

LANARK SETTLERS JUBILEE SPEECH

by

Malcom Cameron (1808-1878)

October 1870

Introduction

In conceiving of the Perth Military Settlement, "... *public men, both in Britain and in Canada [envisioned] a population which should at all times possess an unflinching attachment to the Crown*".¹ The soldier-settlers and Perthshire Scots of 1816-1820, who located in Bathurst, Drummond, and Beckwith Townships, generally met those expectations. However, the Society Settlers from Glasgow, who took up land in North Sherbrooke, Dalhousie, and Lanark Townships in 1820-1821, included a great many who felt no such "*attachment*".



Malcolm Cameron (1808-1897)

Photo Courtesy of McCord Museum

In 1870, when a Jubilee celebration marked the 50th Anniversary of the Lanark Settlement, the guest speaker chosen was a man of radical and reform principles fully in harmony with those who's participation in the Glasgow rising of April 1820 known as the 'Radical War', had brought them to Upper Canada.²

Many who gathered in Lanark Village that October afternoon harbored bitter memories of the failed attempt to establish a Provisional Scottish Government, the subsequent execution or transportation of its leaders, and how it inevitably led to their own exile to the rocks and swamps of their Lanark County farms.

The man on the podium, Malcolm Cameron, was, like the majority of his audience, a Scot, though not a Society Settler. He had, however, grown to manhood among them, heard them recount the events of 1820 in his parent's tavern, and came to know them well as they visited the pioneer stores where he worked as a young man. The experience of these former Glasgow weavers, factory workers, laborers and tradesmen largely shaped the political philosophy he followed for a lifetime.

¹ *Pioneer Sketches in the District of Bathurst*, by Andrew Haydon (1925).

² Among the Society Settlers known to have actively supported the Glasgow radicals of 1820 were men like Robert Gardner Sr. (1781-1855), who was arrested for his part in the affair and spent two months imprisoned in Stirling Castle (Dalhousie Township C-5/L-6), and Ebenezer Wilson (1790-1848), father of John Wilson (1807-1869) survivor of the Last Fatal Duel (North Sherbrooke Township C-1/L-12(W)).

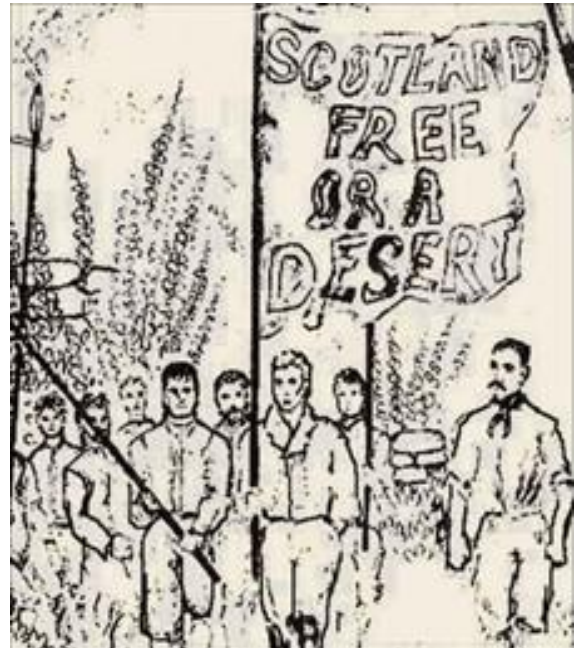
Born at Trois-Rivières, Lower Canada, Malcolm Cameron was the son of British Army Sergeant Angus Cameron (1761-1822) and Euphemia McGregor (1773-1858). Following the American war of 1812-1814 Sergeant Cameron and his family settled at the Perth Military Settlement in August 1816. Their land grant at Drummond Township C-11/L-6(NE), on the banks of the Mississippi River, proved ideally situated for establishment of a ferry and tavern to serve the Society Settlers of 1820-1821 as they passed, to-and-fro, along a newly opened road between Perth and Lanark. As such, the Camerons, and in particular Malcolm who usually managed the ferry, became well known to the Glasgow radicals turned settlers.

