly demonstrated by an immediate rescue; yet they concluded that if they could not protect the innocent they could at least prevent a repitition of the revolting scene. So, immediately after the execution a dozen men, armed with rifles, went to the house of Francis and found it occupied by a family by the name of Shiver, who said that Francis was not at home, when they were ordered to remove their goods, as the house was about to be burned, Francis, who had taken to the loft, heard their decision, and fearing that his doom was sealed, began to plead for his life. He offered to make restitution to those he had wrongfully arrested; and when the smoke became suffocating to him he came to the window and begged to be allowed to jump out, but the answer was, “The blood of the Dunhams must be avenged, for which you must die,” when a volley from their rifles left him a corpse to be consumed with the house. But as there was no investigation had, or called for, the reasonable inference is that the public approved of the retribution; yet a repitition of the tragedy under other circumstances than the needless and aggravating annoyance to good subjects, merely to gratify the capricious whims of an old man that led to the ignominious death of two respectable and respected men, the Dunhams, could not be tolerated without demoralizing the whole community. But if those authorized to exercise the pardoning power had been available, the sympathy manifested towards the culprit by all the spectators at the trial would have warranted the justification of the act of clemency by that power, and the disagreeable act of retribution avoided.

Notes

1. This article originally appeared in the *London Free Press* of December 5,1878.

   E.A. Cruikshank mentions a Captain William Francis who was murdered at his home in the Township of Woodhouse by a group of American marauders in October of 1814. See op. Cit., Cruikshank, E.A., *The County of Norfolk in the War of* 1812. p.35.

   Oakes' article is a rather garbled account and does not agfree with the published source material. Neither Seth nor John Dunham served in either the First or Second Norfolk Regiments during the War of 1812-1814. The editors can find no record of the hanging of Seth Dunham. Oakes describes the event as if it took place in Norfolk, but the only treason trials were at Ancaster.

   In the York Gazette of January 21, 1815, there appeared the following:

500 Dollar Reward

His Honour GORDON DRUMMOND, Esquire, President, administering the Government of the Province of Upper Canada, and Lieutenant General commanding his Majesty's Forces within the same.

To all to whom these presents shall come,

Greeting:

Whereas, on or about the twenty first day of October last, Captain William Francis, of the Norfolk Militia, in the District of London, was most inhumanly murdered in his dwelling-house which was at the same time burnt to ashes.

I have thought proper, by and with the consent of His Majesty's Executive Council for the Affairs of the Province (that the persons guilty may be the more speedily detected) to offer the above reward of Five Hundred Dollars, or One Hundred and Twenty-Five Pounds, Provincial Currency, to be paid immediately to any person or persons who shall give such information as may lead to the apprehension and conviction of all, or any of the persons concerned in the murder or in the arson or burning of the dwelling-house of the said William Francis.

In Witness whereof I have hereunto set my Hand and Seal at Arms at York this eleventh day of November, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and fourteen, and in the fifty-fifth year of His Majesty's Reign.

(signed)

GORDON DRUMMOND, President

By Command of his Honor,

WM. JARVIS, Sec'y

N.B. One John Dixon, a principal ringleader of a party of rebels, occasionally infesting the District of London, is suspected of having been concerned in the murder and arson.

The reward advertisement had disappeared from the York Gazette by June, 1815.

In November, 1813, a band of marauders from the United States were operating between the Grand River and Port Dover. At a public meeting held in the home of William Drake at Port Dover on November 11, 1813, officers and men of the Norfolk Militia signed a declaration that they would drive the marauders away.

Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Bostwick, in a letter dated at Woodhouse, November 14, 1813, stated that a group of Norfolk Militia left early on the morning of November 13 and surprised the raiders at the house of John Dunham, “which had for some time been one of the principal places of rendezvous” for American marauders. Some of the marauders were killed or wounded, and some escaped. Some members of the American raiding party are named in Bostwick's report, but neither Seth nor John Dunham are listed.

A John Dunham was found guilty of treason at the “Bloody Assize” held at Ancaster. He was found guilty on June 20, 1814 and hanged at Burlington Heights on July 20, 1814.

About the middle of October, 1814, another group of American marauders surrounded the house of Captain William Francis. He was shot and burned with his house. Everyone in Norfolk regarded it as a very brutal murder.

There was a family named Dennis living on Captain Francis' farm. They made depositions about the affair on December 3, 1814 before George C. Salmon, J.P.

For the above see:

Riddell, William Renwick, *The Ancaster 'Bloody Assize' of* 1814 . *The Ontario Historical Society. Papers and records, Volume XX.* Toronto: Ontario Historical Society, 1923, pp. 107-125.

Cruikshank, Lieutenant-Colonel E., editor. *The Documentary History of the Campaigns Upon the Niagara Frontier in* 1812-1814. *Volume VIII, Part IV,* 1813. Welland, Ontario: Lundy's Lane Historical Society, 1907, pp. 156-158 and pp. 181-186.

Cruikshank, Lieutenant-Colonel E., editor. *The Documentary History of the Campaigns Upon the Niagara Frontier*

in the year 1813. *Part III.* Welland, Ontario: Lundy's Lane Historical Society, 1905 Cruikshank, Lieutenant-Colonel E., editor. *The Documentary History of the Campaigns Upon the Niagara Frontier in* 1814. *Part II.* Welland, Ontario: Lundy's Lane Historical Society, n.d. pp. 225-226 and 319 -320.

...the few articles indispensable...

St. Thomas Journal, September 9, 1879.

In the year 1803, at the age of thirteen, I came from New Brunswick to Port Ryerse. At this early date, 76 years ago last July, the settlement consisted of a few families located on the shore lots, between Port Dover and Port Rowan.

Besides, there was a small settlement a little north of, where Simcoe now stands, known by the name of Calver's Settlement. At this time there were but two grist and two sawmills in a distance of fifty miles.

The first store was established at Port Ryerse in 1807, by Daniel Ross. Up to this time, I am unable to say where or how the people procured the few articles indispensable to their primitive housekeeping and simple farming operations.

The enterprise was joyfully hailed by the people. But Ross took undue advantage of their necessities. Such was his rate of profit that a miser in the contemplation of his rapid gain would have gone wild with delight. Some idea may be formed of what the profits were by the result. In ten years he had cleared the snug little sum of $60,000. This immense amount was drawn from a population, few in numbers, with no other means than what they extracted by indomitable energy and daily toil from the wilderness in which they had cast their lots. But what comes with the wind goes with the rain. A speedy retribution was awaiting the man who ground the faces of the poor with selfish delight and amassed his wealth at their cost. A man named Wilson went to his house and relieved him of $40,000 and made good his escape.

The next advancement, and one that proved of great advantage to the people, was a carding machine – the first in Upper Canada. It was established at Port Ryerse in 1807, by James Standering. For many years the price of carding was a York shilling a pound, or six pounds for a bushel of wheat. The hand cards were then laid aside, for at that price it appeared as if the machine was doing its work gratis. A serious inconvenience was experienced throughout the settlement by the scarcity of hollow ironware. This had to be brought from Albany, N.Y., and what was obtainable in this way commanded fabulous prices. In proof of this I need only mention that I paid ten dollars for a five pail kettle that was split in two halves.

Our want of these needed articles occasioned the next step in the advancement of our settlement. In 1812 a man named Mason commenced the erection of a foundry at Charlotteville, county of Norfolk, but unfortunately for him he failed. Joseph VanNorman then took hold of the enterprise, and in the latter part of 1814 completed an extensive establishment. Let me say, just here, that Joseph VanNorman relieved the necessities of more people than any other one man in any other line of business had done, or ever will do, for the people of Canada. Every family then living between Windsor and Toronto shared in the accommodations which his useful manufactures afforded. Besides, for many years he may be regarded in the light of a public benefactor. He gave employment and good wages to hundreds of needy men. For all this his memory should be venerated and his life and labors held in grateful esteem.

The iron ore having become exhausted at Normandale, Joseph VanNorman wound up his business affairs and went to Montmorenci where he employed all his capital in the erection of a new foundry. Unfortunately the ore which at one time appeared plentiful and of good quality could not be worked, and the venture became a total failure. The enterprising good man is now living at Tilsonburg, spending his latest days happy and contented, as

certainly so good a man ought to be.2

In this connection I will give an incident in Van's life, where presence of mind proved more efficient than firearms for the safety of his life.

He started with a sleigh and horses to deposit a large sum of money in Toronto. On the road he overtook a lady who solicited a ride. The request was readily granted. Shortly after taking her seat a gust of wind blew open her cloak, and revealed the butt of a horse pistol. He said nothing, but thought rapidly. The truth was plain. He had a robber beside him. He struck his horses and they sprang forward. At the same time he threw back his head and his hat fell off. He politely asked the lady to step out and get his hat, which she did with evident reluctance. As soon as she touched the ground he laid on the whip with a will, and on the flight which the speed of his horses made good, a ball whistled past close to his head as an attempted punishment for his ungallant desertion of the indignant but pretended lady. He succeeded in making a safe deposit in the bank with but the trifling loss of his hat.

