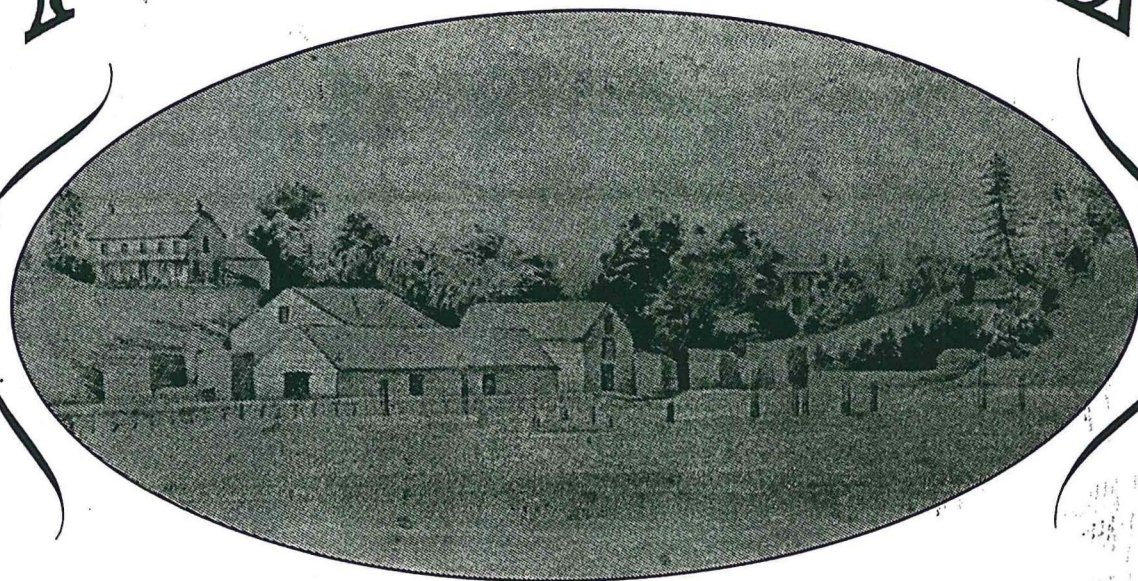


PORT RYERSE



1794 - 1994

*A collection of stories, photographs and remembrances
of Port Ryerse from the past 200 years.*

Port Ryerse

1794 - 1994



The harbour circa 1980.

Compiled by the Port Ryerse Historical and Environmental Association
to commemorate Samuel Ryerse's coming to Upper Canada in 1794.

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Cover photo: "Port Ryerse Harbour" circa 1860 is a watercolour by William Pope looking into the harbour from Lake Erie. The house on the left was known as the Steamboat Hotel. Warehouses sit on the banks of Young's Creek and the house on the top right was built by Edward P. Ryerse in 1835 and still stands today.

Picture courtesy Eva Brook Donly Museum, Simcoe

Preface

It was 200 years ago that United Empire Loyalist Samuel Ryerse approached his friend Lieutenant-Governor John Graves Simcoe about moving to Upper Canada. Simcoe recommended the north shore of Lake Erie, specifically the area then known as the Long Point Settlement, and offered Ryerse a land grant to become one of the first pioneers in what was then a primeval forest.

With one of the area's best natural harbours, at the mouth of Young's Creek, the resulting community flourished through much of the next century. Mills, ship-building, the lumber trade, four hotels and other business enterprises provided employment for hundreds in the thriving port. Then a railroad was built connecting Port Dover and Simcoe, and Port Ryerse faded as a commercial centre.

During the first half of this century, Port Ryerse was primarily a summer retreat for residents of Simcoe, Brantford and beyond, who found its clean, quiet beaches a great place to vacation. In recent years, most of those cottages have been converted to year-round homes, new homes having been built and historical dwellings restored.

Ryerse/Ryerson



Amelia Ryerse Harris circa 1880.

"Col. Samuel Ryerse was a prominent character in the early pioneer times of the country's history. It was through him that Long Point Settlement was first organized into a separate district, and this historical fact will always keep his name at the head of the list of our old pioneers who settled in Norfolk."

A.E. Owen, 1898

Ryerse/Ryerson Roots

by Phyllis A. Ryerse, November 1993

The history of the Ryerse-Ryerson Family encompasses 16 generations of descendants over more than 400 years. Dutchmen during the golden age of the Netherlands and Britons during the golden age of British Colonial America, they are proud Canadians and Americans in this 20th century.

On-going research into the very early and complicated Dutch records in the Netherlands has pushed the family's pedigree back to the earliest known ancestor, Reijer, who was born around the year 1575. In those early times, a single name was sufficient — the name they were given at birth. In small villages where there was only one Jan or one Katrina this worked very well. As the population grew, however, single names proved inadequate and soon, second names were being added to distinguish between individuals with the same name. These were based on occupation, residence, and personal peculiarities. Thus we find men with names such as Peter the shoemaker, Hendrick from Amsterdam and Jan the bald! Most common was the addition of the father's given name which was called a "patronymic." Thus when this earliest ancestor Reijer became a father, he named his little boy after himself, Reijer the son of Reijer. The Dutch word for son is *zoon* — often abbreviated to *s*, *se*, *sz*, *sen* or sometimes *x*. And so this boy, who would become our second, in a long line of grandfathers, was known as Reijer Reijersz.

Early in January 1631, Amsterdam's Nieuwe Kerk (New Church) was the scene of the marriage of Reijer Reijersz to Marritie Fransen van Swindrecht, that is, Mary the daughter of Frans who was *van/from* an area (near Dordrecht) called Zwindrecht. In 1637, Reijer and Marritie became the parents of Marten Reijersen. His mother died in April of 1642. Although the circumstances are unclear, Marten left his home in Holland and sailed to New Amsterdam in 1646 when he was about nine years old. It was during that time that Amsterdam was devastated by the plague, the death toll so severe that bodies were piled in the streets waiting to be buried. Death records are numerous but incomplete, the list of orphans long. It is possible that both of his parents succumbed to that awful disease and young Marten was sent to New Netherlands to escape the same fate. Research in the Dutch records continues.

Marten grew to young manhood in the little Dutch settlement along the Hudson River which in time came to be called Brooklyn, N.Y. In 1663, he married Annetje Rapelje, the daughter of Joris Jansen Rapelje and his wife, Catalina Tricot. They were French speaking protestants, or Walloons, who had sailed on the very first ship sent out by the Dutch

West India Company to settle the new little outpost in the New Netherlands. Marten and Annetje settled on a farm next to her parents on the Wallabout — that area of Brooklyn along the bend in the East River just opposite New York. They attended the nearby Dutch Church and raised eleven children.

Their first son was named after his maternal grandfather with his father's given name used as a patronymic. He was called Joris Martensen. Joris married Annetje Schouten and they lived on a 5-1/2 acre farm between Broadway and the Hudson River in New York City, then a village of about 5,000 people. On this land today stands the 110 storey twin towers of the famous World Trade Center. Joris farmed the land there just outside the gate in the wall which had been constructed to keep out animals and attacking enemies. Today this is lower Manhattan's famous Wall Street. His children were baptized in the Dutch Church, those born before 1701 as the children of Joris Martensen and those born after that time as the children of Joris Reyerse. It is clear that the use of patronymics had become outmoded and Joris now chose to use Reyerse as his permanent "surname" — although there exist documents in which he used Reyerse as well as Ryerse. He also dropped the use of the letters "ij" which were the Dutch equivalent of our letter "y", and he began to go by the name of George, the Anglicized version of the Dutch name, Joris. (The British had taken over New Amsterdam and it was now officially New York.)

George Reyerse farmed his 5-1/2 acres in New York for many years, but always with an eye across the Hudson River to the rolling hills and towering forests of New Jersey. He knew that New York land would continue to become scarce and more expensive. He knew also that trading in real estate was a certain means of improving his economic position. Yet the purchase of land was an expensive and complicated undertaking for men of ordinary means. And so he joined a company of eight men to buy N.J. land. They were headed up by Arent Schuyler who had traveled through the area along the Indian "Minisink path" and had returned with vivid accounts of a "wondrously beautiful valley." Being able to speak the Indian language, Arent would handle the details of the Indian purchase. Other members of this enterprise included Col. Nicholas Bayard, a rich New York merchant-investor who had served as a member of the City Council as well as Mayor of the City of New York, and his son Samuel who had served a term as Treasurer. With their connection and status, they would conduct negotiations

with the N.J. Proprietors. Major Anthony Brocholst joined the group along with John Mead the weaver, Hendrick and David Mandeville, Samuel Berry and of course, George Reyerse.

On June 6, 1695 a small group of Delaware Indians of the Lenii-Lenape tribe slipped quietly out of the East Jersey wilds and rowed across the Hudson River to New York. There the deed, or treaty was signed and sealed with drops of hot wax, undoubtedly amid great ceremony and the smoking of pipes. The purchase price was a certain quantity of wampum and of goods and merchandise to the value of 250 English pounds. In return, this group of men obtained the entire Pompton Valley from the Passaic River on the south, along the Pequannock River to the Pompton River on the north and all the area between the hills east and west. Legal possession from the N.J. Proprietors would be established a few months later and this 7,000-acre tract would then be divided equitably [among] the members of the group.

George Reyerse moved his family to one of his tracts along the Penquannock River and soon became a prominent man in this growing community. In 1715 he was named one of "His Majesty's Judges" for Bergan County, thus beginning nearly two centuries of participation in local government by his descendants, including the office of Town

Clerk, Township Committee, Judge of Appeals, Supt. of Public Schools and the tax assessorship which was in the Ryerson family for more than 50 years.

For George Reyerse, this was the beginning of the acquisition of many parcels of New Jersey land. His extensive holdings provided his family a comfortable home with lands to pass on to his children as well as [lands] for speculative purposes. At his death, the northern part of his homestead farm went to his youngest son, Lucas Reyerse. Lucas carried on his father's penchant for acquiring land and followed in his footsteps as the Judge of the Court of Common Pleas. It is said that he was a man of giant stature and great strength.

About the year 1736, Luke, as he was called, built an unpretentious house from stone gathered in nearby fields and river banks. It had a sloping roof and Dutch doors front and back. Inside could be seen the hand-hewn ceiling beams, the wide plank floors, thickly plastered walls and a large and useful fireplace. Among the 12 children born and raised in this house were Samuel and Joseph who were later to be involved in so much of the history of Norfolk County, Ontario. Luke died in 1764 when these boys were only eight and three years old. As they grew up they would become very close to their older half-brother, 21-year-old George L. Ryerson as well as



The Ryerson home in New Jersey

The small wing of this home was built by Lucas Ryerse in 1736. It is the birthplace of both Samuel Ryerse and his brother Joseph Ryerson.

their uncle George Ryerse Jr. who lived just down the road. He was a prominent man in the community also, being one of His Majesty's Judges and a Surveyor for the East Jersey Proprietors. During these years, the family name can be found as Ryerse as well as Ryerson, sometimes one individual being called by both spellings in the same document. Ryerson, however, was being used more often.

A long-undiscovered baptismal record had given us the first concrete clue as to the mystery-identity of Samuel Ryerse's first wife. (Previous claims that she was Elizabeth Colwell have been found to be in error.) On Nov. 9, 1776, "Samuel Reyerse and wife" had their son Jacob baptized at the Pompton Plains Dutch Reformed Church. Standing as witnesses that day were Jacob Demere and his wife Elizabeth. Keeping in mind that Samuel's oldest child was named Elizabeth, and that it was customary to name children for their grandparents, a strong case can be made that Jacob and Elizabeth Demere were the parents of — or related in some way to — Samuel's first wife.

These were years of political unrest but the Ryerse family members remained loyal to the King and Empire. Many years later, Samuel's son, George J. Ryerse, would recount his father's statement that at the outbreak of the Revolution, some of his neighbours who were sympathetic to the patriot side "would not give him any peace at all . . . and finally took him and put him in a log cave" or jail. After his escape he was even more determined to remain loyal to the King and was instrumental in recruiting over 40 men into the Loyalist troops. The original list can still be found in the New Jersey Archives with notation by each name giving their status, such as "killed by Rebels," "taken prisoner" and even the dates they were inoculated.

A complete retelling of the Revolutionary War experiences of Captain Samuel Ryerson would fill an entire volume. As a member of the 4th and later the 3rd New Jersey Volunteers under Abraham Van Buskirk, and quartered mostly in the Staten Island and New York area, he participated in many raids and skirmishes into New Jersey territory, a difficult order when fighting against old friends and neighbours. The confiscation of New Jersey lands belonging to these Loyalists deepened the bitterness and anger. The records are incomplete but on March 5, 1780, Samuel lost 30 acres of wood land at Pompton, auctioned off at a public vendue on the green at Morristown, N.J. There is no wonder that Bergen County became a seething caldron of hatred in this war between neighbours, cousins and brothers.

In the fall of 1779, Captain Samuel Ryerson was chosen for special service in an elite corps under the distinguished British officer, Major Patrick

Ferguson. He was issued a new red-jacketed uniform and taught the use of a newly invented breech-loading rifle of superior fire power. On the day after Christmas, Ferguson's crack light troops of 1,100 Tories sailed with General Clinton for the south where they would join in the siege of Charleston, So. Carolina and later at the battle of King's Mountain.

It is hard to understand why Ferguson chose to post his army on King's Mountain. Perhaps he felt he held commanding ground and could not resist the temptation of another glorious victory. It would only take the back country patriots an hour and five minutes to prove him wrong. With each charge up the mountain, the Loyalists were driven into an ever diminishing pocket until they were forced to surrender. Captain Ryerson, who was wounded in his left hand and wrist, surrendered his sword to the first American officer [who] came near him and [Ryerson] was told to sit down on the ground. He would remain a prisoner until the following February when he was exchanged and returned to New York.

At the conclusion of the war, Samuel and his brother Joseph left New York and with their battalions settled in the province of New Brunswick. Unhappy with the remote lands assigned to them, Samuel petitioned for a better location and for compensation for his wartime losses. In this he would be unsuccessful. In 1786, he finally received 600 acres on the Little River where he would try to establish a home. After "being disappointed both in soil and climate, finding it to be sterile and uncongenial," he returned to New York in 1793.

It would not be long, however, before Samuel discovered that the bitterness and unforgiving sentiment against him had not diminished and by 1794 the decision had been made to seek a new home in Upper Canada. His friend John Graves Simcoe encouraged him to settle there with promises of rich and fertile land. The story of the long and difficult trip to Canada is best told by Samuel's children, George J. Ryerse and Amelia (Ryerse) Harris. Their accounts follow.

(If you would like to read more about the early history of this family, be sure to refer to the booklet *Captain Samuel Ryerse* by Phyllis A. Ryerse, printed in 1975 or *A Patchwork of Family History* by Phyllis A. Ryerse [master copy in the Norfolk Historical Society archives at the Eva Brook Donly Museum, 109 Norfolk St. S., Simcoe, Ont.] or the *Ryerse-Ryerson Family* by Phyllis A. Ryerse and Thomas A. Ryerse, printed in 1994.)

Port Ryerse, 23rd June, 1861

Dear Cousin,—

Dear Cousin,—

Your kind letter I received, and in answer to your suggestions I have to state that my father was a captain in the New Jersey Volunteers during the American Revolution; and at its close in 1783, having his property confiscated in the United States, he went to New Brunswick and drew lands according to his rank as captain; but being disappointed both in soil and climate, finding it to be sterile and uncongenial, he determined to remove to Canada. In the spring of 1794 he started and went to Long Island, the place where the city of Brooklyn now stands, and there left his family. While on foot, he went to Canada (U.C.) to better his condition by looking out a more congenial place. Having accomplished his purpose, he started, at the opening of navigation, with his family, in company with Captain Bonta's family, first on board a sloop (as all was then done by sloops) to Albany, thence by land to Schenectady, where they procured a flat-bottomed boat, in which families and baggage were put; thence, with poles and oars, against a strong current, they made their way up the Mohawk river a long place called Wood Creek, which they approached toward Lake Ontario, until they approached which to enter they had to draw their boat (some two miles); thence down this stream lake in this boat westward to the Niagara as Queenston, where again they had to go around the Falls to Chippawa; thence around the lake westward eight miles; thence up the lake westward eight miles; thence up the lake westward eight miles, selected (and which is now my home), this boat that they went to mill, as before furnished plenty of fish and game at have survived. The total absence of many years were among the heavy and endure.

My Dear Cousin,—

I received your circular so I cannot at once give an answer to your undertaking, and humbly amply rewarded. I am sorry to use to you. You are aware of our parents, that made the British Throne, and endured this country. It was in 1794 my family that if he should de State, to take his body to were but eight families resided Indians; no roads; the near

Rev. E. Ryerson

Rev. E. Ryerson
Rev. George J. Ryerse's second letter to his cousin transcribed from Egerton Ryerson's 1880 book, providing further detail of Samuel Ryerse's coming to Canada.

Port Ryerse, 12th June 1861

My Dear Cousin,—

I received your circular some time since, but, through forgetfulness, I did not at once give an answer. I am highly gratified with your noble undertaking, and humbly trust that you may live to succeed and be amply rewarded. I am sorry that I have no documents that would be of use to you. You are aware of the staunch loyalty that was inherent in our parents, that made them sacrifice everything out of regard for the British Throne, and endure every privation in their early settlement in this country. It was in 1794 my father came here, and gave orders to his family that if he should de cease while on his way through the United States, to take his body to British soil for burying. At that time there were but eight families residing within thirty miles of this place, except Indians; no roads; the nearest mill 100 miles distant by water (at Niagara Falls). My father purchased corn of the Indians at the Grand River, thirty miles from home, and carried it home on his shoulders. Afterwards he bought a yoke of oxen of the Indians, and on a toboggan sled put his son, and with his axe and compass made his way through the woods and streams to his beloved home. Two years afterwards he built a saw mill, and afterwards a grist mill. These nearly proved his ruin, not understanding the business, and very little to sustain them; they were badly built, and proved a bother to him, but still a great help to the settlement for a long time. Merchandise was so very expensive and produce so very cheap that the early settlers could barely exist; but they loved their country, and they have gone to their rest, and I feel proud that so many of their children inherit their spirit.

I am, yours truly,
George J. Ryerse

Rev. E. Ryerson

This letter from Samuel Kyerse's son, Rev. George J. Ryerse, to his cousin, Rev. Egerton Ryerson, "gives some particulars of his father's life coming to Canada, and of the earliest settlement of the London District," according to Egerton Ryerson, in his 1880 book, *Loyalists of America and Their Times*, from which it was transcribed.

The Settling of Port Ryerse

by *Amelia Ryerse Harris*

Preface to this Edition
by *John Cardiff*

The most interesting surviving first-hand account of early life in Port Ryerse was written by founder Samuel Ryerse's daughter, Amelia (Ryerse) Harris and published by her cousin, Dr. Egerton Ryerson in his 1880 book, *Loyalists of America and Their Times*. It is re-printed here, complete with Egerton's introduction, with only a few transcriber's notes added between square brackets.

The Province of Ontario was originally part of Quebec. In 1791, it was re-named "Upper Canada" by the British government because it was farther up the St. Lawrence River than "Lower Canada" (now Quebec). In 1841, Upper Canada was renamed "Canada West," the name it went by until Confederation in 1867, when it was renamed "Ontario." Mrs. Amelia (Ryerse) Harris refers to Upper Canada as Canada West in the following article because that was its name at the time she wrote this memoranda.

At the outbreak of the American Revolution, British forces captured New York and held it throughout the war. Many of the colonists who chose the British side, moved their families to New York for the duration of the war so they would be safe behind British lines. Captain Samuel Ryerse moved his first family from New Jersey to New York, and that's where they were living when his first wife died.

After the War, many American communities refused to allow their "traitorous" neighbours who had fought for the British to return to their homes. Their land and property were confiscated. Some who tried to return to their homes were tarred and feathered, run out of town, or killed. Some communities passed bylaws making British supporters criminals. Many Loyalists consequently turned to the British for a solution to their dilemma.

Hoping such supporters might defend its colonies to the north, Britain offered them passage by ship to New Brunswick (which at that time included Nova Scotia) and land grants to settle there. This is where Captain Ryerse settled and married his second wife, Sarah Underhill (the widow of another British supporter named Davenport), who had been raised in comfortable circumstance in New York before the Revolution. Many Loyalists found New Brunswick's soil and climate unsuitable for farming, and within a few years were petitioning the British for an alternative.

General Simcoe, who had fought with many

Loyalists during the American Revolution and was, by then, the Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada and stationed at Niagara, took advantage of their discontent to solve his problem of attracting settlers loyal to the crown to the north shore of Lake Erie to defend this area from impending American invasion, by offering them land grants in the "western wilderness."

Since neither roads nor railroads existed then, pioneer settlers arrived either by foot over Indian trails or by boat. Many of Norfolk County's earliest pioneers arrived by water, coming west along Lake Erie's northern shore until they found a place they liked. Most settled near the lake's shore and/or beside a river that provided easy access to water.

The woman named Granny McCall mentioned in the following article was Elsie Simpson, the wife of Donald McCall, another Loyalist from New Jersey. Two of Donald and Elsie's grown sons, John and Daniel, are also mentioned in the following article. The Mr. Powel should be Mr. Powell. The Proyer family name was actually Troyer.

The following article is in two parts. The first written circa 1859, the second in June 1879. The first was written for the author's children, the second was written as a favour for the author's cousin and extends the story to the end of the War of 1812.

Introduction to Part One

by *Rev. A. Egerton Ryerson, D.D.*

Historical Memoranda by Mrs. Amelia Harris, of Eldon House, London, Ontario, only daughter of the late Colonel Samuel Ryerse, the sister of the late Rev. Geo. J. Ryerse.

The husband of Mrs. Harris was an active and scientific officer in the Royal Navy, having been employed with the late Admirals Bayfield and Owen in the survey of the Canadian lakes and rivers, by the Admiralty, during the years 1815 to 1817. It was during the progress of this survey that Miss Ryerse married. After a few years' residence in Kingston, Mr. and Mrs. Harris returned to a beautiful home-
stead on Long Point Bay, intending to reside there permanently. In the days of the early settlement, a more refined and cultivated society was to be found on the country than usually in the towns and villages. Mr. Harris was at once selected by the various Governments of the day to be the recipient of various Government offices. During the years 1837-38 he took an active part in quelling the rebellion and is believed by many to have been the head and front and organizer of the expedition which sent the steamer *Caroline* over the Falls. He was the first man on her deck, and the last to leave, having set her on fire.

The late Edward Ermatinger, in his *Life of Colonel Talbot*, refers to the Harris family as follows: A.D. 1834. "By degrees the officers of the Court removed to London, and Mr. Harris was the first to build a home of considerable dimensions on the handsome piece of ground highly elevated about the banks of the River Thames. This house was long the resort of the first men of Canada, and in this house the venerable founder of the Talbot settlement lay during his first serious illness, while on his way to England. Every man of rank or distinction who visited this part of Canada became the guest of Mr. Harris — the late Lord Sydenham, the various lieutenant-governors and governor-generals, and the present Lord Derby, were among the number."

In the following Memoranda, which Mrs. Harris wrote more than 20 years since, at the wish of her children, but not for publication, she gives a graphic and highly interesting account of her father's early settlement in Canada, and of the circumstances of the first settlers, and the state of society of that time.

Historical Memorandum

by Mrs. Amelia (Ryerse) Harris, 1859

Captain Samuel Ryerse, one of the early settlers in Canada, was the descendant of an old Dutch family in New Jersey, and both his father and grandfather held judicial appointments under Kings George II and III. When the rebellion commenced in 1776, and the British Government was anxious to raise provincial troops, they offered commissions to any young gentlemen who could enlist a certain number of young men; sixty, I think, entitled them to a Captaincy. My father, Captain Ryerse, being popular in his neighbourhood, found no difficulty in enlisting double the number required, and on presenting himself and men at headquarters, New York, was gazetted captain in the 4th battalion New Jersey Volunteers, in which regiment he served with distinction during the seven years' war.

After the acknowledgement of American Independence by England, and the British troops were about to be disbanded, the British Government offered them a free transport to New Brunswick, and a grant of land. When there, little choice was left to those who had sacrificed all for connection with the mother country. On my father's arrival in New Brunswick he obtained a lot of land in or near Fredericton, the present seat of government; and there he met my mother, who was a refugee also, and they were married.

After remaining there several years, his friends entreated him to return to New York, holding out great inducements if he would consent to do so. He accepted the offer of his friends and returned, but he

soon discovered that the rancorous, bitter feelings which had arisen during the war were not extinct, and that it was too soon for a British subject to seek a home in the United States. My mother loved her native city, and might not have been induced again to leave it had it not been for domestic affliction. She brought from the healthy climate of New Brunswick four fine children, all of whom she buried in New York in eight weeks. She gave birth to four more; three of those had died also, and she felt sure if she stayed there she would lose the only remaining one. Therefore she readily consented to my father's proposal to come to Canada, where his old friend, General Simcoe, was at that time governor. In the summer of 1794 my father and a friend started for Canada. The journey was then a formidable one, and before commencing it wills were made and farewells given, as if a return was more than doubtful.

On his arrival at Niagara he was warmly greeted by his old friend, General Simcoe, who advised him by all means to settle in Canada, holding out many inducements for him to do so. He promised my father a grant of 3,000 acres of land as a captain in the army, 1,200 as a settler, and that my mother and each of her sons should have a grant of 1,200 and each of her daughters a grant of 600 acres.

My father was pleased with what he saw of the country, and heard a favourable account of the climate, and decided at once to return as early the ensuing year as possible. On his return to New York he commenced making arrangements for his move the ensuing spring.

It would be much easier for a family to go from Canada to China now, than it was to come from New York to Canada then. He had to purchase a boat large enough to hold his family and goods, with supplies of groceries for two or three years, with farming utensils, tools, pots, boilers, etc., and yet the boat must not be too large to get over the portage from the Hudson to the Mohawk. As there were no waggon roads from Albany to the Niagara frontier, families coming to Canada had to come down the Mohawk to Lake Ontario and enter Canada in that way. My father found it a weary journey, and was months in accomplishing it.

On my father's arrival at Niagara, at that time the seat of government, he called on his Excellency, General Simcoe, who had just returned from a tour through the Province of Canada West, then one vast wilderness. He asked General Simcoe's advice as to where he should choose his resting-place. He recommended the county of Norfolk (better known for many years as Long Point), which had been recently surveyed.

As it was now drawing towards the close of summer, it would require all their time to get up a shanty and prepare for the winter. Consequently, arrange-

ments were made immediately for continuing their journey. The heavy batteau was transported from Queenston to Chippawa around the Falls, a distance of twelve miles. Supplies were added to those brought from New York, and they once more started on their journey, bidding goodbye to the last vestige of civilization. They were twelve days making 100 miles — not bad travelling in those days, taking the current of the river and lake, adverse winds, and an unknown coast into consideration.

When my father came within the bay formed by Long Point, he watched the coast for a favourable impression, and after a scrutiny of many miles, the boat was run into a small creek, the high banks sloping gradually on each side.

Directions were given to the men to erect the tent for my mother. My father had not been long on shore before he decided that that should be his home. In wandering about, he came to an eminence which would, when the trees were felled, command a view of the harbour. He gazed around him a few moments and said, "Here I will be buried," and there after fourteen years of toil, he sleeps in peace.

The men my father hired in New York all wished to settle in Canada, and were glad to avail themselves of an opportunity of coming free of expense, and promised to remain with him until he had a log-house built, and had himself comfortable. He had paid them a great portion of their wages in advance, to enable them to get necessities in New York. Immediately on his arrival at Niagara they left him, with one exception, and went in search of localities for themselves, very little regard being paid at that time to engagements, and there being no means to enforce them; consequently, he had to hire fresh hands at Niagara, who were men, like the former, on the look-out for land. After one day's rest at Ryerse Creek, they re-embarked and went fourteen miles further up the bay, to the house of a German settler who had been there two years, and had a garden well stocked with vegetables.

The appearance of the boat was hailed with delight by those solitary beings, and my mother and child were soon made welcome, and the best that a miserable log-house, or rather hut, could afford was at her service. This kind, good family consisted of father, mother, one son and one daughter. Mr. Proyer [sic, actually Troyer, used hereafter], the father, was a fine-looking old man with a flowing beard, and was known for many years throughout the Long Point settlement as 'Doctor Troyer.' He possessed a thorough knowledge of witches, their ways and doings, and the art of expelling them, and also the use of the divining-rod, with which he could not only find water, but could also tell how far below the surface of the earth precious metals were concealed, but was never fortunate enough to discover any in

the neighborhood of Long Point. Here my father got his goods under shelter and left my mother, and returned to Ryerse Creek, intending to build a log-house as soon as possible. Half a dozen active men will build a very comfortable primitive log-house in ten or twelve days; that is, cut and lay up the logs, and chink them, put on a bark roof, cut holes for the windows and door, and build a chimney of mud and sticks. Sawing boards by hand for floors and doors, making sash and shingles, is an after and longer process.

But soon after my father returned he fell ill with Lake fever; his men erected a shanty, open in front like an Indian camp, placed my father in it and left him with his son, a lad of fifteen years of age, the son of a former wife, as his only attendant. When my father began to recover, my half-brother was taken ill, and there they remained almost helpless, alone for three weeks.

My mother hearing nothing of or from, them, became almost frantic, as some of the party were to have returned in a few days. She prevailed upon Mike Troyer, the son, to launch his bark canoe, and to take her and my brother, then a year and a half old, in search of my father. On approaching Ryerse Creek, after a many days' paddle along the coast, they saw a blue smoke curling above the trees, and very soon my mother stood in front of the shanty, where my father sat with a stick, turning an immense turkey, which hung, suspended by a string before a bright fire. The day previous, a large flock of wild turkeys had come very near his camp, and commenced fighting. Without moving from his shanty, he killed six at one shot. He afterwards, at single shots, killed eight more, and the united strength of him and my brother was scarcely sufficient to bring them into camp. My mother used to look back upon that evening as one of the happiest of her life. She had found her loved ones, after torturing her mind with all sorts of horrors — Indians, wild beasts, snakes, illness, and death had all been imagined. The next day, Mike Troyer's canoe was laden with wild turkeys, and he returned alone, as my mother refused to separate herself again from my father. A few days after, a party of pedestrians arrived, on the look-out for land, and they at once set to work and put up the wished-for log-house or houses, for there were two attached, which gave them a parlour, two bedrooms, a kitchen and a garret. On removing from the shanty to this house, my mother felt as if in a palace. They bought a cow from Mr. Troyer and collected their goods, and when cold weather set in they were comfortable.

My father found it necessary to return to Niagara to secure the patent for the lands he had selected, and also to provide for wants not previously known or understood. The journey was long and tedious,

travelling on foot and on the lake shore, and by Indian paths through the woods, fording the creeks as he best could. At the Grand River, or River Ouse, there was an Indian reservation of six miles on each side of the river from its mouth to its source, owned by two tribes of Indians, Mohawks and Cayugas, whose wants were well-supplied with very little exertion of their own, as the river and lake abounded with fish, the woods with deer and smaller game, and the rich flats along the river yielded abundance of maize with very little cultivation. They were kind and inoffensive in their manner and would take the traveller across the river, or part with their products for a very small reward.

On my father's application for the lots he had chosen, he was told by Council that the two at Ryerse Creek could only be granted conditionally, as they possessed very valuable water privileges, and that whoever took them must build both a flour and a saw-mill. My father accepted these conditions, secured the grant for his own lands, but left my mother's for a future day, and at once made arrangements for purchasing the necessary material for his mills — bolting cloths, mill-stones, iron, and screws, etc. — and then with a back load of twine, provisions for his journey, and his light fusée, he commenced his return home, where he arrived in good health, after an absence of twelve days. It is only the settlers in a new country that know what a pleasure a safe return can give.

Long Point now boasted four inhabitants in twenty miles, all settled on the lake shore. Their nearest neighbour, Peter Walker, at the mouth of Patterson's Creek [now Port Dover], was three miles distant by water and six by land. But from this time, 1795, for years to come, there was a constant influx of settlers.

Few days passed without some foot traveller asking a night's rest. The most of the travellers would set to work cheerfully for a few days, and assist in cutting roads, making sheds, sawing boards, or felling timber. The winter was now fast approaching, and much was to be done in preparation for the coming spring. My father succeeded in hiring five or six men for as many months. The great object was to get some land cleared so that they could plant maize, potatoes, and garden vegetables for the next year's consumption. They had also to make preparations for sugar-making, by hollowing out troughs, one to each tree that was tapped, sufficiently large to hold the sap that would run in one day.

Their evenings were devoted to netting the twine, which my father had purchased at Niagara for that purpose. My mother hired Barbara Troyer as a help, and time passed less heavily than she had imagined. My father had brought with him a sufficient quantity of flour and salt pork to last them a year; for fresh meat and fish he depended upon his gun and spear,

and for many years they had always a good supply of both. My father had a couple of deer-hounds, and he used to go to the woods for his deer as a farmer would go to his fold for a sheep. Wild turkey and partridge were bagged with very little skill or exertion, and when the creek and lake were not frozen he need scarcely leave his own door to shoot ducks; but the great sporting ground — and it is still famous, and the resort of sporting gentlemen from Toronto, Woodstock, and indeed all parts of Canada West — is at the head of Long Point Bay. I have known him, several years later, return from there with twenty wild geese and one hundred ducks, the result of a few days' shooting. Pigeons were so plentiful, so late as 1810 and 1812, that they could be knocked down with poles. Great would have been the sufferings of the early settlers had not a kind and heavenly Father made this provision for them. But deer were not the only animals that abounded in the woods; bears and wolves were plentiful, and the latter used to keep up a most melancholy howl about the house at night, so near that my mother could scarcely be persuaded that they were not under the window. The cow, for security, was tied to the kitchen door every night; during the day she accompanied the men to the field they were chopping, and fed upon browse, which kept her fat and in good heart — the men making a point of felling a maple tree each morning for her special benefit. Their first sugar-making was not very beautiful, but they made sufficient of a very bad quality for the year's consumption. The potatoes gave a great yield; the maize was eaten and destroyed by racoons; the apple and pear pips grew nicely, as did the peach, cherry, and plum stones, and my mother's balsams and few flowers from the new rich soil were beautiful.

The summer of 1796 passed away with few incidents at Ryerse Creek, except the arrival of settlers.

This year there was a total failure of the grain crops, not only in the new settlements, but throughout the United States. The Indians alone had preserved maize from destruction by the racoons, squirrels and bears, which had invaded the settlements by thousands in search of food, as there were no nuts in the woods. The settlers had now to depend upon the Indians at the Grand River for their bread, and they continued to sell their maize at the same price as formerly, and during the year of scarcity never raised it. My father procured his year's supply, but there were no mills; the nearest ones were south of the Short Hills, seventy miles distant. Lucky was the family that owned a coffee mill in the winter of 1797. My father had a number of hands getting out timber for his mills and clearing land, and when they returned from their work in the evenings they used to grind in the coffee-mill maize for the next day's consumption. They soon learned the exact quantity required,

and each man ground his own allowance, dividing that of the rest of the household amongst them. The meal was made into johnny-cakes, eaten hot for breakfast, cold for dinner, and the remainder in mush and milk for supper; and upon this fare they enjoyed perfect good health, were always cheerful and apparently happy.

The greatest good-feeling existed amongst the settlers, although they were of all nations and creeds and no creeds. Many of those families who had remained neutral during the revolution to save their property, and still retained their preference for the British Government, now sought homes in Canada, or assisted their sons to do so. The Quakers and Yunkers were amongst the best settlers, as they always brought some property with them, and were generally peaceable and industrious.

Lands were so easily obtained, and so much encouragement was given by Government to settlers, that many of the half-pay officers and soldiers who had gone to New Brunswick found their way here, as well as many of the idle, discontented, dissipated, vicious and worthless of the United States. But at the Settler's Home all were made welcome; the meals, victuals and night's lodging were freely given to all, and for years after, to my recollection, during the summer season our house was never free from travellers; not that there was any particular merit due to our hospitality, for the man who would have closed his door against a traveller would have been looked upon as worse than a savage. My mother, this summer, had a dreadful alarm, which she used to describe to me with great feeling many years after. My little brother (George), for whose sake she had encountered all the privation and hardships of an early settler, gave rise to numerous fears and anxieties if he was out of her sight a few minutes. Endless misfortunes might befall him; he might be eaten up by wild beasts; or, he might be stolen by the Indians (their stealing of children not being a very uncommon occurrence in those days, and during the summer there used to be hundreds encamped on the beach); or, he might be drowned; or, he might wander away and be lost in the woods; and he would steal away and follow the men in the field when not closely watched. One day George was missing, and great was the commotion. Search was made everywhere, and George's name sounded through the forest in every direction. At last his hat was found in the creek. My mother sat perfectly quiet on the bank, with feelings not easily described, while my father probed the deep holes, and thrust his spear under the driftwood, expecting every time he drew it out to see George's red frock rise to the surface, when she heard with delight a little voice say "Mamma," from the opposite side of the creek. And there was George, with his little bare head peeping through the

bushes with his pet cat by his side. The reaction was too great for my mother; she fell fainting to the ground. George had lost his hat walking over a log which the men used as a bridge.

The settlement was now considered in a most prosperous state; in a half-circle of twenty miles, probably there was a population of a hundred. People had ceased to count the families on their fingers, but no census was taken. The mills were fast advancing toward completion. Some few of the settlers grew wheat sufficient for their own consumption, and a little to sell; but the squirrels, racoons, and pigeons were very destructive to the grain of the early settlers. A dog that was trained for hunting the racoons, or a "coon dog" as they were called, was of great value, and the young lads, for many years after, used to make coon parties on fine moonlight nights, and go from farm to farm, killing those animals; and, although the necessity has long passed away, these parties still continue; and, though a virtue and a kindness in the commencement, have ended in vice, and the coon parties now meet together to rob orchards and gardens of their best fruit and melons. One bitter cold night in February, 1798, the household was alarmed by the announcement of my mother's illness. No assistance was to be had nearer than three miles; no horses and no roads — only a track through the woods. Mr. Powel, who just secured a lot near us, volunteered to go in search of Granny McCall, with the ox-team. After some weary hours' watching, the 'gee haw!' was heard on the return in the woods, and Mrs. McCall soon stood beside my mother, and very soon after the birth of a daughter was announced. That daughter is now making this record of the past. The settlement was now increasing so fast that the general voice was for a town, and my father was petitioned to lay one out at the mouth of Ryerse Creek, and was at last prevailed upon to do so, and called it Clarence. The first applicant for a lot was a Mr. Corklin, a very good blacksmith, a mechanic that was very much wanted in the settlement. He was a very intelligent young man for his class, and a great favourite with everyone, although he had one fault, that of indulging in strong drinks occasionally. He bargained for a lot, and put up a frame for a house. My father bought him a set of blacksmith's tools to commence with, and built him a shop. The next thing was a wife. My mother soon saw that a tender feeling was growing up between the young blacksmith and her nurse, a pretty girl, to whom she was much attached. My mother's advice was against the marriage, on account of his one bad habit; but of course she was not listened to, and they were married.

A few months after the marriage, Mr. Corklin went in a log canoe to the head of the bay, on business, and was to return the next day; but day after

day passed, and no Mr. Corklin appeared. At last the poor wife's anxiety became so great that a messenger was sent in search of him. He had been at Dr. Troyer's but left the day he was expected home. The alarm was given, and search commenced along the lake shore. They found his canoe drifted on shore, laden with game, vegetables and a few apples, his hat, and an empty bottle that smelt of rum; but he was gone. They supposed that he had fallen overboard without upsetting the canoe. His body they could not find for days after, and his wife used to wander along the lake shore, from early dawn until dark, with the hope that she might find his body. One day she saw a number of birds on a drift log that was half out of the water. By the side of this log lay the remains of her husband. The eagles had picked his eyes out, but had only commenced their feast. This was the first death in the settlement. My father took back the lot, paid for the frame house, kept his smith's tools, and so ended his town.

Upon more mature reflection, he decided that the neighbourhood of a small town would be the reverse of agreeable, as the first inhabitants would be those that were too idle to improve a farm for themselves, and bad habits are generally the attendants of idleness, and that he, in place of being the owner of all, would only be proprietor in common with all the idle and dissipated of a new country.

