



Implement Shed and  
Barns.



Hunter House.  
(Bayley Farm.)

The Small Farmhouse.  
Built in 1849. The  
property was purchased  
by the MacBeth family. 1869.  
It was kept as a working  
farm until 1925.

Winter Scene.



XVII  
TOM TALBOT'S CASTLE

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**A** SAD day for "gay Tom Talbot" should his jovial but testy ghost still haunt the log Castle of Malahide on Lake Erie, at news that the remains of his semi-feudal estate has gone into the hands of an American syndicate!

More than a hundred years ago, when settlers used to apply to him for grants of land, the imperious Colonel Talbot would confer with prospective buyers from behind a sliding window pane, and to the enquiries of Americans would reply, "This is a British settlement." If argument arose, as it often did, his formula was simple. He merely turned to his faithful steward, valet, and man of all work, Jeffrey Hunter, and ordered, "Set on the dogs."

Few people recall one of Canada's most romantic stories.

It began at Malahide, nine miles from Dublin, in a castle that might have come out of a medieval fairy tale—a place of lofty arches and circular towers and carved oak ceilings, Van Dyke portraits and an altar-piece by Dürer, once the property of Queen Mary.

The lordship of Malahide has remained in the Talbot family for more than seven centuries. One of William the Conqueror's barons was a Richard de

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Talbot. The name figured in Shakespeare—John Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury, who was the terror of France. It was his descendant, Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury, who, at the coronation of King Edward



The Honourable Thomas Talbot.

VII, took rank and precedence as premier Earl of the United Kingdom.

In the castle of Malahide, and of this ancient stock, Thomas Talbot, the founder of the Talbot Settlement in Upper Canada, was born in 1771.

## CANADIAN HOUSES OF ROMANCE

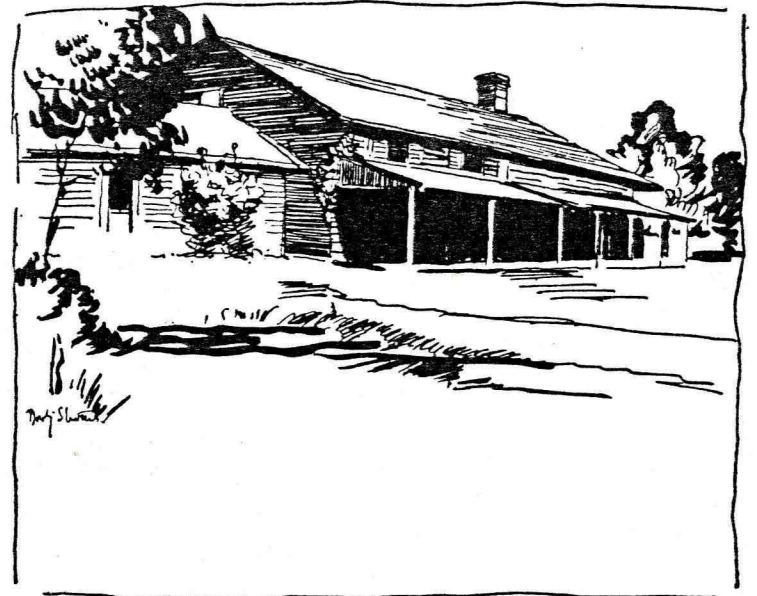
As a younger son he seemed destined for diplomatic service, but his imagination turned to adventure overseas. He talked of the new land, Canada, with a boon companion and life-long friend, a fellow aide-de-camp of the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, one, Arthur Wellesley, better known hereafter as the Iron Duke of Wellington.

The upshot of the matter was that young Talbot left Dublin Castle in 1790 to join his regiment, then stationed at Quebec. He wished to penetrate farther into the wilderness, into the country fabled by Charlevoix as "the paradise of the Hurons"—south-western Ontario. And so, using his influence with the Duke of Kent, then at Quebec, he shortly became an aide of the first Governor of Upper Canada, Sir John Graves Simcoe, and was stationed at the capital, Newark (now Niagara).