Our next public improvement was of great assistance to the people, but of no great advantage to the country. During the war a blockhouse was built on a Government reserve of Ordnance land at Turkey Point, Norfolk county, which from observation only I should think to be 100 feet square. The walls were constructed of flat pine logs, fifty feet long, laid on each other to the height of eight feet, with two log partitions to support a covering of flat timber. The walls were then raised four feet higher and filled with earth. This was in its turn covered with four inch plank. So constructed the block house was considered bomb proof. On top was mounted a 24 pound traversing gun. The sides were pierced for musketry, with a field piece at each of the three sides. After the completion of the fort, the officers, tired of inactivity, agreed to divert themselves by causing a false alarm. When the bugle sounded the alarm and call to arms, in a most incredibly short space of time the infantry were formed into line, the dragoons were in the saddle, the three field pieces and the 24 pounder were manned, the guns were served from the magazine and charged, matches were lighted, and all was ready. Mounted scouts were then sent out to reconnoitre, who, in half an hour, returned and reported the enemy withdrawn. Co!. Hamilton with his wooden leg was in command, and gave the men and officers great credit for proficiency in drill and promptness of action.3

Silas Montross had procured a building lot from the Government on which he put up a large house, which he enclosed but never finished. The officers desired it for a barracks and storehouse, but Montross in his greed set his price at $30,000. The officers through necessity finally came up to $20,000, but utterly refused to go beyond this amount. Montross thought the sale was only a question of time, at his own price, but peace was unexpectedly proclaimed, the works were abandoned, and Mr. Montross' house was no longer needed. It afterwards caught fire and was burned to the ground.

The country did not lose by his greed nor did he profit by his avarice.4

NOTES

1. There was a D. Ross, Esq., who was an agent for the *Upper Canada Gazette* at Long Point. See the *Upper Canada Gazette,* January 16, 1817. It is likely that the first carding and fulling mill in Upper Canada was built in York County in 1803. See op. Cit., Spencer, Audrey, *Spinning and Weaving at Upper Canada Village,* p. 32.

2. Mason was Samuel Mason, and he attempted to set up a forge in 1818. This gentleman was unsuccessful and sold out to the Van Norman Company of Manchester New York in 1822. Members of this firm were Joseph and Benjamin Van Norman, George Tilson, Hiram Capron, and Elijah Leonard.

   The Van Norman Company was quite successful in Norfolk County until the iron ore ran out about 1850. They then moved their operations to Marmora, in Hastings County, where they were not so successful.

   See McCall, Alex, *Normandale and the Van Normans, Ontario Historical Society. Papers and Records. Volume* xx. (Toronto: Ontario Historical Society, 1923), pp. 94-97.

3. There was a blockhouse built at Turkey Point in late 1814 and early 1815, but construction appears to have been abandoned when peace was announced in the spring of 1815. This has been marked as an

historic site by the Historical Sites and Monuments Board of Canada.

See op. Cit., Cruickshank, E.A. *The County of Norfolk in the War of* 1812, p. 39.

See Pearce, Bruce M. *Historical Highlights of Norfolk County,.(S.L.:* Bruce M. Pearce, 1973), p. 49.

4. For information on the Montross family see op. Cit., Owen, E.A., *Pioneer Sketches of the Long Point Settlement,* pp. 411-414.

...without one cent of pay...

St. Thomas Journal, September 30, 1879.

The first courts of law in the London District were held on a Government reserve at Turkey Point, in the township of Charlotteville, county of Norfolk. At that time the counties of Norfolk, Oxford and Middlesex (inclusive of the present county of Elgin) constituted the London District, and Turkey Point was the place to settle all litigation for the three counties. It required their united means to build the court house and gaol, and these were merely a makeshift. About the year 1818 a courthouse was built at Vittoria.[1] What I now shall relate will be from personal observation. I served three years as a constable, not in succession, but frequently as a juryman in the intermediate years. All magistrates and constables were in those days ordered to attend at each session of the Court of King's Bench or pay a penalty, for at those courts the grand juries were composed of magistrates only, and as there were four Quarter Sessions annually the constables were in duty bound to attend five courts each year. As I was living fifty miles from Vittoria I had to travel going and returning, three hundred miles a year, or nine hundred miles in three years. This I had to do on foot, at the same time carrying provisions to last until my return home, and I had to do it without one cent of pay. There was no accommodation at Vittoria for one-tenth of those attending court. But I had plenty of company every night when there. We used to make field beds in the court room with our knapsacks of provisions as a substitute for pillows. During our absence from home we were usually unable to get a cup of tea or coffee to assist deglutition. But the jurymen had the advantage of the constable, for when a case of debt was tried each juror received twenty cents from the prosecutor. The man who could earn enough to get a glass of beer and a warm supper might take it as an omen that fortune with her pitchfork was inclined to boost him to the highest round of the ladder of his ambition, where he could sit at peace with himself and all the world, unless he had taken too much sour krout, shmear cake or baked beans. Should he indulge in such extravagant luxuries some perfidious nightmare was apt to claim him for a bedfellow, and before morning he might find himself brought down to the level of a supperless constable. Yet those of us who lived within fifty miles of Vittoria, were favored when compared with such who lived at the western limits of Middlesex, for these had to travel a hundred miles to attend court, when their only road was made by clearing off the underwood and old logs to the width of twelve or fifteen feet – a road that went winding between and around the large trees, and following the high ground to avoid the swamps and impassible places. This was the only road for years, and I have seen females who had travelled the way on horseback at the risk of their lives, and who took nearly three days to accomplish the journey. Yet the necessity of having a horse for ladies was a relief to the men who accompanied them, as the horse carried a stock of provisions in addition to a blanket for the dame. These were essential requisites, for it was invariably necessary to sleep two nights in the woods before reaching Vittoria, and the same, of course, on the return journey.

At one of the courts held at Vittoria there was a case tried – the parties lived near the western limit of Middlesex – where a man named Crow was charged with stealing a yoke of oxen. While one of the witnesses was under examination the Judge said to him, "Now, young man, as the yoke was taken off the oxen at night and they were found the next day on the premises of the prisoner with the yoke on them, do you mean to tell me that they yoked themselves?" “Well, sir,” replied the witness, “I can't say they didn't. The oxen were muleys, you see, and while they were feeding they might have put their heads through the bows and so have become yoked.

However, I have heard mother read that in a multitude of councillors there is wisdom, so what do you think about it, Judge?"

When the court house at Vittoria was burned, it was determined to erect a new one on a reserve made by Governor Simcoe, the first Governor of Upper Canada, for the site of a town to be called London. The building was constructed of flat logs, and on the ground floor was a log partition to separate the gaol from the gaoler's room. The court room above was reached by stairs outside. As soon as the house was roofed, William Parke, the old Vittoria gaoler, removed to London to assume his office in the new building, and I assisted him to finish the court room in rought manner as a makeshift until the new court house should be ready for occupation. In the year 1828 I attended court at London, when an incident occurred that brought the business of the court nearly to a standstill for twenty-four hours. The episode was chargeable to one McGregor, who kept a small tavern near the court house. At that time there was no brewery there to furnish beer, and Mac had to turn brewer himself or miss the dimes that were afloat. So, at it he went. He was puzzled, however, for hops were not obtainable for the manufacture of his precious stuff. But a bright idea struck him, and he used aloes as a substitute. The scene that occurred that night can be better imagined than described; suffice it to say that a great many claims in the court room were hurriedly abandoned, but I stuck to mine till morning, for the simple reason that I did not imbibe Mac's novel brew worth a cent. [2]

Notes

1. The London District was organized in 1800 and consisted of the counties of Oxford, Norfolk and Middlesex, and the area directly to the north. At this time, a large part of the local government was done by Justices of the Peace meeting in Courts of Quarter Sessions. The first courts were held at the home of James Monroe in the Township of Charlotteville, Lot 14, Concession 5, mainly because he had the best house in the area. From 1802 to 1815 the courts were held at Turkey Point, where a courthouse and jail were constructed in 1804.

   After the War of 1812 a brick courthouse and jail was erected at Vittoria, at a cost of 9,000 pounds. This building was the location of justice and the administrative centre for the London District until it burned in 1826. Because of the fire, and because the centre of population had shifted to Middlesex and Oxford Counties, London was made the administrative centre for the London District in 1826, and the courts moved to this location. Kenneth W. McKay says that until facilities were built on the then empty site of London, the courts were held in St. Thomas.

   See op. Cit., Owen, *Pioneer Sketches of the Long Point Settlement,* pp. 325, 387 & 501; op. cit., Ermatinger, *The Talbot Settlement,* pp. 122 & 123; Armstrong, Frederick H., *The Forest City. An Illustrated History of London,* Canada, (s.l.: Windsor Publications Ltd., 1986), pp. 22 & 23. Also Cruikshank, E.A., "The Early History of the London District," Ontario Historical Society. *Papers and Records.* Volume XXIV. Toronto: Ontario Historical Society, 1927. Also, McKay, Kenneth W., *The Court Houses of a Century,* (St. Thomas, Ontario: Elgin Historical and Scientific Institute, 1901), pp. 5-8.

