1812 - 1836

THE SCOTTISH INFLUENCE

General

As soon as the war between Canada and America had ended, the British Government was anxious to establish a loyal population in the country. Suitable applicants were given 200 acres of land and guaranteed a free passage, and this offer resulted in the Crown Lands west of the Seigniory being quickly developed.

No doubt the Seignorial dues and the law suit dragging on for fourteen years between the settlers on Lane's purchase and the Seigniors,.-first Major Murray then Sir John Johnson, were not conducive to attracting settlers to Lane's Purchase and even in 18 14, as can be seen from Bouchette's map, *Fig. I, the* farms huddled along each side of the river forming a long narrow belt of inhabited country with the farmers having to sell their merchandise in St. Andrews, St. Eustache or Montreal.

Settlers

Between 1812 and 1836, a number of settlers, mainly from Scotland, came into the general area occupying tracts of land around 200 acres which they began to farm.

During this period, the Seigniory changed hands. In 1814, Sir John Johnson purchased it from Major Murray and built his manor house on the banks of the Ottawa. About 1820, he left to reside in Montreal and appointed an agent to look after his affairs. After his death in 1830, his son, Col. Charles Christopher Johnson, succeeded to the title. Sir John's Lake was named after Sir John Johnson.

We have already seen that Thomas Barron came to Lachute in 1809. He built the family house near the river at the west end of Main Street. Across the river was the

stone house built in the 1830's for the Seignior's agent.   This house, long known as the Clunie house, later received a second storey but was demolished in May, 1964.

Thomas Barron rapidly acquired all the land on which the centre of Lachute now stands.   The site where the upper part of Main Street and the station are now located originally belonged to Alexander Smith, but in 1816 he exchanged this for a tract of land at Hill Head belonging to Barron. By 1829, the map, *(Fig.* 2)) of the Barron estate shows the extent of the Barron property in the Lachute area.   During the 1812 war, Barton was adjutant to the militia but after the war he was promoted to the rank of Major and later to Lieut. Colonel. He was also Crown Land agent for a large territory comprising Chatham, Gore, Wentworth and later Morin and Howard.

In 1832, his brother, John Barron, joined him in Lachute bringing his newly born son, Thomas Barron, Jr. John Barton lived with his elder brother and helped manage the Barton estates until his death in 1866. The elder Thomas had no children but his brother had two sons, Thomas and Robert, the former succeeding to the Barron House.

Honours fell thickly on Thomas Barron who can rightly be regarded as the founder of the Barron fortunes. He became the first magistrate in 1825 and was later to be the mayor. Truly it may be said that if Jedediah Lane was the founder of Lachute, Lieut. Col. Thomas Barron was its first squire.

In this period, a number of weavers from Paisley who were driven out of Scotland by the high cost of rents as a result of the Napoleonic wars came to settle in the area.   These include names familiar today — the Pollocks, Morrisons, Dobbies, Fultons, Christies and Wilsons, most of whom had tracts of land along the North River.   Thomas Morrison came to Lachute in 1822 but later started farming at the Hill Settlement. John Macdonald came to Lachute in 1821 and worked as a land agent for Colin Robertson before moving to Brownsburg.   1827 saw the arrival of James and John both Paisley weavers; they started to farm 150 acres in Upper Lachute but later moved to Mount Maple.

Another old and well-known Lachute family arrived from Montreal in 1825, Walter McOuat and his son, James, who was born in Montreal in 1818. James later bought a farm in the River Rouge area. The McOuat family was to play a large part in the development of Lachute. In all, six brothers settled in Argenteuil County. John came to Montreal in I819; in 1820, he settled in Hill Foot and started a mill on Davis Creek. Later he was instrumental in establishing the first church in Lachute. Two other brothers, Andrew and William, built several houses in the county, also the Presbyterian Church, later called the Mackie Church. Peter McOuat, another brother, built mills in Brownsburg.

John McGregor brought his family from Dumbartonshire, Scotland, to Lachute in 1826. He too farmed 100 acres in the Upper Lachute area and then added another 90 acres to it.

In the early 20's, Donald McKerricher became the first settler in Dalesville but about three weeks later the sound of an axe announced the arrival of the second settler, John McGibbon, who had come to Lachute in 1820 from Glenlyon in Perth&ire before moving to Dalesville. These were the forerunners of a colony of pioneers from Glenlyon, including Peter and Alexander McGibbon. The   settlers were Baptists not Presbyterians.

