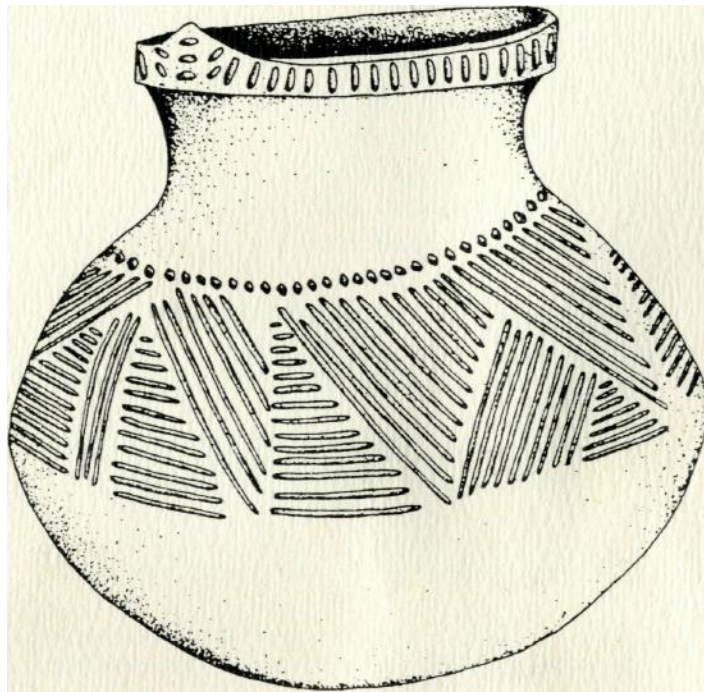


Wellington County History



PUSLINCH INDIANS • RANKIN'S ROAD SURVEY
BON ACCORD • HISTORY IN NEWSPAPERS

VOLUME 2 • 1989

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aspects of the history of Wellington County.

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Cover: Neutral Pottery, Puslinch Township

To Our Readers

Our second volume focuses on the prehistory and early history of Wellington County.

Native Indian settlement and activity in Wellington is attracting a growing amount of public interest. We are pleased to be able to offer a report on recent archaeological work in Puslinch Township by William Fitzgerald. The introduction is by Ken Oldridge, whose infectious enthusiasm and energy has made him a well-known popularizer of local archaeology. We plan to include Mr Oldridge as a regular contributor in future volumes.

Charles Rankin is known as the surveyor of the Owen Sound Road. James Gow's article takes a new look at Rankin's journal, and offers a fresh interpretation of Rankin's problems in completing the job.

Steve Thorning's commentary on the letters of John A. Davidson of the Bon Accord settlement examines the complexities of life and religion in Nichol Township in the 1840 era.

The major articles conclude with Joe Gabriel's research note reviewing some of the material that has appeared in local publications over the past 125 years.

The volume concludes with reports on significant archival acquisitions and reviews of recent books.

Our next volume will be a theme issue on the rise and fall of the railway network in Wellington County. This was inspired by the success of our public meeting on railway history in Palmerston in the fall of 1988. We welcome suggestions for future articles and theme issues.

We invite you to join us in exploring the rich and varied heritage of Wellington County, both through this journal and through the other activities of this society.

An Introduction to the Neutrals in Puslinch

by Ken Oldridge

About five hundred years ago in what is now Puslinch Township, a small village, now named the Raymond Reid site, was inhabited by Iroquois-speaking people the Neutrals.¹ Their village had a palisade and this would serve as a windbreak from gust wintry breezes. It would also help keep out nocturnal scavenging animals. Nine longhouses were built within the stockade. These houses would have had a domed roof and would be built with a framework of cedar poles. Elm bark would shelter the people from the elements. There would be ceiling holes along these tubular structures to let out the smoke from cooking fires. The longhouses had earthen floors with sleeping bunks along each side and with storage pits for corn. Through excavation, it has been determined that the rounded narrow ends of the site's longhouses generally faced the prevailing winds. This would lessen the chance of a fire destroying the whole village if a single house caught fire. In winter, the warmth from the cooking fires would pass down the length of the houses.

A spring provided the village with its water supply, the villagers enjoyed a rich and varied diet judging from the remains found in the middens (garbage dumps). The women and children tended the fields. Corn, beans, and sunflower seeds have been identified at this site. Although not yet discovered at the Reid site, other villages by 1500 A.D. were growing squash. As horticulturists, they could lead a rather sedentary village-oriented life style. The harvest would provide interesting soup possibilities for the 350 people of this village. Deer were an important mainstay of their menu judging from analysis of the site's animal remains. In addition, elk, dog-wolf, bird and human remains have been located in the middens. Fish were caught with bone hooks or nets. Their likely fishing spots would be Mill Creek, Crawford Lake,

and the Eramosa River.

Most stone projectile points, scrapers, knives and drills were flaked from Onondaga chert, which comes in varying shades of gray. This easily-worked flint is abundant along stretches of the north shore of Lake Erie. This would not be a difficult journey by canoe along the Eramosa, Speed, and Grand Rivers. Other stone tools such as chisels, axes, and adzes were discovered by the excavators and these were usually fashioned from basalt.

The sounds of village life would only have continued for ten or fifteen years. After this, the site would have been abandoned as prolonged agriculture would have exhausted the fields. Hunting and fishing in the area would have become increasingly difficult. Tree cutting for building and maintaining the site and for cooking fires would impact negatively on the water table, and firewood would have to be brought in over greater and greater distances.

But did the Reid site stand alone in this area or was it a small part of a much larger picture? From further excavations, it now appears that the Reid site, a small village of about 1.45 acres (0.6 hectare), was likely a satellite community of a very large entity. For just east of Morriston there existed a huge village of about 13 acres (5.2 hectares). This settlement possibly had a population of about 4,000 natives. It is, at the time of writing, the largest known prehistoric site by area in Ontario.² Tentative excavations at this Morriston village, known as the Ivan Elliot site, show that it was likely the mother community for the Reid site. The Reid site and perhaps two or three other small settlements would have been affiliates of the large village. As an interesting sidelight, the population of this area 500 years ago would have been much higher than what it is now.

Excavations at the Raymond Reid and Ivan Elliot sites began in 1983 and followed for three years, with grants arranged by Members of Parliament Jim Schroder and William Winegard. The sites have been living museums for several thousand Wellington County school students who helped with their excavation. A tremendous amount of information has been gleaned about these Iroquois-speaking agricultural natives who came to be called the Neutrals by later explorers and missionaries.³ This phase of Wellington County's prehistory is now reasonably well known and documented. If archaeologists now have a handle on the activities of five hundred years ago, it must

be remembered that south-western Ontario was inhabited by Palaeo Indians about *eleven thousand* years ago! Clearly, there is a need for much more research and excavation.

NOTES

- ¹ The Raymond Reid site is located on Lot 27, Concession 8 in Puslinch Township. It is about 1.77km. north of the modern hamlet of Morriston.
- ² The name Neutral was given by 17th Century French Explorers and Missionaries to the Iroquois speaking horticulturists who at that time lived on the Niagara Peninsula between the Grand and Niagara rivers. This confederacy was "neutral" in the bitter struggle between the Huron who lived between Lake Simcoe and Georgian Bay and the New York State Iroquois. However, the Neutral nation fought against the Algonkins of Michigan and Ohio.
- ³ The term prehistoric in this introduction and the following article indicates that the natives under discussion did not have *direct* contact with Europeans.

The Raymond Reid Neutral Hamlet

by William R. Fitzgerald

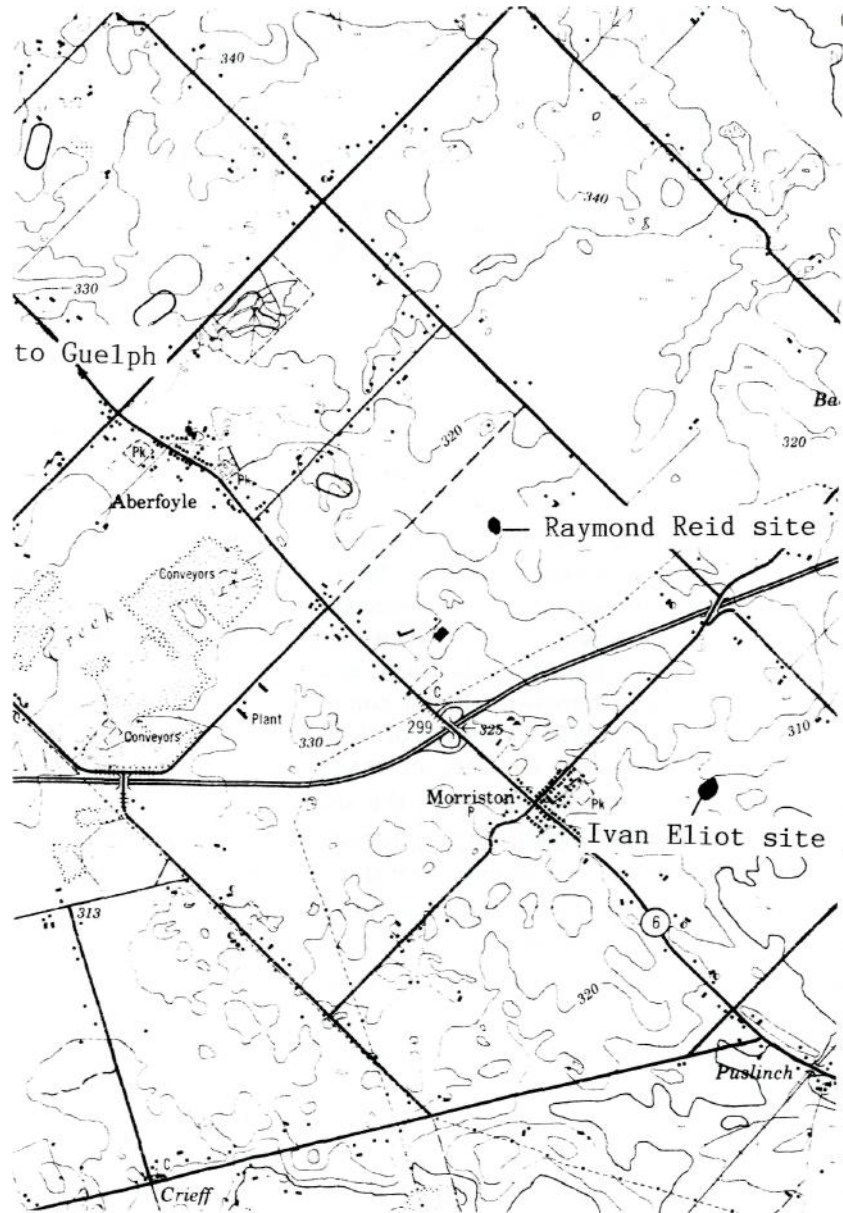
[This article is an edited and updated version of Mr Fitzgerald's unpublished paper, "A Preliminary Report on the 1983 Excavations at the Early 16th Century Neutral Raymond Reid (AiHa-4) Hamlet," which was prepared for the Ontario Heritage Foundation in 1984.]

The Raymond Reid hamlet is situated on Lot 27, Concession 8 in Puslinch Township, about 1.75km. north of Morriston. The soils of the area are of an exceedingly stony loamy nature; however, the hamlet was constructed on a slightly elevated sandy pocket not much larger than the site itself, adjacent to a spring-fed coniferous swamp and hardwood forest complex.¹ These features were likely responsible for the placement of the hamlet in this locale.

In examining the site, a collection was made on the surface for artifacts over the suspected extent of the site. A north-south grid was then set up. Archaeological digging commenced with a north-south trench 1.5m by 60m., and an east-west trench 1.5m. by 40m. First, the ploughzone (the top layer of soil that had been disturbed by cultivation) was removed. The sites of two houses and one midden, or garbage dump, were then identified, and excavations were expanded in those areas.

Six houses were soon found, and a palisade was discovered. The entirety of the palisade was ultimately identified, though there were problems in tracing it along the western slope of the site. This was probably due to the effects of erosion on this rather steep slope. The palisade had a single, well- defined entranceway at the eastern apex of what was essentially a triangularly-shaped hamlet covering 6 hectare, or about 1.45 acres. Further excavation revealed three additional houses and a number of middens.

The middens are of two types: those that were simply depressions



The Neutrals in Puslinch:
 The dark areas show the locations of the known Neutral settlements.
 This article deals only with the Raymond Reid site.

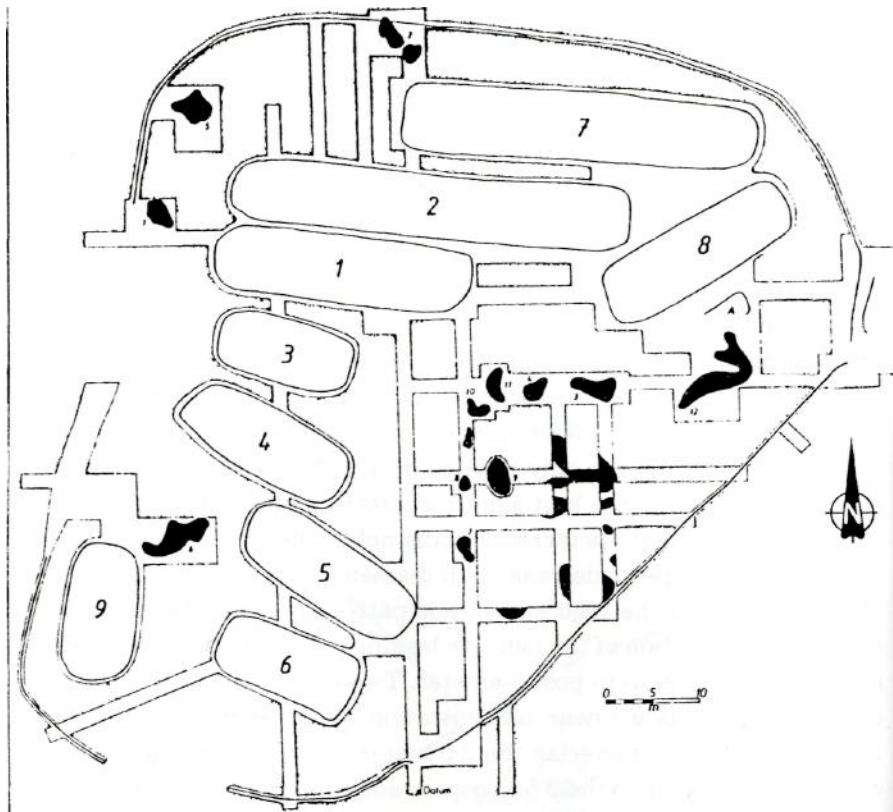
in the ground that were filled with garbage, and those which appear to have been dug, as they lack a podzolic sequence (the usual layers of soil and subsoil) below the debris layer.

The undisturbed midden deposits tended to be shallow, with rather uncomplicated depositional sequences. No doubt, substantial portions of the middens were above ground level once the depressions were filled. On average, the ploughzone was 25cm. in depth; and substantial amounts of artifacts were recovered from the disturbed level.

With the exception of the gateway at the eastern apex of the hamlet, the palisade consists of a single row of regularly spaced posts. These are generally between 8cm. and 10cm. in diameter (about 4 in.), and spaced between 25cm. and 45cm. (10 to 18 in.). The 'delicate' nature of the palisade suggests defence was not the primary function.

The gateway was the only notable divergence in an otherwise repetitive pattern. On the east side the pattern changes. Coming from the north side, the posts increase in diameter, then the wall becomes concave with the posts decreasing in diameter. There is then a gap of about 2.5m. until the regular palisade pattern is encountered again. Similarly, the portion of the palisade leading to the gap from the south exhibited an increase in post diameter. Two meters to the east of the concave section is a linear concentration of larger diameter posts. However, it does not overlap the 2.5 meter gap. The increase in post diameter leading up to the 2.5m. gap, in addition to the more cluttered nature of the posts in this section of the palisade, is suggestive of an entranceway. The exact nature of the gateway is not apparent, nor is the function of the 'shield.' The prevailing wind comes from the west, and this corresponds with the general east-west orientation of the houses. While the palisade presumably served to deflect the direct force of the wind, the seven western houses appear to have been constructed with the prevailing wind in mind to further minimize the effects of penetrating draughts.

