

Toronto Telegram, July 11, 1953
Schooner Days MCXIII (1113)
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Happier Bride's Diary – Home Again After Five Years

AT LONG LAST Anne Smith MacDonell, bride of the High Sheriff of the Home District of Upper Canada, did reach New York.

It was on June 23, 1805. We have been so long telling of the vicissitudes of her journey from Etobicoke in the forest primeval that we may be to blame for your having forgotten when she started, and what she started for. On the 30th of May she left the hospitable mansion of her brother, Col. The Hon. Samuel Smith – still standing in Etobicoke, hard by a supermarket – and she was on a visit to her aged parents in Herrick on Long Island, N.Y.

She had not seen them since her recent marriage, nor, indeed, for five years before. Her parents had suffered by the late American Revolution but had not been driven from their property. Their children had been active Loyalists and had been forced to find homes in the Canadian wilderness.

Anne's diary, that treasure beyond price, is more personal and intimate when she is no longer traveling. We shall respect her privacy. There is nothing in the diary requiring concealment and above all Anne had no cause to blush had she read in print what she wrote of her homecoming.

"Stopped at Jamacia" – Anne spelled it that way; Jamaica, N.Y., on the way from the city to Herricks – "& dined. Called at Mr. Foster's where I was once accustomed to be often. Miss F. Appeared very happy to see me. It brings to mind many happy hours I have spent there. The place looks much as it used to, tho' a little improved, but I am told the society has changed. It must, of course, in five years. There is quite a new set of young people grown up –."

It is wonderful to be so young that five years is an age, an epoch, an era and to be sixty is to be venerable.

The Homecoming

"'Tis a place I would like to reside at. Then I might often see my aged parents – what a consolation it would be to them to have me nearer! I shall not, I cannot ever reside on Long Island or New York. If I did wrong to leave my parents it is now too late to remedy it, but whatever is, is right. I must adhere to that tho' perhaps I should have acted more up to the duty incumbent on a child to parents in the decline of life, particularly when they had only (that) one to expect that attention from.

"We got to my Father's about sundown – my poor old Father and Mother seemed much affected on meeting me – and I felt so too, particularly to see my Mother so changed, tho' her health is a good deal better than I had reason to expect – poor Susan wretched as ever, but grown very fat. When I left home she was quite a skeleton. My good friend Miss Kissam was here to

meet me. I was pleased to see her.”

The Dutiful Wife

4th July. (No mention of the date’s significance to the land she had left). “In the morning I walked round the orchards. I am sorry to see them not in the order they used to be, but how can so old a man as my father attend to them with no assistance but hire that care not?”

Six weeks later.

“My poor father and mother have formerly seemed pleased with everything I say or do, they are dotingly fond that every wish appears to be too gratifying for me. It sometimes makes me sorry they should think so much of it.

“My father, how venerable he appears; every hair as white as snow. He is plain, but none can possess a better heart, a good old man, an indulgent parent. My mother, too, is not remiss, she is too fond of me. How can I pain them so soon by leaving them? Yet I must go. The authority, the love, of a husband even outdoes that of a parent. And I have even this night wished myself with my husband – and thought I should be happier away from this place, though I know it will be on my parents’ account give me the most poignant pain to leave it, and am almost inclined to reproach myself for ever doing so, because I cannot bear to give pain.”

Anne spent about six week with her parents altogether but she did some visiting around and, of course did not neglect the opportunity of sampling the attractions of the metropolis of the United States, New York City. That life in New York 150 years ago, as mentioned in her diary, will be told next week.