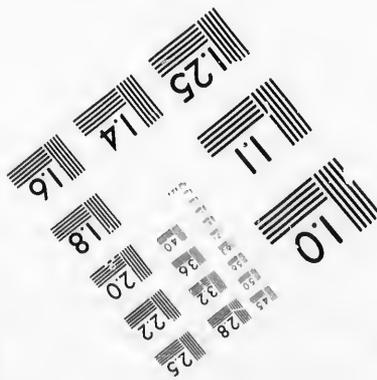
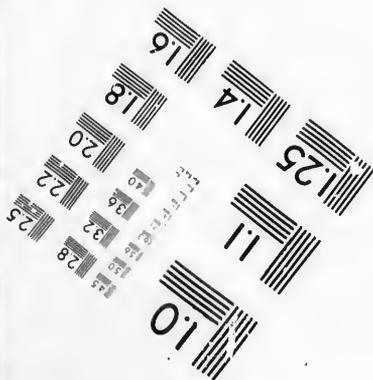
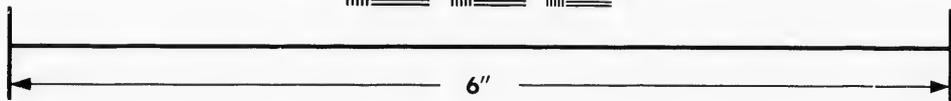
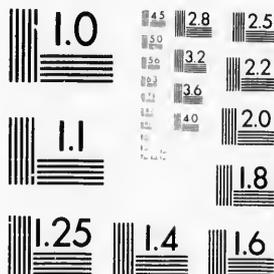


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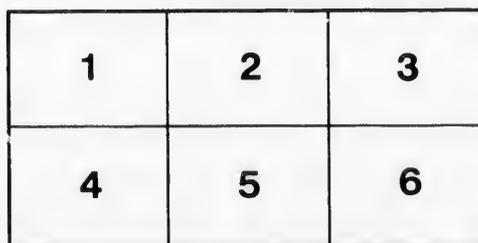
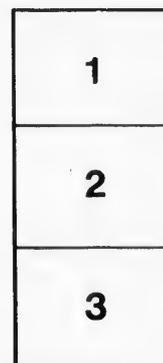
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Selmah

1853.



Christina R. Frame

SELMAH

— IN —

1853.

A Paper read before the the Presbyterian Social in Selmah,
Maitland, Hants County, Nova Scotia,

BY
ARCHIBALD FRAME, ESQ., Ex.-M. P. P.

Published by unanimous resolution of the Social Gathering
aforesaid, on motion of A. Shaw Smith, Esq.,
seconded by R. B. Eaton, Esq.

HALIFAX HERALD PRINT, 1894.



THE making of History in quiet and scattered sections of our Country is of slow growth. Our historical life is of so recent date that when portrayed it seems trivial and unimportant.

We sometimes read of the daily life and doings in an English parish, five or more centuries ago, a record that has come down to our times in the diary of some good parish priest or the brother dwelling in the old monastery; we have a kindly memory for the writer, who has given to us a picture of society that has long since passed away.

Those old annalists builded history better than they knew. In our democratic age those old records are valuable; as history does not alone consist in the records of courts and camps, and in descriptions of wars too often waged only for power or plunder.

The struggles of our early settlers, the difficulties and hardships they met and overcame; their moral characters and their religious tone, are to us of especial interest—what Gray has so aptly called “The short and simple annals of the poor.”

Here we have no old records running far away into the centuries as are to be found in our motherland. And we have no history such as that we have referred to. This year, at the World's Fair, at

Chicago, was celebrated only the 400th anniversary of the discovery of this continent by Columbus.

That exposition was a memorial of the improvements and advances made by the people of America since its discovery and settlement.

And we, as Canadians, proud of our country, have cause to rejoice at the position achieved by our exhibitors who displayed to great advantage the industry and intelligence of the Canadian people.

But this theme is outside of the scope of our humble paper, that only proposes to give a short description of Selmah as first seen by the writer in June, 1853, forty years ago. And before we come to our story, we must say a few words about the earlier history of this district.

It is now well known that the first European settlers in Selmah were of French origin and language.

The French people came early to Acadia as missionaries of the Catholic church, hunters, fishermen and cultivators of the soil.

In Nova Scotia the centre of their power was at Annapolis ; from that point their settlements extended into the country, until their hamlets were found on both shores of Cobequid Bay, and on the Shubenacadie River to the head of the tide waters.

For not fewer than forty years after the final conquest of Nova Scotia by the English, the French remained, living industrious, restless lives around the

Bay shores, erecting dykes, clearing the uplands, and too often blamed for inciting their Indian allies to plunder and murder the English settlers.

The latter charge was alleged to have been the chief cause of their expulsion in 1755.

