

**Trafalgar in 1817**

**No Store, Four Taverns, Three Schools, 97 Houses, 448 People**

Days when Trafalgar had four taverns and no stores, no doctors, three schools, 448 residents living, 97 houses and land selling at \$4.00 to \$5.00 per acre, having been brought to light through a document found a few years ago by Mrs. Wright-Orr amongst possessions of the late Dr. Wright of Oakville. This copy was loaned by Mrs. Colin H. Campbell, O.B.E., Winnipeg.

Written 140 years ago in the clear scholarly hand, and in the excellent state of preservation, the document is the following letter addressed to Mr. Robert Gourley.

Sir: At a meeting of the inhabitants of our township holden on the 27th November, 1817, at the house of Daniel Munn, innkeeper, the following answers were framed in reply to your queries, as they appeared to us in the Niagara Spectator:

1st. The name of our township is Trafalgar. It is situated in the County of Halton, in the District of Gore, in the Province of Upper Canada, about 21 miles from Little York. It is eight and eight-fourths miles in length and about seven miles breadth. It is bounded on the north-west and north by a large tract of land yet in the possession of a nation of Indians called Mississauga, it is bounded on the northeast by the township of Toronto, east and southeast by the Lake Ontario, and on the southwest and west by the Township of Nelson. It is divided into 200 acres each, excepting on the lake shore, where they are irregular according to the bearings of the lake. The lots are 21 chains in breadth and 100 chains in length.

2nd. The first settlement of our Township began in the Spring and Summer of 1807. The number of people is 548. The number of houses inhabited is 7.

3rd. No churches. There are two preachers who preach alternately. They belong to the sect called Methodists according to the institution of the late Rev. John Wesley.

4th. Of medical practitioners we have none.

5th. We have three schools in this Township. The price per quarter is Two Dollars and boarding found.

6th. We have no stores in this town.

7th. We have four taverns.

8th. We have one grist mill and four sawmills. The rate of grinding is one-twelfth. The rate of sawing is one-half when the sawlogs are carried to the mill.

9th. The surface of the land is level, the top soil is clay, mixed with loam and a little gravel; under that is clay mostly of a red color.

10th. Our timber consists of oak, two kinds, white and red; pine (very large) of the white kind; beech; maple, two kinds; ash, two kinds, the black or swamp ash and white ash; basswood; hickory; elm, white and red; hemlock, ironwood; chestnut; some birch; suckling ash; some cedar; some butter-nut and a little tamarack. The timber most large and stands thick on the land.

11th. Respecting minerals, there is a considerable quantity of the mineral of iron called bog ore; also a few salt springs of an inferior kind.

12th. Building stones we have none excepting a few which may be found over the land of a very indifferent kind.

13th. A few bricks have been made. Their price is Six Dollars per thousand.

14th. No lime has been burnt in this township, nor have any limestone quarries been discovered.

15th. Blacksmiths here most generally work by the pound, that is 7½d per pound, when the iron and steel are found, and 1s 3d when the blacksmith finds the materials. To this there are some exceptions but not many. Carpenter work by the day or by the job. By the day it is a dollar and boarding included, by the job it is according to the quantity of the labor to be performed.

17th. The price of mowing grass for hay and reaping grain is from four to five shillings per day according to the price of wheat (as the greater part of wages here is regulated by the price of wheat). Cradling wheat is a bushel of wheat or its price as above.

18th. Clearing and fencing of land when all the timber is cut off, costs Twelve Dollars per acre; so that a field containing five acres would cost Sixty Dollars. But the common custom of our Township is to cut down no more at first, then the timber which is a foot in diameter, measured about two feet and a half from the root of the tree and all under that size, and the rest they birdle and kill with an axe, in this state it will produce nearly as good a crop as if all were cut down, and as this only costs Six Dollars per acre, in both cases boarding and lodging included. The rest of the timber is cut down by degrees, for fencing and firewood, etc.

19th. A good work horse may be had from Fifty to Sixty Dollars; a good cow from Eighteen to Twenty Dollars; a yoke of oxen, four years old, from Fifty to Seventy Dollars; a good sheep of the same age from Two to Three Dollars.

