

LANARK COUNTY STATISTICAL ACCOUNT 1850

Extracted from

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By William Henry Smith

Perth, which is situated in the south corner of the Township of Drummond, is a neat, well-built and thriving little town. It is built on a rising ground (in fact on a mound of granite) with the River Tay running through it and is consequently well-drained and healthy. The center of the town is built on an island, surrounded by the Tay, and excellent bridges, two of which are of stone, have been constructed across it. The town was laid out by the government in 1816 and comprises about 400 acres.

The River Tay has been converted into a canal and made navigable for small vessels from Perth to the Rideau Lake by construction of locks, and barges carrying 80 tons can pass through it. This work was undertaken by a private company and cost the sum of £7,000, and the island mentioned above was given by the government to the company to assist in the expense. The canal, however, was made on too small a scale, and, when the roads are in good condition, considerable produce is sent by road to Oliver's Ferry¹ on the Rideau Canal.

Perth is making good and substantial progress; a number of excellent houses have lately been erected, and others are in progress; many of them are built of pale drab, or cream-colored sandstone, which is quarried a short distance from the town, and have a light and handsome appearance. The courthouse and gaol and two or three churches are built of the same material. The principal business establishments of the place consist of a grist-mill, saw-mill, oatmeal-mill, barley-mill, three foundries, four tanneries, a brewer, etc. A newspaper, the Bathurst *Courier*, is published weekly. The Commercial Bank, the Johnstown Mutual, and the Equitable Fire Insurance and colonial & National Loan Fund Life Assurance Companies have agents here. The government and county offices are kept in Perth, and there are seven churches, Episcopal, two Church of Scotland, Free Church, Methodist, Baptist and Roman Catholic. The population of Perth, according to the census of 1850 was 1,581; this was taken in the beginning of the year, and the number is said to be now nearly 2,000.

A semi-annual fair for the disposal of cattle, etc., is held in the town, at the last of which stock to the value of nearly £3,000 is said to have been sold. We were unable to obtain a complete list of the exports from Perth during the last season, but the following statement will probably comprise about two thirds of the whole:

¹ Later renamed Rideau Ferry.

Potash	1,900 Barrels	Oatmeal	300 Barrels
Butter	1,370 Kegs	Indian Corn	500 Bushels
Pork	650 Barrels	Rye	100 Bushels
Oats	11,000 Bushels	Pease	150 Bushels
Flour	950 Barrels	Wheat	3,000 Bushels
Cornmeal	125 Barrels		

Near the north corner of the township (Drummond), about 12 miles from Perth, is a small village called Innisville. It is situated on the Mississippi River, and contains about 150 inhabitations a grist mill, sawmill, carding machine and post office.

The township of Drummond in 1850 contained 2,374 inhabitants and 20,000 bushels of wheat, 20,000 bushels of oats, 38,000 bushels of potatoes, 11,000 pounds of maple sugar, and 31,000 pounds of butter were produced from the crop of 1849.

To the southwest of Drummond is the township of Bathurst. It is well settled and in 1850 contained 2,500 inhabitants, seven grist and eight sawmills; 20,700 bushels of wheat, 18,000 bushels of oats, 29,000 bushels of potatoes, 11,000 pounds of maple sugar, 10,900 pounds of wool, and 37,000 pounds of butter were produced from the crop of 1849.

About 12 miles from Perth is a settlement called Playfair's Mills. It contains a grist mill, three sawmills, carding machine, etc.

Adjoining, and to the southwest of Bathurst, is the township of South Sherbrooke. It is but little settled and in 1850 contained but 452 inhabitants and these had only 630 acres under cultivation. There were three sawmills in the township, and 2,400 bushels of wheat, 9,500 bushels of oats, and 6,000 bushels of potatoes were produced from the crop of 1849.

North Sherbrooke is still more thinly settled, and it does not appear to be making any progress; in 1842 it contained 350 inhabitants, and in 1845 1,519 acres were under cultivation. In 1850 it only contained 343 inhabitants, 1,495 acres were under cultivation, and 3,400 bushels of wheat, 7,000 bushels of potatoes, 9,000 pounds of maple sugar, 2,000 pounds of wool, and 2,900 pounds of butter were produced from the crop of 1849.

To the northeast of North Sherbrooke is the township of Dalhousie. It is pretty well settled and contains some good land. Much of the north and east of the township is rocky, and marble of different shades of color is plentiful. In 1850 Dalhousie contained 1,478 inhabitants and 8,000 bushels of wheat, 11,500 bushels of oats, 27,000 bushels of potatoes, 5,300 bushels of turnips, 32,000 pounds of maple sugar, 6,700 pounds of wool, and 19,000 pounds of butter were produced from the crop of 1849.

