

U. E. L. Settlement At Lakeside Armed Itself To Repel Rebel Threat

Little Oxford County Village Which Attracted Settlers 100 Years Ago Was Jealously Guarded

By M. V. WYE

On the St. Marys branch of the C. P. R., 25 miles northeast of London, and 10 miles north of Thamesford, is located the village of Lakeside. Here in the midst of a splendid farming area and on the shore of a beautiful lake, is the Lakeside Park, which is visited annually by many motorists from various parts of Western Ontario and by guests from the United States, possibly many of them descendants of the New Englanders, who endured the privations and struggles of pioneer life, and laid the foundation for the settlement of Lakeside, Ont.

The history of this little village of Oxford County dates back 100 years to the autumn of 1836, when Jacob German, a native of the New England States, and a member of a United Empire Loyalist family, arrived at the spot, now known as Lakeside. Attracted by the luxuriant vegetation of the district, and by the placid waters of the little lake, bordered as it is by clusters of elderberry bushes and willow clumps, the pioneer decided to hew out for himself a home in the Canadian wilderness.

In these dense forests the huge black bears roamed in search of berries and honey. The prowling wolves made their nightly visits to the little settlement and immense herds of deer came to the water's edge in the evening to quench their thirst in the lapping waters of the lake. Wild fowl was plentiful. Wild turkeys and pigeons could be seen perched on the stumps outside the cabin door, waiting to devour any feed that might be dropped on the land.

U. E. L. SETTLEMENT

As news spread of the fine lands to be acquired in Oxford County other New Englanders, lured by the spirit of adventure, followed the example of Jacob German, and made their way into the Canadian woods. Through the efforts of Col. Ingersoll, registrar of Oxford County, a settlement of United Empire Loyalists was made in the vicinity of Lakeside and Ingersoll. Overlooking the lake still stands the old mill, built by Col. Ingersoll for the use of the Loyalist settlers, and which was at one time the chief industrial plant of the community, but now only a picturesque landmark.

Robert Gleason settled at Lakeside in 1832 and Charles Mitchell arrived in 1834, taking up the farm on the north shore of the lake where his grandson, Charles Mitchell, now resides. The pioneer preacher, T. B. Brown, came to the settlement a few years later, carrying in a bag all his worldly possessions, which it is said included a violin and a bottle of whisky, the latter being used for medicinal purposes.

In 1837 when news of the rebellion reached the little settlement, excitement ran high. The New Englanders with the Loyalist blood welling in their veins, determined to quell the rebels, and if necessary lay down their lives for the country of their adoption. The old muskets were taken down from the cabin wall, a meeting called on the shore of the lake, and

a brigade formed, consisting of four men and a boy, Jacob German, Charles Mitchell, Philip Baker, William Gregory, and George Hereford. These volunteers, bidding farewell to their wives and families, shouldered their old flint locks and began their march to Oxford, as Ingersoll was then called.

PEACE RETURNS

Wild rumors raged everywhere. Due to the lack of proper communication it was impossible to learn the truth of the situation, and terror was driven into the hearts of the women and children. Meetings were held at a central home, conditions discussed, and plans made to carry on in the absence of fathers and husbands. However, on hearing of the retreat of the rebels, the little Lakeside band returned unharmed, and peace reigned in the settlement once more.

In 1842 the first public building was erected in the village of Lakeside. This was the log schoolhouse which stood on the main corner where the United Church now stands. The building was 12 feet square with one window at the south side, and although this was the only lighting system in the school, pioneers declare that eye trouble was unknown.

In 1846 a hotel was erected on the corner across from the school. This was a frame structure, and still stands, though remodelled several times. In this building was a large sitting-room, in which stood a huge fireplace. Here on winter evenings assembled the pioneers, and while the flames roared up the old chimney, many wild tales were told of experiences, encountered and rare happenings in the locality. In the midst of the group sat the genial host, Captain Dottie, ever ready to extend a hearty welcome to any wayfarers who might enter the inn.

The Anglican church, which was a wonderful structure, was erected in 1861, under the direction of Rev. William Brookman, rector of the parish, consisting of Lakeside, Thamesford, Thorndale and Evelyn. The bricks for this building were manufactured from clay in the churchyard by the late Charles Shrubsole, who lies buried in the churchyard plot, and whose monument stands near the church. In manufacturing the bricks the wet clay was packed into rough wooden boxes and set out to dry before being used in the homemade kiln. These bricks have stood the test of time and weather, and no stronger structure exists than the little Anglican church at Lakeside. The cemetery and grounds are kept in splendid condition and are a fitting memorial to the pioneers, who entered the wilderness and labored to establish homes and build up a prosperous community. Some of the early rectors of Christ Church, Lakeside, were Rev. William Brookman, Rev. Samuel Belcher, Rev. William Daunt, M.A., Rev. W. M. Seaborn, Rev. T. H. Brown, Rev. W. Stout, Rev. T. G. A. Wright, B.A. The present rector is Rev. H. J. Johnson.

McKIMS CHURCH

The Methodist body in 1862 erected a fine little brick church about two miles from the village. This was known as McKims Church and was attended by the settlers from many miles around. A few years ago a fine red brick church was erected on the main corner of Lakeside. In 1856

LAKESIDE LANDMARK



OLD MILL, built by Col. Ingersoll and which still stands as a picturesque landmark, was erected for U. E. L. settlers in the vicinity of Lakeside.

a blacksmith shop was opened with Enoch Burdock in charge. The first store was conducted by Andrew Harris, who was succeeded by H. F. Sharp.

The mail service to Lakeside was very poor in the early days and in order to improve this condition, a road was cut from Lakeside to Oxford (Ingersoll) to which point the old stage coach from Hamilton brought the mail. As soon as the road from Lakeside was completed to the home of Nathan Allan Prescott, this settler made the trip to Oxford and on return distributed the mail among the settlers. Later a post office was established in the corner store, with Robert Armstrong as postmaster. The mail was brought in twice a week by horseback from St. Marys and Ingersoll.

On Confederation Day, 1867, the pioneer physician, Dr. Thomas Sparks, arrived in the village and opened up a practice which he carried on for a period of 25 years, administering to the sick and suffering, answering calls day and night, and many times traveling by horseback to the outlying districts. In 1892 Dr. Sparks disposed of his practice to Dr. A. J. Murray, a native of Zorra Township, who was born on a farm three miles from Embro, and where his father and grandfather were also born. Dr. Murray faithfully discharged his duties for a period of 28 years, rendering splendid service to the community, not only in the professional field, but also in assisting in every worthy project, and endeavoring at all times to further the interests of the rural people.

Dr. Murray moved to London in 1920 where he practiced until his death.

In 1903 the red building which stands near the C. P. R. tracks was built by Dr. T. W. Wilson, who had an extensive practice throughout East Nissouri, West Nissouri and Zorra townships.

In 1908 the Canadian Pacific tracks were laid through Lakeside and the depot erected. The coming of the railway was a great boon to the farming district, as farmers have been enabled to dispose of their live stock much more readily, through the shipping facilities afforded. Today in Lakeside and vicinity are found fine homes, beautiful farms, and a progressive and enterprising people.