



The Story of GORE VIII – March 2019

The Fenian Raids of 1866 and the Gore Volunteers (Part 2)

In mid-June of 1866 once the Fenians retreated from the Pigeon Hill area and returned to the United States, the Gore companies, along with the rest of the Argenteuil Rangers, began the journey home. A military parade for volunteers of the raid was held at Champs de Mars in Montreal and we can probably assume the Rangers stopped enroute for the event. From Montreal they likely took a boat up to St. Andrews and from there found their way up to Gore.

A fine-looking battalion

What kind of assessment did the Argenteuil Rangers get? The commanding officer of troops stationed at Cornwall in early June, 1866 wrote the following:

“The Argenteuil Rangers had evidently been together but a very few hours before they arrived in Cornwall; a very fine body of men, but undrilled, partially uniformed and not well officered. The Colonel (Abbott) and his Major [Simpson] were indefatigable in their endeavors to work their men into shape, and spared no time or trouble in striving to make them comfortable in their quarters.”

If the men were undrilled, we should remember that the majority were farmers and June is planting month. They were, no doubt, preparing to plant the crops when they were called up for military service. Indeed, the same Montreal journalist who travelled them from Cornwall to St. Johns commented on precisely this problem: “This campaigning... falls with great severity on those farmers from Argenteuil—many of them having left without having put in all their crops, and fearing now lest they may reach home too late to put them in, so as to secure a good crop this season.” Who did the planting that year? Perhaps the women, children and those men too young or too old to serve.

The Rangers may have been stressed and somewhat agitated, but the journalist was mightily impressed with their good looks and fine stature.

“The Argenteuil Rangers—the Gentiles (corruption of Ar-genteuil)* as they are called by their fellow soldiers of the line. They are a splendid body of men, fine, strapping, yeomanry—lacking something in nattiness of dress, and precision of drill, of their companions in arms; but seeming in every way, fit for hard fighting when called upon. Some of them were strapping fellows from 6 to 6 ½ feet high.”

Years later in 1881, Lovell’s *Gazetteer of British North America*, commented, in the entry on Lakefield, on the handsome looks of the Gore volunteers.

“The men of Gore are a sturdy loyal class, mostly descendants of and settlers from the north of Ireland. They are nearly all Orangemen, and are famous for the fine appearance they made when, as a part of the Argenteuil Rangers, they hastened to the front to repel the Fenian invasion....”

The Argenteuil Rangers enjoyed a long and often distinguished history. In 1911 the battalion was disbanded and absorbed into the Royal Canadian Hussars. In WWI many of the men from Argenteuil who signed up with the Canadian Expeditionary Force had served with the Rangers/Hussars. Those from Gore included William John Evans, Clarence Matthew Sherritt, Garnet Matthew Strong, Ira Francis Strong and Randolph William Strong. Randolph William Strong died in WWI.

Gore coming of age

In the three decades between the Rebellion of 1837 and the Fenian Raids of 1866, the township of Gore and its people—particularly the men—came of age, so to speak. From wilderness beginnings in the 1820s, Gore grew into a farming community and was incorporated in 1840. In 1855 when the first meeting of the Argenteuil County Council was held, George Rogers was mayor of Gore.

By the 1860s Lakefield and Shrewsbury both had post offices, as did Dunany and Mille Isles. The post office in Cambria opened in 1872. In the 1860s more roads were built to the township. The 1866 Parliamentary Sessional Papers reported that two miles of the road from the North River up to Lakefield had been constructed and work was continuing. Gore had churches and schools, tradesmen & women and shops.

Historians agree that the Fenian Raids of 1866 help spur on Canadian Confederation. The raids revitalized the pro-Confederation movement and within a year the nation of Canada was born. By the 1860s the census record indicates the majority of people living in Gore had been born in this country. In 1867 they became “Canadian”. In future articles we will be looking at development in Gore post Confederation.

Fenian Raid medal

Decades after the Fenian Raids, in 1899, the federal government decided to award the "Canada General Service Medal" to all who volunteered during the Fenian invasions of 1866 and 1870. However, in order to actually receive the medal, the person had to still be alive in 1899 and had to apply for it.

This list does not include those who served and qualified for the medal, but who died before 1899. Nor

does it include those still living in 1899, but who did not apply for the medal. Please note the post office address below is for 1899 and as you will see some veterans had moved to other parts of Canada or to the U.S.

The medal was finally awarded in 1901.

Coming up in the April issue of the Gore Express, part 3 of Gore and the Fenian Raids.

