

Historical Incidents

OF THE

COUNTY OF SIMCOE.

A CITY BEAUTIFUL.

COLLINGWOOD, A DISMAL SWAMP
IN 1852, A THRIVING TOWN
OF 6,000 PEOPLE TO-DAY.

IT HAS THAT RARE THING, "GOOD
LOCAL GOVERNMENT," AND
OWNS ITS WATER AND LIGHT-
ING SYSTEMS, WHICH INCREASE
THE TOWN'S REVENUE.

The following interesting and descriptive article from the pen of Mr. John Birnie, B. C. L. LL. B., recently appeared in the Montreal Witness it was accompanied by a number of illustrations, including a portion of Hurontario street, the harbor and the Dry Dock:

The town of Collingwood is a "winning sort of place" so busy and so beautiful, that the traveller within its borders not only carries away with him many pleasant recollections, but becomes, a sort of missionary for the town, by his constant flattering references to it. It is difficult to wholly believe that this now, populous and thriving city was nothing but a dismal and impenetrable swamp in 1852, the haunt and home of the wild deer and the wolf, untracked and untrodden by the foot of man, save some wandering Indian on his way to the hunting grounds of the Nottawasaga river. Such was the case, however, and at that time there were very few settlers in the surrounding country, and what is now well-cultivated farm and golden meadow was then dark primeval forest, with no means of intercommunication from one lone-

ly settlement to another. In 1854, however, the Northern Railway even then reaching out for the great North-west traffic (which now rolls in such volumes from the west to the east,) projected its line to the shores of the Georgian Bay, and its manager, the late Mr. Cumberland with prophetic instinct settled this uncomprising swamp as the northern terminus of his railway. From that time to this, the town has been slowly but steadily progressing. There has been no mushroom growth, no boom, no spasmodic movement, but a gradual, graded, growing which has placed the town to-day on as sound a financial basis as any town of its size and population on the North American continent. The first white man who probably landed on the present site of the town of Collingwood, with the intention of settling, was John Birnie, who came from the Nottawasaga river in 1850; but the shores looked so barren and inhospitable, the only denizens being immense clouds of mosquitoes, which viciously attacked the daring intruder with such vim and violence that Mr. Birnie incontinently bent a retreat and sailed for the river. Others came, however, in 1854 when the town proper was first settled, some of the old residents, being still living, notably, John Birnie, Chas. Macdonnell, and Dr. Stephen. From the advent of the railway settlers began to pour in and soon the desolate swamp was converted into a thriving village which in turn gave place to the populous town of the present day.

Territorially, Collingwood has plenty of room to expand, being sever-