

A PIONEER'S STORY

THE HARDSHIPS OF THE U.E. LOYALISTS

STORY OF A PINE CANOE - A TRIP TO KINGSTON - ADVENTURE WITH A BEAR -

ALARM FOR INDIANS

An old resident, an esteemed citizen of Belleville, has handed in the following very interesting account of the early life of settlers in this district. The Ontario would be pleased to give space to other narratives touching on the lives and incidents of the early settlers of this locality.

"Son William" as my father-in-law used to call me, as we sat in the stoop of his neat log house overlooking the calm mirroring waters of Lake Ontario in the distance, in the cool of a fine summer evening, - "Do you see that old log canoe over there by the hog pen?" "Yes" said I, "What about it?" - "Well" said he, "That old canoe was the first of the boat kind ever made on this bay shore, and if you care to listen I will tell you a story about it."

"Go on" I said, "I shall be very glad to hear it."

"Well" said he. "When father and mother first came to this country, it was a complete wilderness. There were no roads or bridges, nothing but deer tracks and Indian tracks through the woods, so that the first settlers picked out their lots as near the water as possible that they could use it as a highway when they had any business to do away from home. Therefore one of the first requisites was a boat. They tried to buy a birch bark canoe from the Indians, but they would not sell them one. Consequently father and his nearest neighbor went and cut down one of the largest pine trees they could find on the bay shore, and being handy with such tools as they had, they soon accomplished their work and that old wreck that does duty now as a hog trough, is the identical result of their labor. Well now my son if I were to tell you I have helped to paddle that canoe down to Kingston to get a small grist of wheat ground, I suppose you would not believe me, but it is true, and the story I am going to tell you is about that voyage, and this is how it came about and what came of it.

We had just cut and harvested our small field of wheat, when mother said, I am tired of that coarse black bread, it makes my teeth ache to eat it, and my back feels ready to break with pounding the wheat in that old mortar all day before I can make it fine enough to go through the sieve, and the bread it makes after all my trouble, is not fit to eat.

Old man, you and the boys must thresh out some of the new wheat and get it ground, even if you have to go down to Kingston Mills.'

"Why old woman you must be getting crazy," said my father, "go down to Kingston Mills? Why, we would lose our way in the woods, and get eaten up by wolves before we could get half way there, besides, I wouldn't carry a bushel of wheat that far for all the flour in America."

"Who asked you to go by land. Take the old canoe; it's big enough to go to New York if you wanted to. I only wish I was a man, I'd soon paddle down to the mill.

What around by the lake, do you mean? said my father.

"No," said my mother, "if you went that way I would never see you of the canoe again in this world. But I tell you what I would do. I would bring the canoe to the beach here in front of the house, load it, paddle down to the carrying place, hitch the oxen and draw it over to Quinte bay."

This plan of my mother's took my fancy first rate. I was a boy about 15 years old at that time and nothing pleased me more than the prospect of an outing from home. The details of the trip were arranged, the wheat threshed and I and my brother Abe spent a restless night. The boat was loaded with two bags of wheat, a basket of butter and eggs, two quilts, father's old Queen Anne musket, powder horn, and shot bag and we were off. Father hauled our boat and cargo over the carrying place and as the sun rose we were embarked on the bay, and started on our long trip.

The whole shore on both sides of the bay at that time was covered with dense woods to the water's edge, not a house or a clearing except a little patch and log shanty here and there, few and far between. It looked lonely then. Just see it now. Beautiful cleared fields and orchards, snug farmhouses and towns and cities that have sprung up since. It is wonderful and all in the life time of one man. It makes me feel old to think of it.

We made such good progress, that we were opposite Myer's Creek, (the Moira) by noon and here a misfortune happened to us that nearly put an end to the whole voyage. We were sailing along half way between each shore when Abe saw the head of some animal swimming across from the north side to the south side of the bay. We of course had to give chase and when after some stiff paddling we came near it we found it was a big bear. Now although it would have been better for us to have left Bruin alone, our hunting propensity made us resolve to capture it. Accordingly Abe told me to steer the canoe

towards the bear and he would throw a noose of a rope over the bear's head and try to choke him. I did so, but the bear was not to be caught so easy as that. Instead of allowing us to come up to him, he turned and came at us. In spite of all we could do to prevent him, he sprang up with his fore paws on the edge of the canoe, with his whole weight, and turned it over, bottom upwards before you could count one. Abe and I being good swimmers soon came to the surface, and on looking for the bear, found that as if content with the mischief he had done, had made for an island that was only a few yards off from us and there we lost sight of him in the bushes. We pushed the canoe on to the island, turned it over to empty the water out, secured our paddles and everything that would float, then sat down with faces as long as your arm looking like two drowned rats, to consider what we should do next. He was the first to speak. Pete this is a nice scrape we have got into. What will they say at home. I think we had better have left that old bear alone. Yes, said I, but what I am most sorry for is losing dady's old gun. You took it without asking and won't he be mad? I tell you what we must do; the water is not very deep where we were upset, let us strip off our clothes and swim out and see, if we can't find the things up again. "That is just what we will do," says Abe, "and as the sun shines warm we will hang up our clothes to dry anyway."

We soon recovered everything that we had lost. On getting ashore again we of course, found the wheat soaking wet. Seeing some large flat rocks near the shore we brushed them clean with some cedar brush, and emptied the bags onto them, and spread the grain out to dry in the sun. We then examined our other things - the basket with the butter and eggs. These we found all right, as mother had fastened a cloth over them so that nothing could fall out, and the water had done no harm, but it was different with our provision basket. The cooked meat was not hurt, but all our bread was wet. However, we did with it as we had done with the wheat, and everything else, we put it out to dry, and although it got a little too hard, it did very well as long as it lasted.

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