

THE THIRD WAVE

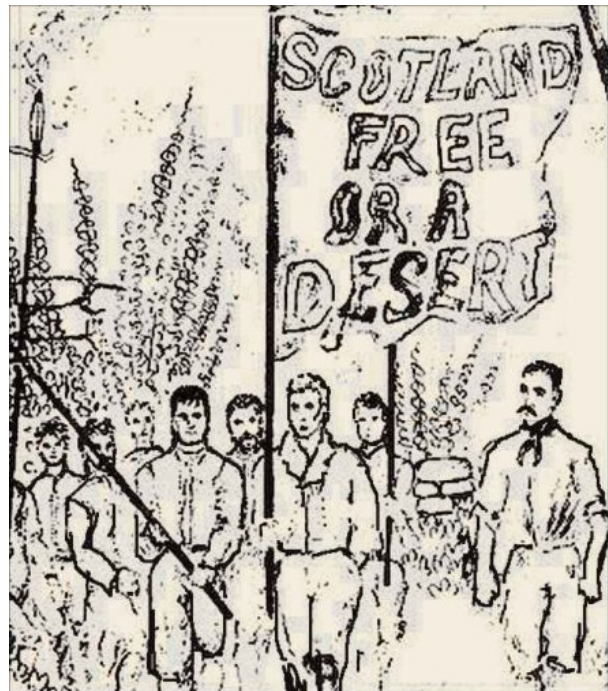
The Lanark 'Society Settlers'

This paper is excerpted from 'A Swarm of Bees: Lanark Society Settlers 1800-1900, A Journey from Scotland to Upper Canada and Utah' © Ron W. Shaw (2013)

Like the maple syrup and potash kettles of its pioneers, the Perth Military Settlement was a three legged vessel. Between 1816 and 1821 three British government subsidized and Army managed schemes attracted about 270 civilians responding to the Edinburgh Proclamation, 1,500 discharged soldiers, and 2,850 'Society Settlers'. In the same time frame about 780 other Irish, Scots and English immigrants reached the settlement at their own expense.

The third leg, like the others, was a response to the deep economic depression that followed the end of the Napoleonic Wars and threatened social and political upheaval in Britain. Years later Glasgow born Society Settler Thomas Robert Forsythe (1813-1898) wrote; *"I can remember in the fall and winter of 1819, seeing the rebels, or those they called rebels, marching past our house in great number, mostly after dark."*¹ Another Society Settler, Archibald Gardner (1814-1902), would recall that; *"Times were poor, business dull, and people became dissatisfied with the government. Meetings were held by agitators, even privately in our own house or tavern."*²

By the time these disturbances began those few who had employment, including children as young as six, labored in mills and factories, working 14-hour shifts for a wage of one shilling per week. Weavers, working their own loom, found their income (if they had any at all) dropping to that paid to factory laborers. Weavers had earned 25 shillings a week in 1803, then 10 shillings in 1816, and by 1819 were trying to survive on 5½ shillings per week. Pawnbrokers had exhausted their capital and families were selling their belongings down to their bedclothes in desperate attempts to pay for food and shelter. In the winter of 1819-1820 between 15,000 and 20,000 were on the Glasgow poor roles.



¹ 'Thomas R. Forsyth Reminiscences' (c1890).

² 'Archibald Gardner Reminiscences' (1857).

Encouraged by the 'Committee for Organizing a Provisional Government', on Monday April 3, 1819, all across Scotland workers from all trades, but especially the weavers, went on strike. Moreover many abandoned their looms for the drill field and the manufacture of pikes and other weapons from any material available. Andrew Hardie was elected to lead a small band of rebels on the Carron Iron Works³ at Falkirk, with the objective of seizing arms for the coming battle. About halfway to their objective, however, Hardie's tiny force was ambushed by dragoons. Although involving less than 100 men the 'Battle of Bonnymuir', on April 5, 1820, was a fierce, grim and bloody affair. All of Hardie's men were either killed or wounded. By nightfall 47 survivors were rounded up and locked away in Stirling Castle. Hardie was sentenced to be hung, drawn and quartered.

Reading the writing on the wall, in late 1819 and early 1820 Members of Parliament Lord Archibald Hamilton (Lanarkshire) and John Maxwell (Renfrewshire), brought petitions before the government demonstrating that even the wages of employed laborers could not sustain their families. With the French Revolution still within living memory, the demonstrations and unrest in Scotland led to fears among the elite of an overthrow of the governing classes. Such concerns, combined with some altruistic motivation, soon led to the suggestion that emigration to the colonies might be the way to give the unemployed a new start while placing radicals and troublemakers at a safe distance.

