

LOOKING BACK OVER THE CENTURY

A yellowed page from The Evening Telegram, dated April 8, 1922, has been lent to this newspaper by Mrs. Thos. Griffith of Gifford, and that 45-year-old paper records a story about happenings in this district 130 years ago. It is a story of the rebellion of 1837, and while some of the story has been recorded by historians, and is known to some persons around here, many will read for the first time about that period of political unrest and of the part residents of this district played in it. The Evening Telegram's

(Continued on Page 10)

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(Continued from Page 1)

DOWN OLD-TIME YONGE ST. WITH PIKE AND MUSKET

An Incident of the Rebellion of 1837

In 1903 there was erected in the Necropolis, Toronto, by the friends and sympathizers of Samuel Lount and Peter Matthews, a gray granite monument, surmounted by a broken column, on which is inscribed the following:—

"Samuel Lount was the eldest son of the late Gabriel Lount, an Englishman who emigrated to Pennsylvania in the middle of the eighteenth century, and of Philadelphia Hughes, his wife, a Quakeress. He emigrated to Upper Canada and settled near Newmarket, in the County of York, in 1811. In 1834 he represented the County of Simcoe in Upper Canada Legislature and served two years. In 1836 he became a candidate again and was defeated by corrupt practices used by his political opponents. A petition of eight thousand people asked for a reprieve which was refused. He lived a patriot and died for popular rights."

Executed On 12th April

"There is reason to believe that Lount could have purchased his life by putting the Government in possession of evidence that might have tended to place others in the position he occupied, but he resolutely refused to accept it on such terms."

"In the spring of 1838, executions for high treason commenced in Canada."

"On the 12th of April, 1838, Samuel Lount and Peter Matthews, the first of the victims were executed at Toronto."

"The militia who went to the succor of the Government was not generally a more warlike body of men than the insurgents under Lount."

"A description of a party as given to the writer by an eyewitness who came down from the north would answer with a very slight variation for the militia of any other part of the province."

A Motley "Army"

"A number of persons collected at Bradford on Monday or Tuesday, not one-third of whom had arms of any kind, and many of those who were armed had nothing better than pitchforks, rusty swords, dilapidated guns and newly manufactured pikes, with an occasional bayonet on the end of a pole."

"These persons without the least authority of law set about a disarming process, depriving

every one who refused to join, them or whom they chose to suspect of disloyalty of his arms. Powder was taken from stores wherever found without the least ceremony and without payment."

"On Thursday a final march from Bradford for Toronto was commenced, the number of men being nearly 500, including 150 Indians, with painted faces and savage looks."

Marching To Toronto

"At Holland Landing some pikes which probably belonged to Lount were secured. In their triumphant march these grotesque looking militiamen made a prisoner of every man who did not give such an account of himself as they deemed satisfactory. Each prisoner as he was taken was tied to a rope, and when Toronto was reached, a string of 50 prisoners, all fastened together, were marched in. Fearing an ambush these recruits did not venture to march through the oak ridges in the night, and a smoke being seen led to the conclusion that Toronto was in flames. McLeod's tavern beyond the ridges was taken possession of, as well as several other houses in the vicinity."

They Were Hungry

"In a neighboring store all kinds of provisions and clothing that could be obtained were unceremoniously seized. At the tavern there was a regular scramble for food, and cake-baking and bacon-frying were going on upon a wholesale scale. Next morning several who had no arms, and others who were frightened, returned to their homes. Each man wore a pink ribbon on his arm to distinguish him from the rebels. Many joined from compulsion, and a larger number, including some who had been at Montgomery's, suddenly turned loyalists when they found the fortunes of the insurrection had become desperate. When they marched into Toronto they were about as motley a collection as it would be possible to conceive."

"Such was the Canadian Militia in 1837 at a time when Sir F. B. Head had sent all the regular troops out of the province."

Samuel Lount's Part

"These extracts from Lindsey's 'Life and Times of William Lyon Mackenzie,' go to show or tell the part taken by Samuel Lount in the Rebellion of 1837, but little is recorded or written by Lindsey of the attempts made by Samuel Lount to keep out of the clutches of the Government and save himself from being executed after that fateful day at Montgomery's tavern. On December 7th, 1837, Sir Francis Bond Head issued a proclamation offering a reward of five hundred pounds for the apprehension of David Gibson, Samuel Lount, Jesse Lloyd or Silas Fletcher. So Samuel Lount had good reason to keep out of the way of the Government militia."

