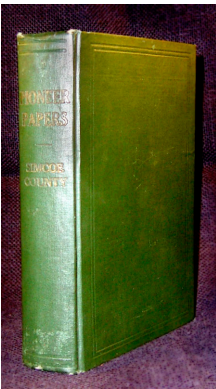




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Simcoe County Pioneer and Historical Society.

PIONEER PAPERS--No. 1.

BARRIE:
Published by the Society.
1908.

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**A FEW NOTES ON THE TOWNSHIP OF SUNNIDALE
AS I FOUND IT FIFTY YEARS AGO, AND MY
JOURNEY TO IT.**

(Written in 1897.)

By George Sneath, Esq.

At that time it was uncertain how the Township came by its name. It was an inappropriate name, for the Township was so thickly wooded and the foliage so dense that it was impossible for the sun to penetrate through and make Sunny dales.

There is a legend in connection with the naming of the Township: A short time before it was surveyed, (1831-2) a party of surveyors and sportsmen left Toronto early in October to explore and hunt over the tract of Country lying between Lake Simcoe and the Nottawasaga Bay. Arriving at the little Village of Barrie they took up quarters at the King's Arms, a small log hotel kept by the late John Bingham, and stayed there for a day or two laying in a stock of provisions and making arrangements for an extended stay in that hitherto unexplored tract of Country.

Starting on their expedition, they had not long left Barrie until they found themselves in the solitude of the bush and in a sportsman's paradise. On the second morning after leaving Barrie, they considered it necessary that one of their number should return to that village and get assistance to take away the game they had killed, as wolves were numerous and following in their tracks and destroying it.

A young gentleman lately from England, a visitor at Government House, who had joined the party at Toronto, volunteered to return to Barrie and get the required assistance. He did not expect to find any difficulty in retracing his way back to the village. He was cautioned by his friends not to lose sight of the trees they had blazed as they went along. He expected to make Barrie easily before night, but he had not travelled long before he lost sight of the blazed trees. He tried in every direction to find them again but failed. He was lost in the bush and became bewildered, travelling at his greatest speed, he knew not whither, until night closed on him. Tired and hungry, he laid himself down; but he dared not sleep for fear of wild animals. His

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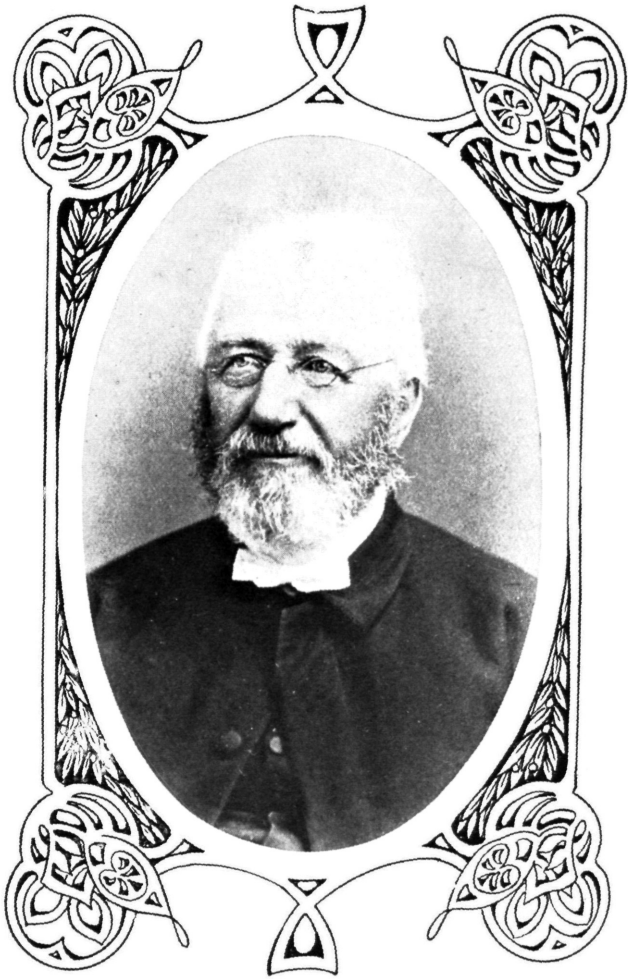
PIONEER PAPERS—No. 2

BARRIE
Published by the Society
1908

INTRODUCTION.

