

Macdonald, George F
The new settlement on
Lake Erie

THE NEW SETTLEMENT

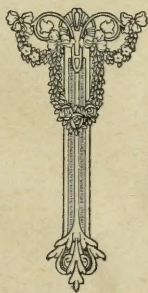
—ON—

LAKE ERIE

—BY—

GEORGE F. MACDONALD

Read at a Meeting of the Essex Historical Society
Windsor, Ontario, 25th April, 1918.



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THE NEW SETTLEMENT ON LAKE ERIE.

In preparing this paper some time ago, I had intended using the title "Three Pioneers of South Essex", but while collecting information I found that at the time of which I write, Essex county was not in existence. The whole area, now included in the counties of Essex, Kent and Lambton, and as far as Long Point on Lake Erie, was called the District of Hesse.

There were no settlements in the district, with the exception of those in the neighborhood of Detroit.

In the year 1784 Capt. William Caldwell, of Butler's Rangers, secured a grant from the Indians for, "a tract of land on the north shore of Lake Erie, from a creek four miles from the mouth of the Detroit River, to a small creek about a mile and a half beyond Cedar Creek". This he called "The New Settlement," which was to be settled by the Rangers, who had been disbanded after the peace of 1783.

The settlement measured about 15 miles and was divided into 97 lots of about 200 acres each. In 1790, twelve more lots were added, making a total of 109 lots and the name was changed to "2 Connected Townships" in the New Settlement, Lake Erie.

Lots 68, 69 and 70 were reserved by the Crown for a town plot, a plan of which I enclose. This was the first town to be laid out in Upper Canada west of Niagara, and when the townships were divided was named Colchester.

A few years later the townships were divided, the one to the west be-

ing named Colchester, and the other Gosfield.

P. McNiffy in his survey of the lake front, made in 1790, describes it as follows: "From the east side of Point Pelee to commencement of the New Settlement, 16 miles, good land. Here also the general plan of survey may be complied with, but the only place in that space, where a town can be laid out is on very high land, where no access can be had to the lake nor any harbor for water craft, but on this high land are plenty of springs. From the east end of the present New Settlement, to the entrance of the Detroit River, 20 miles, 15 miles of this space is settled. Here it is impossible to comply with the general plan or survey, without injuring many of the inhabitants in their improvements; nearly in the centre of this settlement is a space left for a town, but not quite of the extent specified in the general plan. This is by no means so proper a place for a village, as many others that might have been pointed out in the settlement, but those situations are not the property of individuals, and under improvements.

From the west end of the New Settlement to the entrance of Detroit River, 5 miles, is either a marsh, or what is not, is claimed by individuals. The marsh is the property of W. and J. Caldwell, by an order-of-Council passed in their favor on 29th December, 1788." (Ont. Arch. 1905. p 71)

The following is an extract from Bureau of Archives, 1905, p. 13, relative to the New Settlement, on Lake Erie:—

"Sergeant Field informed the Board that having been a non-commissioned officer in Captain Caldwell's Company of Rangers, his fellow soldiers had frequently applied to him to move some measures to give them satisfaction. That the Rangers in the list before the Board are all of Captain Caldwell's Company or were selected by him as good settlers on his return from Quebec in 1784, after they had been disbanded at Niagara, to establish a settlement at the mouth of the River Detroit, where most of them drew lots, but few could settle for want of provisions and tools, which they were taught to expect from the Government. That, notwithstanding their disappointment in that expectation, and the example of many who returned to the United States, not one whose name is in the list has absented himself from the Settlement, many preferring to labor in the service of others;—being questioned by the Board, as to his opinion of the disposition of the petitioners, to accept of other locations in lieu of those given away on default of their improvement within the year, Sergeant Field assured the Board that most of them would be well pleased, even now, to be located at the Rivere La Tranche, and that rather than remain without lands, such as are able, would settle without the aid of provisions or tools. Mr. Field also informed the Board that the petition was forwarded without collecting the petitioners to subscribe their names, from apprehensions, that if rendered more public, their object would be defeated and themselves rendered ridiculous.