On my father's arrival in the country he had been sworn in a justice of the peace for the London and Western districts — a very extensive jurisdiction over wild lands with few inhabitants; for those districts embraced all the lands between Lake Erie and Lake Huron, the Grand River, and Rivers Detroit and St. Clair. Courts were held in Sandwich, a distance of nearly two hundred miles, without roads, so that magistrates had to settle all disputes as they best could, perform all marriages, bury the dead, and prescribe for the sick. In addition to the medicine chest, my father purchased a pair of tooth-drawers, and learned to draw teeth, to the great relief of the suffering. So popular did he become in that way, that in after years they used to entreat him to draw their teeth in preference to a medical man — the one did it gratuitously, the other, of course, charged. My father put up two or three small log-houses which were tenanted by very poor people whose labour he required. From one of these houses my mother hired a nurse, Poll Spragge, who was a merry laughing, 'who-cares' sort of girl. Upon my mother remarking the scantiness of her wardrobe, which was limited to one garment, a woollen slip that reached from the throat to the feet, Poll related a misfortune which had befallen her a short time before. She then, as now, had but the one article of dress, and it was made of buckskin, a leather something like chamois; and when it became greasy and dirty, her mother

said she much wash it that afternoon, as she was going visiting, and that Poll must have her slip dry to put on before her father and mother returned from the field. During the interval, she must, of necessity, represent Eve before her fall. Poll had seen her mother, in the absence of soap, make a pot of strong ley from wood ashes, and boil her father's and brother's coarse linen shirts in it. She subjected her leather slip to the same process. We all know the effect of great heat upon leather. When Poll took her slip from the pot it was a shrivelled-up mass, partly decomposed by the strong ley. Poor Poll was in despair. She watched for the return of her family with no enviable feelings, and when she heard them coming she lifted a board and concealed herself in the potato hole, under the floor. Her mother soon discovered what had befallen Poll, and search was made for her. After a time, a feeble voice was heard from under the floor, and Poll was induced to come forth, by the promise of her mother's second petticoat, which was converted into the slip she then wore. She ended her recital with a merry laugh, and said now she had got service she would soon get herself clothes. But clothing was one of the things most difficult to obtain then. There were very few sheep in the settlement, and if a settler owned two or three, they had to be protected with the greatest care, watched by the children during the day that they might not stray into the woods, and at night penned near the house in a fold, built very high to secure them from the bears and wolves, which could not always be done.

There were instances of wolves climbing into pens that they could not get out of. On these occasions they did not hurt the sheep, but were found lying down in a corner like a dog. It is said that the first thought of a wolf on entering a fold is how he is to get out again; and if he finds that difficult, his heart fails him and he makes little effort.

Wolves were the pests of the country for many years, and, even after they were partially expelled by the settlers, they used to make occasional descents upon the settlements, and many a farmer that counted his sheep by twenties at night would be thankful if he could muster half a score in the morning. It was flax, the pedlar's pack, and buckskins that the early settlers had to depend upon for clothing when their first supply was run out. Deerskins were carefully preserved and dressed, and the men had trowsers and coats made of them. Though not becoming, they were said to be very comfortable and strong, and suitable to the work they had to do. Chopping, logging and clearing wild lands required strong clothing.

One part of the early clearing was always appropriated to flax, and after the seed was in the ground the culture was given up to the women. They had to

weed, pull and thrash out the seeds, and then spread it out to rot. When it was in a proper state for the brake, it was handed over to the men, who crackled it and dressed it. It was again returned to the women, who spun and wove it, making a strong linen for shirts and plaid for their own dresses. Almost every thrifty farmhouse had a loom, and both wife and daughters learned to weave. The pedlar's pack supplied their little finery, the pack generally containing a few pieces of very indifferently printed calicoes at eight and ten shillings, New York currency, a yard; a piece of book-muslin at sixteen and eighteen shillings a yard, and a piece of check for aprons at a corresponding price; some very common shawls and handkerchiefs, white cotton stockings to match, with two or three pieces of ribbon, tape, needles, pins and horn combs; these, with very little variety, used to be the contents of the pedlar's pack. Opening the pack caused much more excitement in a family than the opening of a fashionable shopkeeper's show-room does at the present day.

About this time, 1799, a great number of old soldiers, who had served under and with my father, found their way to Long Point Settlement. One of these soldiers had been taken prisoner with my father at Charleston, and when they were plundered of everything he managed to conceal a doubloon in his hair. With this he supplied my father's wants, who was wounded and suffering. My father now exchanged with him one of his choice lots, that he might be in the settlement, and near a mill; and took his location, which was far back in the woods. My uncle [Joseph Ryerson], and several other half-pay officers, came from New Brunswick to visit my father. The pleasure of seeing these loved and familiar faces, and again meeting those who had fought the same battles, shared the same dangers, and endured the same hardships, fatigues, and privations for seven long years, and had the same hopes and fears, and the bitter mortification of losing their cause, was indeed great. How many slumbering feelings such a reunion awakened! how many long tales of the past they used to tell, of both love and war! Those officers that came from New Brunswick to visit the country all returned, after a few years, as settlers. The climate of Canada was much preferable, and as an agricultural country was very superior. The population was now becoming so great that the Government thought it necessary to have all the male population, between the ages of sixteen and sixty, enrolled in the Militia. My father was requested to organize a regiment, and to recommend those whom he thought, from their intelligence, good conduct, and former service, most entitled to commissions. He was appointed Lieutenant-colonel of Militia and Lieutenant of the County, a situation that was afterwards done away with. This duty of select-

ing officers gave rise to the first awkward feelings that had been exhibited towards him in the settlement. Every man thought he ought to be a captain at the least, and was indignant that my father did not appreciate his merits. Some threatened to stone him; others to shoot him. The more moderate declared that they would not come to his mill, although there was no other within seventy miles. John McCall did not care for my father; he would be a captain without his assistance. He built a large open boat and navigated her for several years, and gloried in the designation of Captain McCall. But, notwithstanding all opposition, the regiment of militia was formed. They used to meet one day in the year for company exercise, and there was a general muster on the 4th of June, the King's birthday, for a general training. These early trainings presented a strange mixture. There were a few old officers with their fine military bearing, with their guns and remains of old uniforms; and the old soldier, from his upright walk and the way he handled his gun, could easily be distinguished, though clothed in home-spun and buckskin, with the coarse straw hat. The early settlers all had guns of some description, except the very juvenile members, who used to carry canes to represent guns. Those trainings used to be looked forward to with intense interest by all the boys of the neighbourhood, and afforded subjects of conversation for the ensuing year. It was no easy thing in that day to find a level piece of ground that was tolerably clear from stumps sufficiently large to serve for their general trainings.

Amongst the early settlers there were very few who could afford to hire assistance of any kind. Those that could pay found it easy to get men as labourers; but women servants, unless by mere chance, were not to be had. The native American women would not and will not, even at the present day, go out to service, although almost any of the other neighbours' daughters would be glad to go as helps, doing the same work and eating at the table with their mistress. My father, for many years, used occasionally to take the head of the table with his labourers, to show them he was not too proud to eat with them. My mother was exempt from this, but the help ate at her table, which was considered a sufficient proof of her humility. Many of those helps of early days have since become the wives of squires, captains, majors and colonels of Militia, and are owners of large properties, and they and their descendants drive in their own carriages.

In the summer of 1800 my mother had a very nice help as nurse. Jenny Decow had been apprenticed to a relative, and, at the age of eighteen, she received her bed, her cow, and two or three suits of clothing (those articles it was customary to give to a bound girl), and was considered legally of age, with the

right to earn her own living as best she could.

My mother soon discovered that Jenny had a wooer. On Sunday afternoon young Daniel McCall made his appearance, with that peculiar, happy, awkward look that young lads have when they are 'keeping company,' as it is called. At that time, when a young man wanted a wife, he looked out for some young girl whom he thought would be a good help-mate, and, watching his opportunity, with an awkward bow and blush he would ask her to give him her company the ensuing Sunday evening. Her refusal was called 'giving the mitten,' and great was the laugh against any young man if it was known that he had 'got the mitten,' as all hopes in that quarter would be at an end. But young Daniel McCall had not got {the mitten,' and it was customary on those occasions, when the family retired to bed, for the young man to get up and quietly put out the candles, and cover the fire, if any; then take a seat by the side of his lady-love, and talk as other lovers do, I suppose, until twelve o'clock, when he would either take his leave and a walk of miles to his home, that he might be early at work, or he would lie down for an hour or two with some of the boys, and then be away before daylight. Those weekly visits would sometimes continue for months, until all was ready for marriage. But they did not always end in matrimony. Sometimes those children of the woods were gay Lotharios in their way, as well as in more refined society, and it would be discovered that a favourite Adonis was keeping company with two or three young girls at the same time, and vice versa with some other young coquettes. But such unprincipled conduct would furnish gossip for a whole neighbourhood, and be discountenanced by all. Nor must you for a moment imagine that there was anything wrong with this system of wooing. It was the custom of the country in an early day, and I think it is still continued in settlements remote from towns. But the lives of hundreds of estimable wives and mothers have borne testimony to the purity of their conduct. When Jenny had been with my mother about six months, young McCall made his appearance in the middle of the week, and my father and some visitors commenced bantering him why he did not marry at once. Why did he spend his time and wear out his shoes in the way he was doing? He said he would go and talk to Jenny, and hear what she said. He returned in a few minutes and said they would be married. In an hour afterwards they were man and wife. They married in their working dresses — he in his buckskin trowsers, and she in her homespun. She tied up her bundle of clothes, received her wages, and away they walked to their log-house in the woods. Thirty years afterwards they used to show me some little articles that had been purchased with Jenny's wages; and they appeared to look back at

that time with pleasure. They became rich; he was colonel of militia, and some of their descendants are worth thousands. During their early struggles, Mrs. McCall was in the field with her husband, pulling flax, when she felt what she thought was a severe blow on her foot. A rattlesnake had bitten her. Her husband killed the snake; vulgar prejudice thought that, by killing the snake, the poison would be less severe. Then he put his lips to the wound, sucked it, and, taking her in his arms, carried her to the house. Before he reached it, her foot had swollen and burst. They applied an Indian remedy, a peculiar kind of plantain, which relieved her, but she was years before she perfectly recovered from the effects of the poison. Two children that were born during that time turned spotted, became sore and died; but her third child was strong and healthy, and is still living. These reptiles, that are now almost unknown in the country, were then plentiful. They had a den at the mouth of the Grand River, and there was another at the Falls. For many years the boatmen going up and down Lake Erie used to stop at the mouth of the Grand for an hour or two's sport, killing rattlesnakes. My father and boat's crew, on one of these occasions, killed seventy. The oil of the rattlesnake was thought to possess great medicinal virtues.

There was a sad want of religious instruction amongst the early settlers. For many years there was no clergyman nearer than Niagara, a distance of 100 miles, without roads. My father used to read the Church Service every Sunday to his household, and any of the labourers who would attend. As the country became more settled, the neighbours used to meet at Mr. Barton's, and Mr. Bostwick, who was the son of a clergyman, used to read the service, and sometimes a sermon. But there were so few copies of sermons to be obtained, that after reading them over half-a-dozen times they appeared to lose their interest. But it was for the children that were growing up that this want was most severely felt. When the weekday afforded no amusements, they would seek them on Sunday; fishing, shooting, bathing, gathering nuts and berries, and playing ball, occupied, with few exceptions, the summer Sundays. In winter they spent them in skating, gliding down the hills on hand-sleighs. And yet crime was unknown in those days, as were locks and bolts. Theft was never heard of, and a kindly, brotherly feeling existed amongst all. If a deer was killed, a piece was sent to each neighbour and they, in turn, used to draw the stream, giving my father a share of the fish. If anyone was ill, they were cared for by the neighbours and their wants attended to. But the emigrant coming to the country in the present day can only form a very poor idea of the hardships endured by the early pioneers of the forest, or the feelings which their isolated situation drew forth. Education and station

seemed to be lost sight of in the one general wish to be useful to each other, to make roads and improve the country.

I think it was in 1802 that I first saw Colonel Talbot, a distinguished settler, who had a grant of land seventy miles further up the lake, at a place afterwards called Port Talbot, where he had commenced building mills. People were full of conjecture as to the cause that could induce a young gentleman of his family (the Talbots of Malahide) and rank in the army to bury himself in Canada.

He and Sir Arthur Wellesley had been at the same time on the staff of the Duke of Buckingham, then Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and it was said the field of glory was equally open to both. Colonel Talbot afterwards came to this country and was on the staff of General Simcoe when he made a tour through the Upper Province. At that time he selected his future home. Some said that he left the army in disgust at not getting an appointment that he felt himself entitled to; others, again, said that neither Mars nor Venus presided at his birth. But one thing was certain: he had chosen a life of privation and toil, and right manfully he bore the lot he had chosen. When in the army, he was looked upon as a dandy; but my first impression would place him in a very different light. He had come to Port Ryerse with a boat-load of grain to be ground at my father's mill. The men slept in the boat with an awning over it, and had a fire on shore. In front of this fire, Colonel Talbot was mixing bread in a pail, to be baked in the ashes for the men. I had never seen a man so employed, and it made a lasting impression on my childish memory. My next recollection of him was his picking a wild goose which my father had shot, for my mother to dress for dinner. Thus commenced an acquaintance-ship which lasted until his death in 1853.

My father, on his arrival at Long Point, promised my mother that if she would remain contented for six years at Port Ryerse, and give the country a fair trial, if she then disliked it, and wished to return to New York, he would go back with her — that party feeling would by that time have greatly subsided. My mother now claimed my father's promise. He at once acquiesced, and left it to her to decide when they should go, my father well-knowing that however much my mother might wish to return, when left to her to decide, her better judgment would say "Not yet," as the improvements must all be a sacrifice. To sell his property was impossible. My mother postponed the return for a few years, but could not relinquish the hope of emerging from the woods, and be once more within the sound of the church-going bell. My father's property was fast improving. He had planted an orchard of apple, peach, and cherry trees, which he procured from Dr. Troyer, whose young trees were a year or two in advance of his

own, and he had procured a few sheep which were pastured in a field immediately in front of the house. But all their watching could not preserve them from the wolves. If they escaped by the greatest care for a year or two, and the flock increased to twenty or thirty, some unlucky day they would find them reduced to ten or a dozen.

A tree sometimes unobserved would fall across the fence, and the sheep would stray into the woods, which was fatal to them; or, the fastening to their pen would be left just one unlucky night not secured, and the morning would show melancholy remainder of the fine flock that had been folded the night before. All of these mishaps were serious vexations to the early settlers. The mill was a constant draw upon my father's purse. A part of his lands had been sold at a very low price (but not low at that time) — one dollar the acre — to assist in building it, and now it had to be kept in repair. The dam breaking, machinery getting out of order, improvements to be made, bolting cloths wanted, and a miller to be paid — to meet all this was the toll, every twelfth bushel that was ground. During the summer session the mill would be for days without a bushel to grind, as farmers got their milling done when they could take their grists to the mill on ox-sleds upon the snow. Few grew more than sufficient for their own consumption and that of the new-coming settler; but had they grown more, there was no market, and the price of wheat until the war of 1812, was never more than half a dollar a bushel; maize, buckwheat, and rye, two shillings (York) a bushel. The flour mill, pecuniarily speaking, was a great loss for my father. The saw-mill was remunerative; the expense attending it was trifling, its machinery was simple and any commonly intelligent man with a day or two's instruction could attend to it. People brought logs of pine, oak, and walnut from their own farms, and my father had half the lumber for sawing; and this, when seasoned, found a ready sale, not for cash (cash dealings were almost unknown) but for labour, produce, maple sugar or anything they had to part with which my father might want, or with which he could pay some of his needy labourers. There were some wants which were almost unattainable with poor people, such as nails, glass, tea, and salt. They could only be procured in Niagara, and cash must be paid for them. There was not yet a store at Long Point. Great were the advantages of the half-pay officers and those who had a little money at their command, and yet their descendants appear not to have profited by it. It is a common remark in the country that very many of the sons of half-pay officers were both idle and dissolute; but I am happy to say there are many honourable exceptions. At the head of the list of these stand our present Chief Justice (Sir John Robinson), and Dr. Ryerson, the Superintendent of Education,

and many others who deem it an honour to be descended from an United Empire Loyalist. From a multiplicity of care, my father had postponed from time to time, going to Toronto, or Little York, as it was then called (where the seat of government had been removed), to secure the grant of land which had been promised to his family, until after the departure of his friend General Simcoe, who was succeeded as Governor by General Hunter.

When my father made application to General Hunter, he was told that an order from the Home Government had limited the grants to the wives and children of U.E. Loyalists to 200 acres each; but said that if the Order in Council had passed for the larger grants, of course my father should have the land he had selected; but he, not foreseeing the change, had not secured the order, and General Simcoe's verbal promise could not be acted upon. The autumn of 1804 found us still in the original log-house. It had been added to and improved, but the stick chimney had not been replaced by brick, as my father looked forward from year to year to building a better house in a better situation; but he found so many improvements actually necessary, and so much to be done each spring and summer, that although a great deal of material had been prepared, the house was not yet commenced. One fine, bright morning, as some visitors were taking their departure, there was an alarm of fire, and, sure enough, the stick chimney had caught and communicated to the garret, and in a few minutes the whole of the upper part of the house was in flames. Our visitors, who had not got beyond the threshold, joined with the family and labourers in getting out the furniture as fast as possible. Nearly everything was saved from the lower part of the house, but what was in the garret was lost. The garret had been used as a store-room, and contained cases which had not been unpacked since they came from New York, but were left until a better house could be built. These things — linen, bedding, and some nice little articles of furniture, and various little knicknacks which were prized beyond their value — were a great loss; but the greatest loss was a box or two of books. These were not to be replaced this side of New York, and to a young family the loss was irreparable. A part of Pope's works, a copy of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Buchan's *Family Medicine*, and a Testament with commentaries were all that were saved. A small quantity of plate also, which had not been unpacked, was found in a very unsatisfactory state. The family took shelter in a house built for and occupied by the miller and his family, sending them to a smaller tenement. The situation was airy and beautiful, and with a few alterations and improvements, was more comfortable than the first log-house. This my mother rather regretted, as discomfort would have hastened the new house.

Although allusions were made to New York, no time had yet been named for their return. My father used to assure my mother and friends that he would go as soon as she said the word; yet these remarks were always accompanied by a particularly humorous expression of countenance. About this time the London District was separated from the Western, and composed what now forms the counties or districts of Middlesex, Elgin, Huron, Bruce, Oxford, and Norfolk. The necessary appointments were made, and the London District held its own courts and sessions at Turkey Point, six miles above us on the lake shore. The people, in the most patriotic manner, had put up a log-house, which served the double purpose of courthouse and jail. The courts were held in the upper story, which was entered by a very rough stairway, going up on the outside of the building. The jail consisted of one large room on the ground floor, from which any prisoner could release himself in half an hour unless guarded by a sentinel. The juries for some years held their consultations under the shade of a tree. Doubtless it was pleasanter than the close lock-up jury-room of the present day. My father, in addition to his other commissions, was appointed Judge of the District Court and Judge of the Surrogate Court. Turkey Point is a very pretty place; the grounds are high, and from them there is a very fine view of the bay and lake. General Simcoe had selected it for the county town, and the site of a future city. Now it boasted of one house, an inn kept by Silas Montross. There was also a reservation of land for military purposes. But the town never prospered; it was not in a thoroughfare, and did not possess water privileges. Twenty years afterwards it contained but one solitary house. The county town was changed to a more favourable situation, Vittoria. My father's young family now gave him great anxiety. How they were to be educated was a question not easily solved. Schools there were none, nor was it possible to get a tutor. A man of education would not go so far into the woods for the small inducement which a private family could offer.

Magistrates were not allowed to marry by license, nor could the parties be called in church, for there were no churches in the country. The law required that the parties should be advertised — that is, that the banns should be written out and placed in some conspicuous place for three Sundays. The mill door was the popular place, but the young lads would endeavour to avoid publicity by putting the banns on the inside of the door; others would take two or three witnesses and hold it on the door for a few minutes for three successive Sundays, allowing no one but their friends to see it. In many places marriages used to be solemnized by persons not authorized, and in a manner which made their legality very doubtful; but the Legislature have very wisely passed Acts legal-

izing all marriages up to a certain date. The marriages which took place at my father's used to afford a good deal of amusement. Some very odd couples came to be united. The only fee my father asked was a kiss from the bride, which he always insisted on being paid; and if the bride was at all pretty, he used, with a mischievous look at my mother, to enlarge upon the pleasure that this fee gave him, and would go into raptures about the bride's youth, beauty and freshness, and declare that it was the only public duty he performed that he was properly remunerated for.

Application had several times been made to the Rev. Mr. Addison, the only clergyman in the country, who was living at Niagara, entreating him to come to Long Point and baptize the children. All who had been born there remained unbaptized. This summer his promised visit was to take place, and was looked forward to with intense anxiety by both parents and children. I used to discuss it with my elder brother, and wonder what this wonderful ceremony of christening could mean. My mother had explained it as well as she could, but the mystical washing away of sin with water, to me was incomprehensible, as was also my being made a member of a Church which was to me unknown. I wondered what God's minister could be like, and whether he was like my father, whom I looked up to as the greatest and best of anyone in my little world. At last Parson Addison arrived, and my curiosity was satisfied on one point, and in my estimation my father stood higher than the clergyman.

The neighbourhood was notified, and all the children, from one month to eight or nine years old, were assembled to receive baptism. The house was crowded with people anxious to hear the first sermon preached in the Long Point Settlement by an ordained minister. Upon my own mind I must confess that the surplice and gown made a much more lasting impression than the sermon, and I thought Mr. Addison a vastly more important person in them than out of them; but upon the elder part of the community, how many sad and painful feelings did this first sermon awaken, and recall times long past, friends departed, ties broken, homes deserted, hardships endured! The cord touched produced many vibrations, as Mr. Addison shook hands with every individual, and made some kind of inquiry about their present or future welfare. The same God-hopeful smile passed over every face, and the same "Thank you, sir, we find ourselves every year a little better off, and the country is improving. If we only had a church and a clergyman we should have but little to complain of." But it was a hope deferred for many long years. A Baptist minister, the Rev. Mr. Finch, was the first clergyman who came to the little settlement to reside. His meetings were held in dif-

ferent parts of the settlement each Sunday, so that all might have the opportunity of hearing him if they chose to attend. He preached in houses and barns without any reward, labouring on his farm for his support. He, like all the early Dissenting ministers who came to the province, was uneducated, but possessed and sincerely believed a saving knowledge of the Gospel, and in his humble sphere laboured to do all the good in his power. Many of the young people joined his Church. He was soon followed by the Methodists. Too much cannot be said in praise of the early ministers of these denominations; they bore every privation and fatigue, praying and preaching in every house where the doors were not closed against them — receiving the smallest pittance for their labour. A married man received \$200 a year and a log-house for his family; an unmarried man had half that sum, the greater portion of which was paid in home-made cloth and produce. Their sermons and prayers were very loud, forcible and energetic, and if they had been printed verbatim, would have looked a sad jumble of words. They encouraged an open demonstration of feeling amongst their hearers — the louder the more satisfactory. But notwithstanding the criticisms cast upon these early preachers, were they not the class of men who suited their hearers? They shared their poverty and entered into all their feelings; and although unlearned, they taught the one true doctrine — to serve God in spirit and in truth — and their lives bore testimony to their sincerity. In this world they looked forward to neither preferment nor reward; all they expected or could hope for was a miserable subsistence. Nor was it surprising that in twenty years afterwards, when the path was made smooth, the church built, and the first clergyman, the Rev. Mr. Evans, came, that he found a small congregation. Every township had one or two Methodist and Baptist chapels. I do not recollect one Roman Catholic family in the neighbourhood. Although the Long Point Settlement was in existence thirty years before we had a resident clergyman of the Church of England, yet I cannot recollect one member who had seceded from the Church. Many had died, and many communed with the Methodists, who did not belong to them.

Introduction to Part Two

by Rev. A. Egerton Ryerson, D.D

At the author's request, Mrs. Harris, in June, 1879, brought down her recollections to the close of the war of 1812-15. The following pages are the result — written by Mrs. Harris twenty years after writing the previous memorandum, in the eighty-first year of her age, containing some interesting

particulars of the war, and stating the cause of the loss of the British fleet on Lake Erie, and the disasters which followed.

The author has not seen cause to alter a sentence or a word of Mrs. Harris' manuscript, written by herself in a clear, bold hand, notwithstanding her advanced age.

Historical Memorandum Post Script

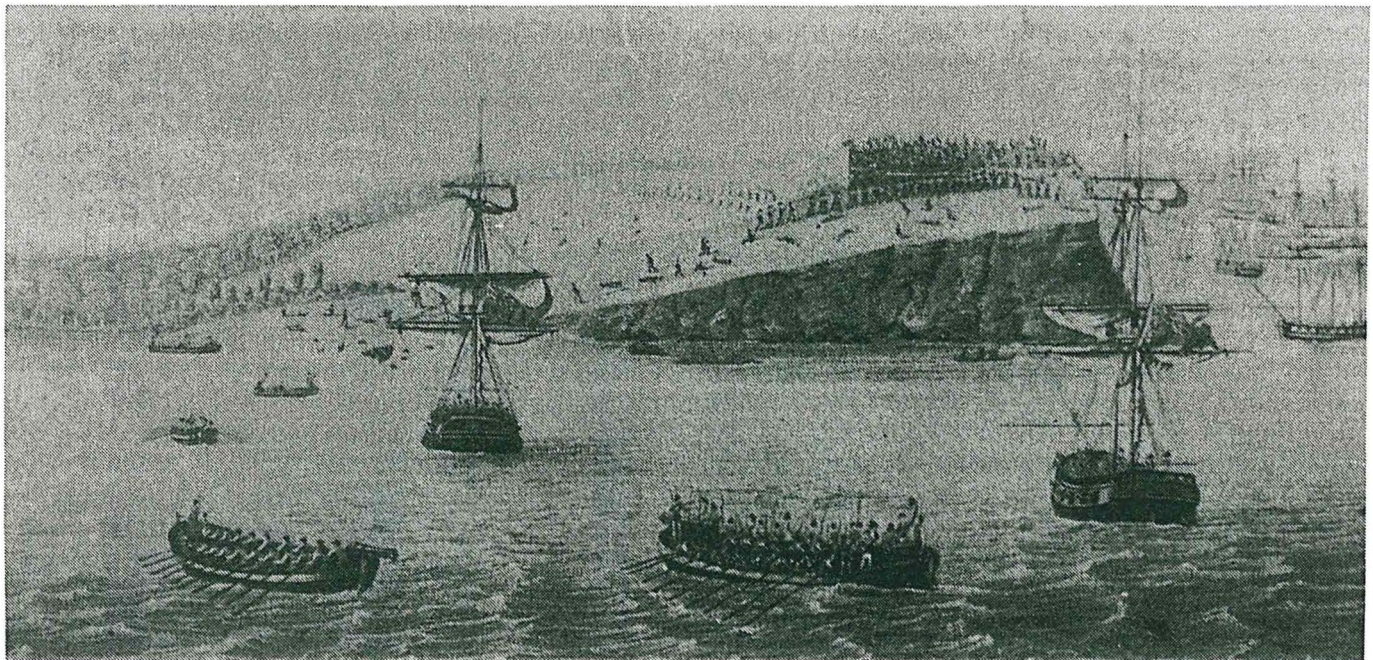
by Mrs. John Harris (nee Amelia Ryerse)
June, 1879

In 1810, my father showed signs of failing health. A life of hardship and great exertion was telling upon a naturally strong constitution. He decided upon resigning all his offices, and his resignation was accepted upon this assurance, that from ill-health he could no longer fulfil the duties involved. The Hon. Thomas Talbot was appointed his successor as colonel commandant of the militia, and the later Judge Mitchell succeeded him as Judge of the District and Surrogate Courts. At this time there were strong rumours of war between America and England, and the militia anticipated being called into active service. At the close of 1811, a large body of the militia which my father had organized waited on him, and urged him to resume command, as in him they had confidence. Colonel Talbot was a stranger among them, and lived at a distance. My father at that time was in the last stage of consumption, and died in the June following, in 1812, aged sixty years. In the six days after his death war was declared, and then came troubles to my widowed mother in various shapes. My father in seventeen years had seen a lonely wilderness changed into a fruitful country. Most of the original log-houses had given place to good frame buildings, and the inhabitants generally seemed prosperous and content. Immediately after the declaration of war, the militia had to do military duty and neglect their farms. British troops passed through Port Ryerse on their way to Amherstburg and Sandwich, and every available building was used as barracks. All merchant vessels were converted into ships of war, and they, with one or two small ships belonging to the Provincial Navy, were placed under the command of Captain Barclay, of the Royal Navy; Captain Finnes, R.N., was second in command. His ships were all of light tonnage; there were several transports which were in constant use conveying troops and army supplies to Sandwich and Amherstburg. The lake was clear of enemies, as the Americans were blockaded within Erie Harbour, where they had two or three large ships on the stocks. They could not cross the bar at Erie without

lightening their ships and taking out part of their guns. This they could not do in the presence of Barclay's fleet. When the weather was too rough for the blockading squadron to remain outside the harbour, it was too rough for the American fleet to get over the bar; consequently we felt very safe. This was during the summer of 1813. During this summer General Brock called out the militia of Norfolk, and asked for volunteers to go with him to Detroit; every man volunteered. He made his selection of the active and strong young men. Right gallantly the militia throughout the province behaved during the three years' war, casting no discredit upon their parentage — the brave old U. E. Loyalists. During the summer, Captain Barclay used to have private information — not very reliable, as the result proved — of what progress the ships were making on the stocks. He used occasionally to leave the blockade and go to Amherstburg and come to Ryerse. The Americans took note of this, and made their plans and preparations for his doing so. There was a pretty widow of an officer of some rank in Amherstburg, who was very anxious to go to Toronto. Captain Barclay offered her a passage in his ship and brought her to Ryerse and then escorted her to Dr. Rolph's, where he and some of his officers remained to dinner the following day. When they came in sight of Erie, they saw all the American fleet riding safely at anchor outside the bar. The Americans had everything in readiness; and as soon as the watched-for opportunity came, and the British fleet left the station, they got their own ships over the bar, their guns in, and all the things ready for defense or attack. They far outnumbered the British fleet, and were of heavier tonnage. Captain Barclay consulted his senior officers whether it would be best to come into Long Point Bay to winter, where they could get supplies across the country from Burlington Bay of all the munitions of war, and leave the ship on the stocks at Amherstburg (the Detroit) to her fate, as neither the guns to arm nor the men to man her had yet been forwarded, and now could not unless by land, which for heavy guns and the munitions of war was the next thing to an impossibility. It was with great difficulty that food and clothing could be forwarded, where there was little more than an Indian path and no bridges. The wisdom of the fleet decided upon going to Amherstburg and trusting to arming the ship with the guns from the fort, and manning them with sailors from the fleet, and with soldiers and volunteers. They landed Captain O'Keefe, of the 41st Regiment, who was doing marine duty at or near Otter Creek, to find his way to Ryerse, and to tell the militia commandant that the whole frontier on Lake Erie was now open to American invasion, the new ship was launched, imperfectly armed and manned; and without a sufficient supply of ammunition for

the fleet, and with little more than a day's rations for the men, Commodore Barclay was necessitated to risk an action. The result is too well-known. Nearly all the officers were killed or severely wounded. Captain Barclay, who had already lost one arm, was disabled in the other arm; but they did not strike their colours to Commodore Perry's superior force until their ammunition in some ships was all exhausted, and in others nearly so. No one could have fought more bravely than Captain Barclay. At the same time, those who knew of his leaving the blockade could not help feeling that all the disasters of the upper part of the province lay at his door. In May 1814 we had several days of heavy fog. On the morning of the 13th, as the fog lifted, we saw seven or eight ships under the American flag anchored off Ryerse, with a number of small boats floating by the side of each ship. As the fog cleared away they hoisted sail and dropped down three miles below us, opposite Port Dover. Of course an invasion was anticipated. Colonel Talbot was then in Norfolk, and he ordered all the militia to assemble the next day at Brantford, a distance of thirty miles, which they did with great reluctance, as many of both officers and men thought that an effort should have been made to prevent the Americans landing; but no resistance was offered. On the 14th, the Americans burnt the village and mills of Dover; on the 15th, as my mother and myself were sitting at breakfast, the dogs kept up a very unusual barking. I went to the door to discover the cause; when I looked up, I saw the hill-side and fields, as far as the eye could reach, covered with American soldiers. They had marched from Port Dover to Ryerse. Two men stepped from the

ranks, selected some large chips, and came into the room where we were standing, and took coals from the hearth without speaking a word. My mother knew instinctively what they were going to do. She went out and asked to see the commanding officer. A gentleman rode up to her and said he was the person she asked for. She entreated him to spare her property and said she was a widow with a young family. He answered her civilly and respectfully, and expressed his regret that his orders were to burn, but that he would spare the house, which he did; and he said, as sort of justification of the burning, that the buildings were used as a barrack, and the mill furnished flour to British troops. Very soon we saw columns of dark smoke arise from every building, and of what at early dawn had been a prosperous homestead, at noon there remained only smouldering ruins. The following day Colonel Talbot and the militia under his command marched to Port Norfolk (commonly known as Turkey Point), six miles above Ryerse. The Americans were then on their way to their own shores. My father had been dead less than two years. Little remained of all his labours excepting the orchard and cultivated fields. It would not be easy to describe my mother's feelings as she looked at the desolation around her, and thought upon the past and present; but there was no longer a wish to return to New York. My father's grave was there, and she looked to it as her resting place. Not many years since a small church was built on a plot of ground which my father had reserved for that purpose; in the graveyard attached are buried two of the early settlers — my father and my mother.



War of 1812, storming of Fort Oswego.

Colonel Samuel Ryerse 1752 - 1812

Colonel Samuel Ryerse was a prominent character in the early pioneer times of the country's history. It was through him that Long Point Settlement was first organized into a separate district, and this historical fact will always keep his name at the head of the list of our old pioneers who settled in Norfolk. In the month of March 1880, Colonel Ryerse received a packet from the executive office at York, containing a Commission of the Peace for the new District of London, naming himself and 16 others to be Justices of the Peace for the said district. The packet also contained commissions for the appointment of a Clerk of the Peace, Clerk of the District Court, Registrar of the Surrogate Court, Commissioners for the taking of acknowledgements of recognizances of bail or bails for the Court of the King's Bench, and a *Dedimus Potestatem* appointing Samuel Ryerse and two other Commissioners for administering the oaths prescribed by law to the officers of the government. Being thus constituted his Majesty's Commissioner of the Peace for the District of London, he called together those of the newly appointed magistrates who resided in Woodhouse and Charlotteville, and administered to them and the Clerk of the Peace the oath of office as prescribed by the law. This meeting was held April 22, 1880 at the house of James Monroe in Charlotteville. William Spurgin was the first to take the oath, and then, he, in turn, administered it to Colonel Ryerse, after which the latter proceeded in administering it to the others. The newly sworn justices at once held a special Session of the Peace, with Colonel Ryerse in the chair. After taking the necessary steps for the holding of a Court of the General Quarter Sessions of the Peace, they adjourned. The first Court convened April 8, 1800 at Monroe's house and Samuel Ryerse, being chairman, was Norfolk's first judge. In the history of pioneer times in our county, it will be thus seen that Colonel Ryerse played an important part. He was not only the head of affairs at the beginning, but he remained a leader after the machinery of the district had been set in motion. He was the most prominent man on the Bench during the time the courts were held at Turkey Point. The old court record shows that he served as Justice of one of the Divisional Courts of Request almost continuously for years. In 1805, on November 16, a special session of the Quarter Sessions was held at his own house at Port Ryerse, at which time a Commission bearing the great Seal of the Province was read, whereby Joh Bostwick was made Sherriff of London District.

Colonel Samuel Ryerse had three sons — Samuel, George and Edward — and two daughters, one of whom (Amelia) married John Harris, Treasurer of

London, and settled there. The other daughter, Margaret, married a retired British officer and settled in one of the West India islands.

Samuel, eldest son of Col. Samuel, was about 11 years old when the family came to the Long Point Settlement. He married Sarah Cyphor of Newton, N.J. and, in 1808, settled on 365 acres of land located on Black Creek, a short distance above Port Dover. He had seven sons, Peter, Robert, Samuel H., Edward, Arthur, Isaac and George Collin. He had five daughters, Eleanor, Sarah, Ann, Harriet and Hannah.

Rev. George Ryerse, second son of Col. Samuel, was a Baptist preacher. He married Elizabeth Vail and settled in Port Ryerse. Many of the older people of Windham and other back townships remembered, with pleasure, the old house on the hill where they used to go for cherry and other fruit supplies. Elder George Ryerse subsequently married Nancy Shaw, his second wife. He had five sons — William, James, Francis, Lewis and George — and six daughters — Maria, Sarah, Amelia, Ida, Bessie and Helen. William married a daughter of Col. Isaac Gilbert and settled in Port Ryerse. James married Sarah Ann, daughter of Emmanuel Winter, and settled near Port Ryerse. Francis married Elizabeth Potts of Woodhouse and settled near Port Ryerse. Lewis married Kate Kelly and settled at Point St. Ignace, Mich. George married Caroline Lee, granddaughter of John Chadwick of Charlotteville, and settled in the old homestead. Maria married John Austin, the carriage builder, and settled in Simcoe. Sarah married Charles Mabey and settled in Delhi. Ada married Captain Wesley Hazen. Bessie married in Saginaw, and Helen married J. Bottomly and settled in Lynedoch.

Major Edward Ryerse, youngest son of Colonel Samuel, married Martha, daughter of Elnathen Underhill, and settled in Port Ryerse. He left no children.

Pioneer Sketches of Long Point Settlement, A.E. Owen, 1897.

LIEUT.-COLONEL SAMUEL RYERSE 1752-1812

(Located at Anglican Church, Port Ryerse)

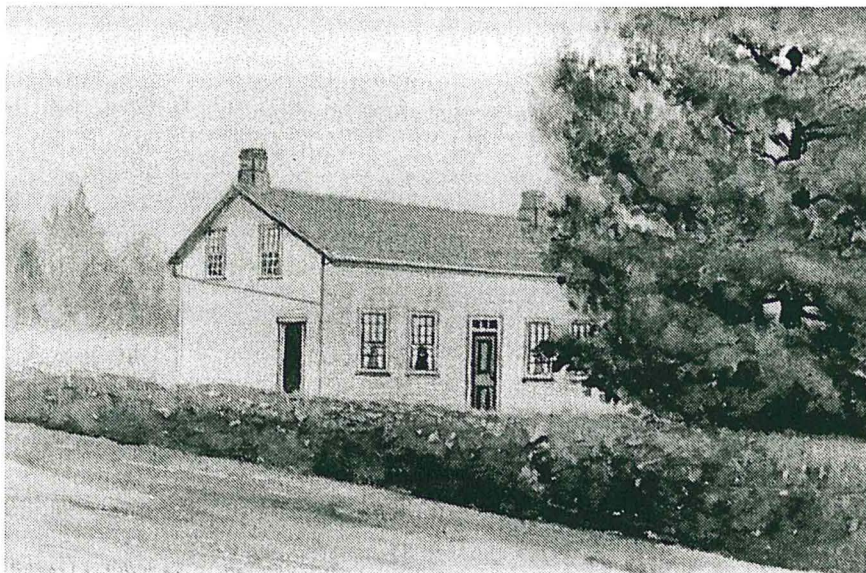
A United Empire Loyalist, Ryerse was commissioned in the 4th New Jersey Volunteers during the American Revolution, following which he took refuge in New Brunswick. In 1794 he came to Upper Canada, and the following year received 3,000 acres of land in Woodhouse and Charlotteville townships. Settling at the mouth of Young's Creek, he erected a grist-mill around which grew the community of Port Ryerse. As Lieutenant of the County of Norfolk and chairman of the Court of Quarter Sessions, he took an important part in the early military and civil administration of this area.

Erected by the Ontario Archaeological and Historic Sites Board

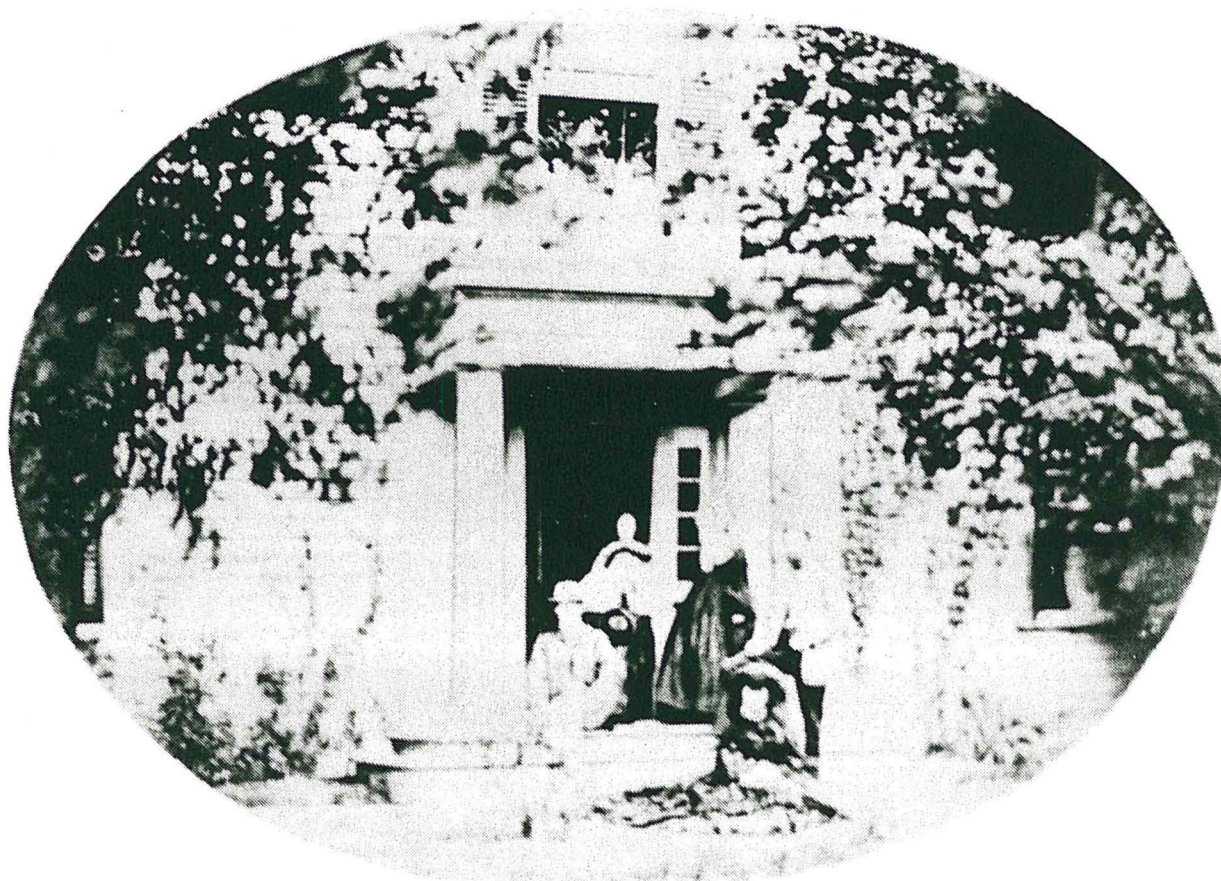
Amelia Ryerse 1798-1882

In 1815 Amelia Ryerse and John Harris were married in Port Ryerse by Amelia's uncle, Joseph Ryerson. Harris had come to Canada with the Royal Navy and served in the War of 1812.

