



# The Story of GORE

II – November 2012

## More on the naming of Gore

Thank you all for your many comments and compliments on our first installment of Gore history. As you remember, we discussed the origins of the name 'Gore' and we concluded that it came from Joseph Bouchette's 1824 description in which he noted that the "land composing this vacant tract or gore is in general fit for culture." Bouchette repeated the phrase in his 1832 description (see below). Several people have asked us about Sir Francis Gore and how his name became associated with the township.

Precisely when the Francis Gore connection crept into the historical literature on the township is not clear, but the earliest reference we have found dates to 1910 when James White, a fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, published a report to the Geographic Board of Canada on Place-Names in Quebec. The entry for Gore reads as follows: "Gore, township, Argenteuil, after Sir Francis Gore, Lieut.-Governor of Upper Canada, 1806-11. Or, because it fills a gap, or 'gore' between the adjoining townships and seignioriy." James White is correct in saying the name Gore comes from its shape and location. However, he gives no source for linking Francis Gore to the township.

Let's look at a few facts. Sir Francis Gore, a retired major in the British army, became Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada in 1806, relinquished his office in 1811, to resume it again in 1815 until 1817. Thus when it came to defending the country during the War of 1812, he was noticeably absent and handed the reins to the army under the British Major General Sir Isaac Brock.

Francis Gore enjoyed the high life, but as concerns affairs of state he had a very mixed reputation. In fact, in his book *Earliest Toronto*, author Robert MacIntosh, describes him as "clearly the most incompetent and disliked Lieutenant Governor in the history of Upper Canada."<sup>2</sup>

Why, then, would either Joseph Bouchette or the Irish settlers of Gore want the township named after him? Not only was Francis Gore heartily disliked, it is doubtful he ever came to Lower Canada, let alone this community.

In addition, naming the township for Francis Gore would not have enjoyed the support of American settlers in the surrounding area such as Lachute. In his second term in office, Gore attempted to pass legislation to refuse land grants to American refugees coming to Upper Canada. He lost and shortly thereafter, he left for his home country.

## Joseph Bouchette's 1832 description of Gore Township<sup>3</sup>

The emigrant settlements in the Gore in the rear of Argenteuil are chiefly established on the borders of a fine lake about 1 mile in length by ¼ mile in width. The land composing this tract or Gore is in general fit for culture, and the front part has been recently surveyed and divided into 4 ranges containing several beautiful lakes, on the borders of which are the houses of the new settlers.

The surface is mountainous and the soil rocky, but not so much as to prevent the establishment of excellent farms. The soil is a clayey sandy loam, for the growth of wheat and Indian corn not to be surpassed, and is generally fit for any other grain. The timber is chiefly maple and beech, but there are many other varieties of useful wood: the maple affords large quantities of sugar. 1500 acres and upwards are under cultivation: the annual produce per acre is 20 bushels of wheat, 30 of Indian corn and other grain in proportion.

The average price of labour is from 2s. to half a dollar a day, but in summer agricultural labourers are scarce at any price, the different canals employing at high wages all the superfluous population.

Hemp could doubtless, be cultivated to great advantage and flax is already grown on most farms. — Three roads lead from the S. of Argenteuil, but they do not afford a comfortable conveyance. If the contemplated road to the Rideau should ever be cut, it would of course tend materially to improve this part of the country. —

A meeting-house has been lately erected, and the rector of St. Andrew's performs service at stated periods. The settlers in the Gore are all Irish and exclusively of the Church of England. — A school-house has also been lately erected, and the scholars are from 30 to 40. — One of the proprietors of lands in the Gore is Mr. Perkins, a naval officer, whose residence is near Lake Bouchette.

