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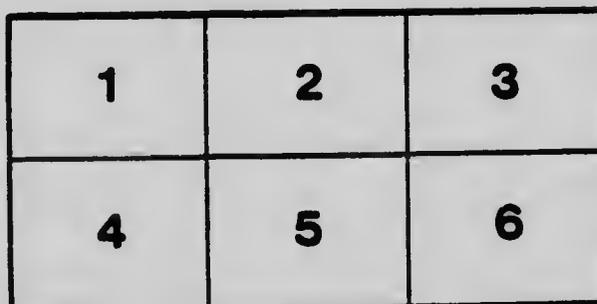
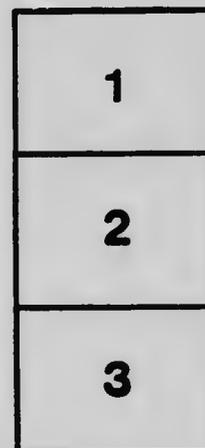
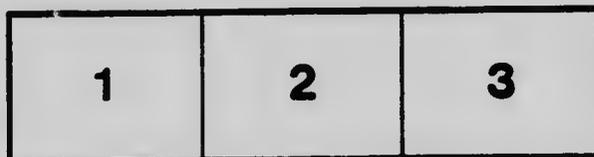
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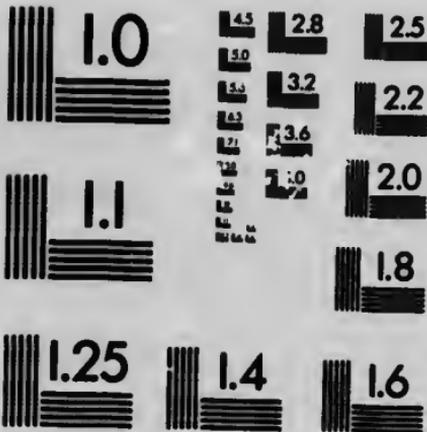
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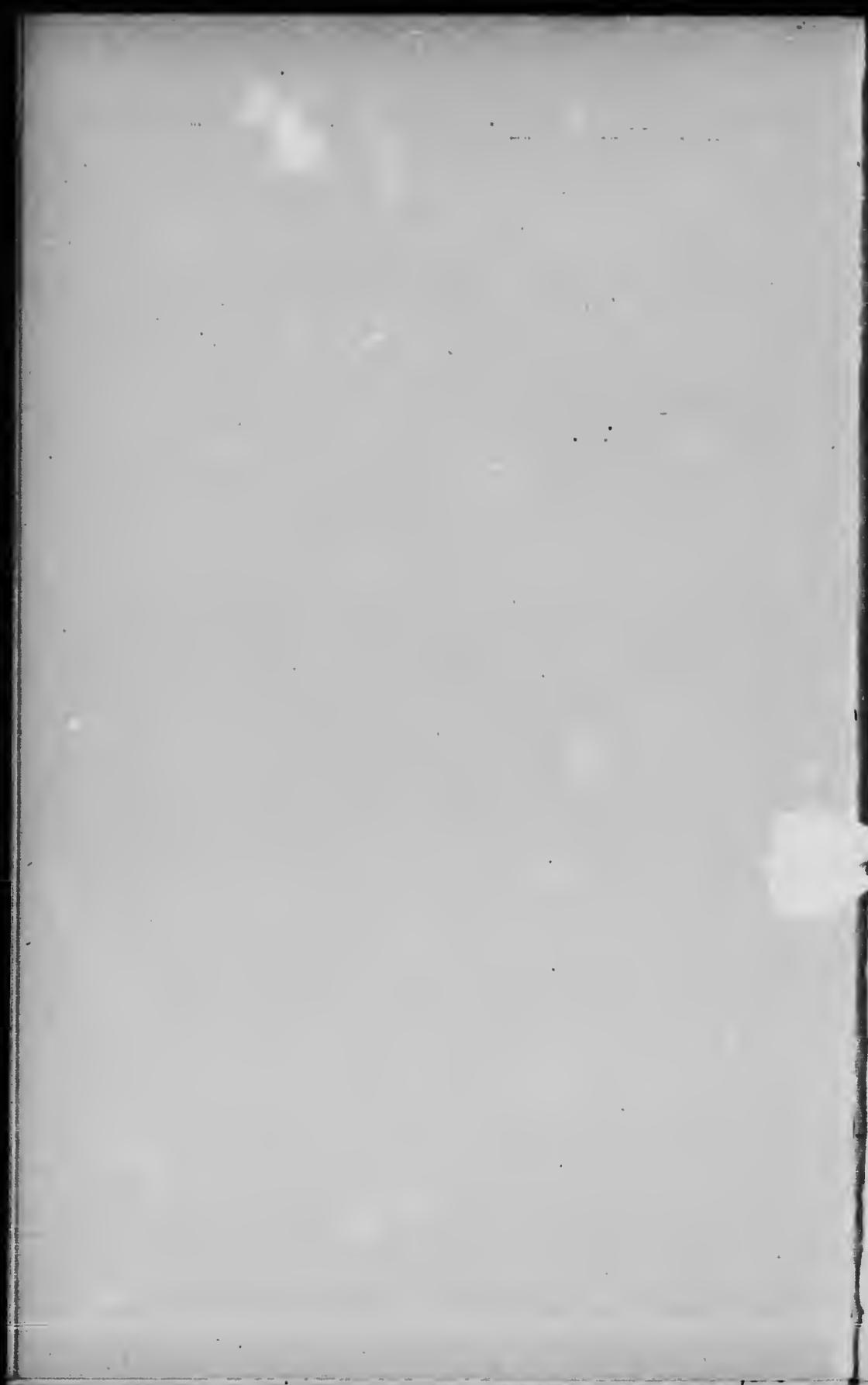
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A History of the
Society of Friends
of Lobo Township

