

Glengarry's Representatives in the Legislative Assembly of Upper Canada

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Introduction

By the Constitutional Act of 1791,¹ it was provided² that

“ the Governor, Lieutenant Governor or Person administering His Majesty's Government within the said provinces [Upper and Lower Canada] respectively” might be authorized “ to issue a proclamation dividing such province into Districts, or Counties, or Circles and Towns or Townships and appointing the Limits thereof and declaring and appointing the Number of Representatives to be chosen by each of such Districts, or Counties, or Circles and Towns or Townships.”³

Under the authority of this enactment, John Graves Simcoe, Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada, issued a proclamation, dated July 16th, 1792, providing, among other things, as follows:

“ That the first of the said Counties be hereafter called by the name of the County of Glengarry: which County is to be bounded, on the East by the Lines that divide Upper from Lower Canada, on the South by the River St. Lawrence, and Westerly by the Easter-most boundary of the late Township of Cornwall, running North Twenty-four Degrees West until it intersects the Ottawa or Grand River, thence descending the said River until it meets the divisional line aforesaid. The said County is to comprehend all of the Islands in the said River St. Lawrence, nearest to the said County, and in the whole or greater part fronting the same... that for the purpose of representation, the said County of Glengarry (bounded as aforesaid) shall be divided into two ridings; the first riding shall and

¹ 30 Geo. III Ch. XXXI.

² Sec. XIV.

³ *Documents Relating to the Constitutional History of Canada 1759-1791*, p. 694.

may be represented in the said House of Assembly second riding to comprehend such part of the said County of Glengarry as is not contained in the first riding, and that each of the said ridings shall send one representative that is, the said first riding shall and may be represented in the said House of Assembly by one Member, and the said second riding shall and may be represented in the said House of Assembly by one member.”⁴

By the provincial Statute of 1798, 38 George III, Chap. V, it was enacted that:—

“That the townships of *Lancaster*, *Charlottenburg* and *Kenyon*, together with the tract of land claimed by the *St. Regis Indians*, and such of the islands in the *River Saint Lawrence* as are wholly, or in greater part opposite thereto shall constitute and form the county of *Glengarry*... And... That the townships of *Hawkesbury*, *Longueil*, with the tract of land in its rear, *Alfred* and *Plantagenet*, with such of the islands in the *Ottawa River* as are wholly, or in greater part opposite thereto, shall constitute and form the County of *Prescott*.⁵

By the provincial Statute of 1800, 40 George III, Chap. III., it was enacted that:

“The Counties of Glengarry and Prescott shall together be represented by *two members*.”⁶

This arrangement, continued until 1808, when by provincial Statute 48 George III, Chap. XI, it was provided:

“That the county of Prescott shall be represented by one member; that the county of Glengarry shall be represented by two members.”

As a result of these various enactments, the County of Glengarry was, throughout the whole of the period under consideration, represented by two members. From 1792 until 1800 it included within its boundaries what was later to become the County of Prescott. In 1800 the County of Prescott was separated, but, until 1808, continued to be united with Glengarry for electoral purposes; but from 1808 until the union of 1841 Glengarry stood by itself and was uniformly represented by two members.

⁴ *Documents Relating to the Constitutional History of Canada 1791-1818*, pp. 78-81.

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 222.

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 245.

It may be well to insert here a list of Glengarry's representatives, indicating the respective Parliaments in which they sat:

FIRST PARLIAMENT – 1792 - 1796

Glengarry First Riding – Hugh Macdonell (Aberchalder)
Glengarry Second Riding – Col. John Macdonell (Aberchalder)

SECOND PARLIAMENT – 1797 - 1800

Glengarry First Riding – Captain Richard Wilkinson
Glengarry Second Riding – Col. John Macdonell (Aberchalder)

THIRD PARLIAMENT – 1800 - 1804

Glengarry and Prescott – Alexander Macdonell (Collachie)
Angus Macdonell (Sandaig)

FOURTH PARLIAMENT – 1804 - 1808

Glengarry and Prescott – Alexander Macdonell (Collachie)
W. B. Wilkinson

FIFTH PARLIAMENT – 1808 - 1812

Glengarry – Alexander Macdonell (Collachie)
Thomas Fraser

SIXTH PARLIAMENT – 1812 - 1816

Alexander McMartin
Col. John Macdonell (Greenfield)
(Killed shortly after election and was succeeded by)
Alexander Macdonell (Collachie) who, however, was unable to take his
seat, as he was at the time a prisoner of war.

SEVENTH PARLIAMENT - 1816 - 1820

Alexander McMartin
John Cameron

EIGHTH PARLIAMENT – 1820 - 1824

Alexander Macdonell (Collachie)
Alexander McMartin

NINTH PARLIAMENT – 1824 - 1828

Alexander Macdonell (Collachie)
Duncan Cameron

TENTH PARLIAMENT – 1828 - 1830

Alexander Fraser
Alexander McMartin

ELEVENTH PARLIAMENT – 1830 - 1834

Alexander McMartin
Alexander Fraser

TWELFTH PARLIAMENT – 1834 - 1836

Donald Macdonell (Greenfield)
Alexander Chisholm

THIRTEENTH PARLIAMENT – 1836 - 1841

Donald Macdonell (Greenfield)

Alexander Chisholm

Of these fourteen men, eight were Catholics and six Protestants. The Catholics were the six Macdonells, Alexander Fraser and Alexander Chisholm. The two Wilkinsons, the two Camerons, Thomas Fraser and Alexander McMartin were Protestants. My first idea was to confine my paper to the Catholics, but further consideration led me to conclude that biographical sketches of all of the members, regardless of their religion, would constitute a more valuable contribution to local history. I experienced considerable initial difficulty in securing a correct list of the representatives and much greater difficulty in identifying several of the men; but my efforts in both regards, eventually met with complete success.

