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INTRODUCTION.

These reminiscences of pioneer life from Mr. Steele's pen appeared in the ORILLIA PACKET in 1893-4.

John Coucher Steele was a native of the Norman town of Coutances, where he was born on September 27th, 1817. He was educated there and at Upton Grammar School, Worcestershire, England. In 1832 he accompanied his father, Captain Elmes Steele, R.N., to Canada, and settled in Medonte, taking his share in the struggles and difficulties incident to pioneer life in those early days. In 1847 he settled on his own farm, close to "Purbrook," the old homestead occupied by his father, but in the early fifties moved to the Township of Oro, where he purchased the Dunsmore farm, (east half lot 16, concession 6), on which he lived until 1887. As Clerk of the Tenth Division Court he then (on a re-arrangement of the divisional boundaries) moved to Coldwater, where he continued to reside until his decease on the 20th of August, 1909, much respected. Few had a longer experience or knew more of the early history of the County of Simcoe, either political or municipal, than Mr. Steele. He was for a few years Councillor, and then Reeve of Oro for 18 years, having been elected to the chair of the Township Council for seventeen consecutive years by acclamation. He was Warden of the County in 1875, and he was ex-officio a Director of the Northern Railway.

Mr. Steele was a candidate for the constituency of East Simcoe for the Ontario Legislature in 1879, but was not elected. In 1865, when a member of the County Council, he succeeded in having the County entertain a large force of regulars and volunteers under the command of General Napier. The force got free transportation to Barrie, where a grand review was held. This act on the part of Mr. Steele stimulated the military spirit, and resulted in a company being formed at East Oro, under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel, then Captain, O'Brien of Shanty Bay. Mr. Steele succeeded in obtaining a sum of money from the Township for a drill hall and armoury, to supplement the Government grant, and induced the farmers to provide musical instruments and flags. His purse was always ready to assist in the good work of keeping the force in a position to be useful in the defence of the country. Rifle shooting he encouraged by getting the Council to vote prizes to marksmen, and during his time the riflemen of the County had a high place. Personally his militia service consisted of taking part in the suppression of the rebellion of 1837, in a corps raised for the purpose, in which he and his brother, the late Mr. Henry Steele, were officers.

Canada may justly be proud of the record of her early pioneers, and the County of Simcoe will long remember their blameless lives and their ready promotion of all that tended to the welfare of their country.

JOHN C. STEELE

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Reminiscences of a Pioneer

BY

JOHN C. STEELE

I.

SETTLEMENT IN MEDONTE.

As one of the pioneers who settled in 1832 in this part of the County of Simcoe, I will redeem my promise of giving you a few reminiscences of that early time. My father, the late Capt. Steele of the Royal Navy, and I, a lad of fourteen, sailed from London in the good ship "The Branches," on the 25th of March, 1832, and arrived in Quebec on the 17th of May, after a long voyage of seven weeks, having been detained by ice in the Gulf of St. Lawrence two weeks. We stayed in the ancient city for a week, for it was a pleasure to my father to renew the acquaintance of several of the inhabitants whom he had known in the year 1806, when, as Lieutenant of the "Triton" frigate, he had sailed up the St. Lawrence in the month of December, after the buoys had been removed and the pilots had left, having to trust to the knowledge of a fisherman to pilot the frigate to Quebec. The vessel got on a rock, and was got off by the crew of three hundred men all getting to the stern and jumping up and down. The motion made the frigate gradually slide off the smooth rock. To add to my father's interest in Quebec was the fact that an uncle of his was an officer with General Wolfe at the taking of that city. But, "revenons à nos moutons." We left Quebec in steamer "St. George," the Captain being an old shipmate of my father's, and on arriving at Montreal, that city being at that time the terminus of steamboat navigation, we and a number of emigrants embarked on board a batteau, or barge, and were hauled up the rapids of the St. Lawrence by horses, or oxen, as the case might be. My father

