

THE FRENCH LINE

Refugees from Le Grand-Brûlé

For a quarter century from the founding of the Perth Military Settlement in 1816, thousands of immigrant settlers from Scotland, Ireland, and England flowed into the townships that would become Lanark County, reinforcing an overwhelmingly Anglophone culture in Upper Canada (Ontario). Then, in the 1840s, a tiny outpost of Francophones appeared, creating homesteads, and putting down roots along Darling Township Concession-1, a then primitive road following the north branch of the Clyde River below Joe's Lake. The first of those who created that 'French Line' settlement were refugees from 'La Grand-Brûlé', perhaps the most violent event of the Patriote Rebellion in Lower Canada (Quebec).

In 1837-1838, following years of rising tensions between Lower Canada's anglophone governing minority and the growing nationalistic aspirations of its francophone majority, French Canadian militants took up arms against the British Crown. Although violently and quickly suppressed by the British Army and loyal Militia forces, the revolt (combined with a simultaneous rebellion in Upper Canada) led to political reform, the creation of the United Province of Canada in 1841, and ultimately to Canadian Confederation in 1867.

Inspired by the ideals of the American Revolution and the Parti Patriote's 'Ninety-Two Resolutions'¹ of 1834, the Fils de la Liberté² staged their first public rally at Montreal in September 1837 demanding the right to choose their own government and an independent Lower Canada. A month later, in defiance of a government decree prohibiting public assemblies, Louis-Joseph Papineau (1786-1871)³ addressed 5,000 Patriotes at Saint-Charles-sur-Richelieu. That rally essentially declared the independence of the 'Six Counties'⁴ of the Richelieu Valley and the willingness to resort to arms to defend it.

On November 16th when Governor General Archibald Gosford (1776-1849)⁵ issued warrants for the arrest of 26 Patriote leaders on charges of high treason, it sparked a violent response. On the same day a Patriote force attacked the Montreal Volunteer Cavalry near Longueuil. A week later, in the Richelieu Valley, government forces under General Charles Gore (1793-1869) suffered a minor defeat at Saint-Denis, but a few days later, crushed the Patriotes at St-Charles, killing 56 Fils de la Liberté.

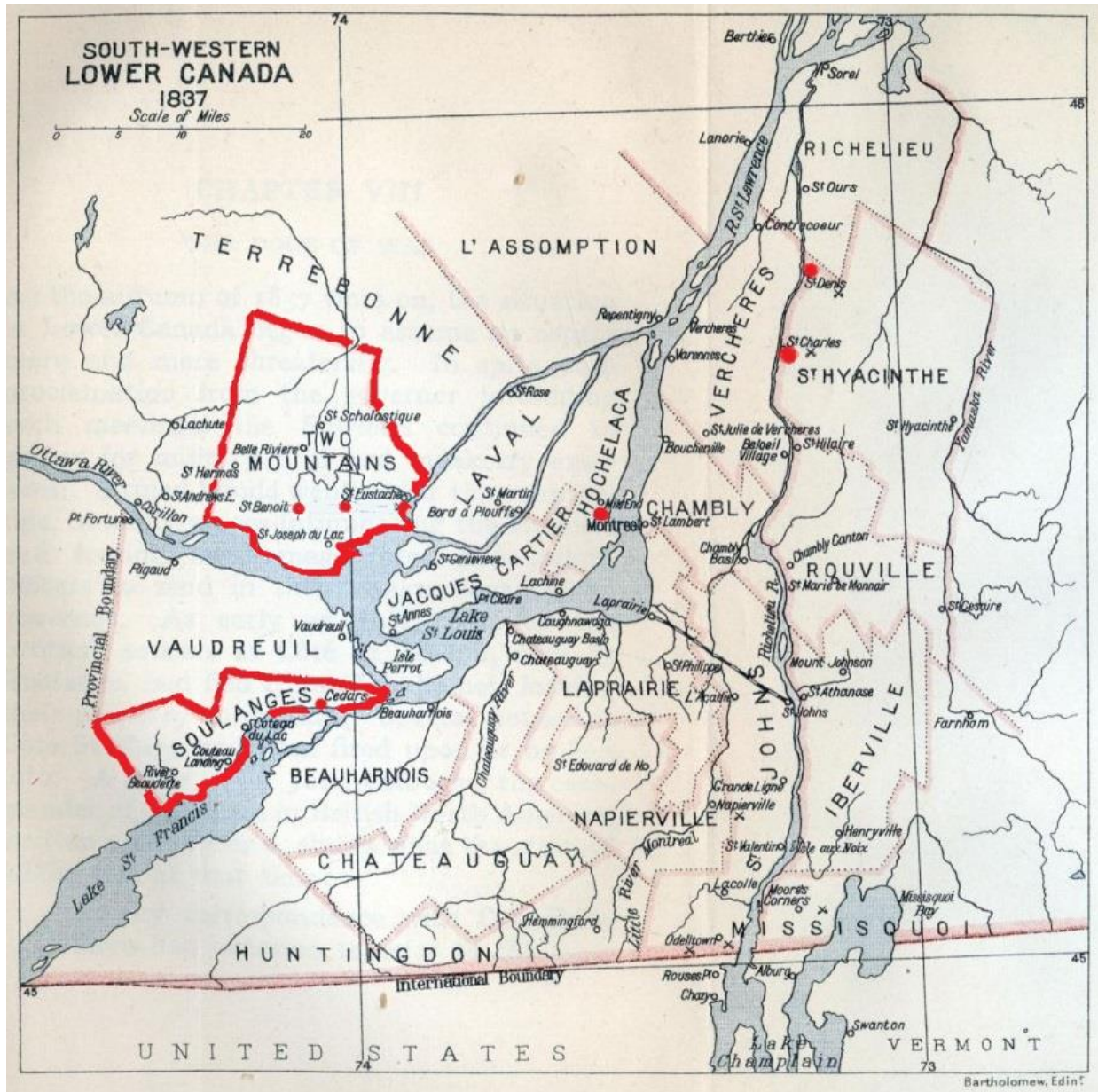
¹ A series of demands addressed to the British Government for political reforms in the colony.