In the winter of 1819 emigration societies began to form, urging government action and raising funds by private subscription. Their petitions "*for liberty to emigrate with their families to Upper Canada, and that the Government be graciously pleased to grant one hundred acres of land, free of any charge, along with aid in money, implements of husbandry, and building materials*"⁴ were presented to Lord Bathurst⁵, Secretary of State for War and the Colonies. By the spring of 1820 Lord Bathurst was writing to Sir Peregrine Maitland⁶, Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada, advising that 1,000 settlers, who wished to locate near friends and relatives in the area of Perth and the Rideau River, would soon be on their way.

As members of about 45 different emigration societies qualifying for British government assistance, almost 1,500 people from Glasgow and its suburbs signed up to go and in the spring of 1820 948 settlers set out for Upper Canada. The first group of 402 sailed on the ship *Commerce* in May, but the second and third groups, consisting of 370 settlers aboard the *Prompt* and 176 on the *Brock*, delayed until sufficient donated funds could be raised, did not sail until mid-July. In 1821 Government permission was granted for another 1,800 emigrants to sail to Canada on the same terms but 1,892 managed to raise sufficient funds to pay their deposits and secure passage; 489 on the *George Canning* and 607 on the *Earl of Buckinghamshire* sailing in April, followed by 422 on the *Commerce* and 374 on the *David of London* sailing in May.

The provisions shipped aboard the *Earl of Buckinghamshire* (illustrative of the other ships) deemed sufficient for 607 passengers and conforming to Government regulations for that year, amounted to; Salted Provisions of beef and pork, 8,700 pounds; Biscuit, 192 bags amounting to 21,504 pounds; Oat Meal, 319 barrels, totaling 67,483 pounds; Barley and Pease,

³ An arms manufacturing facility.

⁴ *The Lanark Society Settlers 1820-1821* - Carol Bennett (1991).

⁵ Henry Bathurst (1762-1834).

⁶ Sir Peregrine Maitland (1777-1854)

six barrels of each, totaling 2,364 pounds; Butter, in 23 casks, totaling 1,505 pounds; Molasses, three casks, 3,056 pounds. Regulations prohibited the substitution of potatoes for any of the above provisions, but passengers were allowed, at their own expense, to take *“what quantity they please”* and it was agreed the *Earl of Buckinghamshire* would also ship 61 bolls, 12 pecks of potatoes (over 13,000 liters).

The above was based upon a weekly ration, for a passage of 84 days (12 weeks), for every passenger eight years of age or older, of one and one half pounds of beef or pork, three and one half pounds of biscuit, 11 pounds of oat meal, a half-pound of barley or pease, a quarter pound of butter and a half pound of molasses. Children aged two to eight years received a two thirds ration and those under the age of two were *“left to the discretion of their parents, who must lay in porter, tea, coffee, sugar, &c. for the mothers and infant children”*. The food ration was calculated on the estimated time required to reach the Lanark settlement from



Greenock, including the inland trip to Upper Canada. The ships' water rations were calculated on the basis of a sea passage of 63 days (nine weeks), at six pints for all passengers aged 14 and up, four pints for those aged eight to 14, three pints for those two to eight years and two pints for infants under two years. Published rules allowed the emigrants to take with them;

... their body-clothes, pots and pans, a small assortment of crockery-ware, and a few articles necessary for their own immediate use ... no furniture to be carried out, such as chests of drawers, clock-cases, bed-steeds, chairs, tables, or washing-tubs, without the emigrants are in sufficient circumstances to pay for the transport of the same from Quebec to the place of settlement; but the books which they may have, as their private library, may be allowed; and the whole must be closely packed in small and sufficient chests, boxes, or bagging: the latter will be found to be the most useful.

No dogs could travel *“on any pretext whatsoever [and] no smoking or lighted candles can at any time be allowed betwixt decks”*.

Emigrant Arthur Lang (1789-1849), a Society Settler who sailed aboard the *Earl of Buckinghamshire*, kept a diary of his 1821 voyage to Upper Canada. He notes that the voyage *“Began with the roaring of children and I believe ended the same way,”* and that it was not only the children who were unruly;

*There was plenty of rum going today, and great laughing at the odd ways of some of the men and women. Some got drunk and were very troublesome to many of us. One of them was put in irons for his stupidity.”*⁷

⁷ Transcript of the 'Diary of Arthur Lang' - Carleton Place Herald (February 9, 1938).