In his early teens Malcolm Cameron went on to work as a shop clerk at Perth, then as a partner in stores at Perth and Lanark, serving the same clientele he had rowed back and forth across the Mississippi. In 1837 he moved to what became Lambton and Kent Counties in the western part of the Province where he established another store, speculated in land, and played a significant role in founding the city of Sarnia. Nevertheless, throughout his life, he maintained close contact with the people and developments in Lanark County and, in the 1840s, enticed many Society Settler families to followed him to the shores of the St. Clair River.

In 1836 at age 28 Cameron began a 40-year political career when he was elected to the Upper Canada Legislative Assembly representing the constituency of Lanark. He went on to represent the provincial constituencies of Kent, Huron, and Lambton. He was a driving force of the Reform Party and a staunch opponent of the Tory Family Compact. At various times he served as Inspector of Revenue, President of the Council, Minister of Agriculture, Postmaster General, and Queen's Printer (in partnership with Georges-Pascal Desbarats (1808-1864).

When he spoke to the Settlers' Jubilee of October 1870, Cameron was out of office, but the following year he returned to the fray when he was elected to the federal seat for South Lanark, a position he held until his death in 1878.³

Half a century had passed since the events of the 'Radical War', so, except for a few surviving greybeards who had themselves helped raise the banner reading 'Scotland Free Or A Desert', most of his audience had been born in Canada. But Cameron called upon that new generation to remember, recognize and honor what their fathers and grandfathers had achieved. He reminded the gathering that, despite the defeat at Bonnymuir, the 1820 'Radicals' deserved much of the credit for compelling British Government reforms that brought freedom of speech, freedom of religion and representative government to Britain and Canada in the years immediately following the 'Radical War'.



On the 1820 banner of the Glasgow Radical's, carried by James Purlie Wilson (1760-1820), the word 'Desert' was actually mis-spelled 'Desart'

³ For more about Malcom Cameron see *Barefoot Ferry Boy* elsewhere on this website <https://www.perthhs.org/documents/the-barefoot-ferry-boy.pdf>

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The Speech

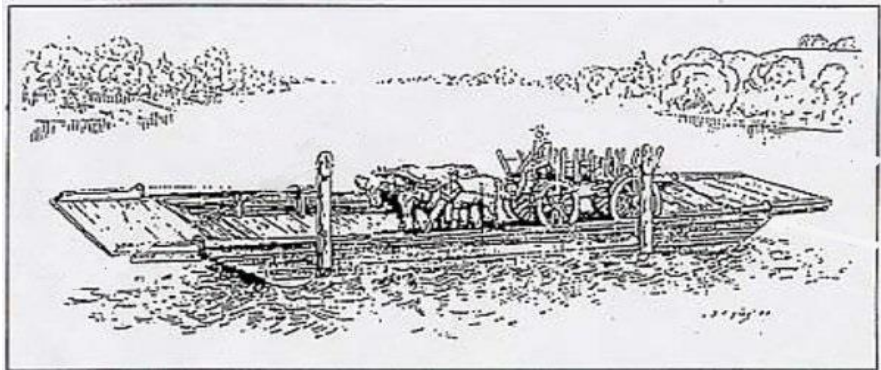
Excerpted from *Founded Upon A Rock: Carleton Place Recollections*, by Howard Morton Brown (1904-2000), published by the 150th Year Festival Committee of Carleton Place, 1969.

Men, women, and children of the County of Lanark –

Fifty years ago, Perth, a small military settlement, had few houses, none of stone or brick. The Island (Centertown Perth) was a wilderness. Fifty years ago, the road to Lanark was at certain seasons literally impassable.

Cameron's ferry had a scow – a canoe of which I was captain – and a small log house and a good barn⁴. Then a small boy of 12 years of age, I chopped, melted ashes, drove oxen, and kept the ferry. And in that log house, on 12th May 1822, my father died.

I remember with pride the anxiety I caused in the heart of a bonnie lass – and I think she is in Lanark today – when attempting to ferry a large pig. 'Grumphy' nearly upset me, and the lass cried aloud: "O dear me! The laddie will be droned for soo!"



I well remember of coming out to the ferry – Mrs. Glass⁵, myself and a man hired to carry a bushel of wheat. Paddy fell from a log in the black ash swamp, with the wheat over him. There he lay, and exclaimed: "Good morning to you, Mr. Cameron, with your half dollar!" The wheat Mrs. Glass and I hoed in with two government hoes, while the black flies literally made us drop our blood with the wheat into the earth.

