

MEMOIRS OF THE 1880's

by

Robert A. Conway

This collection of memoirs of the 1880's was written by Robert Conway on the invitation of some local lovers of rural history to describe an imaginary trip through Zorra Township in the 1880's.

This is not intended to be a history but rather a collection of incidents and folklore from which one could form a picture of the life and spirit of the early settlers of this area.

Some of the old Zorra cronies were standing on Embro's main street corner in front of Bill Munroe's Hotel. Embro was now a big hamlet, and as we stood on the main corner and looked to the southeast, we saw the Beagley's Hotel; if we looked to the north, we saw the first Township Council meeting place; on the northeast corner stood one of the oldest business places in the hamlet, namely the Geddes' Plumbing and Hardware store; and when one raised one's eyes to look over the trees and roof tops, one's eyes caught sight of the majestic steeple of the new Presbyterian Church.

The beautiful July afternoon was wearing away and the men, busily working on the neighbouring farms, would soon be coming home for their evening meal. It was one of those rare seasons in rural life. Those who had heavy crops of hay were busily hauling into the barn the last few acres of hay coils, while others were cutting and stooking the earliest fields of fall wheat; and a small field of barley just over the rail fence was drooping its bearded heads suggesting that it was its turn next in line for the busy farmer's attention. As we looked farther across the cleared area, among the beautiful stands of virgin forest, we saw the bigger fields were planted to oats, but along the side nearest the woods, there were possibly two acres of corn. Some time before the early frosts would come, this would be cut with a sickle, or perhaps just an old sharpened hoe with a short handle. Some of the more sturdy young farmers would probably tell you that they could cut a full acre of corn in a day. It would then be stacked in round stooks, and after the stooks were set up, it was an intriguing sight to see that the ground was almost yellow with the big pumpkins that had been busily growing while hiding beneath the shade of the corn leaves.

As we started to walk among the large stumps of the recently cleared land, we came upon the loveliest patch of mangels and turnips and an extra patch of potatoes to make a winter's supply when the small back-door garden was done. One of the first big ambitions of the early settlers was to have an apple orchard and it was one of the first projects of the Upper Canada government to give free or cheap apple trees to the settlers. As a result some of those first Red Astrachan apples were the delight of the young folks growing up.

Since it was the harvest season, the village streets seemed free of wagons and buggies, but the younger children, who were not old enough to be helping their parents, were playing in the back yards. Their express wagons and toy wheelbarrows were in all likelihood made in old Mr. Ross's carpenter shop, and ironed off in the McDonald blacksmith shop. Many of the villagers had small barns in their big back yards where they housed a few chickens, a family cow, and some had even brought a horse and buggy from the farm when the eldest son married and took over the home farm. The horse and buggy came in handy for dad to continue to help on the farm. The cows in many villages were allowed to pasture on the roadside, and since they were all old family pets, got themselves in no end of trouble. During holiday season, the children out of school were assigned the task of being herdsman. Other times, when the cows became too much trouble, some farmer would agree to pasture them for so much a day. It was a lovely sight to see them coming marching home to be milked. When they got nearly home, the calves that were left tethered to cherry trees in the yards would give welcoming "Blass" and the mother cows would bawl in return. Suddenly the whole village would become a place of activity.

One of the old cronies leisurely smoking his pipe would call out, "Here she comes!" and all heads would turn south. Horses' heads would appear over the hill and the village stage coach soon would be rattling down main street and come to a halt right in front of the Munroe Hotel.

As you glanced up and down the street, it was amusing, at least, to see the old, the young, and everyone in sight, peeking around the corner to see who might be getting off the coach, which needless to say, was fully loaded. Some were farm hands coming home from the harvest fields. They were the first off as they were hanging on behind, or standing on the door steps, and even one on each side of the driver.

As the coach was about empty a stranger, a young attractive girl got off, and also a young man with a light club bag. He introduced the young lady as Miss McKay, who would like to know where the chairman of the school board might be found. The young driver whom everyone called Bill [Vanatter] quickly stepped up, having finished collecting fees from some of the farm hands, who were hanging on the sides and back end, and immediately let the attractive newcomer know that he was officially the guardian of the coach and all its passengers. He suggested that if she would just go into the waiting room until he put the horses away, he would very gallantly take her up to the school trustee's home. The young man with the light travelling bag, picked it up and was starting for the hotel when the curiosity of one of the old cronies getting the better of him caused him to inquire, "Hey, young feller, could we be of some help to you?"

The young man awkwardly shifted from one foot to the other, then shyly replied, "I have been hired to oversee and help with the census taking. My name is Bert Conway and I would like to see the township reeve. I think I am getting the job of census-taker for the Township of West Zorra."

He looked down at my worn button shoes and, with a sly smirk which seemed to be shared with this buddies, said, "Eh, lad, your feet is big but your gear is light."

I shyly asked where I might rent a livery horse and he said, "Follow in behind where you saw the stage coach go. It is the only livery stable in business at present."

As I started to follow the track around behind, I noticed looking out of the window in the hotel door, a big powerful man who was eyeing me very carefully and I had a feeling he was about to invite the old cronie, who had been talking to me, to come in and give him more particulars.

As I strolled with bag in hand around to the stable, I met up with the cocky young chap who was in charge of the stage coach. I again introduced myself as Bert Conway and wondered if I could buy a horse or rent a livery horse and buggy for several weeks as I had hopes of getting the job of census taker.

He? replied, "At present, I am trying to buy out the livery stable business from Mr. Bill Munroe, who owns the Hotel. My name is Bill Vanatter, and if the deal goes through, I take over the stable, horses, harness, and all usable buggies and wagons, except the old broken buggy in the corner, over yonder, and one old driving mare which has gone lame and has been turned out to grass."

In a crisp business-like way, he asked me how much I would care to spend on a horse and buggy. My face turned about as red as some of the buggy wheels when I finally had to admit that I didn't know much about a horse or how much it should be worth, and, all the money I had was thirty-five dollars. The bewhiskered old chap, leaning on a manure fork, who I guessed might be his stable helper, took a big fresh chew of tobacco and started to laugh and choke as if it were the funniest thing he had heard in many a day. Before young Bill had a chance to say anything more a heavy hand was laid on my shoulder, and in a crisp voice, the man I had seen eyeing me through the front door of hotel was saying, "Young man, what can we do for you?"

In as few words as possible, I tried to explain my problem. "Well, as I see it," he said, "you won't be travelling many miles in a day and will not be in a big hurry so I think perhaps the old chestnut mare might do you all right." Turning to the old stableman, he continued, "Take him to see the old mare in the yard out behind."

Then, to me, he added, "As regards a buggy, the old buggy in the corner yonder has no top on it, its tires need setting, one wheel needs some spokes in it, and one shaft is broken, but we have some good repair shops in town. Since you are a stranger, we could recommend some to you."

I again sheepishly informed him that I had some relatives which I had been told to hunt up - a Mrs. Donald Ross who was supposed to be my grandmother's sister and known as Aunt Lexie, and also grandmother's brother, a blacksmith known as Big Hugh MacDonald.

Immediately, the big man's voice softened as he squeezed and shook my hand and said, "Lad, if you are from that stock you are O.K. and and if the old mare were shod she would do you fine. You could pay me one hundred dollars for her when you get your pay from the work you do for the township. Your two uncles are wonderful mechanics and we will hitch a horse on the old buggy, take it up to Mr. Ross' shop and get him working on it."

I was asked to go along, and after a few words of introduction I was invited to stay for supper and make my home with them for the duration of my job. The evening was pleasant and I had to tell all I knew about the doings of all the clan which they hadn't seen for some time.

The following morning Uncle Donald Ross started to repair the wooden pieces of the buggy and I went to the pasture behind the livery stable and led the once lovely old chestnut mare over to the McDonald's blacksmith shop. Again after a few words of introduction I was kindly treated and, as he started to work at shoeing the old mare, he told the history of the faithful old horse who had served her masters so well, and suggested that if I were good to her, she would soon look much better. The price for new shoes and labour was fifty cents per

shoe put on, bringing the total bill to two dollars which secretly I thought to be a big price far less than two hours work.

After a lovely noon meal, I put the used set of harness which I had purchased from Mr. McWilliams, the harness maker, on the horse and waited until Mr. Hugh MacDonald finished setting the iron tires on the buggy wheels and putting new bolts in the wooden pieces which Mr. Ross had so beautifully fitted.

One of the first places at which I planned to call was owned by Mr. Columbus Ross. I was told to go south from the village to the first crossroad and turn left. The first sixty rods of the crossroad was called the Snake's Trail, and one could readily understand why. When you turned left for only a hundred feet you came to a high board fence which kept you from falling down a fifty-foot incline. Turning right you followed a sharp incline till the road faced a high bank heavily covered with small trees and then you followed a sharp curve to the left down an incline at a steep angle. At the bottom you came to another turn to the right and there facing you was an old wooden bridge which shook and rattled as you crossed it. Looking to your right your eyes beheld the beautiful sight of a man-made lake nestling behind a high ridge of land on the west side covered with beautiful green trees.

As I stopped the horse to gaze at its beauty a man's voice said, "Young man, it is one of the wonderful things we get for nothing, nature's beauty, fresh air, and put water to drink."

Without looking at him, I asked, "What do they call that body of water?"

The man said, "It is the dam for the Scotia Mills, just over the hills."

When I got a closer look, I saw he was the strange man I had seen in Embro in the morning with an unusual hat, which someone called a Mexican hat, highly coloured fancy leather boots and a fancy fringe of cloth down the outside seam of his trousers. A very lovely girl, I took to be his daughter, stood by a colourful wagon, and she, too, was dressed in an unusual fashion with some sort of guitar or musical instrument under her arm. She sang a sweet little love song and once again I remembered hearing that there were gypsies camping down on the Snake's Trail. Then, as usual, the gypsy was looking for a horse deal and asked how I would like to trade the little old, lame, windbroken mare for something better.

Instantly, I said, "Yes, I would like to do that but I haven't paid for the horse as yet and therefore I couldn't trade her off."

"That is too bad, too bad, that you should lose a wonderful opportunity" he said, giving Dolly, the old mare a thorough going over. He looked in her mouth and said "She will soon need false teeth."

