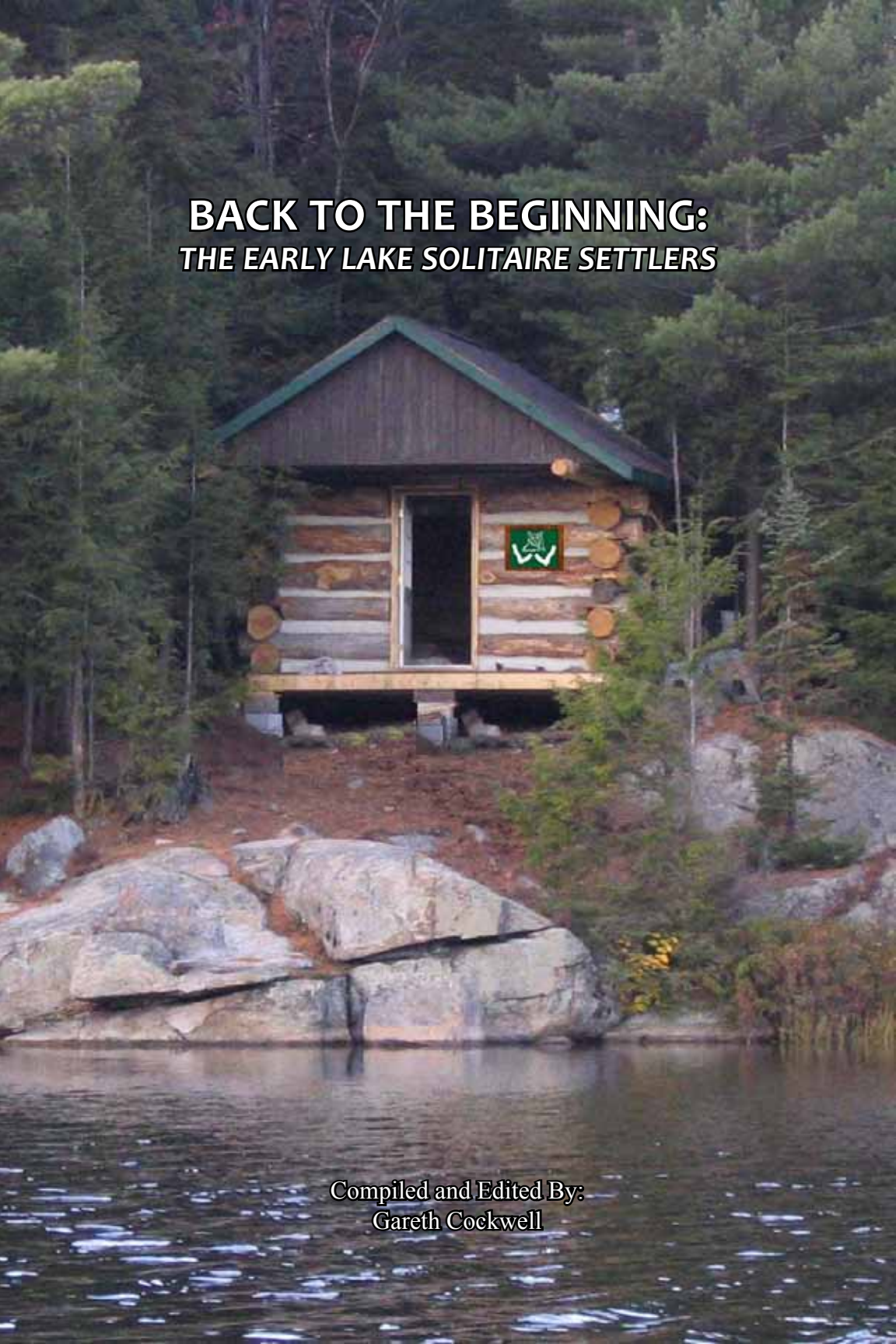
BACK TO THE BEGINNING:
THE EARLY LAKE SOLITAIRE SETTLERS



Compiled and Edited By:
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This book is dedicated to the early settlers who courageously sought to establish homesteads north of the Severn River in Ontario, Canada, and the individuals who have extended our fascination with nature, from the northern forests to the southern oceans, and beyond.

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Introductory Note

Let us give thanks for the water and the forests,
without which life would not be possible.
– Aboriginal Prayer

This is the fourth in a series of seven wilderness books set in and around the Limberlost Forest & Wildlife Reserve, which adjoins the world famous Algonquin Provincial Park and surrounds the J. Albert Bauer Provincial Park.

The first three books trace the experiences of three siblings and the lessons they learnt about the wonders of nature from an experienced woodsman, while they were growing up on the pristine wilderness reserve.

Each chapter of the first three books chronicles their exploration of a different area of the reserve to study various aspects of the wilderness under Joe MacTeer's patient tutelage. By following their exploration routes, visitors to the reserve are able to re-live the adventures Teda, Colmac and Thegar experienced. The first of these three books was written to interest children between their sixth to tenth years, the second for those who are ten to fifteen years of

age, and the third for individuals with a deeper interest in the wonders of nature.

This fourth book is an historical novel, as it steps back one-hundred and fifty years in time to record the arrival of immigrants from Europe to settle the lands, which today comprise the Limberlost Forest & Wildlife Reserve. Each chapter describes the work and travails of the settlers who began arriving in the area in the 1870's. It is therefore possible for readers to also retrace their footsteps, and visit the places described.

It was nearly twenty years ago when we, as a family, started to take a deep interest in the lives of the settlers who built their cabins on Lake Solitaire, the largest of the twenty lakes on the reserve.

Since then, we have tried to experience different aspects of their daily lives by, amongst other ways: relying on the natural drainage and land features to find our way through the wilderness, building log cabins to provide shelter for our visitors, constructing trails with picks, shovels and rock hammers, gathering leeks in the spring, berries in the summer and mushrooms during wet periods, and cutting our own firewood to heat our homes. All of this has helped us to better understand the challenges that the settlers faced and the courage they needed to survive.

We also searched for information on the lives of the settlers before they left England, which generally failed to prepare them for a life in the northern wilderness of Canada. We then attempted to weave the knowledge we gathered

into a story that describes the journey and adventures of a fictional character, Samuel MacTeer, from the dock lands of London, England, to the shores of Lake Solitaire.

We purposely chose to craft a positive and uplifting tale of his and the other settlers' lives, as there is much to be learnt from those who persevered and were eventually successful. Their legacy has certainly guided and inspired us in our enjoyment of the reserve.

To assist readers who are familiar with the current names of the places described in this book, we have used them rather than the ones they were given in the late 1800's. For example: Clear Lake is now known as Lake Solitaire; Little Clear Lake became Clear Lake; Green Lake became Buck Lake; Hardup Lake became Poverty Lake; Dog Lake became Spaniel Lake; Lake of Many Bays became Lake of Bays; Algonquin Park Road became Limberlost Road; Rebecca Creek became Kalonga Creek; and Storm Caves became Windy Caves.

Although there have been many contributors to this book, both as researchers and writers, it has been my responsibility to check facts, conform writing styles and ensure continuity to the twenty short stories that it contains. Therefore, any shortcomings or factual errors are entirely mine, for which I apologize.

We would welcome your suggestions on how to improve this book, or any of our earlier wilderness writings, as we still have much to learn both as students

of nature, and also about the history of the area which has become our home.

We are, however, very much aware of how privileged we are to live on the Limberlost Forest & Wildlife Reserve, and to have the opportunity to share this property with you in the hope that your enjoyment of its unique topography and thriving wildlife becomes as great as ours.

Gareth Cockwell
February 2012

Chapter 1

A Fateful Night

In March 1873, a violent confrontation forces Samuel MacTavish to abandon his business and immigrate to Canada.

1872 was a tragic year for many families living in London, England. A cholera outbreak spread rapidly through the east end of the city resulting in the death of more than ten thousand individuals, and in many cases entire families.

The Langleigh family was not spared, leaving their two sons Samuel MacTavish and Joseph Langleigh without parents, and also the loss of their two younger sisters, Anne and Caroline.

Samuel was the only son of Arthur MacTavish and Mary Williams. In 1848, a year after Arthur's death due to an industrial accident, Mary married Charles Langleigh, and together they had a son, Joseph, and shortly thereafter Mary gave birth to twin daughters.

At the age of fifteen, Samuel began his apprenticeship as a blacksmith, developing skills not only as a farrier, but also in steel bridge and general construction. Seven years

after commencing his apprenticeship, Samuel was admitted to the Iron Workers Guild as one of its youngest and most capable members.

As a family, Charles and Mary Langleigh, their two sons Samuel and Joseph and daughters Anne and Caroline, had entered 1872 with great hopes. Joseph had completed his studies and qualified as a high school teacher. He had also recently married Catherine, and they were planning to start their own family. Samuel in turn was solidly established as a co-owner of a blacksmith and steelworks business, and was highly respected by others in the industry.

Soon after the death of Joseph's parents and his two sisters, Catherine, who had lost her own father to cholera and who came from a relatively wealthy family, had insisted on volunteering as a doctor's aid at a small local hospital. It was there that she tirelessly helped the depleted staff of doctors and nurses to comfort the overload of patients needing attention as a result of the cholera epidemic.

Catherine's family, and Joseph in particular, were deeply distressed by her insistence on working at the hospital, but being strong-willed, she prevailed in doing what she fervently believed was her duty.

Through discussions with Samuel, Joseph concluded that he and Catherine needed to start a new life far away from the grief surrounding them. He was also concerned that Catherine was tempting fate by dealing with the sick at the hospital; but he knew that while they remained in London he would be unsuccessful in persuading her otherwise.

This was the background that led to Joseph, Catherine and many others in similar predicaments to attend emigration meetings at the Colonial Affairs Building in central London. It was there that representatives of the various colonies vied with each other to attract immigrants with the objective of settling them in the more remote regions of their respective countries.

To learn more about Canada, the nearest and most important colony, Joseph paid five shillings to purchase *The Canadian Settlers Guide*, which was published in 1860 and authored by Catherine Traill, a resident of twenty-five years in the colony. The book contained a vivid description of life in the backwoods of Canada, and over a hundred pages of government-sponsored programmes and related studies describing the climate, currency conversion tables, minerals and agricultural crops, as well as the published conditions of the various land grants available.

The Canadian Settlers Guide also discouraged individuals who were sickly, peevish or discontented from making the voyage; as it considered cheerfulness of mind and activity of body to be essential to prosper, noting further that:

> "In Canada, persevering energy and industry, with sobriety, will overcome all obstacles, and in time will place the very poorest family in a position of substantial comfort that no personal exertions alone could have procured for them elsewhere.
>
> To the indolent or to the intemperate man, Canada offers no such promise; but where is the coun-

> try in which such a person will thrive or grow wealthy? He has not the elements of success within him. It is in vain for such a one to cross the Atlantic; for he will bear with him that fatal enemy which kept him poor at home.
>
> The active, hard-working inhabitants who are earning their bread honestly by the sweat of their brow, or by the exertion of mental power, have no sympathy with such men. Canada is not the land for the idle sensualist. He must forsake the errors of his ways at once, or he will sink into ruin here as he would have done had he stayed in the old country."

The offer by the Government of the Province of Ontario, under its *Free Land Grants Act of 1868*, seemed particularly attractive. This Act entitled individual settlers eighteen-years of age or older to select 100-acres of undeveloped land in a surveyed township, and families to select 200-acres.

The conditions to be met in order to obtain title to the lands, included clearing trees from 15-acres of land within five years, with two acres being placed under cultivation each year; a house had to be built, fit for habitation, of at least 16-feet by 20-feet in size; and the applicants had to have continuously resided on the land, which meant not being away from the property for more than six-months in a year.

Upon fulfillment of these conditions, title to the land passed in fee simple, meaning that it became inheritable and saleable without any restrictions. In addition, a settler had the right to purchase a further 100-acres at 50 cents per acre, subject to the same conditions, except there was no requirement to build a residence on these lands.

The Ontario Free Land Grants Act representative stationed in London was better prepared and a more persuasive advocate than many of the representatives from the other jurisdictions who manned recruiting tables on Wednesday evenings in the hallways of the Colonial Affairs Building. He also had breathtaking photographs of pristine lakes and forests with massive trees on display to review with those present, and required far less information than some of the other regions demanded in order for immigrants to qualify and reserve passage to this enticing country.

In addition to free ocean passage being provided to Quebec City, immigrants had the choice of either rail or steamboat transportation to Toronto. After that, they were on their own as to when and where they decided to select their lots from within the eleven townships offering free property in Ontario at the time.

In case settlers were concerned about being isolated, the Ontario Government representative assured them that there would be daily mail collection and delivery between Toronto and the Free Land Grant townships. They failed, however, to state that the mail could take weeks to find its way to its eventual destination, and several months to reach

London. This was only one of the many misconceptions the settlers would discover over the next five years.

It was these enticements that led Joseph and Catherine Langleigh to register for immigration to Canada on a small sailing vessel chartered by the Ontario Government, and slated to depart from the east end London docks early in March 1873.

The evening before their scheduled departure for Canada, Joseph was busily arranging to transport the few possessions they were permitted to bring on board the ship, Samuel, at Joseph's request, was on his way to the hospital to escort Catherine home when she completed her working day.

When Samuel neared the hospital, he heard a commotion, followed by a woman crying out for help. He rushed ahead without the slightest hesitation, but because it was a very dark night, it was only when he was almost at the hospital's front steps that he could make out the shape of a large, stocky man hovering over a young woman, crouched at the edge of the cobblestone road.

As he drew closer, he recognized that it was Catherine who was being attacked by this hulking brute. He instinctively rushed to her defense, calling upon the attacker to back off, who quickly pushed her aside to turn his attention to Samuel, swinging a heavy club that struck him on his shoulder, completely numbing the right side of his body.

At this point, Samuel recognized his attacker as Harold Ramson, the eldest son of the local Reeve. Like his

father, he was partial to hard liquor and known to be a mean adversary when crossed.

Anticipating the next swing of Harold's club would likely be at his head, Samuel rushed forward with his head and shoulders low, tackling the brute in his paunchy midriff. He then used the full power of his legs to drive him backwards, resulting in the clumsy, drunken man loosing his footing, and fall solidly on the road. As he fell, Harold's head struck the first row of stones of the hospital entrance steps with an ominous thud.

Samuel quickly gathered himself and grabbed Catherine's hand, pulling her past the fallen thug and rushing her down the street to get away as quickly as possible from the scene. He was also hoping to escape Harold's wrath once he regained his footing and tried to pursue them.

Half carrying and half dragging Catherine, he stole a quick glance back to the hospital just before turning a corner to make sure Harold was not following them. He also wished to establish whether there were other people in the vicinity who may have recognized them. Unfortunately it was too dark to see what was taking place in front of the hospital, other than to hear voices from a crowd that was gathering in the area where Harold had fallen.

Wasting no further time, Samuel urged Catherine to run with him as fast as possible to her mother's home, as it was much closer than hers and Joseph's home. Upon reaching the front door, he checked to see that Catherine was not too seriously injured, which she was not, beyond a slight

cut that was bleeding on her forehead and the sharp twinges she felt in her right wrist.

Samuel relayed to Catherine's mother what had occurred in front of the hospital, and implored them not to discuss the incident with anyone until he had the opportunity to explain everything to Joseph. He also needed time to determine the whereabouts and condition of Harold Ramson, who had a notorious reputation for being vindictive and violent. Therefore, before searching for Joseph, where Samuel expected to find him at the docks, he made a short detour back to the hospital, hoping to establish what had happened to Harold Ramson after they left him lying on the ground following their brief scuffle.

To his surprise, he found the local police superintendent and two members of his precinct questioning a large group of individuals who had gathered; searching for witnesses to explain what had taken place. Even more disconcerting, Harold Ramson's body lay inert on the ground with a coat jacket covering his head and shoulders. The jacket, however, did not hide the dark pool of blood that had accumulated around him and seeped between the cobble stones.

It suddenly struck Samuel that Harold Ramson was likely dead, and if this was the case, there would be little prospect for a fair trial should a witness, and especially should a friend of Harold's accuse Samuel of accosting him, knocking him to the ground in such a rough manner that it resulted in his death. It was well known that Harold's father, as the district Reeve, exerted considerable influence

over the local police superintendent and had never hesitated to use his position in the past to obtain special treatment for his troublesome son.

Knowing this, Samuel rushed to the docks in search of his brother. As he ran through the dark streets his mind could not escape the thoughts of the hasty trial that would be orchestrated by a grieving father intent on blaming someone, whether innocent or not, for killing his son; going so far as to railroad a murder conviction, which would likely result in a certain hanging.

It was ten o'clock at night before Samuel found his brother Joseph at the east end London docks. He quickly proceeded to describe in detail what had transpired in front of the hospital earlier in the evening, having first assured him that Catherine was safe and secure at her mother's home.

While Joseph and Samuel hurried back to meet Catherine at her mother's home, it did not take them long to conclude that Samuel should leave London immediately, notwithstanding that his absence would be viewed as confirmation of his guilt. They realized that a major search would be initiated across the city to find him, followed by a rigged trial. Even the smallest bounty offered by Reeve Ramson would ensure that he was quickly captured if he remained in the vicinity of London.

It was Joseph who suggested that Samuel should join himself and Catherine on the voyage to Canada. He could change his identity and begin a new life, far away from the

corrupt justice he would receive if he took his chances on a London trial. They were both aware that any justice exacted would be based on concocted evidence that Reeve Ramson would make sure was brought against him.

As the two brothers were much the same size and looked somewhat similar, Joseph suggested that early the next morning they should dress alike. Joseph would board the ship first, and Samuel would board a short while later, accompanied by Catherine. If questioned, he would claim that he had left the ship earlier to fetch her.

Once on board it was agreed that Samuel would change his clothes in order to resemble a deckhand. He would then join one of the crews loading the ship, and help them with their chores during the passage to Canada.

Joseph was confident that he and Catherine could find a way to provide Samuel with food, on the chance he failed to gain acceptance as a deck hand, making it necessary to hide as a stow-away for the four weeks or more it would take to cross the Atlantic Ocean and sail up the St. Lawrence River to Quebec City.

It was also agreed that they would worry about what to do on arrival in Quebec City, once they had further time to think more clearly and a had better idea of what to expect.

When they arrived at Catherine's mother's home, they found the two women both deeply distraught. In order not to aggravate the situation any further, they chose not to tell them about Harold Ramson's presumed death and the likely pursuit of Samuel.

Once Catherine and her mother calmed down, Joseph explained that Samuel had decided to accompany them on the voyage to Canada; using the credible excuse of the trouble the Ramson family would certainly bring to bear on him should he stay in London, both with respect to his business as well as his everyday personal life.

Catherine was apologetic for being the cause of the trouble that Samuel found himself in, and somewhat naively felt that she and Joseph should cancel their voyage to Canada so that her evidence would ensure that Samuel would not be charged.

On the other hand, Catherine was well aware of the influence of the Ramson family and the steps they would take to hurt Samuel, if only for affronting or besting one of their family members. Catherine and her mother were still not aware that Harold Ramson was probably dead, and it seemed better not to elevate their concerns prior to leaving the country.

Eventually they all agreed that Joseph and Samuel's plan was the most viable of the options available to them, and that Samuel should proceed straight away to collect the clothes he would need and whatever other belongings were particularly precious to him. Joseph and Catherine would make space within their baggage allowance to include them, and they would ensure they were safely transported and stowed on the ship before daybreak.

It was also agreed that once Samuel had collected the possessions he wished to take to Canada, he should return

to Catherine's mother's home, where he would sleep the remainder of the night. It was felt he should gain as much rest as possible, as he would need his wits about him upon boarding the ship. If he succeeded in passing himself off as a deckhand, he would require all his strength to work the long hours demanded of him.

As much as Samuel tried to sleep during what would be his last night in London, he could not help taking the precaution of thinking through each possible situation that may lie ahead of him once aboard the ship. He could be immediately apprehended and handed over to the authorities; or be discovered later and locked in chains to be returned to England; or even quietly disposed of by being cast overboard.

Although Samuel would have liked to have packed and carried with him some of the treasured tools and special instruments he used in his business, he knew this was not possible and instead settled for his father's diaries, with the family tree and correspondence received from his Uncle Archibald MacTavish; a reformed pirate who accepted a naval commission and fought valiantly to eradicate piracy from the Caribbean islands.

He always wanted to study these letters carefully, but had never found the time to do so. He felt it fitting, however, that this would be done before they arrived in Canada, as he expected his Uncle Archibald's correspondence to be invaluable in providing them with insights on how to survive and prosper in what was to become their new home.

Chapter 2

Voyage To Canada

To leave London, England, Samuel MacTavish stows away on a sailing ship destined for Canada.

Boarding the Hornbill sailing vessel went precisely as planned, with Joseph arriving first. Samuel and Catherine followed a half-hour or so later, with Samuel pretending to be Joseph and claiming that he had left the ship to fetch his wife, and had not been aware he was expected to record his departure from the ship.

With the intense commotion going on as the hour for sailing approached, there was no time for the ship's purser to press the issue, and fortunately for them, he had little choice other than to wave the two of them along.

Once all three were safely on board, Samuel found a secluded spot behind a large pile of deck cargo and changed into working clothes, to reappear looking more like a typical deckhand. He also doffed a woolen headpiece, similar to those worn by the other deckhands and which would be essential should they encounter late winter storms on their

crossing of the Atlantic Ocean.

Joseph and Catherine took possession of Samuel's boarding clothes and headed to the stern of the vessel, where the passengers were expected to remain throughout the voyage. They would be separated from Samuel other than when deckhands were required to assist the sailors raise or lower the ships sails, or to swab the decks and carry out other maintenance chores.

Joseph and Catherine in turn were surprised to be assigned separate sleeping quarters, with the women on the port side of the ship and the men on the starboard. They were expected to respect each other's sleeping quarters, but were permitted to mingle on the lower deck and eat together in an area set aside for meals.

The sleeping quarters were nothing like what they had been led to expect. Rather than having individual cabins, which had become fairly common on passenger ships sailing to New York, there were rows upon rows of hammocks strung four high, with a narrow wooden walkway to access the third and forth levels – worse than even the most primitive English prison.

Samuel resigned himself to sleeping hidden among the cargo stacked on deck, at least until he could find a better place below deck in a storeroom, or if all went well, in the crew's quarters.

However, this would need to wait, as his first priority was to get himself accepted as a sought after member of one of the work crews. He aimed to perform the most

menial tasks and do these so well that, even if discovered, the crew leader would protect him, not wanting to lose such a willing and effective worker.

Right at the time designated for sailing, which had been set to obtain the maximum benefit of the outgoing tide, the mooring ropes were untied and pulled on board for careful storage later in four wooden crates.

Joseph and Catherine waved their final farewells to her mother and a small group of friends, as a steam-driven tugboat nudged the Hornbill into the middle of the Thames. From there it moved slowly down the river with the aid of the outgoing tide and two top sails, which fluttered in the breeze coming off the land.

Even though Samuel was hardly notable, while the vessel was leaving the wharf he took care to keep well out of sight of those standing on the dock, busying himself with mopping the starboard upper deck.

Fortunately for Samuel, his concern about obtaining adequate food was far less a problem than he had expected. Although not the most appetizing, a crew member informed him there would always be two large pots of stew available near the fo'c'sle to provide the deckhands with twenty-four hour access to a hot meal, together with an ample supply of freshly baked bread.

Samuel later discovered that the generous supply of food was one of the reasons many crew members signed on to serve on the Hornbill, rather than the sleeker and more modern steamships that had come to ply the Atlantic Ocean

route to North America.

For Samuel to obtain access to the food, it was therefore even more essential than ever that he establish himself as a deckhand and be accepted as a member of a work crew, albeit unpaid.

Throughout the first day at sea, there were plenty of opportunities to work both above and below the main deck by attaching himself to the crew leader he had identified as being the most industrious. That night after enquiring when his crew was expected to start its twelve-hour shift, he slipped off to the bow of the upper deck to sleep among the two large spare sails stored there.

Samuel awoke early, well before daybreak, listening carefully to the ship's bell as it clanged out the hours. He instinctively knew that it would be important for him to be careful in moving about the ship's deck to avoid attracting attention, at least until he had established the daily routines and his place in the ships hierarchy.

He therefore remained hidden amongst the sails until the ship's watch clanged out six bells, whereupon he smoothed out the sails and proceeded to the fo'c'sle to gulp down a bowl of stew and fill one of his pockets with chunks of bread. He then headed to the designated reporting station, waiting for work to be assigned.

The first five days at sea started in this manner and were largely uneventful with the Hornbill under full sail, moving steadily on a fairly calm ocean. Generally similar chores were assigned each day, with Samuel always willing

to complete more than his share, which he was careful to perform well. It did not take long for the crew leader to take note of his abilities and discretely convey his appreciation. Samuel was pleased with this, and knew it would be invaluable to have someone speak well of him should he ever be exposed as a stow-away.

Early on the sixth day, the weather began to deteriorate. The winds came up, the ocean swells rose higher and lightening crashed all around them, virtually shaking the pitching and tossing Hornbill. In no time practically every passenger became violently ill, messing their sleeping quarters and the deck at the stern of the ship where they were confined.

With many of the deckhands in no better condition, Samuel was assigned the task of swabbing the passenger quarters. Fortunately for him he had been at sea many times before, fishing off the west coast of England. He had served as a cabin boy on a small boat captained by a relative, who similar to his Uncle Archibald MacTavish, was reputed to have had a somewhat questionable past sailing in the Caribbean.

While on those trips he learnt not to fill his stomach with liquids that could slosh around once the ships movements became irregular. He knew well that water or tea should only be drunk when eating solid foods or when calm seas were the order of the day.

The inclement weather did, however, have a definite side benefit, as it provided the opportunity to meet up with

his brother while performing his menial clean-up tasks in the passenger quarters during the height of the storm. Ever so discretely he assured him that he was being well treated by his crew leader and with a fair degree of respect, or at least relative to the way his co-workers were treated.

The storm continued for days on end, with no sign of sunlight, and only letting up slightly for short periods of time before returning with what seemed to be even greater vengeance.

On the fifteenth day, two large spars attached to the foremast were struck by lightning causing the starboard half of each one to crash to the deck below, severing the rigging, tearing the sails and instantly killing a sailor who was unfortunate to be nearby the mast at the time.

Pandemonium broke out, even among the most experienced sailors who feared that the situation would rapidly deteriorate. What they knew for sure was that the ship was out of balance and that the upper sails on the foremast had to be secured as quickly as possible, for fear of snapping the mast which in turn could capsize the Hornbill if a wave happened to broadside it at much the same time.

While many sailors and deckhands fled below deck, Samuel stayed to help clear the area around the mast to enable the three most experienced sailors to climb up, cut the lower sails loose and then gather in the upper sails by rolling and tying them securely to the remaining spars.

This work took two excruciating hours and required volunteers to climb the rigging that remained loosely in

place to pass looped ropes to the experienced sailors struggling to roll up and secure the upper sails. Samuel made eight trips up the rigging without a break, which was many more than anyone else, all without the benefit of a safety harness, and at great personal peril, while many others refused to take a turn. This did not go unnoticed by the First Mate, who had taken charge of the operation. Once the sails were secured, Samuel quietly returned to his workstation to obtain further instructions.

The next day the storm abated, and by mid-day the seas calmed and the sun appeared for the first time in more than two weeks. It was time for the ship's officers to take stock of the damage, punish those who failed to obey orders and reward those who had helped to save the day.

It took some time to track down Samuel, but when he was found he was quickly marched by two sailors to the First Mate's quarters where they sat him down on a bench and told him to wait until called. Samuel was convinced that a disgruntled deck hand had reported him as a stowaway, and naturally feared the worst.

When called to enter the First Mate's quarters, he initially thought about fleeing, but quickly realized that finding a safe hiding place would be almost impossible, as even the smallest monetary reward would motivate the sailors and deckhands to search for him and promptly deliver him to the ship's officers.

To his surprise, as the First Mate walked across the room toward him he extended his hand, expressing his

appreciation and congratulations for what he referred to as a heroic contribution toward saving the vessel. He then gestured to Samuel to sit down and promptly served him tea and oatmeal biscuits. He wanted to know why he did not remain at the foremast once the sails had been secured, why it was so difficult to locate him and finally who he actually was, adding that nobody seemed to know anything about him, other than his first name was Samuel.

Samuel instinctively knew that he was being questioned by a very intelligent, decent and fair-minded man. If he tried to fool him, he realized that the odds were against being successful, with the result that he would at once lose any respect he had gained by his earlier contributions at the foremast.

He therefore decided to tell the truth, including the circumstances which led him to stow-away, where he had been sleeping during his time off duty, the work he willingly performed as well as his duel qualifications as a trained blacksmith and master metal worker, and how these could be put to good use to repair the broken spars on the foremast.

The First Mate was taken aback, and though he had a duty as an officer of an English sea-going ship to apprehend criminals, he quickly deduced that not being aware of any police charges nor the precise circumstances of Samuel's altercation with Harold Ramson, he would only deal with the facts as were known to him. Moreover, he was sympathetic to Samuel's plight and in any event, could

utilize Samuel's talents to save the voyage from becoming a disaster.

A disaster it would certainly be if the foremast could not be repaired, as the vessel would be required to trim its remaining sails to maintain equilibrium and avoid the bow of the ship being forced down into the ocean waters. Trimming the sails in turn would extend the length of the voyage by a further two weeks, by which time they would have long depleted their food supplies, necessitating an immediate enforcement of half rations.

After notifying Samuel of his predicament and concerns regarding the state of the vessel, he quizzed him in great detail on how he would proceed to repair the broken spars, and then informed him that the vessel carried one spare spar for such emergencies.

Samuel asked for a pen and paper and sketched out how he would splice together the best parts of each of the two broken spars to create a new one. He would then place steel plates on either side of them and bind the spars and plates together with ten iron rings he would forge to fit tightly around the area where the shaved down wood from the two broken spars would overlap.

Samuel went on to mention that the iron needed to make the rings could be salvaged from a strongbox and the steel plates could be forged and hammered flat using the metal hand railings leading to the lower decks. He also said he would require a supply of coal from the kitchen to operate a forge he would need to build.

Chapter 2

The First Mate informed him that there was a forge below deck and authorized him to go ahead and begin the repairs. He also said that henceforth he would be known as Samuel MacTeer, giving him the surname of the sailor who died in the accident, and as a reward promised to provide him with full information on the individual at the end of the voyage in order to permit him to adopt his identity and leave the past behind.

Finally, he wrote out a single page order sheet, authorizing Samuel to commandeer whatever materials and help he required to complete his task. With a generous smile and a hearty handshake, he led Samuel to the door of his quarters and called for the Second Mate to advise him of the orders he had just signed, without mentioning Samuel's situation prior to or while on board.

Working through the night, Samuel first shaped the two broken spars to fit snuggly against each other, splinted on each side by the steel plates. He then used a set of calipers he made from strips of wood to measure the different diameters of each of the ten iron rings he would need to forge in order to bind the two pieces of wood and steel plates together. He made each ring precisely the required size, slid each one while red hot to its exact position, and then immediately doused it with cold sea water causing it to shrink and bind the two pieces of the new spar tightly against the steel splints he had hammered flat from the railing bars.

