

Westboro' of the Past and Present.

Being a Historical Resume of the Days Gone by when Westboro' then Birchtown and afterwards Skead's Mills had its first Beginning.

THE history of Westboro is one of continuous growth and prosperity even away back in years gone by when that section east of Main St. was called Birchtown, after its first settlers, and that portion west of Main St. was called Baytown.

About one hundred years ago the first settler arrived in Westboro, his name was Thompson and it was he who built that large and spacious home now occupied by the widow of the late Thos. Cole. Just about that time the Government built the first road through Westboro which connected Bytown with Richmond. This road was what was commonly called a corduroy road and wound around down by the river. In those days it took an entire day to go to the village of Bytown, now Ottawa, and return to Westboro.

Thompson settled upon that section of this village now known as Highland Park, this farm afterwards past into the hands of a man known as Cameron and from him it was purchased by the late Thos. Cole, father of this present owner, John E. Cole.

In the year 1819, Thomas Birch, together with his wife, who was previously a Miss Sarah Robertson and their one child, came out from Ireland on one of the old time sailing vessels, which were then considered the acme of perfection in ocean navigation. The time taken to cross was four months, due, it is said, to the wariness of the captain of the boat whose passenger list contained a number of wealthy travellers who paid by the day for their passage. The captain with one eye open for business — the longer the trip the more pay — would turn his ship in the hours of darkness and double back for at least one half the distance he had covered the day previous.

After due time the passengers were landed at Sorel, Quebec, where Thomas Birch and his wife and one boy, nine months old, decided to postpone their travels. But not for long, however, as with many others, Birch soon heard of the broad acres of Ontario and together with others, he and his family started for the new lands. Here Birch and his brother Robert, took up residence at Richmond, Ontario, and lived for several years. Then hearing of the River Ottawa and the many advantages of being located near a stream of such importance, he again started over the blazed trail through the bush and settled upon that section what is now known as Westboro, taking up and breaking in a large farm on that portion of Westboro that lies east of Main St. or as it was then about to be known part of Nepean Township. Shortly after taking up residence in this locality, Col. Bye was sent out from England to build the Rideau Canal and the biographer of this historical period has had the pleasure of seeing a coin that was struck off in commemoration of the historical event when the Sappers and Miners built the now removed Wellington St. Bridge in Ottawa. This coin and many others



Home built by Mr. Thompson, 100 years ago.

are at present in the hands of one of Mr. Birch's daughters — Mrs. Peter Paysant, of Main St., Westboro.

Like all early settlers in Canada, Thomas Birch was the father of a considerable number of children. Eight sons and four daughters, of which three survive to-day, — came to cheer his lonely home and help him in his older days. The surviving members of his family are the aforesaid Mrs. Peter Paysant of Westboro and Mrs. James Hayes of Carp, P. O. Huntley Township, Carleton County, both well to do, after many years of hard and continuous work. One son, still alive, migrated to the United States some years ago and of late years little has been heard of him.

Just about one year ago the child who migrated from Ireland with this heroic and fearless pioneer, who thought little of the many trials and dangers of the then wilds of the North American Continent, passed away to a well earned rest at the grand old age of ninety-six years.

As a peculiar instance the ship which so safely landed Thomas Birch, with his family, and other passengers, proceeded but forty miles upon her backward journey when the whole entire bottom fell out and she sank in the Gulf of St. Lawrence River. Many years after, two of Mrs. Paysant's brothers, sons of Thomas Birch, while taking a trip of pleasure, and then quite grown up young men, inspected the ship as she lay on the bottom of the river.

Seventeen hours out of twenty-four was the usual working day in those times. Starting at four o'clock in the morning and winding up at nine and ten o'clock at night. Fifty cents a day was considered