

# A BRIEF SKETCH OF THE EARLY HISTORY OF GUELPH.

BY ROBERT THOMPSON,

A FIRST YEAR'S SETTLER.

In the spring of 1825, my father, with his family, came to reside in the Town of Galt. He purchased a lot on the west side of the Grand River, and erected a house where we resided for about two years. Galt was at that time a place of about 70 to 80 inhabitants, with one store, one tavern, grist and saw mill, a cooper's shop, a distillery, and about ten dwelling-houses. On the morning of the 22nd of April, 1827, my attention was arrested by a small group of men and ox teams on the opposite side of the river. I was then a boy of about ten years, and possessing, as I believed I did, a fair share of full-fledged curiosity in seeing and knowing all that was going on around me, I hastened to the spot, and very soon gathered from the conversation that the party was preparing to start for a place they called the Block, somewhere east of the Township of Waterloo. So far as memory serves me the party were as follows:—Mr. Galt, Dr. Dunlop, Charles Prior, John McDonald (late Sheriff of Goderich), William Goodin, of Galt, and some eight or ten axe men and chain bearers—four of whom I knew—as Harry and Curtis Lambert, Stace, and Ira Holdin, all residing in or near Galt. The teams belonged to Absalom Shade, and were loaded with pork, flour, whiskey, etc. The easterly part of Waterloo through which they had to pass was at that time but thinly settled, and only one settler in the entire Township of Guelph; this was a man named Rife, who had about two years previous squatted near the westerly limits of the Township, about five and a half miles from the town; the creek running through his farm is still known as Rife's Creek. The distance to be travelled from Galt was about seventeen miles, and for the most part was over a rough and newly-made bush road. The cortege left Galt at eight o'clock in the morning, and reached their destination about five o'clock in the afternoon. As many of the more favoured of the party as could be accommodated took shelter for the night in a log shanty which had been erected a few days previous by the Surveyors; the remainder as best they could, some under the waggons, and some in wigwams covered with the branches of trees.

The shanty stood about thirty yards north of where the Grand Trunk Railway Passenger Station now stands. As the story ran they had a grand jollification that night; what was lacking in domestic comfort was more than made up by convivial cheer—for if they were na fou they just had plenty.

1877