THE RISE OF THE FOREST CITY; LONDON FROM 1826 TO 1836

Arrival of the First Families; Strange Experiences of the Early Settlers in the District.

LOST IN THE FOREST IN ADELAIDE TOWNSHIP

Rev. Dr. Cronyn's Thrilling Adventure—Interesting Extract From Judge Ermatinger's Work, "The Talbot Regime"—Familiar Names—The Legal Profession in Old Days.

By the kind permission of the author The Advertiser reproduces a chapter from Judge Ermatinger's intensely interesting work, "The Talbot Regime." The chapter deals with London's first decade as the new district capital, 1826 to 1836, as follows:

The original reservation for the town of London, made in Simcoe's time, was much more extensive than the town plot surveyed into lots by Colonel Burwell in 1826. The latter covered only some 240 acres, extending from the river on the west and south to Wellington street, on the east and North street—now Queen's avenue—on the north.

The little Scotchman, a tailor by trade, Peter McGregor by name, to whom is generally conceded the honor of having erected the first house in the Forest City, was blessed with an energetic wife, and—as was, indeed, usual with first settlers in those days—they constituted their house a place of entertainment for those having occasion to visit the new district capital. It was but a shanty at best, on King street, a little west of Ridout street. The first public building, the temporary court house, has been already described. It was removed to the southwest corner of the grounds, when the new court house was built. When the new court house itself was completed, this building became a school, in which the first schoolmaster, a Mr. Vanevery, began the instruction of the young villagers. Besides the court and district officials already referred to, the pioneer lawyer, John Ten Broek, physician, Dr. Chisholm, and merchant, G. J. Goodhue, soon appeared. The latter came over from Westminster, obtained a lot on the corner of Dundas and Ridout streets, and established a place of business and became London's first and wealthiest business man. He was from Connecticut, a brother of Dr. Goodhue, of St. Thomas, and was referred to as a "merchant, distiller, pearl ash maker and dealer in pork, in Westminster, and merchant in Ancaster" in 1825, by Peter Russell, a Scotch gentleman—not the president—who traveled through the settlement in that year, and described Mr. Goodhue's premises in Westminster as very centrally situated for business, and kept clean by water conveyed in pipes from the top of the distillery. McGregor's primitive inn was soon eclipsed by the more pretentious "Mansion House" built in 1828, by Abraham Carrol, on the north side of Dundas street, east of Ridout, and by 1829 the town was regarded as one of growing importance, though described as then "quite new, not containing above 40 or 50 houses, all of bright boards and shingles." The handsome court house was, of course, the chief architectural feature, the bricks for which were manufactured at two brickyards near by—the one on the site of the subsequent Robinson Hall hotel, the other on Walter Nixon's land, in what is now London West. Mr. Edwards was the architect, John Ewart, of Toronto, the contractor, with Thomas Parke as partner or foreman in charge of the work. There are traditions of a church in course of construction, too, at this time, but if within the city boundaries all traces of it have long since vanished* It was to have been at the northwest corner of Dundas and Ridout streets, where some burials took place.

In London Township, however, the Rev. Alex. McIntosh, the first incumbent of St. Thomas, is said to have held services, and the Rev. Dr. Stewart, bishop of Quebec to have preached as early as 1822, in the barn of William Geary, and the Hon. Freeman Talbot, already referred to, is authority for the statement that the church, afterwards known as St. John's, in that township, was partially built in that year, though not completed until some time in the forties. The Rev. E. J. Boswell followed Mr. McIntosh from St. Thomas, in 1829. The Geary barn was, moreover, the scene of many baptisms.

Birthplace of Edward Blake.

