

BROCK TOWNSHIP

Called after the famous Canadian General, and hero of Queenston Heights. The township was laid out and surveyed in 1817, and was early settled by way of Newmarket. According to the last revised assessment roll, the township contains 64,040 acres; number of acres cleared, 39,932; value of real property, \$2,769,669.00; population about 5,000.

A large portion of the township contains excellent land — a heavy clay loam; there is, however, considerable broken and marshy land along the Beaver River.

Old Philip St. John, an Irishman from the county Limerick, the genial "King of Brik" as he delighted to be called, settled in the township in 1821, and reared a large family. Several of his descendents are still prominent men in the townshp. James Vrooman, better known as "Colonel" Vrooman and after whom the village of Vroomanton is named, was a still earlier settler. The Shiers, James Ruddy, George Smith, John O'Leary, the Kennans, Daniel King, Ewart, Speiran, Fordiff, Amey, Campbell, Bagshaw, Carmichaels, Brethours, Brabazon, Thompsons, Sproules, Harts, McPhadens, Bollsters, Cowans were all settlers of the following twenty years.

HISTORICAL NOTES

By

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Brock Township was of course named after the victor of Queenstown Heights, Sir Isaac Brock. Among many monuments raised to commemorate the General's prowess is that in Westminster Abbey so we have this link with the Heart of the Commonwealth. The Township was laid out and surveyed in 1817 and was settled by way of Newmarket.

One of the first settlers in Brock was Philip St. John from Limerick, Ireland. Born in 1793 he died here in 1874. He and his wife, who died in 1880, were known as "the King and Queen of Brock." He was the first settler to sell a load of wheat from the Township. Their family of six sons and five daughters have left many descendants in the district.

The Township slowly developed around five villages: Sunderland (formerly known as 'Jones' Corners'), Vroomanton, Valentine, Wick and Cannington. The early growth of Brock was impressive: in 1842 it had 1541 inhabitants, in 1850 this had risen to 3,174 and by 1877 to 5,000. This is a real testimony to the fertility of our local farms and the energy of

those early pioneers who had hewn down the giant trees of the dark forest that then covered Sunderland, to cultivate the rich loam into fields and pastures.

How the settlers toiled in the clearings! The essential implement was the mattack, which had an axe at one end and a hoe at the other. They would cut the underbrush down, pile it in small heaps then cut down the oak and other large trees. Next the trunks were cut into logs. The tops were chopped up and stacked in separate heaps. The brush was then set alight. In this way it would take a good hand from eight to ten days to chop an acre. The actual clearing then began: it would take five men and a yoke of oxen a day to clear from one half an acre to an acre; it would take a man a day or two to pick up the chunks of wood and do the burning of the logs.

Among other early arrivals was James Vrooman, better known as "Colonel" Vrooman after whom the village of Vroomanton is named. He seems to have arrived here rather earlier than "the King of Brock."

Also among the early settlers were the Shier family, James Ruddy, George Smith, John O'Leary, the Keenans,

From early records in Mr. Fairlowdown's possession, it is found that Brock Township was named after General Brock and was surveyed in 1817. Settlers came by way of Yonge St. east from Newmarket and others by way of Lake Simcoe.

The first white male child born in the Township was Robert Stephenson, while the first white female child born was Rachael Bagshaw, daughter of the original pioneer, William Bagshaw, and Sarah Bolton.

In 1821, Philip St. John, commonly known as the King of Brock, came from Ireland and settled in the Township. The large brick residence of Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Jewell on the Brock Road, was built by Philip St. John.

The first settler was Jones Reekie, who came in 1818, on October 10th, on the night of which he slept under a pine tree. William Bagshaw, settled on Concession 9 in the year 1821.

Daniel King, the Ewarts, Speirans, Fordiff's, Campbells, the Ameys, the Bagshaw's, Carmichaels, Brethours, Brabazons, Thompsons, Sprowles, Harts, McPhadens, Bolsters and the Cowans. Many of these families are still represented in the district but some have vanished away into the mists of antiquity. All these had settled in Brock by 1845.

Very true are the famous words of the Hon. David Mills, a former Minister of Justice at the turn of the century: "They toiled and rested until they laid down for the last time, and soon the second generation will have followed in their foot-



Other early settlers were Colonel James and George Vrooman, who settled west and north of Sunderland at Vroomanton.

The first mill was built on Lot 6, Con. 7, by James Ruddy. The first of the large Shier family was John Shier, a Limerick man who took up Lots 1, 2 and 3 in the 5th Concession.

The first store in the Township was opened by his brother, Richard Shier, at Lot 4, Concession 5.

Other early settlers of Brock were George Smith, John O'Leary, the Keenans, Dobles, Shipmans, Daniel King, the Campbells, the Ameys, Carmichaels, Brethours, George Brabazon, Doyles, Malones, Taylors, Francis Acton, Vallentyne, John Hall Thompson, the Harts, McPhaden's, McLean's, Wm. McDonald, Thomas and John, John Bairds, Bolsters, Cowans, Corporal McCully, Sproule's, Thomas and Henry Glendenning and Malcolm Gillespie.

steps, and will be gathered to their fathers. They had their trials, their hours of innocent pleasure. They found the country a wilderness, they left behind them smiling fields. They toiled for others, and laid down to sleep, to wake in a better country whither the good are hastening. Let us not waste their inheritance."