



RICHMOND STREET, LONDON, ONT.—[LOOKING SOUTH.]

WRITTEN FOR THE LAND WE LIVE IN.

## INCIDENTS OF PIONEER LIFE IN THE EASTERN TOWNSHIPS.

### FISHING IN THE EARLY TIMES.

**I**N my early boyhood I remember my first fish-hook was made by my father out of a brass pin. We had no means of getting at that time such fish-hooks as we now have, I used to catch many dace and some trout with this hook, but as there was no barb on it, I was compelled to yank them right in, as any slack line would have allowed them to escape.

When I was six or seven years old my father and his nearest neighbor wished to try their luck, fishing for salmon, so they went into the woods and got some pitch pine and spruce roots with which to make jack lights, to use during the summer nights at the time when the salmon were ascending the rivers to their spawning beds. Unless delayed by very low water they usually reached the Eaton River about the middle of August. There were only two houses then at or opposite the present village of Cookshire, all the country east of there being a howling wilderness and a howling one it was at night, when the wolves were plentiful.

Having got all things ready, one night after dark they lighted up their jack light, which was placed in the bow of an old log canoe, and fished down the Eaton River, about a mile from where the present bridge

stands but saw no fish. Before leaving their canoe they thought they would try a little higher up where there was an immense rock or boulder near the west shore of the river. This rock was always used as a water mark to show us when it was safe to ford the river with our horses. If the top of the rock was visible it was safe, if not, it was dangerous to attempt crossing.

This rock was not more than ten rods above the present bridge site and there was always a considerable depth of water round it. As they approached the rock two large salmon were seen close to the side and through the skill and good management of the spearsman in the bow of the canoe, they secured both of them. These were the first salmon I ever saw caught, and as I grew up and my love of fishing increased I became quite an adept at catching them. My father was fond of fish as food, and often when I asked his permission to go fishing, I got it, if I gave an affirmative answer to his inquiry, as to whether I thought I could catch any. Many a time I have brought home strings of those speckled beauties, that it would do your heart good to look at, and even now I love to take my rod and go to the river that runs close to my house and try my luck, but the mills above, and the saw dust, have about finished the fishing on my premises. During the fifty-two years I have resided here I have caught a great many trout, but the largest one I ever caught in this river, I caught several years ago. It weighed 2½ lbs.

The greatest and best fishing I ever saw was in 1829 when I lived on the shore of Lake Ontario, just above what is known as

Port Oshawa. My uncle lived there, and he had two sons who were adepts in salmon fishing. Salmon were so plentiful that in the fall of the year they did nothing but fish for about a month, and they would take from one to five barrels of fish each night, with spear and jack light. One young man, a near neighbor, told me, that he and his adopted father caught one night 508 salmon, which would when dressed fill fifteen barrels. He happened to be where he saw or knew that the fish were running into the mouth of Oshawa Creek, and had everything in readiness to commence fishing as soon as it was dark the same evening. My cousins were away from home and did not get back until 1 a. m. when they immediately went to the creek and before day light had taken 100 salmon, and they had no doubt our neighbor's statement was correct.

The summer of 1829, the salmon had been so closely caught up and so many fishing for them, they had become scarce, but the latter part of April of that year, I was on the shore of the lake with one of my cousins, and as the moon was bright, until 2 a. m. we could not light up until then, but we caught nine of the handsomest and most luscious salmon I ever saw. At that time of the year they were as fat as the best white fish, and never before or since have I partaken of such delicious fish.

On one occasion I was out with one of my cousins, when he told me he would paddle the boat and I might try my luck with the spear. We had not gone far before I saw what I thought was a fish, but a light wind which caused a ripple on the