The scene at Bolton's Mill⁶, with a two bushel grist waiting for days, cracking with Lizzie Horn, Belle Cameron, and other Dalhousie lassies there on the same errand, often comes to my memory.

⁴ The Cameron family also ran a tavern at the ferry landing.

⁵ Christina Cameron (1804-1886), Malcolm Cameron's sister, married to Henry Glass (1799-1866).

⁶ Fallbrook.

At this period the settlers arrived. Colonel Marshall⁷ came out as superintendent, Mr. James Shaw⁸ as clerk., Messrs. Glass⁹, Jones, and Coleman were shop keepers. There I first tried clerking in 1822 and in February 1822 Mr. Glass married my sister¹⁰. But all this is of myself and not of the men for whom this Jubilee is held. Who were they, and why hold a jubilee for them more than other settlers? Now, my friends, it is just to this point I come to speak.

These counties were settled by [all] kinds of groups. Perth and Richmond were settled by soldiers ..., Beckwith by settlers from Perthshire, Scotland, ... The Scotch Line, Bathurst, was settled by a wealthier class. The Bally Gibblins were Irish who settled in 1823 and made a stir when they did come.

But the Lanark and Ramsay settlers had a history. They were in Societies¹¹ – they had their president and secretary for each 50 or so, and they had been organized since 1817. They had been spoken of in Parliament, some had been tried for sedition – persecuted – and some of their friends had gone to the stake and gibbet. They had been defended by Sir Thomas Jeffrey¹², by Mr. Grant – afterwards Lord Glenelg¹³ – by Mr. Campbell and Mr. Drummond¹⁴. They had been betrayed into danger and entrapped by carotid-artery-cutting Castlereagh¹⁵ and his minions.

After this partial success, noblemen, appreciating their worth, had organized them as emigrants and induced the government to atone for the injury done them by loan of £10 for each head of family and each child, and to send them out in chartered vessels to Canada to receive free grants of land. And here they were placed among these rocks¹⁶ – not knowing whether their lot was bettered.

Now my friends it is important for you young men to study their history and know what were their crimes – of what they were guilty – and what was the result of the stand they made for freedom and reform.

⁷ Captain (in 1820) William Marshall (1774-1864), Superintendent of the Lanark Settlement 1820-1830.

⁸ James Shaw (1798-1878), clerk to William Marshall 1821-1830. Later founded Shaw's Store at Perth, elected to Legislative Assembly of Canada in 1851 and appointed Senator in 1867.

⁹ Henry Glass (1799-1866), merchant at Lanark and Perth, including a partnership with Malcom Cameron in the early 1830s. Later a merchant and then Registrar of Lambton County.

¹⁰ Christina Cameron-Glass (1804-1886).

¹¹ For background and context see *The Third Wave: The Lanark Society Settlers* elsewhere on this website <https://www.perthhs.org/documents/neighbour/shaw-third-wave-web.pdf>

¹² Not Thomas Jeffrey, but Francis Jeffrey (1773-1850), Lord Jeffrey, who defended 'Radical War' leaders Baird and Hardie.

¹³ Charles Grant (1778-1866), 1st Baron Glenelg, MP for Inverness-Shire.

¹⁴ Henry Home Drummond (1783-1867), later MP for Stirlingshire.

¹⁵ Robert Stewart, 2nd Marquess of Londonderry (1769-1822), aka Lord Castlereagh from the courtesy title Viscount Castlereagh, Anglo-Irish politician and reactionary. He was secretary to the Viceroy of Ireland and played a leading role in crushing the 1798 Rebellion. Castlereagh was British Foreign Secretary from 1812 and domestically promoted harsh measures against any agitation for reform, including the Peterloo massacre of 1819 and suppression of the Scots radicals in 1820. When Castlereagh committed suicide in 1822 Lord Byron wrote, "*So Castlereagh has cut his throat! — The worst, Of this is, — that his own was not the first*", and Shelley wrote "*I met Murder on the way -- He had a mask like Castlereagh -- Very smooth he looked, yet grim; Seven blood-hounds followed him*".

