THE TOWNSHIP OF ARTEMESIA

A HISTORY

BY W. S. CHRISTIE

In pursuing my writings on the township of Artemisia, I turn to its first council meeting. Under a bylaw of the county council at Simcoe, made on the 31st day of August, 1850, at the court house, Barrie, councillors were elected by the township of Artemisia, and their first meeting was held on the 20th of January, 1851. The members elected were Elias B. Gray, George Armstrong, William Aikins, John Gray. Elias Gray was elected reeve, and Charles Draper township clerk and treasurer. Afterwards the name of W Wright appears as another councillor. The election took place at the house of E. B. Gray. Of the first council, but two survive, viz.: John Gray and William Eakins, the latter a man of fair education, an elegant pensman, a congenial, affable person, but too timid; to the impartial observer he lacked force or push to succeed in public life. A part of his family continue to reside in Artemisia, but at present he resides with others members of the family in the United States.

George Armstrong was postmaster at Inistoge, and father of the late J. W. Armstrong, Esq., treasurer for so many years for Artemisia. This councillor was a fine specimen of the Irish gentleman, dignified and qualified, but was by the wily E. B. Gray prevented from being Artemisia's first reeve. A few of the older settlers remember him with his blue coat and phenomenal brass buttons, and gentlemanly bearing.

John Gray was a brother of E. B. Gray and was married to a sister of Mrs. John Dinwoody of Flesherton. There was much room for improvements in his morals. He kept tavern for a short time in the old log premises on the Bentham farm, but was refused a license to continue. He removed to the township of Ospreyand thence to the U. S. Since his residence there, his reformation has become complete, and himself and family, a large one, hold a very respectable position.

As to the first Reeve, E. B. Gray, he was a notable character—a man of limited education, but self-possessed to a remarkable degree. Motherwit, as it is called, was seldom wanting, and if you add cunning and dogged perseverance co-existant with doubtful morality, you have his makeup. He acted as pettifogger in the division courts, and his clients never lost a case for want of cheek on his part

In 1853 William Kingston Flesher became reeve. He was the most important personage in the municipal government of the township for several years A man of composite ability; in mechanics, in law, and not infrequently in medicine, in the absence of professionals, he became their expositor and adminstrator. He was postmaster and magistrate. It may be averred that no man, from that day to this, possessed such a general influence over the people, insomuch that when he offered himself as representative for the House of Commons, Artemisia's majority for him was simply immense.

Mr. Flesher was not an educated man, according to the schools, but possessed a very critical mind, many think a hypercritical one, hence in the minutia was painfully prolix. His written documents evidenced to common men an unintilligible jargon; they were frequently circumlocutory and recapitulative adfinitum; nevertheless the pith of them, when divested of its bars and parentheses, showed more than ordinary ability. Mr. Flesher was a person of undoubted benevolence, and straightforward intergrity; no worthy poor man applied to him in vain. If the many works undertaken and unfinished are witnesses, it must be said of him that he lacked continuity—very good at suggestions and initiation, but not so good at finishing. He was a fascinating speaker; his speeches, always interlearded with racy anecdote, took well; in addition and subtraction, even in small things he was very exacting, so that in any settlement a cent was a cent. This seemed to be a natural law with him in every sphere. The postoffice duties had to conform rigidly to this law. But most men with an extra zeal sometimes get fooled. An amusing incident occurred in the long ago. A lady, who is still living, and now one of his firm friends, was posting a newspaper. She had used a clean sheet of paper for wrapper. She had addressed the letter, but thought she could do it better, so she turned it within and readdressed it on the outside. When she presented the paper, the following conversation took place between the lady and Mr. Flesher:

Flesher—"Are you aware, madam, that newspapers should contain no communication?"

Lady—"I am quite aware of that!"

Flesher—Unfolding the wrapper very deliberately, he discovered the written address referred to.

