

“After remaining a few days in York the family proceeded to take possession of a farm my grandfather purchased in the township of Clarke, about fifty miles below York. They travelled in open bateaux, when night came on pitching their tent on the shores of Lake Ontario. The journey generally occupied two days, sometimes much longer. They found on the land a small log hut with a bark roof and a chimney made of sticks and clay, the chinks between the logs stuffed with moss, and only a ladder to go to the loft above.”

After living about eighteen months at Clarke, Mary Breckenridge was taken by her father and an elder sister to New York, in order that the latter might be married to a gentleman she had become engaged to on the voyage out. The journey in those days was one of difficulties and adventures.

“About October, 1799, the trio set out. They crossed Lake Ontario to Niagara, which took a day and a half. They had been detained three weeks at York before they found a schooner crossing the lake, and they were detained three weeks more at Niagara before they found a party going on, for people had to wait then for a party to go through the forest, as a caravan does over the desert.

“While detained at Niagara a dark day occurred, which was very extraordinary, and during which strange noises like cannon were heard, which alarmed them very much. They visited the falls, which one came upon through the dense forest, and which were infinitely grander then, in their primeval state, than they are now, when laid bare by civilization.

“After returning they proceeded to Canandaigua, where they found they had not sufficient money to get on, and they had to wait a whole month until a remittance came to them, meanwhile suffering great privations and even hardships.

“Another party having been found, and money having come, they set out once more. They crossed Cayuga Lake over a long bridge, two miles long, and after that, by some means, lost their way—their sleigh first being overset and their money nearly lost in the snow. It was, of course, in those days gold and silver, and carried in a bag.

“After wandering about and quite losing their path they at length, by the moonlight, saw smoke, and proceeding towards it, dogs began to bark, and presently an Indian came towards them, to whom they explained their distress. He proved to be a chief, and very politely invited them into his wigwam. They gladly accepted the invitation, and my mother often speaks of that, to her, delightful night in the bark wigwam, with the blazing logs on one side and the hole at the top, where, as she lay on her bed of hemlock boughs and bear skins, she saw the stars twinkling down on them. The Indians were very hospitable, giving up with great politeness the half of their wigwam to the strangers. My mother does not remember any of the incidents of their sleigh journey for the rest of the way down the Hudson, except my aunt getting a dress made at Albany, where, to her amazement, the dressmaker told her that the open gown with the long train that was in vogue when she left Ireland was done away with, and round gowns were now the fashion.”

They finally arrived safely at New York, and the marriage—on account of which the journey had been undertaken—took place Feb. 12th, 1800. Mary Breckenridge did not return to Canada until 1807.