becoming tired of the slow progress we were making, we left the batteau at Cornwall and took the stage to Prescott, where we embarked on board a steamer, I think the "Niagara," and arrived in due time at "Little York," as Toronto was then called, and sometimes with the addition of "Dirty Little York." After a stay of two or three days, my father started out to spy out the land in the Township of Medonte, leaving me at Colonel Wells's, whose residence, some three miles from the town, was called Davenport, after his native place in England, and which still bears that name, being a station of the Northern Railway. After taking up his land he returned for me. We then travelled up Yonge-street by stage to the Holland Landing, and crossed Lake Simcoe in a little sloop commanded by one Peter Gruet. The wind not being fair, two days were spent crossing the lake, and on getting into Lake Couchiching we had the first sight of the Indian village, at that time called the Narrows, and now the town of Orillia. The village was on a rising ground, the houses being in semi-circle, each house containing two families, a log partition dividing each house. We stayed for a night at a boarding house, kept by a woman who was known by the name of Sarah. She afterwards married a man of the name of John O'Connor, who subsequently was a resident of your town. He was one of the first men my father employed to clear up the old homestead, and he consulted him anent the match, saying he was sure the said Sarah had laid by some money, and he thought he would marry her—and so he did. We left the village and started north by the Coldwater Road. Mr. Ritchie, who was Emigrant Agent for showing the settlers their land and locating them, kindly lent us a tent, and we camped out by the bank of a stream about eight miles from Orillia, which still bears the name of Purbrook; the men lodging in small shanties made from the bark of the elm tree. I stayed in the camp until the men had cut a road to our future homestead. We were ten days in that camp, and Indians were frequently passing between the two villages of Coldwater and the Narrows, and the first batch that called at our camp my father made them sit down and told our housekeeper, Mrs. Butcher, to get them something to eat, and after that during our stay in the camp we had many visits from them. It was during the time we were camped on that spot that one evening we saw an old woman coming out of the woods with a pail in her hand. She was an old Scotch lady, the mother of an old man-of-war's man, Mr. John Jamieson, who lived on the townline between Oro and Medonte, and the grandmother of Mrs. Thomas Dunn, and the great-grandmother of your townsmen, the Messrs. Dunn. It seems she had taken the pail to go for water, and had lost her way, and had wandered at least five miles through the then unbroken forest.

She stayed all night with us, and in the morning my father sent a man to her home, and when the old lady was leaving, on seeing the nice clear water in the little brook, she went down the bank to fill her pail, saying it was a bonnie burn. At last we broke up camp and finally located it on the spot where our old homestead was afterwards built, and which was for many years called "Purbrook," but now changed to Fair Valley. A number of men were employed to clear the land and build the house, which after sixty years still stands. In the meantime we lived in the tent, which being an old one was not impervious to rain, and many a time I awoke to see my father holding an umbrella over our heads, a Scotch mist finding its way through the old canvass, and I remember how we both enjoyed hearing the rain rattling on the shingles when we removed into a room which was partly finished in the new house, and we had our two hammocks slung up; and many a laugh the old gentleman had at my awkwardness in getting into mine, sometimes going in at one side and coming out at the other. But he, being an old sailor, was adept, and got in and out without any trouble. But, "experiencia docet," I soon could get in and out as well as he could. Soon after we had moved to the room in the house, Mr. Wm. Kent and his family (he was afterwards Deputy Receiver-General), Mr. John Eplett and his family, which included his sister-in-law, Miss Lovering, an aunt of Mr. H. L. Lovering of our village of Coldwater, and their hired man, who also came from Cornwall in England; he was of the name of Lobb, and had a wife and child. The child died, and was buried on the place, my father reading the burial service over her, being the first death in Medonte of the emigrants of that year.

J. C. STEELE.

Coldwater, December 19th, 1893.

II.

THEIR FIRST YEAR IN CANADA.

I will now, if I do not tire your readers, continue my recollections of the old days. When my father took up his land in Medonte he had been promised by Sir John Colborne that a grist mill would be built at Coldwater, and having cleared up some six or seven acres of land and sown it with fall wheat, and there being no sign of a mill being built, he went off to York and called at Government House and told the Governor that the promise had not been fulfilled, and he intended to leave. The Governor told him to consult with Captain Anderson (the Indian Superintendent) and he had his authority to have a first-class grist mill built, and a mill which was then considered first-class was built, and Mr. Jacob Gill, the father of the Messrs. Gill of Orillia, Fesserton and Matchedash, and of Mrs. Millard and Mrs. Buchanan, was the millwright who erected the mill. And many a time I have seen, when there was only a footpath past our homestead, a man carrying a bushel of wheat on his back, his wife half a bushel, and a boy about the same, to get it ground at the Coldwater mill, having beaten the sheaves against a barrel, scutching it, as it was called, and throwing it up to the wind to separate the chaff. These were the hard times. One day our old housekeeper and I walked to Orillia, and on our way, near where Warminster is now, we met a young man of the name of Graverod, who told us he had seen a bear a few minutes before, but not having a gun he could do nothing, but he intended procuring a gun at Coldwater, and he might see the bear on his return the next day. The old woman who was with me was pretty well frightened, but we saw no bear, and on our return the next day we met, near Bass Lake, five or six Indians carrying a wounded Indian boy. It seems the boy had been shooting at a bird, and his arrow was caught by a branch of a tree, and he climbed up the tree to get it. Young Graverod was returning from Coldwater, and near the same place where he had seen the bear the day before he saw something dark among the leaves of a birch tree, and thinking it was the bear, he fired, and wounded the poor Indian

boy. Graverod was with the party of Indians, but the poor boy died from his wounds.