"The Board find the information of Mr. Field in part corroborated by Alexander Grant, Esq., Senior Officer Commanding His Majesty's vessels on the Upper Lakes, who says that in 1784 the officers commanding His Majesty's vessels were ordered by Col. DePeyster, then commanding the Upper Ports, to receive on board such

disbanded loyalists as chose to settle at the mouth of the Streight and transport them and their stock, free of any expense, and Mr. Reynolds, Assistant Commissary at this port, informs the Board that by order of Major Mathews, in 1787, he received from Capt. Caldwell part of a quantity of farming utensils and garden tools which had been delivered to Capt. Caldwell for use of the Loyalists by order of Sir John Johnson, Bart, 1st Sept., 1784."

The pioneers which I have selected are among those which settled on the lots, which later became the township of Gosfield, the descendants of whom have taken a very prominent part in the public affairs of both the township and county.

Capt. Wm. Caldwell, the progenitor of the Canadian branch of the family of that name, was a native of Ireland. He was an officer in the British service, and engaged in the army of the South during the early part of the Revolutionary War. Having been transferred from the regular service to the celebrated corps, the Butler Rangers, he took part, as Captain of that regiment, in all the border forays and frontier exploits in which they were engaged, including battles extending over a territory comprising Virginia, Kentucky, Ohio and Southern Michigan. He selected his future home in the vicinity of the present town of Amherstburg some years before the U. E. influx, and while still an officer of the Rangers. On the breaking out of the Anglo-American war, he was appointed Quarter-Master-General of the army on the western frontier, with the rank of Colonel. He had great influence with the Indians, and was chiefly instrumental in securing the allegiance to the British of the Wyandottes, on both sides of the Detroit River. Four of his sons served as officers throughout the war. All were the recipients of medals for

bravery displayed on the field. One of his sons, Francis, was the first man to enter the fort at Detroit after Gen. Hull's surrender. He was wounded seven times during the war, and was later member of Parliament for the county."—(Dominion Atlas, 1881.)

John Wendel Weigele, the progenitor of the Wigle family of Essex county, was born in Germany in the year 1753. His parents dying when he was quite young, left him in the care of some neighbors, who were so severe with him that, being a boy of spirit, he decided to run away. The sea, at that time had great fascination for boys, so we are not surprised to find that he made his way to the coast. Finding a vessel about to sail for America, he decided to hide on her until she had sailed. He would then go to the captain and offer to work. He does not say how he was received, but we note that when the vessel arrived in America, he was apprenticed to a weaver for a term of seven years, for which, in all probability, the captain was well paid.

We next hear of him in the town of Little York, Penn., where in 1776 he married Juliana Romerin. Here they remained for ten years, he following the occupation of a weaver.

While a resident there, he was accused of being a Tory and, although never taking sides with either party, he was always under suspicion, which made it very uncomfortable for him. It is said that on one occasion he was sought by the Revolutionists, and being closely pursued, he hid beneath the floor of his house. After carefully searching the premises, the officers, as a last precaution, poked their swords through the cracks in the floor, but, fortunately for him, they did not reach the place where he was concealed. This, he often remarked, was the most exciting experience of his life.

In 1786, hearing of the offers of free land in the Canadian Northwest and also on account of the persecution of the Loyalists, he, with several others, set out for the land office at Detroit. the journey was made on foot, driving their cattle and carrying their household goods on pack horses.

He remained in the neighborhood of Detroit until 1792, when he received a grant of Lot No. 9, Second Township, North Side River La Tranche. In 1793 he exchanged this lot with George Sichelstel for Lot No. 6, East New Settlement. Here he made his home, which he developed into one of the best farms in the county. He died in 1824 and is buried in Gosfield.

The family consisted of eleven children, five sons and six daughters, some of whom were born in the States.

Philip Fox and Catherine Lamer, of Baden County, Germany, were married in 1772. In the following June they sailed from Liverpool for America, where they arrived after a voyage of fourteen weeks, at the city of Baltimore. Here they remained four years. Then they moved to the State of Pennsylvania, where they lived until 1786, when, in company with John Wendel Weigele, they emigrated to Canada. They lived for a short time on Grosse Isle, then on Col. Elliott's estate below Amherstburg.

In 1791 they moved to Petite Cote, where they remained until 1794, when he exchanged his lots with Augustus Wurzback for Lot No. 7, New Settlement.