John Hay came to Lachute in 1834, a Scotsman from Inverness-shire. He first worked for Colin Robertson earning the modest sum of 5 dollars a month, but later became a Justice of the Peace and farmed on the south side of the Brownsburg Road.

In 1833, Joseph and David Rodger came from Scotland and purchased their farms from the early United Empire Loyalists, Isaac Hyatt and Milo Barber in the East Settlement, whilst William Todd bought the James Pollock farm in Upper Lachute but sold it in 1841 and also came to farm in the East Settlement.

It would be tedious to mention all these early settlers, though their children moulded and developed Lachute but

one other must be mentioned, James Walker from Ayrshire, who arrived in 1832 and worked as a miller until he purchased his own farm along the Upper Lachute Road from a son-in-law of Benjamin Burch named, Johnson.

In these early years, French-Canadians did not come as far west as Lachute. The first French-Canadian to settle in the vicinity was Pierre Robert who bought a farm in Chatham around 1829. Another was "Johnny' Blais who farmed along the Lachute Road.

Early Life

Farming was the occupation of nearly all the inhabitants. Slowly' ground was brought under cultivation; horses, cattle and sheep were bought and oxen were sometimes used for ploughing. Planting of grain was done with a hand hoe until farming implements, consisting of a horse rake, reaper, mowing machine, wagon, etc., could be purchased.

Potash was still a source of income from newly acquired land but the timber was being depleted since sixty large maple trees were necessary to make enough ashes for one barrel of Potash, the price of which after the Napoleonic wars was about 56 dollars a barrel.

Wolves and lynx were particularly common and made periodical forays on the sheep. The wolves usually announced their presence by howling, but the lynx robbed swiftly and silently and proved a greater menace in the lambing season than the wolves. Any inhabitant of Lower Canada who could prove before a magistrate to killing a wolf could claim IO dollars from any unappropriated funds held by the Receiver General in Quebec.

About 1825, farming was made much easier by the introduction of the Scottish plough to replace the old hog plough and from that time, improvements were rapid. Before, it had been difficult to plough back sustenance into the land; rotation of crops was not practised and the land became less and less fertile until in 1816, there was a serious crop failure resulting in a famine, the staple diet of most families then being reduced to oatmeal and potatoes.

At a time when a very good workman only earned around $1.25 a day, articles in the St. Andrews stores were by no means cheap. In -1814, a bushel of corn was $2.00; a pound of tea, $1.80; and 6 yards of cotton, $3.00; a scythe cost $2.00; and a pound of beef, 7c; these being the equivalent prices of the sterling currency then in use.

Howes

The earliest settlers' houses and barns were built of logs and these served to give shelter until the farm was underway and an income from farm produce could be relied upon. Then the settlers began to build more substantial quarters, utilizing square timber, brick or stone.

In spite of the vast square timber trade, this material does not seem to have been- common locally. Perhaps the_ first house made from sawn lumber was that built by Derrick Ostrom about 1812. It was the grandest house in Chatham shingled all over from top to bottom. In 1825. E. Pridham with great trouble built a timber frame house at Grenville, 50 x 32.feet in area and two stories high.

We have already noted the Stephen brothers who made brick near Hill Head before 1812, using oxen to tramp the clay since they had no machinery for grinding. They certainly built two brick houses for themselves and probably others as well. John Smith found clay on his property at Beech Ridge and began an extensive brickmaking business around 1825 installing machinery for- this purpose. Many of the brick houses in Lachute were made from this clay deposit on the west side of the road leading to Beech Ridge about half a mile beyond the St. Eustache fork. Even today the hill is called Brick Hill. Noyes and Weldon were also making brick along the Front of Chatham before 1828. This clay deposit made hard and durable brick whereas the brick from Beech Ridge was soft. There were many lime kilns, both at Lachute Mills and on the Mountain, just east of the present Dunany- Road where the Beekmantown beds of limestone come to the surface.

A kiln on the latter site was operated by Peter McGibbon as early as 1827.

In **1819,** Duncan Dewar built himself a comfortable two storey stone house along the Front of Chatham of field stone, and as we have seen a stone house was built in Lachute for the Seignior's agent in the early 1830's.