A striking feature of the houses is their proximity to one another. Such compactness was likely due to the restricted distribution of easily workable soil. With the structures being constructed of extremely flammable materials, the possibility of fire spreading from structure to structure would have been a major hazard. In order to minimize the threat, the houses appear to have been constructed with the axis of the house aligned with the prevailing wind with the expectation that if one house caught fire the draught would spread it along the length of the



RAYMOND REID
 (AiHa-4)
 1983-1984

- ≡ palisade
- unexcavated area
- house
- areas containing artifacts

The layout of the village:

The east-west orientation of the houses is clearly evident. The palisade at the west side was difficult to trace due to erosion. This map also shows the grid system of trenches used in excavating the site.

house rather than to adjacent structures. A major house fire, would likely have spread rapidly, engulfing adjacent structures. None of the houses at this site exhibited any indications of having been burned (eg., charcoal or ash-filled posts and pits, high artifact content, serviceable tools, and valuables).

Another consideration for the alignment of the houses with the prevailing wind may have been one of thermal efficiency. Rather than having a draught blow the heat out the sides of the houses, the heat from the hearths would have been retained, drifting down the long axis of the house.

The eight houses range in size from 15m. to 37m. in length (50 to 120 ft.), and 7m. to 7.5m. in width (23 to 25 ft.).

The post pattern was, for the most part, of an uncluttered nature. The walls tend to exhibit either a single row or a double-rowed offset pattern of posts. While the former pattern likely possessed an external covering of woven bark, the latter, based on the distance between the rows, would appear to have had horizontally stacked poles acting as a protective sheathing at least along the lower portion of the wall.

The ends of the houses are generally constructed of a single row of posts; however, they tend to be poorly represented in the longer houses (1, 2, and 7), while the smaller houses (especially 3, 4 and 6) had well-defined solid ends. Amorphous ends may have been constructed with the intention of expansion; though the the poorly-defined eastern end of House 7 would tend to negate such a contention as the house end almost abuts the palisade. Rather, it might be that with the longer structures, end wall posts did not bear the stresses that side wall posts did.

Storage sections appear to have been located at the ends of, and along the side walls of the houses. The end storage sections are present in Houses 1, 2, 4 and 5, and are structurally partitioned from the living section of the house by a row of posts, linear features which contained wooden planks, or a combination of both. Side wall storage is suggested by the presence of discontinuous patterns of posts, and sometimes linear 'slash' pits, approximately one metre in from the side walls. These posts and features presumably supported storage benches. House 2 possesses two readily discernible pairs of benches, and other examples are found in Houses 4, 5 and 6. House 6, while lacking storage cubicles, appears to have north side wall and west end storage benches.

House 3 presents a unique situation. All of the houses but this one have recognizable end entranceways. The major break in the post pattern in House 3 is mid-way along the north side wall, and the pattern of interior posts suggests that the house was not divided along the long axis; rather, it possessed living cubicles which were on either side of the short axis. Neither compartment had readily definable storage space.

Generally, the living sections of the houses are divided symmetrically about the long axis with families sharing centrally aligned hearths. A structural feature of the houses at this site which is absent in later Neutral structures is the presence of large central support posts. These posts occur at regular intervals in all of the houses except House 6.

If ploughing has not been too deep, the pattern of central hearths is clearly observable. This is only the case in House 6 where three pairs of hearths were preserved. It is likely that the individual pairs were originally single hearths. Accounts written by whites in the 17th century mention that each hearth was shared by two families¹

Consequently, House 6 was likely occupied by six families. It has been determined from other Neutral houses that individual compartments measured approximately 4 metres in length and 3.5 metres in width.² Hearths were not so well preserved in the other houses. Nevertheless, the pattern of four-metre-long compartments within the living portion of the house permits an estimate of the population of the hamlet. (See Table 1.)

The virtual absence of non-structural features within the houses, and the uncluttered post pattern of the palisade and house walls would seem to be suggestive of a short-term occupation, a feature which seems to characterize settlements immediately prior to and at the time of early contact with Europeans. Historic accounts mention that Indian sites were occupied anywhere between ten and thirty years, with the most frequently stated duration between ten and fifteen years.³ Soil fertility, wild game availability, and a supply of wood were the major criteria influencing the duration of occupation.

The pottery found at the site was, with a few exceptions, of a uniform style. The vessels appear to be characterized by a globular, undecorated body, a rounded shoulder (occasionally decorated), a constricted neck (rarely decorated), and a generally low-collared rim. Some of the vessels possessed castellated rims.

Table 1. Estimation of the hamlet population.

| House | Living | Hearths | Families | Occupants | |
|--------|---------------------|---------|----------|-----------|----------|
| | Section Length m | | | 5 family | 6 family |
| 1 | 22 | 5 | 10 | 50 | 60 |
| 2 | 30 | 7 | 14 | 70 | 84 |
| 3 | * | 2 | 2 | 10 | 12 |
| 4 | 12 | 3 | 6 | 30 | 36 |
| 5 | 12 | 3 | 6 | 30 | 36 |
| 6 | 14 | 3 | 6 | 30 | 36 |
| 7 | 30 | 7 | 14 | 70 | 84 |
| 8 | 12 | 3 | 6 | 30 | 36 |
| totals | | | 64 | 320 | 384 |

*the nature of this house prevented an estimate.

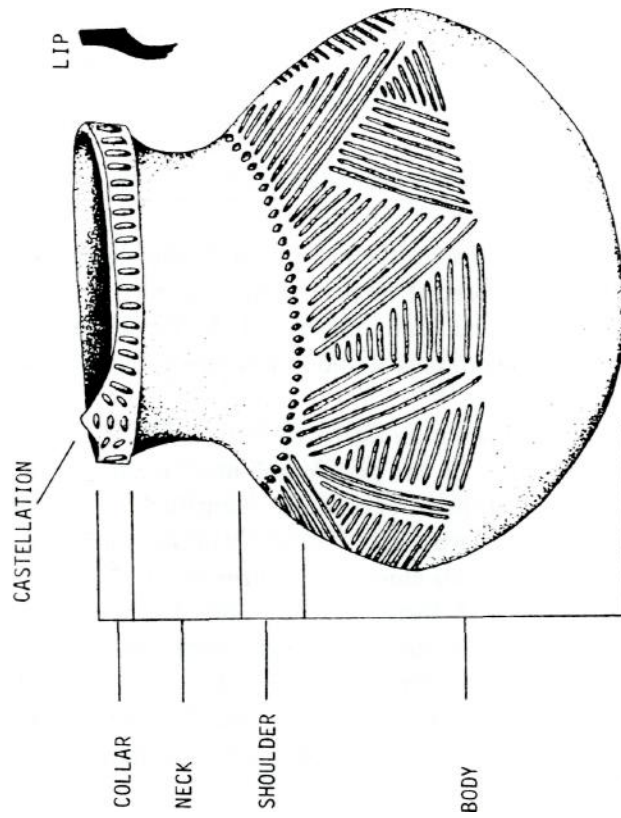
The majority of decorative motifs are characteristically unimaginative Neutral, composed of vertical, oblique or horizontal linear impressions, with occasional combinations of the three motifs. There were some divergent examples found; these are foreign objects acquired from other tribes.

All of the pots are manufactured from a grit-tempered clay paste, and predominantly by the paddle-and-anvil technique, although one example of coiling manufacture was identified. It is possible to estimate vessel sizes based on the curvature of the shards found. It would appear that the vessels cluster into three mouth diameter categories: about 5cm. (2 in.), 10-15cm. (4-6 in.), and 25-30cm. (10-12 in.).

In contrast, and quite surprisingly, very few smoking pipe fragments were recovered. Three ceramic bowls (one each of collared, conical and coronet shape) and one limestone bowl (square in shape) comprised the pipe bowl sample. Similarly, few stems and mouthpieces were recovered.

The lithics, or worked stone, can be divided into two classes: flaked and ground. The flaked implements consisted of characteristic Neutral elongated triangular projectile points, two varieties of drills (flattened and elongated conical), bifacial knives and scrapers.

Onondaga chert was the predominant raw material for the manufacture of flaked implements. This flint is light grey to dark grey and bluish-grey mottled in colour, and is finely textured and opaque. It is



Neutral Pottery:

This is a reconstruction of a pottery vessel based upon the sherds found at the site, and illustrating the terms used by archaeologists.

found in outcrops along the north shore of Lake Erie between Port Maitland and Fort Erie, and to the northwest as far as Villa Nova. It is also found in secondary deposits along the Lake Erie shoreline, and in pebble form from stream beds and agricultural fields located on gravel-bearing glacial deposits throughout the Neutral area.⁴

Kettle Point chert was also present, but it comprised less than one percent of the chert found at the site. It is from the southeastern shore of Lake Huron. The presence of this material, considering the distance to the source, attests to the desirability of this high quality chert.

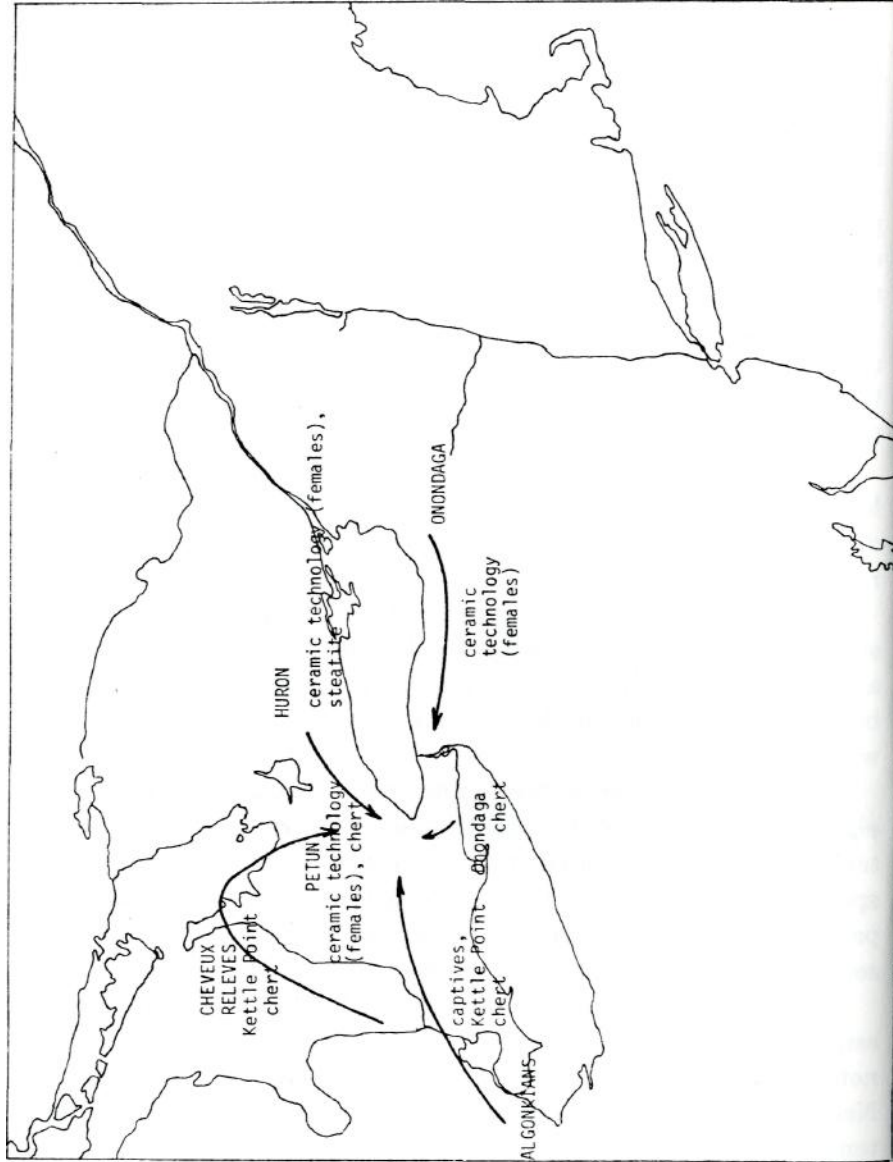
Ground stone artifacts included basalt and slate adzes and chisels, the previously mentioned re-ground limestone pipe, and a steatite bead fragment. Steatite (talc) is found in eastern Ontario in Hastings County.

There was surprisingly little worked bone recovered from the hamlet, aside from a few bone beads, awl fragments, ground and drilled deer bones, modified antler, and a broken portion of a human skull rattle.

The occupants of the hamlet practiced horticulture. Corn, bean and sunflower seeds have been identified. The neutrals were also hunters and fishers. Deer, elk, wolf, dog, human, fish and bird remains have been identified. Curiously absent is any indication of shellfish or fresh-water fish.

Several classes of artifacts contained items that were obviously foreign to the Neutrals at this site. Unlike later periods for which written accounts exist, it is not possible to attribute their presence to specific inter-tribal interaction. Trade, gathering activities, war campaigns and captives, and bride exchange could all account for the presence of foreign commodities at the Raymond Reid hamlet.

Onondaga, Iroquois, Huron and perhaps Petun ceramics are represented at the site. High collared rims with intricate motifs and deeply notched rim exteriors are characteristic of eastern Iroquois ceramics. Neutral ceramics tend to have course exteriors due to the use of large temper. Conversely, Huron pottery tends to contain smaller temper and possesses a more polished surface. Large, overhanging castellations are another characteristic of Huron pots. It is only possible to speculate about the origin of these apparent foreign ceramics. While it is unlikely that the pots were exchanged, it may have been that the ideas were transmitted via females who were exchanged between groups in order to cement relations.



Their Neighbours:

In the early 1500s, the Pusalich Neutrals probably interacted with these five neighbouring groups. Animosities existed with the Algonkians in the Michigan area.

The presence of Kettle Point chert could conceivably be attributable to Neutral gathering activities while on war campaigns against Algonkians in Michigan and/or via the Petun who may have obtained the material from Cheveux relevés whose seasonal rounds would have taken them to the southern end of Lake Huron.

Chronic hostilities existed between the Neutral and Algonkians in Michigan and Ohio during the 17th century and back into the prehistoric period. Recovered from a midden was an incomplete rattle ground from a human skull bone. Butchered human remains are encountered at other Neutral sites of a similar time period. However, aside from a few teeth and small hand and foot bones, this rattle portion is the only confirmed piece of butchered human bone from this site.

Overall, the Neutral interaction sphere at this time seems to be quite limited in comparison to its extent after the initiation of the fur trade, (post 1580s.) However, it must be remembered that the Raymond Reid site is only a hamlet, not a major settlement. Further investigation of additional sites will be important in order to assess the extent of pre-fur trade native interaction to ascertain the ease with which the European system could integrate with the existing native systems.

The period of this site, spanning the late 15th and early 16th centuries, is important in the context of northeastern North American history. The European-centred biases of some investigators contend that southern Ontario Iroquoian groups, which included the Neutrals, reacted instantaneously to a distant yet materially superior culture (as reflected in population movements, warfare, increased inter-regional interaction, etc.). Others believe that these events in the native populations occurred independently of the European presence, a presence that was not concerned with developing trade with the natives in the first place. However, the effects on native society of non-material contact (i.e., European diseases) which may have preceded material culture, must be seriously considered in explaining inter-group relations.

The Raymond Reid hamlet, and the larger village at the Ivan Elliot site, with which it may have been associated, are providing important contributions to our understanding of this period of Ontario's history.

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¹ For a discussion of the soils and terrain see L.J. Chapman and D.F. Putnam, *The*

- Physiography of Southern Ontario* (Toronto, 1973), p. 200.
- ² C.F. Dodd, "Ontario Iroquois Tradition Longhouses" (unpublished M.A. Thesis, Dept. of Archaeology, Simon Fraser University, 1982), p. 27.
- ³ William R. Fitzgerald, "Lest the Beaver Run Loose: The Early 17th Century Christianson Site and Trends in Historic Neutral Archaeology, *Archaeological Survey of Canada Paper Number 111* (Ottawa, 1982), p. 257.
- ⁴ Bruce G. Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic: A History of the Huron People to 1660* (Montreal, 1976), pp. 36; 147; 158. See also G.A. Warrick, "Reconstructing Ontario Iroquoian Village Organization" (unpublished M.A. Thesis, Dept. of Archaeology, Simon Fraser University, 1983), p. 18.

Charles Rankin's Survey of the Owen Sound Road

by James Gow

On April 28, 1837, Charles Rankin, a forty-year-old Canadian trained surveyor, was commissioned by the Surveyor General of Upper Canada to "survey a line of road from Oakville on the North side of Lake Ontario to Owen Sound, or Big Bay, on Lake Huron".¹ Some forty miles of the road, an extension of the Seventh Line of Trafalgar Township into Erin and Garafraxa Townships, was already open. Rankin's task was to find a feasible route from the northerly boundary of Garafraxa Township some sixty miles north to Owen Sound. His exploration and survey, completed during the summer of 1837, established the general location of what is now Highway 6 from Arthur to Owen Sound.