At this time in your, then, village there was a Mr. Ailey, who was quite a stirring man, and indeed considered himself the founder of the village. He was very near sighted, and old Mrs. James Sanson used to say there never was a village without a blind alley. I had been invited by our kind friends, Colonel and Mrs. Wells, to visit them again at Davenport, and I left Orillia on board the little sloop, Mr. Alley being also a passenger. He had a boat towing behind the sloop. As usual, the wind was ahead, and the sloop lay to for more than half-a-day. Mr. Alley then called for volunteers to go in his boat by the Mara shore, and I, boy-like, at once answered to his call, and we started, but made very little headway, and when darkness set in Mr. Alley could not see at all, and was asking me every now and then if we were clear of the shore. I am afraid I used a little duplicity and did not tell him exactly the truth, for I had seen a light on shore, and I saw the boat was nearing it every minute, and we soon found ourselves ashore, and making for the light found a small log house, inhabited by a half-breed, of the name of Kennedy. His wife and sister and two or three children occupied the house. They received us in a very friendly manner, and we stayed all night and partook of a supper and breakfast, the bill of fare being a hodge podge of squirrels, ground hogs and rabbits. Next morning we sailed to Beaverton, and from thence to Roche's Point, where a Major Raines lived. We stayed there a night and left the boat and walked to David Town and Newmarket. I there took the stage to York, heartily tired of Mr. Alley's company, for he had a way of travelling by imposing on the hospitality of some who were perfect strangers to him, which to me, although only a boy, seemed very mean. I then had a good time with my kind friends the Welises until February. The old Colonel was Treasurer for Upper Canada, and when the roads on Yonge-street were impassable I often drove him to his office in a little spring cart down what is now College-avenue, having to thread our way in and out round stumps and fallen trees. We used to drive to church every Sunday, to a little frame church standing where St. James's cathedral is now, and often heard Archdeacon Strachan preach, who was afterwards bishop. I used to see him on week days walking sturdily along King-street. It was a fine sight on a Sunday to see the regiment of regulars stationed at York going to church, the band playing before them, and the soldiers filing off to their respective churches, Sir John Colborne, the Governor, in his uniform of a General Officer, walking on the sidewalk with Lady Colborne and his family. There was no cry then for Sunday cars, or omnibuses, but every one made use of the limbs God had

given them, I stayed with our kind friends until February, 1833, when my father came for me, and we went by stage to the Holland Landing. My father's friend Mr. George Lount, the father of William, and Samuel, and George Lount, was the then Registrar, and had bought a yoke of oxen for my father, and we started next morning for home, driving the oxen before us. We stayed at a tavern a few miles from Barrie, having walked about twenty-five miles. We had to cross the head of Kempenfelt Bay on the ice, there being no road except the beach. The oxen did not like the ice, as it cracked when we were near a stream flowing into the bay, and I was sent (as we could not get them to cross) to get someone to help us, and I got a man who lived in almost the only house in Barrie, but we could do nothing with them even then with his help. We saw a sleigh approaching with four or five men. The driver, Mr. Eli Beaman, was a half brother of Chief Justice Robinson, and when he saw the dilemma we were in, he sent a man to cut a pole in the bush, and two men at each end pushed the oxen across the crack, and we went along rejoicing towards the Barrie shore. About twelve miles from Barrie we came to the residence of Mr. Craig, the grandfather of the Messrs. Craig of Medonte, and stayed, the next day being Sunday, until Monday morning. There was in the house one of the old-fashioned chimneys, four feet wide at the back, and whenever the old gentleman would bring in a log for the fire, he would say to my father, "Captain, winter is approaching, we must keep up a good fire." This was the signal on the mast head of Admiral Duncan's ship when the British fleet was going to engage the Dutch fleet, commanded by Admiral De Winter, and they did keep up a good fire and "beat the Dutch," which is reckoned a hard thing to do. My father being a naval officer was the cause of the old gentleman using the expression. We started home next morning, and many a load of lumber I brought from Coldwater that winter with the oxen, making at that time the acquaintance of old Mr. Craddock, our present oldest inhabitant, born in 1812. He was a man of about twenty years old when I first knew him, and he is still hale and hearty, and as straight as any young man; and he is straight in every way, being a man whose word is as good as his bond, for the saying here is, "Whatever Mr. Craddock says he will do, he will never back out." In the spring of this year my mother, sisters and brother came out, and I can assure you it was a great change for us who had been so long without the society of ladies, and we both appreciated it. The young ladies of those days could walk eight or ten miles, and many a visit we had from old Mr. Drinkwater and his daughters. He was the grandfather of the Messrs. Drinkwater of Northbrook, and my sisters used to return the visit and thought nothing of the