Within eight hours, to the amazement of the First Mate and Captain Smithers, who had taken an intense interest in Samuel's work, a new spar had been created out of the remains of the two shattered ones. Samuel then asked the First Mate to summon the two most experienced sailors on board and proceeded to instruct them on how to position their bosun chairs in order to attach to the mast the steel clamps he had fashioned from the steel plate on top of the Repair Master's work bench. The clamps were to be used to support the spar while it was being bolted firmly in place. When satisfied that this had been successfully completed, he bid the First Mate and Captain good night and retired for a much-deserved rest.

The balance of the voyage was relatively uneventful, with a brief provisioning stop in Halifax before proceeding up the St. Lawrence River to Quebec City.

During their last night on board, Captain Smithers insisted that Samuel join him and the First Mate for dinner in his cabin to thank him and wish him well. True to his word, the First Mate conveyed all the knowledge he had been able to gather from the crew on the dead sailor's age, birthplace, education and family.

The next morning they docked at Grosse Isle, a small island that was a short distance from Quebec City, where they were examined by Canadian Government medical staff before being cleared to proceed to Quebec City and whatever forward destination they chose.

Chapter 2

It was obvious that the doctors and the other government officials present had scant interest in the individuals they were examining, their reasons for immigrating or whether they were scoundrels or not.

As long as they appeared healthy and from the desired stock, they were welcomed, fed a hot meal, and given instruction on the alternate routes for proceeding to Toronto or wherever else they wished to go. They were also provided with the opportunity to line up and wait for a turn to have their first hot bath in more than a month, which virtually everyone decided to do.

Chapter 3

Sojourn In Toronto

Samuel, Joseph and Catherine spend a year in Toronto in order to save money prior to taking possession of their land.

The government official at Grosse Isle handed each immigrant two vouchers; the first to cover a steamboat voyage further along the St. Lawrence River to Montreal; and the second to travel by rail from Montreal to Toronto.

They had been forewarned to purchase sufficient food to eat during the two days they would be travelling; an early sign that any further help from the Ontario Government which they may have expected or been assured of, was quickly coming to an end. They would soon be on their own, fending for themselves in a land that was starkly different from the one they were accustomed to.

Once they had acquired a supply of fruit, bread and cheese for the passage, they lost no time heading down to the docks to board the Frontenac, a small steamship that plied its way regularly between Quebec City and Montreal.

Chapter 3

Although the trip was to take almost two full days, passengers were required to sit on unpadded varnished wooden benches or small chairs, and were not permitted to lie down on the deck to sleep.

The three of them, however, were determined to remain in good cheer as they anxiously looked forward to arriving in Toronto. There they planned to establish contact with the Anglican priest whose name they had been given by Catherine's local church back in London, together with a letter introducing Joseph and Catherine as upstanding members of their community.

On arrival in Montreal, a bustling mercantile city and centre of the lucrative fur trade, they disembarked and made their way towards the Grand Trunk Railway Station, not wanting to waste any time before continuing their journey to Toronto.

When they arrived at the station, they found out that the next train to Toronto was scheduled to leave Montreal in six hours, and although disappointed that they could not leave immediately, Joseph and Catherine seized the opportunity to climb to the top of Mount Royal, a large hill with an iron cross that overlooked the city neatly laid out below it.

Samuel remained at the railway station to watch over the few possessions they were permitted to bring with them from London. He did not mind, as it would provide him with the first real occasion to relax in nearly two months. He also welcomed the opportunity to read his Uncle

Archibald's correspondence, seeking to glean as much as possible from his experiences living in northern Canada.

The train journey from Montreal to Toronto was a great deal more comfortable than anything they had experienced during the past two months at sea. The passenger carriages were clean, the conductors were polite and they were permitted to leave the train at its frequent stops to walk along the station platforms, while fresh produce and other goods were being loaded for delivery to Toronto.

On arrival in Toronto they sought directions to St. James Church, which they had no problem finding given the towering height of the spire that was under construction. After presenting the letter of introduction provided to them by Catherine's parish priest in London, they were warmly welcomed and assured of a place to sleep for four nights. After this time, they were expected to have found their own lodgings and make way for the next wave of new arrivals to the rapidly growing community.

They were also informed that they should meet, together with other recent arrivals, in the Church Hall at nine-o'clock the next morning at which time they would receive guidance on where to seek lodgings, employment and many other matters that would help them get established in their new country.

The counsel they received was helpful and reassuring. They were told where rooms could be rented, what they should expect to pay, where to line up for casual labour, the best stores to shop at and the importance of building a nest

egg of cash before venturing further north to take possession of their land grant properties.

They were also advised that they should try to accumulate enough savings to purchase saws, axes, spades, ploughs, guns, horses, and a store of food supplies to see them through their first winter. They were told that they should count on it taking at least two years to clear enough land to grow sufficient crops to satisfy their family's needs.

Thereafter they should aim to produce surplus crops for sale on the local market, in order to earn the cash needed to pay for the building materials and other supplies required to enlarge and upgrade the log cabins they would probably settle in for the first few years. At that point, they would have graduated from adventuresome settlers to pioneer homesteaders.

Samuel, Joseph and Catherine accepted this advice, even though Catherine's mother had insisted on transferring a fairly substantial sum of money to a bank account in Toronto, in case they ever had need for it. Samuel and Joseph were brought up to be self-sufficient, and had no intention of ever permitting Catherine to use these funds for their benefit, and therefore decided to seek employment in Toronto before moving on to Huntsville to claim their Free Land Grant properties.

To their pleasant surprise, they each had acceptable work opportunities offered to them within the first day of searching for employment. After introducing himself and his qualifications to the railway stationmaster, Samuel was

directed to the repair yards where the foreman asked him to start working the very next day. Joseph visited the high school on Jarvis Street recommended by Father Thomas, where the principal welcomed him to fill a vacancy that was open for the grade 10 classes. That afternoon, Catherine was also successful in responding to an advertisement seeking a governess for a family who lived nearby on Church Street, in a large red stone manor house.

It certainly appeared to be a land of opportunity, with work easy to come by and the wages paid being very generous compared to London, England. It was therefore with great elation that they returned to the basement of St. James Church to sleep on their second night in their new town.

The following morning, Joseph and Catherine set out to find two suitable rooms at a rate that would not tax their wages too heavily, as their objective was to save as much as possible, and as quickly as they could manage.

The next four months were fairly uneventful, with the three of them working diligently and saving far more money than they had expected. They were also enjoying the summer weather and eagerly learning more each day about their new land and local customs.

It was late in the early part of October of 1873 when their daily routines abruptly changed. The days had grown shorter as winter approached, so that when Samuel left the railway repair shops at the end of the day, it was after nightfall.

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On this particular evening, as Samuel stepped out of the large, corrugated iron doors of the workshop, he was surprised to notice how bright the sky was outside. At first, he thought he was looking at a sunset, then quickly deduced that the orange glow was to the east, and not where the sun would set in the west.

At that instant, he got his first whiff of smoke and instantaneously realized one or more buildings were likely burning, and that the fire was in the very centre of the town.

Having lived in the City of London, he was familiar with and well trained to respond to fires. It was every citizen's duty to do their part, realizing the devastation that fires could cause if not immediately contained, which could only be done through a concerted effort by every available citizen.

As he sprinted towards the burning buildings, he was heartened to see that others were also racing in the same direction. At the same time the clanging fire wagon bells grew deafening, as they came from all directions to contain the blaze and prevent it spreading to the surrounding areas.

In the ten minutes or less that it took Samuel to reach the bottom of Yonge Street, at least five buildings had flames shooting out of their upper windows, and seemed to be a lost cause. The efforts of the fire fighters were now directed at saving the adjacent buildings.

To rescue the neighbouring buildings, it would be necessary to ensure that the sparks that alighted on their flat pitch-covered roofs were immediately extinguished.

Samuel noticed the Fire Marshall calling for and lining up civilian volunteers; some to help keep back the crowds that were gathering, and others to safeguard the fire pumps and hoses. He was also pulling aside and lining up the sturdiest and youngest volunteers to place them under the command of a wizened old fire officer. Samuel was assigned to this group of volunteers.

The fire officer did not take long to disclose to the volunteers what he had in mind, at which point half the volunteers quickly disappeared into the crowd. He must have anticipated this happening, as he never bothered to add to the ranks before explaining precisely what they needed to do and the risks they would face.

There was no time or opportunity for questions before the eight remaining volunteers were doused down with water, and handed red metal helmets and broomsticks with twenty or so long leather straps attached to one end. These were also soaked with water.

Samuel and another volunteer were seconded to a younger fire officer who promptly led them to the external fire stairs behind the Toronto Gas Company headquarters building. He used a long steel hook to pull down the access ladder and told them to start climbing until they reached the roof, five stories above the ground. He was careful to follow and not to lead in order to ensure neither of his two volunteers had second thoughts and decided to climb back down to the ground.

Once they were on top of the building he showed them how to extinguish the sparks that were already falling on the flat roof, and told them he would be on the adjacent Colonial Building roof, directly south of them, doing the same. He promised to keep checking on them and told them to call him if they needed his help.

For the next four hours, the three of them frantically darted back and forth across their designated areas of the two roofs, beating out each spark, often virtually before they landed. This exhausting work left no time for any of the drenched men to feel the sting of the cold fall wind that was fanning the flames of the fires raging in the surrounding buildings.

As building after building began to collapse around them, the fire officer coaxed them to stay and increasingly left the Colonial Company roof to join them when it appeared necessary to lend a hand. By ten o'clock, Samuel's co-volunteer abandoned him without notice, obviously exhausted and probably also fearing for his life. This necessitated the fire officer and Samuel to keep closer in touch as they jointly took care of both buildings.

By midnight, the winds abated and the fires around them slowly subsided. They could clearly see from the glowing and flickering flames near the ground that virtually all of the buildings in a two-block radius either had burnt to the ground or had sustained heavy damage.

A short while later the Fire Marshall sent a police officer up the fire stairs to tell them they could come back

down. When they reached the ground, the Fire Marshall was quick to congratulate Samuel and requested his full name and where he was employed.

A month later, Samuel, together with fifty other volunteers who had performed heroically during the blaze, received a framed scroll thanking them for their contributions, and were awarded a specially-minted City of Toronto Medal of Honour.

Immediately after the fire, Samuel, Joseph and Catherine volunteered in the evenings to work together with hundreds of other citizens of Toronto, loading oxcarts with rubble from the burnt-out buildings. These carts were driven to the foreshore where the rubble was used to fill in the mud flats that lay between Front Street and the wooden docks built out into the lake to enable ships to moor and deliver their cargos, and reload with materials destined for other locations.

Shortly thereafter, the City Engineer contacted Samuel with a new proposition. His department had become aware of Samuel's qualifications and his ability to motivate work crews in the railway repair shops. He had therefore arranged for the railway to grant Samuel a leave of absence, so that he could take charge of an urgently needed community housing construction project, being built on farmland immediately east of the town's previous limits. Samuel was notified that he would be exceptionally well rewarded, with a bonus based on the number of houses delivered within the time frames agreed upon.

This new task, together with the additional employment that Joseph and Catherine sought to supplement their incomes, kept all three fully occupied until early in the spring of 1874. It was then that Samuel, who had completed nearly double the number of housing units he had contracted to deliver, decided to travel north and explore the Free Grant Lands they were finally ready to select and take possession of. It would also provide the opportunity to visit the area where his Uncle Archibald MacTavish had spent his latter years, and determine whether any of his relatives were still living in the region.

Chapter 4

Holdover In Huntsville

Samuel journeys to Huntsville and earns Captain Hunt's support by completing a bridge critical to the town's future development.

As the spring of 1874 approached, Samuel began to search for a transport company in order to work his way northward to Huntsville. In return for carrying his few possessions, he offered to tend to their wagons should they require repair during the course of the journey.

Road construction from Toronto had progressed as far as the Severn River. It had been fairly easy to complete the southern section of the road, given the relatively even terrain, the availability of sand to raise the roadbed where needed, and gravel to top it off and provide a firm and even surface. However, extremely rugged terrain was encountered after crossing the Severn River, the point at which bedrock, commonly referred to as the Canadian Shield, outcropped all over the landscape, posing significant difficulties for road building. As a result the route north, especially after the Village of Bracebridge, deteriorated rapidly and soon became no better than a wilderness track,

but nevertheless was euphemistically referred to as the Muskoka Road.

Most of the early settlers who travelled beyond Bracebridge journeyed by foot, because those who travelled by horse or cart found it equally labourious and time consuming. Under the best of circumstance it normally took a full day to journey from Bracebridge to Huntsville, and even longer if it rained for any length of time or when heavy snowstorms occurred.

Through his work in the rail yards, Samuel came to deal with the company that supplied the Grand Trunk Railway with steel products, and with the recommendation of his superior, they agreed to have him join the company's transport wagons on their next trip to deliver steel beams to Huntsville. Coincidentally, that trip would start the very next day.

On their sixth day out of Toronto, and just over ten miles before Bracebridge, a front wheel of the heavily laden lead-wagon became wedged between two large rocks in a very narrow section of the trail. The driver made the mistake of turning the wagon sharply to the left in an effort to free the wheel, which caused the spokes to snap and the wheel-hub to shatter when it collapsed to the ground. Because the trail was closely hemmed-in on both sides by large rocks, the wagons behind them were prevented from proceeding, resulting in the wagon master becoming impatient and noisily expressing his anger and frustration.

Samuel recognized that it was essential to move the broken wagon out of the way to enable the other wagons to pass. This could not wait for the steel beams to be unloaded, since this would delay the other travelers for the better part of the day. To move the wagon, Samuel arranged to borrow a team of oxen from the transport wagon immediately behind them. Samuel and three other company men led the animals individually through the small open space on the left side of the trail, and then hitched them to the broken wagon. Once the steel beams were firmly secured, the eight oxen dragged the wagon, with its now missing wheel, through the pass and well away from the trail.

Samuel then gathered a wrench and a heavy hammer, and borrowed a horse to ride to an abandoned cart he had noticed a mile or so down the road, hoping to remove its one remaining good wheel to use as a replacement for the broken wheel on the transport wagon. As he recalled the wheel was smaller than the one that broke, but correctly assumed that most wheel hubs were built to fit standardized axles. After removing the wheel, he lengthened the reins on the horse and attached them to the back of his belt. This allowed him to have both hands free to roll the smaller wheel back up the trail to the damaged transport wagon, with the horse following behind him.

Before he rode off to fetch the replacement wheel, Samuel had arranged for the transport company workers to select and cut four sturdy maple poles from the nearby forest to be used to move the steel beams off the wagon. The task of moving the steel beams to one side of the wagon,

and then sliding them slowly down the maple poles to the ground, took more than an hour. Next, the maple poles were used as levers to raise the wagon axle off the ground in order for the broken wheel hub to be removed and the replacement slid into place.

The maple poles were then laid against the side of the wagon to create a ramp on which one steel beam at a time could be slowly inched up. Once they passed the halfway point, the poles were lifted by four sturdy men, and the steel beams were slid back onto the wagon. Each beam was then carefully arranged on the floor of the wagon to concentrate the weight on the side with the two large wheels.

Dusk had set in before the repairs and reloading were complete, however the wagon master insisted on them pressing forward. With the aid of lanterns, the wagon master and Samuel walked ahead to lead the way, often struggling to find the trail. The cargo of steel beams eventually arrived at Huntsville the next morning, shortly after daybreak. It was only then that Samuel found out the importance of arriving within the scheduled time, which was to avoid the financial penalties that would otherwise have been levied for late delivery.

When the wagon master made a full report to Captain Hunt on the complications they had endured and overcome, he highlighted Samuel's role in repairing the wagon and helping him lead the oxen through the night. The Captain immediately asked to meet with Samuel, as he was desperately searching for a person who was adept at dealing with

difficult situations and capable of improvising, if necessary, to achieve his objectives. He was frustrated with dealing with individuals who created problems, often merely to impose their will and perhaps along the way extract extra remuneration for providing the services he felt they had contracted to perform.

Captain Hunt faced a major credibility issue at the time with his quest for the rail line to be extended further north from Hunters Bay, and not by an alternate route being proposed, which would bypass Huntsville. For his route to be feasible, he needed a sturdy bridge to be erected across the narrows between Lake Vernon and Fairy Lake.

The first half of the bridge had been completed, with the concrete support pillar firmly anchored to the bedrock. Unfortunately, for the past three months they had been working on building the second support pillar, but had encountered what seemed to be an endless deposit of clay, which quickly dissipated the construction materials as fast as they were laid down.

The Government appointed contractor was on the verge of walking off the job, and in open defiance, proposed using floating pontoons for wagon traffic to cross the divide between the two bodies of water. Clearly a train could not cross in such a manner. It did not help that the contractor came from a neighbouring town that was also competing for the rail line, which made his allegiance to the project somewhat suspect. Failure was not an option for Captain Hunt, who knew that abandoning the bridge would

not only be a black-eye for the community, but would also deter future lumber businesses locating in his town, not to mention the fate of all rail traffic being re-routed to bypass Huntsville.

When Captain Hunt discovered that Samuel was a master steel worker, he requested that they meet later in the morning at the bridge construction site. It did not take Samuel long to gather the depth of Captain Hunt's frustration as there was no holding back his contempt for the Government contractor. However, once he began to talk about the problems experienced in building the bridge, Samuel's respect for Captain Hunt immediately rose, as the Captain had no trouble grasping and discussing intelligently even the most intricate engineering concept.

In response to Captain Hunt's request for suggestions to overcome the inability of the contractors to build the second support pillar, Samuel suggested temporarily cantilevering steel beams across the divide to the first support pillar, then stabilizing and bracing them with tension cables and steel cross struts. Samuel also stressed that it would be essential that the temporary working platform built on the beams be strong enough to support a pile driver, and was pleasantly surprised to hear from the Captain that there was a pile driver in the village, as otherwise it would have required a month or more to build one.

When Captain Hunt questioned Samuel on the likelihood of being successful, Samuel assured him that he had worked with similar ground conditions in London, England

in building a wharf on the sand and clay flats laid down over thousands of years by the Thames River. He was confident that as long as the piles were driven deep enough into the clay, and provided there were enough of them, friction would hold them in place. He assured the Captain that the friction would make it unnecessary to anchor the piles and concrete bridge support pillars to the bedrock.

Whether it was desperation on the part of the Captain or his instincts that caused him to trust and respect Samuel, he commissioned him without any further discussion to take immediate charge of the project, with full authority to order whatever materials, equipment and labour he needed. The Captain also promised Samuel a significant reward if he demonstrated substantial success in completing the bridge prior to word getting back to the Government in Toronto; and the inevitable arrival of their engineers to second guess his decision to proceed without detailed drawings and costing.

Over the next few days, Samuel spend most of his time surveying the bridge site, eventually deciding that instead of cantilevering two single steel beams across the water, he would use shorter beams and a make-shift crane to bolt them sequentially together. This would speed up the project, be much easier to erect, and most important, the loss of a full length beam could jeopardize the completion of the bridge on time.

Samuel co-opted Simon Robertson, the local blacksmith, to work alongside him in re-fabricating the steel

beams. It did not take long for Simon to appreciate Samuel's unique skills and willingly work long hours side by side with Samuel, cutting and drilling the holes for the rivets to be pounded through to join the beams together once they were secured.

At least once every day, Captain Hunt stopped by to observe the progress and to ensure that Samuel was receiving the full cooperation of all involved, including especially suppliers of the materials and equipment he needed. He always asked, before departing, whether there was anything else he could do to be helpful.

After the fifth day of working in Simon's blacksmith shop, and with the Captain's repeated offers to help, Samuel felt comfortable asking Captain Hunt to contact his brother Joseph and explain the reasons for his extended stay in Huntsville. The Captain not only agreed to do this, but also volunteered to arrange for ten lots to be set aside for Samuel and Joseph to choose from, leaving it to Samuel to notify him which three lots they preferred. He also promised Samuel the opportunity to purchase two additional lots at discounted prices if he completed the bridge project on time.

On the Captain's suggestion, Samuel visited the land registry office early the very next morning to select the three lots he desired, and while there he managed to identify two other lots near Lake Solitaire that matched those described in his Uncle Archibald's correspondence.

Once the steel beams were re-fabricated, Samuel and Simon moved to the bridge site. With the help of a the crane and the block and tackle, they lowered each section of steel into place, securing them with red-hot rivets that were pounded through the holes they had pre-drilled in the beams. After they were anchored to the completed half of the bridge and the tension cables tautened, a temporary working platform was built with eight-inch squared lumber laid across the steel beams on which the pile driver was mounted.

The pile driver then proceeded to pound thirty, twenty-five foot long, ten-inch square larch poles into the clay subsoil to form of an enclosed rectangle. When the top of each pile came within two feet of the lake surface, a steel sheath was used to extend the length of the pile by attaching a fifteen-foot larch log, enabling the pile to be driven deeper into the clay subsoil.

When all the piles were firmly in place, bands of steel were used to bind them together, after which as much subsoil as possible was pumped out. The inside of the rectangle was then double-lined, deep into the sub-soil using two-foot wide hemlock planks to minimize the loss of concrete material, which was then continuously poured for three days before it reached the water surface level. In the meanwhile, wooden forms were built to extend the support pillar from the water level to the steel structure above, ensuring that the continuous concrete pour was not disturbed.

Chapter 4

Fortunately for Captain Hunt, by the time the engineers arrived from Toronto to inspect Samuel's unconventional solution, the final cross-bracing and steel wedges were being bolted in place. Notwithstanding the virulent complaints of the previous contractor, the Government inspectors had no choice other than to endorse the work completed.

Captain Hunt was so elated with the outcome, that the very next day he persuaded the town leaders to award Samuel a medal of honour. It was customary to award ten of these medals at the end of each year to the citizens who made the greatest contributions to the town's development. Captain Hunt insisted on the award being made immediately, and not left to the end of the year. Thus, in the space of less than one year, Samuel received medals from two different towns for exemplary service to their communities.

Captain Hunt did, however, insist on Samuel supervising the construction work remaining to be completed on the bridge, while promising him financial rewards well beyond anything he had ever expected to receive.

As a result, the spring of 1875 was approaching before Samuel could find time to think about visiting Lake Solitaire to inspect the three Free Land Grant lots set aside by Captain Hunt for him and his brother Joseph to take possession of, as well as the two bonus lots he could purchase at a quarter of their posted price.

Chapter 5

Exploratory Expedition

Samuel visits Lake Solitaire, accompanied by Brian Powers, who becomes a close friend and mentor on the northern wilderness.

On a cool spring morning early in April 1875, with the snow levels in the deepest areas of the forest no more than a foot or so and the deciduous trees having yet to bud, Samuel headed towards Lake Solitaire on horseback. He was accompanied by Brian Powers, a well-known woodsman and trapper who was familiar with the area. His dog Jackson trotted along beside them with his nose close to the ground, requiring his master to call him whenever he would catch the scent of some animal and head into the forest to explore on his own.

Samuel had been advised that it was highly dangerous for an individual to venture into unfamiliar areas of the northern wilderness, unless they were accompanied by an experienced woodsman. It was extremely easy to become disoriented by the undulating land and rocky outcrops, and end up proceeding in the opposite direction they intended.

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Evidence of inexperienced explorers, who had lost their way, was often only found many months later if at all, and sometimes a hundred or more miles away from their intended destination. Others were known to have walked in circles before they perished.

After a great deal of thought, Samuel had chosen his guide carefully. Brian Powers was not only highly recommended and the owner of two sturdy horses, but he also knew the area well and had offered to school Samuel on the many pitfalls which awaited unsuspecting 'city-folk'.

They aimed to spend three days, with two main objectives in mind. First, Samuel was hoping to identify and clearly mark the boundaries of the three lots north of the Millar Hill concession line, that Captain Hunt had arranged to be set aside for Joseph, Catherine and Samuel. He wished to thoroughly familiarize himself with these lots and attempt to identify the areas best suited for their cabins and for cultivating their crops.

Undisclosed to Brian, Samuel's second objective was to locate the lands that his Uncle Archibald MacTavish had described in his letters to his father. It was there that his Uncle had spent nearly twenty years living in a world of what he described as immense freedom, completely safe from any questionable colleagues he had linked up with in an earlier life, who may have had good reason to come looking for him. This was the area where he planned to acquire the additional land he was entitled to purchase as a result of the successful completion of the bridge project.

The ride from Huntsville started at Brunel Road and proceeded for nearly twelve miles northeast on a winding track to its intersection with the road Captain Hunt had recently commissioned along the north shore of Peninsula Lake to link Huntsville with the Bobcaygeon Concession Road that passed by the Village of Dwight.

They then proceeded north for a mile before once more turning east onto the Millar Hill concession line, which was an even rougher and narrower wagon track with water crossings along the way.

Shortly after crossing the Boyne River, they left the concession road and headed north along an ill-defined trail, marked by the rocks and boulders which had been pushed to the side of the trail. Although it was not signposted, Brian referred to it as the Stoney Lonesome Road; stoney because much of it was gravel, and lonesome since it seemed to wind endlessly uphill with no distinctive natural features to secure a traveler's bearings.

Brian pointed out that a trail such as the Stoney Lonesome Road could be a life saver, for if someone ventured into the forest on the east side of the trail and became lost, all they would need to do was walk into the sun in the late afternoon and at some point they would intersect it. If they then walked downhill, they would eventually reach the Millar Hill concession line. They could follow a similar procedure if they found themselves lost on the west side of the Stoney Lonesome Road.

Chapter 5

Brian stressed the importance of being able to recognize each track and trapper's trail, and memorize where they emerged from the forest if followed either downhill or uphill. Equally important were the rivers and streams that drained the region as they could be as valuable as a road or track in saving one's life.

To drive home the point, Brian encouraged Samuel to repeat to him several times over the course of the three days they spent together, that to the west of Lake Solitaire the drainage flowed south to the Millar Hill concession line and into the Lake of Many Bays, and from Lake Solitaire itself, water flowed north, while on the east side of the lake it flowed south. He referred to Lake Solitaire as the natural divide, because the land around it was the highest in the region.

By continuing on the Stoney Lonesome Road for what seemed to be forever, given its gradient and the need to constantly duck to avoid overhanging branches, they eventually encountered a large thinly-frozen beaver pond that Brian was concerned about crossing, so they instead followed it a short distance eastward until they reached Lake Solitaire.

At this point they dismounted, and from there onward led their horses through the forest. Because it was so dense, they walked slowly along the shore of the lake. A half hour later, they reached a large overhanging rock that was high enough to create a sheltered area protected on two sides.

Brian had chosen this cave-like structure to camp for the night and to use as their base for the next couple of days.

Samuel was taken aback by the sheer beauty of Lake Solitaire, and the size of the majestic white pine, cedar and hemlock trees that lined its shores. He was also fascinated by the inverse images of the trees reflected in the crystal clear water along the banks of the lake.

Brian was quick to inform Samuel that there were twenty more equally beautiful pristine lakes within a day's walk of Lake Solitaire, and that it was important for him to familiarize himself with them as well, since they could also provide valuable reference points when venturing further north into the forest. He said this would be necessary in the late fall, when he would need to search for deer and moose to build a meat supply before the winter set in.

He also advised him that a portion of their meat stock could be frozen if the winter set in early, otherwise it would need to be dried or smoked. Hunting would be more difficult in the winter months when snow levels were deep on the ground, making it sometimes close to impossible to get around fast enough to pursue the animals they were hunting.

Around sunset, the two men returned on foot to the beaver dam they had skirted around earlier in the day, to see if they could shoot a young buck foraging on the lush grass growing in the wetlands surrounding the dam. Brian said that it was not right to shoot a doe until well into the

fall, as in the spring they would have given birth to one or two young fawns, which they would nurse through the summer, and shooting the mother prior to the late fall would result in the certain death of her fawns, as they could not survive without her.

Just as Brian predicted, once dusk began to set in, an old ten-pointer deer and two younger bucks wandered into the clearing to feed and drink. Brian had no difficulty in bringing down the closest of the two young bucks, with a single shot from his Winchester rifle.

They ate extremely well that night, cooking sufficient meat over an open fire to last for the next two days. They placed the rest of the carcass three hundred yards away from their campsite for the wolves and other animals to devour. Brian reminded Samuel that it was important to have a dog accompany him, especially when there was the smell of food around, as well as in the early spring when black bears came out of hibernation, and were generally hungry and ill-spirited for a month or so.

Early the next morning they reheated two large slices of venison over the camp fire while they drank their coffee, and then ate the meat as they went searching for the mounds of stones and tree slashes which the military surveyors would have used to mark the boundaries of the lots Samuel had expressed an interest in.

They knew the most northern lot intersected with the mouth of the Kalonga Creek at its mid-point on its western boundary. They therefore decided to locate the mid-point

of the lot by walking up the east side of Lake Solitaire until they reached the Kalonga Creek. They then walked seven hundred and fifty paces north parallel to the shore of the lake, at which point they started their search for the stone cairn that would mark the northern boundary of the lot. They did this by walking concentric half circles away from the lake, approximately twenty-feet apart.

To Samuel's surprise, the cairn was located less than fifty paces from the point they stopped walking and started their search. After enlarging the cairn to make it even more noticeable, they walked nine hundred paces east before beginning again to search for the northeast boundary marker. This time they walked full circles from the point where they started their search. It took them more than an hour to locate the cairn, as they had not allowed for the fact that the lots were laid out slightly askew from a true north-south axis. Next, they walked fifteen hundred paces south to find the southeast marker.

For the rest of the morning they followed the same process to find and enlarge the stone cairns that marked the boundary corners of the other two lots. Samuel then went off on his own, crisscrossing all three lots six or seven times to familiarize himself with the topography, while making notes to share with Joseph on the more attractive sites to build their cabins and cultivate their fields.

In the meanwhile, Brian spent the afternoon checking the trap lines he had laid down the previous week. He did this purposely to test whether Samuel would be able to find

his way back out of the forest on his own before sundown. Brian told him if he had not returned by four o'clock in the afternoon he would fire a shot from his rifle every ten minutes, and start to search for him an hour later, by walking up the east shoreline of the lake with Jackson in tow. Brian also reminded him that each time he felt disoriented he should walk west until he eventually encountered the lake. From wherever that was, he would only have to follow the shoreline south to return to their campsite under the overhanging cliffs.

The next day Samuel asked Brian to guide him to the two lakes referred to in his Uncle MacTavish's letters as Buck and Helve. Brian decided to approach Buck Lake by walking east up the Kalonga Valley, a natural feature Samuel would surely recognize should he return on his own. He then turned north where the valley narrowed to link up with the south end of Buck Lake. From there they walked east along the shoreline until they reached Helve Lake Creek, which drained into Buck Lake. They followed the creek for close to a mile before reaching Helve Lake and continued along its west shore until they emerged at the eastern end of the Kalonga Valley.

