

# Surveyors of The Past

BY CHARLES FAIRHALL

## JOHN GOESMAN, P.L.S.

The townships of Flos, Tiny and Tay in Simcoe County were named after the three pet lap-dogs of Lady Sarah Maitland, wife of Sir Peregrine Maitland, Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada from 1818-1828.

Lady Sarah, who is said to have possessed a character of unaffected excellence, was the beautiful daughter of Charles Lennox, fourth Duke of Richmond, Governor-General of Canada from 1818, till his tragic death from hydrophobia, caused by the bite of a rabid fox, in 1819.

The townships of Flos and Tiny were surveyed under instructions of Thomas Ridout, Esq., Surveyor General of Upper Canada, in 1821-22, by John Goesman, appointed a Provincial Land Surveyor in March 1821.

If ever it can be said that a man suffered "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune", John Goesman must surely be that man. Not only did he have to contend with an inhospitable climate and rugged terrain, but he was also continually plagued with drunken, mutinous men and the ever-present problem of a shortage of supplies.

The following are extracts from his daily journal:-

"I say in no way that Thos. Ridout, Esq., Surveyor General, displaced his confidence in me. But on the contrary, confess that this Gentleman constantly recommended me with the best recommendations."

**Sept. 24, 1821** - I set out from York in the afternoon with 5 men for the survey.

**Oct. 2, 1821** - The men gave me rude language, which I had suspected since I had left Newmarket, where a certain Indian Trader, a Mr. Borland Proe resideth and of whose report of fickleness, when I had been in their employment, the men this morning utterly exclaimed. I showed them a stern resolution not to be the least governed by them and discovered therein the strong confidence I placed in the immediate assistance of the Government and at the same time firmly requested of them to declare their resolution instantly - either to perform the requisite duty or to venture the consequences of deserting from their engagement. They then declared them for the former and I signed them for the future a proper allowance of whiskey.

**Nov. 17-19** - The snowy weather still continued and the snow becoming to such a depth that we found it now very difficult to proceed on our return. On the 19th, we arrived with difficulty at the Storehouse at Natawaysawga (at Peter Robinson, Esq.'s Storehouse) where we took refreshment. As we had been short of provision I took particular care not to give the men too strong victuals at first. I ordered them to take at first a glass of liquor before they took their other victuals. I was very fatigued because I had to break the road almost all the way on our return for if I obliged one of the men thereto, they went so infirm and slow that in that way we positively would have been exposed to the utmost distress of perishing with the cold and hunger, which I now so happily removed as none of us became the least frostbitten. I now explained to the men the difficulty we should be exposed to if we should continue the survey notwithstanding we were sure of completing the Party with men engaged by Mr. George McCarty and they agreed with me upon those terms to postpone the survey till next Spring.

**Nov. 24, 1821** - I was seized by a detachment of Soldiers under command of Mr. Bennett and cruelly treated and compelled by them to give them liberty at the liquor I had at the store of my surveying party.

**Nov. 25, 1821** - The soldiers under Mr. Bennett's command still continued their cruelty and no doubt Mr. Bennett would have remained there with his soldiers as long as my liquor would have continued, if not Mr. Eli Beaman had arrived of Penetanguishene who procured me security for my things and took me with him in his room.

**March 31, 1822** - Set out on the survey with 4 men and proceeded to the south-east corner of Tiny, readjusted the compass again and encamped.

**April 14, 1822** - I wrote a letter to Thomas Ridout, Esq., Surveyor General and returned to our encampment. The men that were gone to the establishment were too much inclined for liquor as not to accompany me to the encampment. I directed Mr. McCarty to send them after me to the encampment speedily. The ice on Penetanguishene Bay being still so thick as to bear.

**April 15** - Good weather with some slight snow showers. The three men who were at Penetanguishene did not return before night; had been all this time inebriating and sitting about the establish-

ment at Mr. McCarty's house and at Carney's Tavern and were still intoxicated when they returned to our encampment.

**May 3** - The men arrived with their chaining at my encampment at 11 a.m. - Ducks keeping the field notes - I noted down the remarks thereof in my field notes as I constantly through the whole survey entirely kept the field notes myself - after which we proceeded chaining as the line was blazed before the party was deficient on account of P. Smith absconding and we advanced till lot 3 and 4 encamped.