Included with Rankin's report to the Surveyor General, submitted in November 1837, was the diary he kept during the course of the survey.² It is an interesting document that, in its recording of the daily progress of the survey, depicts a summer of arduous work on the part of Rankin and his men. It also reveals a good deal about the nature of the times and something of the character of Rankin himself. For residents of Wellington County, familiarity with the scene of the action adds another dimension of interest.

But there is more to the story than the diary tells. For Rankin, it did not have a happy ending. His difficulties in obtaining provisions extended the cost of the survey and led to his severe censure by the Surveyor General. A scarcity of the staple items of flour and salt pork, and Rankin's lack of ready cash to buy such supplies as were available, contributed to his difficulties, but do not entirely explain his running out of provisions in the middle of the wilderness early in the survey. As he did not outline his provisioning plans in his diary, what really happened may never be known with certainty.

The original impetus for a road from Garafraxa to Owen Sound came from Col. William Chisholm of Oakville. Chisholm, a merchant, ship-owner and industrial entrepreneur, was also active in political affairs and was well-connected with the ruling establishment. He had been elected to the Legislative Assembly from Halton East for several sessions, and was a member in 1837. In the preceding year the government had negotiated successfully with the Saugeen and Newash Indians for the surrender of a vast tract of land that now constitutes much of Grey County, plus Minto and Arthur Townships in Wellington County. Chisholm saw this territory as a prime target for settlement, and Oakville as its natural supply centre.

The solidity of Chisholm's Tory connections is evident in the fact that his petition to Lt. Gov. Sir Francis Bond Head in March 1837 for a road into the new territory resulted, only one month later, in Rankin's commission to conduct the survey. The strength of Chisholm's interest in the road is also evident in the Surveyor General's instructions to Rankin: 'You will commence your work at Oakville, and will call on William Chisholm, Esquire, who has *promised* to render you valuable aid in engaging men, *supplying provisions*, and obtaining preliminary information respecting the interior from Indians and others."³ [Emphasis added.]

Rankin must have welcomed this instruction as a convenient solution to a troublesome problem. In addition to the road, his assignment included a survey and sounding of Owen Sound Bay to determine its suitability as a port. The work would involve substantial expenditures, for which he would not be reimbursed until the job was completed and his accounts approved by the Executive Council. Though there would be no difficulty in finding workmen who would be willing to wait until that time for their wages, they had to be fed. Having negligible financial resources of his own, he had to obtain his provisions on credit. The promise of assistance from Chisholm, who dealt in the commodities he required, and Chisholm's own interest in the outcome of the project, seemed to solve that problem neatly. But, as we are soon to learn, it didn't. Something went awry.

The diary opens with Rankin's preparations in Toronto:
Toronto, May 1st, 1837. Having received the Surveyor General's Instructions on 29th ultimo to lay off a road from Oakville (or Garafraxa) -proceeded on 2nd, 3rd and 4th inst. to copy (in Surveyor General's office) such parts of plans of Trafalgar, Esquesing, Erin and Garafraxa

as I suppose may be useful on this service, having in the meantime sent to Guillembury for two or three men whom I know to be expert woodsmen, intelligent and trusty - for this service - and occupied my time till the arrival of these persons on the 11th in getting necessary articles, &c., &c., preparing for the bush. Then delayed - waiting the receipt of a little money which I need for travelling expenses, &c., till - 15th.

May 15th (Monday). Engaged the following men, viz., G. Ruthven, Frank Bole (as chainman), Thos. McAustin, Jas. Spence, Wm. Hardy and Francis Berford. (Wm. Hardy & Jas. Spence as pack carriers). Raining - arrived at the wharf a little too late for the Oakville steamer.

16th. With all hands to the wharf but a gale blowing prevents the Oakville steamer leaving port; the rain of yesterday having rendered the road exceedingly muddy, determined to wait till tomorrow morning for the boat.

17th, 18th. To Oakville by steamer with the men engaged on the 15th inst. To 20th inclusive spent in procuring flour and pork in which we met with some delay (no flour being in Oakville for sale).

20th. Engaged the following additional men as pack carriers and axe men for this service, viz., Joseph and Philip Bisnois, George Burt, - McRimmon and Edward Baker a boy.

21st. Sunday.

22nd. Mr Chisholm having supplied us with two teams at [blank in original manuscript] per day for hauling provisions and luggage - set off with all hands - (by the line into the 7th and 8th cons, of Trafalgar Township, for Garafraxa. 23rd, 24th & 25th. Occupied in getting by a very muddy road (rendered difficult by the flooding of various creeks) to Garafraxa - 7th con. No. 11 Grand River, [present-day Belwood]

May 26th. Went down to Fergus in Nichol to ascertain if it would be practicable to procure more provisions there when needed, and to seek information respecting the western extent of the Luther swamp.

Rankin makes no comment on the usefulness of his visit to Fergus, but it becomes evident shortly that he did not find a ready source of provisions there. This is scarcely surprising, as the fledgling community just commencing its fourth year of existence had lost most of its previous year's harvest in a fire that destroyed its only grist mill. We learn, however, from later entries, that two farmers in Garafraxa, Leonard Dobbin and Louis Felker, undertook to supply beef, pork and flour for delivery later in the summer. (Dobbin and Felker were early

settlers in Garafraxa, having taken up land on the 7th concession in 1826.) Another entry shows that some supplies were obtained from Thomas Webster in Fergus; it is also possible that Webster acted as middleman in the transactions with Dobbin and Felker.

We pick up the diary on the following day:

May 27th. Shouldered our packs and proceeded towards the N.W. corner of Garafraxa.

28th. Sunday.

29th. Arrived at the S.W. corner Luther, our beginning point.

30th. Started from the N. W. corner of Garafraxa on a course north 45° west, going through a cedar swamp with wind fall of half a mile, but which we observe may be partly in hardwood land a little to the left. [The N.W. corner of Garafraxa and the S.W. corner of Luther are, of course, the same point, located at the junction of Highways 6 and 9.]

31st. Proceeded with the line 2 miles farther again, meeting some swamp, but which also apparently may be avoided by going a little to the right.

June 1st. Spent in exploring the country right and left. Evening showery.

2nd. Continued our N.W. line through swamp and over dry land 1 mile. Afternoon raining.

3rd. Continued our N. W. line over better land than yesterday 2 miles. Afternoon showery.

4th. Sunday. Wet.

5th. A fine morning. Ran N.W. 3 miles - good land again.

6th. Ran N.W. 1/2 mile and 3 miles N. 9° W. Raining in evening.

7th. A day of rain. Sent G. Ruthven east and went myself S.W. about 3 miles - Exploring and passed over a pleasant and good tract of country and well watered.

9th. Ran N. 9° W. 2 miles to a large river or stream, suppose the main branch of the Saugine, flooded so as to be impassible on the line and from the nature of opposite (N) shore a broad flat, deeply inundated, unfit for road. Encamped a little way down the river where we find it possible to pass it. Went to opposite shore with G. Ruthven and explored N.W. (good land and well watered) about 3 miles.

Rankin is now in the vicinity of present day Mount Forest. Two days earlier, evidently having decided that he had proceeded far enough to the west to clear the Luther swamp, he had changed the course of his survey from N. 45° W. to N. 9° W., and is now projecting a line directly

toward Owen Sound. It is only 17 days since he left Oakville, and the survey appears to be going well. But there is a cloud on the horizon. The diary for the next day reads:

June 9th. Perceiving that our provisions would not hold out to run regularly and mark a line all the way through to Lake Huron - and the line we were running being merely a random one from which to explore the country right and left in search of good ground for a road - determined to trust to affecting our present object by walking through by a pocket compass, and passed over good land clay bottom - hardwood and mostly good for road about 6 miles (course about N. 9° W.)

Within the next two or three days it became apparent that their dwindling stock of supplies would not sustain even this cursory inspection of the route, and that additional supplies would have to be obtained before the survey could continue. The reprovisioning operation was costly of both time and effort, and left Rankin open to the Surveyor General's charge that he had "not shown any foresight or skill in this particular."⁴

How Rankin got into this predicament is an interesting subject for speculation. Clearly, in leaving Oakville with provisions for only three weeks, he had not profited from the arranged contact with William Chisholm. If taken at face value, the diary entry for May 17 and 18 would imply that Chisholm had failed to act on his promise to supply provisions. For a number of reasons, this proposition is difficult to accept. By all accounts Chisholm was a man of unimpeachable integrity, and it seems unlikely that he would default on a commitment that was well within his power to fulfill, and at a profit to himself. There is a possibility that Chisholm himself was experiencing financial difficulties and was unable to extend credit to Rankin. (Through his various entrepreneurial activities Chisholm had spread himself rather thin, and at the time of his death five years later he was on the verge of bankruptcy.)⁵ However, aside from the implications in the diary, there is no other evidence to support a conclusion that Chisholm failed in any way to honour his commitment. The most likely explanation is that Chisholm wanted a higher price for his flour and salt pork than Rankin was willing to pay. Rankin's statement, "no flour in Oakville being for sale," probably indicates that Chisholm, as a leading merchant in the area, had his supplies stored elsewhere, possibly at his partner's establishment in Burlington.

For Rankin, the cost of provisions was an important consideration,

as any amount he spent in excess of the Survey Department's established allowance of 1 shilling 6 pence per man per day would come from his own pocket.⁶ Conversely, he would profit from any saving he could make. Taking all the circumstances into account, it is reasonable to surmise that Rankin balked at Chisholm's prices, and gambled that he could obtain provisions at less cost from other suppliers. As matters turned out, he lost the bet.

We learn from a later entry in the diary that, before leaving Oakville, Rankin sent a message to a merchant in Barrie requesting him to lay in a supply of provisions for use later in the survey. It was probably his intention from the outset to provision the Owen Sound part of the operation from Barrie, which was not only closer to Owen Sound than Oakville, but was also accessible by water. At any rate, in the depths of the forest somewhere in the vicinity of present-day Durham, their supplies almost exhausted, Rankin decided that their best hope lay in a dash to Barrie, some 60 miles eastward as the crow flies. The trip involved a walk of 30 miles to Nottawasaga Bay, where, in the vicinity of present-day Thornbury, they were able to obtain two rowboats. With eight men aboard they paddled along the shore to the mouth of the Nottawasaga River at Wasaga Beach, and thence up the Nottawasaga and Willow Creek to the Nine-mile Portage leading to Barrie, where they arrived on June 17. To the modern reader the trip seems a noteworthy feat of human endurance, but Rankin disposed of it in a half-dozen laconic lines in his diary.

Barrie did not provide the hoped-for solution to the provisioning problem. The supplies he had ordered for delivery there had not arrived. Rankin began immediately a southward foray for pork and flour that occupied him for ten days and took him all the way to Toronto. His account of this episode, recorded in more than usual detail, reveals a good deal about his financial constraints and his solicitous concern for his employees:

June 19th. Mr Sandford, Merchant of Barrie, not having been able to procure pork and flour for me agreeably to order addressed to him from Oakville - determined after arrival of the steamer, finding that she did not bring either of those articles, to proceed tomorrow morning for the Holland Landing in search of them.

20th. Proceeded in a small boat to Roach's Point - having this morning discharged McRimmon.

21st. Arrived at the Landing - called on Mr Laughton, Merchant

there, who has neither of the articles we need and tells me they are scarce in the neighbourhood. Went over to Beverley Mill - find that Mr Tyson the miller has flour on hand belonging to the Honorable Peter Robinson, and no other - but states that his orders are to sell it only for cash in hand - which I am not prepared to pay - Mr Henderson also has pork for sale but only on same condition.

June 22nd. Went to New Market to enquire after flour - could hear of none there except a few bags (not sufficient for our purpose) in the hands of the miller and for ready cash only. After further enquiry here of both pork and flour in the hands of a farmer on Yonge St. called Mr. Ermitage, the farmer who is willing to furnish both articles on credit by having Mr. Roe of New Market as surety. Mr. Roe being absent from home (at the narrows of Lake Simcoe) and not expected back till Tuesday evening - determined to proceed to Toronto to procure those articles if possible earlier than Tuesday.

23rd. To Toronto by stage taking Philip Bisnois one of the hands who has an attack of pleurisy and is desirous of returning to his home at Oakville with me, also Edward Baker a boy who proves unsuitable for this service, to go home. Philip becoming exceedingly ill and unable to bear the jolting of the stage, had to leave him at Richmond Hill at Mr. Clark's Inn, whom I requested to provide medical aid, &c. - Evening arrived at Toronto and spent it in procuring tea and other little articles for taking out, etc., and in enquiring about pork and flour - did not find any of either at either of the grocers with whom I deal (Viz. Messr's Smith & Ross).

24th. Went to Mr. M. having heard that he has pork for sale, to enquire after it - learned that he has a parcel now at the village of Hope near New Market for sale which if suitable I may procure. Preparing to be off by the stage at half past nine o'clock - a wet morning - The little articles - tea, &c. not having been sent up in time for the stage determined to remain till Monday which I have less hesitation in doing because I expect Philip Bisnois to come down from Richmond Hill today and am anxious to see him embarked for Oakville.

25th. Sunday. Philip not having come down in the stage yesterday, procured a cart and proceeded towards Richmond Hill to bring him down, being apprehensive that increased disease had prevented his coming yesterday - At 11 miles from Toronto met the stage and was very glad to find poor Philip in it tho' still very ill, having yesterday been bled & blistered - returned with Philip to Toronto.

June 26th. Put P. Bisnois and Edward Baker on board the Brittanica for Oakville, allowing them their wages to this day inclusive. Set off at 10 o'clock in the stage for New Market and the Holland Landing.

27th. Not having been able to procure flour in Toronto (Tho' pork may be got), at noon find it necessary to wait till this evening for Mr. Roe's return from the Narrows, to procure those articles. Evening Mr. Roe arriving; went to New Market with him.

28th. Purchased 8 barrels of flour and 500 lbs. of pork from Mr. Ermitage through Mr. Roe and had it sent to the Landing. Set off myself in a small boat with three new hands, viz. G. Bailey, H. Palmer and Anthony, engaged in place of McRimmon, Bisnois and Baker, discharged or left. Evening arrived and slept at Roch 's Point.

29th. Arrived at Barrie.

Three weeks have elapsed since the men left the survey line north of Mount Forest, during which time Rankin has been in almost constant motion. If he felt any impatience or regret at this loss of valuable working time, he did not express it in the diary. Having obtained a substantial stock of provisions, his plan now is to carry out the survey and sounding at Owen Sound Bay before resuming the road survey. The diary continues:

June 30th. Things brought over by the steamer too late to cross the portage to Nottawasaga Creek.

July 1st. Hired two teams and hauling over as much as our boats would carry (leaving 2 barrels flour and one of pork in Mr. Sandford's store house), arrived at Nottawasaga Creek landing, embarked and proceeded down the river to within six miles of its mouth.

2nd. Sunday - raining.

3rd. A rough lake detained us all day.

4th. Arrived at Collingwood [Township].

5th. Cleaning - boys and men washing and mending their clothes, &c.

6th. Proceeded to Big Bay (Owen Sound), having yesterday evening sent 2 men to Barrie for the remainder of our provisions.

7th. Went to visit Newash (an Indian) and to endeavor to engage him to go through the wood with us when we should be ready to leave the Bay for Garafraxa, &c.

There is no further mention of Newash in the diary, and it is probable that he did not accompany the party on the road survey.

From July 8 to August 12 the party conducted the survey of the Bay

By August 13 Rankin is making ready to begin the road survey southward from Owen Sound:

August 13th. Sunday. Spent in Collingwood [Township], having come down yesterday evening for flour, etc.

14th. Return towards Big Bay, rowing all night.

15th. Morning - arrived at the camp, allowed the men, having been up all night, to rest - Evening sounded upper end of the Bay.

16th. Ran a line 2 1/4 miles from our encampment to portage road to the Saugin.

17th. Running from the head of Big Bay, by ground before examined - southerly for the road.

18th. Continued the road southerly - fair weather.

19th. Continued the road to 10 miles from Big Bay.

20th. Sunday.

21st. Continued the road line with some difficulty to select ground on account of bits of swamp, &c., 2 3/4 miles - raining in the afternoon.

22nd. Raining in the morning - Afternoon pursued the road survey 2 1/4 miles.

23rd. Continued the road survey.

24th. Continued survey of the road.

25th. Dispatched 5 men to Garafraxa for flour, &c.; self and Mr. Berford examining the country right and left - raining.

26th. Continued the survey of the road line 2 1/2 miles.

27th. Sunday. Set off to meet our provision, being short.

28th. Continued walking towards Garafraxa to meet our provision carriers.

29th. & 30th. Raining steadily, which had detained our provision carriers, being completely out of bread and pork, continued walking toward Garafraxa.

