

OUR SUMMER HOME

During the holiday season the islands and the shores of the lakes and rivers become the summer homes of many Kingston families and it may be of interest to them to hear something of the men and women who carved lasting homes for themselves out of the virgin forest, whose days were full of toil, who travelled in flat-bottomed batteaux, or Indian birch bark canoes, where today, the sailing yacht spreads white wings to the breeze or the motor boat dashes along at thirty miles an hour. The smooth roads on which the descendants of the men who blazed trails through the forest, drive high-powered cars were less than a century ago, rough corduroy tracks on which the family necessities were drawn by oxen or strong horses. From stories told by our elders and from family records, we have gleaned the information of the neighborhood in early days which will be published during the remaining weeks of the camping season.

About twelve miles to the west of Kingston, at the entrance to the Bay of Quinte, lies Amherst Island, which for many years has been a favorite haunt for family parties from Kingston and Napanee. Stella, the pretty little village opposite Stella Point, where summer cottages nestle among the trees, has an Anglican and a Methodist church, a post office and some comfortable homes. Emerald, the village at the western end of the island, has of late years, had its share of summer visitors. Amherst Island has a romantic history. It was called the Isle of Tanti by the Indians and the story is told of the chief who came to Sir John Johnson, saying he had dreamed Sir John had given him the horse he rode which had aroused his envy. "It will be yours," said Sir John, "when my dream that the Isle of Tanti is mine, comes true." The chief, whose desire to possess the beautiful steed was great, gave the island to Sir John. Later in the good old days when a fortune was lost or won on a throw of the dice, the lovely wooded island in Lake Ontario was wagered in a London club and won by Lord Mount Cashel, an Irish nobleman, and by his marriage to Lord Mount Cashel's niece, it became the property of the late Robert Perceval-Maxwell, of Finnebrogue, Ireland.

W. H. Moutray, his nephew, acts as the agent for this part of the large estate. "Farham," the beautiful old home with grounds shaded with tall trees, running to the water's edge, is the home of Mr. and Mrs. Moutray and their family and here true Irish hospitality is dispensed. The oldest part of the house was built in the early forties and the story is told that the spacious rooms were designed for a ballroom for Lord Mount Cashel to entertain in, when he came to this far-away corner of his estate. He would have had a merry party if he had come, for in those days Amherst Island was the home of a number of retired army officers and their families and on the shore near Bath were the Fairfields, the Radcliffes and other families noted for keeping open house and giving the best of refreshment to man and beast.

One of these hardy pioneers conceived the idea of building a house of clay, which stands still on a point just above Stella. It is a curious relic of the old days and is still in good repair and used as a dwelling house. For many years Amherst Island was the home of a distinguished English artist, who came to what was then considered the wilds of Canada, to paint his beautiful pictures in the solitude of the new world, far from the cities of men. Daniel Fowler's pictures may be seen in the National Gallery at Ottawa and in "The Grange," Toronto. He received a diploma medal in the Colonial and Indian Exhibition in 1886 and was elected a chartered member of the O. R. C. A. in 1880. "The Cedars" where some of the members of his family still live, is a charming home full of objects of art. Two dear old houses about a mile east of Stella are the property of the Patterson and the Preston families who are among the oldest settlers on the island.

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