distance. Captain Wilson, Mrs. Wilson, and his family of three sons and one daughter, settled about two miles from us, and there was constant intercourse between us. The ladies of the family used to meet, and you would be astonished, Mr. Editor, what good coats Miss March (Mrs. Wilson's sister) and my mother would make for us boys. "Necessity is the mother of invention," and these ladies being put to it showed what they could no. The mosquitoes were the great trouble with them, for they were in countless thousands, and the clearing being small there was no wind to drive them away. A neighbour of Mr. Drinkwater's was going to visit the family and, as was the fashion at that time for gentlemen, he wore a large cloak. On his way he saw a little animal which did not get out of the way quickly and he gave chase to it, and not wishing it to escape he took off his cloak and threw it over the little animal—when lo, and behold, the perfume which emanated from the said cloak certainly was not so pleasant, although far stronger than ottar of roses, and the gentleman had to return home, not being presentable to ladies for a few days. He certainly learned something that day of Canadian zoology. I am afraid, Mr. Editor, that your readers will find what I have written rather prosy, but they must forgive an old man of seventy-seven.

JOHN STEELE.

III.

LIFE IN THE BUSH.

I once more sit down to give your readers a few more memories of "Auld Lang Syne." I will pass over our second winter, which, in spite of those who say the seasons are changed, was very much like the winters we now have. The forest not having been cleared up as it now is, we were spared the drifts which so often at this time block our roads. As my brother Henry and I had been brought up not to mind a little roughness and fatigue, when the middle of April, 1834, opened out fine and balmy it was decided by the family council that we two boys were to go to Newmarket, a distance of seventy miles, to drive home two cows which our old friend Mr. George Lount had bought for my father. Our good mother, knowing we could get nothing to eat until we got as far Mrs. Bruce's, on the Penetanguishene-road, where we were to stay the first night, filled our lunch basket, and we started by the townline between Oro and Medonte, arriving about six o'clock at Mrs. Bruce's hotel. The ladies were in the ascendant in those days, and it was called Mrs. Bruce's hotel, as Mrs. Barr, whom Capt. Anderson mentions in his diary, kept the hotel at Warminster. I suppose there was a good reason for it, as in both cases the old saying that "the gray mare was the better horse" held good. However, Mrs. Bruce made us very comfortable, and next morning we started on our journey, crossed the bay in a boat at Kempenfelt, and stayed at night at a hotel near where Bradford now is. The next morning we called on Mr. Lount, who kindly went with us to the farm of an old Quaker who lived near Newmarket. Mr. Lount having already a cow at his own place, he chose a black cow from the old Quaker's stock, and as we were leaving with her the old fellow exclaimed, "There goes trouble" —ominous words, for from the time we started homewards the next morning she was either getting caught by the leg in a causeway or getting swamped in a mud hole. We travelled only about fifteen miles that day, as a heavy fall of snow had covered the ground. The next day we again arrived at Mrs. Bruce's, and