Then he felt around the tops of her front hoofs and said, "These side bones are quite large but maybe they won't hurt much because this will likely be her last summer to live. The jack coming on her left hock is making her a bit lame and will and will soon get worse."

As she coughed a little, he added, "For a couple of dollars, I could give you some advice on how to help both her troubles."

I wondered how he knew that two dollars was all I had, but since Dolly was to be my mode of transportation I agreed that I would like that very much. He went to his wagon and from a cupboard took a small medicine bottle and began to rub its contents on the spot where he said the jack was growing. Setting that bottle down, he picked up a very smelly, dirty-looking bottle, and with a little wooden paddle painted some of its contents on the bit in her mouth and put a little on her nose.

Then he said, "As long as this liquid lasts, rub it on the hock of her leg and when it is done, take the bottle to the drug store and say you would like it filled with a solution half sweet oil and half turpentine, and I guarantee she will not go really lame. This can contains pine tar

and if you rub it on the front of her manger and on the bit of the bridle every time you drive her, it will help her to prevent getting the heaves.”

Thinking what a kind, generous soul he was, I drove on to the top of the next big hill and just as I had been told, I saw a driveway turn sharply to the right and curve around a clump of trees. Following this across a big field I came to the top of the hill and there appeared a very large new bank barn. Strange to say, the driveway went past the barn toward a brick house, supposedly one of the first in Zorra Township. It was just a storey and a half high but the proprietor, Mr. Columbus Ross, soon proudly informed me it was forty feet wide and seventy feet long. The ground sloped sharply to the east and from that end you could walk into the large basement, which seemed to be a lively place of activity.

I was treated to a lovely big mug of fresh buttermilk as they had just taken up twenty-five pounds of butter into a big wooden bowl and were working it with a wooden ladle. It must have been a second churning because another member of the family was busily making pound prints which they said would be taken to the market at Ingersoll on Saturday morning. They also had a strange-looking contraption along the wall and, observing me looking at it, an elderly gentleman informed me that it was a cheese press and that they mixed skimmed milk with some whole milk to make a form of cheddar cheese.

After we discussed our business he accompanied me out to the horse and buggy, passing a reaper whose cutter showed signs of having been recently used and he said, “The boys have just finished cutting and stooking the wheat. The old reaper has done a good job but I hear the new binder, with a knotter that ties up the sheaves in uniform, neat bundles, is working wonders over at Elder Smith’s. Perhaps we can get one for next year.”

As I was about to get into the buggy he drew my attention to some nice new white bricks and proudly remarked, “My eldest son is about to be married and we are going to build a new house for him with these new kind of bricks”

He had one of the bricks that they had used in the big old house for a comparison. These old bricks were sun-cured bricks, but the new bricks were more firmly pressed and kiln-dried. He proudly stated that same day there would be a lovely brick house up at the top of the hill north of the big barn.

After shaking hands with the fine old gentleman and congratulating him on his lovely farm home and handsome family of young men and women, Dolly and I started once more on our way with the Elder Smith’s home as our next stop.

Having travelled a little over a mile, we came to the top of a hill that seemed to stretch away down into a deep valley to a river or large creek that leisurely flowed under a large, old, wooden bridge. On the other side of the river, the trees and partly cleared land were a thrilling sight where some sheep and a few old-fashioned Durham cattle were peacefully grazing. Once again my directions said I would find a driveway on the right. This time down an incline between beautiful maple trees with a sort of surprise, one came upon a very lovely old stone house. It did not appear very high but it was beautifully built from cleverly-shaped field stones.

I was met at the door by a kindly, motherly lady, and peeking around her on both sides were several half-grown girls. Awkwardly, I enquired if this were where Mr. Elder Smith lived. The girls giggled and the mother sweetly smiled and said, “His name is not really Elder, that is just a nickname since he has been an elder in the old log church for so many years. If you wish to see him just go down to the barn and take the laneway up the hill to the west. He and the boys that are home are busily cutting and stooking the wheat with their new binder, which is a marvellous machine.”

It didn't take me long to find them as Dolly and the old buggy could travel any sort of rough terrain. The men had finished cutting the field of wheat and it was all neatly stooked. Mr.

Smith proudly introduced me to his two sons, George, and Peter, explaining that the third son, Alex, was away at little Andy Sutherland's threshing. In a few moments my attention was drawn to the new binder, painted red with white trim, a beautiful sight to see. All three began to talk at once to explain the magic working of this new machine which could tie a knot more neatly than a person could do with his fingers.

"To think," Mr. Smith said, "they are being built in Ingersoll and Mr. Noxon said he put nothing but the best material he could buy in the machine and he had planned to build many more things, such as a hay rake, and best of all, a new seed drill with eleven runs, seven inches apart, and one man and a team of horses could sow ten acres in a day. It sounds unbelievable! He also plans on a cultivator on wheels that would cultivate almost as fast. I find it hard to walk and keep up to the horses so they are putting a seat on a cultivator for me. With our two yokes of oxen and two teams of horses, my three sons and I can start and finish planting ten acres in a day. It seems like some sort of magic. But then, things are changing so rapidly. My son, Alex, is down at little Andy Sutherland's helping to thresh wheat and it is hard to believe that last evening, the thresher had delivered to him a new steam engine to drive the threshing separator with a flat belt that runs on two pulleys, one on the steam engine, and the other on the grain separator. We expect them to thresh for us in a few days."

Since we were ready to go to the barn, the old gentleman said, "I might as well ride with you in your buggy."

As we neared the barn I noticed some large Durham cattle and I asked him if they made cheese and butter like the Ross family.

"No." he replied, "not quite on as big a scale. We make some butter and take some to Woodstock market. Butter is a fair price now as we get from twelve and a half to fifteen cents per pound. The neighbourhood is quite excited about a rumour that a cheese factory is to be built on the intersection which you passed between here and Ross' place. Perhaps you noticed some work being done on the north-west corner, times are changing rapidly."

As I admired his cattle in the beautiful valley southwest of the fine big barn, I remarked on how large they were.

He answered, "Yes we don't worry about trying to sell milk. We are getting a good price for the cattle. We have ten of those big steers which will weigh fourteen hundred pounds. At two and a half cents a pound, they will bring about thirty-five dollars apiece, but if the factory goes up, the boys think we should milk some cows. We have four daughters nearly grown up and they could do most of the milking. We also keep a lot of hens. We have one hundred and fifty layers right now and we got quite a few eggs in the cold weather and we got as high as a dollar per dozen, but just now we are only getting six cents per dozen.

Besides the sons and daughters I have already mentioned, I have one other son who is studying to be a medical doctor. His name is Dave."

After we transacted our little business, he showed me through the lovely old house and, as was the custom in Zorra, we had to have a cup of tea and a big piece of apple pie and some oatmeal cookies.

When we came out to the buggy again, I asked him, "What log building is that which I see through the trees on the hillside?"

"Oh, that is the dear old log church and I am sorry to say that since they built the new church in Embro, they do not hold regular church there now, but I am happy to say that we have a good Sunday School there every Sunday afternoon from two-thirty to four p.m. I must go down there now to fix a hinge on the front door."

I was pleased to think I would have his company that much longer. As we came out on the road, he drew my attention to a huge pile of stones in a field on the farm on the north side of the road. He informed me that he and his sons owned that farm also and they were starting to build a big two-story stone house, one of the first in the neighbourhood, for his son, Alex, to have as a home for his bride.

As we went down a very steep hill and turned right at the corner, we came to another big wooden bridge on the concession, which Mr. Smith informed me was the seventh concession. A slightly built boy of fourteen years was fishing from the bridge and Mr. Smith said, "Hello David, how is the fishing?"

He held up a lovely string of fish in answer.

After we had passed on, Mr. Smith remarked, "That is a clever boy and a great reader. I would hope some day, he might be a good community leader and the community perhaps would see fit to send him to parliament. D. M. Ross, M.P., would look good in the press."

As I let the old gentleman out at the church, he stood pointing out to me the resting places of many of the heads of homes in the neighbourhood who were the first to arrive and set up homes in the virgin forest.

I hurried along a little faster past the next two homes hoping to arrive at Little Andy Sutherland's place as he was my grandfather. When I turned into the driveway, suddenly a cold chill ran down my spine, for coming towards me were a group of young men running as if the "de'il" himself were after them. As Big Alex Smith was in the lead, something terrible must have been happening. Leaving poor Dolly to her fate, I jumped out of the buggy and ran for shelter to hide behind a big tree I saw nearby. There was a terrible noise coming from the direction of the barn, but soon the noise became less and less violent and Big Alex Smith stepped out once more and cautiously started to lead his men back to the barn.

As we passed the kitchen door, a bonnie woman came out to Mr. Andy Sutherland and, clutching his hand, anxiously asked if anyone had been killed.

Andrew said, "Now, Sophie, darling, but mind I told you that it were tempting the Almighty, having sich things about the place."

When some of the more venturesome of the men reached the barn, up went a roar of laughter and then the engineer explained what happened.

Since the engine was brand new and the little leather belt that ran from the drive shaft to the governors was laced with a new rawhide lace, and someone had made a mistake in locking his lace, it came loose and the little engine started to puff and puff, and go faster and faster till the belts were flying off the pulleys on the separators. Since some of the more skeptical, even Little Andy Sutherland, on whose farm they were working, had read in a newspaper regarding where one of the infernal contraptions had blown up with dire results, when one of the men made a move to run for safety, even the novice engineer didn't wait to look for the reason but ran also. But as they co-operated with the threshing crew in getting things ready to go again, they had plenty of fun in accusing first one then another of being first to run. In most cases the reply came back, "Yea, you were running so fast you ran right over me."

Someone remarked, "Well, this is one joke that will go down in the history of Zorra.

The afternoon was wearing on and I was invited to stay and have five o'clock supper with the men, as they work after supper until dark. I said I would work on to the next side road and try to be back by five o'clock. When I reached what the local people called the Cody's side road, a crowd of children, seemingly of various ages, were having an exciting time killing a porcupine. One little fellow was holding his hand a crying as he had some quills in his wrist.

