

HON. JOHN COLLINS, DEPUTY SURVEYOR GENERAL**Progress Report**

- 1759—Came to Quebec a merchant.
- 1764—Appointed Deputy Surveyor General, by Major Samuel Holland.
- 1765—On surveys in Gaspé.
- 1770—January 25th, Margaret Collins buried, aged 32 years and 7 months.
- 1775—Member of Legislative Council to 1795—date of his death.
- 1775 - 1783—Engaged in surveys boundaries of Provinces.
- 1777—Power of attorney to manage estate of John Aitken. (Probable relative of Alexander Aitken who surveyed Yonge Street).
- 1783 - 4 - 5—Bay of Quinte surveys.
- 1783—May 26th—General Haldimand instructed Holland to visit Cataraqui and Carleton Island and report on the condition of fortification. Apparently these posts had remained abandoned since evacuation by the French in 1760.
- 1783—June 26th—Holland reports on his inspection and states Captain LaForce, Mr. Kotte and Mr. Peachy were instructed by Holland to survey the north shore of Lake Ontario all the way to Niagara.
- 1783—September 7th—Haldimand wrote Major Ross at Cataraqui a letter to be delivered by Mr. Collins, who was instructed to proceed with surveys of townships. Correspondence of General Haldimand with Major Samuel Holland, John Collins, surveyor, and Major John Ross, commanding the post at Cataraqui, with papers relating to the settlement of the post, is preserved at the British Museum. (Additional Manuscripts 21786).
- 1783—September 11th—Haldimand's instructions to Collins. Captain Reuben Sherwood, Lieut. Kotte, and Captain Grass were to accompany him.
- 1783—September 15th—Further instructions to Collins about surveys at Cataraqui.

1783—October 1st—Collins arrives at Cataraqui.

1783—November 3rd—Collins reports he has surveyed one township and will commence the second one the next day. Sherwood and Kotte employed.

Collins reported as having outlined the following townships in 1783: Kingston, Fredericksburg, Ernestown, and Adolphustown. And the front parts of these townships were laid out in 1784.

Holland reported, was at Cataraqui in November, 1783, and in August, 1784. He reports that he had only then returned from Lake Ontario, where he had been since spring.

To illustrate the diversity of mental equipment of John Collins, it may be interesting to note that in obedience to instructions of General Haldimand dated 29th May, 1788, wherein doubts are entertained whether Carleton Island or Kingston is the most eligible situation for the King's ships of war to protect the navigation of Lake Ontario and the upper part of the St. Lawrence, &c.

On December the 6th, 1788, he reports, amongst other statements, "I beg leave to premise as well with respect as to other objects of my instructions, that when speaking on subjects purely naval, I cannot be supposed to do it with that confidence which might be expected from a professional man, but, I do not on any account mean to insinuate, that I shall shrink from giving an opinion of my own; on the contrary, I shall never advance any argument or opinion which I do not myself think well founded."

Then follows his report on his comparison between Kingston and Carleton Island. Then follows his report on Fort Ontario, Toronto Harbor, Niagara, Fort Schlosser, Fort Erie, on the communication and transportation from the upper end of Lake Ontario to the lower end of Lake Erie. Report on Fort Detroit, Falls of St. Mary, "which was not then settled or inhabited, except by such Indians and traders as occasionally stop there." His conclusions regarding Thessalon Road: "But, I apprehend the want of water over the bar for vessels drawing more than five or six feet will always remain an obstacle to its being a place of any consequence either in a commercial view or as a port." He also reported upon French River, on Matchadash Bay and Lake Huron coast.

