

THE FIRST TAY CANAL

An Abortive Upper Canadian Transportation Enterprise of a Century Ago

By H. R. Morgan

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Illustrated with postcards from the collection of the Perth Museum.

Although it is one of the most important tributaries of the Rideau, the river Tay is not a very impressive stream; nor can it be truthfully said that such was ever the case. A matter of a century ago, however, it was considered by the people of Perth, which is situated upon its banks, and by those who dwelt in other sections of the military settlement in that area, to be sufficiently impressive to warrant a prolonged agitation for its creation into a navigable waterway. When this agitation, in which petitions replaced the deputations of the present, failed to stir the government of the day to action, Perth and Montreal capital partially carried out the same object and gave to the merchants of Perth and to the inhabitants of the neighborhood the boon which they had long sought -- direct communication by water with Lower Canada. This did away with all necessity for the long overland transit of goods from Brockville over a mere excuse for a road which was, until the time of the construction of the Rideau Canal, the sole practicable method of reaching the military settlement.

It would appear from records which are extant that one of the guarantees made to the disbanded soldiers and others who first settled at Perth and on lands adjacent to that place was that, with the building of the Rideau Canal, there would come corresponding improvement of the Tay which would render it, too, capable of navigation by steamboat. As time passed and the settlement grew, it became a matter of vital import that this guarantee should be fulfilled. Not only did the early merchants require better facilities for

importing the goods stocks, but there were surrounding farmers to local market was quite for the consumption of was necessary for them more populous Canada to find a sale of this produce involved Brockville and then by Lawrence, It will be which it yielded must the farmers must have



The Tay River, Perth in the distance.

There was, consequently, every reason that the people of the Perth settlement should desire the authorities to fulfil the promise given to them when they took up land. This guarantee was never completely met and it remained for private enterprise to perform what the government failed to do and to give to Perth communication by water with the trading centres of the outer world.

which formed their also the products of the be considered. The inadequate to provide all their produce and it to turn to the older and communities of Lower for it. When marketing transport overland to boat down the St. evident that the profits have been impaired and suffered accordingly.

Among the papers left by the Hon. William **Morris**, whose influence in Perth during the early stages of its history was great, there is record of the proceedings of a public meeting held there on August 20th, 1824, "for the purpose of considering the propriety of exploring the navigation of the rivers Tay and

Rideau and to ascertain the practicability of rendering the same navigable for boats." This may be considered as the first step taken by the people of the Perth district to gain for themselves improved methods of communication. At that time, it must be remembered, Perth occupied rather an isolated situation. To the south alone was there any appreciable settlement and joining it with Perth was a road which, even in a day of inferior highways, was regarded as execrable. We have the word of no less a personage than Bishop Jacob **Mountain**, who travelled from Brockville to Perth in 1820, that "all the roads which I have described before were turnpike and bowling green to this. Roots, rocks, sticks, stumps, holes and bogs -- these were the component materials of the roads. The journey was divided into three equal stages of about seven miles, and each of them, exclusive of baiting [sic], took us three hours. The holes, however, and the sloughs are, of course, much worse in the wet season and travellers have sometimes been obliged to leave waggon and horses sticking fast till they could procure a yoke of oxen to pull them out. An Irishman in the service of Major **Powell**, of Perth, being asked by his master how he had got along upon the road (with a waggon) replied that he had got along pretty well, for he had found bottom at every place but one!" If the trip from Brockville upon a stagecoach involved such difficulties, what must have been the effort required to move heavily-laden waggons over the same route?

One of the resolutions adopted at the meeting held in 1824, at which the Hon. Mr. **Morris** presided, sets forth the contention that "a water communication to Montreal by the rivers Tay and Rideau into the Ottawa and the establishment of a line of boats thereon of sufficient burthen to transport the products of this settlement to market would be of vast public advantage and would save to the inhabitants large sums of money annually expended in transporting goods to and from Brockville." "In order to promote an undertaking of such obvious general utility and to give the subject that weight and respectability which its importance demands," a committee of management, composed of R. **Matheson**, J. **Wylie**, W. **Morris**, John **Ferguson** and J. **Taylor** was appointed to solicit subscriptions in support of the project and to proceed at the earliest moment to examine the obstacles to a boat navigation between Perth and the mouth of the Rideau River. This meeting, it must be borne in mind, was held at least two years before work was commenced upon the construction of the Rideau Canal, and the projectors of the undertaking in Perth had improvement of the Rideau, as well as canalization of the Tay, as their object.



