
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

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£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

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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-

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ment, are found in the books of the Canada Company as follows :—

Lot 1	Jos. D. Oliver.	Lot 19	Andrew McVean.
2	Allan McDonell.	20	Wm. Elliot.
6	Aaron Anderson.	23	Wm. Reid.
12	Jas. Thompson.	24	Jas. Smith.
13	Jas. McLevy.	27	Dobbin.
14	Robt. McLevy.	42	Jas. Corbett.
15	David Gilkison.	71	Chas. Armstrong.

Another party of emigrants arrived later in the summer of that year direct from Scotland, and, being for the most part farmers, they founded what was afterwards known as the Scotch Block on the Elora Road.

In Burrows' "Annals of Guelph" the names of the most of these good Scottish settlers are given. They were: Alex. McTavish; Donald Gillis; Alex. Reid; McFie; Peter Bucharth; Angus Campbell; Halliday; Joseph McDonald; Capt. McDonald, uncle of a Lieut.-Governor of Ontario; Jas. Stirton; Jos. McQuillan; Wm. Patterson; Rose; McCrae; John Dean; Jas. Mays; Thos. Knowles; the Kennedys, three families.

Many of these moved elsewhere afterwards; the Bucharths, I think, going north to Owen Sound. Those who stayed became well-to-do citizens of the community.

A third party came to the locality of Guelph about the same time and settled in what was called the Paisley Block, from the city of that name in Scotland. Prominent among these were: John

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Inglis ; Robert Laidlaw ; J. McCorkindale ; Drew ; Campbell ; Alexander ; Gideon Hood ; Wm. Hood ; Thos. Hood ; Boyd ; McKenzie ; John Spiers ; Thos. Jackson ; John Jackson ; Jos. Jackson ; Wm. Jackson ; and George Jackson.

These people all had families ; and many of them became prominent and wealthy members of the community and the province.

The historian gives John as the name of the Laidlaw whose name is second on the list, but his real name was Robert. He was grandfather of Mr. Robert Laidlaw, the present able attaché of the Dominion Archives, the discoverer of many valuable collections of historical documents, and formerly a well-known journalist.

Galt took a deep interest in the educational facilities of the young community, and insured half the price of the building lots as an endowment and maintenance of a school.

During the summer of 1828 Mr. Pryor was sent out by Mr. Galt to survey the Huron tract and lay out the plot of the proposed town of Goderich.

In September Mr. Buchanan, British Consul of New York, came to Guelph and inspected the affairs of the Company, there being a conspiracy to wreck it. The result of his inspection was that he wrote to England praising Mr. Galt's management. Before leaving Canada Galt paid a visit to the sister settlement of Goderich.

On his leaving Guelph an expression of regret, signed by 144 heads of families, expressed the

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obligation he had conferred upon the settlers whom he had brought into the country.

He left the country regretted by all in the community ; for through the busy, indefatigable energy of this wonderful Scotsman a large portion of what is now the Province of Ontario was opened up and settled by a number of sturdy, self-reliant communities, the most of whose citizens were emigrants from that glorious land of Wallace, Bruce, Robert Burns, and Walter Scott, his one-time friend. For his able management of the Canada Company alone the province owes Galt's memory a debt of gratitude which can never be repaid. Is there a statue to this remarkable man in Guelph or Goderich or Galt? If not, there should be one erected in the public square of each of those places.

Certainly Guelph and Goderich should pay some lasting tribute to the memory of that doughty Scottish genius who laid their first foundations.

Far over the wave, in the old maritime city of Greenock, from whose quays so many vessels have sailed bearing Scottish adventurers to Canadian shores, this fine writer and father of Western Ontario communities sleeps in the tomb of his fathers.