2. Mahlon Burwell did the survey for the Town Plot of London in 1826. The first settler in the new town is generally considered to have been Peter McGregor, who moved to the town in 1826 and built a shanty on what is now the south side of King Street, "a short distance west of Ridout." He operated a hotel and tavern on this location for the convenience of people attending the courts. See Campbell, C.T., "The Founding of London," Centennial Review 1967, (London, Ontario: London and Middlesex Historical Society, 1967), pp. 4-19.

...frequently ballots were purchased...

St. Thomas Journal, October 3, 1879.

The ballot is a blessing that can only be appreciated by those who have spent the greater part of a long life before its adoption. At our elections for members of Parliament in the bye-past, intimidation too often gave the seat to the wrong man, and frequently votes were purchased for a few months' respite in the payment of some paltry sum of money. Under the present system of balloting for jurymen those elected are chosen from all who are liable to serve in the county. And further, each panel is balloted out of the full list of jurors, so that litigants can have perfect confidence that they will get an unbiased verdict.

The difference in this respect was just where the trouble existed in former times. The present mode of dealing with contested elections was shown in the recent East Elgin case, over which a jury could have no control. Under the old system of selecting jurymen, the sheriff, if so minded, could pack a jury for his own interest or that of a friend. He only required to find some shrewd fellow to lead the way, and then he had the whole range of the district in which to find eleven others who only knew enough to follow. So, when the panel was given by the sheriff to the clerk, the verdict was secure. In proof of this I will give one instance of which there are witnesses still living. I myself was an eyewitness to the greater part of the transaction:

In 1806 or 1807 there lived near Port Ryerse a farmer named Coltman, who let his farm to be worked on shares to one Frayer. The latter was a poor, honest, but industrious man, with a large family to support. He occupied a house near the residence of Coltman. In the fall of the year, Frayer's family were short of bread, and induced him to try his potatoes. He told Coltman that he would take a row and leave one, so that there would be no wrong done by the act. Coltman replied, however, that if he took any before they were dug and divided, he would take his life. This made Frayer desist for the time, but at length hunger compelled him to risk the consequence. So he dug a basketful. He started homeward with it on his shoulder, the hoe in his hand, when he met Coltman. The latter was in a towering rage, and followed, cursing and shouting at such a rate that the Frayer family rushed to the door. The old man was about to step on the threshhold when the hoe happened to fall from his hand. Coltman seized hold of it, and with one fearful blow struck the blade into Frayer's skull so that it penetrated the center of the brain. The unfortunate man fell dead, with the hoe still sticking in the ghastly wound. Coltman then walked off with the remark, "1 think he'll dig no more potatoes."

I was there in time to assist in the removal of the body into the house, and I kept watch that night over the corpse. I was then able to realize that if you wish to have proof of genuine, filial affection you must be where a family are gathered round the death couch of a poor but honest father or mother, for in these is their treasure, and where the treasure is, there will the heart be also. Anyone witnessing a scene like the one enacted that night must form the same conclusion, and retain the impression through life, that the home of the humble and contented poor is the resting place of genuine love and kindness.

Coltman was arrested and lodged in jail until the sitting of the court of King's Bench. The witnesses for the prosecution were the family of the deceased - the widow, two daughters and a son the youngest being sixteen years of age. They all testified to the facts as above stated, without variation in their evidence. There was but one witness for the defence - a son of the prisoner a lad of fourteen, who swore that his father struck the blow in self-defence. The jury retired, and in a short time returned with a verdict of Not Guilty. The accused was then set at liberty. There was but one opinion in the minds of the public as to the mode of obtaining a jury who could give such a verdict. I forbear expressing my opinion, but it is satisfactory to know that such things cannot be done under the ballot system. But retributive justice followed Coltman's footsteps. In a short time his eyes grew diseased. He soon became totally blind, and remained with ulcerated eyes for a number of years until death relieved him from a life of torture.[1]

I will mention an incident to show that officiousness is not always profitable. In the year 1818 a negro robbed and burned a store a few miles north of Port Ryerse. He was hung for the crime at Turkey Point. A man named Disbro, who had born a good character, offered his services as hangman. This was tolerated by the people, who were greatly incensed at the loss of the store, which had been erected by Cummings, of Chippewa, to accommodate the settlement. But their resentment became turned as if by magic from the negro to the hangman,

for after the former had hung a minute or two, it was seen that he was still breathing. An inspection showed that the noose was imperfect. Disbro then took hold of the negro's legs, and being a heavy man his added weight soon brought the noose to the choking point. There was an immediate rush made to take vengeance on the hangman, but a few persons with less impulsive natures got him conveyed out of the rabble. He went home, and there remained concealed for three weeks until his business affairs were settled; then he cleared out of the Province, and the rest of the family followed his footsteps shortly afterwards.[2]

Notes

1. The editors have been unable to verify this story. There was, however, a John Coltman living in Norfolk County at about this time. See op. cit., Owen, *Pioneer Sketches of the Long Point Settlement,* pp. 327, 329 &499.
2. This story is partially verified in op. cit., Owen, *Pioneer Sketches of the Long Point Settlement,* pp. 118 & 119.

...aggrieved at the ingratitude...

St. Thomas Journal, October 14, 1879.

Although you have published an article wherein I complained that for sixty years our Legislature had neglected to reward the defenders of Canada in the war of 1812, yet as I still feel aggrieved at the ingratitude of those whose duty it was reward merit, I wish to say a few words more on the subject. The paltry pittance of $20 to each of the survivors of that war was merely sufficient to awaken the sensibility of the poor veterans who, being in their dotage, were expected to receive it as children receive Christmas toys. But there are still a few whose activity of mind is not to be gauged by their physical disabilities, and who have been led by the transaction to take a retrospective view of the hardships and privations overcome by them, the painful remembrance of which had nearly been obliterated by the lapse of time. It is this that led me, for one, to review the doings of three years expended in the midst of danger, toil and anxiety, for which I will now give another reminiscence.[1]

In 1814 a call was made for troops to do duty at the lines, the consequence being that one half of each company was drafted. But there was soon another call on those who got clear, to volunteer for service at Fort Erie. James Brown and myself were among those who stepped forward.[2] Our journey was one of four days, at thirty-five miles a day, and that on foot. We took our provisions, rifles and ammunition, and started off. On the third day we became footsore, owing to the old shoes we wore - yet they were a luxury that many could not boast of for summer wear in those days. We reached Fort Erie on the fourth day. I had often heard the question asked, "What is the use of trying with what is only a corporal's guard in comparison to the American forces, to protect the country at each assailable point along such an extensive frontier?" Often too, assertion was made that the State of New York alone could and would put men in the field sufficient to take and retain possession of Canada until England should redeem it by some humiliating treaty. But these fears and boasts were altogether belied by the result, for when the enemy at last sued for peace not one hostile American could utter the taunt that he stood on Canadian soil. On the contrary, thousands of them are indebted to us for the decent burial we gave them in Canada. Were this not a historical fact few Americans would be found to acknowledge the humiliating assertion.

While at Fort Erie I was the eye witness of an incident that showed the accuracy with which a piece of artillery aimed by a competent cannoneer would carry a ball. One morning a fleet of boats filled with troops left Buffalo harbor and shaped their course for the Fort. As our force was too weak to face them without shelter, the

fort having been previously burned by the Americans, an order was issued to spike the twenty-four pounder and to retreat. This was done, but the boats took a circuitous route and returned to port. That night we were reinforced, and concluded to stand our ground should the enemy effect a landing. So a log heap was raised and fired, and the gun placed on it for the purpose of being heated, so that the spike could the more easily be extracted. But the American boats were seen to leave the harbor before the gun had time to cool again. To assist the cooling process water was applied, and this cracked the breech of the piece. However, when the boats reached the middle of the river the men lay on their oars as if in consultation, having perceived our twenty-four pounder and the activity of our volunteers in preparing to give them a warm reception. They seemed to conclude that their business in Canada was not very pressing, for they returned to port and disappeared. It was then determined to test whether our cracked gun would stand fire. A double charge was rammed home, and the target chosen was an American boat that lay in a position to be raked from stem to stern, at the upper point of Grand Island, two miles distant. When the match was applied we had but a short time to wait to see the boat reduced to kindling wood.

On the third day after our dismissal from Fort Erie we reached within thirty miles of home, and, as the night closed in, a heavy thunderstorm arose. Although we were in the pine woods we dare not sit under a tree, as we knew that it would be dangerous to do so in consequence of the lightning. So we sat on a log all night, the rain pouring down on us in successive torrents till daylight, when we had to travel thirty miles in our wet clothes, carrying our heavy rifles and suffering through fatigue and loss of sleep. It was only by the exertion of that stern resolution which had carried us through many seeming impossibilities, that we could accomplish the last day's journey. But had one of our legislators with his rifle and knapsack of provisions been forced to travel that two hundred and eighty miles on foot, feeling as we did that the labor would be without one cent of reward, I think that in less than sixty years he would have moved in Parliament for at least a supplement to that twenty dollar humbug, called a pension.

Notes

1. For information on this subject see the footnotes to Oakes's article of December 3, 1875.
2. In 1814 James Brown was a private in Captain Daniel Rapelje's company of the Middlesex Militia. He served from May 25 to July 24, and August 25 to October 24. Garrett Oakes was also a private in Rapelje's company during this same period. Oakes served from May 25 to June 24, and August 25 to October 24. Brown lived on Lot 61, North of the Talbot Road in Yarmouth Township, which he patented on June 19, 1816.

