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Incidents in the Early History of the Settlements in the Vicinity of Lake Ontario

By Lieut. James Richardson

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THE REV. JAMES RICHARDSON, D.D.
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Incidents in the Early History of the Settlements in the Vicinity of Lake Ontario.

Reminiscences of Lieut. James Richardson; later the Rev. James Richardson, D.D., Bishop of the M. E. Church.

I was born in the town of Kingston, N.Y., on the 29th of January, 1791. My father, James Richardson, was from Lincolnshire, near Horncastle, and my mother, Sarah Ashmore, was from Kings Norton, near Birmingham, in the County of Worcester.

In his early life my father served in the Royal Navy and was in the *Ramillies*, 74 gunship, at the time she encountered the ever-memorable storm and diastrous gale September 1782. After being dismasted and in a sinking state for five days, the vessel at last foundered, not, however, until all the officers and crew had been taken off by some merchant ships which had weathered the storm.

The ill-fated ship with several other men-of-war formed part of the West Indian Squadron under Lord Rodney. At the time mentioned they were convoying a homeward-bound fleet of merchantmen, with the prizes captured in the famous victory, over the fleet commanded by De Grasse.

Some of these prizes, such as the *Ville de Paris*, 120 guns; and the *Centaur*, 74 guns, were ships of the first class, but they, with several of the English men-of-war, went down together during the gale. The particulars of the fearful storm may be found recorded in the "Marine Chronicle", and other histories of Marine disasters.

About the year 1785 my father received an appointment to the Lakes of Canada, as Lieutenant in the Provincial Marine organised for the two-fold purpose of fighting the enemy and transporting troops and stores, under the direction of a Quarter-Master-General, in the Forces in British America, the senior officer for the time being, in each lake, was styled Commander. This marine establishment existed coeval, with the Conquest of Canada.

My earliest recollections are associated with it. Old Commodore Bouchette, father of the late Surveyor-General of Lower Canada, I recollect as commanding at Kingston, when I was a boy.

At the age of 18, in 1809, I entered the Service, and in 1812 I received a commission as Lieutenant, being just turned 21 years.

The war with the United States commenced that year—our naval force on Lake Ontario consisted of the ship "Royal George", 20 guns; the "Moir", 16 guns; the schooner "Duke of Gloucester", 18 guns, and the schooner "Prince Regent," afterwards called the "Nettle," 12 guns; with a few smaller vessels doing service as gunboats and transports. Our Senior Officer was Commodore Hugh Earl.

Our little squadron, though not very much celebrated for exploits in the way of fighting, managed, however, to keep open the communication between the Eastern and the Western Divisions of the Army, and to facilitate the transport of men

and stores, as occasion required; as likewise the conveyance of the prisoners, which from time to time fell into the hands of our forces, during the first year of the war. The importance of such services in the then uninhabited state of the country, and the lack of land conveyance owing to the badness of the roads, must be obvious.

From some mistrust that the Provincial Marine would not be adequate to the increasing emergencies of the war, application was made to the Admiralty of England for aid from the Royal Navy, and accordingly, in the Winter of 1812, Captain Barclay, accompanied by Commanders Downie and Pring, Lieutenant Scott and a few warrant officers and sailors were despatched from Halifax across the wilderness, through storms, posts and snowdrifts to Quebec; thence to Kingston, where they arrived in April; weather-beaten, exhausted and all but done-up.

Captain Barclay took the command until the arrival in May of Sir James Yeo, direct from England with 500 officers and men.

I had the honour of being despatched by Captain Barclay in the gun-boat "Black Snake" to meet Sir James, with his flotilla of unarmed Canadian batteaux, and escort him up the river, along the frontier of the enemy to Kingston, where with the rear division under Captaijn Mulcaster, we arrived in the latter part of May 1813.*

The naval armaments on the lakes now assumed a new character and position, no longer Provincial, but part of the Royal Navy.

Our Provincial Commissions were of no force in the new relations, yet because of our local knowledge and experience, our services were desirable, and required by our new Commodore. None, however of the Commissioned Officers on Lake Ontario consented to remain, except Lieutenant George Smith and myself. I told the Commodore that if my services were of any avail, they were at his command, only I would not take any

* Being then a young Lieutenant in the Marine, I was despatched with a gunboat to Prescott to escort the Brigade on its way up the River. The scenes and feelings attendant on the discharge of that duty – having a small flat-bottomed craft called the Black Snake with about 8 men and a three- pounder in her bow, to pass for sixty miles on open frontier of the enemy, mostly in the night, called for a sharp look-out, with both nerve and caution. No enemy, however, appeared, and we returned unmolested. Here it was I first formed the acquaintance of the officers of the expedition, among whom was the brave Captain Mulcaster, second in command to Sir James, who at the capture of Oswego 6th May, 1814, was wounded in the abdomen, while I suffered the loss of my left arm. Great were his sufferings for even after I had recovered, and was able to resume service, he lingered in sick quarters, and although surviving several years, he never fully recovered from it. He died in England, having been honored by his Sovereign, the late William the IV, with a standing on his staff as Aide-decamp. From a lecture by James Richardson.

rank inferior to that I held in the Provincial Marine. He remarked that the rules of the Service precluded my relation as a lieutenant among them, but he would be happy to have my services as a Master, and would rate me accordingly. This, while it gave me rank in the "gun-room" with the commissioned officers, would be appropriate to the two-fold duties of Master and Pilot.

In this highly responsible relation I continued to serve, to the best of my ability, during the remainder of the war, and for some time after, sharing the fatigues, dangers and exploits of the campaigns of 1813 and 1814 of which the published narratives of the war furnish details.

Some incidents, however, it may be proper to note here. The failure of the expedition against Sackett's Harbour, under the immediate command of the General-in-Chief, Sir George Prevost, which opened the Campaign of 1813, is wholly inexplicable.

Why were not the troops landed in the forenoon of the day of our appearance off the place, when the wind and weather, and every other circumstance were favorable, when none of the enemy were at the landing place (respecting which I had the honour of being consulted) to oppose, when our men were in the boats and the anchors were ready to be dropped?