One quite lanky and active boy with a dark complexion looked just a little different, and on the way back to the threshing, I questioned some of those to whom Dolly and I were giving a ride. They informed me that the MacDonald family, the first on the left on the way to Golspie, had taken him as a wee baby after his mother had died when a group of Indians were camping in the big woods which covered a large area on the south side of the Cody's side road. The story went that a group came every summer and stayed to make baskets, many of very pretty and useful design. He was a handsome boy but, as one child remarked, he was as wild as the porcupine and could climb just as well. Months later I heard that when the Indians broke camp that fall he disappeared with them.

It would be impossible to relate all the stories of the wonderful people who were the pioneers of Zorra so we will try to relate a few folk lore stories of here and there.

A few days later Dolly and I found ourselves going down a big hill towards a little hamlet at the crossroads and we paused to drink in its natural beauty. We looked to the west and the sun was just shining over the top of the hill and as we looked east the sun brought out a landscape scene more beautiful than any hand of man could paint. When I enquired at the little country store and post office as to where I might be, the question appeared to cause some surprise and concern that anyone would not have known of Braemar.

Since it seemed a long way for Dolly to take me home to Embro every evening and since it was my desire to meet as many as possible of these lovely, hospitable rural folks, I gratefully accepted the many invitations to stay all night, and Dolly slowly but surely showed the results of getting a good feed of oats evening and morning.

One evening late in August, I drove into a home which they said was a Mr. McIntosh's farm where a man was exercising one of the biggest and most beautiful black Clydesdale stallions one could imagine. When I showed an interest, I was invited into the stable where the sons were grooming two teams of black geldings with white feet and white faces. They were groomed till their coats shone, the hair on their legs was washed and brushed very carefully. The boys soon informed me that they were getting ready to start showing them the next day at a fall fair and they would be going almost steady for over a month. Embro would be the last one on the list and my heart swelled with pride to think that Zorra could produce such quality.

On the weekend I drove into Embro from the north and as I came down the hill by the cemetery gate some men were erecting poles with a strange-looking glass cage or box on one side which they called an electric lamp. I looked at the men carefully. They looked sane and healthy but it was hard to understand how they figured that the box would make light. As I came near Boxall's North Embro Mill, the activity was quite exciting. After making enquiries from the township reeve, I was informed that the Township Council and Mr. Boxall had made an agreement whereby he installed an electric dynamo, driven by his waterwheel which would light street lights similar to ones in the big cities. They said that they were arc lights run by direct current.

It was hard to believe that such a thing could be but the company supplying the equipment was demonstrating that in each glass light there were two carbon candles and, by bringing the two top points together, the current would pass through one to the other and by slowly separating the points, the electric current would jump across the space between the carbon candles and make an electric light.

There were three mills and three mill dams in Embro, - Boxall's, D. R. Ross', and Scotia Mills. They were all places of interest, beauty and useful services.

Some of Zorra's forward-looking council members had taken one of the big excursions to the Chicago World Fair and somewhere on the way had seen some new methods of building roads in a big way. They persuaded an ambitious contractor to appear before the

council to tell how he could cover with crushed gravel six miles of the Embro road from the Tollgate side road to the Harrington side road, ever so much cheaper and faster than local teamsters could do it with teams of horses drawing one and a half yards per load and dumping by hand. His method was to have a steam traction engine hauling three big wagons, each with two and a half yard capacity, the box having a bottom made of hinged doors. By tripping the doors, they would open in the middle all the way on the way on the bottom. They had three pieces of chain which let them open just so far. They would spread gravel as thick or shallow as the road man desired and he could keep driving and make a nice neat job spreading the crushed gravel.

A gravel crusher had been set up on the side of the road at Alonzo Kittmer's gravel pit on the Town Line. Since the contraption would be difficult to turn around they just kept on driving in a cycle right around the ten miles, and that was the beginning of the big road construction undertaking. The concessions were being gravelled by a method called statute labour where a man and a team of horses were given credit for three days' road work. The average one hundred acre farm would be assessed ten days' road work and if you didn't turn out to do your part the council insisted you would pay ten dollars additional taxes. The average taxes in Zorra at that time varied from fifteen to twenty dollars.

The township school houses by this time were beginning to replace the first log structures with what was then thought to be the most up-to-date public school system in the world. As we look back at the fame gained and public service rendered by the graduates of those little red schools, our chests rightfully begin to swell with pride. Many are the stories of happenings at school and childish pranks on the way home, as life-long friendships and love affairs welded the characters that built so strong a foundation for the homes, churches, schools and universities which together form the democratic society in this beautiful Canada of ours.

The grain harvest being completed, it was an opportune time for a few logging "Bees". This was the procedure which had been going on for the past thirty years, but is not so common any more. There were two brothers, Robert and Henry Ross, who had a twelve acre field with some heavy timber and a lot of scrub timber that they had worked at chopping down the past winter. A method they had tried at a previous time on a piece of forest was to chop the trees in such a way that they would criss-cross one another as they fell to the ground, and by starting fires at the points of crossing, it would shorten the logs for hauling into heaps far burning at some other time.

The fall wheat having been sown on about the twelfth of September, they invited many of the young men of the community to bring their teams and possibly one or two yokes of oxen to a logging bee. It turned out to be a very warm sunny day. The McKays had their oxen, the Thomsons had good big horses, the Greens were big husky boys who could slip a logging chain around a log almost like magic, big Bill Conway had his grey Percherons, the Campbells, the Kerrs, and the Mathesons were there and all told, they were a jolly bunch, capable of terrific lot of work but never too busy to stir up a bit of fun. The ends of the logs being covered with charcoal, you could imagine what their hands were like, and pretty soon, as the faces began to perspire, unwittingly, the hands went to rub their faces and before long, they were terrible looking creatures. Since the young folk liked to make sort of a picnic of the task, at about eleven-thirty in the morning the sisters, young wives, and some sweethearts would gather with big baskets of food which was spread out under large maple trees, left along the fence line by the roadside.

Since there were no railways in this area for some little time after the early settlers began taking up their holdings, the greater part of the Zorra families got off the train at Burford, and as always, some enterprising men set up a business of taking the early settlers back to their new holdings. It so happened that a young Irish lad by the name of John Payton had got

off the railway somewhere to the south and was on foot with a pack on his back looking for his relatives who had settled a few miles to the north in Downie Township in Perth County. About twenty minutes before he arrived at the picnic site¹ the girls were laughing and teasing the boys about the looks of their black hands, faces and clothing with the result that the boys began hugging and kissing the girls and rubbing their blackened faces on them, until pretty soon the girls were looking as bad as the boys. About the time they had settled down to enjoy their lunch, the tired, lost and discouraged young Irish chap stopped to enquire his way and immediately was invited to join their dinner party.

As boys will be boys, they began teasing the visitor, and one asked the question, "Well, Pat, where do you think you are anyway?"

With a sly twinkle in his Irish eyes he replied, "Begorra, by the feelin' o' the heat and the lookin' o the men, it is Perdition, surely.

The methods of drilling wells to insure a steady source of water was just beginning to be used, and when the fun turned to more serious things, someone addressed a young chap known as Angus Matheson with the question, "Hey, Angie, how are they getting along drilling your well?"

"Well," he answered, "Old Mr. Bugly said they might have a drink of water from in the rock one hundred and ninety-five feet in solid rock."

One of them just looked at him in disbelief and wryly whispered to someone near, "Where have thy got that jug hid? I wouldn't mind having a swig myself."

Someone else piped up, "Did you hear they are setting up a rig in Harrington to drill for oil?"

The "oh's" and "where's" were quick in coming and it was soon learned that such was the case. Many were the dreams that some folks in the area would possibly become wealthy.

In a matter of a few days, Dolly and I were driving in a long lane on the Matheson property. As we drew near the buildings we saw a group of men standing near two teams of big horses hitched to two long ropes threaded through two pulleys anchored to something on the ground. The teams and ropes started from a given point, one at a forty-five degree angle to the right and the other at the same angle to the left. A third rope went from the same given point directly opposite to the angle formed by the last two ropes hitched to the horses. Lying on the ground was the strangest looking contraption composed of a series of brightly shining galvanized angle irons, all held together by countless smaller braces. There was one big man in command who shouted orders from a position at the end of the third rope.

Since Dolly and her driver were greenhorns, Dolly's driver whispered in her ear, "It looks to me to be an unjust and unfair way to play tug-o-war."

As the horses began to carefully pull on their ropes, the strange-looking galvanized monstrosity did a very queer thing. It began to raise its head, up and up it went until there it stood straight as a policeman on a city street corner. The men hurriedly began bolting each of the three galvanized legs of the monster, now a beautiful tower, to three galvanized pieces previously set in the ground. Then one man put away his team of horses while the other was left hitched to one rope. A man climbed up a ladder built right on the frame and took with him a pulley and one end of the long rope, fastened the pulley to the top of the tower, threaded the rope through the pulley, and lowered the loose end to the ground. Next the men on the ground tied a long cedar pole to the rope and the horses pulled it up to the top of the tower where a man fastened a pulley to the end of the pole and secured it to the tower with the end which was carrying the pulley pointing high into the air. Once again the loose end of the rope was lowered to the ground where the men fastened to it a heavy iron box-like contraption with a short shaft sticking out either side.

One of the men said, "This is an especially good gear head. You fill this tank with oil and you just go up the tower once a year to replenish the supply."

When they were hoisting the mechanical head, I remarked that they were clever to put that pole with the pulley on top up there and he replied, "That is what builders call a gin pole."

After putting the mechanical head in place, two men began rolling out the queerest looking wheel you ever saw. The men were kind enough to inform me that this was the most important part of the whole windmill as it was the part that the wind turned around. It was eight feet in diameter. Within a surprisingly short time it had been hoisted and fastened in place and the men announced that the windmill was ready to begin its work.

There were not many of these strange looking giants in the community at that time, but I could guess that there would soon be many more.

After the work was completed, the helpers were invited to a bountiful supper, and with hat in hand, I sheepishly accepted the invitation to go along. Following the meal, as the men stood around the back door, the youngest son, Angus, was seen to get his rifle and start into the woods.

He answered, "Yes, Father."

"Where are you going, Angus?"

"I'm going shooting, Father."

The old gentleman replied, "Very well, very well, Angus, whatever you aim at will be safe anyway."

