



The Story of GORE

V – July 2015

Gore and neighbouring communities

With this issue of the *Gore Express*, we present the fifth installment in our continuing series on the history of Gore. We have covered a lot of ground thus far – we have looked at the first petitions of settlers and at the reports of surveyors Joseph Bouchette and William Teasdale. We talked about conditions in Ireland in the early nineteenth century and we described the long journey from Ireland to Gore. In the last installment, we looked at agricultural development in the township up to the census of 1851. In less than 25 years the population of Gore grew from about 50 people to almost 1000 – an enormous rate of increase by any measure.

In future issues we will look at the lakes and villages, at the schools and churches and at changing demographics, but for the moment we are going to turn back the clock a bit and talk about the settlement of Gore in relation to the surrounding area. As we noted at the very beginning of the *Story of Gore*, the township is so named for its shape and because it was wedged between the Seigneuries of Argenteuil and Deux Montagnes to the south and east and the townships of Wentworth and Chatham to the west.

A natural affinity has always existed between Gore and the Seignury of Argenteuil. Settlers bound for Gore landed at St. Andrews East or Carillon and then travelled up to Lachute before heading north on the Dunany Road. Thomas Barron, who lived in Lachute, was the Crown Land Agent for the region, including Gore.

Like Gore, the adjoining township of Wentworth became home to many Irish Protestant immigrants. A strong connection between Gore and Wentworth was established at the outset – the first settlers came to Gore via Wentworth and when Joseph Bouchette visited Gore his guide was Archibald McArthur of Wentworth. Similarly, immigrants to Mille Isles – the municipality along the north side of Gore – were predominantly Irish Protestant, though in general they arrived here somewhat later than immigrants to Gore. Here too, folk knew one another well. People moved back and forth between Gore and Wentworth or Mille Isles. LJ

Gore and St. Columban

Less well known is the relationship between the people of Gore and the neighbouring Seignury de Deux Montagnes and its settlements, most particularly St. Columban or St. Colomban as it is now known. St. Columban was settled during the same period as Gore,

also by Irish immigrants, but whereas Gore was predominately Irish Protestant, St. Columban was established for settlement by Irish Roman Catholics. The first families arrived in the mid-1820s from Ireland via Montreal.

The Irish of St. Columban left the old country for the same reasons as those families which settled in Gore: Economic depression, periodic famine, disease and religious discontent. In his 1955 article on St. Columban, Brother Jerome Hart wrote:

The miseries of these good people were emphasized by rents, tithes, and leases. In contrast, by emigrating to Canada with its vast acres of land, the Irish were removed from distress and want, and were given the opportunity for independence and happiness.

The settlement and growth of the two communities were almost mirror images of one another. During the 1820s, 30s, and 40s, the population in both areas grew steadily and by the 1851 census St. Columban had 888 inhabitants, Gore, 976. As famine swept through Ireland in the 1840s, both groups welcomed new immigrants from the old country. In addition, both benefitted from a high birth rate.

We don't know how much folk in the two communities saw of one another, particularly in the early days. Roads connecting the two settlements did not exist until at best, the late 1840s. Oddly enough, linguistic differences could have been a barrier to communication and the following story, taken from Cyrus Thomas' *A History of Argenteuil and Prescott Counties*, illustrates this point:

Matthew Hammond, from the County of Cavan, Ireland, settled in the east part of Gore in 1830, and lived there the remainder of his life. He had four sons and three daughters, who arrived at maturity. In 1840, his eldest son, James, also came with his family, and settled in Mille Isles on 200 acres....

The next summer [1841], towards evening one day, he [James] started out with his little son, David, to look for his cows. They lost their way in the woods, wandered into Morin, which was then an unbroken wilderness, and, finally, came out in St. Columban, ten miles distant, in a direct line from home. There, at Phelan's store, Mr. Hammond learned where they were. In their wanderings they had traveled many miles in a circuitous route, and though they came to a shanty

or two in the forest, they could learn nothing, as they contained only women, who could not speak English; and, indeed, they were too much frightened at the appearance of a stranger to say anything. The lost man and boy were absent three days, and their neighbors had been out searching for them in all directions.

What language did the women speak? In all likelihood Gaelic. James Hammond was probably an English speaker. In his study of St. Columban, Claude Bourguignon notes that in the 1830s many of the people in that parish spoke only Gaelic. A fair number of people

in Argenteuil were Gaelic speakers, but they were for the most part Scots immigrants who lived in the communities of St. Andrews, Chatham and Harrington.

Though they held much in common, some important differences existed between them. The two communities were on opposite sides of the proverbial religious divide and by the late 1840s this proved to be a source of considerable tension between these neighbours. As we will see, a number of events and developments gave rise to feelings of ill will in St. Columban toward the people of Gore. LJ



A section of James Wyld's 1837 map of Montreal showing Gore and environs. The "Irish settlements" to the east is St. Columban. Also seen here is a portion of the seigneurie of Deux Montagnes, including St. Benoît.