In 1791 he secured for himself and son Jonas the original grant for Lots 8 and 9, East New Settlement, which with Lot 7 made a splendid farm of six hundred acres.

Their family consisted of ten children, eight sons and two daughters, several of whom were born in the States. He died in the year 1815 and

with his wife is buried on the farm which they cleared.

Leonard Kratz was born in the town of Teutonhofer, three miles from Frankfort-on-Main, Germany, on the 14th February, 1756. Nothing is known of his parents except that his father, Peter Kratz, was killed three years after Leonard was born.

The next we hear of him is in 1776, when he was twenty years old, coming to America as a member of one of the Hessian regiments, which came over to help King George III quell a rebellion in the colonies.

They arrived at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and were instructed to proceed at once to Quebec, where they were to reinforce General Carleton's army and assist in driving the Americans from Canada. At Quebec they were joined by several regiments of Canadians and Indians and the whole army of 10,000 was placed under the command of Gen. Burgoyne. They moved down Lake Champlain and Lake George with the intention of forming a junction with an army from New York, and thereby cut off General George Washington's communications with the Eastern States. They met the Americans at Stillwater, near Saratoga, and after waiting for two weeks for the co-operation of General Clinton, General Burgoyne decided to try and cut his way through, as he was getting short of provisions. After failing in several desperate attempts, he decided to retire to the town of Saratoga, where, finding himself surrounded, he surrendered on the 11th of October, 1777, to General Gates, the American commander.

The army was taken to Virginia and held as prisoners of war for two years, after which they were given their choice of either free passage back to Germany or free grants of land as colonists.

Leonard Kratz, in 1779, when this offer was made, was absent on furlough visiting some friends. On his return he was quite surprised to find his company disbanded and most of them had sailed for home. Whether he would have returned with them or not, is hard to say, but when he found that his companions had gone, he at once decided to stay and take advantage of the free land grants.

In the years 1779 and 1780 there was a great rush of emigrants into the "Lone Lands" of Kentucky, and among one of the groups we find the families of Munger and Tofflemire, also the soldier, Leonard Kratz, who being familiar with the country, acted as guide to the party.

In the Munger family was a daughter named Mary. It is not known whether she and Leonard were acquainted before leaving Virginia, but somewhere on the journey it appears that Leonard proposed to Mary and was accepted. The next thing to be done was to obtain the consent of her parents, which, to his surprise, was most positively refused, their reason being that he was a soldier. This was a great disappointment to the lovers, but it also made them more determined. They waited until they were well on their way, when he brought them to a halt by declaring he would go on further as guide unless they would consent to his marriage with their daughter. This was placing them in an awkward position, for to be left in the wilds without a guide could not be considered for a moment, so after due deliberation they consented, and as soon as possible the ceremony was performed.

After this romantic event they proceeded on their way. Their destination was the fertile valley of the Licking, about thirty miles below the city of Cincinnati, where after a stockade

was built, which they called Ruddell's, they began to prepare for planting the next season.

In the following spring a company of 600 Indians and Canadians, and several pieces of artillery, made a raid into Kentucky. Simon Girty led the Indians and the whole force was under Captain Bird, an officer in the British army. They travelled down the Miami to the Ohio, thence to the Licking, up it as far as the Forks, where they left their boats, and then marched on to Ruddell's stockade

The settlers knew nothing of the approach of the raiders until the 22nd of June, when the report of one of the field piece announced their arrival at the stockade. This is hard to understand, as the British were twelve days marching from the Licking to Ruddell's, having cleared a road the greater part of the way.

A summons to surrender was sent by Capt. Bird, to which Capt. Ruddell replied that he would consent on one condition, which was that the settlers should be under the protection of the British, and not allowed to be prisoners of the Indians. Capt. Bird agreeing to this, the gates were immediately thrown open. The Indians then rushed into the stockade, seizing the first persons they could lay hands on, and claiming them as prisoners. Capt. Ruddell remonstrated with Capt. Bird, who admitted he dare not interfere with them, as their number was so much greater than the regular troops.

After the settlers had been made prisoners, the Indians proposed proceeding to Martin's stockade, some five miles further, but Capt. Bird was so affected by their conduct that he refused unless their commander would pledge himself that the Indians would take no more prisoners. Agreeing to this, they marched on and took the stockade.