This of course, brought a round of laughter from the older brothers and young neighbours who were there to help. One could easily see that a bit of good-natured joking was something of a habit in this neighbourhood.

The summer holiday season being over, it was the usual thing to meet and visit with the friendly, rural children on their way to and from school. When Dolly and her driver came upon a group of not more than four in number, it was always a pleasure to have them pile in for a ride and a visit.

On this particular evening, we were driving west from the old log school called S. S. No. 7 and when enquiring how far our passengers had to walk to school I was informed that the schools in West Zorra were arranged so that no one had farther to walk than three miles. When we were about to the three mile limit, there were two small boys left in the buggy. When the second to the last was getting out of the buggy, we noticed he had his slate and a bunch of books stuffed in his bookbag, carried by a strap over his shoulder.

His young friend said, "How come, Nelson, you have all your books with you?"

From the corners of his beautiful brown eyes were traces of a stain from possibly a few tears. "Yes," said the young scholar, as he straightened his shoulders and stuck out his chest and chin, I am through. I am not going back again."

His young neighbour began to reason with him, until the lower jaw began to quiver, and almost in tears, he remarked, "Well, he didn't kill anybody today but he likely will tomorrow."

With that, the family dog met his young master at the gate and we drove on. The other young scholar was willing to talk so I got the information that they had a new teacher for the year just starting and he was big young man who could roar like a lion, could catch two boys, a coat collar in each hand, and bang their heads together, and also grab a blackboard brush and hit someone on the head in the back seat right from his desk on the platform. His name, strange to say, was Mr. Darling.

Straight away, since I was a lover of the zoo and all the wild animals in captivity, I decided the next evening to make some excuse to call at the log school and also at the site of where they were building a nice, new, red brick school house some two farms down the road right at the intersection. They hoped to be able to have it in use before the real cold weather came on.

The following evening I arranged to be waiting at the school door when it opened and I had to jump aside quickly to escape being run over by thirty-five young folks weighing all the way from fifty pounds to one hundred and fifty pounds. One could not help but think what a healthy handsome and happy group they were.

I waited until they were all out before I went to the inside door and rapped timidly on it. A strong clear voice invited me to enter the classroom. There I saw a handsome, curly-haired young man writing some work on a crude blackboard made up of large pieces of real slate nailed to the squared logs that formed the north wall. At each corner hung a map,- at the right a map of Oxford County and at the left the province of Ontario.

I noticed the construction of the seats, which were rough elm planks taken right from the sawmills, now worn smooth by the children's bodies rubbing against them. The floor consisted of loose planks embedded sufficiently in the ground to make a little protection for the children's feet and keep them dry.

As I stood studying the young teacher, I realized that here was one of those young characters who could be an army officer, prison guard, judge in a criminal court, or a caged lion that could purr like a kitten or scratch and claw like a tiger. Undoubtedly, however, to the lovely young fifteen or sixteen year old girls, he could be the Young Lochinvar or Prince Charming.

I mentioned the fact that they would soon have a nice new building and he replied, "Yes, but not before we need it?"

We discussed the maps on the walls.

"I always," he said, "try to hang a map on the north wall because it's like a person standing on the roadway and looking north. The road ahead is north, to your right hand is east, and to your left is west. A map on the north wall gives you the same perspective, the top is north, to the right is east, to the left is west, and the floor is south. As time goes by, it helps one to find one's directions."

Together we went to the new building site and he explained all the fine points of the new school. Here I also met the chairman of the school board and he informed me that they had had a discipline problem during the last two terms, so they had hired Mr. Darling, who was noted as a good disciplinarian and he was starting a bit rough in order to get control.

The chairman was getting elderly and I suggested that possibly he had seen many fine men and women get their start in the world by attending the old log school.

"Yes, indeed," he replied, "they are now king their places in the world, many of them leaders in any and every walk of life which they chose to follow."

I found the time seemed to keep flying by and one and all seemed to be thinking of the shortening days. The fall fairs were nearly over while the farmers were still kept busy threshing from the stacks of sheaves, so carefully built after the fashion which our grandfathers had learned back in the old lands. Those, who were fortunate enough, had built new barns of framed timber sided with pine lumber one inch thick. This lumber was usually acquired by the local farmer selling logs and squared timbers to the sawmills and lumberyards in the local towns and buying back what lumber was needed.

By this time new railroads were being built, the Stratford area serving as a Grand Trunk Railway terminal with branch lines, serving London, Sarnia, Goderich, Owen Sound, etc. It became easier to do business and in the growing towns everyone burned cordwood for heating churches, schools, stores, and homes while the new industries using power machinery installed stationary steam engines which used cord wood to make steam in big bricked-in boilers.

The income from general farmer was rather meagre but the cordwood and log market created a means by which a farmer secured the cash to build lovely brick homes or other new frame homes and outbuildings along with new bank barns.

The framing of the new square-timbered barns was a clever trade, which was highly developed in the township of West Zorra. It was a long drawn-out procedure. The contracting carpenter usually started in the winter preceding the framing of the new structure which was usually built according to a special pattern and popular size.

The first survey divided the crown land into hundred acre farms. The early settlers purchased these farms from the government and received Crown Deeds, usually drawn up on parchment paper, which are highly prized possessions today. Later in some areas when the oldest son wanted to set up a home, all the land close by was already settled and was not for sale, and perhaps for many reasons, the parties concerned felt that it would be better to divide the home farm. By building another set of buildings, they would have two fifty acre farms. There were some areas close to small towns where the men could work part time in feed mills, saw mills, and also at the building trades. I would hope that some person might be good enough to put in pictures and print the story of the barn raisings and a list of the clever tradesmen who built the first structures of Zorra.

The early plantings of apple trees were just coming into good production. In some areas there were sawmills and even some cheese factories where they had steam boilers which could be used for steam cookers. As the steam threshers became more plentiful even some of them were made available and many small and some quite large apple cider, apple butter, and cider apple sauce industries were set up. Almost all families took some of their surplus apples to have them processed. By bagging up seven good sized bran sacks or three-bushel grain sacks of apples, the cider mill could press out thirty-five gallons of cider. The process began by putting the apples through a grinder that would grind them into a mushy, pulp. There were many types of presses, some made from the big barn jacks for lifting heavy timbers and operated by hand, others big powerful ones driven by mechanical power. Big thirty to forty gallon oak barrels could be bought new from the many cooper shops in small towns, one even in Embro. Many farm homes stored one or two barrels of cider to have for drinking during the winter evenings when guests arrived. Many were the recipes used for preserving its quality and in many cases it became highly intoxicating. In most cases just a few gallons were taken home to drink while it was fresh and sweet.

Some folks took apples to the mill several times through the Fall in order that they might have fresh cider on hand. Then there were always some small juicers on the market which some families bought in order to have cider any time they might desire.

The cider apple butter was a most popular dessert which found its way into most fruit cupboards. This was processed by building a box from heavy tongue - and - grooved lumber and procuring or having made, what is called a steam coil. This consisted of pieces of copper pipe the length of the box laid four inches or possibly six inches apart. At one corner the first pipe stuck out through the wood, but the remaining pipes were joined together by elbows. The end pipe again extended through the box and was joined to the cold water intake of the boiler. The other extended pipe was connected to the live steam connection on the steam boiler used with the steam engine. When the live steam was circulated through the coil, it would boil any

solution put into the wooden tub at a terrific pace. Sweet cider would be put into the tub and boiled down to half its original quantity. Then quartered apple or pieces of pumpkin, which were peeled and brought for the purpose, were cooked in a small cooker. This filler was added to the cooked cider and boiled to the desired consistency. This apple butter added greatly to the family winter supply of ready-made dessert.

As I was standing in Mr. Bean's yard discussing the apple butter, a man drove in with a big wagon-load of apple barrels. In amazement, I asked, "What ever are these things?"

He proudly answered, "A brand new market has come for our Canadian apples and they are going to pick, and pack them in these barrels, draw them to the nearest railway station, and ship them to England."

Mr. Bean's son came carrying a ladder and his daughters had some new baskets, especially designed to hang on your arm, and, while they were discussing the apples, a small democrat drove in with three men: a Mr. McIntosh, who, Mr. Bean said, was the apple packer, and the other two were helpers. They immediately set up a collapsible four-legged table with a loose canvas top, and as the Bean family picked the apples they poured them into the pocket formed by this loose canvas top. The two graders sorted them out as to size and discarded any blemished ones. Then they very carefully packed the graded apples into the barrels which were made of light wooden staves with four wooden hoops. The top hoop of each could be pulled off and the lid lifted off. When the apples were carefully placed in the barrel in level formation on top, the lid was laid over the apples and the whole barrel was placed in a press that gently shoved the apples down until the lid would fit in a groove in the wooden sides. The top of the barrel was tapered so that the big wooden hoop would start on and the packer had a tool which pressed it down until it was tight. Then with small nails he nailed it to the wooden sides. The barrels must be laid on their sides during storing and shipping for if they were left standing up, the apples would settle enough to become loose in the barrel and the vibration during transportation would ruin them. At this time, the apple orchard became a real economic boom to the farmers with good orchards. Strange to say, the Baldwin apple, which was the most unpopular on the local market for eating raw or cooking was the most popular for shipping.

The next big family project came as the weather became cooler and everyone knew that winter was just around the corner. Folks usually had one or two fat pigs which were raised on purpose for the winter supply of meat. I have in mind, one group of farmers who made a Bee out of the job, and six, seven or eight pigs, in some cases were butchered. The first step was to secure a forty gallon barrel and in most cases the farmer hitched a team of horses on the big sleighs, used for a variety of winter projects, and pulled it to the site chosen for the job, generally crosswise in front of the drive-barn doors so as to have some protection from the weather.

Next the forty-gallon barrel was leaned up against the side of the sleigh preferably near the back end, just so that the lip of the open end would be almost level with the platform of the sleigh. While some were busy doing this act of preparation, others would be setting up three cauldron kettles. A large one was used to heat water to boiling for scalding the freshly slaughtered pig so that the hair could be scraped off easily. As in all family projects the operation would not be complete without the help of the ladies. So they had the men set up two cauldrons somewhat smaller than the one used for boiling the water. The first pig was scalded and then pulled toward the front end of the sleigh where all hands got busy at scraping off the hair.

