

Recollections of Mary Warren Breckenridge,

OF CLARKE TOWNSHIP.*

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My paper consists of a few extracts taken from the recollections of Mary Warren Breckenridge. These recollections were written from her dictation by her daughter, Maria Murney, about the year 1859. They are interesting, as showing the contrast between those early days in the settlement of Canada and our own more comfortable times.

Mary Warren Breckenridge was the youngest of sixteen children, and was only seven years old when her father, Robert Baldwin, emigrated to America in 1798, bringing with him six children. After meeting with many adventures and being more than once in danger of shipwreck they finally arrived safely on this side of the ocean.

The first extract describes their journey from New York to Toronto :

"My grandfather and his family," she says, "reached New York in June, 1798. About a fortnight was taken up in going up the Hudson in a sloop. The weather was very hot, and they frequently stopped to buy milk, bread, etc., suffering very much from the heat. They took fully another fortnight coming up the Mohawk, where they found the mosquitoes a terrible infliction. From Oswego they crossed lake Ontario to the island—then the peninsula—opposite Toronto, which was then a carrying place of the Indians, and at night they crossed the bay of Toronto, then York, arriving at the celebrated town and finding it composed of about a dozen or so of houses, a dreary, dismal place, not even possessing the characteristics of a village. There was no church, schoolhouse or any of the ordinary signs of civilization, but it was, in fact, a mere settlement. There was not even a Methodist chapel, nor does my mother remember more than one shop. There was no inn, and those travellers who had no friend to go to pitched a tent and lived in that as long as they remained. My grandfather and his family had done so during their journey. The Government House and the Garrison lay about a mile from York, with a thick wood between.

* Read before the Women's Canadian Historical Society of Toronto.