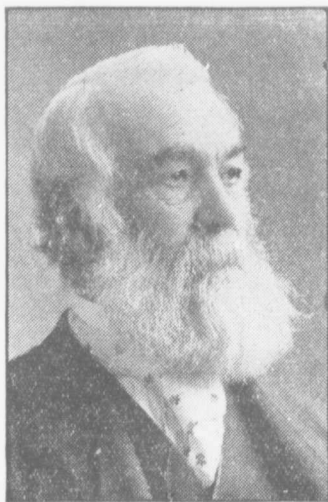


1912

From the Morrisburg Herald of May 31, 1912

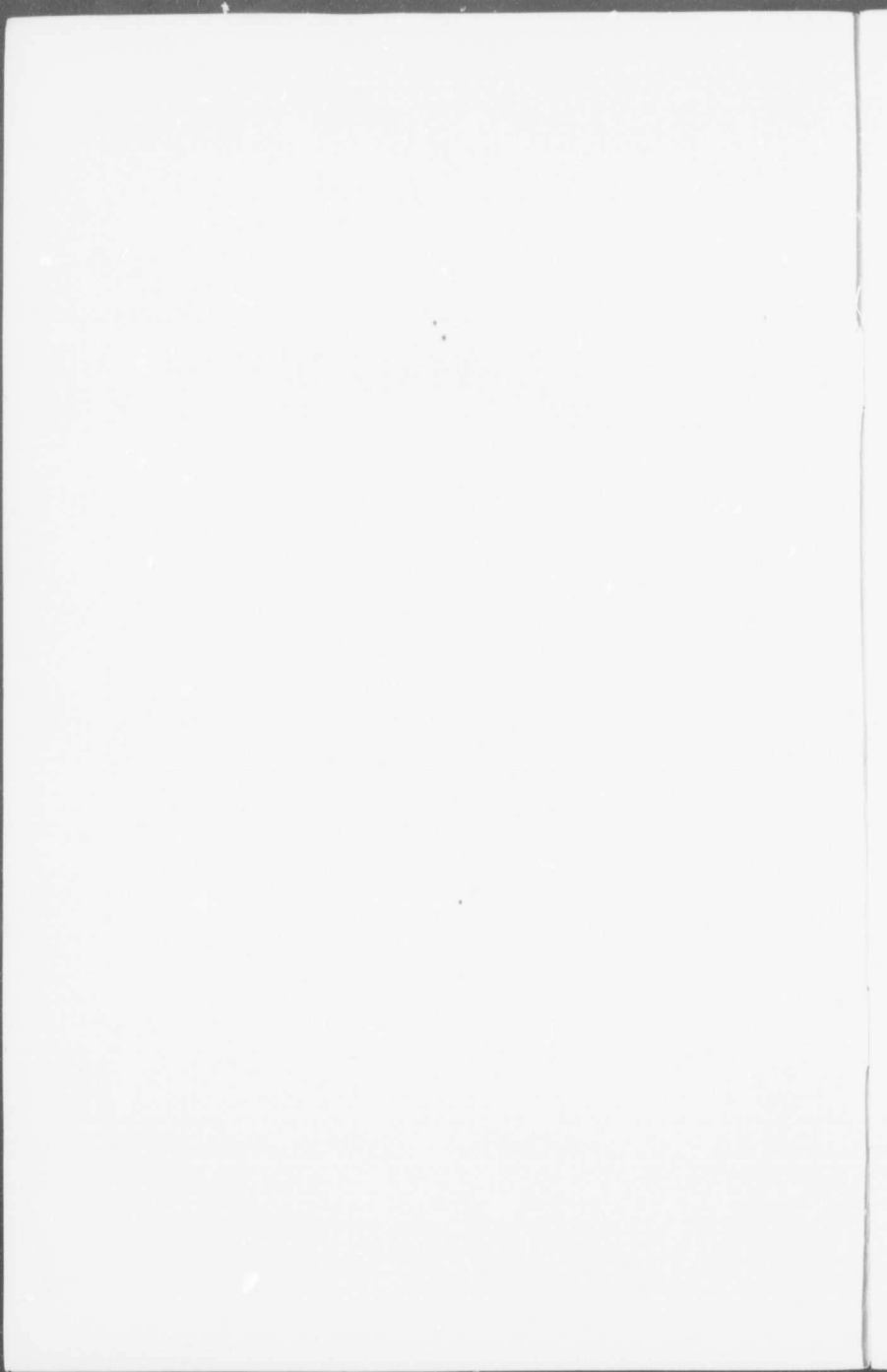
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JAMES CROIL