20th. The average quantity of wool produced by a sheep is two pounds and a half. Its price is one shilling and ten pence half-penny per pound.

21st. Beasts are turned out about the first of May and taken

in about the same time in December. 22nd. Sleighing lasts about three months, that is, beginning about the first of January and ends about the last of March. Plowing begins about the 20th of April.

23rd. Season of growing wheat is from the 25th of August until the 1st of October. The time of harvesting said grain is from the 20th of July until the end of August.

24th. The quantity of wheat to be sown on one acre is from a bushel and a peck to a bushel. An average crop is from 15 to 25 bushels per acre.

25th. Respecting pasture, as the wild woods constitute our principal pasture lands, we have not yet made sufficient experiments to enable us to answer your query. But our meadow lands will generally produce one ton per acre and an ox of four years old will gain two hundred weight by a summer's run in our woods and his meat will be well flavored. Our dairy produce is of an excellent quality. Butter sells for a shilling per pound. Cheese the same price.

26th. The ordinary course of cropping on new land is wheat the first year, harrowed in and sown, and a crop of oats are sown in, in the Spring on the stubble. Then it is sown down with timothy or clover, or both together and is used for meadow for three or four years till the roots rot in the ground and then plowed up, after which buckwheat or peas are generally sown first, and then wheat perhaps the same season and then peas or buckwheat, or oats and then wheat, and so on alternately. Little or no manure is used, but new land and orchards require it most.

27th. Land is frequently let on the shares on the following terms: If new the lesor finds the leasee in terms of boarding, in farming utensils and in half the seed, and then receives one-half the produce, if old and the leasee finds everything, the leasee has one-third of the produce; if the leasee finds everything, the leasee has only one-third of produce. Enough of land can be had in either of these ways.

28th. Land at the first settling of our Township sold for \$1.50 per acre; it now sells for Four to Five Dollars per acre. Also a farm of 200 acres with a log house and a barn upon it with 110 acres cleared in the customary way, may be had for fifteen hundred dollars. If frame buildings are upon it, a greater price, but seldom in proportion to the buildings.

29th. The quantity of land for sale we cannot justly describe, but suppose three or four thousand acres. And there are but few farmers in our Township who would not even sell their improved farms if they had the offer of a good price.

30th. The state of the public roads is present is but indifferent but they are capable of improvement at a very moderate expense, as the face of our country is generally level. Great improvements might be made by means of canals and locks. Respecting our navigation, we are situated on the coast of Lake Ontario, and thence have the benefit of all the adjoining waters. Besides we have two very fine streams called the Twelve and the Sixteen Mile Creeks. These can be made navigable waters for boats, some part of the year: four miles from the mouth, to communicate with our mills on Dundas St. The mouth of the Sixteen, where it empties into Lake Ontario is navigable for vessels of a considerable burden and forms a safe and commodious harbor.

31st. The causes which retard the improvement of our Township and the Province at large are various. The first and principal cause you have already very justly observed that is, the want of capital. This may perhaps be best illustrated by the facts. Know then, that the greater number of farmers when they first settle in the wild woods, have little more property than a cow, a yoke of oxen, a log chain, and an axe, and some have little or no property at all but their axe alone. The family generally consists of a man and his wife and a number of young children. Unable to hire hands the whole of the labor naturally devolves upon the man, and hence it is for six or seven years till such time as the roots of the timber begin to rot in the ground, so that he can use the plow, and until the oldest of his children grow up to help him, his toil is incessant. Four or five acres is all that he is able to clear and sow in a season and that is generally put in so late that it produces but little, so that the whole of his crop will scarcely support him through the year, but many times he has to work out for part of his bread.

Clothes he must have for himself and his family, and these must be got out of the store, and merchant goods are very dear in this Province, and as he hath nothing to pay with he is obliged to go on credit. These in a few years soon run up high, so that by the time he gets his farm in such a state of improvement it might enable him to live comfortably, he is frequently obliged to sell it, in order to pay off his debts. Such is the consequence of beginning poor. But this you will observe, is only the gloom side of things. For those who are so fortunate as to weather out the storm of the first ten years without sinking their plantations are generally enabled to spend the remainder of their

days in comfort. The scarcity of labor, so that the produce will scarcely pay the hands, forms another hindrance to the improvement of our Township and the Province at large.

