



**Robert Wade**

..Robert Wade, a pioneer settler who bought a farm half-way between Port Hope and Cobourg in the early 1820's documented the early

life and activities of the country in a series of family letters to England that continued until he died in 1849. The letters were continued by his brother until 1867.

## The Wade Papers

Mrs. Gwen Wilkinson read excerpts from the Wade Papers Wednesday at the March meeting of the East Durham Historical Society.

This rare collection of preserved

family letters gives a fine detailed insight into the progress of life and attitudes of the Upper Canada pioneer Wade family in the 1820's and the correspondence continues right up to 1867 when Confederation took place.

The series of letters which make up the Wade collection were originally written by two English emigrant brothers who farmed east of Port Hope over a 48 year period up to 1867, when the last brother died.

Robert Wade wrote for 30 years to family and friends in Durham County, England, mostly to his father John (who died in 1825), and to his brother William (who died in 1823), and also to his sisters Margaret, Elizabeth and Mary, and to his youngest brother, Ralph, who also eventually emigrated in 1845 to settle near Robert, and when the latter died in 1849, Ralph continued the correspondence until his own death in 1867.

A condensed summary of the letters was first published by Howard Pammett in November

In his diary for May 29, Robert Wade notes that they had sailed 1,496 miles and outlined details about what their food supplies consisted of aboard the schooner. "In the cookhouse are two coppers and one oven and a large fireplace for the use of passengers. By rewarding the cook with a little spirits he makes ready a good deal of our victuals; we brought two bushels of bread meal which we find very useful; potatoes and oatmeal also for the children, being easily cooked; we make yeast so that we have brown and white bread.

"We bought a round of beef, and by dipping it in the sea a few times it kept fresh for nearly three weeks; tea and coffee are not good; oatmeal, barley and rice are best; raisins, prunes and preserved

arrange for his farm.

..STEAMBOAT

On July 28, steamboat for shillings per passenger (each child under 10 free), and arrived Montreal, a town where persons that were greatly benefited by its

Carts took to Lachine on July 28, engaged passengers on boat, for \$2 each cwt. for his 26

The trip was tiresome, but Robert found the country "stony and barren" chiefly wheat

..SON WILLIAM ON TO KINGS CREEK-THE ONTARIO IS

They stayed at Prescott, where he died; he was killed by soldiers that were Ogdensburg." He went by steamer arriving about 10 days later on the schooner to uncomfortable days.

..ROBERT IMPRESSIONS OF CREEK

Pammett says Kings creek was made in 1819 as "Port Hope" gradually replaced. He noted that Robert Wade's diary as "a small lake and had the first settler was ..WADE DIRT BUILDINGS

Wade wrote of stores, two tan two distilleries mill and a chief market and York.

..THE PORT AREA

Pammett notes 1788 Treat of Mississaugas Quinnte-York Ontario; Lie Graves Since 1792 set up the including the lumberland north into the

The front part on the Lake township in D townships were surveyed to receive settlers, most the United States The hamlet



to family and friends in Durham County, England, mostly to his father John (who died in 1825), and to his brother William (who died in 1823), and also to his sisters Margaret, Elizabeth and Mary, and to his youngest brother, Ralph, who also eventually emigrated in 1845 to settle near Robert and when the latter died in 1849, Ralph continued the correspondence until his own death in 1867.

A condensed summary of the letters was first published by Howard Pammett in November 1967 in the Journal of Canadian Studies. Pammett had arranged with J. M. Vincent-Smith of London and Chesterfield, England, for a typescript set of the Letters to be sent to Canada for deposit in the Public Archives. Vincent-Smith's great-great-grandmother was a sister of the letter writers Robert and Ralph Wade. Morely Wade, who used to reside near the Greenwood Tower on Peter Street was a grandson of Ralph Wade.

The Wade letters as outlined by Pammett tell a great deal about life and the country in Upper Canada at the time for the early rural settlers, and the change in attitudes that these pioneers developed over the years after leaving their native England behind.

#### ..FAMILY ORIGIN

The Wade family tree begins with George Wade of Langley, County Durham, England, buried nearby at Staindrop in 1639. Five generations later, Margaret Wade (after her marriage to a Colpitts) emigrated to New Brunswick in 1783.

In the next generation, her two nephews, Robert (born 1777) and Ralph (born 1797) emigrated to Upper Canada in 1819 and 1845 respectively, settling in the Port Hope district.

