

Old Days in Blenheim.

WHAT PIONEERING REALLY MEANT.

The pioneers of Blenheim were confronted with the same difficulties that met the early settlers everywhere in the Province of Ontario. A dense forest surrounded them everywhere. Even to make "a clearing" sufficient as a site for their little log house and barn, they had to chop down the trees, trim the brush off, cut the trees into logs, roll them into log heaps and burn them with the brush—wood was of no commercial value. In the clearings thus made, the crops were grown and on the wheat, oats and buckwheat, and corn, potatoes and beans, they planted, they had to depend for their food during the long winter.

There were scarcely any horses and where there was a yoke of oxen or cows, they browsed on the green foliage of the trees for their food. Grist mills were few and far apart, so often the wheat was ground into flour by the primitive means of two stones, one of which was hollowed out rudely in the shape of a mortar, the other doing duty as a pestle. Where grain was taken to the mill, it had to be packed on a pack back into Ancaster, now Dundas, the nearest point where gristing was done.

There were no roads, but narrow trails were blazed through the woods. For several years, settlement was sparse and there were no schools or churches, neither was there any market for produce, should the settler have a surplus. Consequently little or no money was in use, "black satts" (potash) being used as current coin of the realm.

Nevertheless the "Queen's Bush" grew less and less, from year to year, the number of settlers steadily increased, roads were made, churches and school houses were built, the services of teachers and clergymen were secured, at intervals at least, and the blessings of civilization began to overflow the new settlements.

DIVINE WORSHIP NEVER NEGLECTED.

Religious services were first held by outside clergymen sent in by their respective denominations. Other religious services were contributed by local preachers, who added their Sabbath Day labor of love to the heavy toll of the week.

During the summer months, camp-meetings, held in the open air usually, in some shady grove were much in vogue. Partly because of their novelty and the absence of other entertainment, these were almost always largely attended by everyone, young and old, in the neighborhood. Sometimes the proceedings immediately outside the range of the pulpit service were not always decorous, though there was seldom any rowdiness. Camp-meetings in those days were popular, and to many they doubtless brought deep religious comfort, apart from the relief they gave to the dull monotony and harsh conditions of pioneer life.

Though notably earnest and devout, the pioneer local preachers were self-

The first preachers were early in the field. Rev. George Murray representing the U.P. Church at Princeton; Willis Church, on the fourth concession, was the religious centre of the Scotch settlement in the south of the township. Its ministers were in turn Rev. Duncan McRuer, Rev. John Gillespie, and the Rev. Hector McQuarrie. This congregation was during the sixties divided and congregations formed and churches built at Princeton and Drumbo. The Rev. Mr. Shearer is now the highly respected pastor of this congregation. Another branch of the congregation from Willis Church was also formed and a church built at Shower's Corners, fourth concession. This was united with the congregation in East Oxford and is now under Rev. Mr. Clouston.

In the north of Blenheim, at Chesterfield, the Presbyterians had an early and flourishing congregation under a devoted and most scholarly minister, the Rev. William Robertson. How many aspiring "callants" to the ministry, law, medicine, teaching and other professions, had their first "drill" in the classics from this "drill" learned and deeply read country minister? His was a fine spirit and he was a grand man. Rev. Mr. Johnston is the present minister.

The Methodists had churches latterly in all the villages of the township and they are a strong body. They have enjoyed the service of many earnest and devoted pastors, but the itinerant system prevents them from being so fully identified with the township as other clergymen with a longer pastorate. The Rev. William Griffin, who though bearing the weight of more than four score years, is still the efficient treasurer of the Methodist body, owned the Methodist church at Richwood more than fifty years ago.

The Baptists were represented at Gobles by the first free will Baptist church in the County. Later, the regular Baptists built the River church, east of Richwood, and also at Drumbo, Plattsville and Wolverton. Elders Haviland, Pickle, Patten, Currey and other local preachers served the Baptists with great faithfulness in early days and their names are still recalled with gratitude by the Baptist community. In later years,

graduates from the C.I. Institute, Woodstock, and McMaster University, superintendent of the Toronto Asylum for the Insane.

The early teachers whose names will be most readily recalled are Robert McLean of Richwood and J. F. Ainslie of Drumbo, both of whom gave long years of efficient service; together with George Perry of Perry's Corners, James Winterburn of Washington, A. S. Cruikshank of Princeton, A. Fisher of Windfall, John Clinton of Springhill, and William Henderson of Chesterfield.

SPORTS OF THE OLDEN TIMES.