² Sons of Liberty.

³ Leader of the Parti canadien.

⁴ The Counties of Richelieu, Rouville, Saint-Hyacinthe, Chambly, Verchères and L'Acadie.

⁵ Simultaneously Lieutenant Governor of Lower Canada 1835-1837.



Cradle of the Lower Canada Rebellion
 (From *The Patriots of '37* by Alfred D. Decelles (1916))

With the rebellion defeated in the Richelieu Valley, the government turned its attention to the Patriote stronghold in the county of Deux-Montagnes (Two Mountains) and specifically the village of Saint-Eustache. Located at the junction of the Rivière du Chêne and the Rivière des Mille-Iles, 30 kilometers west of Montreal, the first European inhabitants had settled the area in 1739 and in 1769 built the Église de Saint-Eustache. In 1838 the parish had a population of about 5,000, approximately 400 of whom lived in Saint-Eustache with the remainder living on small farms and in neighboring villages. The sympathies of the people of county were more-or-less equally divided between the Patriote and Loyalist cause.

On December 14th General Sir John Colborne (1778-1863)⁶ surrounded Saint-Eustache with an army of 1,280 British regulars, supported by artillery and 220 Loyalist volunteers. Two hundred Patriotes barricaded themselves in the priest's house, convent, and church. The rectory and convent were soon cleared, but the church held out against cannon fire for two hours and, when British Grenadiers tried to enter the sanctuary, they were driven back by Patriote musket fire from the balcony. As they withdrew the Grenadiers set the building ablaze and fired at the rebels attempting to escape the flames by jumping from the windows.⁷ Seventy Patriotes, including their leader Dr. Jean-Olivier Chénier (1806-1837), were killed, 15 others wounded and 118 taken prisoner. The British suffered only one killed and eight wounded.



Battle of Saint-Eustache, December 14, 1837

(Watercolor Lord Charles Beauclerk (1813-1861), courtesy of Library and Archives Canada)

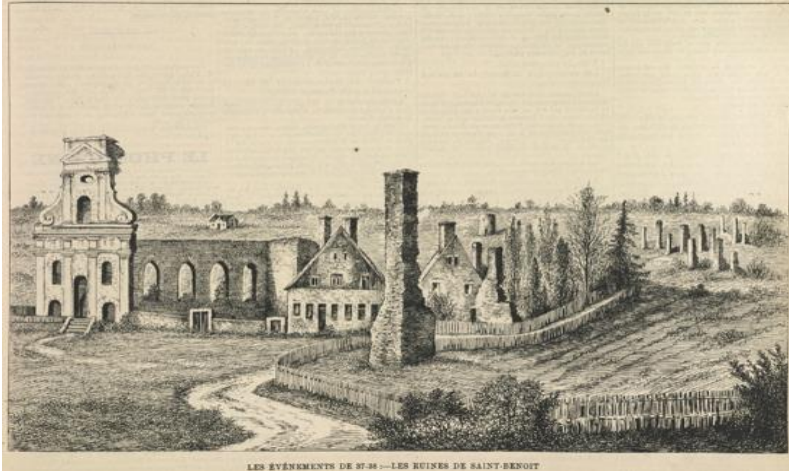
In the days that followed, Orange⁸ militiamen looted and torched Saint-Eustache, burning 65 houses. They followed up by scouring Deux-Montagnes County in search of arms and rebels. In the process the neighboring village of Saint-Benoît was also reduced to ashes, while in Saint-Joachim, Sainte-Scholastique and Sainte-Thérèse the houses and other property of rebel leaders were put to the torch. Martial law was declared, and troops deployed throughout the countryside. Many of the habitants, including those who were not active participants in the uprising, had their property confiscated or destroyed.⁹

⁶ Commander-in-Chief of armed forces in British North America.

⁷ When the church was reconstructed its bullet and cannon ball scarred façade was left as a memorial to those who died in the battle. It was designated a national Historic site in 2014.