By
Edgar M. Zavitz

1917



The
Society of Friends of
Lobo Township





BENJAMIN CUTLER.

SOCIETY OF FRIENDS OF LOBO TOWNSHIP

BY EDGAR M. ZAVITZ.

There is in the centre of Lobo Township, in the centre of Middlesex County, a small body of people known as the Society of Friends, or Quakers. They were pioneers, not only in the clearing of the primeval forest, but they were pioneers in the clearing of people's minds from old superstitions, and ancient barbarisms. There have been no reform movements in the Township in which Friends have not been either leaders or staunch supporters. No matter in what form the temperance cause came up, they used it in driving out alcohol. If they could not get just what they wanted, which was total prohibition of the sale, traffic and use of all intoxicating drinks as a beverage, they took as much of it as they could get (I mean as much of the prohibition) from whatever political party, and ever worked and hoped for more.

It was their creed to follow peace and practice love with all men and all nations, believing that to be the only way to end wars. The typical Quaker would not fight. They could strap the gun on his shoulder, and march him in the battle's front, but they could not make him shoot. He obeys Christ, both the spiritual and the historical, which are one in their teaching, and would follow Him even to the Cross for love's sake.

As to their religious assemblies, they worship in the Temple of Silence, where every soul is a priest or a priestess, and there is no need of a mediator. The outward voice is often heard, but the ordination and the anointing is of God, not man.

I present these facts of the Friends' faith, that their acts, which make their history, may be read in a truer light, for if a Friend is anything he is sincere, and his acts and life reflect his faith. He does not trust in hope for any vicarious salvation, but rests his soul in its attitude of love towards God and good-will and forgiveness towards his fellow men.

With this introduction and explanation I will endeavor to give a few facts that might pass as history concerning that little community selected, at your request, from all the world.

If I over-estimate and over-praise I ask you to judge with the leniency of Goldsmith where he screens the pastor, his father, by saying:

"Even his failings leaned to virtue's side, ' for I am conscious of a feelir ; akin to that which Scott describes in those noted lines —

"Breathes there a man with soul so dead
Who never to himself hath said
This is my own, my native land?"

The place of our birth, and the scenes of our childhood, unwittingly bias the most of us, more or less, but it is a fault that we can condone, or, with Goldsmith, pass as a virtue.

The first Monthly Meeting of Friends in Canada was established at Pelham, Welland County, in 1799. Norwich M. M. was established in 1819. The Preparative Meeting, which forms a unit of the M. M. was established in Norwich in 1816, Yarmouth in 1819 and Lobo in 1857.

Thus as "Westward the course of Empire takes its way," so the Society of Friends penetrated westward into the wilderness of this western peninsula of Upper Canada. Previous to the Preparative Meeting an Indulged Meeting had been granted to Lobo Friends back in 1849, several families, at different times, having taken up land and made for themselves homes in the vicinity.

John D. Harris and wife were the first settlers that afterwards formed a part of the meeting. They came in 1834. Benjamin Cutler came in 1837. John Marsh in 1839. My father, Daniel Zavitz, came in 1843.

Pardon me if I narrate some of his trials in love and home-making. I do so just to give you a general idea of the experiences of those pioneer times. He purchased a hundred acres at about \$4.00 per acre, on which not a tree had been cut in the way of clearing. He bought an axe and resolutely went to work. He says: "At first it went very slow and discouraging, but I hacked away, cleared seven acres, and sowed to wheat, which looked very promising the next spring, but the late frosts caught it, and it was fit only for chicken feed." But he had no chickens, and if he had, eggs were only 5 cents a dozen.