After their marriage, Amelia and John moved to Kingston where John was reassigned as a surveyor. When he retired from the navy in 1817, they returned to the Long Point Settlement and built a house. The exact location is not known, but is thought to be near Vittoria. Shortly after, in 1821, Harris went to London, Ontario as the Treasurer of the London, District of Vittoria.



Amelia and John's house at Long Point Settlement between 1817-21 as depicted in this Edgar Cantelon painting.



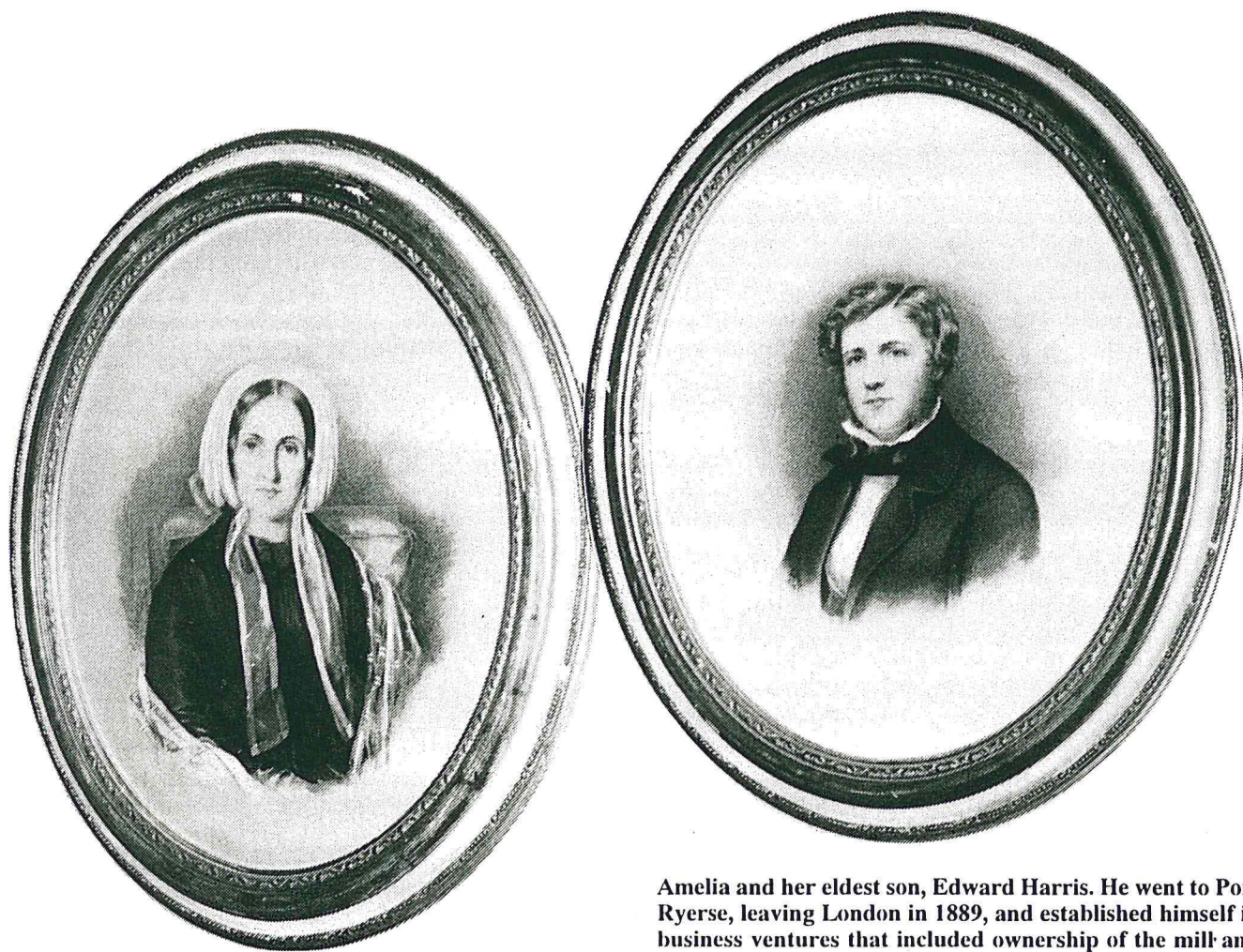
Amelia, centre, and her family at Eldon House. Her eldest son, Edward stands to her right, son George sits at her left and the two women are unknown.

By 1834 Amelia and her eight children had settled into a large two-storey frame house named "Eldon House" after the Earl of Eldon, Lord High Chancellor of England from 1801 to 1834. Two more children were born in London. In total she had 12 children — eight daughters, four sons — two died in infancy.

From 1834 to 1959 four generations of the Harris family lived in London's oldest surviving residence. Thanks to the generosity of the family, in 1960 Eldon House became a city museum and its eleven-acre riverside grounds became Harris Park. Furnished with the family's possessions, the house provides a fascinating look at life in a gentleman's home in the 19th and early 20th centuries.



A painting of Eldon House, London, Ontario (top right) by an unknown artist, shows the Thames River below the house.



Amelia and her eldest son, Edward Harris. He went to Port Ryerse, leaving London in 1889, and established himself in business ventures that included ownership of the mill and establishing the Long Point Company.

Joseph Ryerson

Reprinted from the Ontario Historical Society's *United Empire Loyalist Settlement at Long Point*, published 1900.

Joseph, younger brother of Samuel by nine years, was born in New Jersey, at a town called Paterson, on the 28th February, 1761. At the outbreak of the war of American Independence he entered the army in 1776 as a cadet. Being for some time too small to handle a musket, he used a light fowling-piece. About the close of that year, Sir Peter Parker and Sir Henry Clinton called for volunteers to form a light infantry corps, to go south for the purpose of besieging Charleston. Joseph is mentioned by Col. Sabine as being one of the 550 volunteers for this campaign. When Col. Ennis, the recruiting officer for this expedition, came to Joseph Ryerson, he told him that he was too small to go; but the boy replied that he was growing older and stouter every day, and the colonel, pleased at the lad's ready answer, accepted him.

The service was hard and dangerous, and scarcely a sixth of the force returned, Joseph being one of the eighty-six who got safely back to the Northern States after the unsuccessful siege. After this, the light infantry corps was dispersed, and the men who remained were returned to the regiments from which they had volunteered.

In 1778 he was made an ensign in the Prince of Wales Regiment. This honor was conferred on him in recognition of his services in the bearing of dispatches from Charleston to a point 196 miles in the interior. In the course of this he had many narrow escapes. One story is related by Peter Rodner, who had served in the same division, and remained, till death, his faithful and intimate friend.

He says that on one occasion Ryerson was sent on a scouting expedition and was rash enough to crawl up to a tent of American officers, when he was discovered by one standing in the door, but determining to save himself by an act of unparalleled intrepidity, walked boldly up, and, drawing his bayonet, plunged it through the heart of the hesitating officer and escaped before the startled Americans could give pursuit. He also mentions that Ensign Ryerson was one of the most determined men he ever knew, and, with the service of his country uppermost in his mind, often exposed himself to great dangers for the accomplishment of his purposes.

In the following year he was promoted to a lieutenancy in the same regiment, in recognition of the courage which he showed in the bearing of special dispatches by sea to the north, having eluded the enemy many times and repulsed them frequently at great odds. He was in six battles and several minor encounters, and once wounded.

In 1783 he went to New Brunswick, being assigned lands at Majorville, on the St. John. There he remained till 1799, when he removed to Upper Canada and settled in the township of Charlotteville.

In Canada, he held in succession the military offices of captain of the militia, major, and afterwards colonel.

In 1800 he was made a member of the first commission of magistrates, and was for some years chairman of the Courts of Quarter Sessions. In that same year he was appointed high sheriff of London District, which position he held for about five years. He held also the position of Treasurer of London District for eight years.

True to his loyalty to the British crown whenever danger threatened, in the War of 1812 he again shouldered his musket, and, together with three of his sons (George, William and John), remained in active service to the end of the war.

He seems to have been of a stronger constitution than his brother Samuel, and to have remained healthy and vigorous throughout his life. The Colonel lived till 1854 and was probably the last of the original U. E. Loyalists who joined the Royal Standard in 1776. His descendants, who live at the present time, have inherited his pluck and perseverance, unswerving loyalty to the Crown, and unsullied faith in the glorious destiny of the land for which their distinguished ancestor fought so long and so faithfully.

The families of the two brothers, Samuel Ryerse and Joseph Ryerson are connected by intermarriage with some of the best families of the Province. The circle of connection is very wide, including, among others, the Austin, Barett, Lee, Stirling, Wilson, Burch, Freeman, Williams, Bostwick (the late Colonel Bostwick, of Port Stanley, was a son-in-law of Joseph Ryerson), Wyatt, Rolph, Hazen, Mitchel, Clark and McMichael families.

Joseph married Mehetable Stickney in New Jersey. When he came to the Long Point Settlement, he was 39, his wife 33. He died in 1854 at 59 and Mrs. Ryerson predeceased him in 1850.

They had six sons, George, Samuel, William, John, Egerton and Edway; and three daughters, Mary, Mehetable and Elizabeth. Of these sons, Samuel was the only farmer, all the rest were preachers.

Major Edward Powers Ryerse

Edward was the youngest son of Col. Samuel Ryerse. He was born at Port Ryerse on Nov. 11, 1800. He died on March 27, 1882 and is buried in the Port Ryerse Memorial Church cemetery.

In 1824 Edward married Martha (Patty) Underhill, a UEL descendant, born in New Brunswick in 1806. They had no children, but raised two kinsfolk — Rev. Seth Ryerson and Sarah Ryerse.

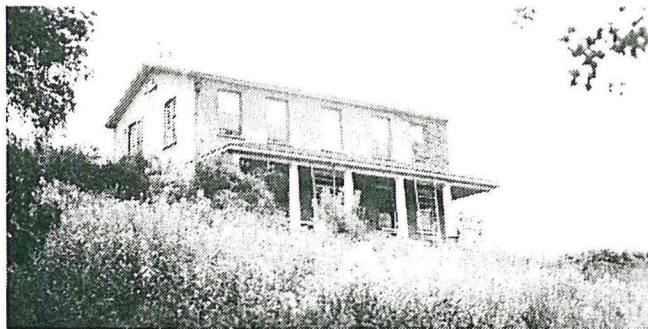
Edward was granted 1,000 acres in Port Ryerse, and several hundred acres in the Black Creek area. He was educated at Kingston Grammar School. Edward was very active in the Militia and became Lt. Colonel of the Regimental Division of South Norfolk in 1874.

Edward was a Judge of the Quarter Sessions and a Justice of the Peace for over 40 years. After the Rebellion of 1837-38, he was appointed Collector of Inland Revenue, a post he held until 1871.

About 1835 Edward built the impressive brick house, long owned by the George Smiths, and now by Jack and Sheila Beamer.

Most of his life was spent improving the Port Ryerse harbour. He built the first pier and the first four warehouses.

Edward was a true Conservative, and opposed liberalism in any form. A great patriot, he is said to have fired off a small cannon over Lake Erie every July 1st at "Those Yanks."



This picture is of the Major's house is from a postcard entitled "The Old Fort – Port Ryerse, Ontario."

Ryerse or Ryerson?

That is the question which has bothered our family for many decades. Since the first family records in Holland, as early as 1414, the name has gone through many changes — Reyerszen, Ryerszen, Reyers, Ryerson, Ryerse.

Samuel Ryerse was an older brother of Joseph Ryerson. Both served as loyalists throughout the American Revolution (1176-1783).

I have a letter dated Sept. 24, 1779 signed Samuel Ryerson, and another dated May 19, 1781, signed Saml. Ryerse. Somewhere between these two dates Samuel changed from a Ryerson to a Ryerse. Since then several descendants have changed their surnames from Ryerse to Ryerson and vice versa.

Robert E. Ryerse



Major Edward Powers Ryerse, a painting by Edgar Cantelon.

MAJOR EDWARD POWERS RYERSE. LATER COLONEL. SON OF SAMUEL RYERSE, BORN AT PT. RYERSE 1800. SEE PAINTING OF HIS LARGE BRICK HOUSE UPON HILL-TOP, SOMETIMES CALLED "PORT RYERSE" DUE TO THE FACT THAT HERE WAS THE RENDEZVOUS OF THE LOYALISTS DURING REBELLION OF 1837, FEARING AN ATTACK FROM ALCO'S LAKE ERIE. A FEW BRICKS REMOVED FROM THE WALLS MADE PLACEMENTS FOR GUNS, THAT WERE NOT REQUIRED. SINCE THE BURNING OF IT, OVER AND VARIOUS MILLS THE COLONEL LOVED TO FIRE HIS SMALL CANNON TOWARDS THE U.S.

Above copy by W.E. Cantelon appears on the portrait he painted of Major Ryerse.

Egerton Ryerson Founder of Ontario's School System

Adolphus Egerton Ryerson's distinctive contribution to the public welfare has gone unparalleled by any other Norfolk Country native.

Born to Col. Joseph Ryerson and Mehetabel (Stickney) on March 24, 1803, just north of Port Ryerse, Egerton is still revered as the founder of Ontario's public school system.

Having been raised on a farm, a hard-working Egerton always found time to read and acquire the knowledge he craved. Formal education was sporadic. First he attended the District Grammar School under the tutelage of James Mitchell. Later, he went to Gore District School at Hamilton.

Egerton made efforts to remain on the farm but his urge to learn overpowered him. There was also tension between Egerton and his father, the latter being Anglican while his son Methodist. Despite the fact the Colonel already had two sons in the Methodist ministry, Joseph gave Egerton the ultimatum to choose between home or the church. Egerton left. He took the position of usher and assistant teacher at his former grammar school for two years when his father asked him to come back. He remained until he was 21 and could no longer resist the desire to learn. After six months at Hamilton, Egerton suffered a breakdown. Upon his recovery, at 22, he was accepted as a Methodist minister for the Niagara circuit. This strenuous position meant travelling from district to district, often composing sermons on horseback.

A transfer took him to York (Toronto). Then he was stationed as a missionary to the Credit River Indians where his farming knowledge was passed on to them.

When he was only 23, Egerton came into public view upon publishing a rebuttal to Archdeacon John Strachan's ridicule of the Methodists. This eventually led to Egerton's induction as editor of the *Christian Guardian* in 1829. It was considered a leading journal of Upper Canada and Egerton stayed on until 1840.

In 1833, Egerton made a couple of trips to England to negotiate a union between the Canadian Methodist Conference and the Wesleyan Methodists of England. His success on these trips led to the establishment of Victoria College in Toronto at which Egerton served as the first president in 1840. That same year a degree of Doctor of Divinity was conferred upon him and he accepted the pastorate of Adelaide Street Church, Toronto.

Continuing to climb the ladder, Egerton was named Superintendent of Education for Upper Canada in 1844, his most distinctive position. He

spent 32 years remodelling and building the educational system. Dr. Ryerson researched modern schools through extensive tours of the United States, England and Europe. By 1850, the Schools Act was passed by the Legislature which abolished the old rate-bill system that taxed parents based on the number of their children attending school. He proposed a general taxation of property and free common schools throughout the province. The plan was adopted in 1871 along with the Grammar School Act which set standard province-wide entrance exams for high schools and collegiate institutes. Also implemented were school inspections, mandatory education and township school boards.

Besides Egerton's phenomenal abilities as head of education, he had an exceptional physique and "almost tireless energy." Of course as Egerton got older, he required a rest now and then. Ryerson Island provided just such an escape. Located in Long Point Bay, and also known as Pottahawk Point, it was acquired by Egerton's father as part of a Crown grant. Egerton would row a "little skiff" he built to make the 26-mile round trip.

In 1864, Egerton made a momentous voyage by boat from Toronto Harbour to Port Dover. He outfitted his 15 1/2-foot skiff with a canvas deck, ballast and sail. Toronto to Port Dalhousie took nine hours., then the boat was taken to Port Colborne for him via a lake boat through the Welland Canal. He proceeded along Lake Erie's north shore from the mouth of the Grand River to Port Dover in one day — a 40-mile trip. The return trip was not quite as uneventful as he encountered a storm on Lake Ontario that required great exertion.

By 1876 a 73-year-old Egerton requested retirement and stepped down as Chief Superintendent of Schools after 32 years. His functions and responsibilities were passed on to the Minister of Education.

In his retirement, Egerton wrote the "voluminous work", the *History of the United Empire Loyalists*, which pointed out the involvement of the UEL in the building of Canada.

Egerton Ryerson died in Toronto Feb. 19, 1882 at 79 and was buried at Mount Pleasant Cemetery.

His Personal Life

Egerton met Hannah Aikmen of Hamilton in 1824 while staying at her father's home after his breakdown. Although they wished to marry, he could not afford to, earning a mere \$50 per year with food and lodging supplied by his followers. As it turned out,

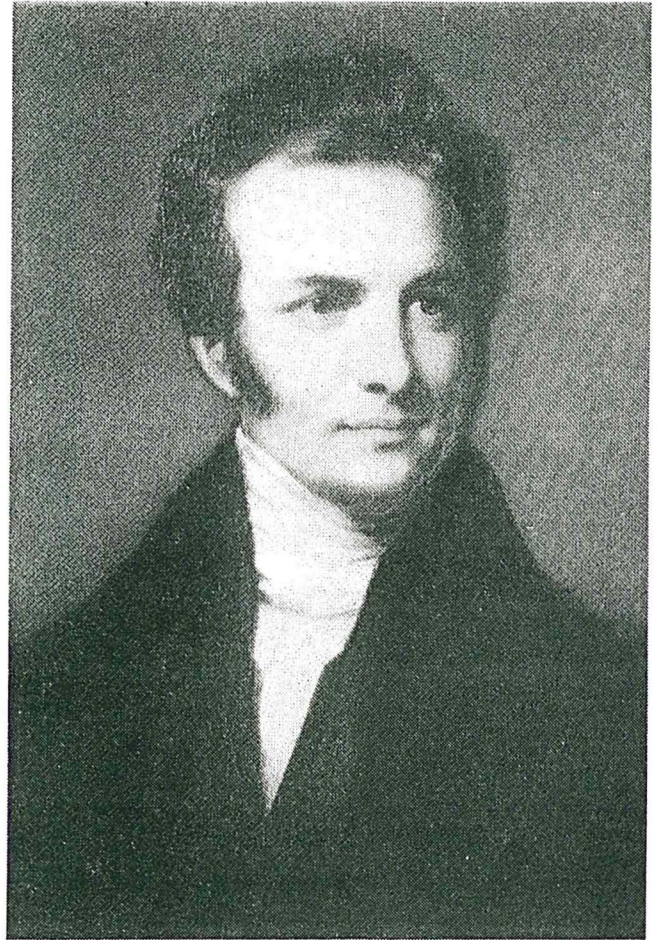
Hannah became engaged to Egerton's youngest brother Edway. In the meantime, Egerton transferred to the Coburg circuit which included a significant pay increase. Through the intervention of brother John, Egerton and Hannah reconciled and were married Sept. 10, 1828. They had to be married by a Presbyterian minister because Methodists could not yet legally perform marriages.

John William Ryerson was born to the couple in July, 1829 and Lucilla followed Jan. 15, 1832. Due to complications with her daughter's birth, Hannah died two weeks later on Feb. 1, 1832. Egerton was left a single parent with an infant daughter and a 2-year-old son and found it necessary to have various family members care for them.

Egerton remarried Nov. 8, 1833 to Mary who bore him another daughter, Sophie in Dec. 29, 1836.

His only son, John, developed "summer complaint" (likely dysentery) and died Sept. 22, 1835. Another son was born in 1842 but died six months later. Another son, Charles Egerton, was born July 6, 1847. Yet another death befell Egerton when his 17-year-old Lucilla succumbed to "consumption" (tuberculosis) in 1849.

Daughter Sophie went on to marry Edward Harris, one of Amelia's sons in 1860. She returned home in 1862 under marital strain but returned to her husband at Eldon House in London in 1865.



EGERTON RYERSON PLAQUE

The Reverend Adolphus Egerton Ryerson 1803-1882

This outstanding educationalist, journalist and clergyman, the son of an Anglican Loyalist, was born near Vittoria. He entered the Methodist ministry in 1825, serving as a circuit rider and missionary to the Indians. He was appointed first editor of the Methodist 'Christian Guardian' in 1829, and became an advocate of the Reform objective of separating Church and State, though he later expressed conservative views in politics. As head of the Department of Public Instruction (1846-76) he established this province's present system of public education, in the hope of seeing 'every child of my native land in the school going way'. A vigorous, prolific controversialist, he wrote on agriculture, politics, religion, the Loyalists and Canadian Methodism.

Erected by the Archaeological and Historic Sites Board of Ontario

A Short History of the "Old Trees" on the Colonel Sam Farm

by H. Vernon Ryerse

Of special interest with respect to these trees are the comments of the late Helen Straith which are taken from a note written to me June 29, 1977, in which she describes her impressions while taking a walk on the Colonel Sam property with a naturalist friend:

We spent a couple of hours enjoying the enchanting grass-carpeted, tree enclosed, park-like space at the top of the hill at Port Ryerse adjacent to the Thompson farm. The gate was new since I last saw it a few years ago, but we knew the path on the far side of the barn. The avenue of trees grows more majestic every year. The encircling trees around the space that formed the basement of the house that burned down on May 24th of 1893 have grown to look like a memorial tribute to the former owners. My friend had brought her binoculars and red-headed woodpeckers, mourning doves, barn swallows, etc. were our company for the afternoon.

The so-called "avenue of trees" formed two columns easterly from the old barn. Some of the maples on the south side were planted by Rev. George Ryerse (Elder George) as early as 1895, while those on the north side were planted at a later date. As time went on, their spreading limbs



grew into a living canopy over the laneway extending all the way from the barn to the old homestead. Eventually the largest tree acquired the name of "Colonel Sam" after my great-great-grandfather, and a second one was called "Elder George." Due to their age, and the severity of occasional storms, both of these trees perished during the 1980's. Two of the remaining ones have since been named after my grandfather George and my father Carl. All of these trees are among the older "nature" citizens of Port Ryerse, and have been silent witness of the many changes that have taken place in the village over the years.

As maples have a limited life expectancy, it has been a matter of concern to keep the ones that are still standing alive. In recent years two tulip trees and a copper beech have been planted in the park to commemorate the "old trees" and to carry on their tradition.

Shipping & Shipbuilding

Early in Port Ryerse's shipping industry, the Van Norman family made use of the harbour's deep waters to ship the "pigs" processed from bog iron they mined from the area until the resource ran out in 1847. Boats hauled the iron from the Port as well as finished iron products and goods exchanged for them.

The ore could be located "at or near the surface of the ground, in beds sometimes several feet in thickness and so abundant that three or four thousand tons might be secured from a few acres."

The Van Normans employed about 400. Many of these men formed lumber companies on the side, cleared the land and shipped the resource from the Port.

With all this activity, the natural harbour needed improvements. Wharves, sheds and, later, piers and warehouses were built.

As a result of stripped lands, the farmers set to growing and supplied the ships with grains and flour. With businesses springing up, manufactured goods also became part of the trade. The port abounded with docks and warehouses that stored, as well as transported, the wealth of the land.

From 1860-64, Port Ryerse experienced its shipbuilding era, causing great beach activity. At the time, the Port boasted a population of 200 and 14 businesses were registered.

David M. Foster was a prominent ship builder from the area and together with W.H. Ryerse, built the schooners *Brittania* (1860) and *E.P. Ryerse* (1861). Other vessels likely built in Ryerse included: the *Georgiana* (1872), a locally owned screw propeller of 54 tons originally built as the "*Dover*" in Port Dover in 1850; N.C. Ford; J.S. Austin, a three-master built in 1863; D.W. McCall, 122 tons; the *Arabian*, *Alliance* and *Rebecca Foster*, three more of Captain Foster's; and Captain Lewis Ryerse's small fore Emily Ellen and refurbished two-masted scow Kate Kelley.

In 1862 the Simcoe and Port Ryerse Harbour Company was formed with Edward Powers Ryerse as president and William Holmwood as secretary/treasurer. Under their reign the harbour was improved enough to accommodate large sailing vessels and steam propellers for loading and unloading. It was dredged, the dock was improved and stocks were issued. It has been written that Col. Sam's grandson, Edward Harris of London — builder of the third gristmill — initiated changes to the harbour that E.P. originally developed with the first dock some years earlier. Port Ryerse's first harbour master was William Mercer Wilson.

Another company was formed in 1867. The Port Ryerse Tram or Railway & Harbour Company was to build a tram road to Simcoe, but never did.

In 1871 alone, 7,500,000 feet of timber and lumber were claimed to have been shipped from Port Ryerse. It has also been claimed that 150 teams of horses showed up all in one day to unload grain.

"They used to tell me of spar timber being piled on both sides of the road for a mile back from the beach when spring-time arrived," recalled George A. Smith in a 1959 *Hamilton Spectator* article.

"A lot of timber and lumber was rafted across the lake," he explained. "There was a grain elevator here, too, and boats came into the harbour slip to load cargo. One time a vessel (the *Argyle*) sank in the harbour and its outline could be seen for years in the mud."

The A&T McCall Company (brothers Senator McCall and Thomas McCall) were probably the leading shippers in the Port. They owned vessels, shipped lumber and other forest products, and sold grain.

Some other lumber shippers included; David Sharp and Captain Joseph McFell (who used the schooner *David Sharp*), John Potts and Mr. Dawson, Mr. Gibbons of Windham, and William McCall.

The shipping business met its end when, in 1871-73, Port Ryerse was turned down as a recipient of a railway link, the Air Line & Canada Southern Railroad. Port Dover was chosen.

Captain David Montague Foster 1823 - 1907

Born in Danby Township, Thompkins County, New York, Captain Foster came to settle in Port Burwell, Ontario, from where he became a prominent figure in the shipping industry.

The skilled captain was also a master shipbuilder, having constructed some 45 ships, both lakers and ocean-going vessels. His first schooner was *Eunice Ann* of Port Dover (1849-50) while the last was *Hazel A.* (1894) at Reed's Lake, Michigan. Captain Foster formed a shipbuilding company with W.H. Ryerse which produced at least 10 vessels for freight.

During the 1890s and early 1900s, Captain Foster excelled in pleasure-boat excursions on Lake Fenton and the Flint River. He also ran trips between Port Burwell and Port Dover.

The captain may best be remembered for the fact that he opened the original "Wonderland" (now Wonderland Gardens) in 1890 at London, Ontario. Two years prior he built two steamers, the "*City of London*" and the "*Thames*" which ran between London and Springbank Park on the Thames River.

Captain Foster spent his last years at Port Coldwell, Ontario, on the north shore of Lake Superior.



Captain Alexander McNeilledge 1791 - 1874

Having emigrated from Greenock, Scotland, Captain McNeilledge was a seasoned sailor. His career began at the age of 8 and carried him all over the world. He settled in Port Dover in June 1830.

A major accomplishment of the captain's was the publishing of a Chart and Sailing Instructions for the north shore of Lake Erie by Jewett, Thomas & Co. in 1848.

An excerpt from this publication includes Port Ryerse: "About 5 miles to the west [of Port Dover] is Ryerse's Creek, or Port Ryerse. There is considerable flour shipped from this place, and there has been a good deal of money laid out by the owners of the place in building piers and dredging the creek and between the piers, for which they deserve a great deal of credit- but having no shelter, the SE blows often do much damage to the piers and works, etc. Vessels have formerly loaded at the piers- now they have to load at anchor. There is a pile of stone about the anchorage a little above the piers that was thrown over by some vessel. That you must guard against- it is right to know this, as in getting underweigh when you are loaded you may save some trouble."

(From *Tales of the North Shore* by Frank and Nancy Prothero, Nan-Sea Publications 1987)

General Stores

Port Ryerse General Store

The Port Ryerse General Store was built in 1835 by George Ryerse and partner, Mr. Gray. Ryerse soon bought out Mr. Gray's shares and passed the business on to his son William H. Ryerse in 1837. In turn, W.H. went on to run the store until 1904. During his ownership, W.H. served as postmaster from 1844-1902. He was also the victim of a break-in Nov. 1, 1878 when the safe was blown open. Losses included \$40 worth of stamps and \$10 cash.

The next proprietor, Mr. Smale, actually had his own money made for the store. Aluminum trade tokens were produced in denominations of \$1, 50¢, 25¢, 10¢.

The store has changed hands many times over its 159-year history. Following Mr. Smale were:

Wm. F. Smith	April 1916-21
Thomas & Ida Buck	1921-25
Richard Berry	April 1925-30
Clarence & Mildred Ward	Aug. 1930-49
Norm & Maude Shillington	Sept. 1949-65
Elizabeth & Bruce Mayo	1965-76
Susan Hicks	1976-79
Shaun & Anita Holbrook	1979-87
Edward & Marie McCreary	1987-present



This postcard shows the General Store and the Ryerse house circa 1908 from a western viewpoint



Trade tokens from the store "minted" by Audrey Smale who owned the business from 1904-16.

When the Shillington's took over in 1949, the store ceased to offer postal service. In 1950, David Goodlet became the new postmaster and opened a post office on his property, the old Collins Hotel, where service was provided from June 15 to September 15. This summer service was discontinued in September 1969 when year-round delivery began. Free rural delivery between Port Ryerse and Vittoria had previously begun Oct. 1, 1909.

Up until the 1960s, locals used the store for all their grocery needs because of the convenience as well as prices. Wives and children would spend the entire summer in the Port without transportation — having been dropped off by husbands who returned on weekends. As the large grocery chains flourished, smaller stores could not compete with cheaper prices; so the store was no longer a viable means of support for an owner. Some owners began staying open just during the very busy summer season. With new owners came new ideas

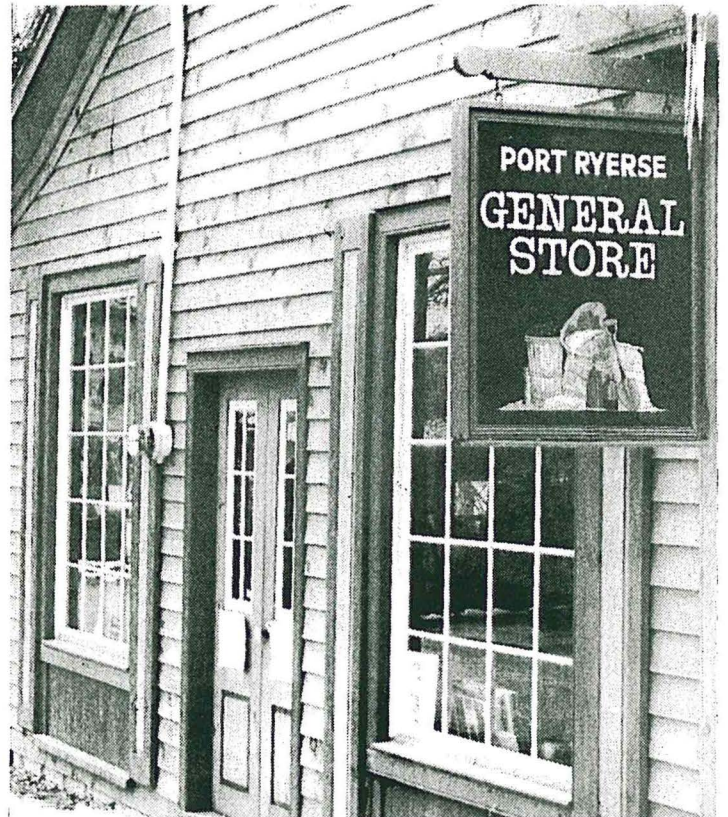


From September 1949-65 Norman and Maude Shillington owned the General Store.

as to what the store should provide to customers and what renovations should be carried out on the old building.

The face of the store took on some major changes, barely resembling the original appearance. Pictures taken during the Shillington's ownership show smaller front windows and much commercialism through large advertising signs. When the Holbrooks owned the store, it had been painted brown and the windows appeared even smaller. Extensive interior renovations took place. At one point, the store was closed for three years. As a means of bringing in more money, Shaun installed pinball machines and a pool table, turning the store into an arcade of sorts, and turning away the locals.

It wasn't until 1988 that the building was restored to an almost original front. The deteriorating store had been left empty for a year when new owners, the McCrearys, chose to undertake the large project which included structural improvements and considerable interior changes as well. As part of the upgrade, a large kitchen was installed to provide a never-ending supply of fast food and baked goods. The store was re-opened during the May 24th weekend in 1988. In November 1991 the store was closed again and remains just a residence today.

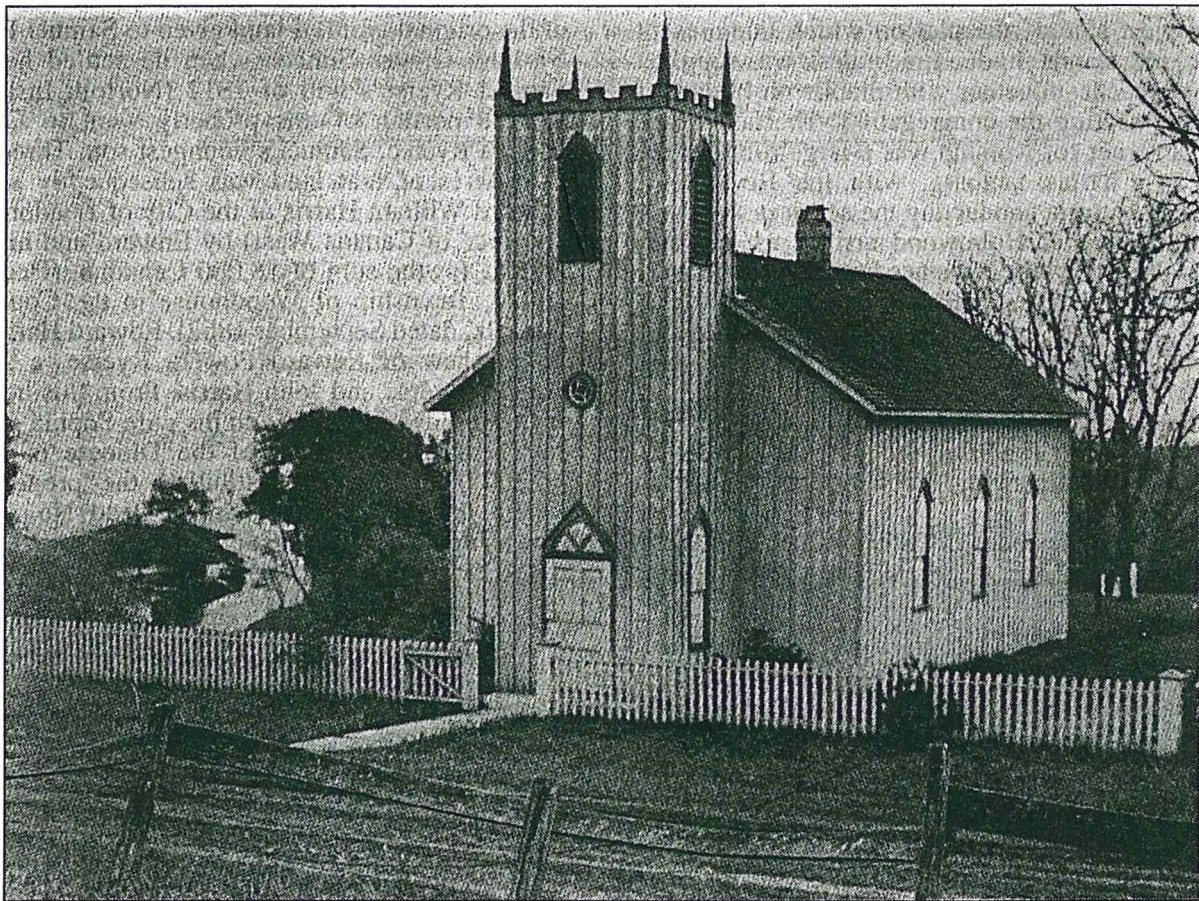


Leaney & Co. Groceries & Provisions

This store was located across from the Cutting Hotel on the northwest corner of King Street at Commercial Road (its sign can be seen in the picture of the Cutting Hotel).

There was another store at the foot of Simcoe hill on the northeast corner of King Street. It also had a hall which was used by the Masons and the Salvation Army.

Port Ryerse Memorial Church



"On a moonlight night a shining white church and steeple watch over a small community, where the twinkling lights show that families have once again found haven in Port Ryerse. Memorial Church has been adorned with loving hands, reminding one of a gracious old lady who has fulfilled her struggling duties toward her Lord and is now serenely welcoming people into her quiet sanctuary where there is tangible evidence of what can be accomplished through steadfast faith and perseverance."

Edna Goodlet, 1954

Port Ryerse Memorial Church, 1870 to 1994

The Anglican church at Woodhouse had already been established to serve the settlements of Vittoria, Port Dover and Bird Town (now Simcoe) before the first Anglican services were held in Port Ryerse. These commenced in the 1860s, in the yard of Major Edward Ryerse. The Rev. M. S. Baldwin of Port Dover, who would later become the third Bishop of Huron, conducted the services. Later services were moved to a more favourable location in an orchard on the west side of the plot on which our present church now stands. In due time a desk was supplied for the preacher together with planks on blocks of wood for seating the congregation. The next place Anglicans met for worship was a large room in the home of Charles Sellburg, with the Rev. R. V. Rogers of Vittoria conducting the services.