31st. A fine morning. Near N.E. corner of Garafraxa met our carriers coming out with charges of pork and flour. Determined (the men having been for about 2 days on short allowance and much exposed to wet, &c., greatly fatigued) - to allow them this day a rest. Sent the other 5 men back to Mr. Felker's to bring out the remainder of our stock of flour and pork in hopes to have enough to finish the survey with.

Sept. 1st. Mr. Berford being unwell, allowed him to return to Toronto - 5 days to get home. Sent G. Ruthven to Fergus to get tea, &c.; I with the rest set off with provisions on our return to the line (where I left off).

Sept. 2nd. Walking back with loads, &c., to our line (about 40 miles).

6th. *Running the line, made 4 1/4 miles.*

7th. *Continued our line 4 miles.*

8th. *Continued our line 5 miles.*

9th. *Being greatly detained in examining Deep Gulley river - about for best place to carry the road over - made only 1 1/2 miles - encamped at Deep Gulley river [the Beattie Saugeen].*

10th. *Sunday.*

11th. & 12th. *Continued on line southwardly.*

13th. *Compelled once more to go out for provisions.*

14th. *Arrived at Mr. Felker's, found flour but no meat ready for us.*

15th. *Went down to Fergus to procure meat, tea, etc., and to settle accounts (for provisions furnished for use of this survey with Mr. Thos. Webster).*

16th. to 18th. incl. *Detained in Fergus to procure meat and some more flour which was not yet ground.*

19th. *All hands preparing their packs carrying beef from Mr. Dobbin, Etc.*

20th. to 22nd. *Travelling out with loads to end of our line.*

23rd. *Examining the country and bringing out our line to the Saugin 2 3/4 miles.*

24th. *Sunday.*

25th. *Running south-eastwards to join the southern part of our line, keeping west of a 5 mile piece before run - to avoid wet ground on that piece. Evening raining.*

26th. *Raining in the morning - Afternoon continued the line a mile and a half to the ten mile creek.*

27th. *Raining in the morning, cleared up about 10 o'clock; pursued on line running -joined on N.W. line 1/2 a mile north of the nine mile picket, pursued that line blazing afresh and planting mile posts to within 8 miles of Garafraxa.*

28th. *Continued down old line, blazing afresh and planting mile posts to the 5 mile picket - from Garafraxa, inclusive.*

29th. *Examining the country west of our random (1st N.W. line) to discover a better route, &c., &c., running 2 miles on the new route.*

Sept. 30. *Finished the running of the road line by coming to the corner of Garafraxa; all hands in health through Divine Mercy.*

At this point the reader feels something of Rankin's sense of relief and gratification that the ordeal has come to an end. The amount of physical energy expended on the survey seems prodigious. Robert

Mitchell, an early settler in Nichol Township and himself a surveyor, recalls in his memoirs: "I remember seeing the Surveyor after he had arrived at Fergus from finishing his survey. The party suffered a great deal of hardship - the Surveyor having lost 16 lbs. in weight."⁷

But the task was not yet finished. On October 2 the party set out to walk the line back to Owen Sound to plant some mile posts and to complete some blazing that had been overlooked on the way down. On October 6, at Owen Sound, Rankin discharged all hands, "allowing each man 5 days or until 12th inst. to return to their various homes".⁸ The allowance was a payroll entry, not a cash payment. As in the case of the provisions suppliers, the men could not be paid until Rankin's accounts were approved by the Surveyor General and the Executive Committee. They had a long wait.

Rankin submitted his survey results and accounts to the Surveyor General, John Macaulay, in mid-November, 1837. The cost of the survey - £503. 6s.Id. - was much higher than Macaulay had originally anticipated, and that placed him in an embarrassing position. Successful in his career as a merchant, newspaper publisher and banker, and recognized as a capable administrator, Macaulay had only recently been appointed to the position of Surveyor General, in a move to improve the efficiency of the Survey Office.⁹ He was now in the unpleasant position of having to explain a cost over-run on the first major project for which he was responsible. He placed the blame squarely on Rankin. In passing Rankin's report and accounts on to the Civil Secretary for the attention of the Lieutenant Governor, he wrote:

.... [I] regret to be under the necessity of remarking that the expenses of his Survey have very much exceeded my expectations. An abstract of the Diary, which I have the honor to submit, shews in what manner the time charged has been employed.

Mr. Rankin was directed to examine Owen Sound, so as to terminate the road at some point eligible for the site of a Town and furnishing, if to be found, a good harbour, and he was also requested to describe his Plan, the form of Owen Sound, but on this duty he appears to have spent not less than 37 days in obtaining results which are of no immediate benefit, though they will be found useful on the laying out of new Townships in that quarter.

I feel myself also required to observe on the time spent in travelling and obtaining provisions - viz. 67 days. Provisions, it is true, were scarce and dear in the early part of the summer, and it was difficult to convey them into the wilderness - nevertheless I do not think that Mr. Rankin has shewn any foresight or skill in his arrangement in this particular.¹⁰

In his criticism of Rankin for spending too much time on the survey of Owen Sound, Macaulay did not quote his full instruction to Rankin, which was to "endeavour to place on your plan of Survey as accurate a description of Owen Sound as possible."¹¹ While the omission may not have been deliberate, it has the effect of exculpating himself and blaming Rankin for following his instructions faithfully.

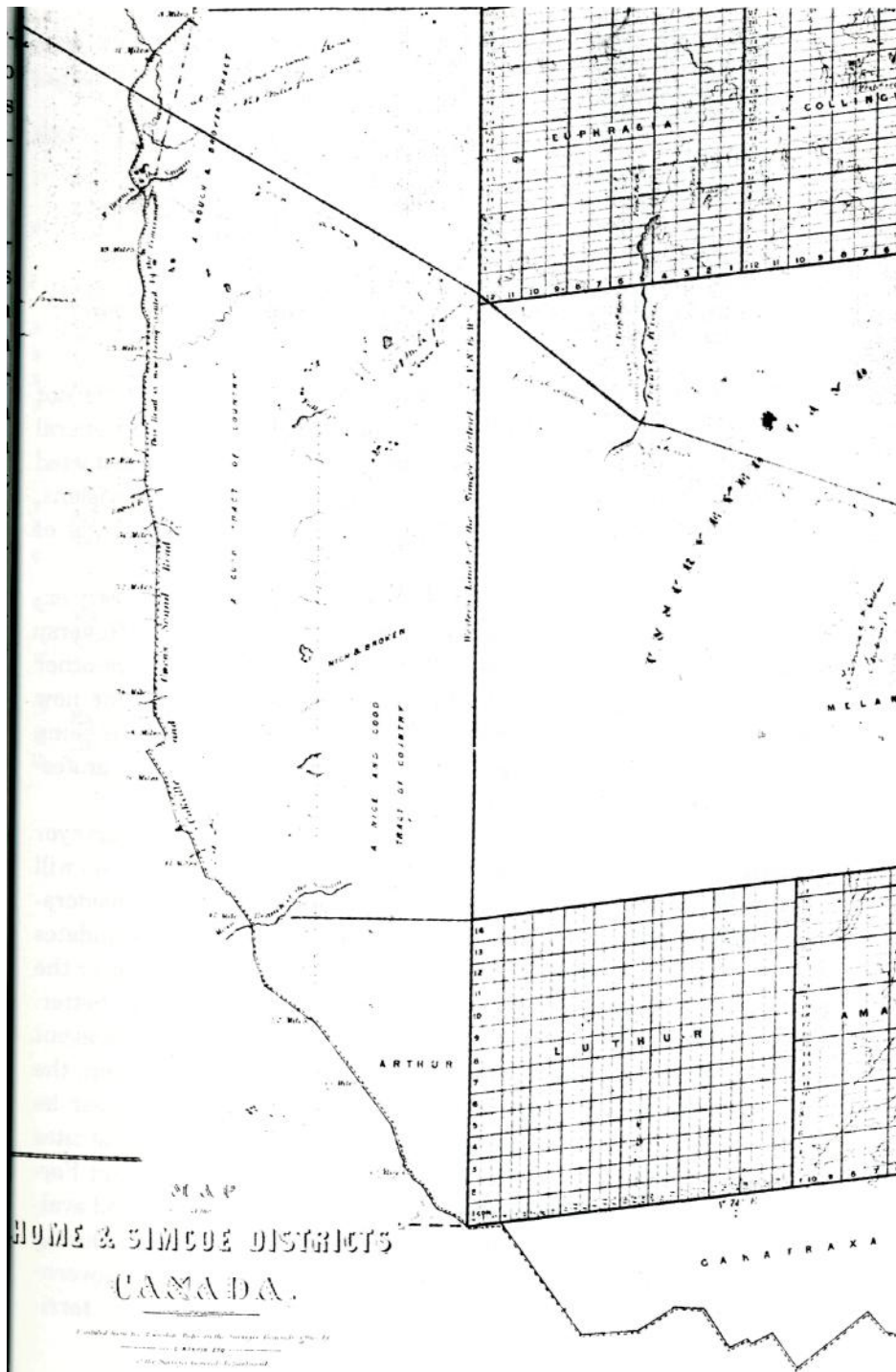
On the issue of the time charged for travelling and obtaining provisions Rankin was in a more vulnerable position, having included in his charges the full amount of time spent on the reprovisioning operation in June. Without knowing what actually transpired between Rankin and Chisholm at the outset of the survey it is difficult to judge whether Rankin merited the harsh words in Macaulay's final phrase, though one might wish that by prior negotiation with Rankin for a reduction of his charges, he might have avoided the occasion of saying them. But Rankin was a man of strong convictions; perhaps Macaulay did attempt to negotiate, and failed. In the end, Macaulay arbitrarily reduced his travelling time by 22 days.

Rankin's career was marked by his propensity to get into contentious situations, but he could not have anticipated the next misfortune that was to befall him, which was not of his making. Before his accounts reached the Executive Council, the regular business of government was brought to a halt by William Lyon Mackenzie's attack on Toronto. The unhappy effects of the resultant delay are evident in a letter from Rankin to the Surveyor General dated December 27, 1837:

Without being unmindful to the important and distressing events which have recently occurred to the disturbance of the peace and the distraction of all civil business in the province, and which I am aware must have fully occupied the attention of the Government, and I fear may for a short time further continue to do so -I am yet induced both at the urgent solicitation

Map drawn by Charles Rankin in 1841 showing the line of his 1837 survey for the Owen Sound Road. The blank area on the right of his line, marked "Unsurveyed Lands," now comprises the Townships of Proton, Melancton, Artomesia, Osprey, etc. The zigzag line at the bottom of the map shows his route from Belwood to the starting point, now the village of Arthur.

The diagonal line that has been superimposed on this copy of Rankin's map shows the line of an early 1840's survey from Toronto to the mouth of the Saugeen River.



of the men (thirteen in number) who were employed on behalf of the Government during the whole of the past summer, and who in two or three of the instances, I know to be suffering for want of their wages (and by a feeling of my own pecuniary need) to request that it may at the present time be practicable to procure the necessary audit in Council of the Accounts for the said survey (which Accounts are now in the Council Office), you will kindly serve all the parties concerned by doing so, or suggesting that it may be done - or should this appear impracticable at the present time, that you will if possible obtain an advance on the amount of the accounts - equal to the amount of the Pay List - that the men now suffering may be satisfied and the provisions used on this matter of public service may be paid for.¹²

Whether this plea had any effect on the course of events is not known, but a memorandum from Macaulay to the Inspector General of Accounts on Feb. 8, 1838, confirming that 22 days had been deducted from the time Rankin charged for travelling and procuring provisions, suggests that some action was taking place, or had taken place, as of that date.

For Rankin, the survey for the Owen Sound Road was a costly experience, personally as well as financially. The resultant controversy seems to have had an adverse effect on his employment for other government work. On Dec. 6, 1839, we find him writing to the new Lieutenant Governor, Sir George Arthur, complaining that he is being passed over for surveying contracts in favour of juniors in the profession with less experience than himself.¹³

The letter to Sir George Arthur was passed to the new Surveyor General, Mr. R.B. Sullivan, with "His Excellency's desire that you will be pleased to take this Gentleman's application into your consideration together with the claims and qualifications of other Candidates as opportunity may offer." As a result either of Rankin's pleas or the change of Surveyors General, his fortunes changed for the better. Early in 1840 he was directed to assist the newly-appointed land agent for the area, John Telfer, to lay out the town plot of Sydenham, the nucleus of the modern city of Owen Sound.¹ Later in the year he worked with another surveyor in laying out farm and town lots at sites on the Owen Sound Road that later became the towns of Mount Forest and Durham. In 1845 he was given the task of surveying and evaluating all potential mill sites between Arthur and Owen Sound. During the remainder of his long and productive career in private and government surveying he laid out several of the townships in the new terri-

tory, including, in 1852, the Township of Minto in the County of Wellington.

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- ¹ Survey Records, Dept. of Lands and Forests, Letters Written: Vol. 30, Ontario Archives.
- ² The original diary is in the Baldwin Room, Toronto Public Library. It was transcribed by the late Prof. E.W. Banting of the Dept. of Civil Engineering, University of Toronto, and published in the Ontario Historical Society's *Papers and Records*, Vol. XXVII, 1931.
- ³ Macaulay to Rankin 28 Apr./37, Survey Records, op. cit.
- ⁴ Macaulay to Joseph 27 Nov./37 Survey Records, op. cit.
- ⁵ Hazel Matthews, *Oakville and the Sixteen* (Toronto, 1953), p. 174.
- ⁶ In 1852, when Rankin was surveying Minto Township, the provisioning allowance remained Is. 6d. per man per day; remuneration was 2s. 6d. per day for axe-men, 3s. 6d. for chainmen, and 15s. per day for the surveyor. It is probable that these rates applied in 1837.
- ⁷ A.E. Byerly, *Fergus* (Fergus, 1934).
- ⁸ Rankin's Diary, op. cit.
- ⁹ See R.L. Fraser, entry for John Macaulay, *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Vol. V pp. 513-22.
- ¹⁰ Macaulay to Joseph 27 Nov./37, Survey Records, op. cit.
- ¹¹ Macaulay to Rankin, 28 Apr./37, Survey Records, op. cit.
- ¹² Rankin to Macaulay, appended to a letter from Macaulay to John Joseph, Dec. 27/37, Survey Records, op. cit.
- ¹³ Rankin to Arthur, 6-39 CLP., Ontario Archives.
- ¹⁴ Harrison to Sullivan, 12 Dec./39, C.L.P.
- ¹⁵ E.L. Marsh, *A History of the County of Grey* (Owen Sound, 1931).

John Davidson's Letters from Bon Accord

by Stephen Thorning

Most of Wellington County's pioneer communities were centred on a village or town. There are, though, some notable exceptions to this general rule. The Paisley Block settlers of Guelph Township come immediately to mind. Perhaps the most significant of the totally rural pioneer communities was Bon Accord, a Scottish agricultural settlement immediately to the north of Elora. Surprisingly, there wasn't a farmer in the bunch. These were urban people: mostly merchants, clerks and tradesmen, and all were from Aberdeen on the east coast of Scotland. The subsequent success of many of them at farming was a notable achievement by any standard. Through connections of friendship and kinship they had pooled their resources, with the dream of founding a community in the backwoods of Upper Canada. The first of the group arrived in Nichol Township in late 1834, and purchased a block of land from the Gilkison Estate.¹ For the next decade, while Fergus stagnated and Elora struggled for its existence, the settlement at Bon Accord was the only thriving community north of Guelph Township.

Photographs of the Bon Accord settlers, taken decades after the founding of the community, show these people to be distant, patriarchal characters, clad in out-of-fashion clothing, their faces weathered and wrinkled, the men sporting thick, graying beards. When they came here they were much different. They were very young (most were in their early twenties); and they were extremely idealistic. Theirs was an idealism combining independence with communal cooperation, and steady personal material progress with a firm commitment to the evangelical zeal which had seized Scottish Presbyterianism.

With the second group of Bon Accord settlers, in June 1835, came John Alexander Davidson, the youngest and most idealistic of the

group and a carpenter by trade. A bachelor at the time, Davidson boarded with George Elmslie, an earlier settler from whom he bought his farm, for some months until he put up his own cabin. Davidson was soon acting as a spokesman for the group (they shunned formal leadership), and he was markedly vocal in matters dealing with the church. His literary ability was far above what would be expected of someone with his background, but perhaps more importantly, his religious zeal exceeded that of the others in the community. The few of his letters that have survived give us not only a glimpse of the Bon Accord community in its early years, but also of a man maturing and prevailing in the backwoods that much of Wellington County was in the 1840 era.

In the spring of 1838, a new arrival in Bon Accord, James Middleton, brought with him a letter from William Robson, a friend of Davidson in Aberdeen. Davidson's reply to Robson, written in June 1838, has survived, as have later letters from 1843 and 1845. Together, these are an important source for the early history of the Bon Accord settlement.

