
CHAPTER XV

GALT'S SETTLEMENT AT GUELPH

*Where are ye goin', my canny, canny, Scot,
Far o'er the salt, salt sea!
I'm goin' to fare wi' honest Johnnie Galt
And the Canada Companie.*

THE foundation of the city of Guelph and the settlement of the surrounding country by John Galt, the Scottish novelist, is an interesting and important chapter in the annals of Scottish settlements in Canada.

After the war of 1812 Upper Canada became better known in the Old Land as a country of promise and possible prosperity. The fine struggle made by the loyal settlers side by side with the Regulars to keep the country under the British flag had gained respect for the province in Britain; and the returning officers of the regiments proved good emigration agents in the interest of the young country.

Later, in 1822-23, the debates in the Imperial Parliament on the subject of the proposed Union of Upper and Lower Canada, and the vote of

The Scotsman in Canada

£100,000 for the payment of losses sustained by citizens of Upper Canada in the late war, turned the tide of emigration in that direction.

At this period the founding of the Canada Company by John Galt was brought about; and in this connection he had seriously considered the emigration on a large scale of Scottish and English settlers to the western part of Canada.

Of a keen, shrewd, practical nature, and well known as a writer and as a student of the people of his own country, Galt was able to secure the confidence of the Government and the public, and a favourable consideration of his schemes.

Consulted by Mr. Robertson, Chancellor of the Exchequer, on Canadian affairs and Upper Canada's liabilities, Galt established the Canada Company, and became its secretary.

He was then appointed, with Sir John Harvey, Col. Cockburn, and Messrs. McGillivray and Davidson—four other Scots—a Commissioner of the Government for the valuation of Upper Canada.

Meanwhile he had consulted a noted Scotsman, Bishop Macdonell, of Glengarry, Upper Canada; and when the question of the Clergy Reserves had to be settled it was left to arbitration between him and another noted Scotsman in Upper Canada, the Honourable and Rev. John Strachan, then Archdeacon of York.

He early turned his attention to the new lands in the western peninsula, where Galt, named after

Galt's Settlement at Guelph

him by his friend Col. Dickson, was already a flourishing village. Near here was the noted township of Dumfries, a well-known Scottish centre of settlement.

On April 23, 1827, Galt started out into the virgin forest, some miles north of the village of Galt, for the purpose of founding what was afterwards known as the town, then later the city of Guelph, which he named after the Royal Family. With him on this memorable occasion were other Scotsmen—Dr. Dunlop, a noted character in Western Ontario; Charles Pryor; John McDonald, land surveyor, afterwards Sheriff of Huron County; George Corbett, since of Owen Sound; and James McKenzie, who finally settled in Guelph.

The ceremony consisted in the felling, in a solemn manner, of a large maple-tree, each man, commencing with Galt, cutting a few strokes. We are told that the tree was duly cut down, an impressive silence following the thundering jar of the fallen forest monarch; while Galt says: "The silence of the woods that echoed to the sound was as the sigh of the solemn genius of the wilderness departing for ever."

Then the humorous Dr. Dunlop produced a flask of whisky and "we drank prosperity to the city of Guelph."

Among the earlier settlers were the following of Scottish origin: Thomas Stewart, shoemaker; Wm. Gibbs, baker; Jas. Anderson, carpenter. Others arriving in 1827, with their place of settle-