From Perth to the village of Lanark is 12 miles, and a plank road is now forming between the two places. Lanark is situated on the Mississippi River in the south of the township of Lanark and contains a sawmill, tannery, post office, etc. A weekly newspaper of very respectable appearance, the *Lanark Observer*, is published here, and there are four churches: Episcopal, Presbyterian, Methodist and Baptist, and a grammar school.

The township of Lanark is one of the best settled in the district. It contains a fair proportion of good land and is making some progress in settlement and improvement. In 1842 it contained 1,129 inhabitants, and in 1845 there were two grist and three sawmills in the township and in 1845 there were two grist and three sawmills in the township and 10,430 acres of land were under cultivation. In 1850 the population had increased to 2,623; 14,082 acres were under cultivation. And there were three grist and five sawmills, and 17,500 bushels of wheat, 13,000 bushels of oats, 39,000 bushels of potatoes, 6,900 bushels of turnips, 26,000 pounds of maple sugar, 11,000 pounds of wool, and 29,000 pounds of butter were produced from the crop of 1849.

About nine miles from Lanark, near the western corner of the township of Ramsay, is a small village called Bellamysville². It is situated on a tributary of the Mississippi, and contains a grist mill, sawmill and post office. From Bellamysville a road leads to Ramsayville³, a village situated on the Mississippi, a little north of the center of the township. It is nine miles northwest from Carleton Place, and 12 miles from Pakenham. It contains two grist mills, a sawmill, woolen factory and a manufactory of wooden ware. There is a Roman Catholic church in the village, and two Presbyterian and a Wesleyan Methodist church about a mile distant.

Ramsay is the most thickly settled township in the District. In 1842 it contained 2,462 inhabitants and in 1845 10,658 acres were under cultivation. In 1850 the population had increased to 3,223; 13,305 acres were under cultivation; there were five grist and six sawmills in the township, and 27,000 bushels of wheat, 23,000 bushels of oats, 5,500 bushels peas, 43,000 bushels of potatoes, 12,000 bushels of turnips, 20,000 pounds of maple sugar, 12,500 pounds of wool, and 47,000 pounds of butter were produced from the crop of 1849.

Smith's Falls is situated in the eastern corner of the township of North Elmsley, on the Rideau Canal, about 32 miles from Brockville. The situation is pleasant, but the village does not appear to make very rapid progress. This is partly caused by its remote situation, and something is also said to be due to the unwise cupidity of the original owners, in asking exorbitant sums for building lots. We were told that no less than £250 was the price demanded for a quarter acre lot in the business part of the village. In 1845 the population of Smith's Falls was stated at about 700. It is now said to be 800, but the census return for 1850 merely gives it as 674.

There are three locks on the canal at this place, which give a fall of twelve feet, and this has been taken advantage of for the erection of machinery. The manufacturing establishments consist of two grist mills, having seven run of stones, an oatmeal mill, carding and fulling mill, two sawmills, a foundry, ashery, two tanneries, shingle machine, &c. There are also five churches: Episcopal, Presbyterian, Methodist, Secession and Roman Catholic.

A stage runs daily (Sundays excepted) between Brockville and Perth, passing through Smith's Falls, and a mail is conveyed tri-weekly from hence to Bytown, Pakenham and Merrickville.

² Later renamed Clayton.

³ Later renamed Almonte.

From Smith's Falls to Merrickville is 12 miles. The road runs on the north side of the canal; part of it is good and the remainder rough and stony. The soil is a loam, varying in consistence, and the timber principally hardwood, with pine, cedar, hemlock and balsam occasionally intermixed. For a portion of the distance the road is made within sight of the Rideau Canal, which would form a pleasant feature in the prospect, were it not for the large quantity of dead timber still standing on the flooded ground.

Much of the land between the two places is cleared, and a great deal of it is free from stumps. There are some excellent stone houses along the road, but a large proportion of the dwellings and farm buildings are of a very poor description, and much of the land appears badly farmed. We noticed fields cropped with wheat, in which the stumps were completely decayed, and would evidently have burned out years ago: and yet the farmer, or occupant, (for farmer he does not deserve to be called) too indolent to set them on fire, continues to plough round them and sacrifice the ground they encumber year after year. As might be expected with such a state of affairs, much of the cattle appeared of poor quality and half starved, and few good orchards were to be seen. Although some of the land is poor and stony, still a large portion is of good quality, and there is no doubt if the country was inhabited by a more active and industrious class of settlers, it would exhibit a very different appearance.

