Bridgeford

Bridgeford, Colonel David Col. Bridgeford, the second owner of Lot 47, Vaughan and the centre of our village on the west side, was born in Scotland in 1792. He came to Canada with his mother and step-father, Robert Marsh, in 1797, and to the vicinity of Richmond Hill early in the century, their conveyance being an ox-cart, the journey from York taking two days.

In 1812, on the advice of Bishop Strachan, David Bridgeford volunteered to avoid the draft. He received the commission of Lieutenant in the 3rd Regiment of the York Militia. During the War he was often in action. He was at Detroit when the American's Commander, General Hull surrendered. He was in the Battle of Queenston Heights on October 13, and saw General Brock fall, and also in the battles of Chippewa, Lundy's Lane and Fort Erie. He was one of those in the Fort at York on April 27, 1813, when the magazine exploded, killing the American commander General Pike and about 200 of his men who had seized the fort.

On Monday December 4, 1838, he was seized by Mr. Lount and his men who were on their way to Toronto. However, Mr. Lount released him when Col. Bridgeford promised to go home and stay there. He went home but hearing the rumor that it was the intention of the insurgents to march on Toronto, he went to see Colonel Moodie who had noticed many small parties of men going south. They decided to inform the Governor immediately. The story of that trip is reported in the article on Colonel Moodie.

After Col. Moodie fell, Col. Bridgeford outwitted the troops at Montgomery's Tavern and obtained a fresh horse. He reached Government House and helped organize the defence of the town. He started north again to raise volunteers and was taken prisoner with his companion Mr. P. Lawrence, near Montgomery's Tavern. Lawrence made good his escape. Later troops from the city under Colonels McNab, Fitzgibbons, and Jarvis retook the Tavern, released the prisoners and burned the building.

Col. Bridgeford married Lucy, daughter of Mr. John Stegmann. He built the largest building in the village in those days. It was hewn logs and two stories in height. It stood back of the present building at No. II Centre Street West. This was a hotel. Yonge Street was a corduroy road, connecting the Hill with what was known as Duck Valley, for the north end of the village was a swamp through which ran a sizeable stream. Near Centre Street, a beaver lived for many months, the last of the families of beavers who had dammed the creek at the west side of the village.

The hotel ran for many years and was much frequented by military men. Later it was sold with the front 50 acres to a Mr. Gregory, who modernized it and painted it red. In this building Troop and Sargent started the first Richmond Hill Fanning Mill Company. Here also Patterson Bros. started manufacturing agricultural implements, later moving to Patterson village and later to Woodstock.

In 1850 Col. Bridgeford was elected councillor in Vaughan, and served from 1852 to 1858 as Deputy-Reeve, and in 1858 became Reeve. He died in 1868 at the age of 75 years.

-taken from a series of articles on early settlers written by William Harrison, and published by the Richmond Hill Liberal, in 1888.