

THE HISTORIAN'S PAGE-COLONEL TALBOT ANNIVERSARY DINNER

In 1817, the local settlers of the Talbot Settlement formulated plans for a special celebration to honor the founder, Colonel Thomas Talbot.

In early March of that year, Talbot received a note signed by Leslie Patterson, a good friend of the Colonel's, and also signed by James Nevills, the secretary of the association that formed to organize the ceremony. The letter expressed that the district settlers wanted to "commemorate the institution of this highly favoured settlement". The letter continued:

"To your first arrival at Port Talbot we refer, as the auspicious hour, which gave birth to the happiness and the independence we all enjoy, and this day commemorate. In grateful remembrance of your unexampled hospitality and disinterested zeal in our behalf, and contemplating with interested feelings the astonishing progress of our increasing settlement, under your friendly patronage and Patriarchal care, we have unanimously appointed the 21st May for the Talbot Anniversary. And this public expression of the happiness among ourselves, and of our gratitude to you, we transmit through our children to our later posterity."

There is no doubt that the Colonel was flattered at this invitation. Talbot thanked the settlers, and gave them his blessing for the first anniversary, which was held at Dr. Lee's Hotel in Yarmouth, near St. Thomas.

Edward Ermatinger, a contemporary of the Colonel, described the Talbot Anniversary in his book, **The Life of Colonel Talbot**:

"In the first years of the celebration, the Talbot Anniversary was commemorated in a style of rustic conviviality, the company being composed almost exclusively of men who had chopped their own fortunes and of women fit to rear their hardy

sons and daughters."

"Among these the Colonel (Talbot) never failed to appear to share in the joy of the occasion, and invariably led off their first dance, even at the advanced age of three score and ten years."

"On the 21st of May in each year the back woodsman abandoned his toil, threw by his axe, and took his partner under his arm to the anniversary. The ample board greened under such substantial fare as the settlement could afford, and after the cloth was removed, a hundred rustic voices responded to the King's health. 'The day and all who honour it' elicited a stentorian shout, which made the welkin ring, and the 'Hon. Thomas Talbot, the founder of the Talbot Settlement', was drowned in Bumpers amidst deafening cheers."

"When the storm of voices had subsided, the honoured guest, Colonel Talbot, rose amidst the rattle of the table, the jingling of bottles and glasses, startled by such vigorous thumps as men daily exercised in wielding the axe only could give, and with manly pride peering through his bright eyes, returned thanks in a neat, short speech, always concluding in the most affectionate and emphatic manner 'God bless you all'."

In the first few years that the Talbot Anniversary was held, many settlers did attend. The small size of the settlement allowed Talbot to be more in touch with each of his pioneers personally. However, as the settlement grew, and men of influential occupations took up residence there, the anniversary became too refined for the farmer. Ermatinger writes:

"...But in the progress of time, as the population became less homogeneous, and strangers to the early feelings of the early settlers became more numerous, the spirit of the anniversary was

lost. The peasantry found themselves elbowed out of society, by their consumers, and homespun grey and blue stockings had to give place to silks, scarlet and gold, and every variety of fashion!"

Ermatinger also writes that the farmers had to "fill the corners of the ball-room to avoid being run through by a gallopade". The music of the fiddle was substituted by the music of Strauss. The last year that the anniversary was held for Talbot was 1938. A few other organizations have revived the anniversary since the Colonel's death, but none have lasted for many years. The Tyrconnell Heritage Society decided to revive the anniversary in 1996 to honor the Colonel and the pioneers who made the settlement a success. The anniversary has been an enjoyable event, and there are plans to hold the dinner gala in St. Thomas in 1999 in order to attract more people.

Historic Signing of Lease

The aim of the Tyrconnell Heritage Society has been to acquire the historic Backus-Page house in Dutton-Dunwich Township and this came one step closer when a lease between Ontario Parks, Ministry of Natural Resources (owner of the property) and the Tyrconnell Heritage Society was signed. The lease is effective for 50 years and grants use of the house and 2.5 hectares of land.

The conditions upon which this lease is valid are the society must expend \$120,000 in labour and materials over the life of the lease and pay rent of \$75 per year. Plans for a new roof and eavestroughs, repairs to the windows and shutters are in the immediate future. Improvements have been made to the grounds already.



ANN LILLEY (PRESIDENT) IS SIGNING A 50-YEAR LEASE BY THE TYRCONNELL HERITAGE SOCIETY. LOOKING ON IS AUDREY LITTLEJOHN AND ALICE PATERSON.

Third Annual Colonel Talbot Anniversary Dinner!

The third Annual Colonel Talbot Anniversary Dinner will take place at the Dutton-Dunwich Community Centre on Friday, May 22nd, 1998. The Social Hour will be held from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m., with dinner commencing at 7 p.m. The menu will include traditional pioneer fare, such as wild range turkey and wild leek soup. Wine from Quai du Vin will be served, with extra

bottles available for a charge of \$10.00. Guests are encouraged to dress in nineteenth century garb. Entertainment will be provided by the Tyrconnell Heritage Society and the Elgin Historical Society. Steve Peters, the Mayor of St. Thomas, will be assisting with the event. Tickets are \$25.00 per person. Buy them as soon as possible, because it will be sold-out soon.



X-mas 1998.

Talbot Creek at Port Talbot, c.1907

Photo courtesy of Elgin County Pioneer
Museum - C.W. Ellis Collection



Xmas 1998.

Foot Bridge near Tyrconnell, c.1907

Photo courtesy of Elgin County Pioneer
Museum - C.W. Ellis Collection



Picture
from Page
family

Tyrconnell - White building - ice house for storing blocks of ice. Black building
- grain storage earlier for shipping - Fish house for packing fish later.
Building on the Right - maybe be for horses? The men - taking ice from the lake.
Don't see any boats so must be before it was a fisherie; looks like a wagon behind the
men in front of building - Early 1900?



Tyrconnell - ice House