In the first Parliament of the Province, Glengarry was represented by two brothers, the First Riding by Mr. Hugh Macdonell and the Second Riding by Lt. Col. John Macdonell. As the latter was, however, a more outstanding man than his brother, we will reverse the natural order and deal first with the representative elected by the Second Riding.

PART I – 1782 - 1812

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL JOHN MACDONELL

(Aberchalder)

Lieutenant-Colonel John Macdonell (1750-1809) who represented the Second Riding of the County of Glengarry from 1792 to 1800 and was the first Speaker of that body, was the eldest son of Alexander Macdonell of Aberchalder, and was born at that place on the Glengarry Estate in 1750. Aberchalder, which has given its name to a district, is on the East side of the Caledonian Canal, on the banks of Loch Oich,⁷ in the County of Inverness, Scotland. John and his brothers were sent to a good school at Fochabers, in the County of Elgin, where they remained for several years.⁸ The family came to America with the party in the “Pearl” in 1773 and settled on the Estate of Sir William Johnson, near Johnstown, in the Valley of the Mohawk.⁹ John was destined for commercial life and was

⁷ *Place Names in Glengarry and Glenquoich and their Origin*, by Edward C. Ellis (London Swann Sonnenschein & Co. Ltd. 1898) p. 104 and map.

⁸ *A Memoir of Lieutenant-Colonel John Macdonell of Glengarry House, the First Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Upper Canada*, by Brig. General E. A. Cruikshank, LL.D., F.R.S.C., F.R.H.S. (Ontario Historical Society's “Papers and Records” Vol. XXII, 1925) p. 20.

⁹ *The Macdonells of Leek, Collachie and Aberchalder*, by W. L. Scott, K.C. (Report of the Canadian Catholic Historical Association for 1934-1935) p. 22.

accordingly sent to Montreal, where he obtained employment with an accountant. In May, 1775, however, he was back with his family and, upon the breaking out of hostilities, with a following of thirty Highlanders, he joined Colonel Guy Johnson and proceeded to Canada. On the way they were joined by Colonel McLean, then engaged in raising the Royal Highland Emigrant Regiment, and the latter offering John au Ensign's commission in the new corps, the offer was accepted, he and his Highlanders being among the first to join. His commission was issued by General Gage and is dated June 14th, 1775. He had the honour, in 1775, commanding the first detachment of the regiment to come under fire, and in executing the service he received two painful wounds. Before these were healed, he was taken prisoner with General Prescott and remained in captivity nearly fourteen months, when he was exchanged. In April 1777 he was promoted to a Lieutenancy in the Second Battalion of his regiment, which rank he continued to hold in the Army until the close of the war.¹⁰ When, however, the corps known as Butler's Rangers was formed, he was attached to that, was on August 1st, 1778, raised to the rank of captains,¹¹ and fought with the Rangers throughout the remainder of the war, distinguishing himself on several occasions. In the summer of 1779 he was entrusted with the command of an expedition into enemy's country and carried it to a successful issue.¹² He also commanded a detachment of the Rangers which formed part of Sir John Johnson's force on the expedition of May, 1780,¹³ and his gallantry is several times mentioned by Sir John in his report to Governor Haldimand of these operations. Macdonell continued to take a distinguished part in the war and when, in June, 1784, the Rangers were disbanded, he was credited with exactly nine years service.¹⁴ In common with other Loyalist officers, he was retired on half pay and given a liberal grant of unimproved land, which in his case amounted to three thousand acres, located in

¹⁰ A Memorial of Captain John Macdonell to Governor Haldimand dated December 14th 1779 (Haldimand Papers, Series B, vol. 213, p. 47; Army Lists for 1779 et seq.).

¹¹ [In the original article, footnote "10a" - as a consequence of which in this online version, subsequent footnotes will be one numeral higher than in the original.] Macdonell held the rank of Lieutenant in the 84th Regiment, Royal Highland Emigrants, till the end of the war. This regiment appears in the Army Lists for 1779-1783. It was a regiment in the regular army and "Lieutenant" was therefore Macdonell's rank in the regular army. For much of the time, however, he was seconded to Butler's Rangers, in which he ranked as Captain. The Rangers were not part of the regular establishment, but merely a local unit, and Macdonell's rank as Captain was, therefore only a local rank.

¹² Haldimand Papers Series B, vol. 182, p. 104.

¹³ Haldimand Papers Series B, vol. 158, p. 170.

¹⁴ Cruikshank op. cit. p. 38.

Townships 2 and 3, later known respectively as Cornwall and Osnabruck. Though Captain Macdonell was still only thirty-four, “the great hardships which he had to surmount undermined a constitution naturally excellent and entailed upon him a severe rheumatism, which embittered the remaining part of his life” but, on the other hand, “by his own care and attention found himself at the end of the war in the possession of a small independence.”¹⁵

In 1786, a petition was presented to the Governor, Lord Dorchester, on behalf of the inhabitants of the eight Eastern Townships of “the Upper Country,” which were in the following year united to form the District of Lunenburg. The petition asked for a number of things, among them a change in the tenure of patented lands, so that they might be held in free and common soccage, unencumbered with the payment of any rent to the Crown. The petition was signed by two leading citizens from each township, and Captain Macdonell was one of the two signers on behalf of the residents of Township number Three.¹⁶

In 1787 the Militia of the Province of Quebec (which still included what four years later became Upper Canada) was reorganized, the return for the District of Lunenburg showing a total of 1525 men liable for service. These were formed into two battalions, one of them composed of the men residing in the Townships of Lancaster and Charlottenburg and to the command of this Captain Macdonell was appointed, with the rank of Major.¹⁷

Macdonell proved to be a man of outstanding ability, who soon rose to be one of the leading men of Upper Canada. It was natural, therefore, that he should have been elected, in 1792, to be the first representative in the Legislature for the Second Riding of Glengarry and, further, that he should have been elected unanimously to be the first Speaker of that body.