started next morning for home. We had walked only about a mile from Craighurst along the townline of Oro and Medonte when "Trouble" got fast in a bog, and I had to send my brother for help to get her out, and when we had her out she was on the wrong side of the bog and would have had to go through it again, so I sent her back to Mrs. Bruce's with my brother and left her there until she calved, and after we got her home she was always getting into trouble. There was not a bog round the place that she did not try the depth of it. We kept her until by good luck Mr. Alley got up a fair in your then village, and as Trouble was a black cow she took the fancy of Capt. McPherson, the father of Mr. James McPherson of Rama, as her colour reminded him of the Highland cattle. I never heard how she ended her days, whether it was in a bog, or did she die to help feed the natives? About this time honest Mr. John Scott lived in Oro. He was a provincial land surveyor, and was employed by the Home District Sessions to survey some roads in Oro and Medonte, and he walked to the Holland Landing and from thence by stage to Toronto to attend a meeting of the Sessions to present his account for the work he had done, but he failed of getting paid, and on his return he called on my father and shewed him a petition he had prepared to present to the Session at their next meeting. The petition as usual began with "The petition of the undersigned humbly sheweth" that he attended the last meeting of the Sessions and on presenting his account the Chairman roared at your petitioner like a Bull of Bashan. My father told him it would never do to present such a petition, and he was at last amenable to reason, and between them they made the petition presentable, and he got his account paid. Mr. Scott was a very worthy man and has many of his descendants in the neighbourhood of Rugby. I heard a story about him which was told me by a neighbour. He (Mr. Scott) was digging a very deep well and was at the bottom filling the bucket when those who were hauling it up saw a bear and went to look after it and left Mr. Scott at the bottom of the well, and I believe he himself did roar, and no wonder.

Well, I think it is time I should end these disjointed remembrances, but I often fancy in my day dreams that I see the kind faces of so many of my old friends who have passed away from this world. Among many others, kind old Dr. John Ardagh on his little gray mare; Dr. Paul Darling, his brother James, and their brother, my old chum, the Rev. Wm. Darling, and that kind old lady their mother. Very few of the old friends I knew in those early days are now alive, although I had the pleasure of meeting, a little more than a year since, my old friend Canon Mulock, after fifty years. Speaking of Dr. John Ardagh reminds me of a visit

he paid me (not a professional one) in 1846. I was then living in Medonte in a shanty, as I had just moved on to my own land. It began to rain very hard and I wanted him to stay all night, but he said he had to get home, and I put him on the road and told him to mind in turning round a tree which had fallen across the road that he did not get into the bush. It was just getting dark when the Doctor knocked at the door. He was wet through. He said he had lost his way, and tied his mare to a tree, and having found his way out he could not find "Jenny." I offered to give him a horse to ride home with, but as we had a roaring fire in the chimney he said he would stay all night as he was very comfortable, and he entertained us with ancedotes as he alone could tell them. The next morning we again tried to find poor Jenny, but failed, and I lent the good Doctor a horse to ride home. The next night there was a heavy fall of snow, and in the morning I found the little mare standing by the stable door. The valise the Doctor carried in front of his saddle was thoroughly wet. I took the instruments out and dried them and sent a man home with the mare.

I cannot help here relating an incident which endorses the old French saying, "Le vrai n'est pas toujours le vrai semblable," which translated into English means that truth is not always like truth. Two gentlemen lately out from England called on us. They had letters of introduction to my father. One was a Mr. Tongue and the other a Mr. Riddle. Mr. Riddle introduced Mr. Tongue and Mr. Tongue did the same for Mr. Riddle, and at the same time amidst much laughter told us that his friend could not pronounce his own name. Mr. Riddle then related that his parents sent him to a teacher of elocution and he gave him the rhyme, Round the rugged rock the ragged Rachel ran, and he could say it quite glibly, but could not pronounce the letter R in his own name. Well, he was a riddle to me then and I have not been able to this day to solve the riddle.

In the Toronto Mail's history of the Clan McLean it is stated that Allan McLean Howard had been Clerk of the Toronto Division Court since 1832. This was a mistake, for the Division Courts were not established for several years after that date. There were Courts of Requests, as they were called, and Mr. John Thomson, the father of Mr. Frank Thomson, Mr. James Dallas, I think, or perhaps it was Mr. James Sanson, and my father were the commissioners of the Court of Requests, and Sergeant Baillie, the father of Mrs. Price. of Price's Corners, was the Bailiff. The place where the sittings of the Court were held was the Plough Inn, Price's Corners. Said inn was kept by Mr. Henry Fraser, the father of Mr. Alexander Fraser of your town, being the first of several hotels of which he was landlord during his long life. For

a sign there was a little wooden plough on the top of a pole, and many a time I drove with my father to attend the sittings of the Court. I remember several settlers were brought before the Court having been sued on notes they had given to a Yankee wooden clock pedlar. Many of the settlers had bought them, and a man came round and seized the clocks on the plea that they had not paid duty. The poor settlers, as the time drew near for payment, willingly gave up the clocks, but they did not get the notes they had given, and another party having possession of them sued the settlers and they had to pay them—but I remember the Commissioners gave them easy terms of payment. These clocks were not a bad kind, and I saw one which was in good running order after twenty-five years wear. Yours, &c.,

JOHN C. STEELE.

