

Chapter VIII.

THE BEGINNING OF LAKE NAVIGATION.

The Northwest Company complained to the Upper Canadian Government in 1811 that the forwarding parties on Lake Erie and elsewhere near the frontier had been continually subjected to the vexatious interference of the United States customs officials since 1796, and they had had boats and property seized and detained. They suggested the use of the route across the narrow part of the province by way of Lake Simcoe, and this soon brought about the navigation of that lake, as well as the establishment of lake ports at the southern end of Georgian Bay for the convenience of navigation on that large body of water, the first of such ports being the Nottawasaga River outlet and Penetanguishene.

At the first the craft in general use was, of course, the birch bark canoe. Then came batteaux, especially in the time of the war of 1812-15; sloops and schooners soon followed on both Lake Simcoe and the Georgian Bay. The inauguration of steamboats on Lake Simcoe took place in 1832, and a "horseboat" was tried in 1838, but did not work well.

THE FIRST SAILING VESSELS ON LAKE SIMCOE.

As the Northern Railway was not opened till October, 1853, the early vessels on Lake Simcoe were chiefly concerned with the first settlement of the County, and must, accordingly, come in for a passing review.

Until the year 1832, a few small boats and one schooner comprised the entire "shipping" of Lake Simcoe. Of the small boats, a sloop belonging to Philemon Squire of Holland Landing was often used by parties of settlers going to different points on the lake.

In 1819, depots were established on the Nine Mile Portage for military stores in transit to the posts on the Upper Lakes; and about the same time an armed schooner was built to sail on Lake Simcoe for the protection of the military storehouse on Kempenfeldt Bay, and the transportation of the stores. It was kept in commission by the Johnsons of Holland Landing—a family of U. E. Loyalists.