In 1794 there were in existence, in Upper Canada, a number of independent companies of militia and, in 1796, these were joined with certain Lower Canada companies, to form a regiment of two battalions, which was placed on the Permanent Establishment and given the name of the Royal Canadian Volunteer Regiment of Foot. Macdonell was appointed to the command of the Second Battalion of this corps, with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.¹⁸ His duties were very far from nominal, as appears from the following letter addressed by him to the Military Secretary at Quebec, dated Sept. 1st, 1800:

“Not having it in my power to examine into the state of the Militia of the

¹⁵ Quoted from an anonymous biographer by Cruikshank op. cit. p. 38. The preceding statement is based on Cruikshank, but actually the township of Lancaster (easternmost of the province) was not laid out in the first survey, and originally Townships 1 and 2 were Charlottenburg and Cornwall.

¹⁶ Cruikshank op. cit. p. 39.

¹⁷ Ibid. p. 41.

¹⁸ Ibid. p. 44.

County of Glengarry, nor of my private affairs, since the first raising of the Royal Canadian Volunteers, I take the liberty to request of Lieutenant-General Hunter 'leave of absence for a few weeks for that purpose.'¹⁹

The regiment was, however, disbanded during the Peace of Amiens, in 1802.²⁰

At the general elections of 1796, Macdonell was again elected to represent the Second Riding of the County of Glengarry, but whereas during the first Parliament he had attended regularly, presiding as Speaker at every session, during the first session of the second Parliament (1797) he appears never to have taken his seat. This was, no doubt, due in part to the necessity of his attending to his military duties, but also in part at least to ill health. At the beginning of the second session, in June, 1798, it was moved

“ that Colonel John Macdonell do stand excused for his non-attendance by reason of indisposition and of the strong probability of his arrival to take his seat in the course of the day should the state of his health permit.”²¹

A little later Macdonell did in fact come in, subscribed the oath and took his seat. Before the adjournment the Speaker, D. W. Smith, addressed the House as follows:—

“ As you have done me the honour to call me to the Chair of this House I feel it a duty I owe to the recollection of the services of Colonel Macdonell to move you that in order to mark the sense I entertain of his former situation as Speaker, a place be considered as appropriate to him during the present Session being the first next to the Chair on the right hand.”

The House unanimously agreed to this recommendation.²² Macdonell appears to have thereafter attended regularly until June 22, when a motion was passed granting him eight days leave of absence. He did not attend again, but the Legislature was prorogued on July 5th. An interesting item of business at that Session was a motion, seconded by Col. Macdonell

“ to authorize and allow persons coming into this Province to settle, to bring with them their Negro Slaves.”

¹⁹ Ibid. p. 51.

²⁰ Ibid. p. 54.

²¹ Ibid. p. 47.

²² Ibid. p. 47.

The motion carried, but was opposed by Macdonell's friend the Solicitor General and by his brother-in-law, Captain Wilkinson.²³ Macdonnell attended for only a short portion of the Session of 1799 but regularly during the Session of 1800.²⁴ He did not however, stand for re-election in the general election of the latter year.

About this time the British Government was in receipt of reliable information that the French Government (the Directory) contemplated an attack on Canada. In answer, however, to a letter of enquiry from the Military Secretary Colonel Macdonnell was able, on May 24th, 1799, to write as follows:

“ Aware of the probability that an attempt might be made by the French to disturb the quiet of His Majesty's subjects in this Province, I have been particularly cautious and attentive to the Orders respecting the admission of Frenchmen or other Aliens. But it affords me the greatest satisfaction to say with confidence that I think the loyalty of the inhabitants of this Province in general is such as to render the success of any attempts of this nature highly improbable.”²⁵

While stationed with his Regiment at Fort George, Colonel Macdonnell married Helen, daughter of Henry Yates of Schenectady, a member of an influential family, members of which were distinguished in the professional and political history of New York.²⁶

After the disbanding of his regiment Colonel John retired to his residence, Glengarry House, in ill health and considerably impoverished in estate. In 1807 he was appointed paymaster to the Tenth Royal Veteran Battalion, a position carrying no military rank, but by no means undesirable, as the battalion had been lately sent to Canada and was performing garrison duty, with headquarters at Quebec.²⁷ He did not long enjoy the position, however, for he died in November, 1809. His only child, Alexander, served with distinction as Major of the Lancaster regiment of Glengarry militia, in the suppression of the rebellion of 1837.²⁸ Alexander left two daughters, who lived for many years in Ottawa, but died unmarried. Fortunately, sufficient of the Aberchalder patrimony remained to permit these ladies to end their lives in comfort, if not in affluence.

²³ Ibid. p. 48.

²⁴ Ibid. p. 50.

²⁵ Ibid. p. 51.

²⁶ Ibid. p. 56.

²⁷ Ibid. p. 57.