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Apparently one of the first acts of this committee of management was to solicit the assistance of the government in conformity with the pledge which had been given when the settlement was instituted. When this assistance did not materialize, (although the building of the Rideau Canal had been begun) we find the Perth people growing restive and expressing a desire to undertake the work at their own expense. Undated resolutions passed at a subsequent meeting first speak of the possibility of the formation of a joint stock company with a capital of £2,000 for the purpose of securing "to themselves and the public generally the enjoyment of an uninterrupted water conveyance to the markets of Lower Canada" there being then "no reason to hope that the government will undertake the work at the public expense." It was declared a necessity that "the river Tay be rendered navigable at all times during the summer season in order that the surplus produce may hereafter be transported to market at a reasonable rate" and the importance was stressed of its completion taking place before the Rideau Canal was opened for commerce. It was felt that Perth would be at a disadvantage when this canal was in operation unless it had communication with it by an improved waterway. William **Morris**, H. **Graham**, R. **Matheson**, G. H. **Reade** and Messrs. **Glass** and **Leslie** were thereupon appointed members of a committee to apply for letters of incorporation.

In the petition which was subsequently presented to the Legislature in this connection, it was set forth that authority had been granted by an Act of Parliament some years previously empowering the officers employed to construct the Rideau Canal similarly to improve the Tay and that these officers had not seen fit to take advantage of such legislation. The petitioners consequently asked the right to carry on the work as a joint stock company. The petition was granted and the *Tay Navigation Company* came into being. But several additional years passed before the plans of the company were put into effect.

In the meantime the promoters encountered an unforeseen obstacle. A certain Alexander **Weatherhead**, originally of Augusta, on the St. Lawrence, (whose sister, Margaret, was married to Richard **Arnold**, also of Augusta, son of the celebrated Benedict **Arnold** by his first wife) had come into possession of land bordering on the Tay and had conceived the idea of utilizing one of its water-powers, that at the point known as the Fishing Falls, for the operation of a mill. Apparently without having consulted any person, he proceeded to throw a dam across the stream. Word of this development having reached the promoters of the navigation company, it may be easily imagined that their indignation knew no bounds. At first, the magistrates contented themselves with addressing a formal letter to **Weatherhead** notifying him that "as the inhabitants of this District feel a deep interest in the improvement of the navigation of the said river, we hereby inform you that we shall immediately resort to legal steps in order to prevent you or any other individual from constructing works which can in any degree interfere with the free navigation of a river which in its natural state affords during three or four months each season every facility for the transport of produce to the Rideau Canal." This letter bears the date September 9, 1829. In explanation of the statement made in the final stages of this communication, it may be mentioned that during the period of the construction of the canal, the people of the Perth district did a considerable business with the contractors, furnishing them with pork, potatoes, and the like. These provisions were conveyed to the Rideau by boats, necessarily of very limited capacity, which were floated down the Tay and on their return towed up the rapids.



To this ultimatum **Weatherhead** appears to have paid not the slightest attention and the Hon. William **Morris** then solicited the intervention of Lt.-Col. John **By**, R. E., Chief Engineer on the construction of the Rideau Canal, informing him that "the completion of such a work will inevitably obstruct the navigation from this place to the Rideau Canal and materially interfere with the surveys made under your direction." On October 2nd, 1829, Lt.-Col. **By**, acknowledging the receipt of this request from "Royal Engineers' Office at Bytown," expressed the opinion that **Weatherhead** was not only acting illegally "but contrary to the wishes of

government" and advised that without loss of time the magistrates should communicate the circumstances to the Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada. Such a step was taken, the entire correspondence being forwarded to York with the result that the Attorney-General was instructed to notify **Weatherhead** that he was liable to prosecution should he persist in throwing his dam across the Tay.

Weatherhead was, however, disposed to argue the question. In answer to the Attorney-General he forwarded a statement of his position in which he advanced the claim that, instead of being a possible obstruction to navigation, his dam would facilitate it. What he said concerning the subject was as follows: "The river in its natural state runs about the distance of a mile and a half a very strong rapid with twelve or

fourteen inches depth of water, which is only in the month of April. The rapid is such that it is impossible to propel the lightest craft, even a bark canoe, in any way against it.

"The average depth of water from the 15th May or 1st June through the season is from four to six inches.

