

By Percy L. Climo

The year 1984 has been set aside for celebration. Colborne plans to commemorate and celebrate its past. The province of Ontario is promoting remembrance and encouraging various groups, organizations and municipalities to honor events and happenings of the past two hundred years of our history. The federal and provincial governments are making grants of money available for celebration. The year 1984 can be made a very special one to remember.

The main thrust of the 1984 commemoration is the Bicentennial of the arrival of the United Empire Loyalists. At that time, Northumberland county was a total forest. The first settlers came later. It was in the early 1790's when newcomers started to move into Murray Township from the Quinte area. Joseph Keeler was the first to come into this locality. By the year 1795, others were moving into Cramahe Township. That year, the central government hurriedly ordered two survey parties to mark out the township boundaries. The following year, Aaron Greeley and his helpers laid out the township concessions and lots. More people came to Cramahe.

Two hundred years ago, Upper Canada started out as a military settlement. First to come were the Loyalist veterans of the American Revolutionary War, and later, the British Army and Navy men who received their discharge in Canada. Descendents of the former and some of the latter came into this area. Some of the later generations of these families are still with us.

"FIDELITY", a United Empire Loyalist publication, out of Toronto, recently featured a for-

mer Cramahe Township resident, by telling about some of his naval exploits. The story is about Lieutenant Francis Brockwell Spilsbury, a son of a naval surgeon. He was a Canadian hero.

The Barbary Coast

off the shores of Africa, was plagued by a fleet of privateers led by the notorious Barbastro, nefarious ally of Napoleon Bonaparte. Lloyds of London was losing a fortune in insurance payments due to the havoc Barbastro inflicted on British shipping. Prize money was offered to Royal Naval personnel for the capture of the pirates. On an April evening, 1812, H.M.S. Hyacinth and three other navy boats trapped Barbastro's fleet, at anchor near the molehead, Malaga, under the guns of a fortified castle. Lieutenant Spilsbury and twenty-five others raided and captured the boats of the pirates. During the encounter, Barbastro escaped by jumping overboard. First officer, Lieutenant Spilsbury, and others, were highly commended. The following month Spilsbury again saw action with distinction at Almuncar and was promoted. Shortly after, he came to Canada and again saw action at the Battle of the Forty near Stoney Creek, in the war of 1812.

Francis Brockell Spilsbury obtained post-rank, September 15, 1815, and a pension of 250 pounds per annum was granted to him for wounds, on the November 4, that same year.

Spilsbury settled in Cramahe township on land just west of present day Salem Church, between No. 2 Highway and the lake.

The writer has few other details on Spilsbury. He became an active farmer. In 1830, he apparently entered his farm in competition for prizes, under the auspices of the then Northumberland County

Agricultural Association. The farm was visited along with others by the committee of judges, and the citation reads "Found the farm in general good order. The barns, stables and yards are very comfortable and convenient. The Judges were much pleased with them, and recommended them to the notice of the farmers throughout the county. Captain S. has made numerous and valuable improvements to his farm and raises good crops on it, considering the natural deficiency of the soil."

The above is a brief story about a retired naval officer who came to this area. Our local bicentennial review would not be complete unless mention was made of a United Empire Loyalist family. For this part, the writer has chosen the Rusk family as representative of this group.

Andrew Rusk served in the King's Royal Regiment of New York. Following the close of the American Revolutionary War, he, along with many others who remained loyal to the British Crown, was given a grant of land in township Number Two, later named Ernestown, on the Bay of Quinte. In the year 1790, Andrew married Elizabeth Cook. To this union, four children were born namely Samantha, Elizabeth, Andrew and Sarah. Samantha married Hammel Madden of Ernestown. Elizabeth married David Johnston of Ernestown. Sarah married John Sansburn of Camden East.

The Rusk family took up residence at Camden East, located to the north of Ernestown. The son, Andrew, became a blacksmith and married perhaps before 1830. He had a family of ten children. Before 1850, Andrew and his family moved west into Murray Township taking up residence

between Wooler and Stockdale. Here he carried on some farming along with his blacksmith work, and lived in this locality for a number years. The names of his children are: James, Mary, Isaiah, Robert, Elizabeth, John, Amanda, Matora, Lorenzo and Sarah. In time, the children married. Some remained in the area, others moved on to various places.

The Rusk families of to-day, living in Castleton, Colborne and Cramahe are descendents of Isaiah, the grandson of the original Loyalist settler. There are now many descendents of the Andrew Rusk who came to Upper Canada two hundred years ago. They live in many areas of Canada and beyond our borders. The writer has known family members for many years.

The Spilsbury family, representative of retired military and naval personnel who came to Canada; the Rusk family group, representative of the many United Empire Loyalist who chose Canada as a place to live under the British Crown, they and their descendents were the main thrust of pioneers of days gone by, who cut down the forest, created farms, made improvements, and laid the foundation for a great nation. The Bicentennial Year should be people-oriented. These are the people to recall and to remember.

The year 1984 has been set aside for celebration. We can do this in many ways. Families can search out their roots, hold reunions, and family picnics. Groups and organizations can take on some special project in their community. Municipalities can promote special celebrations, review their history and stage special events. We, in Canada, have a lot to celebrate and to be thankful for in 1984.

A-Cramahe Township (1984)