In returning down the valley to Lake Solitaire, they encountered thirteen active beaver dams of varying sizes. Brian explained to Samuel that there were very few valleys with as many active beaver dams so close to each other, and therefore he should easily recognize the area in the future. Brian also made the point that they had essentially

completed a large rectangular hike, with Buck Lake at the north end, Helve Lake to the east, the Kalonga Valley to the south and Lake Solitaire lying to the west.

He assured Samuel that after the day's expedition, his knowledge of these four distinctive natural features should provide him with a fairly large area in which to safely hunt. Samuel should also be confident, that if he was hunting within this area and became disoriented, he would eventually encounter one of these natural features, which he would surely recognize.

That night Brian suggested that Samuel should use the technique that they had chosen to visit Buck and Helve Lakes to expand his knowledge of other areas in the surrounding forest, taking care not to venture into a new area until he was sure of his knowledge of the one he would be leaving. He emphasized that, provided he taught himself to be observant, he would in time come to recognize thousands upon thousands of rocks, trees, streams and animal trails throughout the vast forest, which could be used to ensure that he never became lost for any meaningful length of time.

The following afternoon Samuel, accompanied by Brian, made his way back to Huntsville, elated with what he had seen and learnt. Three short days together had convinced him that he could count on Brian to be a reliable friend. He was also confident, having learnt so much from Brian, that he could return to the area with Joseph and Catherine, without placing them at risk.

Chapter 5

Upon returning to Huntsville, Samuel sat down and prepared the most detailed of his many dispatches, urging Joseph and Catherine to wind-up their affairs in Toronto and head as soon as possible to Huntsville. He was anxious to take early possession of their Free Land Grant lots, as they would need as much of the summer as possible to clear land and build their cabins before the winter set in.

Chapter 6

Huntsville Dispatches

Throughout his stay in Huntsville, Samuel prepares lengthy dispatches to inform Joseph and Catherine in Toronto about the town and its people.

During the week prior to them departing for Huntsville, Joseph and Catherine read and re-read the dispatches Samuel had prepared while working on the bridge project. These described life in Huntsville and its grand aspirations, notwithstanding its relatively short history. He had taken the opportunity during breaks from his work to question the work crews about the formation of Huntsville, its founders and their plans for the surrounding territory. He made sure that he never missed a week in conveying his findings to Joseph and Catherine in the form of a lengthy dispatch.

The dispatches traced the history of Huntsville back to the year 1850, when the colonial government began placing pressure on the various territories to open up and settle vacant lands. In the case of Ontario, these programmes focused on the lands north of the Severn River.

To pursue this, Samuel was told that the Robinson Treaty was negotiated with the Muskoka native bands, who were given a cash payment and an annual annuity in return for a large swath of forestlands. The area acquired was promptly surveyed and concessions lines laid down, which in turn were subdivided into rectangular lots, each comprising approximately 100-acres.

The concession and lot lines may have appeared neat and appropriate on paper and certainly acceptable for conveyance, however in reality, they bore no relationship to the natural boundaries set by river courses, rocky outcrops, flooded marsh lands and other natural features; all of which were prominent on the lands north of Peninsula Lake.

The town site was thoughtfully located near the headwaters of the north branch of the Muskoka River and the mouth of the Big East River, which flowed into Lake Vernon. This lake in turn was joined to Fairy Lake, and not too far away was a much larger lake with many bays.

This vast network of waterways had made it a desirable location for a key fur trading post, which had been established as early as 1829 on Bigwin Island. It was not until the Hudson Bay Company built an even larger trading post at Orillia in the 1860's and 1870's that the Bigwin Island post was eclipsed.

Samuel discovered that Captain George Hunt visited Huntsville for the first time early in 1869, and soon after decided to make it his life's calling to build a permanent settlement between Lake Vernon and Fairy Lake.

He and the other town founders of Huntsville were quick to qualify the lands north of the town under the Free Land Grants and Homestead Acts. In order to encourage the arrival of settlers, the town founders were free with their glowing praise for the quality of the soil, superior crop yields, healthy climate and the natural beauty of the pristine lakes.

Unfortunately, time would eventually show that the only really truthful claim related to the exceptional natural beauty of the region, which if anything, was understated.

Captain Hunt was convinced that if the sandy plains in the immediate area of Huntsville supported large stands of majestic white pines, they would also be good for growing agricultural crops. He also believed that the vast forests would attract loggers and sawyers to process the logs from the vicinity and those from further afield which the homesteaders would be cutting down.

He was correct in assuming the deposits of sand and clay left by glaciers in the valleys and lowlands around nearby lakes provided fertile land. However, he incorrectly assumed that all land capable of supporting healthy stands of white pine would also have excellent prospects for agriculture. This proved to be a costly mistake for many settlers, but there was no way that Samuel, nor any of the other settlers who chose to homestead north of the major lakes and their fertile valleys, could have known this at the time.

Even if known, this probably would not have deterred George Hunt as he was a determined man, and in a hurry

to fulfill his dream. After first urging families to settle near the town, he planned to secure its future as a supply centre by encouraging the population of the more rugged lands that lay to the north.

He pleaded with every government official he met to send him able-bodied young men to live what he called a life of sturdy independence, with the opportunity to rear their families away from the pestilence and vice that was prevalent in the large European and growing Canadian cities. He claimed they would be certain to enjoy robust health, enjoy a good appetite and sleep soundly. 'Shoulder your axes and come to Muskoka,' he called to all who he could reach!

Critical to the development of Huntsville, was the government approval and funding Captain Hunt received late in 1869 to start building a winter road from Bracebridge to Huntsville. Shortly afterwards he was appointed postmaster, with the postal station being named after him, and given his leadership, it was not long before the village adopted his name.

By 1871, work crews under Captain Hunt's direction began building a bridge across the Muskoka River near what would become known as Port Sydney to replace the cumbersome pontoon being used to that time to cross this natural barrier. He then petitioned the government to extend the road north to Huntsville and then east to meet the Bobcaygeon Road, which ran north from southern Ontario; and was already under way and approaching the small vil-

lage of Dwight. When he received permission in 1872, he promptly set about linking Huntsville with Dwight.

Huntsville was unique in that it was blessed with rivers and waterways to deliver logs to the sawmills, he was confident would be built. However, to be truly successful, Captain Hunt believed the town required a railhead to source logs from further afield and to transport the sawn lumber to Toronto and beyond. If a railhead were not established, the raw logs would be taken further down the Muskoka River to Bracebridge where they would be sawed into planks and then transported to Toronto.

While he anxiously awaited arrival of the railway, Captain Hunt aggressively promoted the expansion of the population of Huntsville and the northern lands. He wanted to make sure the town had the labour pool and economic base to support a major sawmilling town and enjoy the prosperity this would eventually bring.

Samuel was fascinated with the lumber business, and as a result his dispatches dealt with its development and future potential in considerable detail. He established that lumbering had actually begun in earnest north of the Severn River some twenty years earlier, when lumber men from the south became aware of the rich but limited white pine stands in the area. They had also received word of much larger stands further north.

The forest resources in the southern and eastern portions of the province had been substantially depleted, but the demand for broad softwood planking was continuing to

grow rapidly. The first mill in the region had been erected on Lake Muskoka in 1853 near the mouth of the Muskoka River. The bulk of the timber came to this mill by way of a tortuous water route down the southern branch of the Muskoka River.

Logs harvested from north of the road that linked Huntsville to the Village of Dwight were transported by land to Peninsula Lake and through a canal to Fairy Lake, and then onto the Town of Huntsville. Alternatively, they were taken across a short portage railway into Lake of Bays, and then down the southern branch of the Muskoka River to Bracebridge. It wasn't until the 1870's, with the arrival of rail service, that a majority of the logs from the area were being milled in Huntsville, and the sawn planks shipped south.

Captain Hunt had correctly forecast that once the rail line arrived at Huntsville, competition for timber limits along the Big East River and beyond would heat up. As predicted, this led to numerous sawmills being built along the rail line. In the Huntsville area there was, fortunately, ample land between the rail line and the lake shoreline to establish mill yards for stacking sawn planks in preparation for shipping. The lake itself was also well suited to store the massive booms of logs arriving in the spring and used by the mills over the course of the year.

Samuel also made a point of meeting with settlers who visited Huntsville to acquire supplies, and learnt from them the important role the lumber industry played in supple-

menting their income, as without the winter work lumber companies provided, many would have departed the area much earlier. It became customary for the settlers, and even well-established farmers, to dispatch one or more of their family members to the lumber camps for the winter months to earn additional cash to bide them through the year.

The settlers who left their families to work in the lumber camps in the winter led a colourful but dangerous life. They generally worked sixteen hour days felling timber and loading giant sleighs to transport the logs to water and across the lakes once they were frozen. They ate well, eating as much pork and beans as they could handle, and in the evenings gathered around the potbelly stoves in the bunkhouses to tell wild stories, mend their gear and play checkers.

In the spring, some of them would stay on to work as river drivers, which was described to Samuel as one of the most dangerous and best paying jobs in the lumber business. These men were responsible for directing the logs down the waterways, over waterfalls and through rapids. The toughest area for this type of work was on the fifty-mile long Big East River, which originated in the Algonquin Highlands and flowed into Lake Vernon. The logs were then corralled into booms and towed as required to the Huntsville sawmills.

The other industry Samuel made a point to learn about, and which he covered in one of his later dispatches to Joseph and Catherine, was the rapidly expanding tan-

ning business. It was based on the large stands of hemlock trees in the region. Hemlock logs were of little interest to the lumber merchants, given their weight and coarse grains, and with its principal use confined to rough construction lumber for barns and fencing. In the early 1870s this changed with the realization that hemlock bark was rich in tannin.

The readily available supply of hemlock bark attracted a number of tanneries to set up operations in Huntsville, creating a growing demand for the bark. In fact, the high quality bark became worth a great deal more than the wood. For the best quality, it needed to be peeled from the logs a few months after the tree had been felled, but before it dried out completely. It was then pulverized in grinding mills and steeped in water to make the tanning liquor in which hides would cure for as long as nine months.

The final dispatch Samuel sent to Joseph and Catherine aimed to prepare them for some of the difficulties they should expect to encounter during their wagon trip to Huntsville, as well as his excitement about what lay ahead for them, having just completed his exploratory expedition to Lake Solitaire and the surrounding forests. He urged them to proceed as soon as possible to Huntsville as he had already begun to purchase the equipment and supplies necessary to clear their lands to meet the Free Land Grants Act requirements, and to start building their future homes well before the winter set in.

Chapter 7

Cabin Building

While Samuel waits for Joseph and Catherine to arrive in Huntsville, he starts building a cedar cabin.

Samuel realized that it would take Joseph and Catherine a month or more to wind up their affairs in Toronto before they could join him in Huntsville. They would need to notify their employers of their plans and continue to work for them until their replacements were found; which in Joseph's case would likely require him to complete the school year, or at least until another teacher became available.

Being concerned that there would be a great deal to do before the cold winter weather arrived, Samuel decided to use the period prior to Joseph and Catherine's arrival in Huntsville to start building one or more of the cabins which would be essential to have completed in order to survive the winter. He was also concerned that Catherine would be uncomfortable camping out in the open without the security of some sort of shelter.

Chapter 7

Before departing for Lake Solitaire, Samuel arranged with the Huntsville postmaster to deliver all mail addressed to him to Brian Powers, who had agreed to read the mail and ride out to Lake Solitaire as soon as Joseph wrote to notify Samuel that he had set a date for his departure from Toronto.

Not wanting to waste any time, the day after Samuel sent his dispatch urging Joseph to head north at the earliest opportunity, he purchased an old buckboard, which he was confident he could repair should it break down, and a riding horse that was capable of pulling the wagon. He then loaded it up with the tools he had been acquiring, which included a heavy mallet capable of breaking rock, a seven-foot crowbar, a large bow saw, a splitting axe, hammers, two cases of steel spikes, an assortment of nails, a wide wood chisel, a pickaxe, two spades and miscellaneous other supplies.

It was late afternoon before he reached the Stoney Lonesome turn off on the Millar Hill concession line and nearly nightfall before arriving at the beaver dam on the west side of Lake Solitaire, where he decided to camp for the night.

For the next four days, Samuel spent the daylight hours cutting a trail from the beaver dam to within a half mile of the Windy Caves, making it wide enough for the buckboard to travel. It was there that he planned to build a temporary shelter to be used in bad weather until he completed one of the cabins. The next morning it took four trips

to carry his tools and other supplies from the end of the trail along the half mile of rugged shoreline north of the Windy Caves. This persuaded him that it was necessary for him to find an alternate route to the east side of Lake Solitaire in order to avoid the cliffs and steep shoreline encountered by approaching the lake from the west.

Once the tools and his other belongings were transferred to the Windy Caves, and his newly acquired horse tethered in a beaver meadow he found nearby, Samuel leveled a corner of the cave using a pickaxe and a spade. He then proceeded to collect flat stones to build a wall on two of the open sides, leaving only a narrow entrance that could be closed off if necessary.

Samuel decided he would only install a door should Catherine use the shelter before the cabin was built, and she expressed concerns about wild animals entering the shelter at night. He felt that leaving this for her to decide would be a test of whether she was ready to live the life of a homesteader, and accept the many inconveniences she would certainly experience.

On completion of the stone shelter, Samuel returned to trail building, cutting a six-foot wide swath through the forest to the stream that flowed a quarter of a mile north of the beaver meadow where he had tethered his horse. It was there that he planned to erect his own cabin, which he felt he should try to complete before Joseph and Catherine arrived from Toronto. This would leave him free to assist them in building a larger and more elaborate home further

up the lake, once they had decided on the size and materials to be used. This latter cabin would probably require the three of them to work together in order to lift the heavier logs they would likely decide to use.

In choosing the site for his cabin, Samuel took into account the proximity to the large beaver meadow that he instinctively felt could be relatively easy to transform into fields, and thus avoid the time consuming felling of trees and removal of their stumps. He also had in mind piping water from higher up the stream to his cabin, which would save time fetching it each day, at least during the months prior to freeze up.

Samuel was content to build his own cabin with the five-inch to six-inch diameter cedar logs that he had found to be in plentiful supply in an old growth cedar stand close to the site he had chosen. The old growth cedars, with their twenty-four-inch and larger trunks and the all-encompassing canopy they created had over the years blocked out the sunlight for the smaller trees, causing hundreds of them to die. However, being cedars, they remained standing for decades without their trunks deteriorating very much.

The tree trunks did dry out though, and this made them fairly light and easy for him to carry one pole at a time, or use his horse to drag three or four poles secured together as a bundle. With the lightness of the logs, he was capable of cutting and transporting the hundred and twenty poles he calculated would be needed to the site over a period of four days. Samuel's plan was to erect a twin walled cabin, with

the intention of filling the space between the walls with sawdust, mud and straw.

After stripping bark from the poles and cutting off any protruding branch stumps, he laid them one upon the other, overlapping in the corners with only a two-foot opening left for a door. To add stability, he drove steel spikes through each second layer of logs near the corners of the cabin.

He then filled the gaps in the inner sides of the walls as he went along with a mixture of clay and grass, leaving the outsides of the walls looking neat and tidy in their natural state. Only once the two walls were erected to their full height did he plan to fill the space between them with straw, sawdust and dried moss, working through the top of the walls and the gaps cut for the door and windows. He was confident that when this was done, the winter winds would not penetrate the cabin nor could rain wash out the clay plaster.

The cabin roof was a more significant challenge as it needed to extend well beyond the outer walls. It took as much time to design and construct the roof trusses as it did to erect the inner walls of the cabin. The roof itself required over two-hundred three-inch to four-inch diameter poles, which were also cut mainly from the mature cedar stand, supplemented with poles salvaged from the small trees cleared while building the trail around the south end of Lake Solitaire. The butt end of a pole was matched with the thin end of the next pole to keep them as perpendicular as possible to the roof line.

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The next and even more time-consuming step involved splitting shakes to cover the roof poles and thereby seal the cabin from rainwater and snow. This required cutting the largest dry cedar logs he could find into fifteen-inch long rounds. These in turn were split into shakes using his six-inch wide wood chisel. This task alone consumed seven eighteen-hour work days, and another five days to nail the shakes in place, ensuring that they always fully overlapped each other.

Upon completing the roof of his cabin, and still not having heard from Brian about Joseph's arrival date, Samuel decided to turn his attention to finding a more suitable route to approach the east side of Lake Solitaire from the Stoney Lonesome Road. It was clearly impossible to widen and level the narrow trail that he had built in front of the Windy Caves to make it accessible for wagon travel, which would be increasingly necessary in order to bring in supplies and eventually deliver produce to the Huntsville market.

After three days of criss-crossing the lands between the Stoney Lonesome Road and the east side of Lake Solitaire, Samuel finally settled on a route that descended down a steeply sloping valley to exit at an abandoned beaver dam, located only a short distance from the lake. He saw no difficulty in flattening and widening the beaver dam wall to permit a wagon to safely cross. However, descending down the valley would require moving a considerable amount of soil in order to create three or four switchbacks to lessen the grade.

The soil in the valley was plentiful, so that it was more a matter of the time and effort required to dig and move earth, using a large metal bucket, from one part of the route to another in order to slope the trail into the side of the hill, rather than having to move large rocks out of the way. The trees he cut down were used to help retain the soil he was moving to the down-slope of the hill. Samuel felt that he was extremely fortunate to have not encountered any insurmountable difficulties, such as rock outcrops or cliffs.

Samuel calculated that the switchbacks needed to be at least one hundred feet long and thirty feet wide at the corners, to safely maneuver a wagon down the hill, and even then he felt it may be necessary to secure the heavier loaded wagons with a block and tackle attached to their rear axles and nearby trees to prevent them from sliding off the road or descending too rapidly and crushing the horses or oxen used to pull them.

He found the work both mentally and physically satisfying, as at the end of each day he could look back and see measurable progress. He also got pleasure from knowing that many others would benefit from his efforts, but would probably never appreciate the thought and effort required to build the road.

After ten days of continuous physical labour, and before completing the final switchback, Samuel decided, in order to rest his back, which was giving him some trouble, he would move ahead and complete rough-cutting and marking the larger trees that needed to be felled at the

bottom of the hill in order for a wagon to pass. When this was done, Samuel headed back to Huntsville and purchased a supply of 1½-inch thick planks to be used to build cabin doors, shutters, shelves, tables, benches and other furnishings.

He also acquired panes of glass for the windows, and gypsum to build a stone fireplace on the north wall of his cabin to provide heat during the winter, and to cook with until he could purchase and transport a wood burning stove to the cabin site. The openings for the windows and fireplace had yet to be cut out, as he had decided to leave this task until later in the year after Joseph and Catherine's cabin had been built.

While he was in Huntsville waiting for Joseph and Catherine to arrive, Samuel knew he could spend the time usefully pre-building doors, windows and cabin furniture, as well as repairing the buckboard and purchasing another horse.

Samuel left Lake Solitaire feeling confident that when Catherine arrived at Lake Solitaire she should feel safe staying with Joseph in the modest cabin he had just built, while he and Joseph started to build a more elaborate cabin on a site yet to be chosen by them. Until the second cabin was completed, Samuel had decided that he would be quite comfortable camping out at the new cabin site and, if necessary, retiring in bad weather to the stone shelter he had built beneath the overhang of the Windy Caves.

Chapter 8

Homesteading At Last

Upon Joseph and Catherine's arrival, Samuel helps to build a more substantial cabin for their own use.

While he waited for his brother and Catherine to arrive in Huntsville, Samuel set about acquiring the additional supplies they would be needing to build their homesteads in the forest along the shores of Lake Solitaire. These supplies included agricultural and carpentry tools, as well as hunting rifles for each of them.

When he purchased a second horse, he was given a six-week old pup, which he named London to remind them where their journey started from. The two horses, being mares, were named Anne and Caroline, after the sisters they had lost to cholera.

It was early June before Joseph and Catherine arrived at Huntsville with their still meager possessions packed on a transport wagon. Their combined financial resources, however, were decidedly more substantial, especially considering that they had only been in Canada for less than two

years. The bonus Samuel received for his contributions to building the town's bridge contributed considerably to their financial well-being.

Before departing for Lake Solitaire, Samuel suggested they spend a couple of days in Huntsville to allow Joseph and Catherine to familiarize themselves with the town and the supplies available in the stores along Main Street. They also took the opportunity to re-inventory their combined possessions, and then Joseph and Catherine assumed responsibility for purchasing the tools and food supplies they felt were required. These included a plough and a large, badly damaged wagon, which Samuel proceeded to repair at the blacksmith's shop, reinforcing its sides with steel supports and replacing the wooden base with much thicker and stronger boards.

While working in the blacksmith's shop, Samuel forged a thirty-inch wide axle to which two of the buckboard wheels could be attached to assist in transporting the larger logs they would need to build Joseph's and Catherine's cabin on Lake Solitaire. He planned to sling one end of a log under the narrow axle and use a horse to pull it with the other end of the log being dragged along the forest floor. By using a narrow axle, the wheels would be able to fit between the large mature trees. With smaller logs, Samuel planned to place the wheels over the middle of the log and attach it firmly with a chain to the axle at that point, which he felt would increase their maneuverability between the forest trees. He was confident that with a bit of

effort, he and Joseph could transport the logs they required even through the densest sections of the forest.

The three of them left Huntsville for Lake Solitaire early on a Tuesday morning with the repaired wagon and the buckboard both fully laden, and the sun shining brightly ahead of them from a clear blue sky. The first part of their journey was uneventful, other than Catherine's fascination with the different types and size of the trees they passed through.

On reaching the turnoff from the Millar Hill concession line to the Stoney Lonesome Road, Samuel reminded them that they would need to partially unload the wagon in order for the horses to pull it up the steep grade near the top of the hill. The buckboard, being much smaller, would not require its load to be lightened and could be used to return to collect the belongings removed from the wagon.

When they approached the steepest portion of the hill, they unhitched the mare Anne from the wagon and both horses then hauled the buckboard to the top of the hill. They returned the unloaded buckboard to the bottom of the hill where it was reloaded with the heaviest items from the wagon. By making three trips, they managed to transport all of their belongings to the start of the new trail Samuel had roughed out down the valley to the abandoned beaver dam on the east side of Lake Solitaire.

With the trail from there onward still being in a roughed-out state, the wagon and buckboard had to be left

part of the way down the valley. From there the three of them made four trips using the short axle rig with its two buckboard wheels to help transport the heaviest items, and another six trips to carry their lighter belongings themselves to the cedar cabin Samuel had built on Lake Solitaire, a half mile north of the beaver dam.

It would be an understatement to record that Catherine was pleasantly surprised when she first set eyes on the cedar cabin. She was even more pleased once she had the opportunity to appreciate more closely Samuel's handiwork, the location he had chosen for the cabin near the crystal clear stream, and the natural beauty of the cedar shake roof.

Having met with some of the settlers who were on their way back to Toronto, she had developed some misapprehensions over the discomforts she was expected to endure while homesteading in the northern forests. These quickly disappeared on inspection of the cedar cabin, and imagining what it would be like once the windows, fireplace and inner walls were completely filled. The last vestige of concern vanished when Samuel described the type of cabin he felt they could build for her and Joseph.

Samuel's friend Brian Powers had loaned him a copy of the handbook written by Catherine Traill to help newcomers adapt to the northern Canadian forests. Having carefully studied the chapter on building log cabins, Samuel was confident in assuring his brother and Catherine that their home would not only be sturdier, but even more attractive than the cedar cabin he had just built.

That night they sat in the cabin around the table on the benches Samuel had built while waiting in Huntsville for Joseph and Catherine's arrival from Toronto. They discussed at great length the four or five most pressing priorities they needed to attend to, while recognizing that there would be many other matters to take care of before winter set in.

They quickly agreed that the first and most important priority was the cabin to be built for Joseph and Catherine's use. This required a site to be found, preferably one that would be easily accessible with the buckboard and not too distant from Samuel's cabin. To accomplish this, Samuel proposed that they spend the next day hiking along the route he covered with Brian three months earlier. This would not only help them to orient themselves, but would also reduce the chances of them later becoming lost in the forest. Along the way they could visit a number of attractive potential sites to locate their cabin.

Next, they determined that it was important to spend time extending the Stoney Lonesome Road around the east side of Lake Solitaire, at least as far as the cedar cabin, and preferable sooner rather than later to the site Joseph and Catherine decided to build their cabin.

They concluded that once the new cabin and trail were completed, and certainly before winter arrived, they would need to set aside time to build a shelter to stable their horses, with additional space to store hay to feed them through the winter, as well as the firewood they would need.

Chapter 8

Once Samuel described his idea of converting the beaver meadow into a field to grow hay, vegetables and other crops, Catherine urged them to also make this a priority, recognizing that it was already quite late in the year to expect a bountiful harvest. She argued that if all they achieved was to prepare the land and lay down a limited number of plants, they would know what to expect to achieve when they planted early in the next year, after the frost left the ground.

Samuel reminded Joseph that the two of them would also need to devote time in the fall to hunt. Brian had recommended they shoot at least two deer to build up a supply of both dried and smoked meat, and that once ice could be recovered from the lake, they should add to the supply by storing fresh meat in a below ground icebox or stone cairn. Alternatively, they could store the meat in the stone shelter Samuel built under the Windy Caves, provided they blocked up the entrance with rocks to keep wolves and other animals away.

The next day, it did not take Joseph and Catherine very long to select a site for their cabin, partly because Samuel made a point of taking them first to the area he believed was the most attractive. It was on a point of land jutting into the lake and looked out across the water to the high rock cliffs on the west side of the lake. An additional attractive feature was its location immediately south of the beautiful Kalonga Valley with its abundant wildlife.

Samuel was pleased they chose that particular site, not only for its natural beauty, but also because it was close to two healthy stands of relatively young hemlock trees that were growing on slightly higher ground. The stands were more than capable of yielding an ample supply of consistently sized twelve-inch diameter logs, which were ideal for constructing a sturdy, long-lasting cabin. Furthermore, being on higher ground made it somewhat easier to haul the logs down to the cabin site.

The actual site chosen for the cabin was set back fifty feet from the lake and nestled in a large grove of magnificent hemlock trees, with many of them having trunk diameters of at least thirty inches. The hemlock trees were spaced far enough apart to permit the cabin to be built without having to cut down any of these mature trees, which would ensure that the canopy remained intact and continued to shelter the area around the cabin from all but the heaviest snowfalls. The vast majority of snow would be caught on the tree branches, where it would either evaporate or melt and fall as water to the ground.

There were, however, risks to building a cabin beneath such large trees, which necessitated constructing an extremely sturdy building that could withstand one of them being uprooted in a severe windstorm and falling onto the cabin. This required using large logs and ensuring the corners of the building and roof trusses added strength to the cabin rather than being areas of weakness.

Chapter 8

It took nearly a week for Samuel and Joseph to cut forty twelve-inch diameter logs, and with the help of the buckboard wheels and short axle rig, one of their horses dragged the logs to the cabin site. Joseph and Catherine then set about stripping the bark off the logs, and shaving down protruding areas where branches had grown.

While Joseph and Catherine prepared the logs, Samuel took the opportunity to inspect the beaver meadow closest to his cabin, which he hoped could be converted into a farm field, believing that it would take a great deal less effort than clearing a forested area of land and removing the tree roots.

In examining the meadow further, he found it to be heavily matted with many types of grass, raspberry canes and sapling growth, and quickly realized that they could not be removed by hand or even through repeated ploughing. He therefore concluded that they would have to be burnt off, which would require all three of them to be present to prevent the fire getting out of control. This would have to happen only after the nearby trees and undergrowth had been well soaked by a summer rainstorm.

Instead, he decided to search for twelve large larch logs to provide a solid base for Joseph and Catherine's cabin. The hemlock logs would then be placed on top of them, thereby preventing them from deteriorating over time. Samuel had learnt about the natural preservatives in larch logs while supervising the construction of the bridge near Huntsville. Due to their unique characteristics, larch

logs had been used as piles to anchor the bridge supports.

While Joseph and Catherine continued to spend time stripping bark off the hemlock logs, Samuel dragged the larch logs, which had been cut into fifteen-foot lengths, to the cabin site with the help of their horses. He then set about leveling the site using a pickaxe, spade and rake; the type of physically taxing work he favoured over such mundane tasks as peeling logs.

After the site was leveled, he laid down the twelve larch logs parallel to each other, approximately thirty-inches apart and then with Joseph's help he rolled two of the large peeled hemlock logs into place, driving steel spikes through them into the larch crossbeams. He proceeded to notch the logs with an axe and chisel to permit the shorter sidewall logs to fit tightly into the notched areas, and filled the gaps with a mixture of clay and wood chips.

Once the first layer of logs was securely in place, a six-inch wide channel was cut down the centre of each log using an axe and chisel, to ensure that the log placed upon it fitted as tightly as possible over its full length. This was a time consuming task, as it required each log to be put in place and removed a number of times for adjustments to be made to ensure the tightest possible fit was achieved.

They reached the window sill level after laying down the fourth layer of logs. This enabled them to use shorter logs on either side of the spaces left for the windows, thus speeding up their progress considerably as it was much easier to prepare and fit the lighter logs into position.

Chapter 8

The back wall spanned over twenty-three feet and had neither a door nor a window, and therefore it was a much more difficult task to put these logs in place, since it was physically impossible for them on their own to lift one above the level of the fourth layer.

They resolved this problem by building a twenty-foot ramp comprised of two pine poles, which they attached to the top log of the back wall. They slowly rolled the hemlock cabin logs up the ramp, assisted by a block and tackle, to the top of the wall where the logs could rest on the side walls until they were ready to be secured into place.

Samuel's ability to improvise and overcome what, to them and most others would be considered insurmountable obstacles, made Joseph even more grateful that Samuel had joined them in immigrating to Canada.

They decided to make the roof structure less steep than the roof on the cedar cabin, as the hemlock cabin would experience significantly lower snow loads. On the other hand, the cabin itself needed to be much stronger to withstand a large hemlock tree falling during a fierce wind storm.

Brian Powers had pointed out to Samuel a number of very large hemlock trees that had twisted in a wind storm, split and snapped half way up their trunks. He attributed this to the nature of the grain and inflexibility of the wood. For these reasons they chose to place the trusses much closer together than Samuel did for the roof of the cedar cabin, which was located some distance from large

trees. They also decided to sheath the twenty trusses with two-inch thick pine planks on which cedar shakes would then be placed; similar to the roofing material installed on Samuel's cabin.

This required Samuel to make three trips to Huntsville to purchase two-inch planks to be used for the roof, and one-inch planks to install a floor over the larch cross beams on which the cabin walls rested. In the meanwhile, Joseph and Catherine continued to split cedar shakes for covering the cabin roof.

Once the roof, floor and windows were in place they decided to defer building shutters for the windows until the fall, when it would no longer be possible to work effectively on other tasks, such as the access road and the preparation of their farm fields.

Samuel was delighted to see how much his brother and Catherine appreciated their cabin. Having learnt lessons while building the cedar cabin, he was able to make their cabin superior in design and quality. Nevertheless, he remained quite satisfied with his work on the cedar cabin, particularly given the speed with which it was built, and what he believed would be its superior ability to retain heat once all the spaces between the walls were filled.