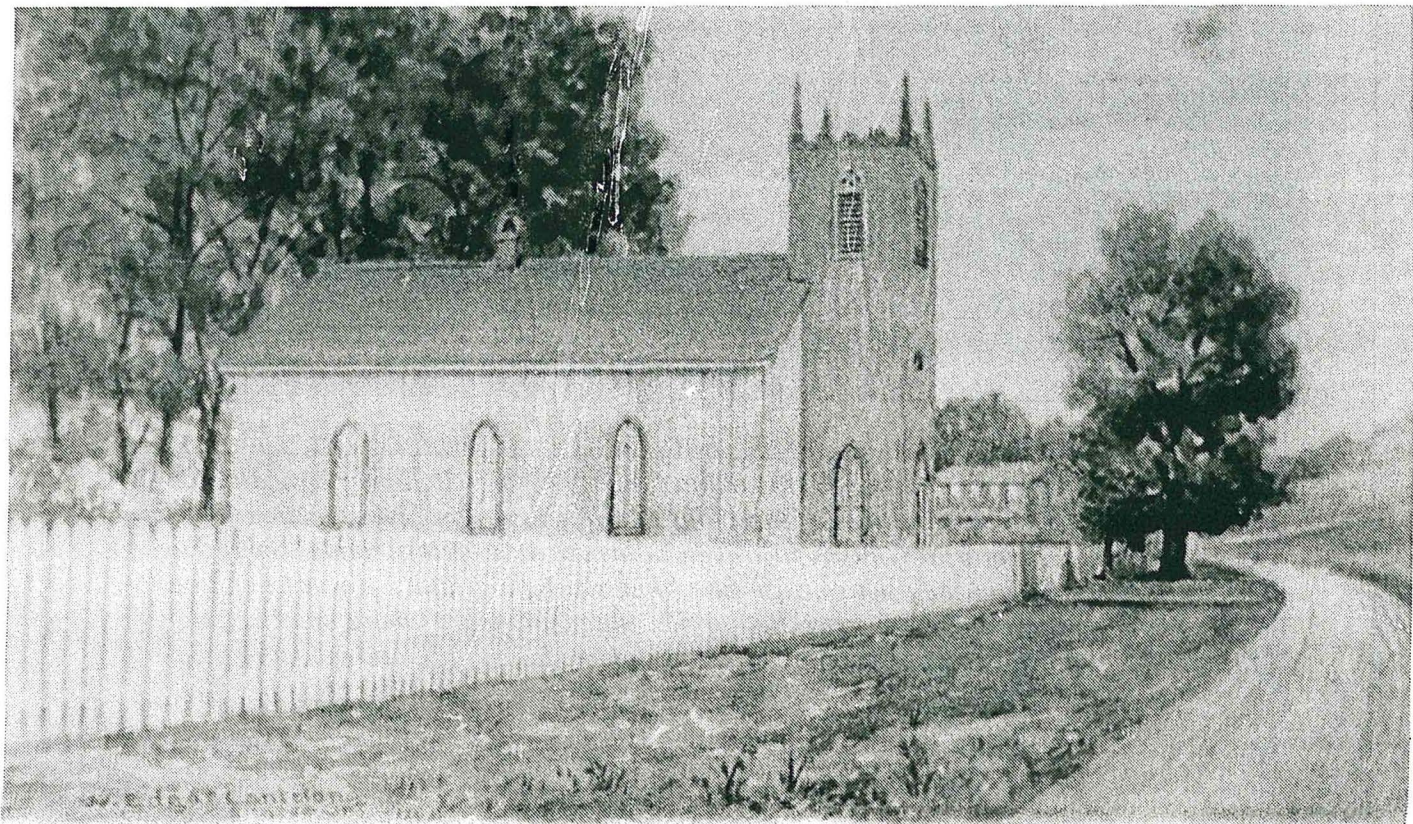
In 1865 Walter Holmwood arrived as harbour-master of Port Ryerse and since he and his wife were dedicated Anglicans, the idea of building a church at Port Ryerse was encouraged. By about 1869 the decision had been made to build the Port Ryerse Memorial Church, as a memorial to the founders of the then-flourishing community. A building committee was established and, in the summer of 1869, it issued the accompanying Proclamation and List of Subscribers.

The church was built in 1869 and consecrated in

1870. One of the builders was John Gunton, who walked six kilometers every day from Vittoria to work on the church. He then walked back home at night.

Original Land Transactions

The land on which the church is situated was part of the original grant of land given to Samuel Ryerse by John Graves Simcoe when he settled here. In Samuel Ryerse's will of 1812 (Norfolk Instr. No. 723), a portion of this property went to Edward Powers Ryerse, Samuel's youngest son. Three hundred acres of that land was subsequently sold to Edward William Harris of the City of London (then Province of Canada West) by Edward and his wife Martha for the sum of \$8,000 Canadian (Deed No. 21920, Township of Woodhouse in the County of Norfolk, dated September 1862). Edward Harris was the nephew of Edward Powers Ryerse, a son of Amelia Ryerse and John Harris. From this holding, in 1870, Edward Harris and his wife Sophia granted to The Church Society of the Diocese of Huron 15,800 square feet constituting the property on which the church now stands (Deed No. 28057, Township Woodhouse, County Norfolk).



An Edgar Cantelon painting of the Memorial Church, Port Ryerse with the E.P. Ryerse home in the background.

MEMORIAL CHURCH, PORT RYERSE.

It is proposed to erect a Church—in connection with the Diocese of Huron—in memory of the late COLONEL RYERSE, for the use of the members of the Protestant Episcopal Church.

Port Ryerse promises to be a place of importance, though now consisting of a population of ~~two hundred~~ —, a majority of whom are either members of, or friendly to, and attendants on the ministry of the Rev. R. V. Rogers, M.A., minister of Vittoria.

Believing the present to be a very favorable opportunity, which, if not embraced, might never return, the Committee earnestly and respectfully entreat the aid of friends in general, and especially the descendants of the late Colonel SAMUEL RYERSE.

COMMITTEE:—Rev. Mr. Rogers; Walter Holmwood; H. Leany; E. P. Ryerse; ~~John Rogers~~.

—We, the undersigned, agree to pay the amounts opposite our names, on or before November One 1869, to E. P. Ryerse, Esq., Port Ryerse.

Church Consecrated 16th Oct. 1878

Edward B. Ryerse. Burial Ground Reserve	\$200- 00
do in cash	25- 00
Walter Holmwood cash.	50. 00.
Harry Leany	20. 00
Mr. Haskett (Vittoria)	15- 0
Anonymous - Toronto post mark	5- 0. Rec
B. H. D.	10- Rec
H. R. Beecher Esq.	2- 45. Rec
Mr. Hayward Esq. Miss Bigham 2/2 (Port Ryerse)	5- 1 Rec
Archdeacon Patton	5- Rec
John Watkins Esq. (Kingston) unknown mts	50- 0 Rec
The family of the late Rector of Vittoria	20- 5 Rec
J. H. Ardagh, M.A.	2- 0 Rec
Mrs. Askew - Kingston	
Thos. Kirkpatrick Esq. (L.C.)	
Rev. S. Bousfield, Kingston	
Dr. Ramblant - R.C.R.	
Rec'd W.H.	9- 00
Rec'd R. Leany	5. 00
Mrs. Fry - Toronto	12- 5- 0
Mrs. Harney - Bath	10- 0- 0
Rev. Mr. Bousfield	\$133. 00
Collected by Mrs. J. Rogers, Reading, England	13- 40-
	<u>\$156- 40</u>

5- 1
2- 0
2- 0
Rec'd H. G.

The Early Years

Originally, Memorial Church was associated with Vittoria under the leadership of the Rev. Rogers and his successor, the Rev. H. B. Wray. Later this parish became part of Port Dover. Finally in 1885 it was joined with the parish of Woodhouse under the pastoral care of Rev. William Davis. This partnership continued for over a century and it is only in recent years that the congregation would give any consideration to establishing a separate parochial identity.

Port activity was at its peak in the early 1870s and large volumes of lumber and grain were shipped to both U.S. and Canadian ports. In addition, a thriving shipbuilding industry was in place. With the depletion of the great Norfolk forests and the building of the Air Line and Canada Southern Railroad to Port Dover in 1873, port activity fell off. The next two decades witnessed a gradual decline in the shipping business and both the town and the church were to suffer from the effects of this.

First Half of 1900s

Toward the latter part of 1890, the church was closed. Normal services were not held until 19 years later. In July 1909 the Rev. James Ward, Rector of Woodhouse, resumed services and he continued to provide worship at Port Ryerse for the next 20 years. Succeeding Rev. Ward was Rev. T. B. Holland who remained for the next 11 years, until 1941.

For the most part, during the first half of this century, Port Ryerse Memorial Church held services only during July and August to serve visitors who spent summers at their cottages nestled among the hills and along the sandy beach. Due to the mixed backgrounds of the summer colony, these services were not always strictly Anglican in form. Sometimes a Harvest Home service was held on the last Sunday of the summer season. Sheaves of wheat, bundles of corn stalks, fruits and vegetables decorated the church much as is done for the Harvest services today.

As Edna Goodlet explained in an article in the May 18, 1956 *Simcoe Reformer*, there was never enough money to do major repairs to the church. "Money had to be used every year to replace broken windows, for when the church was idle it was a perfect place for errant boys who had a mania for throwing stones, and it was not uncommon to hear the church bell rung in the middle of the night when teenagers were looking for amusement."

In 1939, a well-attended garden party was organized by church neighbours to raise funds for major renovations. The event was held at the summer home of Mrs. Arthur Lea and the adjoining property of Dr. and Mrs. Alan Jackson. The \$200 raised allowed a

new roof to be put on the church.

A feature of the afternoon was the presentation of a handsome oil painting of the church, the work of the donor Helen Straith. This was raffled off for the general fund and won by Mrs. Robert Gunton whose great-grandfather donated the land on which the church stands.

Depicted in the painting is a summer day in the late 1920s or early '30's. In her personal notes Helen Straith described the scene in these words: "I sat on the bank across the road from the church and attempted with oil paints on canvas a bit of the charm of it, with its setting of trees. There were purple flowers of thistles in the foreground and I could not resist including that bit of colour in the picture."

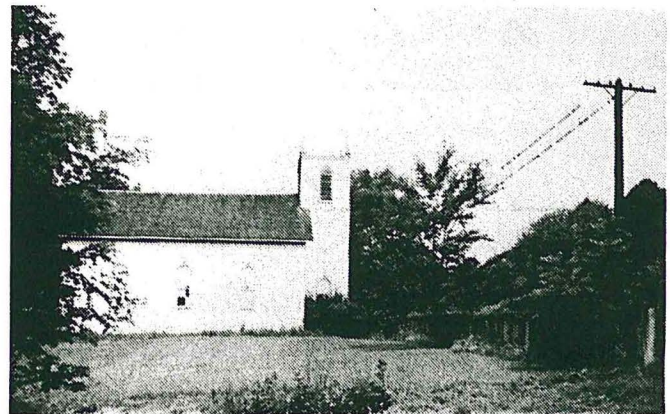
In 1941, still during the tenure of Rev. Holland, a portion of the church property was sold off to Mrs. Vera Helena Lea for the sum of \$50. This section comprised essentially a triangle of land from the corner of King and William streets running roughly 90 feet north along King Street, terminating about 10 feet from the south side of the church building. Also from the corner of King and William, it ran 145 feet down the William Street hill (Grant No. 223522, Township of Woodhouse, Norfolk County).

Rev. Holland was succeeded by Rev. William E. Crarey, who remained in office until approximately 1947, when Rev. E. L. Vivian was installed.

Second Half of the 1900s

During the early 1950s housing was in short supply in nearby Simcoe, and this led to the conversion of summer cottages to permanent residences in Port Ryerse. As a result, year-round activity in the village gradually returned.

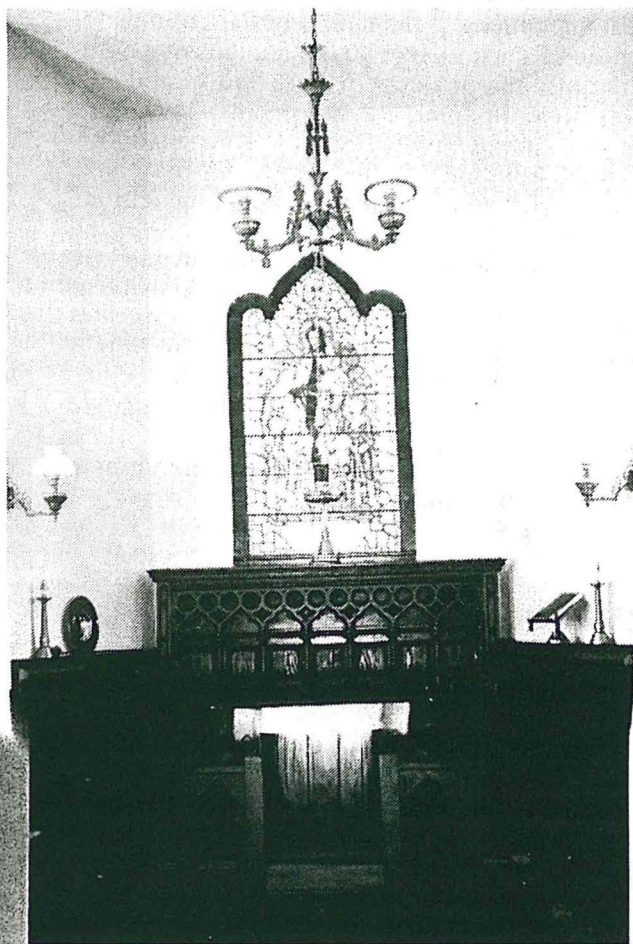
In 1952, Charles Inder was a visitor at Port Ryerse, canoeing with his two daughters. He noticed that the little church on the hill had fallen into disre-



The deserted church in the 1950s.

Artifacts And Memorials

The light fixture above the main entrance is a relic from the village's best-remembered blacksmith families. It was found in the old Stalker home on Commercial Road and installed at the church during the 1952-56 renovations.



These original oil lamps were recovered and restored for the 1956 restoration.

Inside the church on the left back wall there is a large key enclosed in a box also relating to the Stalker family. This is the original key to the church door, cut by hand after many hours of work by William Stalker, the father of Robert, who kept the blacksmith business open until the middle of this century. Robert's brother developed the well-known engineering firm of the same name in Simcoe in the early part of the 1900s.

Beside this, on the same wall, is a framed parchment on which is printed the original proclamation plus the handwritten pledges for the funds with which the church was built.

On the right back wall is a framed newspaper account of the ceremony of 1926 when Dr. J. H.



Notables in this photograph from left to right are: the Honourable James N. Allan, provincial treasurer; Dr. J. A. Bannister, honorary president of the Norfolk Historical Society, C. G. Hare, warden of Norfolk County; John E. Cooper, reeve of Charlotteville Township; Charles E. Booth, reeve of Woodhouse Township; J. Evans Knowles, MP Norfolk; Leslie R. Grey, a member of the Archaeological and Historic Sites Board; Carl S. Ryerse, a direct descendant of Colonel Samuel Ryerse; Rev. David Miln, rector of Port Ryerse and Colonel Douglas Stalker, president of the Norfolk Historical Society and nephew of Robert Stalker of Port Ryerse.

Coyne unveiled the tablet commemorating five of the original pioneers of this community, as described elsewhere in this book.

On the same wall is a small framed picture recording the unveiling of the Ontario Historical Association plaque in 1959, again to commemorate Colonel Samuel Ryerse. The third and fourth pews from the back of the church on either side, are about two feet shorter than the rest. They were shortened to accommodate the old box stove which was used to heat the church until central heating was installed in 1980.

There are six brass chandeliers, three on either side of the nave. Originally each of these was equipped with coal oil lamps which were converted to electricity in the 1952-56 restoration. Helen Straith provided both the inspiration and financial support to have this work done. This was not without difficulty, as the renovated lamps initially refused to hang straight. Included in the lamp electrification were the two converted oil lamps on either side of the chancel arch. Some of the lamps were found in the belfry of the church and others in the old Stalker house. Shirley Wigmore, wife of Rector William Wigmore, assisted Helen Straith in organizing this work.

Midway down the south wall is a marble plaque installed by the Diocese of Huron in memory of

Arthur C. Lea. This was given by the Diocese in grateful recognition of the return of the corner lot on King and William Streets, previously sold to Mrs. Vera H. Lea in 1941.

On the north wall is a brass plaque in memory of church warden Leslie Adams, who laboured hard and skilfully to preserve the church during the 1952-56 restoration. It was donated by Bruce Smith, a close friend of Mr. Adams.

The east end window depicting Christ blessing the children was given by Mrs. Arthur C. Lea in memory of her parents Edward E. Collins and Margaret Alma Collins. The scene depicts Jesus surrounded by children, one of whom offers a gift of flowers. At the head of the window is a Descending Dove, symbol of the Holy Spirit. The window was designed and executed by craftsmen of the Celtic Glass Co. Swansea, U.K. It is composed of English, handmade antique potmetal and slab glass. The red used in the robe of Christ is a very precious colour known as Selenium Red. Approximately 600 pieces of glass were used in fabricating the window.

The original altar of solid walnut was rediscovered after years of neglect, refinished, then raised to its present height by Leslie Adams. When discovered the curved front of the table had been placed to face the back wall, then covered over with panelling. This was re-dedicated by Bishop Luxton in 1956.

A prayer and reading pulpit, an exact replica of the original, which matches the old pulpit still in use, was also made by Leslie Adams. He also provided a bread box to match the old 1870 pewter communion vessels. The flagon of this set remains in good condition, however the chalice and paten were mistakenly silver plated. These have since been retired and replaced (during the 1979-80 restorations) by a new communion set, donated by Mrs. Pat Buchanan in memory of her mother, Mrs. Elizabeth Mayo.

The font was a gift of the congregation and what is believed to be the original pewter font bowl can be fitted into it. The font now rests on a new walnut stand, a gift of the congregation, made possible by donations in memory of the late Dorothy Hall. The stand was made by Beckett's Furniture, Normandale, and dedicated in 1993.

A beautiful set of altar appointments consisting of a cross, candlestick, flower vases, missal stand and candlelighter, executed in solid brass with a hand-beaten satin finish, were gifts of Mrs. H. T. Downer and Mrs. N. A. Hills in memory of Mr. Henry Thomas Downer and of Josephine Margaret Downer Hills.

The communion linen for the altar was a gift of Mrs. Jean (Taylor) Holden and other members of the Taylor family, in memory of their mother, Mrs. Amy Taylor. They also donated the brass lavabo, which is used in the communion service, in memory of their

father, Fred Taylor. (The kitchen cupboards in the basement were installed by the ACW in memory of Mrs. Amy Taylor, using a donation made by the Taylor family.)

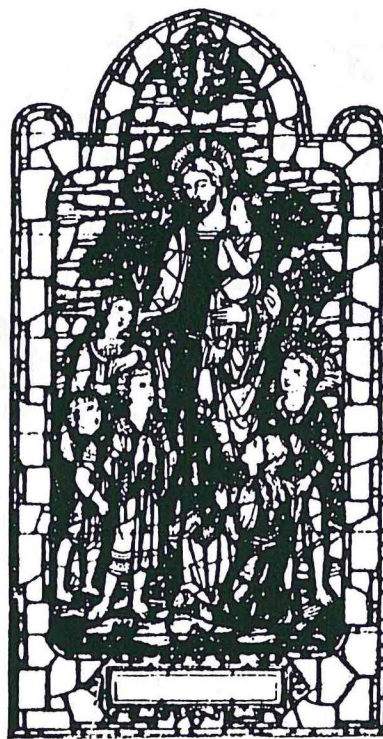
Hanging above the altar is a red Perpetual Light given in 1981 by Cathy and Duncan Buckle in loving memory of their daughter Amy Lynn who died at the age of four months.

The solid brass collection plates, dated 1976, were given by Mrs. Annie VanStone in memory of her husband, Kenneth.

On the church property there is a graveyard which, at one time, was the family burial grounds for the founding Ryerses. Here lie the remains of a number of the original pioneers of Port Ryerse and surrounding area. In total, 22 interments have been recorded, including Colonel Samuel Ryerse and his wife, Sarah. Additional bodies, however, may have been interred for which we have no documentation.

In the yard, at the rear and on the north side of the church building, is the tablet originally unveiled by Dr. J. H. Coyne, president of the Royal Society of Canada, in 1926 "To Honour The Pioneers" — specifically, Samuel Ryerse, Joseph Ryerson, Robert Nichol, Thomas Welch and Donald McCall.

The Ontario Historical Association plaque unveiled on September 19, 1959 by Mr. Carl S. Ryerse, is also on the north side of the church near the front of the building.



The Memorial Window "Suffer little children to come unto me".

The Cemetery

Three unknown soldiers

who died at Fort Norfolk, Turkey Point, 1812

Colonel Samuel Ryerse

died 12 Jun. 1812; in his 80th year¹

Sarah Ryerse

died 1 Oct. 1888, 80 years, 1 month, 14 days²

Colonel E. Ryerse

died 27 Mar. 1882, in his 82nd year

Martha Ryerse

wife of Colonel E. Ryerse

born 2 Nov. 1806; died 31 Mar. 1878

Joseph Ryerse

son of George & Elizabeth, 4 days old

Elizabeth Ryerse

wife of George J. Ryerse

died 19 Feb 1834; 33 years, 3 months 4 days

Elizabeth Ryerse

daughter of George J. & Nancy Ryerse

died 17 May 1841; 7 months, 2 days

Matilda Fisher Ryerse

daughter of George J. & Nancy Ryerse,

died 11 Aug. 1846; 4 years, 3 mos., 23 days

Edward Ryerse

son of George J. & Nancy Ryerse

died 22 Sep. 1854; 7 years, 6 months, 22 days

Abraham Sells

of Pennsylvania, who landed and was buried at Port Ryerse in 1798 and Mary Wilson of Maryland, his wife, buried in Frome Church Cemetery in 1846, founders of Sells family in Canada.

Sarah Fletcher

died 3 Nov. 1880, aged 66 years

Algenia Lawrence

daughter of William & Sarah

died 6 Apr. 1857; 3 years, 6 months

Edward Lawrence,

son of William & Sarah; died 6 Apr. 1857; 3 years, 6 months

Lewis Fouard Lawrence

son of William & Sarah

died 11 Nov. 1862; 1 year, 8 months, 22 days

Harriet Lawrence,

daughter of William & Sarah

died 13 Aug. 1865; 19 years, 11 months, 25 days

Ellen Lawrence

daughter of William & Sarah

born 14 Sep. 1854; died 9 Sep. 1870

Thomas Stalker

died 26 Nov. 1885; aged 76 years

Willie Stalker

infant son of Robert & Laura; died 26 Jun. 1895

¹ Samuel Ryerse was born 1752 in New Jersey, and died 12 Jun. 1812, aged 60 years.

² Sarah Ryerse, wife of Samuel Ryerse, died in 1838.



In the Port Ryerse Memorial Church yard are the graves of Colonel Samuel Ryerse and his wife, Sarah. He died in June 1812, only a few days before the outbreak of war. His tombstone is the short, dark-hued one in the centre background. His wife's stone is to the right and beyond it is a boulder with a plaque commemorating Samuel Ryerse and his brother, Joseph Ryerse, with other pioneers of the Long Point Settlement, and lauding their valour in meeting the hardships and dangers of carving out a new civilization in the forest-covered wilds of Upper Canada.

More than bats in our belfry

No history of Port Ryerse Memorial Church would be complete without retelling the tale that first appeared in Harry Barrett's *Lore and Legends of Long Point* under the title of *Worshipping under the Skull and Crossbones*.

"Grave robbing was not uncommon in the nineteenth century. Medical knowledge was beginning to evolve then, and the budding medics required cadavers for demonstration and practice. This was not understood by the public, who regarded the practice with horror. Consequently a lively trade in grave robbing developed. The lonely graveyards of the Long Point district offered reasonably safe opportunity for such desecration.

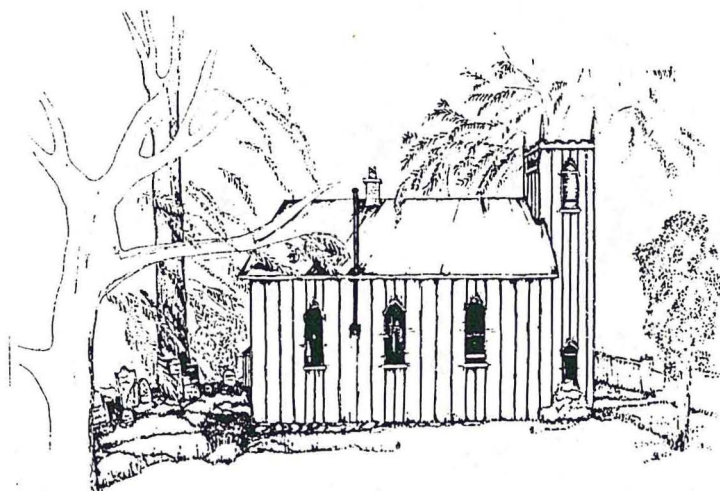
"The story is told of a canvas-covered piece of cargo that was off-loaded at Port Ryerse on a warm spring evening in the 1880s. It was about six feet in length and neatly trussed up like a sailor's hammock. Its final destination was the local blacksmith shop, which belonged to the brother of one of the sailors. There a huge, hogscalding kettle of water was boiling over the forge fire. The shop to all intents and purposes was closed. Following supper the blacksmith and his brother unwrapped the canvas to disclose a corpse and quickly lowered it into the kettle. Now the two men had only to keep the fire burning merrily until the bones emerged bright, white and devoid of all flesh. They sat talking quietly about family matters as brothers separated for some time are wont to do.

"Suddenly the quiet was shattered by a loud hammering on the shop doors. It was a farmer for whom the blacksmith had forged new tips on ploughshares.

Seeing a glow of the forge fires he refused to leave without them. Reluctantly the blacksmith opened the door wide enough to hand them to his unwelcome visitor who pushed the door wider and came right into the shop. On seeing the steaming cauldron, he demanded to know what they were cooking. Not satisfied with the blacksmith's rather evasive reply, he grabbed up a long hook from the forge and plunged it beneath the grey frothy surface of the boiling brew. Coming in contact with something solid, he pulled it up to the surface. Unfortunately the hook had caught in the eye socket of the cadaver so that a human skull suddenly seemed to be leering at him over the rim of the smoke-blackened kettle. The badly shaken farmer's knees turned rubbery and he slumped to the floor.

"The brothers gathered up their unfortunate visitor and laid him out in his own wagon box, carefully putting his ploughshares along side of him. At the hotel they found a friend willing to drive the poor man — 'a customer suddenly taken ill' — home.

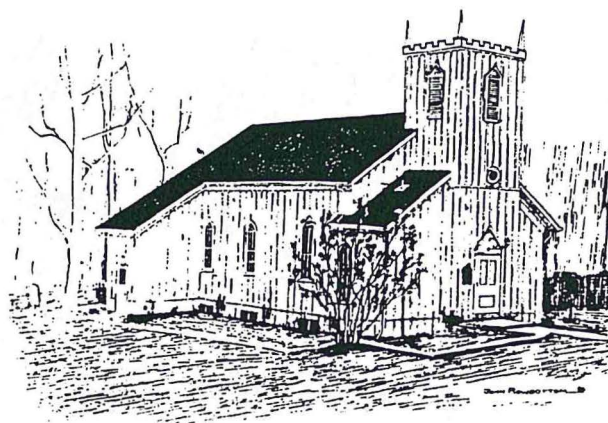
"Returning to the shop, the brothers continued their gruesome task until the bones were free of all flesh. Unfortunately they were anything but white. This was an unforeseen problem. But the brothers were not long at arriving at a solution when the neophyte doctor pointed out that two or three months in the direct sunlight would bleach the skeleton. Getting a long ladder, the two men carefully bundled the bones into sacks and before daylight climbed to the belfry roof of the local church. As my story teller concluded, the good people of Ryerse, on worshipping in the Anglican Memorial Church throughout that long hot summer did so under the skull and crossbones."



MEMORIAL CHURCH, PORT RYERSE

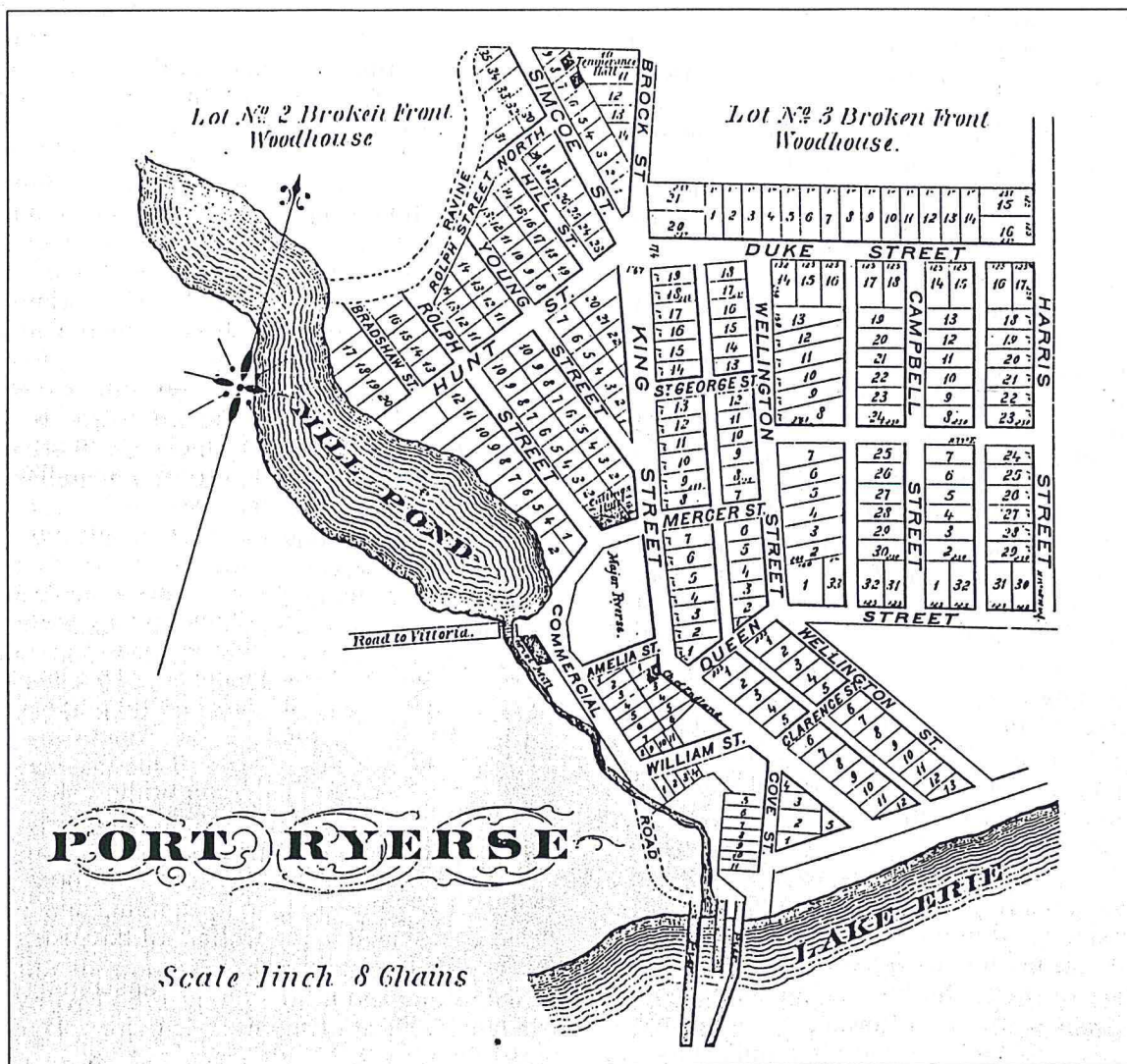
The style of this delightful little church is often referred to as "Carpenter's Gothic". It was built in 1870 on land donated by the Harris family, by subscription of the residents of Port Ryerse and surrounding area.

Drawing by Elizabeth Barrett, 1973



Memorial Anglican Church
Port Ryerse, Ontario
Established in 1869

Early Days at Port Ryerse



This map is from H.R. Page and Company, Toronto, 1877.

Early Days at Port Ryerse

by George J. Ryerse

This article was originally published in the July 27 and August 3, 1923 issues of the *Simcoe Reformer* and was subsequently reprinted at least twice in pamphlet form

The first resident of what is now known as Port Ryerse, was Colonel Samuel Ryerse, who was born in New Jersey in 1750 and died June 12, 1812. Why two brothers of the same family, who lived but two miles apart, should have different names, namely Ryerson and Ryerse, is a mystery that has never been satisfactorily solved as far as I know. My guess is that it came about by the name being written Ryerse when my grandfather received his commission as a captain in the British Army of 1776. His four brothers were Ryersons. One brother, Joseph, afterward Colonel and father of five Methodist preachers, joined the British Army near the same date, though but sixteen at the time, and not being in good physical health. The brothers served the full seven years to 1783. Their property being confiscated, both went to New Brunswick, Samuel being induced by friends to return to Long Island, found it a most uncomfortable place to live, as he was regarded as a Tory, and an enemy of the new republic. Writing to Governor Simcoe, he was urgently solicited by the Governor to come and make his home in Upper Canada, and promised liberal grants of land. They met at the Niagara River in 1794, when satisfactory arrangements were completed. My grandfather returned to his home, settled his affairs, and in the summer of 1795, with his wife, my father, then one year old, a son of his first wife named Samuel, who was then twelve to fifteen years of age, his worldly goods and some hired help, started to Upper Canada. It was a tedious and trying journey across New York State, but Niagara River was finally reached. Passing out of this river into Lake Erie by boat he coasted along the north shore of the lake until what is known as Ryerse's or Young's Creek was reached. There he landed, and going up the hill adjoining the present English Church property, he surveyed the place and remarked, "Here I wish to live and die." He and his wife now sleep a few feet from the place where he stood at that time.

Some three years later his brother, Joseph, later Colonel, came from New Brunswick and settled in Charloteville, two miles away on the road to Vittoria, where he lived till ninety-four years of age. Bringing assistants with him he appears to have had considerable means for that time. Securing a comfortable place of shelter for his wife and child at old Dr. Troyer's place, near Port Rowan, he commenced to build a place for himself and his family. First it was a shanty made of any material that could be procured. The first three weeks were a most trying time

for him. Before the shanty was hardly completed, his men cleared out and left him alone with his young son, Samuel. Surviving this sickness and trying time, at the end of three weeks he was able to do something for himself again. From his shanty door he shot a number of wild turkeys, which gave him much needed food. Procuring more hired help, he erected a fair sized, comfortable log house, so that his family were quite well provided for.

These buildings were located on the flat ground close by or the present site of Harry Brooks' summer cottage. After a time the fireplace and chimney of this house, being made largely of sticks covered with clay, took fire and was burned down. We have no record of the next residence of my grandfather. However, he filled his place in the community and county to the full, and faithfully served his fellow men. Governor Simcoe and those who followed him in provincial authority, honored him with various offices in their gift. For the first two or three years after 1795, if he required supplies of any kind he had to journey all the way to Chippewa Creek on the Niagara River for them, either through the woods or by boat. We have a list of supplies with prices for the same purchased in 1797 from a merchant named Markham, of Chippewa Creek.

The first saw-mill and grist-mill on Ryerse's Creek came into existence between 1800 and 1810. When the Government of Upper Canada made the grant of Lot No. 2, Woodhouse, to my grandfather, it was on the condition that he would erect both of these on the most convenient site. This he proceeded to do and both served a most useful purpose until the grist mill was burned by the Americans in 1812. During the seventeen years of his residence at Port Ryerse, he cleared land, built bridges and buildings, and served the general public in many ways. He was the first judge of the district, took an active part in military affairs, as Colonel of the militia, and gave encouragement and help to anything and everything that contributed to the welfare of the district.

If ever I meet with the record of his military service to England from 1776 to 1783 I will write up a detailed record of his life's activities. Dying in the early part of 1812, his place was taken by his two sons, George and Edward. One of the earliest activities of my father was to build a substantial home for himself on the hill just west of the old dam. Here the Ryerse family were sheltered for seventy-five years, until its loss by fire on May 24, 1893. Here both the first and second family of my father resided. Major

Edward Ryerse lived first in a small frame house on the site of the present brick one occupied by George Smith, and which was moved to the north part of the farm when the brick one was built.

The ordinary work of useful citizens occupied their time from the death of their father onward.

Educational Affairs at the Port

Port Ryerse School Section No. 1, being quite probably the first schoolhouse in the Township of Woodhouse, was erected between 1830 and 1835. The eldest member of the Ryerse family, William H., attended the Chadwick Academy, southwest of Vittoria, in 1830. He was then twelve years old and his well-written copy books of that date are still in existence. Where my father, Major Ryerse, and their sister, Mrs. Harris of London, received their education, I do not know; but all three had a fairly good education and wrote a very good hand. The other members of our family obtained their education at Port Ryerse, Simcoe, London and Buffalo. The first schoolhouse was located on the southwest side of the road to Simcoe, about two or three hundred

yards from the present one. This building was set on fire and destroyed previous to 1850. The next one was on the road to Port Dover, three or four hundred yards northeast of the present site. The school section at that time extended from Amos Stickney's farm, in Charlotteville, well down the gravel road to Port Dover, taking in the farm of Alex. Bowlby. The third or present brick building was built in 1871. In 1870, serious differences arose among the ratepayers about the site for a new and larger building, and the result was that the northerly part of No. 1 was set apart as No. 14, and a school building erected on the farm of Mr. Allan Culver. Who the early teachers were I do not know, but from the beginning of 1856 to September 1860, they were Delia Holmes, Miss Emerick and Mr. Corey. Miss Emerick was something of a premillennialist [sic], for the sect to which she adhered had set a certain day in the fifties for the passing away of all things and the coming of the Lord Jesus. On that particular day she dressed herself in white and sat in a chair all day waiting the coming of the Lord. But as on occasions previously, He did not appear, and this sect had the chance of making another guess.



Looking down the hill on Commerical Road and King streets at the turn-of-the-century. The Cutting Hotel is at the right.

On Sept. 1, 1860, there came to our section a young man, Peter Nicol, afterwards the Rev. Peter Nicol of the Presbyterian denomination. He remained with us five years, and could have stayed five more had he wished, for he was a very competent and popular teacher. Desiring to enter the Presbyterian ministry he resigned, and after teaching for a time at Port Dover, entered college at Toronto. Now, after spending forty-four years in the ministry, on his retirement it is a great pleasure for me to have my old, highly esteemed teacher located in Simcoe for the rest of his days, where I can frequently meet and associate with him.

Since then the section has had many different teachers. The first three after Mr. Nichol being Jesse Ryerson, Harry Hayne and Mr. Carter. In the winter of 1876-77 there were on the school roll ninety-four names, but an epidemic of diphtheria took eighteen of these. The village physician also died of this disease. So great is the change since that time, I am told there are now but eleven children of school age in the section. In the year 1860 smallpox came to the village, brought from Cleveland, and resulted in the death of a fine young man named Edward Raymond, the captain of the schooner Rebecca Foster. He was to have been married to Melissa Underhill on that trip in. She bravely undertook to nurse him, but was stricken with the same disease and very narrowly escaped death. Her companion, Rebecca Foster, also was very sick with it.

The Various Mills at Port Ryerse

As I have written, the first saw and grist mills were built, and in use sometime prior to 1812. Either this saw mill, erected by my grandfather, was spared by the Americans or another one was built shortly after 1812. The community could not do without one. It just comes to me, as I am writing, that my father told me he built one shortly after that date. The next grist mill was built by my father in 1849, and shortly after that date, some time in the fifties, a plaster mill was added to it, the building of which I can just remember. In the early days land plaster was considered a necessity for clover and meadows. It was brought to Port Ryerse by the vessel load and dumped on the side of the street, close to the mill. The source of the supply for this article in the rock state was the mines near by the Grand River. Previous to the erection of this plaster mill, farmers would drive all the way to the Grand River in the winter time for their supply. But little is now heard of land plaster, which shows how ideas change. The saw mill that was dismantled when the grist mill was built no doubt was used to cut the lumber needed for the two new mills. In 1860 there was a fine lot of lumber at our place that was sawn in the old mill,

which were basswood planks four feet across.

In connection with the fine pine and other forests of early days in Norfolk County, I have a letter written a few years ago by Mr. Geo. Hotchkiss, who for many years was secretary of the Northwestern Lumbermen's Association, with headquarters at Evanston, Illinois, and who was on business at Port Dover in the early fifties. He says the very finest pine he ever saw grown on this earth he saw in Norfolk County. Prices were not very high then for first-class stuff, for my brother, William, brought clear stuff pine at four dollars per thousand in the early fifties. My own purchases for bill stuff in 1869 were at six dollars per thousand feet, and good stuff it was. With the building of the Air Line and Canada Southern Railroads in 1872 the price advanced to \$10.00, and remained quite steady at that price at late as 1890. My father's mills were lost by being set on fire in the spring of 1860, and the unfortunate part of it was there was no insurance on the buildings, so he could not rebuild.

On February 26th, 1869, my father sold the mill privilege to Edward Harris of London, who with Mr. John Potts, built a fine up-to-date mill for that time, with five run of stone and a sixth turbine to run the rest of the machinery. This was leased to Mr. John Shaw of Normandale for ten or more years, and who conducted during that time a very successful business. This mill stood there till one day in August, 1890, between twelve and one o'clock, when fire broke out on the third floor, though there had been no fire in the mill for many weeks, and thus Port Ryerse was deprived of the last industry of any account that brought people there. It was a case of spontaneous combustion perhaps. Truly the several mills on this site have had a most unfortunate history.



A venerable elm was a landmark at the Vittoria Road bridge. The old mailbox marks the spot where the mills of the Port stood.

Home of Elder George J. Ryerse

My father's house was on the hill west of the village, and south of the road over the dam towards Vittoria. It was a lovely site and was always much admired. The date of its erection was 1818 or 1819, and the Ryerse family were sheltered there for 75 years, until the 24th of May, 1893, when it was accidentally set on fire, and passed out of existence. It was formerly noted for the large number of cherry and other fruit trees on the premises.



The early postcard shows the location of the Elder George J. Ryerse home on the road to Vittoria.

The White House on the Hill

Sometime near the year 1835, the prospect for an across-the-lake passenger and freight trade appeared very fair, as steamers called at times, landed passengers, and took aboard a supply of wood for motor purposes. Anticipating this trade, my father built what was known for many years as the White House

on the Hill. It was a good sized building with a large dining room, parlor, kitchen, and bedrooms on the lower floor, and bedrooms in abundance on the upper floors. But the expected trade did not materialize and it could be used only as a private dwelling. When Mr. James Hooker lived there in the early fifties, with its beautiful flower garden in front, surrounded by the handsomest rustic fence I ever saw, and other flowering bushes on the north side, it was a fine appearing property. However, there was one useful purpose it served. Painted white, a two-storey building, and located on a hill as it was, it could be seen by navigators of Lake Erie many miles away, and thus it was a bright landmark of the north shore, as well as a guide to the harbor of Port Ryerse.