Canadian General Service Medal, 11th Battalion Argenteuil Rangers, Gore companies 2, 3, 5, 6

Key to abbreviations: Sergt or Sgt: Sergeant, Pte: Private, Corpl: Corporal, Lieut: Lieutenant, Capt: Captain, Cr. Sgt: Color Sergeant, Col: Colonel

bn or Bn: battalion, do: ditto, act: active, ser: service, att: attack, ex'd: expected, Hd. Qrs.: Headquarters

Source: *Military Medals, Honours and Awards, 1812-1969*, Library & Archives Canada)

Name of Applicant	Rank	Company	Service	Date	Commanding Officer	Post office in 1899
Armstrong, James	Sergt		26 May-29 May at St. Andrews	1870	Col Abbott	Lakefield
Armstrong, John	Pte	No 6	4-17 June at Cornwall & St. Johns sct ser, (whole Bn at these points)	1866	Capt Sherritt	Shrewsbury
Armstrong, Robert	Pte	No 6	June-Nov. at St. Johns & Cornwall	1866	Col Abbott	Lachute
Bennett, Archibald	Pte	No 6	3-18 June at Cornwall & St. Johns	1866	Capt Sherritt	Lakefield
Bennett, James	Bugler	No 5	May & June at Cornwall & St. Johns	1866	Col Abbott	Arundel
Bowes, Richard	Pte	No 6	4-17 June at Cornwall & St. Johns	1866	Capt Sherritt	Cambria
Boyd, John	Sergt	No 2	Feb & June Cornwall & Pigeon Hill			
Conlin, Thomas	Sergt	No 2?	March & June at Cornwall & St. Johns	1866	Col Abbott	Louisa
Creswell, Joseph	Pte	No. 2	June at Cornwall & St. Johns	1866	Col Abbott	Louisa
Curry, Isaiah	Pte	No. 3	June at St. Johns	1866	Col Abbott	Mclver, Michigan
Curry, James	Pte	No. 3	June at Cornwall and St. Johns	1866	Col Abbott	Lachute
Curry, Thomas	Sergt	No 2	2-18 June at Cornwall & St. Johns	1866	Col Abbott	Mclver, Michigan
Dawson, Edward	Pte	No 5	May & June at Cornwall & St. Johns	1866	Col Abbott	Lakefield
Dawson, Richard	Pte	No 6	4-17 June at Cornwall & St. Johns	1866	Col Abbott	Island Brook, Qc
Dawson, Thomas	Pte	No 6	4-17 June at Cornwall & St. Johns	1866	Capt Sherritt	Mille Isles
Dixon, Thomas (Sr)	Pte	No. 5	May & June at Cornwall & St. Johns att ex'd, guards, pickets & outposts	1866	Col Abbott	Lakefield
Dixon, Thomas (Jr)	Pte	No. 5	May & June at Cornwall & St. Johns	1866	Col Abbott	Lakefield
Elliott, Robert	Pte	No. 3	3-18 June at Cornwall & St. Johns	1866	Capt McKnight	Mille Isles
Evans, Robert	Corpl		25 May-30 May at St. Andrews	1870	Col Abbott	Lakefield
Good, Philip	Sergt	No 3	4-17 June at Cornwall & St. Johns	1866	Capt McKnight	Mille Isles
Good, William	Lt	No 3	March-June at Cornwall & St. Johns at Cornwall on night of ex'd att	1866	Col Abbott	Shrewsbury
Hammond, Matthew	Pte	No 5	3-18 June at Cornwall & St. Johns	1866	Col Abbott	Lariviere, Manitoba
Hammond, William	Pte	No. 5	May at Cornwall & St. Johns attack expected	1866	Col Abbott	East Clifton, Qc
Hicks, John	Pte	No 5	May & June at Cornwall & St. Johns Guards, pickets, outposts, att ex'd	1866	Col Abbott	Lakefield
Hodge, Robert	Pte	No 5	May & June at Cornwall & St. Johns	1866	Col Abbott	Hill Head
Kerr, Samuel	Sergt	No 5	May, June, 3 weeks Cornwall & St. Johns, Niagara for three months	1866	Col Abbott	Island Book, Qc
Lister, Edward	Pte	No 5	May & June at Cornwall & St. Johns	1866	Capt Rogers	Grants Pass, Oregon
Lister, James	Pte	No 5	May & June at Cornwall & St. Johns	1866	Capt Rogers	Manitou, Manitoba
Lister, William	Pte	No 5	May & June at Cornwall & St. Johns	1866	Capt Rogers	Manitou, Manitoba
McCamley, William	Pte		17-22 April, Montreal	1870	Capt McKnight	Mille Isles