As usual there was always a funny incident. In this case, a little girl of the home, who always wanted to have the gizzard when they had chicken for supper came running out and said, "Daddy, Daddy, has it got a 'diddard' in it?" No sooner was the head off the carcass than

the ladies had it cut up and soaked and in the smallest kettle to make potted head, or better known as head cheese. Once the carcass was hanging from hooks on the driving barn beam, the ladies had the men pull out the loins and they started in to make sausage, some to be put in patties and cooked and covered in its own lard and put away in cellars. This would be brought out and be delicious many months later. One family bought a sausage press and learned how to make their own casings from the intestines and they really felt that they were becoming quite professional, which was quite true. Over in one remote corner of the yard was a little square brick and stone building. Probably the next day, after the meat became well cooled, they would finish cutting the meat and some nice shoulders and hams and also some sides for bacon would be hung up to the ceiling of the little stone and brick building to be smoked for use in the months ahead. The ladies also cut the fat area off and rendered the lard in one kettle and divided it up in containers for each family to take home for themselves.

One incident that caused a laugh at this Bee happened when they filled the barrel a little too full of hot water and Mr. Matheson and his young farm-hand just recently out from Scotland, were taking the lead in the scalding process. Accidentally one let his grip slip on the leg of the pig and the carcass slipped into the hot water so quickly that the hot water rolled out over the top and a goodly quantity went down inside Mr. Matheson's rubber boot. Everyone hurriedly helped him to get his boot off and sympathy from everyone was very generous when young Scottie MacPherson dry remarked, "Well? It could ha' bin worse."

Mr. Matheson, who secretly was blaming young Scottie, shouted at him, "You stupid mutt, can't you see it's burning my leg? How COULD it have been worse?"

With a sly twinkle in his eye, young Scottie answered, "Aye, aye, it could ha' bin worse, --- it could ha' bin mine." At which remark, of course, everyone laughed.

There might have been some real casualties if the looks on Mr. Matheson's face could have killed anyone.

A few days later on the farm of Mr. John Conway, they had a Bee to kill pigs in a different way. Since there were no big killing stations, such as the pork factories or abattoirs as yet, the butcher shops in the small towns of Stratford, Woodstock, Ingersoll, and St. Mary's needed meat, so two or more butchers would get together and buy a whole litter of fatted pigs from a farmer. Most farmers would have only one brood sow which, in most cases, would have just two litters a year, and if lucky, might raise twenty fat pigs.

Mr. Conway and his son William, sold ten fat pigs to be dressed and divided up among three butcher shops in Stratford. They got some extra help on hand on a Friday afternoon and very carefully dressed and hung the whole ten carcasses on the front verandah. Winter had just started to settle in and sleighs had just taken over from wagons.

On Saturday morning, the weather was crisp and cold and the snow had formed a firm smooth crust on top. Two teenage boys, Charlie Gordon, (In later years known as Ralph Connor) and George McKay, "framer", were chancing a ride to Stratford on the Conway sleigh. Mr. Conway and his son William were carefully loading the carcasses on the sleigh on white sheets laid on the bottom of the wood rack, placing them neatly crossways. As they were loading the last pig, the boys coming for a ride to town, having a hand sleigh with them, jumped on it to ride down the big hill just south of the Conway house. As they neared the fence they were coming so fast on the crust of snow that they couldn't stop, so rather than strike the fence they rolled off and let the sleigh go on. It jumped over the fence with a frightful clatter and landed almost under the young team of horses. They gave a terrible bolt, circled around and, as hard as they could gallop, followed the sleigh track back to the woods. As Conways owned two hundred acres of land, their property stretched to the next concession and the track through the woods brought the frightened team out on this back concession where some farmers were able to stop them with nothing much left except the harness they were wearing.

Mr. Conway's precious dressed pigs were scattered from one concession to the other. Mr. Conway was noted for being a man who seldom used any swear words than to say, "By George". Rumour has it that there were plenty of "By Georges!" that morning.

One thing that rural people always had that was second to none among their fellows was an abundance of good food. Farmers would agree among themselves to butcher a beef and the neighbours would buy a quarter of beef and hang it up to the ceiling of a back woodshed where it would freeze solid. Every few days the farmer would cut off a nice big chunk, and they lived well with the best steaks and roasts and lots of big bones for delicious home-made soups.

One could safely say that every cellar was well stocked with barrels, boxes, and sometimes bins of apples of all varieties. Above every kitchen stove were four hooks screwed into the ceiling and hanging from these was a frame a little bigger than the kitchen stove, a coarse wire screen covering the bottom. By this time you were able to buy a little machine that clamped onto the end of the kitchen table. It seemed like magic how you could shove an apple, blossom end first, onto a three-pronged contraption like a miniature pitch-fork and when you turned a crank the apple would revolve against a sharp knife which peeled the apple quickly and took off a thinner skin than you could do by hand. Some screens over the kitchen stove held more than others. The one in the new stone house on the Conway farm held approximately three bushels of fresh quartered apples. The apples had to be stirred once a day and left on the screen until the ladies of the house were sure they would be perfectly dried. While this process was going on some of the neighbours would be having little neighbourhood parties to have their screens filled up. All in all there was a happy community spirit, and in the late Spring before the rhubarb was ready, dried apple pie and dried apple sauce tasted mighty good.

As you moved around the community you ran into many delightful sources of community folklore and one of these sources was the home of Mr. Angus Clarke, near Maplewood. One evening Angus was holding his sides laughing as he was trying to tell of a funny thing that had happened a few days earlier. There were two farmers whose homes were on the Sixth and Seventh Concession of West Zorra but their unharvested forests were on the back end of the farms. The wooded areas were over the fence from one another and the neighbours were the best of friends. Since the marketing of wood and logs was the farmer's main source of ready money, one could understand that friendly rivalries grew up.

Mr. Robert Murray lived on the Seventh Concession while Mr. James Amos lived on the Sixth Concession. Mr. Murray has won the reputation of always being the first man in the morning to arrive with a load of wood on Stratford market. Mr. Amos remarked to someone that he was going to beat Bob Murray to town with a load of wood at all costs. Mr. Amos stayed up all night and cared for his stock in the barn during the night and was just nearing Stratford at the break of day and what do you know? He met Mr. Murray coming home with an empty sleigh. Mr. Clarke thought it was a joke that would go down in history but slyly hinted that someone tipped "Bobbie George" as he was known, as to what Mr. Amos was doing and so he took his team and empty sleigh up another concession, crossed over, and met Mr. Amos to make out he was coming from town. At least it did show how much work they would go to in order to have a bit of fun.

When the heat was on, Mr. Clarke was willing to tell some stories of the Stratford wood market. Another family noted for drawing a lot of wood on the Stratford market was the Philip Meadow family. Mr. Meadows had a family of six sons and that meant they could have a team of horses steadily hauling wood, as the sons could easily have plenty cut at home.

Ephraim was a great horseman and his team was harnessed up with Scotch collars, brass hames, and buckles brightly polished while he, himself, seemed to have not particularly

warm clothing when most of his young competitors were clothed like Eskimos. One cold frosty morning Mr. Meadows was standing by his load of wood waiting for a buyer, an old felt hat sitting cock-eyed on one side of his head, nothing over his ears, and a pair of light gloves which he took off to light his pipe.

Someone said, "It's a wonder that Eph Meadows doesn't freeze. They say he doesn't even wear socks in those copper-toed leather boots he has on."

The answer was, "I'll bet a dollar he hasn't."

"You're crazy! I'll bet two dollars he has."

Soon the crowd got into the argument and the bets kept getting bigger and bigger until the sum reached the staggering figure of ten dollars, which represented the price of anyone's load of wood. One old horse dealer, who was always on hand, insisted that he would collect the bets. When Ephraim was informed of the circumstances he was involved in making a deal for his load so he just kicked his boot off and stood casually in his bare foot in the snow and continued with his transaction, while the crowd did everything but take his boot apart and the bettors stood there with their mouths open while the rest laughed and laughed.

On the next concession was another family by the name of Major McLeod. They were one of the early settlers and, like most of the neighbours, they sometimes got a bit too much of their favourite brand of liquor. Mr. McLeod was a good debater and rather enjoyed a lively argument. One day, just before the snow came, Mr. McLeod went to Stratford with quite a lively team of young horses hitched to a two seated democrat, giving a ride to a neighbouring farmer who was noted as being a very quiet, congenial chap. All the way to Stratford, Mr. McLeod was baiting Mr. John Gunn for an argument but the answer always came, "Yes, Mr. McLeod." On the way coming home, after both having imbibed a little too freely, Mr. McLeod's bid for an argument continued and at last he angrily said, "John, you say 'yes' to me again and I'll throw you out of the wagon!" So the next time John said, "Yes", Mr. McLeod, who noted for his great strength, just picked John up bodily and set him in the back seat. When they were still over a mile from home, they had to cross quite a large old-fashioned wooden bridge, and being a bit out of sorts, he was letting the team travel a little too fast and bumped the back seat off the democrat. When he drove in home his son expressed his annoyance at having the team, which he had been so carefully for, all sweated up. Then he exclaimed, "Father, you have lost the back seat off the democrat!"

The old gentleman began to look a little concerned and said, "Well, noo, Rorie, my boy, if I have lost the back seat off the wagon, I have also lost John Gunn."

In consternation, they started back to look for John Gunn, and when they reached the bridge where the seat had been bumped off, there was John Gunn. He was too drunk to walk home so he had simply righted the seat on the edge of the road and was sitting there leisurely smoking his pipe.

The next morning before starting on my way, I thanked Mr. Clarke for telling me some of the community jokes and he answered me, "My boy, if one were to write down all the funny things have happened in Zorra, there would be so many books they would make a good library."