Some Physical Changes

In going through the Port now to the Lake Shore, no one would realize that in the fifties, directly across the street, opposite the blacksmith shop of Robert Stalker, there was quite a strip of land between the wagon track and the running stream on which was a good sized barn and a strip eight or ten feet wide between the barn and the creek. The water was then two feet or more higher than it is now. Directly back of the first cottage from the harbor, within my memory, the bank extended forty feet farther south than at present, while west of the row of cottages, two or three hundred feet of the bank of Lot No. 2 has gone in the lake.

The Travelling Craftsmen

In early days they had the travelling tailor, who went from house to house and made up a supply of clothes for the male portion of the family. There was also the itinerant shoemaker, who looked after a supply of footwear for all the members of the household. These two craftsmen were through with their work shortly before my advent in August, 1851. However, when I was old enough to realize what would contribute to my enjoyment in life as a young boy, and get into all kinds of mischief, I found in our home a shoemaker's bench, with tools, lasts and everything quite complete; also a large supply of all kinds of leather. All these things furnished a great deal of happiness for me for the bench was used for many years to crack various kinds of native nuts and of which we always had a large supply, which we divided with the family of red squirrels which always dwelt in the garret part of our house. What I did with the tools and leather I cannot remember.

Simcoe Reformer - July 30, 1896

James Peachy and family are summering at Port Ryerse. Mr. Peachy goes to and fro on his wheel.

The Work of Women in Early Days

Possibly no housewife of early days did more hard work during the years of her active life than my mother. Married at four o'clock in the afternoon of January 13, 1835, by Elder McDermant, of Port Rowan, her wedding trip shortly after six was taken to the barnyard to milk the cows. Not much honeymooning with autos or anything else in those days, but plenty of work and still more work. This was her start in married life, and she kept up the pace the most of her active days. Her first care was to look after my father's five children by his first wife, who died some time previous, the eldest being sixteen. Then nine children were born in the second family, which of course made still more work. When father was building his mill in 1849 she would take care of eighteen men at a time, and do it with very little assistance. No mowers or reapers in those early days, for grain of all kinds was cut with cradles, and hay with the scythe. Grain was threshed with the flail; and so there were plenty of workers to provide for. There were some fellows who could handle the cradle then. Two of them, named Murtland and Underhill, cut twelve acres of wheat for my father in one day. It took a lot of binders to follow them. The everyday work of my mother was much the same as that of many capable housewives of that time, namely preparing the food, clothing and other necessities of the family, and looking well after their households. My father was a good provider for the table at least. Every fall a half dozen or more fat hogs would be cut up and packed in barrels. In the spring the hams and shoulders would be smoked and only a limited amount of the salt pork disposed of. Then every spring the product of four hundred maple trees in sugar and syrup would be put away for the coming year.

When the sheep were washed and sheared, the wool would be sent by my mother to the carding mill, which was located at the bend of Young's Creek, one-third of a mile east of the Vittoria mills, where the bridge now stands, for making into rolls; then it was spun by hand into yarn and taken generally to Neighbour Stickney's, where his daughter, Margaret, wove it into cloth, blankets, shirting, dress stuff or anything else that was required. If it was cloth that needed fulling, it was returned to the carding mill, where this work was done. It was my mother's custom during the fall and winter months to rise at half past two or three o'clock in the morning and spin yarn until time to get breakfast. A few minutes' sleep was taken about nine, and then the regular work for the day, and bed at 8 to 8.30. This routine was followed for years both before and after my birth. There are now but few nights in the year that I

do not hear the clock strike two or three o'clock with a wakeful hour or more at that time. Another thing the housewife had to do was make tallow candles by dipping. Candle wick was cut into proper lengths, placed on small round sticks three and a half feet long, doubled and twisted on these sticks in quantities probably of 20 to each stick. Then sufficient tallow was melted in a boiler with plenty of hot water under the tallow, and into this combination the wicks were plunged again and again until the candles were large enough for use. The upper end of these candles was small and the bottom large enough to fit nicely into the candlesticks in use. One amusing circumstance I remember in connection with these dipped candles. My father had a peculiar way of reading all his own. When evening came he would always place the light between his eyes and the newspaper he was reading. Sometimes the paper would come too close to the candle and get on fire, and this made lots of fun for us youngsters.

The making of soft soap, dyeing and many other household economies was a regular part of the work of the home-makers of those days. Here is a experience of my own in connection with soft soap, when I was a young boy. I was fixing a fishline on our south verandah when, glancing behind me I thought I saw a hard seat to rest on. Backing up I sat down and landed in the bottom of a tub of soft soap. For once in my life I was thoroughly soft-soaped.

It was thus our mothers spent their time, and I think mine was only typical of many other good mothers, and the grand women of early days in Glorious Old Norfolk. Well do I remember when the first stove and coal oil lamp came into the house. Previous to that time our cooking was done in a fire-place, excepting the bread, meat, vegetables, and other things were placed in kettles and swung over the fire by means of a crane of the side. Poets have spoken of the swinging of the crane, but my experience with its swinging has been that there was not much poetry in it, but a lot of continuous hard work for the housewife. The baking of bread was frequently done in a brick oven. Some built their ovens outdoors. Ours was attached to the fire-place, on the north side, was about six feet square, with a flat top and removeable door in front. The flat top was a handy affair, for it always held a large amount of household hardware of all kinds. This oven was properly heated and when the right temperature, the most of the hot coals removed and the bread placed in it. Pies, cakes and anything else required were baked in these ovens.

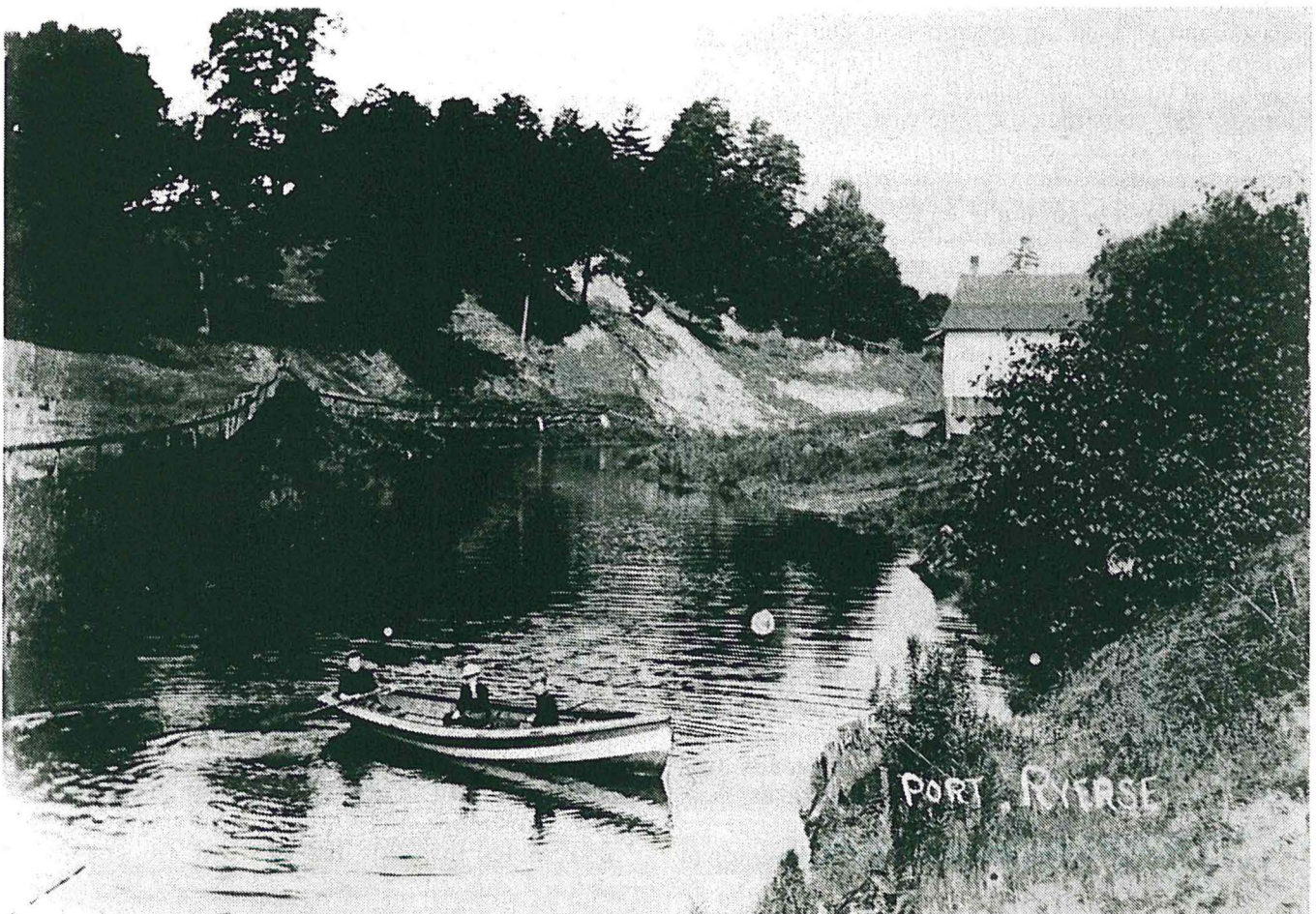
Appearance in Early Days

In its early days, Port Ryerse made a fine appearance, and it is quite plain why grandfather chose this spot as his future home. The view from the lake northerly up the valley was very attractive. When approached from the Simcoe road, surrounded as it was by forest wealth and so many grand old walnut, butternut, hickory and chestnut trees all over the village survey, on its hillsides, and elsewhere, and its abundance of oak, elm and other trees, with Lake Erie in the background, it presented to some of us at least a charming appearance. Then there was the lovely mill-pond with its handsome woodland on the westerly side and its shaded bays and its long stretch into the adjoining woods of cedar, hemlock and maple. There is where I spent many and many a happy day with my boat, fishing in its waters or paddling a goodly distance up the stream. But, alas! nearly all this beauty and loveliness has gone forever. The most of the nut and other beautiful trees have long since had to yield to commercialism and only their memory remains.

Early Harbor Improvements

Both Lot No. 2, Woodhouse, where my father lived, and Lot No. 3, where Major E. P. Ryerse resided, were entailed property. A bill to release certain parts of each on which to found a village, was passed by the Legislature of Upper and Lower Canada at the session of 1856 at Quebec, chiefly through the influence of Dr Rolph, who was then the member for Norfolk. I have no means of knowing the date of the first improvement at the harbor by the erection of a pier and warehouses. The appearance of the oldest warehouse betokened an early date. Major Ryerse was the first to finance and push ahead this work. The first dock was built of piles placed in rows of three or four, a proper distance apart, capped by a heavy cross timber, then by timbers lengthwise of the pier, and plank securely spiked to these timbers. All was made secure. It extended well out into the lake, for only boats of moderate draft could use this creek.

The first warehouse was a low one, of very moderate dimensions, located quite near the site of the



Boating on the Young's Creek in the early days as seen from the Commercial Road bridge showing the General Store on the right.

summer cottage of Harry Brook. No. 2 adjoined it on the north side. No. 3 was a long low one that covered the west end of the pier. No. 4 was quite a large one and was attached to No. 1 on the east end. Thus they were all together. To finish loading vessels a track was laid on the pier and a car propelled by hand or horse power, about 12 by 24 feet in dimension, was used to convey barrels of flour or any other goods to the end of the dock. Watching the men working this car one evening in the fall of 1857, I saw the first beautiful comet in the southern sky.

Very many goods and much grain passed through these warehouses during the fifties and sixties, both going out and coming in. The distilleries at Simcoe and Vittoria would send deckloads of fat hogs to Buffalo to be slaughtered. It was large, fat hogs that were dealt in then, and some of them were so large they reminded me of young elephants. A number of them would appear to me now as if they would weight 600 pounds each dressed. After the signing of the Reciprocity Treaty of 1856, till its abrogation in 1866, and especially during the American Civil War, there was a very large volume of trade outward. On May 26, 1863, Major Ryerse deeded the whole harbor property to the Port Ryerse Tram or Railroad and Harbor Company, the leading spirit of which was Edward Harris of London. The proposition was to build a tram road to Simcoe. A dredge was purchased and various improvements made at the harbor of a permanent nature. Cribs filled with stone were used on which to build docks. Two large warehouses were constructed on the east side of the harbor, so that vessels could load grain directly from these warehouses. The large warehouse on the west side was moved to the water's edge, and its capacity doubled. A large dredging outfit was brought from Buffalo with tugs and scows, and the water in the harbor was deepened to about ten feet. The first harbor-master was William Mercer Wilson, and the second Mr. John S. Austin, also of Simcoe. Later came Mr. Walter Holmwood from Port Stanley, who lived in the Port for a number of years afterwards. During the period of 1861 to 1873, Port Ryerse experienced its palmiest days, for the building the Air Line and Canada Southern Railroads, in 1872-73, was the means of destroying its grain and import trade, and the grand forests of Norfolk were rapidly disappearing. It is claimed that in one year, about 1871, there was seven and a half million feet of lumber and timber shipped from the Port. As to its grain trade, long rows of loaded wagons could be seen almost any day during the grain season waiting to unload. During the greatest year of the lumber trade, almost every available space about the harbor and streets was filled with lumber, timber, pailwood, staves, ties, stave bolts and other stuff.

From 1860 to 1864 was the era of shipbuilding at

Port Ryerse. The yards were on the beach immediately west of the harbor, where the summer cottages are now located. David M. Foster and W. H. Ryerse constituted one firm, whose output was the schooners *Brittania* and *E. P. Ryerse*. The other boat builder was Captain Lewis Ryerse, who first built the small fore and after *Emily Ellen*. Then he purchased a new but sunken two-masted scow, raised her, put the boat in good trim and renamed her the *Kate Kelley*, after the maiden name of his wife. The man who built this craft did a peculiar and unheard of thing, namely, instead of properly caulking his boat, he filled the space between the lining and the outside with land plaster, with the result that the water soaked through and she sank in the bay. This venture proved a most profitable investment. My brother Lewis was an expert sailor and could find a way to cross Lake Erie at almost any time. Later, he built the large schooner, *N. C. Ford*. In 1863, in partnership with John S. Austin of Simcoe, the large and substantial three-master, *J. S. Austin*, was constructed. This was the vessel that gave so much trouble in getting her into deep enough water, for it was so shallow in front of the boat that weeks were spent and a variety of ways tried to release her. Finally, a heavy storm came from the southwest, with high water, and this accomplished what men could not do.

A few years later the *D. W. McCall* was built by H. and T. McCall at the head of the harbor, in which it was launched.

The Establishment of the Anglican Church

The first work towards forming the Church of England Society at Port Ryerse began in the early sixties when a weekly open air service was held in the yard of Major Ryerse, on the west side of the north part of the house. Rev. Mr. Baldwin of Port Dover, afterward the beloved Bishop Baldwin of Huron, officiated. Later the place of worship was moved to the orchard on the west side of the present church. Here we had a desk for the minister, with seats of boards on blocks of wood for the audience. The next place of meeting was in a fair-sized room in the house of Chas. Shellburg, with the Rev. Mr. Rogers of Vittoria, as the minister. With the coming of Mr. and Mrs. Holmwood, who were devoted Church of England people, about the year 1865, steps were taken to erect a church building, and the present church was the outcome. There was no trouble in raising the necessary money, for Port Ryerse was then much richer than at present, and friends in Port Dover, Simcoe, Vittoria, London and elsewhere contributed liberally. The Rev. Mr. Rogers was the

minister in charge for some time after this church was dedicated. Since then a number of worthy men have conducted its services, among them the Reverends Evans and Davis. Other religious services have been held in the Port by Baptists, Methodists and evangelists, also union meetings. I have never known of any religious jealousy of rivalry of any kind in the community. Whenever there was any religious or moral activity of any kind taking place, whether it was by the Good Templars, Church of England or any other society, practically all the community took part in it.

Smuggling

About 1858 to 1861 there was considerable smuggling going on from the United States in the vicinity of Port Ryerse. I have known some of our young ladies of that time pleasantly entertaining the customs officer of the an evening, while their friends were very busy unloading goods by small boat at the foot of Lot No. 1 and carrying them up the bank and through the woods to be distributed through the county. Sometimes when the way was clear small boat loads at a time would be brought into the harbor to be met by teams and taken away. This work

took place generally about two or three o'clock in the morning. However, when finally store stocks, small and large boats, were seized and sold for this kind of law-breaking, the participants gave way to a tired feeling and this industry ceased.

The Hotels of Port Ryerse

Four buildings in the Port have been used as hotels. What is known as the Cutting Hotel was erected in 1851 and has been in use continually from that time for hotel purposes. In early days its trade was large and remunerative. The next one built was the house one door north of Cutting's Hotel, and known as the Thompson property. This was put up by David M. Foster for the combined purpose of hotel and boarding house for his men, who were engaged in shipbuilding. The next one to go up was just across the street, southwest of Cutting's, but before it was finished, fire destroyed it one night and it was not rebuilt. This property belonged to Mrs. Green of Windham, and her son-in-law, John Morrow. Number four was the present Collins house, by the harbour, which was used for several years as a hotel. Part of the time its large front room was used as a grocery.



The Collins house, far right, served as a hotel in the early days at Port Ryerse. This view was taken from the east hill above the creek.

Loss of Buildings

I have known of a loss of sixty buildings in the Port, all excepting one, viz., my grandfather's mills, in my time. In the fifties, the village blacksmith shop was located across the street, directly east of Mr. Buck's barn and Moses Berry was the blacksmith. These buildings passed out of existence either by fire or removal, but chiefly by removal, and were of various kinds, namely, warehouses, dwellings and business places. The one building that has stood the test of time is at present used as a general store. It was built about 1835 and has always been used for the one purpose.

The Village Flower Gardens

We always had a few beautiful flower gardens in the Port. That of James Hooker, in front of the white house on the hill, was very fine. Aunt Patty, the wife of Major Ryerse, had a choice collection in her garden on the west side of her residence. Mrs. Walter Holmwood kept pace with the others, and always had a large display of them about her home on Rolph Street. Other ladies in the village cultivated them also, but these were the leaders. Another flower garden that was very much admired in the early days was that of Mrs. Donald Fisher Sr., in the old homestead garden at Fisher's Glen. It was situated on the banks of the beautiful little stream that ran through their garden. When the Glen was approached by the steep hill on the north side it presented a particularly charming appearance. This kindly, genial and highly esteemed lady was very generous with her flowers, for she always gave every one who visited or called on her a fine bouquet to take home with them.

Visit of Prince Arthur

Among the historical items of interest in connection with the Port is this: In the early seventies our village was honoured with a visit by a member of the Royal Family, namely Prince Arthur. After spending a few very pleasant days at Long Point shooting ducks, he crossed the bay and landed at Port Ryerse from the steamer Argyle. When the boat drew up to the dock he was greeted by our first citizen of that time, Mr. Walter Holmwood, with three cheers for the Prince of Wales. This came very near spoiling our cheering for the crowd had a very hearty laugh at the mistake.

Simcoe Reformer - July 5, 1888
Port Ryerse: Willie Cruickshank was rescued by Henry Sheppard when he fell from the bridge into the flume at the Summerfeldt mills.

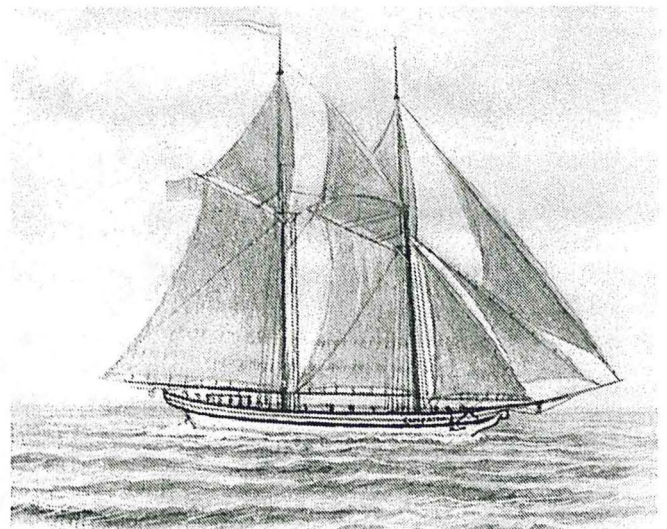
Port Ryerse Home Guards

At the time of the Fenian Raid of 1866, loyal Port Ryerse had its quota of volunteers called Home Guards, who were drilled by Captain Machon of Vittoria. We watched the shore at night in the vicinity of Port Ryerse during the anxious days of that excitement, using the pier as our place of parade.

Past Industries

Whatever activities of the past there have been in the village, the one that stands out far ahead of all others is the shipping industry, including as it did all incoming goods and outgoing raw products of the forest, such as lumber, square and round, timber, spars, ties, staves, pailwood, and other products of a like nature; grain of various kinds from the farms of a large portion of the county. The aggregate was very large. The shipping industry was the foundation and superstructure of nearly all the prosperity the Port ever had. The manufacture of flour, grinding of land plaster and general milling business would come next. Hopes were frequently entertained that all this trade would result in a large growth of the village, but for some reason it did not, and population remained quite stationary through all of it. Any further growth that may come to the village will in all probability be in connection with the summer resort business. It seems a misfortune that such a fine water power as it has should go to waste for so many years.

Of the many boats that traded at the Port, herewith follows a list of the various craft that were most frequently there and the names of the captains who were best known to the shipping interests. Among them were many competent, upright, moral men, who adorned their occupation:



This Cantelon painting of the Cleopatra, a schooner built by David M. Foster in 1853, is typical of the day.

Schooner Rebecca Foster,
 Captain Edward Raymond.
 Schooner Ada, Captain Henry Avichouser.
 Schooner Britannia, Captain Samuel Baker.
 Schooner E. P. Ryerse, Captain D. M. Foster.
 Schooner N. C. Ford, Captain Jack Shaw.
 Schooner Kate Kelley, Captain Wesley Hazen.
 Three-master J. S. Hustin, Captain Lewis Ryerse.
 Schooner Rebecca Foster,
 Captain Edward Newkirk.
 Schooner Maria Shaw, Captain Abram Leask.
 Schooner Three Friends, Captain Spencer Phipps.
 Schooner Bay Queen, Captain William Allan.
 Schooner David Sharp, Captain Joseph McFell.
 Schooner Eliza Allen, Captain John Allan.
 Schooner Erie Stewart, Captain John S. Allan.
 Schooner Snowdrop, Captain Geo. Allan.
 Schooner D. W. McCall, Captain Alex. Begg.
 Schooner E. Hall, Captain Sutherland Simpson.
 Schooner Saucy Jack, Captain Orrin Ryerse;
 later Captain Geo. Gillies.
 Schooner Dauntless, Captain James Allan.
 Schooner Persia.
 Steamer Argyle, Captain Walter Hunter.
 Schooner Enterprise, Captain George Spain.
 Steamer Georgian, Captain John Burgess.

In writing this list many pleasant memories come to the surface of associations with and knowledge on the work of these men. Of this list of Lake Captains only one remains, viz., Captain John Allan, now living retired in Port Dover.

The Brick Industry

The first brickyard in the Port was located a few yards east of the present farm owned by Mr. Geo. Smith. To Major Ryerse is due the credit for starting this yard. This was about 1835. The substantial brick residence where Mr. Smith lives, and owns, the old home of Major Ryerse, was built of the bricks made in this yard. During the year 1854 Mr. Ira M. Wood established a yard on the flat north and adjoining the Port, which was quite successful. Several of the brick buildings in the Port and elsewhere were made of brick manufactured on this yard. Again in 1879 Mr. Wood made brick on the same spot. In 1863, Mr. Benjamin Young of Windham, and his brother, had a yard on the beach adjoining the harbor, and immediately west of it. In the early seventies, Mr. Peter Mason, who came out from England, made brick close by Mr. Ira Wood's old yard. Later, he and his son Charles moved to Simcoe, where they were engaged for many years in brick manufacture. In 1871, Mr. Edward Harris of London established a yard on the high ground east of the harbor, employing a big staff of hands and turning out a large product. The expectation was to ship out vessel loads to

outside places; but for some reason the enterprise did not succeed.

From 1851 onward the making of flour and other barrels was considerable of an industry. Several parties have engaged in this business, the chief ones being the Cuttings, father and son, Mr. John Long and Mr. W. H. Ryerse.

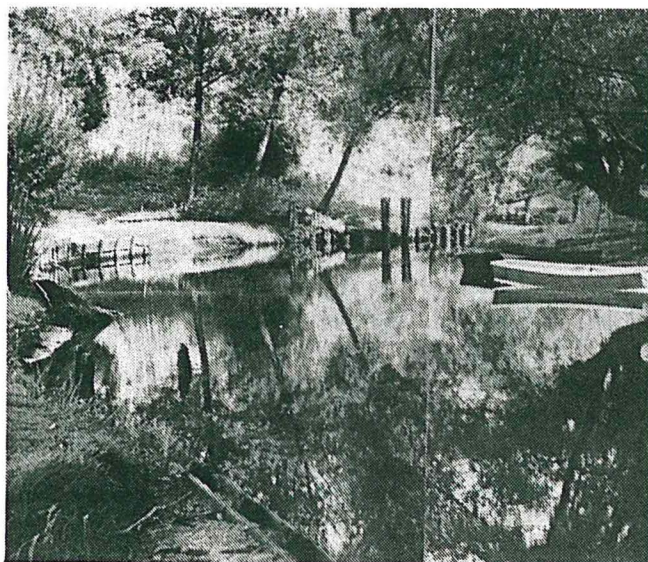
For some years during the sixties and seventies, Abraham Marlatt conducted a pottery business at Port Ryerse and disposed of a large amount of earthenware of all kinds in the days when it was in general use, and before tinware supplanted it. For a few years in the seventies, Orrin Ryerse had a potash manufactory at the upper end of Rolph Street.

The Fishing Industry

In the early days, fish of all kinds were very abundant in Lake Erie. Large quantities of whitefish and other kinds were caught in the fall of the year. The general price for whitefish was 10¢ each, and 12¢ for the larger ones. A fine large sturgeon could be bought for 75¢.

When the mill dam was in existence, there were large quantities of suckers caught at its foot with dip nets. In short, Ryerse's Creek was about the best place along the shore for miles to catch this kind of fish. One afternoon in the space of one hour I saw 1,000 of these fish taken out of the creek with dip and sweep nets. Another afternoon Mr. Hammond Oakes and myself, threw out 300 from a small pond under the leaky waste weir.

In 1876-77, an American company from Conneaut, Ohio, was engaged here in fishing on quite a large scale, using pound nets and the steamer Argyle.



Looking down stream from the bridge, the remains of the sunken Argyle are visible at the bottom left.

Biographical Sketches

First will come my grandfather, Col. Samuel Ryerse. As I have written something of his life and work in the first days of this county's settlement, it is at present only necessary to say that during his seventeen years at the Port he filled a place that scarce any other person could have filled. His name and lifework will be remembered for many years to come. My misfortune is that I cannot remember of my father mentioning his father's name a half dozen times to me during the first 24 years of my life; and it was just the same in the way of imparting information of their early days by my elder sisters and brothers. Had I been properly inquisitive or my relatives anxious to impart such knowledge, there was a mine of interesting information open to me.

Elder George Joseph Ryerse

I choose to speak of my father as Elder Ryerse, for he was never addressed by any other name during all the time that I knew him, namely, twenty-four years. Born Feb. 1, 1795, on Long Island, N.Y., when one year old he, with his mother and a half-brother, Samuel, twelve to fifteen years of age, were brought to at that time an unbroken forest, there to spend the while eighty-two years of his life. His early education was probably given in his own home, though I never heard him say anything about it. When eighteen years of age his father died, and he had to take his place as the head of the family of four, namely his mother, his brother Edward, and sister Mrs. Amelia Harris. He spent his younger days like other pioneers, clearing land and making a comfortable home. Married on Dec 25, 1816, to Elizabeth Vail, eight children were born to this union, five of whom reached maturity, the others dying when quite young. He succeeded quite well in the way of self-education, and in 1828 was licensed to preach by the Vittoria Baptist Church. Later he was ordained a regular Baptist minister. He also studied medicine on his own account and for the most of his active life spent much of his time preaching and serving sick people. And the peculiar part of it was, no charge was ever made, as far as I know for any services in either of these lines. If any one chose to make him a present of any kind, well and good; though this was not often the case.

He would visit a drug store in Buffalo in the winter time, purchase a liberal supply of drugs during the succeeding months give them away to ailing humanity. Many times I have seen him take the team from the plow and drive a goodly distance away to help some sick person. Also he has taken sick folk into our home, boarded and cared for them for no reward excepting what he would receive in the Kingdom of Heaven. He would also mount his horse

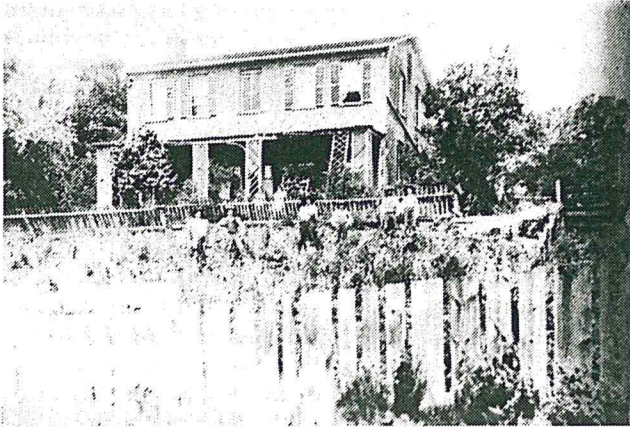
on a Sunday morning and ride all the way to Norwich or Cheapside to conduct religious services. He would go as far as Lobo, various places in Oxford County, the Township of Townsend, and other places. The work was chiefly that of a pioneer and certainly some of this class of men were very energetic and faithful. He engaged in this work because he wished to do what good he could and leave the world some better than he found it by his having lived in it. Then there is another reason, namely, there have been several individuals named Ryerson and Ryerse who take to preaching as naturally as a young duck takes to the water. It runs in the family. It is said the Vittoria Baptist Church never met with greater prosperity than when under his care and pastorate.

During the forties he was for some time customs officer at Port Dover. His own hands procured for him his living, chiefly from the farm on which he lived all his days. He preferred to spend his life preaching and as a physician to that of taking an active part in local government of any kind. However, this kind of life made for him many very warm friends.

There is now, so far as I know, but one individual alive who has heard my father preach, namely Mrs. John Stickney, of Renton, now upwards of ninety years of age. My father was fifty-seven when I was born, so that when I reached twelve his work was done. The last place where he officiated was in a then new log schoolhouse on Turkey Point, which has long since disappeared. I was then about ten years old and he would take me with him for company. This was in 1861 or 1862. At that age I could not form a proper opinion as to the quality of his preaching. He did much work in connection with the medical part of his life. He related to me one amusing circumstance in his practice. He had given an ailing Irish girl near Cheapside some pills to be taken at stated times. Her judgment was to take all of them at once, which she did. Asked why she had done so, she replied "she wanted to get well quick."

Major Edward P. Ryerse

Edward Powers Ryerse, the second son of Colonel Samuel Ryerse, was born at Port Ryerse in 1800, and who died on the 22nd March, 1882, spent his whole life on the farm on which he was born. His early education, in all probability, was like my father's, given at their own fireside. Commencing work for himself in his early manhood, he, too, did a lot of pioneer work at clearing land, putting up buildings and other early day work. The fine old brick residence, now the home of Mr. George Smith, is a monument to his taste and ability. He was very active in connection with the militia of bygone days



Colonel E.P. Ryerse's home in the early 1900s.

of Norfolk County, and earned the rank of major, by which he was always known. Shortly before his death the Dominion Government conferred on him the title of colonel for his sterling worth and unswerving loyalty through all the days of his life. And it is the loyal inheritance, bred in the descendants of the

Bowlbys, Gilberts, McCalls, Ryersons and very many others scattered through this Dominion that is the strength and security of this favored land of ours. During his life Major Ryerse served the public for many years as License Inspector, Inland Revenue Collector, and Magistrate for Norfolk County. He was a fine type of the English gentleman, and it was always a pleasure to meet him at his own fireside. He would make his friends so welcome and so much at home with his cordiality and fine manners. He was the one who first made harbor improvements, built the first pier, and the first four warehouses. His home and all its surroundings were always a very attractive place and he was ever a devoted adherent of the Church of England.

His wife, Martha Underhill, born November 20, 1806, and who died March 31, 1879, was a most worthy companion for him. She was an excellent woman and was highly esteemed by everybody. There was but one name by which she was spoken of, namely Aunt Patty. How pleasant are the memories of such people.



Commercial Road at the turn-of-the-century. The General Store is on the right while the Stalker home can be seen to the left. The early cottage at the bottom left was replaced by a larger cottage in the 1920s.

W.H. Ryerse

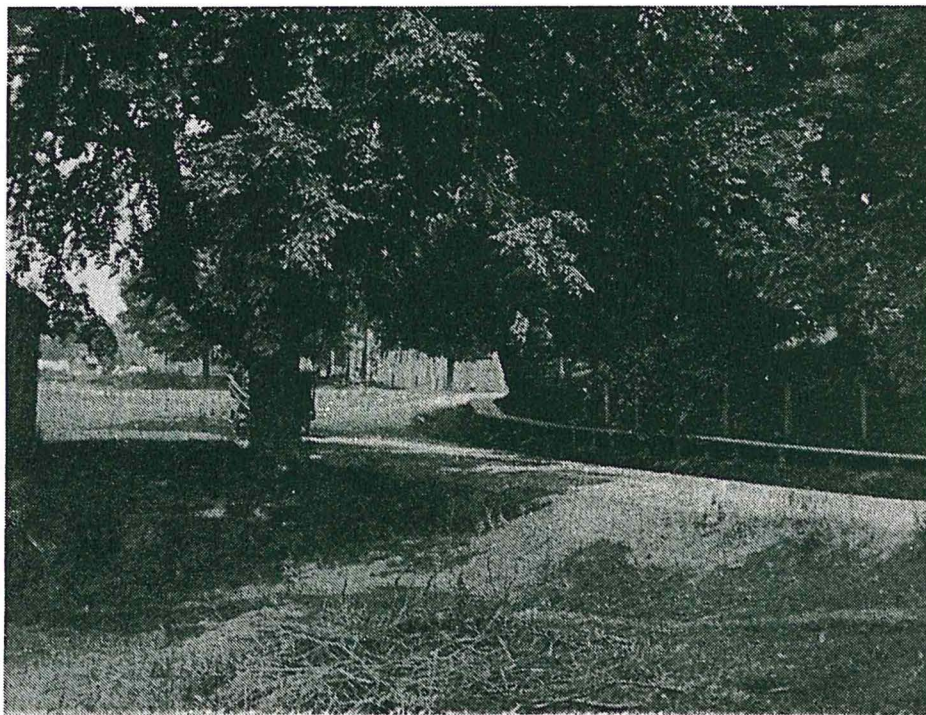
Born in 1818, the first of my father's family was about ninety years of age when he passed away. Her early education was obtained from the limited means than at command. At twelve years of age he was a student at the Chadwick Academy, located southwest of Vittoria. He was a good writer at that early age, as his then copybooks, which are still in existence, plainly show. At eighteen he was a clerk in perhaps the first general store at Pt. Ryerse, which was opened by my father and a Mr. Gray. This was on the spot where the present one now stands, and it may be the same building. One year later he was given my father's share in the business, and shortly after Mr. Gray's interest was purchased, and this business was continued for sixty-five years by him from its commencement in 1836. In 1844 he was made postmaster at Port Ryerse, which office he held for fifty-eight years. In 1837, at the age of nineteen, with other loyalists, he shouldered his musket and marched out to restore law and order in Canada. His business career embraces the ownership of several vessels, the purchase and shipment of lumber in large quantities, the importation of plaster, the handling of grain and many other activities. For the most of his life from an early age he was a honored member of the Vittoria Baptist Church, and for very many years its clerk and deacon. He was married twice, the first wife being Mary Gilbert, daughter of Col. Issac Gilbert, and the second one Maria Carrier.

He left three children, two of whom, Elizabeth and Ellen, reside in Detroit. Orrin, the only son to reach manhood, passed away at Minneapolis a few years ago. While in bygone days there were so many of our family located in and near Port Ryerse, at the present time there is neither a descendant or relative to found here. Such are life's changes.

Mr. James Cutting, Sr.

Mr. Cutting was always a prominent citizen of the Port, as well as an enterprising worker and leader in industry during all the years he lived there. Coming to the Port about 1851 at the solicitation of Mr. James Hooker, he built the hotel that bears his name and engaged in the cooperage and hotel business. From that time until he removed to Simcoe in the seventies, he made good in various kinds of business activity. For years he dealt in square timber, staves and stave bolts, ties, pailwood and anything else that promised profit. He took a very active interest in the gravel road to Simcoe. When in the seventies there was no longer opportunity for a profitable business at Port Ryerse he removed to Simcoe and started a planing mill and lumber yard. Here he spent the rest of his days.

Mr. James Hooker came to the Port about 1857 [sic] and took the lead in a business way. He rented the mill, engaged in the shipment of grain, the manufacture of flour, helped and encouraged anything and everything that made for prosperity of the Port.



A boardwalk ran along the bottom of the hill on Commerical Road below the E.P. Ryerse home. An unknown building appears at the far left of the picture.

Years ago, in conversing with those who knew and had business relations with him, one and all spoke of him in the highest terms as a business and moral man. His untimely death in 1856 was a severe blow to the Port for there was no one to take his place at the time.

Other Leaders in Business

Of the many who have had business connections at the Port and have contributed to its past prosperity, may be mentioned the firm of A. & T. McCall, consisting of Senator McCall and his brother Thomas, who dealt in and shipped immense quantities of lumber and other forest products from the port. They also owned vessels, bought and sold large amounts of grain and probably were the leading shippers at the Port. The schooner David Sharp was one of the lake boats that was owned in partnership with Mr. David Sharp and Capt. Joseph McFell. Other shippers of lumber were John Potts and Dawson, the Gibsons of Windham, William McCall and many others.

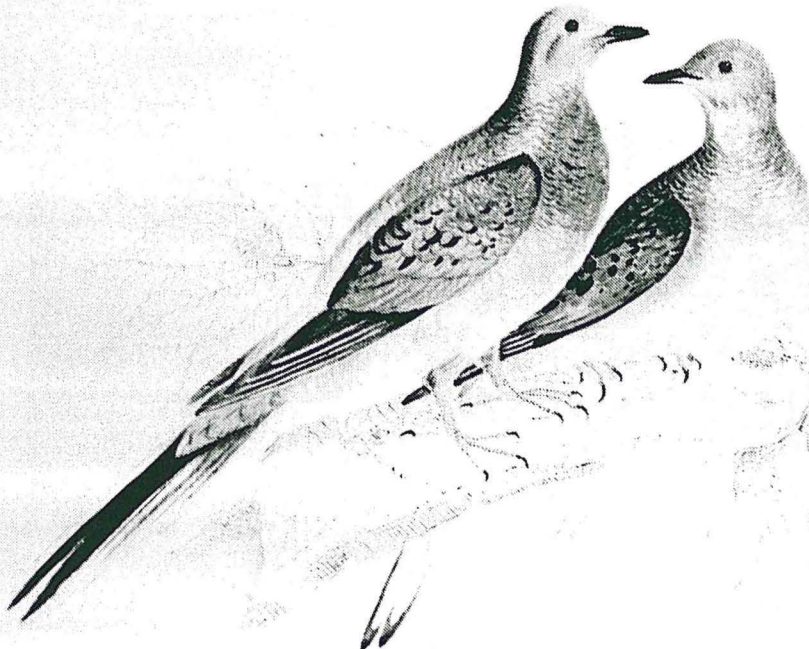
Mr. Edward Harris of London, though not a resident of Pt. Ryerse, was a leading spirit there for a number of years. He it was who initiated improvements about the harbor, the building of the third grist-mill, the establishment of the large brickyard on the east side of the harbor, and many other activities. Credit is also due for the aid of himself and friends in contributing to the building of the

Memorial Church. At eighty-seven he was at Long Point duck shooting and could skip around like a young boy.

Another esteemed business man of Port Reyse [sic] were Mr. John Shaw, whose residence was Normandale. There never has been a more straightforward miller and grain dealer in Norfolk County than Mr. John Shaw. I knew and dealt with him for many years and never once have I heard a whisper against his integrity or moral character. He conducted a milling business, manufactured and shipped large quantities of flour and bought and sold grain for a period of twelve years or more. He is always highly spoken of.

If I have written considerable about the Ryerse family, it is only because they were the most numerous here in the past, and there are no persons of a different name to write about.

My narrative would not be complete without saying something about the wild pigeons of early days. These fine birds served a most useful purpose for the settlers and pioneers of early times. In the way of a food supply they were invaluable, for they came in such abundance that it was easy to shoot and net large quantities of them. Some of the early settlers would salt down a keg or half barrel of them for future use. Occasionally they would come directly across Lake Erie and having to rise over its bank could be and were knocked down with poles. In the spring of 1865 I saw millions of them fly overhead in a single day. From early morn until evening there



Wild or Passenger Pigeons as depicted by William Pope.

