

SAMUEL HOLLAND AND JOHN COLLINS

Pioneer Canadian Surveyors

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SAMUEL HOLLAND

Prior to the Revolutionary War, Samuel Holland and George Washington were well known surveyors along the Atlantic coast of North America. Washington was made a Virginia surveyor in 1748, and in 1755, at the age of twenty-three, became a distinguished Colonel in General Braddock's army, and might have continued prominent in the British forces throughout all future struggles with disloyal American Colonists to the end of his career, had some courtesy and diplomacy been used by his British superior officers. Had George Washington been retained in the British service it is quite possible there never would have been a successful revolution, or even a real cause for continued civil war.

When General Wolfe made his memorable stand at Quebec in 1759,

Samuel Holland was his military engineer, and carried out Wolfe's commands for hurried defences on the field of battle; and when that small, plucky, and now world famous General fell on the Plains of Abraham fatally wounded, on the 13th of September, 1759 -victorious over that gallant, stricken rival, Montcalm, Samuel Holland, his alert military aide, was near at hand, and assisted in performing the last sad rites, and in mournfully carrying the body from the field.

Samuel Holland, in later years, became Surveyor-General of all the Atlantic Colonies between Canada and Virginia. He wrote Lord Dartmouth of the British Government, in 1775, that he was now ready to run the line between Massachusetts and New York; but already the smouldering embers of Civil War were bursting out in flame.

Had he and Washington - level-headed surveyors and peace-makers - been enabled at that time to have met and had a conference, perchance the trifling bickerings would have ended then and there. Making reference in later years to his very complete set of instruments, Samuel Holland said: "At one time they were very much deranged by being removed from their boxes by Mrs. Holland, to prevent them from being carried away by the Americans, while she and her family, in 1776, were their prisoners." When the disruption was over and peace was restored, Quebec became the permanent home of Samuel Holland and his family.

One of the many calamities of that revolutionary war was the thrusting out by the victors of all loyal, British colonists, after confiscating their homes, and brutally thrusting them

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penniless out on the street. British representatives at the peace-conference of Paris, abjectly fell down before the clever intrigues of Dr. Benjamin Franklin, leader of the American representatives. Instead of the British holding on to their Western-American millions of acres ceded to them by the Quebec Act, and entirely outside the domain of the American colonies, and using the proceeds of the sale of the Chicago group of fertile States - today worth untold millions - to compensate the spurned and hated, British loyalists - they permitted Franklin, by dishonest claims, false maps and supreme bluff, to cheat them out of that vast heritage, and this left tens of thousands of the most prosperous and loyal American colonists to drift away as bankrupts from their comfortable homes to other lands, bearing the jeers and jests and contumely of their supplanters.

Many bands of impoverished United Loyalists found their way to Canada through the pity, help and guidance of the British Government, and their most interesting history has yet to be fully written. I shall make brief reference here to one belated group of these Loyalist Pilgrims who mustered in New York, and sailed away in September, 1783, in seven vessels, guarded by a British warship, "The Hope," bound for the St. Lawrence River, and the wilds of Western Canada. They wintered at Sorel, a little below Montreal. Supplied with bateaux they ascended the rapids by slow stages the following Spring. The men waded in the swift currents, pulling and pushing the boats loaded with women and children, and their small bundles of earthly possessions, and provisions. They finally landed at Fort Frontenac and awaited the completion of the surveys, and the allotments of their promised free-grant, 200 acre homesteads.

Now Samuel Holland appears on the scene once more, as Surveyor-General of Canada, appointed by Governor Hal-dimand of Quebec. Accompanied by his Deputy-Surveyor, John Collins, with several fully equipped parties, Holland

had been in the field for some time, east and west of Fort Frontenac, running base-lines, and blocking out Counties, and Townships and Concessions, for the settlement of many thousands of hungry land-seekers, anxious to find shelter for the approaching winter, after their terrible experiences in army-tents the former winter at Sorel, where smallpox had invaded their camp.

