

Memories—A New Series

Your readers will mostly know that the military road, called the Penetanguishene road, was the base of the first real settlement of the country north of Lake Simcoe. This road was designed to be a continuation north of the then already famous Yonge-street road, leading from York, the then capital of Upper Canada, to the Holland Landing, the southernmost point of the navigation of Lake Simcoe. About the year 1813 or '14 a Provincial surveyor, named Birdsall, was instructed by the authorities to run out a line from a point on Kempenfeldt Bay, Lake Simcoe, to a suitable point on the beautiful inlet of Penetanguishene. This line was to be a military road, but he was to lay out on both sides farm lots of one-quarter of a mile in width, and to limit the rear of these lots by parallel lines on the east and on the west, one mile and a quarter distant, making two hundred-acre farm lots, and numbering them towards the north. These lots numbered to upwards of 120. As these writings are memories, and I have no desire that they should be considered in any other character, I may say that it was my pleasure to meet the gentleman who did that surveying in the year 1836, near his place of dwelling, in the Township of Toronto, not far from the village of Churchville. He was then an elderly man, styled Major Birdsall, a much respected and influential magistrate. The centre line run by Mr. Birdsall has been pronounced by competent judges, who have observed its directness, one of the best, if not the most correct, lines run by compass for so long a distance through a wild, densely-timbered country, in the entire Province. The form and measurement of the lots on this line was the same as prevailed generally in the Province before that time, and as found in all the older settlements, and called to distinguish it from later forms, "The Old Survey." Very soon—the same autumn and winter—men were at work opening up, bridging and crosswaying this road to Penetanguishene, but intended only as a winter road for the passage of sleighs. It was some years afterwards before any vehicle with wheels attempted to pass upon it. As late as 1824-25 the settlers who needed any teaming done did it with sleighs, or wooden-runnered "jumpers," as they called them, drawn by oxen. The road was made along the centre line,