Here are several potash factories but no corn-mill; the inhabitants are obliged to take their grain for grinding and their timber for sawing to the Argenteuil seigniorial mills, a distance of 6 or 7 miles. — Here are about 300 head of neat cattle, chiefly of a mixed breed between the American and Canadian; if they are not so profitable as the new breeds they are, at least, useful and hardy animals. —

Several beautiful lakes in the t. and the Gore abound with trout, pickerel, eels and other varieties of fish. The waters of lake Bouchette are clear as a diamond and afford abundance of fine salmon- trout; it is about one mile in circumference, and is bounded by Chatham, Wentworth and the Gore. These lakes, when the country becomes more clear of timber, with the fine diversified hill and dale scenery, will afford one of the most picturesque and romantic spots in the province. —

When it is considered that only a few years ago this whole tract of country was a dense forest, several miles from the residence of a human being, it must strike every one with surprise that so much has been effected by poor settlers without capital or any other resource but their labour. Branches of each family having been in the habit of working during the summer on the canals, they have, by saving the produce of their industry, been able to cover this extensive tract with their herds and flocks. These people left their native land with trifling resources, without patronage, guides or protectors, and are now living in comparative plenty without excepting, perhaps, a single family; and there is not a finer looking company of militia in the province than the settlers of the Gore.

### The 1832 Land Petition<sup>4</sup>

Return of Settlers on the Crown Lands called the Gore in the rear of the Seigniorship of Argenteuil in the County of Lake of the 2 Mountains.

I do hereby certify that the within named settlers were located by me in the year 1829 by order of His Excellency Sir James Kempt. That they had occupied their lots by permission of Lord Dalhousie for several years before they received their Tickets of Location, that they are all residing upon their Lots, and have made extensive improvements, in clearing, buildings and roads. They consist entirely of Irish Protestants and are very industrious.

Thomas Barron Agent. Argenteuil, 3rd January 1832.

Petition of the settlers on the Crown Land called the Gore, in rear of the seigniorship of Argenteuil in the county of Two Mountains, who have performed their settling duties, and pray that letters patent may [be issued] for their lots.

Robert Kenny	Robert McMahon
Thomas Morrow	Robert Smith
William Wright	James Stephenson
John Mayble	George Sheret
Andrew Simmons	John Sheret
Daniel Simmons	James Stephenson
James Campbell, Sr.	Andrew Simmons, Jr
Samuel Campbell	James Campbell
Robert Mayble	William Boyde
Arthur Davis	John Campbell
Thomas Robertson	John Stephenson
Patrick Kerr	William Henderson
George Stephenson	Wm Boyde Jr
Wm Stephenson	Alexr Johnston
James McMannus	Edward Beaty
John Simmons	James Boyde
William Christy	William Hunter
? Christy	Alexr Cochran
Wm McManness	Thomas Crawford
William Jackle?	David Christy
Wm Crawford	John McDonald
Thomas Hess?	James Bennet
Jacob Hess?	Thomas Smith
Daniel Parker	John Parker
William Byrne?	Michael Payne
Joseph McMahon	William McDonald
John Bryan	Michael Craig
William Craig	Samuel Rodgers
Hazlet Hicks	George Rodgers
Frederic Rodgers	Widow Richard Robertson
Charles Moor	William Evans
George Jackson	John Kerr
Edward Dawson	William Wilson

Henry McDonald	Andrew Elliot
James Armstrong	Robert Armstrong Jr
Robert Armstrong Sr	James McDonald

Total 72<sup>5</sup>

Argenteuil 3rd January, 1832

Thomas Barron, Agent

### Ireland to the Gore: from poverty to comparative plenty<sup>6</sup>

Joseph Bouchette, Surveyor-General of Lower Canada, had a great deal of admiration for the first settlers of the Gore. They were, he noted in his 1832 report, all Irish and all of the Church of England and arrived here "without capital or any other resource but their labour." In just a few years they had cleared enough land for growing crops and raising cattle. They had built a church and a school house. "These people," wrote Bouchette, "left their native land with trifling resources, without patronage, guides or protectors and are now living in comparative plenty...."

The first group of Irish settlers came to the Gore in the mid to late 1820s. By 1832 a total of 70 families had taken up residence in the township. For sure life here was not easy for them, but back in Ireland living conditions were becoming intolerable. Why exactly did men like James Stephenson, Robert Smith, Robert McMahon and William Henderson (to name just a few) bring their families to Canada?