   See Public Archives of Canada, Record Group 9, *Records of the Department of Militia and Defence.* Series B. Adjutant-General's Office Upper Canada, 1795-1846. Part 7. War of 1812 Records. Also, *Elgin County Crown Land Patents Register. 1795-1943.*

...the munificent $20 pension...

St. Thomas Journal, November 25, 1879.

In 1814 a company of the incorporate militia were stationed at Fort Erie. They had a field piece manned by an efficient set of artillerymen, one of whom was Thadeus Ostrander, now living in the township of Malahide. Poor Thadeus, by the way, was never able to see the pile granted to him by a grateful country for his three years' service. The exposure that he suffered in those days laid the foundation of ophthalimia, which ended at length in total blindness. Therefore it is that his eyes have never been gladdened with a sight of the munificent $20 pension.[1]

Moses Lee, his cousin, once narrated to me how Thadeus tried to take his life not knowing of course who were the persons he was aiming at. Lee was then in the American service, and was detailed with three others to take a boat load of barrelled flour from Buffalo to Tonawanda. A tier of barrels above the gunwale completed the cargo, so that the boat was very deep in the water. As soon as Lee and his companions reached the river the twenty-four pounder at Fort Erie was brought to bear upon them. The first shot missed, but the second made a road through the upper tier of barrels. Then boat and crew became invisible for a time amidst the cloud of dust. The men began to think that matters were becoming serious enough, so they dropped over the off side of the boat and held on by the gunwale with their heads only above water. Every time the man at the helm saw the smoke of the gun he would lie down and shout to them, and then they would without further ado bob their heads out of sight till the shot had passed. They would afterwards pop to the surface, nearly suffocated by a new cloud of flour. By the time the boat had drifted with the current a couple of miles to the shelter of Grand Island very little of the upper tier of barrels remained. When they were at length out of danger the helmsman drew the men on board and they went on their way rejoicing. If a single shot had struck the boat they would all have been drowned, for not one of them could swim; however, it fortunately happened for them that she was loaded for smooth water, so that a very small margin was exposed.

As soon as they were in safety, Lee remarked: “We can now boast that we have been under fire!”

“Ay,” said one, “and you may add under water too.”

“We can truthfully give a floury account of our trip,” added the second. “According to the command of Scripture,” said the third, “our bread was cast upon the waters, but I don't quite admire these Canadians for doing it for us.”

In the winter of 1814 a call was made for volunteers to drive back a party of American marauders who had been killing cattle that had been wintering at Rondeau. There was no road west of Port Talbot in those days, and we had to travel along the lake on the ice when we came to the east side of Orford. The snow was deep, and we had to clear it away in order to build our camp fires, round which we would sit on our knapsacks till the morning. We had travelled all the previous day and had not rested an hour since leaving Port Talbot, therefore it was little wonder that one of our men became overcome with fatigue. He stepped aside into the woods, lay down, went to sleep and froze to death. His absence was not noticed until we arrived at the next camp, and then we knew that it would be too late to save his life. It is said that many years afterwards, while a man was clearing the land, he found the skeleton of the volunteer with his old musket lying alongside. So, here was $20 saved to the Govemment.[2]

In 1813 Alonzo Pease was living near Yarmouth heights, Talbot road, when he was called to do duty at Sandwich, on the Detroit river. Through exposure he fell sick, and being unfit for duty started for home on foot and alone, the distance by the road being one hundred and forty miles, with scarcely a settler by the way. He reached home on the fifth day, having camped three nights in the woods, and he was buried five days after his arrival. He left a widow with one child dependant on the charity of the neighbors, but our legislators have the consolation that $20 was saved to the country in his case also.[3]

Notes

1. Thaddeus Ostrander served as a private with the 2nd Lincoln Artillery during the War of 1812. He received a certificate for 100 acres of land on July 27, 1820. At that time Ostrander gave his residence as Malahide. He settled on the south half of Lot 16, Concession 3, Malahide Township, which he received by an Order-in-Council dated March 15, 1838. Ostrander petitioned for the land on June 11, 1836. He patented the lot on May 2, 1838. Action on his petition may have been sidetracked by the 1837 Rebellion.

   In 1879 the St. Thomas Journal had this to say about Thaddeus Ostrander: "Thaddeus Ostrander was born at Thorold, Niagara District, Sept. 7th, 1792. He was in the American war, at Lundy's Lane, Beaver Dam, Queenston Heights, &c. He moved to Malahide and settled on Talbot street in 1818; married Margaret Conroy on Sept. 19, 1819, and had seventeen children, eight of whom are yet living. His wife is 78 and quite smart, but he is rather feeble, and has been blind for five years. Still he does light work in

the house. These are Baptists."

Thaddeus Ostrander is buried in the Baptist Burial Ground or Nineteenth Mile Creek Cemetery in Yarmouth Township, but his stone has long since disappeared. See the cemetery transcription for the Baptist Burial Ground prepared by the Ontario Genealogical Society, Elgin County Branch.

See Public Archives of Canada, Record Group 1, L7, Volume 52.

See *St. Thomas Journal,* September 9, 1879.

See *Upper Canada Land Petitions, 'O'* Bundle 21, No.5; also *Early Township Land Papers* (Malahide Township).

2. See Oakes's article of February 27, 1874.
3. See Oakes's article of March 6, 1874.

...the man with corn on his toes...

St. Thomas Journal, December 2, 1879

The first vessel built on the Canadian shore of Lake Erie was the Lodor, a sloop of the carrying capacity of two hundred barrels. She was built at Turkey Point, county of Norfolk, by Job Lodor, and was without a competitor for six years. Then John McCall built the Wild Cat, a boat of nearly the same tonnage, but without a main deck. The freight for a barrel of flour in those days, from Port Ryerse to Fort Erie, was half a dollar, the distance being seventy miles, and there was plenty of employment at that rate. When the Lodor was pronounced to be unseaworthy the owner determined to sell her. So he told a man named Cope that there was a chance of a fortune to be made out of her. Cope was himself of the opinion that the speculation was likely to prove a good one, and he purchased the craft in exchange for twelve yoke of oxen. After engaging a cargo he learned that she had been condemned. There was nothing then for it to dismantle her, and she was left to rot. Cope subsequently accused Lodor with duplicity for saying that there was the chance of a fortune being made out of a condemned vessel. But Lodor replied that his statement was quite correct, "for," said he, "there could certainly not be a fortune made in her, and therefore it would have to be made out of her." However, Lodor had the oxen. He afterwards turned all his property into cash, with which he bought goods and started a store at Waterford. One day several customers were detained in his store by a thunderstorm, when a flash of lightning struck the building and found its way into a large keg of gunpowder. An explosion at once followed, and the men were instantly dashed senseless on the floor. When they revived they found themselves scorched and bruised, while the whole broadside of the house was gone, goods and all. Everything was a general wreck. It seemed to those who hastened to the spot as if the lives of the men had been saved by a miracle. But the catastrophe gave employment to the doctors and housejoiners. Lodor was one of those pioneers whom losses and crosses only stimulated to renewed activity. Although the accident had destroyed all his available means, he nerved himself to redoubled action so that in a few years he was in a position of entire independence. At that time I lost sight of him. But from a knowledge of his business capacity I feel assured that at his death he must have left his heirs a goodly heritage.[1]

When our volunteers were dispersed at Oakland by McArthur's army, our men took to the woods and lay there all night. It was sunset when the rout began. The next morning there was a slight fall of snow. One of our men from Yarmouth was barefoot, and had to walk sixty miles to reach home, over a rough and almost impassable road. There was one stretch of twenty-eight miles without a house by the way, nor was there any possibility of getting shoes. Yet, although suffering intensely from cold his feet were not frozen. To add to his

difficulties he had to carry his knapsack with provisions and blanket, besides a heavy rifle a load any pedestrian on a good road would find a sufficient drawback on his speed and vitality.

I am aware that on paper the force and reality of such hardships and war details become greatly weakened. But the reality was stern enough to the settlers on Talbot road who, at the beginning of the war, when their patches of land were just sufficiently cleared to raise enough corn and potatoes to keep body and soul together, were obliged to leave all in order that they might defend their country from invasion. For three years all improvement was suspended, as there was not a day that we could call our own. And all this for $20 or half a cent for each day of our three years service. Some may say that these sketches of mine refer too often to the $20 grant to the veterans, but to use the old saying, "It is the man with corns on his toes who feels the hurt when they are trodden on."

I think this is the last time I shall trouble the readers of the Journal with these reminiscences of the old pioneer days. I fear their patience must be nearly exhausted, as this is the thirty-third time I have ventured on their forbearance. I have seen my eighty eighth year, and I realize that I am nearly the last of my generation who can narrate incidents that extend over a period of eighty years. Such incidents, how vividly they are impressed on my memory, will be seen by the coming generation as through a mist. But I shall leave these sketches where they will be available at a future time, should anyone have the curiosity to know something of the hardships and doings of the early settlers amidst the wilds of Western Canada. The only apology I shall make for any imperfections in composition is, that nine months' instruction in a so-called school was the extent of the education I ever had the opportunity of receiving.

