

FERTILE SOUTH YARMOUTH SETTLED BY FRIENDS EARLY IN LAST CENTURY.

An intensely interesting story of the pioneer history of the Friends' settlement in South Yarmouth was given by Edgar Haight of Union, one of the speakers at the meeting of the Elgin, Norfolk and Oxford Historical Societies at the Friends' Meeting House at Sparta in 1938. Speaking of the beauty, the genial climate and the splendid development of the South Yarmouth district, Mr. Haight said:

"We of to-day can but slightly conceive of the trials, hardships and privations that the early settlers of this fair part of Ontario underwent in order that they might hew out of the primeval forest, homes for themselves and their succeeding generations." Quoting from an article by the late Squire Hunt, the speaker pointed out that:

"Col. Talbot, who was granted five thousand acres of land for services performed for his King and country, and who was given the choice of lands not granted in the Province of Ontario, selected the Township of Yarmouth, but he had been forestalled by Col. Baby, who had secured the coveted prize, and Col. Talbot had to go farther west for his domain."

"South Yarmouth, commonly called the 'Plains' before the white man came to this continent, was the favorite home of the Indian, and here, one of the few localities north of the Great Lakes, he raised corn in the oak openings." "Our late friend A. G. Hannon told me," went on Mr. Haight, "that when he was a boy, corn rows could be distinctly seen in the south part of the Lawton woods, near Whites' Station. Traces of the red man have been found on almost every farm, weapons of war and articles of husbandry." "The fame of these fertile plains was scattered abroad early in the century and their merits were discussed amongst the Friends of New York, Pennsylvania and other States, who heard from persons who had visited the north shore of Lake Erie, of a beautiful country watered

by numerous streams, which flowed into the lake.

First White Settler.

"Jonathon Doan, who was born on the sixth day of the third month, 1765 married Jane Thompson in the fifth month, 1786, lived twenty miles from Philadelphia and being a United Empire Loyalist, emigrated to the Niagara district at the time of the War of Independence; was appointed in 1810 as agent by Col. Baby for his lands in South Yarmouth, where he came in 1813 to spy out or look over the same. He pitched his tent where William Collins now lives, and afterwards settled near Sparta, upon land adjoining the Friends' burial ground, being according to accounts, the first white man to settle in South Yarmouth. With him came his grandson, Jonathon Steele, a boy of seven years. He remained two years clearing his homestead, before he went back to Pennsylvania, and reporting so favorably that several heads of families decided to return with him, these being John Kipp, William Harvey, Joseph Albertson, and Samuel Scott. They had large families and were possessed of those characteristics for which the Friends were noted, viz., honesty, industry and sobriety. There were eighteen in the company and they came from Buffalo in a scow, some of the men driving their cattle on land along the lake. The scow was pulled or shoved along near land and when stormy and at night, it was drawn ashore, the company camping, it taking several weeks to reach Port Stanley, near where they camped for the Winter.

"Jonathon Doan built a tannery north of the Friends' Cemetery. The land for the Meeting House and burial ground he deeded in 1820 to John Kipp and William Harvey, trustees for Friends, for five York shillings. He was a great hand to attend meetings, and walked several times to Pelham for the half-yearly gathering, and also to Farmington, N.Y. for the yearly meeting and as he walked along, he would knock the

stones off the road with his cane, so that they would not hurt the horses' feet. Even in his eighty-fifth year, he walked to Pelham, making four miles to the hour. Aunt Elizabeth Haight said that the people thought it quite a curiosity to see the man who had walked such a distance. She, as a girl, remembered his being there in attendance at the yearly meeting at Farmington.

"Year by year the little colony received additions from the States. In 1814 Jacob Preffer, the first blacksmith, Calvin Witt, Isaac Moore, Jarves Thayer, Isaac Minor, Jesse Page, from Pennsylvania; Thomas Millard, William and George Parker, they being the first to settle on the lake shore. In 1815 Jesse Zavitz arrived. He built the first flour mill on Lot 3, Con. 3, also Asa Fordyce. The first store was built this year by Capt. Smith on Lot 5, Con. 2 and the following year he built the first distillery at Sucker Town.

Walked from Nova Scotia.

"William York in 1816 came from Nova Scotia, walking all the way. It is said that he made the trip three times on foot. In the same year came William Sholl, Anderson Montross, Findly Grant, Josey and Mahlon Doan. In this year the first death occurred. Pamella Preffer passed away and was buried on the farm of Isaac Moore.

"The first school house was erected of logs in 1818 on Lot 7, Con.3. Elias and John Moore were early settlers and James Brown, who married Lydia Kipp in 1829, was the first white man to drive a team through the Grand River swamp. He later became the first mayor of Kincardine. Elias Moore was later elected a member of parliament. Elias and John Moore came from Digby, N.S., first settling in Norwich, then coming here, Elias settling near Union and John north of Sparta. During the Rebellion of 1837, John took an active part and was thrown into jail and sentenced to death, which would have been carried out only for the

intercession of an English Quakeress, whom he had doctored for a cancer. He had three sons and four daughters. Elias' family also consisted of three sons and four daughters. He gave each of his sons one hundred acres, also James Brown, whom he raised.