Disorder was probably inevitable considering the strains of a lengthy sea voyage in a small and crowded ship struggling through frequent foul weather;

*A very heavy sea was rolling and continued the whole night. The first scene ... was fourteen or fifteen of the passengers tumbling headlong on top of one another. Everyone is telling what a bad rest they got, for really such a tumbling of baskets, cans, bundles, basins and pots I never heard before. One of our side sail booms broke and vanished.*⁸

While there were days of calm when “*We are just lagging ... without wind,*” bad weather made life in the hold a misery of confinement and complaint;

Not until today have I been able to look up on deck, but was forced to endure intolerable stench, and the bocking of poor souls wishing to be back again, though it were to live on water gruel at home.” [He goes on to describe passengers] ...*distributing and disputing about our provisions [and being] ...such a gang to fight about a bucket of salt water, a matter in which five minutes would have set both parties right.*⁹

Just four days out of Greenock, the *Earl of Buckinghamshire* ran aground. Passenger James Gilmour recalled;

*The ship got ashore upon Wednesday May 2nd, at midnight, about twelve miles south of Dublin, near the mountains of Wicklow. I was awake at the time and felt the shock; I was instantly on deck. It had rained hard and so dark we could not perceive an object at arm's length, but in a few minutes the stars appeared and to our horror we saw the rock twice mast high. I gave up all for lost, but concealed my apprehensions, and seemed not concerned, that I might encourage those about me, whose condition is easier conceived than described. However, we got off the next day at eleven o'clock, in a miraculous manner, with the assistance of two officers, and two boat's crews, belonging to the revenue cutter who came on board at daylight, armed to defend us from being plundered, not knowing our strength.*¹⁰



At one point on her 1821 crossing the *David of London* endured a storm lasting nine days, during all of which time the passengers were confined below deck. By the time the weather cleared, the heat and stench of the hold was unbearable. Society Settler William Purdie (b.1766), however, writing from Quebec to Robert Lamond¹¹ on June 30, 1821 reported the settlers had been;

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ *The Lanark Society Settlers 1820-1821* - Carol Bennett (1991).

¹¹ Secretary to the Glasgow Committee on Emigration.

*... well used by the officers and men during the passage [and were] five weeks and two days on the passage [with] a fortnight of rough weather and, most of the voyage, contrary winds [but] our vessel was the finest sailer I ever saw; we passed every vessel on the same tack. We were just four weeks without seeing land.*¹²

John Climie described the 1821 voyage of the *Commerce* as;

*... crossing the Atlantic, meeting with gales of wind, sometimes seasick, too much choked-up in our berths, sometimes loathing our food (though good and wholesome), wearying for sight of land – but with bad navigators and contrary winds going faster back than forward – and, to crown all, associating with profane swearers and Sabbath-breakers, then landing in a strange country ...”*¹³

Arthur Lang’s 1821 *Earl of Buckinghamshire* diary brightens once land is seen;

*This morning we saw land for the first time since we left Ireland. We saw St. Paul’s on the right and Cape Breton on the left. [A few days later] we were in the mouth of the river at 5 o’clock this morning. The hilltops are covered with snow, but the rising ground near the water is completely covered with trees. A pilot came on board today. He seems to be an able, crafty-looking man. [As they make their way up the St. Lawrence] there is a new scene before us this evening ... trees to the hilltops, cultivated plains ... with ranges of white houses for they are all in rows. The women appear to be enamored with the prospects, and no wonder. Two boats came along side of us with herring, bread and tobacco.”*¹⁴

The immigrants paid government contractors £2 per person, from their £10 loans, for the cost of transportation from Quebec to the Lanark settlement. The actual cost to the government was considerably higher. At Lachine the immigrants were issued with rations, bread and biscuits with pork and beef.

Pleased as diarist Arthur Lang was to have finally reached Canada “...*We saw Quebec and it looked beautiful. I got my feet on terra firma and really I was well pleased*”, he and his fellow emigrants soon found that some of the most difficult travel lay ahead of them.

*A very wet day, yet we were disembarked and were hurried away in small cars [carts] and the kind of trains used for loading heavy articles with ease. We arrived at Lachine in the evening and were huddled in a cold, damp reeky barracks. Away we started for the upper Lachine, as they call it, but we passed and rowed till dark night. It was the longest pull I ever had. We landed at the place in the dark; here nothing but hurry again for a bed. We slept in the open air and our heads were wet with dew in the morning.*¹⁵

As the settlers struggled west against the river current Lang’s diary entries are a litany of either long hard days in the boats under a scorching sun or cold rain, or long unexplained delays, and nights sleeping in the open or, occasionally, in barns or barracks. Some nights he is too tired to make more than a single line entry in his journal. Eleven days after landing at

¹² ‘Rise and Progress of Emigration from the Counties of Lanark & Renfrew to the new Settlement of Upper Canada on Government Grant’ - Robert Lamond (1821). William Purdie never reached the Lanark settlement; he died six weeks later at Prescott.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Transcript of the ‘Diary of Arthur Lang’ - Carleton Place Herald (February 9, 1938).

¹⁵ Ibid.