"The usual method of ascending or descending the river the above distance (which is rather unusual) is by discharging the burthen and towing or, I may say, lifting the craft along. At the termination of about one mile and a quarter, there is a perpendicular fall of four feet at which place the mill dam is erected, being about one-quarter of a mile above the foot of the rapids.

"The dam now raises the water nine feet which, being thrown back upon the rapid, renders the river perfectly navigable above the dam to still water, which gives one mile and a quarter of easy navigation, whereas in its natural state it could not be called navigable, as there has never been but one or two instances of any craft ascending or descending the stream at that place without assistance in lifting the craft, and that in the month of April at high water.

"The apron of the dam is 48 feet in length, 18 feet in width and 4 feet in perpendicular, which renders it perfectly easy and safe passing over. It is admitted by those who are acquainted with the situation of the place to be an improvement."

Reasonable as the contentions of Mr. **Weatherhead** may appear at first glance, they did not meet with the favor of the Perth magistrates whose indignation was added to, rather than appeased, by their presentation. The magistrates immediately prepared and forwarded a counter-statement, supported by an affidavit, in which they repeated their belief that the building of the dam would have an injurious effect upon the plans which they had in mind. They admitted the truth of **Weatherhead's** claim that the dam would render the rapids open to navigation, but so would the locks which they planned to construct. The truth was that in its natural state the Tay was navigable for a period sufficiently long to enable the inhabitants to transport all the produce which might be collected during the winter and the dam would prevent them from constructing a lock below the Fishing Falls ("falls" only in name). No boat would now be able to descend without being obliged to unload and re-load at the dam. They expressed their "astonishment" that "statements so unfounded as those made by Mr. **Weatherhead**" should be given circulation. "One thing is certain," they said, "that if Mr. **Weatherhead** is permitted to continue his dam, the public have lost the free navigation of the Tay and are precluded from ever undertaking works which would have made the river navigable for boats the whole summer."

The affidavit accompanying this rejoinder was made by Samuel **Snedden**, at that time a clerk in the employ of Messrs. **Ferguson & Wylie**, contractors on the Rideau Canal. In it he swears that during the spring of 1828 he had been engaged in transporting a large quantity of provisions from Perth to the first rapids of the Rideau and that he had made at least twelve trips with a heavily-loaded boat without the least difficulty, either in descending or ascending the Tay. In ascending, the boat was towed by a rope as was customary at the rapids of the St. Lawrence and in descending no part of the cargo was ever unloaded. Mr. **Snedden** further swore that the Tay was perfectly navigable during the months of April, May and June, unless the water should be lower than he had ever seen it, and that the boat frequently left the rapids of the Rideau, went up to Perth, a distance of fifteen miles, was loaded, and returned the same day.

From further correspondence it is evident that the matter continued to engage the attention of the authorities during part of the year 1830. The Lieutenant-Governor wrote to J. H. **Powell**, Sheriff at Perth, requesting him to examine the work and report as to the effect which it would have upon the proposed

improvement of the river. This, owing to the season of the year, Mr. **Powell** was unable to do, but he wrote to the Lieutenant-Governor expressing the opinion, from his own knowledge and from the best information that he was able to collect, that the erection of the dam "must materially obstruct its navigation." "I have, amongst many others," he wrote, "communicated with an experienced miller who has been acquainted with the river since the foundation of the settlement and has plied on it in craft of every description from a bark canoe to the largest government scow and on whose judgment I am disposed to place considerable weight. He informs me that no laden boat could with any degree of safety attempt passing over the apron of the dam; consequently, its construction must render impracticable the communication between Perth and the Rideau by the canal which has been contemplated and which would so materially benefit this settlement. I am the more induced to credit this statement from its being fully corroborated by my son, who has a thorough knowledge of the navigation of the river. There is not, nor has there ever been, any mill or obstruction on the river Tay, between Perth and the Rideau, except the dam erected by Mr. **Weatherhead**." This report must have had the effect of causing the government to re-affirm its original position, for we hear no more of either Mr. **Weatherhead** or his projected mill and the construction of the canal was in due course proceeded with, evidently without the impediment which the dam must have presented.