The vital role of letters to both the Bon Accord settlers and their friends back in Aberdeen is immediately evident in this correspondence. Letters acquired the status of communal objects: the news, if not the letters themselves, were circulated among friends and relatives in both Bon Accord and Aberdeen. The primitive state of the post office at the time did not aid such long distance communication. Scheduled mail packets were in service between New York and Liverpool, but there were plenty of opportunities for delays between Bon Accord and New York. Post offices were not opened in Fergus until 1836 and in Elora until 1839, and even then, service was only once per week. Compounding difficulties was the cost of postage: the rate for a single letter represented about a half day's wages for a labourer.² This was a strain on those in Aberdeen, and a major sacrifice on the Bon Accord people. The economy here ran largely on barter. The postage on a letter could, and probably did, require every coin in the household.

Davidson's solid Scottish education is immediately discernible in his style. In common with many others of the time, he employs the stiff formality of the eighteenth century in his writing - rarely referring to his wife or members of his family by their first names. These tendencies diminish in Davidson's writing over time. Undoubtedly, the backwoods society of Wellington County and the forced intimacy of the Bon

Accord settlement played their roles in this. Though a literate man, Davidson cannot be called a master stylist. His sentences too often are rambling; the ideas and thoughts qualified with a profusion of "buts" and "however's." This suggests a man who was indecisive and who scattered his energies in ways that were not always the most productive. The letters contain other evidence to support such a view of his personality, but Davidson could also be resolute and strong-willed.

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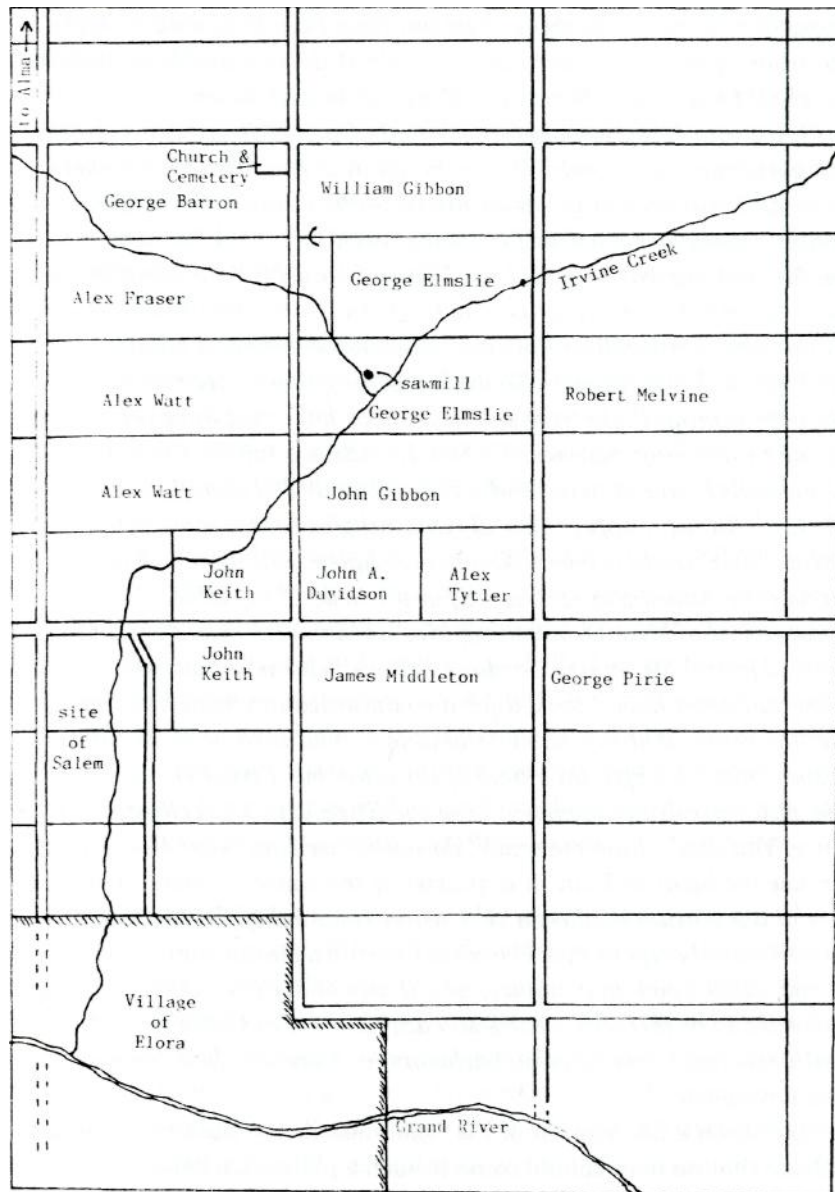
Davidson's letter to Robson of June 1838, written exactly three years after he settled in Bon Accord, begins with a long review of common friendships, and goes on to express his pleasure at James Middleton's arrival in the settlement.

Woodburn, Nichol, Upper Canada 13 June 1838³

My Dear Friend,

By my old acquaintance and friend Mr Middleton I have received your kind and welcome letter and I now take up my pen to acknowledge its receipt. I beg to assure you I never received one with more pleasure from any of my numerous correspondents in as much as it was unexpected because I had never acknowledged the receipt of the epistle I received two years ago. You state you have however heard from me indirectly. Well, I never took up my pen to write to Scotland but I recollected I had a friend in Mr Robson and wellwishers in Mrs Robson and family. I have often resolved and reresolved to drop you a line but I had so much to occupy my attention that I could barely get time to answer business letters much less letters on private friendship, but I am catching an hour from the time I should otherwise devote to sleep to scribble something or other to you, and to use your own words, "although separated by the wide Atlantic and forests of wood, you are never a week out of my mind," and therefore I feel confident that you will at least take the trouble of reading my communication.

There is, as you observe, something remarkable in the allwise providence of God in so ordering it that after a certain period, an old acquaintance and fellow pilgrim in this vale of tears should leave his native land and follow me to the strange land which our fathers knew not and be set down and settled alongside of his former friend. But after all I have ceased to wonder at any such kind of dispensations of providence for many were and will yet be sent to this country who never



The original settlers of Bon Accord:
 The settlement adjoined Elora (and Salem after 1845), but a strong sense of community prevailed in Bon Accord in the 1830's and 1840's, and persisted to a lesser extent for decades after.

thought or were yet thinking of emigrating. I am delighted with the restoration of personal intercourse with Mr Middleton and hope and trust we shall be spared to be mutual blessings to each other.

I have your letter open before me and of course I review every different paragraph as it comes. I am very happy to hear that Mr Crocket still lives and still able to go about his respective duties. Good worthy old man! I would give a dollar for another evening of him, but it may never be. My best regards to him. I am likewise happy to hear Mr Sterling is well but you do not say if his vine has been fruitful nor how many olive plants are surrounding his table. My kindest heartfelt regards to him and Mrs S. I always every Sabbath morning fancy I see him in his pulpit proclaiming those truths which I hope and trust have been blessed to me in a saving manner. To Mrs Davidson's family (in your neighbourhood) I request to be kindly remembered. Tell them I am still a bachelor with every appearance of remaining so unless some of them take it into their heads to commiserate my hapless situation and take a trip across the Atlantic to seat herself at the head of my table.

Any word of Miss D. becoming Mrs Gordon yet? Pray do you ever see my old friend Mr James Gordon? Tell oh! tell him I have not forgotten him and often have I looked for a communication from him but I fear he has committed my name to oblivion. Who is to be Miss Eliza D. 's happy man? I forgot the name of the other but I trust she will pardon me and refresh my memory. D'ye see Eliza was a sweetheart of mine once. You don't think me crack^d do you for writing thus? If so you must excuse me because I am in a quarter of the country where the fair sex are at a premium because a very scarce commodity. By the way, I must state I bitterly repent that I came to Canada a single man. I wish much I had acted upon your advice, and if any of my friends are coming to America to be farmers, I earnestly advise them in God's name (I speak with reverence) not to come bachelors, or they will find themselves in the wrong box.

Davidson's description of his loneliness in the backwoods, and his advice that no man should come to such a place a bachelor, is the most poignant passage in these these letters. Most of the other Bon Accord people were married, and many had children. At a time when social contacts outside the community were few, these circumstances only increased his sense of isolation. In a later paragraph, written the next day, his tone has changed completely as he proclaims his contentment with the independent life of the backwoods. In any case, he did not fret

for long. Within a few months he would marry James Middleton's daughter Catherine.

Davidson was a loyal member of the Secession Church of Scotland, and he had strong sympathies with the evangelical movement that was sweeping Presbyterianism in the 1820's and the 1830's. It is evident from Davidson's remarks that a constant spiritual presence animated his life, and that his belief was a continuing source of comfort to him. It is perhaps useful here to consider the state of religion in Scotland in Davidson's time.⁵

The Church of Scotland remained the state-supported church, with separate congregations for Lowlanders (in English) and Highlanders (in Gaelic). During the 18th century the church maintained authority over education, welfare, and even some aspects of civil law. Government had appropriated many of these functions by Davidson's time, though the church remained a very powerful force, particularly in rural communities. Beginning in the 1760's many Lowland Scots became discontented with the Church of Scotland and formed several breakaway groups, most notably the Secession Church. The Seceders believed that the Church of Scotland had drifted away from its traditions regarding religious practices, and that it was controlled by large land owners who had made it the unresponsive tool of government. The agricultural revolution of the 18th century had alienated many rural and small-town people, and it was from these, as well as the growing working classes of the cities, that the Secession Church drew its followers.

The Secession Church stressed the old covenanting tradition, which emphasized local control of the church and placed it at the centre of the community. Under the title of 'The Missionary Presbytery of the Canadas in Connection with the United Associated Synod of the Secession Church in Scotland,' the Seceders had, since 1834, been the most active Presbyterian group in Upper Canada. Their superior organization, along with their stress on a distinct division between church and state, virtually guaranteed a successful mission among the proudly independent settlers in communities like Bon Accord.⁶ Davidson boasts that the Bon Accord church has attracted a number of Secession Presbyterians: "all pure seceders - no adherents" of the Church of Scotland.

Davidson's letter contains an excellent first-hand account of the early months of the Bon Accord church (which became Knox Presby-

terian Church when it moved to Elora in 1850). He mentions that there are only seven males residents within three miles of the church. He excludes non-Presbyterians from this figure, but it does emphasize the sparseness of settlement and the poor progress of Elora during its first six years.

I regret much to hear that the society in your congregation is falling off. Were they in my situation they would feel the value of a stated dispensation of the word and ordinances. Congregations in connexion with the Synod are springing up like mushrooms here, but no shepherd to preside over the little flocks. Ten ministers and upwards of thirty congregations - eighteen of them without anything like the shadow of a supply. Nichol congregation has received but three sabbaths since its erection a year ago: 21st May and 26 Dec. 1837 and 13 June 1838, on which day the ordinance of the Lord's Supper was dispensed to fifteen all pure seceders - no adherents. Our little chapel is now tenable. We now meet in it to worship the God of our fathers. We are straining every nerve to get it rendered quite comfortable before winter.

14th June. I am at my pen again. Our little chapel you are aware is built of logs; is 30 feet by 18 feet within walls; seated for 80 but will accommodate about 150 in it. Only 7 males resident within 3 miles and 1 about 15. We struggle hard to keep it clear of debt, which at present amounts to only 2 dollars, but will accumulate very considerably before winter, but we cheerfully do all we can ourselves. Two of us being carpenters have of course given all our work gratuitously, and never have we solicited the smallest assistance from our neighbours, some of whom begin to think we value the principles we hold very much, otherwise we would never have exerted ourselves so much on exertions to build and fit up a place of worship. I will struggle hard to get it made comfortable for winter, but we are very short of the needfull. We must purchase stove pipes to warm it. We have the stove already, but which for want of pipes is completely useless. If we cannot do this we must desert the little temple for 5 or 6 months during the cold weather. Rude and rustic as it is, yet we are delighted with it because we can now point to it and say "there we meet in obedience to the divine command on the first day of the week," and consequently if we are to be starved out all winter we will not relish it much.

It appears that Davidson and Robson were not especially close

friends in Aberdeen, and that Robson was entertaining thoughts of himself emigrating to Canada. This subject is hinted at again in later letters, but Davidson never offers unqualified encouragement. Nevertheless, he reaffirms the sense of personal freedom he enjoys in the backwoods. The reference to hard information on conditions for settlers is interesting. It would appear that at least some Scotchmen did not believe everything they read in the many settlers' guides published in these years.⁷

Now for your private concerns. You have been adding house to house and I field to field since we saw each other. I neither advise nor advise any man to emigrate, but self says I would have liked as well that the "small cottage" had been embosomed in wood within the former distance of "twa Scots miles" of mine. But this is not likely ever to be the case. If you are contented, happy and comfortable, stay where you are. I wrote my friend Mr James Tytler, tobacconist, about two months ago. If you have not seen that letter, give him my kind compliments and in my name request a perusal of it. So soon as he writes me I shall endeavour to reply to the best of my ability. Every successive season I hope gives me some additional light upon the subject upon which he wrote last. Now you must understand that Irvinebank never was my property (see the map in Mr Tytler's letter), and with respect to your query how I continue to live by myself in a corner of the forest, here I am happy as the day is long—none of that anxious solicitude about what I am to eat or drink or wear as I did in Scotland, and my Bible is my companion at my fireside, and Christian friends around me always ready to perform any duty incumbent towards me and to give me every assistance.

The extent of Davidson's horticultural activities, given the primitive state of the Bon Accord settlement, is somewhat surprising. It appears that Davidson devoted more time to growing flowers and wandering in the woods than he did to clearing land. William Lyon Mackenzie's rebellion was barely six months in the past when Davidson wrote this letter, but the episode does not elicit any strong emotions from him, other than his fear that the aftermath is crippling commercial activity, and in particular his own opportunities to earn money at carpentry.

I have this spring laid out a little garden in which roses. tulips and

anemones that formerly actually grew at Barkmill and accompanied their owner across the Atlantic, bid fair to thrive. Some others I raised from seed. I would like to get a few crocuses and romibius from you if this letter could but reach you before the fall ships sail for Quebec. Apply at 137 Union Street to Mr George Brown, auctioneer, who could inform you of any opportunity of getting them sent to the Bon Accord settlement in Upper Canada. Dog tooth violets, hepaticas, lobelias, trilliums, martagons, monardas, irises, columbines, anemones of many varieties, and a number of other flowers to which I cannot give names grow wild here and amongst the many shrubs I may mention the Guelder rose and hydrangea.

I have not as yet chopped down many trees myself but I like the work very well when my trade is slack which I am sorry to say is at present the case owing to the late uproar amongst us. But as I have no apprehensions of a war I am looking forward to better times. I am blessed with health and strength superior to any I enjoyed in Scotland, and brave the winter cold and summer heat like a brave fellow. As Mr Middleton will perhaps occupy the blank left at the bottom to his friend Mr Byrne, I must close by laying one injunction upon you - an immediate reply. My kind regards to those members of Session and Managers with whom I was formerly associated and all enquiring friends. Call on my mother and tell her I am well. Will write in a week or two, but am too fond of the woods to think of leaving them. Would like to hear when she intends to come and see me. Regards to Mrs Robson and family and remain yours very truly,

John Alex^r Davidson

Horticulture was the subject of a short note written by Davidson in 1839 to Charles Mickle, a pioneer near Guelph, whom he had probably met through their mutual interest in church affairs.⁹ This letter, and the accompanying roses, were carried to Guelph by Alexander Watt, the senior member of the Bon Accord settlement, and the de facto leader of the community. Already by 1839 the Bon Accord settlers were establishing a social network with residents of Guelph, and it is highly likely that the church was central in this. It was around this time that Davidson's father-in-law James Middleton established his contacts in Guelph as a lay preacher.

Woodburn, Nichol¹⁰
6 May 1839

Dear Sir,

I embrace the opportunity of Mr Watt's coming down to Guelph to forward a few roses to Mrs Mickle, being offsets from plants I brought with me from Scotland. Also a few pumpkin seeds.

If Mr Middleton had come down at this time I would have sent some more, but as Mr Watt has not much conveyance to carry them, I do not like to trouble him too much. As I expect Mr Watt every minute, I can only scribble this. Mr Middleton and family are well and desire to be remembered to their kind friends at Guelph, in which Mrs Davidson and I join. Mr M is very busy logging for some spring crop, but is not able to bear much fatigue. However, he stands it better than I expected. If convenient, I should be happy to hear from you how the chapel is getting on. I hope Alexander is keeping well. My respects to Mr Passmore, Mr Baker, and my worthy reverend friend Mr Wastell.