It has been said to the writer that John Collins was, like other Surveyors, not an impressive man, because he did

not leave behind him the records of his family history. But that may be decided by the reader. We desire to discover the maiden name of his wife, where and when they were married, and where he came from to Canada. In Dr. Canniff's "History of the Settlement of Upper Canada," mention is made of Collins and Holland, in the County of Albany in 1720. Collins's wife, Margaret, died 27th January, 1770. John Collins murdered two Indians on the St. Lawrence in a barque. Registered in Newport, R.I., U.S.A. This adds support to Dr. Canniff. This murder almost caused a riot between Great Britain and Canada. Collins Street, in the ancient City of Quebec is named after him. Collins Bay, near Kingston, is named after him. He was Masonic Grand Master of Quebec for 19 years, and was known as the most outstanding Masonic propagandist of his time. In 1787 he founded St. James Lodge of Free Masons in the King's Rangers, at Cataragui.

I do not know if Mrs. Collins in her time, was a member of the Women's Temperance Union or not, as I find the following, written by Major Samuel Holland to General Haldimand. "Mr. Collins is not so well in his affairs as I would wish the honest man to be, he has bought a farm on the Lorette Road, on St. Charles River, where he has built a house and lives now, his wife is always the same, but as Venus relaxes Bacchus makes encroachments, her adventures at Gaspay, and the voyage to St. Johns island, she has often repeated to me as being the most pleasing she ever had and talks often of G. . . . The news of my receiving a letter has cost the poor man a bottle extraordinary." During the American Revolution in 1776, when General Montgomery was trying to capture the City of Quebec, the residence of John Collins was given over for the quartering military pickets. Sir James LeMoine writes that this residence was with the elite on the fashionable and favorite St. Louis Street, south of St. Louis Gate and three lots south of D'Auteuil Street, and was the property of Honorable William Baby in 1870. Honorables John Collins, Samuel Holland, Lord Dorchester and Hugh Finlay, warmly patronized the Quebec Agricultural Society, founded in 1783.

On the 11th January, 1793, James Rankin, Surveyor, bachelor, was married by David Francis Montmollin, rector, to Mary Collins, spinster, in the presence of John Collins, D.S.G., 1, etc., and witnessed by Hannah W. T. Gale, J. Penoyer and S. Gale.

On the 30th June, 1819, James Rankin, butcher, married Rose Iffland, daughter of Christopher Iffland, in St. George's

Cathedral, Quebec. We believe that James Rankin, the butcher, was a son of James Rankin, the Surveyor, and Mary Collins, because, from the Most Reverend Archdeacon F. G. Scott, of Quebec, we found the address of Mrs. Armitage Rhodes, formerly Miss VonIffland in England. Mrs. Lennox Williams, wife of Right Revd. L. Williams, Bishop of Quebec, was a Miss Rhodes, consequently a sister-in-law of Mrs. Armitage Rhodes, from whom in England, a letter has been received, saying she has a hazy recollection of a Rankin among her ancestors.

John Collins died suddenly at Quebec, without a will, on April 15th, 1795, and was buried on the 18th in St. Louis Gate Cemetery, beside his wife. There is no such cemetery now. This cemetery was inside a British arsenal, where British were buried. General Montgomery was buried there, and a bronze plate marks the spot. But a number of years after his burial, Montgomery was moved to the States by his wife.

The following appeared in the "Quebec Gazette" on the 16th April, 1795: "Yesterday morning, died suddenly, at his house in St. Louis Street, the Honourable John Collins, Deputy Surveyor General, and a member of H.M.'s Legislative Council, for the Province of Lower Canada.

"On the 8th September, 1764, Samuel Holland, then Surveyor General, appointed John Collins his deputy. In the Commission, granted to Collins by the Governor Guy Carleton, dated May 2nd, 1775, it is recited that, 'being well assured of the loyalty, prudence and integrity of the Honourable John Collins of the City of Quebec, in the Province of aforesaid, Esqr., and one of the Members of His Majesty's Council for the said Province, and having had experience, during the course of many years' service of his Capacity and Abilities, in the execution of the Office of Deputy Surveyor General of Lands, etc. . . . I have thought fit to constitute and appoint him, the said John Collins, to be Deputy Surveyor General of Lands.'"

In a letter from Mr. A. G. Doughty, Archivist, of the Public Archives of Canada, a paragraph reads: "I may add that recently, I saw in some papers of Simcoe a memorandum to the effect that Holland took with him to England several papers and journals which he intended to publish but that during the journey in the post chaise his bag was stolen and none of his papers were recovered." This accounts for the absence now of the many records of great value.