(It will be a matter of regret, not only to ourselves but to the body of our readers, should our sturdy old friend find it necessary to bring his interesting sketches to a close. The series has been no mere ephemeral work, but will hereafter be found to be of permanent value as a contribution to the history of the early settlement of Western Ontario. -ED.)

Notes

1. E.A. Owen says that Job Lodor was a millwright and housebuilder by trade who came to the Long Point settlement from Sussex County, New Jersey. Lodor apparently moved to Ancaster and Hamilton in later years. See op. cit., Owen, E.A., *Pioneer Sketches of the Long Point Settlement,* pp. 283-286.

   There is more information about Lodor in op. cit., Pearce, Bruce M., *Historical Highlights of Norfolk County,* pp. 45-48.

   Oakes says that this is his 33rd article, but only 32 have been located in the files of the *St. Thomas Journal.* One article must have been in one of the missing papers.

A Story About Counterfeiters ...a most unrighteous and unprofitable undertaking...

undated

The readers of the *Journal* deserve the name of Clear Grits if they continue to show forbearance toward my scribbling. However, my aim is not to give rhetorical flourishes but to state simple facts. So here is another cut off the same old web.

About the year 1835 there was living in the Newcastle district a man named Overfield, who owned a blacksmith shop well furnished with tools. He rented it to a couple of young men from York State, whose time was more taken up with making counterfeit Mexican dollars than with their legitimate business. Yet they avoided all suspicion until they began to pass the money. Even when at length detected, they were not suspected of

coining it. One of them was sent to the penetentiary for seven years, and the other circumstraddled the national boundary and escaped.

Some time after this transaction a young fellow named Moses Long, who had married a daughter of Andrew Nellis, was living near his father-in-law, a few miles west of Brantford. He worked there as a blacksmith for several years, and then bought two village lots. There was a good dwelling house on one of them, and on the other a blacksmith shop with two good sets of tools, on which I paid $200, as his available means would not cover the price of the property. But, before removing to the place, a mortgage that covered the whole was foreclosed, the smiths' tools were removed, and another family put into possession. At this time Long fell in with a man from Newcastle, who offered to let him have a tavern already furnished, at a reasonable rent. A bargain was struck, and the time for obtaining possession was agreed upon. But on arriving at Newcastle he found that the place had been let to, and was only a verbal one, and he was nearly penniless.[1]

On the opposite side of the way was Overfield's blacksmith shop together with a vacant tavern stand. Long rented the shop and a room in the hotel. One day Overfield came to him, and said that he could put him in a way to furnish the old tavern and start opposition to his rival. He then told the story of the two young fellows who had been detected in the counterfeiting business, and how, after they left, he had emptied a large tub in which they cooled their iron, and had found at the bottom five hundred Mexican dollars, all finished except the milling of the rims, together with the tools used in making them. He offered to divide the spoils on condition that the coins were finished, and Long weakly agreed to do the work. Afraid, however, of detection, he finished but few at a time, and always at night.

By this time the owner of the bogus money had served his term in prison. He returned to Newcastle, where he was interviewed by the sheriff, to whom he told where the coins had been deposited. Both of them hied off to the blacksmith shop and there they caught Long in the very act of finishing the last piece. To me it appears like the fullfilment of a decree that the sheriff should have come at the last moment. Long was immediately arrested and handcuffed, and both he and Overfield were taken off to Newcastle gaol. They were conveyed in a double seated sleigh, the sheriff and Overfield on the front seat while Long and the sheriff's son sat *in* the rear. Night had fallen as they were passing through a stretch of wood about a mile from the gaol. Long was wearing a cloak, and under cover of it he managed to get the handcuff freed from one hand. He threw off the cloak, jumped from the sleigh, and bolted for the brush. The sheriff's son shouted out, "Long has gone." The sheriff hauled up. Both jumped out, and set off in chase but Long was out of sight in the woods. Overfield saw his opportunity. He took hold of the lines and drove off, leaving the sheriff and his son standing on the road. He drove five miles, then hitched the horses, went on to the house of an acquaintance and was safe.

Long went leaping and panting through the forest, through the deep snow, avoiding the road, till nearly morning. When almost exhausted he went to the residence of a preacher. To him he told his whole story. The minister was merciful, took a lenient view of the case, and promised to assist him. So he took Long to the house of his brother, who was living a mile from the main road. There he was safe for the time being. In a few days afterwards his protector walked fourteen miles to let Mrs. Long know where her husband was. A girl who worked at Overfield’s volunteered to get Long away. She dressed herself in male attire, took Overfield's team, and getting him on board drove westward through Toronto, past Brantford, and on til she came to the residence of Nellis, his father-in-law. Then she returned home. Young Nellis afterwards drove Long to my place at New Sarum, where he staid a few days. He was subsequently taken to Detroit, where his family speedily joined him. Then they went to Illinois, where he bought a piece of land, built a stone house and blacksmith shop and settled down. He had learnt a lesson, and forever afterwards had a confirmed suspicion that counterfeiting was a most unrighteous and unprofitable undertaking.

Overfield staid with his friend till he saw by the papers that Long had got clear. There was in consequence no evidence against him, so he returned home. But they both owed their escape to Long's small hands, which allowed him to free himself from the handcuffs.

Notes

A copy of this article was given to George Thorman by Lulu Victoria Simpson Crossett, who is a great

granddaughter of Garrett Oakes. To date, the editors have not been able to discover a date for it, or the newspaper in which it was printed. There is no doubt that it is a Garrett Oakes article.

1. Garrett Oakes married Maria Long at Charlotteville on March 3, 1812. Moses was probably a relation.

The Temperance Band ...binding themselves to abstain...

undated

The first temperance meeting ever held on the topic temperance principle, was covered by eight young gentlemen, clerks by occupation, who met in a room over a grocery store, in the city of New York. They framed a constitution and by-laws for the future government of the order. Then they framed and signed a pledge, binding themselves to abstain from all intoxicating drinks. The influence of that meeting has permeated society to a certain extent, throughout the bounds of Christiandom and has suggested the following lines:

The day is drawing near
When brandy, rum and beer,
With whiskey, wine and gin in their train,
Shall be banished from all lands
By those noble temperance bands,
That are spreading over earths wide domain.

When Bacchus ruled the world
And the banner was unfurled
To the breeze o'er the sea and land,
When the nobles of the earth
Joined with those with meaner birth;
Payed homage and obeyed his command.

'Twas then a noble few,
With a philanthropic view,
Saw the evil of his reign, and combined
To put the tyrant down,
Let the world approve or frown,
Assisted by that Power all divine.

And now the little spark
That was kindled in the dark,

Like the sun at noontide it doth shine,
Is sending forth its rays
Till that spark becomes a blaze
To give light to the world of mankind.

So now this temperance plan
Is adopted through the and,
And the nations of the earth see and own
That the cause is all divine,
So in unity they join
Till they drive the dread tyrant from his throne.

Then the millions yet unborn,
Will bless the happy morn,
When the tidings of the new-found plan
Of total abstinence,
Our only sure defence,
Was adopted by that choice little band.

Whose names should be enrolled,
In a book whose leaves are gold,
And then placed in the temples of fame;
Where deeds by heroes done
And all their battles won
Would be dimmed by their contact with these names.

And we that share the prize
Should one and all arise
And take the Gospel widow for our guide.
And each one add his mite
To a cause so just and right
Till universal abstinence preside.

- Garrett Oakes

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some question as to whether Oakes wrote the poem.

Some Reminiscences About William Wilcox ...a man of iron...

undated

Having nothing else to do, I propose to while away a brief space of time by talking about some of my neighbors of the bygone time.

I will take the late William Wilcox to begin with. In 1811 he settled on lot 21, Talbot road, Yarmouth, which location can boast of being the site of New Sarum. Wilcox was, physically and constitutionally, a man of iron. Yet, with all his courage and power of muscle, I never knew him during our sixty years' acquaintance to quarrel with any man. He always avoided anything that would lead on his part to a physical settlement of disputes. But woe betide the man who would force an encounter.[1]

I will relate an incident to show his mode of settling a difficulty of this sort, and the little waste of words that characterized him. It happened that a man named Jackson, from York State, came to Long Point settlement, and soon made himself known as a dissipated, loafing bully. He became a nuisance to the whole neighborhood, and was in the habit of forcing himself into all gatherings, without invitation, and never leaving until he had abused every man whom he thought likely to resent his insolence, with the express desire of raising a row.

At a general training, which took place at Vittoria, I saw a display of his brutal disposition, and the exhibition was quite sufficient to explain why people did not care to have any personal encounter with him. An Irishman named O'Brien offered, after great provocation, to fight Jackson at the training, providing the rules of fair boxing were observed, and that there should be no clinching. This was agreed to. But while O'Brien was stripping himself, his opponent sprang forward, caught him by the legs, threw him down, and in a moment had his nose bitten off. Then jumping up he shouted, "If you have any more men to be ate up bring them on."