Instead of landing and taking the place, which probably could have been effected without the loss of five men, the men were ordered to embark and the ships were hauled to the wind, and were made to stand off till midnight; then, in the dark, at the distance of several miles, the men were put into the boats and ordered to find their way, as best they could, to the same landing-place, abreast which they had been in the morning. In the meantime the enemy had posted themselves, had fortified their position, had received large reinforcements by land and water during the day, and were prepared to give us a warm reception.

Why was it that after several hours of hard fighting, and great sacrifice of life, when the enemy had been driven from their works, and were in the act of abandoning the place, and had in despair, actually set fire to their own navy-yard and store-houses, was a retreat sounded, the troops re-embarked, and the dead, with some of the wounded left to the enemy, is a question left to this day a mystery. I heard one of our brave colonials, as he came up the ship's side, indignantly exclaim; "Oh, if he would but give me my own regiment, I would yet land again and take the place."

A somewhat amusing incident occurred in the afternoon of the day; while our ship was working to windward away from the landing-place as above mentioned, and yet about six miles distant in the offing, a boat was observed coming towards us from a point of land covered with bush, which forms the entrance of a deep, bay called "Henderson's Harbour", distant from us about one and a half miles, displaying a flag of truce. Lieut. Dobbs was sent with one of the ship's boats to meet the American and know his business. The boats met and after a short time we observed one boat with Lieut. Dobbs proceed to the shore, while the American stood toward us. Commodore Yeo suspected a Yankee trick of some sort; but not so, it turned out to be an honest, but not very brave affair, for he was soon alongside and on being interrogated by Lieut. Owen, the officer

on duty, as to his business, he said he was a captain of Dragoons, and had come off with his men to surrender and claim our protection as prisoners of war against the savages on the shore, that the woods were full of Indians, that he had had a fight with them that morning; and rather than fall into their hands and be massacred, he surrendered to us, that there was another boat-load of his men that would come under the escort of our officer. The lieutenant on duty reported the message to the Commodore, who was with Sir George Prevost and Staff at dinner, and orders were given to receive them on board. Lieutenant Owen therefore replied, "Very well, Sir", and the brave captain, with his men were safely secured, and assured of our protection, his fears no doubt subsided. He was a portly-built man armed to the teeth, with a hanger by his side and a pair of pistols in his belt, etc. He was then ushered into the presence of the Commodore and officers at the dinner table. Whether the countenances of any present gave indication of surprise or suspicion at this most extraordinary surrender I cannot say, but he must have observed 'some tokens of this kind, for it was reported by the officer who introduced him to the cabin, that he uttered this queer remark: "Gentlemen I confess my appearance is rather uncouth, but my heart is as square as any man's." In a short time the other boat with his men were alongside and safely accommodated with quarters on board—the whole mustered about thirty unmounted Dragoons. They were on their way to Sackett's with the boats and having encamped on the point in the night, had an encounter with two or three canoe loads of Chippewa Indians, perhaps a dozen or so, who had accompanied the expedition from Kingston. The Indians had got the worst of it and had retreated from the place altogether—one of them was wounded and was then in the ship with his thigh shot, so that for several hours the dastardly Dragoon had not an enemy near when he sought our protection, nor had we even noticed, much less molested him during the day;—so much for the power of imagination acting as nervous timidity. The dread of encounter with Indian foes was a striking feature among many of the Americans and it evinced itself in several instances during the late war. To the effect of nursery tales and fireside legends aided by "thrilling narratives" issuing from a mercenary press the Americans are mostly indebted for this weakness.

Some of us were ungenerous enough to think that this instance of pusillanimity on the part of the enemy had its influence on the Commodore to induce him to return to the attack on Sackett's, as before mentioned. But of this conjecture I cannot speak, I give merely the facts as they occurred.

In regard to Sir James Yeo and Commodore Chauncey, who though frequently in the vicinity of each other, and exchanging shots in partial combats, never came to any decisive action, free opinions and doubts of fidelity and courage have been thrown out, I may by way of explanation, explain: Sir James Yeo had mostly short cannonades, which though adapted to rapid firing, were not suited to long range, while, on the other hand, Chauncey had long guns which gave him a decided advantage at a distance. In consequence the one was anxious to seek close quarters while it was the policy of the other to keep his distance. As the closing in action with sailing vessels depends on the "weather gauge", a decisive action was avoided on each side as the circumstances alternated.

It is but due to the memory of Sir James Yeo to state that I heard him say, on a certain occasion of avoiding the enemy, in reply to a suggestion of Captain Mulcaster, that if he had his command on the high seas, he would risk an action at all hazards, because, should he be beaten, it would be but the loss of his squadron, but to lose it in this lake, would involve the embarrassment, if not the discomfiture of the Western division of the army, whose dependence was on keeping open the channel of communication—so high a responsibility resting upon him he had to act with the more caution and prudence.

The building of ships at the Kingston dockyard calls for a passing remark: During the season of 1812, while the Provincial Marine existed, the "Wolfe", a corvette of twenty guns, was built and commissioned, also the "Melville" of sixteen guns. These added materially to the strength of our naval armament at the time Sir James Yeo took command. The Americans also kept adding to their strength. The fine commodious ship "Pike", 28 guns, with the "Madison" of 32, were launched in the Spring of 1813, and it became necessary to keep pace on our part, and accordingly, in the Spring of 1814, there were launched and fitted out from the Kingston dock-yards, the "Prince Royal", a fine ship of 80 guns, and the "Princess Charlotte" of 32.

These were followed on the part of the Americans, by the "Superior" and the "Mohawk", of force to match the two last mentioned on our part. This led to the building at Kingston of the "St. Lawrence", mounting 110 guns, and with draught of water 23 feet. The "St. Lawrence" took the lake in October 1814, and made two trips, up and down, previous to the setting in of Winter, without a chance to try her prowess with the enemy, as he very prudently kept himself close in harbour, so that at the end of the season, which terminated the war, our proud ship and squadron had the lake wholly to themselves.

But, although the fighting terminated, the ship-building did not, for the British Admiralty were so considerate as to frame in the English dockyards, and to forward the frames (perhaps deeming ship timber a rare material in Canada) two frigates of 36 guns each, one of which, the "Psyche", was sent to Kingston, set up, furnished and fitted up in the Spring of 1815, besides two other large ships, 120 each, which were framed and partly planked during the Summer and afterwards left to rot on the stocks. The ships that were afloat also rotted in Navy Bay, and were sold under the hammer when they were condemned.