²⁸ *Sketches Illustrating the Early Settlement and History of Glengarry in Canada*, by J. A. Macdonnell (Montreal, W. M. Foster, Brown & Co.: 1893), p. 103.

HUGH MACDONELL

Hugh Macdonell, who was returned to the first Parliament as member for the First Riding of Glengarry, was the second son of Alexander Macdonell of Aberchalder and therefore a younger brother of Lieutenant Colonel John Macdonell, whose life we have just sketched. Hugh was one of the six hostages taken by General Schuyler in January, 1776, the other five being his father, his uncles John of Leek and Allan of Collachie, and his cousins Archibald (Leek) and Ranald (Leek).²⁹ Hugh, together with his father and his uncle John, were the first of the prisoners to make their escape. They returned to Johnstown, collected a party of forty or fifty Highlanders and an equal number of Germans, and succeeded in reaching Montreal, arriving there on May 10th, 1777.³⁰ Hugh served throughout the remaining seven years of the war, first as an ensign and later as a lieutenant, in the First Battalion of the King's Royal Regiment of New York. After the war he was appointed Surveyor of the Eastern District of Upper Canada and actually surveyed the greater portion of it, including the County of Glengarry,³¹ Upon his election to the Legislature, he took an active part in its deliberations and a resolution, moved by him on July 3rd, 1793, and carried unanimously, is not without interest. It read as follows:

“Ordered that such Acts as have already passed, or may hereafter pass the Legislature of this Province, be translated into the French language for the benefit of the inhabitants of the Western District of this Province and other French settlers who may come to reside within the Province and that A. Macdonell, Clerk of the House, be employed for this and other purposes.”³²

One can scarcely imagine such a resolution receiving the unanimous assent of the present Ontario Legislature!

Hugh Macdonell commanded a company in the Royal Canadian Volunteer Regiment of Foot, a battalion of which his brother John was, as we have seen, Lieutenant-Colonel; and in time rose to be the senior captain of the Second Battalion.³³ In 1803, he was appointed Lieutenant Colonel of the Glengarry Militia Regiment, of which John was Colonel.³⁴ Hugh was appointed to be the first Adjutant-General of Militia in Upper Canada and was thus the founder of our

²⁹ Scott, op. cit. p. 31.

³⁰ *A United Empire Loyalist Family*, by W. L. Scott, K.C. (*Papers and Records*, Ontario Historical Society, vol. XXXII) p. 146.

³¹ J. A. Macdonell, op. cit., p. 107.

³² Ibid. p. 105.

³³ Ibid. p. 96.

³⁴ Ibid. p. 104.

Militia system.³⁵ He did not, however, long remain a resident of the Province. He was fortunate in enjoying the friendship and patronage of the Duke of Kent and this fact led him to seek his fortune in England. The following letter of recommendation, addressed on his behalf to the Under Secretary of State for War, by Colonel Mathews, Military Secretary to Lord Dorchester, is of interest:

“Chelsea College, 23rd June, 1804.

“Dear Sir,

Understanding that Captain Hugh Macdonell, late of the Royal Canadian Volunteers, has been particularly recommended to the Earl of Camden, and that he will consequently have the honour to wait upon you, I cannot, with the intimate knowledge I possess of his own and the meritorious services and sufferings of his family, forbear of taking the liberty of troubling you with a few lines, in the hope of interesting you in his favour.

His father and uncle, respectable men in the Highlands of Scotland, left that country with their families and considerable property, a few years before the Rebellion in America, with a view to establish themselves in that country, having for that purpose carried out a number of their dependents. They obtained a valuable grant of land from Sir John Johnson on the Mahawk River, in the settlements of which they had made considerable progress.

When the Rebellion broke out they were the first to fly to arms on the part of Government, in which they and their adherents, not less than two hundred men, took a most active and decided lead, leaving their families and property at the mercy of the rebels.

I was at that time quartered at Niagara, and an eye-witness of the gallant and successful exertions of the Macdonells and their dependents, by which, in a great measure, the Upper Country of Canada was preserved, for on this little body a very fine battalion was soon formed, and afterwards a second.

Captain Macdonell's father and uncle, at that time advanced in years, had companies in that Corps and in which his elder brother, afterwards an active and distinguished partizan, carried arms. The sons of both families, five or six in number, the moment they could bear arms, followed the bright example of their fathers, and soon became active and useful officers in that and another corps of Rangers, whose strength and services greatly contributed to unite the Indians of the Five Nations in the interest of Government, and thereby decidedly to save the Upper Country of Canada and our Indian trade.

These Corps were reduced on the peace in 1783, and were settled in Upper Canada on grants of land from Government, where Captain

³⁵ Ibid. p. 104.

Macdonell's father and uncle died a few years after with a total loss of all their property and the means of assisting their families.

Captain Macdonell afterwards held a company in the Canadian Volunteers, of which his elder brother, before mentioned, was Colonel; but that also being disbanded, and he not having rank in the army, he is literally left destitute after a service of twenty-six years – for I countersigned his commission as Lieutenant twenty-three years ago. Thus a valuable officer is lost to himself and to the service, whose abilities either in a civil or a military capacity, particularly in Canada, where his knowledge of the French language, the customs and manners of the people, and of the interests of the Indian nation, might be turned to good account, while the services and sufferings of a very deserving officer would be rewarded.