IN THE COUNTY OF DUNDAS

1845 - - 1870



JAMES CROIL, son of a West India merchant, was born in Glasgow, 4th September, 1821; educated at the New Academy, Edinburgh; the Grange School, Sunderland, and Glasgow University. After an apprenticeship of two years to farming in East Lothian, then as now the garden of Scotland, he sailed for New York in the emigrant ship "Clyde," and reached his destination after a fine voyage of forty days, to find the thermometer indicating 106° in the shade.

Thence to Montreal, occupied four days by steamer and stage, and the seventeen miles of railway from St. John's on Lake Champlain to Laprairie at that time was the only passenger railway in Canada, opened for traffic in 1837. That was in 1841, when he came to visit his brother William, who some years previously had purchased Stacey Island, a beautiful and fertile tract of land of 2,000 acres, situated in the St. Lawrence near the head of the Longue Sault rapids, where he resided for twenty years, administering his estate with patriarchal simplicity and caring for his Scottish tenantry with parental affection.

His second voyage in 1844 occupied forty-two days, and was relieved from monotony by a mutiny of the crew in midocean, which continued until the pilot took charge of the ship off Sandy Hook. Such of the cabin passengers as chose joined the cook, the carpenter and the ship's officers to shorten sail or shake out a reef, as might be needed. Among those who volunteered their services were the subject of this sketch and his life-long friend, Robert Graham, who was so long associated with the Montreal Star.

In 1845 Mr. Croil purchased the old

Crysler Farm in the township of Williamsburg, to which he gave the name of Archerfield, in remembrance of the beautiful property of that name in East Lothian, dear to him in the days of his apprenticeship. The farm occupied about 500 acres of land fronting on the St. Lawrence, nearly one-half of which was as yet primeval forest. Here Mr. Croil soon learned that farming in Canada was very different from that in East Lothian, and that he must serve a second apprenticeship, but it did not take long to convince him that his lot had been cast in a pleasant place, and that the inhabitants of Dundas county, taken as a whole, were as fine a people as one could wish to meet, and that he had much to learn from his exemplary neighbors. They were nearly all of German lineage, members and descendants of the United Empire Loyalists who were located here by the British Government at the close of the war in 1783 and by religion were nearly all Lutherans. Frugal and industrious in their habits, they were scrupulously honest in their transactions, every man's word being considered as good as his bond. Among them were such names as the following: Bouck, Brouse, Broeffle, Carman, Casselman, Cook, Coons, Crysler, Frymire, Doran, Empey, Haines, Hayunga, Hickey, Loucks, Merkle, Shaver, Snyder, Schwerdfeger, Weagant, Weager, Whittaker and Willard.

In those days they had neither reaping nor thrashing machines, and it goes without saying that the women had no sewing machines. The grain was reaped by scythe, sickle or cradle. The thrashing floor in the great old barn resembled that of Ornan, the Jebusite, three thous-

and years ago ; the only difference being that, instead of oxen, the grain was treaded out by barefooted horses and colts. One of the men, George Casselman, was accounted the best cradler in the county, and did his work with astonishing rapidity and even gracefully.

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT.

The early members of Parliament for the county of Dundas were : Alexander Campbell 1792, Colonel Fraser 1797, Captain Weager 1800, Major Henry Merkley 1804, Colonel John Crysler 1808, Peter Shaver 1824, George Brouse 1828, John Cook 1830, George McDonell 1845, John Pliny Crysler 1848, Jesse W. Rose 1852, J. William Cook 1857.