Here, beyond "the country of the cataract", lay the most entrancing of all mysteries—the unknown. Various errands through the bushland, to Indian councils, to settlements and villages, and into border cities of the United States, greatly intrigued Talbot's fancy. He was recalled to Europe on military service, but in 1800 sold his commission and returned to Upper Canada with the thought of founding a colony. It is said that he was sated with society, that there was an unhappy love affair—even that one of the King's daughters had been in love with him. . . . Anyway—on an expedition with Simcoe

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he had chanced upon a lovely region between Lake Erie and the River Thames, a place to fill the imagination and the heart, a place in which to hew out a kingdom. With the skill of an adept court follower he began pressing his claims on the crown, aided and



"a place in which to hew out a kingdom."

abetted by influential friends and by the country's need of colonization.

He received his grant, upwards of 70,000 acres, on condition of placing a settler on every two hundred acres. After the first years of difficulty and of superhuman effort the settlement grew and ex-

## CANADIAN HOUSES OF ROMANCE

tended to over 500,000 acres, with a population of fifty thousand.

The situation was, and is, as beautiful as stream, lake and woods can make it. . . Talbot Creek flows across fertile meadowland towards the lake. There are great yellow cliffs of sand, and sand shoals extend into the lake. The shallow water, lapping at the feet of the great cliffs, makes a band of lapis lazuli against the deeper water beyond. Through poplar trees one catches azure vistas shining between their tall, dark shapes.

Woodsmen, Indians and half-breeds felled trees and broke ground for Talbot's first cabin. Years later a more pretentious house was built and the log "castle" still standing is a replica of the second house: a mere echo of its heyday. A wooden bench, the only personal possession left, still stands on the verandah. A small kitchen garden is planted over the site of the wine cellar. To the left of the clearing, facing the wide, blue water, are some fine trees, among them an enormous, wide-spreading locust imported from England a century ago—a perfect and beautiful tree except for a huge, fallen branch.

They told us that on the morning of the day that the option papers were ready for the disposal of the property it was noticed that the old tree was going—the Colonel's favorite tree. "There wasn't any storm that night," they said. "It just fell, as though its time had come!"

## TOM TALBOT'S CASTLE

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This appeared to be a sort of rural château, with "a really civilized rose garden," to Anna Jameson, the English critic and historian, travelling by springless wagon, over corduroy roads, and through the dense bush in 1836. She has left the best picture of the place that we have, and writes of orchards and innumerable outbuildings, the wide hall, where panther skins glared from the rafters above, "ghastly and horrible," handsome lodging-rooms, and blazing open fires.

The Colonel kept open house. No one of distinction came to Upper Canada without paying him respect, noblemen and gentlemen, judges, littérateurs, and ladies of distinction. Once, his nephew, Richard, afterwards Lord Airey, came to stay for some time. His wife, being of an artistic turn, hung Greek lace curtains from the Ionian Islands on the windows of the half-savage "castle" and changed the hours for meals,—all of which was deeply resented by her host. Of the visit of Lady Emeline Stuart-Wortley a quaint little souvenir lies in the British Museum, for her daughter of twelve—now Lady Victoria Welby—was moved to write a diary of her travels with mamma in America, which includes a studious chapter on Port Talbot. One of the rare copies of this book I was fortunate enough to see in the home of Dr. J. H. Coyne, of St. Thomas, editor of the Talbot papers.

## CANADIAN HOUSES OF ROMANCE

A century ago Ontario was soaking in alcohol, but Colonel Talbot, in spite of his detestation of temperance, used to say that a man who imbibed in the early morning was sure to die a drunkard! Therefore, he placed a mark on an outbuilding showing where the sun should rest at eleven o'clock, and would sit on the verandah patiently watching the dial. When the moving shadow touched it Jeffrey Hunter produced the decanter. No business was transacted in the afternoon.

An English portrait of Talbot, when he was nearly sixty, shows a florid, good-natured face the features of which strangely resemble those of William IV. The costume is homespun (woven and made by his settlers) a grey coat and picturesque striped trousers of scarlet and black.

His sheepskin coat for winter was famous on both sides of the Atlantic, for he loved to swagger about London in Canadian clothes.

As to the Talbot habit of resembling kings, that which Anna Jameson calls the most memorable repartee ever recorded in the chronicle of wit occurred when Richard Talbot, then Ambassador to France, was asked by Louis the Fourteenth, who was struck by the amazing likeness to himself, "M. l'Ambassadeur, est-ce-que madame, votre mère, n'a jamais été à la cour du Roi, mon père?" Talbot replied with a low bow, "Non, Sire—mais mon père y était!"