The "St. Lawrence," which when she first sailed out, with her complement of men, arms, stores and provisions for one month, cost the British nation, as I heard from our purser, upwards of £800,000 sterling, was sold, as I was informed, in her dismantled and condemned condition, under the hammer about the year 1826, for twenty pounds.

Our neighbours, not to be outdone in the race for ships, set up two ships in their dockyards of 120 guns each, which were unfurnished at the close of the war, but they took the precaution to build sheds so as to enclose them from the weather, which, I am told, has preserved them to the present time.

While speaking of ship-building I must not forget to mention that in the Summer of 1812, Mr. John Dennis, then the master-builder in the dockyard at Kingston was ordered to York (now Toronto) to build a ship with which he had

proceeded during the winter, so that she was nearly completed in April 1813, when the place fell into the hands of the enemy, who burnt her on the stocks. The officers and attachees of the dockyard were formed into a Company of which Mr. Dennis, the master-builder was Captain. This Company aided to the utmost of their power in defending the place, but being with the other forces overpowered, they had to share in the discomfiture.

The memory of Mr. Dennis deserves a passing notice. He was one of those U.E. Loyalists who suffered and lost their earthly all by the American Revolution. His father, Henry Dennis, belonged to the "Society of Friends." and resided in a handsome property, including some ironworks he possessed on the banks of the Delaware, Buck's County, Pennsylvania. At an early period in the Revolutionary struggle he evinced his adherence to the British cause, and Quaker as he was, did something that favored the British troops. For this he had to fly from his home, taking his son John, then 18 years old, with him. He took refuge within the British lines at New York, and died suddenly at Staten Island during the war. The family estate was confiscated and for ever lost to his children. John took up arms and volunteered on an expedition against the French at St. Lucia.

At the close of the war which gave the States their independence, Mr. Dennis, who in the meantime had married in New York, Martha Brown, the widow of Surgeon McClary, of the Royal Navy, who had perished at sea in the frigate to which he belonged, was sent with other of the Loyalists to "Beaver Harbour," Nova Scotia. This proving a barren, inhospitable place he could barely sustain his family and, therefore seeking more favorable parts he at length migrated to Upper Canada about the time that Governor Simcoe had surveyed and began to settle the fertile land in the vicinity of Toronto. He drew his portion on the banks of the Humber, a few miles from the site of the present village of Weston. Here for some years he had to grub and toil and suffer the privations incident to the formation of settlements in the wilderness, without even a road from the "town" or rather the then "town-plot" to his dwelling, having to "pad" it along the lake shore and banks of the Humber, carrying, perchance, a few pounds of flour or other necessaries, on his back, to keep life in the family.

Being a ship-builder, he occasionally, during his residence in this isolated spot, built small vessels for such as required them, among others a neat Government yacht called the "Toronto", a schooner rigged for the transit of officers and employees of the Government, with others, across the Lake, which proved a great convenience and pleased his Excellency Governor Hunter so well that he gave him the appointment of Master-Builder in the King's Dockyard at Kingston, about the year 1802; where he continued till at the outbreaking of the war he was removed to York to build the ship before-mentioned.

Here he continued to reside until August 1832, when he fell a victim to the cholera, in the 73rd year of his age. His son, Joseph Dennis, Esquire, and grandson of Henry Dennis, now holds and resides on the property he left on the banks of the Humber, not now, however, in the heart of a wilderness, isolated and forlorn; but a beautiful county-seat contiguous to the thriving village of Weston and surrounded with highly cultivated farms in free communication with the City of

Toronto and other parts by means of railroads and good carriage highways.

It was while Mr. Dennis resided as Master-Builder at the said dockyard that I became acquainted with his daughter Rebecca and-subsequently made her the steadfast partner of my life.

In the Spring of 1814 word having reached our Commodore Sir James Yeo, that a large number of boats were at the mouth of the Oswego River,, laden with cannon and stores for the fitting out of the two frigates then being built at Sackett's Harbour, an expedition was ordered for the capture of the fort at that place, now named "Fort Ontario", our squadron consisting of the "Prince Regent," 60 guns; "Princess Charlotte," 32 guns; "Wolfe," 20 guns; "Royal George," 20; "Moirs," 16; "Melville," 16; and "Netley," 12; with detachments of troops from the Royals, Glengarry Fencibles, and other corps, left Kingston on May 4th and arrived off Oswego on the 6th, but, owing to heavy squalls of wind they were obliged to haul off, and delay the attack till next day. In the morning of the 6th, orders were given for the "Wolfe" (subsequently named the "Montreal") to stand in and take up position under the fort to cover and assist with the landing of the troops. The charge of conducting her to her anchorage among the rocks and shoals that environ the entrance of that river devolved on me, and not without some degree of diffidence did I perform the task; for not since I was a lad had I been there, and then only in small vessels; with very light draught of water.

I resolved, however, on doing my best, though, sensible of the weighty responsibility resting on me.

I succeeded in securing the desired position to the satisfaction of both my captain, Stephen Popham and Commodore Yeo, who were pleased to commend my conduct in their official despatches.

Our gunners had rather a warm berth after the gunners of the Fort obtained the range, every shot telling on some part of her, a fixed object at anchor.

The shots with which they complimented us were evidently "hot," for they set our ship on fire three times. One of them made so free with me as to carry off my left arm,* just below the shoulder, which rendered amputation at the shoulder joint necessary. Our position was obtained before the troops were ready to land, the other vessels keeping in the offing, so that we alone for some time had to be under fire from the Fort.

The "Melville" brig and the schooner "Netley" at length came within range of the batteries to our assistance. In the meantime, while the troops with some sailors and marines, having effected a landing, marched directly up the hill, and scaled the fort, under a galling fire from the enemy, which cut down a goodly number of our men, both officers and privates.

Among the wounded was the gallant Captain William Mulcaster of the "Princess Charlotte," who received a musket shot in the abdomen, from which he never fully recovered, though he survived for several years, honoured by the notice

* Lieut. Richardson always maintained that at the moment, in the excitement of battle, he was not conscious of this; later wishing to use his arm, he found it gone.

and confidence .of His Majesty William IV, who placed him on his Staff as aide-de-camp at his Court.

