



Coldstream Meetinghouse - 1859

Newsletter

CANADIAN FRIENDS HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

60 LOWTHER AVENUE, TORONTO, ONTARIO M5R 1C7

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Visit of Isaac Stephenson to
Upper Canada in 1824
by Carson Bushell

During the 1820s many acknowledged ministers of the Society of Friends from England and the United States made 'visitations' to Meetings in Upper Canada. Many of them travelled to the most remote settlements where members of the Society were pioneering. Men and women of undoubted sincerity they made these trips under great hardship experiencing dangers and discomforts for which travel in their own country had hardly prepared them.

The influence they had upon thought in the meetings they visited was probably quite substantial. The part they may have played in fostering the conflicting doctrines that led to the Separation of 1828 is explored by Dr. Dorland in his 'History of the Society of Friends in Canada'. The religious impact they made was, however, not their only contribution to society. Many of them wrote of their travels and their accounts are of historical importance.

Among those who have left us informative accounts of their penetration into the 'wild lands' of Upper Canada are Phoebe Roberts¹, Isaac Stephenson², and Thomas Shillitoe³.

Stephenson's accounts of his travels are preserved in letters he wrote to his wife, Hannah. In 1818 he visited Meetings in New York State and eastern Ontario. The letter quoted below gives an account of his trip in 1824 from York through to Yarmouth and Norwich and back to Buffalo from whence it was mailed to his home at Stockton-on-Tees. While the letter minimizes the hardships of the journey, the entries in minute books regarding the visit are masterpieces of



understatement. A bare entry that Isaac Stevenson attended meeting on the 8th of 9th mo. 1824 with a certificate from Darlington Monthly Meeting in Minutes of Norwich Monthly Meeting gives the visit no more importance than it would one from a neighbouring Meeting.

The letter is dated at Ancaster, 9 mo. 16th 1824 Upper Canada.

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1. An account of Phoebe Roberts religious visit to Upper Canada from Pennsylvania in 1821-2 prepared from her diary by Leslie R. Gray was published in Ontario History, Ontario Historical Society, 1950.
 2. Two of Stevenson's letters including the one presented here are in the Special Collections Library, Quaker Records and Documents, University of Western Ontario.
 3. Shillitoe's trip is recorded in his two volume work, Journal of Thomas Shillitoe, London, 1839
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My dearly beloved Hannah.

My last to thee was finished and left at York in this province the 3rd inst. but as the communication between that place and New York does not appear to be regular it appears quite uncertain by what vessel the same might be sent. The meeting at York was held in a Methodist meeting house and was both large and satisfactory. On the 4th we proceeded on our way toward a small settlement of Friends in this township and after travelling about 50 miles we took up our quarters at a poor Inn at Flamborough West.¹ Next morning we rode 10 miles to Wilsons settlement and attended a meeting in a private house with friends and others which was I believe an entwining opportunity.² In the afternoon of that day we had an appointed meeting with some of the Mohawk Indians at their village (a marginal note locates this as 14 miles from Wilsons settlement) on the Grand River in an Episcopal Church, so called, which has been

erected there for them and where a priest officiated in the morning;³ ----- We lodged at an Inn 2 miles off ----. On the 6th we went forward abt 26 miles to Pine Street and quartered at Wm. Cromwell's:⁴ he is I think a valuable minister, brother to Hannah Field, lately come to settle in this province. This journey occupied nearly the whole of 2nd day part or most of the road being very difficult and bad wood-road.⁵ On 3rd day we had a meeting in W.C.'s house with friends and others, in which I believe best help was graciously afforded.⁶ On the afternoon of that day we travelled to Norwich abt 12 miles mostly through the woods and very bad.⁷ We attempted to go under a tree which was bent across the road, but after breaking the supports to the roof of our carriage we had to retreat and go another way. On 4th day we attended the Monthly Meeting at Norwich where a man (identified in margin as Peter Lawson)⁸ resides who has twice occupied the station of a minister in our society, and still continues to preach altho the sanction of society is withdrawn. He is said to be fluent, his natural abilities being great. We did not see him as he was confined by indisposition to his house. The monthly meeting was pretty large and exercising. ---- On 5th day we went abt 36 miles much of the road being through the woods and had to Talbot Street, where John Pound and his wife entertained us kindly, yet for want of comfortable lodging and other accommodation I passed nearly a sleepless night fearing to take away with me some unwelcome companions or loathsome disease.⁹ Next morning we had a meeting with friends and others ----- That afternoon we went abt 16 miles to John Kipp's at Yarmouth, the road being very difficult.¹⁰ On 7th day we rested, the friends being remote it took considerable time to extend general notice. Our accomodation was much better; we feasted on wild pidgeons and watermelons, and our lodging was comparatively good. ---- This journey to Yarmouth and back to Norwich was performed in a farmer's waggon, that being much more suitable for the roads than