McDonald, Henry	Pte	No 6	3-18 June at Cornwall & St. Johns	1866	Col Abbott	Lakefield
McDonald, James	Corpl	No 6	1-18 June at Cornwall & St. Johns	1866	Col Abbott	Lakefield
McDonald, Joshua	Pte	No 3	26 May-9 June at Cornwall & St. Johns	1866	Col Abbott	Lakefield
McKnight, John	Lieut	No 3	3 June-11 July at Cornwall & Pigeon Hill	1866	Col Abbott	Hyder, Manitoba
McKnight, Robert	Pte	No 2	2-13 June, Stottsville (St. Valentin)	1866	Capt Smith	Broadview, N.W.T.
McManis, Henry	Pte	No. 5	Cornwall & St. Johns	1866	Col Abbott	Arundel
McMullin, William	Pte	No 6	4-17 June at Cornwall & St. Johns	1866	Capt Sherritt	Cambria
Matthew, Thomas	Pte	No 2	June-July	1866	Capt Smith	Louisa
Miller, James	Pte	No.5?	May at Cornwall & St. Johns at Niagara for 3 months	1866	Col Abbott	Island Brook, Qc
Miller, John	Pte	No. 2	Lachute, St. Andrews, Montreal, Stottsville	1866	Capt Smith	Boxgrove, On
Montgomery, James	Pte	No 6	4-17 June at Cornwall & St. Johns	1866	Capt Sherritt	Cambria
Moore, Charles	Sergt	No 5	May & June at Cornwall & St. Johns	1866	Col Abbott	Arundel
Moore, Charles	Pte	No 6	4-17 June at Cornwall & St. Johns	1866	Capt Sherritt	Mille Isles
Morrison, James	Pte	No 2	5-16 June at St. Johns	1866	Col Abbott	Louisa
Morrison, William	2 nd Lieut	No 2	Mar-May at Cornwall & St. Johns att ex'd	1866	Col Abbott	Shrewsbury
Morrow, Charles	Pte	No. 3	2-20 June at Cornwall & St. Johns att ex'd	1866	Col Abbott	Maxville
Nicholson, Thomas	Capt	No 6	3-18 June at Cornwall & St. Johns act ser, att ex'd, whole Bn on service	1866	Capt Sherritt	Lakefield
Noble, James	Pte	No 6	3-18 June at Cornwall & St. Johns	1866	Capt Sherritt	Cambria
Noble, Thomas	Pte	No 6	13-24 April at Montreal	1870	Capt Sherritt	Cambria
Parker, James	Pte	No 5	May & June at Cornwall & St. Johns Guards, picket & outposts, att ex'd	1866	Col Abbott	Lakefield
Parker, William	Pte	No 6	4-17 June at Cornwall & St. Johns	1866	Capt Sherritt	Cambria
Pollock, John	Capt	No 3	5-18 June at St. Johns	1866	Col Abbott	Cambria
Rathwell, Samuel	Sergt	No 5	5-18 June at St. Johns	1866	Col Abbott	Shrewsbury
Robinson, James	Pte	No 5	5-18 June at St. Johns	1866	Col Abbott	Lakefield
Robinson, John	Pte	No 5	May & June at Cornwall & St. Johns	1866	Col Abbott	Ninga, Manitoba
Rogers, Frederick	Corpl	No 5	May & June at Cornwall & St. Johns	1866	Col Abbott	Lakefield
Rogers, George	Cr. Sgt.	No 5	May & June at Cornwall & St. Johns	1866	Col Abbott	Lakefield
Rogers, John	Staff Sgt.	No 5	May & June at Cornwall & St. Johns Assist Orderly Clerk	1866	Col Abbott	Lakefield
Rogers, Mathew	Corpl	No 5	May & June at Cornwall & St. Johns	1866	Col Abbott	Lakefield
Rogers, Samuel	Pte	No 5	May & June at Cornwall & St. Johns	1866	Col Abbott	Lakefield
Scarlett, John	Pte	No 3	3-18 June at Cornwall & St. Johns	1866	Col Abbott	Edson, Michigan
Scott, James	Pte	No 6	3-18 June at Cornwall & St. Johns	1866	Capt Sherritt	Lakefield
Scott, Matthew	Pte	No 5	3-18 June at Cornwall & St. Johns	1866	Capt Rogers	Cambria
Sherritt, James	Sergt	No 6	3-18 June at Cornwall	1866	Col Abbott	Transkie, Nevada
Sherritt, Thomas	Sergt	No 6	March '65-Oct. '67 Cornwall	1866	Capt Sherritt	Levering, Michigan
Smith, William	Capt	No. 2	at Headquarters	1866	Col Abbott	Hannah, N. Dakota
Strong, John (Sr)	Pte	No 6	4-17 June at Cornwall & St. Johns	1866	Capt Sherritt	Cambria
Strong, John (Jr)	Clairon	No 6	4-17 June at Cornwall & St. Johns	1866	Capt Sherritt	Cambria
Strong, Matthew (Jr)	Enseigne	No 6	8-28 March at Company Hd. Qrs. 4-17 June at Cornwall & St. Johns about 26-29 May at St. Andrews whole Bn at this point on act ser	1866	Capt Sherritt	Cambria
Strong, Thomas	Corpl	No 6	4-17 June at Cornwall & St. Johns	1866	Capt Sherritt	Montréal
Sutton, John	Pte	No 3	1-15 June Cornwall & St. Johns	1866	Capt McKnight	St. Amedel, Qc
Thompson, Richard	Pte	No 3	4 June-18 June at Cornwall & St. Johns	1866	Capt McKnight	Shrewsbury
Westgate, Jarvis	Pte	No 6	3-18 June at Cornwall & St. Johns	1866	Capt Sherritt	Cambria
Westgate, John	Pte	No. 6	12-24 Apr at Montreal	1870	Capt Sherritt	Mille Isles
Wilson, Robert	Pte	No. 6	3-18 June at Cornwall & St. Johns	1866	Col Abbott	Montreal
Wilson, Thomas	Pte	No 6	4-17 June at Cornwall & St. Johns	1866	Capt Sherritt	Cambria
Woods, Thomas	Pte	No 6	4-17 June at Cornwall & St. Johns	1866	Capt Sherritt	Cambria