As we have before stated, they were the first settlers here. At the "French Field," near the head of the marsh, forty years ago, could be plainly seen the mounds that marked their dwelling places, and a few years later a number of their farming implements and a few household utensils were turned out by the plough from the place where they had been buried by their owners to hide them from their English foes.

After the French were gone, for a number of years we have no records of any person living in Selmah. In the year 1765, Mr. Salter, of Halifax, obtained from the Crown a grant of 2,500 acres, extending on the shore from near Mr. Alfred Putnam's shipyard to Lower Selmah. All that has come down to us of his ownership is the name of "Salter's Head," and our worthy citizen and county councillor, Mr. Stairs, is one of his descendants.

The Salter Grant, except 100 acres at the upper side, passed by purchase about twenty years later to General Small, who, at the close of the American Revolution, settled the Kennetcook and Nine Mile River districts with soldiers who had been disbanded

at the close of that unfortunate struggle, and were rewarded for their sacrifices and services with allotments of lands in those districts.

We know little of General Small during his ownership, further than the fact that he lived some time here. Of his family or his dependents, no descendants remained.

To him we are indebted for the name "Selma," that he gave to his estate. The name remains to keep his memory green; only in spelling it, those who came after him, added an h, an addition, we fear, that must vex his spirit for our disregard or ignorance of the orthography of Ossian.

On the north shore of Cobequid Bay, at Londonderry and Onslow, and at Truro, the settlers came in a body, and the early records of those townships give the names and nationalities of the people, together with the area of the lands allotted to each of them.

The same is true of Falmouth, Windsor, Newport and Rawdon, in this county.

On this south shore of the Bay no organized efforts at settlements seemed to have been made, presumably for the reason—that the area of the cleared lands made by the French were small and the acreage of marsh lands limited. Here the permanent settlers seem to have straggled in by twos and threes or singly, and amidst isolation and many discouragements, bravely took up the toilsome burden of life.

In this way the south shore of the Bay was settled from Maitland to Walton, or, as they called it, from the Shubenacadie to the Petite.

But to return to Selmah, in 1803. General Small was dead in the old country to which he had some years before returned, and his executors sold his Selmah estate to Colonel William Smith, of Douglas, who conveyed it to three of his sons, Caleb, Richard and Nathan who all settled here. Shortly after this date, their relative, Mr. John Sterling, located at the lower part of the district, and from that time the permanent settlement of Selmah begins. Fifty years later, in June, 1853, the writer came here, and the purport of this paper is to give our younger friends, whose memories go not very far backwards, a short description of Selmah at that time, forty years ago.

The part of the Selmah that was then comprised in the school section from Capt. Ellis' to Mr. David R. Crow's east line. To give the names of the families and others, and the number of inhabitants, their daily pursuits and manner of living, their religious persuasions and educational condition—in a word, a few of the many things that make up the daily life of a community. The natural scenery of the district then presented to the beholder much the same beautiful appearance it does to-day.

The area of improved lands was of much less extent than at present; the woods extended to the

highway in many places. Salter's Head was an almost unbroken forest, mostly covered with hardwood, giving a large supply of firewood for home use and cordwood for export.

The marsh had been dyked for a number of years, and included its present acreage, and then yielding a large amount of hay. The number of inhabited houses of all descriptions was thirty-six. Of these, six were of unhewn logs; ten of the others were of the poorest description. Of the remaining twenty, about one-half were fairly comfortable dwellings.

There were no grates in any of the houses, and no coal used as fuel; cooking stoves had lately come into use.

The open wood fire was then in use in every house. This, with the tallow candle, afforded light in the winter evenings, for at that date kerosene oil and the kerosene oil lamp were unknown.

Commencing at the upper end of the section the inhabitants are comprised in the following list. :

Norman Cole, wife and 7 children	9
Dr. McDowell and wife.....	2
John Weldon, wife and 5 children.....	7
Christopher Weldon, widower	1
Mrs. Atkins, widow and 3 children	4
John McDuffee, Bachelor.....	1
Mrs. Allen, widow, and 2 sons	3
George P. McNutt, wife and 8 children	10
James Walker, wife and 4 children	6