They were part of a wave of 'pre-famine' emigrants who left Ireland in search of a better life. Mostly Protestant, these settlers began leaving Ireland in the early 1800s. Many came from Northern Ireland—then called Ulster—though in the case of Gore the majority came from counties such as Mayo, Sligo, Leitrim, Monaghan and Cavan in what is now the Republic of Ireland.

Overpopulation appears to have been the fundamental cause of this early migration. Between 1754 and 1830 the population of Ireland grew from 2.4 million to over 7 million. Traditionally, the marriage age was relatively low, which led to very large families. In addition, the Penal Laws of Ireland discriminated against Roman Catholics. Land could be passed down from generation to generation, but it was continually subdivided among all offspring. This meant families had land to farm, but the parcels became smaller and smaller.

The era of the Napoleonic Wars from 1790 to 1814 was a time of relative prosperity, but in 1814 a post-war slump hit causing widespread unemployment and destitution. In the farming areas severe weather destroyed grain and potato crops. In addition, a series of harsh winters and waves of small pox and typhus hit and between 1816 and 1818 some 50,000 people died of these diseases.

Meanwhile, in 1814 with the end of the war, shipping lanes across the Atlantic re-opened for business. Britain looked to Canada to replace the Baltic as its source of timber to fuel industrial growth and shipbuilding. Here in Quebec, timber from the Ottawa Valley was sent downriver to Quebec City and loaded on ships bound for England.

Irish migrants filled these same ships on the return voyage to Quebec. In 1815-1816 alone, 20,000 people left Ireland.

Famine and disease continued through the 1820s and 1830s as did the exodus. Between 1828 and 1837 almost 400,000 Irish left for North America.

The Protestant pre-famine migrants—those who came to Gore included—were poor to be sure, but they were not entirely destitute. They had enough funds to pay for the trans-Atlantic voyage, they had some skills and many were semi literate. More than anything else they had drive. Their departure constituted both a brain and a brawn drain. One Protestant clergyman back in Ireland noted that “the young, the enterprising and the industrious leave us,” while the old and infirmed remain behind.