These interesting sketches of pioneer life in Simcoe County in the twenties and early thirties of the nineteenth century, from the pen of the Rev. Thomas Williams, appeared in the ORILLIA PACKET some years ago—the first one in the issue of that journal for November 28th, 1890, and the rest at intervals for about a year. Mr. Williams was a native of London, England, and was a son of Richard Williams, who settled on lot 36 on the west, or Vespra, side of the Penetanguishene Road, near Craighurst, in the year 1822, when the subject of this sketch was not yet twelve years old. When Wellesley Richey was locating the original settlers of the Townships of Flos, Oro, Medonte, and Orillia, Thos. Williams was a member of his party, and he thus acquired a knowledge of the country when acting as “guide to the pioneers,” whom he took to their allotments. He afterwards taught school at Orillia and Craighurst. One of his pupils at the latter place was the Rev. George McDougall, the pioneer Methodist missionary in the West. When he was nearly twenty-nine years of age he himself entered the Methodist ministry, in which he laboured indefatigably for fifty-five years, filling circuits from Amherstburg to Sault Ste. Marie. When between sixty and seventy, he was Superintendent of Methodist Missions on Lake Superior, and in his yacht and on land performed labours which might have overwhelmed a much younger man. On accepting superannuation he returned to Orillia, where he spent the evening of his life, vigorous and respected to the last. He passed away on the 1st of February, 1899, in his ninetieth year. Possessed of a remarkably good memory, Mr. Williams retained to the last vivid and accurate impressions of the pioneer days, and was fond of relating his youthful experiences. The reminiscences preserved in the following pages were, however, as far as known, the only ones he committed to writing.

On the 16th July, 1845, Mr. Williams married Deborah, second daughter of Robert Keays, of the Township of London. After spending upwards of fifty years of happy wedded life together, they passed away within a few days of one another, Mrs. Williams surviving her husband only four days. They had a family of ten children, of whom eight survived their parents.



The Rev. Thomas Williams

VII.

As near as I can now ascertain, the first real settlers—those who took land with a view of making homes and deriving their living from the land—came to the country in the year 1819. Some may have come in 1818, but I can find no proof of such coming. Our family came in 1822. The land was “taken up,” that is, ours was selected and a location ticket obtained from the Surveyor-General and Crown Lands Office, in the fall of 1821. When we did reach it and built our shanty, I can distinctly remember our neighbours (and the whole settlement for the first ten miles at least were neighbours). All knew each other and went in and out of each other’s dwellings, and were interested in the affairs of each other; and most of them spoke of coming three years before. A few had been a shorter time. This applies to all the settlements along the Penetanguishene Road. At or in the vicinity of Penetanguishene there were some few families which were not of the military or naval forces stationed there. They were of the class which the soldiers there would have called civilians. Some might have been considered a sort of camp-followers, carrying on some sort of business or mechanic art, and deriving their living in that way from such works as were carried on in connection with the Naval and Military Establishment. One family of these, the Mundys, still remain in the neighbourhood. There was another name—the family was employed much in the same way—but I have lost the name and am not able to recall it. But these were not settlers in the true sense of the term. They were business people. The Mundys afterwards settled in the vicinity. The mother of the Mundy family was a noted person. She lived to be more than a centenarian. She was a native of Quebec; a French woman, and began her married life there. One of her sons became a noted lawyer and rose to the rank and position of Chief Justice of that Province. He called himself “Joseph Remi de St. Valliere.” The name of her first family was Valliere. In the first years of the century she married Asher Mundy, an American, as her second husband, who was for many years a well-known, quiet and respected man in the neighbourhood of Penetanguishene.

