

# Grafton Historical Notes

(6) By T. R. M.

In the days of rough roads and slow travelling, the Inn, with a good meal and a comfortable bed, was a welcome sight to the weary traveller.

It was also the community centre where political meetings, assemblies or dances, banquets and public gatherings were held, years before the advent of the more specialized Temperance Hall, Town Hall, Orange Hall or Masonic Hall. Busy colourful places they must have been in the early days of Upper Canada. The following sketch of old Inns in Grafton and vicinity is, of course, as all these articles are, subject to correction. At this late date it is extremely difficult to verify location and change of ownership. But from the newspaper files, which we rely upon for information more than on any other source, we have drawn the conclusions arrived at below.

The earliest Inns began to make their appearance as soon as the Kingston road was opened in 1816. That road, in this part of the Township appears to have co-incided with the Dundas-Danforth road. E. C. Guillet writes in his recent book on early Upper Canada: "In January 1817 Samuel Purdy inaugurated the first stage line over the (Kingston) road, leaving Daniel Brown's Inn, Kingston, every Monday, and York every Thursday. The halfway house on this three-day trip was Spaulding's Inn, Grafton, (Haldimand) and the fare was \$18.00." The Spaldings were very early settlers in this district. The names of William and Zabulon Spalding occur in the Loyalist petition for Haldimand township 1792, and Thomas Spalding was granted land in the Township in 1814. We conjecture that this Inn stood on or near the site of the present residence of Mrs. Anson Cartwright as both this house and its neighbour were built by Mr. Spalding. There is a lingering tradition that the building formerly standing on Mr. Thomas Heenan's farm was a Post House but we do not know...

into Grafton, either building a new tavern or occupying an old one, more probably the latter. He then appears to have moved into the Mansion House (Pepper's Tavern) and his old stand came into Patterson's possession a few years later. The Patterson House or Patterson's Hotel had a long existence, extending over forty years. William Patterson built a new hotel within a short while and this was passed on to his sons. When this old building was burned in April, 1890 it was in the possession of a Mr. Roach. The British American Gasoline Station stands on the site of the Patterson House.

We have left to the last a discussion of one of the oldest Inns and its successor. The letter published a few weeks ago telling of the naming of Grafton speaks of "the rapid formation of a village about the place formerly known as 'Grover's Tavern.'" From the emigrant guide quoted above we learn that Grover's Tavern was standing in 1820. It is fully as old as Spalding's Inn and may even ante-date it. It is our belief that this ancient building has survived to the present day, and is now the garage of Harvey Bryson. Grover's Tavern is a sturdy clapboarded building with solid hand-hewn timbers. The upstairs part has once been lathed and plastered and was used as an Assembly Hall, access being gained by an outside stairway at the front. It has changed much in appearance since John Grover's day but even yet when viewed from the rear it bears a certain dignity, well befitting a building that has weathered the storms of 120 years. Inn, shop, Assembly Hall, stable, garage - what will be the ultimate fate of Grover's Tavern?

The issue of the "Star", March 1st., 1831, has this letter:--

"We have been furnished by a friend at Haldimand with the particulars of a very scandalous outrage committed on the property of Mr. Pepper, a proprietor of the Inn in

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or near the site of the present residence of Mrs. Anson Cartwright as both this house and its neighbour were built by Mr. Spalding. There is a lingering tradition that the building formerly standing on Mr. Thomas Heenan's farm was a Post House but we do not connect it with the name of Spalding. That it existed in 1820 is certain as the following quotation from an emigrant guide, published in that year, shows: "Twenty miles further (from Presqu'ile) at Haldimand are Mr. Grover's and Mr. Spalding's Inns." By the 1830's the Spaldings had turned to the more lucrative brewery business, and later to the manufacture of bricks. No trace of this Inn remains to-day.

Another vanished nostalgia whose situation is unknown is mentioned in the "Star" of Feb. 8, 1832: -

"To be let—That commodious and capitially situated house in Haldimand, well known as the Widow Brown's Tavern.—Robert Hilton."

The only other probable reference to this Tavern is the inclusion of the name of Elizabeth Hilton in the list of those paying Inn-keepers licences in Haldimand in 1837. Apparently from first to last this Inn was under feminine management.

Still another early Inn comes into public notice in an advertisement in the "Star" of Oct. 30, 1833.

"Property for sale land in and near Grafton.

"A lease for a term of twenty years of a large and commodious tavern stand in Grafton, occupied at present by Mr. Jacob Vanalstine.

"The Tavern stand at the Four Corners, Haldimand, with one acre of ground attached, occupied by John Arkland."

Jacob Vanalstine was probably one of the family of which Peter Vanalstine of Prince Edward County was the most well-known member. There is a stone to the memory of Mrs. Jacob Vanalstine in the Methodist cemetery, and reminiscences are current as to the exploits of another Mrs. Vanalstine, but the name, like that of the Spaldings has vanished from Grafton. Apparently Mr. Vanalstine made several changes of property. It is rumoured that he once occupied the Mansion House, but if he did so his tenure was not long. We think it probable that he operated for some time the Inn later bought by Arkland and then by Patterson. There is record of Jacob Vanalstine's payment of Inn-keeper's licenses in 1837 and in 1842. He probably went out of business in the late 1840's. The Inn, referring to

The issue of the "Star", March 1st., 1831, has this letter:--

"We have been furnished by a friend at Haldimand with the particulars of a very scandalous outrage committed on the property of Mr. Pepper, a proprietor of the Inn in that village. Some scoundrels, it appears, on the night of the 19th ultimo, cut down and completely destroyed a sign belonging to that gentleman together with two posts that supported it. We sincerely trust the authors of this disgraceful and wanton act may be discovered and receive the punishment that they so richly deserve."