In the meantime there is evidence that the directors of the *Tay Navigation Company* had not been inactive. The petitions which the inhabitants had presented to the Governor-in-Chief, the one in 1826 through the kindness of Captain **Marshall** and the other early in 1830 through Lt.-Col. **By**, had been ignored and on December 25th, 1830, Mr. **Morris** once more addressed himself to the Governor applying for assistance. In doing so, he apologized for troubling him, solely upon the ground that the people of the military settlement felt that they had peculiar claims to recognition. Ultimately, this assistance was granted by the setting-apart for the benefit of the company of lands which had previously stood in the name of the Crown.

In a report to the stock-holders, printed by order of the board on November 22nd, 1831, by F. H. **Cumming**, Perth, the directors reviewed the progress which had been made. The services of John **Jackson**, "a respectable builder of this place and whose professional practice in England had made him acquainted with the nature of levelling," had been obtained to make a survey of the Tay from Perth to its junction with the Rideau Lake. After having sounded the depth of water and taking the levels, **Jackson** found the descent at the various rapids to amount to 27 feet, 11 inches, and recommended the construction of four locks and an equal number of dams. The latter were to be made of timber and the locks to be built of rubble stone work. It was found that the two lower locks would be sufficiently protected against damage at the time of the spring floods by a branch of the river which had been discovered and which would carry off all the surplus water, This outlet was choked with fallen trees and other debris which cost a few pounds to remove, since which time the current had carried everything before it and had left a rock bottom to serve as foundation for a regulating dam.

Although Mr. **Jackson's** plans were acceptable to the directors, it was thought prudent to send him to inspect the Welland, Erie, and Oswego Canals. These works he examined most carefully, but he saw nothing which caused him to recommend any variation of the plans which he had submitted. Accordingly, in June, 1831, the directors issued the contract for the mason work of the first two locks above the Rideau and also for the accompanying dams, leaving the making of the gates and other wooden work to a few workmen over whom **Jackson** exercised supervision. At the time at which the report was made, these works were almost completed. To assist in their construction, stone and lime had been found on the spot. But for sand it had been necessary to go to the shores of Rideau Lake.

The report mentions that Col. **By** and other officers of the Engineer Department who had visited the locks had expressed their approval of the plans adopted and of the manner in which they had been

executed. The locks were adapted for the passage of boats ninety feet in length by twenty in beam, a type of vessel which might be towed from Lachine to the entrance of the Tay and thence poled to Perth. "The depth of water, three and a half feet, will enable Durham boats to ascend to the town without difficulty and (if they were covered over similar to the packet boats on the Erie Canal) they might be navigated with perfect safety to the cargo by three hands at most, as the voyage both ways would be performed in tow of a steamboat."

At the close of the season of 1831 the company had all but completed the construction of two of the locks and dams which had been planned by **Jackson**. It was hoped by the Board of Directors that the state of the funds of the company would permit the commencement of work upon the third lock during the same season and with this expectation timber was taken to the spot and a rock excavation made for the foundation. Evidently, however, some of those who had been at the outset enthusiastic advocates and supporters of the undertaking experienced a change of heart. In the report which was issued in 1831, mention was made of the fact that many of those who had agreed to take stock had neglected to pay even the first instalment, while others, having made their initial payment, were loath to make the others which followed. The directors were consequently under the necessity of deferring work upon the remaining locks and dams until such time as the stock-books had received additional names or until those who had already borne the expense of the undertaking saw fit to increase the extent of their holdings.

It was intimated by the directors at this time that the cost of the four locks and dams, including embankments, the expenses of surveying and every other contingency, would not exceed £3,000, to defray which they had called in four instalments amounting to seventy per cent. of the capital stock subscribed. There was thus available little more than a sum large enough to liquidate the debt contracted upon the construction of the first two locks, with accompanying dams, and the directors did not feel inclined to proceed with the remaining works until additional funds were at their disposal. They made another appeal to the public spirit and enterprise of the people and expressed their satisfaction that the cheapness and durability of the works would recommend the undertaking to men of capital as a profitable investment. To this end stock-books remained open in the counting-rooms of the firms of *Gillespie, Moffatt & Co.* and *Forsyth, Richardson & Co.* in Montreal, the merchants of which city had liberally assisted in furthering the object. They were, in fact, more inclined to pin faith in its efficacy and profitableness than the people of Perth itself.