John Armstrong, veteran of the Fenian Raids

In 1899 Private John Armstrong was one of many veterans of the Fenian Raids who was eligible for and received the Canada General Service Medal. In April of 1912 the federal government passed an order-in-council—called the Fenian Raid Volunteer Bounty Act—authorizing a payment of \$100 to surviving veterans. John Armstrong applied for this grant in May, 1912.

John Armstrong, born in Gore in December 1839, was the son of James Armstrong and Elizabeth Kennedy. He was 26 years old in 1866 when he served in Gore Co. 6 under Captain George Sherritt. He was on duty from June 4-17 at Cornwall and St. Johns (St. Jean-sur-Richelieu) at the time of the raid on Pigeon Hill. According to one document, he was the cook for the company. John continued to serve with the Argenteuil Rangers until at least 1872 and earned the rank of Sergeant.

John and his wife Jane Dawson lived on the 5th Range and had eight children—two daughters and six sons. John was one the census takers for Gore in 1901. Jane died in 1904 and in or around 1910 John moved to Langruth, Manitoba where four of his sons farmed. He was in Manitoba when he applied for the Bounty Act grant. John Armstrong died in 1915 and is buried in Langruth.

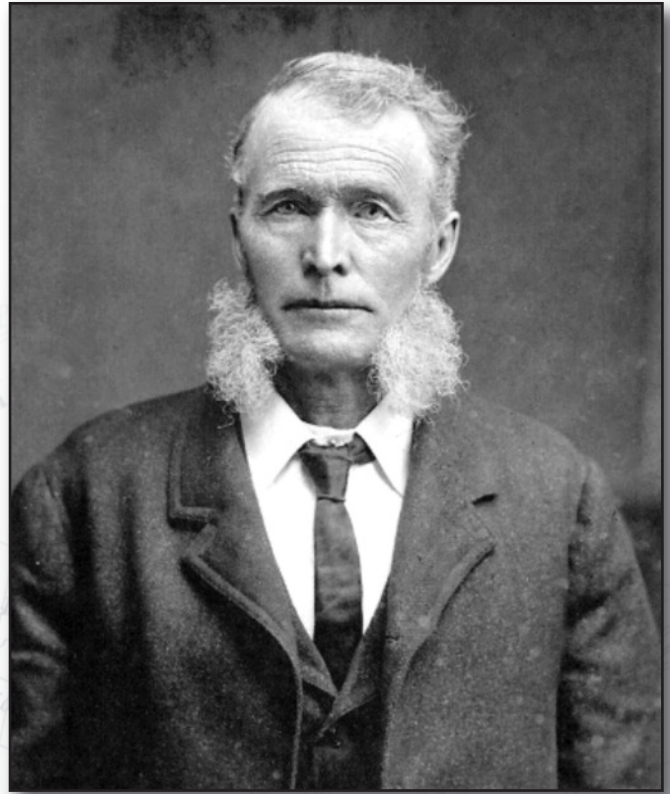


Photo of John Armstrong taken c. 1899 in Lachute

John Armstrong's Fenian
Raid medal



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Notes and references

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

Report of the Fifth Session of the Eighth Parliament of the Province of Canada, 1866, p.18.

Report of an unnamed Montreal correspondent cited in *Narrative of the Fenian Invasion of Canada* by Alexander Somerville. Hamilton, Canada West: Joseph Lyght, booksellers and Stationer, 1866, p. 127.

*The nickname 'Gentiles' likely came from the penchant for English speakers to pronounce Argenteuil as Argentile.

Lovell's Gazetteer of British North America. [Rev. ed.]. Montreal: J. Lovell, 1881, p. 166.