John Davis came to Canada from Sligo county, Ireland, with his father and mother, about the year 1822. He was then a boy, about 19 years of age."

His father had been a soldier in the British army for forty years, and received a grant of 100 acres from the Government of Upper Canada, being lot 9, con. 13, township of West Gwillimbury. There was no bridge across the Holland river at this time and a raft was used to cross the river."

From Holland Landing

Samuel Lount was at this time doing blacksmith work at Holland Landing, and John was one of his customers, and in this way a friendship grew up that was genuine, although

this way a friendship grew up that was genuine, although John Davis was a Tory and Samuel Lount a Liberal."

When Samuel Lount started down Yonge street, about December 1st, 1837, with his ninety followers from Holland Landing (called the pike men), John Davis was chopping cord wood on his father's Crown grant of land, the said lot 9, con. 13, township of West Gwillimbury. Reports of what the rebels were doing at Toronto were continually being brought up Yonge street to Bradford. As a result of these reports his father, James Davis, told him he had better go and help the Government or Mackenzie would soon be in control of the Government."

John Davis walked to Bradford and two days later was marching down Yonge street in what is described as "the first Canadian militia." He was armed with an old musket given to him by his father."

Lount A Prisoner

"When they had travelled a short distance down Yonge street from Holland Landing some of this band of militia wanted to go and burn the village of Sharon, as some of the rebels were supposed to come from Sharon and vicinity. Others, including John Davis, objected to this kind of warfare, with the result that Sharon was not burnt nor molested. When they arrived at Toronto the rebellion was over, and Lount, with several others, were being held as prisoners in the old Toronto jail, where the Toronto Street Railway offices now stand. John Davis was placed as one of the guards of these prisoners, and he was sorry for the position he found his friend Samuel Lount in."

The Escape

"One night when he was on guard, John Davis fell asleep (on purpose) and Lount escaped. Lount's horse had been brought to Toronto by friends and hidden near the Don River. Lount got the horse and made his way back up the country, and hid in the swamp near where John Davis had been cutting cord-wood. Davis was soon discharged and sent home, and started again at his wood-chopping job, and for about six weeks kept Lount supplied with food. He had a hard task, as his father, James Davis, being a loyalist, would have given Lount's hiding place away had he known where he was hiding. One of John's methods of getting food to Lount was taking more lunch

for dinner than he could eat when going to chop wood."

Suspicion Aroused

"One day his father grew suspicious, and followed John to where he was chopping wood. Lount got none of the dinner that day. John kept on chopping until it began to get dark, when he put his axe on his shoulder and started for home. His father followed, but had not gone far when he lost John, or John lost his father purposely. John then went back to the swamp and told Lount what had happened. Lount then wanted to leave his hiding place and try and get to the United States, as others of his friends had managed to do. That night Davis took Lount in a northerly direction through swamp and timber to one of Lount's friends at a place about three and one-half miles north-east from where Cookstown now stands. Lount thought he could make his way by himself from here, so Davis bid him good-bye, with his well wishes. John went back home and received a "calling down" from his father."

Indian Treachery

A short time afterwards Lount tried to go farther on his way towards the United States. He hired an Indian of a tribe who were then living on Snake Island, and of whom Jim Snake was "chief." This Indian, for a sum of money, was to have taken Lount in a southeasterly direction along the shore of Lake Simcoe. Instead of doing this, the Indian showed his meanness and treachery by taking Lount to the Government military camp near the mouth of the Holland River, where he was again captured."

Samuel Lount was taken to Toronto and tried, and was executed April 12th, 1838, and there was none more sorry and bitter about this execution than John Davis. John Davis died March 5th, 1903, at the age of 101 years, and was buried at Coulson's Cemetery, a few miles north of Bradford. Many times during his late years he would say and give as his opinion that if Sam Lount had stayed in hiding as Jesse Lloyd and others had done, he would not have been executed. And Samuel Lount died true to his friends, and would not tell on those who had helped him to keep out of hands of the Government, even though he might have saved his life by so doing."

Relics Are Kept

Relics of happenings of those times of 1837 are still in possession of the Davis family, being a swivel link for a logging chain, made by Samuel Lount when he was blacksmithing at Holland Landing, and an old rifle which was given to John Davis by Sir Francis Bond Head, when he arrived at Toronto, after marching from Bradford to defeat William Lyon Mackenzie. William H. Davis, 244 Margueretta street, is a son of the fine old pioneer whose portrait drawn by Owen Staples, is from a much-faded photograph which is the only existing portrait of the pioneer."

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