West of Kingston, as you know, the Bay of Quinte joins Lake Ontario, from the North-West, the Murray Canal, some seven miles long, now unites North-West, the Murray Canal, some seven miles long, now unites the upper reaches of the Bay with Lake Ontario, opposite the town of Brighton. From thence the Bay winds down through a fertile county, joined by the Trent, Moira, Salmon and Napanee rivers, and after nearly a hundred mile course, debouches into Lake Ontario, and on into the St. Lawrence at Kingston, where Fort Frontenac was a strategic post in the days of trade with the Indians.

Holland and Collins paddled back and forth over those St. Lawrence and Bay of Quinte waters, from their central camps at Kingston and Adolphustown, until they had every acre of that long stretch of fertile, frontier country subdivided, and had located settlers upon their homesteads. The latter process was comparatively easy, for the settler usually chose his homestead by drawing a small marked slip of paper from the surveyor's wrinkled old hat. Doubtless these intelligent surveyors were fairly familiar with the earlier history of the country they were surveying, and around the big, blazing camp-fires at night, with pipes aglow after the dinner hour, and alternating with the lively songs and wild stories of the French and English members of the survey parties, Holland, or Collins, would tell of some of the chronicles of that intrepid explorer, Champlain who, in 1615, descended the river Trent from Lake Simcoe, with his Huron Indian allies, to the Bay of Quinte, paddle across its quiet waters, and possibly camped on the very spot where they

were not camping; breasted the rougher waters of Lake Ontario, and attached the alert and dreaded Iroquois in their comfortable wigwams south of the lake, suffered severe defeat, beat a hasty retreat back across the lake and spent a miserable winter somewhere in the forests north of the Bay of Quinte.

On another occasion the other surveyor would tell about the intrepid De la Salle, another French explorer, leaving his headquarters at Fort Frontenac, with his skilled crew of voyageurs, paddling up the Bay of Quinte to its headwaters, portaging over into Lake Ontario, from thence ascending the Niagara River, skirting the mighty falls with canoes over their heads, and provisions hanging on their backs, reaching and crossing Lake Erie, threading the various inland streams to the distant Mississippi - "The Father of Waters". La Salle's canoes were always laden with the choicest of furs on those several return trips, which were stored at Fort Frontenac, sold in France, and gave him both wealth and fame. Then the final expedition from France to the mouth of the Mississippi, direct by sea, and his pathetic end from a shot by one of his expedition when lost, and wandering in the marshes still seeking the outlet of the Mississippi, where he was to build the city of his dreams. All these heroic exploits recounted would be sufficient for the Holland-Collins encampment on the Bay of Quinte for another night.

That encampment at Adolphustown, or Fourth Township from Kingston, as known to the surveyors, was assigned to Major Peter Van-Alstine, and his contingent of three hundred British and Dutch soldier families, from the State of New York. First Town was granted to Captain Grass who had formerly lived at Fort Frontenac as a prisoner, and who told such an attractive tale at New York of the wonderful country in which he had lived, that he and his friends were given choice of the townships, and of course selected King's town or Kingston. Then General Rogers and his band of soldiers were assigned Second

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Town, or Ernest Town; and Third Town, or Fredericksburgh, was given to General Johnson and his soldier families.

Trouble arose when it was found that there were not enough homesteads in the second and third townships to satisfy the Rogers and Johnson contingents. The latter demanded Fourth Town, as well, and that aroused the proud Knicker-Bocker VanAlstine, and his Adolphustown contingent. The contention becoming serious demanded skilled diplomacy on the part of the surveyors, who represented Governor Haldimand in the field remote from the seat of Government. Unfortunately, Collins did not stand with his Chief, and that made "confusion worse confounded".