With Joseph and Catherine's cabin well under way, Samuel returned to working on the last of the three switchbacks required on the wagon trail descending from the Stoney Lonesome Road down the valley towards Lake Solitaire. Similar to the upper sections of the road,

it required the movement of substantial quantities of earth and imbedded boulders to level the roadbed and reduce the gradient. Although Samuel realized that it was sufficient to make the road passable, but not necessarily perfected at this stage, as there were so many other pressing tasks to complete.

He found this difficult to do as by nature he was a perfectionist. However, once the descent was passable, Samuel moved on to rough out the lower sections of the trail along the shore of Lake Solitaire leading to both cabins, as they also required upgrading to permit wagon traffic.

It was essential for their large wagon to be able to reach their cabins before winter set in too deeply, in order to transport the heavy cast-iron stoves they needed to acquire to supplement the heat from the stone fireplaces they planned to build in each of their cabins.

Chapter 9

Breaking Fields

Samuel proceeds to drain a small beaver dam for a vegetable garden, and clears a much larger beaver meadow for a hay crop.

Samuel knew only too well from his construction experience in London, England, that the many smaller tasks required to complete Joseph and Catherine's cabin would take two to three times longer than the time required for the basic construction. These tasks included chinking the small spaces between the logs, insulating around the windows and doors with a mixture of wet clay and straw, installing the plank floor, and building a small underground food storage cellar and pantry shelves. Catherine had also set about making heavy curtains for the windows to help keep the winter cold out.

Samuel concluded that it was best that Joseph and Catherine be left to work together on their own, as his views on the finishing touches would not necessarily be the same as theirs. It would be the home the two of them would be living in for quite some time, or at least until they were absolutely sure the settler life on the shores of Lake

Solitaire was what they were seeking for themselves for the long term; at which time they would probably add a room at each end or construct a more substantial building close by.

While Joseph and Catherine worked on completing their cabin, Samuel set about exploring more intensively the three lots they had laid claim to, to determine the land that would be most suited for cultivation. Although they had been given five years to clear a total of thirty acres, it was essential that a portion of this be done almost immediately in order to grow vegetables, and equally important to harvest hay for storage to feed their horses during the winter months.

Since the vast majority of their land was covered with large mature trees, Samuel deduced that it would be virtually impossible to fell sufficient trees, remove their roots and break up the soil, to create enough plantable land to cultivate a vegetable crop in the current year.

This led him to explore the valleys that ran across each of their lots. Large sections of both valleys were either under water, held back from dams built by beavers, or were meadows created when their dams were washed away. Over time, the meadow's became covered with a dense growth of raspberry canes, brambles and coarse sedge grasses. Dams were abandoned, either when the beavers were killed by wolves, or they moved on once an area became depleted of deciduous saplings within safe reach of their lodges.

Samuel determined that clearing a beaver meadow would be a great deal easier than cutting down trees and

struggling to remove their roots. In addition to the land in the valleys being flatter, he was hoping that it would be easier to work , as the soil would likely be deeper and richer than the land on the hillsides or along the shores of the lakes.

After consulting with Joseph, the two of them decided that they would clear a portion of the beaver meadow a half mile south of Samuel's cedar cabin, as well as attempt to drain the beaver dam at the bottom of the Kalonga Valley. They envisaged using the cleared area in the existing beaver meadow for growing hay, whereas root and other vegetables would be grown in the Kalonga Valley, as it was closer to Joseph and Catherine's cabin, and safely accessible for her to tend.

Since there was greater urgency to plant the vegetable garden, Samuel first set about creating a hole in the Kalonga Valley beaver dam wall in order to drain the area and get a good look at the condition of the valley floor and the quality of the soil.

It took a full morning to cut a hole deep enough into the dam wall for the force of the water flow to gradually start widening the gap. Within an hour or so of water gushing through the opening in the dam wall, Samuel was able to cause a ten-foot wide section of the embankment to collapse, hastening the dams drainage. Nevertheless, it still took another day and a night to substantially empty the dam and, to Samuel's delight, expose two relatively large, flat sections of land; more than adequate for their own needs, as

well as plenty-large, enough to cultivate surplus vegetables for market.

That evening he described to Joseph and Catherine how he intended to re-channel the natural overflow of water from the undamaged upper dams, along a ditch he planned to dig a foot or so higher than the level of the two garden beds that were to be laid out in the richer soils near the centre of the rapidly drying valley floor. From this ditch, a portion of the water would be diverted into shallower, slower flowing furrows to feed the vegetable garden.

For this irrigation system to work effectively, it was essential that the vegetable gardens be as level as possible, enabling them to be periodically flooded with an even six-inches of water. Once this slowly soaked into the soil, it would encourage the vegetable plants to set their roots deep into the earth.

Before the leveling of the garden beds could take place, the soil on the valley floor needed to be drained further, which Samuel attempted to hasten by digging small furrows to dissipate any remaining pools left over from the dam, or water that collected after a light rain fall.

While he waited for the soil to dry out, he cut and dragged, with the help of his horse, forty long, sturdy logs from the forest to create a border around the garden beds to retain the irrigation water he intended to flood the garden beds with. Around the logs, Joseph and Catherine planned to erect a brush fence to discourage deer and other

animals from foraging on their vegetable plants. They would cut the necessary poles and saplings for the fence whenever they felt the need for a break from the intricate finishing work they were completing on their cabin.

As an added precaution against wildlife destroying their young vegetable plants, they had accumulated ashes from their fire places to spread between plants to serve both as fertilizer, and reputably also to deter deer and rabbits.

Digging of the irrigation ditches and leveling off the garden beds, was work Samuel enjoyed doing. It tested his endurance and provided a sense of achievement at the end of each work session, when he looked back over what he had accomplished.

Immediately after the Kalonga Valley vegetable plots were made ready and the irrigation system proven, Catherine took possession of the garden beds and started transplanting the young onion, turnip, carrot, beet, squash, cucumber, pumpkin and tomato plants she had seeded in ten wooden trays. These had been laid out in a nearby clearing that received ample sunlight, and were carefully watered each day to ensure the seed boxes were ready for transplanting as soon as Samuel completed preparing the vegetable field. Joseph had earlier acquired a sack of seed potatoes, which Catherine also proceeded to plant. The day before Catherine transplanted the seedlings, Samuel opened the irrigation sluices to allow water from the upper dam to flow down each furrow, and in turn into the prepared beds.

Chapter 9

Next, Samuel turned his attention to the beaver meadow south of his cedar cabin. After a fortuitous early morning rain shower, Joseph and Catherine joined him to burn a three-foot wide firebreak around a three-hundred by three-hundred foot square area he had selected for cultivating a hay crop.

Later in the day, when the sun had dried the vegetation in the centre of the square fire break, he methodically burnt section after section, always with the wind blowing the flames to an already burnt out area, and being careful never to allow the fire to get out of hand or sparks to jump the fire break.

With the vegetation burnt off, he was able to examine the soil and was pleased with what he found. It was a rich loam comprised of soil washed down from the surrounding hills as well as from hundreds of years of decomposing plant growth trapped by the beaver dams on the valley floor.

Samuel recognized, however, that before they could re-seed the meadow, the burnt but still matted grass and raspberry cane roots would need to be broken up by ploughing and re-ploughing the field. Over the course of the next four days he ploughed the burnt area of the meadow from east to west, north to south, and diagonally from corner to corner, exposing the roots to the heat of the sun and hoping to bury those not destroyed deeply below the surface. The grass seeds they sowed sprouted within a week, and six weeks later yielded their first hay crop.

From an initial hay field of approximately three acres, Samuel increased its size over time more than three-fold, to more than ten acres. In addition, he cleared a small patch of land further west down the valley, to confirm that the very next beaver meadow had the potential to add an even larger amount of comparable quality land, should they wish to cultivate a meaningful corn crop or need additional hay fields.

Although the vegetable gardens were planted relatively late in the year, by mid-August Catherine was harvesting a bountiful supply of tomatoes, carrots, cucumbers, collard greens and melons; more than sufficient to satisfy their needs as well as to share with their neighbours. Unfortunately, most of their neighbours had either not been as industrious as them in establishing their vegetable plots, or had cleared land in the forest, only to encounter less fertile soils. They were also surrounded by trees, which limited the sunlight that was essential for their gardens to flourish in the short growing season they experienced in the north.

By the end of August, Catherine was preserving berries, beans, tomatoes, relishes, onions, beets and cucumbers. She was also laying out seeds to dry for planting the following year, and drying corn to crush in the winter.

Their successful harvest enabled Joseph and Catherine to make three wagon trips into Huntsville, where they delivered a variety of vegetables to Johnson Preserves. This required leaving Lake Solitaire at four o'clock in the morn-

ing to ensure the produce arrived in a fresh state. In return for their load of vegetables, they received a quarter of the quantity back in a bottled or canned state, which went a long way to satisfying their vegetable needs through the winter and the following spring.

Chapter 10

Community Hunt

Samuel makes a major contribution to the annual community deer hunt, bringing down a large moose.

By mid-November of their second year living on Lake Solitaire, the frost set into the ground early and a layer of ice developed on all but the windiest sections of the lake. The ice was too thin to safely support a person's weight, but thick enough to prevent travel by canoe. As a result, Samuel and Jacob knew they would not be able to fish for at least another month, until a solid layer of ice permitted them to travel across the lake.

Fortunately, in early October Joseph had built up a small inventory of smoked fish. Part of Catherine's preparations for winter included taking stock of the supplies in their pantry and root cellar. She noted that they only had a six week supply of dried or smoked meat and fish. When Catherine informed her husband of this, he realized it was none too soon for the annual hunt to take place.

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Although this was only their second winter in the northern wilderness, they were well familiar with the significance of this important community event. Men from five or six families in the area participated in the planning of the expedition, hunting, butchering and sharing the meat. It was customary for each participant to receive a ration relative to their contribution, as well as the needs of their family.

The community nature of this activity encouraged each hunter to try to excel in performing his assigned responsibilities, while co-operating with his companions and deferring to the authority of the elected master of the hunt. Furthermore, hunting as a well-coordinated group in the rich forests and beaver meadows around Lake Solitaire significantly increased the chances of being successful, and minimized the risks of settlers hunting on their own and accidentally shooting a neighbour.

Jim Brooks had been selected to be the hunt master, with Brian Powers having been retained to provide field guidance and support. It was the responsibility of the hunt master to decide when the hunt would take place and to notify the six participating families, three or four days in advance.

One of Jim Brooks' first visits was to see Samuel, to arrange for the hunters to meet at his cabin on the day before the hunt and plan their different roles. He also asked Samuel to notify Brian Powers and the three participants who were closest to him, of the date set for the hunt.

When Samuel visited Brian Powers, Brian commended them on the timing, as the rut was almost at its peak and the bucks would be very aggressive; making it easier to track the deer, and with light snow on the ground the movement of the hunters and their dogs would not be impeded. Based on the signs he had seen while hiking through the forest in recent weeks, Brian predicted that the hunters would be able to bag the number of deer they sought in a single day.

On his way back to Lake Solitaire, Samuel paid a quick visit to Albert Fleming, Arthur Johnson and George Pilger. He invited them to meet at his cabin in two days time to plan the hunt. It was clear that the men and their sons were eagerly looking forward to participating in the annual community event, but he also noted that the women and their daughters were visibly excited by the prospect of having a few days to themselves, without their men around to enjoy the last days of autumn!

Along the trail between each farm, Samuel paid close attention to the many signs of deer. There were scrapings on saplings where bucks tried to rub velvet off their antlers, bedding areas where does left a scent that informed nearby bucks of their readiness to mate and tracks in the light snow that revealed the daily commute of the deer. Brian had already taught him how to interpret these signs, so Samuel occupied himself by trying to predict which deer would be where during the hunt. Like the other men he visited throughout the day, he was also eager to have an opportunity to co-operate with his neighbours in providing their families with meat for the coming winter.

Chapter 10

Two days later, as arranged, the men met at Samuel's cabin to plan the hunt. The hunting party, in addition to Jim Brooks, Samuel, Joseph and Brian, included Albert Fleming, Arthur Johnson and George Pilger, who each brought their eldest son. Between them there were six well-trained hunting dogs, including London and Jackson, who belonged to Samuel and Brian. During the meeting, which was held inside Samuel's small but warm cabin, the men talked while the sons were respectfully silent.

As the host, it was Samuel's duty to start the meeting. He said the first order of business was to elect the master of the hunt for the following year. During leisurely hunts for fowl or small game in the spring this position was simply ceremonial. But during the annual deer hunt, this position entailed a greater responsibility because the participants depended to a fair degree on the skills of the master of the hunt for a good portion of their winter supply of meat. If he failed to lead the hunters well, every family might run short.

As the most experienced hunter among the settlers, Jim Brooks was almost unanimously re-elected as the master of the hunt. Only almost, because George Pilger tried to secure the position for himself by boisterously claiming to have shot the biggest buck during last year's hunt. Albert Fleming pointed out that George only shot the biggest deer because Brian and his dog Jackson had expertly driven the buck to his stand. When the other men said "Ay!" in support of Brian as master of the hunt, George quietly muttered something rude and sat down.

With the election behind them, Jim Brooks laid on the table a detailed topographical map of the area they planned to hunt and asked Brian to provide advice. Pointing with a piece of kindling, he drew their attention to the well-sheltered Kalonga Valley and explained that there would be many deer getting ready to winter in this area thanks to the abundant forage and thick canopy cover on both sides of the valley. He said that the Kalonga Valley would be relatively easy hunting, so this area ought to be kept as a reserve to hunt in the event of a severe winter, and it became necessary to shoot a deer to replenish a meat cache looted by weasels or coyotes.

Brian then explained that a strong wind from the southwest had been blowing up the McReynold Valley for a week and would probably continue for another few days. Such conditions were ideal for a group hunt, since the deer could be driven up the valley by men with dogs towards a few strategically placed shooters. The tailwind would ensure that the deer would not catch the scent of the shooters before coming into rifle range, thus encouraging them to remain in the valley. Furthermore, the sun would be in the eyes of the deer for the most of the day, giving the shooters another advantage.

Brian concluded his briefing by saying that he had reconnoitered the western side of McReynold Valley the previous week. He had found evidence of at least ten mating pairs of deer, as well as moose. Many years had passed since the last time a hunter bagged a moose during the

annual hunt, as the elusive beasts were hard for the drivers to spook and even more difficult for the shooters to see.

On the map, Brian indicated the route that the drivers would take the next morning. He explained that he wanted them to walk approximately two hundred paces apart; this was close enough for the dogs to fill the gaps between them, but far enough apart that the entire width of McReynold Valley could be covered in one sweep. Brian reminded the men to keep their dogs nearby and under control, so that man and dog moved as a solid line across the landscape.

Brian then pointed to the exact rock outcrops where he wanted the shooters to position themselves. He reminded the shooters that they should kick away the dead leaves, twigs, and other obstacles from their positions, so that they would be able to move or turn their bodies without making the slightest noise. He instructed the shooters to only fire at confirmed targets, in order to avoid the injury or death of a dog or man. Finally, Brian marked the area where he wanted a cairn built, on a rocky knoll near an old stream bed about four-hundred paces behind the shooters. This was also where the men would rally at the end of the hunt, or in the event of an emergency. Five shots would be fired in quick succession to signal such an event.

The men all voiced their approval of Brian's plan, and Jim Brooks thanked him for sharing with them his strategy and deep knowledge of the area. Jim then took nine marked rifle shells out of his coat pocket and put them inside a wool sock. He passed the sock around so each man could

pull out a shell. George, Albert and his son, and Arthur held shells with 'S' carved into the bullet, meaning they would be the four designated shooters during this year's hunt. Jim, Joseph, Arthur's son, George's son and Brian held shells with 'D' carved into the bullets, meaning they would drive the deer up the valley with the dogs.

But Samuel held a shell with a 'C' carved into the bullet, meaning he had to place himself ahead of the shooters and busy himself by building a stone cairn that could safely hold the bulk of the meat over the next few weeks. Samuel knew that each man had to accept his position without complaint since each job was equally important, and therefore he was careful to hide his disappointment with being assigned such a boring task.

Brian closed the meeting by leading a short prayer that the men would have a successful and safe hunt the following day. He explained where he wanted to meet the drivers the following morning, and then he did a final review for the shooters, as these men had to silently sneak to their positions very early in the morning. Soon afterwards, the men went home to finish cleaning their rifles and prepare their kit. Samuel lay awake for a long time after the other men left, contemplating his misfortune as the designated builder of the cairn. But by the time he fell asleep, he had decided to construct the best cairn any annual hunt had ever seen, even if he thought it was the least desirable role.

Before dawn the next morning, Samuel ate a hearty breakfast of beans and dried fish, dressed in his warm-

est clothes, and rode to Fowler Lake at the top of the McReynold Valley with London, his reliable dog following behind. He tethered his horse in a grassy clearing, and then walked a mile south down the stream flowing out of Fowler Lake to reach the rocky knoll where Brian had indicated he wanted a cairn built. Nearby he found a supply of flat stones that could be used to build the walls, which he started separating into different sizes and diameters.

The cairn was necessary to store the deer carcasses while the hunters allowed the meat to season. After two weeks, they planned to butcher the deer and carry out selected portions of the meat over the course of several weeks. For this temporary storage structure to be effective, it had to be secure enough to withstand the prodding of raccoons and coyotes, and also very tightly packed to prevent weasels and rodents from entering. Samuel knew that he would need a combination of flat stones, small rocks and moss to make a great cairn.

Just after the sun rose above the tops of the trees, Samuel heard three shots in the distance, one after the other. That was Brian's signal to the shooters that the other men and their dogs had started driving the deer up the valley. London's ears perked up immediately, his canine instincts telling him that something was underway. After stopping for a moment to listen to the shots, Samuel checked his rifle to make sure it was loaded, just in case a deer managed to slip by the shooters. He then resumed his work on the cairn.

The entire morning passed with nary a sound, except the slight clunk of rocks being piled gently as he advanced the height of the walls of the cairn. Sometimes, far in the distance, Samuel heard the barking of one of the driver's dogs. By early afternoon, Samuel had laid a solid foundation measuring eight feet by eight feet, and had erected all four walls to a height of four feet. He was now almost finished stuffing the walls with wet moss, which would soon freeze as hard as the rocks themselves. For the roof, he planned to lay down a layer of maple saplings, a thick layer of hemlock boughs and then another layer of maple saplings with many heavy stones on top. Samuel guessed that the cairn, when completed, could hold the carcasses of at least ten mature deer.

The air was suddenly pierced by one shot, then another. Finally, the first deer had reached the shooters! Samuel stood still, trying to imagine the excitement that he was missing. Even London let out a quiet whimper, seemingly upset that he was stuck watching his master move rocks, rather than pursuing deer. Over the course of the next two hours, many more shots echoed through the otherwise silent forest.

All the shots led Samuel to give up hope of a deer getting through the line of shooters. Nonetheless, he was at the same time pleased for his fellow hunters, and looked forward to celebrating their success later that night. He had become so dedicated to building the roof of the cairn, that he failed to notice when the shooter nearest to the cairn shot multiple times; such shooting was almost always a sign that

an animal had broken through the line of shooters. So great was his concentration on the cairn that he even ignored London when the dog crouched low, lifted his right paw, and put his ears back; another sure sign of proximate game!

Just as Samuel put the finishing touches on the roof of the cairn, an enormous bull moose and a smaller cow trotted into a thicket of fir saplings just twenty paces away. The hulking beast was four times the size of a mature buck and almost twice as big as Brian's best draft horse. Even the cow moose was three times as big as a mature buck. Both animals stood among the fir trees, audibly huffing and puffing. London was growling and yipping, trying to get his master's attention. Yet Samuel kept selecting flat stones for the roof of the cairn.

Frustrated by his master's unawareness, London tugged at Samuel's pant leg, causing him to admonish the dog sharply and by doing so spook both moose, which were already agitated from being chased the length of McReynold Valley by dogs. Without hesitation, the bull moose grunted and charged at Samuel, reaching an impressive speed in just a few bounds.

Samuel's instincts took over as he did not have time to think. He was seconds away from being trampled and gored by the moose. Part of him wanted to raise his rifle and shoot at the moose, but another part realized the danger of taking such a risk. What if his rifle misfired, or what if his trigger was jammed with frost? So, instead of taking a stand, he grabbed the sling of his rifle with his right hand and the

scruff of London's neck with his left. Then he dove through the small opening he had left in the roof of the cairn, tumbling onto the rock floor on top of his rifle and the dog.

The bull moose stumbled to a halt and snorted loudly, aching for a fight. Crouched beside London, Samuel gripped his rifle and peaked through a crack he had failed to fill in the wall of the cairn. The bull moose stamped its feet and threw its head up and down. After a moment, it started to saunter off. The cow moose limped forward, obviously in excruciating pain. Samuel could see that the female had already been shot on its rear thigh, acquiring a wound from which it would unlikely recover.

Many thoughts ran through Samuel's mind. He could shoot the bull, which would garner him respect with his fellow hunters, but it would prevent this perfect animal from reproducing in future years. Besides, the bull would provide more meat than the families needed, since he had heard the shooters kill at least seven deer earlier in the day. On the other hand, Samuel could shoot the cow, which would provide enough meat for the families, put a suffering animal out of its misery, and allow the massive bull to sire another generation of offspring.

It took only an instant for Samuel to determine what he should do. He peered through the crack in the wall to determine the precise location of both animals, checked the breech of his rifle, and then jumped up. He simultaneously took aim and fired at the cow, shooting it just below the shoulder, through the lung. It dropped immediately and

was dead when it hit the ground. The enormous bull moose, frightened by the report of the rifle, dashed into the forest, perhaps never to be seen again by man.

By the time he walked over to the dead moose, Samuel could hear dogs barking and men talking cheerily and laughing. The other nine hunters were approaching slowly, struggling to carry or drag the deer they had shot behind him. Each hunter was telling his own story about the day's highlights and exciting moments. When they saw Samuel, they shouted greetings and heartily congratulated him on bagging the cow moose, which it turned out his neighbour, Albert Fleming, had shot in the hind leg. Once they noticed the stone cairn, they were quick to exclaim that it was the sturdiest and most attractive stone cairn they had ever seen.

Caught up in the excitement and conversation, Samuel did not have a chance to tell them about the massive bull moose he had seen but opted not to shoot. After a few minutes, he decided not to tell the others about his experience. He was pleased with himself for not succumbing to pride and having done the right thing in shooting the injured animal, and allowing the healthy bull to continue reproducing in the forests around Lake Solitaire. All Samuel really wanted at that moment was to share in the glory of a successful hunt with his neighbours and friends.

While they talked about their adventures, the men pulled out their knives and field dressed the large moose and all eight deer. The carcasses were to be temporarily

stored in the cairn, but the hunters set aside a few selected cuts from one of the deer to carry home for immediate use in stews and soups. When they were substantially done dressing the animals, Brian used his hatchet to disconnect the lower legs of two deer, and gave the stumps to the dogs as a reward for their contribution to the good hunt.

Having finished field dressing the deer, five of the hunters agreed to meet again at the cairn in two weeks to prepare the various cuts of meat. The waiting period was necessary to season the meat and stiffen the hides, which could then be peeled off after hanging the carcasses in a tree by their hind legs. Storing the meat in the cold autumn weather also congealed the valuable fat, which would be cut away and melted into small cakes. From these they would make super high-energy snacks, to which they would add bits of dried meat, nuts, berries and even vegetables, known as pemmican.

When the hunters returned to the cairn, they would divide the various cuts into roasts, racks of ribs, and off-cuts for stewing. They would wrap the portions and each man would receive a preliminary share of the meat based on the size of his family. The balance, which represented approximately a fifth of the cuts, was to be allocated to the hunters who had made the greatest contribution to the hunt. Albert Flemming's son received an extra share for the best shooting, Jim Brook's for a safe hunt, Brian Powers for organizing the hunt and skillfully commanding the dogs, and Samuel for building an excellent cairn and bringing

down the cow moose. In this way, nobody around Lake Solitaire would go short of meat that winter, but special contributions were appropriately recognized.

Chapter 11

Northern Elope

Samuel ventures deep into the northern wilderness to deliver a letter to the Reverend Norton Hill's son.

Reverend Norton Hill was the founder of Hillside, a small village that lay eight miles east of Lake Solitaire, on the road leading from Huntsville to the Village of Dorset. During the fall of 1878, the Reverend rode to Lake Solitaire to discuss a sensitive family matter with Samuel. Before doing this, he had sought Captain Hunt's advice, who strongly recommended that Samuel was the right person to carry out what he had in mind.

Reverend Hill's son, Edward, at the age of 18, had eloped four years earlier with Alice McPhee, a beautiful married woman who was five years older than him. Edward had left a note for his family, explaining the circumstances for him leaving and giving the impression that he was heading west. He asked them to not try to find him, as it would place Alice's life in serious jeopardy.

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Alice's husband, William McPhee, was a violent and unpredictable man who regularly beat her. It was after noticing marks on the side of her face, while attending one of his father's church services, that Edward became concerned and enquired whether she was all right. She had brushed off the bruising as the result of a silly accident, claiming to have tripped and fallen against a door frame.

A few weeks later when he noticed that her hands and wrists were a dark red and black hue, and badly swollen, Edward was certain something was amiss and decided to accompany Alice on her walk home. Over the next year his relationship with her grew from being a sympathetic friend to something much deeper, leaving them with no practical alternative other than to discretely depart the area, and in such a manner that her husband would be unable to trace her. They chose not to go west, but rather north, where they hoped to live peacefully with a small band of the Algonquin tribe, led by Chief Blackrock, an enlightened leader known to welcome teachers to help his people learn English and the white man's ways.

The Methodist missionary who had previously served as a teacher in this community had died just over a year ago, and had never been replaced by the diocese. Edward was aware of this through his close friendship with Charlie Otter, who lived nearby with his mother. She had been the Norton family's housekeeper for many years, and as a result, Edward and Charlie had spent much of their time together while growing up, fishing and hunting together; more like brothers than friends.

Almost four years after guiding Edward and Alice to Chief Blackrock's camp, Charlie Otter returned to visit his grandfather. He was pleased to find Edward and Alice healthy and fulfilled, teaching the young children to speak English in the mornings and discussing the white man's world to the band's elders in the afternoons and evenings.

When Charlie Otter returned to Hillside, he came back with a lengthy letter from Edward to his father, explaining in more detail his decision to have left Hillside, the love he shared with Alice, and their commitment to continue the work they were doing. He also sought his family's forgiveness for the grief he may have caused them, but truly believed there was no other way to have protected Alice from the wrath of her husband.

Reverend Norton Hill, being a man of the cloth, had long ago forgiven his son; praying constantly for his safety. Therefore, when he received the letter from Charlie Otter and discovered that his son was alive, it was with great joy, and he anxiously looked forward to communicating further with him. Although he was asked by Edward in his letter not to share his news, other than with close family, and also that they were not try to visit him, he did state, however, that he would welcome receiving a letter in due course, informing him of the family's well being.

The Reverend Hill knew he would need to respect Edward's request not to visit him, as it would attract attention if a Reverend of his standing were to travel to Chief Blackrock's camp. He therefore sought out Samuel, whom

Captain Hunt had assured him was among the most capable and trustworthy of the settlers living in the Hillside-Millar Hill area. He was confident that Samuel was more than capable of venturing into the wilderness, with or without Charlie Otter, to deliver a letter to his son.

Nevertheless, before approaching Samuel, Reverend Hill had prevailed on Charlie Otter to guide Samuel to Chief Blackrock's camp. Since it was expected to take at least five days to hike, canoe and portage to the camp, Reverend Hill insisted that while Samuel was away, that his two middle sons stay at Samuel's cabin in order to assist Joseph with chores on their two farms.

Samuel and Charlie Otter left two days later, having purchased a supply of beads, knives and other items as gifts, and also to trade. They managed to hitch a ride on a horse-cart to the Oxtongue River, where Charlie Otter had arranged for a canoe to be available. From there they travelled two miles north, where another canoe was stashed to take them further upstream.

After repacking and loading the second and lighter canoe with their sparse supplies, they headed north, easily fighting the late summer current of the Oxtongue waters, which northbound travelers could not paddle during the springtime melt. At times, where the river met open flood lands and widened, the two would tie a rope to their canoe and drag it over the sand and gravel bars.

When it came time to leave the river and portage up a much smaller eastern tributary that led to Chief Blackrock's

camp, Charlie and Samuel made easy work of carrying the canoe and their possessions, doing it in two trips. Charlie Otter, notwithstanding having heard of Samuel's strong character and legendary exploits, had not anticipated such a keen and disciplined traveler – and a white man to boot.

Within three or four hours of trudging through the muck, brush, and the slippery stones of the small stream, Charlie and Samuel reached its source known as the lake of two streams. It was a small lake, consisting of a several dozen acres of open water interspersed by standing dead-heads and lined with willows and cat tails. Charlie explained that this dark pool, with a giant blackish-coloured rock centred in its middle, was significant to his people because it had one stream entering and two leaving, standing as it did at the top of two watersheds. They had traveled up the difficult western arm, flowing east, and would continue on down the equally difficult eastern arm, flowing west in order to reach Chief Blackrock's camp.

Charlie defended his respect for this swampy pond explaining that, like his people, it would come and go. One generation would see a pond a third the size of the one before them, while the next might see one twice its present size. All this, he explained, depended on the needs of the beavers that tended the two large dams that held the water in on the east and the west sides.

When predators were suffering in numbers, the beaver population would thrive. More beavers would mean the easily accessible saplings on which the beavers survived

were consumed, and in time would be farther and farther from the water. Additionally, more beavers meant more lodges and need for more shore. In response the ingenuitive beavers would build up the height of two damns, increasing the space for lodges and also bringing their food sources closer to the water.

In time, the wolverine, lynx, and wolf populations would rebound and reduce the number of beavers, who were the sole custodians of the dams. As a result the dams would break, the water level recede and the surrounding vegetation would re-grow. Charlie's parents had spent their youth in a beaver boom time, he explained: pointing out the sun-bleached conifer and cedar snags still standing some 30-yards from shore. Using his father's French, he called them chicots.

With night falling and a tangled and difficult stream to travel the next day, Charlie guided their canoe to shore where his people had often camped. Although Charlie wanted to question Samuel on the stories he had heard about him, the bracing pace the white man had set that day all the way from the mouth of the Oxtongue River had been too much for him and he soon fell into a deep sleep.

The next morning, after eating a few strips of smoked meat and a handful of late-summer blueberries, Samuel went on foot to reconnoiter the dam that held the western edge of the lake. Since coming to this frontier land and settling in the northern wilderness, Samuel had admired the skill of the Canadian beavers. The structures they built

never ceased to amaze him, especially the manner in which they imbedded wood, rocks, leaves and mud together, and in this case, the sheer height of the two dams.

The west dam, which they had crossed the previous evening, was built across a gorge. It was approximately twenty-feet high but no more than twenty-feet wide at the water's surface; very high as far as such dams go, but otherwise not particularly noteworthy. What Charlie Otter had failed to mention when explaining the significance of this lake, was the challenge the beavers overcame in successfully blocking the eastern exit.