¹⁶ The Lanark Society Settlers of 1820-1821 were placed land in the hill country townships of North Sherbrooke, Dalhousie, Lanark and Ramsay that was largely rock and swamp and where it proved nearly impossible to create even a subsistence living. From the mid-1830s Malcom Cameron promoted a sustained campaign to attract as many of those families as possible to re-settle on the vastly superior farmland of Lambton and Kent Counties -- land they very often purchased from him, or properties located where they would patronize his saw and grist mills and his store at Sarnia.

No set of men since the Pilgrim Fathers – who earlier fought for the right to worship God and faced the unknown forest and the cruel Indians rather than submit to tyranny, 200 years before – deserve better to be remembered in history than the Radicals of 1819¹⁷ – than the persecuted men of the Reform Association and the heroes of Bonnymuir¹⁸.

I will read the oath they took – the treason they spoke, and then we will thank God that from what they did and suffered we can ask reform, speak of immoral or drunken rulers and petition without fear of indictment, jail, or gibbet.

[At this point in his transcript of Cameron's 1870 speech, Howard Morton Brown writes only that "Cameron read the oath". What "oath" he read is not clear, but he probably quoted from the 850-word 'Proclamation' by the awkwardly named 'Committee of Organization for Forming a Provisional Government' that had been posted around Glasgow on the night of April 1-2, 1820. Most likely he quoted the oft-cited preamble to that proclamation.



**Martyr's Monument, Sighthill Cemetery,
Glasgow**

(Courtesy of glasgowguide.co.uk)

"Roused from that torpid state in which we have been sunk for so many years, we are, at length, compelled, from the extremity of our sufferings, and the contempt heaped upon our Petitions for redress, to assert our RIGHTS, at the hazard of our lives and proclaim to the world the real motives, which (if not misrepresented by designing men, would have United all ranks) have reduced us to take up ARMS for the redress of our Common Grievances".

Cameron may have quoted more and the 'Proclamation' of April 1820 appears in its entirety as an annex below.

Then Cameron continued ...]

This is the reason they uttered, and but 13 years afterwards the House of Commons was Reform, and Lord John Russell¹⁹ immortalized for doing that for which Palmer and Muir, Baird, Hardy and Mohr suffered as traitors ... and today a monument stands in Sighthill Cemetery, Glasgow, to their memory.²⁰

¹⁷ The Glasgow insurrection, known as the 'Radical War', actually took place April 1820.

¹⁸ The 'Battle of Bonnymuir', April 6, 1821, occurred when a small army of poorly armed weavers was ambushed by dragoons of the regular army and the Stirlingshire Yeomanry near Bonnybridge, Falkirk, Scotland. Although involving less than 100 men it was a fierce, grim and bloody affair. The entire rebel force was either killed or wounded. Forty-seven survivors were rounded up and locked away in Stirling Castle.

¹⁹ John Russell (1792-1878), 1st Earl Russell, one of the principal architects of the Reform Act of 1832.

²⁰ Although in direct violation of the 1707 Treaty of Union, English treason law was applied in Scotland and 22 men were convicted and sentenced to death. John Baird (1790-1820), Andrew Hardie (1793-1820) and James Purlie Wilson (1757-1820) were hung and then beheaded (the last beheadings in British history). Thomas Muir, Thomas Fyshe Palmer, Benjamin Moir/Mohr and 16 others were transported to New South Wales.

Remember too that in that day the Catholic soldier could not rise above a captaincy unless he forsook the faith of his fathers or committed perjury. He could never hold a seat in Parliament²¹, and among us in Canada 'Dissenters'²² once could not hold land enough for a church or graveyard and could not marry if within 20 miles of an Episcopalian; and one seventh of this whole land was set apart for the Church of England²³. Now no man is asked his faith or suffers for his color.

... These men whose memories we now honor, upon whose graves the snow of another Canadian winter soon will fall, were a power in Scotland and have made their mark in Canada, and their sons fill posts of honor now.

A Wilson honors the bench of Canada²⁴, a Dick²⁵, a Climie²⁶, a Baird and three Hays²⁷ in the pulpit. Gemmill²⁸ stands inferior to no local pressman in Canada and his son²⁹ is making a like mark in Chatham, so that of the old Doctor³⁰ it may be said his children's children call him blessed.

Time would fail me to speak of the Rollos, Neilsons, Caldwells³¹, Hamiltons, McLaren³², Chalmers, Youngs, Robertsons, Sheriff Hall³³ of Peterborough, Lowrie, McIntyre and others, who have shown that the seeds of fine thought were sown on good soil.