Not long after this Wilcox went to Walsingham to see a friend of his named Ellice. He got there at night, as the men were coming in to supper from a logging bee. Jackson was among them, and on seeing Wilcox demanded his name. Getting no reply he said, "What is your business here, sir?" There was still no reply; only a laugh. "Laugh at me do you, sir?" said Jackson, "D_n you, take that;" and he suddenly kicked Wilcox with such force on the right elbow as to dislocate his shoulder. Wilcox immediately let out with his left hand, and struck the ruffian a blow that knocked him senseless into a large wood fire that burned on the hearth. He was speedily hauled off, but not before his hands and clothes were badly burned. Wilcox had never spoken a word during all this time, and the first intimation the others had that he was hurt was after Jackson began to show signs of returning consciousness. Then he turned quietly to the men and said, "Please pull my shoulder into joint." As soon as Jackson could speak he asked if the lightning that struck him had hurt anyone else.

But even after this, the bully was loth to give up the championship. One day he met William McMichael in the hall of Hatch's hotel. "Hillo," said he, "they tell me you're the stoutest man in the settlement, and I intend to whip you." McMichael knocked him down, and he fell on an axe that lay in the hall. It was on his seat he fell. The seat of his pants had a six inch hole cut in them, and Jackson's capacity for sitting was spoiled for the next six months. He afterwards dwindled into obscurity and the settlement had peace.

There is another incident in which Wilcox was an actor that is worth relating. It chanced that William Lyon Mackenzie came to St. Thomas at the time of an election, with the view of aiding the Reform candidates. He had in his carriage a trunk containing paper designed to assist him to his addresses. As he was driving to the common he was fol1owed by hundreds of people belonging to both political parties. On arriving he stood up in his carriage, and had only made a few preliminary remarks when James Neville, a powerful looking man shouted, "Let us upset the d_ scoundrel." A rush was made to carry the threat into execution, and Neville took hold of the

hub of the carriage. Wilcox was standing close by at the time. He seized NevilIe by the shoulders, swung him round like a top, and ordered him to stand off. Then stripping himself of his coat he exclaimed, “I’ll knock down the first man that touches this carriage: Mackenzie, go ahead! and I'll protect you.”[2]

Even to this day I can recall the attitude in which he placed himself, with the rabble in front, who were only kept in check by the determination they could see imprinted on his countenance. The firmness of one man was sufficient to prevent the threatening outrage. By this action Wilcox showed himself to be a true lover of justice, and as generous as he was brave; though a staunch Tory, defending Mackenzie, an impetuous Radical, while the latter was denouncing Toryism in the strongest terms and in such vigorous language as only a Mackenzie could use.

As an expert with his rifle Wilcox never came across his equal, as many who dared to risk their money or their reputation in an encounter with him learned to their cost. A few of his matches will suffice as a sample. Before he removed to Talbot road a man from York state, hearing the fame of Wilcox as a noted marksman, came over to Canada to take the conceit out of him. His challenge was at once accepted. The range was fixed at 100 yards, and the stakes agreed upon were $1 a shot. They fired eleven shots, every one of which was in Wilcox's favor, when the challenger threw up the sponge. A man who was present told me that the top of a teacup would cover every hole made by the eleven balls. So cousin Jonathan went home again, satisfied at least that the dared Canuck had his money.

When Wilcox was more than sixty years of age, a man came from London to New Sarum to have a match with him. They agreed to have twenty shots each, at $1 a shot. The range was 100 yards. Wilcox won the first ten shots, when the man offered to give him a dollar if he would omit the other ten shots. The money was refused, but the request granted, and the challenger thereby saved $10.

Some time afterwards Wilcox was in London and went to the barracks to see the soldiers at target practice. The officer, hearing his name, asked if he was Wilcox the great hunter. Receiving a reply in the affirmative, he said that he heard he was a good shot, and asked him to take a rifle and show his skill. He took one and fired, when the man at the target called out, "He has centred the bull's eye." "Well," said the officer, "if I had a team of such men I would challenge the world."

At the age of seventy five his eyesight was but slightly impaired, and knowing that the owners of turkeys were aware that they never got the value of them when he was allowed to shoot at matches, he once had recourse to a droll stratagem in order to get a few shots. There was a turkey shooting match near Union, so he went to it provided with a pair of spectacles. When he arrived he found that the owner of the turkeys had expressly excluded him from the contest. However, he put on his specs and went to the dame, from whom he requested liberty to have a few shots. He said that when he looked through the spectacles he could see the turkey but dimly at shooting distance which was true enough. The device succeeded, for he was allowed to fire a few shots. So at it he went. But when about to fire he would raise the specs a couple of inches, and the result was that before the dame was aware, her turkeys were dropped for ten cents each - the price of a shot - and he had four good fat turkeys to take home with him.

As a hunter I think I may safely say that his equal never trod on the soil of this continent. He told me that for some years before he gave up following the chase he had kept a correct account of the animals he killed, and that they numbered over one thousand deer, besides bears, wolves, foxes, turkeys, and other game. He has frequently killed two deer at one shot, and once three. As I lived only half a mile from him, during a period of sixty years, I have reason to believe that his statement was within the mark.

Notes

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1. On August 11, 1810, William Wilcox petitioned for land. His petition said: 'That your Petitioner has been in this Province about Six Years, has a Wife and one Child, and has property sufficient to enable

him to begin a new farm." Wilcox's petition included recommendations from W. Crooks, a Niagara merchant; Robert Nichol of Norfolk, a leading merchant and politician; and Thomas and William Dickson, also important merchants of the Niagara area.

The letter from Thomas and William Dickson said: 'We certify that the bearer William Wilcox of Humberston Potash maker, is a sober and industrious man, and we hereby humbly recommend him to the Executive Government of the province as a fit person to obtain a Grant of Two hundred acres of the waste lands of the Crown " Crooks's letter said that Wilcox had worked for him for a number of years as a potash maker and that he wanted to carry on this activity in the new settlement. Robert Nichol's letter was also complimentary: "The Bearer William Willcocks is desirous of settling on the Road leading to Port Talbot. I am well acquainted with his Character which is sober and industrious and I have no hesitation in recommending him as a man who will become a valuable settler."

Wilcox, by the way, signed his name on the land petition as 'Wilcox.' The petition was successful and Wilcox received a grant of two hundred acres by an Order-in-Council dated August 13, 1810. He settled on Lot 66 South of the Talbot Road in Yarmouth, which he patented on December 4, 1817.

Wilcox may very well have worked as a potash maker in Yarmouth. On November 3, 1818, William Wilcox petitioned to lease Lot No. 23 in the 4th Concession of Yarmouth and Lot No. 24 in the 5th Concession. In the accompanying documentation, Lot No. 24 in the 5th Concession was described as a Crown Reserve and that the timber on it was cedar, chestnut and oak. Lot No. 23 in the 4th Concession of Yarmouth was a Clergy Reserve and the timber on it chestnut and oak. Wilcox was allowed to lease the land by Orders-in-Council dated November 4 and 5, 1818.

William Wilcox died on February 5,1863 and is buried in the Orwell Cemetery.

See *Upper Canada Land Petitions,* W' Bundle 9, No. 70, and 'w' Bundle "Leases," No. 125; also, *Early Township Land Papers* (Yarmouth Township).

2. This was probably the 1824 election, when Mackenzie was present in St. Thomas. See op. cit., Ermatinger, *The Talbot Regime,* pp. 113-115.

The Story of a Loaf ...warding off both harm and hunger...

undated

I would not have troubled you again had I not seen that one of your readers, at least, received the announcement of the discontinuance of my sketches with some regret. But now I will give a chapter of incidents that have no pretension to any regular connection.

It is said that bread is the staff of life. Yet it is a fact that it has destroyed life, as in the case of Homer, who, when about to die with hunger was choked by the first mouthful of a loaf given to him in charity. Speaking of Homer reminds me of a couplet that to my mind expresses the different appreciation of dead and living talent better than a thousand lines of ordinary declamation:

Ten cities claim the honor of a Homer dead

Cities through which a living Homer begged his bread.

Now I will give you an instance to show where a loaf of bread served the double purpose of warding off both harm and hunger.

When our militia met McArthur's army at Oakland we found them three to our one, with entirely the advantage of ground. So we had to retreat under a heavy fire, with the enemy's balls whistling past our heads. The tune might have been "Yankee Doodle," but as we had concluded to migrate we had no time to give much critical attention to the music. Three of our men fell a victim to the firing, while a fourth had a singular escape. It was sunset when the retreat took place, and each man went his own way in the woods. Next morning I met some of the men at Waterford, and while taking lunch Ira Disbro called my attention to a hole in his loaf. Then with his knife he extracted a Yankee rifle bullet that had passed through several folds of a blanket, afterwards lodging in the loaf which lay in the knapsack that he carried on his back.

In 1815, at the close of the war, I started for Port Ryerse, having one Dr. Lee for a companion. For nearly thirty miles of the road there was no settler, so we had to pass a night in the woods. We cut pine branches and stuck them in the ground, with the tops in contact. Then, building a fire at the open end, we formed a cozy sleeping place. As I was returning, on the second day after, I endeavored to arrange my time so that I would again sleep in our improvised lodge. But on reaching the place I found a pine tree, three feet in diameter, lying across the sleeping place which we had occupied but thirty-six hours before. How soon it fell after our departure could not be known. I erected a new sleeping place against the fallen tree.

