

THE FREEMANS OF FREEMAN'S FARM, SARATOGA, N.Y.

Those of us who are familiar with the early history of our country will recall the many years of intermittent warfare between the French settled along the St. Lawrence River and the Great Lakes on the one hand, and the English colonies scattered along the Atlantic seaboard. We will recall that peace of a kind developed after the Battle of the Plains of Abraham and the subsequent occupation of Montreal and the forts along Lake Champlain.

And with the Peace of 1763 the broad no man's land which lay between the contending parties was now opened to settlement. Eager settlers flocked into Vermont, the Lake Champlain region, the Upper Hudson Valley and westward along the Mohawk River in New York Province. Many large blocks of land were already owned by prominent persons. New areas yet unsettled were divided into Towns (Townships to us) to accommodate families, relatives and friends who came from the old settlements to the south.

The Saratoga area, which should be of great interest to the early settlers of Ernesttown Township, had been granted to the Livingstons and the Schuylers as early as 1684. But settlement had been slow and haphazard. The frequent raids of the French and Indians from the Montreal area were a deterrent. The Schenectady settlement had been destroyed in 1689; Deerfield, in northern Massachusetts, was set afire in 1704; and the saw and grist mills at Saratoga had been destroyed in 1745.

But, now that peace had arrived, and such dangers were no more, groups of settlers from Dutchess County began to arrive in the Saratoga area in 1763. Many of these families, who made the slow journey up the Hudson River to take lands in the Saratoga District, became Loyalist refugees, or Tories, when the American Revolution began. Many of these families, when the Revolution had been won, and lost, became the first settlers in Ernesttown Township. These were SNIDER, ROSE, AMEY, BURLEY, STORMS, HICKS, WILLIAMS, ROGERS, MCPHERSON, SCOUT, MCDUGAL, CONCKLIN, ROBINS, AND FREEMAN. There likely were others, but these are enough to prove my point.

All these families had suffered losses of property, indignities and bodily harm because of their beliefs. It might be possible to furnish details of each family's sufferings. I wish to call your attention to the train of miseries, almost beyond belief, as you may well agree, namely the tragedy which beset the Freeman family.

John Freeman and his sister, Dorcas, wife of John Burley, were offshoots of a Connecticut family which had taken land in Dutchess County early in the eighteenth century. Their names appear in the tax lists of the Crum Elbow region of that county which lies east of Poughkeepsie, during the period 1750 to 1762, and likely later. In the year 1766 these two families removed to the Saratoga District. Here John, by then married and father of a growing family, became a farmer of the Schuyler family land and occupied the land, later to be known as Freeman's Farm, on which the first battle of Saratoga was fought on September 19th, 1777.

During the eleven years which elapsed after John Freeman obtained a lease to one hundred and fifty acres in the Stillwater area of Saratoga, until the invasion of the region by General Burgoyne, the Freemans must have been busy. Between fifty and sixty acres of land had been cleared; crops had been planted; a log house and barn had been erected and a road and bridges had been laid out. Besides planting crops and stocking the farm with the usual animals, the Freemans had become parents to nine growing children.

This was the situation on Freeman's Farm in the early summer of 1777, as the army of General Burgoyne advanced up Lake Champlain, and reduced Fort Ticonderoga. By July and August, the army had reached the Upper Hudson River and was preparing to cross the river to Saratoga village. Hundreds of men from the area flocked to join the Royal Standard. Among these was John Freeman. Because of his knowledge of the country, he was employed as a guide, although at the same time he was aware of his responsibility to his wife and nine children. His son, Thomas, a boy of twelve years of age, became a soldier in Jessup's King's Loyal Americans, a Loyalist regiment, on August 6th. He continued so until the day after the Battle of Freeman's Farm, when he was discharged as unfit for further duty. Is it any wonder that he was so discharged? He had seen his mother and brothers and sisters make their escape to Burgoyne's camp above Saratoga. He had been present at the Battle on 19th September, and had seen the soldiers trampling the crops which he had aided in sowing; he saw their animals slaughtered in the fields to feed the army. Perhaps he observed some one slaughter his pet dog for food. No wonder he was declared unfit for service on the following day.