... It was the public spirit and self sacrifice of your fathers that I have commended. No self-sacrificing benevolent effort is ever lost. So shall we open up our country to new fields of victory which shall not want the sympathies or congratulations of the good or the praises of history.

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The Proclamation

Proclamation of The Committee for Forming a Provisional Government

ADDRESS TO THE INHABITANTS OF GREAT BRITAIN & IRELAND

²¹ The Roman Catholic Relief Act of 1829 repealed prohibitions against Catholics that had been in force since 1672.

²² The 'Dissenting' or 'Free' or 'Secession' Presbyterian Church refused to accept Crown appointment/approval of ministers as in the 'Established' Presbyterian Church of Scotland (Old Kirk). Cameron was a member of the dissenting church branch.

²³ The Constitution Act of 1791 set aside one-seventh of all public lands in Upper and Lower Canada as 'Clergy Reserves' to be leased or sold for the maintenance of a "Protestant clergy" -- a phrase interpreted to mean the Church of England alone.

²⁴ John Wilson (1807-1869), survivor of the 'Last Fatal Duel in Upper Canada', became judge for Middlesex County, Ontario. He was the son of Society Settler and Glasgow radical of 1820 Ebenezer John Wilson (1778-1848) and Jean Adams (1790-1853).

²⁵ Rev. Robert Dick (1814-1890).

²⁶ Rev. John McKee Climie (1807-1867).

²⁷ Among them Rev. James Hay (1823-1908).

²⁸ John Raeside Gemmill (1810-1891). In 1854, at the urging of Malcolm Cameron, Gemmill moved his Lanark *Observer*²⁸ newspaper from Perth to Sarnia where it became the *Lambton Observer and Western Advertiser* (later the *Sarnia Observer*).

²⁹ John Roger Gemmill (1845-1922), founder of the Chatham Banner, later Kent County Sheriff.

³⁰ Reverend Dr. John Gemmill (1760-1844) served the Lanark Society settlement as both minister and doctor during its first years.

³¹ Family of lumbermen, millowners, politicians.

³² Peter McLaren (1831-1919), lumberman and Senator.

³³ James Hall (1806-1882).

FRIENDS AND COUNTRYMEN --

ROUSED from that torpid state in which We have been sunk for so many years, We are, at length, compelled, from the extremity of our sufferings, and the contempt heaped upon our Petitions for redress, to assert our RIGHTS, at the hazard of our lives and proclaim to the world the real motives, which (if not misrepresented by designing men, would have United all ranks) have reduced us to take up ARMS for the redress of our Common Grievances.

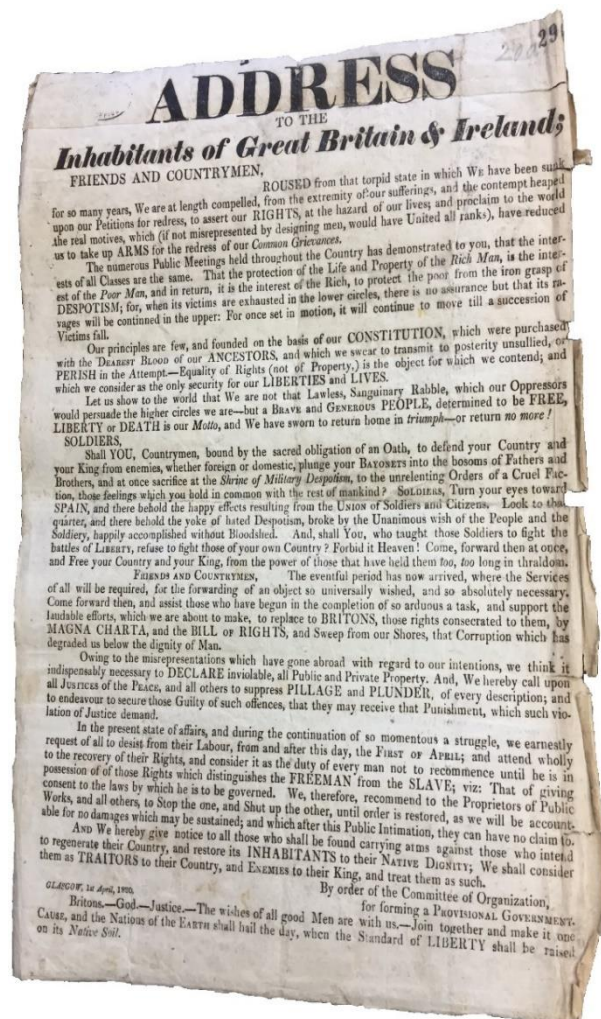
The numerous Public Meetings held throughout the Country have demonstrated to you, that the interests of all Classes are the same. That the protection of Life and Property of the Rich Man, is the interest of the Poor Man, and in return, it is in the interest of the Rich to protect the Poor from the iron grasp of DESPOTISM; for when its victims are exhausted in the lower circles there is no assurance but that its ravages will be continued in the upper; For once set in motion, it will continue to move until a succession of Victims fall.