Coldwater, March 17th, 1894.

IV.

MUNICIPAL LIFE IN THE EARLY YEARS OF ORO.

It may interest some of your readers if I give some of my recollections of municipal life in the early days in Oro. Mr. Richard Drury, the father of Mr. Charles Drury, was Reeve, and our place of meeting was John Galbraith's tavern, as it was called. Old John Galbraith was well-known to travellers on the road from Orillia to Barrie; he also was a Councillor for the township. I was generally the first to arrive at our place of meeting, and as the landlady had forgotten the day of the meeting, my arrival put her in mind that it was Council day, and immediately there was a commotion among the fowls; boys were set to run them down, and they (the fowls) were made to contribute towards our dinner. Mr. Drury, having the longest road to travel, was generally the last to arrive. About one o'clock we would adjourn for dinner, the fowls having been caught, without looking to their age, and they were generally a pretty tough lot. On one occasion (Mr. Drury, as Reeve, being the carver) the hens being tough and the knives being blunt, he could make no impression upon them, and he looked around with blank despair on his countenance, when old John Galbraith came to his aid with an exclamation of "Hold on, Mr. Drury, and I will soon tore them in pieces." He immediately took hold of one of the aged hens by the legs and pulled them apart, and with "Ahem, that's the way to do it," he seized on the other and served it in the same way. On another occasion a man by the name of McGregor had the house rented, and Mr. Duncan Clarke, who was the township clerk, generally had a large, brown dog with him. And one day we were wondering we had no announcement of dinner made, and after waiting an hour later than usual, dinner was announced, and on entering the dining room the landlady met us with, "Gentlemen, you will have to pay fifty cents each for the dinner, for Mr. Clarke's dog has eaten the first dinner prepared." Our Reeve, Mr. Drury, turned to the Clerk and said, "Mr. Clarke, charge the extra twenty-five cents to the township," and so it was done.

V.

ORO VISITED.

According to promise I will give you an account of my late visit to my former home in Oro. I was astonished to see the great change that seven years had made in the neighbourhood, and within sight of my old homestead I could see five or six substantial brick houses that had been erected since I had left, and the farms shewed the prosperity of the owners. Verily the thought passed through my brain, is this the sign of the down-trodden farming community which we have heard so much of lately, and wish for a return of the good times of old? Very little the present generation know of the good times they mourn after. I remember them well, and the time when the farmers' wives would walk to Barrie or Orillia, carrying a basket of butter or eggs ten or twelve miles, and returning in the evening with the groceries, &c., they had purchased, altogether a distance of twenty or twenty-four miles, and paying for the said groceries, 10c. per pound for sugar, tea from 60c. to $1, and salt $3.50 per barrel. I remember before I removed to Oro I had a good crop of wheat, but there was no cash market for it, unless we waited for sleighing and drove to the Holland Landing, and I wanted to pay my taxes and could not raise the needful. My old friend Mr. George Hallen came to the rescue. He told me he was getting a saddle from Mr. King, a storekeeper at that time in Orillia. King would take wheat for it at the price of fifty cents per bushel, and Mr. Hallen had no wheat to sell. I gave him the wheat, with which he paid for the saddle, and gave me the money, with which I got out of my dilemma.

But to return to my visit among my old friends. I went on Sunday to the Presbyterian Church at Guthrie, which is a large, substantial brick Church erected in the stead of the old frame one, at the opening of which I was present many years since. There is also a fine Church near the Town Hall, and another at Jarratt's Corners, all erected within the last three or four years. I found good roads, rather a contrast to the roads leading into the village of Coldwater, which are a disgrace to a township which has now

been settled more than sixty years. About two miles from here, near Mr. John Walker's residence, there is a piece of roadmaking the like of which I never saw, and jogging towards home we had to walk the horse until we passed it. The townline between Tay and Medonte, which is a leading road into our embyro town, is a disgrace to the two townships that have superintendence of it. My trip put me in mind of several incidents of my municipal days. One was this. We had for an assessor an old settler from the neighbourhood of Rugby, and there was at that time a tax on dogs. My old friend Mr. Marshall Young, the assessor, had a great deal of trouble in getting all the canines on the roll, and as he came to a shanty the man of the house called to his wife, "Here comes the assessor; open the trap of the cellar and put the dog in." And it was done. Mr. Young asked if they had a dog. No, there was no dog; but as Mr. Marshall Young always walked and carried a stick which he called his pony, when he was leaving he said, rapping the floor with his stick, "This is my pony." The dog in his prison thought someone was knocking at the door, and began to bark, and was immediately put on the roll. I remain, yours, &c.,

JOHN C. STEELE.