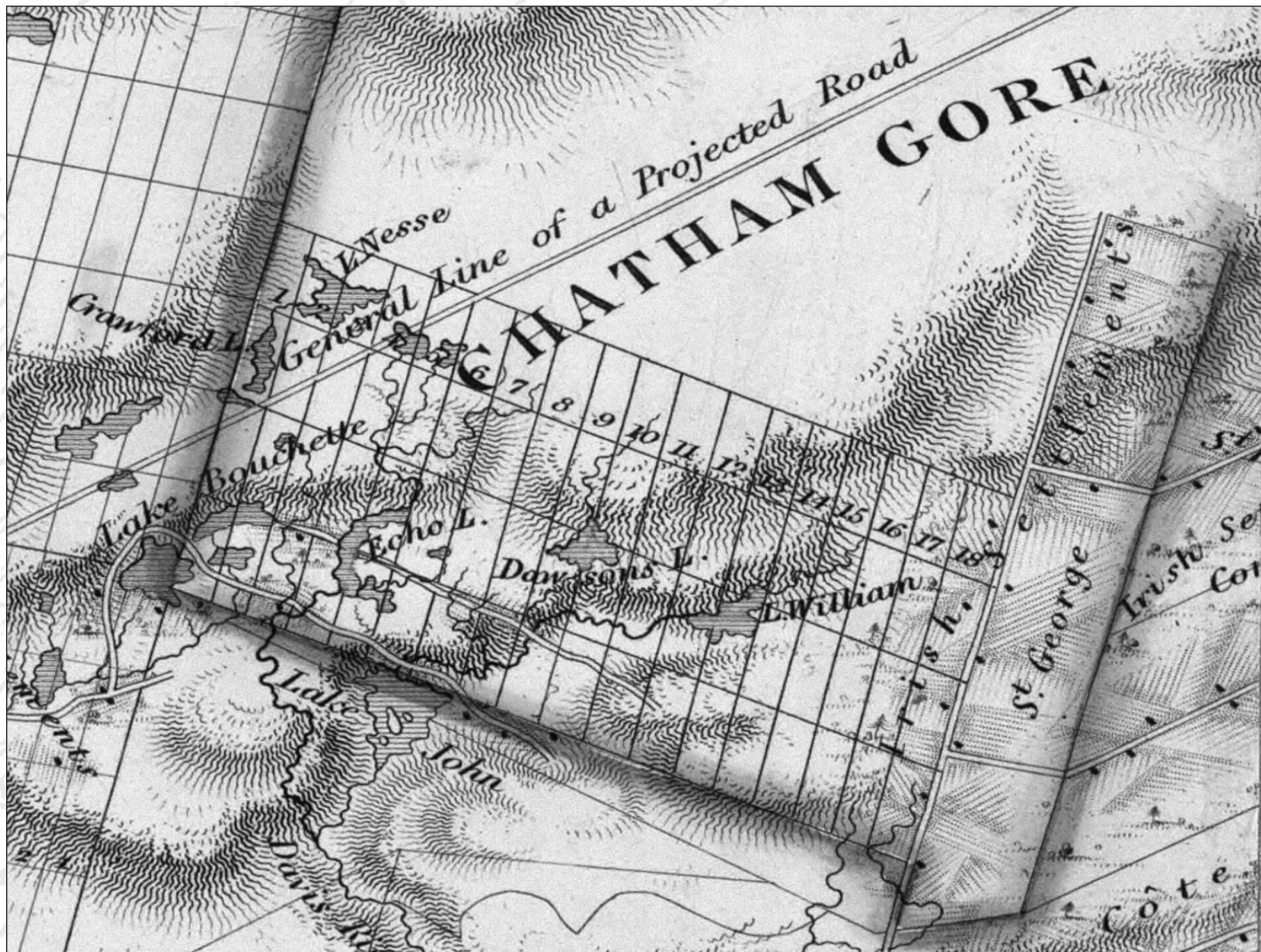
Perhaps the most difficult part of emigrating was a great sense of loss both for those who left and those who stayed. Emigration was considered an act of disloyalty to the Irish soil. In 1845 when the Great Famine began, a tidal wave of humanity came to North America and as communities formed on this side of the Atlantic and communication between the Old and the New world improved, the stigma of emigration finally began to lose its grip.

LJM & LJ

### Joseph Bouchette's map of 1831

Joseph Bouchette's 1831 map of the District of Montreal measures 1 metre by 2.3 metres and covers the entire area of Lower Canada and a large portion of Upper Canada. The map is stunning in its detail. The section reproduced here of Chatham Gore shows the ranges and lots, several lakes and two roads running parallel from west to east along the bottom of the township. Lake Bouchette is now Lac Clair or Clear Lake. In his descriptions of the township Bouchette talks simply of Gore. On this map, however, he calls it Chatham Gore, suggesting it is a gore of land associated with Chatham. The township was, from time to time, also called North Gore.

In 1831 when this map was made, the final name "Gore" had not yet been determined though it was the most frequently used term. In 1840 when the Letters Patent were issued, the name was established as the "Township of Gore".



Joseph Bouchette, Detail of Topographical Map of the District of Montreal, Lower Canada, 1831. (London: James Wyld, 1832.)  
Digital image, David Rumsey Historical Map Collection ([www.davidrumsey.com/](http://www.davidrumsey.com/) : accessed September 19, 2012).com/  
accessed September 19, 2012).



Settlement near Chatham on the Ottawa River, QC about 1865 by Alexander Henderson, MP-000.268.1, McCord Museum, Montreal, QC. Exhibition label: This photograph illustrates the harsh conditions endured by people who chose to live in forest regions far away from such major centres as Montreal and Quebec City. Near the house can be spotted a camera and tripod, covered with a black cloth.