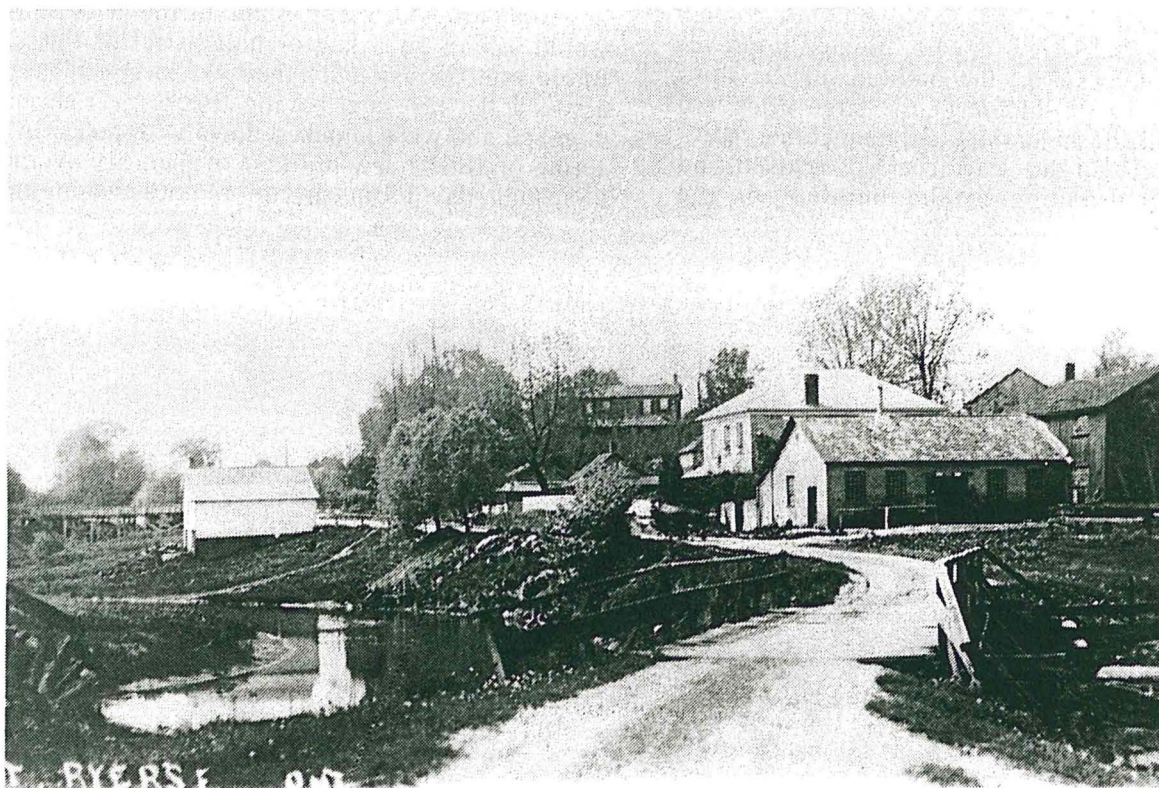
was a steady procession of the largest flocks I ever saw, passed high in the air towards the north. My sister, Ida, was governess in a family close by the Mammoth Cave, in Kentucky, the same year. She said that watching them one morning for two hours a steady stream of them passed over the buildings, and no sound of a gun was heard. They furnished lots of sport for trap shooting at various hotels generally. Mr. Archie Scott, who lived near Vittoria, was perhaps the most successful trapper of these birds with the net. The largest number of pigeons killed at one shot that I heard of was by my brother, William, who with his 1837 flintlock musket obtained fifty in buckwheat field in the fall.

I have a fine picture of one of these lovely birds that is perfect in every detail. A feeling of sadness always comes over me whenever I look at it, for the thought comes that nevermore will I see one of these beautiful birds that gave me and so many others so much pleasure and enjoyment in early days. About 1867 was the last flight of these birds here, for after that year they could only be found in small quantities in the woodland for a few years. Until the present year I have not known of the time of their final disappearance from this continent. Writing in the *Geographic Magazine*, Mr. Shiras, the son of a for-

mer Chief Justice of the United States, records that up to 1885 flocks came regularly to the south shore of Lake Superior, where his grandfather, and himself, had gone regularly to hunt game of various kinds for many years. In 1886 only one bird made its appearance. Since then there has been no trace of them. For years the Smithsonian Institute offered five hundred dollars for a pair of them. It is a surmise that an epidemic of some kind destroyed them, or that they may have been driven out over the ocean by a high wind and lost.

Conclusion

Before closing I wish to pay my tribute to my ancestors and all others of the noble band of pioneers for the grand work they did in laying the foundation for the present prosperity, comforts, improvements of various kinds and opportunities for getting on in this world the county now possesses. When we think of these pioneers exchanging the comforts of civilization for life in the forests of Norfolk County with its deprivations and hard work, verily their memories should be revered. When a proper history of Norfolk is written, may there be abundant justice done to this noble and self-sacrificing band.



Commercial Road sans trees at the turn-of-the-century.

Port Ryerse; Its Harbour and Former Trade

by George J. Ryerse, an address, July 6, 1922

Reprinted from the Ontario Historical Society's Papers and Records Volume XX

Some years ago I wrote an article for the Norfolk Historical Society on Port Ryerse, and I have it in mind to write another to supplement that.¹ It is well known that the first settler at Fort [Port] Ryerse was my grandfather, Lieut.-Col. Samuel Ryerse. At the outbreak of the Revolution he was living quietly in a gentlemanly way in New Jersey, and it was well known among his neighbours, who were largely sympathetic with the Revolution, that he sympathized with the British interests. They would not give him any peace there at all. My father told me that they finally took him and put him in a log cave of some kind. He watched his opportunity and when the guard at the door got sleepy, went out and struck him a heavy blow, and got out and went back to the community that he had come from. He raised a company, was made captain, and started in the service of the British Government. He spent seven years fighting for the British side as did also his brother, Col. Joseph Ryerson, father of Egerton Ryerson. Joseph was a boy sixteen years old; he was rather frail, and was refused admission to the army at first, but he was very anxious to go, and finally they accepted him. He served seven years also. His health improved and he came out in great deal better health and lived until he was ninety-four years old, and died in 1854 in Victoria.

When the war was over, my grandfather had no peace with his neighbours and so he went to New Brunswick, where other Loyalists had gone. His property was confiscated. He did not like it there. Some of his friends on Long Island induced him to go back there, but when he arrived he found that he was a Tory, and Tories were not wanted in that part of the country then. They gave him no peace whatever, so he communicated with Governor Simcoe, and in the year 1794, met the Governor at the Niagara River, who told him that if he would come to Canada he would do well by him, give him a large grant of land, and when he was under the British flag supporting British interests, he would be contented and satisfied. My grandfather went back home and brought his family over to the Niagara River. They secured a boat and started out, landing at Port Ryerse. My father said that he went up on the hill right at the foot of the graveyard adjoining the present Anglican church, and sat down under the trees that were there — I think they were walnut trees, and I think one of those trees were there until ten years

ago, when it was bought by a man who wanted walnut lumber. When my grandfather saw the country, he said, "Here is where I wish to live and die." And a few feet from that point you will find his grave, where he and his wife are buried. The first house was built there about where Harry Brook's house is. After a little while he made considerable improvements, hiring some men and building a good log house, and there he lived for some time. The fireplace had to be built with sticks and clay, and one day it took fire, and the house burned down.

I have no record of what he did in connection with the next house. He lived there and did his work until 1812, when he died. His wife lived quite a few years after. He had done his work well. He was a very useful man. He was practically the first judge in this district. He was honoured very much by Simcoe, who gave him command of a regiment. Of course, they were always the warmest of friends. Simcoe did what he could for him while he was here as Governor. My grandfather made application for the land on which the village of Port Ryerse now stands, lots 2 and 3, and he was told that if he took No. 2, he would have to build a saw-mill and grist-mill. He did this, but McArthur's raiders, when they came through burned those mills. The dam then was just where it is now. There were no more mills built on that property until 1849, when my father put up a grist-mill, a very good one, and also a plaster mill as well. Previous to that my father had a saw-mill and cut up a lot of lumber. That saw-mill was taken away, and the other buildings were put in its place. Those mills stood until 1860, and then they were set on fire. Unfortunately my father had no insurance, and was not able to put up another.

In the late sixties, another very fine mill was put up by Edward Harris and John Potts, and leased to John Shaw of Normandale. That stood there until 1890, and then it went down by fire also; so all three went the same way, by being burned down. That is the story of the three grist-mills at Ryerse.

As early as 1835, steamers came to Port Ryerse for a supply of wood. In those days coal was not used as fuel on the steamers, and they had to get a supply of wood to run their engines. Before that year, steamers would come to Ryerse occasionally to get a supply of wood and it was thought then that there might be quite a trade across the lake sooner or later, and my father put up a large white house on the hill. It was put up for a dry hotel, but it was never used for that purpose. It was never used for anything more than a private dwelling. My uncle, Major Edward P. Ryerse, was the one who developed the harbour. I do not know in what year he built the first dock there, but I can remember what it looked like. It was built on piles, and was quite a long affair. The creek had a fair amount of water. A boat with only a

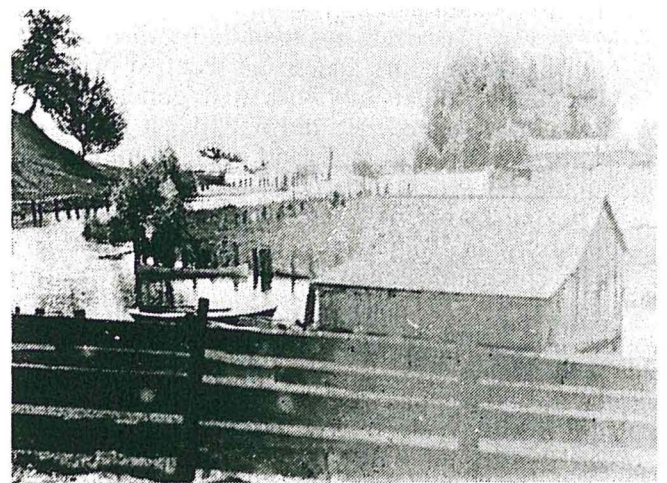
moderate draught could go up quite a way and take on part of its load, and then go out to the end of the pier. There was a car which ran from the warehouse to the end of the pier, and that would be loaded with flour and taken out to finish the loading of the boat. I can remember how trade was about 1856 or 1857, after the signing of the old Reciprocity Treat. There was quite a large trade done then at Ryerse. I can remember seeing a great deal of going and coming at that time and for a number of years afterwards. Ryerse was the chief outward shipping point, and later it was also the place where most of the goods came in for Norfolk County. About 1851, Mr. James Hooker came there. He was a very fine man, and it was thought that with his guidance and help the place would go right ahead. He leased my father's mill, but about 1856 he died, and hopes of advancing Ryerse's trade fell off. About 1861 to 1863, there were a number of vessels built at Port Ryerse. The first one was by the firm of Foster and W H Ryerse. A little later my brother Louis built one, and later on a large three-master was built. There was no particular trouble in launching these three schooners, but the larger one required a good deal of work before they got her out in deep water.

About 1867 there was a company formed called the Port Ryerse Tram or Railway and Harbour Company. It was intended to build a tram road to Simcoe, but it was never built. The Harbour was improved, stock was issued, the place was dredged out, the dock was improved, a great deal of money spent and trade boomed for a time. About 1870, seven million feet of lumber went through Port Ryerse. I can remember that year very well, when everywhere the streets were filled with stuff of various kinds. All about the Harbour was filled with lumber. The side of the hill back of the store was filled with spars and lumber was piled up on the road toward Vittoria and toward Simcoe. Port Ryerse was doing a very large trade then. It was also a great shipping point for grain. There were warehouses on the east side of the harbour to hold the grain and it was said that on one day there were 150 teams there at one time to unload grain. It was the chief shipping point for the grain of the community. Lumber as well as grain came from a long distance. It was expected that Port Ryerse would go ahead, but it has never grown a very great deal. When the railways went through, that stopped the whole thing. It was not very long before trade dropped off, and it has been going back from that time to this, until now it is not much more than a summer resort. The last industry was the mill industry, and when that was gone, it was the finish of the whole thing. I have known of the loss of sixty buildings in the village, chiefly by removal, but there were losses by fire as well. Of course now the population is very small to

what it was. In the year 1876, the number of scholars on the roll in that section was ninety-four. I am told that to-day there are only eleven children of school age in the section. The section when it was first formed, extended from Stickney's farm, taking in the farm of Alexander Bowlby, near Port Dover, making it a very large section. The first school house built was about two hundred yards north of where the present school house is. That was used for some years, and I am inclined to think that as our section was No. 1, it was about the first school house built in Woodhouse. The next one was three or four hundred yards from the present, on the road to Port Dover. It is there I went to school all the days of the formative period of my life, from nine to fourteen. We had a most excellent teacher, Mr Peter Nichol. He afterwards spent forty-four years in the ministry, and now he is retired and living in Simcoe. Previous to the building of these schools the elder children of our family got their education as best they could. Part of them went to school to Mr. Chadwick, in a building the site of which we passed to-day, and in our possession we have the copy book of the oldest one of the family when he was about twelve years old. Later in life the children went to Simcoe.

The first store in Port Ryerse was opened in the year 1835. It was kept by my father, in partnership with a man by the name of Grey. My brother William kept store there for sixty-six years. He was given the Post Office in 1844, and kept that until shortly before his death.

As to the future of Ryerse, the only thing that they can depend upon is being a summer resort. The day of any industrial development has gone by, I presume. However, it is liked very well as a summer resort, and time will likely bring success in this line and find it more popular as the years go by.



View of Young's Creek where many warehouses once stood.

Farms & Firesides

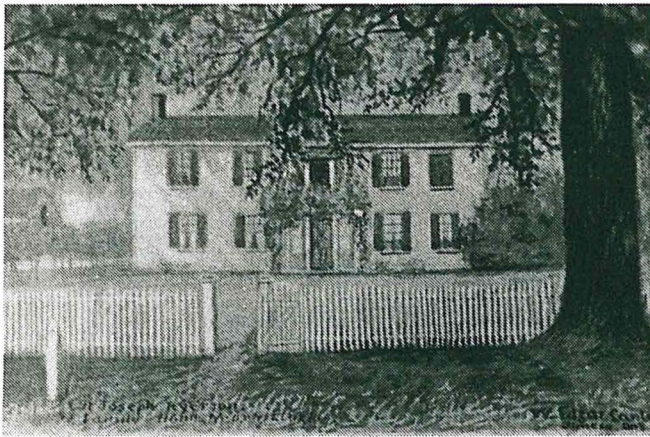


This early 19th century watercolour of the Ryerse-Smith-Beamer home was donated to the Eva Brook Donly Museum by a descendant of the Harris family.

"The old brick home sometimes called Fort Ryerse was erected by its first owner, Major Edward P. Ryerse, perhaps as early as the 1830s. Though the house itself has survived well with few changes to its exterior and its park-like grounds, the rest of the village has grown up around it. Cows no longer graze in the streets and picket fences and split rail fences are hard to come upon."

The Original Log House of Colonel Sam

While his young family sheltered with Dr. Troyer near Port Rowan, Col. Samuel Ryerse built a shanty of any material he could lay hands on. This was replaced by a log house with a parlour, two bedrooms, a kitchen and a garret. His daughter, Amelia Harris, wrote, "On removing from the shanty, to this house, my mother felt as if in a palace." While a more substantial house was in the planning stages, the log cabin's stick and clay chimney caught fire and the cabin was gutted. Although their exact locations are unknown, it is thought the shanty and cabin were nestled in the crook of Young's Creek, just above the lake. After the fire, the Ryerse family moved into the house of the miller and his family. The latter removed to a smaller abode. Amelia described the miller's house as "airy and beautiful" and observed that "mother rather regretted [this], as discomfort would have hastened the new house."



The Joseph Ryerson Home

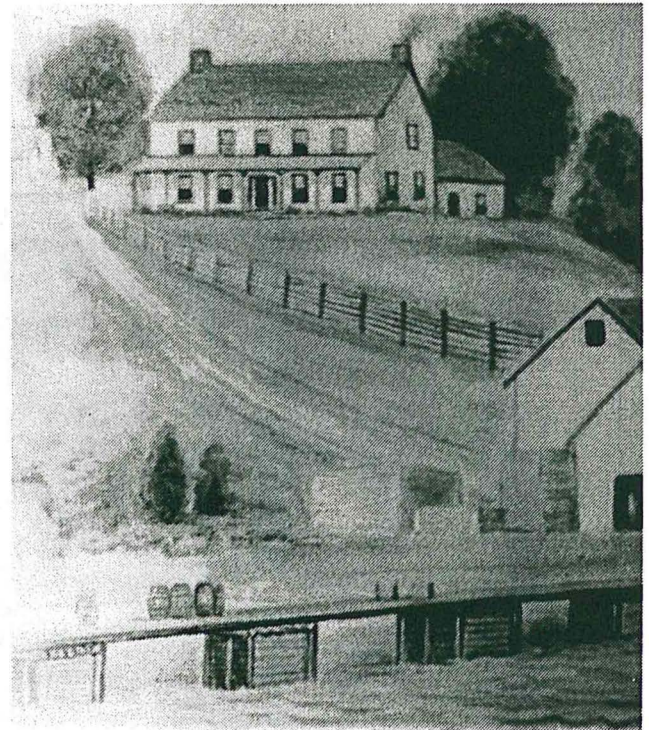
Colonel Joseph Ryerson, younger brother of Samuel Ryerse, erected the second of the Ryerson family homes on the highway west of Port Ryerse in 1818. A landmark for many years, it has long since disappeared.

This branch of the family, however, left an indelible mark on the history of Ontario. The fifth of Joseph's six sons was Egerton Ryerson, the founder of public education in the province.

The last resident of the Joseph Ryerson home was Marjorie Stickney, who moved to a new house built by Max Stickney on the farm on Lakeshore Road in 1943 (see Farms). It was likely at this time the Ryerson home disappeared from the landscape.

Elder George

Located in a still picturesque spot south of the lakeshore road, just west of the village and above the dam on the creek, the home known as Elder George's was built circa 1818. On May 24, 1893 it was destroyed by fire. The avenue of maples, as it is known, still spreads its canopy over the former lane leading to the spot where the home stood. Current owner Vern Ryerse writes that "all of these trees are among the older 'nature' citizens of Port Ryerse, and have been silent witness of the many changes that have taken place in the village over the years."



The White House on the Hill

In approximately 1835 Rev. George J. Ryerse (known as Elder George, middle son of Colonel Sam) built what became known as "the white house on the hill". Situated on the west bank behind the beach, it was constructed in anticipation of expanding across-lake travel by steamer passengers. This boom never materialized and the home remained a private dwelling. Writing about his memories of this residence, George, the son of Elder George, noted that "when Mr. James Hooker lived there in the early (1850s) with its beautiful flower garden in front, surrounded by the handsomest rustic fence I ever saw, and other flowering bushes on the north side, it was a fine appearing property. However, there was one useful purpose it served. Painted white, a two-storey building, and located on a hill as it was, it could be seen by navigators of Lake Erie many miles away, and thus it was a bright landmark of the north shore, as well as a guide to the harbour of Port Ryerse."

Ryerse/Smith/Beamer House and Farm

This land granted to Samuel Ryerse in 1796 became the property of his son, Edward Powers Ryerse in 1812. In approximately 1836, Edward built a brickyard and used the products of it to construct a two-storey Georgian house on the ledge of the hill, between the lake and the higher flat land. It is said that, remembering the events of 1814, he built the house to withstand assault by invading Americans, with walls four bricks thick in the main part of the house and three bricks thick in the lower back part. The rumour that there were gunslits in the walls of the second storey is probably not true, but children like to think that there is a jail in the basement.

The house and land were sold to George G. and William F. Smith in 1900 and, at the present time, the sixth generation of this family lives and works on part of the land. In 1914, pine trees on the farm provided lumber to build a barn near the house. This barn was the home of a large herd of Jersey cows until 1967, when the growth of the Port as a bedroom community made it increasingly difficult to drive them to pasture or to the creek. For many years, the "Cattle Crossing" sign remained in the barn, perhaps waiting to be used again. The barn still stands, but is not in use.

Parts of the farm have been sold over the years, for cottages along the lake, or for permanent homes. In 1975, George and Frances Smith built a house for themselves on St. George Street and sold the 1836 house and the barn to David and Jean Ryerse, who sold it in 1979 to John (Jack) and Sheila Beamer.

The interior of the house has been changed from time to time to provide space for the various families who lived in it. The present owners are trying to restore it.

In 1993, the back part of the house was completely redesigned to make use of all available space, creating a library/loft and increased living space. The cooking fireplace, now freestanding, was retained and the wainscotting of the earlier family room was retained or matched. This project also added much-needed insulation.

Previously, in 1985, a major renovation restored the main part of the house to a symmetrical centre hall plan, with the dining room opposite the living room. The central staircase was completed by David Beckett of Normandale, who matched the existing banister and uprights as well as designing a newel post in keeping with the rest of the house. To make these changes possible, the kitchen was moved and modernized. In the past 156 years, at least three "modern" kitchens have been built in this house.

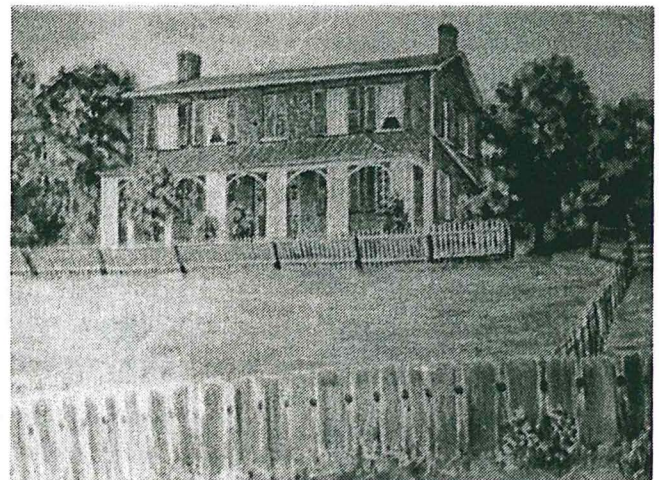
The exterior of the house has been changed somewhat in the course of 156 years. An early picture shows a small semi-circular porch at the front door, but the later Cantelon painting shows a porch with a curved roof running the full length of the lake side of the house. The original front door, with decorative windows at the sides and at the top, still exists but is not visible from outside. On the back part of the house, there have been several porches, most recently, one with a roof and impressive pillars. The doorway casing makes use of some fine wood that was part of the interior of the house.

On the west elevation, interesting architectural details include the fanlight, the cornice and cornice returns and two blind windows. In the whole house, four blind windows maintain the balanced design necessary in a Georgian house. Someday, they will be covered by shutters.

An ongoing tree-planting program is enhancing the park-like setting for the house. Several decorative trees have been added to the many mature walnut and locust trees. Of special interest is a flowering dogwood presented to Jack on his retirement in 1993. The hill on the south side is especially attractive in spring when the grape hyacinths covering it are in bloom.

Jack has had a flagpole installed, proudly flying the Canadian flag, to identify "Fort Ryerse, Loyalist Rendezvous, 1837" as the house is identified on one Cantelon painting.

This house has been designated by the Local Architectural Advisory Committee under the Ontario Heritage Act as having architectural and historical significance. The designating plaque was unveiled on Saturday, August 17, 1985, by Jennifer, Geoffrey and Mary Beamer, with members of the Ryerse and the Smith families in attendance.



An Edgar Cantelon painting from an early photograph of the Ryerson home. Cantelon called this painting Fort Ryerse, Loyalist Rendezvous 1837. Present residents are Jack and Sheila Beamer.

The Vail/Pope/Oakes House and Farm



In 1986, the Vail house was designated a Heritage Home by the Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee. Greg and Karen Oakes performed the unveiling of the plaque, with members of both the Vail and Pope families in attendance. The designation recognized the architectural significance of the house as well as the contribution made by one of its owners, William Pope, to the history of the area.

This cottage, on the north side of the road west of Port Ryerse opposite the Norfolk County Park, was probably built in the 1850s when Isaac Vail Jr. took out a mortgage for £450. The Vails owned a considerable amount of property at this time: 80 acres of land purchased from Abram Powell in 1800, a store in the Port and a schooner. The 80 acres extended to the lakeshore, including the present site of the County Park.

In 1860, William Pope purchased the farm from William Salt, who had owned it for 4 years. William Pope lived there with his family for 40 years, during which time he created many of the paintings of Canadian birds for which he has become recognized. He also ran the farm. Records show that he raised livestock and grew wheat, oats and barley. He had been interested in tree fruits at his early home in England, and pursued this interest in an orchard around the house. Chapter 8 of this book tells more about William Pope.

In 1922, the Oakes family purchased the farm of 137 acres from William Pope Junior. Elisha (Frank) Oakes, with his wife Greta, operated a general farm, producing milk, wheat, corn, oats and hay. The milk cheques were the main source of income, but like many wives the world over, Greta raised hens and sold the eggs to help out.

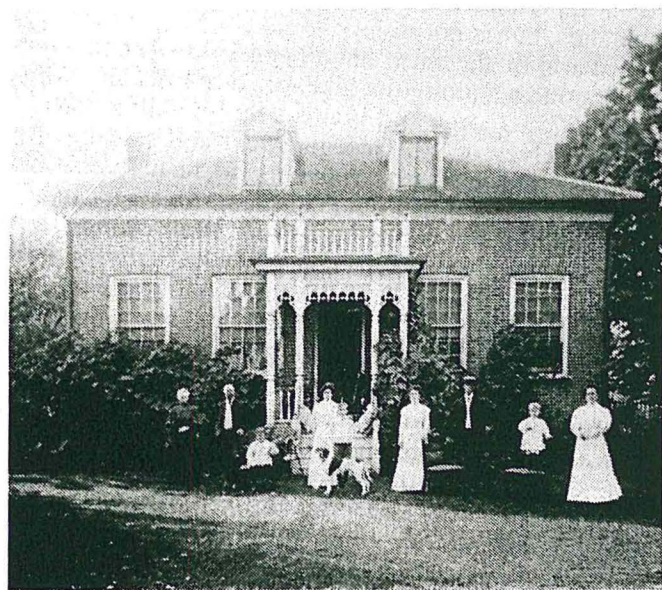
In 1968, Earl and Evelyn Oakes took over the

farm. Earl worked away from the farm during the week and farmed at night and on weekends. The land south of the road — 47 acres in all — was sold in 1951 and 1974 to form the Norfolk County Park. All of the farm land has now been sold but Earl and Evelyn retain the house and some land. In 1992 their son, Greg, and his wife, Esther, built a new log house on an adjoining wooded lot.

The one-and-one-half-storey "Georgian cottage" has solid brick walls 14 inches thick made of locally produced brick. It is thought that it was intended to be a two-storey house, but when the Vail family's schooner sank, financial considerations forced a change of plan. Mrs. Oakes reports that the upstairs of the house was not finished as carefully as the downstairs.

Originally, the main part of the house had a central hall from the front door to the kitchen at the rear of the house. The kitchen wing also contained a pantry and the hired man's room. It is said that when the Popes lived in the house, one of the upstairs rooms was used to store the winter supply of meat. At times, the interior has been modified to accommodate two or three generations sharing the house. It has usually been a family home, from the Pope family with their five children to the Oakes with their two.

As you drive west from the Port, be sure to look appreciatively at this cottage which has remained through many changes in the Port, and which has been lovingly cared for by these three families.



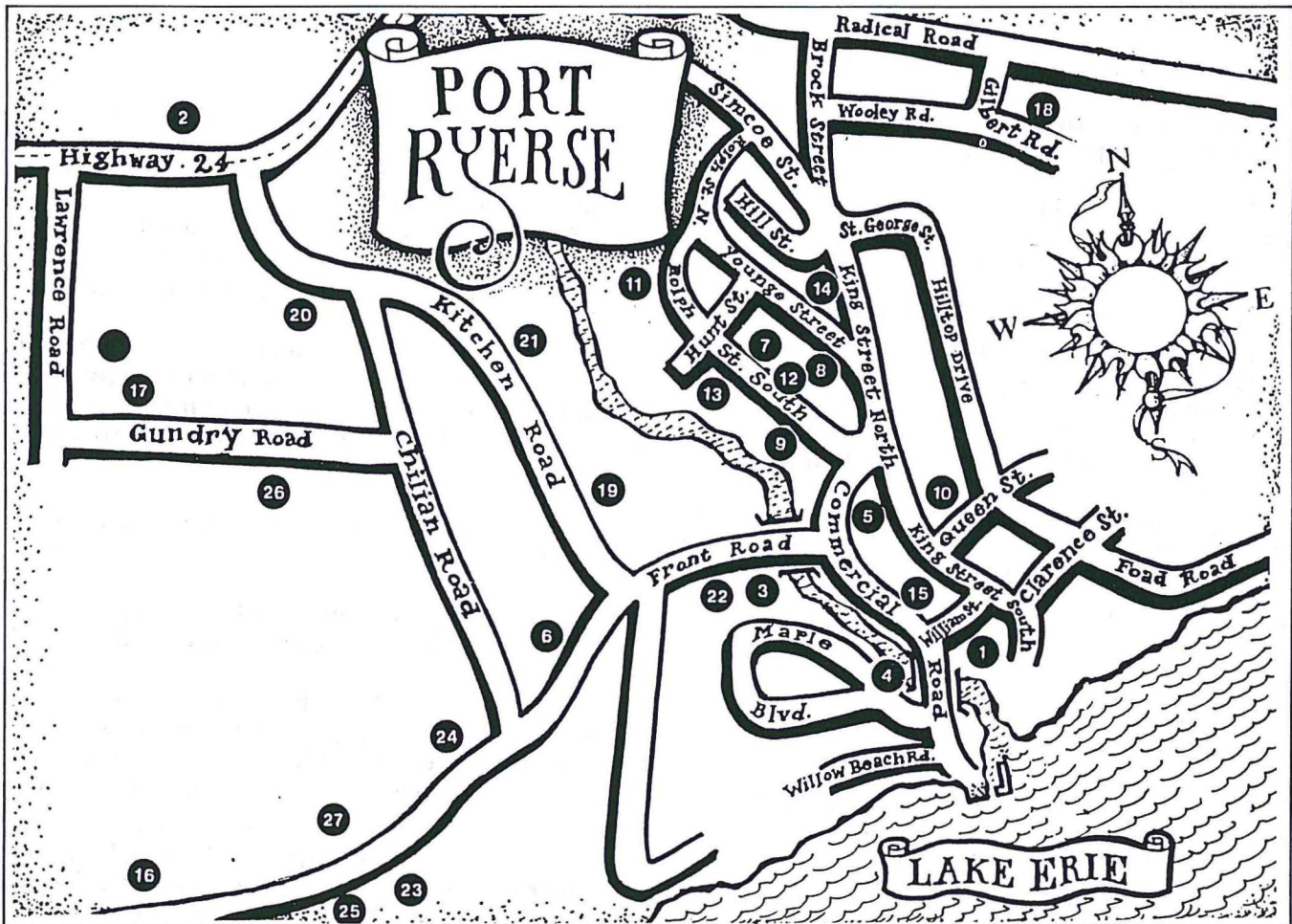
This picture is dated in the early 1900s. William Edwin Pope and his wife, Emily Amelia. Their children are: Minnie (Smith), Annie (McInnes), Thomas Price, Carrie (Walker) and grandchildren Leighton and Leland Smith, Archie Walker.

“Woodsvew Acres” Winter Farm

The west half of Lot 24, Concession 1, Charlotteville, on the Lawrence Road, has been a Winter property since being purchased in the late 1800s. Hammond Oakes is listed as the owner in the 1877 Atlas of Norfolk. The farm has passed from Robert Winter to his son Norman and to his son Ivan who still resides there.

The southwest corner of the south half of the farm was sold to the Boy Scouts in 1962 by Norman. This 29-acre portion was purchased by Mel Fletcher in 1968, while the remaining southern portion, south of Lakeshore Road, was sold to Jim Ryerson.

Two acres, including the old brick house, a garage and garden, were severed in 1973 for Norman and his wife Mary, so Ivan could purchase the farm and build a new home.



- | | | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 - Original Log House | 8 - Ryerse-Jones-Ferris-Atkinson | 15 - Stalker House | 21 - Chilian Farm |
| 2 - Joseph Ryerson House | 9 - Welsh House, 27 Rolph Street | 16 - Lawrence-Gundry Farm | 22 - Thompson Farm |
| 3 - Elder George Ryerse House | 10 - Smith-Adams-Buckle | 17 - Mitchell-Gundry Farm | 23 - Mitchell-Black Farm |
| 4 - White House on the Hill | 11 - Allan, Delisle - 17 Rolph St. | - and Mitchell Cemetery | 24 - Stickney-Ryerson Farm |
| 5 - Ryerse-Smith-Beamer House | 12 - Rolph - 26 Rolph Street | 18 - Isaac Gilbert House | 25 - Winter Farm |
| 6 - Vail-Pope-Oakes House | 13 - Colville - 21 Rolph Street | 19 - Harris-Kitchen Farm | 26 - Stickney Farm |
| 7 - Vary - 22 Rolph Street | 14 - Ryerse-Lyons | 20 - Caswell Farm | 27 - Winter Farm |

Port Ryerse's 1924 Voters List

Alway, Elgin, retired
Alway, Lena, m.w.²
Alway, Ethel, teacher
Adams, Chloe, m.w.
Buck, Thomas, hotelkeeper
Buck, Ida J., m.w.
Everett, Charles, labourer
Jones, Walker, labourer
Jones, Frank, labourer
Oakes, Charles, farmer
Oakes, Andrew, farmer
Pope, William E., farmer
Pope, Emily, m.w.
Stalker, Alice, spinster
Stalker, Robt. E., blacksmith
Smith, Ernest, farmer
Smith, W.F.
Williams, Harry, farmer

Aikens, Mrs. D.F.
Aikens, D.F.

Brown, Albert, labourer
Brown, Mrs. Albert
Brooks, Mrs. Fred
Buell, Rev. W.G.
Boyd, Dr. J.S., doctor
Carpenter, Rev. W., minister
Copeland, J.M., minister
Carrington, W.H.
Culver, Harold, farmer
Cutting, Vera, m.w.
Clews, James, printer
Dellar, Howard F., minister
Donly, H.B.
Donly, Mrs. H.B.
Folmesbec, Eugene
Green, Rev. Thomas
Gunton, R.E., magistrate
Gunton, Mrs. R.E.
Gallagher, A.H., agent
Hicks, Rev. Thomas
Hurliburt, Rev. N.A.

Jackson, E.H.
Jackson, Mrs. E.H.
Jackson, Della
Jackson, William
Jemmett, E.L.
King, George A., minister
Lea, Mrs. George A.
Lea, George
Lea, Vera H.
McLeod, J.R.
McLeod, Mrs. J.R.
McCall, M.J.
Peachey, James
Reid, Frank
Robbs, Rev.
Stalker, W.H.
Sutherland, W.L.
Stapleton, Rev.
Tisdane, Mrs. W.E.³
Woodward, Mrs. Ilra
Wilson, Mrs. Carl
Wooten, Rev. F.M.

The Simcoe Reformer's Port Ryerse column of June 8, 1922 reported:

The Dominion Gas Co. is drilling a well on the farm occupied by L. Woolley.

Wheat is heading out nicely and it will not be long before the hum of the thresher is again heard.

Miss Annie Pope accompanied J. H. Lawrence and party on a motor trip to Weston and Toronto.

Miss Annie Muth, eldest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Geo. Muth, was married to Nelson Sloat last week.

We noticed Mr. James Peachey and Mrs. Woodward down here last week getting their cottages in order.

Several parties were down fishing on the 3rd, but they are not generally as lucky as our boys, who have had some good catches lately.

Rain is badly needed at present. Some things are beginning to suffer and if it does not soon come the strawberry crop will be shortened.

The Simcoe Reformer's Port Ryerse column of June 22, 1922 reported:

Hay is about fit for the mower, but the appearance of the weather is not favourable.

Strawberries are plentiful and the price about or below the cost of production.

Bruce Holloway launched a fine new motor boat constructed by himself last week.

The cost of paint is simply outrageous and is poor encouragement to the man who would beautify his property. All protection should be withdrawn from the paint manufacturer.

A very successful strawberry festival was held at the Old Woodhouse Methodist Church on Thursday last. A good time was spent. Port Dover band furnished excellent music.

We are now ready for summer visitors. The pathmaster has improved the condition of the roads, and thanks to W. L. Oakes the grass on the road to the church had been mowed, much improving its appearance.

The Simcoe Reformer's Port Ryerse column of June 29, 1922 reported:

W. L. Oakes has completed his haying.

Our village has now the post office in the store for the summer months.

Apples, especially winter kinds, ever in well orchards, have not set good in this vicinity.

Haying is now the order of the day. The crop is not an overly large one. Lack of rain somewhat shortened the yield. The quality, however, is good.

A variety shower was given to Mrs. Hall (nee Lily Cruickshank) at the home of Francis Evans on Thursday last. There was a good attendance and the gifts were all suitable.

The Port Ryerse Harbour

by William B. Jackson, former harbourmaster

I purchased what was left of the original harbour facility in the fall of 1963 from Simcoe coal dealer Russ Gibson. The title conveyed through Lot 23 of Plan 71B was the property at the mouth of Young's Creek and the piers that extended out into the lake from that point.

Gibson had purchased the property sometime before 1940 from Simcoe lawyer Francis Reid. Gibson's plan was to rebuild the docks to provide for the unloading of coal vessels to supply his business, and to ship out goods from the Canadian Cannery plant in Simcoe. (I have copies of the drawings that he commissioned.) But the Second World War came along and he had to abandon this idea.

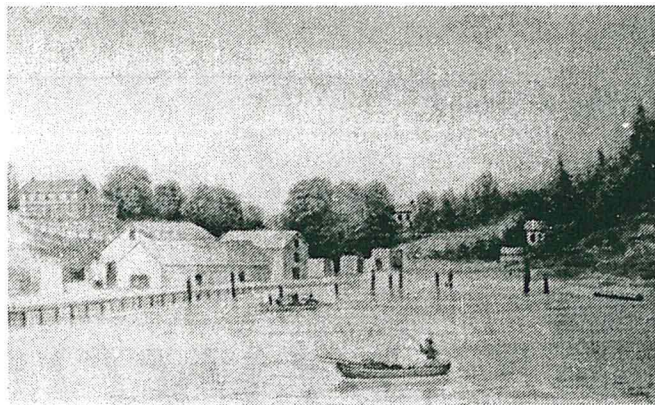
Because of the convoluted trail of ownership, rights, uses, and practices, I did a considerable amount of searching and enquiring to find out all I could about the harbour.

The land was part of the original Crown Deed granted to Colonel Samuel Ryerse. The creek was used to gain access to the original home site. In those days settlements were made on the high ground, not on the flood plain of the stream. Just as the water was dammed farther upstream to make a mill site, so too there must have been improvements made at the mouth of the creek to give safe harbour to craft plying the waters of the lake and the bay. The banks were probably reserved for the mooring of boats that would transport the products of the mill to other locations, as well as the unloading of supplies and people required for the development of inland communities.

Port Ryerse flourished in the early part of the nineteenth century. Water transport was an essential ingredient of this prosperity.

The harbour property was separated from the original lot, and was shown as such in the original plan of the Village of Port Ryerse (17B). In 1863 Samuel's youngest son, Edward Powers Ryerse, and his wife Martha, sold the property to a company formed for the express purpose of developing the site. This company had the long and all-inclusive title of "The Simcoe and Port Ryerse Tram or Railroad and Harbour Company" which had been incorporated the year before by an Act of the Parliament of Canada.

There were "three acres two roods and thirty two perches of land," commencing at the waters edge on the east side of the mouth of the creek at the extension of Cove Street. It following a course marked by "a basswood tree" and other points, to the junction of Commercial Road and William Street, across to the west side of the stream, and thence in a line that



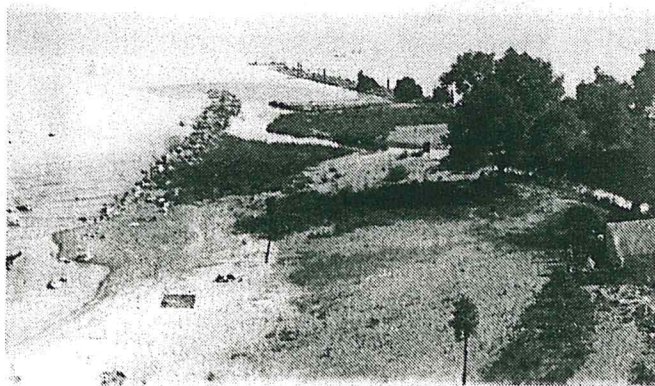
Cantelon's portrayal of the Port Ryerse harbour taken from a painting by William Pope.

would approximate the base of the hill, to water's edge again, back to the place of the beginning. Reference was made to a former plan of the harbour so there must have been an earlier deed to pass title to Edward Powers Ryerse.