The 1830s – cholera, economic hardship, social and political unrest

For newly arrived immigrants life in Gore held the promise of a future free of disease, famine and poverty. With hard work, settlers could obtain freehold land grants and would be able to prosper. Life always throws a curve ball, however, and though the 1830s started off well enough, in 1832 a hitherto unknown deadly disease began to sweep through Europe, including Great Britain and Ireland. Cholera – a waterborne bacterium which causes vomiting and diarrhea – crossed the Atlantic with immigrants bound for Canada. Quebec, where the immigrants landed, and Montreal, where the majority settled, were especially hard hit. Cholera spread at an alarming rate and in February of 1832 the now famous quarantine station was established at Grosse Isle, just outside Quebec City. In that year as many as 4,000 people died of cholera either during the Atlantic crossing, or in Quebec City or Montreal.

The number of deaths in Argenteuil during that cholera epidemic is unknown. In his *History of Argenteuil County*, Cyrus Thomas cites about 20 actual cases and says many more died, especially in the Grenville area. Thomas makes no mention of cholera deaths in Gore. However, Wilma Elder (1921-2006), a long-time resident of Lakefield, told this author that cholera graves are scattered all over the township.

In Montreal the cholera epidemic, combined with the failure of public health authorities to adequately address questions of sanitation in poorer areas of the city, led to social unrest. In addition, during the decade of the 1830s an international economic downturn negatively impacted the Quebec economy. In many rural areas farmers suffered for years from low crop yields and in 1837 some experienced outright crop failures. In the meantime, a deepening constitutional standoff was developing in Lower Canada over the failure of the British colonial government to address undemocratic procedures in the legislative assembly. In the autumn of 1837 social and political tensions erupted in armed conflict. LJ

The Gore Loyal Volunteers and the Rebellion of 1837

The Rebellion of 1837 is, even today, the subject of sometimes intense historical discussion; it has been described as one of the great traumatic experiences in Canadian history. Our interest here is in the role of the Gore Loyal Volunteers in events which unfolded in the seigneurie of Two Mountains at the end of 1837.

Exactly when the Gore Loyal Volunteers were formed is not clear from the historical record. Volunteer militias have a long history in this country dating to the French

Regime. Militias became especially important during the War of 1812, and thereafter became part of a standing military presence in Lower and Upper Canada, up to and beyond Confederation in 1867.

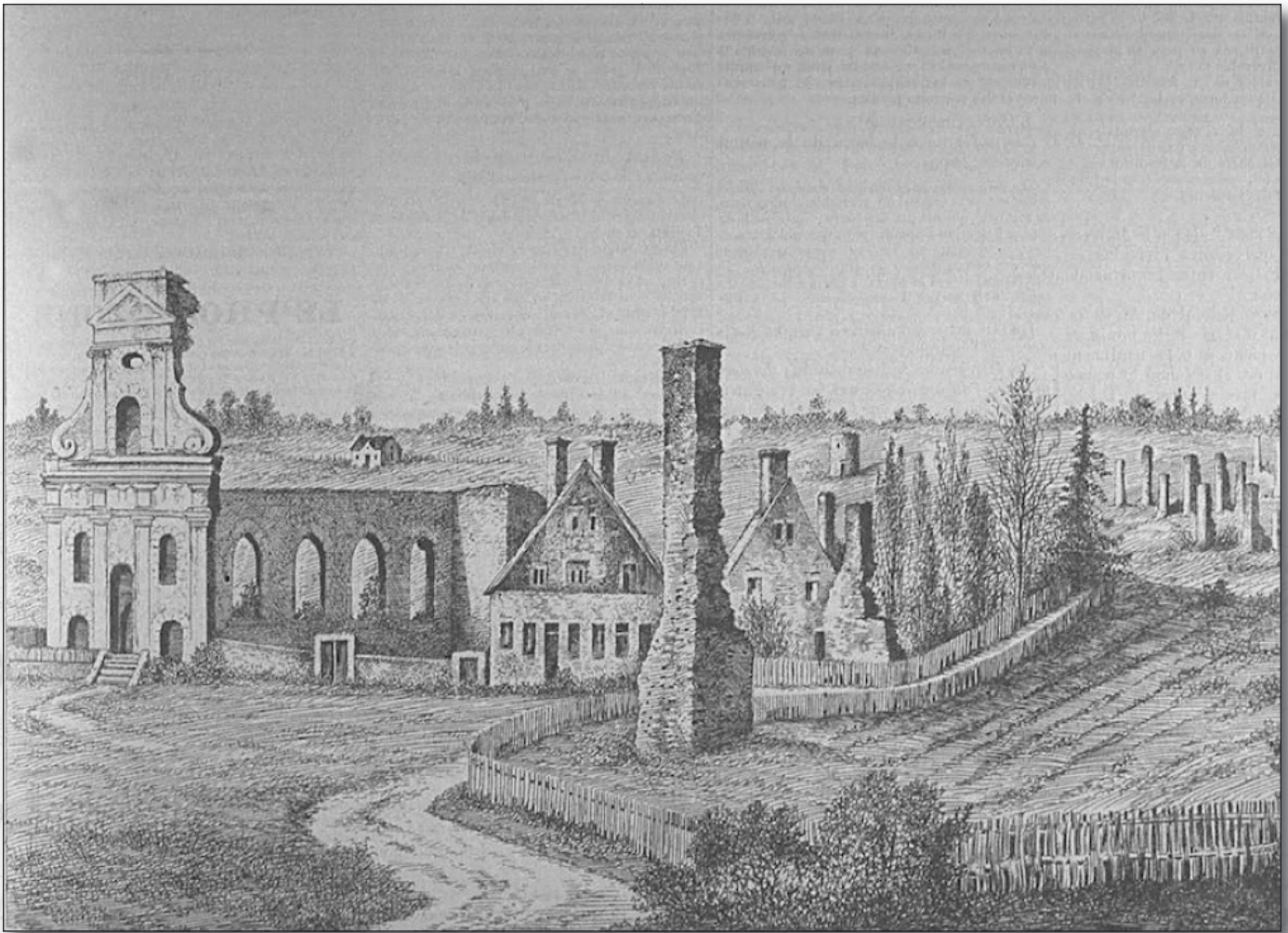
Here in Quebec, virtually every community had at least one company of volunteers. Gore had five companies at one time and each was likely organized as soon as enough settlers had moved in and signed up, perhaps as early as 1827. Joseph Bouchette commented on the Gore militia in his report of 1832. There is, he wrote, “*not a finer looking company of militia in the province than the settlers of the Gore.*”