In the summer of 1832, large numbers of discharged soldiers were sent out by the British Government to settle in Canada. A considerable body of these was placed in the township of Adelaide. So unfitted and unprepared were they for life in the backwoods that the Provincial Government deemed it necessary to come to their assistance by erecting huts and distributing provisions among them. Mr. Roswell Mount, the local member of Parliament, superintended the erection of these rude houses, 32 of which Freeman Talbot states he himself built. At or about the same time came a number of retired officers, clergymen and other gentlemen with their families, from Ireland, who settled in the same locality—Colonel Curran, the Blakes, Radcliffs and others among the number. The Reverend Dominick Edward Blake was appointed to a rectory in Adelaide, while his brother, William Hume Blake, settled on a farm, near the boundary of the neighboring townships of Metcalfe and Ekfrid. Here the Hon. Edward Blake, the distinguished Canadian lawyer and statesman, was born in 1833. His father soon tired of roughing it in the bush, went to Toronto, where, having studied law, he became a leading counsel, a member of the Government, and subsequently chancellor. Here another son (Hon. S. H. Blake) was born. His fund of anecdotes was, however, enriched by his brief life in the backwoods, and among the experiences he was wont to recall was his having gone to the blacksmith's shop for a supply of harrow pins, which, proving too heavy for him to carry, he had fastened to a chain which he placed round his neck—and thus equipped the future chancellor dragged them home through the woods.

*It is said that Patrick McManus, Charles Henry and Dennis O'Brien began business in London about the same time as Mr. Goodhue. These with M. McLoughlin and John Jennings, a brother Irishman, had been traveling pack merchants in the very early days, and with John Carfrae, Abram Carroll and McGregor, formed the nucleus of the new town, Nathaniel Yerex being the earliest inhabitant born in the town.

*The frame of the church is said to have been put up in 1828 on the burial lot opposite the court house, then taken down and re-erected as St. Paul's Church on the site of the present cathedral. The same authority (W. Horton) states that the Methodists built the first place of worship, a frame building on the northwest corner of North (now Carling) and Ridout streets.

Rev. Benjamin Cronyn's Arrival.

In November of the same year in which the Adelaide settlers arrived, the Rev. Benjamin Cronyn came from Ireland with the intention of ministering to their spiritual wants. With his wife and family of two young children in a wagon, toiling and bumping over the rough track of the commissioners' road, he chanced to hear, from a wayfarer of whom he made inquiry as to a place of shelter for the night, of the village of "The Forks," some two miles to the north. Thither he made his way, over the Wharncliffe road and Westminster bridge, to the Mansion House, then kept by John O'Neal. Safely ensconced here in comparative comfort, a day or two's rest was decided on for the wife and family's sake. Sunday service naturally followed the announcement of a clergyman's arrival. It was held in the temporary court house building already mentioned, where a goodly proportion of the four hundred inhabitants the town then boasted were gathered together. On Monday following a deputation waited upon the Reverend Mr. Cronyn and urged him to remain in London. This led to his eventual appointment to the rectories of London and St. John's, London Township, and after many years' service, to his election as the first bishop of the Diocese of Huron. Meantime, the proposed site for a church at the corner of Dundas and Ridout streets was abandoned in favor of that now occupied by St. Paul's Cathedral, where the first church, a neat one, with tower and spire was erected in 1835. The church was a frame one, facing south, and between it and Dundas street a dismal swamp, full of fallen trees and underbush, afforded shelter for the frogs, whose nightly concerts enlivened the summer evenings.

Already a rough church, built of logs with earthen floor, had been erected a little to the north—on the corner of Richmond street and Maple avenue—by the Roman Catholics of the city and county, Irish and Scotch. It was dedicated in 1834 by the Rev. Father Downie, and destroyed by fire as late as Aug. 24, 1851. There were long periods of waiting between the visits of priests to the mission. When one sent word of his coming, Messrs. P. Smith, Dennis O'Brien, James Reid, Hugh McCann and Mr. Cruickshank, the then leading members, sent round the glad message to their friends, who flocked in on the day appointed for mass, while mothers brought their children for baptism.

Difficulties of Marriage.

The difficulties in the way of those desiring to marry, where no ordained clergyman of the Church of England was within reach, in the early days, are well known. Where there was no such minister within a prescribed distance, justices of the peace were empowered by statute, to perform the ceremony, and certificates of marriage are still preserved by some whose ancestors were united by Colonel Talbot.

On Rev. Mr. Cronyn's arrival in London he was intreated by various couples in the neighborhood, many of whom had lived together for years, but had not the opportunity of being married by an ordained minister, to marry them according to the forms of the church. Guided by one Robert Parkinson, he accordingly rode on horseback for days through the bush, stopping at the settlers' shanties and performing the marriage ceremony, oftimes baptising at the same time the children of the parents to whose union he gave the sanction of the church.

