

EARLY DAYS IN CHATHAM

J. F. VanAllen of Windsor, An Old Maple City Boy
Tells of Days When He Was An Employee of
The Planet

To the Editor of The Planet:

Dear Sir,—When I sent you my

little article a few days ago for

publication on the above subject I

hardly knew you would

deem it of sufficient interest to give

it a space in your columns or con-

sign it to the "waste basket." I

find, however, that it has not only

been given to your readers as a bit

of interesting history of days that

have long since gone by, but I re-

ceived a friendly and complimentary

note from the proprietor telling me

that the reminiscences of my ap-

prenticeship days were interesting to

him and he thought, as

equally so to many of his numerous

readers, and this unexpected kind-

ness shown me has induced me to

use my brush once more and add

one or two more pen-pictures to

those already given.

In the days of yore I think, as

a rule, people were far more lib-

eral in money matters than now.

This may have been for more rea-

sons than one. Work was plentiful,

wages fair, food and rent cheap, and

there were not so many looking for

something to "turn up" as now, and

then the fair sex had not learned

the art of "holding down" positions

in all branches of business. They

are doing to-day, but kept quietly

at home attending to domestic af-

airs and planning how to catch a

husband, and some very good plans

they had. My reason for referring

to money is because of the hand-

some way they patronized me in sell-

ing my first New Year's address. It

was neatly printed in blue ink and

was written by the late Judge Wells.

I had only to show them on that

bright New Year morning and they

were sold at the price my patron

chose to give, which ranged from

25 cents to 50 cents, and frequently

a bright pair of silver 50 cent pieces

came into my hand as though the

owner thought it was too bad to

separate them—I thought so too just

then. I stepped into the bowling

alley in rear of Alex. McPherson's

saloon, which was right where The

Planet office now stands, and I sup-

pose there were at least 25 or 30

people in there spending their

money and their holiday, and when

I made my exit my pockets fairly

"groined" under their weight of

silver. I had a few printed in white

sat in which I reserved for the Judge,

Sheriff Mercer, A. McKellar, Esq.,

E. Larwill, Esq., Dr. J. C. Ross, Esq.,

and other leading citizens, none of

whom gave me less than a dollar.

Late in the afternoon business fell

off and, feeling somewhat fatigued

from the exciting chase after wealth,

I collected a few of my most im-

mate friends and paid a visit to

Madam Courtlet's cafe, where I

footed the bill for toast and hot

chocolate and then, after which,

I vended my way home and had the

pleasure of adding about \$20 to my

dear mother's exchequer.

I had only been a short time in

The Planet office when I had the

very unpleasant experience of being

arrested, much to the surprise of my

employers and to my own horror as

well. On this particular day at

about 11 a. m. the office became un-

comfortably warm, and Mr. Miller

asked me to open the door at the

top of the stair and as I did so I

saw Mr. John Goodyear (what "old

boy" of Chatham does not remember

this corpulent old limb of the law)

coming up the stair followed by Mr.

Wm. Richardson, tailor, and as soon

as these gentlemen reached the top

step this officious individual laid his

hand on my shoulder, saying as he

did so, in a quiet but stern voice,

"Is your name Frederick VanAllen?"

to which I replied in a very sub-

dued tone, "Yes, sir," then said he,

"You are my prisoner—get on your

coat." I can't possibly tell you

readers how I looked, but I thought

I ought to have had a box of Dr.

Williams Pink Pills for Pale People

or a few doses of Paine's Celery

Compound for palpitation of the

heart. I had nothing to do, how-

ever, but follow the "cop" along

with my fellow prisoner, Mr. "Goug-

er," as the boys were pleased to nick-

name him, was looking for his third

victim and, as we crossed the street

he captured his bird in the person

I presume the minister and church

officials inspected the artist's hand-

work with the result that on Mon-

day we were brought before the late

A. McKellar, Esq., who asked if we

were "guilty or not guilty." I ad-

mitted my hand to the artist's brush

and my friend Willis Richardson

ditto, while poor Cornelius had to

admit his guilt, when the J. P. gave

us a plain talk on misbehavior in

church and then wrote on a slip of

paper, "Shall I give them four days

in the black hole?" and handed it to

the minister. Now the black hole

was a dark room at the barracks

where the "incorrigible" British sol-

dier was placed when guilty of in-

subordination. The kind hearted

minister said, "No, I'll give them a

bit of good advice and you discharge

them." Thus ended my first trial

without lawyer or jury. Press re-

porters in those days were unknown,

in Chatham at least, and our arrest

and conviction did not appear in the

public prints.

