

Memories of a Pioneer

BY

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I.

The intention to fulfil my promise to write up some of my memories of the early times of this North Simcoe country has not been absent from my mind, though the writing has not made its appearance. A difficulty seemed to stand in the way—where should the beginning be made, and from what date should we start? That trouble was overcome and a happy suggestion made by the extract from the Barrie EXAMINER you gave your readers last week. That gatherer seems to be working backward, and in the article you gave us, had got back quite to the beginning and to the borders of the region of myth. How much farther in that direction he purposes to travel, we shall see. I am admonished that my memories must begin at the beginning and work forward. The point first noticed, and from whence the first work proceeded, seems to be the proper starting point to make intelligent work. To begin, then, I would say that settlement had been made south of Lake Simcoe, in North Gwillimbury, near and about Roache's Point, in the early years of this (19th) century, if not a little before. In the early summer of 1822 there were large clearings, well-cultivated farms, old-looking and full-bearing orchards, and many old weather-worn buildings; and I remember also meeting grown-up young people of both sexes who were born in the country. All the region north of the lake remained an unbroken wilderness—a real TERRA INCOGNITA to all the other settlements until the war of 1812, the fur-traders alone traversing it along the lines of Indian travel. The most frequented of these was the Portage, or carrying-place, from the head of Kempenfeldt Bay—where Barrie now stands—to a point where the waters of the Nottawasaga River would carry canoes and boats. This was the shortest, easiest, and most direct route, and most used communication between the