

HISTORICAL SKETCH of STOUFFVILLE

Written Forty Years Ago

A way back when the century was only four years old Abram Stouffer made the toilsome journey from Pennsylvania to this part of Upper Canada He took lawful possession of six hundred acres of land. It lay between the ninth and tenth concessions, four hundred north of what is now Main Street and two hundred south. Mr. Stouffer was the progenitor of the somewhat numerous family that now bears the name. Abram, Samuel, Christian, David and Simeon, well known and respected, are his grandsons. The history of the village very naturally falls into three periods. The first marks the beginning and considerable development of village life. I venture to call this the Stouffer period. Not long after settling here Mr. Stouffer erected, where Daley's Hall stands, the first grist-mill in this part of the country. The hardy settlers who made the clearings in the forest were not unnecessarily fastidious, for they were accustomed to have their wheat, rye, corn, buckwheat and peas all ground on the same run of stones. Before there were any carriages in the vicinity or any roads on which to drive them, the carrying was done by ox, boat or on horse-back. The boy astride a horse with a sack of corn or wheat in front of him bringing grist to mill, soon became a familiar sight to the few residents of Stoufferville. After two mills were burned on the south side of

the street Mr. Stouffer erected a third on the north side east of the creek. The family home like King David's house built of cedar, stood on the site now occupied by Dr. Freely's beautiful residence. The mill and other property came into the hands of Mr. Stouffer's son, Christian, who continued in business here until the advent of Mr. E. Wheeler in 1847.

With the mill, came the store, the blacksmith shop and the tavern. The first store was kept by Charles Sheldon in one corner of Mr. Stouffer's mill. He afterwards built his residence on the site of Mr. J. Urquhart's block and his store farther west on the same side. Doctor Lloyd afterwards occupied the house, and it ultimately became Sangster's hotel. Mr. Cheney, who for a time was in partnership with Mr. Sheldon, kept a general store on the south side of the street nearly opposite Mr. Sheldon's. He did quite an extensive business as dealer in grain and potash. Next came Mr. John Boyer, whose father, Ben. Boyer, came from Pennsylvania about the same time as Mr. Stouffer. He built a store and drug shop on the site of the Post Office block. His residence is said to have occupied the ground now covered by Mr. Barnes' house. His stock was not so fine, extensive or artistically arranged but it represented almost as many departments as one of Toronto's mammoth stores. One could buy anything from a broad-axe to a yard of blue drill. Mr. Boyer was quite a village factotum. He was merchant, post master, justice of the peace, and for a time printer to the people. His buildings were destroyed by fire and the block of land sold into lots.

The blacksmith shop belongs to every well-regulated village. Mr. Hugh Casler is remembered as the first village smithy. He set up his forge on the south side beyond the tenth. A Mr. Anderson, of stalwart frame, who was such a hearty rebel that he did not return after the rebellion, consecrated to Vulcan the ground on which Todd's Carriage Shop stands. He was succeeded by Mr. James Johnson, and he in turn by Mr. Multhead. The oldest inhabitant says that before the village got out of its swaddling clothes there were three taverns, and the place was not noted for its orderliness. The first building in the east end was a shoe shop built by John Yake, father of John Yake still living. It stood on the south east corner, was enlarged by Hiram Yake

and converted into a tavern. Yake's corner became known by the somewhat suggestive, yet euphonious name of Brimstone Point. Cock-fighting and horse-racing were familiar village sports. It was not unusual to close the week with a "Sport", and settle the accounts at the taverns. The justice of the peace generally gave a final settlement to these accounts by disposing of several cases in his "court" on Monday morning. The old Allan building was one of the west end hostleries, which keeps green the memory of Divine, Morden and Shoefeldt. Another of them stood nearly opposite on the north side of the street. This record would hardly be complete without at least a passing reference to two other classes of men. The wise cobbler and the lame tailor help to round out the life of every old time village. The cobbler was here in the very beginning, but we have failed to learn that any of his craft in Stouffville ever became a Samuel Drew, a Sir Cloudsley Shovel, or a William Carey. No doubt, however, that here as elsewhere, much wisdom went out from his bench. The little lame tailor is still remembered by some of the oldest inhabitants. Chance Stephens, down the tenth, made coats for the men, and cut butter-not dyed cloths for the boys' winter wear, in the long ago.

