

In the dim and distant past there was almost as much pressure on the part of parents to have their boys and girls well educated as today, except that education diplomas today are harder to obtain. The old Form IV called for the writing an Entrance Exam, entrance into the Collegiate Institute.

Remember the many memory tests when it was a must to recite the "War of the Roses" and "The Village Blacksmith". The latter poem was a classic. Half the population of today never heard of the Smith, except in the dictionary as a Blacksmith, all of which leads up to the following story.

A week ago a Blacksmith from Burnt River (north of Fenelon Falls) was noticed with his shop on a large open truck and he was on his way to Barrie to shoe some horses. What a change from the old days!

It was once a thrill to look in on the Village Blacksmith, a man of muscle, a hairy chest, wearing a peak cap and around his waist was tied a leather apron tied with leather string. He was an expert thrusting a large pair of iron tongs into the firey blazing forge and with quick twists he turned a horseshoe in the making, into a red hot shoe.

At the same time he was busy handling a large bellows with the left arm and hand. The hot shoe of iron was thrust briefly and quickly into a large tub of dirty water, and almost in the same movement the Smithy proceeded to put the finishing touches to the shoe by pounding it on the anvil.

There was a fascinating rythm in every movement. The shoe was ready to fit on the horse's hoof and the nails were hurriedly driven and the steel shoe was soon in place.

Even the command and expert manner in which the Smith lifted the heavy leg of an animal was a sight to behold. The blacksmith was usually an expert conversationalist as well and could apply his art and talk on any subject of the day in the same breath.

Who were some of these Blacksmiths of former days? In Lindsay Harry Bell was a pioneer, with a shop on Lindsay Street South which in later years was operated by Andy Cain and sons and Louis Bell was the father of Harry Bell one time Fire Chief in Lindsay.

William Stewart, Albert St. was a Blacksmith in the Sinclair Carriage Works, located west of the Allan Bros., Monumental Works on Cambridge Street. Larry O'Connor, father of the late Judge L. V. O'Connor had a shop on Russell Street, East of the Kiwanis Arena. Bill "Moose" Carley ran a shop on Kent Street East, as did a man named Padget.

A Blacksmith on Cambridge Street South, north of the Bus Terminal was owned by a man named Jones, followed by Wallace Battle and Ed. St. John. Across the road was a shop operated by John O'Leary who hailed from King's Wharf in Emily Township. Richard Ky. lie ex-mayor was a carriage-maker and did some blacksmithing as well.

In the distant past a 'Smithy' was a prominent place of business in every village and hamlet and could be found on many a four corner rural roads. At Woodville a man named Robinson was a busy pounder and at Reaboro Morden was a man who was known for miles around for his horse-shoeing. Downey was a fami-

liar name at Downeyville and Birchard was a blacksmith and a well known curler at Beaverton.

One of the busiest "Burgs" away back was Fenelon Falls. With the lumbering industry booming and a number of saw mills, humming, backed by a fine farming community, the Blacksmith shop was a real part of the village. Charles Kelly was one of the most colourful in the area. Thomas Poulson and Ron Dumley were experts, as was Thos. West.

A smart Blacksmith named Collins who established a popular trade was located in the country in North Verulam. Bobcaygeon had a number of sturdy Blacksmiths including Tom and Joe Henderson. They were located in opposite ends of the village.

One of the best known and very capable members of the trade was at Coboconk, a man named Ryckman. Dick Fry also operated a Smithy in the village of Coboconk.

Little Britain, one of the oldest villages in the County, was once a hive of industry with several mercantile stores, two churches, always an active branch of the Oddfellow's Lodge a carding mill, hotel and many fine residences. It also had two congenial blacksmiths whose names were Richard Robertson and William Yeo.

### **STATELY OAKS**

It is believed that the Village of Oakwood received its name from a large bush of stately oak trees. The village was the hub of a territory known for its productive farms, big barns and large brick homes. The village boasted a number of mercantile stores and one of the oldest hotels in the district. The centre of attraction for many farmers was two blacksmith shops operated by Nelson Hill and Thomas Staples.

Farmers in Manvers Township needed well shod horses because of the hilly country, although several of the hills have disappeared, due to modern roads of today. One of the pioneer blacksmiths was William Arthurs, and a might "Smith" was he. A man by the name of Hobbs was also a busy blacksmith in Janetville and for some time the Hobbs family ran a temperance hotel.

Many farmers around Bobcaygeon remember a blacksmith by name of Ted Woods.

Omemee Village and district has been the centre of considerable history of reader interest and the old blacksmith shop was a gathering place for country and village folk. Ed Jamieson's shop was one of

the busiest, and residents of today recall this popular meeting place.

A man by the name of Neill also ran a Smithy in Omemee. He was located on King Street. A third shop was on the Omemee - Downeyville Road.

Mount Pleasant to the south-east of Omemee was a beautiful place with a couple of stores and the small church on the top of the Mount was the focal point for many passers by. The man who ran the forge and was an expert blacksmith was William Gregg.

Fowler's Corners on the Emily boundary line had a blacksmith by the name of Nurse.

A pioneer blacksmith by the name of Dan Reynolds was at Pinedale, south-east of Sunderland and a blacksmith on the main street of Sunderland was a George Kay.

One of the oldest and most historic spots in Victoria County is the village of Manilla once noted for its fine stone buildings, large frame dwellings, three or four hotels, stores and blacksmith shops.

Blacksmiths were very much needed for it was through this village that hundreds of teams of horses, hauling thousands of bushels of grain followed the trail to Port Perry and on to Whitby where the grain was loaded for transportation to other points.

The earliest blacksmith shop dated back well over one hundred years and was run by a man named Clarke. A son, Sam Clarke, followed and for fifty years a well known resident of Manilla today, Jack Ferguson, catered to the wants of farms and others wishing for a first class job.

At the same time the Coon Carriage factory was also a

prominent place of business and it is interesting to note that John Short, once police chief in Lindsay worked in this carriage shop.

The beginning of the end of the village "Smithy" and the sturdy wielder of the hammer and tongs came with the arrival of the first horseless carriage.

They were not as sturdy as today and when one acted up countless revolutions of the "Strong arm starter" then the irate and completely frustrated owner had the vehicle hauled to the nearest blacksmith shop.

This was actually the first garage, but it spelled gloom and doom for the "Smithy".

The brawny and ingenious blacksmith was sought out by owners of sick automobiles, broken down bicycles, exasperating sewing machines and the Blacksmith Shop was the hospital for all kinds of ill mannered farm machinery.

He eventually disappeared as the horseless carriage became master of the situation.