In those days, community life was progressing quite rapidly and the government was trying to see that post office services were made as efficient as possible. Young Bill Vannatter developed into a very efficient livery stable operator and stagecoach driver, whose stage met each passenger train on the new railroad running from Sarnia through London to Woodstock and east to Hamilton. The stage ran south to the Cody's Sideroad, which ran east and west, and the township built an angle road from the intersection where the Embro road met Cody's sideroad, which ran from there to what was known as Zorra Station at the intersection where

the railroad crossed over Con. Six of West Zorra. The coach took all outgoing mail from Embro Post Office to put it on the train and took back to Embro all incoming mail for the whole township of Zorra. Once again the young ambitious Bill Vannatter accepted a government contract to deliver mail six days a week to the branch post offices of Zorra. He left Embro and travelled east to the little hamlet of Golspie, then north from there, he made his second stop at Braemar, and from there he travelled north to Maplewood. He turned left at Maplewood and continued west to Harrington, and from Harrington on his way home he stopped at Bennington store, operated by a Murray family known to all as the Pete Murrays.

A daily paper was something never heard of at this time but even Embro had a little weekly paper known as the Embro Courier. A much loved paper known as the Montreal Family Herald and the Woodstock weekly Sentinel Review were starting to make their appearance.

The crowds waiting for the mail filled every inch of standing room in each country store. The school children from the local schools formed a big part of the crowd and also farmers with sleighs coming from the chopping mills or blacksmith shops were always pleased to give the children going in their direction a ride as near as possible to their homes. Many were the jokes of all colours that passed around those crowds.

At this time was the beginning of the harvest excursions to the Western Provinces and most of the local young men, before getting married and settling down, thought that they would like to have the adventure of going on one of the harvest excursions.

One of these young men was Lant Youngs, one of Bill Vannatter's best drivers from the Embro livery stable, and when he arrived home, his boss, Bill Vannatter, said, "Say, Lant, you are a good story teller, I'll just give you a five dollar bill if someday, when the crowd is big at Harrington, you can tell a yarn, be it either false or true, that will stump that liar of a Black Jack McKenzie, we are all still trying to outdo him but so far he calls everyone's bluff."

So the next trip around the crowd was unusually large and they were giving Lant Youngs a bug welcome back. Someone suggested that he tell some of his exciting experiences.

Cautiously, he began, "I had one unusual experience when I worked for this rancher and had never gone into this particular town about a few miles west in the foothills. I had often heard them tell of the huge tree that was so large that the road was built right through the centre of the hollow tree. The farmer sold a load of hay to one of the livery stables and asked me load it up and deliver it. In the first place, I put on too big a load of hay and when I came to this big tree, I realized I was in danger of hitting my head as I drove in, so I dug a hole and got down so I wouldn't hit my head, got my blacksnake whip and put the horses on a dead run. I just got inside the tree when my heart nearly stopped for there was another load of hay coming in from the other side."

Everyone's eyes were wide open with excitement as Lant stopped to let it take effect, but before he could go on, a roar of laughter came from Black Jack McKenzie, as he clapped his hands on his knees and said, "Don't you recognize me? I was the guy on the other load of hay."

So the result was Lant Youngs couldn't collect his five dollars.

Mr Ed Barkley was a prominent village gardener, who prided himself on taking once a week to Stratford market the highest quality vegetables, berries, and every kind of fruit in season. Like most villagers he kept a horse, two cows and fattened a pig for their supply of meat. Mr. Barkley's pig was continually breaking out and meddling with his precious garden so he told some of the listeners he had just finished building a pen of good strong cedar rails four feet high which would surely hold that bally pig. But every day he came for the mail he very discouragely said he didn't know what to do as the pig wasn't old enough to be butchered and

he wanted to keep it to get bigger, and that it must be jumping over the top because it couldn't possibly get through the fence. Day after day he came to the store saying he had added one more rail around the top and he had a big measuring rule to show just how high the fence was. As the word got around how high the pig could jump, the village cronies would go up and sit around for hours to see it perform this unusual feat. Apparently it knew what the old cronies wanted and just wouldn't co-operate so, near midnight, thinking that Mr. Barkley had conquered the wayward pig, they would go home to get some rest. As usual when morning came, the pig was happily rooting out Mr. Barkley's beets that he hoped to exhibit at Stratford's fall fair.

Finally, in desperation, Mr. Barkley drove to Medina to his father-in-law's home and secretly borrowed his bulldog, arriving home after dark. Somehow feeling that the village cronies were having quite a bit of sport at his expense, he got one of his best pals as a witness and the two of them went to sleep in the cow barn after fastening the dog in a clump of bushes. After some time, they heard the pig make a little squeal and the dog made a terrific noise. The men rushed out in time to see two half-grown giggling boys lift the rail fence and help the pig out underneath.

Mr. Barkley was a tall lithe young man and he soon had the culprits by the coat collars. He also had a good sense of humour and was willing to forgive and forget and laugh with the rest of the villagers.

John McKay, the village blacksmith, always tried to have on hand a nice big pile of hard dry wood which he took in trade when it was green as pay on farmers' blacksmith bills, but he knew someone was helping himself to his good wood and he thought he would set a trap. There were two John McKays, John Senior and John Junior. John Junior, without consulting his father, took two nice dry maple blocks of wood off the pile, used a good sized bit to bore a hole in each one, and filled the holes with gunpowder and put a wooden plug in the outside of the hole to serve two purposes, one to keep the gunpowder in and the other to conceal the hole. He didn't tell his father and it was well he didn't because in all likelihood, he would have gotten into trouble.

A day or so passed and young John saw that his loaded sticks of wood were gone. He confided in me that he had a sleepless night because he had only a suspicion as to where the sticks had gone and also perhaps he had put too much explosive in the holes.

It was the blacksmith's habit to get up early and work at repair jobs before the local farmers brought in horses to be shod. The next morning a man came down the street carrying an armful of pieces of the cook stove. Young John made an excuse to get out of sight while Mr. McKay senior and the citizen with the broken stove began discussing the situation and each one was at a loss to know whatever would make the stove blow up. Luckily, they had all been in bed and had escaped injury.

"Jean," he said, "had washed the kitchen curtains a couple of days earlier and she will sure have to do them all over again as it just put ashes and soot all over the four sides of the room and scared them out of a year's growth."

It took the blacksmith most of the forenoon to repair the stove and the man said he was out of work, which the blacksmith already knew, and wouldn't be able to pay for getting the stove fixed. John was still feeling too guilty to tell what he knew but it turned out to be an expensive episode. Mr. McKay senior suggested that if there had been a thunder storm, he would have thought perhaps the chimney had been struck with lightning.

Zorra is noted for its lovely old stone houses, most of them built in the late 1870's. The last two to be built were built in 1882 and 1883. Some of the massive brick houses were also appearing. The Campbell home north of Brooksdale was built in 1883 and there were many

others all over the township. At each home the community was invited to attend a big house-warming. Mr. James McKay, "Framer" did the carpenter work in many of the new homes in the area. He had a plan that the ladies liked. He would take the bottom half of the upstairs window sash and let the top half down in the frame so that the ladies could wash the new windows without having to use a ladder to reach them.

The story goes that his son George, the chap who rode down the hill on a hand sleigh, frightening the Conway horses which ran away with the dressed pigs, by this time had become grown-up enough to help his father during midsummer holidays. On a hot day in August, he sent young George to arrange window sashes for the Conway women to wash the upstairs windows in their new home. One of the Conway daughters had the misfortune to break a pane of glass and they felt this was really a major calamity as Mr. Conway would be quite upset at such a thing happening. The three daughters had enough money to hire George to walk nine miles to Stratford to buy a new pane of glass and have it put in the sash before Mr. Conway would come in for the evening meal. It was a hot day in harvest time and the farmers were busy working in the harvest fields. George walked all the way to Stratford, purchased the pane of glass, and was nearing home when he came by the Thistle farms. Mr. Thistle came out of his drive on one farm and called to George, "Boy, you look tired and hot, I am going down with these things I have in the democrat to the boys who are harvesting on the next farm so you might as well have a ride."

When George got out of the democrat and kindly offered to open the gate for Mr. Thistle, he tripped and struck the pane of glass, shattering it. The defeated and frustrated George had to go home carrying the broken pieces to prove that he had at least tried. George had a droll sense of humour and it was laughable to hear him tell about the episode.

Christmas season is always a gala affair, but particularly so in the 1880's as the children of the settlers of the 1840's and 1850's were now grown young men and women and some of the older ones were married and perhaps had one or two children of their own to take back to the old homestead for Christmas.

Every farm home tried to be pretty well self-sufficient and they all had some lovely fat ducks, a few geese, and even some good big fat roosters, and in some cases they would kill a nice young pig, weighing alive from forty to fifty pounds and stuff it the same as you would geese, ducks or chickens. The Christmas tables in every home were loaded with an abundance of lovely things to eat. With plenty of good maple sugar they had candy in abundance, which was second to none. The travelling was done by team and sleigh with some bran sacks full of straw for seats, while horse blankets hung on the big stakes of the wood rack kept the cold winds off the young mother and little children on a drive of three or four miles to see doting and warm-hearted grandparents and also the unmarried aunts and uncles.

After dinner the young people in all the area would gather together to skate on the various mill ponds and sleigh ride down the many hills. No one got very far from home but on Christmas night many homes had little parties where the kitchen table would be shoved in the corner beside the big old stove to leave room enough for one or two sets for a square dance. Since the folks then were just as musical as any people, they always had someone who could play the violin, mouth organ, and some could make good music on the jews harp. Three or four miles would be quite a distance from home and the young people courted the neighbours sons and daughters, and why not, there were none any better anywhere.

In many cases the young school teacher, perhaps from a little distance came to teach and boarded in some home in the community. Very often her training was a big help in many ways and she was expected to be a community leader. She usually married on the farmer's sons and stayed put for life. From such a home came the noted Rev. Fred Kerr. He started his life away from home as a public school teacher and studied, saved his money, and with a

minimum of help from home, was on his way to be one of Zorra's many famous ministers of the Christian church.

After the Christmas season, the weather settled in to be cold and steady and the old folks had a statement which they quoted, "As the days begin to lengthen, the cold begins to strengthen," but the yearly routine went steadily on.

Everyone had wood to cut and pile for sale in the season ahead and in many respects the virgin forest of massive trees was a blessing in disguise as the settler had logs with which to build his first house, and also barns for his small herd of cattle, a span of oxen, and also his first team of horses. The forest provided him and his family with a source of good fuel. Since wood of various lengths was the source of heat in the local towns and cities, it was a source of ready income. The carpenters invariably liked to get out the timber with which they planned to build the modern new barns. Also a market for choice square timber began to develop as the railroads were coming to the area.