*I am Dear Sir
Yours very respectfully,
J.A. Davidson*

There is a break of four years until the next Davidson letter. In 1843 he again wrote to his friend William Robson. In the interval we can see that Davidson's interest in flowers has grown, and that other members of the Bon Accord settlement have taken up the hobby. He is experimenting with both native species and imports, and Robson seems to be an interested partner in these trials.

Davidson next describes the impact of the first provincial school legislation on his community. He has taken on a new occupation and succeeded George Elmslie as the teacher. Elmslie was one of the Bon Accord settlers who found himself totally unsuited to farming. After two years at the half-time job in Bon Accord, he became a full-time schoolmaster, first at Ancaster, then Guelph, Elora and Alma. His account of the early years of Bon Accord is included in Connon's *The Early History of Elora, Ontario and Vicinity*, and is the standard work on the subject. Davidson's own commitment to farming was beginning to slacken: in addition to his teaching job and the many hours he devoted to his garden and the church, he was also active at his old trade as a carpenter. Charles Allan and his partners had just purchased most of the village of Elora, and a minor building boom was under way.

Davidson notes that circulating currency is still in short supply, but this would soon change.

Woodburn, Nichol, Canada West¹¹
29th May 1843

My Dear Robson:

I was duly favoured with your epistle about a month ago containing your welcome present of flower seeds. It reached at the very time I was engaged putting my little garden in order so the seeds were all into the ground in course of a day or two. I have sown the dahlias amongst native vegetable mould in two boxes and one of them has come up, but no appearance of the rest as yet. There are some of the other seeds likewise come through the ground. I must now thank you for them. I may state that after a long and severe winter the snow went away about the 24th April and the crocus began to show itself. I had about 15 yellow, 2 or 3 white and 1 blue. Next came the hyacinths (rose coloured). These have propagated well next the yellow daffodil and at present the lovely white narcissus in flower while the gladiolus is rapidly advancing. These were sent me by you about 2 years ago. My little garden cannot boast of many flowers but in addition to the above I have 6 different kinds of roses, plenty of sweet williams, 2 plants scarlet lychnis, 4 plants of a kind of fibrous rooted iris, 2 small plants of tulips, southern wood and thyme, double white narcissus, a very common kind of pinks, and last although not least valued, a plant of gowans! Such is the inventory of the perennial plants in my garden. I got some wallflower seeds from Mr Tytler last year but the long winter killed them all. If the daisy would give you seed I would thank you for some as I feel confident they would stand the winter and would make a pretty edging for here we have no edging to our walks.

Since I last wrote I have no thing in particular to notice. Mr Middleton and family are all well and getting on as fast as the lateness of the season will permit them.

About 2 years ago the legislature of this province passed an act called the Common School Act which authorized the inhabitants of every township in the province to elect annually a certain number of commissioners to build school houses, appoint teachers, and lay on assessments on the inhabitants for these purposes; the government giving 50,000 annually towards paying the schoolmasters salaries throughout the province generally, and every township gets so much of this government

grant proportional to its population, but must likewise raise a sum equal to their share of the grant which is then divided amongst the different schools in the township. A school is planted in this settlement and now under the control of the school commissioners, five in number, and annually elected. Mr Elmslie was the first teacher here, but having got a better situation in a school at Ancaster, he resigned and no teacher could be found to fill his place. I was applied to but I peremptorily refused, but after holding out a month I very reluctantly yielded and accepted the office. The salary is very small. The government allowance to my school only 14.19.6 currency and the school fees as laid down in the Act is a quarter dollar per month for all and every branch, a quarter dollar at present is exactly a British shilling. I may perhaps make about 7 to 10 by the fees but not a penny of them will be in cash. I teach four hours a day and have the other half to myself so that I must work as hard as ever to make the two ends meet. I have to teach English reading and grammar, writing, and arithmetic, but not required to teach languages. I get no more for teaching all the above than I get for teaching the alphabet: a quarter dollar from every pupil.

This letter shows Davidson as the consummate procrastinator: he began writing on May 29, but did not finish and post the letter until Sept. 19. He claims the delay was to be able to include details of a disturbance in the church. On the surface, this controversy was relatively straightforward. The Rev. William Barrie, who had the ministry at Bon Accord and Eramosa, was transferred by the Missionary Presbytery, who paid the major portion of his salary, to a new congregation in Hamilton, probably against his own wishes, and emphatically against the wishes of the Nichol and Eramosa congregations. Davidson complains that the transfer was done in a high-handed manner and that the people of the backwoods were being looked upon as second class.

15 September. It is high time my letter was finished. If I be as long on the second as the first half I will not be done when Christmas is come. I was intending to have written you sooner but deferred purposely in order to acquaint you with the issue of an important matter respecting our religious privileges. When the Rev. Wm. Barrie accepted our call to be our minister conjointly with the congregation of Eramosa, he received calls from other places and amongst the rest from the town of Hamilton. He declined all save Nichol and Eramosa. The Hamilton

people having applied for another moderation again called Mr Barrie. By some oversight Mr Barrie alone received notice of this call, but no official notice was ever sent to the congregations and the circumstance was known only in the shape of a rumour. The Missionary Presbytery of the Canadas met at Hamilton on the 26 July last, and the call being made, the Presbytery not only sustained the call but acted to remove Mr Barrie from his charges in defiance of his expressed wishes to the contrary, and that when none of the congregations were apprised and had no commissioners present to represent them. However, it is necessary to state that the half of the Presbytery did not vote and although the other members of Presbytery declared that as parties were not present, the business could not be proceeded with. Yet the young ministers round the lake with their elders carried it, appointed Mr Barrie's induction to take place at Hamilton upon the 30th August, and in the interim appointed one of the ministers to preach our church vacant. When we heard of these proceedings our surprise and indignation knew no bounds. A congregational meeting was instantly called and a protest and appeal to the Synod of Canada drawn out and signed; one copy sent to the Synod clerk, one to Mr Barrie, one to Rev. Mr Roy as pro tempore Presbytery clerk, and one to be laid upon the table of the Presbytery of Flamboro in protest of the proposed induction of Mr Barrie at Hamilton. I am at present Presbytery Elder, but I was likewise appointed Commissioner, and along with Mr Armstrong from Eramosa, I went to Hamilton on the appointed day and after three hours debate we put a stop to the proceedings. I should have mentioned that we prevented the churches from being declared vacant by putting a protest into the hands of the minister who came for to do us this piece of service, and in Eramosa he was threatened with physical force being made use of should he attempt to say a word about declaring the church vacant.

I am going to attend the next meeting of the Presbytery of Flamboro, which takes place at Flamboro West on Tuesday next 19th Sept., when I expect the Hamilton people will act upon the advice Mr Barrie gave them at the last meeting, which was to "withdraw their call".

We had a fine harvest, very abundant, and well got in. Some little oats are still exposed and we have had rain these two days past. I have been exerting myself to procure seeds of some of the beautiful wild flowers, but the birds eat them or what becomes of them I know not for I never find any. I am watching one plant now which is in flower which, should it ripen its seeds, I shall without fail send you some. With the

exception of the dahlias and marigolds which never came up, the seeds you sent me have flowered beautifully. I must try to save some of them to sow next year. Mrs Davidson and family are well and will join with me to send regards to Mrs Robson and family and Mr and Mrs Tytler. I am afraid he is getting too much engrossed with cigars, ladies twist and tonguis' mixture,¹³ for his brothers here maintain he has completely forgotten them. Let me know now and then what the Free Presbyterians and Moderates are doing. I shall write you again soon.

*I remain my dear sir yours
faithfully and respectfully
J.A. Davidson*

When writing to Robson, Davidson had been rather calm in his tone regarding the problems in the church. A month before he wrote this letter he had worked himself into a lather over the Barrie affair in a letter to Rev. William Proudfoot, head of the Mission of the Secession Presbyterian Church in western Upper Canada. The Mission Presbytery had chosen an unfortunate time to act in moving Rev. Barrie. Earlier in 1843 the great Disruption in the Church of Scotland had taken place, the culmination of a bitter internal dispute which had lasted ten years. The issue that brought the conflict to a head was the right of a congregation to appoint its own minister, virtually the same one involving Rev. Barrie. When the British government confirmed its support of the existing church structure and its power to assign ministers, Dr Thomas Chalmers led about 500 ministers and a third of the church membership into the new Free Church of Scotland. The new church was to be free of government interference and hierarchical structures. They argued, with considerable justification, that they represented the purer form of Presbyterianism. The Free Church immediately attracted fanatical adherents among both Highland crofters and among the middle classes in the new industrial towns, a constituency similar to that of the Secession Church.¹⁴

Soon there was a similar disruption in the Canadian church. Here, the issues were even more potent than in Scotland because they resonated with the the school and clergy reserves issues, and government itself was in a state of flux following the union of Upper and Lower Canada in 1841. Davidson was thinking of more than the Barrie affair when he defended the people of the backwoods and wrote that the Bon Accord settlers were "an intelligent people, jealous of their rights."

Though we can detect sentiments in these sentences that would soon flower politically into the Clear Grit movement, Davidson was fighting for the immediate objective of preserving the Bon Accord church. Though he professed loyalty to the Secession Church, his religious viewpoint was very much in accord with that of the Free Church Presbyterians. Davidson had many factors to consider. At the time he was writing, the outcome of the Great Disruption in Canada, and its implications for the Secession Church, were not clear. Locally, a group of Presbyterians in Fergus had already set up a Free Church congregation. Davidson was in a much stronger bargaining position by reaffirming his loyalty to the Secession Church. In fact, he uses this line of argument to assure Rev. Proudfoot that the Free Church Presbyterians of Fergus would join the Secession Church if Rev. Barrie were restored to preach in Bon Accord. With three major Presbyterian churches now in the field (Secession, Free Church and Church of Scotland), as well as a half dozen minor ones, the competition for ministers and members was becoming intense. With this background, Davidson sensed that the very survival of the Bon Accord church was at stake when he wrote to Rev. William Proudfoot in 1843.

Woodburn (by Elora), Nichol 13 Aug 1843¹⁵

Revd. Sir,

I have the honour of transmitting to you (as clerk of the Missionary Presbytery which met at Hamilton last week) a copy of the minutes of the congregational meeting held here in the meeting house on the evening of Monday last, and called by public intimation at the Sabbath day meeting.

I likewise send you a protest against the Presbytery proceedings with regard to us and our minister. You will not be surprised to be informed that the Nichol congregation are at present excited by feelings of the greatest indignation at the Presbytery's proceedings, and I may likewise state that although few in number they are an intelligent people, jealous of their rights, and they are determined that so long as Mr Barrie is willing to remain amongst them they will strain every nerve to keep him as their pastor and if need be will carry their case before the Synod in Scotland. I am to be instructed to write by next Halifax mail to Scotland to secure commissioners at the next meeting of the Synod there after the necessary documents may reach them. But I humbly pray that the allwise disposer of events will so order it that such extreme meas-

ures will be unnecessary.

The day following the meeting Mr Watt was sent to Eramosa and delivered a copy of the protest to Mr Barrie. The protest is not signed by all the male members: several of them reside at a distance, and some of them are perhaps as yet unaware of what has happened. As we have only two mails per week, I was prevented from forwarding the enclosed by Tuesday's mail, but shall post it at Elora tomorrow morning.

Having had the pleasure of being introduced to you in the Spring of 1837, at which time I appeared at the bar of the Presbytery as commissioner from Nichol, and having on a subsequent year been recognized by you, I address you with all the frankness that one church member should exercise toward another. I beg leave to lay before you a plain statement of our circumstances, not with the intention of endeavouring to court your favour towards us - no -you can exercise your own judgment in the matter, but to point out to you the consequences that must necessarily arise from Mr Barrie's removal from this quarter. Guelph is fifteen miles from here. The gospel is preached there. Woolwich is as far distant. In both these places ministers of the Church of Scotland are to be met with. Fergus is five miles, but the worthy minister formerly there has been called to his reward. The roads are very bad during spring and fall. A district of country say 30 or 40 miles each way is supplied by Mr Barrie's services alone (if I except an itinerant preacher in connexion with the Canadian Methodists and he holds sentiments which Presbyterians hold to be heterodox. This preacher visits townships which Mr Barrie could not command time to visit).

Is it, I would ask, creditable to the Presbytery to remove Mr Barrie from such a field of labour and lay it spiritually destitute for the purpose merely of filling the pulpit of a fine new stone-built church at Hamilton ? A town already well supplied with the gospel. Does it not look something like sectarianism to add to the store of the already gospel privileged town of Hamilton by robbing the destitute half-famished township of Nichol of the scanty pittance of the word of life, the bread of life, which it enjoys ? Verily, this is maintaining the rights of the Christian people with a vengeance! By and bye we may hear of a new party of Presbyterians - the Extrusionists.

I must say that I am surprised beyond measure that the Presbytery should ever have come to a vote at all, after you had reminded them of what the rules of the Church were upon such a subject; viz., that the

congregation as well as Mr Barrie should have been notified. The loosening of a pastor from his charge is, I consider, a subject of tremendous importance, and our church court commonly implores assistance from the Spirit of Grace to direct them in matters of importance, particularly when they come to a vote. I am told no such direction was sought and therefore I hesitate not to say that it looks very like the work of man will come to nought. I am told that a minister of what is now to be called the Home Presbytery stated that the people in the backwoods were not likely to support Mr Barrie and that he was expending his time and talents there and so forth. The people of the Backwoods here value the gospel, and that gospel teaches them to be a willing people and if it please the Lord, to prosper them in their efforts. They will have Mr Barrie off the Synod Mission fund before another year, and he will then be his own master. Their souls are as precious as the souls of the people of Hamilton, although this minister seems to consider them as not worth one hundred pounds of Hamilton currency a year.

The late disruption of the Church of Scotland is already beginning to tell here. No minister can be got for Fergus. The congregation there are divided and members of the Non-Intrusion party are getting their eyes so far opened as to perceive that state pay and state interference are one and the same in their results. The cause of the Session is therefore likely to progress here unless the Synod knock it on the head. Expressions of indignation and regret are heard everywhere and offers of adherence to our protest have been heard repeatedly made to us. Of course we have declined accepting them. But one thing they are determined to do. If Mr Barrie remains here, They are to give liberally to support him. Never were our prospects so bright nor Mr Barrie's talents as a minister more appreciated.

I must beg to state that my brethren know nothing of this epistle. You must therefore consider it as a private communication. Please therefore to acknowledge its receipt, along with that of the minutes and protest.

As Mr Skinner is now settled somewhere in your neighbourhood, I beg you will remember me to him and his family. In common with my brethren I beg to thank him for his exertions in our favour at the Presbytery. It was intended to move a vote of thanks to him at the meeting, but unfortunately, owing to the excitement that prevailed amongst us at the time, it was overlooked until the meeting dismissed, when many expressed their regret at it. That your great Master whose you are and

whom you serve may as at all times guide and direct you is the fervent prayer of

*Revd Sir yours in Christian Love
John Alex^r Davidson*

The last of Davidson's surviving letters to Robson was written in July 1845. It is most interesting for the comments on his own progress and that of the neighbouring settlements of Elora and Salem. Davidson has succeeded in clearing 36 acres of land in the ten years he has been in Bon Accord. This was fairly good progress for a man who worked as a carpenter and teacher and devoted much of his spare time to flowers, walks and fishing. He notes that Elora is finally established as a commercial centre (by Charles Allan and his partners in Ross and Co.) Davidson also reports that "a Dutchman" has purchased land farther down the Irvine River. This was Sem Wissler, a German-American, and his ambitious plans would soon be the foundation for the village of Salem.

Apparently Robson is still considering emigrating to Canada, and again Davidson advises him to stay where he is, stating that the price of the freedom enjoyed in Canada is the loss of the personal comforts of life in Scotland.

Woodburn, Nichol (7 July 1845) Canada West¹⁶

My Dear Robson

It is upwards of three months since I received your kind letter with its enclosure of seeds and I have often set apart a time to reply to it but when that arrived I had got immersed in business of some sort or other so that I was completely frustrated in my attempts to write and as we work on here while day light lasts I am always so very sleepy that to write at night at any other season than winter is out of the question.

Since I wrote you last there have been many ups and downs with us both but I am glad to be informed you and Mrs Robson and family are all well. With regard to my own family I am happy to say that all is as well as we could expect except myself. I have been very poorly for some days past and cannot say that I am much better yet. My stomach and bowels are affected from cold I have caught while out fishing in the Irvine water and as I am unable to do much I employ the first opportunity that has arrived to write to you.

I received the news of the death of my old correspondent with feel-

ings of deep regret. I called upon his brother the next day and communicated the melancholy intelligence to his family for which they were altogether unprepared.

