

GOLDEN MEMORIES

By Percy L. Climo

AARON GREELEY, JR. 1773-1821

In the year 1795, Aaron Greeley and his first cousin, Zaccheus Burnham left their Hopkinton, New Hampshire homes and emigrated to Haldimand Township, Upper Canada. At that time the local townships had not been prepared for settlement in that township lots had not been surveyed. Hastily the central government sent down survey parties to lay out the boundaries of Hamilton, Haldimand and Cramahe townships. Greeley was employed on one of these survey groups under William Hambley, Deputy Surveyor. Greeley had been a former school teacher and with his advanced education, he soon learned, from Hambley, the art and science of surveying. On the 18th of November, 1797, he was sworn in as a Provincial Deputy Surveyor by D. W. Smith, Acting Surveyor General.

Following this, Greeley surveyed portions of Hamilton, all of Haldimand and Cramahe Townships into township lots and concessions. Unfortunately his records for Hamilton Township are missing, the writer has copies of his Haldimand and Cramahe survey notes.

Greeley was an active, on going person. In addition to

his survey work, he became involved in township settlement schemes. Following the First Parliament at Newark. Niagara-on-the-Lake) in 1791-92, John Graves Simcoe had made 36 townships available to agents for settlement. The Lieutenant Governor was overanxious to have Upper Canada settled quickly. Haldimand Township was among the thirty-six, and it was assigned to Greeley. According to the family story, he was to bring in thirty settlers, look after their needs and supply provisions until such time as each settler would be in a position to live independently. In addition, Greeley was to build and operate grist and saw mills. For payment, he was to receive the balance of Haldimand Township. There must have been some substance to this arrangement.

According to the family story, the mills were built near Grafton. Simcoe returned to England in 1796. Others took over the reins of government.

Greeley, apparently, had gone the 'second mile' in building mills and looking after the needs of settlers. In doing so, he became heavily in debt.

Later, the Executive Council failed to recognize Greeley's

agreement.

Unfortunately, Greeley could not overcome his debts. The times were difficult, money was scarce, and the government had stopped all surveying of new lands. Greeley's creditors "closed him out". He was very much discouraged and in 1805, moved to Michigan.

In the meantime, in 1803, Greeley married Margaret Rogers, daughter of Col. James Rogers of Frederickburgh, and a sister to David McGregor Rogers, first Registrar of Northumberland County and a member of the Legislature. Mrs. Greeley remained at Haldimand Mills for a while after her husband moved to Michigan. She proceeded to dispose of Greeley's property plus several other lots owned in her own right, in order to clear the family of debt. Their daughter, Susan Burnham Greeley, was born at the Haldimand Mills in February, 1806.

Later in 1806, Mrs. Greeley prepared to join her husband in Michigan. She had a boat built at Presqu'ile, then with the help of her brother-in-law and Liberty White, sailed the north shore of Lake Ontario and around to Niagara, taking along baggage and possessions. This journey re-

quired one month. At Niagara, she sold her boat, portaged around the falls and took passage on a boat going to Detroit. The family lived in Detroit, Greeley was busy with survey work in the country around Saginaw and south of Detroit. During this time two sons were born.

Liberty White had settled on 200 acres of Crown land on Lot Number One, B.F. Hamilton Township. He received his patent on April 30, 1805. After receiving his ownership, he sold out to William Kelly, in May of 1805. After moving to the United States, Liberty White was murdered in an Indian massacre near Chicago.

By 1811, Greeley received the appointment of Surveyor General for Michigan. In 1812, he visited Washington on official business and while there war broke out between United States and Canada. En route back to Detroit, Greeley was taken as a prisoner of war, but he escaped and reached Detroit. Later, when Detroit fell, he was again made a prisoner. He and his family were sent to Buffalo, and they proceeded easterly to New Hampshire, travelling in wagon trains. It was a 900 mile journey. A third son was born in New Hampshire.

After the war, Greeley returned to Detroit. Mrs. Greeley and the four children returned to Upper Canada and took residence near Grafton until 1821. She was planning to return to Detroit, but her husband took sick with fever and died suddenly in 1821. She then made a home for herself and family on Lot 2, Concession 2 of Haldimand Township. She died here in 1866 at the age of 91 years.

Two of her sons died in the 1850's. The third son was killed by a rolling log. Susan Greeley was a school teacher and in 1831 taught school in Colborne. She was a Sunday School teacher for 80 years in the Presbyterian Church. At age 92, she dictated her "SKETCHES OF THE PAST" a most interesting family story. This story was published in 1926 by the Ontario Historical Society and a copy is deposited in the Cobourg and District Public Library. Susan Burnham Greeley died Sept. 7, 1904 in her 99th year.

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