Pammett notes that the letters reveal little about the family background and fortunes, or the reasons that prompted Robert Wade to emigrate in 1819. Only a few facts are evident--they were probably a staunch farming family, had considerable capital, and were fervent Methodists.

Robert married Mary Hodgson about 1802, and before they emigrated they had eight children--John (born 1804); Jane (born 1806); Mary (born 1807); Ann (born 1809); Margaret (born 1811); Ralph (born 1812); Elizabeth (born 1816), and William (born 1818).

Pammett suggests that perhaps unsettled postwar conditions in England, with falling farm prices, and industrial unrest, may have determined Robert and Mary to take their growing family to the opportunities of a new country.

#### ..THE OCEAN CROSSING

Robert Wade and his family sailed from Sunderland, England on May 12, 1819, on the "William

By rewarding the cook with a little spirits he makes ready a good deal of our victuals; we brought two bushels of bread meal which we find very useful; potatoes and oatmeal also for the children, being easily cooked; we make yeast so that we have brown and white bread.

... "We bought a round of beef, and by dipping it in the sea a few times it kept fresh for nearly three weeks; tea and coffee are not good; oatmeal, barley and rice are best; raisins, prunes and preserved berries are very serviceable."

#### ..A STORM, A PASSING SHIP, BAD WATER

The diary noted a storm lasting May 30 to June 9, a while within 50 yards of the ship, and occasional ships passing eastbound. By June 7 the water was so bad it could only be used to make soup.

On June 12, 1819, when they had sailed 2,329 miles, three other vessels were in sight. Fighting against headwinds, Robert records the comment: "We have run many hundreds of miles in tacking north-west to southwest, often being satisfied to keep our longitude."

On June 18 they saw a solitary fishing boat on the Grand Banks, and next day dined on cod they caught themselves. June 22 was William's first birthday; "He has grown very strong and fat since he came to sea... Elizabeth is tired of the sea and says she would like to have fields again to gather cowslips and a cow to give us milk."

#### ..SIGHTING AMERICA FOR THE FIRST TIME

After a sudden gale on June 25, when they had travelled 3,270 miles, they had encouraging signs of nearing land, including two timber-laden vessels in sight; and on the 28th day they sailed past Cape Ray into the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

The captain chilled their blood with tales of wrecks caused by fog and ice. Next day, reaching 3,485 miles out, they passed Anticosti Island, where they were able to buy fresh provisions, milk and water.

On July 5, after anchoring overnight at a small north shore village, they sailed with seven other vessdels up the river; each evening they anchored and were able to go ashore for milk, berries, eggs and soap. The entry for July 7 included a vivid description of a French habitant farm.

#### ..QUEBEC ARRIVAL

The Wade family arrived at Quebec on July 9, after travelling about 3,900 miles, and were happy to rest up, especially as William was ill with the "White Flux."

The sea diary closes with a lengthy but interesting account of Quebec, its timber rafts ("masts for the Navy, the largest trees I ever saw"), Indians, garrisons, markets, inhabitants, prices,

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#### ..NEWCASTLE FORMED IN

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**TRIP TO MONTREAL**  
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District Assessment and Census  
 rolls for 1819, Hope township had  
 by then, 754 settlers, (which also  
 included the people living in the  
 hamlet of Smith's Creek) and had  
 150 households as well as two grist  
 mills, five saw mills, four inns, two  
 shops, and five stills.

Hamilton township is recorded to  
 have had 981 people and 165  
 households in existence that year  
 and also one gristmill, four  
 sawmills, three inns, one shop and  
 no stills.

The Methodists of Hope township  
 were visited by circuit-riders from  
 1813, holding services in inns and  
 homes, but no churches were built  
 until the next decade; Hamilton  
 township had its first Anglican and  
 Methodist Churches in 1820 at  
 Cobourg. It is believed that both  
 Port Hope and Cobourg had small  
 private schools by this time, but  
 there is no immediate evidence  
 available to confirm it.

Thus, noted Pammett, by the  
 time Robert Wade and family  
 sailed into Port Hope harbor in  
 August, 1819, the district was  
 already thriving with about 1,700  
 people in over 300 log cabins, a  
 well as inns, mills, shops and other  
 amenities.

The frontier had been pushed  
 north to Rice Lake and Cavan  
 Township. Water and road trans-  
 port was available both east and  
 west by this time.

**WADE BUYS A LAKEFRONT FARM**

Pammett notes that since Wade  
 had financial means, he did not  
 have to delay until the Newcastle  
 Land Board gave him a location for  
 a homestead.