With regard to the sayings and doings in this neck of the world, I have very little more to communicate than formerly. Some years ago I sold the half of my land to a brother of James Tytler's, so that I have now only 50 acres of which I have about 36 cleared and the rest in wood. I have 7 acres of wheat, 2 of oats, 1 potatoes and 1 pease and barley. I have 6 acres of hay and the rest in pasture and ground occupied by houses, the barn and a small swamp, etc. I have built a new house of stone, the only one as yet in this part of the township west of the Grand River. It is but a small one being only 24 1/2 by 16 1/2 within walls. I now occupy it but it is not finished yet. My first log house is rotting down so that I was obliged to look out for another dwelling. It is built upon a rising ground so that I now can see about me better than formerly, and as my neighbours continue their operation of clearing, my view continues to be extended in proportion. Directly southwest of me at a distance of 600 yards a Dutchman has purchased 160 acres upon which there are three fine waterfalls within 200 yards of each other. Upon the fall nearest to me he is at present building a saw mill, and a tannery will be built next year. A little village will soon spring up around the works, composed principally of Dutch and Germans, so that I will require to learn that language in order to cultivate a friendly intercourse.

Elora, our nearest post town, is 1 3/4 miles from me. When I came first here it was a despicable looking village of 6 or 8 houses. It continued in such a state until 3 years ago when a few young Scotch gentlemen purchased the splendid waterfall on the Grand River at Elora and 20 acres of the village ground on which they have erected and in full operation flour, oatmeal, carding and fulling mills and a saw mill. A number of neat log houses have spring up and things seem now to be in a very thriving state there. When I look back to the time I first arrived here and when every way you turned a wilderness met your eye, and compare and contrast it with the present appearance of things the change is astonishing. We want for nothing now but money and that is a very scarce commodity in the backwoods; but I perceive a national prospect of things improving even in this matter. The country back of us is rapidly filling up. Three years ago the longest journey we could take west of my house was 13 miles. No settlement beyond that and all

interminable forest (if I may be allowed the use of that expression) between us and Lake Huron. Now I must walk 9 miles to see some friends settled in the Township of Peel, laid out at the back of our settlement 2 years ago by the provincial government. Here the land is of a very rich mould interspersed with patches of swampy land; but as the settler chooses any kind of soil he may prefer, and the present prices understood to be only 7 shillings per acre, this township will rapidly fill up. I often wish I had you within five miles of me, but as you are comfortable enough I would not advise you to change a life of ease to one of hard laborious toil. I have to labour from sunrise to sunset; but then I have no rent to pay and any improvements I make on my little farm I make for myself and not for the laird. The tax collector is the only official we dislike to see calling upon us, but in general these are and must be civil gentlemen and are always ready to grant indulgence to those who cannot pay when called upon, provided they settle before the day on which they must present their accounts to the District Treasurer.

The Rev. Barrie affair had been settled to the satisfaction of Bon Accord and Eramosa, but Davidson now fears that he may choose to take up less onerous duties in Guelph, if he in fact returns from a trip to Scotland. Meanwhile, after two years the battle in Fergus between the Church of Scotland (called Moderates by Davidson) and the Free Kirk people continues. Davidson's comments contradict the popular view that the division in Fergus was effected in a spirit of friendly compromise.¹⁷

With regard to religious matters we are now 34 strong, but I am much afraid we are to lose Mr Barrie who is bent up coming to Scotland to see his mother, but who may be picked up by some congregation when he arrives. His intentions are to stay only a fortnight in Scotland and to return to post again. The people of Guelph are disposed to call him and as they can afford to keep him themselves, he may very naturally be disposed to accept their call for the reason that he would not have half of the fatiguing journeys to make then that he has at present. However, I cannot say how it may end, but in the meantime we are not in a very high spirit about it.

The Moderates and the Free Kirk folks in our neighbourhood are in ci pretty fix with each other at present. The Frees keep possession of the kirk and manse of Fergus in defiance of the Moderates, but I much fear

they will yet have to make a dishonorable retreat.

As I am removed from my little garden the weeds are getting more headway than I could wish, but upon the whole I have a very pretty display of flowers at present. Your seeds have come up in most cases, and some of them coming into flower. I have a goodly number of double white narcissus but I can never get them to flower. They set for flowering in great numbers. The flower pod will burst but then dies off without ever expanding. I wish much you would give me a hint how you and your gardening friends continue to make them flower. I am to lay out another garden for flowers and fruit beside my old house next spring. I have long tried to procure seeds for you here but the cattle destroy the plants for miles around. I shall be always on the outlook for some.

This scrawl has taken apart of three days and since I began it I am considerably better again and able to resume my work. The Watery Pox¹⁸ has appeared in the settlement and my eldest boy has caught it. He is pretty thickly covered with pustules about his head and breast, but his uncle Dr Middleton says it is a very mild attack and nothing is required more than to keep his bowels open. As a matter of course the others will catch it. Call upon my folks 114 King Street and tell my mother that I will write as soon as a daily expected event takes place and that Mrs D. is as well however as the present heat of the weather will admit. Compliments to Mrs Robson and family, James Crocket, etc. etc. Mr Middleton and family are all well and he is still schoolmaster at Elora. I have given up my office of Dominie¹⁹ but cannot get quit of my other offices. Thomas Gray and family are all well. I saw Mrs Gray at church the last Sabbath. I have a Sabbath school in the church on the Sabbath afternoons and about 30 scholars. This is the last morning for the post and I must now close. Excuse this hurried scribble.

I remain yours very truly

John A. Davidson

By 1845 Bon Accord was beginning its decline as an independent community, as it became drawn more and more into the orbit of Elora. Although agriculture remained the primary activity, Bon Accord craftsmen found employment in the Elora building boom of the 1840's, and several men (Alexander Watt, for example), became involved in business ventures there. Two Bon Accord men had become full time teachers, and a number of others left the community permanently.

Among the latter, George Pirie, who established the *Guelph Herald* in 1847, was one; another was John A. Davidson. In 1850 Davidson sold his farm and moved to Eden Mills, where he soon became a leading citizen of that community. The Bon Accord church was continued in Elora as Knox Presbyterian Church, and the original Bon Accord school closed with the opening of the school in Salem.

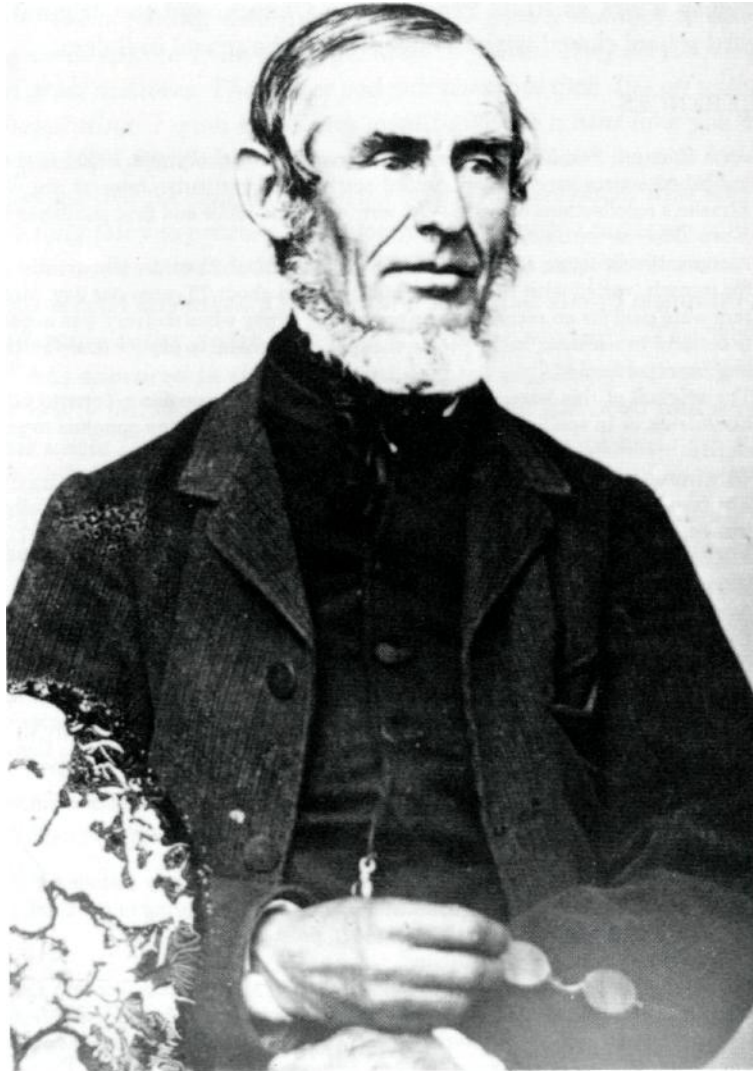
REFERENCES

- ¹ John Connon, *The Early History of Elora and Vicinity* (Fergus, 1930), is the best published source on the Bon Accord settlers. Of particular interest are George Elmslie's recollections on pp. 64-74, written in the 1860s and first published in the *Elora Observer* in 1866.
- ² A transatlantic letter cost 1 shilling 4 pence, or about 35 cents; labour, when paid for in cash, varied with the season, but averaged about 75 cents per day. Most letters were paid for on receipt. Few were willing to pay when delivery was not entirely certain. In addition, many people thought it unethical to pay for a service until it had been performed.
- ³ The original of this letter is in the Baldwin Room, Metropolitan Toronto Library. Eccentricities in spelling have been corrected, and punctuation supplied to provide clarity.
- ⁴ This word then had the meaning of a frivolous talker or an idle gossip.
- ⁵ The best account of the interplay of religion and society in Scotland is Callum G. Brown, *The Social History of Religion in Scotland since 1730* (London, 1987).
- ⁶ For brief comments on the Secession Church elsewhere in Wellington see Frank Day, *Here and There in Eramosa* (Rockwood, 1953), p. 50.
- ⁷ Adam Fergusson's book, *Practical Notes of a Tour made in Upper Canada and a Portion of the United States*, contained information on Nichol Township. By 1838 it had been through two editions and would certainly have been known to Robson and his circle. Fergusson's excessive optimism attracted critics soon after it was published. See also Terry Crowley, "The Site of Paradise: A Settler's Guide to Becoming a Farmer in Early Upper Canada," in Donald H. Akenson, ed., *Canadian Papers in Rural History VI* (Gananoque, 1988), pp. 266-78.
- ⁸ Davidson left a corner of the last page blank so that James Middleton could write a brief reply to his own correspondent. Middleton did not take advantage of the opportunity.
- ⁹ Charles Mickle left important documents relating to the early settlement of Wellington. See Terry Crowley, "The Mickle Family and Pioneering in the Guelph area in the 1830s," *Historic Guelph*, XXVI (1987), pp. 4-36.
- ¹⁰ Original in collection of the author.
- ¹¹ The original of this letter is in the Baldwin Room, Metropolitan Toronto Library.
- ¹² *Lychnis* is popularly known as campion; southern wood is a variety of wormwood, popular in herb gardens of the time; gowan is a common Scottish term for daisy.
- ¹³ These are references to James Tytler's occupation as a tobacconist. He had two brothers in the Bon Accord settlement.
- ¹⁴ These events are covered in detail in Andrew L. Drummond and James Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688-1843* (Edinburgh, 1973).
- ¹⁵ The original of this letter is in the archives of the Presbyterian Church of Canada.
- ¹⁶ The original of this letter is in the Baldwin Room, Metropolitan Toronto Library.
- ¹⁷ Hugh Templin and John M. Imlah, *Melville Church, Fergus: A History of the Con-*

gregation (Fergus, 1945), p. 9.

¹⁸ Probably chickenpox.

¹⁹ A Scottish term for schoolmaster.



John A. Davidson

A portrait taken in his later years, when he had become a pillar of the Eden Mills community in Eramosa Township. (Source: University of Guelph Library, Cannon Collection.)

Early Newspapers and Periodicals as Sources for the History of Wellington County

by Joe Gabriel

The Guelph Regional Project's researchers investigated many sources in compiling the bibliography, *Guelph and Wellington County*. Among them are several distinctive newspaper and journal series that illumine especially the rural and agricultural past of this region.

GUELPH NEWSPAPER SERIES

The evolution of Wellington County is reflected in the contents of several series of special articles published in Guelph newspapers in various years from 1866 to 1927. These sources contain a wealth of information covering a range of subjects including the nature of pioneer life, the development of social institutions, the evolution of the economic structure and the activities of local notables.

The earliest local history newspaper series was published by the *Guelph Mercury* in a number of weekly installments from Jan. 11 to Dec. 27 of 1866. This series presents a number of articles focusing on the early history of Guelph and the townships of Wellington County which were written by long-term residents of the area. Several of the articles describe the nature of pioneer life, list the names of pioneer settlers of various townships, and discuss how larger crises such as the rebellion of 1837 affected residents of the area.

In one such article written by James Peters the author outlines the

treatment of seven Eramosa Township farmers arrested as rebels during the rebellion.¹ Peters, who was one of those arrested, indicates that the seven men were held in jail for six weeks, were nearly burned in a fire set at the jail, and were acquitted at a subsequent trial. The article is useful in demonstrating how larger political crises had an impact upon residents of local areas.

The 1866 *Guelph Mercury* series is valuable in that it was written at an early stage in the history of the county when many early settlers presented historical reminiscences of pioneer life. Several articles discuss economic conditions, the poor state of roads, the considerable distance to mills and markets, and how these conditions improved from the 1820s to the 1860s. The articles also list individuals who held political posts in the county.

The 1866 series presents a useful overview of economic conditions in Guelph, highlighting early difficulties and later expansion with the coming of the railways in the 1850s. *The Elora Observer* commenced a similar series in 1866 which focused on the history of northern Wellington County. The *Observer* series is available at the University of Guelph and the County Archives; the *Mercury* series is held at the Guelph Public Library.

In the 1870s Guelph began to develop a number of manufacturing interests as it evolved from a commercial to an industrial centre. Special newspaper industrial and trade editions reflected changes in the economic activities in Guelph and Wellington County. On May 22, 1878, the *Guelph Herald* published a series of 114 brief biographies of leading merchants and manufacturers in Wellington County in a special edition. The biographies outline the types of goods produced or sold by specific businesses, and often indicate when firms were established in the county. This series is available at the University of Guelph Archives and at the Guelph Public Library.

Two other trade editions were published in Guelph newspapers during the 1890s, presenting information in the same manner as the 1878 *Herald*. In 1894, the *Guelph Mercury* published a special issue highlighting the city's industrial and mercantile activities as well as briefly outlining the range of churches and schools in Guelph.² This issue is available at the University of Guelph Archives and Guelph Public Library.

In 1895 the *Guelph Herald* published a special illustrated edition which focuses on mercantile and industrial establishments operating

in Wellington County with brief descriptions of specific firms. The series also describes the churches of Guelph and lists members of county councils from the 1840s to the 1890s. The edition is held at the Guelph Public Library and the University of Guelph Library. These various Guelph newspaper industrial series would be beneficial to anyone interested in the business history of the region.

In 1908 the *Guelph Mercury* published a special issue entitled "The Royal City of Canada, Guelph and Her Industries," which presented approximately 200 brief surveys of the city's industrial, mercantile, and monetary establishments. This source often indicates when companies were established and how ownership changed over time. The issue is held at the University of Guelph Library.

Three other useful newspaper series were published by the *Guelph Mercury*, presenting brief histories of Guelph and Wellington County from the settlement period to the early twentieth century. In January 1906 the *Mercury* commenced publication of articles discussing the history of the county and its various townships. The articles briefly discuss the economy, politics, militia and general conditions in the various townships by 1906. Unfortunately the series was conducted on an irregular basis and consequently only 40 articles have been indexed by the Guelph Regional Project from January to December of 1906. The series continues into the next year, and is an excellent candidate for a detailed indexing project. The series is held at the Guelph Public Library and the University of Guelph Library and the Wellington County Archives.

In 1917, the *Guelph Mercury* celebrated its sixtieth anniversary as a daily newspaper by publishing 14 articles on July 20 and 21. The articles included a range of topics including the history of the *Guelph Mercury*, brief biographies of two long-term merchants of the city, outlines of the history of social institutions operating in Guelph, and reproduces an 1875 newspaper inventory of buildings constructed in the city. The issue is available at the University of Guelph and Guelph Public Libraries.

In 1924 the *Guelph Mercury* published a special issue to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Ontario Agricultural College. The series outlines the reasons why Guelph was chosen as the site for the college, highlights the founding of various departments, and presents biographies of O.A.C. professors and presidents.³ This issue is held at the University of Guelph Archives.