⁸ Members of the anti-Catholic Orange Lodge.

⁹ The greater part of the pillaging was at the hands of the Glengarry Highlanders who had been called in from Upper Canada.



Saint-Benoît December 1837

(Courtesy of Library & Archives Canada)

99 were sentenced to death (12 were actually hanged) and 58 were banished to penal colonies in either Bermuda or Australia¹⁰.

The storm of fire and sword that swept Deux-Montagnes County in the winter of 1837-1838 destroyed the homes and livelihoods of a large part of its francophone population. The county soon showed a marked decline in population as men and their families, deprived of a means of support, were set on the road. Some found a living in Montreal and other urban centers, some emigrated to the United States, and others sought jobs and new homes in Upper Canada (Ontario). Those jobs were most often in the square timber and lumber trade.

The Napoleonic Wars¹¹ of the early 19th century created a huge demand for timber to build British warships; however, a French blockade severed England from its traditional source of timber in the Baltic states. As a result, England turned to her North American colonies, where a seemingly inexhaustible supply of wood was available. Lumber camps sprung up in the forests from the Maritimes to Lower and Upper Canada. The defeat of Napoleon in 1816 did nothing to reduce demand. Having sacrificed her own forests to the war effort, wood was still in high demand in the UK and there was a growing market in the United States and domestically in the North American colonies for construction material.

From the outset, most lumbermen were seasonal workers, primarily farmers and laborers, seeking extra wages during the winter months – among them, were many men of Deux-Montagnes County.

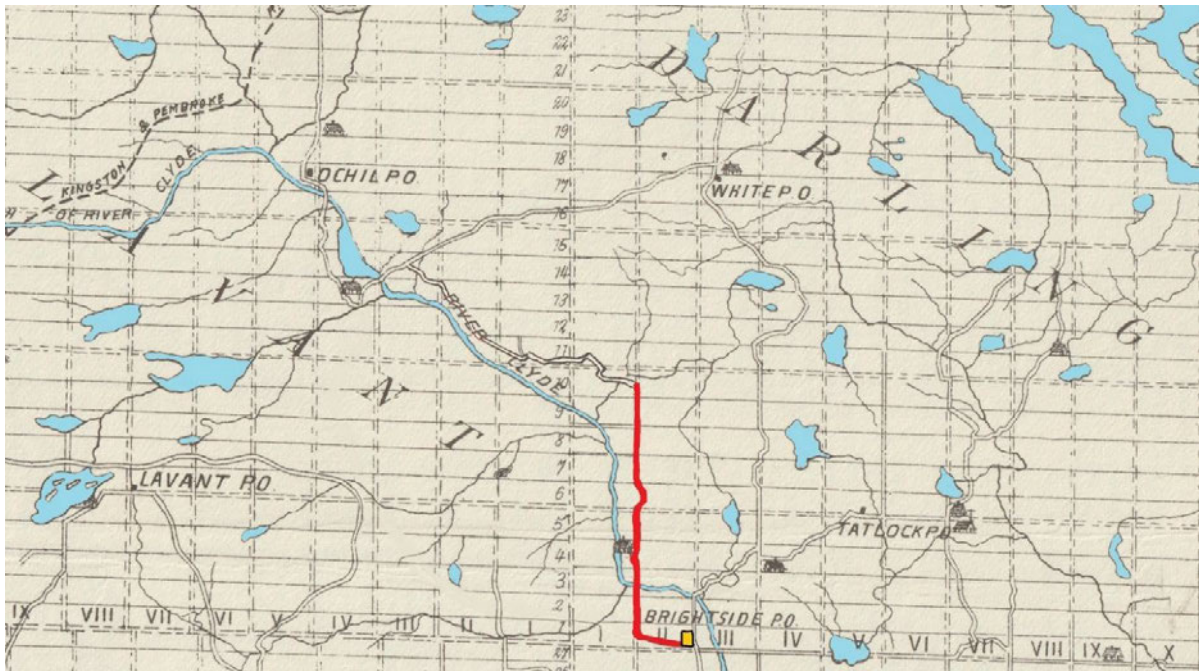
In the post-rebellion years of the late 1830s and early 1840s the timber industry in the Clyde and Mississippi River basins of Bathurst District, Upper Canada, was expanding rapidly, and the jobs it created attracted the homeless and unemployed of Saint-Eustache and Saint-Benoît. Some of the displaced came to Lanark County directly from Deux-Montagnes County while others arrived after brief stops at other points.

¹⁰ By 1844, all had received pardons and most returned to Canada.

¹¹ England and France were in a state of near continuous conflict for 23 years – the French Revolutionary Wars 1792-1802 followed by the Napoleonic Wars 1803-1815.