As Burgoyne's Army proceeded southward they encountered the rebel forces and a day-long battle was fought in the fields lying beside John Freeman's house. The American version of the battle is told in the "Story of Old Saratoga" by J.H. Brandow, M.A., published in 1901 which has this description of the battle:

"Burgoyne formed his line of battle in the woods on the north side of a clearing owned by one Isaac (sic) Freeman. It contained 12 or 15 acres and extended east and west about sixty rods. This clearing, called Freeman's Farm, was the principal scene of the action of the 19th...Fraser having formed his junction with Burgoyne, the chief struggle was now on Freeman's clearing and in the open woods just to the west. The Americans attacked the British furiously and drove them into the woods on the north side, where they rallied, and charging with bayonets drove the Americans back across the same field into the cover of the woods to the south, where they in turn recovered themselves and hurled the redcoats back with great slaughter. Morgan's sharpshooters, posted in trees, did terrible execution among the British officers as well as the rank and file. Both sides exhibited the most desperate valor, and bloody hand to hand contests were frequent, especially about the British battery, which was taken and retaken at every charge, but the Americans, having no horses nor matches could neither get them

off the field nor fire them. Gates, having been persuaded to reinforce the tired patriots, about five o'clock sent out Learned's brigade, which renewed the fight with such spirit that Burgoyne, finding himself on the perilous edge of defeat, sent to his left for reinforcements. Riedesel responded promptly and reaching the field about dusk, struck the American right, folded it back and posted Pausch's battery on the hill south of Freeman's cottage, which was served with such efficiency that the patriots were obliged to give way and retire, leaving the British in possession of the field of battle."

Proof that the British had won the first battle of Saratoga and remained on the field is upheld by an entry on the last page of Major Jessup's Field Book in the Provincial Archives at Toronto, which states:

"Camp at Freeman's House 25 September, 1777".

Then came the second battle, followed by the retirement of the British army to Saratoga. Burgoyne was faced with a problem. His army was surrounded by an enemy, like a pack of wolves waiting for the wounded animal to die; His line of communication with his base in far-off Quebec was maintained with difficulty, and provisions were almost unattainable. The army before Fort Stanwix had been forced to retire to Montreal. Aid from New York did not materialize. Moreover, October was half gone, and the hint of the oncoming northern winter was in the air. Burgoyne's next move was capitulation, which took place on October 17th.

The General was faced with another problem--what to do with the many men, residents of the American colonies, who had joined the Royal Standard. He was aware of the dangers facing them, if they returned to their homes and families. It was thus included in the terms of capitulation that all persons of this category should proceed to Canada. Thus, as is noted in Lieut. Henry Simmons' Journal, the terms of the capitulation at Saratoga allowed

"it was agreed that the Volunteer(s), Sailors, artificers, batone men must go to Canada."

Actually, there was nothing else to do. Their property had already been confiscated.

Lieut. Simmons' report of his journey to Canada in 1777 will give some idea of the problems arising during this 200 mile journey from Saratoga to St. John, Quebec. Leaving Saratoga on October 17th, they marched, arriving at Lake George on the 20th. Then a three day boat ride to Ticonderoga. The next day they proceeded by batteau about 8 miles, when a raw north wind with snow and rain forced them to seek shelter in the woods for three days and nights. On the 29th they resumed their journey to Split Rock where they remained until November 1st. Then a south wind aided them in arriving in St. John, Quebec, on the 3rd. Seventeen days to cover roughly 190 miles.

Where was the Freeman family during this black period in their history? We know not, nor can we do more than assume. We know that the son, Thomas, had been a soldier in Jessup's Loyal Americans from August to 20th September, when he was discharged as unfit for duty. His father, John Freeman, earlier had been a guide to the army was enrolled a soldier in the same regiment on October 15th, likely done to protect him as a soldier. The next record, appearing in the Haldimand papers states that John Freeman died February 10th, 1778, on the banks of Lake Champlain. A petition by the son, Thomas, to be quoted later, states that there were nine children, 5 boys and 4 girls, of whom only three survived. One military record states that there were ten children. It is possible that the tenth was born during this period.