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BARRIE :

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SOME REMINISCENCES.

(Apr. 22, 1892.)

By His Honor Judge Ardagh.

When I consented to read a paper before the "Pioneer and Historical Society" of this County, I, rather unadvisedly perhaps stated that my subject would be "Some reminiscences of the County of Simcoe and the Town of Barrie."

My actual reminiscences in connection with this subject would be of very little value, as I am not yet entitled to be styled the "oldest inhabitant," and consequently there are others amongst us, whose recollections, going back a much longer period of time than mine, would cover far more ground and prove much more interesting.

What I give you will be mere *DISJECTA MEMBRA*—some *MEMORANDA*, some not, perhaps—which may prove helpful to the future historian of this county, when preparing a work, which, I have no doubt, will take its place among the annals of Canada.

For many years past I have been in the habit of briefly jotting down not only facts I thought worthy of being noted, but also 'odds and ends' of information coming to me, either from the lips of others, or from sources I had access to either in print or MS., and which at the time I thought worthy of being preserved—and it will be observed that I do not undertake to go back to a time much prior to that when I was able to make observations for myself.

To shew how usefu such a practice may be, let me remind you, (*PARVA COMPONERE MAGNIS*), of the well known story of Marco Sanudo, the Venetian chronicler, who at the early age of eight began to note down circumstances in connection with his native place, which at the time perhaps seemed trifling and hardly worthy of being recorded. This practice he continued for upwards of fifty years, and left behind him some fifty-six volumes of his diary, chiefly of public events, a record day by day of

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PIONEER PAPERS—No. 4

BARRIE
Published by the Society
1911

Reminiscences of a Pioneer

BY

JOHN C. STEELE

I.

SETTLEMENT IN MEDONTE.

As one of the pioneers who settled in 1832 in this part of the County of Simcoe, I will redeem my promise of giving you a few reminiscences of that early time. My father, the late Capt. Steele of the Royal Navy, and I, a lad of fourteen, sailed from London in the good ship "The Branches," on the 25th of March, 1832, and arrived in Quebec on the 17th of May, after a long voyage of seven weeks, having been detained by ice in the Gulf of St. Lawrence two weeks. We stayed in the ancient city for a week, for it was a pleasure to my father to renew the acquaintance of several of the inhabitants whom he had known in the year 1806, when, as Lieutenant of the "Triton" frigate, he had sailed up the St. Lawrence in the month of December, after the buoys had been removed and the pilots had left, having to trust to the knowledge of a fisherman to pilot the frigate to Quebec. The vessel got on a rock, and was got off by the crew of three hundred men all getting to the stern and jumping up and down. The motion made the frigate gradually slide off the smooth rock. To add to my father's interest in Quebec was the fact that an uncle of his was an officer with General Wolfe at the taking of that city. But, "*revenons à nos moutons.*" We left Quebec in steamer "St. George," the Captain being an old shipmate of my father's, and on arriving at Montreal, that city being at that time the terminus of steamboat navigation, we and a number of emigrants embarked on board a batteau, or barge, and were hauled up the rapids of the St. Lawrence by horses, or oxen, as the case might be. My father

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ten years entertaining travellers and visitors. The explanation probably is that Mr. Galt was virtually the guest of Commander Douglas, but was entertained at Mrs. Johnstone's, just as the Dukes of Richmond, Manchester, Northumberland, etc., were the guests previously of Commandant Roberts, but were entertained at the "Masonic Arms."

CHAPTER V.