I have the honour to be, dear sir,

Your very obedient and humble servant,³⁶

R. MATHEWS

Edward Cooke, Esq.³⁷

In 1805, due to the influence of the Duke of Kent, Hugh was appointed Assistant Commissary-General at Gibraltar. In 1810, he with Lord Cochrane K.B. and Captain Harding R.E., was sent to Algiers to inspect and report upon La Calle, and in 1811 he was appointed Consul-General at Algiers, where at the hands of the infamous Dey of Algiers, he suffered great hardships and privations, his own and the lives of his family being in almost constant jeopardy. It was in fact, necessary for Lord Exmouth, in command of the Mediterranean fleet, in August, 1816, to bombard Algiers, in order to secure his release from prison. Having effected his purpose, Lord Exmouth publicly thanked Macdonell, in the following terms:—

“I cannot deny myself the satisfaction of offering you my public thanks for the assistance I have received from your activity and intelligence in my late negotiations with the Regency of Algiers, and more especially for the manly firmness you have displayed throughout all the violence and embarrassments occasioned by the late discussions, of which it will afford me sincere pleasure to bear testimony to His Majesty's Ministers on my return to England.”³⁷

In 1820, he retired on pension. His two sons became respectively Sir Alexander Macdonell, K.C.B., Colonel-Commandant of the Prince Consort's Own Rifle Brigade., and Sir Hugh Guion Macdonell, K.C.M.G., CB., Her Majesty's

³⁶ Ibid. p. 105.

³⁷ Ibid. p. 70.

Minister to the Court of Denmark.³⁸

CAPTAIN RICHARD NORTON WILKINSON

Captain Wilkinson (d. 1804) represented the First Riding of the County in the Second Parliament, from 1797 to 1800. He was married to Hellen (sic), daughter of Alexander Macdonell (Aberchalder), probably in Scotland before the family came over, and he and his wife and children were no doubt members of the party in the "Pearl." Wilkinson settled in Albany, where he embarked on a mercantile career. At the breaking out of hostilities he was the owner of a ship, freighted with provisions and other supplies of considerable value, intended for the use of a British man of war then stationed at York. Both the ship and cargo were seized by the Rebels and their owner cast into prison, where he remained for several months. Eventually he succeeded in making his escape and finding his way to Canada, leaving, as he says, "his wife and family, together with what remained of his property, to the fury of an enraged and merciless multitude."³⁹ Upon his arrival in Canada, Wilkinson applied to Sir John Johnson and obtained through him, from Sir Guy Carleton, a Lieutenancy in the King's Royal Regiment of New York, his commission being dated 17th June 1776. He served in this capacity for a year and a half, until the end of 1777, when, learning of the distressing situation in which his wife and children were placed, he upon the advice of Sir John Johnson, resigned his commission, intending to endeavour to make his way to them; but upon reaching Ticonderoga, he found that recent British reverses had rendered the attaining of his object impracticable and he was obliged to return to Canada. Then, for a considerable time, he remained without occupation and in necessitous circumstances.⁴⁰ In September of 1778, nothing better offering, he was appointed by Colonel Johnson to the Indian Department, with the rank of Lieutenant, a position which he continued to occupy until the close of the war.⁴¹

Though Wilkinson's losses must have been very considerable, his name does not appear among those who made claims for compensation for losses sustained by reason of the Rebellion. He, however, evidently received the usual substantial grant of lands. In a petition dated January 16th, 1790, he stated that he had received

"Certificates for a part of the lands allowed by the Crown for himself and family, in the second concession, Township of Charlottenburg, District of Luneburg"

³⁸ Ibid. p. 94.

³⁹ Haldimand Papers, B 215: Memorials from the Provincial Corps & Loyalists, vol. 2, pp. 258 & 259.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Haldimand Papers, B 216: Memorial from the Indian and Naval Departments, pp. 28-29.

but that one John Griffin obtained a certificate for a lot dividing the lands of the petitioner and he asked that, as Griffin had been absent for two years and could not be found, the certificate should be cancelled and the lands granted to the petitioner.⁴²

Wilkinson was one of the signators from New Johnstown (Cornwall) to the petition, dated December 2nd, 1786, addressed to Lord Dorchester, Governor General of British North America, congratulating him on his reappointment to that position and asking for a change in the tenure of patented lands. Wilkinson held a commission as Captain in the Second Battalion, Royal Canadian Volunteer Regiment of Foot, of which his brother in law, John Macdonell, was Lieutenant Colonel. The Corps was organized as the result of a despatch from the Duke of Portland to Lord Dorchester dated February 15th, 1784.⁴³ The regiment was disbanded in 1802.⁴⁴

Wilkinson's will, recorded in the office of the Surrogate Registrar at Cornwall, is dated April 28th 1804 and probate issued on September 6th of the same year. In it he bequeaths, to his wife, among other things, "a servant woman and two children which slaves" are now in his possession; to "my oldest son, Walter Butler Wilkinson my Military Hat and sword, together with the sum of ten pounds... for the purpose of purchasing a suit of mourning." The balance of his property he leaves to his executors in trust for his wife and four other children, Alexander Wilkinson, Mary Johnson Wilkinson, Ann Wilkinson and Hellen Wilkinson. He appoints no less than five executors, namely, his wife, his brother-in-law Col. John Macdonell, Miles Macdonell, Neil McLean and his son W. B. Wilkinson. Mrs. Wilkinson was, of course, a Catholic, but her eldest son, W. B. Wilkinson, was not. Whether she brought up all or any of her other children Catholics, does not appear. There is, however, an entry in the Parish Register of St. Raphaels Church, dated February 18th 1819, of a baptism at which the sponsors were "Col. Donald MacDonell and Mrs. Mary Wilkinson." This lady may, therefore, have been the wife of the second son, Alexander.