The William Caldwell (1774-1863) Lumber Company had been exploiting the pine forests of Bathurst District for a decade when his sons Alexander 'Sandy' (1815-1872) and Boyd (1818-1888) took over and began expanding the operation in 1843. In 1842, the Gillies Brother's Co. extended the reach of their sawmill operation by establishing timber shanties on the Clyde. The Caldwells expanded further in 1857 by forming independent companies, with Sandy cutting along the Clyde and Boyd cutting along the Mississippi. In addition, there were several smaller operators, as well as numerous jobbers cutting on contract for the larger firms.

Even though many farmers spent their winters in the lumber shanties, the local labor market could not meet the exploding demand for workers. To complete their ranks, the Bathurst District companies recruited men in large numbers by word of mouth and by advertising in taverns and boarding houses along the riverbanks of the timber drives. Those recruited to work in the shanties through the winter, cutting and squaring the timber, also managed the spring drive to the mouth of the Mississippi River, where the rafts were assembled. Then a part of their number sailed the rafts to their final destination at Quebec City's Wolf Cove. All were encouraged to install their families on small farms in Darling and Lavant Township, where they would be productively occupied until returning to the shanties when snow fell.



French Line Road, Darling Townships, Lanark County
(From Belden Atlas 1880-1881)

These homesteads, convenient to the timber limits leased by the Caldwells, Gillies and others, were often on Crown land controlled, but not owned, by the companies. With few exceptions they were located along the road known today as the 'French Line', running about a mile west from Brightside, along the Darling-Lanark Township line, then northward along Concession-1 of Darling Township for about 10 miles. As the land was mostly rocky hills and swamp, rejected by earlier settlers, the arrivals could still avail themselves of free Crown Grants, or purchase land from the Canada Company or previous owners at minimal cost. However, at the direction of the Caldwells, most simply settled on Crown land within the company timber limits. They established homes and farms without title or lease rights and, in many cases, secured no title to the land on which they lived until the 1920s and 1930s.

The land was generally unfit for extensive cultivation, but a combination of lumbering and small-scale farming kept the wolf from the door. The men spent the winter and spring in the shanties and on the rivers and farmed during the summer and fall. Maintaining the farm through the winter was the job of wives and children. Apart from the state of the land itself and frequent poor weather, wildfires often undermined efforts to establish a productive farm. In 1870 and 1903 major fires caused widespread destruction and damage to farms across Darling and Lavant.



Early 20th Century Log Drive
(Courtesy of Library and Archives Canada)

The Quebecois refugees and their growing sons soon became the backbone of the timber trade in Lanark County. In the winter they were the fellers¹², teamsters¹³ scorers¹⁴ and hewers¹⁵, living in shanties deep in the forest. In the spring, they drove the logs and square timber down the Clyde, Mississippi, and Madawaska Rivers, some crewing the timber rafts onward down the Ottawa and St. Lawrence Rivers all the way to Quebec City. It was dangerous work. In the shanties men were killed by falling trees and errant logs. Many bodies were buried along the riverbanks while many others were never recovered from the icy water.

¹² The men who cut down, 'felled', and removed the limbs from the giant pines.

¹³ The men who skidded (twiched) the felled logs to the river side using teams of horses or oxen.

¹⁴ Felled logs were marked with a chalk line to indicate the squared timber within, and the scorer notched the log every foot or two down to the chalk line.

¹⁵ Working from the Scorer's notches, the Hewer converted the log from its rounded natural form into squared timber using an axe, one of the most labor intensive and artistic aspects of the timber harvesting trades.

In the vanguard of the French Line settlers were the Cardinals, Larocques and Majores from Saint-Eustache and Saint-Benoît, in Deux-Montagnes County. Accompanying them were relatives by marriage, the Denis, Lalonde, and Ranger families from Les Cèdres and St. Polycarpe, Soulanges County.



In addition to the family connections, the 1837-1838 rebellion also probably played a role in the decision of the Les Cèdres group to move to Darling Township. Soulanges did not sustain the physical destruction levied on Deux-Montagnes in 1838, but it did suffer extensive social and economic disruption.

The county was the center of strong Patriote sentiment. At St. Polycarpe, when the local curé dared say a few positive words about the British monarch, the entire congregation walked out of mass. Many men from the area joined the ranks of the Fils de la Liberté and, as a result, were arrested and imprisoned in the aftermath. Among these were several named Wattier, most prominently Joachim Wattier a leading member of the local Patriote Party. Also, among those from Les Cèdres who were imprisoned were Louis-Moyse Wattier, Joseph Wattier, Antoine Wattier, and François Ranger. Although their relationships to the rebel Wattiers and Rangers is undocumented, it is worthy of note that Marcelline Wattier/Watier arrived on the French Line as the wife of Peter Ranger.

Based on the birth dates of their children, as recorded in family histories and genealogies¹⁶, this clan of inter-related families arrived in Darling Township between about 1840 and 1842.

¹⁶ Archives Lanark, Middleville Museum, ancestry.ca, LDS FamilySearch.