In view of the above it is, therefore, evident that John Freeman, his wife, and his six (or was it seven?) children, died of an epidemic, said to be small pox, in January and February, 1778, somewhere along the shores of Lake Champlain. The three children who survived the disease, Thomas, aged 12 years, and his two younger sisters, Mary and Dorcas, in the course of a few months, had met the four hosemen of the Apocalypse--conquest, slaughter, famine and death. That they survived and made their way to Canada is evident.

Nothing further is known of their activities until June of the same year (1778) when the two girls are mentioned in a list of the dependents of the King's Loyal Americans. It records that:

"John Freeman's Children:

2 children over 10 years of age received 2 rations.
Himself, his wife and 7 children died in Canada.

Total dependents 62

2 of Freeman's children gone.

60

The foregoing is a copy of what was delivered in a little after that date. Since which time Freeman's two children have left my Corps, and one of them lives with Captain Finn, and the other with another Person.

Montreal, 11 June, 1778."

Mary, the elder daughter, became the wife of Lewis Mosher, a loyalist soldier in Jessup's Rangers. He had known the Freemans in Saratoga before the war began. It is possible that Mary was his second wife. They settled in 1784 at South River, Quebec, but finally removed to Lansdowne Township in Leeds County. Their nine children drew land as Loyalist's children.

Dorcas. Nothing is known of her subsequent story until her marriage in Montreal, in 1784, to John Scott. After marriage it is recorded that they settled on a private seigneurie. Nothing further is known of them, except that John Scott was a Loyalist soldier.

Nor is there much to be known of the son, Thomas Freeman, following the disaster of the banks of Lake Champlain, at least not until 1780. It is evident, however, that some of the senior officers in the British Army, such as Brig.-Gen. de Riedesel, Major Freeman, Captain Simeon Covell, took an interest in his welfare. He served several years as a Volunteer, which often times, led to a commission in the army. In fact, in October, 1783, his name was proposed as ensign in a new regiment which was proposed for service. He did serve as a member of Jessup's Loyal Rangers, posted at the two forts on the Yamaska River. He remained in service until the disbandment of the regiment on 24th Dec., 1783. In January of that year his name appears with these notations:

Born in America, age 18, 5'6" in height.

In December, 1781, he presented a petition addressed to the Commander-in-Chief, General Haldimand. This petition, in part, reads as follows:

"The Humble Memorial of Thomas Freeman Volunteer Humbly Sheweth That your memorialist's fathere was one of the first that embraced the opportunity of joining general Burgoyne's army in the year 1777 and was in consequence of his approved Loyalty, employed during that Campaign as a guide.

The engagement of the 19th of September 1777, was on his Father's Farm, commonly called Freeman's Farm, and in his cornfields the advance Corps under Brigadier General Fraser encamped from that day to the 8th of October following.--The devastation and havock attendant on such occasions not only destroyed our standing crops, which can be notified by every officer of that corps was great, but also deprived us of all our livestock and every other moveable property; the sole dependance of a numerous and loyal Family whose Father at the moment was contending for the rights of his Sovereign - - General Fraser was an ocular witness of the irrecoverable losses your Memorialists Father sustained - - promised every indemnification at the close of the Campaign, and assured him his zeal and mistaken fidelity should be amply rewarded, as can be proved by British Officers now in this Province, but the fatal chance of war terminated that gallant officer's existence and the succeeding misfortunes of your memorialist's family, all of which with painful weight falls upon him and his sisters; to whom can they, with such drearing hope raise their feeble voices--or with such propriety; as to your Excellency.

(Signed) Thomas Freeman

This petition was then sent to General Riedesel, with the following letter, which adds an additional appeal.

Montreal Nov. 25th, 1781.