THE HON. ALEXANDER MACDONELL
(Collachie)

Alexander Macdonell (1762-1842) was the eldest son of Allan Macdonell of Collachie, and was born at Collachie, on the Glengarry Estate. His mother was a daughter of the Chief of MacNab. He came to America in the "Pearl," with the other members of his family, in 1773. In 1777, when only fifteen, he volunteered as a cadet and served under Sir John Johnson at the attack upon Fort Schuyler, at the

⁴² Upper Canada Land Petitions We 40.

⁴³ Q 69-1 p. 37. Some account of this Regiment is given in J. A. Macdonell, op. cit., pp. 91 & seq.

⁴⁴ E. J. Chambers, *The Canadian Militia*, p. 46.

Battle of Oriskany and in most of the severe fighting of that year. In the following year he received a commission as ensign in the Second Battalion of the Royal Highland Emigrant Regiment, and was present at the Battle of Monmouth. He was with General Clinton when the latter evacuated Philadelphia and upon arrival at New York, he received his lieutenancy and was entrusted with a despatch from General Clinton to General Haldimand. The young Lieutenant proceeded with his precious burden via Rhode Island, Lake George and Lake Champlain, to Canada, travelling most of the way on foot. Upon his arrival in Canada, he was transferred to Butler's Rangers, in which corps he remained, as First Lieutenant, until the Regiment was disbanded, in June 1784. In 1792 Alexander was appointed Sheriff of the Home District, but resigned in 1805.

From that year until 1812, he acted as agent for Lord Selkirk in superintending the latter's settlement at Baldoon. He represented Glengarry in the Legislature continuously from 1800 to 1812, from 1812 to 1816 in succession to Lt. Col. John Macdonell (Greenfield); and from 1820 to 1828; and he was Speaker from 1804 to 1808.

Upon the breaking out of the war of 1812, Alexander Macdonell was gazetted Colonel of Militia and appointed Assistant Paymaster-General. At the capture of Niagara by the Americans, in 1813, he was taken prisoner and confined, until the close of the war, at Lancaster, Pennsylvania, in the very prison in which his father had been confined, forty years before. Upon his release, Alexander Macdonell was made Superintendent of the Department for Settlers. In 1831 he was called to the Legislative Council, of which body he remained a member until his death. He died in 1842, at Toronto, which had been his home since the days when his appointment as Sheriff of the Home District necessitated his residing at the Capital of the Province.

LIEUTENANT ANGUS MACDONELL
(Sandaig)

Angus Macdonell, (d. 1817) who shared with Alexander Macdonell, the representation of Glengarry and Prescott in the Third Parliament, 1800 to 1804, was a member of the Scotus family and a first cousin of Spanish John. Angus was the son of John Macdonell of Sandaig, a brother of John Macdonell of Crowlin, the father of Spanish John. At the present day, Sandaig is the name of a village, a burn and a bay, all in the District of Knoydart, in the County of Inverness, on the west coast of Scotland, not far from Scotus.⁴⁵ In the 18th Century it was the name of a property leased by the Chief of Glengarry, from which, as in all such cases, the tenant took his designation. The property had frequently changed hands, having been held, at various times, by members of the families of Ardnabee, Lochgarry and Greenfield. This had led to some confusion; but Angus of Scotus appears to have

⁴⁵ *Survey Atlas of Scotland*, by J. G. Bartholemew, (Edin. Geog. Institute: 1912), Plate 41.

been the only one to carry the name to Canada. John of Sandaig and John of Crowlin were sons of an earlier Angus of Scotus; and the latter, marrying a second time late in life, had a son Alexander, who became a priest and came to Upper Canada, as will presently appear. He was thus an uncle of Spanish John, although some forty years his junior!

Upon the outbreak of the American Revolutionary War, Major General Simon Fraser, son of the twelfth Lord Lovat, raised in the Scottish Highlands, a regiment in two battalions, known as the 71st, and in the 1st battalion of this Regiment, Angus Macdonell, Sandaig, obtained a commission as Ensign. Fraser, the Colonel, had been in command of a regiment, known as "Fraser's Highlanders," which served at Louisburg, Quebec and elsewhere, but which was disbanded after the peace of 1763. Angus' commission as Ensign is dated December 6th, 1775, and on October 14th, 1778, he was promoted to a lieutenancy. Both battalions of the 71st Regiment came to America, and served throughout the war and one at least of them was among the British units surrendered by Cornwallis at Yorktown, on October 19th, 1781. The Regiment, later, returned to Scotland and was disbanded there, after the peace, on June 24th, 1783. At that time Lieutenant Angus Macdonell is reported as "In Britain – a prisoner on parole." Presumably, therefore, he had been taken prisoner and released on parole.

In 1786 Angus Macdonell came out to Canada with a large party of Highlanders, chiefly from Knoydart. In a letter from Hon. Hugh Finlay to Evan Nepean, Under Secretary of State, dated September 7, 1786, the arrival of the party is referred to in the following terms:

"A few days ago were landed 519 emigrants from the Highlands of Scotland, who intend to fix themselves in the upper parts of the Province. Their Highland friends, who evacuated Sir John Johnson's lands on the Mohawk River, gave them encouragement to come over. The men are young, stout, hale and hearty, a brave and loyal people, very fit to occupy the lands bordering on the United States."