The report closes with mention of the economical manner in which the works had been constructed and in which it was hoped that they would be operated for the public advantage. Up to that time the services of all the officers of the company had been entirely gratuitous and it was not proposed that any expense for superintendence should be incurred until the extent of the revenue from the navigation warranted such expenditure. There was the additional hope of an economical administration of the canal from the fact that three of the locks were situated close together and could be operated by one man. The other, a small lift distant from these by several miles, fortunately, lay close to the residence of a man who would take charge of it for a very inconsiderable sum. "The whole expenditure will fall short of the sum already mentioned," the board confidently predicted, "and cannot fail to prove most profitable stock, as the navigation of the Tay must attract and greatly increase the commerce of this populous settlement." Subsequent developments, it will be seen, did not justify this statement.

By dint of much effort, the stock-book in 1832 showed subscriptions of £2,000 with which means the company carried on its work and succeeded admirably, when it is considered that it was in receipt of slight governmental assistance. On June 1st, 1832 (the Rideau Canal having been completed) arrival on the Tay of the steamboat "*Union*" raised the hopes of the promoters. This steamboat, built at Hawkesbury in 1822, was the first to ply on the river Ottawa and the record of its arrival at Port Elmsley (then known as

"Barbadoes") is thus recorded in an old day-book kept by Alexander **Weatherhead**, previously mentioned, in his establishment at that place: "The steamboat Union, N. **Morehouse**, master, from the Ottawa, arrived at this place on the first day of June, 1832, at half past 11 of the clock A.M., being the first steamboat that run (sic) on the Ottawa, Rideau Canal and up the river Tay. Barbadoes, June 1st, 1832." It may be mentioned in explanation of the name "Barbadoes," that Samuel **Weatherhead**, father of Alexander, had been born in that British colony which he left as a boy to adopt a sea-faring life. After numerous adventures, including capture by pirates, he made his way to Upper Canada and entered into business as a general merchant at what is now the village of Maitland, between Brockville and Prescott. A contemporaneous newspaper account of the arrival of the "Union" on the Tay says that she ascended that stream as far as the first lock and found the depth of water to be several feet more than required for her burthen. It was her intention to make weekly calls on the Tay.

In spite of the progress already made, the directors of the Tay Navigation Company foresaw that their utmost exertions would fail to accomplish all the improvements which were necessary to render the navigation of the river both safe and convenient. They were particularly desirous that a basin should be excavated at Perth to enable steamboats to ascend to the centre of the town, there discharge their cargoes, and then turn in safety. It was proposed by them to the government that the latter should grant to the company what was known as Cockburn Island within the town of Perth in order that they might raise funds with which to convert the swampy portion of it into a basin with wharves surrounding it. This swamp was referred to by Mr. **Morris** as a "stagnant and unwholesome quagmire" and it was considered that its removal, in addition to facilitating the navigation of the river, would confer a benefit upon the town. Upon this occasion, the government of the day acceded to the request which was made. In January, 1832, the grant was made and the engineer immediately proceeded to lay out the basin and wharves and make a plan of the ground with a view to the sale of lots. A number of streets were laid out with access to the waterfront. On April 27th a public sale of lots was held and the sum of £300 was realized. Those, however, who desired to purchase lots surrounding the basin were unwilling to do so until an excavation had been made, as much of them lay under water. The company, therefore, obtained a loan of £1,000 from the Bank of Upper Canada with which to prosecute the work. This money was not received until September and on the 24th of that month the contract was let for the basin. Unfortunately, the autumn was a wet one and the river became swollen to an unprecedented state. Little progress was consequently made, but enough was done to convince the directors that had it not been for the very high water, the contractors would have completed the undertaking in less than two months.

There now arose fresh trouble for the company in which the Hon. Mr. **Morris** continued to be the leading spirit and the principal stockholder. At that time he was one of the sitting members for Lanark in the Legislature, his confrere being Donald **Fraser**, a resident of that county of long standing and a political opponent of Mr. **Morris**. During the month of October, 1832, Mr. **Fraser** wrote to the Executive Council in protest against the manner in which Cockburn Island had been disposed of by the company. He asserted, in substance, that the directors of the company had carried out the sale of the lands for their own benefit and not in the public interest and that the people would have been better served had the land, which previously had been considered a reserve for public use, such as the holding of fairs and a militia training-ground, been ceded to the magistrates in trust and the proceeds devoted to the purchase of stock in the company on account of the public. By such a course it was held that a fund of from £200 to £400 per annum might have been raised for public purposes, such as the building and maintaining of bridges, and the navigation of the river would not have been permitted to suffer. As it was, while the public would benefit from the construction of the works, he contended that those who held stock in the company and who were permitted under its charter to gain profits as high as twenty per cent. would benefit much more. Moreover, it was contended that the directors of the company held lands in close position to the projected basin and

wharves which would naturally increase in value as the result of the completion of the work. Mr. **Fraser** made other allegations concerning the prices which had been received for some of the lots.

