

## COLBORNE'S ROOTS

*Colborne Chronicle Special 125th Anniversary Edition*

*Published: Wednesday June 27, 1984*

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*The writer has reviewed recently a pamphlet entitled "The First Century of Methodism in Colborne 1823-1923." The first page of this pamphlet gives some interesting statements about the first settlers in the area. We reproduce here the first paragraph:*

"The first settler in what is now the Village of Colborne was Joseph Keeler, who came here from Rutland, Vermont, in the year 1787, and who was for many years, the representative for East Northumberland in the House of Commons of Canada, and who died in the City of Ottawa while the House was in session in January, A.D. 1881. The first settler Joseph Keeler, returned to his native state, and in the year 1793 came back to this section of the country, bringing with him forty settlers who were the earliest settlers in this part of the country, and in the number was Aaron Greeley, a surveyor, whose family lived in the Rutherford neighborhood."

A later publication printed in 1862, relates that Joseph Keeler came to these parts in the year 1789, just two years later than the date given above. Apparently Keeler was on an exploration trip and returned to Vermont, coming back again in 1793. In the meantime two important events took place.

It was in the year 1788 that this part of the North shore of Lake Ontario and for an area about ten miles back from the lake, was acquired from the Indians by treaty. This dates the taking over of this area by the Crown. In 1791, Augustus Jones was commissioned to set out the first survey in this area.

Jones set out with his survey party from York, and starting at Scarborough proceeded east along the North shore of Lake Ontario, staking out a traverse, a series of measured lines and bearings. With continuous measurements and calculations, Jones and his party returned to York, and on the return marked out the sidelines for each Township, starting with the Township of Murray, then Cramahe, Haldimand, Hamilton, Hope, Clarke, Darlington, etc. For each Township, the sidelines were run back to the first concession and the base line marked. Thus the start on laying out the Township surveys and the defining of the county boundaries paved the way for the first Parliament of Upper Canada which met at present-day Niagara-on-the-Lake in 1792.

When Joseph Keeler returned in 1793, with his band of forty families, this area was in position to receive the pioneers who took on the task of carving farms out of the forest. The fact that one of these settlers was a surveyor assisted the newcomers in getting settled on organized lands.

The writer has no information as to what surveys Aaron Greeley made in this area. In all probability he continued on where the Augustus Jones party left off and marked township concessions and lots.

*The pamphlet referred to above lists some of these first settlers as follows:*

"Stephen Simmons, Daniel Lewis Simmons, Hiram Merriman, Ebenezer Percy, James Rankin, James Lyons, Ozen Strong, Joshua Webster, Thomas Webb, Christopher Jaques, Joseph Jaques, Smith Herman, Robert Scripture, Robert Dunnett, William Philp, and the Muttons, Bellamys, Turneys, Isaac Gould, John Dudley, and Levi Dudley."

One hundred and ninety-one years have elapsed since that band of forty families came to this area. We do not have all their names, but a number of the surnames are with us today. Descendants of these families are still in the area.

These people of 1793 experienced all kinds of hardships. They went without many of the comforts of life. They endured hard labour. They strove to conquer the forest and create farms. They lived and died, and many more buried in graves long since forgotten. Their deeds, accomplishments and experiences, in many cases, went unrecorded and lost with their demise. Some history has thus passed beyond recall.

However, from time to time, there are pages from the past that come to light. People today are turning more to the record of their roots. Families tracing back to their genealogy find and uncover interesting stories and history unknown to the present generation. In this area there are tales worth re-telling, recollections of events of yore worth placing on record. Writing down and recording the past gives one much satisfaction and a deeper appreciation of what our forefathers accomplished, the benefits of which we have inherited.