

## HISTORICAL RECORDS OF SPARTA DISTRICT

The center of our local history is Sparta, in Yarmouth Township, Elgin County. Our boundaries are - Lake Erie at the south, Catfish Creek at the east and two miles west and three miles north of said village.

This section was covered with huge forests of beech, maple, oak, ash and stately elm, walnut and butternut, chestnut and hickorynut and patches of pine and other evergreen trees.

Herds of deer and flocks of wild turkey roamed the forest; bears enjoyed the berries which abounded. The howling of wolves could be heard at night.

### INDIANS

The Indians, who inhabited these parts, were the Neutrals, so named because they maintained neutrality between the two great warring peoples - the Hurons and Iroquois. It is related that at least 175 years before the white settler came, the Indian inhabited these parts. Here he raised Indian Corn and Maize in small cleared openings. Traces of the red man are everywhere to be found. On almost every farm has been dug up some weapon of his used in war, some article of husbandry and often bones of the Indian himself.

### COLONEL JAMES BABY COLONEL THOMAS TALBOT RECEIVE GRANTS OF LAND

Most prominent of those who received grants of land, in South Yarmouth, from the Crown is the Baby (pronounced Bobby) family. James Baby, member of the Legislative Council, obtained over 17,000 acres which he distributed among his family, viz. Daniel, Lewis, Antony, Peter and Susan.

Colonel Thomas Talbot, who was granted 5,000 acres of land for services performed to his king and country, and who was given choice of lands not granted, in the Province of Ontario, selected Township of Yarmouth, but he had been forestalled by Colonel Baby who had secured part of this coveted prize and Colonel Talbot went farther west for his domain.



## SPARTA'S FIRST SETTLER

Jonathan Doan was born in 1765 and married Jane Thompson in 1786. Being United Empire Loyalists, they left their home, 25 miles from Philadelphia, in 1789 and came to Niagara District at Sugar Loaf, where they lived 25 years. During these years several children (one account says ten) were born to them. Israel, Joel, Samuel, John, Benjamin, Mahlon, Elijah and Joshua were some of the sons.

Colonel Baby became interested in Jonathan Doan and appointed him an agent for his lands in south Yarmouth where he came in 1813 to spy out the land. With him came his grandson Jonathan Steele, 7 years old. They came in a small boat up Lake Erie to Kettle Creek. Having landed safely and stored their boat, they walked up through the level stretch of woods until they came to some rising ground and made a shelter of boughs and brush just west of where the Friends' Cemetery is now located. He liked the country so well he decided to settle here permanently. He was the first white man settling in Yarmouth south of Talbot Street. For two years he labored to make a clearing and to erect a log house for his family by the Sparta road where his tent had been. This was Lot 19, Concession 4. He had other land as well. The first purchase of land in his name (June 1813) from James Baby is Lot 7, Concession 4 - also 3,000 acres on Concession 3 and 4 for which he paid 1,125 pounds in 1816.

It is quite an interesting fact that Jonathan Doan walked from Sparta to Farmington, New York - a distance of perhaps 250 miles - to the Yearly Meeting of Friends. He was quite a curiosity as he walked from the village to the Meeting House knocking all the large stones out of the road with his cane so they wouldn't hurt the horses' feet. He walked to Pelham, near Welland, to Meetings when he was 82 years old at the rate of four miles an hour.

## SETTLERS COMING FROM PENNSYLVANIA, 1815

At the end of two years J. Doan returned to Pennsylvania and reported so favorably that several heads of families, mostly of the Society of Friends, decided to return with him. These were John Kipp, William Harvey, Joseph Albertson, Samuel Scott and John Mills. They all had large families and were noted for being good neighbors and for their 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 where they camped for the winter.



SETTLERS COMING FROM PENNSYLVANIA, 1815 (Cont'd.)

Year by year the little colony received additions from the "States". The Minors, Hights, Moores, Burgess, Geo. Lawton, Jesse Page, Jesse Zavitz and Enos Scott arrived in 1818 and 1821.

Joshua Doan, Jonathan's son, was an active participant in the Rebellion of 1837 when Canada was agitated in the struggle for responsible government and, being captured, was by court martial sentenced to death and executed as a rebel in 1839.

A. F. Butler, a school inspector of Elgin County, said "Joshua Doan was a brave, true-hearted man, if his execution had been delayed a few weeks he would have received a full pardon".

A. J. Allworth of St. Thomas, for forty years leader of the old English Church choir, says "I was well acquainted with Doan and I know he did much to make life pleasant for those with whom he came in contact. He was of a genial disposition. He had charity for all and malice for none".

His last letter to his wife, written from London Jail, is as follows:

"London, 27th Jan. 1839.

Dear wife:

I am at this moment confined in the cell from which I am to go to the scaffold. I received my sentence to-day, and am to be executed on the 6th of February. I am permitted to see you tomorrow, any time after ten o'clock in the morning as may suit you best. I wish you to think of such questions as you wish to ask me, as I do not know how long you will be permitted to stay. Think as little of my unhappy fate as you can, as from the love you bear to me and I have evinced, I know too well how it must affect you. I wish you to inform my Father and Mother of my sentence as soon as possible. I must say goodbye for the night, and may God protect you and my dear child, and give you fortitude to meet that coming event with that Christian grace and fortitude which is the gift of Him, our Lord, who created us. That this may be the case is the prayer of your affectionate husband.

