

AARON GREELY

The Greely brothers came to America about 1650, one of whom, Benjamin, settled at Haverhill, Mass. His son, Captain Ezekial, lived at Hudson, N.H., also his grandson, Zacheus, Sen., who died at the age of 95. Zacheus, Jr., son of Zacheus, Sen., was the father of the noted journalist, Horace Greely of New York, 1811-1872. Two of Horace Greely's grand-uncles were killed at the battle of Bennington. Zacheus, Jr., lived at Amherst, N.H., only a few miles from Manchester, N.H., and not more than twenty-five miles from the birthplace of Aaron Greely.

There can be no doubt that Horace was closely related to Aaron, and may have been a nephew. It is not probable that he was a brother, as stated in a sketch now extant, as he was born in 1811, or thirty-eight years later.

Following the arrival of the United Empire Loyalists from the United States between 1784 and 1800, thousands of former citizens of the U.S. came to Canada. With some the motive was a preference for British institutions, with others cheaper and better land and a greater opportunity of acquiring a competence. One of these immigrants was Aaron Greely, Jr., son of Aaron Greely, Sen., of Hopkinton, N.H., a place near Concord. Aaron, Jr., was born there on April 25th, 1773. He was a school teacher, and his education qualified him for Land Surveying. He came to Upper Canada with his cousin, Zacheus Burnham of Cobourg, about 1795, and appears to have resided in the vicinity of what was known for many years as the "Carrying Place," near Brighton.

On November 18th, 1797, he was appointed a Deputy Surveyor. There may be a mistake in this date, as the Crown Lands records show that he surveyed part of the Township of Hamilton in 1791, parts of the Townships of Cramahe and Haldimand, and the Township of Percy in the year 1795. (It is more than probable that 1791 should be 1795).

There is a tradition in the family that he contracted with Lieutenant-Governor Simcoe in 1792 or 1793 to bring in thirty families and to erect two sawmills and two grist mills. He built one at Brighton (Presqisle) and one near Grafton in Haldimand. For these services he was to be granted all of the

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balance of the land in Haldimand Township. It is further stated that Lieutenant-Governor Hunter, who succeeded Simcoe, refused to carry out the original agreement, but offered Greely 1,200 acres as compensation, which he indignantly refused and left the country in 1806.

On September 11th, 1803, he married Margaret Rogers, daughter of Col. James Rogers, of Fredericksburg. At the time she was keeping house for her brother, David McGregor Rogers, who was then living in the Township of Murray at the Carrying Place.

Greely had been negotiating for the position of Surveyor General in the State of Michigan, before Governor Hunter refused to carry out the terms of the agreement with Greely as the latter interpreted them. He decided therefore to leave Canada, and proceeded to Detroit, where he received the appointment of Surveyor General in 1811, after practising several years, part of the time probably as Deputy Surveyor General.

He did surveying work in the Saginaw district, also on the River aux Raisin, where the main road to Chicago entered the semi prairie country.

In the Autumn of 1806 his wife decided to go to Detroit with her only child, Susan. She had an open boat built at Presquisle, with which she skirted the north shore of Lake Ontario. She was accompanied by her brother-in-law, Jonathan Greely, and Liberty White, the last being killed subsequently at a place upon which Chicago now stands. They skirted the north shore of Lake Ontario, got lost for a time in the Dundas Marsh, but eventually arrived at Queenston, where she sold the boat. The party was portaged around Niagara Falls to Chippawa, but they did not see the cataract. From Chippawa they secured passage on a vessel to Detroit, which was then a frontier village boasting of two brick dwellings and one stone council house.

Greely purchased a lot that extended to the river bank and erected a house thereon, in which they lived for five or six years. Two children were born there, Aaron and James.

On April 23rd, 1812, Congress confirmed claims as surveyed by Greely under directions of the Surveyor-General, making his survey authoritative. Greely was at Washington when war broke out. He left deeds of Michigan and other

valuable property at Buffalo, and then proceeded in a small boat towards Detroit, but was captured by the British at Malden. He escaped to Detroit, but when this post was captured by the British, on August 12th, 1812, Greely, who was then Commissary of the American Army, was made prisoner. Through the intercession of his wife he was paroled, and he and his family were sent to Buffalo, where they were living when the battle of Queenston Heights was fought. They afterwards undertook the journey from there to New Hampshire by the train of wagons which came up with supplies for General Hull's army. They passed through Geneva, Utica and Albany, and from there to Troy, and crossed the Hudson on the "Firefly," one of the earliest steamboats in America. The journey of 900 miles from Detroit to New Hampshire was safely concluded, and they settled down there, during the period of the war. Peace was declared on December 27th, 1814, and Mrs. Greely, who was then visiting an uncle in Vermont, remembered seeing the mail coach arrive on runners with the word "Peace" painted on each side in large white letters. Loyalty to Britain was too strong a passion with Mrs. Greely to be contented under any other flag, so she and her four children (another son having been added) started for Upper Canada in the Autumn of 1816. She arrived in Kingston via Sackett's Harbor, then went to Hallowell Mills on East Lake, where she stopped a few weeks. She then took up her abode at Grafton and lived there until 1821. She was preparing to go to Detroit when her husband's death occurred, but then decided to settle upon the land she had drawn from the Government in Haldimand, lot 2, 2nd concession. She also owned lot 1 in 3rd concession, and lot 1 in 4th concession. Mrs. Greely survived her three sons, and died at the ripe old age of 91 on August 22nd, 1866, and was buried in the Presbyterian Churchyard, Grafton.