Another hindrance is that in many places of this Province, large tracts of land have been granted to certain individuals, and these being generally men of fortune are under no necessity of selling their lands, but hold them at so high a price that poor people are not able to buy them. Again there are many of these gentlemen gone out of the Province so that there is no opportunity to buy from them. So it still remains a wilderness. And the poor people who are settled round such tracts have roads to make, and every other public duty to perform at their own expense, which greatly enhances the value of such land to the great injury of inhabitants.

Another hindrance respecting our Township is that a great number of Lots are reserved for the Crown and the Clergy and notwithstanding that these lots might be rented for 21 years for a very small sum of money, yet the land in this Province has hitherto been so plenty and cheap that no one cares for renting land who can have it in free simple; hence it is that the great number of them still remain unsettled. But when settlers become numerous this evil will soon be done away.

What in our opinion, would contribute to the improvement of our Township and the Province at

large would be to encourage men of Property into the country to purchase the waste lands of our province, which if sold even at a moderate price would introduce such a flow of capital into our Province as would not only encourage a respectable race of settlers of every description to come in and cultivate the face of the country, and turn the wilderness into fruitful fields, but would also make trade and manufacture of all kinds flourish. Then would our Province no longer remain poor, neglected and unknown to the rest of the world but would become a respectable colony not only to support herself, but she would add a large revenue to the

British Crown and her redundancies would contribute to feed the hungry and clothe the poor of other nations.

Sir: We have also seen your second address with your additional queries, which we answer as follows:

32nd. We know of no one in Upper Canada whom we would sooner trust to publish the statistics of our Province than yourself.

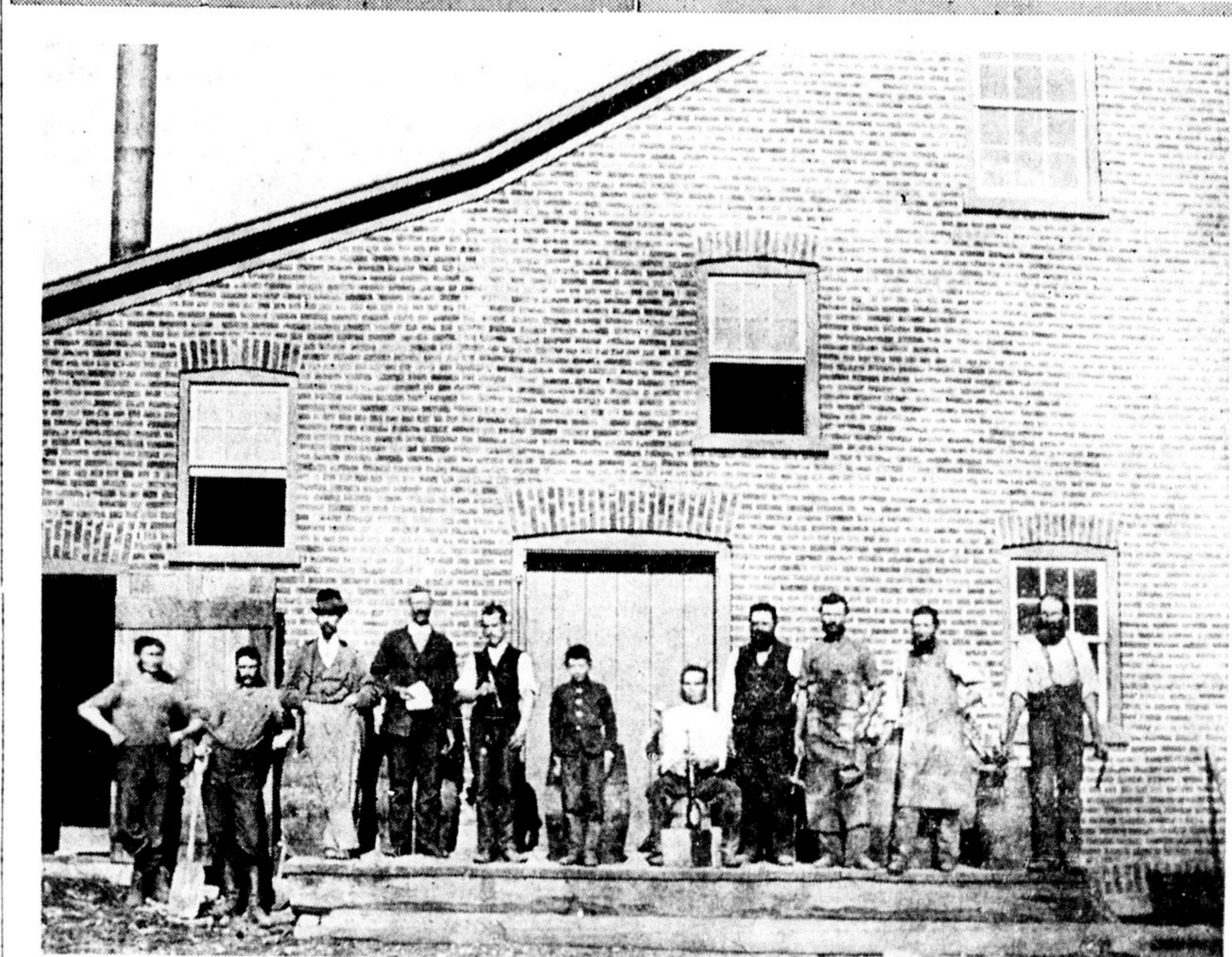
33rd. We are willing therefore to trust the whole to your own veracity, and may the highest success crown your labors.