After looking at several farms,  
 he purchased 200 acres near the  
 lakefront, just three miles from  
 Smith's Creek and two from  
 Cobourg.

(Today this property is known as  
 lot 27, concession A in Hamilton  
 Township.)

Wade paid 270 English pounds for  
 the property or the equivalent of  
 \$1,200 with the property being  
 immediately available for him to  
 take possession.

The farm consisted of two log  
 houses, 30 acres cleared and a hay  
 crop standing; it was on a good  
 road and only half a mile from a  
 school.

Wade's description of the  
 homestead brims with enthusiasm.

"The land is of the first quality  
 and a small creek runs through it;  
 the wood that it grows is beech,  
 elm, basswood, oak, birch, ash,  
 maple and asp. I have bought six

milch cows from 18 to 24 dollars  
 each, two horses and one foal from  
 50 to 60 dollars. Mutton, beef and  
 veal sells from 3d. to 4d. per  
 pound, pork at 6d. butter from  
 10 to 12d.

**WADE'S FIRST S OF SMITH'S**

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 On Aug. 19, 1819,  
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**SCRIBES TOWN**  
**EXISTING IN 1819**  
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 a grist-mill, a saw-  
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**HOPE-COBOURG**

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 including Hope  
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 Smith's Creek had



Ralph Wade

Ralph Wade, the brother of Robert Wade, continued the family correspondence of letters to England that his brother Robert had so meticulously recorded for 30 years from 1819 to 1949 when he died. The letters ended in 1867, when Ralph Wade, who also followed his brother to settle in Hamilton township died.

is very dear and we have done all our work ourselves: we have lined the inside with boards and have a boarded floor.

"The country around here is improving very fast; there have been seven frame houses built within a mile of us since we came here. We intend to build a house in two or three years' time and plant an orchard this fall or spring.

After a lengthy dialogue on farm technique, Wade describes how they kill a beast in the rural country.

**WADE DESCRIBES PIONEER METHOD OF SLAUGHTERING CATTLE**

"The way they kill a beasty in this country is to have a bee, for example, five or six of the neighbors to assist them; they take him

mills...Mr Radcliffe preaches once at fortnight at our house.

On Christmas Day, 1822, Robert Wade wrote his brother Ralph to inform him of the death of Elizabeth, age six of a lung inflammation. He also provided an insight into his financial position since he had first come to America.

"When we left England we had a little upwards of 500 English pounds with property to the amount of 200 pounds more; our voyage and travelling expenses were nearly 100 pounds.

"I bought this farm for 300 pounds or 270 pounds sterling. I paid down 200 pounds and was to pay the remainder in 18 months: our house being very bad it cost us 10 pounds to repair it; stock to the farm and utensils and a little



...lands along Lake  
Lieut. Governor John  
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the lakefront Counties  
Durham and Nor-  
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the wilderness.  
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including Hope  
Durham and Hamilton

Northumberland  
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Cobourg's first settler  
1798.

### TRANSPORTATION THE SOLE COM- TION

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### ORTH ROAD WAS FIRST VE ROAD

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to build the first  
trail from York to  
at \$90 a mile; in the three  
December 1799. this  
Road extended from  
ingston at \$90 a mile;

orth Road extended from  
Cobourg, so that sleighs  
ns could travel the route  
e year.

### ASTLE DISTRICT IN 1802

the Newcastle District  
ed from the Counties of  
nd Northumberland for  
ative purposes (land  
nsus, taxes, roads and  
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ndian land "surrender"  
ict was extended in-  
north.

the Danforth Road was  
ossible, and in the next  
it was rebuilt as the  
oad, following parts of  
th Road. This permitted  
age and mail service at  
along the lakefront.

### HAMILTON GEOGR-

t notes that the Hope-  
area was, on the clay  
a limestone base created  
ancient Lake Iroquois  
ts present Lake Ontario  
Such clay-silt plains  
richest growing soils in  
ada, when well-drained,  
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of Port Hope rode his  
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one farm farther back  
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milch cows from 18 to 24 dollars  
each, two horses and one foal from  
50 to 60 dollars. Mutton, beef and  
veal sells from 3d. to 4d. per  
pound, pork at 6d. butter from  
10 to 16d. cheese six to nine d.  
milk 2d; per quart; hay two  
pounds, 10 shillings per ton; wheat-  
five shillings per bushel; barley,  
white peas and Indian corn, four  
shillings, Buckwheat three  
shillings, six d.

Wade warned that English goods  
were dear; tea five to six shillings  
per pound, better than in England;  
sugar- one shilling; coffee three  
shillings, 6d rice- 9d l, salt 1  
shilling per stone.