Merrickville, which is on the canal, is rather prettily situated, and contains some good buildings. Its progress, however, is rather slow. It contains about 700 inhabitants, two grist mills, having seven run of stones, a sawmill, woollen factory, making from three to four hundred yards of cloth per day; two shingle factories, two tanneries, a foundry, axe factory, ashery, &c. There are two churches in the village, Episcopal and Roman Catholic.

On the canal at Merrickville are three locks, which give a fall of about 20 feet. Merrickville is partly in Montague and partly in Wolford.

Montague commenced settling about the year 1816. In 1842 it contained 2,097 inhabitants, and in 1850 the number had increased to 3,022. There were one grist and three sawmills in the township, and 16,000 bushels of wheat, 14,600 bushels of oats, 22,000 bushels of potatoes, 30,000 pounds of maple sugar, 10,800 pounds of wool, and 56,000 pounds of butter were produced from the crop of 1849.

From Smith's Falls to Perth, distant 14 miles, the country for the first 10 miles has a very dreary appearance: the road passing through large tracts of land which have either been flooded and rendered swampy by the construction of the Rideau Canal, or on which, from other causes, the timber has been destroyed. The few clearings to be seen along the road are small, and the buildings generally of a miserable description. A portion of the land is stony and rocky, and part of the road is bad, rough, from the occurrence of stones on the pathway and pieces of corduroy: the major portion however is tolerably good. The soil is principally a light loam, and the timber a mixture of hardwood, pine, hemlock, cedar, balsam, &c.

As you approach Perth the appearance of the country rather improves, the clearings are larger, and the buildings of a better character. About half-way between the two places is a small cluster of houses called Pike Falls, where is a sawmill.

The township of Beckwith is pretty well settled and contains some good land, but a large portion of the west corner is taken up by the Mississippi Lake. A little north of the lake, on the Mississippi River and close to the border of the Township of Ramsay, is a considerable village, Carleton Place. It is about 21 miles from Perth, 21 from Smith's Falls and about 30 from Bytown, and contains about 500 inhabitants. The manufacturing establishments consist of a grist mill, oatmeal mill, sawmill, foundry and tannery. A newspaper, the Carleton Place *Herald*, is published weekly, and there are five churches: Episcopal, two Presbyterian, a Wesleyan Methodist and Baptist. In the southeast of the township, on the road from Perth to Richmond is a small settlement called Franktown; it contains about 15 or 20 homes.

The soil of Beckwith is principally loam, and the timber a mixture of hardwood and pine, with patches of tamarac and cedar swamp. Beckwith is not settling up very fast. In 1845, 8,131 acres of land were returned as under cultivation; there were two sawmills in the township and 10,900 bushels of wheat, 16,500 bushels of oats, 45,000 bushels of potatoes, 11,000 pounds of maple sugar, 10,000 pounds of wool, and 37,000 pounds of butter were produced from the crop of 1849.

Twelve miles northwest of Ramsayville is the village of Pakenham Mills. It is pleasantly situated on the Mississippi River, in the northeast of the township of Pakenham, and contains about 350 inhabitants, a grist mill with three run stones, a sawmill, post office, etc. Also, four churches: Episcopal, Presbyterian, Wesleyan Methodist and Roman Catholic in 1842 the township of Pakenham contained 1,142 inhabitants and 4,060 acres were under cultivation. In 1850 the population had increased to 1,694, but only 3,676 acres were returned as under cultivation. There were one grist and two sawmills in the township, and 12,800 bushels of oats, 22,000 bushels of potatoes, 3500 pounds of wool, and 134,000 pounds of butter were produced from the crop of 1849. The soil throughout the township is said to be generally of good quality.

About 12 miles west from Pakenham village, on White Lake, is a small settlement called by the same name; at present it is not making much progress.

The Township of Darling is but little settled. In 1850 it only contained 511 inhabitants, and 1,606 acres of land under cultivation. The quantity of produce raised was consequently very small.

The adjoining township of Lavant is almost altogether unsettled, 69,999 acres of crown lands alone being open for sale. We have no statistical return from this township.

The township of North Burgess contains a great deal of rocky land, particularly in the south and east of the township. It is separated from South Burgess by the Rideau Lake. The soil is mostly loam and the timber a mixture of hardwood and pine. We have no statistical return from this township, but the ratable property in it only amounted to £7,750⁴.

(Transcribed by Ron W. Shaw 2025)

⁴ What is now Canada used the British Pound Sterling (£) until switching to a decimal Dollar (\$) in 1858.