On July 20, 1927, the *Guelph Mercury* published its well-known centennial issue in celebration of the one hundredth anniversary of Guelph. The issue was 132 pages in length and covered a broad range of topics in presenting a history of the city from 1827 to 1927. The issue also outlines the history of various townships, describing the activities of prominent local politicians and businessmen. Also included are references to social institutions, sports activities, and obituaries of Guelph notables who died in previous years. This source is at the Guelph Public and University Libraries, and the Wellington County Archives.

THE CANADA FARMER

The significance of agriculture in Wellington County is often associated with the Ontario Agricultural College, which was established in Guelph in 1874. While this relationship is undeniable, the county was an important agricultural area in the years preceding the founding of the college. The journal the *Canada Farmer* provides many references to the early agricultural history of the county.

This farm journal was published from 1847 to 1876 and contains 152 articles relating to the history of Wellington County, all of which have been indexed in the bibliography, *Guelph and Wellington County*. The *Canada Farmer* was released either monthly or bimonthly throughout the period and was edited by a Guelph resident, the Rev. W.F. Clarke, from 1864 to 1868. In earlier years, the Provincial Board of Agriculture was associated with the journal. F.W. Stone, a prominent livestock breeder who lived near Guelph, was a board member for several years. The influence of Stone as a board member, and the editorial presence of Clarke in the 1860s helps to explain the consistent references to Wellington County farmers and agricultural interests in the *Canada Farmer*.⁴

This journal is of value to researchers because it illuminates a broad spectrum of themes and topics of interest not only to the history of Wellington County, but also to the province generally. The articles in the journal include descriptions of prices, crop yields, the agricultural operations of prominent farmers and livestock breeders, fairs held in Guelph and other areas, and the success of county residents at larger provincial fairs.

Illustrative of the type of information presented are the numerous

references to livestock sales held annually at Moreton Lodge, the farm of F.W. Stone. Articles regularly outlined the range of livestock Stone sold to purchasers who came to Guelph from other parts of the province and the United States.⁵ Stone was also listed consistently as a winner in the prize lists of the Provincial Exhibition held annually in either Toronto, Kingston or Hamilton.

These exhibitions were a forum for farmers to compete and display various categories of agricultural products, and for manufacturers to display agricultural implements. The *Canada Farmer* published the prize list of the event each year and indicated individuals who received special attention for their displays. For example, an 1864 article cites the self-delivery reaper of J. Collins of Guelph as being of considerable potential.⁶ By the late 1860s the Provincial Exhibition began to attract a number of displays of manufactured products, including woollen goods, sewing machines and organs. Several Guelph manufacturers utilized the event to exhibit and advertise their products for a broader provincial market. The prize lists of the exhibition can help researchers to study the marketing strategies of Guelph businessmen in the period.

The *Canada Farmer* also assessed agricultural fairs held in Guelph and Wellington County and stressed the growing importance of Guelph as a site for such events. Fairs were organized in Guelph each month and by the 1870s the city challenged other centres to be the host of the annual Provincial Exhibition. In 1873 the *Canada Farmer* noted the Guelph Central Fair was well attended, resulting in decreased attendance at the Provincial Exhibition in the same year. Fortunately, all the issues of the *Canada Farmer* have survived and are held at the University of Guelph Archives. The Wellington County Archives holds 42 issues published between 1864-1875. This farm journal and others like it are vital sources for researchers attempting to interpret our agricultural past.

ONTARIO AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE REVIEW

The pre-eminent position of agriculture in the economy of Canada was beginning, in the late nineteenth century, to be challenged by the forces of industrialization. For many who worked the soil, industrialization was perceived as a serious threat to their very existence. In the nineteenth century various bodies and organizations took action to

promote formal agricultural education in attempting to enhance the social position of the farmer in an evolving society.

The Ontario Agricultural College was one of the earliest proponents of the need to educate farmers' sons. A student journal, first published in 1889, is a valuable source for researchers. This journal, the *Ontario Agricultural College Review*, was published until 1961.

In the early years of publication, several editorials appear outlining the problems associated with gaining societal acceptance of formal agricultural education. In an 1896 article entitled, "Prospects for Agricultural Education in Ontario," the author outlines the need for greater emphasis on agricultural education in the curriculum of high schools. Several articles also stress the need for scientific farm management that could be achieved by formal education of farmers' sons. Initially, many articles were openly lobbying to gain acceptance from farmers and society overall for the need for formal agricultural education.

The journal outlines how a farmer's son would benefit from a two-year course at the O.A.C. In one such article written in 1890, it was noted that an O.A.C. graduate was in a "...position of honour in farmers' councils, agricultural societies, and the like, and even in church and state affairs he is greatly advanced." In short, the journal and the college envisioned O.A.C. graduates to be the natural leaders of agricultural development in the country.

The *Ontario Agricultural College Review* also offered a useful survey of the sporting activities of the college. A large number of articles indicate where O.A.C. teams travelled to compete with other sports clubs. The value of athletics to participants is emphasized in numerous sports reports. The articles list members of teams and show the range of sports teams that functioned at the college at various times.

In later years, the journal offered periodic histories of the college, an example being a 1934 article entitled, "Under Five Presidents: The Saga of the Ontario Agricultural College is a Real Success Story." The journal also discusses community events in the city of Guelph, such as the Ontario Provincial Fair, and stresses the great value of such events. This journal is held at the University of Guelph Archives. It was published monthly by the Literary Society of the O.A.C. It has been indexed from 1889 to 1913, and for 1920. This journal and the college generally were ardent promoters of the virtues and potential of agricultural life in Canada. An 1900 article by E.G. Drury, a future

premier of Ontario, conveyed well the notion that agricultural education was helping to facilitate:

....the beginning of a larger movement which shall raise the farmer of our country from the position of a mere drudge, and place him on that higher plane of life which it is his right to occupy.

REFERENCES

- ¹ James Peters, "Township of Eramosa," *Guelph Mercury*, May 31, 1866; June 7, 1866.
- ² *Guelph Mercury, The Guelph Mercury Trade Edition*, June 30, 1894: pp. 1-6.
- ³ *Guelph Mercury, Ontario Agricultural College Semi-Centennial*, June 7, 1924: pp. 1-28.
- ⁴ This journal was initially called *The Agriculturist* but evolved over time. In the 1850's it was called *The Canadian Agriculturist and Transactions of the Board of Agriculture*. In 1864 George Brown agreed to become the publisher of the journal and from 1864 to 1876 it was called the *Canada Farmer*.
- ⁵ "6th Annual Sale of Stock at Moreton Lodge," *Canada Farmer*, 2, 20: pp. 314-15.
- ⁶ "The Provincial Exhibition at Hamilton," *Canada Farmer*, 1, 18: pp. 280-83.
- ⁷ "The Provincial Exhibition of 1873, London," *Canada Farmer*, 10, 18: pp. 356-60.
- ⁸ J.B. Reynolds, "Prospects for Agricultural Education in Ontario," *O.A.C. Review*, 8, 2: pp. 5-6.
- ⁹ J.B. Muir, "The Farmer's Son Before and After a Two-Year Course at the O.A.C. at Guelph," *O.A.C. Review*, 1, 5: p. 42.
- ¹⁰ B.C. Drury, "The Social Position of the Farmer," *O.A.C. Review*, 11, 4: p. 13.

ARCHIVES REPORT

THE CONNON COLLECTION, ARCHIVAL AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS, UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH LIBRARY.

Thomas Connon (1832-1899) was born in Aberdeenshire, Scotland. He emigrated to Canada in 1853, settling in Elora. He and his wife, the former Jean Keith, (1835-1909) had three children: Elizabeth, John Robert (1862-1931), and Thomas George (1852-1936). Between 1860 and 1867 he was a partner in Connon and Henderson, general merchants in Elora. In 1867 he left the business to pursue photography, on a full-time basis, as it had become his main interest.

John Connon collaborated with his father in the photography business. He specialized in outdoor shots, and photographs taken at the Elora Rocks. Thomas concentrated on studio photography. In the late 1890's John began to devote much of his energy to historical research. He published *The Early History of Elora, Ontario and Vicinity* shortly before his death. Thomas Connon Jr. was a railway agent and historian at Goderich.

The Connon collection contains a large amount of material from all three men. Included are Thomas Connon's business records, 1860-61, Tom Connon Jr.'s historical notes on Goderich churches, and John's extensive papers which include genealogical papers, correspondence, photographs, newspapers, newspaper clippings, historical notes, maps, circulars, broadsides, and division court records. Of particular interest are his research notes, early drafts and galley sheets for his book. He did not publish all the information he collected. Many of the broadsides and circulars are from the old *Observer* printing office in Elora.

The photographs form an important part of the collection. There

MINTO MONTHLY CATTLE FAIR

MUNICIPALITY OF MINTO!

Notice is hereby given that the Municipal Council of the Township of Minto have resolved to establish MONTHLY FAIRS, in connection with those of Elora & Guelph, for the sale of CATTLE, HORSES, SHEEP, SWINE, AND FARM PRODUCE. To be held in the VILLAGE OF HARRISTON,

 ON THE FRIDAY PRECEDING THE DATE OF THE 

Monthly Fairs of Elora and Guelph. Steps have been taken to invite and secure the attendance of first-class Buyers, and it is expected that the gentlemen who have hitherto attended the Markets in Elora and Guelph will also honor Minto with their presence, and so make the three Fairs second to none in the Province

God Save the Queen.

MINTO, 23rd Nov., 1865.

Wm. YEO, Tp. Clerk

Observer Machine Printing Establishment, Elora.

Some Competition from North Wellington:

Harriston merchants papered Minto Township with these posters in 1865 to compete for the farm trade that had been going to Elora and Guelph. This is one of the broadsides in the Cannon Collection, University of Guelph.

are over 500 of these, covering the years 1860 to 1920. This is the largest group of Canon photographs in any public collection. Included are glass negatives, lantern slides (prints have been made of these), studio and 'river group' portraits, scenic views, cartes de visite, post-cards, cabinet cards, tintypes and stereoscopes.

The collection was acquired through a donation made by Charles Corke, a retired faculty member. Some material was included in the Marston-Archibald Collection, and most recently the collection was augmented through a transfer from the University of Western Ontario. The collection has been catalogued, and is accessible through the University's computer catalogue system.

Gloria Troyer

ADDITIONS TO THE WELLINGTON COUNTY ARCHIVES

Nineteen eighty-eight was an important year for architectural preservation in Wellington County. The Ministry of Culture and Communications awarded a grant of \$4,904 to the Wellington County Local History Council to assist with the reproduction of 13,000 colour slides showing significant architectural sites in Guelph and Wellington County.

The impressive slide collection was bequeathed to the Wellington County Museum and Archives by Guelph's noted architectural historian, the late Gordon Couling. Couling was well known for his interest in architectural preservation. He also prepared historical walking tours of the City of Guelph, and lectured to many university and community groups.

The slide collection represents a variety of subjects such as houses, barns, hotels, churches, schools, mills and commercial establishments. The grant enabled the Wellington County Local History Council to create a duplicate set of slides which can be loaned to individuals and groups for public viewing and research purposes. The Local History Council felt that a second set of slides would forestall further deterioration of the images, a problem evident in some of the originals, many of which date back to the 1960's.

The Ministry grant was matched by donations from several members of the Local History Council, including the Wellington County Historical Research Society, the University of Guelph Library and History Department, Guelph Public Library, Guelph Museums, Welling-

ton County Museum and Archives, Guelph LACAC, and the Puslinch Township LACAC.

A custom designed software package was designed by computer programmer Randy Roach of Waterloo to index and classify the massive collection. With the aid of an employment initiative grant from Employment and Immigration Canada, a finding aid was prepared, arranged by location and subject.

Researchers interested in Wellington County architecture will find the Couling Collection a valuable resource. In addition to the slides, this collection includes architectural inventories, black-and-white photographs, historical notes, and newspaper clippings.

Bonnie Callen

REVIEWS

Guelph and Wellington County: A Bibliography of Settlement and Development Since 1800.

Elizabeth Bloomfield and Gilbert A. Stelter.

Guelph, Guelph Regional Project, University of Guelph, 1988. 329 pages.

With its publication in the fall of 1988, this book immediately became the key reference work for the history of Wellington County, and it will hold this place for decades to come.

The Guelph Regional Project is an interdepartmental venture at the University of Guelph that is examining all aspects of development in the Upper Grand River Valley. As part of their task, the members of the project have compiled this bibliography of all known books, articles and pamphlets having Wellington County as their subject. Altogether, the book lists 1,716 items.

The book is divided into three sections. The first contains useful articles by Gil Stelter on studying the region, and a guide by Elizabeth Bloomfield on using the book effectively.

The second section is devoted to the listings of writings on Wellington County. It is subdivided into eight subsections, and entries within each are arranged alphabetically by author. In addition to the usual bibliographic information on titles and authors, each entry includes a brief summary of the item, and a reference to the library or archives where it may be found. Researchers will find this a useful feature in deciding whether a particular item is of interest to them, and where to locate it quickly. It should also be mentioned that a particular item may be in libraries or archives in addition to those listed. The classifications include 'Settlement Process,' 'Culture and Social Institutions,'

and 'Townships and Urban Centres.' This feature makes it possible to merely peruse a small section of the book to find most of the writings on a particular subject.

The outstanding feature of the book is the index, or rather, indexes - there are five of them: an author, a place, and three subject indexes.

Many will balk at purchasing a reference book such as this. However, for anyone engaged in local historical research, 20 minutes with this book can save days of searching for material. Even the casual reader of Wellington County's history will find it useful for locating works of interest.

A companion volume, listing all primary sources on the County - manuscripts, government records, private papers and photographs - is in preparation. Together, the two volumes will be indispensable tools to all who are interested in the history of the County.

— Steve Thorning

From Then Till Now: A History of Arthur Township 1850-1985.

Compiled and published by the Arthur Historical Committee.

Arthur, 1986. 419 pages.

The members of the Arthur Historical Committee should be commended for their efforts in compiling *From Then Till Now*.

This publication contains fascinating memoirs and reminiscences of early pioneer life in a rural area. Because it is people-oriented, readers will close the book with a better understanding of the experiences confronting our forefathers as they set out to conquer the wilderness.

Private individuals contributed photographs of Arthur Township never before published, as well as thematic articles on community history, churches, schools, sports, agriculture, organizations and government. The Table of Contents lists 17 chapters, and half the book is devoted to over 400 farm and family histories, ensuring that this local history will be a valuable resource for genealogists.

An attractive feature of the book is found in the inside cover where a map of the township pinpoints churches, schools and cemeteries. A family tree chart on the back inside cover is a thoughtful addition.

Unfortunately, an index is omitted. However, the farm and family histories are arranged alphabetically, so the lack of an index is not a critical matter.

The Book Committee consisted of 24 residents who devoted over

two years to this fine publication. The pride they felt in its compilation is evident throughout.

— Bonnie Callen

Families, Facts and Fables: Minto Memories.

Edited by Marsha Boulton.

Durham, Saugeen Press, 1988. 554 pages.

Minto Memories is being hailed as the largest book of its kind in Ontario with 554 pages of text and photographs devoted to the township's history.

The History Book Committee under the editorship of Marsha Boulton spent three years compiling this vast compendium of farm and family histories. Hundreds of contributors submitted articles on their Minto ancestors. It is regrettable that recognition has been denied to most of the contributors due to the chosen format.

Rather than printing each family history as a separate submission, which is the usual custom in such memorials to local pioneers, the editor included the family histories under the farm histories, arranged by concession and lot number. Thus two or three family histories may be embodied in one article, revised and rewritten by the editor. A list of contributors should have been included.

Minto Memories's real value lies in the photographs it contains. The clear, sharp pictures of Minto Township people and places will be cherished in years to come. The township ownership map is also interesting and a valuable addition.

Researchers may find the book somewhat difficult to use. On first perusal an index appears to be missing, which is a flaw common to many local histories. However, an index to the families covered in the farm histories is found at the end of the farm histories chapter. An index to a book's contents should logically appear at the end of the book, and should be comprehensive in nature.

Other chapters cover political history, churches, schools and businesses. There are many interesting anecdotes about pioneer activities, and the authors deserve credit for including the how and why, and not just the usual who, what, where and when of history. For instance, the article on brick making provides the reader with information on early brick making techniques, and the article on toll roads explains their

significance to the township's pioneers. The writers have made the book a human history.

Minto Memories will be valuable as a companion to Clifford Harrison's *A History of Minto Township*. Together, these sources have documented for posterity the evolving history of this township. *Minto Memories* gives quiet testimony to the legacy of its pioneer families. The History Book Committee members should feel proud of their endeavours.

— Bonnie Callen

OUR CONTRIBUTORS

Ken Oldridge is Head of Geography at John F. Ross Collegiate in Guelph. He has supervised archaeological work in Puslinch.

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