

bread placed in it. Pies, cakes and anything else required were baked in these ovens.

#### Appearance in Early Days

In its early days Port Ryerse made a fine appearance, and it is quite plain why grandfather chose this spot as his future home. The view from the lake northward up the valley was very attractive. When approached from the Simcoe road, surrounded as it was by forest wealth and so many grand old walnut, butternut, hickory and chestnut trees all over the village survey, on its hillsides, and elsewhere, and its abundance of oak, elm and other trees, with Lake Erie in the background, it presented to some of us at least a charming appearance. Then there was the lovely mill-pond with its handsome woodland on the westerly side and its shaded bays and its long stretch into the adjoining woods of cedar, hemlock and maple. There is where I spent many and many a happy day with my boat, fishing in its waters or paddling a goodly distance up the stream. But, alas! nearly all this beauty and loveliness has gone forever. The most of the nut and other beautiful trees have long since had to yield to commercialism, and only their memory remains.

#### Early Harbor Improvements

Both Lot No. 2, Woodhouse, where my father lived, and Lot 3, where Major E. P. Ryerse resided, were entailed property. A bill to release certain parts of each on which to found a village, was passed by the Legislature of Upper and Lower Canada at the session of 1856, at Quebec, chiefly through the influence of Dr. Rolph, who was then the member for Norfolk. I have not means of knowing the date of the first improvements at the harbor by the erection of a pier and warehouses. The appearance on the oldest warehouse betokened an early date. Major Ryerse was the first to finance and push ahead this work. The first dock was built of piles placed in rows of three or four, a proper distance apart, capped by a heavy cross timber, then by timbers lengthwise of the pier, and plank securely spiked to these timbers. All was made secure. It extended well out into the lake, for only boats of moder-

ate draft could use this creek.

The first warehouse was a low one, of very moderate dimensions, located quite near the site of the summer cottage of Harry Brook. No. 2 adjoined it on the north side. No. 3 was a long, low one that covered the west end of the pier. No. 4 was quite a large one and was attached to No. 1 on the east end. Thus they were all together. To finish loading vessels a track was laid on the pier and a car propelled by hand or horse power, about 12 by 24 feet in dimension, was used to convey barrels of flour or any other goods to the end of the dock. Watching the men working this car one evening in the fall of 1857, I saw the first beautiful comet in the southern sky.

Very many goods and much grain passed through these warehouses during the fifties and sixties, both going out and coming in. The distilleries at Simcoe and Vittoria would send deckloads of fat hogs to Buffalo to be slaughtered. It was large, fat hogs that were dealt in then, and some of them were so large they reminded me of young elephants. A number of them appear to me now as if they would weigh 600 pounds each dressed. After the signing of the Reciprocity Treaty of 1856, till its abrogation in 1866, and especially during the American Civil War, there was a very large volume of trade outward. On May 26th, 1863, Major Ryerse deeded the whole harbor property to the Port Ryerse Tram or Railroad and Harbor Company, the leading spirit of which was Edward Harris, of London. The proposition was to build a tram road to Simcoe. A dredge was purchased and various improvements made at the harbor of a permanent nature. Cribs filled with stone were used on which to build docks. Two large warehouses were constructed on the east side of the harbor, so that vessels could load grain directly from these warehouses. The large warehouse on the west side was moved to the water's edge, and its capacity doubled. A large dredging outfit was brought from Buffalo with tugs and scows, and the water in the harbor was deepened to about ten feet. The first harbormaster was William Mercer Wilson, and the second Mr. John S. Austin, also of