Politics ran high in those days, when Liberals and Conservatives ousted each other in succession. None of these men had a more memorable career than COLONEL JOHN CRYSLER, who came to this country in 1784, "a drummer boy," fifteen years of age ; he early engaged in merchandise and acquired a large fortune—as farmer, merchant, justice of the peace, colonel of militia, representative of the county in Parliament for sixteen years. He was a man of note and extensive influence ; his hospitality knew no bounds, and the large ball room in the old Crysler mansion bore unmistakable testimony to the convivial spirit of the times. Rapidly, however, as he had accumulated his handsome fortune, even more swiftly did his riches take wings to themselves and flee away. Colonel Crysler died in Finch in 1850, aged 81. His son, JOHN PLINY, occupied for many years a position of high standing in the community, having represented the county in Parliament for nine years. Mr. Crysler died 7th April, 1880, in his 81st year. His wife, Mary Westley, died in April, 1864. Mr. Loucks, in his funeral sermon, said of her : "She was a woman of singular purity of character, who made her own that loveliest attribute of love—the charity that thinketh no evil."

The COOKS of Williamsburg came of

the old U.E. Loyalist stock. They became extensively and successfully engaged in the lumber business. During many years they represented the county in Parliament and enjoyed the respect and confidence of the entire community. They were all liberal supporters of the Lutheran church.

WILLIAM ELLIOTT came from the borderland of Scotland in 1828. After engaging in business of different kinds in the United States and Canada, he became contractor for the St. Lawrence canals and built a grist mill in Iroquois ; was a manager of the high school during many years, and in various other capacities became a prominent member of the community—a man of unflinching honor and integrity and the mainstay of the Free Presbyterian church in Matilda. Mr. Elliott died in October, 1891, in the 91st year of his age.

THE BATTLEFIELD.

Samuel Crysler, another son of Colonel John Crysler, lived all his life on his farm adjoining the battlefield, for many years occupying the log house that had been built about one hundred years ago. Of the large concourse who assembled at the unveiling of the monument on September 25th, 1895, he was the sole survivor of those who witnessed the engagement, being then only seven years of age, but he remembered being with other children placed in the cellar of Crysler Farm house, to keep them out of danger. He married Sarah Anne Hickey and had a family of eleven children. He died December 17th, 1896, in his 91st year.

Mr. Croil's five children were all born on the battlefield.

'Twas on the 11th of November, 1813, that the decisive victory was won which hastened the termination of the War of 1812-14, that made lasting peace with the United States, and guaranteed that "the brightest jewel" in the imperial diadem of Lord Durham's fertile imagination, shall always be identified with the British Empire.

The WHITNEYS traced their descent

from an old English family, some of whom came to British North America in 1640.

RICHARD LEET WHITNEY, born at Waddington, N.Y., in 1805, had one daughter and ten sons, four of whom survive. He died in 1883. Albert resides in Prescott and George Edgar in Montreal.

Sir James Pliny was born in 1843, called to the bar in 1876; married Alice Park of Cornwall in 1877; has represented the county of Dundas in the Ontario Legislature since 1888; in 1905 appointed premier and in 1908 received the honor of knighthood from H.R.H. the Prince of Wales (now King George V.) at Quebec. "Sir James is acknowledged to be the foremost man in all the House. The ruler of his Cabinet, his personality dominates the Assembly; every decree of the Whitney Government seems to smack of the rugged character of the man who stands behind it."

His brother, Edwin Canfield, born 1844, married Sarah, daughter of the late John Pliny Crysler, in 1879. Engaged extensively in the lumber business, he became a millionaire and philanthropist. The beautiful stone church erected in 1904 at a cost of \$8,000, on the site of the old rectory, was presented to the parish of Williamsburg by Mr. and Mrs. E. C. Whitney "in loving memory of their parents." If none of this family are now resident in the county, the honored name of Whitney will be long remembered and handed down to posterity in the annals of Dundas.

In his history of the Iroquois high school, MR. ADAM HARKNESS tells us that JAMES CROIL and JOHN SYLVESTER ROSS were appointed members of the board of trustees in 1856, and exercised a marked influence on the school for several years. Mr. Croil, he says, "was a Scotchman, who about the middle of the century purchased and settled on the old Crysler farm. He was a gentleman of culture and devoted a considerable portion of his time to literary pursuits,

and wrote about that time his history of the county, known as 'CROIL'S DUNDAS'—a work of great merit the value of which increases as time goes on. He served on the board ten years, during five of which he was its chairman." At that time ALBERT CARMAN, a native of Iroquois, the distinguished General Superintendent of the Methodist church since 1883, was the headmaster.

