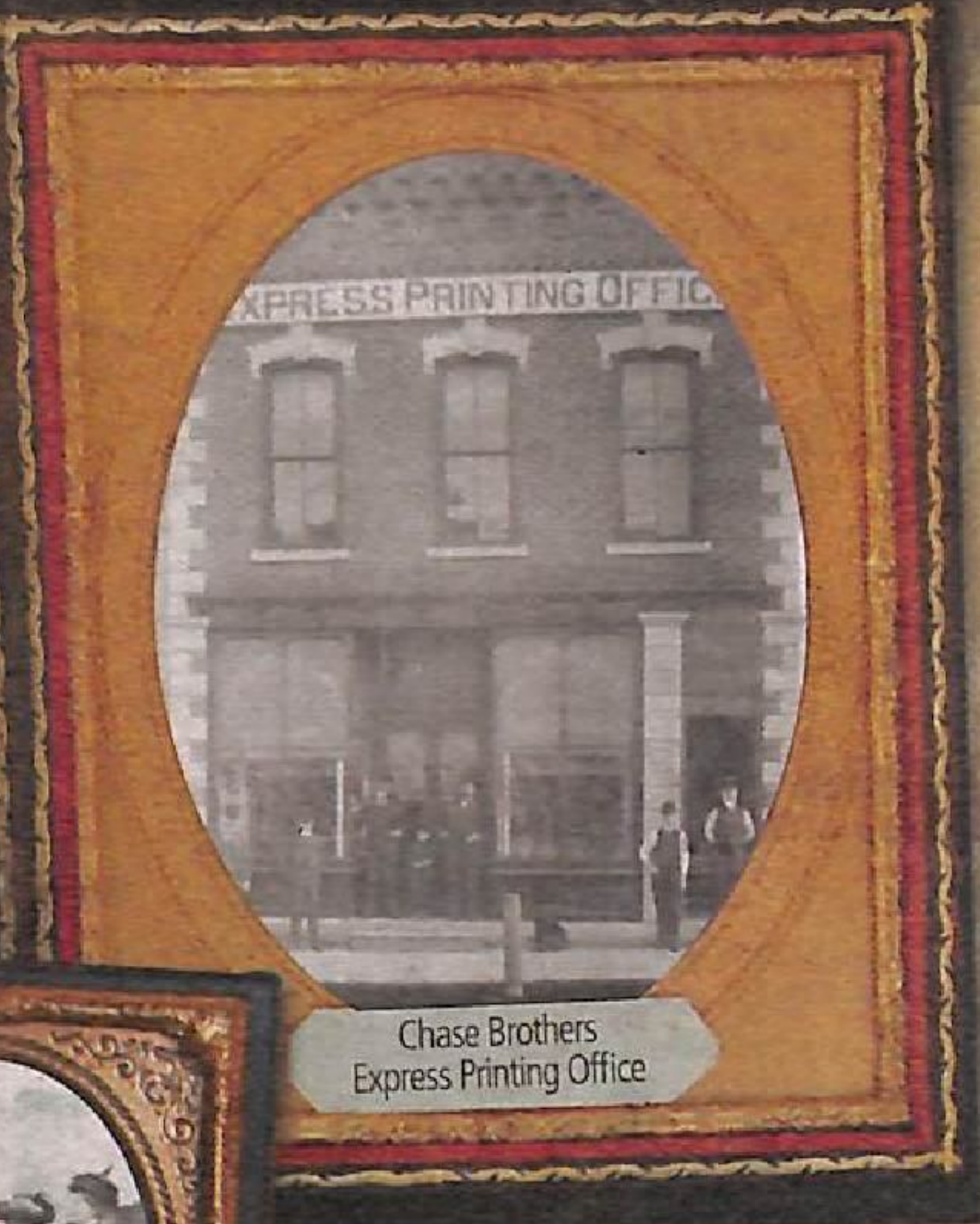


Colborne's 150th Anniversary

1859 - 2009



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he climbed the tallest tree to survey the lay of the land. He evidently liked what he saw and became a land agent, securing the requisite 40 American families to move and settle here. In exchange, he was promised a grant of 1,200 acres.

