

Toronto Telegram, May 23, 1953
Schooner Days MCVI (1106)
By C.H.J. Snider

Oneida By Moonlight

That cheerful traveler, Mrs. Anne MacDonell, who started from Etobicoke for New York 148 years ago and felt herself fortunate to reach Gotham in 34 days traveling, had to pass through Oswego on the way. It was, indeed, her port of entry into the United States, as York (Toronto) was her port of departure from Upper Canada and British North America.

Her diary which we have been quoting, last described five wet and weary days in Oswego, waiting for the boat to start with four passengers for Schenectady, N.Y. Reduced to reading the prayer book and sermons in the *Columbian Orator* on a wet Sunday morning in the crude American village of 1805 Anne was heartily glad to leave it behind on that damp Monday morning of June 10th, when they at last got away, in a four-man rowboat, equipped with sails. They slept that night at a widow's house, three miles beyond Oswego Falls [Fulton] and fifteen miles only from where they had started. The diary continues:

“June 11th - Rose early and was off by six o'clock. We sailed and polled together, and after attempting to sail over some reefs (rifts) as they call them, which were bad, and being carried back three times, they were obliged to pull the boat over by a rope. Mrs. McGill was so alarmed she had a perfect fit of the ague.

“For my part I did not feel so much fear (then) as in the ox cart, (at the carrying place the day before) having great aversion to travel with oxen. I say after all this we arrived at the river point by 12 o'clock, twelve miles from the falls. It was thought a short time.

Breakfast at Noon

“We here got our kettle boiled, took it on board, and all made a famous breakfast. I was pleased with this place. On the point is a house. The grass looks green and very pleasant around it.

“The Oswego River divides here into the Onondaga and Oneida rivers. The latter we pursue. It is very serpentine and the water strong, so that we could not sail or get through that night. We went 14 miles and stopped at a log house with two rooms. I suppose the best on the river. We passed several not a quarter so good. We were very happy to find one so good and the people so obliging.

“It was late at night tho' the moon was in our favor. It really appeared very beautiful. Sometimes it shown full on us, and then it was entirely obscured by the thick trees and the sudden winding of the river, which is not broad, and the banks seem to vary with its turns. On one side is a high bank and the other quite a flat. There is a good deal variety in it, though a wilderness, and mosquitoes and flies not a little troublesome.

“Our accommodations this night we thought good, particularly as I was taken ill with a

faintness which lasted some time and prevented the comfortable cup of tea we had anticipated. I hastened to bed and slept pretty well.

Off Again at 6

“June 12th. I was better and at 6 o’clock we pursued our journey 4 miles to Oneida Lake where we breakfasted at Mr. Stephen’s. As we saw our breakfast made readily appetite was good enough to eat what I saw prepared tho’ not in a very cleanly manner. I would rather not be present again. We were fortunate in a fair wind and crossed the lake in 5 hours, 26 miles.

“There the boat’s sails were of great assistance. At the entrance of Wood Creek is a house but we preferred dining from our baskets in the boat.

“Went 4 miles up the creek and stopped at a wretch looking house, quite a hovel. It was not at night. The creek was so crooked and the difficulty we met in going over and under the logs fallen across till late, prevented our attempting to go further, and if we had we should not have found a better place to lay our beds in, and none I am sure so clean as Mr. Graves.”