

"WATFORD AS I KNEW IT"

Editor, "The Guide-Advocate,"

Your recent letter was duly received offering me as a former Watford resident, the privilege of writing of "Watford as I knew it", and on the occasion of the approaching Reunion. I am pleased to make some references to the place where I so long resided and which for many years has played a part in the lives of the early settlers among whom were both my mother's and father's people.

My first recollection of Watford goes back to 1875 when as a child of four years, in company with my mother, I visited the home of my uncle and aunt the late Mr. and Mrs. Albert Rogers, at that time a newly married couple, just recently arrived from Warwick village to make their home in Watford.

I recall that on the way into the village we turned off the main road onto 18 sideroad leading into town and that the farm at the south east corner was then all in bush. Being so young at that time I cannot of course recall a great many details regarding the place but a few things are yet very clear to my mind.

I recall that a great thing to me as a boy, was the big bridge over the railway tracks and of the trains passing underneath, the engine giving out great clouds of smoke and steam which would come up through cracks between the plank floor of the bridge. Then too I will recall the wonderful "Golden Lion" which rested over the entrance to the store then conducted by Mr. David Watt and now occupied by Messrs Harper Bros.

I have also a recollection that the "Elephant Warehouse" a store conducted by the late Murdo McLeay was also in operation and of seeing the picture of an elephant painted on the south side of the building. This store is now the Hotel building so long known as the "Taylor House" and I believe yet conducted as a hotel.

Little did I dream then that in later years would I come to reside in the village which had presented to my childish mind such wonderful things as the big bridge, the trains, the picture of the elephant and the wonderful "Golden Lion," but such was to be and in 1887 when I was a boy of sixteen, my mother, after my father's death, purchased and moved into the home which she yet occupies.

I recall however of being in Watford at other times prior to that time. My second visit to the village was when I was ten years of age and at which time my father bought me a suit of clothes at A. Browns. Mr. Brown's store along with others had recently suffered by fire and his stock was then located in a rough frame building on the corner, now occupied by Mr. R. E. Prentiss. I recall the building was back from the street and a big open platform was at the front, and the suit my father bought me was chosen from a pile of clothing out on this platform.

This location was in later years occupied by Bullock and Thorner as a blacksmith shop and later still by Thos. Alexander and son as a carriage shop. As for the suit of clothes—well, it had a double breasted coat and long pants and it cost eight dollars.

On another occasion I recall being in T. B. Taylor's "Photograph Gallery," as it was then called, located about where the barber shop is now opposite the Roche House. Mr. and Mrs. Taylor were not long married, and I remember a life size picture of Mrs. Taylor, she wearing a black velvet dress reaching down to the floor and a large, broad rimmed hat. During this same visit I recall being in the Methodist church with my cousin, Asa Rogers, while some work was being done preparing for an entertainment. A music teacher, one Mr. Holmes, gave us ten cents to go up town and get for him a table.

On another occasion I remember being in Watford along with the Luckham boys of Warwick, on Dominion election night. We were with the crowd in the Music Hall and my old friend "Peg" Shaw was lying on the back seat. It was said

Soon after going to live in Watford I entered the employment of Thom & Doherty. Not many months later Mr. Thom bought out the interest of Mr. Doherty who had removed to Sarnia and there opened the Doherty Stove Works, yet conducted by his sons. My recollections of "The Foundry" are very real to me, indeed. For fourteen years up to the time of his death, I enjoyed the fullest confidences of my employer and realized that in his passing I had lost a good friend. Only recently I had the pleasure of renewing acquaintances with his sons, Will and Dave.

Of the Foundry staff in the early days I recall the names of Geo. Laird, Jas. Johnston, Albert Rogers, Wm. Bryson, Walter Scott, Alfred Radson, Chas. Lawrence, John McPherson, Geo. Apted, Mike Hallisey, Wm. and Thos. Kerr, John Cook, Jos. Hume. Many, indeed most of these men are gone but their names and the "Foundry" have a sacred place in my heart and each time I have visited Watford during the years that are gone.

This brings me to the church life as I knew it in 1887. I recall the Methodist Minister as the late Jasper Wilson, a very kind man and a good preacher. I will recall my first Sunday in the Methodist Sunday School, a class of boys known as Mrs. Thompson's Class sat in the north east corner of the Church. Our teacher was then quite a young woman, and her little wife, sat beside her mother. Some of the boys rather took delight in reaching over the back of the seat and pulling the little girl's hair.

I recall the delightful evenings this class of boys occasionally spent as the guests of Mrs. Thompson and of the kindly treatment by her husband, the late Mr. Wm. Thompson, who in his own quiet way was a prince of a man.

On the occasion of the first Sunday I attended Sunday School. I well recall a class of young women one of whom was Miss Jones, the wife of Mr. Chas. Vail, so long the agent at the C. N. R.

You will notice I have referred this far more especially to my earlier recollections of the old town and its people. I could not undertake to tell all my recollections of succeeding years but much I kindly remember.

The Firemen who so well served in their way deserve a mention and I recall their many field day victories in various parts of Western Ontario. Dave Roche, Jos. Cook, Sandy Mavity, Dave and James Hamilton, Sanford Stapleford, Jake Brown, Tom Hillis, Walter Scott, Wm. Bryson, Albert Rogers are some of the names which I recall as actively engaged in the service of the village as firemen.

Then there was the Watford Silver Band or Plug Hat Famel; led by that splendid citizen, Wm. J. Hastings. Besides the musical victories, these Band Boys used to win there were, the victories some of them used to win with the ladies; for what girl would not admire a Band-Boy in such a suit.