One more incident during my ap-

prenticeship days I would like to

refer to and I'll leave the rest of my

story until some time in the future.

It was a beautiful, warm, moon-

light night in the latter part of

April, soon after the spring assizes,

I was sleeping with an office chum,

Wm. Lewis, a step son of the late

Hon. Walter McGee, in a room at-

tached to The Planet office, in the

old James Burns' building which

stood immediately opposite the pre-

sent post office, and was, at that

time, occupied by Messrs. Stone and

Turnbull on the ground floor. I

was awakened about 2.30 a. m. by

the ringing of old Lewis' (colored)

bell. This old fellow was

hired on all occasions to announce

an auction sale, an important

event, and was known as the "Shake-

spear" crier, for he had quite a

number of quotations from that dis-

tinguished author stored away, be-

neath that massive brown brow,

which he generously gave to the

public when announcing a sale, and

he always insisted that he was a "Royal

object," instead of a loyal subject

of H. M. Queen Victoria. Well, I

thought, "What can the matter be?"

old Lewis can't be having a sale on

at this hour, and I hurriedly stepped

to the open window when I distinct-

ly heard the old crier calling upon

the citizens to "Wake up, there's a

mob at the jail" and, at that

moment, I heard two or three ran-

dom shots fired which told me that

there was mischief afoot, and that

that quarter of the town. I was not

long in reaching the street and on

my way to the Court House, when I

met a party who told me that it

was a part of the McDougall gang

who had planned to release Miles

McDougall. He had just been con-

vinced of horse-stealing, house-break-

ing and other misdemeanors, and

sentenced to 14 years in Kingston

penitentiary. There were four or

five counts in the indictment and

the prisoner had been tried and

found guilty of all but one, and that

one was the most serious of them

all, viz., Sharp's robbery at or near

Dawn Mills. The Judge told the

prisoner that if found guilty of this

it would be his duty to pronounce

the death sentence, as fire arms had

been used with intent to kill. The

trial proceeded and the evidence

against the prisoner was, to use an

American expression, as clear as ice

and as sharp as the point of a "No"

from your sweetheart. The Judge's

charge to the jury was very strong

for conviction and just as they were

about to go out, a lady friend, or

relative, of the prisoner's, stepped

over to him, threw her arms about

his neck and embraced him and, at

the same time, gave him an orange.

Now, whether this little act of sym-

pathy on the part of this lady had

any effect on the feelings of these

twelve jurymen, or whether they had

made up their minds that the pri-

soner at the bar would get all the

punishment he was deserving of, it

is impossible to say, but they were

not long in deciding upon their

verdict, and, in answer to the ques-

tion, "guilty or not guilty," the fore-

man replied, "guilty, my Lord."

The verdict seemed to please the

large crowd who had assembled to

hear the end of this interesting

trial, especially the ladies, who had

crowded the galleries of the court

room from the first day of the trial

until its finish. Now, it so happened

that on a certain afternoon, a few

days before Miles McDougall would

say "good bye" to old Mr. E. K.

Paine and wife, that this lady who

had played her part so well at the

close of the trial, came, ostensibly,

to pay a farewell visit to the pri-

soner, but really to inform him that

"the boys" were coming for him that

night and to be all ready, and to

locate his cell and the most direct

route to it for the information of

those who were coming. After she

left, Mr. and Mrs. Paine came to the

conclusion that it would be well to

change the prisoner's position to an-

other corridor and poor Miles was

thrust into another cell. When the

would-be liberators came in the

morning and broke into the build-

ing and demanded the keys of the

corridor door and cell, Mr. Paine

showed the "white feather" and kept

well in the background, while Mrs.

Paine pluckily faced them and hand-

ed them a bunch of keys which

would not unlock the doors. By the

time they had tried them all, the

citizens began coming in crowds and

old Sol was beginning to light up

the eastern sky when the gang

thought it high time to put spurs

to their steeds and return to their

rendevous without their coveted

prize. Poor Miles did not under-