This newly formed company was doomed from the start because no railroad was built between Port Ryerse and Simcoe. In fact, other railroads were already being built across southwestern Ontario which drew away potential lake commerce from the Port.

At some point in time, a row of pilings was set across the creek mouth allowing only small boats to get inland to protected waters.

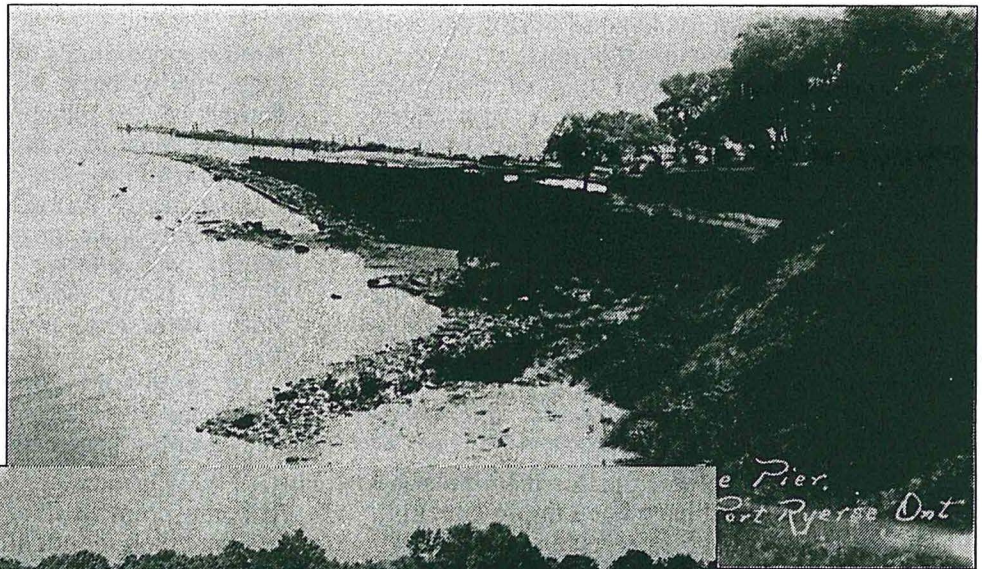
With no revenue to maintain the facility, the buildings deteriorated, the creek bed silted up and, eventually, the land was sold for taxes. Frank Reid acquired title, probably in payment for the legal bill to straighten the whole matter out, and eventually the part west of the creek was incorporated in Plan 71B with Reid retaining the front lot at the mouth of the creek.



This postcard shows the Port Ryerse pier and harbour in the 1920s.

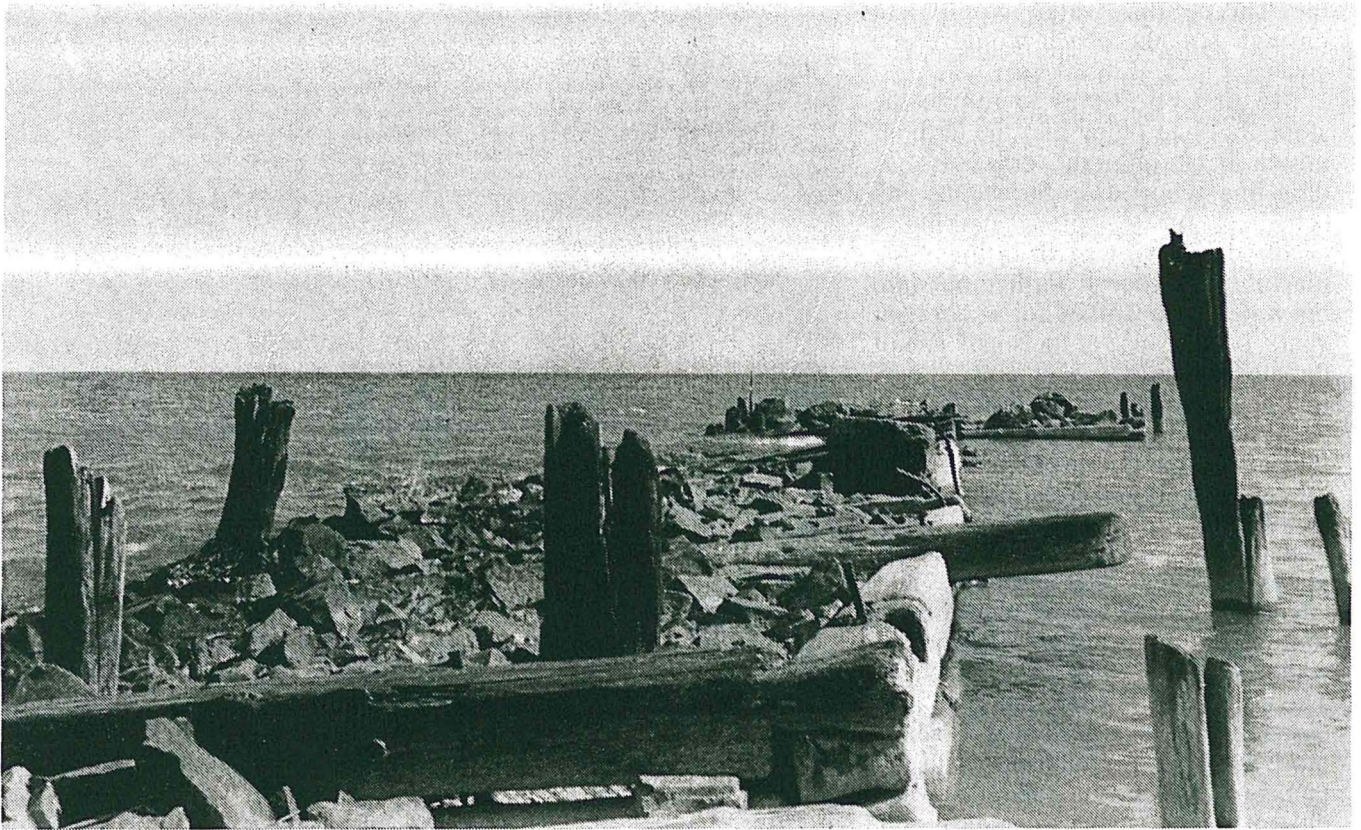
Lake Erie & Young's Creek

View of the Port Ryerse harbour from the east bank showing the last visible remnants of a thriving harbour. Circa 1905.



Looking up Young's Creek at the Vittoria Road bridge near the former site of Ryerse's mills in 1912.

"Lake Erie bears the name of a tribe of Indians who lived on its south shore. The name Erie means people of the panther or people of the cat. Louis Hennepin, in his 1698 book, mentions that the Iroquois gave Lake Erie its name by calling it Erie Tejochavontiang. Gabriel Sagard believed that the Erie were referred to as the Cat Tribe because of the number of wildcats and lions that roamed their country. He also thought their robes, with a number of animal tails fringing the edges of the back of the neck, may have had significance."



High and low lake levels over a number of years have played havoc with the remains of the pier — relics of the once busy harbour.

The original layout of the piers is indicated on the early map of the village. On the east side two structures were built, probably to protect the entrance from the crushing waves set up by a strong east wind. The end of the easterly pier was angled to make a smaller entrance into the harbour basin. The centre structure provided mooring space for those vessels waiting to go up to the warehouse area to load or unload their cargo.

The piers were constructed of large square timbers held together by long iron spikes, to form a crib into which were placed rocks originally used for ships' ballast. Pilings were driven down outside the cribbing to protect it and to facilitate moorings. It appears the east side of the west pier went straight into the warehouse area, while the east side of the creek was kept close to the high bank to make it easy to off-load from the wagons drawn there. There must have been a "turning basin" before the bridge, to permit the ships to reverse direction and sail out of the harbour.

While there is no visible evidence of the piers today, when the water is clear the outline of their location is quite discernible; the rocks are not too far below the surface of the water. I can remember in the 1930s the whole west pier being out of water for a considerable distance, and the taller pilings still

showing. But with the passing of years the ice and waves did their damage, the cribs came apart, and the rocks were scattered into the water alongside. The east piers were more exposed, and at one point were even breached so that a new entrance to the creek was established.



View of Young's Creek showing the turning basin where the ships could reverse direction to sail back out to the harbour. Postcard circa 1908.

The water level was very low when I bought the property and it was evident that if something was not done to maintain the structure connected to the shore, the water would cut through and the beach would erode away.

My first effort was to re-pile the stone that had fallen into the harbour mouth back onto the crib base. A drag-line scooped up the stones and set them on the piers, making a roadbed that would allow the machine to proceed farther out into the water. This worked for a couple of years, but because of the small size of the stones, and the ever present current and waves, it didn't last long.

Next, I pulled out the row of pilings across the mouth of the creek — they were well preserved oak logs — and dredged out the sand between the east and west piers. On each side I drove deep steel plates to form a solid wall with 6 feet of water at the edge, and closed off the entrance except for a 28-foot opening. Mooring piles were put out in the water, and I ran gang planks out for every other slip. The north side was left closed to allow access to the easterly part. This provided a basin in which 15 or more small craft could moor, on the condition that their owners launched them elsewhere, and that they did not require a parking spot beside their jetty.

Once again Port Ryerse had a safe harbour. Or so I thought! With the entrance seaward, wave action could come into the basin and set everything to rock-



Ed Ostrosser and George Bradley fishing on the remains of the old piles of the docks and warehouses on the east bank of Young's Creek in 1908.

ing. In the winter, ice worked on the mooring stakes and raised them three feet into the air. So the following year I closed off the entrance and opened up the land spit, to give access through the breach in the east pier. The gangways had to come out so that mooring was done fore and aft alongside. This worked for a couple of more years, during which the lake level rose to record heights.

Another condition also became apparent with the high water: waves were going right over the shore and dropping sand into the harbour basin. I placed more rubble along the west shore and the Region added more at the end of the road allowance, so that

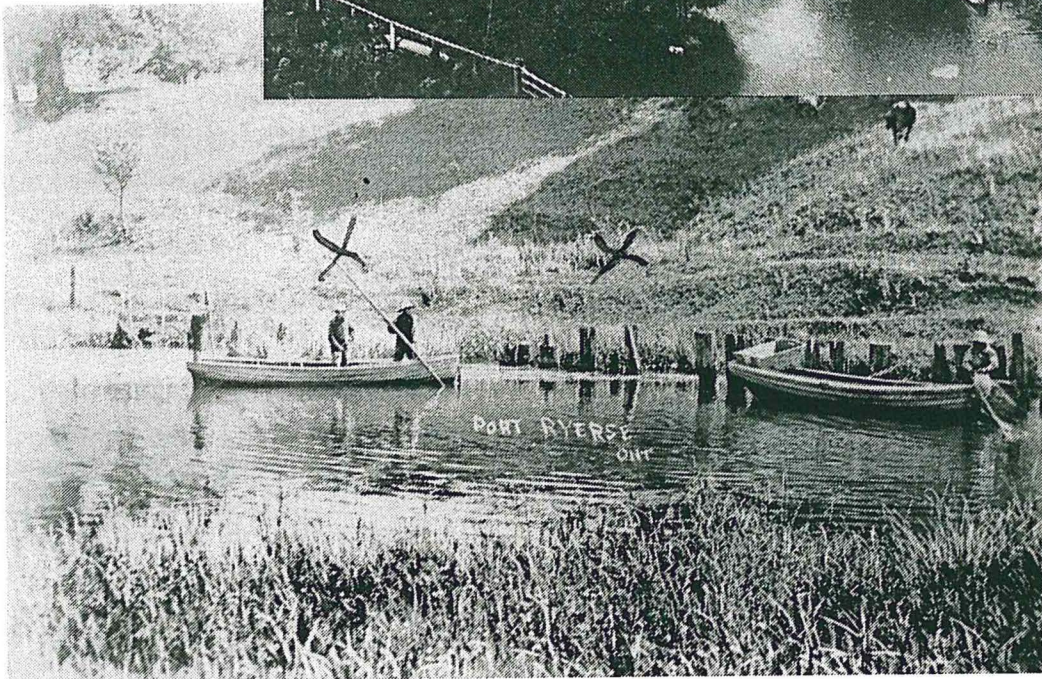
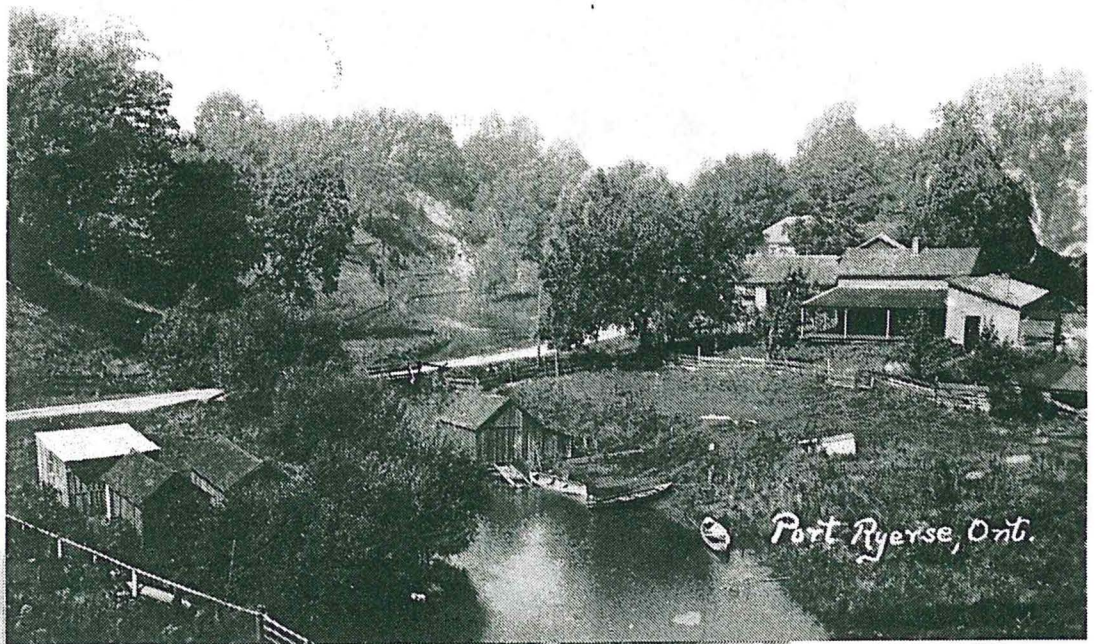
further erosion was prevented, but it still didn't stop the overflow of sand and water.

Finally, in 1976, I sold the property to the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. Now it is back in the hands of the government, bringing to an end the controversy and speculation about what should and could be done. While the Ministry has capped the east side with concrete, the basin has almost completely silted in. The prime usage being made of it now is for fishing. It is doubtful that any further development will be undertaken as there is not enough land area to support it. What could be done is to rebuild the piers out into the lake 10 to 50 feet and put on a solid cap at least two feet above the high water level. Other than that, it's doubtful Port Ryerse will ever be a harbour again.



This row of piles were removed from the mouth of the creek in the 1960s. The old piles, pulled from their lake bed anchorage, had rotted down almost to water level and, for years, formed an odd pattern across the old harbour.

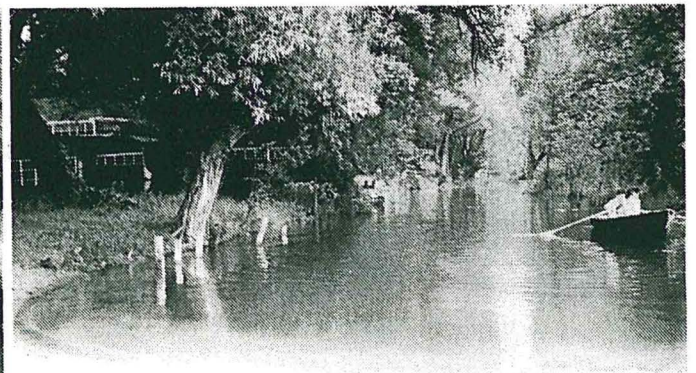
Bird's-eye view of the inner harbour turning basin in the early 1900s.



Boating at the bend at Young's Creek showing the east bank.



Looking up the creek through the growth of willows in the early 1940s.

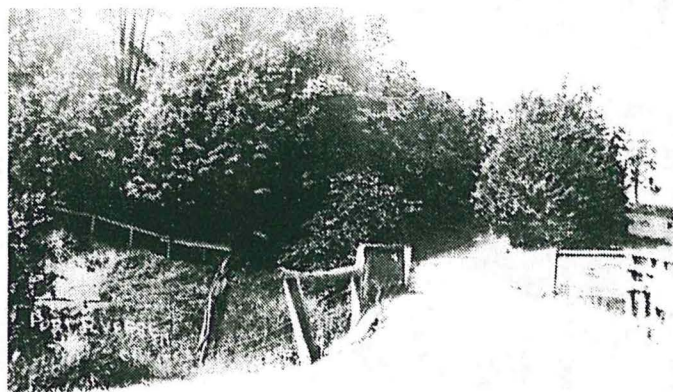


The E.H. Jackson cottage at the mouth of Young's Creek in 1945 when boat traffic was reduced to canoes and rowboats.



The bridge over Young's Creek leading to the beach in 1905.

The bridge to Vittoria from Commercial Road. A wooden walkway is visible on the left of the photo.



The road to Vittoria in 1905.



Commercial Road bridge in the 1940s.

Families & Folklore



Caroline Lea Ryerse and George J. Ryerse Jr. with their children (left to right) Ida, Bertha, Arthur and Carl.



James and Sophia Cutting

Cutting Family

James Cutting, a cooper or barrel maker, emigrated from Woodbridge, England in the 1840s and established a flourishing cooperage in Waterford. In 1851 he moved his business to Port Ryerse with the encouragement of James Hooker.

The same year he built the Cutting Hotel at the bottom of the hill on the main road as it turns toward the creek. It was one of four hotels in the thriving village for the next two decades. Today it is Idlewyld, the home of Steve and Jean Holden. Before and during the American Civil War, the Cutting Hotel was a northern link to the Underground Railroad which helped to smuggle black slaves from the U.S. to Canada.

James Cutting's business expanded to include wood building supplies, square timbers and many other construction materials. He encouraged the construction of the gravel road from Port Ryerse to Simcoe.

When the railway by-passed the village in favour of Simcoe and Port Dover, Cutting re-established the barrel and shingle manufacturing operation in Simcoe with partner Samuel Crump, formerly of Pittford, New York.

The business eventually passed to William Rosseau Cutting, son of James and his wife Sophia Chart of Waterford. In the 1930s William R. built the family cottage along the east side of Young's Creek in Port Ryerse, hauling stone along the beach with

horse and wagon for the fireplace. This cottage remains in the hands of his granddaughter, Mary Lou (Cutting) Varey and husband Bill. The Vareys also maintain a permanent residence in one of the older frame homes on Rolph Street in the village.

William O. Cutting, son of William R., operated the family business in 1930s and 1940s. His wife was Marjorie, daughter of Lt. Col. William L. Heath. Heath's parents were George Heath and Tallulah Ryerson, niece of Egerton Ryerson. This fact doubles the family's connection to Port Ryerse.

The couple sold the century-old Cutting family home at the corner of Norfolk and James streets in Simcoe in the 1960s, taking up residence in a new home overlooking Black Creek in Port Dover.

William was one of the founding members of the Port Dover Yacht Club, and in the 1950s, active in the conversion of an old frame church building into the clubhouse.

In addition to daughter Mary Lou, William and Marg had sons James and William (Skip). Skip's son Bill now resides in Port Ryerse with his wife Brenda and children, Jessica, Michael and Caitlin, in a home they built in the early 1980s at the corner of Hilltop and Clarence. Mary Lou's daughter Cathy and husband Duncan Buckle with their four children, Chad, Emily, Molly and Shelby, live on Hilltop Street in the former Smith-Adams house. Thus the Cutting family's ties to Port Ryerse have continued into the sixth generation.

Charlie Brown

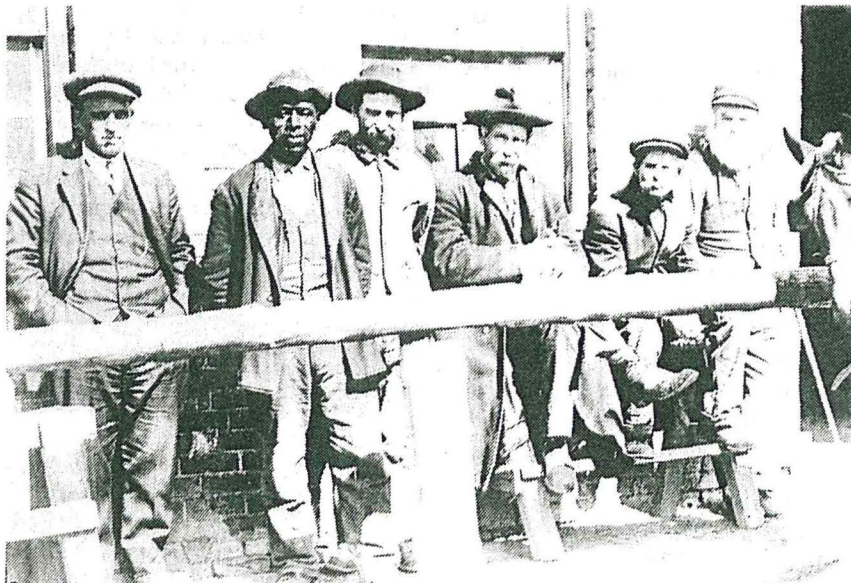
By Harry B. Barrett

While visiting in Niagara-on-the-Lake on business Edward Powers Ryerse observed two well-dressed American gentlemen with a negro slave land from across the river. They began to promote their slave as a boxer. Money was offered, with side bets to the crowd that began to gather, to anyone who could stay in the ring with their man for a given period of time. It would be bare knuckle fighting.

Mr. Ryerse spoke quietly to the slave who was standing apart watching his owners' efforts to line their pockets at his expense. Learning that his name was Charlie Brown, Mr. Ryerse asked him if he realized that there were anti-slave laws in Canada and that he would be free of his American masters if he were to find employment here.

As a result Charlie refused to return home and despite the angry protests and dire threats against both him and his benefactor, Charlie came to Port Ryerse. His abilities as a pugilist stood him in good stead as he maintained order among the dock workers and schooner crews while looking after Mr. Ryerse's interests, both as an officer of her Majesty's Customs and as a ship owner and businessman in the busy port.

Charlie soon established himself as a well-loved and respected member of the Port Ryerse community. His grandson, Albert, carried on the tradition as a hard-working, honest blacksmith in the area. He dedicated his free time to gaining a better life for blacks through their own church and the negro masonic order, in which he was an active member and powerful influence for good.



Alex Boughner, Theodore Brown, Jim Graham, Wm. A. Smith, Henry McQueen, Emery Smith circa 1900.

Smuggling

From the time of the first law to tax or exclude a product entering one country from another, the art of smuggling has flourished. The most colourful form of this in our area was always "rum running."

During prohibition, following the Volstead Act in the United States which banned the manufacture, sale and consumption of spirits, an irresistible opportunity was provided to Canadians. In Canada the consumption and sale of spirits was forbidden, but no such law governed their manufacture, and rum running flourished in Canada from sea to sea as a result.

Customs officers in Port Dover, Port Ryerse and Port Rowan could, and did, clear legally for export vast quantities of whisky to off-shore destinations as far distant as Cuba or the Bahamas; no questions asked. It was of no concern to them that the "ship" might be a speed boat or a row boat, nor did they question their return for another shipment a few hours later.

The actual destination for the cargos of Corby's Special Selected or Old Crow rye whisky was in the vicinity of Erie, Pennsylvania. Those in the row boats were attempting to relieve the parched throats of their own countrymen.

Many area residents supplemented a meagre income during the "dirty thirties" from just such activities.

• • •

A clock rests quietly in a cosy sitting room of the mill owner's house at the site of the original hamlet of Dover. Mr. Charles G. Ivey used to regale his visitors with the story of its arrival by schooner, with some thirty others, one sunny morning in the 1860s at the busy pier of Port Ryerse.

As the customs officer boarded the newly arrived schooner, a wagon pulled in behind a nearby shed. The jovial captain welcomed his friend aboard and as they disappeared below to check papers and manifests and enjoy a dram; the wagon driver and friends sprang into action. With a crew member's help the clocks were quickly transferred to the waiting wagon and spirited away.

The customs official found no evidence of their existence so no toll or duty was levied against them. They were soon regulating the lives of the good people of the community and a few, like one in Port Dover, may still be doing so over a century and a quarter later.

Harry Gundry

The twinkle in his eye is only a hint of the extraordinary spirit that lies within Harry Gundry.

A farmer in Vittoria, Gundry, who rises early every morning to start his daily chores, has made farming his life. And while this scene is familiar to many farmers, it is especially so for Gundry who is 96 years old.

While his appearance and quick wit make it initially impossible to determine his age, it is his stories that make it quite evident. Gundry has many experiences and memories, spanning almost a century.

Born and raised on the family farm, Gundry still resides in the same house, initially built in the mid-1800s, with son Doug and his wife Ruth. The farm consists of 172 acres, which is used for a general farming operation, primarily corn, and includes a woodlot, and 20 apple trees of several varieties.

Gundry is in charge of the small apple orchard, and performs all the necessary maintenance, except spraying. As well, he looks after the family garden, and as he describes



it, basically "tinkers around."

It is the activities of farming, he says, that keep him going and active, which includes heading out every day to the barn, to do whatever needs to be done. This includes hopping aboard his first ever tractor, which was purchased in 1945, and heading outdoors. Gundry still operates the smaller tractors on the farm, but leaves the larger ones to his son.

The farming lifestyle is not only Gundry's heritage, but his family's as well, dating back to his grandfather, who turned to it in the 1860s. Despite the ancestry, Gundry says he once considered the veterinary profession. However, he is glad he remained in farming, figuring that due to his slight build, the vet business would have proved to be a formidable one.

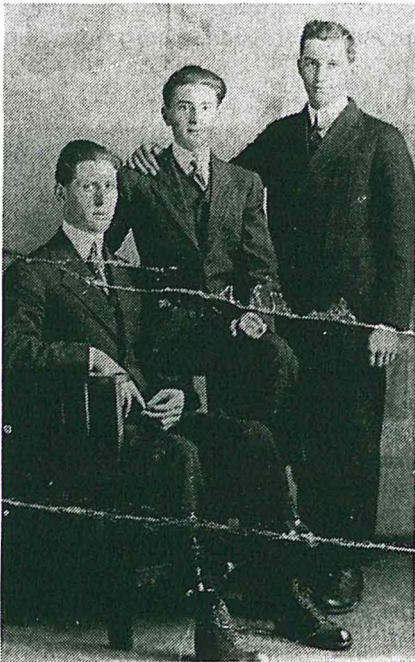
And because of his history in the profession, Gundry has always had a wish that his family continue on, as well as the family farm in general. The unit of the family farm is an important one, notes Gundry, "it keeps the community together," and the potential for such a loss deeply saddens him.

Besides the emergence of larger farming operations, Gundry has seen an assortment of fundamental and broad changes in the agricultural business, particularly in terms of machinery and technology. He recalls with ease the horse-drawn equipment which preceded the steam engines, which eventually led to the advanced technology used today. What the future holds for farming, adds Gundry, is anybody's guess.

Despite the enormous time he puts into farming, it is not his only interest. Following the loss of his wife in 1966, Gundry took to travelling and continued to do so up until a couple of years ago. Florida and the East Coast were just two of his favorite ports of call.

Although he doesn't travel the miles on trips anymore, Gundry still adds up the mileage on his tractor and on his feet, remaining as active as ever. Farming he says, has provided him with a good living.

After all these years the farming bug still remains in Harry Gundry's veins, and that twinkle still remains in his eyes.



Harry in his younger days, centre, with David Currie, left, and Arthur Johnston, right.

Brown Family

Charlie Brown, a black slave who escaped from the U.S. to Port Ryerse, was given a land grant from the government of Upper Canada. He farmed this land as did his son, Theodore, after him. Theodore was also employed by West and Peachey of Simcoe who manufactured the alligator tug.

Theodore's children, Emma, Addie, Harry, and Albert, who was born in 1880, were baptized at Memorial Church and attended school in the village.

Albert apprenticed as a blacksmith to the Stalkers in their Port Ryerse shop. As a young man he was a cook on a Great Lakes steamer and worked as a shipbuilder in Collingwood before taking up his blacksmith's trade in Simcoe and later Guelph.

He returned to Port Ryerse in 1917 as his father was ill. Both Theodore and his wife, Theodora, are buried in the cemetery at Memorial Church. These two graves are in the southwest corner of the churchyard near the edge of the property. The head and foot of each is marked by small pieces of limestone. Theodore died about 1918.

Bert Morris of Simcoe, now 92 years old, remembers attending Theodore's funeral as a youth of sixteen years.

Albert Brown continued as a blacksmith in Simcoe and area for more than forty years. He was described as a hard worker and a popular person with an accommodating nature. His services were used by local race-horse owners at the Simcoe fairgrounds. For years, even into his nineties, he was the crossing guard at Dean Street for South Public School and beloved by all. He was also involved in coaching minor hockey and baseball over the years. As a goal judge at local Intermediate O.H.A. games at the old Mason arena which stood on Lynnwood Avenue, he was highly respected. Albert was also a member and officer in the Masonic Lodge, Mt. Olivet Lodge No. 1 in Hamilton.

Albert's wife was Dora Stewart who died in 1970. His son and four grandchildren lived in Windsor. Albert Brown died in Simcoe in May 1972. He was 92 years old.



Albert Brown at the forge in Stalker's blacksmith shop in the 1930s.

Emery Smith

Many recollections of long-time resident Emery Smith, who died at age 96 in the early 1930s and is said to have been buried in the village churchyard, were recorded for posterity shortly before his death.

Emery, or "Grandpappy" as he came to be known, came to Port Ryerse in its boom days. In his 70 years residency, he witnessed its decline as business followed the railway to Dover and Simcoe and its development into a summer cottage area.

Born in Youngstown, New York, he came to the village as a young man and undertook a variety of employment. Described in some accounts as a thrasher, he also worked at one of the taverns, on machines dredging in the lake, and loaded lumber and grain onto sailing ships in the harbour. In addition to loading the boats, he also helped build and sail them, even felling the trees for the lumber.

He recalled being aboard a lumber raft on Lake Huron in a most dreadful storm. He described to a recorder how the raft was battered, while the crew worked night and day, up to their waists in water, trying to keep her afloat. When the captain of a passing boat urged them to accept help, the crew refused to give up. Hours later, with not a man nor log lost, the raft limped into Goderich, where the anxious owner awaited their arrival. They were accorded a hero's welcome which Smith never forgot.

When Emery first rented the cottage house on the hill overlooking the spot where the church was built, he paid \$1.50 a month in rent. A day's pay would be 50 cents. Smith remained in this house, now home of Duncan and Cathy Buckle, until his death. He and his wife, Margaret Hoshall, had five children. When he died, the bell of Memorial Church was rung 96 times to mark each year of his life.

W. Edgar Cantelon

William Edgar Cantelon painted more than 300 historical subjects in Norfolk County over a 50-year period. These paintings now form one of the central attractions in the Eva Brook Donly Museum in Simcoe. Year after year he rode his bicycle up and down the concessions of Norfolk County, gathering historical relics and painting scenes which he felt should be preserved.

Mr. Cantelon was, for many years, Curator of the Norfolk Historical Society and assembled the nucleus of the society's collection of relics pertaining to Norfolk's early history. Several of his paintings appear in this book, courtesy of the Eva Brook Donly Museum and the Norfolk Historical Society. Mr. Cantelon died on March 3, 1950, in his 84th year.

Emery married Margaret Hoshall from Decewsville. One of their five children was Chloe who married Mr. Adams and later, with her son Leslie, came to live in Port Ryerse with her father. Leslie married Alta Brook from Lynden. Leslie was a much respected, self-employed carpenter and cabinet maker and was very active in community and church work. Alta was also active in the community and church work and compiled much of the information for the Women's Institute's Tweedsmuir History Book.



Emery Smith.

Simcoe Reformer - April 20, 1899

A serious case of stabbing occurred at Port Ryerse on Monday evening. It appears that Charles Yokum was engaged by Mr. Charles boughner moving furniture from a house of which an old man named Conrad Snyder had charge. Snyder attacked Yocum with a knife while Snyder's son, aged 18 years struck Yokum on the head with a handspike. Yokum tried to get away, but the old man Snyder stabbed him in the arm, nearly severing the hand. Neighbours interferred saved Yokum's life. Dr. Kennedy was summoned and Yokum though very weak is expected to recover. Snyder and his son are under arrest.

Colonel Ryerse, The Surveyor's Friend

by David Chechak

"Here is where I wish to live and die!" exclaimed Colonel Ryerse to his family from atop rising ground in the creek valley on arrival in Norfolk County in 1794 at an area known at the Long Point Settlement.

The next year, in the summer of 1795, Governor John Graves Simcoe made a special trip to the Long Point Settlement. Loyalists had come to Canada in droves after the American Revolution. Some were promised land for their loyalty. Some not so loyal were opportunists swearing allegiance to the British Crown for land grants. Governor Simcoe wanted a fort at Long Point for strategic reasons. It was a time of petitions, promised and squatters. One letter circulated by D. W. Smith Surveyor General of the Province of Upper Canada, warned squatters to get out of the Long Point district "without lots of time." The land was not up for grabs.

Soon Surveyor General David William Smith, of the province of Upper Canada, had ordered Surveyor William Hambly to survey the townships of Walsingham, Charlotteville, Walpole, Woodhouse and Rainham and a gore of land lying between Charlotteville and Woodhouse.

Surveyor William Hambly sailed by boat from Newark (Niagara Falls) on November 30, 1795 westward towards Haldimond and Norfolk counties. Hambly followed Lake Erie's windy, stormy coast and stopped at waystations either for provisions or to locate earlier placed survey stakes.

On January 20, 1796, Surveyor William Hambly went to Colonel Ryerse's log house at the mouth of Young's Creek.

William Hambly found Colonel Ryerse's log cabin an oasis in the backwoods of Upper Canada. Although her surveyor's diary makes reference to Peter Walker's place, in what is now Port Dover, it is Ryerse's place that Hambly finds the most multipurpose in the backwoods of Upper Canada. After running a line eastward of Hay Creek in January 25, 1796, Hambly was back at Ryerse's in January 24 and again in January 25. Ryerse's place might have been a government depot but Colonel Sam made no excuses and went out of his way to help Hambly during his survey.

Perhaps Colonel Ryerse was aware of Hambly's mounting pressure and understood this climate of hurled snowstorms, unequal rain, forlorn and wild pine forests and the vast dreary Charlotteville plain, better than the surveyor did. Hambly states in his diary entry, March 5, 1796, that he was "waiting for Captain Ryerse's team," bring supplies maybe. And again he went to "Riersons" to bake because Ryerse

had a supply of flour. And on March 25, 1796, Hambly sent a hand to "Riersons" for provisions, perhaps salt and pork because Ryerse had a year's supply. Imagine baking over the open hearth in Colonel Ryerse's warm log cabin compared to baking on chips at a cold lonely campsite. Yet Colonel Ryerse supplied more than food.

On April 5, 1796, Surveyor Hambly had a mechanical breakdown which might seem minor to us now but one that stopped Hambly from doing his survey. He used a Mr. Persons (early settler) boat "to go to Captain Ryersons to get a square of glass to put in the room of that I had broken." Hambly had broken his compass.

Did Colonel Ryerse become a crutch for Surveyor Hambly? Hambly wrote on April 18, 1796, "that having no provisions nearer than Captain Ryerson's thought it best to work in that vicinage so went down to Mabees and baked. And yet Hambly's relationship with Colonel Ryerse intensified.

In April 19, 1796, Hambly "went to Captain Ryersons and it raining in the forenoon made corner at the gore Charlotteville and Woodhouse by the lake wood as there is no stone on that land — and returned to Captain Ryerson's." If Hambly couldn't get shelter he camped on the line, and at this time of year if it rained it meant no moving.

Colonel Ryerse was well aware of Surveyor Hambly's working methods or habits by this time. On May 2, 1796 Hambly went down to Colonel Ryerse's. He must have felt foolish because "finding my provisions were going up in a canoe and the last (last provisions) sent a man to bring it back" Ryerse was almost a member of the survey crew. And then he was.

Early in May 1796 Hambly was clearing up loose ends of his survey. On May 6th Hambly wrote: "went to run the third concession of Woodhouse Captain Ryerson 'of my company' staked out 8 lots of the gore to the 7th lot. This area is around St. John's Road and Highway 24 today. Even at this time of the year the weather could still rule the day. Snow and heavy wind stopped the survey on May 8th. But whether out of necessity or compassion Colonel Ryerse helped Surveyor William Hambly finish his survey.

On Thursday, May 12, 1796, William Hambly saw Colonel Ryerse for the last time of his survey. Two days earlier his provisions were gone and none to be prepared for returning his discharged his hands but two to work his work. The south west wind was right. It was time to go.

The Ryerse-Ryerson Family Association

by Thomas A. Ryerson and Robert E. Ryerse

The first family reunion was held at the home of Col. Samuel Ryerse. It was organized by his wife — Mary Matilda (Slack) Ryerse. It was held on July 18, 1954 at their Black Creek land near Port Dover. Over 100 descendants enjoyed a buffet supper in the "Ryserse Grove." The first executive was elected — President, C. Percy Ryerse; Vice-President, John Gunton; Secretary, Winnifred Baker; Treasurer, Colin A. Ryerse.

The second reunion was held on July 31, 1956 at Ryerse Grove. It was billed as the Ryerse-Ryerson Picnic and 140 people attended. At the third reunion Professor John A. Ryerse gave an excellent speech detailing the history of the Ryerse family.

At the 1958 reunion, John E.S. Ryerse brought his bride of nine months, Phyllis, from Ohio. Margaret Ryerse (wife of Colin A. Ryerse) urged Phyllis to start a record of the Ryerse-Ryerson family. This led to Phyllis producing two books, a 1964 *Ryserse-Ryerson Family History*, and the 1975 "Blue Book" *Col. Samuel Ryerse U.E.L. 1752-1812*.

At the 1959 picnic, William McNeilly was president, and the executive was expanded to include committees for tables, grounds, program and sports. The reunions were held at C. Percy Ryerse's until 1969. The reunions from 1970 to 1975 were held at

Marburg Hall. In 1975 Eleanor Chitalen (granddaughter of Colin and Margaret Ryerse) was elected president. For many many years Eleanor has been the indispensable secretary.

From 1976 to 1978 the reunions were held at David A. Ryerse's home in Port Ryerse. This is the 1835 home of Major Edward Powers Ryerse, long owned by the Smith family, and now by Jack and Sheila Beamer. In 1979, the reunion was held at Peter Ryerse's (son of C. Percy Ryerse) in Port Dover. From 1980 to 1982 the reunion was held at Backus Mill. In 1983 it was at Grand Oaks Park in Cayuga, and in 1984 at Deer Park Conservation Area.

In 1984 the reunion moved to Vernon Ryerse's park in Port Ryerse. This is the site of George J. Ryerse's (son of Samuel) homestead, and the birthplace of Vernon's grandfather George and father of Carl. The reunions have continued to be held here, and this is the site of the 41st family picnic — the 1994 Bicentennial Smorgasbord.

The Ryerse-Ryerson Family Association elected Thomas A. Ryerson president in 1988. Tom continues his excellent tenure of office. Starting in 1988, Tom and Phyllis have collaborated in preparing a new enlarged Ryerse-Ryerson genealogy, which will be available at the 1994 Reunion.

Esther (Ethel) Ann Ryerson

Ethel Ryerson was the wife of Major John W. Ryerson, adopted son of Colonel Edward Ryerse. Although she married into one of the area's well-known families, taking up residence in Simcoe, it is for her own personal triumph over adversity that she is remembered. In the early years of her marriage, between 1876 and 1881, the three boys and one girl born to the couple all died before the age of two.

This was not the end of her personal tragedies. On July 3, 1891, her husband, a prosperous lawyer, councillor and senior major in the 39th battalion, fell victim to one of Lake Erie's storms. He had set out with a friend, Abel E. Bunker, from Port Dover on July 1, on his 30-foot yacht, Mabel, for a fishing expedition at Long Point. While the boat was anchored off the Point on the following night, the worst storm in 25 years struck. The boat was carried some 300 yards from shore. From the lighthouse, the two sailors could be seen trying to buck the winds and return to shore, to no avail. Abandoning this attempt, Ryerson headed the boat in the direction of Port Dover. Five minutes later the Mabel broke up in

60 feet of water. Both men were drowned.

It is said that, overcome with grief, Ethel remained in bed for four days. She endured the agony of knowing her husband's body was missing until August 8, when it was discovered on Ryerson's Island, 15 miles west of the sinking.