Sir:

In consequence of your doing me the honour to promise any assistance in your power for relieving my distress when I had the honour of waiting on you, Sir, at Montreal last month I take the liberty of sending you the enclosed Memorial for his Excellency the Commander-in-Chief, whom I have presumed to address with all the humility I am capable of, and that my misfortunes demand; if it is not too presumptuous I would humbly entreat you, Sir, to present by letter, my petition to his Excellency as it will then acquire a weight and consequence my obscurity could not otherwise obtain--your being one of the principal commanders of the troops that formed General Burgoyne's Army, and returning to this Province, after having been one of the eye witnesses of the destruction of my father's property, at Freeman's Farm, unavoidably underwent, has emboldened me to implore your aid and firmly to hope the distresses of fatherless children will plead the excuse of my freedom and induce you to follow those feelings of generosity you possess.

Mr Freeman who was Brigadier General Fraser's Major of Brigade I understand has the honour of being your Aide de Camp that gentleman, no doubt will, do that justice to my father's memory to, confirm every thing I have taken the liberty to assert respecting General Fraser and the great losses my father sustained in the absolute destruction of all his property; and I am convinced he cannot forget my father's being constantly employed by that General Officer and the Promises he made my father, of ample recompence for all his sufferings.

On December 5th, 1781, from Sorel, General Riedesel wrote a letter to General Haldimand, the Commander-in-Chief, to which he attached Thomas Freeman's petition, as well as Freeman's letter to Riedesel. In his letter Riedesel confirmed that John Freeman had been employed as stated, and "that General Burgoyne promised the rewards for his service and as a reimbursement for his losses; which by the unfortunate issue of the Campaign /77 were entirely frustrated and General Burgoyne disabled from fulfilling these intentions, which no man could more justly deserve, not only from his zealous conduct and services but also in compensation of the depredations his property suffered during the encampment of our own troops on his farm for many days."

What response, if any, General Haldimand made to this petition, is, at present, unknown. Thomas Freeman was discharged from the Service on Dec. 24, 1783, following which, being unmarried, he settled at South River, Quebec.

He later married Elizabeth, whose surname is unknown. It is recorded that he located on lot 34 in the 3rd concession of Augusta Township, just east of Brockville. By 1796 the Freeman family was living in Ernesttown, where on Feb. 25, three of his young children were baptized at Bath by the Rev. John Langhorn. Shortly thereafter Thomas and his young family removed to Loughborough Township, Frontenac County. To this date there are still descendants in this area. Many of them know nothing of the family's tribulations in those early days, nor are they interested.

Thomas, the son of John Freeman, made a claim for losses which was presented to the Commission in 1788. His statement at that time repeated much that appeared in his petition to General Haldimand. However, there were two lists of losses, one evidently prepared by Mary Freeman, wife of Lewis Mosher, and the other of Thomas Freeman. As they furnish interesting details, I repeat them here.

	£	S	D
"To 195 acres of land, 60 acres under improvement, with food log house and barn	200	0	0
15 acres of wheat and rye	20	0	0
6 acres of Indian corn	12	0	0
4 acres of oats	4	0	0
half an acre of close	1	0	0
half an acre of potatoes	2	0	0
13 store sheep at ten shillings each	6	10	0
15 store hogs	18	0	0
4 two year old cattle	12	0	0
3 spring calves	2	8	0
10 tun of hay	20	0	0
Set of farming tools	5	0	0
1 large iron pot	1	10	0
2 small iron pots	0	16	0
1 frying pan	0	8	0
Total	315	12	0

Witnesses--Luis Mosher, Mary Mosher

List appended to Thomas Freeman's Claim.

	£	S	D
150 acres of land	150	0	0
2 yoke of oxen	10	0	0
1 horse	11	0	0
One ox cart	5	0	0
One Waggon	9	7	6
Four cows	12	0	0
Three three-year-old heifers	6	0	0
38 sheep at 5/.	9	10	0
Ten hogs 20/ a piece	10	0	0
Two chains at £ 1-10/ a piece	3	0	0
One stay and harness	4	0	0
Three Hows	0	15	0
2 axes	0	10	0
One bed and bedding	5	0	0
One gun	1	0	0
15 Bushels of wheat sown	15	0	0
10 Acres of corn	25	0	0
Halifax Currency	£ 337	2	6

(Sd.) Thomas Freeman

Although the Mosher list totalled over 315 pounds, and the Freeman claim totalled over 337 pounds, the Commission allowed 177 pounds, 10 shillings, with actual payment of 80 pounds. This was payment for the total losses of a family, several vouchers for farm animals slaughtered for feeding Burgoyne's Army, which vouchers were lost at the time of John Freeman's death, the deaths of nine of a family of twelve, and the emotional scars suffered by the three orphans, in their encounter with the four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.