There are two small lakes in the Township, Burgess Lake (now almost drained) near Drumbo, and Pine Pond in the south west part of the township. In certain seasons there is still good fishing at Pine Pond and in early days, Burgess Lake was a favorite resort of fishermen.

I have heard the late John Burgess have filled the pastorates of the several Baptist Churches in the township. The Anglicans have churches in Princeton and Drumbo, both built by the efforts and during the incumbency of the Rev. H. Bartlett.

The United Brethren have long had a church on the windfall, near Hornor's Creek. They are a small but much respected religious community.

THEY THAT HEALED AND TAUGHT.

In the earliest days of Blenheim's settlement the pioneers were without a physician. Later on for some years their health was cared for by outside physicians, who came from Ayr, Paris, Burford and Woodstock. Of the early resident physicians, Dr. James E. Rounds, Drumbo, and Dr. Daniel Clark of Princeton, will be best remembered. The latter afterwards became the able and efficient (Bunnet) tell of paddling in a dug-out through shoals of fish at the mouth of the outlet of Burgess lake, that were so thick that the prow of the boat pushed the fish aside, so that they could be picked with the hands, and landed, without hook or spear.

Burgess lake is located just opposite our old homestead and I have myself paddled a dugout around the shore of the lake, in the spring of the year with a light-jack—an iron hoop basket stuck on a short bowsprit and filled with resinous pine knots—at the bow, while my brother Thomas speared the finny beauties as they lay in the shallow water around the shore into which they had run to bask in the midday sun. It was rare sport and our boyish enjoyment was keen as the bottom of the dugout was gradually covered with fine bass, sun fish, perch and pike.

But there was an occasional break in that enjoyment. The spearman, when opportunity offered, would prove his skill and also gratify his delight for mischief, by picking up a turtle, as it lay basking in the water. The turtle upon being landed, immediately made for my end of the dugout. And as my small boy summer days were largely spent bare-footed, there was imminent danger that a toe, or some other section of the bare foot might soon be gripped in the jaws of the approaching turtle. It was a case of jump overboard and swim to shore (which meant sinking in a slough of soapy mud) or fight. The small boy with the bare feet fought. He was probably brave because he couldn't help himself. And so with a deadly blow from the paddle, the enraged turtle was knocked silly and then pitched overboard. "It was a famous victory," a great naval engagement on the shores of Burgess Lake.

This week your Rambler will review a copy of the Drumbo "Banner" printed over 60 years ago. The paper was brought to the Ayr News office by Erb Clark, Ayr. It had been hidden all the intervening years in the residence of Harry Clark, one mile east of Drumbo, and was brought to light when a partition was being moved.

Copy of Drumbo "Banner" Well Preserved

The issue of the paper in question was Vol. 3, No. 4, Drumbo Banner, Thursday, October 7, 1897; editor, N. H. Boden. The paper was fairly well preserved.



Wilmot Street, Drumbo.

1897.

Butter 13c Pound; Eggs 9c Dozen; Potatoes 25c Bag; Pork \$4.50 Cwt., on Drumbo Market Near Turn of Century

Teachers Ride to Schools on Bicycles

And then, "The school teachers of this section are making good use of their wheels, riding 7 or 8 miles, morning and evening, to and from the schools where they are teaching." Whatdayaknow-about-that.

"Turnip buyers," it says, "have been shipping large quantities of turnips during the past week." We'll bet they were being paid about 5 cents per bushel, rather than the presentday price of \$1.50 bushel or more, which prevailed hereabouts this winter, for a time.

Sweet News from Drumbo

Another item: "It is a fact that C. A. Muma sells 22 lbs. No. 1 Redpath granulated sugar for \$1.00; also 24 lbs. yellow sugar for \$1.00." Those were the good old days, alright. A fellow with a couple of bucks could keep real sweet.

Admission to Band Concert, 10 Cents

And now it says: "The Marine Band of the Salvation Army drew a good house on Tuesday evening. The admission fee was 10 cents, but when the performance was about half through a collection was taken up. At the close of the program they begged the people of the community to take them in for the night. They left for Ayr yesterday afternoon, where the same performance will be gone through again." We hope the Ayr folks gave the Army a good reception.

Bands Played for "Drinks"

Talking of bands, an item reads, "Wolverton is trying to raise a band, will it succeed?" Most every small town had a band in those days. Remember the old Humberstone Band (near Pt. Colborne) which played in front of the hotels "for the drinks"?

Box Social at Windfall

And here is something: "A box social at the U.B. Church, Windfall, is billed for this evening. As usual, upon such occasions, each

lady is expected to provide a box with provisions for two. An address will be given by Rev. Mr. Dyke of Bright, and Burgess Bros. of Drumbo will provide music, along with other numbers on the program. Gentlemen will be taxed 15 cents for admission, but ladies are on the free list."