At the Council Chamber, York, September 5th, 1793. Present, His Excellency, John Graves Simcoe, Lieutenant

Governor &c.; Honourable William Osgoode, Chief Justice, and the Honourable Peter Russell. Among the petitions read, C.I. No. 136, from John Collins, Esquire (Deputy Surveyor General of Lower Canada), praying for patent of two small tracts of land in Upper Canada granted to him by General Haldimand.

Mr. Rankin attended and produced power of Attorney from John Collins, Esquire, descriptive of the land prayed for in his petition as follows: "Six hundred and forty acres of land, lying and being in Ganagoyor Bay, in the Midland District."

Mr. Rankin further states, that from report he is given to understand that Mr. Joshua Booth has had the aforesaid described land granted to him. He likewise produced sundry papers confirming the grant of General Haldimand to John Collins, Esquire. Resolved that John Collins is strictly entitled to obtain the quantity of land prayed for, &c.

Quebec, 24th January, 1800. To His Excellency, Robert Shore Milnes, Esquire, Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Lower Canada, &c., &c., THAT in February, 1795, the said John Collins, ordered your memorialist to subdivide that tract into lots of two hundred acres each, which operation was performed accordingly, and the plan and field notes thereof lodged in the Surveyor General's Office, whose receipt for the same is also hereunto subjoined.

That Your Excellency's Memorialist being married to the Heiress of the said John Collins, who died suddenly after ordering the subdivision of the above mentioned township of Hereford, in the County of Compton, Quebec, the whole expense of that internal survey was borne by your said Memorialist, who did in May following prefer a petition to His Excellency Lord Dorchester, praying to be admitted as leader for the aforesaid township of Hereford, in room and head of the aforementioned John Collins, &c., &c. Granted.

Mr. Collins held a plurality of offices. He was Commissioner to administer the oath of allegiance to the new settlers. Member of the Legislative Council. Member of Carleton's Privy Council. Justice of the Peace in the different Districts of the Province. Member of the Admiralty. He was one of the Members of a Committee charged by Lord Dorchester to enquire on the administration, commerce, justice, &c. of the Province. He also made, with Mr. Cox, Lieutenant of Gaspé, a special report on the cod fishery, in the River and Gulf of

St. Lawrence, indicating measures necessary to protect its development.

A supplement to the Quebec Gazette, of Thursday, December 24th, 1795. BY PUBLIC SALE. "On the 16th February, next, at 7 o'clock in the evening, at the Merchants Coffee House, in Lower Town, will be disposed of to the highest bidder, THAT valuable house and extensive garden and other ground, with good outhouses and other conveniences, situated in St. Louis Street, being the property of the late Honourable John Collins, Esquire. This home and property is adjoining that of William Smith. Sgd. John Jones, Attorney by procuration to James Rankin, Curator to the estate of John Collins, deceased." Previous to coming to Canada, after the American Revolution, William Smith, mentioned as a neighbour of John Collins, was one of the most distinguished jurists and historians of the thirteen Colonies, and afterwards in Canada.

We have not yet discovered a picture of this Honourable John Collins, and we have been advised by archivists that it will only be by the merest accident that one will be found. Yet in the words of himself, we are not shrinking from endeavour or hope to find it.

This report merely portrays a fraction of the activities of John Collins, but will afford a glimpse of his wonderful versatility. We trust that it will arouse such an interest in our members and others, that we may be assisted towards its completion.

In 1787, the Napanee grist mill, for the convenience of the Loyalists, was completed by the Government, and was delivered to John Collins, under whose direction it was continued for many years, until it became the property of the Honourable R. Cartwright, of Kingston. This mill stood across the river, back of the Gibbard walnut furniture factory, in Napanee. And the foundation of the dam for that mill is the same as the present dam is resting upon.

Along the St. Lawrence and Bay of Quinte, John Collins was familiarly, but respectfully addressed as Squire Collins.