To these Mr. **Morris**, on behalf of the company, made indignant and spirited reply. He said that the building of the canal works would never have been accomplished without the assistance of persons resident outside of Perth, for many people of that town "have never to this hour afforded the slightest assistance to a company which by perseverance in the face of almost insurmountable difficulties have enhanced the value of property at Perth to an incredible amount." He did not think that it was very creditable to the enterprise and public spirit of the people of Perth that they had paid only £843 towards defraying the expenses incurred and he put it to "any candid person in the District of Bathurst if it is not far preferable to have a navigation and dock such as will be open for public use before this time twelve month than to see the trade of the town diverted to the banks of the Rideau and Cockburn Island left in a state of Nature for the accommodation of a cattle fair which, in place of being held there, would in all likelihood have assembled at some other place of trade and commerce."

Mr. **Morris** made heated denial of the charge that he had personally benefited from the sale of the lots. "So wholly groundless is the insinuation," he wrote, "that I defy not only Mr. **Fraser** but the whole community to show that one single farthing of the lots in question ever came into my hands or afforded me, directly or indirectly, the smallest personal pecuniary advantage. Nay, more, I put it to him or to any other individual to show on the part of any one director the slightest deviation from the most disinterested probity and honor in the management of one single matter connected with the affairs of *Tay Navigation Company*, and I will further add that, notwithstanding the vast labor and loss of time, as well as expense, that have fallen on a few of the individuals who conduct the business, not one penny has or ever shall be charged against the company for these services." The reply was ended in an exhortation to Mr. **Fraser** or any other person who might be envious of the success of the company to become one of the subscribers to its stock, as money was still needed and the stock-book had not been closed. "Such a line of proceeding," he said, "would be much more serviceable to the public than the conduct of many who by insinuations and evil reports have done everything in their power to mar the progress of an undertaking which will yet be found not only creditable to those who planned it, but the main source of prosperity to that portion of the province."

The upshot of these charges and the vigorous defense made by Mr. **Morris** was that on December 10th the Executive Council "whitewashed" the navigation company, adopting a minute which stated that they saw no reason for recommending any change in the disposition of Cockburn Island "but on the contrary are confirmed in their former opinion."

This controversy undoubtedly had a bearing upon political events which ensued at the same time. On November 30th, while it was at its height, a petition signed by Anthony **Leslie** and R. **Matheson**, was presented to the House of Assembly declaring that Donald **Fraser**, for want of the requisite freehold qualification, "is not, and never was, eligible to a seat in your Honorable House" and demanding that the qualifications in this respect which he had submitted should be examined. The lands upon which Mr. **Fraser** had qualified were lot No. 29 in the sixth concession of Gloucester, lot No. 15 in the fifth concession of the same township and the east half of lot No. 2 in the fifth concession of Lanark township. The petitioners claimed that the first of these lots was held by a location ticket subject to cancellation at any time by the Surveyor-General; that the second could never have belonged to **Fraser**, as half of it was still vacant and the other half located to a person who had not yet received his patent; while the third lot was a Clergy Reserve lot, sold by Hon. Peter **Robinson** to a man named Armour **Graham** on a credit of ten years with but two instalments paid.

There followed a trial of the controverted election, the evidence being submitted to the House, with the result that Mr. **Fraser** was unseated by a small majority upon what was obviously a technicality. Mr. **Morris** led in the fight for his dismissal. At the ensuing by-election, the question of the disposal of the Cockburn Island lands entered largely into the discussion and in an undated issue of *The Constitution*, a paper published at Perth which survived only a few issues, we find mention of a public meeting held at *Cross' hotel* in Perth to forward the re-election of Mr. **Fraser** at which that gentleman was congratulated upon the stand which he had taken in this respect. Another resolution which was adopted, with H. **Glass** in the chair and Malcolm **Cameron** as secretary, declared that "the active interference of our present member, William **Morris**, Esq., throughout this affair is alike derogatory to him and insulting to us."