John Faulkner, wife and 4 children	6
Mrs. Faulkner, widow, and daughter	2
John Robison, wife, son, and daughter.....	4
Capt. William McDuffee, wife and 3 children	5
Jacob Yuill, wife and 4 children.....	6
William Yuill, bachelor.....	1
Archibald Campbell, widower.....	1
Mrs. Walker, Sr., widow	1
Alexander Gray, wife and 5 children	7
Alexander Forbes, wife and 2 daughters	4
Mrs. Hunt, widow, and 2 children	3
William McGuiggan, wife and 5 children	7
Rev. Henry Pope, Jr., wife and 1 child	3
James Dunn, wife and 3 children.....	5
John Sweeney, wife and 2 children	4
Mrs. McDonald, widow	1
Mrs. Norman, widow and 3 children.....	4
Mrs. Downing, widow	1
John Royles, widower, and 2 children	3
John Pratt, wife and 6 children	8
William Skaling, wife and 5 children	7
Col. Richard Smith and wife	}
Harriett Smith, his neice	
David R. Smith, his nephew	
Mrs. Eunice Smith, widow, and 7 children...	8
Mrs. Caleb Smith, widow	1
George Smith, wife and 4 children.....	6
Joseph Woodworth, wife and 5 children	7
William Smith, wife and 2 sons	4
Mrs. Isaac Smith, widow, daughter and grand- daughter.....	3
John C. Smith, wife, 5 sons and 2 daughters..	9
William McKenzie, wife and 6 children.....	6

John S. Smith, wife and 3 children	5
Nathan Smith, wife and 2 sons	4
Mrs. Chambers and 3 children	4
William Morris Smith, wife and 2 children...	4
William Henry Hamilton, wife and daughter	3
James Hamilton, wife, son and daughter.....	4
William Sterling, wife and 5 children.....	7
John Sterling, Sr., widower, and 2 daughters	3
James Sterling, wife and 4 children.....	6
Richard M. Sterling, wife and 1 child.....	3
John Sterling, Jr., wife and 3 children	5
William A. Gaetz, bachelor	1
	<hr/>
Total	225

Of the active men on the foregoing list about one-third were farmers, mostly varied with other pursuits; two were professional men, three carpenters and joiners, three shoe makers, one tanner and one blacksmith. The others, and a number of the younger men and boys, went in the coasting trade in summer, and worked in the woods in winter, getting out timber and firewood. There were no ships or barques built or owned here at that date and the foreign freighting business was then in the future.

There was more employment for men and boys on the farm. The hay making and harvesting season required more help than at present, the mowing machine and the horse rake not having come into use.

Of the farm stock, horses were not plenty; not more than one dozen being in the section. And we

may here say that the barns and outhouses (all of which since have been replaced as we now see them) were of the roughest description.

There were many more sheep kept than in this day. In every house the wool was spun into yarn and three or four hand looms were kept busy, and home-spun, dressed or undressed, formed the staple every day clothing.

In 1853 the world had recovered from a long depression, and entered on a better era. Business of all kinds had so greatly improved that every one seemed to be contented and happy.

Juniper timber, scantling, cordwood, plaster and potatoes were in active demand at fair prices in the American market and trade was free and buoyant.

But, contrasting that time with the present, the conditions of life then would, to our younger friends of to-day, seem in many ways wretchedly narrow and intolerable.

The only road in the district was the highway on the shore, not nearly so good a road as we now have made it.

There was no store in the district and no post office, and instead of our daily, there was then only a weekly mail from Halifax. A few weekly papers, not exceeding a dozen, were taken in the section. We then had no country papers.

Then there were no musical instruments in houses or church.

Church socials such as this assemblage to-night, were unheard of, and there never had been a tea-meeting or fancy sale in Selmah. There were only two or three light waggons and three two-wheel carriages here. The larger part of the travelling was as yet done on horseback.

All were intensely provincial, caring little for their fellow colonists outside of Nova Scotia.

The provinces of Upper and Lower Canada, as Ontario and Quebec were then called, were spoken of chiefly in connection with their rebellion, and then seemed further away than China and Japan are now to us. And all the great west of our Dominion was really an unknown country.

There were no free schools until a dozen of years later, and, as in all country sections, education was in a very backward condition.

The school house was a very humble building about twenty feet square, furnished with two long desks, a few long stools without backs; these with an old box stove, completed the outfit. In June, 1853, there were 45 scholars entered on the school list; most of them bright boys and girls very anxious for education.

Only a few of them now remain, and it is with saddened thought we recall the fact that not fewer

than one-half of the boys have died away from home or were lost at sea.

At that date there were more rivalries among the religious denominations, and more controversies about doctrines and creeds.

In our day we have a larger charity. Of the inhabitants of Selmah at that time, 3 women were Catholics, 3 or 4 Baptists, 3 Presbyterian families; and as this is a Presbyterian social, we will give their names: Mrs. Allen, Mrs. Atkins and the Faulkner family.

All the others, numbering about 200, were members or counted in the Methodist church.

The only place of public worship in the district was the old Methodist church, which most of you can remember. The minister in charge, or as he then styled himself, "Wesleyan Missionary," was the Rev. Henry Pope, Jr. Mr. Pope was an energetic preacher with a fine style and address, and it usually took his sermon to be an hour in length to expound the Wesleyan divinity.

