THE HISTORY OF THE TOWN OF STURGEON FALLS AND IT'S MASONIC LODGE.

CHAPTER 1

The first white settlers to make their homes, on the banks of the Sturgeon River, appeared in 1848, when the Hudson Bay Company closed the fort at the mouth of the La Vasse River, (Fort La Ronde) and rebuilt it at the mouth of the Sturgeon River. It was built on the west bank of the river and was called Nipissing Lake Post. The post actively served the people in the area and promoted the fur trade. The post became famous for the abundant crop of cranberries, which grew wild nearby. The post was closed in 1879, because of poor management and the deterioration of the fur trade.

Lumbering had begun, in the Sturgeon River area, around 1860. Lumber camps were established along the river and during the winter months, the lumber men would cut down the trees and move the logs on to the frozen river, with horses. With the spring run-off, the logs floated down the Sturgeon River into Lake Nipissing. They were then taken to the various sawmills, owned by the Booth Lumber Company, where they were sawed into lumber or made into railway ties.

The settlement on the present site of the town of Sturgeon Falls, began in 1879, when James Holditch of Bracebridge Ontario, purchased crown land, west of what is now Nipissing Street. He sold property to others, who were preparing for the arrival of the railway. When the railway people arrived in 1881, they found a small settlement of traders, hunters, fishermen and lumbermen, living in log cabins.

The Canadian Pacific Railway was being built along the north shore of Lake Nipissing and on December 31st 1882, was completed to just west of Sturgeon Falls, including the completion of a steel bridge over the Sturgeon River. Because of the abundance of fuel, water and dry, flat land, Sturgeon Falls was considered to be a good location for a rail yard and roundhouse. Some say that a dispute over the cutting down of a large elm tree, to make way for the rail yard, caused the C.P.R. to reconsider and North Bay was chosen for the rail yard instead. If truth was known, the choosing of North Bay was more likely to have been financially motivated, as huge profits were made, by people selling their property, to the railway.

A distinctive French Canadian flavor graced the town of Sturgeon Falls and this was evident by the various businesses owned and operated by French families, in the town. In 1883, the first school was opened at the Gauthier house, on Levesque Street. In 1884, the first Michaud store was opened, which became Michaud - Levesque, in 1887, Lavallee opened the first printer and the first chapel-school started by Cote, opened at the corner of Front and Church Streets.

A forest fire swept toward the town in 1887, after destroying three big logging camps. The fire stopped just at the outskirts of town. A terrible fire in Cache Bay in 1901, destroyed houses and killed people. Aid from Sturgeon Falls and area helped ease the pain and suffering but nothing could ever be done to replace lives lost or possessions destroyed, in the fire. Early settlers feared the destructive results of fires and most towns had some kind of volunteer fire department, to help bring fires under control quickly.

The falls on the Sturgeon River was to become the town's greatest asset and