The new settler also stressed in  
his letters that labor "was very  
dear," and noted that "a man in  
haytime and harvest had one dollar  
a day or a bushel of wheat; one  
bushel in 10 for threshing and they  
had one half of the hay for mowing  
and making it.

Wade's letter com-  
mented: "Labor will always be  
dear as long as land is given away.  
They are now measuring several  
thousand acres on the north side of  
Rice Lake and there are a good  
many waiting to receive it, and I  
intend to apply for a grant shortly.

### RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

Concerning religion, Wade's  
letters noted that they had two  
church ministers, one at the  
Courthouse (Cobourg), the other  
at Smith's Creek; the chief of the  
inhabitants were Baptists; they  
are a few Methodists and he said  
the Wade's family has been  
preaching at the Creek once a  
fortnight.

### URGES HIS BROTHER TO IMMIGRATE

Robert Wade urged his brother  
Ralph Wade to emigrate, but not to  
think of drawing land. He warned  
that "It was so far back that it  
would be some time before it would  
be of much value and besides it was  
very difficult settling new town-  
ships."

Wade stated that he only in-  
tended doing his settling duties, for  
example clearing five acres and  
building a log cabin;

"We have 18 months to do it in  
and then we receive our deeds for  
which we pay five pounds, ten  
shillings for and then we can sell or  
do what we please with it.

In his next letter Nov.7,1820,  
Wade describes his farm: "No  
buildings but two old log houses,  
the one we repaired up for our-  
selves and the other for our cattle.  
The size of our house is 22 feet by 18  
feet; we have partitioned three

here. We intend to build a house in  
two or three years' time and plant  
an orchard this fall or spring.

After a lengthy dialogue on farm  
technique, Wade describes how  
they kill a beast in the rural  
country.

### WADE DESCRIBES PIONEER METHOD OF SLAUGHTERING CATTLE

"The way they kill a beasty in  
this country is to have a bee, for  
example, five or six of the neigh-  
bors to assist them; they take him  
in the pasture without fastening  
him and with a little axe they fell  
him, cut off his head, take off his  
hide, quarter him, and im-  
mediately take him to market.

"We have cleared 75 acres of  
land, and a man will chop an acre  
in eight days and five men will log  
it in a day if the weather is dry. I  
have sown a good deal of the new  
land with wheat and the remainder  
I intend to sow in the spring with  
barley and oats.

"We do not plough the new land;  
we just harrow it with a drag in a  
triangular way and a team will sow  
an acre in a day. I intend to clear  
15 or 20 acres this winter.

Robert Wade mentioned that his  
son, John, had rented a farm one  
mile from Cobourg for 10 English  
pounds a year with a good log  
house; instead of cash, John had to  
pay half in wheat at 4-6 a bushel,  
and a ton of hay at two English  
pounds-10, the remainder in the  
improvement of the farm;

### RELIGIOUS VIEWS

Robert Wade comments on  
religion in his letter: "There are a  
good many American Methodists  
here, but we do not join with them  
as they differ a good deal from us.

"We have been very well and  
since we came here have never had  
to employ a doctor. Our children  
have all grown very stout; you  
would scarcely know them...We all  
return brother Ralph for his  
present of books; they were very  
acceptable as books are very  
scarce here...My taxes this year  
are eight shillings, seven pence and  
a man five days to the highways.

A letter of March 5,1821 to friends  
at Shotton, England expresses  
confidence in his new found  
country.

"Steady men may do very well  
here with a family. Blacksmiths,  
taylors and weavers may do well.  
Last summer, a very dry season,  
the hay crops were very light.  
Wheat, peas, barley and indian  
corn were in general very good.  
Prices of grains are very low, stock  
of all kinds lower than last year.

### DESCRIPTION OF EXTREME COLD WINTER WEATHER

"The weather was in January  
very cold, but steady until the 25th  
when we had the coldest weather  
ever known in this province.

"The mercury was 22 to 24 below  
zero. We had great difficulty to

insight into his financial position  
since he had first come to America.

"When we left England we had a  
little upwards of 500 English  
pounds with property to the  
amount of 200 pounds more; our  
voyage and travelling expenses  
were nearly 100 pounds.

"I bought this farm for 300  
pounds or 270 pounds sterling. I

paid down 200 pounds and was to  
pay the remainder in 18 months;  
our house being very bad it cost us  
10 pounds to repair it; stock to the  
farm and utensils and a little  
furniture cost us a 100 pound;  
more; we had our bread and corn  
to buy for two years.