our carriage, which was left behind us to be repaired, --- On first day morning the meeting house was crowded, and my mind was I trust in degree clothed both for awakening instructive and consolatory labour. That afternoon we returned to our kind friends, John Pound and his wife where we passed another interesting night as to bodily feeling; we arose about $\frac{1}{2}$ past four o'clock but had to wait abt 2 hours for our companions Fredk Stover and Hugh Webster of Norwich who slept at Elijah Pound's.¹¹ Nearly the whole of 2nd day was spent in travelling to Norwich. We dined in the woods on bread, cheese and bramble-berries, the latter being plentiful. I felt inclined to held a meeting with friends and others on 3rd day morning at Norwich which was appointed. We were very comfortably entertained at Sarah Webster's when we were at Norwich before; but at F. Stover's request we now went to his house where we were at least equally well and kindly entertained. Altho my bed was very good on 2nd day night, yet my mind was involved in deep and bitter conflict for of late my faith seemed easily to fail --- I wrestled with the Lord in prayer that my ministry might be pure and unmi xed and that I might in no degree desire or receive honour of man. --- The meeting on 3rd day morning was pretty well attended by friends and I trust the exercise of my Gift tended to stir up the pure mind by way of remembrance, yet my concern for the neighbours continued, and at my request another meeting was appointed in the evening which was large. It proved a relieving opportunity to me, so that I was permitted to leave the place comfortably yesterday morning - Wm. Cromwell and Fredk Stover accompanied us on an extremely bad road abt 14 miles, when we got to good road and Fredk left us.¹² ----- I feel often very thoughtful at being detained so long in this province, but don't see how I could have avoided it; friends being scattered over such an extensive country and the roads so exceedingly bad. I consider it a favour to have escaped thus far without bodily injury, except for the bites of mosquitoes, the effect of which have been rather trying and occasioned me some sleepless nights, but at

present I am much relieved therefrom. The first settlers in the different parts of this woody country, many of whom are friends have had, and some of them still have many hardships to endure. The cutting down of the Trees and burning them is exceedingly laborious; but they are in general exceedingly hardy and seem content with their allotment. We saw a pine tree abt 100 ft. high and three ft in diamr cut down by 2 men and a boy in 14 minutes. Government has given farms of 200 acres each to many and some friends. John and Elijah Pound's farms were thus obtained and they have, I think, about 40 acres each nearly cleared (as they term it) tho' still the stumps and some trees remain on it, but by good tilling it seems they can obtain abt 20 or 25 bushel of wheat from an acre. They have but few accomodations; the first night we slapt at J. Pound's we had no candle, not even to go to bed by, and our small bedroom had no door to it. But on first day night after we got there, John Pound's wife melted some grease in a frying pan and put in by spoonful into a pewter or lead mold and this made a candle which rended us a little more comfortable.

From the best information we have been able to obtain the following is a correct list of the Meetings and Members of our Society in Upper Canada. In Lower Canada there is but one Meeting, viz Farnham.-----.

Adclphus Town	Members	64	Minister O. Elder, Sarah Barker
West Lake		250	J. Noxon 1 Elders Jacob and Anna Cronk Eli Noxon 3. These belong to Green Point
Green Point		37	Saml Walton and Joshua Levins: Ministers Jonathan Bowerman, R. Burlingham, Ruth Christie
Monthly Meetg West Lake			
Kingston		18	no Minister or elder
Ameliasburg		100	Aaron White, elder
Cold Creek		37	no minister or elder
Leeds		50	Otis Smith minister
Pelham Mo. Meetg. Pelham ... Black Creek		194 88	Wm Shotwell, Ann Taylor, Ministers ---

Yonge St	232	Margt Bownell Minister, Thos and Martha Linville, Amos and Martha Armitage, Henry Bownell 5 elders.
Yonge St. Mo		
Meetg. Queen St...	62	---
Whitechurch	130	Martha Wiidifield Minister, Henry and Phebe Widdifield elders.
Uxbridge	78	---
Pickering	141	Nichs Brown, John Haight ministers Josh Webster, elder.
Norwich Mo.		
Meetg. Norwich	190	Fredk Stover, Anne Gilham elders
Pine Street ...	57	Wm Cromwell minister, Anne Cornell elder
Talbot Street ..	25	No minister or elders
Yarmouth.....	102	Sarah Haight minister
Ancaster ...	21	No minister or elder

Besides these there are a few members at Earnest Town but as we were told they held no meeting and we were stretching fortune we did not visit them. It is probable the whole no is 1900.