Quebec he wrote; “At night we came through the canal in the middle of a wood and at the head of it there is what they call the Long Soo, a terrible rapid about nine miles long ...”.¹⁶

John McDonald, a Society Settler who arrived on the *David of London* in 1821 described the passage up the Long Soo rapids;

*... all the men who were able were necessitated to jump into the river to haul the boats, wading up the middle of their bodies, and sometimes deeper ... the women and children were obliged to come out and walk and in several places the rapids run with such a force that we were compelled to get two horses to haul every boat.*¹⁷

Fifteen days out of Quebec City Arthur Lang’s 1821 diary records;

*After a short sleep under heavy dew we arose as soon as we could see, and after sailing a short space, we came to Prescott. There is a lonely looking town on the opposite shore [Ogdensburg, New York]. The societies that came up in the ship ‘Commerce’ came to Prescott in the evening.*¹⁸



The 1821 party was delayed at Prescott for more than two weeks. McDonald explained that,

*The cause of our delay here arose from the great multitude that were laying at this place before our arrival. Here we found one half of the passengers of the ‘Earl of Buckinghamshire’, all those of the ship ‘Commerce’, and including us, the passengers of the ship ‘David of London’, the whole exceeded 1,000 people, and it took a long time to carry their baggage along a road of 74 miles to New Lanark.*¹⁹

Various records note that the settlers were in some difficulty while at Prescott with poor accommodation, suffering excessive heat, illness from the change in diet and disorder arising from “*excess drinking of spirits*”.

The 74-mile overland trek from Prescott to Brockville, then northward through Perth, and on to Lanark proved just as dangerous as, and perhaps even more taxing than, the ocean and river voyage. Most of the 1820 and 1821 settlers walked from Prescott to Lanark, but their baggage, and some women and children, were hauled in wagons.

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ *Emigration to Canada: Narrative of a Voyage to Quebec, and Journey from thence to New Lanark, Upper Canada* - John McDonald (1826).

¹⁸ Transcript of the ‘Diary of Arthur Lang’ - Carleton Place Herald (February 9, 1938).

¹⁹ *Emigration to Canada: Narrative of a Voyage to Quebec, and Journey from thence to New Lanark, Upper Canada* - John McDonald (1826).

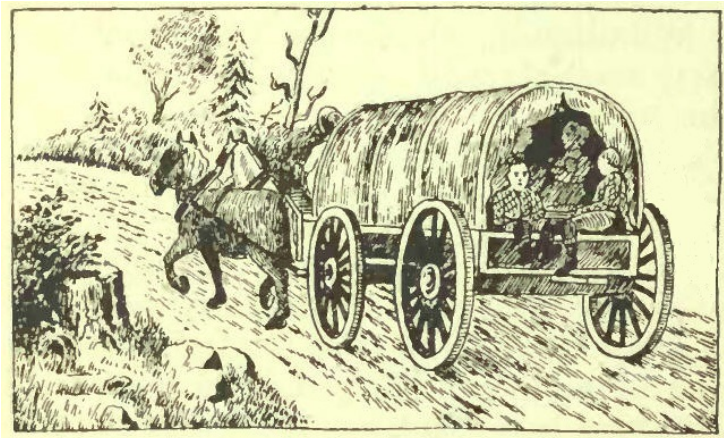
Many wagons ... were overturned with men, women and children. One boy was killed on the spot, several were very much hurt; one man got his arm broken and our own waggoner, in spite of all his care and skill, was baffled, his horse having laired in a miry part of the road, where he stuck fast, and even after he was loosed from the yoke the poor animal strove so much to no purpose that he fell down in a state of complete exhaustion three times in the mire.²⁰

Writing in February 1821 John Climie summarized the 1820 journey of the *Commerce* passengers from Montreal to Lanark;

...jogging in wagons, going up the river in small boats, landing at night at the side of a wood, kindling a fire, cooking our victuals, making our beds, everyone running faster than another to find the lowmest spot, then hurried up by the break of day by the conductor crying 'get into the boats', scarcely giving us as much time to collect our children and bed-clothes (for there is no casting off body-clothes on these occasions) together, till the boats are off, then plying and rowing with oars, till coming to the strict [swift] running of the rivers (which they call rapids) on which poles and oars have no effect, then male passengers with all the sailors but one who is left to guide the boat through, whilst we are pulling with ropes, till we get it through the stream, which is sore work: indeed, you must understand, that the boats sail by the sides of the river, so as that we are on land, while pulling the same. Then, after water-passage, the land-carriage, which is about 60 miles, which they accomplish in about two days, with four-wheeled carriages with two horses, load 10 hundredweight. The road is very rough and they go with such fury that sometimes, going down a hill, all is upset.²¹

An 1820 immigrant, identified only as A.D., also commented on the 'fury' of the horses and the wagon drivers;

... and such horses for running, I never saw in my life. Mr. D.'s horses, that is, the chaise-horses, would not keep in sight of them. I got my wife, family, and baggage, on one wagon, and I thought, when they started, that the men were mad, for they went off like a shot out of a gun, and up hill and down hill was all alike. They were most of them farmers; and I told the man that was with me, that if we were to run our horses that way, we would kill them; but he said no fear of them. They were the most mettlesome creatures I ever saw; not so heavy as yours, clean-boned, lively creatures.²²



The different parties of Society Settlers made their inland treks at different rates of speed, but the diaries of Lang and McDonald suggest the trip from Montreal to the recently

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ 'Rise and Progress of Emigration from the Counties of Lanark & Renfrew to the new Settlement of Upper Canada on Government Grant' - Robert Lamond (1821).