I realize that this paper has been too long, and that we all need a change. But I beg a minute to bring to your attention a phase of Loyalism which should be corrected. I hope to cover this subject in the future. I refer to the fact that the names of Loyalists who died before the settlement of Ontario in 1784 will not be found on the U.E. List.

Mary Mosher, realizing that her father's name was not on the U.E. List, petitioned the Executive Council on 26th August, 1835, asking that her father's name be inserted on the List. This the Council refused to do, stating that:

"All U.E. Loyalists must have come into and resided in the Province, and adding that widows of U.E. Loyalists have no claim to land"

It should be noted that at that time she was a widow.

May I add that we owe a debt to the many Loyalists who never reached the "Promised Land".

It should also be noted that the Reed Index of Sons and Daughters of U.E. Loyalists who drew 200 acres of land by O.C. (Order in Council), with date of grant, contains the following list of the children of Thomas Freeman. Each son received the grant on petition after he had reached the age of 21. The same applied to daughters if 21 or if already married.

Thomas Freeman of Ernesttown:

dau. Clarinda, married 26 July 1807 Peter Brown. O.C. 3 March 1809.
 son John of Ernesttown. O.C. 12 Nov. 1811
 dau. Evalena. O.C. 12 Nov. 1811.
 son Edward of Loughborough. O.C. 11 Feb. 1819.
 son Simeon of Loughborough. O.C. 19 May 1819.
 dau. Elizabeth, married John VanLuvan of Loughborough. O.C. 24 Feb. 1820.
 son Mathew of Loughborough. O.C. 15 Dec. 1832.
 dau. Hannah, married John Edgworth of Loughborough. O.C. 8 Nov. 1832
 dau. Mary, married George Williams, (son of Albert, U.E.) of Loughborough.
 (He had been baptized 21 Dec., 1791. O.C. 2 July 1829.)

John Freeman's daughter Mary, who married Lewis Mosher is recorded in the same index with these children:

Lewis Mosher of Lansdown, married Mary, daughter of John Freeman.
 (She O.C. 26 Aug. 1835)
 dau. Phoebe, married Frederick Bush of Town of Kingston. O.C. 4 July 1807.
 dau. Elizabeth, married Henry Treaky of Yonge. O.C. 30 Oct. 1810.
 dau. Sarah, married Ashel Keys of Lansdowne. O.C. 11 Nov. 1815
 dau. Fanny, married Peter LaRue of Leeds. O.C. 18 Sept. 1821.
 dau. Mary, married John McDonald of Yonge. O.C. 12 Nov. 1817.
 son John of Kingston, Marine, married 20 Nov. 1828, Caroline F. Munro.
 (O.C. 17 Sept. 1823)
 son Lewis of Wolfe Island. O.C. 28 Oct. 1835.
 son Nicholas of Wolfe Island. O.C. 8 Dec. 1835.
 son Reuben of Wolfe Island. O.C. 7 Oct. 1830.

It would appear that the other daughter, Dorcas, who married John Scott in Montreal in 1784, removed to the upper St. Lawrence River. The record of her family is also given, as follows:

John Scott of Augusta:

son William of Augusta. O.C. 5 Nov. 1799 and 14 July 1819.
 son John of Augusta, married Mary, daughter of Hugh Cameron of Cornwall. His
 O.C. 6 Dec. 1832.
 dau. Margaret, married Orrin Sherwood of Augusta. O.C. 3 May 1832.
 son David of Augusta Not. Rec. 11 Dec., 1810, married Henrietta.