When the Wolves Howled.

Meantime his friends in Adelaide were not forgotten. His son, Verschoyle Cronyn, Esq., now the oldest native born resident of the city of London, supplies some interesting particulars, which are given in his own quaintly humorous language, as to his father's early visits to this township, together with some amusing experiences:

"During Mr. Cronyn's first winter on one occasion he, with his friend Colonel Curran, started on foot from London to Adelaide, carrying a quarter of beef strung from a pole between them, for the relief of friends among the settlers. Soon the load grew heavy, necessitating frequent stoppages for rest. Night came on and the wolves, numerous, fierce and daring in those days, scenting the raw beef, howled uncomfortably near. To add to their trouble they lost the trail in the dark, and when about to abandon the beef and endeavor to retrace their steps, discovered a light, and making for it, found a logger's shanty, where stretched on the floor, with feet towards a huge fire, the choppers slept. They hospitably made room between them for the tired travelers, who laid down and rested there for several hours, but were again on the march long before daylight, furnished by the choppers with a lantern, which for a time showed them the trail and kept the wolves at a distance. But soon the light went out and they again lost their path, the wolves howling dangerously near, when they were discovered by some of the settlers on the lookout for the expected succour.

"Often have I listened to strange fireside tales by my father and friends of their Adelaide experience. How they used to sleep on a straw tick, on a heap of brush for a bedstead in the corner of the shanty; of the inconveniences resulting from fowl roosting overhead; how the bed tick grew thin, and the brush underneath becoming painfully present, was explained by the fact, that in order to keep life in the solitary cow, she was being fed daily from the straw tick—and again the host explaining that it was not frequent washing of his night cap that necessitated its being hung out to dry, but simply because it was in it the pudding had been boiled—and how at night they were lulled by the howling of the wolves, which at times becoming too noisy, the door of the shanty would be thrown open and a shot fired in the direction of the nearest howl, when silence would follow."

The parson was a fearless horseman, and his son describes him as he and his horse reach home bespattered with mud, unsaddling and, throwing off all but shirt and trousers, swimming the horse in the river to wash off the mud.

"On one occasion, when driving into town from his residence on the hill, near where Mount St. Joseph's Orphanage now stands, with Mrs. Cronyn and a son and daughter, aged 13 and 9 respectively, in the carriage, the horse took fright at a hole in the bridge over the Medway, and backed the vehicle off into the river. He and Mrs. Cronyn leaped out onto the bridge, but the children went down with the horse and carriage into about eight feet of water. The horse struggled to the log pier of the bridge, where he was able to keep his head above water, but the children, who had been thrown from the carriage, went to the bottom. Mr. Cronyn, without even removing his hat, waited until the water cleared sufficiently to enable him to see objects in the bottom, when he dove down, and, taking a child on each arm, swam ashore with them. My sister was insensible, but soon recovered."

Well Known Families.

In 1836, when Sir Francis Bond Head toured the Province on horseback, being an experienced rider, fond of following the hounds, the Rev. Mr. Cronyn and other leading citizens, while escorting him across the oak plains southeast of London, sighted a deer, when off went the parson's faithful hound in full cry, followed by the governor, the future bishop, and entire cavalcade. Yet the deer, after an exciting run, crossed the river and escaped.

About the year 1832 there arrived by boat at Port Stanley a young Irish barrister, of good family, Mr. J. W. C. Meredith, who made his way into the interior and engaged in farming, married and became the father of a numerous and distinguished family—the eldest of his sons, born in Westminster in 1840, being a chief justice (Sir William R. Meredith), and another (Hon. R. M. Meredith) a justice of the High Court. Mr. Meredith subsequently moved into London and was clerk of the Division Court there.