Edward H. Pepper appears to have come from Cobourg and to have purchased the Grover property. The "Star" of July 11, 1832 has this notice: -

"For Sale -All that excellent and well known Tavern stand in the village of Grafton with Outhouses, Sheds, etc. and three-fourths of an acre of land known for many years by the name of Grover's Tavern, and now in the occupation of Mr. Pepper."

As business was booming Pepper decided to build a more stately mansion, whereupon appeared the greatest and best known Inn of all, the Mansion House.

A philosophical gentleman, naming himself "Traveller" has a long and interesting letter in the "Star" of Nov. 27, 1833, part of which we reproduce below. After a verbose introduction in which he discourses on the progress of the times he continues: -

"Lately in my travels I have paid a visit to your neighbouring beautifully situated village of Grafton, just where our respected host, Mr. Pepper, late of the Crown Inn, had taken possession of his splendid new establishment, the Mansion House. A beautiful sign, painted in your townsman Mr. S. . . . 's best style had just been elevated, displaying the British Arms in bold relief, under which are emblazoned the national emblems of the constituent parts of the United Empire. May the Rose, the Thistle and the Shamrock ever be in unity, and then we can bid defiance as we have already done, to a world in arms against us. These emblems outside, promised, that in this present time of change, our worthy host was still unchanged, and I was not disappointed. The old gentleman, tho' suffering from severe indisposition, still showed his wonted attention to his friends, and the same unbending loyalty which have ever characterized

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On February 22, 1843, the following advertisement appeared in the "Star".

"Farmer's Exchange, Grafton,—  
"The subscriber having become proprietor of the house in Grafton lately occupied by Mr. Arkland purposes to continue it as a Tavern. The situation is most commodious; and the subscriber will keep the Larder and the Bar constantly supplied with the best Viands and liquors he can procure. Every accommodation will be afforded to travellers, and at the most reasonable terms."

"There is good stabling attached to the house, and attentive hostlers will be engaged.

"William Patterson."

According to the Historical Atlas of Durham and Northumberland, 1877:—"William Patterson, settled in Haldimand in 1822. His son Thomas is a prominent man in Grafton, owns a hotel, and is bailiff of the division court."

To refer to the advertisement of Oct. 20, 1833, John Arkland was desirous of selling his Tavern at the Four Corners. He apparently moved

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"The Mansion House is a very superior establishment, indeed, not inferior to any in the district, and cannot fail under Mr. P's. good management, to insure a good profit tho' it must have cost him a large sum, for he has not been niggardly in his embellishments, and in providing for the comfort and accommodation of his numerous visitors, he has spared neither pains nor expence. Thus a double good is secured by this new house of entertainment; the good of the public and of mine host of the Mansion House.

"It was on Saturday last, that on my way to the West I stopped at Grafton. The Court of Requests was then sitting; the Commissioners, six in number, were attending to their arduous duties, which I understand occupied them till night had thrown a veil over nature, and as the weather proved unpropitious for the continuance of my journey, I took up my abode in a friend's house, and to the honour of Mr. Pepper he regaled his friends, the Commissioners and some others with an elegant supper, and the necessary accompaniments to good cheer which his cellar has always at command. The party separ-

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ated at a reasonable hour, delighted with Mr. Pepper's hospitality and pleased with each other.

"You cannot therefore do less, Mr. Editor, than to recommend this new establishment to your numerous friends, and in doing so you will perform a service to them, and to its enterprising proprietor.

"I am Sir:

"A Traveller."

Pepper's Tavern became Arkland's Tavern in 1835 and continued in Arkland's possession for about thirty years. Until the building of the Town Hall in 1859 it was the regular meeting place for the numerous societies and public gatherings of the community. Banquets were held there and in the upstairs part was a large Assembly room. It has been held by numerous proprietors, the present owner being Mr. James Breckenridge. A striking architectural feature of the Mansion House is the front doorway with its oak-leaf decoration. One of the doors of the old bar-room is fastened with a wooden bar.

It would be interesting to know how many Inns in Ontario, or even in the whole of eastern Canada, have been distributing hospitality to the public for over a century. If this

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Mother took this medicine before and after the babies came. It gave her more strength and energy when she was nervous and rundown . . . kept her on the job all through the Change. No wonder she recommends it.

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building were in the United States it would exhibit a sign telling of its history. Canadian communities are very indifferent not only in their attitude toward these early buildings but also in the preservation of objects and items of historical interest for future generations.

Appended is a list of Taverns with approximate dates.

Spaldings Inn 1815—1825; Grover's Inn, 1815—1833; The Mansion House, 1833—1934; The Widow Brown's Tavern, 1830—1840; The Patterson House, 1843—1894; Vanalstines Tavern Tavern, 1833—1843.

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