Our principles are few and founded on the basis of our Constitution which was purchased with the DEAREST BLOOD of our ANCESTORS, and which we swear to transmit to posterity unsullied, or PERISH in the Attempt. Equality of Rights (not of Property) is the object for which we contend, and which we consider as the only security for our LIBERTIES and LIVES.

Let us show to the world that We are not that Lawless Sanguinary Rabble which Our Oppressors would persuade the higher circles we are --but a BRAVE and GENEROUS PEOPLE, determined to be FREE.

LIBERTY or DEATH is our Motto, and We have sworn to return home in triumph - or return no more!

SOLDIERS: Shall YOU, Countrymen, bound by the sacred obligation of an oath, to defend your Country and your King from enemies, whether foreign or domestic, plunge your Bayonets into the Bosoms of Fathers and Brothers at the unrelenting Orders of a Cruel Faction and sacrifice those feelings which hold in common with the rest of mankind? SOLDIERS, turn your eyes towards SPAIN, and there behold the happy effects resulting from the UNION of Soldiers and Citizens. Look to that quarter, and there behold the yoke of hated Despotism, broke by the Unanimous wish of the People and Soldiery, happily accomplished without Bloodshed. And shall You, who taught those Soldiers the principles of Liberty, refuse to spread them in your own Country? Forbid it Heaven! Come forward then at once, and FREE your Country and your King ~ from the influence of those base maxims that have ruined our Country.



FRIENDS AND COUNTRYMEN: The eventful period has now arrived, where the Services of all will be required, for the forwarding of an object so universally wished, as just and equal Laws. Come forward, then, and countenance those who have begun the completion of so arduous a task, and support the laudable efforts which we are making to give to BRITONS those rights consecrated to them by the MAGNA CHARTA and the BILL OF RIGHTS and Sweep from our Shores that Corruption which has degraded us below the dignity of Man.

Owing to the misrepresentations which have gone abroad with regard to our intentions, we think it indispensably necessary to DECLARE inviolable all Public and Private Property. And, we hereby call upon all JUSTICES of the PEACE, and all others, to suppress OUTRAGE of every description; and to endeavour to secure those Guilty of such offences, that they may receive that Punishment which such violation of Justice demand.

In the present state of affairs, and during the continuation of so momentous a struggle, we earnestly request all to desist from their Labour from and after this day, the First of April, and attend wholly to the recovery of their Rights and consider it as the duty of every man not to recommence until he is in possession of those Rights which distinguishes the FREEMEN from the SLAVES, viz. That of giving consent to the laws by which he is governed. We, therefore, recommend to the Proprietors of Public Works, and all others, to Stop the one, and Shut up the other, until order is restored, as We will be accountable for no damages which may be sustained; and which after this Public Intimation, they can have no claim to.

And We hereby give notice to all those who shall be found guilty of PILLAGE OR PLUNDER that they shall meet with the severest Punishment, as we are determined by every means in our power, to prevent those evils of which we have ourselves so just reason to complain.

By order of the Committee of Reformation
for Forming a Provisional Government,

Glasgow 1st April 1820.

Britons - God - Justice - The wishes of all good Men are with us. - Join together and make it one CAUSE and the Nations of the EARTH shall haul the day when the Principles of LIBERTY shall be those of our Native Soil.

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- Cameron speech transcribed from the original by Howard Morton Brown
- Introduction and notations by Ron W. Shaw (2022)