Chaps Pay Big Price for Lunch

The joker in these box socials came to light when the auctioneer placed the boxes on sale. Given the proper "tip-off" each "fellow" would bid strenuously for the lunch box of his "girl". This was the cue for the rest of the fellows who would all take a hand in the bidding. We have seen these lunch boxes run up to as high as \$5-\$6 in old Reid's Hall, Ayr. Occasionally, a guy would run out of cash and another chap would bid in the box and have the pleasure of eating lunch with the other fellow's girl. It was quite a racket which provided plenty of fun.

Admission to Concert, 10c; Children Half Price

"Squire Muma returned from an official visit to the Welland Canal, St. Catharines, and other places on Wednesday," reads an item. Then comes: "A Grand Concert to be held in the schoolhouse, Wolverton, on Friday evening, Oct. 15. Prof. Leeson, celebrated trombone player of Cathcart, and Burgess brothers, Drumbo, have been engaged. 'That Rascal Pat' will be put on as an afterpiece. Admission, 10c; children half-price." It was impossible to go "broke" in those days at the prices mentioned.

"Good Lager Always on Tap" —Hilborn House

Now for a look over the advertisements. On the front page are announcements from: The Anderson Furniture Co., Woodstock; D. Sheddon and Son, Woodstock; W. H. Anderson, shoemaker, Drumbo; D. Mackie, pumps; D. S. Cullen, hardware; F. C. Tate, tailor; Princeton Pump Works, N. V. Field; Drumbo Drug Store; James B. Rounds, auctioneer; Frank X. Wintemberg, blacksmith, Washington; Ben Howes, blacksmith; George S. Cavan, V.S.; Hilborn House, Ayr, V. Hahn, prop. (Good lager always on tap). Annual meeting of Soho Cheese and Butter factory, C. K. Currey, sec.; W. C. Barr, undertaker.

C. A. Muma, General Store

Then we have C. A. Muma, general store; Charles Taylor, lumber; M. Sinclair, V.S.; Henry Burgess, tonsorial artist; Thos. Logan, auctioneer, Princeton; C. E. Baxter, flour and feed; Drumbo Bakery, John Pollock.

Here's a "Make or Break" Market

Here are the markets: Wheat, 72c; oats, 16c; bran, \$8 ton; middlings, \$10; butter, 13c; eggs, 9c; potatoes, bag 25c; lard, 8c; dried apples, 2 1/4c lb.; tallow, 3c; beans, bu. 50c; peas, bu. 37c; pork, cwt. \$4.50.

Many Familiar Names

We will here list a few names from the Blenheim Township Fair winners: James Baker, R. Dickie, J. Cochrane, W. Anderson, G. H. Murray, W. Robinson, D. Petrie, W. Patterson, W. Robson, A. Davidson, A. Martin, D. Bingeman, A. and F. Burgess, J. Chant, A. Telfer and Son, J. Brethour, N. Roth, D. Kaufman, J. Spears.

J. D. Cowan, George Law and Others

Others are: E. Gammon, E. Cressman, T. Thornton, E. Furtney, W. Wallace, J. Bruce, P. Irving, J. Fried, G. Law, W. Hall, J. Rogers, Orr and Lillico, I. Murray, T. Douglas, R. Rennelson, D. G. Harmer, W. Reid, G. Caldwell, W. Daniels, A. W. Burgess, A. Thurlow. Plants and flowers—most of prizes to J. D. Cowan.

Capt. Cockburn, James McLaren, O. Given

Fruits: D. Mackie, Jas. Rosebrugh, W. Copley, L. B. Kinney, A. Fried, H. Hewitt, Jas. McLaren, O. Given, M. Ainslie, Capt. Cockburn, James Hamilton, J. Gofton, M. Milgau, A. Braun, H. Currie, C. J. Baxter.

Suits or Coats—Price \$5

Elsewhere we find announcements of: Drumbo Bargain House, J. J. Pickard, prop. (men's heavy winter suits and overcoats, \$5.00; ladies' coats, from \$3.75 up); J. M. Whitney, optician, Woodstock; Robert Ranks, furniture, Ayr; J. J. Meggs, butcher; some patent medicine advts. such as Fowler's extract of wild strawberry, Milburn's heart and nerve pills; Burdock blood bitters. Then Central Hotel, Jno. C. Caldwell, Galt; Jos. Gillespie, painter, Ayr; Ayr Pump Works, C. G. Jones, prop.; John Wesley Hunt, coal and wood, Ayr.

Drumbo Banner
1897