Lady—Rather indignantly said, "Act as a gentleman, sir, and don't destroy that wrapper.

Flesher—"What made you write the address on the inside of this wrapper?"

Lady—Still indignant, said "That is by business, sir,!" and you will be careful to replace that wrapper as you found it."

Flesher—Rather crest fallen and disappointed, obeyed, the lady trembling in her shoes all the while, for she had put a lengthy correspondence within the folds of the paper. The clean piece of paper deceived him. This lady kept the secret, but didn't repeat the folly.

He was reeve for 15 years, was Warden 7 years, and member of parliament for several years. Members of his family still live in Flesherton; they are extensively known and very highly respected. In this year, 1853, the following resolution occurs: "Moved by Alex. Thompson, seconded by Mr. Hind (late of the village of Flesherton) That the sum of one half penny in the pound currency be raised by assessment on the rateable property of the township, for the purpose of procuring a library in accordance with the late circular from the chief superindendent of common schools." In April, 1854, an item appears of £1 7s. 8d, for the carriage of the library and other small items. A short mention of this library has already been given.

In this year, 1854, Richard Campbell, Esq., was appointed clerk and treasurer; he was a school teacher, and very highly respected for his integrity and moral standing, of which many who survive him will testify. The gift of order, certainly was deficient, and consequently he was lead into financial difficulties with the municipality to be mentioned hereafter.

In 1856 appears, for the first time, the election of tavern inspectors, one for each ward of the township. The price of tavern licenses was £4 and for beer license £3. Nothing more than routine business occurred. W. K. Flesher, Esq., still retained the reeveship until 1869.

THE FAMINE YEAR

The settlers in this year, 1856, were for various causes in extreme circumstances of want. No seed, no food and starvation almost stalking the concessions and side lines; very many had to appeal for relief; and to afford it debentures were issued on the non-resident land fund of the township, irrespective of the rate of discount. Why borrowing on the credit of such laws, it should be called debentures, is a puzzle, but it seems the county authorized it in 1855. On April 12, 1859, a resolution was passed to purchase 500 bushels of seed, and for the same purpose 900 bushels of wheat and 500 bushels of potatoes; and at this same meeting, a motion was passed urging the county council to commence the gravelling of the county roads. In this year a county bylaw was passed to raise fifty thousand pounds to gravel the roads. In this month is noticed, for the first time, the accounts rendered in dollars and cents. It would appear that many of the ratepayers applied for seed wheat in excess of the supply in stock, and for each bushel deficient they received in lieu, 18 prounds of peas, and one bushel of oats. The councillor of each ward was to become responsible for ample security to the council for the seed that each ratepayer received. To show the necessitous condition of the ratepayers in the year last mentioned, $100 were appropriated to each ward for road purposes, and advances to the workers were made to the extent of 50 per cent. of their contracts. The balance of any seed remaining was to be distributed to all applicants who showed they were in absolute need. In the same year, in June, there were purchased 35 barrels of corn meal and 2600 lbs. of rice. It very forcibly reminds one of the Indian famine on a small scale.

In 1862 license was asked for Eugenia, for the first time, to a Mr. Lang. The chief reason assigned was, that the mill had now gone into operation. In those days licenses were granted by the council. Inspectors were elected in the same manner as the councillors, first a salary of five shillings for each tavern inspected, afterwards seven shillings and six pence per day ($1.50) for as many days as their duties required, paid only upon affidavit. In the July meeting of 1861 collectors were instructed to collect seed loans by the 15th day of October following, and if not paid, ten per cent. was to be added to such unpaid loans.