Then, on September 11 that same year, her only remaining child, six-year-old Jackie, was crushed by a train as he attempted to take a shortcut from school by climbing between two railcars. The boy had always been fascinated by trains and had been warned by his teacher about the danger.

But Ethel did not give up, as surely she must have been tempted to. A month later she sold her belongings and moved to Chicago where she trained as a nurse. Some time later she became a doctor and for many years headed hospitals in Dayton, Ohio and Evansville, Indiana. She never remarried and did not retire from medicine until 1929 at age 76. When she died in 1933, she was buried beside her husband and family.

Bob Culver Receives Medal from Soviets

In 1986, Port Ryerse resident, Bob Culver, was awarded a medal by the Soviets, 43 years after the fact, for his service on HMCS Haida in World War II. He was a shipwright on the destroyer, and along with 24 other veterans, was honoured for service in the convoy escort on the Murmansk Run. These convoys carried desperately needed supplies into ports in northern Russia.

Culver recalls that convoy duty in the North Atlantic was always dangerous, especially in the winter weather. The convoys to the Russian port of Murmansk were particularly perilous because of geography and the weather. Ships would be coated with ice that had to be removed constantly so they wouldn't become top heavy and roll over in the high seas.

At age 26, Culver, who had always wanted to be a sailor, was standing on the Haida's deck as she slid into the water at New-Castle-On-Tyne in 1943 for her first voyage. During her wartime service the Haida earned the distinction of destroying more enemy vessels than any other Royal Canadian Navy ship.

Culver says that the comradeship of his shipmates was and is one of the best things to ever happen to him. Members of the Haida's crew, though scattered across the country, have kept in touch over the years. And the Haida herself is now moored on permanent display at Ontario Place. As a crew member, Culver has a lifetime pass and can visit her anytime.



Bob Culver in the 1940s.

Port Ryerse Historical Map

by Sheilagh J. (McCullagh) Hearnden

Having summered in Port Ryerse from 1930 to 1950, I have had a very strong sentimental attachment to the area. On moving to Fort William/Port Arthur, now Thunder Bay, in 1950 this sentiment grew even stronger. While taking a calligraphy course from a qualified scribe, I was challenged to produce a project with meaning to myself and my family. An historical map of Port Ryerse seemed appropriate.

Living so far away from Port Ryerse made conducting the necessary research most difficult. During my brief holidays in southern Ontario I would visit the Simcoe Library and consult with Miss Helen Straith. Without Helen's encouragement and invaluable help, the map would never have been completed. It took four years of sporadic work before the map was produced on mylar and sent off to the printer in 1974.

To the best of my knowledge, there were 20 maps on water colour paper, all hand painted for members of the family and friends; and 40 on regular paper that were given away or sold. The Port Ryerse Historical and Environmental Association made up any number of smaller copies of the map for place-mats. The Association's Bicentennial Committee has requested permission to print more copies for the 1994 celebration.

Upon moving to Normandale, and later retiring, I had 59 more maps produced on watercolour paper with a view to painting and selling them. I have recently begun working on these.

The historical research, the village plan, and the historical sights are as found in the research; however, in the case of more recent buildings, only those of interest to the family are included.

Resources:
Early Days at Port Ryerse
by Geo. J. Ryerse.
Ryersen of Upper Canada
by Clare Thomas
Big Tree Region in American
Report History 1963
by V.B. Blake

The Rygoon family was nearly exterminated sending Philip out of the Netherlands. They helped King's College.
 Morten (-1681) and Adrian Rygoon, Dutch/Huguenot, broke a canoe to New Amsterdam in 1667. Over the years the name changed to Rygo, Rygoes, Rygozons, Rygores, and about 1700, Rygon.
 Morten's grandson, Quynsien Rygoes (Laketygon), exchanged his furs and fowls in New York Broadway to Wall Street for 600 beads, 200 Pompton Plains near Paterson in New Jersey, 1711.
 Morten married the first white woman born in the colony (1663) (she d. 53000) in 1667.

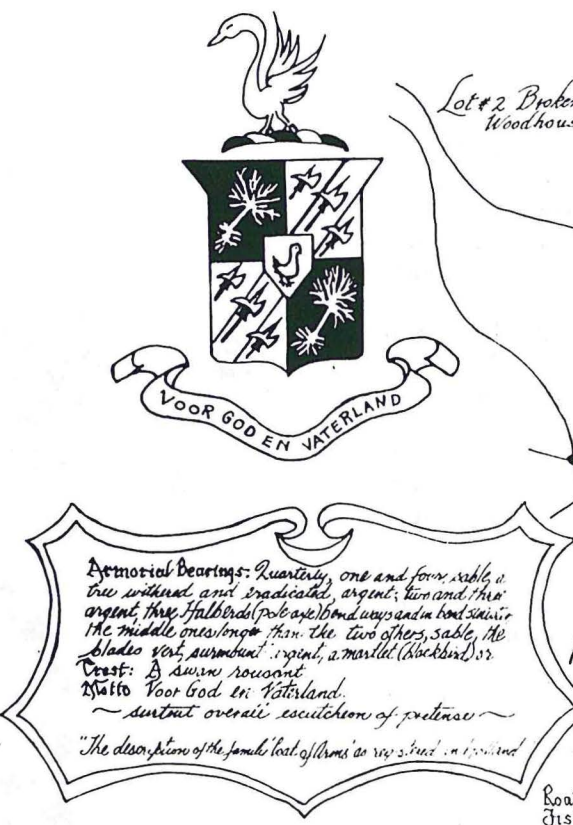
their commission in 1776 and served seven years on the side of the British, and in 1783, was released.

Luykes Rye was, three sons, Francis, Samuel, and lastly remained loyal to Britain during the American Revolution. In 1793 the latter two emigrated to the Province of New Brunswick and were conscripted soldiers in the military until they were discharged after he experienced prejudice for his part in the war. Three of his children lived in New Brunswick and over time in Long Island.

Samuel Rye... petitioned Governor Simcoe for land in Upper Canada

[illegible]

From
the Historical Atlas
of
Norfolk Company
H R Page Co. 1877
Plan 178
Registered 1891



Armorial Bearings: Quarterly, one and four sable, a tree withered and eradicated, argent; two and three, argent, three Halberds palewise and in bend sinister. The middle ones longer than the two others, sable, the blades vert, surmounted, argent, a martlet (Rockland), or.
 Crest: A swain rampant.
 Motto: Voor God en Vaderland.
 ~ surmount overall escutcheon of pretence ~
 "The description of the family coat of arms is as we situated in a land"

Lot #2 Broken Front
Woodhouse

Harry A. Graham
Landscape Gardener
and
Garbage Collector
Ask the man who knows

First
school
site-1835

MILL POND

Road to
Charlottesville
Virginia

Road to
Fisher's Glen
Normandale
Burke's Point
Port Remy
Long Point
St. Williams
Sand Hills

Elger George Kuense
1818-1893

71 Mr James
1835

PORT RYPERSE

LAKE ERIE

was the history that initiated this project and told little bits 5, 6, 7 on. Source found - 3/24/04

Eliza George Ryerson (1791-1872) married Elizabeth Vail and they had eight children; five reached maturity. The second wife had nine children. In 1818 he built a substantial home on the hills west of the town. In 1820, in 1823 he was licensed to preach at Wilbraham Baptist Church. He studied, and practiced medicine. In 1840s he was circuiting officer. Port Dover

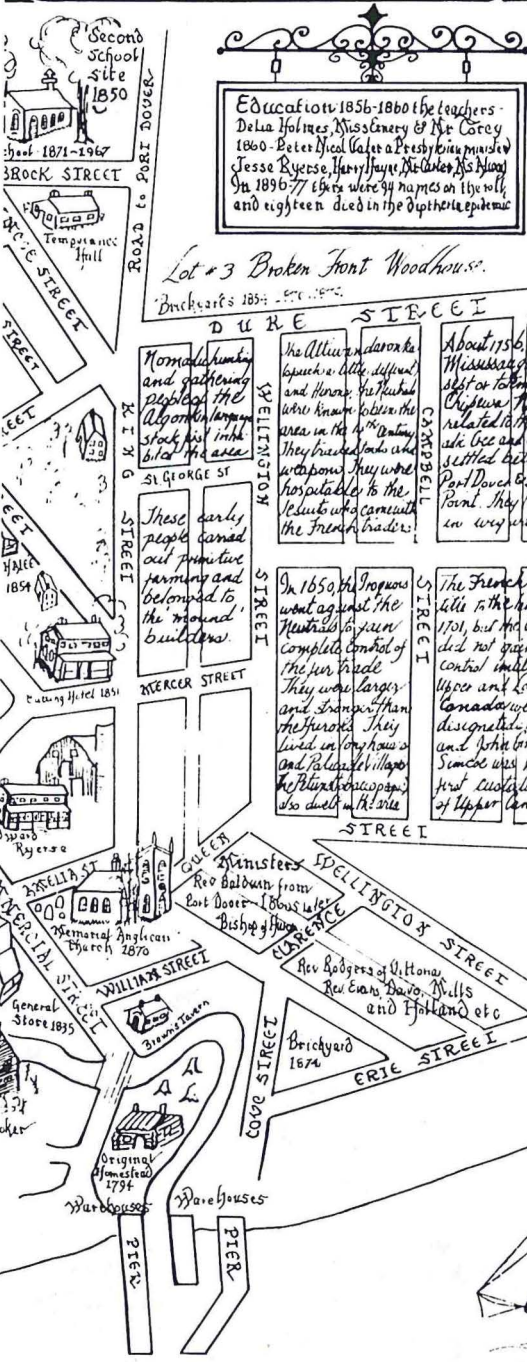
He said H. Ryerson (1818-1894) lived as a shoemaker 65 years, much later (over 90 years)

Edward Bruce Rippey (1800-82) married Martha Underhill, (1806-72) Hunt Rd. He built his home on the hill east of the dam, first a frame structure and then the present red brick house. He continued to develop the country. He built the first post and beam spanned across. He was a mayor, then colonel in militia, licensed Inspector, Ireland Revenue Collector and Magistrate.

Colonel Samuel Ryerson M.E. (1752-1822) 7th son of Lucas, with his son Samuel (1771-1805) first wife and his second wife, and 4 remaining child, George, came to settle at the mouth of Youngs Creek in 1794. Amelia and Edward were born in May 15, 1814, his wife began the invading American fever to spare their home. It was the only building saved in the district. Samuel had 11 sons, settled at Black Creek. *Don't McCall, first caught trout in Youngs Creek in 1760. He home-stayed in the lake in 1795. The town, founded in 1830, is now a village.*

Colonel Joseph Ryerson, M.E. (1761-1854), 12th son of Lucas, settled in his 5th child, Emily, in 1798. He married Mehitable Pickney in New Brunswick and they had 10 children. Samuel, William, John, Mary, and Elizabeth, Edgerton and Edwidge (1817) were born in Charlottetown. Three sons became Methodist ministers, and Edgerton founded the public school system in 1830. Joseph commanded the first Norfolk Regiment of Militia 1837-1841.

Map by Thomas Welch and Mercer. P.L.S.



Education 1856-1860 the teachers:
 Delia Holmes, Missionary & Mr. Grey
 1860 - Peter H. Baker a Presbyterian minister
 Jesse Ryerson, Harry Shaw, & William H. Shaw
 In 1896-77 there were 34 names on the roll, and eighteen died in the diphtheria epidemic.

Lot #3 Broken Front Woodhouse.
 Brickwork 1851-1852.

Homesteads and gathering places for the Upper Canadian stock had been in the area since the 17th century. They traded furs and wheat with the French traders. In 1850, the Indians went against the French traders, but the English did not gain control until 1760. Upper and Lower Canada were disengaged in 1791, and John Jarvis, Simcoe was named first Lieutenant of Upper Canada.

The French lost the battle to the east in 1761, but the English did not gain control until 1760. Upper and Lower Canada were disengaged in 1791, and John Jarvis, Simcoe was named first Lieutenant of Upper Canada.

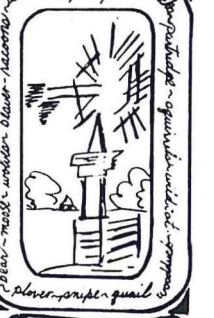
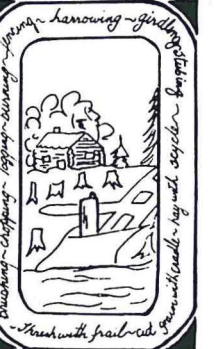
INDUSTRIES
 Mills: In 1796 Sam Ryerson built a dam and a saw mill. The flood of 1797 wiped this out. He rebuilt the same year and added a first mill. The Americans burnt this in the war in 1814. Result and in 1849 a plaster mill for clover was added. This burnt in 1860. E. Harris and J. Harris rebuilt in 1864 and this burnt in 1890.
 Brickyards: 1835-1854 Ryerson, 1854-1860 The Woods, 1860-1863 Benjamin Young, 1863-1869 The Woods, 1869-1873 Peter Mason, 1874-1876 Edward Harris, Barrel Making: 1851-1854 Father & Son, John Long and W.H. Ryerson.
 Blacksmith Shops: 7 in all over the place, including Berry Mason and Robert Stalker.
 Fishing: an abundance of all kinds - salmon, sturgeon, white fish, etc.
 Lumbering: an abundance of all forms and the basis and main stay of the economy. Over in 1871, 7 1/2 million feet of lumber and timber were shipped from the port.
 Pottery: Owen Ryerson at top end of Red Street Pottery during 1850s by Abraham Marshall.
 Shipbuilding: flourished in 1860-1864.
 Smuggling: 1858-61.
 Hotels: Cuttings 1851, Thompson's Collins, Green's (burnt before it opened).
In The District
 Carding Mills: 3 from Victoria on Youngs Street.
 Weaving: Margaret Stickney.
 Winery: 1877 in Port Rowan.
 Elder Mills 1880 in Simcoe.



Poplars - Samuel Baker, Jack Shaw, Alex. Begg, D.W. Foster, Lewis Ryerson, John Allen, Wesley Fyler.

Amelia Ryerson (1753-1822) married John Harris and built Eldon House in London, Ontario. They had 7 daughters and 3 sons, one Edward (1832-85) 7th married Joseph daughter of Edgerton Ryerson. Edward did much to develop industry in Port Ryerson. The Port Ryerson Railway Co. attempted and failed to bring the railroad in 1856 to Port Ryerson. In time all descendants of Ryerson moved to the west.

Samuel Ryerson initially planned a town site called 'Charmie' in 1797 and granted John Conkle the first lot. John Conkle and Samuel changed his mind, deciding against a town so close to his home. The hamlet around Ryerson Mills continued to grow and in 1834 the present site was laid out. With the decline of the forest, the town ceased to flourish.



Research, design and execution - Sheelagh Fearaghy (nee) McCullagh 1970 & 1974

Edna Goodlet

Edna Goodlet has seen a great many changes in the 46 years she has lived in Port Ryerse. She came to Port Ryerse in 1946 with her husband, Dave, and two small children, Anne and Dave. Their third child, Dick, was born here a few years later. The first summer, the Goodlets rented a cottage on the beach. They loved the lake and the feel of the community, so made inquiries about renting another place near the bridge for the winter. Having successfully weathered one winter with no running water, Edna and Dave purchased the property. Edna resides there still.

After the trauma of the war, Port Ryerse was, for the Goodlets, a peaceful and quiet haven. The social life in Port Ryerse was relaxed but hectic in the summer when everyone would come to the lake to visit. In winters people battened down the hatches and settled in.

On a perfect May day in 1952, with renovations largely completed, their home was totally destroyed by a fire. After this setback, the community rallied around and, with much moral support and many work bees, their home was rebuilt. Edna has witnessed this trait many times for many other families over the years. Like other small communities, helping hands are there when needed and without asking.

With the expense of the new house, Edna was forced to seek work outside the home. They operated the village post office, but that was not enough. The older children were conscripted to help with the post office when Edna found a job.

At her first interview Edna was required to take a typing test. When she looked down at her completed paper, she realized that she had started with her

hands in the wrong place and the result was garble. When the company hired her anyway, she asked why and was told "We like to train our own"! A few years later, Edna took up employment in the office of Dr. Keith McIntosh in Simcoe, where she remained for 22 years.

Not only was Edna a working mom, but she was also very involved in the community. For 27 years she was the Brown Owl for the Vittoria/ Walsh/ Port Ryerse Brownies. Edna was also part of a community group that brought about the re-opening of Memorial Anglican Church in Port Ryerse. Very few of the congregation, including Edna, were Anglicans at that time and they made it plain to the Bishop that they saw the Church as welcoming the whole community. The welcome and informal atmosphere which that group fostered still exists today in the church, and Edna continues to be an active member.

One of her favourite activities is gathering and making little bouquets with the children for distribution at the service on Mother's Day. Many little ones, and young adults too, have fond memories of doing this with Edna.

Edna and the other women of the village were also active with the little community school, situated on what is now Cookson property at the top of the hill. On one occasion, the mothers were meeting at her house to plan a school play while all the little darlings were busily occupied across the road breaking the church windows!

Although Port Ryerse has grown and changed, and Edna finds there are many new residents whom she doesn't know, she feels the basic community spirit still remains.

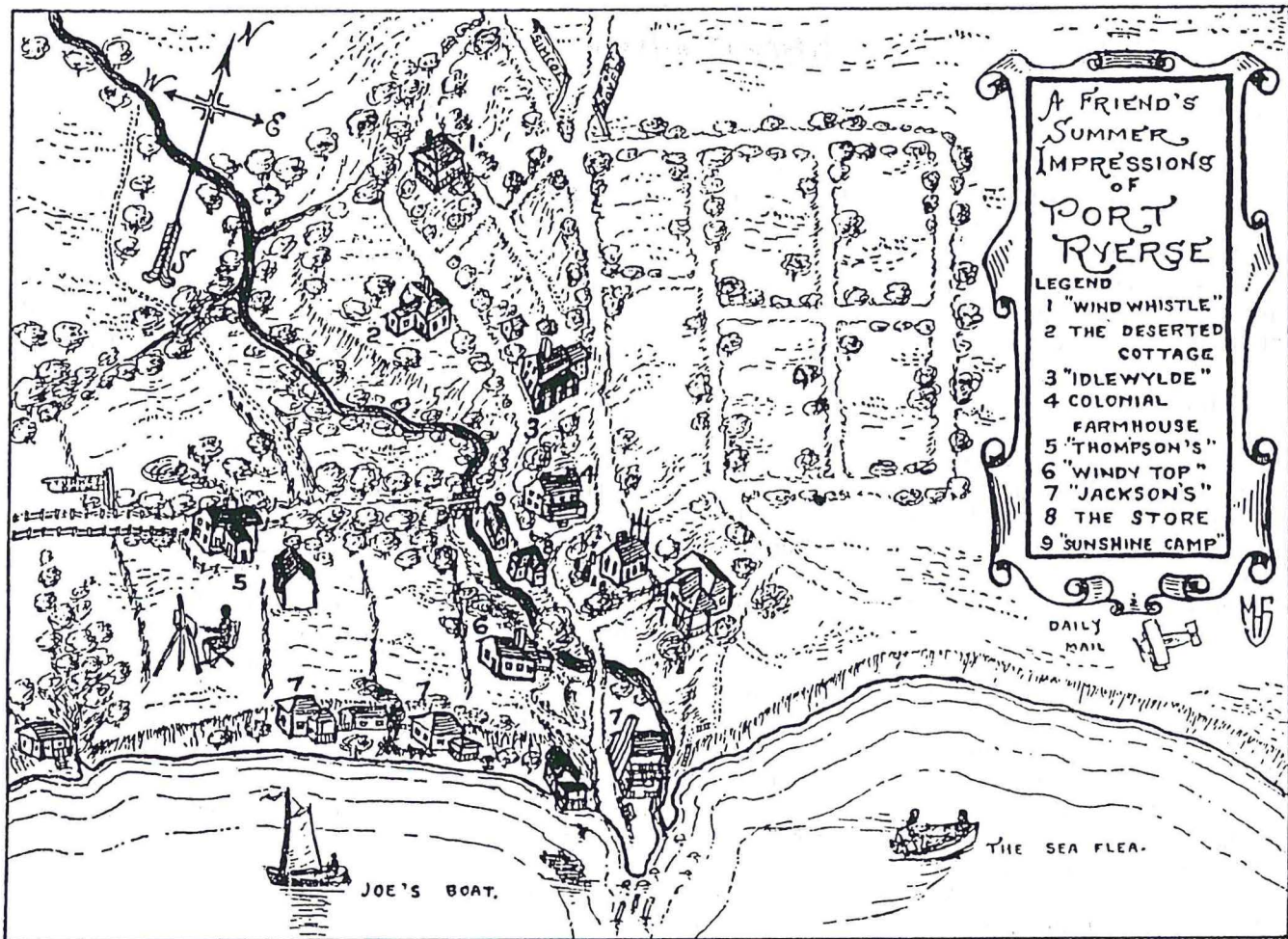


Edna



Edna with all her grandchildren in 1993.

The following 6 pages are excerpts from "Highlights of a Very Personal Memory of Times Spent at Port Ryerse", a scrapbook Helen Straith kept from her first visit in 1925 until the early 1990s.



This graphic map was designed to be used as a Christmas Greeting Card in 1927 or '28. At that time I was just getting to know Port Ryerse a little, while spending weekends and holidays with friends or at the Thompson farm.

I included, as point of interest on the map only, what had some personal appeal and for which my limited knowledge of the place would cover. The layout of the area was copied from a map in a Tackaberry atlas which Jack McKiee loaned to me.

1. "Wind Whistle" was the summer home of Captain Robb, a very warm-hearted person who delighted in visitors of all ages.
2. The "Deserted Cottage" was a lovely, sad, curious mystery to me at that time.
3. "Idlewyld" had, in former times, been an inn and was, at the time the map was drawn, a boarding house for summer visitors. It was run by Mrs. Buck.

She was a little, slight person with a very soft voice. Her prices were not insignificant. A friend of mine, who spent a weekend there, summed it up thus: "The meek shall inherit the earth." It later became apartments.

Behind Idlewyld there is a tiny dwelling scarcely visible on the map, where Charlie Oakes lived.

4. "Colonial Farmhouse" or so I called it in my thoughts when I knew it only as a most interesting feature on a hill top.

5. "Windy Top" was the summer home of the Powell family — Marjorie (McKiee) Powell, her husband Billie and their two girls Eleanor and Nancy. They loved Port Ryerse with a devotion that expressed itself in joy of all its charms; the variety of bird life, the swimming, gathering shells, the wealth of local history and the church which was a must to Nancy for her wedding.

Helen Vokes and the Bible Club

by Valerie Smith

For nearly 20 years, the Port Ryerse Bible Club was led by Helen Vokes, whose patience, good nature, love of children and dedication to the Toronto Blue Jays was, and is, appreciated by everyone who knows her. In her own words, Helen tells us a bit of the history of the club.

"In 1971, the ladies of Port Ryerse came to me and asked me if I would do something like Sunday School for their children, as there was no Sunday School at our little church. As I was involved in another Sunday School, I suggested a Bible Club on a week night right after school. Donna Robinson was going to help. Joan Welsh said she would help with the singing and Jean Holden offered her house as a meeting place.

"As a trial run, our first meeting was in August. We had 15 children — all very eager — responding to the stories, etc. We stayed at Jean's until the spring then went over to the church. Agrita Chilian came with her four children and offered to help with her accordion. Lynda Atkins came to my door one night and offered to help. She was great, as she went along with all my brain waves. Lynda was with us until she went to work in the hospital in 1983.

"The second winter we held our club at Joan Welsh's basement and Jackie McMann's alternately. In the spring we went back to the church. We had a

problem with the children breaking things; so my husband, Clayton, fixed over our basement. The Bible Club moved there in the fall and stayed till I moved to Port Dover in 1987.

"We tried to give the children a training in Bible stories and Christian living. We also had fun with parties for every occasion. I hired a bus twice to go to Marineland and the Toronto Zoo. At Christmas every year we went carolling in Port Ryerse. We had hikes, roller skating and swimming parties."

Although Mrs. Vokes is the person most residents associate with the Bible Club, it did have a forerunner. In the late 1950s, at the home of Edna Goodlet, as the church had no room, there was a young people's group in lieu of Sunday School.

Several generations of children had many good times and learned good values in the Port Ryerse Bible Club. They have fond memories of the fun and the hi-jinks. Many parents joined the kids and wandered through the village singing Christmas carols and remember this as a particularly special time of closeness with family, friends and neighbours. Mrs. Vokes can be proud of knowing she had a hand in raising a lot of fine young people during her years in Port Ryerse. Even though there is a new generation of youngsters, she still comes out to support all of their dramatic and musical efforts at the church.



Bible Club Christmas party in the 1980s.

6. "Thompson's" was the Frank Thompson farm where for many years, I spent happy summer weekends and holidays.

7. The four cottages titled "Jackson's" all belonged to Simcoe families.

From left to right the families in these cottages were: Mrs. and Mrs. (Della Yeager) William Jackson and their children, Joe, Alouise and Ruth.

Mr. and Mrs. (Jean Brock) Harold Jackson and their children Bart, Beth and Bill.

Mr. and Mrs. (Jean Chadwick) Ernest Jackson and their boys, Bruce, Gordon and Douglas.

Dr. and Mrs. (Gertheal Hamilton) Alan Jackson and their two boys and a girl, John, Brud (Alan jr.) and John.

8. "The store", as such stores become, was a popular community gathering place. There was an ice cream corner and the usual general merchandise of such stores and summer post office facilities. Children were always about; the cottagers picked up their daily paper and/or some supplies to supplement what they had brought from town and the all-year residents did regular shopping. A succession of owners have served the village and summer colony and it has somehow managed to retain — a rare thing these days — that nice country-store atmosphere.

9. The "Sunshine Camp" was a holiday camp for less privileged children. It was nominally sponsored by the Rotary Club of Simcoe, but it was actually a project of Harry Brooks.

The historical records of the Ryerse family are to be found in other places. The significance of their name at Port Ryerse is inescapable in two places for me.

First there is the little cemetery at the rear of the Port Ryerse Memorial Church with its roughly shaped boulder faced with a bronze tablet which gives information of the early families who settled here. One's imagination is stirred when contemplating the gravestones in the beautiful tree-shaded corner of the church grounds.

The second is a magnificent avenue of maples that has many indications of the Ryerse family being here in former days. The Ryerse family still owns a beautiful field running along the side of the Thompson farm from Front Road to the top of the bank that drops sharply to the beach.

Along the top of a wooded bank that slopes angle-wise down to the road which runs downhill to the bridge over the creek, are two rows of maples separated by a wide stretch of grass. This grass is as carefully cut as any lawn anywhere. This could surely

The unnumbered cottage on the extreme right on the map was the summer home of Dr. W. McLaughlin and his family. He was a dentist in Hamilton. His wife was the former Gladys Yeager of Simcoe. They had two children, Janet and Andy. A ravine ran from the rear of their cottage between fields of the Thompson farm. It was carpeted with an extensive variety of native flowers on its wooded banks.

The unnumbered building at the water's edge was the "Willow Beach Club."

"Joe's boat" was a beautiful, trim-looking sail boat belonging to Joe Jackson and logged many miles of summer sailing.

The "Sea Flea" belonged to Herbert Johnson and his wife Eileen. It skittered here and there, sometimes harboring in the creek.

The airplane, at lower right in the map, flew over that area on a regular schedule every day about the same time.

The road "To Turkey Point" was called the "broken front road" and led via Fisher's Glen and Normandale to Turkey Point, Port Rowan and Long Point.

happen only when someone cared about a family or has some such association with the place.

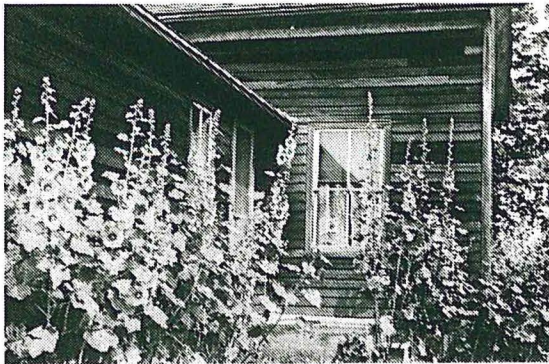
An ancient but substantial barn stands at the entrance to the avenue of maples. Swallows and sparrows often nest in its rafters.

About half way down this land is an excavation. Its squarish sides are lined more or less with stones now shifted about almost as if someone had attempted to turn the excavation into a rock garden.

This, I have been told, was the cellar of a house built by George Ryerse. It stood there for 75 years and on May 24, 1893 burned down. Carl Ryers, e who was a young boy growing up, lived in the house.

Many happy hours have been spent along that lane bird watching — warblers in the spring and fall, red-headed woodpeckers, kingfishers, scarlet tanagers and once, near the creek, a sawhet owl was seen day dreaming on a tree branch overhead.

One appreciates the sense of family history that keeps this spot so beautiful.



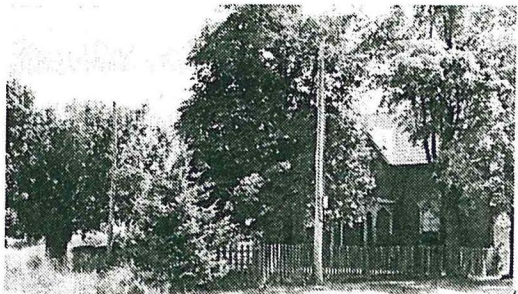
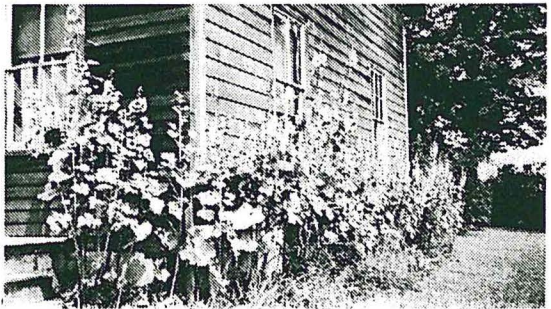
1945

FRANK THOMPSON FARMHOUSE

The Thompson farm is, of course, inseparable in my mind from the wreath of hollyhocks around the farmhouse, or tramping the lanes and fields, warm - from - the oven cookies when

I came in cold on a fall day, or red-headed woodpeckers perched on a fencepost visible from the kitchen window and all such hospitality and interests. Those were halcyon days when it was an event to walk the shore in September and find oneself in the midst of ever so many monarch butterflies. They, apparently, would be aimlessly flitting here and there but actually preparing to migrate across Lake Erie to winter quarters further south. The miracle of their flight never ceased to astonish me.

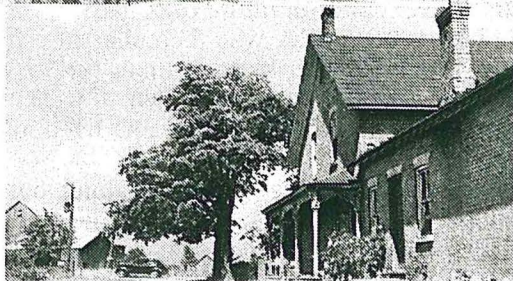
Then in the spring there were all sorts of native flowers in the ravines and along the creek - belliums, hepaticas, spring beauties etc. etc.



THE ERNEST SMITH FARM HOUSE IN 1943

For a few years while Mrs. Frank Thompson was living at Victoria, I spent my weekends at the Ernest Smith farm.

It was there that I heard spell-binding tales of Port Ryerse before I knew it - of dark-of-the-moon work at the crossroads when the main channel of the creek to the lake altered with dramatic effect overnight. There were other tales too of the neighborhood - the kind that so often become local legends.



To Honour The Pioneers



The name of the first settler in this part of the Long Point settlement is perpetuated in the name of the village of Port Ryerse. Here at the mouth of Young's Creek, he landed in 1794. Within a few feet of the spot where we stand, he sat under the walnuts and made his final decision in words that have come down to us, "Here is where I wish to live and die." Here he built his first rude home, and here he is buried. Time would fail me, were I to retell the story of the United Empire Loyalists. Among them were none more famous than the Ryersons of New Jersey.

Side by side with his name stands that of his brother, Joseph Ryerson. Both had sacrificed property, friendships and loved associations, to maintain their loyalty to the principle of a united empire. Each was honored in his new home with the esteem and respect of his fellow settlers, and the confidence of the provincial government, which showered upon them offices of honor and trust. Each served his king and country with loyalty and distinction, and carried to the grave the highest respect and esteem of the community.

The name of Robert Nichol, well known to students of the war of 1812, as Quarter Master General of Militia, has only recently been awarded its due honour, and recognition in General Cruikshank's Biography of that famous citizen of Norfolk. Foremost and prosperous as merchant, trader, captain of industry, he, like the U. E. Loyalists, sacrificed all at the call of duty in the War of 1812, served his country with the very highest distinction throughout the three years of the struggle, and for nearly ten years afterward, until his death in 1824. After Brock himself, there is probably no one who contributed more to the successful organization of the military and civil resources of Upper Canada during the war.

The names of Thomas Welch and his son, are also worthy of special honour, as prominent and wise leaders and advisers among the first settlers. Francis Walsh was perhaps unique among public officials in any part of the world in having held the office of Registrar of Deeds for seventy four years, after having acted for two years as his father's deputy. The office of Registrar was held by

them in succession for a total period of eighty seven years.

Donald McCall, born in Argyleshire, Scotland, came to America, as a soldier in a Highland regiment, in 1756, at the beginning of the Seven Years War between the French and English, which was to decide the long struggle for the control of the North American continent. He was present under Wolfe at the capture of Louisbourg in 1758, and of Quebec in 1759.

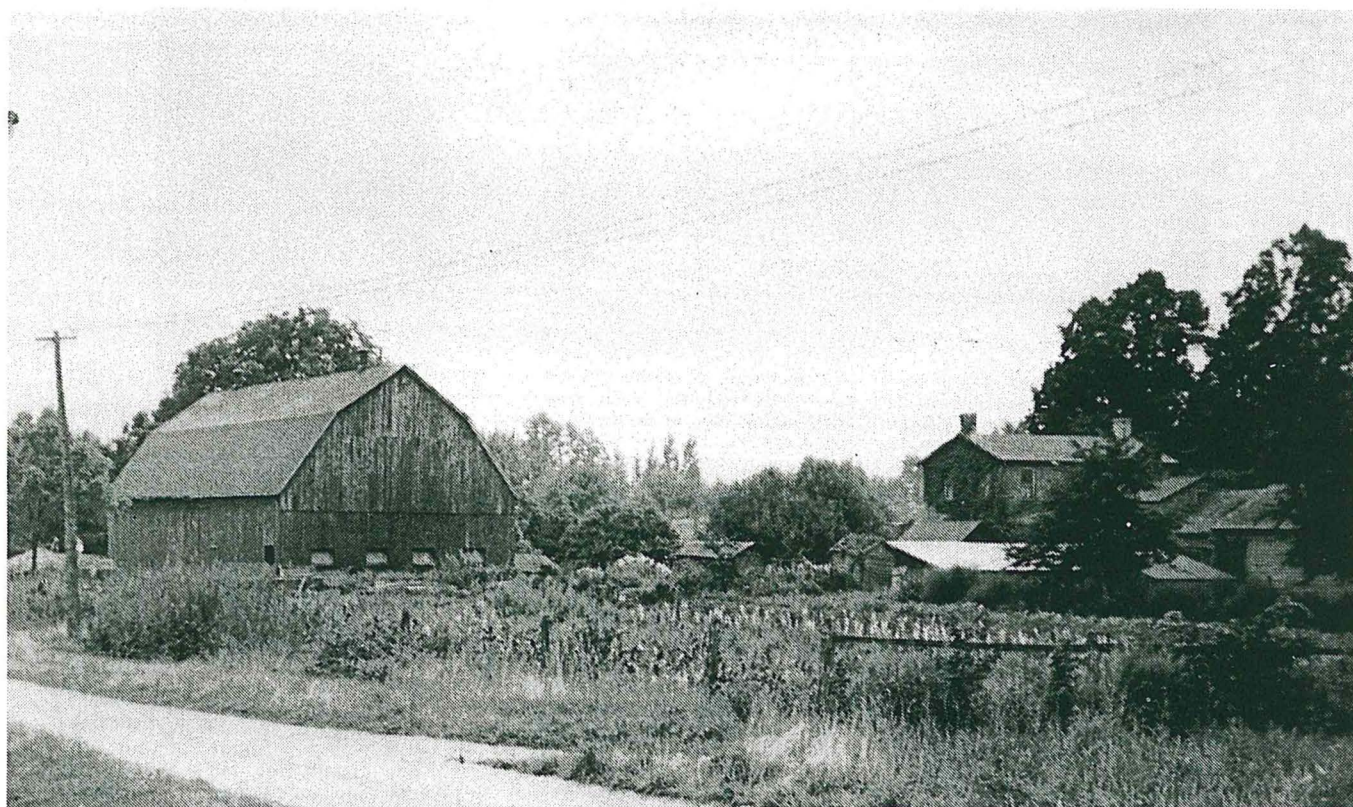
The work of preparing and setting up this memorial has been a labor of love to Mr. and Mrs. Harry J. Brook, the latter a descendant of Samuel Ryerse, and to them with others of his descendants, Mrs. George J. Ryerse, Mrs. Robert Gunton, Arthur Ryerse and Carl Ryerse, acknowledgement is also due for having contributed the necessary funds for renovating and cleaning up the cemetery and maintaining it hereafter in its present beautiful condition.

The marking of the graves of three unknown soldiers of the war of 1812 is due to the liberality of Mr. P. O. Austin.

Simcoe Reformer, 1926

I had, in those younger days, an irresistible urge to know every nook and cranny of the area — the shore, the fields, the ravines and the creek valley — anywhere within walking distance. Occasionally I sat sketching or searched for berries or visited friends in the vicinity, but more often went tramping the highways and byways.

Helen Straith photo, July 1957



George Smith Farm, August 15, 1942

Each summer the swallows — mostly cliff and barn swallows — gathered for a few weeks in great numbers along the wires. Then suddenly, almost overnight, they left for their winter quarters and one knew that the summer's end was not long away.

The tale of memory could go on and on — paths over the water made by rising moons, a rare display of Northern lights, a family of owls making an uncanny disturbance on a still night, yellow warblers nesting in the cedars by a cottage wall, red-headed woodpeckers on a fence post by a farmhouse kitchen window, migrating monarch butterflies drifting over

Lake Erie, finding fringed gentian in the clay bank between Camp Ruddy and Ryerse, bonfires along the beach — all this and more from the memory which goes on and on but here is where the pen says "The End".

Helen Straith, March 1971.

Bill and Mary Lou Varey
Stephen, Brian, Cathy, Michael and Anne

Carole and Ray Wagner

Cliff and Pat Wakeling
Tracey, Jeff, Victor and Peter

Glen and Karen Wallace
Matthew, Jason and Tyler

Jamie and Heather Walters
Lee and William, and William Ferguson

Aubrey and Winnie Warner

Ken and Mary Ellen Wedow
Jonathan and Andrea

Joan and Leo Welsh
Catherine, Jennifer, Peter and Laura

Peter Welsh and Susie Bingleman

Georgia Atkinson White
Casey and Jenna

Kathleen Whitehead
Peter and Gail

Bill and Lillian Whitside

Robert and Doreen Wilcox
Wendy, Rob and David

Harry Wilkes

Elaine Wilson

Audene and Ivan Winter
Carrie and Kevin

Julie Wise
Matthew and Laura

Chauncey and Sarah Wood
Stephanie and Jennifer

Terry (Woodie) Woodrow



We almost weren't . . .

The Town of Clarence, or Clarenceton

This entry appears in one of the field books of Thomas Welch which begins on December 21, 1796, and contains daily entries up to Saturday, March 18, 1797. Dates are only entered from Sunday, March 19 to Wednesday, March 22. Then on Sunday, March 26, Welch entered the names of a party which began work on March 27. Again the days are listed until Sunday, April 2. The extract, copied below, follows without any date or explanation.

Whereas a Grant of confirmation under the Great Seal of this Province, bearing date the 30th of September, 1796, did issue unto the said Samuel Ryerse, his heirs and assigns forever, for 900 acres of land, more or less lying and being in the Township of Woodhouse and County and Province aforesaid, of which said 900 acres the four lots or

portions of ground herein after mentioned and described and bargained and sold by the said Samuel Ryerse and Sarah his wife to the said Nathaniel Damon, his heirs and assigns forever, are parcels and which said four lots or portions of ground are contained and comprehended under the following metes and bounds, that is to say; Beginning for the outlines of lots 1 and 2 of the aforesaid Town of Clarenceton, at a bounded basswood tree standing in a hollow or gully descending into Young's Creek, it being also the southeasterly angle of lot No. 1 of the aforesaid Town of Clarenceton thence N. 11 W 208 feet 8 inches, to a post at the northwesterly angle of the aforesaid lot No. 2, thence N. 79 E 208 feet 8 inches to a post at the northeasterly angle of the aforesaid lot No. 1, thence S. 11 E 208 feet 8 inches to the aforesaid basswood tree containing and now laid out for one acre of land, more or less.