I remember the long photographer Robson, Frank and Charlie Smith, who played the Coronet. Then there was Vic Collier with the Trombone and Elmer Collier and Arthur Moore

Editor Guide-Advocate

I have yours, of recent date, re writing something for the paper in connection with the "Old Boys and Girls Home Coming."

By a coincidence it is not only the 50th Anniversary of the Incorporation of the village and the same Anniversary for the Old Home Town paper but, it is also 50 years since the Collier Family came to Warwick to live and made Watford their Post Office and Market Town. My brother, J. E. Collier still living on the farm, on the 2nd line, where our parents with their boys located at that time, having purchased the farm of the later Jacob Smith. We all attended the Section No. 11 School in that vicinity and of course still remember the Old Boys and Girls in that vicinity, such names as the Wynns, Edwards, Wards, Kerseys, Bruders, Reycrefts, Smiths, Flemings, Clarks, Coreys, Doans, and many others being familiar there.

After four or five years at that school, I came to the Watford Seminary, as it was then known, Thos. White Esq. being our esteemed teacher and I must say he did his best for us all. Can I remember any of the room mates, well a few: "Bill" Hanna, afterwards the Hon. W. J. Hanna; John McLeay, seat mate; Dr. John McLeay, now passed on; Cory Harvey; Sam Hastings; G. H. Wright; Geo. and Frank McDonnell; Gus Brown now A. G. Brown, merchant; "Butcher" McLean, "Bruiser" Bole, (now Mr. Frank Bole of the Regina Trading Co.) and many others and amongst the girls of that room, Ella Wylie, Carrie Kingston, Maggie Saunders, afterwards Mrs. Oxenham of Toronto, Miss Dunham, Martha Molvor, Frankie and Alma Brown, Ina Telfor, and the Hyland girls, daughters of the Rev. P. Hyland of Trinity Church. Others no doubt that I have forgotten.

Amongst the business men who were there in those early days were: David Watt, of the Golden Lion, Peter Dadds and S. Howden shoe makers, W. and T. J. Howden, Contractors, Murdo McLeay, Hungersford flour and feed, Jacob Lawrence and Sons, G. H. Wynn, boots and shoes; J. Bambridge, Willoughby & Saunders; Angus Mitchell; J. Lovell; Thos. Fortune; J. Livingstone; W. P. McLaren & Gordon; T. B. Taylor, Photographer; San Laughlan; Chas. Abbott and Thos. Doherty who run the foundry and machine shop; Tomsonial Artist; Kells & Gearn Coopers; McLeish, Sash & Door factory; Pattenden flour mill; Geo. Stott B. Smith; Andy McDonnell; D. Roche; H. O. Baker; and I could go on but the list would be too long. Then of the younger men, D. H. Howden who was clerk for P. Dadds and when the old Hotel was remodelled, he started a grocery store in one part; John Swift taking over another store in the same building for dry goods, and Mr. S. Howden also coming in there. Then there was Sandy Mavity, and Jack, who used to paint roses on the machinery turned out by the Doherty Foundry. I used to stop on my way to school to watch him. W. M. Clarke, clerk with D. H. Howden, "Peanuts" Clarke the Tailor, Will Willoughby and Fred Saunders. Restoricks also were amongst the old timers, Sanford Stapleford and "Did" his brother.

I have referred to the remodelling of the old Hotel, and the new building, and the "Old Home Town" paper, and the "Old Boys and Girls Home Coming."

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The maple trees back in the bush, and get a run of sap."

We never failed during those twenty-three years of residence on the old farm, to make a few gallons of syrup, and mother found it convenient to swap a few gallons of her best make, for a barrel of sugar from the town grocer.

What old-timer would fail to recall the clay soup that would be the chief asset on Main Street, evenly spread from walk to walk, during the early spring rains, but now you have a beautiful paved street, another evidence that there were many good things that I missed having in my boyhood, because I was born too soon.

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MRS. BUDGE
SO WEAK COULD
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On February 12th, 1865 (so my mother informed me) I first beheld the light of day in the old town. My parents at that time kept open house for travellers at the "Way-side Inn," that stood at that time and for many years after, on the south east corner of eighteen sideroad, and third concession. Then when I was about one year old, my father bought a small farm six miles north, part of lot 16, 2nd con. N. E. R. It was there with my two brothers, and four sisters and I grew up to man's estate, making a life-long acquaintance with school mates and neighbors, many of whom were renewed in friendship during the months of June and July in 1922, when I paid a brief visit to my sisters, and the "Old Home."

As I recall it, my parents never lost interest in the old town, and many of its former residents, for some of my earliest recollections were visits made to their former neighbors, and they took the babies along. And again, Watford was always the trading town, and when I was privileged to go along, how important it seemed when I could walk the length of Main Street up onto the old wooden bridge over the Rail Road track, and wait until a train passed underneath. Phew, how those old wood-burning engines of those days, with their bell shaped smokestacks, would shoot rings of smoke into our faces, and if the engineer would pull the whistle we would be nearly scared stiff. I do not recall the date when the rail-road was built, others no doubt will remember it. As I intimated above, Watford was our place to trade, it was there we swapped our eggs and butter, grain, slaughtered pork, and maple syrup, we always reserved a sugar bush on the old farm, and when the spring days were sunny, "Father then would smile and say, I guess we'd better tap."

The maple trees back in the bush, and get a run of sap."

We never failed during those twenty-three years of residence on the old farm, to make a few gallons of syrup, and mother found it convenient to swap a few gallons of her best make, for a barrel of sugar from the town grocer.

What old-timer would fail to recall the clay soup that would be the chief asset on Main Street, evenly spread from walk to walk, during the early spring rains, but now you have a beautiful paved street, another evidence that there were many good things that I missed having in my boyhood, because I was born too soon.

Editor, The Guide-Advocate,

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