A new era in the life of the village is marked by the coming of Mr. Edward Wheeler, the same year in which the Congregational church was built. Mr. John Yake bought one acre of bush land on the south west corner at the tenth, on which he built a shop. In this Mr. Wheeler kept store for a short time. The old brick building now standing on the corner was built by him for a store, where, for a long time Matthew Flint did business. Later it was converted into a tavern. Mr. John Yake built on the north side, where, for many years he kept tavern and store. In those days the East End was a busy place. It was a halting station for all the farmers from the north townships. For some time Mr. Wheeler conducted a store in the building now occupied by Mr. H. Johnson. Having sold the stock to Mr. Leaney, at the request of the Post-Office Inspector he built the store half way up on the south side, in order that the Post-Office might be centrally located. The next Post Office building erected by Mr. Wheeler was the one still used and which forms part of Sanders' block. It is worth while inserting at this point the following item of interest in regard to the Stouffville Office. It is said that for several years after the rebellion no mail was forwarded here. Mr. Boyer was too much "agin the Government" to be counted one of the Crown's trusted subjects. Most citizens of Stouffville over twenty years of age remember Wheeler's mill. It was first a grist-mill only, but later a saw-mill was added. Dusky Dave's reign as a stoker is still in the memory of the boys.

An example of the enterprise of the people a third of a century ago is seen in the building of the plank road from Yake's corner to Ringwood and then straight through to Kingston road. Our present gravelled turnpikes were not then known. I record the names of the directors of the company, Messrs. John Reesor, Jos. Tomlinson, Arch. Barker, Abram Stouffer, Peter Ramer, Jonathan Gates and Edward Wheeler. The planks for this section of the road were sawn in Mr. Wheeler's mill which stood on the north side about where Sanders' elevator is. Planks did not for several reasons, make the ideal country road. We are sorry to say that the ideal country road is yet

to be found. During this period of our growth we were not without our "native" industries. The old tannery, built by John Boyer, continued under Somerville & McMurphy to do slow tanning. And who does not remember Flint's factory where the celebrated revolving horse-rake, which could pull peas and thresh them at the same time, was made? Hardly less famous was Gibney's plow. But before these commanded public attention Billy Rodick made wagons for Anderson to iron. He did not run for member of parliament or mingle much in society. We have not heard anything as to the quality of Billy's wagon, but tradition says that he was kind to the needy; these however belong to the past, and we rejoice in the period of greatest progress. We acknowledge our indebtedness to many who helped to lay the foundations whose names do not appear in these pages. The tracing of the religious life of the village will be found in the history of the churches. For many years Doctors Lloyd and Freely looked after the sick of the community.

Twenty-four years ago this autumn the villagers assembled to witness the arrival of the first train on the Nipissing Narrow Gauge. It came and stayed with us for a while. It marked another era. It was better than the stage. We rejoiced when it came; we are not sorry that it is gone.

FINANCIAL JOURNAL BACKS HEPBURN

(The Financial Post)

Ontario's Mitchell F. Hepburn put his finger on Public Problem No. 1 last week when he announced initial steps toward a programme designed to reduce the soaring cost of relief in the province. Relief costs for the province in May are placed at \$833,000—a gain of 6.5 per cent over the same month last year despite general all-round improvement in business in the meantime. Similar figures can be duplicated in most parts of Canada. In Toronto, for example, relief has cost the city 22 per cent more during the first six months of the year than in 1934. As a starter, the Premier plans to throw relief responsibility directly back on the municipalities, by restricting cash payments to a flat \$5 per unemployed person per month except for insolvent communities which are to get 7.50 per person. The action follows investigations which showed that where municipalities administered their own relief the cost per capita was much less than when the province had control. Previous payments by the province had varied from \$3.50 to \$13.50 per month per person depending on the financial condition of each municipality. A saving to the province of 10 millions annually is estimated.

The Premier's action will doubtless promote bitter controversy among community politicians, but it deserves praise in that it draws attention to two fundamentals, namely, the need for making each municipality directly responsible for its

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