As our forces entered the Fort in front, the enemy abandoned it from the rear, and though the victory was thus gallantly achieved and the Fort reduced, the object sought by the expedition was not obtained. The flotilla of boats laden with arms and stores, above mentioned, being, with the exception of one, ten miles up the river, and beyond our reach, as our force was not sufficient to penetrate the country. Therefore, with the exception of one boat and some other stores which fell into our hands, nothing was gained with the sacrifice.

The Fort, after being reduced and dismantled, was abandoned, our troops retiring at their leisure, not "driven away with loss" as some of the American chronicles have recorded.

There is rather a painful sequel to the history of the said flotilla:—Our Commander failing to get them as expected at the mouth of the Oswego River, kept on the watch and blockaded the place for several weeks, so as to nab them on their emerging from the river, well knowing that unless they could get into the lake the cannon and naval stores could not reach the ships at Sackett's Harbour, as the roads were unfit for the transport of such large stores. But after the lapse of some months, the vigilance of the blockaders probably having been relaxed, and the Americans being on the alert, they stole a march one foggy night and morning, and got several miles down the coast before being discovered. Captains Popham and Spillsbury with some armed boats being on the look-out intercepted one of the enemy's boats in the fog, and were informed by the prisoners that the others had entered "Big Sandy Creek."

The prisoners omitted to inform them that the boats were strongly guarded by a body of riflemen and Oneida Indians. Captain Popham being in command, immediately, with more bravery than prudence, pushed in after them, and after penetrating the creek between high banks of sandy marsh on either side, after proceeding about two miles, discovered the boats snugly moored with their precious cargoes, in a kind of basin formed by a bend in the creek. Not a soul was visible near them, and it seemed a bon prize, but alas! just as they were grasping them, up started, from their concealment in the woods and rushes, the riflemen and Indians who opened a murderous fire on our poor fellows, cooped up like ducks in a pond.

The result was the destruction or capture of the whole body, not one escaping. Those who survived were kept prisoners of war until peace was proclaimed in the ensuing Spring. Lieut. Rose now residing near Cobourg, must be conversant with this incident, as he was one of the captured. I think that it was fortunate for me, that my wound still laid me up in sick quarters, for had I been fit for duty, I would in all probability have been ordered to accompany my captain—Captain Popham—on this fatal expedition.

In the month of July 1813, the Americans having launched and fitted out the "Pike" and the "Madison", previously mentioned, had them at anchor outside the point forming the entrance to Sackett's Harbour. Commodore Yeo conceived the design of a "cut-out," by stealing a march on them in the night, with a number of armed men in boats manned by expert

seamen, with a detachment of the 100th Regiment and a few marines, under the command of Major Hamilton.

Accordingly we left Kingston about 5 o'clock p.m., expecting to reach the ships before daylight next morning, the distance being about 40 miles.

Such, however, was the sluggishness of some of the gun-boats, propelled by oars, that notwithstanding the calmness of the night, the daylight began to dawn as we rounded the point which opened out the ships at anchor, about eight miles distant. It would not answer to approach them in daylight, and to attempt retreat would have been equally fatal, for, had we been discovered they might have overhauled us and blown us to atoms. No expedient was therefore left us but to hide in some nook or corner of the shore, which was covered with a dense wood, and be concealed, if possible, till the next night.

Our Commodore, therefore, proceeded ahead to scout, and found such a place about two miles up the mouth of "Hungry Bay", to which we retired, and, having laid the boats broadside to the beach of a shallow bend in the shore, we cut saplings and bushes, and placed them in the water outside the boats, by means of which we were tolerably well screened. Our force numbered about 700 officers and men, and strict orders were given not to kindle any fires, or raise a smoke, or discharge any firearm, but to keep quietly concealed in the woods till darkness should favour us. During the day boats passed, and the enemy's armed schooners continued sailing to and fro between us and the open lake, but failed to discern us, which, had they done, we should doubtless have had our boats destroyed, and we left fugitives in an enemy's land, which was covered with forest trees for several miles on either side. We were destitute of firearms, except a few, as we were not permitted to depend but on our swords, cutlasses, boarding-axes and pikes for the execution of the work. In such a dilemma as that our ingenuity would have been fully tested, but fortunately it was not put to the test.

We escaped the notice of the enemy, but, alas! not the treachery of some of our own party.

Some time after we had made good our landing, when the muster roll was called, a sergeant and a private of the 100th were discovered to be missing; search was made in the woods without avail, and it became evident they had taken themselves off, but as there was no house between ten and twelve miles, and they were strangers in the country, hopes were entertained that they would not be able to betray us before nightfall.

Our Commodore was evidently much exercised in mind through the day, lest his enterprise should be baffled, and conversed with me as having more local knowledge of these parts, relative to the practicability of their finding their way to some inhabitants and thus giving the alarm.

Just before sundown, one of the armed schooners, which had been standing off and on, about a mile to the westward between us and the point, anchored and sent her boat to shore, and when it returned, she fired an alarm gun and made sail directly to Sackett's Harbour.

We had no doubt that the villainous deserters had shown themselves on the beach, which proved to be the case. The chagrin and disappointment caused by this betrayal, and the consequent failure of our scheme, within a few hours of what

would probably have been its successful termination, may be conceived. We all felt it sorely, but Commodore Yeo could hardly restrain himself. Nothing could be done but seek our own safe retreat.

As soon as night set in we were ordered to embark, and, putting into the offing, got sight of the ships, which were fully lighted up, and prepared to give us a warm reception, if we had the audacity to make the attack. Orders were given to pull for the Canadian side, and by day-break next morning we saw the American squadron under full sail after us, but the wind was so light during the night that they did not come up, and we reached Kingston in safety.

After the war was over I was informed, in conversation with an American officer, that, the day we lay concealed, a pleasure party of ladies and gentlemen had been regaling themselves on Stony Island in the lake some miles beyond where we were, and when they returned home in the evening and were told that a force of 700 Britishers were the whole day between them and their homes, some of the ladies nearly fainted.