Samuel found the eastern dam to be of equal height to the previous one, but more than one-hundred and fifty-feet in length, and built above a thirty-foot drop into a steep valley. It was by far the most impressive structure he had seen built by beavers, and he now understood why generations of beavers were required to build it, and why the beaver was so revered by the native peoples.

Samuel's pace and determination on the first day of their trip to cover as much distance as possible, made it quite clear to Charlie that he had no intention of dawdling but was determined to travel quickly to bring word back to Reverend Norton about his son. For this reason it came as no surprise that Samuel had already prepared the canoe when Charlie woke at dawn and sat looking toward the eastern dam.

Charlie noted Samuel's ability to find sure-footing with every step he took down the eastern stream, whether

it was over rock, logs or mud. An hour after sunrise, the pair had descended to gaze across a long narrow lake, which Charlie claimed was one of the six lakes connected together, with the final one being the location of Chief Blackrock's camp. It seemed unusual to Charlier Otter to cover so much ground with such ease, especially with a guest who was accustomed to living in a cabin and tending to fields, and this made Charlie recall what he had been told about the man he was traveling with.

By late afternoon, the pair had managed to reach the southern end of the last of the six lakes, being the one on which the camp was situated, and had accomplished their journey in under two days, as opposed to the normal three or four days. Charlie thought it such an accomplishment that he wanted to race to the north end of the lake and boast to his grandfather, Chief Blackrock, that no other two had traveled with such speed. He knew, however, that Samuel would need to enter the camp alone to deliver his message, and so they paddled to a small point that was well out of sight of the camp, from whereon Samuel would continue alone on foot.

Along the way, Samuel had made a precise map of their journey in order to return safely on his own, as it was agreed before they left Hillside that Charlie Otter would leave him a few miles before the camp and return immediately to Hillside. It was important to Charlie that he was not seen to have betrayed the band by guiding an unknown white man to their camp.

Samuel spent two days observing the activities in the camp from a distance, and specifically watching Edward and Alice teach the children in the mornings and have long discussions with the Chief and the band's elders in the afternoons and evenings. Once he was comfortable with the daily camp routines, Samuel presented himself at the camp as a fur buyer with goods to trade. It took two days to win the Chief Blackrock's trust, who then arranged for Edward and Alice to introduce themselves.

After delivering the letters and gifts from Edward's parents and having lengthy discussions on the possibility of them returning to Hillside, Samuel realized how committed they were to their missionary work, and the happiness they enjoyed together.

A day later Samuel left the camp with copious correspondence from Edward and Alice to their respective families, none of which described where and how they were living. In leaving, Samuel promised to get a message back to them, should Alice's husband die or leave Hillside permanently.

On his return to Lake Solitaire from Chief Blackrock's camp, Samuel found plenty of time to think. As Charlie Otter had taken the canoe with him when he journeyed back earlier, Samuel hiked through the forest, retracing the route they had taken by walking along the shores of the six northern lakes to the dark pool with the black rock in its centre, and then down to the Oxtongue River.

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Wherever possible, Samuel sought animal trails to ease his way through the forest undergrowth, and even sometimes waded through shallow lake water when the trees were extremely dense. At sunset he made camp, spending part of the night thinking about what he could do to make it possible for Edward Norton to safely visit his parents, even if he had no current intention of returning permanently to Huntsville.

Samuel had checked out William McPhee before he left and confirmed for himself that he was a man of very poor character, just as the Reverend Norton had described. He worked as a sullen labourer for the Town of Huntsville, which led Samuel to consider approaching Captain Hunt to arrange for his services to be terminated. However, there was no assurance that he would not find another menial job nearby or return later to Huntsville.

As much as Samuel had empathy for the Reverend Norton's family situation, he realized that there was no apparent sure solution. He took comfort, however, in knowing that he had done what was asked of him, and had returned with only good news about their son's safety, his relationship with Alice and the satisfying missionary work he was doing with the members of Chief Blackrock's community.

Chapter 12

Family Growth

Joseph and Catherine adopt three young orphaned brothers and slowly introduce them to life on Lake Solitaire.

It had been four years since Joseph, Catherine and Samuel built their cabins along the shore of Lake Solitaire. All three had settled comfortably into their respective roles as pioneer settlers, their fields were well established, their crops had been plentiful, and they were coming close to completing their work obligations on the Millar Hill concession line.

During their monthly trips into Huntsville to collect supplies and deliver produce, it became a regular habit for Catherine to visit the Anglican Church at the top of the hill overlooking the town. This always incorporated a brief stop at the neighbouring orphanage to donate some baked goods and baskets of vegetables they had set aside specifically for this purpose. Samuel or Joseph would also periodically volunteer to assist with any repairs needed to the building, on which occasions Catherine would spend time reading to the younger children and tutoring some of the older students in

mathematics in order to ease the load of the schoolmistress, who was always grateful for her help.

For the past year, they had made an extra effort to check on the Hodgeson brothers, who were orphaned after both their parents had tragically died in an unfortunate accident. The Hodgeson's were neighbours who had homesteaded close to Millar Hill, and through common interests had become welcome and trusted friends of the Langleigh's and Samuel MacTeer.

During the early winter of 1878, Ethne Hodgeson received word that her youngest sister Barbara had taken deathly ill with fever, and she persuaded her husband Peter to take her to her sister's cabin near Bracebridge, in order to comfort her and help her husband and young daughter through an extremely difficult period for the three of them. It was a dangerous trip to make during the winter, as the roads were often covered in snow drifts, making bridges difficult to navigate along the route.

Despite the risk, Ethne did not want to miss the opportunity to see her sister once more, as Barbara was not expected to recover. The sisters had only managed to visit each other once during the past two years due to the demands of their respective farms and the distance between their homes.

Peter Hodgeson asked Catherine and Joseph to take care of the three boys while they were gone, as the winter trip would be hard on the young children. Peter Jr. was ten

years old at the time, and the twins, Matthew and Luke, had just turned seven a week before the doomed journey.

The Hodgesons set out late in the morning, and made it comfortably to Huntsville before nightfall. They took a room at one of the hotels in order to have a roof over their heads for the night. In the morning they set out at dawn to head for Bracebridge, which they expected to take most of the day. At noon, however, they encountered a terrible storm with blinding snow.

As they reached the first crossing of the Muskoka River, their horse-drawn cart slipped a back wheel off the icy bridge and they were plunged into the rapidly moving waters of the river below them. Both were either drowned or succumbed to hypothermia. Tragically, Ethne never made it to her sister's side, who also died a few days later, prompting her husband to return to England rather than continuing to endure the hard life of homesteading in Canada alone.

It was clear to Catherine that the three boys were missing their parents and were certainly not thriving at the orphanage, causing Catherine and Joseph after each visit to feel torn over returning to their homestead without them. After many nights of discussion together, they concluded that they should apply to adopt the three boys to give them a proper home, and a future to look forward to on their farm.

Catherine and Joseph returned to Huntsville one week later, going directly to the orphanage to ask the boys if

they would like to start a new life with them. They were all still so young, but Peter, who had just turned eleven years of age, was aware that there were not going to be many opportunities for them to be adopted together as a family, if at all, and so he readily agreed. Encouraged, Catherine and Joseph immediately approached the headmistress of the orphanage to determine how to proceed with adopting them.

Their new life as a family started a short month later, when Joseph and Samuel journeyed to Huntsville with their trusty buckboard to fetch the boys and bring them to their new home, where Catherine was waiting. She had stayed behind at Lake Solitaire to prepare a special meal to welcome them home.

Catherine was worried that the boys would not be pleased about having to share a corner of the cabin, with only makeshift bunks, and was increasingly concerned about other potential problems as she looked around. She regretted not going to Huntsville, since being alone offered her no comfort to her worries.

Catherine and Joseph had done some thinking about how they could add two rooms to the cabin so that the boys would have their own space, but were unable to start building before the adoption papers came through. She did, however, derive some comfort from the fact that all three boys would be a part of building their own rooms, and thus learn about construction, which was crucial to survive in the northern wilderness.

It was a quiet and awkward arrival, with the three brothers staying as close to each other as possible and with only the briefest of responses when spoken to. Samuel left soon after dinner in order to give the new family time to acquaint themselves with each other as they prepared for their first night together.

He guessed that it would not be an easy transition. The three boys were very young when their parents died, and the subsequent year in an institution had taught them very little about love and trust. It would take some time, but he tried to think of ways he could be helpful as he fell asleep that night.

Catherine was determined that she would make the boys feel as though they could confide in her as needed, and if they were finding it difficult to adjust to their new life, she and Joseph would be patient with them and give them as much time as they required to come around. It was a learning experience for them as a couple as well, as they had never been parents, although they had always hoped to be blessed with a large family.

It soon became clear to Catherine that her initial fears were largely unfounded, as the three boys gradually settled into the routines of running a homestead, and this helped to bring them closer together. Peter was attentive and quick to want to please, recognizing how fortunate his brothers and him were to be so warmly welcomed by Catherine into her home. In the orphanage, by necessity, he was required to act in many ways as a parent to his younger brothers, and

was therefore much relieved to have two parents that could guide all three of them into the next phase of their lives.

The fact that their new home was more sparse than the one they had previously enjoyed did not seem to bother Peter at all. Contrary to many of the other settlers, Joseph and Catherine, together with Samuel, had devoted their energies to establishing their fields, building their animal shelters, storage barn and the access road to the Millar Hill, as well as the trails they used to hunt and fish on nearby and distant lakes.

Peter quickly developed a keen interest in trapping wild rabbits to bring home as a surprise for his new mother, and always looked forward to a weekly fishing trip with his new uncle. Matthew and Luke, being twins, tended to look to each other to amuse or interest themselves. They did, however, enjoy helping Catherine as she fed the livestock each morning, and had taken to competing with each other in collecting eggs, milking the cows and cleaning out the stables.

Catherine noticed soon after her new sons had settled in, that a day never passed without them quietly retiring each evening to a corner of the cabin to kneel down together to recite their prayers. They often added their own words to record their thanks for something in particular that took place that day, and never failed to pray for Catherine and Joseph, and express their gratitude for taking them into their home.

Catherine did her best to foster their earlier religious upbringing by setting aside time each Sunday evening for reading the Bible together. She used the opportunity to not only reinforce the moral aspects of an experience they had shared together during the week, but also to improve their reading skills.

By late July, all three boys had become efficient at collecting hay from the meadows, and had learned to work closely with Joseph and Samuel as they gathered the fall wheat. The two men went ahead to cut the wheat with the cradle scythes, and the three boys followed behind them to bind and stack the sheaves. Under the hot dry sun, the grain in the fields seemed to ripen as fast as it could be cut and carried, and each evening all were tired, but pleased with their role in bringing in the harvest.

There was also work to be done in the vegetable garden, and young Luke took to helping his new mother collect the ripened vegetables late in the afternoon before dinner, so she could serve some of them that evening and prepare the surplus for bottling the next morning.

Early September was the time for the fields to be ploughed in order to allow the soil to mellow with the winter snow and deep frosts. This was also a project to be completed before the boys would start school in the fall, which young Peter vigorously resisted, claiming it was not necessary for him, as he already knew he wanted to be a farmer.

Joseph and Catherine, however, insisted that he was far too young to know what was yet possible for him. Catherine promised him that he would continue to learn about the land from his father and uncle, but the ability to read and do mathematics were essential tools for any person's life, and one of the greatest gifts that they could help him obtain. Peter reluctantly accepted their wishes, but was the first of the boys to be in the field at the end of the school day, and first to volunteer to work with his new uncle to cut logs to build the extensions onto the Langleigh cabin, and always willing to undertake any other physical task.

When the boys returned from school in the afternoons they took turns working with either Joseph or Samuel. Occasionally Catherine would express annoyance with Samuel for catching them on their way home to help him in the marshy wetlands to repair the irrigation channels. Samuel wanted them to learn about life in the forest, and the steps required to get the land to work to its fullest potential, even if it meant them getting caked with mud from head to toe.

By early fall, as the daylight hours grew shorter, the dinner table was a lively setting for laughter and storytelling. On some occasions, Samuel related the adventures of their voyage to Canada, and also stories about their Uncle Archibald, the famed Pirate Trapper, which he appropriately embellished to the boys' delight.

Joseph was a loving father who encouraged his young sons to ask questions about farming and was always patient

when they couldn't quite grasp a lesson. He recalled how difficult it was for him to learn the role of a farmer, and he did not want to discourage his three young sons in any way by being impatient with them.

For her part, Catherine was an exceptionally loving but firm mother, and insisted on cleanliness when they came in for a meal. She made sure their clothes were always clean, especially now that they were attending school for three days every week.

For the first month after the boys' arrival at Lake Solitaire, weekends were spent helping with peeling the logs that Samuel and Peter had cut to build the extension to the cabin, while Joseph and the twins split the shingles that would be placed on the roof as soon as the trusses and roof boards were in place.

In the late fall, Joseph decided to take Peter on a hunting expedition, while promising to teach the twins how to tap, collect and boil down maple sap to make syrup, early in the spring. They seemed satisfied with this compromise, preferring to look forward to enjoying the toffee and fudge they would make, having previously only tasted it once in their lives at a special church event. They were also happy to miss the long hike to the hunting grounds near Poverty Lake, which Joseph made a point of describing in considerable, painful detail, to ensure the twins did not feel they were missing out.

His objective was to teach Peter how to handle a rifle and the many safety precautions that needed to be taken;

from ensuring the breach was empty while they hiked, to their gun barrels being pointed towards the ground when loaded.

After entering the Kalonga Valley, Joseph placed three small logs on top of the muddy ridge of the first beaver dam, so that Peter could shoot at them: first from thirty-feet, then fifty-feet and later one-hundred. Before doing so, he instructed him in considerable detail on how to hold the rifle firmly against his shoulder and look down the sights at the end of the barrel to aim and line up his shot. To Joseph's surprise, Peter hit the target with more than half his shots.

With such success, Joseph decided that Peter would do the shooting for the day, and instead of tracking down a deer, they headed to a beaver meadow where he knew they could find rabbits and rough grouse.

After shooting three grouse and a rabbit, they returned to their cabin on Lake Solitaire. As they approached their home, Joseph had Peter sling the rifle across his back and shoulder the four-foot pole with the rabbit and grouse slung at its end, while Joseph called out to the rest of the family to come out of the cabin to see what Peter had brought home for dinner.

Chapter 13

Tragedy Strikes

Joseph dies tragically, causing Catherine to declare that she would be returning to London.

Towards the end of March 1883, the weather began to change, with warm southwesterly winds bringing in the month of April. After a week of mild temperatures, the snow in the woods was becoming patchy, and the branches on the deciduous trees were visibly brightening as they prepared to go into bud.

Catherine was excited with the beginning of the new season, and began planning her annual search for wild leeks, which were one of the first plants to reappear in the spring. She started to prepare for this year's harvest by bringing up the empty glass jars that were stored in the cellar, and getting them ready for bottling the pungent bulbs for next winter's supply of cough medicine and tasty preserves.

Joseph, Peter and Samuel were about to work on the Millar Hill concession line, together with their neighbours, in order to fulfill a condition of their land grants. After

several years of working on the road with their neighbours, they had finally reached the Boyene River, and this spring they hoped to approach a steep rocky incline that lay ahead.

Arthur Johnson had built a fine wagon trail detouring around the incline, but had refused to cede his land to the county. Nevertheless, he not only permitted but encouraged his neighbours to use his wagon trail to avoid the steep concession line, while reserving his rights to the land.

This seemed imminently fair to the other settlers, and therefore they planned to resume their road building where Arthur Johnson's road ended and not waste their time following the concession line up the incline, which in any event would be impossible to use for much of the year.

It was agreed with Arthur Johnson and the other neighbours from the area bound by the Free Land Grants Act requirements, that they would begin working on the road after the Easter weekend, when the frost would be mostly thawed from the ground, but before the planting of crops could start.

Joseph, Peter and Samuel set up camp beside Lee Lake in a small cabin, where they would stay for the two weeks required, before returning to their farms to prepare the fields for spring planting. The distance was too great for them to travel in both directions each day, as this would not have allowed them to work the long days they wished to do to advance the concession road and get closer to fulfilling their obligations.

One week of road building had passed, and as planned, it was time for one of them to return to Lake Solitaire for new supplies. So far, they had eaten well, and Peter was successful at fishing each day in Lee Lake; sometimes early in the morning for breakfast, but generally in the evenings for a quick dinner before a sound night of sleep. However, their flour and bean supplies were low, and they were in need of more of Catherine's preserves to spruce up there meals with some vegetables, to see them through another week.

Joseph, who also looked forward to seeing Catherine again, volunteered for the morning's journey to the cabin and back. Peter would have been the obvious choice, since he was still only fourteen-years old and not yet as strong as the other men working on the concession line. Despite this, Joseph worried that the trail back from Lee Lake to the Stoney Lonesome Road was not that clear, and Peter could possibly become disoriented along the way.

After an early breakfast the following morning, Joseph started on his horse and worked his way for a mile or so through a coniferous forest to link up with the Stoney Lonesome Road. From there onwards, the trail was bounded by deciduous trees, which would have made it much easier for Peter to have stayed on course.

As he rode, he looked forward to seeing Catherine again after spending a week away in the bush, and realized that he must be quite a sight, having not shaved since leaving. They had, however, washed their clothes in the

lake a couple of times, and hung them beside the fire to dry overnight, unfortunately leaving them smelling of wood smoke. Their efforts were therefore not even close to the hot wash and scrubbing that Catherine performed on their clothes, with the special lavender scented soap she used that deterred mosquitoes and black flies. He made the quick decision, as he was approaching the lake near the Brenn Meadow, to stop for a swim and wash out his shirt. He was confident that his shirt would dry before he reached the cabin, and in any event he didn't mind the freshness of the wet shirt on his skin.

Joseph had just finished redressing and remounting his horse for the last half-hour ride on the trail around Lake Solitaire, when suddenly a large black bear appeared in front of him, with her two young cubs scampering to the left of him. This was a very bad situation for anyone to find themselves in, and before Joseph could react, the bear rose up on her two back legs to get a better view of him. Peter's horse was instantly spooked and reared unexpectedly, not wanting to be clawed by the bear.

The horse's quick reaction caught Joseph by surprise, causing him to loosen his grip on the saddle just as the horse turned sharply to the right and began its dash for the cover of the trees. There was no time for Joseph to rein her in and regain control, resulting in him falling from the saddle, onto the ground. Tragically, he landed directly on a sharp beaver spike from a freshly gnawed maple sapling. The spike punctured his back and stomach, leaving him

lying in excruciating pain on the ground, less than one-hundred yards from the trail that would have brought him home in less than thirty minutes.

The horse was so stricken with fear that it bolted and headed directly back to the hemlock cabin on Lake Solitaire. When Catherine saw it approaching without a rider, her heart sank. She recognized it right away as Peter's horse, and instantly feared that her eldest son was in trouble. Catherine had no way of knowing that Joseph had intentionally left his own horse behind, as it was much stronger and would be more useful in pulling out the heavy stumps and rocks that needed to be moved to construct the road.

Without hesitating, Catherine grabbed the halter of Peter's horse, mounted it, and with Matthew seated in front of her, galloped out to find her missing son. She instructed Luke to stay behind in case Peter was able to make his way home on his own, and under no circumstance was he to leave the cabin.

After half an hour of riding and calling out for Peter, they reached the area where Joseph had fallen from his mount. They would have passed him altogether, if Joseph had not managed to drag himself, despite his severe injuries, to within a few feet of the trail before losing consciousness. As soon as Catherine caught sight of his red shirt among the dried leaves beneath a stand of maples, she let out a cry and instantly both she and Matthew dismounted and knelt over him.

Chapter 13

Joseph was unconscious and Catherine could see that his condition was grave. She and Matthew struggled, but were unable to lift Joseph's heavy body onto the back of Peter's horse. She therefore had no choice but to send Matthew on his own to find his brother and uncle at Lee Lake, while she remained with Joseph. While she waited she prayed hard, both for Joseph's life and the life of her son; hoping that she would not loose either of them on that day.

Matthew raced on Peter's horse as fast as he could, carefully watching the ground to follow the track his father had made on his way through the coniferous forest. When he reached Lee Lake he found their camp empty, and correctly assumed that they were already at work on the Millar Hill concession line, so he continued on to Millar Hill on a trail he had only traveled on once before. Finally, he heard them in the distance and called out as loud as he could, and dug his heels into the horse's side to have her speed there as fast as possible.

When Samuel heard him calling, his heart sank as he knew that he would only be riding at such a fast pace if some dreadful reason had brought him this far on his own. It took only a few words of explanation for both Samuel and Peter to drop what they were doing and quickly rig Samuel's horse to the buckboard, which he drove as fast as he could while Peter and Matthew raced ahead.

On reaching Catherine and Joseph, they took off their jackets and laid them down on the floor of the buckboard

before placing Joseph onto them, and immediately headed with great haste to the hospital in Huntsville. While Samuel drove the buckboard, Catherine and Matthew sat in the back, trying to comfort and steady Joseph, with Peter following closely behind on horseback.

When they reached the Millar Hill concession line, Alfred Flemming immediately volunteered to ride to Lake Solitaire to take Luke to his farm, where his wife would take care of him until Catherine, Joseph and Samuel returned.

On arriving at the infirmary building, Samuel jumped down from the buckboard and rang the bell on the porch; which brought two porters and a nurse scurrying to assist them. Catherine hurried behind them and Joseph to explain to the nurse what she had managed to piece together since they found him, and what he had been able to tell her as he drifted in and out of consciousness.

Samuel sensed that there was nothing he could contribute at that moment. Not wanting to be in the way between a husband and wife, who were in the midst of a possibly life changing event for all of them, he decided to take care of the horses. He could see that they were exhausted, as they had been pushed hard for several hours now, and were tired and hungry.

He had no difficulty finding his way to the town's stables, and took the horses in to be watered, brushed and fed for the night. He then headed to the hotel that was closest to the infirmary to secure three separate rooms, for Catherine, the two boys and himself. He asked for some sandwiches

to take away with him to the infirmary, knowing that none of them had eaten since breakfast.

By the time he returned to Catherine and the boys, they were sitting on a bench in the hallway of the infirmary, with Catherine staring into her lap and sobbing softly, so as not to disturb anyone else. She did not look up when Samuel sat beside her, but did quietly relay the information she had been given by the doctor. He had told her that Joseph was severely injured and was now running a fever, which the doctor had indicated was a very bad sign.

They sat together for a long while as they waited for further news, leaving the sandwiches that Samuel had brought from the hotel for Catherine's two sons to eat. They were told that within an hour they could see Joseph, but with a firm request from the doctor not to excite him too much, and strict instructions that they should spend no more than ten minutes, and then leave for the night.

Joseph and Catherine held hands throughout their short visit, and Peter tried to joke with his father that if this was the result of stopping to bathe, then he would have none of it in the future. Joseph forced a smile, but then started to cough heavily, which brought the nurse to the room to tell them it was time for them to leave for the evening. They said a quick good-bye and promised to see each other in the morning.

At dawn, Samuel heard the knock on his hotel room door from Catherine and knew that she must have had a restless night and was anxious to start the day. It had been

the same for him and the boys, so they left the hotel and walked briskly to the infirmary. They were not allowed to visit the ward where Joseph was until eight o'clock, so they ate a modest breakfast of toast and coffee in order to help pass the time.

When they arrived back at the hospital, they were asked by a nurse to wait at the door in front of the ward. A short time later, the doctor informed them that Joseph had taken a turn for the worse overnight, and had passed away at five o'clock that morning. Catherine collapsed as he spoke the fatal words, and Samuel just managed to catch her and carry her limp body over to the closest chair to recover. They sat there quietly for a long while, with the boys and Catherine weeping softly together.

After gaining their composure, they went to say their good-byes to Joseph, who was still lying in the same hospital bed where they left him the night before. Samuel then took his grieving sister-in-law and nephews back to the hotel to wait, while he made arrangements for his brother's body to be transported to Hillside Village for a funeral to be conducted by the Reverend Norton Hill the following day.

There was quiet between them as they journeyed slowly back to Lake Solitaire. It was only as they approached the final turn off the main wagon track to the more narrow trail that led towards their farms, that Catherine spoke.

In a calm voice, she relayed to Samuel that the settler experience had been long and difficult, having finally taken from her the last of the strength she had, and that she no

longer possessed the will to continue. She was ready to say good-bye to Lake Solitaire and to Canada; and that once Joseph was buried she would start making arrangements to take her sons with her and return to England.

Chapter 14

Life Goes On

Catherine eventually decides to stay at Lake Solitaire, and encouraged by her eldest son, marries Samuel.

By the end of the summer, Catherine had decided against returning to England with her three sons, as she could not yet bring herself to leave the home that she and Joseph had lovingly built together, and where they had derived so much pleasure raising their three adopted sons. Although there had been no time to discuss the future with Joseph before he died, Catherine knew deep down in her heart that he would have wanted her to stay and tend to the farm they had worked so hard to build together.

Samuel had been a constant support for her and the boys since Joseph's death, and although he was also still mourning the loss of his brother, he tried to make the boys' lives lighter by telling them stories about their father when he was growing up in England, and of some of the misadventures the two of them found themselves involved with.

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Catherine watched him in the evenings while he was cheering the boys on, and when he was working with them in the fields. She could see the bond growing between him and her sons, and wondered how any of them would have made it through the heartbreaking weeks and months after Joseph's unexpected passing, without his constant presence and support. She also regretted ever telling him that she would leave him alone in Canada, since she now understood how much this would have added to his own hurt after losing his brother.

By late September the first early morning frosts arrived, and Samuel and the three boys started to make preparations for the winter; stacking bales of hay in the animal shelter, preparing their fields for next year's spring planting, and cutting and storing maple and beech firewood in the adjoining wood-room to allow it to dry, sheltered from the fall rains.

Winter settled in, and spring soon followed. It was time again for the annual work commitment on the Millar Hill concession line, and although it was unspoken between them, both Catherine and Samuel couldn't help but recall where this had led to exactly a year ago.

Samuel and Peter set off for Millar Hill in the week following Easter, but this year they loaded the buckboard with extra rations so that neither of them would need to

make a trip back to Lake Solitaire during the time they would be gone. Catherine watched them leave, and her heart was heavy as she feared losing the constant strength and support Samuel provided, in the same way she had lost Joseph. She felt a twinge of anger at herself for worrying about Samuel in this way, especially since it had only been a year that Joseph was gone, and in many ways Samuel was a brother to her more than anything else.

She had always hoped that Samuel would find a life of happiness like she and Joseph had found, but now couldn't help but wonder if he would eventually meet someone who would take him away from her and her sons. He had often said to Joseph and her that he could never marry because his past could catch up with him at any time, which would likely result in him being arrested, and possibly imprisoned for life. He proclaimed that it would be cruel and unfair for any woman to live with this hanging over the marriage.

She was taken aback by her thoughts and surprised to find how this frightened her, almost as much as the thought of something dreadful happening to him while he was away.

Samuel and Peter were nearing the end of their annual work obligation on the Millar Hill concession line, and had settled into their evening routine of fishing, and looking forward to an early night and a well deserved rest. For no particular reason, they lingered over their dinner that evening while Samuel relayed a few stories of their early days on the homestead and shared a few memories of his brother.

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Peter had taken on additional responsibilities over the past year with the passing of his father, and as a consequence became more confident in speaking candidly to Samuel, as well as more comfortable in asking questions of his uncle. It may have been because he had been orphaned at such a young age, and then adopted into a loving family, that he was previously more inward in his thinking. Now he recognized that life must go on, even though there would always be some pain in recalling the memories of those who had passed. He also worried constantly about his new mother, and what her life would be like should he and his brothers ever marry and move away.

As they were about to douse the cabin light and retire for the night, Peter pointedly asked his uncle why he hadn't thought of marrying his mother in order to give her a proper life now that their father was gone. He mentioned that Samuel had been part of their family from the first days that the he and his brothers had arrived at the Langleigh farm, and it had always been clear to them that there was a great deal of respect between his mother and him. They had always seemed to work closely together for the better of all of them.

Samuel was surprised by Peter's boldness, as he appeared to have somehow read his heart and mind even though he had tried to hide his own feelings and thoughts over the last few months. When Catherine announced to him, only hours after Joseph's passing, that she would be leaving the farm and removing the boys from his life, his whole purpose in life seemed to slip away. It was not

that he had feelings of love beyond those of a brother for Catherine, but he did need her and the boys, especially now that his brother was gone. He also felt that Joseph would have wanted him to watch out for his family and ensure their futures were sound.

When Catherine decided to stay, Samuel found new purpose in working to make their farms even more successful than they had already become. He came to realize that he had always thought of himself, Joseph and Catherine as a unit, and that it was up to him to provide her with everything that she needed to be happy again.

Peter's words caused Samuel to search for a better understanding of his relationship with Catherine and her sons. He had grown to feel more for Catherine beyond that of a brother's love, but could not imagine that she could ever see him as anything other than what he had always been to her.

The next two nights were restless nights for Samuel, as he spent much of their last three days at Millar Hill in quiet reflection, as he would continue to do when they returned to Lake Solitaire. When they approached Samuel's cedar cabin, he said his good byes to Peter, knowing that it was completely safe for him to return alone on the well established trail between their cabins. Given the thoughts he was wrestling with, he felt embarrassed that night to face Catherine for fear that he or Peter may say something, and she would realize what he was thinking and be deeply offended.

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A few more weeks passed and Samuel remained somewhat withdrawn, returning to his cabin directly after dinner each night without staying for stories or games in the evening. Catherine wondered what had brought on this change in her constant companion, and eventually asked her son if something had taken place while they were away to make his uncle seem so deep in thought, and if it had, she should be aware of it.

Peter relayed his discussion with his uncle, and presented the same question to his mother. She was equally taken aback as Samuel had been, and needing some quiet time, quickly went outside to be alone, hoping to clear her head.

The days had been rapidly growing longer and the sun had not yet set for the evening. To her surprise, she found herself walking towards the animal shelter to saddle her horse. She couldn't help but see the practicality of what her son had proposed, and her heart also felt the need to be opened up once more to the love she had lost so suddenly. She also found herself remembering how Samuel had rescued her in London, and in the process gave up the life and the business he had worked so hard to build. He had already given her so much, but could she possibly ask for more?

Catherine was a sensible woman, and knew that if Peter were right about Samuel having thoughts about a possible future for them together, she knew that he was too much of a gentleman to approach her about it as he would feel he might offend her by putting forward a proposal for

such a union, given her recent loss of Joseph. She realized that it would be up to her to take the first step. All too soon she found herself approaching the front door of his cabin, only to find herself frozen with her own fears!

Fortunately, Samuel had heard her approaching and opened the cabin door before she could knock or turn away. They stared at each other for a few moments before Samuel asked if something was wrong, which led Catherine to relay to him what Peter had shared with her. She said that this was certainly agreeable to her, however, she felt some more time would need to pass before they could be married, if that was acceptable to him. This would also give them an opportunity to adjust to each other as more than just a brother and sister; and suggested that a further six months was appropriate, out of respect for Joseph.

Samuel agreed, and after that they stood in silence together for a few more moments, before he clumsily offered to ride back with her to her cabin. They parted happier than they had been for over a year, knowing that they had much to look forward to in the future together.