Reference has been made to the removal of the district offices from Vittoria to London, and it will be of interest to note who the early officials were at the time of the change. Judge James Mitchell, the first judge of the district, appointed in 1819, had been a schoolmaster at Long Point, as already mentioned. Sheriff Rapelje had taken the place of John Bostwick, John B. Askin was clerk of the peace, with William King Cornish as deputy clerk. Mahlon Burwell was registrar; John Harris, treasurer; John O'Neil was high constable; Samuel Park, jailor, and Gideon Bostwick, court crier. Colonel Burwell continued the registry office at his place of residence, near Port Talbot, until 1843. His son, Hercules, succeeded him as registrar. William Young, an English attorney, living on a farm in Caradoc, was appointed as a second judge, owing to the increasing infirmity of Judge Mitchell, who, however, survived him, and Judge Williams, an English barrister from the West Indies, who had settled between St. Thomas and London, was appointed in his stead. Memories of his handsome Creole wife and their daughters, one of whom became the wife of Judge Askland, of Goderich, and another Mrs. Dixie Watson, still survive among some of the aged settlers.

Of the other officials named, Mr. Askin and Mr. Harris became prominent citizens of the new district capital. Colonel Askin took an active part in suppressing the rebellion of 1837, while Mr. Harris' residence, Eldon Hall, beautifully situated a short distance north of the court house on the bank overlooking the river, became a social center, where a generous hospitality was extended to many prominent people in military and civil life, governors-general and lieutenant-governors, and distinguished visitors from abroad. Mr. Harris had served in the navy in his early days. His wife, a daughter of the first chairman of Quarter Sessions of the district, Colonel Samuel Ryerse, was the handsome and clever daughter of a mother who is said to have been a social leader in old colonial days, before the Ryerses became U. E. Loyalist refugees in Canada. Mr. and Mrs. Harris' daughters were accomplished and attractive young ladies, several of whom subsequently married representatives of old country noble families.*

The professions were, of course, but sparingly represented in the early days. When the court traveled from Long Point, some 70 miles, with stops at Widow Coltman's and St. Thomas en route—when affairs of state and many other things were fully discussed—several lawyers were usually of the party. Judge Mitchell, a fellow-student with Dr. Strachan in their native Scotland, is described as a veteran who had decided the case of many a battle, John Harris as possessing a blunt and jolly manner, and John B. Askin as a man of "bluff manners and abundant chop stuff." With these were old Sheriff Rapelje and the lawyers—William Salmon, afterward Judge Salmon, of Norfolk, among others. He, however, never remained at London. John Ten Broek, already referred to, did, and after him came John Stuart, whose duel and litigation with Captain Grogan, of the Thirty-Second Regiment, with accompanying scandals, formed food for talk in subsequent days. Stuart Jones, of a well-known Brockville family, was another pioneer practitioner of London, as was also William King Cornish, the deputy clerk of the peace and father of Frank Cornish, a well-known lawyer and mayor in later day.

John Wilson came in 1834. Born near Paisley, Scotland, in 1809, he came with his parents to Canada to pass his early days on a farm in Lanark County, where he acquired a knowledge of farm life and a sympathy with the feelings of the backwoodsmen, which stood him in good stead in the subsequent practice of the profession of the law, to the study of which he turned when his health had become impaired by work on the farm. He studied in the office of James Boulton, at Perth. Mr. Wilson speedily acquired a large and lucrative practice in London, and became a prominent and leading man, whose power with juries was enhanced by the blunt common sense and unadorned oratory, which were his characteristics. He was generous and kind hearted by nature and it is, therefore, not surprising that he achieved a large measure of success, professionally and politically, in after years. He married, the year following his arrival in London, a sister of David John Hughes, the first judge of Elgin County, who came with his two sisters from Perth in 1835, (the second marrying Hugh, second son of Major Barwick, of Oxford), and soon after commenced, in the office of his brother-in-law, Wilson, to prepare for the practice of law and for a career on the bench unexampled, in its duration of more than half a century in Canada, if not the Empire, so far as the present writer is aware.