Our Commodore, in the absence of something to fight, proceeded to inspect the enemies' coasts and harbours in search of provisions, and being informed that the United States had a large stock of flour, deposited in the village of "Big Sodus" about 30 miles west of Oswego, he brought his squadron to anchor, and toward evening sent in the boats with a few sailors and a detachment of about 60 of the Royals. It became dark before we made the landing, and an advance party of fifteen, of which I was one, commanded by Captain Mulcaster, proceeded at once to the village, under the guidance of one acquainted with the place.

We found the houses deserted, and not a person to be seen, but one in a tavern so drunk that we could get no information from him. After seeking in vain for the inhabitants, during which strict orders were given not to molest any furniture or private property, and while our Captain was consulting as to future proceedings, it being very dark, someone hailed us from some bushes close by. Captain Mulcaster answered "Friend", but before the word was fully out, they fired a volley, which felled five of our fifteen. They then took themselves off. The detachment of the "Royals" coming up in our rear, having heard the firing, took us for the enemy, and also discharged a few shots at us before the mistake was discovered.

Captain Wilson of the "Royals," who was among the fifteen in advance, wore a peculiarly-shaped cocked hat, which a flash of lightning, happily for our party, revealed and showed whom we were.

The enemy was no more seen during the night, but towards morning some stragglers came within the line of our sentry and were arrested. Being questioned as to the firing, as also, where the inhabitants of the village were, they said that the inhabitants themselves fired; that on the approach of the ships in the evening, a consultation was held in the village and while some would have remained quietly at home, under the conviction that they would not be molested, the majority decided to arm themselves and fire on us, some of them remarking that they would have the satisfaction of killing some British anyway.

This word having come to the Commodore he ordered the place to be burnt, as a warning to all others along the coast.

The prisoners being liberated, were instructed to say that wherever we came, if the inhabitants remained quiet, private property and rights would be respected, but, in all cases, where the people made armed resistance and wantonly fired on us, they might expect to be punished in like manner.

All we got in return for our visit was about 500 barrels of flour, found in a storehouse.

I have since conversed with an American gentleman, who was at this place at the time, who said that about 8,000 barrels of flour belonging to the United States were concealed in the woods, which were not discovered because of the blackness of the night.

I now come to remark on the extraordinary rise in the water in the Lake during late years.

As near as I can estimate it has been, on an average, about five feet higher since 1815, than at any time previous in the recollection of the oldest navigator of the Lake.

Several years experience and pilotage on Lake Ontario enables me to speak thus.

When that large ship the "St. Lawrence" with 23 feet draught, was fitted out, I, having just recovered from the loss of my arm, waited on Commodore Yeo, and reported myself ready for service, he pleasantly remarked: "What, try them again?" I replied, "If my services were required". He exclaimed, "That is noble", and then proposed that, instead of joining my own ship, the "Wolfe," he would prefer taking me in the "St. Lawrence" to aid in piloting her, inasmuch as her draught of water so far exceeded any-former vessel on the lake and it would, therefore, require the more caution and matured knowledge of the channel to conduct her safely.

He remarked that my severe wound and consequent debility for some time yet precluded the discharge of my regular active duties in my own ship, but if I gave my services to the "St. Lawrence" as he proposed, he would continue my substitute in the "Wolfe" during the remainder of the season, and that at the close of navigation, I would be at liberty to recruit my strength during the winter. This afforded me an opportunity of acquiring a more thorough knowledge of the depth of water by sounding and exploring unfrequented channels, and I therefore speak from mature experience, relative to the rise aforementioned.

The first marked rise was in 1818, July, when, standing to the anchorage at the mouth of the Niagara River, I observed the leadsman call out "one-half-three", where the depth had never exceeded three fathoms. My attention thus called to it, I looked over the Quarter at the marks on the line, and saw that he hove correctly. I supposed it might be local, caused by the removal of the sand in the channel, but, on returning to Kingston, I found it to be general, so much so that the Merchants Wharves, which at the highest rise of the water previously had stood three feet above it, were now submerged, and the plank covering them was swept away. They built up these wharves about three feet higher, but in 1818, they were again overflowed, and thus, from the year 1816, the water in all the large lakes has been at least three feet, and in several seasons

about six feet above what was ever known previous to that period, or at least of which we have any word.

This is a phenomenon yet unexplained, and well worthy of scientific investigation. The cause cannot be casual or occasional as is evident from the sudden rise in 1815, and its continuance during the subsequent 48 years.

Vessels of considerable draught of water now traverse, with impunity, shoals and enter creeks and harbours where formerly a batteau would hardly float, and bars of sand and gravel, and points jutting into the lake, which were formerly firm and dry, are now inundated, and in some cases swept away.

TRADITIONAL INCIDENTS.

My mother came to America while yet a young woman, along with the family of Mr. Stedman, who then lived at Fort Schlosser, at the heel of Niagara Falls, in the then province, now New York State.

Mr. Stedman did good service along the Niagara frontier, in the time of the old French war, and my mother would relate some striking adventures which she gathered from traditions in the family. One of these I remember as follows:—

Shortly after the capture from the French, by Sir William Johnson, and the consequent possession of the Niagara frontier, parties of French and Indians would at times infest the woods between Forts Niagara and Schlosser and render the communication between them dangerous. In this state of things despatches and parties would be intercepted and destroyed. The Government at a certain critical period offered the grant of the "carrying place", at the head of navigation, where Lewiston now stands, to anyone who would succeed in safely conveying despatches from one fort to the other. Mr. Stedman undertook to do so, and succeeded, having as companion a lieutenant of the army. The woods on each side were full of Indians, who kept up an incessant running fire on Mr. Stedman and his companion.

The officer was shot in the head but Mr. Stedman succeeded in reaching the Fort. The Indians after that called him "The Alligator" and entertained the belief that he could not be shot. Consequently, at the close of the war, and ever afterwards, they had the greatest veneration for him and his influence over them was unbounded.

There is a well-known chasm in the bank of the river on the States side between Lewiston and Manchester, bearing the name of "Devil's Hole", which is celebrated for a terrible tragedy which occurred there during the Indian War.

A detachment of British troops, with their baggage, was interrupted near this hole, while en route from Fort Niagara to Fort Schlosser, everyone perished; those that escaped the tomahawk were precipitated off the bridge over the chasm, and into the chasm. The bridge was known ever afterwards as the "Bloody Bridge". I recollect when I was a child, the horror with which our family would listen to the recital by my mother, of this and like incidents, which she learned from Mr. Stedman himself.