Friend of Indians.

"In 1819 David Burgess arrived. He was the first man to thresh his grain on cold water, was a great friend of the Indians, often having as many as six or seven sleeping about his fireplace. When they would depart, they would say 'David, he good man! Also in this year John Bostwick, Ebenezer Terrill, Christian Zavitz and Tomlinson, who established the first hotel in the Township at Port Stanley. Dr. Hawkins, the first Doctor, arrived in 1820, also Squire Johnson, Geo. Lawton, William Phelan, Enos Scott, Reuben Haight, and in this year the first Friends' Meeting House was built of logs, but not occupied until the following year. Later this was removed, and a larger frame building was erected on the lot where now lies the Friends' Burial Ground.

Meeting House Built.

"About 1865 the present meeting house was built and in 1873 a large addition was added to accommodate the yearly meeting, which for several years was held here every third year. The number of Friends in attendance from a distance at this time was very large, filling this house and the addition to overflowing, as well as the many Friends' homes at that time. Such gatherings were always occasions of deep interest and greatly enjoyed. It was in 1820 that the first temperance lecture was given in the home of Elias Moore, and David Burgess was the lecturer. The first Methodist meeting was held at the home of Daniel Burgess. Rev. Ryerson was the minister. The first Baptist meeting was held at the home of Anderson Montross. Capt. Smith erected the first barn, and Richard Bailey assisted in building the harbor at Port Stanley. Calvin Witt was the first

child to be born in the district.

Relative of P. T. Barnum.

"The second blacksmith to settle was Thomas Millard. One of the romantic spots near Sparta is known as Barnum's Gully, so named because William Barnum settled nearby in the early days. He was a relative of the great showman, P. T. Barnum. One of his neighbors, Barnabus Lewis, who settled there in 1828 with his family of six sons and three daughters, all marrying Elgin people and helping to make the wilderness a better place in which to live, by high ideals of sobriety, honesty and progressive standards. The youngest son, Lyman, who was the father of the Elgin Historical Society's secretary, Miss. E. N. Lewis, inherited the farm. The first man to have a barn raising without whiskey accompaniment was Abner Chase, (who lived to be nearly one hundred years old). He said he could succeed- his neighbors said he could not, but he did and enacted the first great temperance lesson.

"Others continued to settle here, the Hathaways, Bowermans, Palmers, Weldings, Widdifields, Grahams, Canbys, Willsons, Minards, Pounds, Shotwells, Schooleys, Hilborns, Hesters, Crabbs, Huffs, Bakers, Yeos, Lawrences, Woods, Powells and many more. The first Friends' meeting was held here in the fifth month, 1819 at the home of John Kipp and the meetings were held every first day alternately at that home and at the home of Elias Moore, until the meeting house was built.

"The acknowledged leader of the patriots in South Yarmouth was George Lawton, an Englishman who had settled among the Friends. He was a hard working farmer, of great natural abilities and exceedingly well informed. On the platform he was a match for any of his opponents, and it was largely his voice which raised the spirits of some of the young Friends to the fighting point. Joshua Doan, son of Jonathan, became one of his followers, who afterwards, with his friend, Perley, was executed

in London and buried in the Friends' Burial Ground. Joshua was described as a splendid sample of man. Fearless to a fault, open hearted, always willing to do any-one a good turn, he was a manly fellow and there was great sorrow at his death. On the gallows he prayed that the Family Compact might be broken and it was not long until it was.

Women Ministers.

"It was Sarah Wright Haight who preached his funeral sermon to a very large concourse of people. She was an acknowledged minister among Friends, came here in 1820, being the first gospel minister to settle in South Yarmouth. She was the mother of twelve children- still she found time to go from house to house and to different meetings in Canada and New York State to carry the gospel of glad tidings and judging. Another of the several ministers was also mentioned by the speaker, "Serena A. Minard, who was brought up in New York City by Presbyterian parents, was convinced of Friends' principles, and became an earnest member and in time, an acknowledged minister, greatly beloved by her own people and enjoyed by others. She travelled extensively in the ministry, and went as a delegate to London, England for the World W. C. T. U. convention. And now memory recalls the sweet face of a gracious woman, a face radiant with the divinity within. Serena A. Minard's messages were seldom lengthy or doctrinal, but there was something so uplifting, so beautiful, one could but listen. Her life bore testimony to the cardinal Quaker belief in the guidance of the Inner Light. In the social life, her sweet smile, quick response and sense of humor, made her a delightful companion. Her influence for good still lives, and those of us who knew her, will ever cherish her memory.

"The Friends since their organization over two hundred and seventy years ago, have acknowledged woman the same privilege as men in the ministry, and many of us from childhood, have been accustomed to hear the Gospel Message from the lips of a woman . whose words have often been so evidently spoken in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that it was impossible to question the Divine origin of their call to service. Yea, the many bright and shining lights among the women ministers of Friends have borne testimony to the rightfulness of woman occupying such positions, helping us to fully believe in the gospel declarations that "there is neither bond or free, male or female, for ye are all one in Jesus Christ."