²² Ibid.

established Perth Military Settlement, in the District of Bathurst, was accomplished in about six weeks.

Many of the men left their wives and families at Perth, going on to Lanark alone so that they might be assigned their land and construct some sort of shelter. *“A rough road had been hacked out of the forest connecting Perth with the new settlement ... a distance of 12 miles with the Mississippi River intervening. At this point on the Lanark Road, Malcolm Cameron [1808-1876], son of innkeeper Angus Cameron, ferried settlers across the river”.*²³ Tramping on the last few miles from the Cameron ferry, they reached the Clyde River. A traditional story, quoted in many local histories, recounts that when the Society Settlers arrived on the banks of the Clyde, at the end of their arduous trip of so many thousands of miles, they found, tacked to a tree, only a note which read *‘This is Lanark’*.

As the first settlers struggled into the new townships, Governor General Lord Dalhousie²⁴ himself appeared to inspect arrangements. Writing to a friend, Judge Stewart of Halifax, Dalhousie noted; *“In two days after I saw the first of them, with a Captain [William] Marshall [1774-1864] as Superintendent and a surveyor attached to him, set forward into the woods to occupy their lots. I never saw people in more joyous spirit, or more elated in their prospect”*. Once the heads of family had tramped the Canadian bush seeking out their lots, however, they were of somewhat less *“joyous spirit”*.

*Each emigrant generally gets two lots to view, and if three set out together, there are 600 acres to be inspected. I thought that this toil would have almost finished me, and even stout young men were so completely worn out that they could scarcely return home, and were afterwards confined to bed, and fevered, from the great fatigue and exhaustion occasioned by excessive perspiration during the intense heats of the day, and from sleeping all night in the woods, exposed to the cold and heavy dews ... One of our companions, a young man, leaving a wife and family, died after such an excursion, in the course of a few days.*²⁵

The very real hardships notwithstanding, few 19th century settlers in Upper Canada would enjoy the support and benefits afforded the Society Settlers of 1820 and 1821. Their greatest advantage was probably the appointment of Superintendent Captain William Marshall, a man always diligent in his duty and of a sympathetic and understanding character. If settlers were not satisfied with the lot drawn; *“Colonel²⁶ Marshall still indulged them with more tickets for other lots till they were satisfied.”*²⁷ The appointment of Marshall was;

*... an arrangement to which [the settlement] is indebted for much of its prosperity. This gentleman was not only distinguished for humanity, affability, and good management, but, in consequence of his long residence in the country, was well acquainted with the difficulties to which a new settlement is exposed”.*²⁸

Money was also loaned in installments to families, £10 pounds for each person, young and old. Of that amount £2 was provided toward the cost of transport from Quebec to Lanark,

²³ *Pioneer History of the County of Lanark* - J.S. McGill (1968).

²⁴ George Ramsay, 9th Earl of Dalhousie (1770-1838).

²⁵ ‘Diary of Society Settler John McDonald’.

²⁶ Marshall was a Colonel in the Lanark Militia, but a Captain in the British Army

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Hints to Immigrants* - Reverend William Bell (1824).

£3 upon arrival at Lanark, £3 three months later and £2 six months after arrival. This money, however, could only be spent in prescribed ways and could not be used to pay the cost of passage, or to discharge debts in Scotland.

In the first year of immigration, 1820, many of the settlers arrived at Lanark very late in the season. The *Commerce* had docked at Quebec City on June 20th allowing her 402 passengers to reach the settlement by midsummer. But the other vessels did not arrive at Quebec until late summer; the *Brock* on August 20th and the *Prompt* on August 31st, meaning their 546 settlers did not arrive at Lanark until early autumn.

*It was an unfortunate circumstance for these people that they arrived so late in the season. Had they come two months earlier, they would have had good weather to go upon their land, erect huts and clear an acre or two for fall wheat before the winter set in; but the summer being over before they could make many improvement, or secure themselves from the severity of the weather, much distress and loss of property were the consequences.*²⁹

Inexperience and a lack of applicable skills added much to the labor, time and frustration it took to construct a first shanty.

*When William [Borrowman 1779-1857] had located his farm he set out to cut down his first tree to build a cabin, being inexperienced as a woodsman he cut down six small trees before he got the first one down he could use. It has been written that he then rolled himself in his plaid and went to sleep on the spot.*³⁰

Another settler recalled;

We cut trees down and rolled logs, women and children rolling with all the might they had, and hardly a rag of clothes left on their backs or the men's either. As long as the money lasted [he government loan] sleighs came with meat and flour to us, all the way from the front of Elizabeth [Brockville]. Flour was \$10 or \$12 a barrel. When the money was done, supplies were done and nobody would trust us a chew of tobacco.