The Indians were so delighted with their success that they desired Capt. Bird to continue further, but he refused, owing to the difficulty of procuring provisions, and also the necessity of descending the Licking before the waters fell, which might be expected at any time.

As they decided to go no further, they returned to the forks of the Licking, where they had left their boats. Here the Indians, retaining their prisoners, separated from the rest of the company and proceeded up the Miami River, one group taking the male and another the female prisoners.

With the women and children was the wife of Leonard Kratz and her new born child. One evening as the young mother was struggling up the bank with her baby in her arms she stumbled and fell, striking its head on the roots of a tree, killing it instantly. She dug a little grave and buried her child, after which she was compelled to continue on with the other prisoners. At last, after a long and tedious journey, they arrived at Detroit.

The male prisoners, laden with the plunder of their own homes, were marched across the country, suffering all sorts of indignities from the Indians. Kratz had a huge copper kettle strapped to his back, the marks of which he carried to his grave. Rest was denied him, only at the price of sitting up against a tree with his kettle on his back. He would have died of hunger but for a squaw who, while the Indians were feasting on horse-flesh, secured the entrails, which she gave him. They finally reached Detroit, where they were ransomed by Gen. Macomb, who paid their price in blankets. The sufferings endured by them on their march had rendered them unfit for work, so they were cared for by the authorities until they were able to look after themselves.

Leonard Kratz, not knowing where his wife was, hoped that her captors would bring her to Detroit. Every day he would go to the dock, where the canoes arrived from the different parts of the country, expecting that some day he would find her. At last he was rewarded, for as he was about to turn to a boat, which had just arrived, he heard a voice calling, "Leonard, don't you know me?" It was his wife. The hardships of the journey had so altered her appearance that he did not recognize her.

In 1781 Kratz, the Mungers and Tofflemires, who were also taken prisoners at Ruddell's, were settled on Hog island, where they remained until 1786, when Kratz moved to Trenton, Mich. The following year he and the Mungers moved to Grosse Pointe, where they became the tenants of Gen. Macomb.

While Leonard Kratz was a resident of Hog Island he became the object of a malicious slander. It was said that he, having been a soldier in the Hessian army, and remaining in America after it was disbanded, should be regarded as a deserter. This had the effect of annoying him greatly, with the result that in the winter of 1782, having provided for his wife, he set out for Germany, his purpose being to obtain his discharge and thus silence his traducers.

His return, after an absence of eighteen months, having secured his discharge and also a recommendation, was an event of great rejoicing to his trusting wife. The same spirit which possessed his enemies prior to his departure, manifested itself during his absence, by taunts and prophecies, that he would never return and that the object of his going was a mere excuse to leave his wife and child. But the same exalted sense of honor which prompted him to take so long a journey, compelled him to return.

The original copy of his discharge and recommendation is still in the possession of his descendants.

In 1787 Scratch and Munger, as privates in "Butler's Rangers" received grants from Major Matthews in the New Settlement.

Leonard Kratz and Mary Munger had eleven children. He died in the Township of Gosfield, August 12th, 1829, aged 73 years.

He changed his name from Kratz to Scratch before the year 1790. In proof of which the Land Board of Hesse always refers to him as Leonard Scratch.

As the Mungers and Tofflemires were with Kratz in Kentucky and also as they afterwards become pioneers of the New Settlement, I will give a few extracts concerning them from the Land Board of Hesse.

Detroit, 23rd March, 1792.

William Munger produced a ticket inscribed No. 56, signed R. Matthews, Major Commanding, and dated Detroit 1st, 1787, and claimed thereon the Board's authority for going on his land. The schedules were accordingly examined, and no impediment found to his receiving a certificate for a single lot of about 200 acres, the same was accordingly granted for lot No. 56, in the two connected townships, Lake Erie. The same William Munger having taken and subscribed the directed oaths and declarations.

He produced also certificates from Capt. W. Caldwell of his having served in the Rangers, and being discharged at the Peace, forwent an establishment in the Lower District to promote a settlement near the Strait; and the said Munger being on the approved list for provisions, and having made oath that he never received any since his discharge, and that he has a wife, the Board direct that the issue of provisions be made to them

monthly on producing the required certificates of improvement.

