

THE PERTH SETTLEMENT

*"Behold the Tiber," the vain Roman cried,
Viewing the ample Tay from Baiglie's side;
But where's the Scot that would the vaunt repay,
And hail the puny Tiber for the Tay?*

Anon.

"**A**MONG all the provinces in Scotland," says Sir Walter Scott, "the most fertile and the most beautiful is the county of Perth." If this cannot be said of Perth in Ontario, at least it can be asserted that it has much beauty and fertility of soil and is a pleasant home for Scotsmen in the New World. This was one of the Canadian settlements of purely Scottish and military origin. The names of the old town and of the river on which it is founded at once suggest the famed city and stream of Perth and Tay in Scotland. The terrible depression in trade and manufactures in the Old Land that followed the close of the Napoleonic wars produced a large class of people who were out of employment; and suffering and privation began to be felt in

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different parts of Britain and, among other places, in certain districts of Southern Scotland. Realising the necessity of some relief from this condition, the British Government deemed that it would be wise to send many of the superfluous population to Upper Canada, and not only relieve the Old Land of her burden, but also fill the young colony with loyal subjects of the Crown. As a result of this idea, late in May, 1815, three transports sailed from Greenock in Scotland, that famed port of departure for emigrants, loaded with Scottish families destined for Upper Canada.

These ships were the *Atlas*, the *Baptiste Merchant*, and the *Dorothy*. These vessels, for some strange reason, were all summer on the ocean, and did not reach Quebec until the middle of September. Arriving too late to go to the new settlements that winter, the emigrants were brought up to Brockville and Prescott, and kept there in quarters until the following spring. By April 18, 1816, they were conveyed to their future home in the back townships on the Tay and Rideau, having to travel through blazed trails in the, as yet, uncleared forest. A letter of the Deputy Quartermaster-General of October 13, 1816, describes this settlement as follows:—

Rideau.—This settlement was commenced on the 18th April, 1816. The new village of Perth is situated on a small river, now the Tay, formerly the Pike, which empties itself into the Rideau Lake, at about five and a half miles below; it is distant from Brockville forty-two miles, twenty-one of which is an established and good road. . . . In the village there are twenty houses, and

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in its immediate vicinity there are 250 habitations, which will be in readiness for occupation before the winter. . . . The settlement generally is provisioned to the 24th October, about fifty families of Scotch, to the 24th December.

Meanwhile another source was to provide settlers for the new settlement. After the close of the war of 1812-14, many of the regiments which had taken part in the struggle were disbanded, and the rank and file were induced to become dwellers and landowners in the country which they had helped to defend. In the month of June following the settlement of the Scottish emigrants at Perth, three regiments—the Glengarry Fencibles, the Canadian Fencibles, and what was known as De Watteville's Regiment—arrived at the settlement, and the town plot of Perth was laid out, a bridge was built over the Tay, and the foundation of the settlement was carried forward.

The first settlers were purely Scottish, and many of them Highlanders. A great number of the military settlers were also Scotsmen; and during 1816 many other ships, such as the *Canning*, the *Duke of Buckingham*, and the *Commerce*, brought hundreds of families, the majority of whom were Scotsmen and Ulster Scotsmen.

The settlement at its foundation was a military one, and under the control of the commander of the forces. The troops were used at first to build houses for the rest of the settlers and provide roads and bridges. Among many other necessities, axes for felling the forest were given the settlers; and though they had much to contend

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with, they were lucky in having the care and aid of the Government during the first years of pioneer life. Clothes and rations were also served out, and everything was done to give these sturdy pioneers a favourable start in their conquest of the wilderness. There are in the archives at Ottawa lists of supplies that were furnished ; and that under the heading of hardware included all sorts of articles from palliasses, blankets, billhooks, and Flanders kettles, down a long list to shingle-nails, brads, and iron wedges.