JOHN S. ROSS was the son of a U.E. Loyalist; born in the township of Osnabrock in 1821; removed to Iroquois as a young man, when his energy and capacity for business soon gave him a prominent position in the community. He served as member of the Local Parliament a number of years, and for six years represented the county in the Dominion Parliament. He died in 1882. Mr. Croil, on the other hand, though frequently asked to enter the arena of politics, always declined to do so, saying it was not in his line.

SCHOOLS AND SCHOOLMASTERS.

The schoolmaster in those early days was an important personage in the community. He boarded round in the families of his district, which, apart from his teaching, afforded him many opportunities of doing good. One of these was MR. WILLIAM STYLES, a man of exceptional ability, who gave instruction to about sixty pupils in the school adjoining old Trinity church in Williamsburg, and was for some time private tutor in Mr. Croil's family. He and his brother James, who taught at North Williamsburg, coached pupils for the universities before the establishment of a high school at Morrisburg.

The first resident physician in this part of Canada was DR. WYLIE, a graduate of Edinburgh University, a man of rare ability, residing in Edwardsburg, who made his rounds on horseback with his capacious saddlebags, ready for any emergency. DR. JOHN HARKNESS, whose mother was a U.E. Loyalist, graduated in medicine from McGill University in 1862, and soon after commenced his practice in Matilda. DR. SHERMAN,

from the United States, followed Dr. Wylie, and was many years resident in Williamsburg. Dr. WAGNER, located at Dickinson's Landing, was another eminent physician and a graduate of McGill University.

Among other prominent men in the county mention should be made of Mr. A. MACDONALD (INCH), the polite collector of customs at Mariatown, who annually invited a few select friends to share with him the time-honored haggis on St. Andrew's day. Another highly esteemed man from Glengarry was Mr. A. G. MACDONELL, the county registrar, who was afterward canal superintendent.

Of the "landed aristocracy" in the county of Dundas sixty-five years ago, Mr. Croil still retains pleasant recollections of intimate friendships with Jacob and Peter Brouse, Jacob Haines and George Doran of Matilda, and John and Michael Hickey, the venerable John W. Loucks and Michael Pillar, all of Williamsburg. Mr. Pillar's name is still familiar as a household word in the county of Dundas as a model farmer, a storekeeper, postmaster and wharfinger; as a church warden, and, true to his name, as a pillar and tower of strength in the Church of England, to the end of his days.

The oldest inhabitant in Mr. Croil's time was Mrs. Jacob Coons of Iroquois, a most interesting and intelligent old lady, who informed him that in 1783 there was no Protestant church in Canada that she knew of, and that she was married in that year by the chaplain of the forces in the old Recollet church in Montreal, which had been for a number of years used for Protestant worship. Mrs. Coons was said to have reached the great age of 108 years.

MINISTERS AND CHURCHES.

At the first, the U.E. Loyalist settlers were nearly all members of the Lutheran church, and had for their minister the REV. SAMUEL SCHWERDFEGER of Albany, who came to Williamsburg in 1790; during his ministry churches were built in Williamsburg and Matilda. This eminent U.E. Loyalist died in 1803.

The REV. HERMAN HAYUNGA came in 1826 and had a union church erected by the Lutherans and Presbyterians jointly in 1827, at North Williamsburg. He retired in 1837 from ill health, but resided many years in the county and was highly respected. In 1795 a union church was built in Osnabruck, which had for their first minister the REV. LUDWIG BROEFFLE.

Dundas county was the cradle of Methodism in Canada. The first church edifice was erected on Point Iroquois, Matilda, in 1797. In 1861 the number of Methodists in Dundas was 7,319. In its early years, ignored by the Government of the day, and subjected to many vexatious disabilities, Methodism made rapid progress, and ere long became the largest Protestant denomination in the Dominion. The first Methodist preachers in Dundas were WILLIAM LOSSEE, a lay preacher, and REV. DARIUS DUNHAM. The former came from the United States in 1790; the latter also came from the United States, in 1792. He was familiarly known as "Scolding Dunham," from the denunciatory style of his preaching. It is told that these two had set their affections upon a young lady of rare personal attractions, that "Scolding Dunham" won the prize, which so upset Lessee that he left the country "hors de combat" and was lost to sight.