Larocque¹⁷

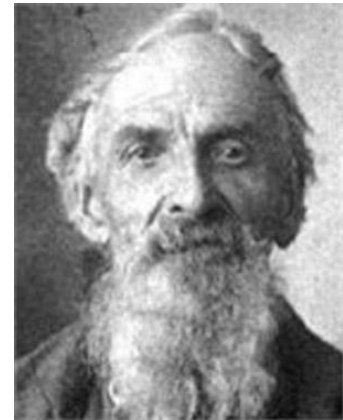
Joseph 'Joe Bonhomme' Rochbrune dit Larocque was born in 1809 at Saint-Eustache, Deux-Montagnes. In 1832, in the church at Saint-Eustache that five years later fell victim to the La Grand-Brûlé, he married Esther Cardinal, who had been born in 1812 at Saint-Benoît.

If not the first, the Larocques, with four of their children, were among the first Quebec emigres to reach Darling Township.

Joseph established a stopping house (inn) and store at the crossroads of what became the Lanark Road, the French Line and Larocque Road.¹⁸ The location was known for many years as 'Larocque's Corners' until renamed 'Brightside' when a post office was established there in 1879. At Larocque's Corners, six more children were added to the family.¹⁹

When the Larocques arrived in Darling Township from Lower Canada they were accompanied or closely followed by at least four of Esther Cardinal-Larocque's siblings – Sophie²⁰, Thomas²¹, Adeline²², Gregoire²³.

Joseph Larocque died in Darling in 1882 and Esther died in Darling in 1880. They were buried in Lanark Village Cemetery.



Joseph Larocque (1809-1882)
(Image courtesy of
findagrave.com)

Cardinal²⁴

Thomas and Marguerite Cardinal arrived in Darling Township with a family group that included at least six of their adult children – Esther (1812-1838)²⁵, Sophie (1822-1915)²⁶, Edouard (1823-1904)²⁷, Thomas (1826-1865)²⁸, Adeline (1829-1904)²⁹ and Gregoire (1832-1913).

Thomas Cardinal had been born in 1789 at Point Claire (on Montreal Island) and in 1811, at Saint-Eustache, Deux-Montagnes, married Marguerite Caille-Ouellette who had been born there in 1790. Over the following two decades, their children were born in Deux-Montagnes County at Saint-Eustache, Ste. Placide (southwest of Saint-Benoît) and St. Jerome (northeast of Saint-Eustache).

¹⁷ aka 'Larock', 'Lerock'

¹⁸ At Darling Township C-1/L-2.

¹⁹ Joseph Jr. (1833-1911), Theophile (1834-1891), Moise/Moses (1839-1929), Elmire/Eleanor (1839-1901), Mathilde (1842-1928), Napoleon (1845-1919), Ferdinand (1850-1950), Maxime (1851-1928), Virginie (1851-1919), Graceline (1854-1941).

²⁰ Married Saint-Benoît born Joachim Majore (1811-1898) at Ottawa in 1840.

²¹ Married Les Cèdres born Zoe Lalonde (1826-1854) at Ottawa in 1846.

²² Married Darling Township born Antoine Lalonde (1827-1905), at Perth in 1848.

²³ Married Darling Township born Philomene 'Fanny' Ranger (1841-1913) at Perth in 1857.

²⁴ aka 'Cardinall', 'Cardinale'.

²⁵ Married Saint-Eustache born Joseph Larocque (1809-1882) at Saint-Eustache in 1832.

²⁶ Married Saint-Benoît born Joachim Major (1881-1898) at Ottawa in 1846.

²⁷ Married Margaret Garant (1833-1906) in 1871 at Malone, New York.

²⁸ Married Les Cèdres born Zoe Lalonde (1826-1854) in 1846.

²⁹ Married Antoine Lalonde (1827-1905).

The Cardinals arrived in Darling after an interim residence of several years at Fitzroy, Ontario.

Perhaps the best known of the first generation of Cardinals on the French Line was Edouard/Edward, youngest son of Thomas and Marguerite, who had been born at St. Jerome in 1823 and arrived in Darling Township at about 20 years of age. When he died, at age 82, his obituary recalled him as

... powerfully built, with a strong constitution and unlimited physical courage. He became a scorer and many a raft of timber sold at Quebec [City] coming from the pine forests of the Clyde and Mississippi Rivers were first shaped by his axe. Subsequently Edward passed on to the avocation of the hewer, in which he excelled. He had a true eye and could follow the lines of the timber stick with accuracy. But it was as a cook that Edward Cardinal is best known He was shanty chef for the Caldwells for many years.³⁰



Timber Shanty or Camboose
(Courtesy of the John Macfie Collection)

Life in the timber shanty³¹, and the importance of Edward Cardinal's role as "shanty chef", was described in the book *Shanty, Forest & River Life in the Backwoods of Canada*, by his contemporary Joshua Fraser (1883).

³⁰ *Lanark Era*, May 10, 1904.

³¹ The term 'shanty' is derived from the French word 'chantier', a work site.