Milo Barbour in the East Settlement using local stone builr a grand three-storey house large enough to accommodate him and the families of his three sons, but this did not induce them to stay on the old homestead (this house survives, **1963**) . Joseph Rodger also built two stone houses in the same area around 1835.

Communications

In 1812, St. Andrews 'was the gateway to the world with its bridge over the North River, its general stores, ashery, tannery, saddlers and shoemaking shops; paper mill, saw mill and grist mill driven by water wheels and a variety of black-smiths kept busy making hoes, axes and forks for the settlers. Lachute had no nucleus before the Seignorial mills were built but about 1818 the name, "The Chute Settlement" began to appear in the St. Andrews church registers.   In an interesting article, Gaetan Valois says that the Scottish settlers later attempted to change the name of the settlement to "Warrenstown" — if so, it was unsuccessful and the French name triumphed in spite of the predominantly Scottish population. Other notaries' deeds around 1829 sometimes refer to the Lachute area as Barronsville.

A line of covered stages drawn by four horses linked St. Andrews with Montreal and St. Eustache to the east and Grenville to the west. The trip to Grenville from Montreal was made in three days and the stage made two trips a week, the driver carrying the mail in his hat.

Although by 1812, the road linking Lachute to St. Andrews via Beech Ridge and the road to St. Eustache via St. Benoit (Grand Brule) were wide enough to permit a horse-drawn carriage, most people just walked.   There were fantastic stories of these marathon walks; E. Pridham of

Grenville found it quicker to walk to Montreal than to paddle a boat on the Ottawa. In the summer he walked from Pointe Fortune to Montreal in two days and did the return journey in three.

Alexander Cameron, "Big Allen" as he was called, regularly carried a bushel of grain on his back from Greece's Point to the Lachute mills and returned with his load of flour, but pride of place surely must be given to Mrs. Rogers who, on her way from Ireland to Gore, gave birth to a son at St. Andrews; three days later, taking the infant in her arms, she walked the 20 miles to Gore.

Roads and Waterways

It was through the waterways that the heart of Canada was penetrated and the early settlers used these to the full by paddling along the Ottawa from Pointe Fortune to Lachine, a part of the river free from rapids. Indians also were still canoeing on the rivers bringing down the furs from the North. S. J. Bevin was the first white man to live in Arundel, setting up a trading post in 1822 and intercepting the Indians thereby making profitable deals as they came down the Rouge River laden with furs. The Ottawa was alive with craft, for around 1830 the square timber business was at the height of its prosperity.

The canoes and paddle bateaux gradually gave ground to more sophisticated craft and in 18 16, there were three steamers plying between Montreal and Quebec.

In 1824, steam-powered passenger boats were operating between Montreal and Carillon and when the water was high enough, some would come up the North River as far as St. Andrews. In the winter of 1822-23, a steamboat was built by Mears of Hawkesbury to ply between Hawkesbury and Hull but it was a poor craft making one journey a week going up the river on Saturday and returning on Wednesday. In 1830, steamers began *to* make three trips a week between Grenville and Hull.

The road system was also extended westward and in 1829 the Quebec Government granted *L*5000 to clear a road

from Grenville to Hull which was opened and passable by the spring of 1830. This linked the Seigniory and Lachute with Hull and Bytown (renamed Ottawa in 1854), through St. Andrews and the Front of Chatham.

It was not until 1825 that the North River was spanned by a second tressle bridge (the first being at St. Andrews in 1807) and this was towards Upper Lachute where White's Bridge now stands some four miles up the river from the Falls. It is astonishing for us today to believe that this locality was more important than the Barron's Bridge area, although the 1829 map of the Barton property (Fig. 2) indicated some kind of river crossing at this point, possibly a plank bridge constructed on boats. Since there were no roads linking Lachute with the Chatham area to the west, this bridge might have been built to connect Lachute and Brownsburg after Brown had settled there in 18 18 and built his mills before 1820.

The forerunner of White's Bridge was built to enable the settlers farming on the north side of the North River to take their corn by cart to the mills instead of rowing the sacks across the river, for all roads then led either to the mills at Lachute, St. Andrews or St. Eustache. The increased traffic between Lachute and the Ottawa River resulted in a new bridge being built at St. Andrews in 1833. This was built a short distance upstream from the first bridge of four spans with cut stone piers but even so the ice and water caused one of the piers to break away and the bridge collapsed in 1837, though it was successfully repaired.