Spring and summer chores went on as they had every other year, with everyone eagerly contributing to the planting and tending to the fields, cutting and stacking the hay from the meadow, and taking care of the multitude of tasks required on a farm to ensure its success.

Samuel worked with the boys in the evenings to construct two lofts with large window dormers, above the two rooms that were added for the three boys when they

first arrived to live with Joseph and Catherine. The lofts were meant for the boys, who would move upstairs, while Catherine and Samuel would move together into one of their rooms once they were wed.

Six months passed quickly for both of them, and by the end of September, Catherine and Samuel were married. The wedding was small, but was a very joyful event for all who were there. Captain Hunt surprised the couple by presenting them with two beautiful young matching white horses, both as a wedding gift, and in gratitude for them being an inspiration to others with their success in settling the lands north of Huntsville.

The three boys were very pleased when Samuel eventually moved from his lonely cedar cabin down the lake to live together with them, and start a fresh life in what seemed like a new home for all of them.

Within a year, Samuel and Catherine were blessed with a son they named Joseph Jr., to be followed four years later by a daughter they named Mary, after his mother.

Chapter 15

The Captain Visits

Captain Hunt visits Lake Solitaire to seek Samuel's help in commissioning his steam-powered saw mill.

It was towards the end of 1885, with the winter rapidly approaching, when Samuel received another surprise visit from Captain George Hunt. This time, he professed to have come to witness for himself how well Samuel had prospered in laying out his fields in the two beaver meadows that he had cultivated at the south end of Lake Solitaire. Captain Hunt had also heard about Catherine's two large flat-lying vegetable garden beds, which were irrigated by releasing water down an earth and log-walled diversion ditch into shallow furrows running between the plants.

With ample sunlight and plenty of moisture in the soil, Samuel and Catherine were able to produce a variety of vegetables, as well as corn, earlier than most other farmers. Samuel and a neighbouring farmer took turns to deliver these crops on Friday mornings to Huntsville by wagon for sale on the farmer's market, as well as to Johnson Preserves for bottling and canning.

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Captain Hunt was highly impressed with Samuel's fields and Catherine's vegetable and flower gardens, as they reflected what he had hoped all of the settlers north of Peninsula Lake would achieve; which unfortunately was not yet true for many of them.

After congratulating Samuel and Catherine, he turned the conversation to his most recent plans for the town and listed its many recent successes, before turning to the subject that was principally on his mind.

The Captain had been convinced for some time that Huntsville's growth and prosperity would be best achieved by capitalizing on the forest resources surrounding the town. He had no difficulty in persuading visiting government officials that Huntsville was ideally located to establish a major saw-milling industry, given the vast resource of white pine and other mature trees that lay directly to the north. However, he had bigger things in mind, as he saw the potential to earn much greater profits by responding to the growing demand in Toronto and other southern towns for planed, rather than rough-cut pine planks.

He mentioned to Samuel that J. Stephenson & Co. had erected a sawmill on the Muskoka River that had been operating fairly successfully for the past three and a half years. The Captain, however, believed that to be truly competitive, the industry could not be solely reliant on the Muskoka River for power, as the water flows could decline rapidly during the late summer and mid-winter months, requiring the mills to shut down.

As a result, he had taken a meaningful portion of the profit he had made from the sale of commercial lots in the subdivision he created east of the Muskoka River, adjacent to Main Street, and invested them in a steam-powered mill that he believed would be more productive and reliable than the water-powered mills.

Captain Hunt digressed for a moment to mention that he had inserted a temperance clause into the deeds for the lots he sold, and if breached, the land would revert to his heirs. He felt this was consistent with his determination to maintain the town's reputation and the good character of its inhabitants. Furthermore, he believed these restrictions encouraged commercial establishments, other than hotels, to build on his subdivision lands, as the business leaders welcomed the order it provided.

The Captain then spoke about the success the town had achieved in persuading the Northern and Pacific Junction Railway to extend its line north of Huntsville, which coincided with the village's official incorporation as a town with its own charter. Many had lobbied for the northern rail line to go either well west of Huntsville or east of Mary Lake with Port Sydney as the location of the station, which would have made that town the undisputed saw-milling capital of the region.

The fact that Captain Hunt had persevered and been more successful than other towns in attracting residents and settlers to farm the land in surrounding areas, eventually won the day. It also helped that he was able to demonstrate

that the Huntsville railway route was shorter, and saved building four additional bridges.

Even more recently, the much larger and better-financed Grand Trunk Railway Company, which had taken over the rail line, had promised to increase the number of trains each week. Captain Hunt claimed that this alone guaranteed the long-term prosperity of Huntsville as a bustling town over Port Sydney, Baysville and other potential locations who may seek to construct sawmills. He believed that the railway would also lead to the expansion of steamship navigation on the lakes, which would benefit all of the towns in the region, in much the same way as it had done elsewhere in Canada.

Captain Hunt never tired of talking about the future prospects of Huntsville, however, with the afternoon wearing on, he knew he should broach the primary reason for his visit.

After commending Samuel for his ingenuity in saving the bridge project, which he made sure he did in the presence of Catherine, and thanking him for the umpteenth time, he bluntly told them that he was in desperate need for his help once again.

The Captain practically begged Samuel to take just a few days to visit his personal sawmill and provide him with some ideas on how to resolve the problems he was experiencing with the boiler he had arranged to be shipped

from England to power the mill. Although the Captain assured him he would need no more than a few days of his time, Samuel knew him fairly well, and assumed he was understating the problem in keeping with his reputation as a persuasive salesman.

He went on to explain that the issue with the sawmill concerned the conversion of a steam boiler power unit, designed in England to operate with coal, to using wood bark and waste wood as a fuel. He described the boiler as a massive reinforced steel drum that stood on top of a shallow furnace with two large openings; one to feed in the fuel and the other to stoke it and remove the ashes.

A week later, when Samuel visited the sawmill site, it did not take him long to realize that the fuel space designed for coal was far too small for the much larger quantities of wood waste needed to generate sufficient heat to pressurize the boiler to the required level. It was apparent to Samuel that to rectify the problem, the boiler would need to be raised, which would be a feat in itself, in order to double the furnace capacity.

Furthermore, to effectively dispose of the larger quantities of ash produced by burning wood waste, Samuel proposed that two sliding steel strip grates be installed beneath the furnace floor, which could be opened up to varying widths from outside the structure, allowing the ashes to periodically fall through the grates, cool and then be removed as, and when, time permitted.

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To raise the boiler he had forty hemlock beams, ten-inch square and twenty-feet long, milled by the Stephenson Sawmilling Company. He placed two of them, ten-feet apart and directly beneath the boiler itself, by cutting large eleven-inch square holes in the sides of the furnace. He then built up a log crib under the two beams.

Next, he raised each corner of the furnace a fraction of an inch at a time, using long steel levers and the help of an 8-pully block and tackle. As each corner was raised, he slid in ever-larger wooden wedges until sufficient space existed to insert another ten-inch by ten-inch hemlock beam to increase the height of the crib.

In this manner, he raised the boiler by six-feet, permitting the furnace space to be rebuilt beneath the boiler three-feet deeper, and with a three-foot space beneath the furnace grate to access and remove the ashes. He explained to Captain Hunt that the same principles were used to raise massive blocks of sandstone in building the pyramids in Egypt; using grains of sand rather than wedges and hemlock beams.

Over the next two weeks he constructed a steel and concrete frame on which the boiler and furnace would permanently rest. He then removed the hemlock beams, and set about re-sheathing the enlarged furnace with heavy-duty steel sheets, which were bolted and welded into place.

Captain Hunt visited the construction site at least twice each day, marveling at Samuel's ingenuity as well as the authority he exercised in marshalling the thirty-odd workers to make the extra effort required to ensure the project was successfully completed before the winter set in with a vengeance.

On December 1, 1885, the furnace was fired up, and ten-hours later when the boiler was sufficiently pressurized and the testing completed, the mill started up.

With the increased and consistent power the boiler could now produce, Samuel assured Captain Hunt that it could be geared up using a drive shaft with a series of wheels and new leather drive belts to achieve the higher speeds required to operate a fine planing mill, and double his profit margins.

Before returning to Lake Solitaire, Samuel drew up plans for the new drive shaft, wheel sizes and leather belts, required to achieve the desired shaft speed for a planing mill. He also advised the Captain to build a sheet-iron shelter over the drive shafts and transfer belts, both for safety, but also to avoid damage from the sun and winter weather.

Captain Hunt was so deeply appreciative of Samuel's efforts, and freely acknowledged that he had not only saved his mill, but had also provided it with the potential to be extremely profitable, which would in turn would assure

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Huntsville of its place as the saw-milling capital of the region. He insisted on giving Samuel one-thousand shares of his company, entitling him to ten percent of what would most likely be a highly profitable saw-milling enterprise.

Chapter 16

London Courage

Samuel and Brian Powers track an errant cougar, resulting in an epic battle between the cougar and their two dogs.

The severe winter of 1886 decimated the deer and smaller animal populations, such as rabbits, squirrels and raccoons, throughout the northern lake region. This led their predators, namely wolves, coyotes and cougars, to prey on the homesteads which had encroached on their natural ranges. They robbed traps of their catches and killed dogs, cats, chickens, and even large livestock. By the end of the spring, one cougar had become known to be more daring than any others the settlers had encountered in the past. It had attacked the McMaster's three dogs and devoured their chickens, as well as killing numerous heifers belonging to other nearby homesteads.

A few weeks after the snow had melted, and only one week before Easter, this cougar snuck up on Matthew McMaster's youngest daughter while she was walking in front of their home. Fortunately, her father; who was chopping firewood nearby, caught a glimpse of the cougar

preparing to pounce, and instinctively flung his axe in the direction of the animal, grazing its shoulder just in time to ward off the attack. Hurt and temporarily disoriented, the cougar dashed with lightening speed into the forest.

No longer feeling safe with such an aggressive predator stalking so close to their home, Matthew packed up his three young children and raced with his distraught wife to the MacTeer home for help, as he knew that Samuel and his friend Brian Powers were the most accomplished hunters in the area. After relaying the events of the afternoon, Samuel insisted that Matthew stay behind and watch over the women and children, and before he could protest, removed his rifle from above the door, whistled for his faithful dog London, and left to enlist the help of his longtime friend and hunting partner.

Early the next morning, the two men and their two dogs, London and Jackson, returned to the McMaster farm where they had no difficulty locating where the confrontation with the cougar had taken place the previous afternoon. From there, it took all the experience that Brian could muster to follow the trail of dried blood and other signs left by the cougar as it fled into the forest.

Barely a mile southwest of the McMaster farm, the cougar's wound seemed to have stopped bleeding. Although Samuel was discouraged at loosing the trail, by that stage Brian had a fairly good idea of where the cougar had headed. He concluded that the cougar had been killing more than its normal food requirements, and that the attack

on the young McMaster daughter reflected desperation on its part. Considering the behaviour of the predator, Brian reasoned that the cougar must have been pregnant and was now likely feeding a litter, which explained its need for additional nourishment.

While the two men rested on the massive white quartz outcrop that lay at the highest point in the area, they set about planning their next move. Brian described to Samuel the caves on the south slope of Echo Rock, where he had taken refuge two or three years earlier after a summer storm unexpectedly blew in.

They determined that it was safe to assume that the cougar was likely nursing her shoulder in one of the caves to allow the wound to begin healing. They were certain, however, that their own movements would need to be carefully synchronized, in order for their plan to succeed. If the cougar detected their approach and escaped from the cave before they were in position to fire, she would be able to move freely among the trees and rock cliffs, knowing exactly where they were, which would be extremely dangerous even for skilled and well-armed men.

With a breeze still blowing up from the south, Samuel approached silently from the north, inching his way slowly down the slope to a rock ledge just above the cave entrances, carrying a bundle of green balsam fir boughs beneath each arm, together with a handkerchief partly filled with gunpowder emptied from several shell casings. When he was close to the top of the cave with the largest entrance, he

quietly removed a generous strip of bark from a white birch tree and then crouched down to assemble his materials.

Meanwhile, Brian led London and Jackson southeast of the caves, to within a mere hundred feet from their entrances. He then took off his belt and looped it loosely around a small tree, and slid his rifle through the loop, twisting the belt until it became tight and he could hold his rifle perfectly steady. As he stood there with its sights aimed at the entrance to the cave, he was conscious not to blink even once.

Although Samuel could not see Brian, he trusted that his friend had found a suitable site from where to shoot the cougar should it leave the cave and try to break into the open. Wounded or not, there could be nothing more dangerous than a desperate wild animal trying to protect its young; and especially this cougar which seemed to have no fear of humans.

Having woven the resinous balsam limbs together, Samuel inserted pieces of the birch bark and emptied the gunpowder from his handkerchief into the bundle. Creeping ever closer to the edge of the cave, he lit the bundle using the tinder box he always carried with him, and with the collection of limbs and bark sparking and crackling, he threw them in front of the mouth of the largest cave. As plumes of white smoke began to pour out of the pile, they slowly wafted their way into the cave aided by the breeze coming from the south.

Jackson and London knew danger was lurking, and sensing the uneasiness of the situation, stared through the brush toward their masters, with the fur on their backs bristling in anticipation. Brian was controlling his breathing, observing the cave entrance along the sights of his rifle as the curls of smoke crept slowly into the cave. It did not take very long for the cougar to burst out of the cave's entrance, clearly agitated, and quick to notice Brian. He took careful aim and calmly squeezed the rifle's trigger, heard the click, but failed to feel the customary kick against his shoulder.

Realizing that his gun had misfired, he rapidly pulled the bolt back to eject the dud cartridge and insert another round into the chamber; but it was too late. Although Jackson was trained to stand his ground and only move when commanded by his master, he took off snarling towards the cougar, which by then was in full stride and leaping towards Brian. Jackson met the cougar in midair, only a few yards away from his master. The momentum of Jackson's leap disrupted the cougar's pounce, resulting in the two animals crashing into Brian's legs, causing him to crumble on the ground from the force.

Meanwhile, Samuel had grabbed his own rifle and signaled for London to join the battle, as he ran to get a clear shot at the cougar. Without hesitation, London bounded at full speed to save his friends. The cougar was momentarily confused by the presence of London and the unrelenting clench of Jackson's powerful jaw, locked deep into the back of her neck, but very quickly managed to swipe the dog's flank with its claws and in the process tossed it aside.

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With the large black dog noticeably injured, the cougar turned to attack Brian. Although the impact that made him fall had severely hurt his right leg, he managed to crawl free of the scrapping animals, but was unable to grab his rifle which lay at the cougar's feet. The enraged animal bared her teeth and crouched to ready herself to pounce and deal him what could well be a fatal swipe with her forepaw. At precisely the same moment, London leapt towards the cougar's rear haunches, growling ferociously as he sunk his teeth deep into her leg muscles.

The cougar screamed from the pain inflicted as London shook his powerful neck from side to side, tearing at her flesh. She quickly spun around, ignoring Brian for the moment in order to strike London and remove his grip on her haunches where he was weighing her down and preventing her from attacking Brian.

While this was happening, Samuel stepped from side-to-side with his rifle raised, searching for any shot he could take between the trees that stood between him and the cougar, in order to end the chaos; but found none. The animals thrashed about, bouncing unpredictably, with London trying to gain a firmer footing in order to bring the cougar down. Relentlessly, the cougar spun right then left, each time viciously clawing fur and skin from the dog's back.

Although badly injured, Jackson regained his feet and seized the first opportunity to once again strike at the cougar's throat. As the cat twisted its neck around in a desperate effort to rid itself of London, Jackson clamped

his jaws around the cougar's exposed neck, hoping to sever a major vein. For the first time in the frantic skirmish, it seemed that the two valiant dogs had gained the upper hand. London impeded her movement from the rear, while Jackson's teeth were deep into her throat. Seconds were all that should have been left in the cougar's battle for its life, but the strong heart of a mother prevailed.

The cougar rolled itself over, dropping its full weight onto its hips as they smashed London's torn and bloodied body against the hard packed forest floor; stunning the exhausted dog. She then reared up and swung her neck, crushing Jackson's ribs against the rock face, leaving the exhausted dog temporarily limp and immobile on the ground.

Having crippled Jackson, the cougar spun quickly, escaping the full impact of the shot fired from Samuel's rifle, which merely grazed her side. The shot did however distract her and cause the fatigued cat to fall to the ground for only a moment before she swiftly regained her footing; screaming loudly and then hissing angrily in Samuel's direction. Meanwhile, Jackson lay motionless at his master's feet, however London, who had fallen between the cougar and Samuel, somehow summoned what must have been his final ounce of energy to once again ferociously assail the cougar.

Rising and standing stiff-legged between the cougar and Samuel, the two animals growled as they faced off against each other. A split second later, they each leapt high

into the air, and London shredded the cougar's ear with a quick snap of his jaws and a jerk of his head, before setting his teeth into the axe wound inflicted the previous day on her shoulder. Simultaneously, the cat once again dug her claws deep into London's back, cutting to the bone as she tried desperately to get to the dog's thick neck.

The battle ended abruptly as both animals fell to the ground, with Brian, lying on his side only a few yards away from their slumped bodies, holding his smoking rifle in his hands. London had distracted the cougar long enough for Brian to shoot it through the chest, but being so enervated from the fight, and not realizing it was over, continued to attack the cougar's neck; only stopping when Samuel called him off.

Before trying to digest the terrifying events that had just unfolded before their eyes, the two men assessed and tended to the potentially fatal wounds inflicted on their warrior dogs. Never had either man seen or heard of two animals facing death as bravely as London and Jackson had done that afternoon to protect their masters.

While the four of them sat on the bloodied forest floor, with the dogs quietly whimpering with their heads resting on their laps, Samuel questioned Brian about the cougar's unwillingness to run or yield. Brian recalled the reason they had concluded the cougar had taken the cave for its den, why it had killed so prolifically in such a short span of time, and fought with such ferocity and desperation – the cubs!

Samuel proceeded to reload his rifle, and then cautiously approached the cave where his bundle of balsam branches lay smouldering. As he drew near he discovered that they had not only smoked out the cougar, but also drawn out its cub that was no larger than London was when Samuel had acquired him many years ago as a pup. The cub was crouching on the ground, eyes still half closed and panting in small, sharp breaths while crying for its mother.

He probed deeper into the cave to discover that the other cubs from the cougar's litter had died of starvation; a fate that this cub was not prepared to accept. True to the character of its mother, the surviving offspring had a strong will to live and when approached, promptly hissed and clawed at Samuel.

It must have been Samuel's admiration for the mother's courage that caused him to shoulder his rifle and scoop up the cub into his hat before binding it tightly in order to prevent it from scratching him. He then made his way back to Brian, who had taken the time to strap up his injured leg and cut down a birch sapling to serve as a crutch. He assured Samuel that he could hobble on his own for the mile or so back to the McMaster's farm and encouraged Samuel to go ahead of him.

Taking account of their situation, Samuel recognized that they needed to return to the McMasters homestead, as quickly as possible to stitch up their dogs. Loaded up with Brian's kit, including his rucksack, rifle and ammunition belt, Samuel tucked the bound cub inside his jacket and

carefully lifted up London to place him across his shoulders. His intention was to move as quickly as he could to the McMaster's farm, attend to London and then double back to help Brian and Jackson.

Walking at a brisk pace, Samuel covered the distance through thick brush in less than an hour. No sooner had he arrived at the cabin, than Brian's son approached on horseback, having hoped to join the hunt. He had been away when Samuel and his father departed the previous evening, but followed as soon as he heard of their mission. Although he was eager to hear the details of the fight, he left immediately to race through the forest in order to assist his father and Jackson.

Inside the McMaster's farmhouse, Samuel found a small wooden crate to serve as a bed for the cub. He cut a hunk of salted pork from a barrel in the cellar and tossed it into the covered box. The hissing almost ceased immediately as the cub noisily chewed on the meat, eventually falling asleep. This gave Samuel the opportunity to disinfect London's wounds with brandy and stitch together the torn flesh on the brave dog's back and right side. It was with awe that he reflected on the courage of their loyal companions, who had never hesitated for a moment in putting their own lives on the line to protect their masters.

Chapter 17

Harmony With Nature

With the arrival of the cougar cub, Catherine recalls her role in nurturing wilderness foundlings.

When Samuel arrived back at Lake Solitaire with the cougar cub, Catherine shook her head knowingly. She was probably the only person aware of the depth of his kind and caring side, as he made a point of keeping it well hidden.

Samuel was practical enough to know the necessity of hunting for his family's nourishment, and that an occasional cull of certain animals was unavoidable; such as when beavers would attempt to dam up the vegetable garden; however, he also believed strongly in helping any animals he discovered in distress.

Catherine had grown to realize that there was a fine balance to be achieved in order to live in harmony with the wilderness, and that Samuel seemed to have found his own way of doing that. For her part, she had grown accustomed and comfortable with her many roles, one of which involved nursing the young animals that were constantly

being brought home from Samuel's and her son's expeditions into the forest.

The three oldest boys were just as likely as Samuel to bring home a foundling, and she was sure this would become a habit for her two youngest children some day. Fortunately, over time Catherine had learned that young animals could not stomach cows milk, which led her to acquire two goats from Albert Flemming, initially to save the life of a small fawn that was orphaned by a careless hunter, and later countless other animals she had tended to.

Like the fawn, once an injured animal arrived at their home it quickly became her responsibility; so without saying much, she took the young cub from Samuel and proceeded to comfort it. After all the children had been provided with a chance to inspect and tentatively touch their new guest, she and Luke took it to the barn where there was a corner with available space for the young orphans that would frequently arrive.

There were currently two young beavers living in an enclosure built to resemble a beavers lodge, although without access to water. They would be leaving their enclosure soon, as it had been a full year since they arrived. The boys had already started to re-introduce them to their natural environment by taking them for an occasional swim in the lake. Catherine planned to use the arrival of this new guest to encourage the boys to accelerate their efforts, and move the beavers permanently out of the unnatural comforts they now enjoyed.

It was about this time last spring when Samuel sent the twins to inspect the series of beaver dams along the Kalonga Valley. The water in the bottom dam, just above their vegetable garden, was rapidly reaching its limits and would soon damage the drainage ditch they used to regulate its level and feed the irrigation furrows for their crops. Furthermore, they could not afford to have the dam overflow too heavily, as it would wash away much of the top soil and compost they had added to ensure they had fertile ground for their vegetable plants to grow.

The two boys noticed that each dam they visited had crested, with most of them flowing over the embankments that held back their water. They were getting close to the top of the valley when they finally found evidence of a collapsed dam. Beyond the debris piled on the banks of the stream, they found an empty pond with only small pools of water sitting in the lowest sections. They crossed the remaining portion of the dam wall and walked toward the beaver lodge that was partially embedded in the bank. There they found the ravaged remains of at least three mature beavers, with evidence of wolf scat in the close vicinity.

Luke quickly removed his rifle from his shoulder and loaded a cartridge into the breach. He didn't want to take any chances with a pack of wolves nearby, so he called to his brother that it was time to move on. Just as they started to do so, Matthew stopped in his tracks and motioned to stand still and be quiet. Luke lifted the rifle to prepare for a confrontation with a wolf, but instead his brother gingerly approached the beaver lodge and reached in to pull out a

very young kit, whose whimpering he had heard when they were quiet. They briefly admired the small beaver, and Matthew was preparing to tuck it into the folds of his coat when another tiny kit pushed its head out of the lodge. It was obvious that it could not see, since its eyes were shut and it stood sniffing the air, afraid to take further steps into the unknown.

The young beavers were a puzzle to Catherine, as she had yet to attempt rearing such small fragile creatures, and furthermore ones who were meant to be raised near the water.

A few years earlier she hand fed a small nest of red squirrels brought home by Peter, and had even taken care of and hand fed a nest of rabbits that were only a few days old when they were given to her.

Here they were a year later, and the beavers had long graduated from goats milk to nibbling on fresh poplar and birch twigs that the boys cut for them each day, only recently having added fresh sedge grasses and juicy reed stalks taken from a nearby marsh.

The cougar cub was certainly hungry, and although it had gnawed at the strip of salted port Samuel had already given it, Catherine searched for the leather nipple Samuel had fashioned for her to feed the young fawn from a bottle, followed by the beavers. While she searched, she sent Luke to fetch some goat's milk, as Samuel and Peter were occupied attending to London's wounds, and she could tell Samuel was deeply worried about his old friend.

It took more than an hour to coax the cub into finally suckling from the leather nipple, with each boy having a turn until finally Luke was successful in getting some milk into the cub's stomach. This may have come down to the fact that the poor animal was desperate for liquid, but it made the young boy proud to have accomplished something that none of the others were able to do.

The earliest signs of summer soon came and the cub was rapidly growing, both in size and strength. It was now heartily eating raw meat scraps from chickens and rabbits, although they continued to supplement its diet with goat's milk at least once every day. After two months the cub was moved down to Samuel's old cedar cabin and lived in the sturdy animal shelter that was built in the hay barn for a wolf pup whose foot had been badly crushed in a trap.

As the summer wore on, Brian Powers advised them to be careful not to let the young cougar get too familiar with their domesticated animals. He reminded them that the end goal was to return it to the wilderness, which would require it to be capable of thinking like a cougar, and not a family pet. From then onwards, the boys took turns taking the cub on a leash for walks each day in order to familiarize it with different scents in the forest. It was also becoming quite proficient at chasing squirrels when they took off its leash. The first time the cub caught a squirrel, the rodent nipped her nose, causing it to scurry back to them for comfort.

Eventually the cub learned what was required to hunt successfully, and soon was catching rabbits on its own.

Once this happened, they slowly cut back on her food, and eventually let her fend for itself. It would not necessarily catch something every day, but they knew this would be a reality in the wilderness, so it was an important part of the cub's preparation.

This progression was a sign to Samuel that the time had come to leave the young cougar out on its own to see if she could survive a few days at a time without their support. This took some careful thought, since the location needed to be near enough for them to monitor her progress from a distance, but also remote enough so that it wouldn't be tempted to attack their livestock. They settled on an area west of the Brenn Meadow as it was rich in deer and other small animals, and was at least three miles away.

They rode there with the cougar cub following behind them, chasing a squirrel here and there, and even a few butterflies, but generally it kept up the pace. Catherine had marinated a cut of venison with a small amount of laudanum to feed to the cub once they reached the meadow, to make it drowsy and provide them with sufficient time to leave the area before it recovered. It was difficult for all of them to leave the sleeping cub, but this was an essential test that needed to be passed.

They had intended to wait four days before returning to the area to check on the cub, however, on the third day, she surprised them when she reappeared at the cedar cabin, having either heard them across the lake or amazingly retraced the scent of her steps from the remote location.

It was purely by chance that Samuel and Peter had decided to work in the hay field that day, and they happened to be passing by the cedar cabin on their way home when they noticed the cub lying peacefully in front of the woodshed, patiently waiting for them. She did not appear to be hungry, but was happy to have her ears gently rubbed by Peter, and then walked directly into the barn to fall asleep in her old corner on the straw bed that still lay where it had been left. They closed the door before leaving, as it was in everyone's best interests to keep her from roaming over night.

The next morning Samuel went to visit Charlie Otter near Hillside Village to seek his advice on a more distant location to release the cub. The young cougar had proven that she could take care of herself, so what was now required was an area far enough away that she could not trace her way back to Lake Solitaire. They settled on a distance that was more than six miles northeast of Lake Solitaire on the way to the Algonquin Highlands, where other cougars were known to exist. Charlie was quick to offer to help, as he was pleased to do something for the man he deeply respected.

Charlie could not make the trip until the following week, so the young cougar remained their guest a while longer. The whole family spent time tending to her needs, knowing that very soon she would no longer be with them. When the morning came to say their good-byes, Charlie arrived with his wagon and Catherine sent along the prescribed dose of laudanum for him to lace her last hand fed

meal.

Four days later, Charlie returned to report that the trip had been uneventful, and that he had spent a couple of days tracking the cougar after its release to confirm she was feeding herself. She had not attempted to search for a way back to Lake Solitaire, and in fact encountered a male cougar on her second day. After getting to know one another, they started to hunt as a unit. Catherine took this as a sign that nature had taken her back, and that they no longer needed to be concerned about her future.

Nevertheless, the emptiness felt by the family that night reminded them of the day the young osprey they rescued left them for the last time. This led them to reminisce over dinner that evening about three summers ago, when Matthew and Luke had been fishing on Buck Lake with Albert Flemming's son Gerald. They discovered an injured osprey struggling on the banks of the lake, near the large nest that was high up in the white pines that grew on a small island. The osprey fledgling was still very young, but had all of its feathers. It was far enough into the summer to guess the bird was at least two or three months old, and should have been ready to fly and learn to fish.

Since it showed signs of a damaged wing, and with such an injury, it was clear to the boys that it would not survive the night, as a fox or coyote would certainly find it. Therefore, the three boys tossed one of their shirts over the bird and tucked it into the satchel they used to carry their fishing gear. They had caught a rainbow trout of a good

size, which they promptly sacrificed for the injured raptor. As they left the area with the rescued bird, an adult flew over them, loudly protesting their possession of its juvenile chick.

Catherine was in the kitchen preparing the evening's dinner when the boys arrived with the osprey fledgling. She could see that the bird was exhausted and very frightened, and wondered aloud whether it may be best to let nature take its course. The persuasive protests from her children, however, convinced her that dinner would have to wait, and she would have to attempt a small miracle to save this bird.

She sent Luke to fetch Samuel from the vegetable field where he was repairing a section of fence that had been breached by a deer. In the meanwhile, Catherine used a sparing amount of laudanum to sedate the bird so that they could handle it without injuring it further. Samuel carefully studied the structure of the raptor's functioning wing, and then went to the barn to fashion a splint out of thin strips of cedar shingle left over from the renovation to the cabin many years earlier.

He returned and deftly assembled a splint, which they bound to the still sedated birds wing, and then took it to the barn to place it in a crate that had one side covered with wire mesh. Their dinner was late that evening, but no one complained and their grace expressed gratitude for the gift of the osprey entrusted to them.

The next morning Catherine took Joseph Jr. with her to the barn to check on the osprey. They other boys had

wanted to come as well, but there were chores to be done, and she promised them that they could see it after they finished their lunch. The bird was standing in its cage, rocking its head from side to side, suggesting to Catherine that it was in a state of stress, and that perhaps the inside of a dark barn was not the best place for a bird so accustomed to being high in a tree and exposed to the elements of nature.

Catherine carried the heavy cage to their cabin, where she hung it from one of the rafters overhanging the porch. This was not as good as its former white pine nest, but was the best she could come up with under the circumstances. She pushed ground fish into the cage from the early morning catch supplied by Matthew for the occasion, and also poured fresh water through the slats into the small bowl that had managed to stay upright despite the birds movements in the cage. To her great surprise, an adult osprey was circling over the lake, calling to its young offspring, who replied in earnest.