John Wilson's office speedily became the headquarters for a coterie of students, who became prominent men throughout the district in after days. Foremost among these, in many ways, came in 1836, Henry Corry Rowley Becher, a young Englishman of good family, sent out to seek his fortune in Canada, who visited the Harrises and took up the study of law. In after

*Sarah B. Harris, the eldest, married in 1846, Lieut.-Col. the Hon. Robt. A. J. Dalzell, C. B., fourth son of the seventh Earl of Camwath, and Helen Vidal Harris, a younger sister, married in 1856, the Hon. Maurice Berkeley Portman, third son of the first Viscount Portman. See Morgan's "Eminent Women of Canada." As to other sisters see Chapter XXXV.

Continued on page 8.

CHRISTMAS SHIPS ALL LADEN DEEP

Clerks in the Foreign Branch of the Postoffice Are Working Double Time.

New York, Dec. 23.—This is the period of Christmas ships. The Kaiser Wilhelm II., the Oceanic and La Lorraine, are the last mail carriers that will land their precious burdens on the other side in time for the holiday cheer.

The Kaiser Wilhelm II. carried away 2,311 ordinary mail pouches and 35,170 registered packages, a smaller showing than last year by 242 pouches and 2,900 registered packages, but Supt. McKelvey of the foreign branch of the postoffice, said this was undoubtedly due to the fact that the North German Lloyd liner sailed at 10 a.m., whereas last year she sailed at 3 p. m. If she had sailed at 3 p. m. the number of bags and packages, the superintendent said, would have been greater than last year.

The average hourly inrush of Christmas letters and registered packages at the foreign branch, at Morton and West streets, is 50,000 of the former and 5,000 of the latter. The men on duty are working double time.

The reason that the force is not increased is that competent men cannot be had. A greenhorn would only be in the way, Supt. McKelvey says. The clerks must be familiar with all sorts of foreign addresses and know what to do with the "fool addresses," as the letters from children to Santa Claus are unsentimentally termed, and also those letters and parcels addressed by ignorant persons.

Hundreds of these "fool addresses" are being received. "Mr. Santa Claus" is addressed at Greenland and Iceland. On some of the letters only a surname appears, on others only a Christian name, while many are addressed with as broad a geographical destination as Europe, the name of the country, province and town lacking. All the letters written to Santa Claus and addressed to places where there is no postoffice find their way to the dead-letter office in Washington.

The Oceanic will be the last logical Christmas ship, Superintendent McKelvey says, because she will be the last steamer going to English speaking countries and arriving there before Dec. 25. The Oceanic will carry 3,000 bags of letters, and from 50,000 to 75,000 registered packages. La Lorraine will carry the Christmas mails for France and the other Latin countries.

The Minnehaha and the Etruria, which sailed last Saturday, were burdened with 3,085 pouches and 55,107 registered packages.

WHILE MOKE prevalent in winter, when sudden changes in the weather try the strongest constitutions, colds and coughs and ailments of the throat may come in any season. At the first sign of derangement use Bickle's Anti-Consumptive Syrup. Instant relief will be experienced, and use of the medicine until the cold disappears will protect the lungs from attack. For anyone with throat or chest weakness it cannot be surpassed.

From Jericho to the Dead Set, the Jordan, and back to Jericho carriages pass when the mud is not too deep, although there is no made road. Carriages go from Yafa to Gaza, 40 miles; from Yafa to Haifa, at the foot of Mount Carmel, 60 miles, and from Gaza across the desert to Beersheba, although no made roads exist. Beersheba is nearly two days' journey south of Hebron.

Coughs, colds, hoarseness, and other throat ailments are quickly relieved by Vapo-Cresolene tablets, ten cents per box. All druggists.

After the battle of Waterloo the Duke of Wellington was created Prince of Waterloo, and four pensions were conferred on him and his descendants. A Belgian paper states that in the Great Book of the Belgian Public Debt there are four entries every year of payments to Prince of Waterloo. They are 80,106 francs 14 centimes, 492 francs, 35 francs 89 centimes, and 3 francs 47 centimes.

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A quaint feature of Samoan life is kava drinking. This beverage is made from the root of the angona shrub, which being pounded and mixed with water ferments and forms a mild intoxicant. It tastes like soap suds and ginger ale mixed and the relish for it has to be required.

Intestines of sea lions are slit and stitched together to form hooded coats, which are superior to India rubber as wateproof garments. Walrus intestines are made into sails for boats by the Eskimos of Northwestern America.