In 1835, another bridge was built over the North River almost 2 miles west of White's Bridge. This was called Powers' Bridge (later Copeland's Bridge) because the farm on the north side of the bridge was occupied by Orlando Powers.   Apparently, there was bitter controversy and opposition to this location, but when built, it served as another link between the mills and the settlers on the north side of the river for a number of Irish families had now settled as far north as Gore. The river road on the south side linking

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Lachute with Upper Lachute was commonly referred to as the Front Road.

Industries

As more land was put under the plough, the pressing need was more mills to grind the grain. These were generally wooden structures; the first grist mill at St. Andrews was a building made of cedar logs and clapboarded, being one and a half stories high. It was later rebuilt in field stone and a second mill to grind oatmeal was also built adjacent to it.

George Brown, an English miller, employed in the Lachute mills received a grant of land about 5 miles north of Lachute Falls on which he erected mills in 1818. These proved of great service to the farmers north of Lachute and gradually a community began to gather which later received the name Brownsburg after the founder. John McOuat also built mills on Davis Creek at Hill Foot by arrangement with the Seignior. These were later to come into possession of the Hammond family. He had an -oxen team that dragged the felled trees to the mill.

The Lachute grist mill was rebuilt in 1832 as a substantial stone structure, the stone being quarried on the site. F. C. Ireland says, "During its building, as much whisky was drunk as water used in the mortar."

In 1830, Dan Dale built a saw mill to which he added a grist mill in 1838. The district was later named Dalesville. About this time also, James Arnott built a grist mill and a saw mill at Lakefield. Though simple and crude, these mills saved the farmers many weary miles of walking. The Dewar mill, noted for the excellence of its ground oats, was built in 1835 on one of the streams west of Stonefield just north of its confluence with the Ottawa River. It was patronized by farmers for many miles around. See Fig. 3 for mill sites where the Brown mills are shown due south of Brownsburg.

In the early 1830's, a new industry came to the East End 'Hills Tannery'. Samuel Hills, a native of New Hampshire, came to Lachute in 1830 and almost immediately built his

tannery along a little creek on the south side of the Upper Lachute Road about half a mile above the Dunany fork that crosses Powers' (now Copeland's) Bridge. He was thus located in the centre of a rich farming area. His venture quickly prospered and he was soon employing so much labour that a little village began to grow around the creek. Leather of different types was produced which was then made into harnesses, shoes, etc.

Buildings

Stores

The first store in Lachute was opened by C. Robertson in 1813, strategically located on the same side of the North River as the mills and just north of them. Thus all the farmers bringing their grain to the mills would be tempted to purchase. This was a small log building with a shanty roof and one small window. Ireland says when the storekeeper wanted to go out he left the key in the door and customers would help themselves, writing their purchases in a book

In 1828, Samuel Orr, who came with his father, James Orr, to Canada from Belfast in 1817, opened a business for_ himself in the East End on the north side of the Upper Lachute Road nearly half a mile above the Dunany turn, just west of the tannery. Samuel was lame and often rested his bad leg on the counter; he was deeply religious, a Sunday School superintendent and prayer leader. At this time, money was scarce and his clients would pay' him in -maple sugar and oatmeal, but he would cheerfully loan them, when necessary, a few pence to extract a letter from the Post Office, since when this was founded in 1835, the recipient, not the sender, paid the postage.

At this time, the stores also began to sell liquor and since there was no change less than an English sixpence and the price of a plug of tobacco was four-pence, a glass of rum would be given in lieu of change. But as early as 1805, there was a law in the Province prohibiting the sale of intoxicants on Sundays on payment of a 10 to 20 dollar fine.