In Gore especially (though elsewhere as well), the development of militia companies went hand-in-hand with the growth of the Orange Lodge. Among other things, the militias were a source of steady employment – volunteers were paid in cash and in the 1830s currency was a very precious commodity. The income from militia work helped bring the Gore settlers into the cash economy.

The actions of the Gore Loyal Volunteers during the Rebellion of 1837 are mentioned, albeit briefly, in just about every history on the subject and the notations are not particularly complimentary. According to Joseph Schull, the “*ever-to-be-trusted Orangemen from the Gore*” were among some two thousand volunteer militia forces which, along with one company of regulars and a considerable amount of alcohol, destroyed and pillaged St. Benoit on December 15 and 16, 1837, leaving the church in total ruins.

The Gore Loyal Volunteers were, it seems, particularly zealous in their task, so much so that the Roman Catholic Bishop of Montreal, Mgr. Jean-Jacques Lartigue commented on their actions. On December 19, 1837, just a few days after the conflagration at St. Benoit, he sent a letter to the Bishop of Québec reporting on events. « *Il y a, dit-on, à Gore, dans ces environs, un tas d'orangistes qui se plaisent à détruire tout ce qui est catholique et canadien...* » (“There are, in Gore and environs, a bunch of Orangemen who take pleasure in destroying everything that is Catholic and ‘canadien’...”) That same day he wrote another letter, this one to the curé of Ste. Scholastique. Mgr. Lartigue said a report had come in to him from William Snowden, a magistrate in the seigneurie of Two Mountains, that the men of Gore were guilty of “serious plunder” at St. Benoit. The bishop, it should be noted, was equally critical of the rebels whom he criticized for raising arms against the government.

Meanwhile, the new bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Montreal, Rev'd George Jehoshaphat Mountain, was doubtless also concerned about the conduct of the Gore



Events of 37-38: – The ruins of Saint-Benoit.

militias. The vast majority of Gore residents were professed Anglicans. In 1834, as archdeacon, Rev'd Mountain had visited the township and had expressed his concern for the wellbeing of the settlers who were being served only by visiting clergy once a month.

In January of 1838, within weeks of the St. Benoit debacle, the first resident Anglican minister arrived in Lakefield and by year's end a wooden church, able to hold over a hundred people comfortably, had been constructed. This marked the founding of the Parish of Gore.

Thus, loyalty and fine appearances notwithstanding, the actions of the Gore militias during the Rebellion of 1837 were the subject of some discussion in religious circles and likely in government circles as well. **LJ**

The next installment of the *Story of Gore* will feature the conclusion to "Gore and neighbouring communities."

Notes & references

Published in the *Gore Express*, July 2015, Vol. 05 – No. 06

This article has been researched, compiled and written by Luc J. Matter and Louise Johnston. You can contact us at lucmatteria@yahoo.ca or 450-562-8093 and louise.johnston@mail.mcgill.ca or 450-562-2594.

The following sources have been used in the research and preparation of these articles:

Rapport de l'archiviste de la province de Québec pour 1944-1945. Correspondence of Mgr. J.J. Lartigue, p. 263.

Bourguignon, Claude, *Saint-Colomban: Une épopée irlandaise au piémont des Laurentides.* Montréal : Éditions d'ici là, 1988, p. 53.

Hawkins, Ernest, *Annals of the [Anglican] Diocese of Quebec.* London: 1849, *passim*.

Schull, Joseph, *Rebellion: The Rising in French Canada, 1837.* Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1971, p. 97.

Thomas, Cyrus, *A History of Argenteuil and Prescott Counties from the Earliest Settlement to the Present.* Montréal: John Lovell & Son, 1896, p. 439. Available online at Archive.org.

For information on the history of St. Colomban (St. Columban) including the article by Brother Jerome Hart, please see: stcolumban-irish.com.