### **Thomas Barron**

There are two Thomas Barrons associated with Lachute and environs. The first, Colonel Thomas Barron (1793-1864), arrived in Lachute in 1809 and was a Justice of the Peace as well as a Crown Land Agent. It is he who organized and signed the 1832 petition of settlers in Gore. The younger Thomas Barron (1832-1912) was his nephew. He became mayor of Lachute and a registrar for the county. Several streets in Lachute are named after him, his wife and his children.

### **The Duties of the Settlers**

Those first Irish settlers were required to fulfill a set of obligations before they could obtain title to the land. As Thomas Barron noted in his petition of 1832 the 72 men listed had "performed their settling duties." What were these duties? According to the draft of letters patent they were required to plant and effectively cultivate at least two acres of land within three years and seven acres of land within seven years.<sup>7</sup> The area was heavily forested and clearing the land was an arduous task. The wood was used for many purposes—log housing, fencing and fuel among them—but making potash for sale in Montreal was a way for settlers to raise ready cash. A 500 lb barrel was valued at between \$80 and \$100.

What is potash? Potash or potassium carbonate,  $K_2CO_3$ , was made by pouring hot water on wood ash and collecting the resulting filtered fluid called lye. This was boiled down to a brownish residue which was potash or "black salts". It was normally sold at this stage of the process or it might be refined by oven heating to become the much more valuable pearl ash. Potash was used in the manufacture of glass and coloured fabric and pearl ash in the making of soap, pottery and china.

### **Picturesque & romantic**

An 1833 publication aimed at potential emigrants from Ireland and other parts of the United Kingdom promoted settlement in Canada and included the following entry on Gore.

"... in the rear of the Seignior of Argenteuil, is a small tract called Chatham Gore, interspersed with several beautiful lakes, which make the country picturesque and romantic; they abound with fish, particularly lake Bouchette, whose waters are remarkably clear, and afford plenty of fine salmon trout. The land is fit for agriculture. The population is now about 500, nearly all Irish, and of the Church of England. There is one church, a well-attended school, pot and pearl ash works, tanneries, &c."<sup>8</sup>

### **Upper and Lower Canada**

At the end of the Seven Years War and with the Treaty of Paris in 1763, France ceded the northern part of New France to England in exchange for the return of Guadeloupe. In 1763 the British Parliament named the area the Province of Quebec. The Constitutional Act of 1791 reformed this political entity to accommodate the 10,000 Empire Loyalists desiring to leave the American colonies after the Revolution, by creating Upper and Lower Canada, thus what is now southern Ontario and southern Quebec.

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### **Footnotes**

<sup>1</sup> James White, *Ninth Report on the Geographic Board of Canada*, 1910, Part II, Place-Names in Quebec, Ottawa: King's Printer, 1910, p. 179.

<sup>2</sup> Robert MacIntosh, *Earliest Toronto*, Toronto: General Store Publishing House, 2006, p. 69.

<sup>3</sup> Joseph Bouchette, *A Topographical Dictionary of Lower Canada*, London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, Green and Longman, 1832, p. 76.

<sup>4</sup> Lower Canada Land Petitions, RG 1 L3L, Barron, Thomas, 1832-1840, Vol. 114, pages 56111-56114, Microfilm C-2537. (Online source: Library and Archives Canada, Lower Canada Land Petitions, Barron, Thomas, 1832-1840.)

<sup>5</sup> In the May 2012 issue of *Gore Express* we said a total of 71 people are listed in the petition. The correct number is 72.

<sup>6</sup> The information on Ireland is excerpted from the [Irishtimes.com](http://www.irishtimes.com), Pre-famine Emigration. (Online source: <http://www.irishtimes.com/ancestor/magazine/emigration/pre-fam.htm>.)

<sup>7</sup> Joseph Bouchette, Draft of Letters Patent. National Archives of Canada, Lower Canada Land Papers, microfilm C-2537, pp. 56114 to 56139. (Not available online.)

<sup>8</sup> Francis A. Evans, *The Emigrant's Directory and Guide to Obtain Lands and Effect a Settlement in the Canadas*, Dublin: W. Curry, Jr. and Co., 1833, pp. 123-124. (Online source: <http://openlibrary.org>)