The Keelers and their party arrived by boat in Lakeport in 1793. The lakeshore spot where they landed is marked with a monument. Among the founding colonists were families named Simmons, Merriman, Perry, Rankin, Lyons, Strong, Webster, Webb, Jaques, Herman, Scripture, Dunnett, Philp, Gould, Dudley, Mutton, Bellamy, Colton, Grover, Boyer, Eddy, Bradley, Dewey and Turney, many of whose descendants still live here today. Some accounts claim that Aaron Greeley, a surveyor who later laid out the streets of Colborne, was a member of that party.

Joseph and Olive Keeler arrived with two children, Joseph Abbott Keeler, aged five, later credited with being the founder of Colborne and Castleton; and Clarissa, aged two. In 1800, the couple had their first Canadian-born child, a daughter, Sophia.

The earliest settlement was at Lakeport, which grew into a thriving manufacturing, import and export centre. Eventually, there were three wharves, as well as a Customs House (this was an international port), sawmill, flourmill, carding and woollen mills, an oil well, and a distillery.

In general, settlement in Upper Canada moved from the waterways toward the inland spaces, and Cramahe Township was no different. In a trackless forest, water was the easiest and fastest mode of transportation. It also provided water for crops and households and power for mills.

Joseph Keeler lived to see settlement expand northward and he was there to take advantage of every opportunity he could find or create. He oversaw the building of the Keeler Tavern, sometime prior to 1821. The Georgian-style building still stands on the northeast corner of King and Parliament streets. The Danforth Road, the main overland thoroughfare between York (Toronto) and Kingston came through this part of the country around 1800, so there would have been need for inns every few miles along the route to ensure the comfort of stagecoach passengers, drivers, and horses.

Joseph Abbott Keeler (1788-1855), son of the first settler, was known as Young Joe to distinguish him from his father, Old Joe (1763-1839). He was a practical engineer who built mills (one at Castleton in 1806, around which that settlement grew) and one in Colborne, made of the same limestone as Old St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Colborne, around 1800.

When the village was being laid out, a charming tradition claims Joseph A. Keeler set aside land for churches of various denominations with the proviso each would keep a pew for him, whenever he wanted to attend. In its earliest days, Colborne was known simply as The Corners.

Sometime before 1812, Young Joe married Anne (Nancy) Day. Their children, as listed in the Keeler Family history, were Eliza Jane, Mary Anne, Harriet Maria, and Joseph. Some sources also list two other daughters, Sarah Augusta and Margaret, who may have died in infancy.

In 1815, he built a small store in the village that also served as post office, thus becoming Colborne's first postmaster, a position his father had held in Lakeport. Young Joe also served as justice of the peace for the entire Newcastle District (which encompassed the later counties of Durham and Northumberland) and saw military service in the War of 1812, for which he was awarded more land grants.

During the 1820s, Joseph and Nancy built the house that still stands at 7 Church Street East, facing south down Maybee Lane. It has the distinction of being one of the few local houses of the period to have been designed by an architect, and bears a distinct resemblance to the Barnum House in nearby Grafton. It was for many years the home of the late Nick and Marian Carter and is now owned by their daughter, renowned Canadian novelist Jane Urquhart. On July 11, 1839, Old Joe died there, aged 76.

The Keelers – Colborne's First Family

By Eileen Argyris
Author of *How Firm a Foundation*

Before there were homes and farms, a township or a village, even before First Nations peoples, there was the forest. Omnipresent, forests covered all of this part of Ontario. It was so dense it was dark under the canopy at brightest noonday.

Before the forest were the glaciers whose melting retreat carved out the Great Lakes, and shaped the rolling hills for which the area is famous, and left rich gravel and limestone deposits. The first human inhabitants we know about were the Algonkian-speaking people. When the first European settlers arrived, they found the Mississauga nation inhabiting the land. Among their descendants are the First Nations people of the present-day Alderville Reserve, near Roseneath.

As to Colborne and Cramahe Township, the history of the community we know today really begins with the so-called Laté Loyalist, Joseph Keeler, an American from Vermont who arrived here in 1789, six years after the American War of Independence, when Crown sympathizers found themselves facing social and economic hardship.