Archibald Gardner later wrote;

*All the emigrants that come at that time had hardships to endure, passed the common privations suffered in new settlement. They were all in mass inexperienced, they could not chop, and had no team either to log or get to mill or harrow. But they logged by hand, carried rails on their shoulders, made bridges carrying logs, and all their log houses. They would get together and from four to 16 men would put handspikes under it [a log] and carry it to the building, raising some large log buildings 30 or 40 feet long in this way.*³¹

Establishing a home and farm in the Canadian bush was difficult and dangerous work, especially so for settlers who had, only a few months before, been urban dwellers working as weavers, millers or factory hands. The effort took its toll. Thomas Forsythe Jr.'s memoire, recalls

²⁹ *Hints to Immigrants* - Reverend William Bell (1824).

³⁰ 'History of William Borrowman 1779-1857' – Janet Hogan (1955).

³¹ *Ibid.*

that "... when we landed at Perth, or very shortly after, my mother died in that town"³² and then goes on to record a series of further tragedies;

There were no roads yet made ... consequently our luggage had to be packed on the back of those that were able to pack it and all, young and old, had to do their part in this labor, but the more bulky things had to be left [at Perth or the Lanark depot] until winter when a pathway could be made, the brush cut out of the way and the snow tramped down through the woods and on the ice on the creeks and lakes wide enough for a hand sledge to drawn along.

My father [Thomas Sr.1782-1821/22] and my brother Robert [1802-1834] went to work and made a number of hand sleighs in the forepart of the winter and as soon as the ice was strong enough on the creek and lake and [snow] deep enough to make a good track for sleighs, my father got all the young men he could and sent for the heavier part of our luggage. My father objected to my brother Henry [1804-1821/22] going, as he said he was too young and could not stand the trip but he, Henry, would go whether or not and that was the last day for him. He expired within sight of our house some time in the night; his death was caused by over fatigue and cold.³³

Thomas Jr. goes on to explain that, as soon the family was reasonably settled, and a little land cleared to put in a crop, the older children, Robert and Christina (1806-1891);

... went out to work ... I think in either 1821 or 1822 ... our family misfortunes had not ceased yet, for my father was killed by a tree falling on him. He was buried on his farm at the root of a large white pine tree that stood a short distance from the house.³⁴

In the Gardner household, 12 year old Janet died in October 1824. Her brother Archibald would recall;

During these hardships my sister Janet took sick with typhus fever. She had complained for months of pains in her side. She got worse, sank into unconsciousness, and never rallied. The night before her passing, those attending her was pouring cold water from a teakettle onto her head when she said 'Let me rest. By the middle of the night I will be at the top of the hill.' As she said, at midnight, her spirit took its flight. During all the time she was sick we could get no flour or meal but obtained a little coarse shorts or fine bran and prepared it for her the best we could. When we tried to get her to eat some, she said, 'Is that for me? Such stuff?' But she had no other while she lived.³⁵

Archibald recalled the early years on his family's Dalhousie Township farm;

Once during the winter, father and William [Gardner 1803-1880] were coming home with a back-load of provisions. Father went deeper into the snow than usual and sat down. It was solid and three feet deep on the level. Father said to William 'We will take a drink

³² 'Thomas R. Forsyth Reminiscences' (c1890). Isabella Jackson-Forsyth (1779-1820) had been ill even before leaving Scotland; she probably suffered from tuberculosis.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ 'Archibald Gardner Reminiscences' (1857).

from the canteen'. But when the cork was pulled, the Scotch whiskey was frozen solid. It must have been very cold or the whiskey very weak.

In 1824 Reverend William Bell (1780-1857) wrote;

*The prudent and industrious part of them... surmounted every obstacle, and are doing well. But the thoughtless and improvident part, of which the number was not small, squandered away the money they received from government, and spent their time in idleness, till poverty and want appeared, and woke them from the dream of happiness and abundance with which they had been feasting their imaginations. They then discovered what they might have known before, that in Canada as well as in Scotland, they who will not work must not expect to eat.*³⁶

John McDonald, a consistently cranky observer, painted a grim picture of conditions in the new Lanark settlement. When he published his 1821-1822 diary he called upon readers to;

... pause a little whilst reading this tale of woe, and consider for a moment the deplorable state of your unhappy, unthinking and deluded countrymen, thus exposed ... to the noisome exhalations of immense woods, and the excessive and rapid variation of a Canadian climate, without any shelter from the inclemency of the sky, the heavy and unwholesome dews and rains and the winds (to which latter there is nothing of a natural parallel in this county), but such as a few posts driven into the ground and then wrapped together with frail branches could give – wretched habitations indeed!