In Mr. Croil's time the REV. JOHN DAVIDSON was the Presbyterian minister in Williamsburg and the REV. THOMAS SCOTT in Matilda. In 1839 REV. ISAAC PURKIS was inducted to the pastorate of the Osnabruck Presbyterian church; by him Mr. Croil was ordained to the eldership of the Presbyterian Church of Canada in connection with the Church of Scotland, in 1850. Mr. Purkis died in 1852.

Services of the Church of England began in Williamsburg in 1811 by the REV. J. G. WEAGANT till 1835, when he was succeeded by the REV. G. B. LINDSAY. In 1844 he was followed by the REV. EDWARD BOSWELL, D.C.L., in whose time Williamsburg was created a rectory and St. James' church built in

Morrisburg. He was followed by the REV. EDWIN LUTCKES, who officiated for many years with marked ability and acceptance. It is still remembered that DR. JOHN STRACHAN, whose diocese included the whole of Upper Canada, who was appointed Bishop of Toronto in 1839, visited the churches in these counties to hold confirmation services, driving all the way from Toronto in his old-fashioned yellow-painted carriage and pair. This eminent prelate, strongly marked by the traditional "ingenium perfervidum scotorum" to the end of his days, died in 1867 in his 90th year. Here he was visiting a parish which in after years had as rector the REV. CLARE L. WORRELL, now Bishop of Nova Scotia.

In 1844 the Roman Catholics bought the old Presbyterian church near the Williamsburg stage house; in 1856 they had four churches. Their first priest was the REV. FATHER COYLE, who was followed by the REV. FATHER MEADE.

The Morrisburg and Iroquois of the present time were non-existent until the opening of the St. Lawrence canals in 1849.

After three shortlived journalistic enterprises, two in Iroquois and one in Morrisburg, the first newspaper in the county was the Morrisburg Courier, founded by a highly esteemed "lad o' pairts" from Belleville, in 1863. It was alleged at the time that Mr. Croil had a finger in the pie; be that as it may, he was a frequent contributor to its columns. One of his leading articles was a long lamentation entitled "The Last of the Intercolonial." Little did he then dream that the Intercolonial Railway was to become one of the most serviceable and best equipped in the Dominion. Mr. Kennedy died in 1889; the Courier ceased publication in 1899. There are now five weekly newspapers in the county—The Herald and the Leader in Morrisburg, the News in Iroquois, the Press in Winchester and the Record in Chesterville. The Herald, established 1874, is the oldest, and is the county's only Liberal journal.

For twenty-five years in all Mr. Croil

occupied the old Chrysler farm. In 1865 he was appointed General Agent of the Presbyterian Church of Canada in connection with the Church of Scotland, and in 1870 bade farewell to Archerfield, to the county of Dundas, and to a host of friends, nearly all of whom have since gone to "that undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveller returns," and took up his residence in Montreal.

"Croil's Dundas," published in 1861, contains a concise sketch of Canadian history, and more particularly of the county of Dundas, ending with a full account of the visit of the Prince of Wales to Canada in 1860. The address presented to the Prince by Dundas county was written by Mr. Croil, and by him placed in the hands of His Royal Highness at Ottawa. Mr. Croil has in his possession three letters from His late Majesty King Edward, all couched in gracious terms. Of "Croil's Dundas" two thousand copies were printed—far in excess of the demand for a work of this kind. It might have resulted in financial failure, but the unexpected happened, as it so often does; the Board of Education for Upper Canada acquired the greater part of the large edition for distribution as prizes in the public schools; consequently to the regret of many, the book has been for many years out of print.

Among Mr. Croil's other publications are the following: Historical and Statistical Report of the Kirk in Canada, Montreal, 1867; Life of Alexander Mathieson, D.D., Montreal, 1870; Story of the Kirk in the Maritime Provinces, Montreal, 1875; The Mission Problem, Toronto, 1883; The Noble Army of Martyrs, Philadelphia, 1893; Steam Navigation, Toronto, 1898; Genesis of Churches in the United States, Newfoundland and Canada, Montreal, 1907.

An outline of Mr. Croil's subsequent career in Montreal, during twenty-five years, as administrator, author, journalist, and traveller in many lands, may be found in MR. HENRY J. MORGAN'S "Canadian Men and Women of the Time," Ottawa, 1912.