Robertson's and Orr's stores were quite small, but a new and much more ambitious business venture was started in 1827 by John Meikle. Meikle was a Scotsman from Glasgow who came directly to Lachute with his wife and three sons. He saw the great advantage of a store at the junction of the Upper Lachute Road and the Bethany Road which was then the only road to St. Eustache and Montreal and to St. Andrews via Beech Ridge. No matter where they came from, farmers taking their corn to the Lachute mills would have to pass this point. In 1827, Meikle purchased a few acres of land from Thomas Barron and built his store on the south side of Main Street a block west of the present post office, his residence being on the site of the post office. Later he was to extend his store and build another residence, the first timber frame house to be built in Lachute just across the Bethany Road from his earlier house. This house and parts of the original store are still standing (1963). Meikle, like Orr, accepted payment in kind. He loaned out the leaches, kettles, coolers and barrels required for the manufacture of potash, and accepted payment in this commodity. He obtained his merchandise from Montreal bringing it by river to St. Andrews and then by road to Lachute. In winter, however, it was brought direct from Montreal all the way by sleigh. By all accounts, Meikle was kind and sympathetic to these early settlers sending their potash direct to Montreal and then paying them in cash. Meikle became one of the great business men in Lachute rivalling Barron in his acquirement of public honours.

Later, one of his sons, Robert, was to open a bank though it was not a happy venture whilst another son, George, was to carry on the business.

From the earliest days, itinerant fairs came to Lachute and were temporarily located in the centre of what is now Main Street which is wide-enough to be reminiscent of village greens or market squares, which are common features of many European villages and must have been very familiar to the Scottish settlers. Every year in October there was a large open-air cattle market called the Michaelmas fair which

occupied the entire length of Main Street up to the East End and farmers for miles around bought and sold their livestock.

Between 1812 and 1835, Lachute was beginning **to** emerge as a community. In 1820, there were a few buildings near the mills and one or two houses dotted along the road leading from the mills — now Main Street. There was one house just east of the Barron house though back from the road, another house just west of the present Protestant cemetery where the Rev. Mackie was later to have his manse, and there was the East End school house next to the school on the east side of the cemetery.

Around 1830, the mill district became sufficiently important to justify a hotel which was a log building located just north of the mills on the south side of where Grace Street now meets Main Street. This was a venture of Milo Lane, the second son of Jedediah Lane and son-in-law of J. S. Hutchins. He later opened a grocery store opposite the hotel on the east side of Main Street and operated both this and the hotel until his death in 1857.

Churches

St. Andrews was made a parish in 1822 and embraced the entire Seigniory. No longer had the area to rely on visiting ministers though lay help still supplied most of the services.

About 1818, the parish acquired two resident clergymen, the Rev. Joseph Abbott, an Englishman who held Church of England services in a school house in St. Andrews and the Rev. Archibald Henderson, a Scotsman of the Presbyterian Church who for a time held services in the same school house. Apparently there was not too much love lost between the two factions and each obtained its own church in St Andrews in 1821.

Before the Rev. Joseph Abbott came to St. Andrews, occasional Episcopal services had been held in Lachute and St. Andrews by the Rev. Richard Bradford of Chatham whose daughter, Harriet, married the Rev. Joseph Abbott soon after

he came to Canada. Their son, Sir J. J. C. Abbott, born on the 12th of March, 1821, was to become the most illustrious citizen of the Seigniory of Argenteuil and to attain the exalted rank of Prime Minister of Canada.

With the arrival of the Scottish settlers, the number of Presbyterians in the Lachute area increased rapidly. At first the most zealous walked the six miles to St. Andrews to hear the Rev. Henderson, but eventually so great was the congregation in the Lachute area that Henderson was prevailed. upon to hold monthly services in Lachute. In 183 1, there was a desire to have a resident minister for the Lachute area and the Rev. William Brunton was persuaded to leave St. Therese, the community promising to pay him an annual salary of $264. The people strongly supported their new minister and the next stage was to build a church. Money, however, was hard to come by, though a subscription list was drawn up and headed by John McOuat who gave the large sum of $100. Others gave in kind by rendering practical assistance in the building of the church under the direction of William and Andrew McOuat. After many setbacks, the church was finally completed in 1833.

It was a square stone building with arched wooden window frames, built back from the road in the centre of what is today the Protestant cemetery. Brunton and his congregation worked harmoniously together until 1839 when Brunton died and a grateful congregation paid tribute to his memory by erecting a tombstone bearing an inscription extolling his work and merits. Difficult days were then to descend on the congregation.