Another letter, dated Quebec, November 21, 1815, refers to the first settlement as follows :—

I have the honour to report to His Excellency that, of the settlers recently arrived from Scotland in the Transports, *Dorothy*, *Atlas*, and *Baptiste Merchant*, and since forwarded to Upper Canada ; eight or nine unmarried men have proceeded to Kingston, and are there employed by the Engineer Department on the King's works. At Brockville thirty large families are accommodated in the Barracks, in some adjoining huts, and in the neighbouring farmhouses, where most of them have procured employment ; this station being considered the principal depôt of the Settlement about to be formed under the superintendence of Alex. MacDonell, Esq. ; the Staff Surgeon, Mr. Thom ; the Deputy Adjutant-Commissary-General, Mr. Grieg ; and Lieut. McTier, Acting Deputy-Supt.

It is seen that those in charge were all Scotsmen.

The following statement will be of interest. It is dated Scotch Settlement, Perth, August 10, 1818 (over two years later) :—

We, the undersigned Scotch emigrants, do hereby certify that Mr. John Holiday, who accompanied us from Scotland as our Schoolmaster, taught our children in Brockville Barracks from

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Martimmas, 1815, to Whitsunday, 1816, for which he received no fee whatever, nor did we even hear Mr. Holiday express an idea of making charge for the same. (*Signed*) John Thompson, James Taylor, James McLaren, James Millar, Ann. Holdness, Hugh McKay, Abraham Loner, Thos. Baker, John Ferguson, James Fraser, John Furrier, Wm. McGillivray, James McDonald, Alex. McFarlane, Thomas Barrie, John Brash, Alexander Kidd, George Wilson, Wm. Johnston."

Another petition of inhabitants of Perth shows "Much regret at the removal of the Rev. Wm. Bell from the public school at this place, having the highest opinion of his abilities as a teacher, as well as of his moral and religious character." The petition, which is a long one, is addressed to the Deputy Quartermaster-General, and is dated at the Scotch Settlement, Perth, December 27, 1820, showing that the settlement was still under military supervision. It is signed by the following fifty-five inhabitants, who are all Scotsmen:—John Alston ; Jos. Taylor ; A. Fraser ; Wm. Mackay ; J. Watson ; John Adamson ; Jas. McLean ; Jas. Ferguson ; John Campbell ; N. B. Thomas ; Wm. Brown ; Jas. Robinson ; Angus Cameron ; Peter McPherson ; John Ferguson ; John Paterson ; Robt. Smith ; Chas. Jamieson ; James Bows ; Wm. McPherson ; Jos. Barrie ; Jas. Bryce ; John Fletcher ; Hugh Scott ; Edwd. Harkness ; Jas. Roberts ; Jas. Scott ; John McLaren ; John McLeod ; Austin Allan ; Geo. Wilson ; John Allan ; Abraham Ferrier ; John Ferrier ; Jas. Fraser ; Samuel McEachern ; Jas. McCracken ; Donald Gillies ; Alex. Kidd ; E. C. Mallock ; John Hay ; Alex. McDonald ; Richard Jamieson ; Jas. Mc-

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Intosh ; Francis Allen ; John McNee ; Duncan Cameron ; Wm. McGillivray ; Jas. McDonald ; John Holiday ; Wm. Rutherford ; John McNie, Colin Campbell.

The following petition, addressed to the Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada, asks for title deeds to their lands, without which they were not qualified to vote at the elections. Perth was just then set apart to elect a member to the Provincial House, and hence the request to be legally qualified as electors. The petition, which is dated at Perth, Upper Canada, March, 1820, is signed on behalf of the inhabitants of the Perth Settlement by twenty-four persons, all Scotsmen : Al. Thom, J.P. ; A. McMillan, J.P. ; R. Matheson ; Wm. Bell ; Josh. Taylor ; J. Watson ; Alex. Matheson ; John Jackson ; Josh. Holesworth ; Robt. Winchworth ; Thos. Cousitt ; John Ferguson ; W. Morris ; G. H. Reade ; Wm. Baily ; N. B. Townes ; John Alston ; James Young ; Wm. Matheson ; H. Graham ; David Bay ; A. Fraser.

The officers of the Glengarry Light Infantry Fencibles in 1816 were—Col. Edward Baynes ; Majors Robt. McDonald and Alex. Clark ; Captains R. M. Cochrane, Alex. McMillan, Wm. Campbell, W. Coates ; Lieutenants Jas. Stewart, A. Leslie, Walter Kerr, Jas. McCaulay, Rodk. Matheson, Angus McDonald, Robt. Kerr, John McKay ; Ensigns Jos. Frobisher, Alex. McDonell, Alex. McDonald, John Fraser, John Wright ; Adjutant Wm. Blair ; Surgeon Alex. Cunningham.