Upper Canada was actively courting settlers from Britain, but especially from the U.S. because they were already accustomed to a similar climate and to pioneering conditions.

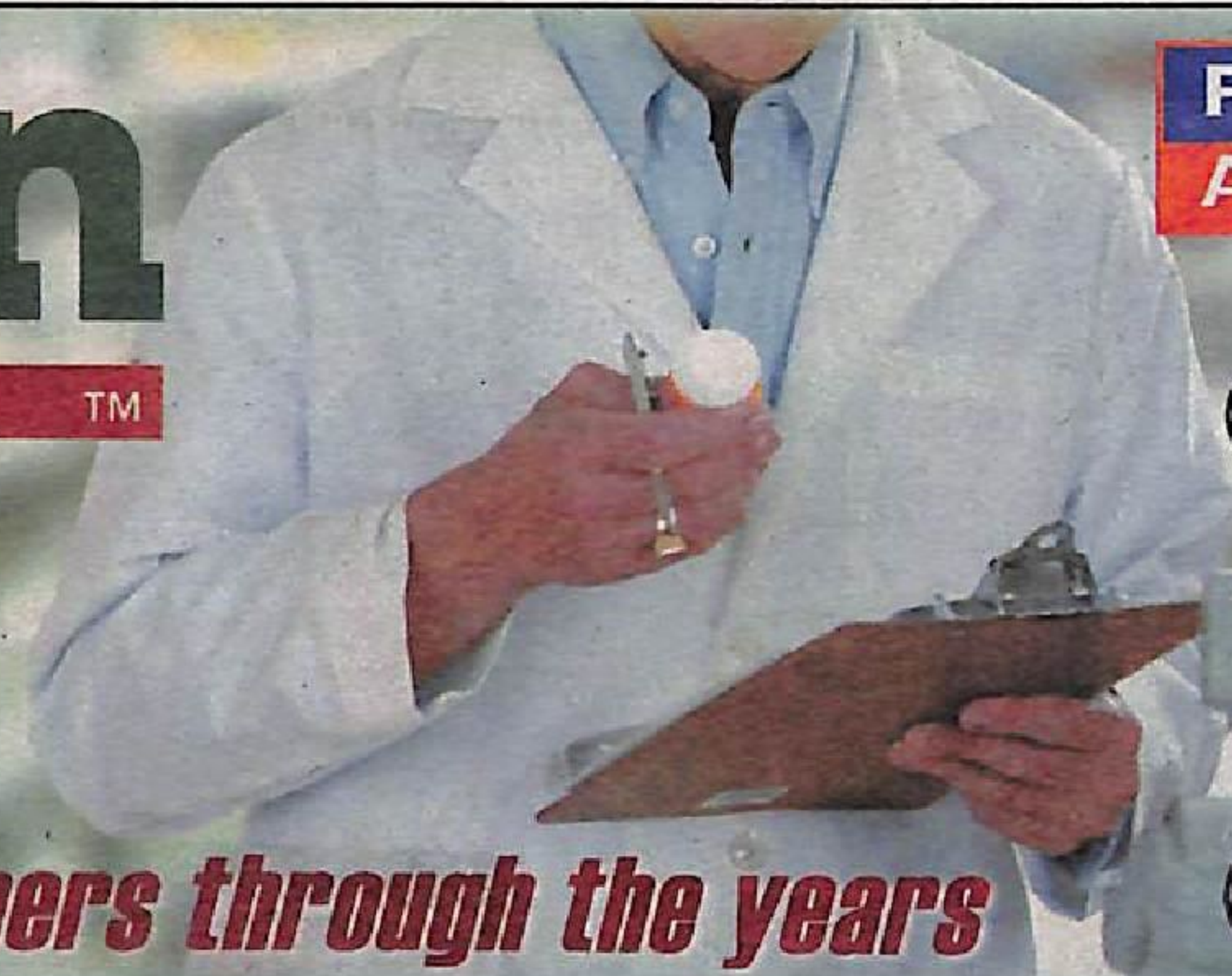
According to a Keeler descendant, in a 1789 trip Joseph Keeler came here by boat from Vermont, found and ascended the tallest promontory of land, now called Kelwood Hill, and there

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