Four weeks passed, and with the osprey quite accustomed to Catherine and the boys, Samuel decided it was time to remove the splint. Speaking in the hushed voice that seemed to clam the osprey, Catherine opened the cage and gently reached in to take hold of the bird, and it only mildly resisted her attempts. She held the osprey firmly enough for Samuel to approach and cut the splint loose from its wing. Catherine then carried the bird to a shoulder high

cedar stump, that was clear of any protruding branches, and close to the lake. She knew that even if the wing had healed itself, the bird would not be able to fly until it had a chance to exercise the limb and co-ordinate its movements, and that this could not be done effectively from the ground.

She slowly relaxed her hands from around the young osprey's body and wings, and instantly the bird flapped them to take flight. As suspected, its wing muscles were not yet sufficiently co-ordinated. Fortunately, the young osprey managed to hold on to the tree stump during its first attempt at flight. Samuel could see that the wing was functioning as it should, and urged his family to move to the shelter of the porch, and sit for a while to watch this beautiful creature regain her strength.

It had been a great story to relive as they finished their dinner and started to clear dishes. All the children expressed how much they had enjoyed watching the osprey finally lift off from the tree stump, to circle over their cabin a couple of times before joining a parent, who was circling above and calling her home. For two years now, they had seen their osprey return each spring to Lake Solitaire and noisily announce its presence.

The twins, not satisfied and still distressed over the departure of the young cougar, begged their mother for the story of how the black raven came to the farm; trying hard

to delay their homework for that evening. This tale was well known to everyone in the family, and Catherine quickly saw through their ploy. She promised them it would be told the next day, but for now, they had work to do.

As promised, when the boys awoke and finished their early morning chores, they sat down to breakfast with their mother to listen to the story of their favourite raven, which they affectionately referred to as the friendly 'little thief', as to them, this was one of its most amazing qualities.

It was four years ago when Samuel was repairing a scarecrow in the vegetable field that they first met the little thief. Catherine had sewn shinny buttons to its shirt to catch the sun, as well as some ribbons to dangle from the arms, that were supposed to move in the wind and deter any birds from entering the garden area.

While Samuel was securing the redressed scarecrow, a raven sat on a fence post, carefully waiting for him to finish. Samuel saw him out of the corner of his eye, and when he walked away from his task he looked back to see if this curious bird would approach the figure. It took no time at all, and the bird was on the scarecrow's shoulder, pecking at the shinny buttons until he got one free. Samuel tossed a stone in the direction of the bird to frighten it away, and it flew off at once.

When he returned to the field the next morning, all the buttons and ribbons had disappeared, and Samuel could not help but laugh at how un-scary his deterrent actually

was. As he worked in the garden, he noticed the raven circling above him, and it eventually landed close by on a post beside the field. He looked at it and spoke to the bird about its thievery, and although the raven turned its back to Samuel, it seemed to be listening, moving its head back and forth when Samuel's tone changed.

The raven stayed and watched him all morning, and when Samuel stopped for a drink of water and a small snack of dried venison, he placed a piece of meat on the ground about six feet away from himself, to see if the watchful bird would join him. It flew to the low lying branch of a hemlock that was close to where Samuel sat, studying the situation, but did not approach the venison. Samuel was just about to abandon his experiment and return to work, when the raven hopped to the ground and tentatively approached the waiting prize in the grass. He reached it, quickly grabbed the meat in his beak, and flew up to his branch to rip it into shreds, all the while holding it with his talons. Samuel was pleased with what had transpired, but thought nothing of it as he left the field at noon.

For the next few days, Samuel noticed the raven flying nearby while he went from chore to chore. Every so often he repeated his experiment with the dried venison, and every time he did so, it would approach in the same manner to take its prize. Eventually the brazen bird came to

eat offerings from everyone in the family, and would even arrive some mornings to tap on the kitchen window with its beak to signal that a treat was expected.

The raven continued to steal small shinny objects that were left outside unattended, which only reinforced the reference to the 'little thief.' It was part of the family now, and they looked forward to its visits.

The twins thanked their mother for her simple retelling of how their raven had come to their farm, and then set about the day's chores. As Catherine smiled to herself, wondering what new animals were about to come into their lives, Beckon, the fawn she nursed five or six years ago, came strolling up the path to the hemlock cabin to pay her annual visit, in anticipation of eating pieces of apple from her hand.

As she went into the cabin to cut up an apple, Catherine could not help but think of how fortunate she was to be so immersed in nature, and trusted by her wild friends to take care of their needs when they were in trouble.

Chapter 18

Rights Of Passage

Samuel is called upon to encourage a troublesome settler to sell his land and leave the area.

British military officers were responsible for surveying the townships, counties, concession and property lines through most of southern Ontario, at least as far north as Lake Nippissing. With few exceptions, concession lines ran east to west, approximately 3,300-feet apart. Lot lines within these concession lines ran north to south and were approximately 1,300-feet apart, creating lots of approximately 100 acres each, and sometimes up to 120-acres.

To ensure that each lot owner had access to their individual lots, 66-foot wide road allowances were set aside on each second concession line, as well as on each fifth lot line, and along the shores of the lakes. Unfettered access to each lot was at least the theory developed in London, England, which was feasible there because the land was virtually flat. This also could generally be applied to southern Ontario, with its relatively even terrain.

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However, north of the Severn River, large rock outcrops, numerous lakes, wetland marshes and steep cliffs made the straight line road allowances shown on the official maps meaningless; necessitating significant deviations onto neighbouring properties more usual than not. In practice, it was taken for granted by virtually all settlers that wagon passage, riding and walking trails would follow the natural land contours, and often passed through fields and even fruit orchards.

To survive, most settlers realized that they needed the help and co-operation of their neighbours, and in fact usually went out of their ways to seek opportunities to assist each other, and even took great pride in doing so. Unfortunately, every now and then a settler would arrive who, for cultural or other reasons, believed that it was important to assert their absolute rights to their lands at the exclusion of their neighbours' ability to pass over them.

George and Jane Pilger were such settlers, and it did not take long for friction to develop, not only between them and their immediate neighbour, Albert Flemming, but also between other individuals who had reason to travel, whether to hunt, trap or fish around the south end of Buck Lake.

Initially George Pilger expressed his displeasure through officious notices posted on trees along the boundaries of his land, and later by blocking up the wagon trails passing across his property with upended tree stumps and large rocks. Over time his aggression escalated into firing

rifle shots in the direction of, or over the heads of individuals who happened to walk across his property.

His neighbours tried all sorts of entreaties: meeting directly with him singularly and in groups, working through his minister and even offering to pay for rights of passage. These were all to no avail, leading them to believe his undisclosed agenda was to extort an exorbitant sum of money for his land.

Early on a cool, overcast August morning in 1883, George Pilger's inner rage got out of hand, leading him to accost Albert Flemming with a rifle in his hand. Yelling vulgarities and screaming incoherently, George accused Albert and his sons of diverting water from the stream flowing through his property, and then threatened at the top of his voice to shoot all three of them.

Albert Flemming, who would not stand for anyone threatening his family, and especially George Pilger, instinctively grabbed George's gun out of his hand and swung the butt around to strike him in the stomach. He then shoved, pushed and repeatedly kicked George in the buttocks as he drove him off his property, all the while holding onto his rifle.

It had completely escaped George Pilger that he had trespassed on private land to aggressively threaten a neighbour, but would not under any circumstances permit peaceful passage over his own land. Philosophically, Albert Flemming thought that only a discontented, self righteous

man could justify such actions to himself.

That afternoon, Albert Flemming, together with his two eldest sons, hiked up the hill behind his cabin, following the stream that flowed through their own property into Buck Lake. They soon noticed that the water flow was unusually strong for the time of year. Just beyond a kilometer above their property line, they came across a fork in the stream with water flowing into it over grass, ferns and other undergrowth, all bent over by the force of the water.

Further ahead they found the source of this new inflow of water. A giant hemlock tree had snapped off close to its base, either in a wind storm or through a lightning strike. It brought down an equally large beech tree alongside it, and some smaller maple saplings. The related landslide and accumulation of forest debris had slowly prevented any ground water entering the stream that previously flowed gently, but continuously through George and Jane Pilger's property, diverting the water instead across a small plain, into Albert Flemming's stream.

It took the three of them nearly four hours to saw a three-foot wide section out of the fallen tree trunks, to provide a passage for water to resume its previous course and eventually reach George and Jane Pilger's property.

As soon as possible, upon completing the task and after returning to their cabin from this demanding work, Albert Flemming saddled his horse and rode to George and Jane Pilger's cabin to inform them that he had found the

source of the reduced water flow on their property, and that the problem had been rectified.

This served only to intensify George Pilger's rage against his neighbour; accusing him of felling the trees in the first place and lying about solving the problem, as his stream remained almost dry. He refused to accept that it could take a day or so for the water to saturate its previous stream bed before it could reach his property.

Recognizing that nothing would be gained by trying to reason with his difficult neighbour, and also that the events of the morning were not going to be put behind them that day, Albert quickly departed.

That very same night, Albert Flemming's animal barn caught fire at ten o'clock in the evening, and burned to the ground.

There was no way for Albert and his family to save the building on their own. The isolated nature of settler homesteads meant that neighbours could seldom react in time to help extinguish a building fire once it was under way. Albert was, however, able to save his livestock, but everything else, including his winter hay supply, tools and stored wood, were lost.

The fire was so intense at its height that the flames lit up the sky for miles around, and were later reported to have been seen as far away as the Village of Dwight. Noticing the glow in the sky, Samuel and a few other neighbours quickly rushed to the Flemming property, however by the time they arrived, the barn and its contents had been

reduced to glowing embers and a few smoldering large support beams.

Although Albert Flemming may have had good reasons to blame George Pilger for his loss, he had absolutely no proof of his involvement, and it took Samuel's and the other neighbours' desperate pleas for restraint, and their promises to deal with the matter themselves, to prevent Albert Flemming from confronting George Pilger himself.

The following day, Albert Flemming's eight closest neighbours met at Samuel's cabin and unanimously concluded that it would be in the community's best interests to persuade George and Jane Pilger and their family to sell their homestead, pack up and leave the area. They realized, however, that George, and possibly also Jane Pilger, were stubborn and destructive people, and would not leave unless they were virtually forced to do so.

The neighbours also looked to Samuel to deliver what one of them referred to as a juicy carrot and heavy stick message to George Pilger, and preferably as soon as possible. Samuel felt that if he were to do this, he should first consult with Captain Hunt and request that he in turn inform the town's senior police commander, especially if they were considering taking a strong stand with George Pilger.

Once everyone had agreed, they spent a couple of hours deciding on the amount they should collectively raise to induce the Pilger family to sell their land and leave the area. They knew Albert Flemming could not afford to con-

tribute very much, given his significant loss, but were confident that once his four boys were older and doing well for themselves, he would insist on reimbursing them for any shortfall they might incur, should George Pilger's land be resold for less than what it would now cost. Alternatively, if the land was not sold, Albert Flemming could be counted on to purchase the Pilger lot back from his neighbours and ensure that they fully recovered whatever money they had contributed.

The visit to Captain Hunt was not only politically appropriate, but also extremely helpful. He suggested that Samuel set a very short time period for acceptance of his offer, and at the same time that George Pilger be made fully aware of the consequences to him if he failed to do so. He went on to advise Samuel not to make idle or violent threats, but rather to notify him of the privileges and benefits that his neighbours would no longer be extending to him and his family.

As soon as he was informed by Captain Hunt that their proposed actions had been discussed with the town's senior police commander, who whole-heartedly concurred, Samuel returned to Lake Solitaire to prepare the written offer, and to carefully choose the words he would use to impress upon George Pilger the consequential damages he would suffer if he refused to leave the area.

When he met with George Pilger one day later, he left him with the offer for his property, which was open for only one day. The offer covered his land, buildings and

the hay in his barn, but excluded all other movables and livestock. Samuel also made it very clear to George Pilger that there were only three realistic options available to him.

The first option was to apologize and make full amends to Albert Flemming, including reimbursing him for the cost of rebuilding his barn, and henceforth grant his neighbours full rights of passage across his lands. The second option was, that if he stayed, he should understand that there would be no help from his neighbours in the event he or his family encountered difficulties working on their property, and that they would insist on having full rights of passage over his lands. The third option was to accept the buy-out offer and start a new life for his family and himself, well away from Huntsville and the surrounding area.

Samuel cut short George Pilger's protestations and said that he would return the same time the next day to collect the signed land sale agreement, or otherwise he would wash his hands of any further dealings with him.

Instead of Samuel leaving it at that, being highly irritated by George Pilger's self-righteous attitude and abusive behaviour, he allowed his frustrations to get the better of him; thereby acting contrary to Captain Hunt's advice. He stated in unequivocal terms as he departed, that George Pilger should take care as an accident could occur in the forest or during the next time he journeyed to town, and that he could no longer count on his neighbours to be watching out for him.

Fortunately for all involved, the signed offer was tacked to the cabin door when Samuel returned the following evening. No further words were ever exchanged between George Pilger and his neighbours. In fact, none of them ever saw or heard from him again.

While awaiting the outcome of the negotiations, Albert Flemming had been preparing to move with his family to Winnipeg. His prime concern was to ensure the safety of his wife and children, should George Pilger not have accepted the offer.

Therefore, when Albert heard the news of George's acceptance of the buy-out offer, he was overwhelmed with relief and deeply appreciative of the generosity of his neighbours, and the friendships that so many of them were fortunate to enjoy.

Samuel had made each of his neighbours promise never to tell Albert Flemming how much they had each contributed to the land purchase price, and in fact none of them knew that Samuel had contributed the vast bulk of the amount offered, using a portion of the monies he received from the Huntsville bridge project. The fact that each of the neighbours had insisted and did contribute something is what really mattered, bringing them all even closer together.

The very next morning after George Pilger signed the sale offer, Albert Flemming's four sons began to cut the twenty-two posts and forty beams required to build a new barn. He in turn travelled to Huntsville to secure a wagon

load of sawn planks, nails and a barrel of metal spikes. These were to be used for a community barn raising project scheduled to begin on the coming Saturday morning. This would be another occasion for the settlers on Lake Solitaire to illustrate in the finest of ways, the co-operation and support that they routinely extended to each other.

Chapter 19

Winter Trials

A severe winter snowstorm tests the resolve of a number of settlers to remain in the northern wilderness.

The winter set in with earnest early in 1890, starting with an iron frost that gripped the land like an oppressive fist. This was followed by two weeks of clear skies that brought bitter cold temperatures, quickly freezing the ground and even the deepest lakes. In short order they were covered by a solid sheet of ice.

Each morning, either Samuel or Peter spent an hour or more on Lake Solitaire, chipping through the ice with an axe to reopen the hole they needed to collect water. This water was essential not only for the family's use, but also to take care of their livestock. By mid-day the water hole was refrozen, and they would repeat the same operation again, and once more before retiring for the night; otherwise the ice would be so thick in the morning that their efforts would need to be doubled.

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As they worked each morning and evening breaking open the water hole, the gusts of wind that had been present for weeks swept across the lake and drove icy fingers through their clothing, searching for holes to eventually reach their bodies. Samuel learned during his earliest winters on Lake Solitaire to tighten a belt around his long woolen coat to keep the frigid air from rushing up his back.

As he grew older, his teeth ached from the cold, and his fingers burned if they got wet. They needed to make these trips as fast as possible, or Samuel feared that frostbite would set into their fingers and toes. After two weeks of the deep freeze, Samuel noticed a dead crow on the path to the lake. Even these hardy scavengers were dying in the cold. There sharp beaks could not tear into the frozen flesh of the carrion they found, and little else was available for them to eat.

At last the cold spell broke, but within a day the rise in temperature also brought heavy winds and darker skies, followed by an ice storm and then raging snow.

By the middle of January, Samuel and his family found themselves in the midst of what would be the most severe snow storm recorded in the area, and the harshest period they had known in all their years on Lake Solitaire.

Over four dark and endless days, forty-inches of snow fell. It began with a rain storm that coated the trees with a thick layer of ice. Although a beautiful sight to see, the weight of the ice caused heavy branches to break away

from the largest trees, and many trees to snap near their peaks.

They were fortunate that their cabin was sheltered by large hemlock trees so that the depth of snow around the cabin was not unduly severe. They were, however, constantly concerned about a heavy branch falling on their cabin, which could be treacherous if one created a major hole in their roof.

When the snow started to accumulate, Samuel knew that they needed to keep open a trail to the lake for them to collect water. The path to the animal shelter was equally important, not only for the animals, but also to collect their daily supply of dry firewood. Three times on each day of the blizzard, Matthew and Luke would also open the paths to the shed and to the outhouse.

By the third day of the storm, Samuel found the path to the lake completely filled in by the drifting snow, as a result of the strong winds that had raged overnight. He was on his own that morning as Peter was helping Matthew and Luke with their chores. Each step Samuel took would sink him to his thighs, and the flying snow caked his eyebrows making it difficult to see as he struggled to make his way.

For a moment he lost sight of the trail, and he felt a swell of fear rise into his body, as more than one settler had died this way; losing their bearings and wandering in circles, before collapsing often only a short distance from the shelter of their homes. He forced himself to stand still and wait, while the snow swirled around him, for a break in the

wind. When it came, he could just make out the trees that had their lower branches trimmed from their trunks, which was their custom to do along their trails; and he quickly re-oriented himself again. The snow was deeper still in the clearing just beyond the trees, and by this he knew he had reached the ice.

It was Samuel's practice to place hemlock boughs over the water hole to help him find it in the drifting snow, and he was fortunate that they were still visible to guide him to its location. It was a difficult task, but he made it back to the cabin with two buckets of water, and briefly stood in front of the fire to warm himself before venturing back outside to assist his sons fetch the additional firewood they would surely need for the night.

As he was warming himself by the fire, he thought of the advice he had been given many years ago by another settler of bringing his livestock into their cabin on the coldest winter nights. This had been a fairly common practice for some of the early settlers, with the dual advantage of protecting the animals and adding an extra source of warmth from their body heat. The practice, unfortunately, also brought in a variety of pests: fleas, ticks and a host of other vermin that would borough into the floor boards and straw sleeping mattresses, and cause skin irritations that could quickly fester on the limbs of the families who lived in these cabins. With the raging storm outside, Samuel wondered if a few pests would have been worth saving them from having to make the trip each day to nourish the animals, but in the end he felt he had made the right choice.

While the storm raged outside, Samuel and his family kept themselves occupied inside the cabin by reading, writing, playing checkers and card games. The younger children needed to keep busy with their schooling, and Catherine welcomed the opportunity to spend this time with them to keep their spirits high and distracted from the weather outside. Samuel and his older sons also found time to repair tools and build shelves that they had been planning, but had never in the past found the opportunity to do.

After the fourth day, the winds calmed and the blizzard turned to a gentle snow fall that lasted a further ten days. This was much more manageable as the temperatures rose, and without the biting chill of the earlier part of the month, the normal tasks of winter became bearable again. The three eldest boys were able to resume ice fishing, which was increasingly necessary as they had consumed a large portion of their winter stock of dried fish and smoked meat while they were bound to the confines of the cabin.

Their low supplies made Samuel realize that with the improvement in the weather they should make a trip as soon as possible to collect the meat they had stored in a rock cairn near Poverty Lake. However, given the high snow level, he realized it would be impossible to travel by horse, and worried whether even his largest snowshoes would do the job in the deep snowdrifts.

This also prompted Samuel to think about visiting some of their more elderly neighbours, as it was during such storms as they had just had, that many of the older and

infirm settlers became depressed and gave up their fight to survive. With a dearth of sunlight and their windows covered with snow piled to their rooftops, some of them may have had difficulty getting out of their cabins to fetch water and firewood, while their food supplies could be as low as his own. To survive, they may have resorted to melting snow for their water needs. The cold temperatures could also have caused some to develop severe chest coughs, which often turned to pneumonia and needed strong tonics of ground oak bark and sage to rebuild their immune systems.

A few days later when the snow stopped falling and the sky cleared, the temperatures fell once more, but not nearly as low as they were a few weeks earlier. Despite the continued cold, Samuel decided it was time to venture away from the cabin to collect meat from their storage cairn, and along the way check on the Davis family; whom he was most concerned about because they were essentially on their own.

His eldest son Peter accompanied him, and was proud to have been asked to make such an important journey in these somewhat difficult conditions. They started out in the morning just as dawn was about to break, as they were still amongst the shortest days of the year and would, therefore, have only about eight hours at most of daylight before it would be dark and extremely difficult to find their way home.

Under normal winter conditions, the trip to the Poverty Lake meat cairn would have taken not much more than two hours, but with the deep snow it was just over three hours before they reached their destination. To hasten their return, Samuel fashioned a crude version of a sled by joining some hemlock boughs together with a rope he carried with him for the task. They quickly unloaded enough meat for themselves, and also for the Davis family, who they planned to check on while on their way back home.

It would take them another three hours to get to the Davis homestead, and when they arrived they found that Alexander Davis had perished during the storm, from what was likely a heart attack while he was trying to clear a path to the icy lake. Anne Davis had struggled hard to drag the body of her husband back inside, having done so just in time as she heard coyotes howling close by. Being desperate for food, the coyotes were not particular about whether it was man or beast that they would seek nourishment from.

Despite her loss, Anne Davis knew that if she were to survive the winter, she needed to leave her husband behind and return with Samuel to his cabin, and stay with his family until she could journey into Dwight to arrange for her husband's burial. It was customary for her church to predig a number of graves each fall to cover such eventualities, as a severe freeze-up, such as the one they experienced this year, could cause the frost to penetrate more than five-feet into the ground.

Chapter 19

It was a sad good-bye, but after securing the door of her cabin and tending to the few animals they had in their barn, she made the trip back with Samuel, with his promise to return the following day to fetch her livestock. On the trip back to Samuel's cabin, Anne Davis decided that the time had arrived for her to leave the settlers life, and head west to be with her son and his family in Alberta.

By the time the three travelers reached Samuel's cabin, it was already dark. Catherine was relieved that they had made it home as she hadn't expected them to be so long, and couldn't bring herself to imagine what misfortune may have prevented them from returning. She comforted Anne Davis while Matthew and Luke set up an extra bed for her, and Peter collected water from the lake.

The clear night sky brought a brilliant moon, and the light made it easy for Samuel to check the animals once more before ending the day with a hot meal, and feeling very fortunate to have his family by his side.

Chapter 20

Forest Justice

Samuel and Brian Powers use their initiative to persuade two brothers to leave the country after terrorizing neighbouring settlers.

As the years passed, Samuel and Catherine developed close friendships with the other families who settled in the Hillside-Millar Hill area, mostly south of the fourth concession line. This road allowance provided access to the last of the areas settled in the late 1800's, and in time became known as the Algonquin Park Road.

Prior to his death, Joseph had been instrumental in winning community support for building a schoolhouse, located a few miles along the Millar Hill Road. He had also been instrumental in attracting Dr. Reisen as the schoolmaster.

The school was so popular that children walked or rode their horses, if they were fortunate enough to have them, for up to five miles, three days a week, to and from school. Susan Emerson was one of the older children who regularly walked to school each day from the north end of

Lake Solitaire. Because she had done so well in her schooling, she was paid a small stipend to stay late after school to help Dr. Reisen provide additional tutoring to the students who were falling behind. This was necessary as many students missed school when their farm chores took precedent over their studies, such as when weather determined when the fields needed to be ploughed, planted or harvested.

Late one afternoon in September 1893, Susan left the Millar Hill Road to turn onto the Stoney Lonesome Road, which had been upgraded significantly from the trail that Samuel used in 1875, accompanied by Brian Powers, to search for the settlement lots that Captain Hunt had arranged to be set aside for him.

Two notably cruel brothers, Eric and Alfred, (whose surnames are not mentioned to protect their families), were waiting for her a short distance along the Stoney Lonesome Road. They immediately proceeded to taunt her and then viciously set about attacking her, and in the process broke her arm and bruised her face badly. They had noted her movements for some time, confident that it was highly unlikely anyone would be using the same route during the rest of the day.

Their attack could not have been more out of keeping with the trust and goodwill that the settlers had established amongst themselves. Neighbours constantly watched out for each other and were always available to help, usually long before being asked to do so.

It was therefore with horror that Catherine discovered Susan, bloodied and limping up the hill to their cabin; instantly bringing back vivid memories of that fateful night when Samuel had rescued her from Harold Ramson's clutches, and possibly as much dreadful harm as had befallen Susan.

Susan collapsed as Catherine led her into the cabin to lay her down on a bed. She gently covered her with a blanket before she frantically rang the bell hanging at the door of the cabin, and fired two shots in the air to summon Samuel. In less than fifteen minutes, he arrived from the field he was tilling in the beaver meadow just south of the old cedar log cabin.

While Catherine comforted and tended to Susan's physical wounds, Samuel rode to fetch Walter and Margaret Emerson. Prior to them arriving at his homestead, he did his best to prepare them for the traumatic shock and anger they were about to experience. He knew that he would have to help Walter, who naturally was extremely distraught, to contain his rage and prevent him from rushing to meter out his own form of justice.

Once Walter and Margaret were reunited with their injured daughter, and had spent some time to reassure her, Samuel quietly ushered Walter outside and urged him to sit down and listen carefully for a few minutes.

He began by informing Walter that what he was about to tell him, he had told no one since arriving in Canada. He then briefly relayed to Walter the circumstances that led

him to leave London, hoping by doing this he would earn his absolute trust.

He urged him to think long and hard before taking any action, repeatedly mentioning the coincidence of Susan's vicious beating and Walter's recent complaint to the parents of the two boys after one of his sheep was stolen, butchered, and the remains abandoned on the road leading away from their farm. Samuel stressed that the vindictive nature of the two brothers would likely not stop by him intervening. He also reminded Walter of the two barn burnings that had taken place over of the past few months; in each case immediately following the theft and slaughtering of a domestic animal from the owner's homesteads, and them having confronted Eric and Alfred's parent's over the incidents.

Finally, Samuel promised Walter that he would personally ensure the two brothers were appropriately punished, conditional on Walter in no way being involved. He said it was essential that Walter establish an iron-clad alibi to vouch for his whereabouts when the time came to hold the brothers accountable for their actions, because he would be a natural suspect, and it was possible that things could get out of hand.

Samuel also knew precisely what should not be done; advising Walter not to involve the local police commander. At the first sign of a police investigation, Eric and Alfred would temporarily flee the area or disappear out west, bringing back memories of his own

actions, albeit for entirely different reasons. Therefore, a week or so would need to pass to lull the brothers into thinking that Susan's parents had decided to protect their daughter, or were fearful of the further harm the brothers could bring to their family, including burning down the Emerson's barn, or slaughtering more of their already diminished livestock.

The Emerson's left the MacTeer homestead late that evening, deeply distressed, but knowing that Samuel would, in his own time and manner, ensure that nothing like what happened to Susan that day would ever occur on Lake Solitaire again. Walter knew deep down, as much as he wished otherwise, that justice would need to take place outside of the courts in order to make the punishment fit the crime and prevent it from happening to another settler family in the future.

That very evening, Samuel set about planning for what he felt needed to be done. He drew heavily on the experience and exceptional caution he needed to exercise on the voyage across the Atlantic Ocean and the care he took to this day to hide his true identity.

However, he first needed to enlist help, and there was no one better in his mind for what lay ahead than his good friend, Brian Powers. Besides leading the community hunt together for the past fifteen years and successfully providing the participants with ample meat to last the winter, Brian regularly stopped by Samuel's cabin when checking his trap lines in the area.

Chapter 20

Brian was rugged, exceptionally strong and knew the terrain north of the fourth concession line like the back of his hand. It was into these untouched forestlands that Samuel intended to take the two brothers to teach them lessons they would never forget.

Equally appalled at what had taken place, and always ready for a new adventure, Brian immediately signed up. He returned with Samuel directly after their discussion, but turned down an invitation to stay the night in their cabin, preferring to camp out at the Windy Caves. Brian insisted that the neighbours should not see them together while they were preparing themselves and waiting for the right time to strike.

They intended to lure Eric and Alfred away from their family's homestead by leading their family's two horses south, deep into the forest around Echo Valley; an area where it would be easy for the two brothers to track them because of the soft sandy soils that lay along most of the length of the valley. They knew that if they went far enough up the valley, the boys' father would turn back since he could only walk short distances because of a painful limp.

Two nights later, after leaving Brian's dog with Catherine, Samuel and Brian departed a few hours before daybreak to visit Eric and Alfred's family homestead. Before leaving, they made a point of dressing themselves in scruffy and unrecognizable clothing, and in addition to their rifles, they carried a sword and an ample supply of raw as well as dried meat.

When they arrived at the brother's barn, they befriended the family's dogs with the fresh venison, slung their boots around their shoulders, and led the horses precisely as planned well up the valley, leaving their bare foot prints and horse tracks embedded as deeply as they could manage into the ground, so that even the most inexperienced woodsman could follow their trail. They tethered the horses in a small clearing surrounded by two large rock outcrops and began their wait for the arrival of the brothers.

When Eric and Alfred eventually arrived close to the noon hour, Brian and Samuel were well hidden behind the rocks with their rifles aimed near the two brothers' feet. They called out to them to drop their trousers and lie face down on the ground.

As expected, they refused to obey, at which point two shots were fired, striking the ground a foot or so away from each brother, causing a spray of dust and small stones to kick up. This precipitated the desired response, and both brothers immediately fell face down on the ground.

With a black eye-patch across his left eye, a bandana around his head and wearing a false black beard, Samuel was the first to approach the trembling scoundrels, brandishing a large sword he had acquired when he first arrived in Huntsville, out of deference to his Uncle Archibald MacTavish's reputed earlier livelihood.

Brian was equally fearsome to behold, having painted his face, arms and hands with dark brown ochre and with slices of apple inserted behind his lips, and even larger

pieces in his cheeks, which made him appear grotesquely ugly and totally unrecognizable.

Once they had tied the left hand of each of the brothers firmly behind their backs and hobbled their feet together, they gave the brothers one last chance to see them before instructing them to keep looking directly ahead, threatening to otherwise gouge an eye out.

By this time Eric and Alfred were cowering with fear, believing they were being addressed by the evil pirate their parents had told them so much about when they were growing up. Little did they realize how much more Samuel and Brian had in store for them.

While Brian untethered their horses, and sent them galloping home with a slap on their shanks, Samuel used the tip of his sword to prod the two brothers to the top of the largest rock outcrop, where he made them peer down at a thirty-foot sheer drop.

Brian then took over and proceeded to instruct them on what lay ahead. He called it forest justice, as it would be their choice as to which of the three punishments he claimed had been prescribed collectively by their neighbours, they were to endure.

Speaking in broken English with a deeply guttural voice, Brian slowly described the three alternatives available to Eric and Alfred. First, they could suffer the ignominy of his pirate friend removing their manhood with his rusty sword. Second, they could enjoy a long march deep

into the forest into territory unknown to them; whereupon they would each have the toes on their right foot shattered and receive only sufficient food for three days, with one of them given food contaminated with the same poison the two brothers had administered to their neighbours' dogs.

Alternately, they could chose to sign a comprehensive statement confessing to each and every crime they had committed, and promising to leave Canada and never return. Should they ever reappear, their confessions would be published for the entire community to read, in which case they would either suffer mob justice, or be held accountable under the law. They could, however, in due course notify their parents of their decision to go abroad, providing whatever reasons they wished, but with the stipulation that if either of their parents or any other relative began to take vengeance on their neighbours, the same condition of publicizing their confessions would stand.