The above was the first half of the letter. A few sentences have been omitted as indicated by ----- . The second part of the letter was dated Buffalo, NY 9mo 21. For the sake of space it is considerably abbreviated below.

My dearly beloved.

We were favoured with a safe and short passage across the River Niagara this afternoon arriving here 2 miles from the ferry at Black Rock ... (he then refers to a letter he had received from his wife and the health of his father whom he fears may 'put off the mortal clothing'. He mentions receipt of other letters including one from E. Robson¹³)--- On the afternoon of 5th day the 16th instant our horse being dull we only travelled 3 miles and lodged at an Inn. --- That day we travelled 35 miles to Pelham, abt 14 miles from Niagara Falls where I expected to hear their roar but the state of the air was not favourable for conveying sound. We lodged at Isaac Wilson's¹⁴; (he then mentions a meeting in a Methodist meeting house abt 2 miles from the falls). The country is so covered with wood and the trees so lofty that we did not see the cloud

of mist which arises from them until we were within abt 5 or 6 miles of them and we did not distinctly hear the sound at a greater distance than 2 or 3 miles --- We proceeded to the meeting house at Lundy's Lane, which was pretty largely attended and I believe many serious persons were present-----After meeting we drove to the Niagara Falls Hotel very near that amazing cataract but it was so dark I could see but little of it. I forgot to mention that sometime before we got to the meeting house the air was charged with mist arising from the falls. In the night I slept very little, the loud roar, the shaking of the bed, the clattering of the door and window kept me awake; and abt sunrise I arose and went on the balcony to view the falls.--- The River Niagara comes out of Lake Erie and runs into Lake Ontario, it seems generally above the falls to be at least a mile wide --- about halfway between the two lakes and about a mile above the falls the bed of it is extremely rocky and seems to be a gradual slope. This part is called the Rapids, the water is so exceedingly rough that no boat could possibly be kept from being knocked to pieces ----- The principal falls is on the Canadian side, is something in the form of a horseshoe and is calculated to be $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile in extent, the water is said to fall from the top of the rock to the surface of the water below 155 feet and the depth of water in the gully is supposed to be 170 feet; joining to this horseshoe there is a woody island^{and} at the other end of it is the falls on the American side which appears nearly in a straight line said to be 300 yards wide, 165 feet in height----. We walked almost into the edge of the water near the edge of the top of the rock on the Canadian side. And we descended a perpendicular winding staircase 102 steps at the bottom of which we were a great height above the surface of the water below; we did not attempt to go between the falling water and the rock as it seems some have done. Our clothes were very wet all the time we were near the falls-----the whole is probably one of the most wonderful natural curiosities to be seen in any part of the Globe.-----Abt 12

friends and one young woman, a Methodist all of Pelham were at the meeting at Lundy's Lane. (He then refers to a meeting at Black Creek and his arrival at Danl Pound's.¹⁵ He then mentions plans for meetings in New York State and a Quarterly Meeting to be held in Scipio. He concludes) --- This afternoon my heart was tendered as I rode, in anticipating our meeting again in my native land if Divine Wisdom should permit it, and the gratitude which I hope we should then feel if my recollections of this arduous engagement were peaceful. My mind is cheered with hope that some pure sweet enjoyment of each other's company may be granted us and our beloved children --- I salute thee my dearly beloved and with the tenderest love for thee and my dear children, our beloved mother and all our brothers and sisters, and love to all our dear relations and friends.

I remain thy truly affectionate

ISAAC STEPHENSON

Above letter addressed to Isaac Stephenson
 Stockton-on-Tees
 Postmark Buffalo NY Sept 21
 Stamped SHIP LETTER LIVERPOOL

The letter quoted above was viewed at University of Western Ontario, courtesy of Mrs. Elsie V. Cutler and Mr. Harold Zavitz of the Society of Friends and of Mr. Edward Phelps, Librarian, Special Collections Library.