During the war of the American Revolution my mother married an officer of the Provincial Marine, named Bryant, and resided on the west side of the Niagara River, then all wilderness except a few acres of Indian camping ground and a square of barracks called "Navy Hall". I have heard her say that for some time she was the only white woman residing there. Here she would be for days and nights, along with her two small children surrounded by Indians who held their midnight revels and war dances around poles covered by suspended human scalps obtained during their occasional scouting. At such times they would be extra impudent and troublesome; one day while she was preparing dinner, two Indians, one of whom was drunk, came into the house. The drunken one came at her with his knife in his hand, demanding what she was cooking, and, on being refused raised his knife to stab her, but his companion being sober observed his action, and jarred his arm by a blow on the elbow, and so caused the knife to fall. He then led him out of the house. A captain of one of the King's vessels coming along at the time took off his sword belt and gave the drunken Indian a sound thrashing on his bare hide, for he had nothing on but a "breech-cloth".

While my mother lived at Navy-Yard, a fine vessel named the "Ontario" – Captain Andrews – carrying King's troops, was lost on her way down the Lake from Niagara River, and nothing was ever seen of her, except a drum-head.

The depôt of the Army and Navy, previous to the formation of Kingston, was at the eastern extremity of Lake Ontario, about 15 miles south-east of Kingston, and was called Carleton Island. This was for several years a densely peopled place and the theatre of animated military life, with rows of extensive and commodious barracks, and highly cultivated gardens. It was kept until the outbreak of the war of 1812, when it was taken possession of by the Americans, and has since remained with them as it was on the American side of the line.

NOTES ON EARLY SETTLEMENTS.

The following narrative relates to some of the pioneers of Upper Canada, who settled in the townships of Kingston, Ernesttown, Fredericksburg, Adolphustown and Marysburg, at the entrance of the Bay of Quinté. I had it a few years ago from John Grass, an old and well-known inhabitant of the Township of Kingston, near Collins Bay. He was 11 years old when his father settled there.

His statement was as follows (as near as I can recollect) my father, Michael Grass lived, at the breaking out of the Revolutionary War, on a farm about 30 miles above New York. He was a native of Germany but had lived most of his time in America. When the Revolution commenced, General Herkimer sent my father an invitation to join the Americans and offered him a Captain's Commission. My father replied – "I have sworn allegiance to one king and I cannot serve any other". For this saying he was driven from his house and family and was obliged to take refuge within the British lines at New York. His family followed shortly afterwards. He lost his farm and property, and was obliged to maintain his family at New York by working as a harness maker. At the close of the war the British General commanding at New York, having heard that my father had been a prisoner of the French at Frontenac, in the

time of the old French war, sent for him to enquire about the place and said – Mr. Grass, I understand that you have been at Frontenac in Canada. What sort of a country is it? Can people live there?" My father replied – "What I saw of it I think it a fine country, and if people were settled there I think they would do very well". The Governor replied – "Oh, Mr. Grass, I am delighted to hear you say so, for we don't know what to do with the poor loyalists, the city is full to them and we cannot send them all to Nova Scotia. Would you be willing, Mr. Grass, to take charge of such as would be willing to go with you to Frontenac? If so, I can furnish you a conveyance by ship to Quebec, and rations for you all till such time as you have means to provide for yourselves".

My father asked for three days in which to make up his mind. At the end of the three days he accepted. Notices were then posted throughout the city, calling upon all those who would go to Frontenac to enrol their names with Mr. Grass.

The company of men, women and children having been completed, a ship was provided and furnished, and they started for the unknown and distant region, leaving behind them homes and friends of their youth, never, probably to see them again; the fruits of all their former toils and sufferings being thus sacrificed on the altar of their loyalty.

The first season they got no further than Sorel in Lower Canada where they were obliged to erect log huts for shelter during the winter. The next spring they took boats and proceeding up the St. Lawrence, at last reached Frontenac and pitched their tents on Indian Point, where the Marine Docks of Kingston now stand. Here they awaited the survey of the townships, which was not accomplished so as to have the lots ready for location before July.

In the meantime several other companies had arrived under their respective leaders, some of which had come across the country by way of Lake Champlain.

In the meantime the Governor, who had removed to Quebec, paid them a visit, and riding along the lake shore on a fine day, exclaimed to my father – "Why, Mr. Grass, you have indeed a fine country, and I am really glad to find it so".

While the several companies were waiting for the completion of the survey, some would say to my father – "The Governor will not give you the first choice to the land but will prefer Sir John Johnson, with his company because he is a great man". But my father declared he did not believe that, and if the Governor did so he would feel injured and leave. At length the time came in July, for the townships to be given out, and the Governor assembling the leaders around him, called for Mr. Grass, and said – "Now you were the first person to mention this fine country and have been here formerly as a prisoner of war, you must have the first choice. The townships are numbered 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th; which do you choose for your company?" My father says – "The 1st". (Kingston). Then the Governor said to Sir John Johnson – "Which do you choose?" "The 2nd" (Ernesttown) was the reply.

Colonel Rogers took the 3rd (Fredericksburg), Major Vanalston the 4th (Adolphustown), and Colonel Macdonell the 5th (Marysburgh).

So the first settlement of Loyalist immigrants was formed in Upper Canada.

Before leaving, the Governor very considerably remarked to my father:—"Now, Mr. Grass, it is too late in the season to put in any crops. What can you do?" My father replied that if they were furnished with some turnip seed they might raise some turnips (which he pronounced "durnips"). Accordingly he sent some seed from Montreal, and, each man taking a handful, cleared a spot of ground, about the centre of what is now the town of Kingston, sowed the seed, and raised a fine crop of turnips, which partly served for their food for the ensuing winter.

Among the parties which composed the state of U.E. Loyalists, I may mention the following, whom I have known in the Township of Kingston—The Pardees, of whom there were several brothers and sisters: Micah; Job; Samuel; David; Gilbert. The Days: father and 3 sons. The Orsons; the Knights; the Fevrises; the Waitmans; the Herkimers; the Everetts; the Bennetts; the Powleys; the Knapps; the Ainsleys; the Beasses; the Ryders; the Bucks; the McGunns; and others whose names have escaped my memory.