This was popular with the younger Presbyterians, who had been used to sermons Calvinistic from an hour and a half to two hours long.

The other professional man at that time in the section was the doctor, Dr. Henry McDowell. The doctor was a Scotchman, past middle age, with a fine

presence and very fine manners when he chose to use them.

We have very little knowledge of his skill as a physician. A few years later he fell into a partially deranged condition and lived a dreary life for nigh on to twenty years later.

Of the four pioneer settlers we have before named who came here in the early years of the century, three were living here in 1853. The elder of the four, Mr. Caleb Smith, familiarly referred to as the "old Squire," had then been dead about a dozen of years. When he first came here he had a wife and children. His sons were settled on his property.

His name was always mentioned with affection and respect. He has many worthy descendants. Three of the oldest residents of Maitland, Capt. Caleb S. Stuart, Mr. McCollum and Mr. Isaac Douglas, are his grandsons.

Of the others at that day, Colonel Richard Smith was the principal man in the district, largely engaged in timbering, farming, and in the plaster trade; he was the chief employer of labor. Mr. Smith was also the most active and interested member of the Methodist Church, always present at the Sunday services, and his solemn and earnest voice was ever heard in the Sunday school and prayer meeting. He had, previously to this time, represented this county in the Provincial Assembly, had long been a Justice of the

Peace, attending the sessions at Windsor, and taking an active interest in local affairs.

Mr. Smith was one of the early temperance reformers, and unceasing in his efforts to make this a temperance and law-abiding community. He was very charitable and a friend to the poor ; and of him it may be truly said : "The good men do lives after them."

Another of the four pioneers was Mr. Nathan Smith, the youngest of the three brothers. In 1853, Mr. Smith was still an active man, past middle age. In consequence of an illness in early life, Mr. Smith was lame and walked with a crutch. Like all the men of his family, nature had endowed him with a fine physique. Also he had what is often wanting to men who are partially invalids—a very happy and cheerful disposition. He was a lover of hospitality, and a gifted and entertaining conversationalist. He was always in the chair at public meetings, where his services were highly valued, and it was amusing at the old-time town meetings to see the skilful way he could handle the man with a "grievance," and send him away satisfied that the overseers had acted wisely and well, and in the public interest.

Mr. Smith was the earliest mail contractor in this part of the country, when the only mail came from Newport Corner on the Western Post Road across the country to Maitland. He died an old man full

of years and honor, after seeing most of his large family settled around him, and sincerely regretted by all who had known and valued his friendship.

The other of the four early pioneers, Mr. John Sterling, was living in 1853. He was then an old man in failing health, and highly respected for his moral worth and his industrious and useful life.

As we had stated, these were the pioneers, and as a community we owe them much. They gave to us its moral and religious tone.

It has been well said that "the record of the lives of those who have done nobly will never cease to influence the conduct of men." If this is true of the higher, it is also true, to a lesser degree, in the humbler walks of life. We have not time to speak of many of the men who were living here in 1853. Some student of human nature has said "that all men have oddities and peculiarities." The particularly odd man in Selmah forty years ago was William McGuiggan, shoemaker, or as Mac sometimes "put it," William McGuiggan, Cordwainer.

Mac was a busy Scotch-Irishman from Belfast, had crossed the ocean in his early days and, after working for some years around the country, came to Selmah worked, or as he said, "wrought at his trade" for Col. Smith, married and settled in a small house by the roadside near where Mr. Scott now lives. He was innocent of letters, or as he expressed it, "was

no scholar." He had a good share of shrewdness, and was celebrated for his quaint sayings and his mother wit. He had an unbounded capacity for the marvellous; his life was in constant terror from ghosts, in whose reality he was a firm believer. The great comet of 1858, blazing in the sky opposite his door, filled him with terror. As this was before the days of shoe factories, he was kept busy at his bench, and many were the marvellous stories he was told, and that he related to his customers, of the war then waged in the Crimea, and the struggle for Sebastopol. "Mac" has been gone nigh a quarter of a century—peace to his ashes.

To complete our sketch we must not omit to mention the grave yard among the trees around the old church. In 1853 there were two dozen or so of graves, four with marble headstones. The harvest of death that never fails has since filled it to overflowing. Its area has been enlarged, and few can pass it by without loving memories of many who sleep beneath its sheltering quiet and repose.

And on this Thanksgiving time our young friends when contrasting this past time with the present, will note that the years gone by have wrought many changes, and all in the paths of progress and improvement, in social life and manners, in domestic comforts and homes, in educational advantages, in the melting away of religious prejudices, and in the enlargement

of our political horizon. And while to-night we praise the "Father Beneficent" for all blessings, especially may we give thanks for peace in our time, that no wars or revolutions have disturbed our country, and that it is our priceless privilege to live under the same glorious flag that sheltered and protected the fathers.