I cannot but pity such of my unfortunate countrymen who came hither in search of a transatlantic paradise, destitute of clothes and money, because there are five or six months annually of severe frost and snow. No sound of music is ever heard ... but a melancholy death-like stillness reigns through the forests, except when they are agitated by the tempest or the storm. The settlers here have a mean appearance, very poor in their food, their dress, and their dwellings. There are many who as yet have not got any land. Many, too, are lying sick.

While much of what McDonald reported was true, at least as it applied to the first year of settlement, his perspective was very much that of the minority. Although perhaps more a reflection of the extreme hardships of their existence back in Scotland than of pioneer life in the Canadian bush, it is remarkable how positively the vast majority of the Society Settlers regarded their situation. Within even the first five years diaries and letters home consistently boast of their good fortune and urge family and friends to join them in Upper Canada;

I have got my land and money and everything as was said. It is a nice lot of ground. I thought I would miss the oatmeal greatly, but I do not. I never thought such a country was here; and I wish that I had been some years sooner. Thanks be to God for being so fortunate as I am [William Miller – 1820].

I am well pleased with my land. It is nearly covered with sugar maple. I suppose I have 4,000 sugar trees. I have got very good neighbors and I have long wished to have you beside me. There are three or four children dead [not his own, Alex Watt was single]

³⁶ *Hints To Immigrants* – Reverend William Bell (1824)

since we left Montreal, in the flux³⁷ and chincough³⁸, but I was never in better health in my days [Alex Watt – 1820].

Our crops are looking well. I will cut my wheat and rye in about a fortnight; it was sown on 24th of May. I would not come back, although you would pay my passage, and set me on my feet in Scotland, unless I had my land along with me [Unknown – 1821].

We are getting over the winter easier than we expected; we have not that fretful anxiety of mind how to get through, as we had in the old country. We have no landlords nor tax-gatherers here [William Gourley – 1821].

I never was so happy in my life. We have no desire to return to Glasgow to stop there, for we would have to pay a heavy rent, and here we have none. In Glasgow I had to labour sixteen or eighteen hours a day, and could only earn six or seven shillings a week. Here I can, by laboring about half that time, earn more than I need. There I was confined to a damp shop, but here, I enjoy fresh air. There, after I had toiled until I could toil no more, I would have the mortification of being a burden, but here, two or three years' labor will give me more than will keep me in sickness, as well as in health. There, it is all dependence, here, it is a fair prospect of independence [Andrew Boag – 1821].

I am very well pleased to handle the axe, instead of the shuttle, and would not, for a good deal, give up my present for my past employment [Unknown – 1821].

If it had been so ordered that you had come here when I came, you would, by being industrious, have had plenty to eat of the best flour, Indian corn and potatoes, and to drink of the best milk, maple sap, molasses and honey. We had difficulties, but now they are almost over. I have got a large house built, 20 feet by 30 feet, and a barn 20 feet by 40 [Peter Munro – 1824].

This place has been settled little more than three years, and some that left Scotland with nothing have now from twelve to eighteen head of cattle, besides sheep and hogs. We have annual meetings when we choose our office bearers [Andrew Angus – 1825].

I and my family are still taking well with this country, and I really do bless God every day I rise that He was ever pleased, in the course of His Providence, to send me and my family to this place [James Dobbie – 1826].

My heart is in the land yet. Oh! It was a faithful piece of land. Before it began to repay our labour we had hardly a rag left on our backs and nothing on our feet. The children were naked entirely. When we had cleared it all, save what was reserved for firewood, we maintained eleven sons and two daughters. I had my dining room and parlour, and lovely garden and orchard, and beautiful fields always so faithful in their crops [Mrs. John McLellan].

Father cleared ten acres and had them in crop the first season. Brother William obtained employment on the Erie Canal to get money to help out. He brought home a yoke of two-year-old steers when he had been in the country about three years. Father bought his

³⁷ Dysentery.

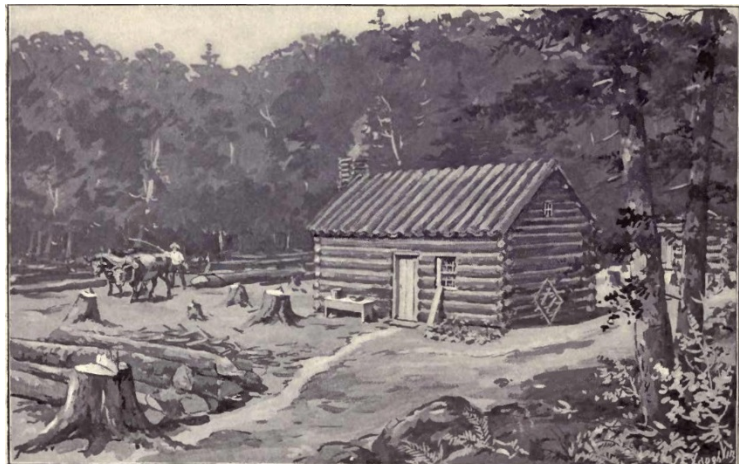
³⁸ Whooping cough.

first yoke after four years of hand labor, having already cleared forty acres of heavy timber [Archibald Gardner - 1857].