Mr. Grass who may be safely styled the patriarch of the settlement, received a park lot of about 70 acres, adjoining the townplot on the south-west extending from the point, now called Murney's Point (then called and known for many years as Grass' Point), in a narrow strip to the north-west upon which the new court-house and handsome park now stand. This he farmed and occupied until he sold it to Captain Murney.

He was respected by all who knew him, for the honesty and integrity of his character. He was somewhat hasty and irritable in temper, but was always to be relied upon as a friend and neighbor. In his old age, he, like most aged people, loved to recite in minute detail the adventures of his youth, and having served as a Provincial in the war with the French and Indians, and having been a captive among them, he had something to tell that was worth hearing relative to the campaigns of that cruel border war, of hair-breadth escapes in the woods, subsisting for days on roots and herbs, and such things, both animal and vegetable, which the stomach would reject.

He lived to a very advanced age and died a victim of cancer. All his children have followed him except, maybe, his youngest daughter, Catherine, who married Thomas Graham, a farmer, living at Little Cataraque Creek.

Next to Mr. Grass was the park, lot and residence of the Rev. John Stuart, father of the Rev. George O'Kill Stuart, Archdeacon of Kingston, whose memoirs being extant, it is not necessary for me to enlarge, further than to remark that no man in his place and day was more respected by all who had the pleasure of his acquaintance. Stately and graceful in his person, dignified yet affable in manner, circumspect in his deportment, impressive and diligent in his ministerial duties, he maintained to the last, the position of patriarch, counsellor, and instructor to the settlers, in the times of their privation and hardship.

A few years ago I paid a passing visit to my own dear native town and strolled about, lonely and pensive, calling to memory by-gone days, and my early playmates, now tenants of the churchyard, the scenes of my childhood and youth filling my mind. I came to Stuarts Point, and observing the remnant of the foundations of the once venerated parsonage which stood so many years among the lofty pines, I did homage to its memory as the home of its former venerated inmate.

The old pioneers, the old father and mothers, that cleared off the forests and encountered the privations and hardships incident to early settlements, have left to their descendants, a goodly heritage, the fruit of parental industry and self-sacrifice.

(Signed) JAMES RICHARDSON.

A FEW TRADITIONAL INCIDENTS.

Oswego River being the inlet to the lake from the Hudson, formed, with its connections the only route of travel, for more than a century, from New York and the settlements along the Hudson and the Mohawk Rivers to the country bordering on the great lakes. This brought the place into note at a date coeval with the settlement of Canada. The French first built a fort at the mouth of the river, and tradition speaks of severe fighting there between the French and the old British colonists of New York and old adjoining Provinces.

It subsequently fell with the other French possessions on the Lakes, into the hands of the English, who erected the Fort on the east side of the River, which, after the Revolution, was in 1794 surrendered to the United States.

The route of travel was up the Hudson to Schenectady, thence up the Mohawk to Fort Stanwix (where the City of Rome now stands), thence along the windings of a sluggish muddy stream, called Wood Creek, to Oneida Lake, through said Lake to Three River Point, thence down Oswego River to the Lake. This route to the Hudson was performed by Schenectady boats and it occupied a period of some weeks, rich and poor, gentle and simple, young and old, families of emigrants and others; all had to contend with the storms, mosquitoes, wild animals and other annoyances along this circuitous route in an open "six oar boat" for weeks together, subsisting on such stores as they brought with them and lodging as best they could, along shore, or in the open boat.

Their dangers and hardships were by no means ended on arrival at Oswego.

The best craft in those days for crossing the great lakes, were schooners and sloops, from 30 to 100 tons, dependent on wind and weather for making their passage, which frequently occupied a week or two to get to the western parts of Lake Ontario. Sometimes when no rigged and decked vessel was in port, which was often the case, they would venture in these open boats to reach Kingston by coasting along the lake shore to the eastward of Oswego, and the foot of Lake Ontario, at the imminent peril of their lives, and, when I was a boy, well do I remember hearing, annually, of one or more boats being wrecked, and numerous lives lost along that dangerous part of the coast between Oswego and Stoney Point; others would be for days storm-bound with wind, rain or snow, in the mouths of the numerous creeks along that part of the Lake.

At the termination of the war, which eventuated in the independence of the United States, Upper or Western Canada was scarcely known to the people of the revolted Colonies. The only ways of coming from the States were those before described, by Oswego, and another by a ranch road leading through an unbroken wilderness for more than a hundred

miles to Osweganski—now Ogdensburg—by way of Lakes George and Champlain, by an early unfrequented route; but this led into Lower Canada and communicated more directly with Montreal.

Several of the early settlers in the "Niagara and Home District" did indeed find their way from the borders of Pennsylvania, through the woods on pack horses, or perchance with wagons, cutting their way as they proceeded, and encamping in the woods with their families for weeks together. Many of these early settlers, however, discharged soldiers of Butler's Rangers and other Provincial corps, who were in quarters in and about Fort Niagara, got their lands in the district.

Now it must be left to imagine the destitution, privations and hardships attendant" on these incipient beginnings of Settlement in an isolated wilderness without the most ordinary means of subsistence.

Tradition speaks of their living on roots and fish and whatever else came to hand, and when they had without the ordinary implements of agriculture, cleared a small patch of ground and raised some Indian corn, potatoes, or some wheat, sown in a burnt fallow and dragged in with a branch of a tree, instead of a harrow, there was no mill or machinery to make meal or flour short of 30, 50, 60 or 80 miles in many cases. I have heard of some carrying a grist of half-bushel of wheat, 15 or 16 miles on their backs through the woods to the nearest mill.

To add to their privation they encountered the "scarce year" about 1793 or 1794, when the products of the earth having failed, and no means of obtaining supplies from abroad, famine stared them in the face and indeed, it is said, numbers were actually famished to death, and more victims would have fallen but for an unusual abundance of fish which Providence caused the waters to bring forth. I have heard old people talk feelingly about "the year of famine".*

The more early of the settlements of Upper Canada were made by the loyal Americans who held their allegiance to the British Crown during the eventful war of the Revolution, in which most of them lost their comfortable homes and were severed from all their endearing relations of early youth, through their cherished attachment to the British Empire.