... One of the most important personages about the shanty is the cook. If you wish to enjoy yourself, and have some fair measure of comfort, you must keep on good terms with him. It will never do to fall out with the cook; you may as well take up your blankets and walk. In many ways he is a more consequential individual than the foreman himself ... Prominent among these stand out, old Ned Cardinal. Ned was a little wizen-faced, crooked-mouthed, fiery-eyed old Frenchman. His countenance at times would assume a queer, comical, rat-like, kind of seriousness, out of which his keen little eyes would leer at you with a droll, malicious devilment.

He was the best dancer I ever saw in the backwoods, and that is saying a good deal of a class noted for their agility and activity. When the day's work was over, the pans and dresser all scoured as bright as a shilling, and the lively strains of the fiddle were cheering up every heart, old Ned would sometimes be seized with a dancing humor, and then his antics round the camboose were simply prodigious. He had the floor all to himself, for no one presumed to rival or keep step with him in his complicated toeings and heelings, and agile bowings and scrapings. And there was a perfect contagion in the spirit of his dancing; it stimulated you for the time being into a feeling of emulation. You could not keep your legs and feet still. One felt as if you could leap over the camboose, and back again without any difficulty, though you might as well attempt to leap over the moon.

And yet there was no nonsense about old Ned. He was a perfect despot among his pots and pans. The puny little fellow would order about those great hulks of fellows as if they were children. "Go and wash your hands," you would hear him yell at some forgetful wight who had presumed to approach the steaming savory pot of pork and beans without having first performed his usual ablution.

When Edward Cardinal died in 1904, he was buried in St. Declan's cemetery. His father, Thomas Cardinal, died at his Darling Township, French Line, home in 1875. His mother, Marguerite Caille Ouellette-Cardinal, had died at Saint-Benoît in 1838, the year of the Grand-Brûlé.

Majore³²

Like the Cardinals, the Majores came to Darling Township after some time living at Fitzroy Harbor on the Ottawa River.

Joachim/Joseph Beautron Majore, born 1811 at Saint-Benoît, Deux-Montagnes, married Sophia Cardinal, in 1840 at Ottawa. Sophia had been born in 1822 at Ste. Placide, a few kilometers west of Saint-Benoît, the daughter of Thomas Cardinal (1779-1875) and Marguerite Ouelette (1790-1838) ...

When they reached Darling, they were accompanied by Sophia's widower father, Thomas Cardinal (1789-1875). They had one son born at Fitzroy and became parents of eight more children born on the French Line.

³² aka 'Major', 'Majeau', 'Mashore'.

A half century later, in 1895, an item in the *Lanark Era* took note that “On the banks of the river Clyde, near Brightside”, lived one of the village’s oldest inhabitants who was “amongst the first to cut pine on its shores and take timber down its stream”. Joachim Majore, 88 years of age,

*... was among the first to pilot rafts of timber down the Ottawa River. It is well worthy of attention to hear of the hardships in taking timber down the Clyde and Mississippi streams, which were then in their natural state, there being no slides or dams on them. In these early days it would be sometimes the second season before they would get to Quebec with their raft, having to wait for wind and tide.*³³

When Joachim Majore died three years later, his obituary recalled that before re-locating to Darling Township, he had,

... resided for a number of years at Fitzroy Harbour, where he followed the occupation of pilot on square timber rafts at which he was an expert. At the time there was no slide at Chats nor the Calumet. In the fall, after returning from Quebec, he was accustomed to contract for the job of taking off [salvaging] all the timber that would go into the Chats chute, and while at that occupation he had many a hair-breadth escape. While he was at Chats, the government proposed to build the slide and he took the contract of supplying all the timber required for the slide.



Square Timber Raft
(Artist Unknown)

He removed from Fitzroy Harbour to Darling about 50 years ago [c1841] and resided there ever since. After going to Darling, he followed the occupation of hewer for some time as he was a first class timber maker and also took jobbing contracts from Messrs. A. Caldwell & Son and the Boyd Caldwell & Co. While working on one of those jobs he had a miraculous escape from death, being crushed beneath a stick of square timber.

*That he possessed a most remarkable memory can be judged from the fact that although he frequently had two gangs of timber makers under him, he never kept a clerk nor was he able to do any book-keeping himself as he could neither read nor wright. Yet the accounts of all of his men were kept in his memory with an exactness that could not be excelled by any bookkeeper.*³⁴

Joachim Majore died in Darling Township in 1898. His wife Sophia Cardinal-Majore died there in 1915. They were buried in Lanark Village Cemetery.

³³ *Lanark Era* November 20, 1895.

³⁴ *Lanark Era*, February 9, 1898.

Lalonde³⁵

Also, among the first Quebecois to settle in Darling Township were Joseph and Charlotte Lalonde and at least five of their 10 children³⁶.

Joseph Lalonde was born in 1782 at Les Cèdres, Soulanges, where, in 1808, he married Charlotte Goulet Gauthier who had been born at Chateauguay in 1785.

The Lalondes established themselves on Darling Township C-2/L-2(E) while one of their sons, Leon Leandre Lalonde (1820-1897) settled nearby on Concession-3. Their daughter Zoe arrived at about the same time as the spouse of Thomas Cardinal, while their son, Antoine, arrived with his spouse Adeline Cardinal. Another daughter, Marie Josephette (1811-1855), the wife of François Veronneau St. Denis (1802-1871), also arrived with the family group.

