

THE RAPELJE FAMILY

From the St. Thomas Times

Joris Janson deRapelje, a Huguenot, who fled from Rochelle, France, at the time of the Huguenot persecution, is the common ancestor of all the Rapelje's in America. He landed in 1623 on the shores of the New World, and purchased a large tract of land from the Indians where the city of Brooklyn now stands. He was a leading citizen and held important offices during the Dutch Administration.

The Dutch Governor of New Netherlands gave a solid silver spoon to Sarah Rapelje, she being the first white child born in the colony, A. D. 1635. Daniel Rapelje, his wife, three children and his brother Jeronimus migrated to Canada in 1802 and settled in the township of Woodhouse in Simcoe* county. They remained there eight years, and during that time four more children were added to Daniel's family. In May 1810, Daniel Rapelje with his wife and children and his brother Jeronimus embarked in a boat at Port Dover, and sailed westward along the shores of Lake Erie to the mouth of Kettle Creek. There the wife and children of Daniel remained while he and Jeronimus cut out a sled track to the 8th concession of Yarmouth, and built a log cabin on lot one, a little east of the spot where the M. C. R. bridge joins the top of the hill, and a little south of John Bobier's residence. David Secord and David Mandeville were the other settlers on Talbot street in 1810. The Talbot road was surveyed the year following by Col. Burwell, and shortly after a few more settlers located on the lots which now comprise the city of St. Thomas. Daniel Rapelje, like many other pioneers in Elgin, had a hard task before him, but with a look forward to the happy time coming when he saw, as in a vision, a city rising around his lonely cabin, and heard the voices of thousands of people mingling with the rippling of the creek that lay at his feet, he took heart, and plied his axe to the tall trees around his cabin, and started to build the city which he did not live to see, yet before he passed over the dark river he knew that his vision was true. For two years Daniel Rapelje toiled in peace and made good progress with his clearing, but war breaking out in 1812, the settlers in the Talbot district were called upon to take up arms, and assist in repelling the invaders. Dan. Rapelje and his son George, who was 18 years of age, joined Capt. Secord's company, and were in the thick of the battle at Lundy's Lane. They escaped unhurt on that historic

*Norfolk—Editor.