## TOM TALBOT'S CASTLE

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We regarded a forlorn lemonade-stand, doing a dingy business with visitors, arriving to picnic and scatter papers on the ground, and thought of the high-handed Talbot. History will write him too high-handed. While his splendid scheme of colonization and road-making succeeded, in so far as strict loyalty and the collection of settlement duties were concerned, it failed, in reality, through lack of initiative and tolerance.

We had just driven over the famous Talbot road, leading to the estate. It was originally an Indian portage. What drama it involved! Indians celebrating with ritual and war dances; settlers landing from small boats at the mouth of the Creek; plundering bands from Kentucky, during the war of 1812, moving up and down the road destroying farm buildings and carrying off everything portable; the colonel himself, driving his light springless waggon in summer, and in winter "a strong high-shouldered box sleigh piled with buffalo robes," on his way to and from the little village named St. Thomas which he proudly called "My Capital."

Here on each 21st of May there was a grand commemoration of the founding of the settlement, with the colonel as hero making a speech which he invariably ended with an emphatic "God bless you all!" after which he led the dance that followed with the youngest and prettiest girl.

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Stories are still told in St. Thomas of his great political meeting in 1832—the crowning triumph of his career. A reform government was in power in England. The Canadian Liberals—a large proportion of non-conformists, Scottish and American immigrants, all anathema to the colonel—were agitating not only a new policy, but worse than that, the temperance question! Enough! Peremptory orders were distributed summoning “A general meeting of My Settlers on St. George’s Day the 23rd of April, at the King’s Arms at noon, when I shall attend.” Apparently the whole countryside flocked in high excitement and listened to a speech which began, characteristically, with “Silence and Attention” and ended in the complete routing of the rebels who advocated cold water and revolutionary principles. A fanfare of drums, torchlights and songs of victory followed the magnificent colonel home to Port Talbot.

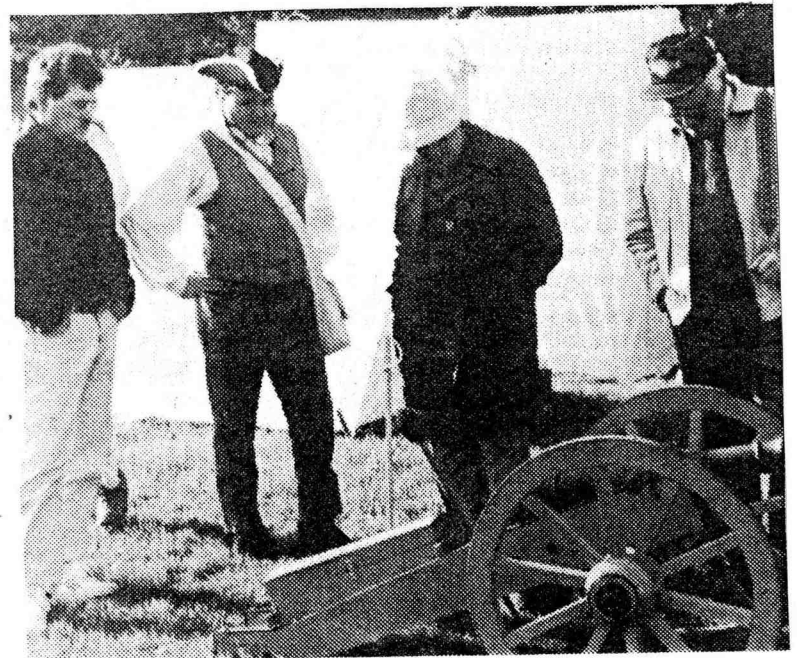
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Tory, Loyalist, aristocrat—how completely he has vanished in the general standardization, the “community spirit” of to-day! Tourists, from the modern hotel overlooking the lake, will play golf over the hillsides where he planted English cowslips, and soon even the rumour of a wild rose, lost descendant of his famous varieties, will be gone. . . . But the log house is not to be disturbed—“at least, not for the present.”

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# Canadian Houses of Romance

by  
Katherine Hale  
with Drawings by  
Dorothy Stevens



## History heavyweights

Local historians inspect a replica cannon at last week's celebration in Tyrconnell of the arrival of Col. Talbot 190 years ago. From left: Don Cosens, Elgin Historical Society president Don Carroll, Jeff Booth, and historian-author George Thorman. *Staff photo*