In opposition to Mr. **Fraser** there appeared as a candidate G. H. **Reade**, the then secretary of the navigation company. The poll was held at Perth in January, 1833, with J. F. W. **Berford** as returning officer, and resulted in the return of the unseated member. The latter in an election card declared that he had been disqualified by "the intrigues of a faction who took advantage of a law quibble . . . I held the necessary quantity of lands and had fulfilled every duty required; and previous to the meeting of Parliament had my deeds to produce. But to disappointed ambition revenge is too sweet to stop because justice and equity are barriers. Every artifice was employed, every means used that ingenious craftiness could devise to thwart your views and prevent you from exercising your free choice. But though they have partially succeeded, it must be gratifying to remark that all the worth and talent of the House voted for you, as you see that it is a greater insult to your freedom than personally to me."

One more petition was presented by the navigation company to the Government and this was dated December 21st, 1834. Lack of funds was again proving a discouragement to the directors and preventing them from completing the work. All that remained to be done was the hanging of the lower pair of gates at the lock which connected the navigation of the Tay with that of the Rideau. In an effort to accomplish this task the company had been put to much expense. It had been found impossible, owing to a depth of six feet of water, to empty the lock with the equipment on hand and the company had been "almost ruined in consequence of the great expense incurred in fruitless attempts to pump out the water and the loss of the use of the navigation." The company asked that the Lieutenant-Governor submit the case to the Secretary of State for the Colonies and endeavor to procure a grant of £1,000 out of the revenue raised by the sale of Crown timber in the District of Bathurst.

Whether or not this petition was granted is not made clear in the remaining correspondence, but the fact remains that the Tay canal was put into operation and that steamboats plied upon it, the little steamer "*Enterprise*" being built at Perth by Captain William **Richards** for the merchants to run between that place, Bytown and Kingston. By this gentleman the "*Enterprise*" was commanded during the period of its operation on the Rideau and Tay routes. A native of Wexford, Ireland, he had had an adventurous career. At the time of the Irish rebellion, both his father and his mother were piked in their own house and he was saved only by the intervention of his nurse who claimed him as her own child. At the age of twelve he went aboard a man o' war and thereafter served in many campaigns in different parts of the world. He was through the naval battles of the war of 1812 and his ship formed one of the escorts of the "*Chesapeake*" when it was conveyed to the harbour of Halifax. Later, he engaged in thrilling skirmishes with pirates, slavers and the like in various seas and although in many hand-to-hand fights, was never seriously wounded. When he left the Navy, Captain **Richards** invested his prize money in a schooner in which he traded, first in the Bay of Fundy and afterwards with the West Indies. He also engaged in ship-building and produced a brig known as the "*William and Mary*" in which he made several trips to the West Indies. On one of his return voyages, carrying a cargo of molasses and other goods, the "*William and Mary*" encountered a typhoon which put her upon her beam ends and caused her complete loss. Captain **Richards** and the members of his crew clung to the wreck until they managed to free a boat. In this they finally

succeeded in reaching land, after many trying experiences. The loss of the brig also meant the almost complete failure of her captain, for the cargo was not insured. Upon his return to New Brunswick he gathered together what funds remained to him and with them purchased a plot of fourteen acres about half a mile outside of Perth, with a brick cottage erected upon it, where he and his wife spent the remainder of their lives.

The operation of the "Enterprise," even in the capable hands of so. experienced a pilot as Captain **Richards**, was not attended by the success which her owners or the owners of the canal had anticipated. After two or three years it was found that the shallowness of the canal and the numerous obstructions which existed on account of it were obstacles too great to be surmounted by private enterprise. In 1836 the owners of the boat came to the end of their tether and she was broken up, her machinery being sold to the firm of George Buchanan & Co., of Arnprior. By this firm it was installed upon the steamer "George Buchanan" which it built as the first to run on Chats Lake, Ottawa River, and which Captain **Richards** commanded for two seasons thereafter. He then returned to Perth, where he died about 1850.

Nor did the Tay Canal meet the confident expectations of its builders. After the steamboat experiment had proved a failure, it was utilized by the merchants for conveying freight from Montreal to Perth by means of barges, but the tolls were not sufficiently large to provide for the deepening of the channel which became a necessity or even to provide for the proper maintenance of the works. These ultimately fell into decay. The stock sold for a mere song and came into the hands of a few individuals, and finally, the old canal, very little trace of which now remains, was abandoned in favour of a new route, departing from the bed of the Tay proper and emptying into Rideau Lake at Beveridge Locks, which is now known as the Tay Canal.