Whether Greely returned to Canada between 1816 and 1820 is now unknown, but it is not probable. After the close of the war he went to Detroit for the purpose of attempting to realize on some of his property there, and probably resumed his practice as a Surveyor.

He died suddenly from fever at River Raisin, a few miles south of Detroit, on April 2nd, 1820, at the home of Mr. La Croix, and was buried there by his Indian helpers. The news of his death was conveyed by letter from Wm. Smith of Sand-

wich, to David McGregor Rogers, M.P., Bay of Quinte. This letter, dated June 7th, 1820, is the possession of Mrs. R. Z. Rogers of Grafton.

Aaron Greely and his wife had the following children:
Susannah Burnham, born Feb. 25th, 1806.

Aaron III, James Rogers and David McGregor Rogers. They lived with their widowed mother and her daughter, Susannah, for some time.

It is reported that one or more of the sons sold Bibles throughout the district, this being before the B. & F. Bible Society began work in Upper Canada.

Mrs. Aaron Greely died at her home in Haldimand on August 22nd, 1866, aged 91 years.

Aaron Greely III. died August 27th, 1850, aged 42 years. He was unmarried.

James Rogers Greely, also unmarried, died June 26th, 1855, aged 45 years.

David McGregor Rogers was accidentally killed by a log rolling over him, and was buried three miles north of Colborne. He was married but had no children.

The daughter, Susannah Burnham Greely, remained on the homestead after her mother's death. When a young woman she taught public school, and in 1831 she taught at Colborne. Later in life she confined herself to Sunday School work, and continued as a teacher in Presbyterian Sunday Schools until within three years of her death, which occurred on Sept. 7th, 1904. She taught for eighty years, probably the oldest Sunday School teacher in the world.

A monument was erected to her memory by the Presbyterian Church to commemorate her work as a Sunday School teacher, and unveiled with appropriate ceremonies on Nov. 21st, 1907.

Mr. R. B. Rogers adds the following:

"Mrs. Aaron Greely ('Aunt Greeley') and Miss Greely ('Cousin Susan') were remarkable people and had extraordinary memories. I remember Mrs. Greely could recite the whole of Sir Walter Scott's 'Lady of the Lake' off by heart. Their visits to our home were always welcomed by us children, as they used to relate to us so many interesting stories of their experiences. I well remember Miss Greely telling me of

her experiences during the McKenzie rebellion, 1837, about moulding lead bullets and going from house to house with news or instructions. My recollection is that she was staying about Toronto, perhaps visiting with the Platers, who were related to us and are still in the vicinity of Toronto."

Mr. R. B. Rogers of Peterboro has also contributed the following information respecting the Rogers family:

Major Robert Rogers, of the "Rogers' Rangers," took an active part in the Seven Years' War. This regiment was revived during the Revolutionary War as the "Queen's Rangers." John Graves Simcoe (afterwards Lieutenant-Governor) commanded this regiment with distinction for some time during the war. The colors were presented to the Reference Library, Toronto, in February, 1924, through the generosity of Mr. F. B. Robins.

Major Robert Rogers, upon the fall of Quebec and Montreal, was charged with the command of the expedition which took over the command of the French ports from Montreal to Detroit in 1760 and thus terminated French rule in Canada. He remained in the West for some time as Governor of Macinac, and while there, in company with a trader named Henry, they purchased a large tract of land from the Indians for merchandise. He published several books descriptive of his expedition in 1760 through the upper lakes in open boats.

Major Robert Rogers died in England about 1800, after a chequered career in America. He was unmarried.

His brother, Col. James, commanded the "King's Rangers" in the Revolutionary War. The colors of this regiment were deposited at Governors Island, N.Y., about two years ago.

Col. James and his family were U.E. Loyalists, and settled in Fredericksburgh, C.W., about 1784. His second son, David McGregor Rogers, settled in the Township of Murray at or near the Carrying Place, where his sister, Margaret, who married Aaron Greely, was his housekeeper.

David McGregor Rogers (1772-1824) had two sons:

James G., 1804-1874, and Lt.-Col. Robert David, 1809-1885.

James G. had four sons: Col. Henry C., 1839-1915, Postmaster at Peterboro for thirty-five years; Dr. Edward J., of

Denver, died 1919; Charles, died 1875, and Col. Robert Zacheus, of Grafton, died 1911, aged 68 years.

Col. R Percy of Woodstock and Col. Hermon C. of Toronto are sons of Col. R. Z.

Lt.-Col. Robert David Rogers married Elizabeth Birdsall, daughter of Richard Birdsall, P.L.S., in 1840. They had the following sons: Col. Jas. Z., 1842-1909; George Charles, 1854-1883; Richard Birdsall, C.E., O.L.S., of Peterboro, born 1857; Edwin Robert, 1859-1917, and Alfred Burnham of Calgary, born 1864.

Richard B. has three sons and three daughters.

During the Rebellion, 1837, Lt.-Col. Robert D. Rogers was one of those who volunteered to cross the Niagara River from the shore at Chippawa to cut out the rebel supply steamer "Caroline" on Dec. 29th, 1837. The party commanded by Lt. Drew succeeded in capturing the steamer, and it drifted over the horseshoe cataract in flames. This brilliant achievement was accomplished without the loss of a man, but many had bullet holes in their clothing.

In 1856, at the age of 57, Lt.-Col. Robert D. organized a company and went to the front to repel the Fenian invaders.