One of the winter social functions was a valentine party held in the school or church. Lunch often took the form of a box social with the girls providing the box of goodies. An old shoe box was usually the base and it was filled with samples of all the best of tasty tit-bits, enough for two, and the outside was beautifully decorated with fancy Christmas paper, ribbons, and bows of all the colours of the rainbow.

The owners of the boxes were supposedly kept a deep dark secret, and since many of the boys wanted to know which belonged to the new school teacher, many were the devices used to find out which one was the much sought-after box. The auctioneer in many cases, was the community wit, or sometimes a full-fledged auctioneer, and when the bidding began he would hold up one of the best decorated boxes and slyly shout, "Bill, this is the one you are looking for. How much do you start it away?"

If Bill bid on it the other boys would think it was the new school teachers' all right as he had taken her home from prayer meeting the previous week and up and up went the bidding. Pretty Jean MacDonald had many admirers and her box would go sometimes for the fabulous sum of two dollars. One young fourteen year old boy would bid twenty-five cents on so many of the boxes that the auctioneer surmised that that was the extent of his spending and money when one of the little girls' boxes came up, he knocked it down to the young Lochinvar with twenty-five cents. All in all it was a happy occasion.

Spring would soon be in the offing as the sun's rays were getting strong near the first of March and the more aggressive farmers were getting their maple syrup equipment whipped into shape. In those early days the spiles were usually home-made. Those who had a good wood bit for their breast drill or a brace and bit, would bore a hole in the maple tree and make a spile out of a piece of large elderberry bush stock by hollowing the pith out of the centre with a Jack knife whittling the end to fit the hole. Many who wished to be a little more modern bought some tin spiles made in Kenny White's tin smith shop in Harrington. He made them out of strong tin any length the farmer wished. They were made of pieces of tapered tin, shaped on a round piece of iron. At the small end they were reinforced by a small piece of tin so that you could tap it with a wooden mallet. For the big end the blacksmith made a special chisel groove under the hole of the tree into which you gently tapped the tin spile.

For buckets to catch the sap the first method used was to cut down a basswood tree approximately eighteen inches in diameter and it into two foot lengths and split it down the middle as neatly as possible. Many were the clever axemen who could do it very neatly as green basswood was lovely stuff with which to work. The next move was to take a tool called the adze, and with it and a sharp axe hollow out the basswood pieces into little troughs which would hold a nice lot of sap. Like all other schemes, some were better at it than others. After the syrup season was over they were carefully turned upside down and leaned against the tree

and left there till next season. They seemed to last for years. One of these ambitious farmers who was preparing syrup equipment was Mr. John Matheson, who lived two and a half miles from the village. One day with a cane in hand, a clay pipe in his mouth, and a large eleven quart basket, in the other hand, filled with spiles to be repaired at the tin shop owned by Kenneth White, a bosom friend, he started to walk to the village, hoping perhaps to get a ride on someone's sleigh, but none happened along. As he was leisurely wending his way along whom should he meet but Tom McKeel, the village wag, who appeared to be in a hurry.

"Hi, Tom, what's the hurry?"

Tom replied, "I really haven't time to talk, John."

"Ah, come on, Tom, tell me the biggest lie you ever told."

"John, please, I'm in a terrible hurry," he called and started off on a run talking back as he ran, "I am on my way for Dr. McLeod. Ken White is dead."

John Matheson received the Jolt of his life, so much so that he put his pipe in his pocket and started off toward the village at a real smart pace, thinking to himself, "Kennie, my old buddy, gone!"

Kenneth's tinsmith shop was pretty well past the main places of business and so upset was congenial John, that he gave only a stiff nod to everyone he met. As he went by, all his friends looked after him, wondering what might be bothering John. As he came to the tin shop he seemed to think it would be a sacrilege to carry a basket of spiles into the shop so he hid it under the outside porch, took off his hat, and tried to open the door without making a sound.

Since the sun was shining so brightly on the snow, the interior of the shop seemed rather dark. Since he had opened the door so silently, no one heard him come in and it took him a minute to get his bearings. When he did, he shook his head and rubbed his hand across his eyes as though he would rub off some strange sight for there, before him, was his supposedly dead buddy, sitting half-asleep in a comfortable old captain's chair, with his feet up on his work bench.

John, for a minute, just stood there trying to put the pieces together. Well, he had asked McKeel for the biggest lie he had ever told and apparently he had got what he asked for, in double measure. To make his presence known he feigned a cough, and when Kenneth turned around he sensed something different in his friend John.

"Hi, old boy, you look as if you've seen a ghost," he greeted him.

"Yes," John said, "I did."

Before Kenneth asked for particulars, Minnie, his daughter, came in carrying the mail. Kenneth picked up a letter he had been looking for and said, "John, I was hoping you might drop in. They have something new in the way of making syrup, called a sap pan. There are three sizes, holding sixty gallons, forty and thirty gallons of sap. You make a fireplace called an arch out of stones, with a smoke pipe on one end and a place to build a fire in the other end. It is supposed to make syrup as clean as honey."

"Well," John answered, "if it does any better than our old eighty gallon cauldron kettle, it will do pretty good."

Kenneth continued, "I bought one already made up and have ordered some heavy sheet metal with which to make more. It is to come by train to Zorra station tomorrow. If some of your boys would take the team and go for the shipment, I could make you a new pan just for the cost of the material. Also they have a new kind of iron spile that will hold a wooden bucket and I have been making some new tin sap pails for samples."

Once again, the settlers of Zorra had taken a step forward.

The John Murray "Mason" family had a very large woodlot and built a special syrup shanty and the sap was kept very clean. The first boiling was very clear, so much so that the ladies on Stratford market objected and said that it was not pure maple syrup and had been adulterated with white sugar. The argument got hotter and hotter and someone called in the food inspector. When he came, the police had to make a way through the crowd of angry customers in order to get to the counter where Mrs. Murray was offering her syrup for sale. She had some in a sauce dish so that the customers could sample it. When the young inspector tasted it, he asked, "How much of this syrup have you with you today?"

Mrs. Murray replied, "I have six gallons, sir."

With a twinkle in his eye, he said "Well, I will just take it all for myself." Then he burst out laughing and turned to the crowd of angry city women and said, "You don't know good syrup when you see it."

It turned out to be a blessing in disguise as on the next few Saturdays while the season lasted, the crowd was nearly as large trying to buy some of Mrs. Murray's syrup.

From then on the quality of maple syrup became better, but like all things of nature, the sap ran just as well on Sunday as any other day, but many of the old folks felt it was a sin to work at syrup on Sunday.

It so happened that I had an opportunity to call at my old friend's home hoping to hear more community folklore. This time, Mrs. Clark was home alone and I could see that she had something funny to tell me so I purposely guided the conversation hoping to hear it.

Presently she began, "By some things that were discussed the last day you were here, I presume that you know that as a family we are opposed to doing unnecessary farm work on Sunday and making syrup was always one of those chores we let wait until Monday morning. For some unknown reason, the sap always seem to run better on Sunday than any other day, and the quality is better than usual this year. Angus does love to get back in that woods and work at making syrup, and if I do say so myself, he makes a grand job of it. Last Sunday morning, Angus, for some unknown reason, had many little excuses for hurrying the rest of us off to church but he was unable to go with us. When we got home from church, he had dinner all ready for the family but he, himself, had had his dinner and very graciously offered to put our horse away. As he did not return, one of the children looked out the back door and exclaimed, "There is Daddy going back towards the bush with the horse, old Queenie, on the stone boat."

Angus couldn't bear to see his precious sap run out on the ground. I hadn't the heart to spoil the fun so made myself scarce but soon I heard some whispers in the hall and first one and then another of our growing family tip-toed out the back door and disappeared in the direction of woods. I was wondering why no one showed up for the evening meal which we usually have early on Sunday evening. The sun was sinking low in the west and it was one of those beautiful evenings when you knew spring was here. Presently I could see old Queenie's white face coming from the woods with the stone boat and a milk can, which, I presumed, carried some of the precious syrup, all the more precious because it had been made for the first time on Sunday. The young folk were running and chasing one another like a bunch of young spring lambs. Everything was going along just fine until Angus was about to take the can of precious syrup off the stone boat. I was getting ready to go out to welcome the home-coming family, but before I got out to where they could see me, something happened and the can of precious syrup upset and was quickly disappearing in the mud and melting snow.

First, one child said, "Oh, Daddy, isn't it too bad!"

Then Mamie said, "We shouldn't have made syrup on Sunday."

Young Allister, who always could put the cap on things, declared, "Yes, Mr. McLaughlin said in his sermon, 'Remember the Sabbath to keep it hole!'"

I too, felt sorry to see the lovely syrup running all over the back yard but the look on poor Angus' face compensated for any loss of the syrup and I had to hide behind the kitchen door so that none of my family could see me laugh. I was certain there would be no more syrup made on Sunday.

Again, Mrs. Clarke laughed, "We had another funny thing happen a few nights back when the young folks came home from a taffy party at school. They said, "Daddy is staying back in the woods boiling syrup awfully late, isn't he Mother?"

"Why, no," I said, "your Dad is in bed."

When he heard the conversation his head was soon peaking around the corner.

Allister said, "Dad, someone is making our syrup back in the woods."

Dad soon had his work clothes on and was ready to start for the woods. As usual young Allister, like his shadow, was close behind, and as they entered the woods, Dad said to him, "Let us play Indian and hide behind the trees, one at a time, till we get up as close as we can before they see us."

Soon they could see six local young fellows gathered around the big old iron kettle, tasting the syrup and licking their lips.

One chap, apparently the leader, said, "It is ready to come off."

He was about to give instructions as to how to proceed when Angus spoke up, "That's fine, boys, we'll just give you a hand."

The young scamps were so startled, they stampeded like so many scared rabbits, and ran just as fast, falling headlong as they tripped over obstacles in their flight.

Mr. Clarke really meant it as a joke and would gladly have given the boys a feed of his finished product. Although Mr. Clarke knew all the boys involved, he never divulged their names."