Batchelor's life under such discouraging conditions and alone in the wilderness could be endured only by the prospect of its coming to a happy conclusion. So after four years of chopping and building and longing he went back to get a companion. She was Susan W. Vail, living at Oakfield, New York State, about 40 miles east of Buffalo, having been born in New Jersey, at the foot of the Green Mountains, within sight of "Washington's Rock."

Their honeymoon lasted five days. The bride and groom, perched on a lumber wagon loaded with their household goods, from his father's home in Bertie, took their way through the forests to their new home hewn in the wilderness. Their pilgrimage might recall as charmingly as the journey homeward of Hiawatha and Minnehaha, "through interminable forests," or of Alden and Priscilla, as "through the Plymouth woods passed onward the bridal procession." After some time of winding their devious way along the blazed trail they came upon the little cabin which was henceforth to be their home. Just the very spot, one might think, that Cowper imagined, and longed for, and sang about,

"O for a lodge in some vast wilderness,
Some boundless contiguity of shade."

Having arrived at their destination they unpacked their goods, with joyful hearts, thankful for their safe journey over

the hazardous way; for the road was very icy, and the hills were much steeper than at present. On the steepest ones the horses would slide from top to bottom. A rail was put through the hind wheels to lock them so they would not try to get ahead of the front ones, and upset the precious load down the embankment.

Lobo Meeting was mostly composed of removals from Pelham Monthly Meeting, to which place their forefathers had immigrated from Pennsylvania, there known as the Pennsylvania Dutch. The original stock we used to think came from Germany, but now we think maybe they came from Holland. "Zee" came Zavitz may have been a corruption of Zuider Zee. I think this merely as a suggestion of mine.

In 1850 one acre of land was given by Benjamin Cutler, and half an acre by John Marsh for a Meeting House and burying ground. The house was built of wood. In 1859, so many Friends having moved in, this house was found to be too small and a new building was erected of brick, size 32 ft. by 50 ft., at a cost of \$700.00. This building is used at present, always being kept in good repair, well painted, plain but useful, serving still the community even more variedly and fully than ever in its history.

Besides the families named above we might mention the Shotwells, the Mumas and the Wilsons, as old familiar names of the neighborhood.

The grounds also have been enlarged by the gift, in 1887, of half an acre by Caroline V. Cutler. They now contain two acres. It is an ideal, quiet, Quakerly spot, inviting repose and meditation. Beautiful shade trees, preserved from the ancient woods, cast their welcome shade here and there over the lawn, while on the south and west of the house protecting it from the piercing blasts of winter and the scorching suns of summer rise a stately grove of pines, planted there nearly fifty years ago by young Friends who were not so much wrapped up in their own selves and their own times that they could not think of other people and times; which thought may be laying up treasures in heaven.

I have spoken of Friends' interest in temperance. I shall relate two occurrences in the early days of the settlement that indicate their stand on the subject, and exerted a wide influence in placing the ban on whiskey. In 1838, when Benjamin Cutler had the timbers hewn out ready to erect his grist and saw mill, word got around that there would be no whiskey provided. This was an innovation on their festive and hilarious occasions and the people said they would not come unless they could have their accustomed drink. "All right," he told them, if they would not put it up without whiskey the timbers would lie there and rot. But when the appointed day arrived there were plenty of hands and less wrangling and swearing than usual. They wanted the mill even more than their afternoon of whiskey, for many of them had to carry their wheat on their backs eight or ten miles

to get it ground, and then carry their flour home, and they knew it was no holiday.

At another raising John Marsh and James McCollom were present and before it commenced the bottle was passed around a couple of times, when they said: "Gentlemen, if that bottle appears again, we shall go home." Their help was indispensable and the bottle didn't appear again.

In those early days there was big game in the woods. Bears were frequently seen prowling around in the day time. The howling of wolves often was heard at night, and the mild eyed deer would sometimes graze in the clearing with the cattle. They were known even to go with the cows up to the barn.

The Indian too was there. And they were tamer even than the deer. They often erected their wigwams on the flats of the creek, — the squaws plying their basket trade, and the men making axe handles. If their sojourn in the settlement was too brief to erect their camp they would spend the winter's night by the kitchen stove or preferably the open fireside in the white man's house. They were trustworthy and honest, except when they would steal back the Black Ash and Hickory from the woods the white man's government had stolen from them. But if they would not forget an injury neither would they forget a kindness. I shall mention one occasion typical of their honesty. There was an old Indian whose name was Simon. His wife's name was Rosy. They came to my father's one day and begged \$2.00 to buy Rosy a calico dress as the one she wore was getting rather shabby. They said they would pay it back, bye and bye. Soon afterwards Simon died. As soon as possible Rosy came back with \$2.00 saying, "My ole man made me promise to take that \$2.00 we had saved up and pay our debt to you." My father commended her on their honesty and told her to keep it. He had intended it as a present.