The arrival of the party is also referred to in the Quebec Gazette of Thursday, September 7th, 1786, under the head of "Arrivals since last published." The reference reads as follows:

"Ship McDonald, Robert Stevenson, 61 days from Glasgow. Passengers, Messrs. Ronald McDonald, Alexander McDonald, Ensign McDonald of the late 71st Regt., Rod. McDonald, Lieut. McDonald of the late 71st Regt., and Mr. McServer; Mrs. McDonald, Miss Isabella McDonald, Miss Mary McDonald and Miss Ann McDonald, besides 520 steerage passengers, being, as is said, the whole inhabitants of a parish in the North of Scotland, who emigrated with their priest, in the hope of bettering themselves at Cataraqui and its environs."

In this extract, “McDonald” should read “McDonnell” throughout. Moreover, local tradition has it that the proper name of the ship was not “McDonald” but “Angus Sandaig.” “Their priest” was Rev. Alexander Macdonell, Scotus (1742-1803), already referred to, uncle of Lieutenant Angus and of Spanish John. He was the founder of the Parish of St. Raphaels and was the second English-speaking priest to labour in Upper Canada, the first being Rev. Roderick Macdonell, Leek (d. 1806). The late J. A. Macdonell (Greenfield) mentions having in his possession two letters addressed by these priests, respectively, to Angus Macdonell. One is from Rev. Alexander Macdonell, dated May 19th, 1803, and addressed “to Angus Macdonell, Prin’le Church Warden” and eleven others. The other letter is from Rev. Roderick Macdonell and is addressed to “Mr. Angus Macdonell, Arch-Syndic of the Parish of St. Raphaels.”⁴⁶

There are three petitions from Lieut. Angus Macdonell, preserved in the Dominion Archives. The first, dated at Montreal July 11th, 1788, sets forth that he “Served in America during the late war in the late 71st Regt., and having been reduced on halfpay in June 1784, came out to this country with a number of families from Scotland, with intention to take his proportion of lands in the Province and settle on them”;

that on making application, he was told to select the lands, but finding that all of the lands along the bank of the river had been occupied, he had deferred making any application; he now, however, understands that lands between the Townships of Charlottenburg and Cornwall are being purchased from the Indians and he asks for his “proportion of lands as a reduced lieutenant” in that area. In answer to this petition, he was given a grant of 500 acres.

The second petition, dated at Cornwall, September 4th, 1790, recites that he has already received 500 acres but is entitled to 1500 more. The third, dated at Montreal, June 14th, 1792, recites that of the 1500 acres asked for in the previous petition, he has received only 500 and asks that he may be granted the remaining 1000 acres “in the new settlement to be formed on the northern bank of Lake Ontario.” This petition is endorsed “read in Council 6th Oct. 1792. Order to stand over for further consideration.” Whether or not he ever got the 1000 acres does not appear. He owned Lot 8 in the 8th Concession of Charlottenburg, probably part of the original 500 acres.

There was a grant, dated May 17th, 1802, conveying Lots 34 to 37, Concession 3, and Lot 2, Concession 3 West Additional, of the Township of East Hawkesbury to

“Angus McDonell of Sandaig, County of Glengarry, Eastern District (a reduced Lieutenant in the 71st Regiment and Member of the Lower House).”

⁴⁶ *The Early Settlement and History of Glengarry in Canada*, by J. Alex. Macdonell (Greenfield) now of Glengarry, Canada. (Montreal: 1893.)

This property must have been overlooked by Macdonell or his heir, for his interest in it was never disposed of

Angus Macdonell married a Miss Bellêtre of Montreal and had by her at least one child, John Bellêtre Macdonell. No will of Angus nor any letters of administration to his estate are of record in the office of the Surrogate Registrar at Cornwall, but letters of administration to the estate of "Ranald McDonell, formerly a Sergeant in the Royal Canadian Volunteers" issued to "Angus McDonell, (Sandaig) Esquire and John McInnis, blacksmith" dated April 29th, 1802. There appears to be no later local reference to him. After that he drops out of sight. He was still alive, however, in 1817, as his half-pay pension was paid to him up to and including that year.⁴⁷ Local tradition affirms that he entered the service of one or other of the large fur trading companies and never returned to the County. It is further said that his son, John Bellêtre McDonell, in later years, visited the County more than once. Angus evidently died intestate, for on February 28th, 1822, his son conveyed Lot 8 in Concession 8 of Charlottenburg as the "heir-at-law" of his father. This was probably on the occasion of one of John's visits to Glengarry, already referred to.

I am informed that descendants of Angus still live on or near Lot 8, Concession 8, and that there is a creek in that vicinity known, as "Crik Aeneas Hauntic."

WALTER BUTLER WILKINSON

Walter Butler Wilkinson (1781-1807) was elected in 1804 as one of the representatives for Glengarry and Prescott in the Fourth Parliament; but did not live to finish out the term for which he was elected. He was the son of Richard N. Wilkinson and of his wife, Hellen McDonell (Aberchaldar). He was evidently called after Colonel Walter Butler. Though the child of a Catholic mother, he was not a Catholic. He married Cecilia, daughter of the Rev. John Bethune, a Presbyterian clergyman, who was a prominent figure in the early history of Upper Canada. There is preserved in the Dominion Archives, a petition from Walter Butler Wilkinson, representing that he is the son of Richard N. Wilkinson, a reduced Lieutenant in His Majesty's late Royal Regiment of New York, and has never received a grant of land; and praying that he should receive "such a proportion of the waste land of the Crown as your Excellency may think proper."⁴⁸ The petition was recommended.⁴⁹

There is also a petition from Cecilia Wilkinson, dated May 3rd, 1803, "daughter of Rev. John Bethune, Chaplain to the late 84th Regiment and wife of

⁴⁷ P. M. G., 4 Vol., 105.