Charlotte Goulet Gauthier-Lalonde died in Darling Township in c1861 and Joseph Lalonde died at Almonte in 1872.

Denis³⁷

French Line pioneer François Veroneau Denis, born 1802 at Les Cèdres, Soulanges, first married Marie Veronique Charlebois (1809-1832) at St. Polycarpe (west of Les Cèdres) in 1827 and, following her death, married Marie Josette Lalonde in 1833 at Les Cèdres.



(Image courtesy of Revolutionary War Journal)

Marie Josette Lalonde-Denis, born in 1811 at Les Cèdres, was the daughter of early French Line settler Joseph Lalonde (c1780-1872). She and her husband, François, apparently arrived as part of the Lalonde family group, accompanied by three of their own children born in St. Polycarpe and Les Cèdres. They would become parents of seven more in Darling.³⁸

François St. Denis was a cooper, an important trade of the day as all the meat (salt pork and beef) and flour that fed the shanty men was packed in barrels for transport to and storage in the bush. Coopers also made the wooden implements needed by the camps and timber rafts -- vats, buckets, tubs, troughs, etc.

François and Josette Denis died in Darling Township, François in 1871 and Marie Josette Lalonde-Denis in 1855³⁹.

³⁵ aka 'Lalone', 'Lelone', 'Lalon'.

³⁶ Joseph Jr. (1813-1880), Michel (1822-1899), Zoe (1826-1854), Antoine (1825-1909).

³⁷ aka 'Denys', 'Dinnes', 'Dunee', 'St. Denis', 'St. Denys'.

³⁸ Joseph (1833-1919), Zoe (b.c1833), Josephette 'Eliza' (1835-1903), Philomene (1839-1929), Marie (1841-1913), Sophie (1843-1926), Theodore (1843-1931), François Jr. (1846-1910), Salome 'Celina' (1848-1930), Lucie (b.1851).

³⁹ An alternate DOD may be 1871.

Ranger

Louis Ranger was born in 1811 at Les Cèdres, Soulanges County. In 1836, at Coteau-du-Lac, he married Marcelline Julie Wattier⁴⁰ who had been born in Soulanges in 1817. Four years later the Rangers moved to Darling Township. They had two children when they arrived and became parents of 15 more between 1840 and 1868.

Louis Ranger went to work in the Caldwell timber shanties along the Clyde and Mississippi Rivers while homesteading a farm lot given to him by Sandy Caldwell. When he retired from the bush and farm, Ranger took up the trade of furniture and coffin maker in Lanark Village.

Louis Ranger died about 1881 and Marcelline Watier-Ranger died in 1891. They are buried in St. Declan's Cemetery, French Line.

In about 1848 Louis Ranger was joined Darling Township by his elder brother Joseph Amable Ranger. Like Louis, Joseph, born 1893, was a native of Les Cèdres and was married there in 1826 to Catherine Denis who had also been born at Les Cèdres in 1808⁴¹. By the time they arrived in Darling, Joseph and Catherine were the parents of eight surviving children, all born in Quebec, at least six of whom arrived with them. Two more children were born in Darling.

In the 1881 census Joseph is recorded as an innkeeper.

Joseph Ranger died at Renfrew in 1881. Catherine Denys-Ranger died in 1890 in Lanark County.

Founded by the Cardinals, Denis, Larocque's, Lalondes, Majores, and Rangers in the early years of the 1840s, the French Line community grew slowly over the following decades with the arrival of families named Brunette, Garrand, Leone, Pelow, Desjardin, Gagne, Milotte, Renaud, Robillard, Simard, St. Pierre, Beauchamp⁴², Deschamps, Dutrizac,⁴³ Nadon, and Routhier.⁴⁴ Some became long-term residents of the area, others stayed only a few years or just a season.

All were Roman Catholics, and, in the earliest years, were served by visiting priests from surrounding parishes, or travelled considerable distances to St. Bridget's Chapel at Perth (established 1820), Holy Name of Mary at Almonte (founded 1842), St. John the Baptist at Perth (founded 1848), or St. Patrick's at Fergusons Falls (established 1856). By the 1880s however, the community had grown sufficiently large that, combining with their Irish Catholic neighbors, they could establish their own parish.

⁴⁰ aka 'Watier'.

⁴¹ The relationship between Les Cèdres born French Line settlers Catherine Denis (1808-1890), daughter of Amable Denis (1785-1859) & Archange Desloges (1781-1859) and wife of Joseph Ranger (1803-c1881), and François Denis (1808-1871), son of Joseph Denis (1765-1833) & Françoise Levaque (1775-1852), and husband of Marie Josephette Lalonde (1811-1855), is unknown.

⁴² aka 'Bushaw'.

⁴³ aka 'Dutrizac'.

⁴⁴ Names that appear on the stones in St. Declan's Cemetery, the Darling Censuses of 1851 and 1861, and other miscellaneous sources.