1. Ancaster was an indulged meeting under Norwich Meeting after 1819.
2. Wilson's Settlement was probably present St. George in S. Dumfries Twp. named after Obediah Wilson who built a house there in 1814, on Lot 7, Concession 3. This location checks well with mileages given.
3. Stephenson fared better than Shillitoe who was not allowed to hold a meeting in the church but had to use a school house.
4. Pine St. Meeting House was on lot 13, Conc 9 of Norwich Twp just west of Otterville. Wm. Cromwell was a miller and prominent figure in early history of this area. The fact that he apparently reached Pine St. before Norwich might indicate that Stephenson travelled South from the Mohawk Village to Fredericksburg (Delhi) then up the Cole Road to Pine St.
6. No reason is given why Meeting was held in Cromwell's house. Pine St. Meeting House was built before this.
7. Norwich Meeting House a mile north of present village of Norwich was only about five miles away following a straight line. By Road they probably travelled to Lossings Mill (Lot 2 Conc 7, Norwich) then north to Hilliker's Mill (Lot 2 Conc 5 Norwich) then east and north to Meeting House on Lossing's farm (Lot 8 Conc 3 Norwich). This would be about twelve miles.
8. Peter Lossing, a miller by trade with his brother-in-law Peter DeLong had purchased 15,000 acres in Norwich Twp. and pioneered the Norwich Settlement. Peter and most of the first settlers had come from Dutchess County in New York State. As a community leader his dealings with Government were sometimes suspect in the eyes of the Society. There was controversy among members when action of Lossings resulted in the jailing of a member of the community.
9. The Pounds were a pioneer family from Pelham Meeting. John and Elijah were brothers, sons of Daniel and Prudence Pound of Bertie Twp. The first Malahide Meeting was held in the home of George Laur. Later a meeting house was built. In 1822 this was an indulged meeting under Norwich.
10. Yarmouth (Sparta) in Yarmouth Twp. Elgin Co. Early accounts all speak of the bad roads between Norwich and Yarmouth but an amazing amount of travel must have been done between the two Meetings, some meetings alternating between the two communities.
11. Stover and Webster were pioneer names in the Norwich settlement. Frederick Stover was a son of Adam Stover. They were large landowners in the area. There are still members of this family in the Norwich area.
12. There is nothing to indicate their road here but it may have been from Fredericksburg to York on the Grand River and then on toward Pelham.
13. He mentions that he has not heard of Elizabeth Rob on's arrival. She was in America by this time, however. She was in Norwich by the end of 1824 and from there addressed an epistle to upper Canada Half Year Meeting which is in the Records at U. Western Ont.
14. Isaac Wilson and wife Phebe were living in Thorold region.
15. This would probably be the father of John, Elijah and David Pound who are mentioned above as pioneers of the Malahide Meeting. The father lived in Bertie where he died in 1834 at the age of 83.

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SOCIETY OF FRIENDS CONFIRM PLANS TO RENOVATE HISTORIC MEETING HOUSE

NEWMARKET - The Yonge St. Meeting of the Society of Friends has decided to make extensive renovations to its historic Quaker Meeting House. However, both exterior and interior appearance of the original structure will remain basically unaltered.

According to David Newlands, one of twenty members of the Meeting and leader of the committee planning the renovations, a modern basement will be built under the framemeeting house.

The Meeting house was built in 1810, was the first place of worship north of Toronto (York), and is one of the oldest surviving buildings in York Region.

Last July Mr. Newlands announced the renovations were being considered, but the final decision was only made recently.

Included in the planned renovations will be installation of plumbing, electrical wiring and central heating.

The new basement, a poured concrete structure, will contain a large all-purpose room, a kitchenette, toilet facilities, an area for the central heating unit, and storage space.

The changes will allow the Meeting to use the building year-round -- it is presently closed all winter, and provide room for its other activities such as First Day School (Sunday School).

Architect Napier Simpson Jr., one of Canada's best restoration specialists, is designing the changes and overseeing the project, which is expected to cost about \$60,000.

To accomplish the renovation, the meeting house, which now sits on stone pillars, will be skidded away from its present location, the foundation built, and then the building replaced.

The building is basically sound, said Mr. Newlands, and little restoration will have to be carried out in this area outside the installation of the new services.

Membership Renewal Fees are now due
for 1974:

Fees:	Personal, Family, Friends Meetings	\$5.00
	Senior Citizen, Student	2.00
	Life	\$50.00