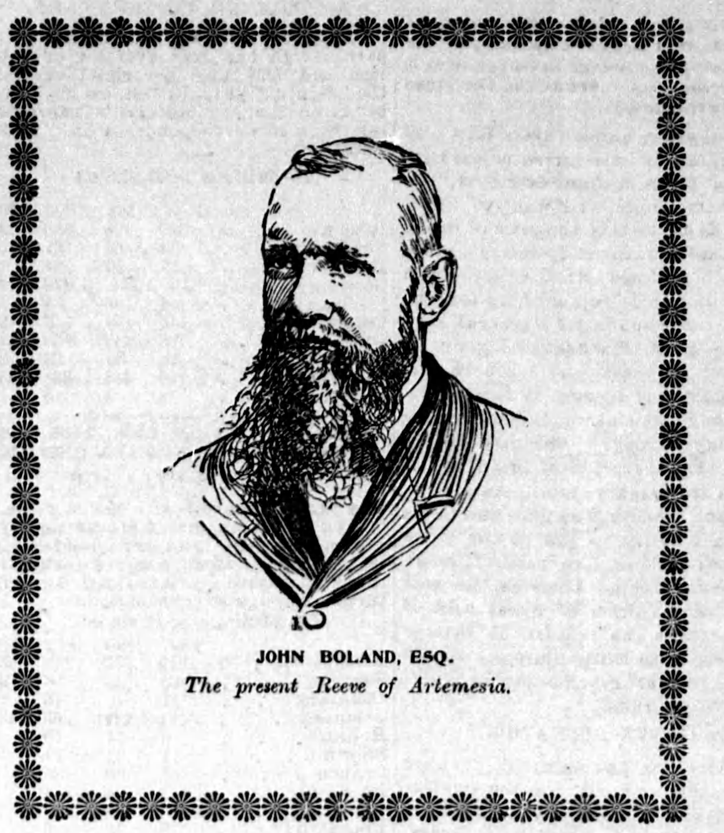
In 1862 appears the first mention of arrears of taxes. The collector is authorized to charge ten per cent. on all arrears for 1860, and if unpaid until July '62, ten per cent. more; and a copy of the said resolution was to be posted in a conspicuous place in each ward. Bylaw 58 was passed at this time to prevent fowls from running at large, afterwards repealed.

A point of interest in 1862 was a motion to memorialize the government to cause the town plots of Priceville and Eugenia to be put into the market and sold to actual settlers.

In referring again to the schools, it is interesting to notice the requirements then and now. At this period the total assessment was, say $1000, for all the schools' assessment. Since then the sections have been somewhat changed; but section 5, raised in '95 almost that sum. The total for school purposes in 1895 in the township was, $5,875.

In December, 1862, sealed tenders for collection of taxes were solicited. Here are the conditions imposed: "The applicant was to be able to write a plain hand, to have a moderate knowledge of accounts and to be assessed on the roll for at least $400 real estate or $800 leasehold." It would be well to perpetuate such a sound policy. The seed loan, as it was called, and arrears for taxes proper, caused endless resolutions by the council. The people no doubt thought the whole thing was a charity and that the council would never force them to pay, hence it is presumed, the delay and excuse, and the collectors seem to have imbibed a similar feeling. In December, 1862, the collector, Wm Ferguson, was directed to collect the arrears for 1860 and 1861, and also the seed loan, and report the balances promptly the Monday following and to give the arrears for each separately. It was likely so reported, but when collected we shall see. The council of 1863 contains the name of R. Trimble and Doctor Mahaffy, two prominent citizens. The former was then, and still remains a merchant, is well known, of fair business habits and rather retiring nature, preferring others to fill public offices to himself; is rather a severe critic, however, when circumstances demand. In earlier days he ran a stage from Flesherton to Orangeville, but the narrow gauge stopped such a mode of travel. The latter, Dr. Mahaffy, was somewhat reckless in habit, very active, a notable horseman, seldom had any girth to his saddle, but rode furiously; his field of practice was very large and laborious, but he was usually equal to the task. Mahaffy's corners most every one knew. He left this township over 30 years ago, has become unfit for business, is quite old, but nevertheless can manage a horse and buggy, as he did from Priceville to the adjoining township this June, 1897. There first motion in the council was an expression of sympathy for Ireland, during the potato famine, but refusing a grant, recommending the matter to the tender mercies of the churches for a collection and to be supplemented by a subscription list. The name of William Buchanan appears at this time, and for several years, as road commissioner. He was one of Artemisia's best men, and was, as his family is to-day, very highly respected. He died but a few years ago, in the bosom of his family, between whom strong attachments existed.