It is true we have seen a parcel of heterogeneous stuff in Niagara Specator, printed against your

plan, which like the Palace of Vanity appears to have no foundation; and like it too, shall vanish into air, yes into thin air, and leaves not a trace behind.

We have used provincial currency in all our calculations, which is five shillings to the dollar, excepting where we have mentioned dollars.

Signed by: James McBride, J.P., Daniel Munn, Charles Biggar, Duncan McQueen, Absalom Smith, James Biggar, Amos Biggar, Michel Buck, Timothy Robbins, James Thomson, Nathaniel Cornwall, James Hopper, Henry Loucks, Lawrence Hager, Joseph Smith.



THE PALERMO PLOUGH and mowing machine was a product of the Smith Foundry at Palermo about 1868. Left to right are foundry moulder Mr. Crump, wood worker Robert Smith of Palermo, W. H. Speers of Bronte, Herbert Inglehart of Merton, John Smith of Palermo, two unknown men, woodworker and carpenter William Floyd of Palermo, blacksmiths Duncan Peer and George Garneau of Palermo, and teamster Joseph Long of Palermo.



MILTONIANS in the early days were fond of numerous social events. Above is a group on a sleighing trip with a four-horse team.

**Indians, Animals**  
(Continued from Page Four)

planned as carefully as present-day warfare, and the wars were waged long and furious.

The forests, teeming with wild animals, must have been a paradise for the settlers, many of whom were crack shots after seeing active service in their homeland. One of these men named George Barnes kept a tally on the butt of his musket of all the deer he shot. The tally amounted during his lifetime to six hundred.

Wolves were a great pest, and a constant source of danger to people and stock both. The Government offered a bounty of six dollars for every wolf killed, and as the money was a great attraction for the people, great efforts were made to hunt the animals. "Eliza McPherson, daughter of Big Bob McPherson of the Scotch Block," the report says, "was attacked by a large wolf. Although only a young girl, she had all the courage of a Flora McDonald, and with a stout club killed the wolf."

A man named William Dobbie was going home on horseback from Ashgrove one night when his two dogs, Laddie and Lassie, attacked some animal in McCall's swamp. There was one on each side fighting for dear life. The owner dismounted, and seizing a pine root, leaped into the fray. It proved to be a large bear that was causing the trouble. Dobbie leaped on his back and plied the club. The dogs did their part, and the bear was conquered, but not before it had severely bitten the legs of Dobbie. Its hide was for years used as a rug and proudly exhibited by him.



Frank Johnson



Charles Johnson

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