One could not travel across West Zorra either in imagination or in plain reality without being impressed with the powerful influence of the Christian church. The township was served almost exclusively by two denominations, namely, the Presbyterian Church of Canada and the Methodist Church of Canada, and one congregation of the Congregational Church. There were Roman Catholic congregations outside the boundaries of the township which some of the people attended.

The Presbyterian Church was thought to be the church which the Scottish settlers took from Scotland with them, and the Methodist church was the one the English settlers took up patterned after the Wesleyan church in England. The Congregational church was a splinter group of the Presbyterians dating from a separation many years before in Scotland.

The settlers had left to get away from the oppression of the wealthy land-lords of Scotland and England who were shoving the humble peasants out of homes in order to have room to have the fox hunts.

The parents of the old country communities dearly loved their sons and daughters who, in most cases¹ married and decided to come to the new land of hope across the sea in America: Canada and the United States.

The story is told of one of the McKay families who were among the first of the settlers of Zorra. Mrs. McKay's parents were upset about the young couple coming to Canada and in one of the first letters sent home to Scotland the young Mrs. McKay said, "Oh, Mother, it is truly a land flowing with milk and honey."

The noble self-sacrificing circuit riders of the Methodist church were the first Christian preachers to go from home to home and they started holding church services in private homes. When the area became pretty well settled, they started erecting churches. The first Presbyterian log church was built about 1860. The schools and churches were built about the same time showing how our early settlement felt that Christian character was the most solid foundation on which to build our new land.

The Minister was held in very great respect, or one could say individually revered as a holy person that could do no wrong. Because of his superior education his opinion usually represented the final word in community standards of living, but in reality they were just as down to earth in thinking as most people, often with a keen sense of humor. Some secretly harbored a little of the old Scottish superstitions.

The noted Reverend Donald Gordon, who for many years was Minister of Harrington Presbyterian Church, lived in the church Manse, one half mile from the centre of the little hamlet. In his younger days at a university in Scotland, he was a professional boxer and the young fry were a little afraid of him. There were three hotels in Harrington, besides several secret outlets where one could get their liquor after hours. Sometimes in the evenings when things were pretty rough, he was known to visit one or more of the hotels and chase all the young drinkers out and preach Hellfire and Brimstone religion to them.

It so happened that a lovely young schoolteacher married a handsome and husky young chap, who had become an alcoholic and came home drunk once and beat his lovely young wife unmercifully. Since many of the young men admired her immensely they decided that he should be publicly punished and in a group discussion, they decided he should be tarred and feathered and forthwith made plans to do just that.

One young chap agreed to get the feathers so he plucked one or two of his mother's young geese, since at that time, it was a common habit for people to pick geese twice, once alive just to take all the outside feathers and the wing feathers, and leave the downy short feathers to be plucked at the time of dressing for market. The downy feathers were used for the making of pillows and eiderdown comforters.

Someone else brought along a small iron kettle and others rigged up some sort of tripod on which to hang the kettle. Others acquired a quantity pine tar and put it in the kettle and when the 'so-called' culprit showed up at the saloon, he was captured and stripped to the waist. A little fire was set under the kettle with the tar in it, to thin it up, and like most young reckless people, they were not careful enough to keep it from getting too warm. Then, they started to paint on one coat of tar while also starting to lay on the feathers. They had his head ever so much bigger than normal and used some long wing feathers to make horns above his eyebrows. To make matters worse the self-styled prosecutors all got drunk themselves for the occasion. The noise of hollering and loud talk was heard over at the Manse, and when Rev. Donald Gordon couldn't stand it any longer, he started on foot at a good pace towards the village. There was a swamp area where the limbs of trees threw their shade across the road and there were some clouds in the sky, with the moon shining brightly in the spaces between about the time that Rev. Donald Gordon hurried towards the village. The punished young man was given his release and was running home, when Rev. Mr. Gordon met him head-on in one of the brightly moonlit spots in the swamp. The dear old gentle-man got the scare of his life; he just turned around and hurried back home and when he opened the door hurriedly and entered, his wife saw there was something radically wrong and said, "Donald, dear, you look strange," but Mr. Gordon was so worked up, that he couldn't explain.

He just started pulling the chairs into a semi-circle as they did for prayers and he led in prayer. After a few moments, they stood up and he collected his wits and quietly said, "I have met Satan in person coming out of the village tonight."

While he was trying to explain, a knock came to the door and there stood the tarred and feathered young man's lovely young bride panting for breath as she had been running for help. Immediately Rev. Gordon assumed his usual self-composure and sent one of his sons hurrying over to Dr. Hugh McLeod's for his assistance. The fact that the tarred and feathered young man hurried so hard to make home caused the fumes of the pine tar to increase to the point where it was difficult for him to breathe and the result was that they had a hard time to save his life.

As we have already stated, the minister of the church was sort of held in a hero worship position and was thought to be above anything that might be called worldly. It so happened that living next door to the manse was Sullivan Ross, the champion bagpiper of Canada. Rev. Donald Gordon and his neighbour were very special friends and every Thursday evening, Rev. Gordon had a standing invitation to visit with Mr. Ross. He didn't go up by way of the township road, but went through the field behind a clump of young trees lest some of the gossiping neighbours would know that such sinful things were taking place. Once up there the skirl of pipes were soon heard by the neighbours. On nice evenings, the pipes could be heard for some few miles in all directions and people wondered how Mr. Ross could play continuously for so long. What they didn't know was that Rev. Donald Gordon was himself a clever piper and that he and Mr. Ross would take turns and parade up and down on a path behind the house and young Mr. Wm. Ross would sit out in front of the house on guard and if any of the neighbours were about to come calling he would give the alarm.

Mr. Gordon was noted for preaching long sermons and during the busy season, many of his farm people found it hard to stay at attention for possibly an hour. One hot Sunday in harvest time some were dozing. He called in a terribly loud voice, "Wheat, \$2.00 a bushel in Stratford." The loud voice in itself brought everyone up with a jolt, then he calmly said, "I thought that might interest you." He stayed at the Harrington Church until he was quite elderly and made that his last charge.

The next minister to occupy the pulpit was Rev. McLaughlin. He was a middle-aged man with four in his family, He was an excellent speaker and had a droll sense of humor. One winter day, two farmers from the northwest point of the township went to Woodstock with a large load of charcoal. It was of light consistency and they had built a large box right on a sleigh. The box was eight feet high, eight feet wide and fourteen feet long. They sold the charcoal for tempering steel at a foundry in Woodstock and on the way home they called at one or two hotels and became quite drunk. As they proceeded homeward they came by the minister's home which was right by a township road intersection with a creek and a bridge. They got arguing over which road they would take to go home and the horses were almost on the bridge when one of the men grabbed one of the lines, gave it a pull, and pulled horses and sleigh over the corner of the bridge and upset the big sleigh box upside down in the creek. They were in a terrible predicament and the minister and his sons came out to help them as well as some other people that had come along. It was winter evening and darkness soon closed in. Both of the farmers in charge were gathering up their belongings. They were of Irish decent and quite broad was their accent. One said to the other, "I can't find the clevis, did you see the clevis?" The other chap put his hand up to his mouth and whispered, "Never mind the clevis! Where is Charlie Munro?"

Charlie Munro's was the last hotel at which they had called and their bottle was missing. Though they searched diligently they finally had to give up, and as they were leaving they were thanking Mr. McLaughlin for his help saying, "If you ever get into a mess like this, let us know and we will help you." That of course, brought a big laugh from the helpers at Mr. McLaughlin's expense.

It so happened that Mrs. McLaughlin had a nice neighbour girl as a helper with the house work, and as is often the case, she had a local boy friend who, when on his way to call on her the following evening, found the whiskey bottle [Charlie Munroe]. It so happened that Mrs. McLaughlin opened the door and in a very mysterious way the young Lochinvar asked the minister if he could see him privately. When he stepped out on the verandah, Joe showed him the terrible thing he had found. Of course the minister immediately recognized it as the missing "Charlie Munroe". He took the bottle and examined it and cautiously said, "I don't think it belongs to any of our congregation." Joe, wanting to be very holy when calling on the minister's hired girl said, "Oh, Mr. McLaughlin, how can you be sure?"

"Well, now, Joe, my boy, if it had belonged to any of our group, it would surely be empty."

Musical instruments at that time were few and far between. The first churches to have an organ were the Embro churches and all the other smaller groups had a "Presenter" to lead in the singing and he used a tuning fork to get started off on the right note. The first one I can remember was Mr. James Martin and as his assistant, John Murray. Some of the older folk thought it was not religious to have an organ in the church and would walk for miles to attend a church which did not have an organ.

The rural church was the centre of the greater part of the social life of the community and what could be more romantic than to be able to walk leisurely home with the lovely young girl next door after attending the evening church service or mid-week prayer meeting. As the families became better off financially, the young Lochinvars could have a nice horse and buggy.

As we let our minds wander back in time, we see how successful were the homes the young people established. A quaint story is told how that a Miss Mary McKay was keeping house for 45 year old bachelor uncle. She informed him one day, "Bill, I am getting married, I think you should get right out now and get married."

There happened to be a neighbour girl he knew well, but big bashful Bill never seemed to have the courage to pop the vital question. However, under pressure from his niece and the fear of being left alone, he dressed up in his Sunday clothes and went over to the neighbour's farm.

The head of the house insisted that in busy seasons, all hands, including the ladies of the house, should help and the task at hand was to hoe turnips. When Bill arrived the younger folk got suspicious that something strange was in the wind as Bill was dressed up on a workday. The father had been trying to sell Bill a cow and he immediately brought up the subject, "Well, Bill, boy, she has calved and is doing well." Poor Bill couldn't do much more than stammer out a few answers to questions. The son sensed the situation and manoeuvred the old gentleman down toward the other end of the field leaving bashful Bill to talk with one of his sisters. After stamping from one big foot to the other and pitifully trying to carry on a conversation¹ finally he blurted out, "I come o'er – I come o'er – to see – to see – to see - - would you ha' me? I got a house and a fire to y'r use." And so another successful home had its beginnings.

And from these humble beginnings the township of West Zorra through her sons and daughters as they went out to take their place in society, gave to the world a strength of Christian character wherever they made their abode.