Coldwater, August 7th, 1894.

VI.

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE REBELLION OF '37.

As some of your readers have expressed a wish that I sho ıld continue my recollections of the days of "lang syne," I will do so. For the next five years after our arrival in Canada we continued in the even tenor of our lives, devoting ourselves to clearing up the forest, and many a stalwart pine tree was consigned to the flames which at the present time would be of great value. There was at this time in the political world grumblings as of distant thunder, but we in the backwoods had no time to take heed of them until, in the beginning of December, 1837, we were startled by hearing that the country between us and Toronto was in open rebellion. As loyal subjects, a muster of all men able to carry arms was called by my father as far as the Township of Medonte was concerned, and we mustered at what is now Craighurst, and a company was formed under the command of Captain Thomas Boyd, the grandfather of the Mesdames Leatherdale of this village, each one of us appearing at the muster with what firearms we could procnre. Old swords were also in requisition. When we arrived in Barrie, those who had no arms were served with guns of the kind that at that time were given to the Indians as presents, and which were as likely to hurt the owner as the enemy. We marched from Barrie and at night took up our quarters at a farm house belonging to a man of the name of Colson. The next day we arıived at the Holland Landing, and during the short stay we made ıhere we heard heavy firing on the opposite hill, and at once our Captain had the roll called and all the men answered to their names except one, and two men were sent into the house to hunt him up, and lo and behold he was found concealed under a bed; and this same man during the march the previous day was a regular fire-eater and only wanted to see a rebel to show what he could do. Poor old Tom Kelly, one of the old Connaught Rangers, "the fighting 88th"—to whom at the battle of Waterloo General Sir Thomas Picton called out, "Rangers of Connaught, come on, you fighting devils," and one of the men said, "Sure, General, we are not

thieves and robbers now." "Well," said the General, "you are all that I called you, but you are not cowards"—Old Tom said to me, "Sure, Mr. Steele, sure he was big enough to ate me, but he hasn't the heart of a flea." The alarm was caused by some volunteers returning, having heard that the rebels had been dispersed, and in passing the hotel belonging to a man who had joined the rebels, they (the volunteers) fired off their guns at the sign over the door. We continued our march to Newmarket and were quartered among the inhabitants. I, with others, was at a hotel kept by Atheneas King, and during the night I heard a crash as of broken glass, and getting up to find out what had caused the noise I found that a poor fellow who had been sleeping on the floor had dreamed that the rebels were upon him, in his fright had jumped through the window into the street, taking the window sash with him. As the poor men who composed our company had left their families quite unprovided for, our Captain saw no use in staying any longer, and the men were marched home. My old friend Mr. William Wilson and myself having friends in Toronto, we thought we would walk down, and in passing Montgomery's tavern, the headquarters of the rebels, the ruins were still smoking, as it had been set on fire by the volunteers from Toronto. So ended my military experience. The next winter, of 1838-39, there was quite a number of men belonging to the several townships of the county stationed at Penetanguishene, to the number of four or five hundred, under the command of Colonel Davis (an old army officer.) I never could see what use they were there, for the ice and old Father Winter was a defence which no Yankee filibusters could face, and as soon as spring opened and the navigation of the lakes, the poor men returned home to their families, having lost time very valuable to them in clearing up and chopping down the forest. I remain, yours truly,

JOHN C. STEELE.

Coldwater, May 24th, 1895.

VII.

AN OLD TIME ELECTION.

