

HISTORY

OF THE

Early Settlement of Muskoka.

The Road was commenced at Washago, in 1853 ; Messrs. St. George and O'Brien were the contractors.

In the fall of 1859, Mr. R. J. Oliver was appointed Locating Agent at \$4 per diem, under the Government of the Hon. John A. Macdonald ; Mr. P. M. Vankoughnet being Crown Lands' Commissioner. On the 1st of October, 1859, he met the settlers at the Severn Bridge and issued about 17 locations—(on the Road only)—James H. Jackson, William Johnson, and John Young, James McCabe, David Leith, and the Simingtons, were the first settlers in the Townships of Morrison and Muskoka. A small shanty had been opened as a tavern, and was kept by a brother-in-law (Mr. Swift) of the late John Tipping, Esq., J. P., of Orillia, who purchased 5 acres off lot No. 1, west from William Johnston. Donald Ferguson, a brave Highland Scotchman, was the first settler in the Township of Draper. At this period the road only extended to the South Falls, and the bridge was not built ; but "Donald," nothing daunted, crossed the river and located on a lovely spot close to the Falls on the north side of the river. While lots on the road were located in the fall of 1859, it was not till 1861 that the lands in the Townships of Morrison, Muskoka, Draper and Macaulay, were thrown upon the market, and at the same time Mr. R. J. Oliver was appointed Crown Lands' Agent. It was in the month of May, in this same year, that the writer became a resident of Draper—before the Township was entirely surveyed. I cannot but refer here to the bitter opposition which was manifested towards the Government by a portion of the Press and a number of gentlemen, for attempting to open up this part of Ontario ; every form of misrepresentation and abuse was sought.