

**THE OLD  
CONCESSION  
ROAD**

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The old concession road by Thomas Laidlaw

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**THOMAS LAIDLAW**


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—BY—

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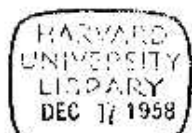


*The speckled trout, when we were boys,  
That finned the shady streams,  
And glanced above the sandy bars,  
Are flashing through our dreams.*



GUELPH:  
O. E. Turnbull, Printer and Binder.  
1899.

KE 35542



W. I. Morse

## IN MEMORY OF THE EARLY SETTLERS.

In the multiplicity of books is there room for another? Even for such as this—is there?

A few years ago a very humble edition of "The Old Concession Road" was published, which in one way or other has been disposed of. The writer has been advised to have it reproduced, which he has ventured to do; but whether wisely, or otherwise, is an uncertainty. In this edition a section has been added, others have been enlarged in a greater or less degree, a picture of the old log school house is given as a frontispiece and in form the book is more attractive.

The little work pictures the early years of a settlement in which the greater part of the writer's life was spent and it is believed to be typical of others over the length and breadth of our land. It exhibits the spirit that was witnessed in the life of the early settler, it delineates the personal experiences and observations of the writer, the memory of which has for him a singular fascination and he lived through the whole.

The lyrics which follow are the same as in the former edition.

THOS. LAIDLAW.

Guelph, 1899.





## IN THE DAYS OF THE LITTLE SHANTY.

To love we would the task resign  
And from oblivion wrest  
Scenes of the old concession line,  
When first by traffic prest.

Ah! he who sings was then a boy  
Bareheaded and unshod  
And sees in age with chastened joy  
The old Concession Road.

Recollection of how we entered the old concession is at this date rather hazy, though we incline to think that we were taken there in a lumber wagon drawn by a yoke of oxen.

The mists of sixty years lie between us and that event, therefore, many a scene of real pathos not affecting the great selfish world at large, but deeply interesting to the worthy settlers on the old concession road is now lost in obscurity. Sixty years have a dimming effect. Even the shorter catechism, that was drilled into us sixty years ago in a way which the mothers of that generation only knew, has in many of its lines faded, though its starting point, "What is the chief end of man?" is, we suppose, written with indelible ink. A track was cut through the woods before this to the township of Waterloo, in the direction of Berlin, for the purpose of bringing supplies from the worthy Dutchmen settled there, into the village of Guelph. For John Galt, four years previous to the humble event to which we have referred, had cut the first tree and laid the foundation of the future city, which we always feel to be somewhat similar to ancient Jerusalem. "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem" so are the hills around Guelph, though here the comparison ends, as it is not "a city that is compact

together." It is likely that we were taken part of the way over this track.

It was in the fall of this year (1831) that the line was opened out. O! for a pen to sketch vividly the concession road of those early years! And who would be interested in that though you had? What distinctive features have this line over many others that it should be so estimated? Are there not a hundred such elsewhere as worthy of our wonder? It is not for us to say that there are not a hundred more worthy, but then this particular one is ours and that makes all the difference. Yes, it is ours, and has been from our early youth. Over its rough uneven track we have run—a boy—barefooted and scaithless, though the sun was beating on our uncapped head; indeed our only covering a shirt and trousers, the latter kept in position by one solitary suspender. We saw it in the beginning stretching away in perspective through the grand old woods, whose tops gracefully gave edgings to a strip of stainless sky. Our life is linked with it—it is part of ourselves. To its joys and sorrows the heart vibrates as an *Æolian* harp to the zephyr. Reasons sufficient for the wish to spare its early scenes from the bleachings of time; to preserve the aroma of its native woods, and to gather up its dying echoes ere they are lost in forgetfulness. Our pen is unequal to the task and will assuredly fail, but, if fail it must, there shall be this satisfaction, that it did its best.

In the concession a majority of the settlers are from the Lowlands of Scotland, with the merest sprinkling of the Highland Celt, a family from the Emerald Isle, a few indicate by their tongue that they are cradled south of the Tweed, and lastly a family or two from Fatherland are tucked into the line at its western extremity. Such are they who cut the first tree and raised the little shanty in the woods, as they rise in

memory before us and after a calm reflection of many years, we say it in verity—they were worthy of the several races from which they sprang. If we are partial the reason has been given, the associations of youth. We love our own, yet in a sense we are lifted above such geographical distinctions—we recognize the sisterhood of concessions. Have we not been jolted over the corduroy of many of them in an ox wagon. But better still we knew the worthy residents for years and learned to respect them, we have sat at their simple board and shared in their frugal meal, aye, and we have drank of their whiskey and called it good.

In fancy from an imaginary summit we see the whispering forest of those days stretching in every direction away to the horizon in wavy undulations. No pen has written its history save the pen of Him who is the Ancient of Days; yet in ages remote we catch in imagination the first ripple of the streams in their outward flow down the solitary valleys, a vegetation creeps over the dreary waste, forests spring up and expand, birds nestle in their branches and beasts haunt their solitudes, and then a figure lithe and agile with bow and arrow is seen gliding with stealthy step and peering with cunning eye through the interstices of the wood—centuries roll, and now in the fulness of time smoke is seen curling in wreaths from little openings in the wood and the knell of the drowsy past breaks in echoes at our feet.