As many of your readers have expressed a wish that I, as one of the few who now remain, who took part in the election par excellence of the last half century, in which my father was the successful candidate, would let my memory travel back fifty-four years, I will give you and your readers as correct an account as I can of the event. At that time there was a strong feeling throughout the country against what was then called the "Family Compact," and at this time it is acknowledged by all parties that it governed the country in a high handed manner. My father's politics when in England was called a name now obsolete—Whig, and which might now be called moderate Liberal. Mr. James Dallas, of Orillia, being of the same politics, my father proposed to him to run for member of the District of Simcoe, which comprised, besides the present bounds of the County of Simcoe, the Townships of Thorah, Mara, and Rama. My father went into the canvass for Mr. Dallas as if for himself, and both of them being in Toronto at the time when a meeting was to be held at Finch's tavern, ten miles from that city, in the fall previous to the election, in support of Lord Durham, they (Mr. Dallas and my father) proposed to attend it. My father was staying at that time with my sister, the late Mrs. A. Murray, and it was arranged between Mr. Dallas and himself that Mr. Dallas would call for him, and they would both go together to the meeting. As arranged, Mr. Dallas called in the morning with a carriage and driver, and both gentlemen were dressed in style, with silk hats, &c. When they arrived at the place of meeting a platform had been erected and the speaking was in full swing, when the opposition party came down upon them and upset the platform and the speakers took to their heels. Francis Hincks, afterwards Sir Francis, being a good rider, took to the fields and rode over fences until he got far enough to make his way to the main road—and then on to Toronto. Mr. Dallas was rushed away with the crowd and lost his hat and one tail of his coat, which, however, was returned to

him, and an old straw hat was given him in lieu of the silk one which was lost in the crowd. My old father—there was no run in him—as soon as the other party put up the platform and opened their meeting, got up among the speakers and protested against their doings. My sister often laughed at the figure they cut, the coming back being so different from the going out in the morning. Well, I have now given you an account of what was at that time called the "Durham Races," as given to me by a participant in the said "races." It sickened Mr. Dallas of politics, and he would have nothing more to do with them—and my father then took his place as candidate, and having already canvassed a great part of this then large county for Mr. Dallas, he found it an easier task to canvass for himself, and he started out on his old mare "Gypsy," and rode all through the county and made a house to house canvass. And as this letter has already taken up too much of your valuable space, I will leave for another issue the account* of the election which took place in the month of March following.

J. C. STEELE.

October, 1895.

*So far as we can ascertain, Mr. Steele did not write the further account of his father's election to Parliament.—EDITOR.

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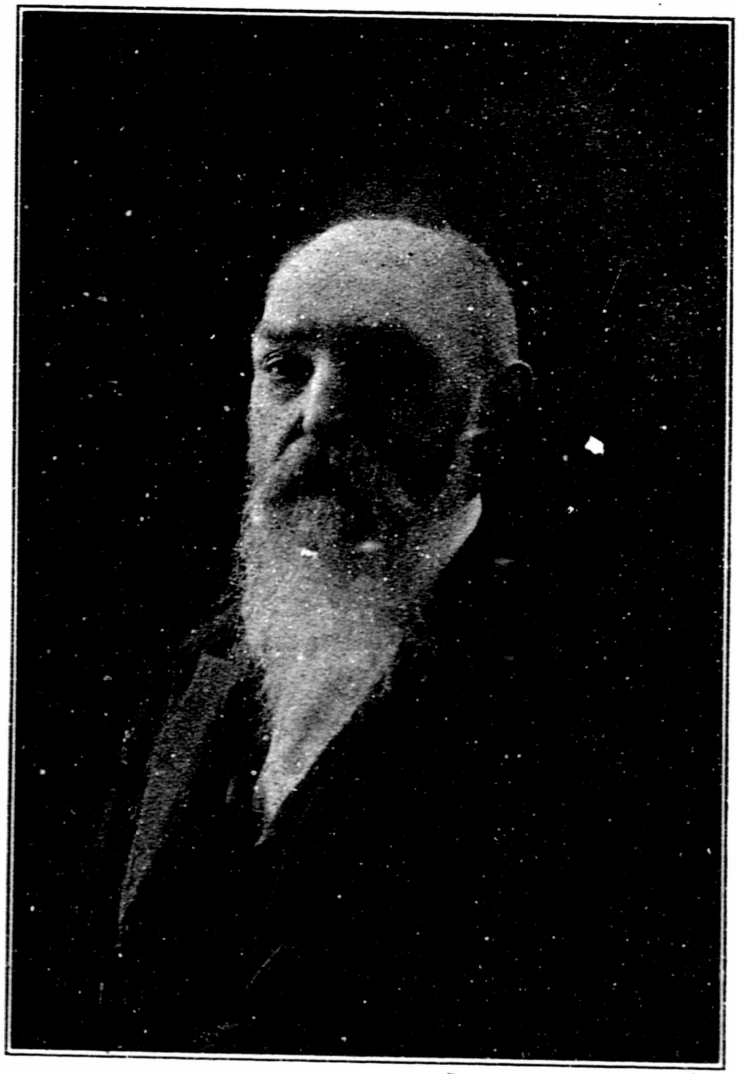

A. C. OSBORNE