TO BE CONTINUED



JOHN BOLAND, ESQ.
The present Reeve of Artemesia.

Markdale is erecting a skating and curling rink 78 x 180 feet.

Frank Jacklin, 12 years old, of Brant, caught his hand in a binder. He got away minus three fingers and one mutilated.

Probably the largest yield of wheat per acre yet chronicled is that on the farm of Mr. George Topper, near Kleinburg, Vaughan Township. From a ten-acre field Mr. Topper has threshed 600 bushels of wheat. This beats anything he has known of farming in Ontario.

M. Richardson & Co

New Fall Goods

Every day sees the arrival of a fresh consignment of **New Goods,** suitable for the coming fall season. The excellent business of the past summer has reduced stocks to the vanishing point and now every department in our building is rapidly filling up with **New Goods.** Everyone has been busily employed in unpacking and marking new importations for some time past, and we can confidently announce that our 1897 fall display will be the most complete and comprehensive ever shown in the history of our store.

MILLINERY DEPARTMENT

We are pleased to announce that we have again secured the services of **Miss Kline** in this department for the coming season, and expect her to arrive and take charge this week. All our purchases of the latest **Novelties in Fall Millinery** are to hand and will be on exhibition in a day or two. Preparations for the millinery opening are in full swing, and the exact date will be advertised in The Advance next week.

NEW FALL SUITS SPECIAL VALUES THIS SEASON

SUIT TO ORDER. Well made and trimmed. A good range of patterns	$ 8.50
SUIT TO ORDER. Well made and trimmed. Selected tweed patterns	$ 9.00
SUIT TO ORDER. Well made and trimmed. Heavy weight tweed, new and seasonable effects	$10.00
PANTS TO ORDER. Special values, latest designs, well made and trimmed, $2.75 to	$ 5.00

Underwear. We have made special purchases of Fall Underwear for Ladies' and Gent's and can offer unapproachable values.

New MANTLES

We have just received an advance shipment of new Mantles direct from Germany and have them on exhibition. They comprise some of the latest novelties in leading styles and are eminently serviceable and handsome. When buying these goods we were offered some exceptionally good values and did not fail to take advantage of them. Full justice cannot be done in description. Come and see them and make your selections while the assortment of sizes and styles is full and complete.

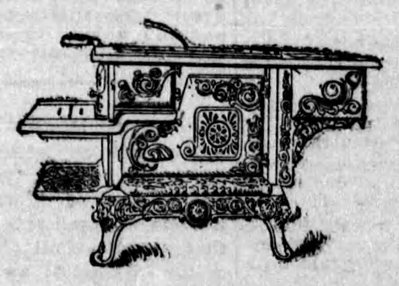
REMEMBER THE FAIR THIS WEEK

We cordially invite all visitors to the fair to come and see us at the same time. Our splendid display of **Fall Goods** will be worth seeing, and it makes no difference whether you purchase or not—We shall be pleased to see you.

HARDWARE DEPARTMENT

....BIG RUN....

COOKING STOVES



COOKING STOVES

We have just got in a few of the nicest and best cooking stoves made, such as Good Cheer, Famous Model, Regal Garland, Moffat's Pearl, and McClary's Presumption. Call and see them if in need.

BIG BARGAINS.....

In Crockery, Chinaware and Glassware, Dinner, Tea and Bedroom Setts for the next month. A good chance to save money. Headquarters' for Threshers' Supplies. Building Hardware and Tinware. Be sure and call when at the fair. We want to meet you all.