NAVAL OFFICERS OF THE POST

As already noted, Commodore W. F. W. Owen was appointed to the command of the Canadian lakes in succession to Sir James Yeo in 1815 and was made Naval Surveyor also. He spent the latter part of that year and part of the year following until he returned to England, in completing the naval survey of Lake Ontario. One of his orders during his short regime was in regard to the big guns and an anchor at Holland Landing and their removal to Kempenfeldt Bay, their destination being Drummond Island, the new post selected in lieu of Mackinaw. This order has become in a sense historic from the fact that the huge anchor and guns, as peace had been proclaimed, were dropped at Holland Landing, where the anchor has since remained attracting much attention from its ponderous weight and monstrous size. It took officialdom a long time, nearly two years, to realize that peace had been promulgated, the order being dated July 6th, 1816 (Archives, 1896, p. 172). Capt. Owen had for his assistant in the survey of Lake Ontario Cadet (at that time) Bayfield, R.N., whom he picked up at Quebec on H.M.S. "Wanderer." An interesting sketch of Kingston in 1819 by Cadet (afterwards Admiral) Bayfield is given in the Ontario Historical Society's Records, No. VIII., p. 124, 1907. Sir W. F. W. Owen was born in 1774, entered the Navy as Midshipman in 1788, serving in the ships *Vengeance*, *Hannibal* and *Cullodon*. In 1808 he was taken prisoner by the French and detained at Mauritius for two years. He was employed in the survey of the Bay of Fundy and Nova Scotia and promoted to Rear Admiral in 1847, obtaining the rank of Vice-Admiral in 1854. He died at St. John, New Brunswick, in November, 1857, aged 83 years. Admiral Owen acquired property on Campobello Island, Passamaquoddy Bay, New Brunswick, from which he was known as "Campobello" Owen.

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of Surveyor General of Canada during the regime of Sir Francis Bond Head. Mr. Richardson was a resident of Penetanguishene for some years, about 1825-40, and afterwards was Treasurer of Simcoe County, in the occupation of which office he died.

CHAPTER XI.

SOME HISTORIC FAMILIES.

ADDITIONAL PARTICULARS OF THE HAMILTON FAMILY.

A CORRECTION.—In a previous chapter we stated that Capt. James Matthew Hamilton, the first postmaster of Penetanguishene, was married at Mackinaw by Surgeon David Mitchell, his father-in-law, who read the ceremony from the Church of England prayer book, he being a Justice of the Peace, as there were no clergymen in that region in those days. We gathered these facts from the diary of the late Capt. T. G. Anderson published by the Wisconsin Historical Society, and which statement has been copied by numerous writers. Miss Charlotte Frances Hamilton Rowe of Orillia, a grand daughter of Capt. Hamilton, has kindly furnished us with some additional particulars and a copy of the following document transcribed Oct. 19th, 1875, from a Book of Records at Mackinac bearing dates from 1785 to 1860, viz.: "Michilimackinac, 15th Nov., 1791.—This day was married by Edward Charleton, Esquire, Captain in the 5th Regiment of His Majesty, and Commandant of the Post of Michilimackinac and Dependencies, before the undersigned Notary and in the presence of the subscribing witnesses, Jas. Matthew Hamilton, Ensign in the said Regiment, to Miss Louise Mitchell, daughter of David Mitchell, Esq., by his lawful wife."

Witness :

Benjamin Rocher,
Lieut. 5th Foot.

Witness :

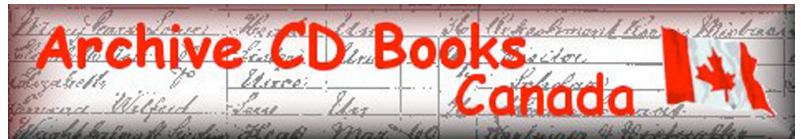
W. Glendower,
Ensign 5th Foot.

J. M. Hamilton,

Ensign 5th Regiment of Foot.
Louise Mitchell, now Hamilton.
Edwd. Charleton,

Captain 5th Regiment,
Commanding Michilimackinac.
D. Mitchell, Surgeon. Etc., Etc.

Capt. Hamilton was the second son of a large family whose mother was Miss Christine Baillie of County Down, Ireland, whose brother, Colonel Baillie, was killed at Mysore in the war with Hyder Ali. The famous "Baillie Guard" at Lucknow was named in his honor. Capt. Usher who married



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