I passed the summer of 1813 entirely barefoot, as my winter shoes had given out and the nearest shoemaker was fifty miles away. But when the weather became cold I went to Vittoria, where I unwisely got a pair at a store for which I paid $3, that being the war price. I put them on and started for home, but before I reached there they were all in pieces, as they were what was termed slop work, and that of the worst description, being sewed with stitches half an inch apart. I threw them away, travelled back again, and got a pair made that did good service. So I had to travel two hundred miles on foot and pay $6 for one pair of shoes. It took eight days time to walk the distance and wait till the shoes were made, in addition to the cost of living. The $6 was at that time to a squatter in the wilderness equivalent to $60 at present. Settlers who came years after this transaction would bear witness to the correctness of my statement, as many of them suffered from the great scarcity of money.

In the early settlement of the county of Norfolk there lived two brothers, Samuel and John - the surname I omit - who had a running account of several years' standing. At last receipts were passed. On the day after squaring up, Joseph went to Samuel and told him that one item in his account had been omitted. "But," said Samuel, "we have made a final settlement, and I have your receipt to prevent afterclaps." "Then," replied Joseph, "I will take you at your word, but I'll tell you what the item was for all that. Three years ago I had a yoke of oxen from you, for which I agreed to give $90." "Oh _ ah _yes," said Samuel, "so you had, but - ." "Hold on," said Joseph, "there is only one but in the transaction. I was willing to pay the $90, but you thought it would be to your advantage to stick to the settlement we made. Very well, I have your receipt, and that, as you truly said, will prevent the possibility of any afterclaps. Ta, ta, Samue1." So Samuel learned to his cost that honesty is the best policy.

I read in Mr. Ferguson's sketch in the Journal how a Mr. Philips, of the county of Brant, acted so ungratefully after the hospitality of Mr. Gunn, of Aldborough. The story reminds me of a similar experience of my own, where a hickory Quaker named John____ , living in Malahide, sixteen miles from my place, played a part. He often had business west, and was very regular in his calls at these times, owing to our previous acquaintance in Norfolk. He was always treated hospitably, and his team well cared for. And he received the treatment as a matter of Course. Not long after his last visit I told my wife that, as we had concluded to see our friends at Vittoria we might as well drop in by the way and give our friend John a call. So we resolved to stay a night with him, as we were sure of a cordial reception. Well, we started off, and got there in the afternoon. We told him what the plan of our journey was, and expressed our pleasure at the anticipation of having a night of his agreeable company. His welcome was far from being cordial: "All my pasture fields are far back; but there is the orchard, if thee will thee can turn thy horses there, but I think the pasture must be light, as it was my potato field." I turned them in without parley, though I smelt a big mouse. Then after a thorough inspection of his surroundings, and when his thurst for approbation was satisfied by a survey of the evidences of his industry and thrift, we went to the house, where but little was said until nearly dark. Then said John to his wife, "Is thee going to get supper for these folks?" "No," was the answer, “I asked Polly if she was hungry, and she says she isn't." But our appetites were ignored. So we went to bed supperless. My wife was uncharitable enough to say that she believed John and the rest of the family had a hearty meal after we turned in. Next morning I got ready to start,

and found my wife waiting. John and his wife went with us to the carriage. Just as we were setting off John said, "Oh, Garret, perhaps thee had better have waited for breakfast." "No," replied I, "we will go to Port Burwell, where we will get breakfast and feed the horses." "Oh, yes. So thee can, it is just twelve miles; farewell." John never called upon us after that.

Notes

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The Story of a Trial ...he was drawn into the act...

undated

I attended a court of Quarter Sessions at Vittoria, and witnessed a farce of a trial, where a man named Edison was prosecuted for slander, very heavy damages being laid against him by a neighbor, whom I shall call Lee. The prosecution, from its inception to its tragic close, was mainly instigated by the Judge of the Quarter Sessions for the District of Niagara. Edison, from the age of nineteen till the day he met the Judge, whose name I shall omit, was known by every one to be an industrious, inoffensive man. His father was not in a position to give him land, and therefore allowed him a couple of years for the purpose of earning a lot for himself. So he went to work with a will, wherever work was obtained. Money was scarce in the new settlement, and wages low, yet by industry and frugality he was able at the end of three years to pay for one hundred acres of land in the township of Bayham. Then came the tug of war. The land was covered with heavy timber, and remote from any settlement. Nothing short of a good yoke of oxen would do after clearing had been effected. So he returned to his former labor, and soon obtained money to buy a team. The time came when he had oxen of his own, ten acres cleared, a house built, and a wife and furniture to put into it.

Edison improved his farm, and all went well until he had a couple of children. Then he bought a horse. The purchase swallowed up all the little savings he had accumulated. Nevertheless his prospects looked as bright as could be expected. It was then, however, that unexpected trouble began to overshadow his life. His neighbor, Mrs. Lee, went on a visit to her relatives near Brantford. Edison missed his horse. He suspected that Mrs. Lee had taken it. Without delay he followed, and found the animal with a man who had bought it from her. The issue of the matter was that he was prosecuted for slander, and before the close of this sketch I will show how he was drawn into the act.

When his trial came on, the Judge left the bench and testified that Edison came to him and voluntarily said Mrs. Lee had stolen his horse and he could prove it. This closed the prosecution. The witnesses for the defence were all relatives of Mrs. Lee; and Tenbrock, Edison's lawyer, was drunk and useless. The question put to the witnesses by the Judge was framed so as to invite evasive answers, and his charge to the jury was pointedly in favor of the prosecution. So the jury returned a verdict in favor of the plaintiff, with an amount of damages which would cover all that Edison possessed. Alas, for the curse of strong drink! Had Tenbrock been sober, the evidence of Mrs. Lee's relatives under a severe cross-examination must have been such as would convict her, and the guilty would have been punished, a valuable life saved, and an innocent family maintained in comfortable circumstances.1

As soon as the verdict was given, Edison asked me to go to his lodgings with him. There he lay down. All his

hopes had now fled, and he only wished to die, but he desired to tell me, before his days were ended, how he was entrapped. Then he related how he went to the Walsingham Mills, after the theft of his horse, and there met the Judge, when the following dialogue ensued:

Judge - "Did you get your horse that was stolen?"

Edison - "Yes."

Judge - "I heard that Mrs. Lee took it."

Edison - "She did."

Judge - 'Why don't you prosecute her?"

Edison - "My reason is this: I had rather lose the horse than their friendship. But now I have both,

and I trust my forbearance will perpetuate that friendship."

Judge - "Noble fellow! I admire your logic. And still you could prove that Mrs. Lee stole your

horse?"

Edison - "Yes; but I consider it will be better to cement our friendship, and that will be an ample reward for the trouble I have had."

Judge - "Young man, I admire your reasoning."

And then they parted. But, with all his plausibility, the Judge sent immediately for Lee, whom he told to prosecute Edison for slander, and to lay heavy damages against him.

"Now," said poor Edison to me, after he had related the story, '1 shall either die or

go crazy."

I told him that perhaps Lee did not wish to ruin him, and all might be right yet.

"No," said he, "Lee is but a tool in the hands of the Judge and will show no mercy

therefore I will not live. May God have compassion on my poor wife and children, whom I shall never see again!"

I then left him, and in less than forty-eight hours he was a corpse.

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1. John Ten Broek is identified by E.A. Owen as an early lawyer in the Long Point settlement who later moved to London.

   See op. cit., Owen, *Pioneer Sketches of the Long Point Settlement,* pp. 392, 527 & 528.

   There were, of course, a number of Edison families in Elgin County. There is no real evidence that any of them committed suicide. For more information see Tait, Lyal. *The Edisons of Vienna.* St. Thomas, Ontario: Elgin County Library Board, 1977.

   See also, *London district. Minutes of the Quarter Sessions of the Peace. Volume* 62, *1813-1820.*

An Election Seventy Years Ago ...accustomed to bogus cheering...

undated

To anyone living in these days a description of a Parliamentary election, as such elections were carried on seventy years ago, must appear as laughable as if it formed part of an amusing comedy.

But as I am not a play-wright I will give the plain facts of an election contest under the old system that kept the Family Compact in power for so many years.

In 1811 the first election of a member of Parliament for the County of Middlesex was held. There was but one place of polling, and that was at Capt. Secord's, lot 24, Talbot Road, Yarmouth.

Mahlon Burwell at Port Talbot was the Tory candidate, and Mallory had been a member of the previous Parliament, and was indeed to run again. So he brought forty qualified voters through the trackless woods to the polling place on foot, each man having his sack of provisions on his back. They had to sleep by the camp fire with the ground for a couch and no shelter but the trees over their heads. The nearest home was at Kettle Creek, eight miles distant.

Col. Talbot was the returning officer, and as Burwell could muster but six or eight good votes, enough required to be manufactured somehow in order to give him a majority over Mallory, otherwise he might as well quit the field.