⁴⁸ Upper Canada Land Petition No. W⁸ 40.

⁴⁹ Upper Canada Land Book E, p. 241.

Walter B. Wilkinson of Cornwall” asking for a similar grant of lands.⁵⁰ This also was recommended.⁵¹

Wilkinson died in 1807, at the early age of twenty-six. The exact date does not appear, but letters of administration to his estate, granted to his widow, issued on September 4th, 1807.

LT. COL. THE HON. THOMAS FRASER

Thomas Fraser (1748-1821), who represented the County of Glengarry in the Fifth Parliament (1808-1812), was born in Stratherrick, Inverness, Scotland, and came to the Province of New York with his father and other members of his family in 1766. In 1769, his father obtained from Sir William Johnson a perpetual lease of 100 acres, situated eight miles from the Mohawk River, probably in the “Scotch Bush.” About this time, Thomas married Mary MacBain. His father, later, bought 600 acres near Ballstown and moved there with his other son, William, leaving Thomas in possession of the first farm. The two brothers, soon afterwards, became widely known as “good woodsmen” and, moreover, acquired sufficient knowledge of an Indian language to permit of their acting as interpreters. Thomas Fraser was one of the Highlanders who were assembled at Johnson Hall, on January 20th, 1776, when the six hostages were taken and the others disarmed. In the spring of 1777, the two brothers were in a party of nearly a hundred Loyalists, who attempted to march to Canada, but were attacked and the Frasers and others taken prisoners and confined in Albany jail. They were not treated as prisoners of war, but handcuffed like ordinary criminals. Thomas had a small, finely-shaped hand and the “bracelets,” though put at their smallest, did not fit him very closely. He, however, kept that information to himself and bided his time. The Colonial authorities did not, at that time, undertake to feed their prisoners and it was the custom of Thomas’ wife to come every day to the jail with a basket of provisions for her husband and his brother. One day, in the July following the capture, she baked, in the centre of a loaf of bread, a file and a coil of rope. With the assistance of these, after a dexterous manipulation of Thomas’ handcuffs and the filing away of those of the other prisoners and of one of the iron bars on a window, Thomas succeeded in making his escape. William, who came next, was however stouter and stuck fast between the bars, to the great dismay of the other prisoners, who had hoped to follow him and who thus saw their escape out off. However, with considerable squeezing and vigorous pushing from behind, William finally got out, as did also all of the others, the whole party reaching General Burgoyne at Fort Edward, in safety. Next morning, when Mrs. Fraser presented herself, as usual, at the jail, feigning ignorance of what had taken place, she received from the authorities, as may be imagined, anything but a cordial reception. On August 24th, 1777, William, the elder of the two brothers, having enlisted a company of

⁵⁰ Upper Canada Land Petition W^c 39.

⁵¹ Upper Canada Land Book E, p. 241.

ifty men, was commissioned as Captain, Thomas receiving, at the same time, a commission as his Lieutenant. Before the capitulation of Burgoyne's army, the Frasers and their followers made their escape and the party appears to have arrived at Montreal, on October 24th. William was thereupon authorized to form a company of Rangers and was sent, with his company, to occupy a blockhouse on the Yamaska River, beyond St. François. As this was considered an important outpost, commanding as it did, a trail from Connecticut, William Fraser and his company were kept there, in garrison duty, during the remainder of the war. Thomas was at first employed in scouting, but later, joined his brother as his subaltern. Finally, he succeeded in enlisting enough men to form another company and secured his promotion to the rank of Captain. Some months later, both companies were included in the battalion of Loyal Rangers, commanded by Major Edward Jessup.

In May, 1780, their father, William Fraser, together with the other members of the three families, were permitted to come to Canada. The wives and children of the two brothers were allowed to join them at Yamaska, where the duty of guarding that portion of the frontier was performed with credit by the brothers. When peace came, the Frasers supervised the movement of their disbanded men to the lands intended for them, in Township No. 6 (Edwardsburg) and their establishment thereon.

About this time, his first wife having died, Thomas Fraser married Mary, daughter of John Macdonell of Leek, but though he had five children by his first wife, his second marriage proved childless.

Thomas Fraser's land grant of one thousand acres was increased first to 3000 and later, in consideration of the fact that he had a wife and five children, to 4000. As early as 1791, the brothers were described by a traveller, who visited them, as very prosperous.

Thomas Fraser represented the County of Dundas (where he resided) in the Legislature, in the Second Parliament (1797-1800) and, as already mentioned, though a non-resident, he represented the County of Glengarry in the Fifth Parliament (1808-1812). In 1797 he described himself as "Lieutenant Colonel of the Militia of the County of Grenville." In the war of 1812, he commanded the Dundas Militia and was in action at the taking of Ogdensburg, on February 22nd, 1813. In 1815, he was appointed to the Legislative Council, of which he remained a member until his death. He died in the Township of Matilda, where he had lived, on October 18th, 1821.

A sister of the Frasers was the wife of Richard Duncan, and Thomas' second son, Lt. Col. Richard Duncan Fraser, represented Grenville in the Legislature from 1830 to 1834, and commanded one of the detachments engaged in the Battle of the Windmill on Nov. 13th, 1838. Richard Duncan Fraser married Mary Macdonell, fourth daughter of Allan Macdonell of Leek, a niece of his father's second wife and an aunt of Sir Richard Scott.