Joshua G. Done."

"The Spartan Quakers claimed the bodies of Doan and Pearley and Israel Doan brought them in a sleigh, in the dead of winter, through the Middlesex and Elgin bush to their native town, where they were interred with Quaker simplicity."

On the gallows Joshua Doan prayed that the family compact might be broken, and it was shortly afterwards.



SETTLERS COMING FROM PENNSYLVANIA, 1815, (Cont'd.)

Sarah Wright Haight preached Joshua Doan's funeral sermon to a very large concourse of people gathered in the Friends' Meeting house on his Father's place.

Doan was buried in the family plot and beside him they later laid his parents, Jonathan Doan, who died September 22nd, 1847, at the age of 82 and Jane Doan, who died May 10th, 1842, at the age of 83.

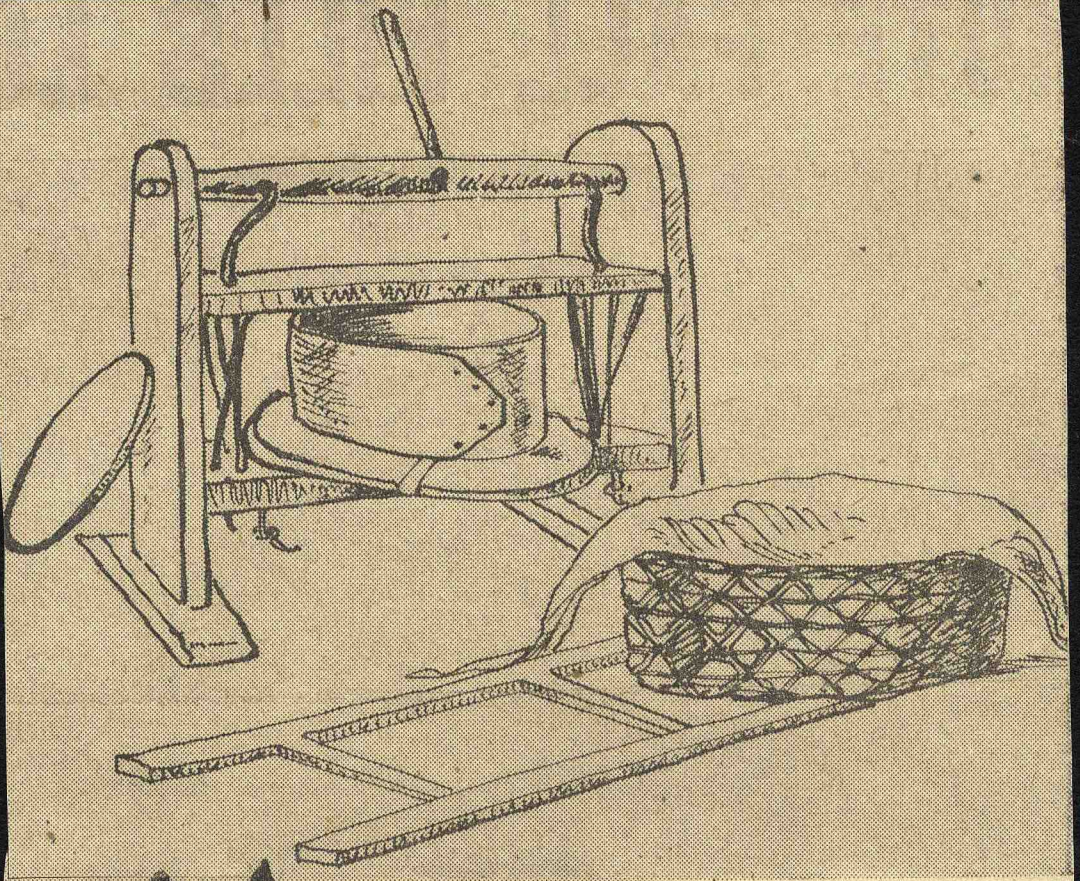
In memory of her father Lyman Lewis, a loyal admirer of Joshua Doan, Miss Ella Lewis had a stone erected on Joshua Doan's grave in the Friends' Cemetery.

Israel Doan, the brother who had brought to Sparta the bodies of Joshua and Amos Perley, lived in the village. He too, was born a Friend and married a Friend - Sarah Mills - in the English mission at St. Thomas on a May day in 1825. Israel was a sort of handy man at Sparta, working at masonry and other trades, but he always had a steady job as the caretaker of the Friends' Meeting house and sexton of its burying ground. One of the first constables of the village, he was a man whose height and strength would have recommended him to any company of policemen or soldiers. George Prior of St. Thomas remembered him as an old man and has said that he was the finest built man he ever saw.

He weighed 230 pounds. At cradling wheat he could beat any man in the township. One day of ten hours he cut eight acres. He frequently spoke of his brother's execution and was always bitter towards those responsible for it.

He and his family lie together in the grave-yard he used to tend.





The above drawing depicts the old fashioned wooden cheese press with ropes and windlass for pressing whey out of curds held in the wooden hoop resting on a drain board. The "folla" or wooden cover of the hoop leans against the press by which it was pressed down on the curds. The cloth cheese bag to drain the curds rested in a big openwork black ash cheese basket which in turn rested on the cheese ladder or "tongs" put over the whey pail.