But the Colonel was equal to the occasion. He was authorized by Government to give land to actual settlers, and to these alone. Presuming on his favor at headquarters and on the cause he was serving, he passed a decree and made proclamation that all could have land who wanted it, and that any man who had his name set down as the holder of a lot would be a qualified voter. Mallory protested against the Colonel's manifesto, but the decree had gone forth, and the contest began. Then, whenever Mallory would require the freeholders' oath to be taken by a voter, the Colonel would refer to his map, where he had just previously entered the man's name, and certify that he was the freeholder of two hundred acres of land.

Mallory objected that they might not keep the land, and perhaps did not even intend

to keep it.

The Colonel's reply was, "If they chose to throw the land away hereafter they could

do so, but their vote is good while they hold it."

Again Mallory objected that they had no title, and merely the Colonel's word that they would ever get one, and if he dealt no more fairly with them than he was doing in this election they would likely have to hunt further for land.

"1 know my duty, sir," replied the Colonel, "and shall do it without dictation from you, clerk take that man's vote."

As the freehold oath was thus set aside there was nothing criminal in the men allowing their names to be set down for land. When asked who they voted for, the reply of "Burwell" was so faint and self-condemning that Mallory felt more sorry for them than otherwise.

But where was the required number of voters to be found? That was the problem yet to be solved.

Here, too, the Colonel gave new proof of his resources. The law allowed the poll to be open for six days. 50 he had time to wait and to stop all the land hunters who went in small companies, were more than usually numerous. He gave them the benefit of his decree, entered their names, recorded their votes and sent them onward rejoicing.

And all the time Burwell kept sitting there, as pompous as a Turkish mufti, his eyes bent eastward to catch a first glimpse of the eagerly expected explorers. The eagerness with which he would grasp the hand of each new

arrival reminded one of the drowning man catching at proverbial straws.

I knew a party of five from Charlotteville - three of them, James, Benjamin, and Christopher Oakes were uncles of mine -who told me before voting that they didn't intend to keep the land on which they voted, neither did they, but Burwell had the votes. 50 the farce lasted until he had a majority and was declared elected.

Those who remained till the declaration of the poll cheered the bogus member to a degree that would have done credit to Wellington's veterans at the victory of Waterloo, had they been accustomed to bogus cheering as taught by the minions of the Family Compact. After being declared fully elected Burwell was placed in a chair and mounted on the shoulders of his vassals whose actions seemed to say, Thus shall it be done whom the Colonel delighted to honor.

But the Colonel would not have dared to act the part of an autocrat were it not for his aristocratic pedigree, and that he could fall back on his influence with the Family Compact.

Mallory had seen the working of contested elections under that power. He knew that a committee of the House would be chosen on whose blind servility the Compact could rely. As he was not in accord with the Family he knew that he need not look for a decision short of the third session. 50, being aware of the influence that the Colonel could bring to bear when a Reformer had an interest at stake, and knowing also that his own political views precluded all hope of fair play, he quietly pocketed the injustice and withdrew from all further contest.

Thus ended the farce.

Notes

A copy of this article was given to George Thorman by Lulu Victoria Simpson Crossett, who is a great granddaughter of Garrett Oakes. To date, the editors have not been able to discover a date for it, or the newspaper in which it was printed. There is no doubt that it is a Garrett Oakes article.

The London District was created in 1800. From 1800 to 1808 the counties of Oxford, Middlesex (which included Elgin), and Norfolk were joined together to form one riding. In 1808 Norfolk became a separate riding, while Oxford and Middlesex stayed joined until 1820.

In 1800, at the Third Parliament for Upper Canada, the representative for Oxford, Middlesex and Norfolk was David William Smith.

In 1804 Benejah Mallory was elected for the Fourth Parliament.

In 1808, at the Fifth Parliament, Oxford and Middlesex were represented by Benejah Mallory.

Mahlon Burwell won the election in 1812 for the Sixth Parliament.

Burwell won again in 1816 at the Seventh Parliament.

See Armstrong, Frederick H. *Handbook of Upper Canadian Chronology.* Revised Edition. Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1985.

See Forman, Debra, editor. Legislators and Legislatures of Ontario. A Reference Guide. Volume 1 1792-1866. Toronto: Legislative Library, n.d.

Fred Coyne Hamil prints the same story in his biography of Colonel Thomas Talbot, and gives as his source the St Thomas Liberal of November 29, 1832.

See op. cit., Hamil, Fred Coyne, Lake Erie Baron, p. 176.

It is interesting to note that Benejah Mallory went to the United States shortly after the War of 1812-1814 broke out and fought as a major in the American forces. Both Mallory and a man by the name of Willcocks were from Oxford County. When Thomas Talbot tried to muster the militia in Oxford County in July of 1812, a great many of the men were not considered reliable. It is quite likely that Mallory and Willcocks had some responsibility for this.

See op. cit., Ermatinger, The Talbot Regime, pp. 82-86.

See also Cruikshank, E., editor. The Documentary History of the Campaigns Upon the Niagara Frontier in 1812-1814. Volume IX. December 1813 to May 1814. WeIland, Ontario: Lundy's Lane Historical Society, 1908. p.25.

See also Cruikshank, E., editor. The Documentary History of the Campaigns Upon the Niagara Frontier in the year 1812. Part IV. WeIland, Ontario: Lundy's Lane Historical Society, n.d. p. 12.

Problems with the Oxford Militia were one of the reasons Henry Bostwick was appointed Lieutenant Colonel in June of 1812. See the footnotes to Oakes article of October 1, 1875 for more information on the Bostwicks.

See also op. cit., Hamil, Fred Coyne, Lake Erie Baron, p. 76-78.

Scarcity of Salt ...which they said was “berry salt”...

undated

During the war of 1812, the only salt obtainable in Canada was the little that could be got by smuggling. Hamilton was the nearest point to the settlers on Talbot road where any could be purchased and the price was $70 a barrel. Near the close of the war two of my neighbors, Moses Price and David Brush, went to Hamilton and paid $72 for one.

At the beginning of the war the Indians told of a "deer lick" near Kettle Creek, which they said was "bery salt." On the strength of their story a meeting of all the settlers in my neighborhood, for miles along Talbot road, was held to form a company for the manufacture of salt. So we organized a joint stock association, with ten shares each to begin with, each share being one day's work. Then preliminary measures were discussed, when it was ascertained that there wasn't a cooper within fifty miles. Of course the question of obtaining barrels was knocked on the head, so it was suggested that purchasers should take their salt in bags. The day was set for commencing work, the names of stockholders being Moses Price, Henry House, David Brush, James Brown, John Wooley, Justice Wilcox and myself. When we started operations we mustered two spades, one shovel and a pick, with a camp kettle to test the strength of the brine as we neared the fountain head. I can tell you that when we assembled, each man with a bag of provisions on his back, we made quite a formidable appearance, and anyone to have seen us would have said, "Now salt must come!" Well, we found the lick, which is near a streamlet that discharges its water into Kettle Creek, being four feet wide at the confluence of the two. It is navigable for muskrats and ducks of the largest size till you reach the falls, which are nearly two feet high. We chose our camping place and, after getting our provisions secured, made preparations for our comfort at night. Then we broke ground, with the most unwavering confidence that we were perpindicularly over a reservoir of the most precious water, brine.[1]

At first the ground was soft, owing to its proximity to the lick, but soon all trace of moisture disappeared. Still we toiled on, until we reached the blue clay, which we unhappily found to correspond exactly with our feelings, if feelings are susceptible of color. The clay was so compact that nothing short of a full grown earthquake could force water up through it to supply the lick with brine, providing any brine existed underneath. The presence of the solid blue clay proved to a demonstration that the water which supplies the lick filters through the friable earth above, and holds in solution some mineral substance of a saline nature that is eagerly sought after by deer and cattle. The stream near the lick was called Salt Lick Creek, but that has been abbreviated to "Salty Creek," which name is as far from fact as to say "righteous Judas."

Well, we concluded that toiling for salt was an ugly job anyhow, and that perhaps salt at Hamilton was higher

than the salt below us. So we broke up camp, dissolved the joint stock company, and returned home.

Notes

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1. Henry House lived on Lot 85 North of the Talbot Road in Malahide, which he patented on February 26, 1831.

   David Brush lived on Lot 63 North of the Talbot Road in Yarmouth, which he patented on June 19, 1816. James Brown lived on Lot 61 North of the Talbot Road in Yarmouth, which he patented on June 19, 1816.

   John Wooley was probably John T. Woolley who lived on Lot 60 North of the Talbot Road in Yarmouth, which he patented on June 19, 1816.

   Justice Wilcox would be Justus Wilcocks who lived on Lot 55 South of the Talbot Road in Yarmouth. Wilcocks patented this lot on August 9,1816.

   Moses Price is probably a misprint for Moses Rice who was likely living on Lot 68 North of the Talbot Road in Yarmouth at this time. See Oakes's article of December 12, 1873.

   See *Elgin County Crown Land Patents Register.* 1795-1943; also *Early Township Land Papers* (Yarmouth Township).

   One wonders if Oakes is talking about Salt Creek in Yarmouth Township. Frank Hunt printed a similar story as told to him by Daniel Drake in 1878. See op. cit., Thorman, *Frank Hunt: Essays on Elgin County,* pp. 18 & 19.