"In the first (year) we were in  
hopes that we should be able to  
raise something from the farm, but  
it was in such a condition that our  
expenses were more than our in-  
come.

"Our prospects are not very  
great, but through the blessings of  
Providence, I expect to pay off all  
in three or four years. We pay no  
tithes, our taxes are 10 shillings per  
year and five days' work on the  
high roads.

"We have cleared 40 acres and  
have 70 under cultivation; we have  
sown 10 acres with wheat this fall  
that we burnt off in summer.

"Our crops last summer were  
eight acres of wheat, 32 bushels per  
acre; five acres of barley, 20  
bushels per acre; 18 acres of  
oats, and 45 bushels to the acre; two  
acres of Indian corn, 30 bushels per  
acre and 20 horse-loads of pump-  
kins per acre.

### POTATOES YIELD

Wade noted that they had also  
one half acre of potatoes which  
yielded 150 bushels; an acre of flax  
and a little hemp. There was five  
acres of meadow and the rest in  
pasturage.

"Our stock consists of six cows,  
one yoke of oxen, two horses, 12  
young cattle, 18 sheep and 10 pigs.  
We want to increase our cows to 10  
or 12 and our sheep to 40 or 50. the  
farm is now worth 500 pounds and  
would let for 35 pounds per annum.

Wade noted that they had also  
done the 'settling duties' on their  
grant in Otonabee, that is, clearing  
out the road and chopping betwixt  
three and four acres.

"It has cost 12 pounds; we shall  
not do any more with it at  
present,"he stated. "It is very  
good land and will be of use to the  
family some time.

"We have made no cheese this  
summer but about 20 pounds of  
butter per week; we have sold it  
from eight to 10 d. per pound.

"We are very well situated for  
selling our produce being only  
three and a half miles from Port  
Hope and the same from Cobourg  
from where flour, pork, butter and  
cheese are sent down to Montreal  
and Quebec by water and from  
thence to the West Indies...We have  
two itinerant preachers and four



Continued from page 5

## ... settler Robert Wade

### ..WADE DESCRIBES INDIANS IN HIS LETTER OF 1822

..“We have lately had the Missowanga tribe of Indians in our neighborhood; they came out to receive their yearly presents from the government of clothing, guns, ammunition and other things, which they receive for their land; they consisted of upward of 200 men, women and children; they carried baskets, brooms, wooden shovels and other things to sell; they are a simple, inoffensive people and show human nature in its lowest state. We have had a few

bears in our neighborhood this summer but they were soon destroyed; they live on berries and Indian corn; they seldom attack any animal but pigs and then when they are pinched with hunger.

In his next letter on Oct. 13, 1823, Robert Wade begins his letter with news of the birth of a boy in January named Charles. He described the other children as growing fast and all healthy. He talks again about farm and crop prices and news of neighbors from the same part of England.

The following year, in a letter

dated Sept.19,1824, Robert Wade tells his brother Ralph that it has been a busy summer and they have built a barn 44 feet by 34 feet and 16 feet high. He said it has cost them about one hundred dollars besides their own labor which he stressed

was considerable.

..“We have made 50,000 (bricks) to build a house next summer. We got a man to do the moulding, the rest we did ourselves; a man will mould 4,000 or upwards in a day.... We have finished our harvest; our crops were 20 acres of wheat; five rye, six oats; four peas; a little barley, one acre of flax and half an acre of potatoes.

On May 25, 1825, Robert began his letter with news of the marriage of his daughters Jane and Mary, the first to Benjamin Mathews who bought a lot nearby after trying to pioneer in the Otonabee bush, and the latter to Cornelius Webster, who tried storekeeping briefly and then bought a farm two miles from Port Hope; both of these were young Englishmen with some capital. Another daughter, named Maria had been born in April.

He also made brief mention of the “Canada Land Company” which would buy all the Crown Reserves and half the Clergy Reserves.

### ..DESCRIBES CONSTRUCTION OF HIS HOME

Robert Wade’s next letter of Sept.3,1825 talks about his healthy growing family and a busy summer with an early harvest.

..“We have built a brick house 44 feet long and 20 feet wide, with a stone cellar under the whole of it. Cellars are very necessary here to keep the cold in winter and heat in summer,”he stressed.

Wade said his house was two stories high. He said they would have two rooms and a passage through the middle in the lower story and three rooms in the other. He stated that they have built their new home further down the farm than the old one.

..“It is the common custom here to build close to the road,”