Among all the people I did not hear one express the slightest regret that he had left Scotland or a desire to return permanently. The people assembled on this occasion had each a year's provisions in their houses and barns with something over, and every year their stock is increasing. R.A.K. [probably Robert Affleck of Lanark Township] has now got fifty acres of land cleared. He has a yoke of oxen, three cows, two or three calves and several pigs. Many of them remarked that often when they rose from a meal the fragments of which were greater than their former whole, they could not help wishing that they had the power to bestow some of their superfluity upon their starving countrymen [Unknown Visitor – 1827].

My stock consists at present of fourteen head of cattle and one yoke of oxen, fourteen sheep besides a considerable number of pigs and poultry, we have fifty acres cleared and in crop. Of this year's crop we had two hundred bushels of wheat, one hundred of oats, from sixty to seventy of Barley, eighty of Indian corn or Maize, five hundred of potatoes and about sixteen tons of hay [John Gemmill – 1829].

Settlement Superintendent Captain William Marshall reported that, by the end of 1822, *"There are already three respectable merchants' stores and a dozen houses in the village [of Lanark]"*. In 1822 a schoolhouse was built in the village, which also accommodate church services until St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church was completed the following year. An Inn at Lanark Village was offering accommodation to travelers by 1827. There were two



grain mills operational in the settlement and four whiskey distillers were at work in Lanark Township in the same year. Also by 1827 Malcolm Cameron's ferry had been replaced by a bridge across the Mississippi River described as *"much wider and stouter than the wooden one at the foot of the Saltmarket [in Glasgow]"*. In 1828 the settlers around Watson's Corners, Dalhousie Township, organized a lending library, soon housed in St. Andrew's Hall completed that year.

Circumstances varied from family to family, but it may be generally said that the years 1820 through 1825 were those of great struggle for the Society Settlers. Over the next five to ten years, the blood sweat and tears expended in the creation of a farm in the wilderness began to pay off and the majority of settlers considered themselves blessed by both Crown and Providence. Between 1830 and 1835, however, discouragement and disenchantment crept into the settlement. Initially buoyed by the experience of owning their own land, by the amazing productivity of the virgin soil, and the dignity of deciding the affairs of their own community, the fact is that most of the land granted to the Society Settlers in the Townships of Lanark and Dalhousie consisted of rock and swamp. The few narrow strips of tillable land between marsh

and stony hillside soon proved hard to manage and less productive. Robert Gardner Jr. (1819-1906) later described the Lanark settlement as;

*... a very poor part of the country consisting of rocky ridges covered with heavy timber, mostly hemlock, pine, cedar and some hardwood. Some swamps and mud lakes, and here and there a small patch of land that would do to cultivate, after cutting and burning the heavy timber. It was a hard, cold country to live in...*³⁹

With their loans coming due and most unable to repay, in 1834 Land Surveyor Charles Rankin (1797-1886) was sent to investigate conditions in the settlement. He concluded that;

The Bathurst District in Upper Canada is, taken altogether, a very inferior tract of country. The western part of Ramsay, Lanark, Dalhousie, the northern part of Bathurst, Sherbrooke, Lavant [Townships], etc. is little else than a continued succession of rocky knolls or ridges with scraps or bits, seldom exceeding an acre in extent, of good land between it appears a matter of surprise how the people managed to obtain a livelihood here. Lands occupied by these people Lanark, Dalhousie ... should never have been attempted to be settled. The people are barely managing to live.

Although the government loans (totaling £22,000 pounds) were forgiven in 1836, families on the poorest land had already begun seeking out better prospects and even families with better farms knew they could find no suitable land in the townships for their growing sons who were beginning to marry and start families of their own. Through the late 1830s and over the course of the 1840s many of the children of the *Commerce*, *Prompt*, *David of London*, *George Canning* and *Earl of Buckinghamshire*, usually with their aging parent in tow, moved on. Most pioneered new farms in the Western Ontario where, as the Rankin report observed, “*there is neither rock nor stone*”. Many settled in the counties of Lambton, Kent and Essex, while others crossed the border to establish farms and families Michigan, Iowa, Illinois and Missouri. As many, however, remained on their hardscrabble Lanark Highlands farms where many descendants live today.

- Ron W. Shaw (2015)

³⁹ ‘Journal & Diary of Robert Gardner’ - *Heart Throbs of the West*, 12 Volumes (1939-1951).