St. Declan's Parish, named by Father Declan E. Foley (1847-1904), then the parish priest at Holy Name in Almonte,⁴⁵ for his name-saint⁴⁶, was established in 1882. The parish church, however, located on the French Line about three kilometers east of Brightside⁴⁷, was not completed until 1889, followed by a rectory in 1916.



St. Declan's Roman Catholic Church, 791 French Line Road
(Photo by the author)

The rectory is gone, but the church remains. When the building was declared structurally unsound and threatened with closure in 2001, its few remaining parishioners, supported by other local Catholics, raised the necessary funds to implement repairs.⁴⁸ In the early 1900s a driveshed was erected beside the church to shelter the congregation's horses during mass. That driveshed also still stands and in more recent years housed St. Declan's widely known annual bean supper; a fundraiser held each August long weekend.

St. Declan's cemetery, on the adjoining hillside, opened in 1898 when burials from marked and unmarked graves in an original cemetery beside the nearby Clyde River⁴⁹ were re-interred there.

Today, Saint Declan's is a mission of Almonte's Holy Name of Mary Church, with the Almonte parish priest commuting to celebrate Mass on a monthly basis.

⁴⁵ Rev. Foley was the parish priest at Almonte 1882-1903.

⁴⁶ Saint Declan was an early Irish bishop.

⁴⁷ 791 French Line Road, (Darling Township C-1/L-4).

⁴⁸ Completed in 2004,

⁴⁹ On Darling Township C-1/L-3 where the French Line crosses the Clyde River.



St. Declan's Driveshed
(Photo by the author)

When the Quebecois settlers arrived, the closest school to their new homes was S.S.#1 (Guthrie's School) opened in 1839 at C-4/L-4 on the Tatlock Road. It lay four miles to the east of the French Line as the crow flies and two to three times that distance via the wandering roads and trails of the day.⁵⁰ In any case, instruction at Guthrie's was exclusively in English and few, if any, of the Francophone children seem to have attended classes there. In the 1842 census, the schoolhouse was described as 'vacant'.

The first school on the French Line, S.S. # 4 (Craig's School), was reportedly not built until 1858. It was located at C-1/L-4, across the road from the site where St. Declan's church would be built three decades later. At one point William Ranger (1849-1958), son of pioneer settlers Louis Ranger and Marcelline Wattier-Ranger, served as teacher at the French Line school. The one room log schoolhouse burned and was re-built at least twice but played a key role in assimilating the French Line children into the surrounding Anglophone community.

As the years and generations passed, the families of the French Line lost their native tongue. Those who remained in Lanark, Renfrew and Frontenac Counties intermarried with their Irish, Scots, and English neighbours, and were fully assimilated. Others, however, remained francophone. Seeking employment opportunities in their trade, they moved on to jobs in the forest industries of Ontario's mid-north, relocating in the French speaking communities of Nipissing District at North Bay, Callander, Sturgeon Falls, Field, Verner, etc. Some moved further north to Kapuskasing and Hearst and, as western Canada opened for settlement in the early 20th century, some descendants made lives in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. Others emigrated to the United States, in particular to Michigan, Minnesota and North Dakota.

⁵⁰ In 1842 there were three school sections in Darling, but SS#1 and SS#3 were vacant, only SS#2 was in use.

In 1842, Quebecois poet Antoine Gérin-Lajoie (1824-1882) wrote *Un Canadien errant* (*A Wandering Canadian*) lamenting the deportation of the 58 Patriotes to New South Wales and Bermuda, and the exile of those forced to abandon their burned villages for a new life in Upper Canada or the United States.

Un Canadien Errant

By Antoine Gérin-Lajoie (1840)

Un Canadien errant,
Banni de ses foyers,
Parcourait en pleurant
Des pays étrangers.

Un jour, triste et pensif,
Assis au bord des flots,
Au courant fugitif
Il adressa ces mots:

"Si tu vois mon pays,
Mon pays malheureux,
Va, dis à mes amis
Que je me souviens d'eux.

"Ô jours si pleins d'appas
Vous êtes disparus,
Et ma patrie, hélas!
Je ne la verrai plus!

"Non, mais en expirant,
Ô mon cher Canada!
Mon regard languissant
Vers toi se portera..."

A Wandering Canadian

By Antoine Gérin-Lajoie (1840)

A wandering Canadian
Banished from his home
Traveled in tears
Through foreign lands.

One day, sad and thoughtful,
Seated beside the waters,
He addressed these words
To the fugitive current.

"If you see my country,
my unhappy country,
Go, say to my friends
That I remember them.

"Oh days so full of charms
You have disappeared.
And my country, alas,
I'll never see it again.

"No, but while dying
O! my dear Canada,
My languishing gaze
Will turn to you."

Ron W. Shaw (2023), with assistance from Kirsten Perreault (Middleville Museum); Frances Rathwell, Marilyn Sneddon & Wendy Roberts (Archives Lanark); and Leif Andersen.