In spite of the enthusiasm for holding religious services, the ministers had much work to do in combatting intemperance. As early as 1824, Hugh Chisholm had built a distillery about a mile west of Carillon. Farmers found a good market for their grain there, but most accepted payment in whisky. The distillery closed after a few years but gave way to a brewery built by C. J. Forbes of Bellevue on Carillon Hill, but this too proved an unprofitable enterprise. Nevertheless, much liquor,

probably, locally distilled, was consumed at 'bees", cattle fairs and elections which led to fights and brawls. The clergy preached powerful sermons from the pulpit at these times and as soon as the Presbyterian community became. established in Lachute, a branch of the Temperance Society that had originated in Boston in 1826, was formed with Thomas Barton as Vice President and Jedediah Lane as Secretary. A sermon preached in the school house by the Rev. Brunton before a meeting of the Lachute branch on May 2nd, 1832, was printed by the Society. In it Rev. Brunton considered the cholera epidemic of 1832 to be "The Judgment of Cod."

As well as the clergy, there were numerous lay preachers, one of the best known at this time being John Calder, the eldest son of James Calder, who had a talent for preaching and singing; finally, after giving up his farm, he devoted his life to the Montreal Auxiliary Bible Society.

Schools

Until 1841, it was not necessary to have any qualifications to teach; the most important requirement was to maintain discipline. The subjects taught were the "three R's" along with a smattering of geography and grammar. Text books were very limited and even the ink was made at home by boiling the bark of soft maple; turkey or goose quills supplied the pens.

There was no educational grant; the teacher was paid by the scholars' parents and since cash was scarce, it was common to pay a part of the stipend in such produce as wood for heating the school house, and the teacher was sometimes provided with free board at one or other of the parents' houses

In 1810, at the request of the community, a school just east of the Protestant cemetery was established by the Governor General under the Royal Institution with J, D. Ely to teach at a salary of L60 annum which was supplemented by fees to L100 annum. After 4 years he was succeeded by A. Wood who relinquished his post when his salary was cut to L20 year. In 1829, a voluntary system of education was established.

The community was responsible for providing a suitable building and a fee also had to be paid for each pupil attending school, but the government paid the teacher directly after authorization had been obtained jointly from a clergyman and the county member.   In spite of the rough-and-ready nature of the educational system, many men who were to obtain local eminence received their tuition in the East End school just east of the Protestant cemetery, including Thomas Barron, nephew of Lt. Col. T. Barron, G. L. Meikle, son of J. Meikle and Dr. G. H. Christie, son of Dr. T. Christie.   The Board of the Royal Institution after a few years established another school in Upper Lachute about 4 miles east of the East End school.

Jedediah Lane was teaching in the East End school in 1834 and other teachers included Lachlan Taylor, John W. H. Brunton and Adam Walker.

Professional Services

There was no qualified doctor in the Lachute area until Dr. McDowell came in 183 1 though he did not remain very long.   The community had to rely on a number of men with some medical skill, noted among these being Messrs. Ellis, Beach and Rice and Alexander McGibbon of Brownsburg, a distant relative of John McGibbon who was noted for vomiting and bleeding the long suffering community. For the most part, these early amateur medicals relied on copious doses of herbs and calomel to effect their cures but would also undertake minor surgery using the lance.

By 1832, there were one or two qualified Scottish doctors in the St. Andrews area, two Edinburgh graduates being Dr. Rae and Dr. McCallum.   This was most fortunate because a serious outbreak of cholera occurred in 1832 which struck every town in Canada and was particularly severe in the Grenville area where many died.

At this time, there were no members of the legal profession in Argenteuil County, for until 1857, the judiciary of Terrebonne, Two Mountains and Argenteuil was centred at

St. Scholastique. All local cases were submitted to the Magistrate's Court, the elder Thomas Barron being appointed a Justice of the Peace and first local Magistrate in **1825.**

Societies

The county of York, then comprising the counties of Terrebonne, Two Mountains and Argenteuil, formed an Agricultural Society in 1828 with Thomas Barron as one of the two vice-presidents. This was the forerunner of the Argenteuil Agricultural Society which later became established near Lachute.

As early as 18 13, a Masonic Lodge was also organized in St. Andrews with Benjamin Wales as the first master. This was called Murray Lodge No. 5 until 1825, after which it was called St. Andrews Lodge No. 5. Among the early members was the elder Thomas Barton, who in 1824 was representing the lodge in the Provincial Grand Lodge of Montreal.