Detroit 10th Sept., 1790.

Martin Tofflemire received a grant of lot No. 13, and his son Henry lot No. 1, East New Settlement on Lake Erie.

In the case of Henry Tofflemire, the Board took into consideration the remarkable circumstances of his father, the petitioner's sufferings as known to part of the Board, his being a prisoner of war to a British officer, who had no authority over the Indians to rescue his children captured at the same time, from slavery, his wonderful exertions to support so large a family, and to pay so heavy a ransom for one of his children to the Indians, induce the board to meet the father's demands and readily grant a certificate for a single lot to his eldest son, who, being presented to the Board, although not of full age, appears fully equal to such an improvement of the lot granted as becomes a useful settler.

Leonard Scratch, private in Lt.-Col. Butler's Rangers, on October 1st, 1787, received from Major Mathews a grant of lot 12, New Settlement, which was confirmed by the Board on September 10th, 1790.

Leonard Scratch, one of the approved list, gave the Board equal satisfaction in the production of a discharge from the corps of Butler's Rangers, and certificates of his location at the Strait's mouth, and having received similar oath. The Board directs one month's provision to himself, wife and four children under ten years of age.

Lot No. 2, New Settlement, Leonard Scratch to John Wirt, June 8th, 1792.

Lot No. 2E, New Settlement, John Wirt to Leonard Scratch, June 8th, 1792.

Letter Major Arent S. DePeyster to Capt. McKee:

Detroit, 8th Sept., 1780.

Dear Sir,—I did myself the pleasure of writing you by George Girty's companion, the young Delaware, sending back the belt with a speech.

Nothing material has occurred since, yet I cannot let slip this favorable opportunity of assuring you of my good wishes.

If it is possible to obtain Mr. Rudel's wife, and the remainder of his children, you will do me an infinite pleasure.

Mrs. DePeyster and the gentlemen join in compliments to you and the Gentlemen with you.

I am, Dear Sir, your humble and obedient servant,

AREN'T DePEYSTER.

Mich. Pioneer, Vol. 10.

Letter Major DePeyster to Secretary Mathews:

Detroit, 4th Sept., 1792.

Dear Sir,—The bearer of this letter, Capt. Isaac Ruddell, was taken by Capt. Bird, who recommended him as a proper person to be fixed upon Hog Island, where he has lived quietly ever since, but having conceived the idea that an exchange of prisoners will take place, he is desirous of going down the country.

Give me leave to mention him to you as I did Capt. Orr.

I am, Dear Sir, your humble and obedient servant.

AT. S. DePEYSTER.

Mich. Pioneer, Vol. 10, p. 634.

The raid into Kentucky by Capt. Bird is corroborated by a letter from Capt. Alex. McKee to Major DePeyster, Commandant at Fort Detroit, dated July 8th, 1780.

Mich. Pioneer, Vol. 19, p. 541.

The following letter confirming this raid, I think is of interest. Major Arent DePeyster to Col. Mason Bolton, at Niagara.

Detroit, Aug 4th, 1780.

Sir,—I have the pleasure to acquaint you that Capt. Bird arrived here this morning with about one hundred and fifty prisoners, mostly Germans who speak English, the remainder coming in—for in spite of all his endeavors to prevent it, the Indians broke into their forts and seized many—the whole will amount to about three hundred and fifty.

Their chief desire is to remain and settle at this place, as you will see by the enclosed letter, received two days ago from Capt. Bird, which I now send, to give you my opinion of those people. Thirteen have entered into

the Rangers, and many more will enter. As the prisoners are greatly fatigued with travelling so far, some sick and some wounded, I shall defer sending them down, lest it be attended with bad consequences. The remainder, to save provisions, I shall distribute in different farm houses to help in the harvest—in the meantime we shall be able to know His Excellency's pleasure upon the subject, should it be approved to settle them.

In a former letter to the Commander-in-Chief I observed that it would be dangerous having so many prisoners here, but, I then thought those small forts were occupied by a different set of people.

I have the honor to be, Sir, your most obedient most humble servant,

ARENT S. DePEYSTER.



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