

ST. CATHERINES

WE this month present our subscribers with a sketch of the flourishing town of St. Catherines, in the Niagara District, taken upon the spot by a talented young Canadian Artist.

The point of view selected by him is upon the gravel road leading from this place to the Falls of Niagara, about half a mile on the Thorold side of the town; and, though from the distance at which it is taken, furnishing to a stranger no very adequate idea of its extent, will yet, when taken in connexion with the accompanying sketch, afford our readers some data whereby to form a correct judgment of its present position and future prospects, in a commercial point of view.

The town of St. Catherines, now numbering about 5000 inhabitants, may be said to date its origin from the first carrying out of the project of the Hon. W. H. Merritt in 1824, of uniting the two Lakes, Erie and Ontario, by a ship canal.

So extraordinary, however, of late years has been the rapidity of rise with which the towns and cities of Western Canada have as it were sprung into existence, that our minds, familiarized to the contemplation of the almost magical changes taking place about us upon every side, have been led to regard the more gradual development of St. Catherines as a comparatively slow and tedious operation; but few and short seem the intervening years to those who yet survive to look back upon the time, when the yet unbroken forests waved majestically over this fair portion of our land, or only bowed their lofty heads at the imperious breath of the hurricane;—when, saving the nomadic bands, who in their hunting expeditions occasionally traversed its lonely wilds, the wolf and bear were the undisputed masters of its solitudes, and the wind as it swept mournfully over the yet unfurrowed mountain's brow, fanned not in its course the face of any white man!

Not yet have the snows of the seventieth winter, enclosed in their spotless winding sheet the luxuriant foliage of the seventieth summer, since the land over which we cast our eyes, was first taken up by actual settlers at the almost nominal price of *seven-pence halfpenny* per acre! at which period, the whole Township of Grantham whereon we

stand, containing about 23,500 acres, might have been purchased for the sum now readily given for an ordinary half-acre town lot! and during which short period, the still unbroken forest land, where such may yet be found, has increased in value no less than at the rate of *one hundred and forty per cent per annum*.

The site of St. Catherines, formerly known as the Twelve Mile Creek or Shipman's Corners, after the oldest inhabitant of the place, was first selected as a country residence by the Hon. Robert Hamilton, father of the Hamilton who gave his name to the flourishing and rising city which still bears it, so early as the year 1800, at which period he owned the mills afterwards known as the Thomas's Mills,* upon the Twelve Mile Creek, up to which point, boats at that time ascended; but it was not until after the war, viz. in 1816, that the Town-plot of St. Catherines was first purchased and laid out as a village, by the Hon. W. H. Merritt and Jonathan H. Clendennen, and received the name of St. Catherines in honor of Mrs. Robert Hamilton, whose name was Catherine.

At this time the supply of water from the Twelve Mile Creek was found so very limited for milling and manufacturing purposes, that, with a view of augmenting it, a few of the inhabitants conceived the idea of obtaining an increase from the River Welland, which empties itself into the Niagara River at the Village of Chippewa, a short distance above the Falls of Niagara. The surveys and examinations for which purpose to one of the sources of the Twelve Mile Creek, then known as the Holland Road, now Allanburgh, gave rise to the projection and ultimate construction of the Welland Canal.

The prices paid in 1816 for the land covering the present site of the town, varied from £2 10s. to £5 currency per acre; where, during the last few months, lots have sold by public auction at the wonderfully increased price of *eighteen pounds per foot* frontage; or upwards of four thousand pounds per acre!

Amongst the many elements of future greatness possessed in a striking degree by St. Catherines, we may mention as one of the first in importance, the unlimited amount of water power, with a fall of about 800 feet in a dis-

* Now owned by J. H. Ball.