Many people think the Indian savage and blood-thirsty, but treat him kindly and he was always your friend. The spirit of Penn's Treaty with the Indians was lived over and over again in every Quaker settlement in the New World, and amid all the guerilla warfare between the Whites and the Red men on this continent not a drop of Quaker blood was ever shed, except in two or three cases when the Quaker lost faith in his peace principles and sought armed protection. Such is the fruits of kindness. Would not that peace policy of the Quakers end all wars throughout the world? O Christ, that men only knew the power of love that led Thee by the way of the Cross into glory!

The Society of Friends in Lobo was early interested in the intellectual as well as the spiritual welfare of their younger members. In the winter of 1875-6 a literary society was organized which afterwards obtained the name of "Olio." The Olio became famed far and wide and many of those who had the good fortune to attend it attribute much of their after success to the

opportunity for culture it afforded them. It ran its brilliant course for a quarter of a century. The number at its meetings varied from the teens to nearly two hundred. A history of its first decade was compiled and printed and a copy has been deposited in the Archives at Ottawa. The good work of the Olio is being perpetuated by the "Young Friends' Association" which started soon after the Olio ceased and is at present a flourishing organization furnishing to the young members opportunity in public speaking, reciting, short story and essay writing, debating etc. Thus there has been a continuous means for the development of the intellectual and spiritual life of the succeeding generations that have come and gone for the last forty years.

The "First-day School," too, has been running since 1880. It takes the child soon after it begins to walk and endeavors to instil into its mind, in a simple way, the basic principles underlying true Christianity. The gray haired fathers and mothers likewise attend. We claim that there is no age limit shutting out the learner from the school of Christ. We believe that every child is born in purity, that it never passes, while on earth, beyond the possibility of losing it. Therefore we are interested in all, from the cradle to the grave. Our school has always taken an active part in the Lobo Township Sunday School Association which held its twenty-fifth convention this summer, 1916.

From 1886 until 1900 the Monthly Magazine called the "Young Friends' Review," was edited and published by Friends at Coldstream, being printed by A. Talbot & Co., of London. It was greatly appreciated by many, but the arrangement of being farmers first and editors at leisure, or rather at pressure, did not always work harmoniously, and the little paper was given up, or rather transferred to Friends in New York, and after a few years it merged into the "Friends' Intelligencer," of Philadelphia.

In a purely literary sense I might mention two movements Friends were largely active in inaugurating. In 1882 there was formed the "Lobo Lecture Club." Its object was to bring to the rural community the best lecturers and elocutionists obtainable. It ran successfully for five years. Among the many noted entertainers we might mention, J. W. Bengough, Dr. Wilde, Manley Benson, A. A. Hopkins, Professors Meeke and Bell-Smith, Dr. Sippi and Senator G. W. Ross. One of the first "Farmers' Institutes" ever held in the Province was handled by the L. L. C., when President Mills, Professors Panton and Shuttleworth, accompanied by the Globe reporter, held a series of meetings in the Town Hall at Coldstream.

Some time back we mentioned the Olio. In 1887 the "Coldstream Public Library" had its birth in the Olio. It ran on private subscriptions and members' fees until 1892, when it was incorporated into the great Provincial System. It contains some 2,500 volumes and is much used and appreciated by the public.

It is considered by the Department one of the best rural libraries in the Province, particularly commended for its choice selection of books.

As I intimated in the beginning, the history of Friends has been greatly influenced by the code of rules laid down for their conduct in the "Book of Discipline." Twice a year the Society queries after its members and advises them as to their diligence in attending our religious meetings; as to their love and fellowship towards each other; as to their total abstinence from the use of all intoxicating liquors as a beverage, or abetting its traffic in any way, also from the use of tobacco in any form; as to helping their fellow members who require assistance; as to providing all children under their care with school learning sufficient to fit them for business; as to bearing a faithful testimony against war; as to the non-use of oaths both profane and judicial; as to the paying of their debts and dealing justly with their fellow men; as to plainness in speech and apparel; summarizing the whole matter up in the injunction of Jesus to "let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven," with the added admonition to our ministers of the gospel "to dwell in that life which gives ability to labor successfully in the Church of Christ, adorning the doctrine they deliver to others by being good examples in deed, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith and in purity of life."

Written at the request of the "London and Middlesex Historical Society and read before it Nov 22-1916"

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