The Scotsmen among the officers of the

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Canadian Fencibles, 1816, were : Lieut.-Col. Geo. Robertson ; Capt. G. R. Ferguson ; Lieutenants John Johnston, Alex. Grant, J. McKenzie ; Ensigns Walter Davidson, Wm. Mitchell, J. H. Kerr ; Quartermaster Alex. Fraser ; Surgeon T. Robertson.

The following letter from the Rev. William Bell, who has already been mentioned, will be of interest in its picture of early conditions in the settlement.

It is dated Perth, Upper Canada, October 10, 1818. He says :—

This being a military settlement, there are a great number of discharged soldiers amongst us, but few of them come to church. My congregation consists chiefly of Scotch settlers, together with the half-pay officers of four regiments who are settled in the neighbourhood. You will scarcely credit the extent of country over which my labours at present extend. It is no less than fifty miles around Perth, there not being any Protestant clergyman nearer in any direction ; but the country is still very thinly inhabited, though extremely fertile. The number of emigrants arriving every year is great, but they are in a manner lost in a country of such great extent. The town of Perth is situated on the banks of the Tay, a beautiful river which falls into the Rideau.

The Rev. William Bell was the youngest son of Andrew Bell, of the parish of Audrie in Scotland. He was teacher of a grammar school in Bute before entering the ministry. Of his many sons, Andrew, the eldest, was the father of Dr. Robert Bell, Chief Geologist of the Canadian Geological Survey. His fourth son, Robert Bell, was Member for North Lanark during the

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McKenzie régime. James, the seventh son, was the first male child born in Perth, and was for forty years Registrar of Lanark. The youngest son, Rev. Dr. George Bell, was the first student enrolled at Queen's University, and afterwards Registrar of that institution. The only daughter married John G. Mallock, first Judge of the county of Lanark.

Another Perth family was that of Peter Campbell, who came out in 1817. He was descended from an old Highland family. Three of his sons were Presbyterian ministers, the most noted being the Rev. Dr. Robert Campbell, ex-Moderator and present Clerk of the General Assembly of Canada. Another son was Archibald, of Perth, father of Archibald M. Campbell, the Ottawa explorer and economic geologist.

Judge Mallock, of Brockville, was a brother of Judge Mallock, of Lanark.

The Hon. Roderick Matheson was paymaster of the military settlements on the Rideau. He was afterwards appointed to the Legislative Council for Upper Canada, and became one of the first Dominion Senators. One of his sons is the Honourable A. J. Matheson, Provincial Treasurer for Ontario. Another was the late Marshall Matheson, Master-in-Chancery at Ottawa.

The Honourable William Morris and Malcolm Cameron are mentioned elsewhere in this work.

Judge John Wilson fought a duel in Perth in 1833 with Robert Lyon, and killed him. Wilson gave himself up, pleaded his own cause, and was

acquitted. Perth was the scene of the famous litigation in connection with the MacNab and his unfortunate settlement.

The McLaren family, the well-known lumbermen of Buckingham and Ottawa, were Perth settlers. Some noted members of this family have been the late Senator McLaren, Peter McLaren, of Perth, David McLaren, of Ottawa, and Professor McLaren, of Knox College, Toronto.

James Wilson, M.D., was a well-known practitioner of Perth. He became a noted geologist. He died in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1881.

The Honourable John Graham Haggart, late Postmaster-General and Minister of Railways and Canals, is a prominent citizen of Perth. He has represented Lanark County in many Parliaments, and is one of the veterans of the Macdonald régime still in the House of Commons. In addition to his energy and abilities as a politician and a man of business, Mr. Haggart is a fine scholar and a close student of classical literature.

Another prominent Perth family is that of Balderson, one of the oldest and most respectable in the locality. Lieut.-Col. Balderson, of Perth, and his brother, Mr. James Balderson, barrister, of Ottawa, are the present representatives of that family.