It was to labor and suffer in this, then remote region and among the settlers in such circumstances that the first missionaries of the Methodist Episcopal penetrated the woods and

* The Scarce Season", about 1794, was prolific of sad traditions, I heard of when a boy from my Father and others. Some probably famished, and had not Providence supplied through the waters an unusual quantity of fish, many hundreds must have perished. All the crops had failed. Scanty and dear supplies were obtained from the interior of the State of New York. As an illustration, the following incident may serve. My father who sailed Lake Ontario, was fortunate enough when at the Niagara River to obtain 5 barrels of flour which he brought to Kingston, but could get only about half a barrel home to his family. The people, hearing of what he had, beset him in the street, and insisted on having the barrels opened, and under the supervision of a magistrate the flour was dealt out in small portions to the clamorous customers who paid for their respective portions. Necessity knows no law. From lecture delivered by Dr. Richardson in Toronto in the eighteen-seventies.

swamps intervening between the settlements in the States and Canada.

I recollect conversing, nearly forty years since, with an old sister, Van Camp, who was among the first-fruits of Methodism in Canada. She told me that she had her residence at first in the township of Cornwall and in the winter of 1791, or thereabouts, she saw through her window one exceedingly severe day, a snowstorm then raging, a man on horseback who knocked at her door and asked shelter and the rites of hospitality. Being a stranger and almost famished she took him in, and accommodated him as well as able. He told her he was a Methodist missionary named Losee, and after he had been refreshed, he would preach that very night if the people could be collected. She seconded the motion cheerfully, though quite a stranger to the Methodists, and sent her boys out to notify the neighbours. Thus was preaching and worship introduced into these parts and she soon became a happy convert to the faith taught, and so strikingly exemplified, in the labors, sufferings, boldness and zeal of the herald of it.

The following incident in the life of my father may seem to show the dangers and difficulties attendant on the communications by water between places adjacent to each other yet on opposite sides of the lake. So late as the year 1795, and at the time that the forts on the western frontier of New York were surrendered to the United States, according to the provisions of "Jay's Treaty". The American troops at Fort Oswego had to look to Canada for flour; and my father contracted to furnish a supply in the fall of the year just previous to the setting in of winter. He took in the load, purchased from the farmers of Bay Quinte and proceeded; but at the mouth of the river encountered adverse winds which baffled all attempts to make the harbour, no steam power for navigation purposes in those days, being driven into the lake and a furious storm ensuing he was wrecked at the mouth of Sandy Creek, 20 or 30 miles east of Oswego. He and one seaman swam to the shore, but here was nothing but snow and woods, no settlements short of Oswego to the west, and a reported commencement of one called Rotterdam about 15 miles through dense woods and swamps to the southward. They first tried the woods but sinking above the knees in snow and mire they had to abandon that route and take the course of the lake shore to Oswego, intersected as it was by several streams, and without food or fire. Providence, however, was kind in the time of their greatest extremity for on arriving at the mouth of the "Salmon River", 12 or 16 miles east of Oswego, they discerned a boat on the opposite side with her crew storm-bound in the creek.

The call being made the boat was brought over and they were rescued. My father proceeded with the boat to Oswego, reported the loss of the vessel and cargo, and then, the winter settling in and navigation closed he had no way left to return home but by Schenectady, or Albany and thence by Lake Champlain.

His home was reached by the middle of winter, my mother in the meantime at Kingston heard nothing of him further than his being wrecked and getting to Salmon River and thence leaving for Oswego. Judge of her anxiety with her little family during those dreary winter months till father made his appearance suddenly in the month of February.

This incident may be taken as an example of similar disasters and the extreme difficulties attendant on travelling in those days.

I recollect hearing my father recite several remarkable occurrences while passing up the Oswego River, Oneida Lake, etc.

The following may be worthy of record—

The frost would, in the night, set the ice so strong that the boat would not penetrate it; they then had to haul her over it by means of a rope. While proceeding in this way across the lake the ice suddenly gave way and six men were precipitated into one hole, my father being the first out, while under the ice he heard those above him exclaim: "Richardson is gone"—but providentially he soon found his hands gripping the edge of the broken ice and, giving a sudden spring, brought himself out, after which the whole six were rescued; then, before they reached a house, a log town on the Lake, their clothes were frozen stiff to their bodies.

NOTE.

The traditions of the old French and Indian wars were fresh, affording much comment and remark in my boyhood. My mother, who coming from England when a girl between the close of the French and Indian war and the breaking out of the American Revolution and living at Fort Tucker was quite familiar with the legends of that day and would occasionally entertain us children with details of Indian warfare in both the French and subsequently the Revolutionary Wars. . . . My mother having married her first husband, an officer of the Marine on the Lakes named Bryant, had her quarters during the whole of the Revolutionary war on the west side of the Niagara in barracks built for the navy on the margin of the river, adjacent to the old Fort George. Here for sometime she lived, the only white woman on what is now the Canada side, surrounded by thousands of Indians. . . . Her perilous situation may be imagined, her husband away with the ships and she solitary with her babes, yet she escaped unhurt and survived the war, but suffered widowhood with two children, her husband being the victim of disease contracted by exposure and hardship in his service on the Lake. Towards the close of the war some of the retired military with their families took up their residence on the west side of the river and became intimate friends of my mother, one of whom, Mr. Lyon's wife, became her bosom friend, and on the reduction of the forces, her husband Bryant and said Mr. Lyon took up land on a creek tributary to the Chippawa—known now as "Lyon's Creek in the township of Crowland.

FROM A LECTURE BY REV. JAMES RICHARDSON, D.D.

NOTE.

At the close of the war of 1812 Lieut. James Richardson received an appointment in the Customs and on the Commission of Peace. In 1818 he joined the Methodists, and at once became a man of mark in the infant society, and was a power in all the complex questions of the stormy years which followed. Full of zeal and earnestness, of a rare and winning personality, combined with marvellous energy, he was beloved and

respected by all, "accomplishing far more with his one arm than most of us were able to do with two," as a contemporary tells us. After a beautiful old age, filled to the last with work, he died on March 9th, 1875. His son, Dr. J. H. Richardson, was for many years a leading physician in Toronto, and his daughter, Mrs. Brett, was a great worker among the poor and in philanthropic circles – *Editor*.