**June 12** - This day I gave the men free. I also ordered Peter Robinson, Esq., Storekeeper, to let them have some of my whiskey. But of course, not so much as they might not hurt themselves with drinking too much. When I returned they were altogether intoxicated except William Calvin and Robinson. I immediately took all the whiskey away. Mr. Bennett and the Penetanguishene Garrison arrived here last night passing by the River Natawasawga to York. Mr. Bennett abused me for having inquired after the circumstances respecting the deficiency of the provisions at the Natawaysawga.

**June 13** - Mr. Bennett obliged Thomas to take liquor with him in quantity which occasioned him to be unfit for his work now all day. Also Leander was drunk. I went to the old establishment to get out of their way.

**June 14** - Mr. Sutherland - Peter Robinson Esq.'s Storekeeper - refused to lend, sell or let me have on account of Mr. McCarty, any provisions, but on the contrary treated my men with whisky so as to keep them drunk. The men consequently refused to work on which he delightful smiled - until almost noon were we detained and when we came at the place to begin, Leander and Brown run off for to go to the establishment to get more whisky.

**June 17** - We finished the 2nd and 3rd Concession line. But neither Ducks nor Calvin were returned with provisions. I ordered Leander to fetch a load of provisions from the Boundary of Flos and Tiny on the Baseline, being not quite 1- $\frac{3}{4}$  miles. But they made for the establishment only on expectation to get liquor there. I of course had to follow them and happily met the men that were to bring us provisions. I ordered them to stay for the night at Jeff's together with the Party, and to be ready early tomorrow morning. But Thomas and Leander went off probably to get liquor. I went to look for Ducks who did not yet return, being reported to be sick, on account of having fought with Brown at the Natawaysawga.

**June 23** - We arose early in the morning; took a hearty breakfast and there remained still a light dinner and the supper we have provided for on the Baseline; but only on account of having no full supply for dinner the men, especially Calvin, refused and run off to the establishment. I now went to the establishment and declared to Mr. McCarty firmly my intention to abandon the survey and to put the Law in force against them but upon his kind application I took once more the resolution to venture with the desperate party and endeavour to finish if anyway possible and then to let them share their own fate.

**July 12** - I sent Calvin and Robinson to the place where the two men were ordered to come with the provision and to have direction for them there if they might arrive. I then observed for Latitude and variation by altitude as the weather was only clear by p.m. At noon the two men arrived together with Calvin and Robinson from the establishment. They related that the canoe was upset and therefore they had left the same on

the shore and proceeded at foot and that they were set out from Penetanguishene on Tuesday last - being the 9th. Leander requested to rest himself today. Mr. McCarty and Brown arrived here at night with a canoe purposely to see for Ducks and Leander which were reported by the Indians to be drowned. But it now proved they had been intoxicated.

**August 26** - We arose early in the morning and I desired Mr. McCarty to proceed with the canoe and provisions  $\frac{1}{2}$  miles north of Mr. Sloane's house. When I was proceeded a little on the line I went a little distance from the line placing my breakfast upon the compass. But by returning I found human excrement placed with my victuals together on the compass, for which I have a reasonable excuse to suspect it to be done by Brown. I went off immediately - especially for fear of a more cruel usage by Brown.

The compass by washing it proved to be damaged.

**Sept. 6** - Early in the morning I arose and proceeded on my journey. I examin-

ed Lot No. 18 on Penetanguishene Road upon Mr. William Drury's request and went to stop with Mr. Harwood.

**Sept. 7** - Being no opportunity to cross the Lake, I remained there. Mr. Amos Harwood died today of the consumption, at which I was present.

**Sept. 8** - Having no opportunity to cross the Lake yet, I therefore was obliged to await still. The remains of Mr. Amos Harwood were committed to the earth today - on which account a sermon was held by Mr. White the elder. At evening I went on board the schooner "Maitland" to cross the Lake.

**Sept. 12** - As Mr. McCarty was not returned yet I proceeded on to Markham to the Reverend Mr. Peterjon and stopped. Very severe toothache still.

**Sept. 13** - I rested and arranged my field notes. From this time to the finishing I have been exposed to a great many difficulties on account of having been sick. I also was not furnished with the convenience of having a proper room to myself alone and without disturbance.