True to the cowards that they were, both Eric and Alfred thought only of themselves and readily agreed to record their crimes, which they proceeded to do in writing; all the while being continually prodded and poked with the tip of the sword, especially when they tried to gloss over the severity of any of their crimes.

Once they were done writing, the pair started a tortuous six hour hike north past Twin, Poverty, Rebecca, Oxbow and Dotty lakes to the headwaters of the Big East River, with their two enforcers walking behind them. The two brothers had only their right hands free to steady them-

selves, brush aside undergrowth and low hanging branches, and to prevent falling, which they repeatedly did.

Before parting ways, and just before nightfall, Brian forced the pair to listen to another tirade about their evil ways. Still speaking in deep, guttural broken English, he spoke of the need for them to reform and start praying every day for forgiveness for the harm they had caused. Finally, he told them that by following the river west, they would eventually emerge in about two-days time on Lake Vernon. From there they were to hop on the first freight train to pass through Huntsville and continue their journey out of the country.

Samuel also warned them that he would be watching their progress from the hilltops through his spyglass, and if they did not follow the instructions precisely as they had been laid out, they would be hunted down and their punishment would be a combination of those previously described to them.

Not surprisingly, Eric and Alfred were never seen or directly heard of again. Two years later the Reverend Norton Hill did, however, mention to Catherine that Eric and Alfred's parents had told him that they were living in South America, claiming that they had been shanghaied by a pirate and his mate, who delivered them to a sugar boat captain to work as deckhands. Evidently they escaped somewhere off the coast of Brazil, where they intended to stay.

Chapter 21

Civic Duty

At Captain Hunt's request, Samuel agrees to serve on a government advisory commission.

At a very early age, Samuel developed a keen sense of what was right and wrong. He had honed this while apprenticing and earning his guild membership. He believed it was not only right, but also his duty to work as hard as he could, accept rewards relative to his contributions, help others achieve their potential, and contribute to his local community. Conversely, he saw it as being reprehensible to portray a sense of entitlement, lay claim to what was not earned, or fail to contribute back to the community where you derived your livelihood.

It was Samuel's well developed sense of duty that made him an easy target for Captain Hunt's entreaties over the years, requesting Samuel's help to further his civic goals.

Only a few months had passed since Captain Hunt last visited Lake Solitaire, and yet as he had done many times

before, he arrived unexpectedly, early in the morning, riding on horseback from Huntsville. His visit brought back vivid memories of the week Samuel spent during the summer, tracking down five criminals who escaped from the Huntsville jail. They kept moving from one cave or camp to another, north of the Big East River; an area that had never been settled and very few had ever ventured into. From there, they preyed on the Hillside-Millar Hill settlers, stealing their livestock and food supplies, as well as a number of weapons.

The Captain was frustrated with the inability of the town's police force to apprehend the escaped prisoners, and especially their reluctance to enter the northern lands with its lack of roads and identifiable trails. He was deeply concerned that Huntsville and the surrounding area could receive a reputation for lawlessness. Therefore, once the reward offered for their capture failed to achieve its purpose, Captain Hunt prevailed on Brian Powers and Samuel to bring them in.

After tracking the fugitives to the camp they were using at the time, and knowing they were armed, Samuel and Brian felt it would be best to avoid a direct confrontation. Instead, they waited until they had retired in a drunken sleep, and then slipped into their camp to make off with their boots, food and weapons.

At daybreak, they tossed ten rifle cartridges into their campfire, and hid behind two large rocks to wait for the bullets to explode; hitting one of the escaped prisoners in

the thigh. It was then an easy matter to instruct one prisoner at a time to crawl into the forest where Brian was waiting to tie his hands firmly together behind his back. As soon as a prisoner hesitated, Samuel would shoot at a tree near to him, scattering bark and leaves in the prisoner's direction.

In addition to the reward, Captain Hunt made sure they received medals of commendation from the regional police chief, needless to say, to the chagrin of the local officers.

As if they had not done enough to fulfill their civic duty for the year, one month later Captain Hunt was back to persuade them to accompany a federal government surveyor to re-examine the possibilities for completing the Bobcaygeon Road from Dwight to beyond the fourth concession line in order to open these lands for logging. They had not expected the government surveyor to be David Hadley, the famed cartographer. Since they learnt so much from him about using the stars to find their way, they considered this to be a pleasurable civic assignment.

Given the purposes of Captain Hunt's previous visits, Samuel could not help to assume that he had yet another project for him in mind. The Captain had indeed come to ask Samuel for help, but of a very different nature from his recent requests. The Provincial Assembly had recently decreed that all towns with more than two-thousand residents form an independent commission with the objective of significantly improving the productivity of their managers, superintendents and work crews.

Chapter 21

Being a learned man and a consummate reader of business journals, Captain Hunt had kept himself abreast of the latest management practices and was well aware of the extraordinary productivity gains being realized by industrial corporations across England, as well as in America. He and other councilors wished to achieve similar improvements by applying these practices to some of the town's own operations. Specifically, they aimed to reduce the costs of providing water and other communal services to its citizens.

To accomplish this, the head of the town's largest tannery and the recently retired general manager of the Molson Bank had been nominated by the province to sit on a commission charged with enquiring into the town's financial and operational affairs.

As the town's mayor, the Captain had the right to appoint a third member to the commission, and since he was concerned that the province's two nominees would produce what on the surface, may be a well written and readable report, few of his constituents would likely understand it, and therefore it would serve little practical purpose.

He wanted a report that concluded with no more than ten pragmatic recommendations, that even the most junior town employee could grasp and apply enthusiastically to his or her work. In fact, the Captain wished to inspire the town's senior employees to aim at providing communal services to its residents at the lowest cost in the province,

and thereby make it one of the most desirable towns to live in, north of Orillia.

After describing his objective, the Captain maintained that he knew of no better person than Samuel to ensure the report, or at least its conclusions, were presented in a form that he could use to motivate the town's administrators to achieve significant cost savings. Being the adept salesman he was, Captain Hunt persisted in complimenting Samuel, referring to his leadership, pragmatism, can-do attitude, innovative approach to challenges, and his reputation for decency; before he finally implored him to join the commission as his nominee.

Before Samuel could protest, the Captain once again repeated that he was unaware of anyone else who was so well equipped as Samuel to do the job required, and even if they could, the other two commissioners and the community at large would probably object to him nominating anyone else he could trust to the commission on the basis of their lack of independence.

The Captain was adamant that given the two medals of honour Samuel had received for civic contributions, his recent community commendation, and his success as a builder, settler and woodsman; no one could possibly object to his appointment. In fact, the Captain was confident that all involved would applaud and value his practical input.

Notwithstanding the flattering comments, Samuel maintained that he lacked the necessary expertise for dealing with such matters, and furthermore had little tolerance

for idle bureaucratic debates and the fancy wordsmanship, which would no doubt take place in the preparation of the report.

This played right into the Captain's hands, who being the master salesman he was, stated categorically that was the very reason why he needed Samuel to accept the appointment. He did not mind if Samuel chose not to participate in the debates, as long as he attended the public meetings, and at some point in the proceedings recorded the values that had made him successful.

The Captain went on to assure Samuel that, for his part, he would ensure that Samuel's values were reflected in the report's conclusion, as he had already arranged for his personal lawyer to volunteer his clerk's services as the recording secretary for the commission. Once Samuel's values were tabled in the report, the Captain intended to draw on them endlessly to justify the efficiency and cost reduction programmes he already had formulated in his mind to achieve his objectives.

He assured Samuel that the commission would meet no more than four or five times, with the early meetings being of a private nature with the town managers, superintendents and selected staff. The public would be in attendance at the final two meetings, where Samuel's presence would be invaluable as he would relate especially well to those attending. Continuing his compliments toward Samuel, the Captain mentioned that the town residents still

talked with glowing admiration about his role in the critical bridge building project.

As it was clear that the Captain was not going to take no for an answer, Samuel reluctantly but graciously agreed to assist him, satisfied that notwithstanding the likely cumbersome process, the commission's objectives were sound and deserved support.

In the weeks prior to the commission's first meeting, Samuel thought extensively about what he had learnt from his earlier training with the iron workers guild in London and his experience in supervising major construction projects. Each time he would end up concluding that success came down to a leader having a positive attitude, the ability to relate to and motivate co-workers, determination to overcome obstacles, and to generously share credit for joint achievements.

He decided that the only way for him to be effective in participating in the commission's deliberations would be to fall back on his own experiences, should he consider the discussions and ideas being put forward to be highly theoretical, impractical or misguided.

In order to prepare himself, he started to record the values he had relied on in his adult life by preparing a letter addressed to his children. He had been thinking of doing something like that for some time with the intention of the letter being given to them when they turned thirty years of age. In doing so, he hoped that the values he described would be embraced by them during their adult lives, and

that these values would assist his children achieve success should they chose to work for, with or alongside others.

To be effective, Samuel confined his advice to the ten lessons he felt were the most important that he had learnt, which after considerable thought and redrafting, were listed as follows:

Accept assignments with enthusiasm and with a positive attitude.

Display confidence at all times, convinced that the toughest problems can normally be overcome if tackled one step at a time.

Provide guidance to colleagues and subordinates clearly and concisely.

Never ask more of a co-worker than you plan to contribute yourself.

Ensure the quality of all work is higher than expected.

Complete assignments sooner and better than promised.

Provide interim reports in a uniform, timely and logical manner.

Conclude each assignment with concrete and specific recommendations and relegate all extraneous, but useful information, to appendices of a report.

Share credit for success generously with co-workers.

Act at all times in an ethical manner, with fairness and decency being the highest priority in all dealings.

In chronicling the values which Samuel listed as contributing to his own success, he became increasingly comfortable with the Captain's view that far more would be accomplished from the work of the commission if its report focused on the importance of the jobs performed by the town's administrators and employees, and the virtues of them being contributing members of society.

His preparation also strengthened his resolve to resist any attempts by the commission members to catalogue staff failures or to make a public example of the isolated few that may have taken advantage of their positions. He believed that doing so, which seemed the typical approach of so many other commission reports, would do more harm than good and in the end accomplish very little. He was convinced it would severely damage morale and impede the efforts of the town's work force, rather than lead to innovation, greater efficiency and cost reductions.

With his convictions solidly founded on his own experiences and aligned with the Captain's objectives, Samuel surprised Captain Hunt, as well as himself, with the extent of his participation in the town hall public meetings. These enabled him to favorably influence the direction of the enquiry and the resulting conclusions to the Captain's great satisfaction.

The Captain was obviously delighted and endorsed the report, adroitly emphasizing the sections that supported the programmes he had been patiently waiting for an appropriate time to launch.

Chapter 21

For the next couple of years, whenever the Captain felt the enthusiasm for the efficiency programmes had waned, he prevailed on Samuel to accompany him to meetings with his senior staff. He then sought Samuel's views after the meetings were over, on the abilities of individuals attending, and for suggestions on how further improvements could be made.

Chapter 22

Reflections

Contrary to many of their neighbours, Samuel and Catherine have much to be grateful for, including their children, good health and financial success.

It was incredible that so many of the settlers in the Hillside-Millar Hill community remained on their farms for as long as they did, when most of them eked out barely sufficient for their families to survive. For some it was sheer determination to persevere, no matter how poor their choice of land proved to be, that caused them to hang on. For others it was the camaraderie they developed with their neighbours, who were always ready to help when they were ill, short of supplies or in need of a hand to construct a building, repair a fence or tend to their fields.

However, as time passed and their children chose other vocations, often in towns far away from their family's northern homesteads, the parents either followed them or were lured by the opportunity for a fresh start on the richer and deeper soils that were abundant in the western parts of the country.

Chapter 22

News of the California gold rush and other mineral discoveries, at first led to frenzied digging in the backyards of Huntsville, the settlers' free grant lands and even further north; in search of elusive riches to lift them out of the poverty many of them experienced.

For some, the mineral discoveries made in and around Huntsville helped to slow their departures for the richer western farm lands. These included a discovery by the owner of the Huntsville grist-mill of enough ore to develop a high-grade, but unfortunately short-lived copper mine near the Big East River. Even the local medical officer, Doctor Casselman, caught the fever and built a feldspar and mica mine on the hill overlooking Fairy Lake, less than a mile away from the centre of Huntsville. Two miles west of Lake Solitaire, another sizable mica deposit was discovered near Eagle Lake, and even closer to Lake Solitaire, a massive quartz deposit was uncovered on the hill overlooking the lake.

Clear evidence of the continuation of the quartz deposit was found down-dip virtually all the way to the Brenn Meadow. Unfortunately, after assaying numerous samples, the gold customarily found with quartz was minimal and the excitement quickly dissipated. The location of the quartz deposit, its size and jewel-like qualities, however, did have a lasting impact, as the name of the lake it overlooked was changed from Clear Lake to Lake Solitaire.

For a while, dreams of the quick riches the settlers hoped to find on their own properties, kept many of the

adult children of the early settlers on the farms they helped to establish. However, the combination of a series of severe winter storms in the late 1890's and the Yukon gold rush, created another wave of settlers leaving the land they had worked so hard to master, in search of the riches that would make theirs and their families' lives more comfortable.

Constant reports of the richer western farm lands eventually led other families in the Hillside-Millar Hill area to, one after the other, sell their lands, pack their belongings and head off in search of a more rewarding life. They recognized that initially their new life might not be as enjoyable and fulfilling, given the deep friendships they would be leaving behind, but they had come to believe that not only was it the right thing to do for their children, but it would be less demanding on their bodies, many of which had grown frail with the passing years.

It was always with much sadness when the friends they were leaving behind, gathered to wish them well as they departed. Some departing settlers left their lands in the care of their immediate neighbours, while most sold them to supplement the resources they would need to re-establish themselves wherever they planned to go.

J. Albert Bauer purchased the McMaster, Robinson and Atler family homesteads, and made arrangements for his family, when they tired of working the lands, to set them aside as a nature reserve for all to enjoy.

After venturing north in the late 1870's and first settling in Gravenhurst, George Hutcheson moved to Huntsville in

1883, and quickly proved himself to be a capable merchant. He also purchased a sawmill near Windemere and slowly began accumulating ownership of forest lands. Generations of the Hutcheson family have since been well ahead of their time in foreseeing the potential value of the northern forest lands to feed the local sawmills once the forests further south were depleted. They also accumulated properties surrounding pristine lakes and lands rich with gravel, which would be needed to build roads. Their foresight and commitment to hold onto their lands for the long term, and avoid the temptation to sell them for quick profits, of which there were many opportunities to do so, paid off handsomely over the years for the benefit of all family members.

The Reverend Norton Hill was also an acquirer of homestead properties in and around Lake Solitaire, as well as lands as far east as Interlaken. He always insisted on paying whatever a settler felt was a fair price, plus something more. Most of these lands were eventually incorporated by his grandson, Gordon Hill, into the year-round Limberlost recreational resort, which became very popular with the addition of a four-season lodge, a mechanized ski tow and other amenities.

Samuel MacTeer was the most selective acquirer of settler properties, confining his acquisitions to the properties referred to in his Uncle Archibald MacTavish's correspondence with his father. Samuel had never quite given up on his search for the elusive pirate hoard, wavering between wanting to believe that it existed on the one hand, and on the other believing that it was perhaps only a ploy

by his Uncle to attract members of his family to join him and enjoy the wonderful country he had come to respect so much.

Samuel, similar to the Reverend Hill, always paid departing settlers more than they expected. In his case, being fortunate to be the ongoing recipient of ten percent of the profits from Captain Hunt's sawmill, he usually doubled the amount they requested; urging his neighbours to use the additional monies to further the education of their children and grandchildren and thus expand the opportunities available to them in life.

On reflection, and contrary to many of their neighbours, Samuel and Catherine recognized that they had a great deal for which to be thankful. They had four strapping sons, a beautiful daughter, bountiful fields, cash dividends from Captain Hunt's sawmill, a comfortable home and good health.

Each day they reminded themselves of their good fortune, which spurred them to take on new challenges. In addition to the many daily tasks that needed to be attended to in order to keep their farmlands productive, there was never a shortage of opportunities to improve what they had already built.

As the years passed and Samuel and Catherine's children grew older, Samuel began to prepare them for a day when he would no longer be around, which included sharing with them the letters his father had received from his brother Archibald MacTavish.

Chapter 22

Their youngest son, Joseph Jr., was sixteen before he broached the subject with them, partly because he did not wish them to be too hasty in judging his Uncle Arcibald's earlier livelihood, but also because he wanted them to think seriously about the implications of a pirate hoard being found on the property. He stressed that none of them should ever count on locating the pirate hoard, and should lead their lives as though it did not exist; which meant working hard to acquire the skills required to support themselves and their families.

Nevertheless, over a period of three to four years, they poured over each letter to seek the clues they hoped to find hidden in them, which would help them interpret the map. They had no trouble coming up with numerous hypotheses which led to many enjoyable family hikes through the area around Lake Solitaire, including six other lakes, in order to check them out, but always to no avail.

In a final attempt to conclude their search, they decided to divide the property into a grid comprised of approximately 200 separate parcels by establishing fourteen grid lines running east-west, intersected by fourteen lines running north-south. They then set out to systematically examine one or two parcels each week; looking for rock caves or depressions in the land that could indicate that the ground had been disturbed to bury something. The family realized that this project could take at least thirty years to complete, as it could only be conducted effectively in the spring and autumn months when the snow was off the ground and the underbrush was not too dense.

The extended period of time it would take to conclude their search did not concern them, as they viewed the project as an opportunity to spend time together enjoying the wilderness, while at the same time getting to know virtually every inch of their land.

Weather permitting, they ventured out each Sunday afternoon together with shovels in hand, criss-crossing selected pieces of land. They would then tick off parcels, one by one, on a large map that Joseph Jr. had prepared to record the areas they examined or dug around. They never felt that their time was wasted in conducting their search, as they enjoyed being together outdoors; and if they had not imposed such a disciplined plan on themselves, they probably would have found other tasks to tackle on their own.

Chapter 23

Fast Forward

This chapter describes the efforts currently being made to safeguard and share the Limberlost Forest & Wildlife Reserve with neighbours and visitors from around the globe.

Although more than two hundred families attempted to settle permanently north of Lake of Bays and south of the Big East River, less than a third of them were successful in earning even a subsistence living from farming.

The McMasters, Robinsons, Flemmings, Langleighs, Atlers and McReynolds were among the more successful families. Notwithstanding their success, they too eventually moved on, leading to their farms being acquired by Dr. John Bauer, the Reverend Norton Hill, the Hutcheson family and others for their lumber or recreational values.

Dr. Bauer placed the lands he acquired into a trust for the enjoyment of his family, conditional upon the forests being allowed to return to their natural state. Eventually, true to his wishes, the five hundred acres he assembled were transferred by his family to the Ontario Heritage Society and are now managed as a provincial park. Today,

this small but beautiful park is surrounded on all four sides by the Limberlost Forest & Wildlife Reserve, with its two principal trails fully integrated with Limberlost's more extensive trail system.

The Reverend Norton Hill's grandson, Gordon Hill, together with his wife Marion, utilized the lands accumulated by his grandfather around Lake Solitaire to develop the Limberlost Lodge, starting in the early 1920s. In a relatively short period he established the property as a pre-eminent wilderness resort operating through all four seasons.

While Gordon Hill was the visionary, Marion Hill was the one who promoted the unique wilderness experience Limberlost came to offer. The creative advertising brochures and related promotional programmes initiated by Marion Hill were well ahead of their time, including the introduction of the owl motif used to this day on promotional material to foster a distinct Limberlost brand.

In many respects, Gordon and Marion Hill were early pioneers of eco-tourism as it is now known. They offered visitors the opportunity to venture safely into the woods and enjoy the forests, lakes and wildlife in a pristine wilderness setting. There were plenty of adventures for guests to embark on, including physically challenging outings that helped them to learn more about themselves while experiencing nature in its most idyllic form.

The Hill family's development of Limberlost also brought significant economic benefits to the region. Their

obvious accomplishments encouraged others in time to establish more elaborate northern resorts such as Deerhurst, Grandview and Hidden Valley, which went on to achieve their own levels of success.

After Gordon Hill's untimely death in 1947, Marion Hill and her daughter Bobbie continued to operate the Limberlost Lodge. However, with changing times, by the 1960's Limberlost's fortunes began to fade. Increased affluence had enabled many families to build their own lake front cottages, and for others the development of the large, more luxurious northern resorts seemed better attuned to their wilderness desires.

Around 1969 these developments led to the Limberlost Lodge being taken over by a partnership comprised of local cottage owners. Known as The Friends of Limberlost, they continued to enjoy and sustain the operation of the lodge for a number of years before they in turn sold it and the surrounding lands to a land development company. Soon thereafter, this large, multinational company registered plans to build two-thousand or more cottage and townhouse units along the shores of Lake Solitaire and on the slopes of Solitaire Hill.

In the face of vigorous opposition from neighbouring property owners and activists in the local community, and after encountering other unforeseen difficulties including a severe economic downturn brought on by inflation and record high interest rates, the property development company abandoned the project and sold its interest in

two-thousand acres of pristine forest lands and six lakes, including Lake Solitaire; the very same properties that were assembled by the Reverend Norton Hill at the beginning of the twentieth century as settlers departed the area.

By the mid-1980's the current owners voluntarily relinquished the hard-won development rights and began to assemble additional acreage contiguous to the original Limberlost property. They also established partnerships and long-term working relationships with adjacent land owners, and set about restoring Limberlost's reputation and the property's renowned hiking trails to the pre-eminent standing they previously enjoyed.

Once most of the restoration was well under way, the forest and its hiking trails were opened to the public to enjoy, this time at no cost to day visitors from nearby lakes, local communities and from more distant locations, including visitors from other countries. In addition, guest facilities and other amenities are now available to less-advantaged groups who incorporate wilderness experiences in their programmes.

Embracing the new direction Limberlost's new owners laid out for the reserve, Ted and Judy Rivers took up residence on Lake Solitaire and set about making it their lives' work to re-establish the Limberlost Forest & Wildlife Reserve as a preferred eco-tourism destination. Together they have made great strides toward implementing programmes to protect the reserve's wildlife and have actively promoted sustainable forest stewardship practices.

The response from nearby cottagers and members of the local community has been overwhelming, with numerous individuals volunteering countless hours to help maintain as well as upgrade over one-hundred kilometres of hiking, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing trails. For safety purposes, strategically located log cabins have been erected along the trails for visitors to take shelter from storms, warm-up on cold winter days or to rest after a long summer hike. Today, Limberlost's trails rank among the most interesting, safest and attractive in North America.

Trail guides provide visitors with information on the reserve's many unique natural and historic features. As a safety precaution, the trails are laid out to circle around the major lakes, ensuring that even novice hikers or inexperienced wilderness adventurers do not lose their way. In addition, numerous link trails, clearly marked with directional signage, enable visitors to extend the length of their hikes along their way to suit themselves.

Wooden bridge ways have been built across streams, wetlands and sensitive areas, minimizing the damage visitors may otherwise cause to wildlife habitats and fragile ecological areas. As a result, animal and bird counts have continued to rise over the past twenty years. This has increased the opportunities for visitors to view wildlife as they move through the reserve.

The southern quadrant of the Limberlost Forest & Wildlife Reserve has been set aside for community organizations serving disadvantaged youth. The area is ideally

suited for introducing their members to the northern wilderness in a safe and informative way. As a by-product, their members emerge well equipped to explore on their own Canada's numerous provincial and national parks, including Algonquin Park, which the Limberlost Algonquin Outpost abuts along its western and southern borders.

The current custodians of the Limberlost Forest are committed to ensuring that humans and wildlife co-exist safely together on the same lands. In keeping with this commitment, Limberlost's trail system is specifically designed to protect animal habitats and their breeding grounds, while providing easy and safe access for visitors to the many natural and historic areas of interest offered by the unique setting and topography of the Limberlost reserve.

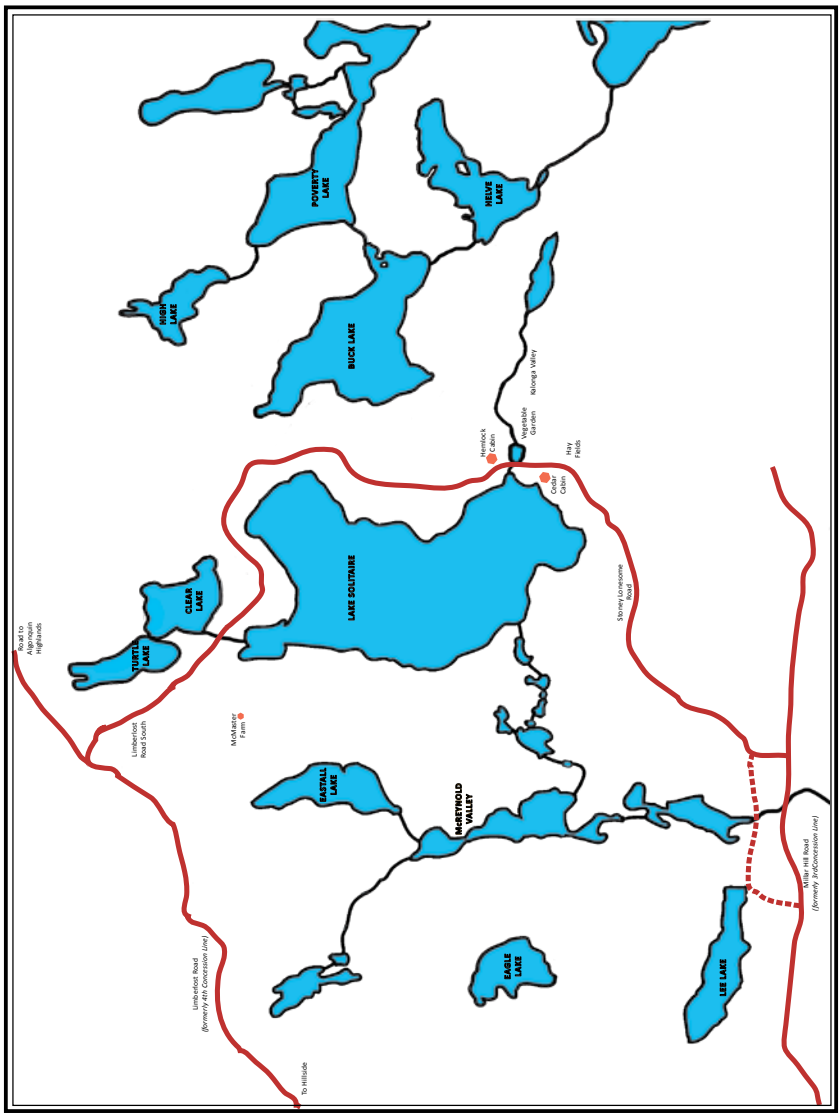
Limberlost's mission statement re-affirms the objectives of the five principal land owners who have partnered together to restore, protect and share the unique natural and historic features the reserve has to offer. As the current custodians of the Limberlost Forest, they have worked together for the past twenty-years to ensure that the property is one of the safest and most interesting forest wildlife reserves in Canada.

This is being achieved, not only by building attractive and safe hiking trails, but also by supporting these with maps and trail guides highlighting the reserve's most interesting natural and historic features.

All parties involved with the restoration of the Limberlost Forest & Wildlife Reserve are committed to

safeguarding the pristine nature of its lakes and waterways and to continually upgrade its forests by promoting the growth of the healthiest trees. Proceeds from logging, fishing and cottage rentals are used to sustain and enhance the reserve's unique ecosystems and to support disadvantaged youth organizations, which incorporate character building wilderness experiences in their programmes.

LOCATION MAP



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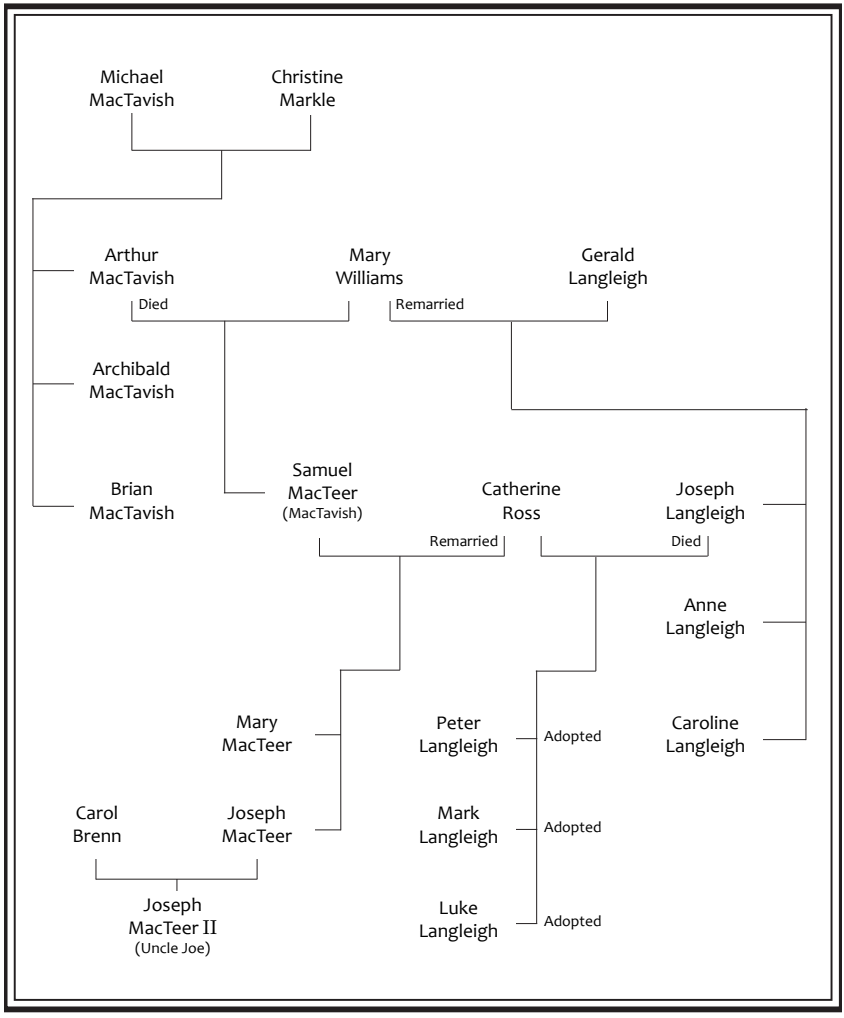
Michael MacTavish
Christine Markle
Arthur MacTavish
Died
Mary Williams
Remarried
Gerald Langleigh
Archibald MacTavish
Brian MacTavish
Samuel MacTeer (MacTavish)
Catherine Ross
Remarried
Joseph Langleigh
Died
Anne Langleigh
Mary MacTeer
Peter Langleigh
Adopted
Caroline Langleigh
Carol Brenn
Joseph MacTeer
Mark Langleigh
Adopted
Joseph MacTeer II (Uncle Joe)
Luke Langleigh
Adopted