Dr. William Canniff's "Settlement of Upper Canada" was published in 1869. Living in Belleville, and being acquainted with the U.E. Loyalist descendants of this district, his following statement of the dispute may probably be regarded as fairly accurate: "It would seem that Surveyor-General Holland, who surveyed the Fourth Town, and Deputy-Surveyor Collins, who surveyed the Third Town, had some trouble with respect to Frederickburg Additional. The number of lots composing the Third Town - Frederickburg - at first, was not enough to supply the whole battalion. When it was seen that all could not be accommodated in the lots of Third Town, it was determined to take a certain number from Fourth Town. To this Surveyor Holland consented, probably with the concurrence of Major VanAlstine.

But more of Rogers company continued to come, and Collins wished to absorb the whole of Fourth Town to accommodate them. In this he was no doubt supported by officers of the battalion - Sir John Johnson, among the rest; but Holland in the interest of those who had already settled in Fourth Town, under VanAlstine, objected. The statement comes to us, that Holland and Collins had well nigh

fought a duel in connection with the matter. As Collins was a deputy under Holland there must have been some strong influence supporting Collins, which was probably through Sir John Johnson, but Holland having completed the survey of the side lines to be desired, started precipitately to Quebec with his report. Collins on hearing of this, started after. Whatever may have been the contest at headquarters, Holland's report of the Fourth Town was accepted, and the Third Town was limited to its present size.

This was probably one of the fiercest surveyors' conflicts in the history of our province, long since forgotten, where Adolphustown - the smallest township in the province, with only about 11,000 acres - was cut nearly through the centre after being surveyed and lots numbered. The dismembered part is now called "Fredericksburgh Additional", and is a part of the adjoining township. Another distinguishing mark of Adolphustown is that the township records have been preserved from the first organized Council, under Governor Simcoe's legislation in 1791. Moreover a frame Church erected by the settlers at that time, which afforded a place of worship for the whole Bay of Quinte district, has safely weathered the elements, is still in use, and is now being renovated and made serviceable for another century. There too, beside the church, Sir John Macdonald spent part of his boyhood days, and a cairn has recently been erected over the devastated home by the Federal Government. The writer's great-grandfather was one of those original settlers, was a member of those original Councils, helped to build and worshipped in the original Church. The writer has heard Sir John Macdonald declare that that period spent in Adolphustown were the happiest days of his life.

A long letter is on record in the public archives from John Collins to Governor Haldimand, dated August 12th, 1748, prior, it would seem, to the Adolphustown dispute which seems to

me of sufficient interest to quote the concluding paragraph.

"With respect to the Fourth township nothing can be done until your Excellency determines to whom it belongs. No doubt the parties who are obliged to quit their claims will expect their lands in some other place. I shall therefore without loss of time, when the business above mentioned is completed, go in search of another township, and by the first conveyance send your Excellency a plan of the settlement lately made, with an account of my success. I find great difficulty to get men, and am obliged to pay high. I have taken the liberty to draw on Captain Maurer for 100 Currency to carry on this service, which I hope your Excellency will approve of. Your Excellency may faithfully rely on my bringing this troublesome business to as speedy conclusion as possible".

John Collins had a long career as a prominent surveyor in this province and his name has been perpetuated in "Collins Bay", a short distance west of Kingston. Others have written further particulars of his interesting career, and his biography was withheld from publication by Mr. Chipman for several years, while endeavouring to secure a photograph of this distinguished early surveyor.

Completing his long and difficult task assigned him by Governor Haldimand, that other illustrious pioneer, Canadian surveyor, Samuel Holland - with whose name that of John Collins will ever be associated - returned to the beautiful home he had previously purchased in the city of Quebec, in 1780; and where in 1791, he entertained Edward, Duke of Kent, the father of Queen Victoria. There, from the St. Foy Road, may be seen today a marble slab, bearing this inscription: "Here rest Major Samuel Holland, and his son who killed in a duel, at Montreal, by Major Ward, of the 60th regiment," by a shot from one of a brace of pistols, presented to Major Holland by General Wolfe.

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