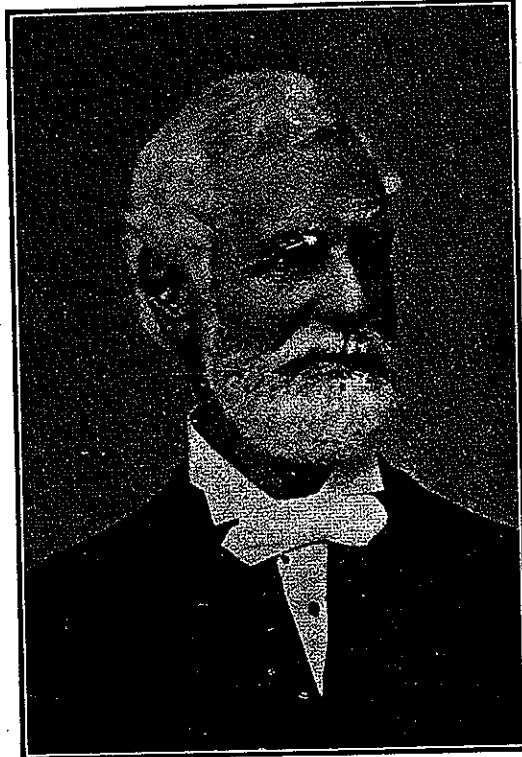


ALEXANDER VIDAL.

Pierre Vidal was brought to England from Southern France by an uncle Emeric (I.) Vidal upon the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1598. The family originally came from Spain. The grandson of Pierre, named Emeric (II.) became a naturalized British subject, served in the Royal Navy and married an Englishwoman, Jane Essex. This English Emeric had three sons, all of whom entered the navy and served with distinction during the stormy first part of the nineteenth century, when England was constantly at war in all quarters of the globe.



The youngest son of Emeric (II.) was Alexander Thomas Emeric, who was for many years employed on Marine Surveys in England, Africa, Azores, etc., and in 1815 was at Halifax and on the Great Lakes as Flag-Lieutenant to Commodore Sir Edward Owen. Cape Vidal, Africa, and Vidal Bank, England, were named after him. He became Vice-Admiral and eventually took up land on the St. Clair River about nine miles below Sarnia. Vice-Admiral Vidal died when on a visit to England in 1863. He married Sara Antoinette, daughter of Henry Veitch, Esq., Consul-General of Madiera, and niece of Col. Tweedie of Bromley House, Kent, who died in 1843.

Owen, the eldest son of Alex. Thomas Emeric Vidal, died unmarried. The other, Beaufort Henry, obtained a commission in the British Army, served in Abyssinia, and retiring, settled in Canada, where he became identified with the Militia, and at his death in 1908 he was Brigadier-General and Inspector-General.

The second son of Emeric Vidal was Emeric Essex, who saw service in the navy, but made his home in England and died there.

The eldest son of Emeric (II.) was Richard Emeric, who was on active service in the navy for thirty years, and was promoted

to Commander in 1830, with which rank he retired and took up land in Canada on the St. Clair River, a part of which is now within the limits of the City of Sarnia.

In August, 1816, he married Charlotte Penrose, daughter of Wm. Mitton of London. Their family comprised seven children as follows: Aymerick Mitton, drowned at Quebec; Alexander, the subject of this sketch, born August 4th, 1819 at Bracknell, Berkshire, England, the family home for two generations; Raymond, who died in childhood; Wm. Penrose, Townsend George, Maria Charlotte and Emma Harriet (the latter born at Sarnia).

Alexander received his education in England and qualified as mate of a merchant ship and became articled, but upon the entreaty of his mother, his articles were cancelled and he came to Canada with his father in June, 1834. Alexander remained in Toronto, acting as Secretary to Col. Coffin, Adjutant-General, and in the following year to Hon. T. Clark of Niagara. In 1835 he rejoined his father, six days by stage from Toronto to Detroit, then by steamboat "Gratiot" to the "Rapids," which little settlement in the following year received the name of "Port Sarnia."

Alexander took up 100 acres of bush land, seven miles east of Sarnia, upon which he erected buildings, cleared the land and did all the usual work of a pioneer settler. In 1837 he served as a private, and in later years rose step by step to Lieutenant-Colonel of Lambton Militia. In 1841 he left his farm and served under articles to John A. Wilkinson, D.P.S. of Amherstburg, but it is possible that he had served as apprentice to Mr. Wilkinson before leaving the farm. To pass his examination it was necessary to go to Kingston with his father. He travelled from Sarnia to Adelaide in a cart, thence to London in a waggon without springs. From London they took stage, which upset in the night, and passengers were obliged to walk several miles, after which they secured a waggon and arrived at Hamilton at the end of the third day, thence by boat to Toronto and Kingston. He recorded in his diary as follows: "Attended at Surveyor-General's office and underwent an examination as to my ability for surveying, passed satisfactorily to Mr. Bouchette, and entered into a bond, conjointly with my father and Mr. Turguaned to discharge my duties faithfully; took the customary oaths and petitioned for a license." He was appointed a Deputy Provincial Surveyor on June 8th, 1842.

From this time he was engaged in "running lines," laying out roads, etc., in the Townships of Moore and Sarnia. In 1843 he spent six months at Kingston, then the seat of Government for Canada, in the Surveyor-General's office.

In 1845 he surveyed the Townships of Bentinck and Glenelg for the Government.

He surveyed Hudson Bay Company posts and mining locations on Lake Huron in 1847.

In 1849 Mr. Vidal had a most interesting experience, being appointed with Capt. Anderson as Commissioner to arrange with the Indians of the north shore of Lake Huron and of Lake Superior for the transfer of lands to the Canadian Government.

In 1851 he was appointed Road Surveyor for the County of Lambton, and in the same year he was sent to survey Saugeen, going up from Sarnia in a small schooner, with just enough men to work the boat, and a chain-bearer. This trip seems to have taken about four months, and its record is contained in a notebook by itself, as are the other two more important ones mentioned.

Among other pieces of his work are the laying out of the townsite of Sault Ste. Marie, and the surveys of Bruce Mines and a number of other mining locations along the Ste. Marie River, and north shore of Lake Huron, and much of the town of Sarnia.

In 1852 he gave up surveying to open the Sarnia branch of the Bank of Upper Canada, of which he was manager until the failure of that institution in 1866. The Bank of Montreal then began business in Sarnia, and Mr. Vidal was appointed its manager, and kept that position until 1875, when he resigned.

Meantime he had taken an active part in civic and national affairs, and in 1861 began his political life as Conservative candidate, but was defeated. He was, however, returned two years later, and went to Quebec as representative of the St. Clair division (comprising Lambton and West Middlesex) in the Legislative Council, holding the seat till Confederation, when he retired. He was called to the Senate in 1873 by Lord Dufferin, and was an active, conscientious member of that body for the remaining thirty-three years of his life, never missing a session in all that time. He was one of the hard workers, and was always on a number of important committees, and frequently a Chairman of one or more. He was a strong advocate of the temperance cause, and worked hard to bring about prohibition. For many years he was President of the Dominion Alliance, and was well known throughout Canada as an earnest champion of what was so near his heart.

Mr. Vidal was the first Treasurer of the County of Lambton, and held the office for thirty-eight years, resigning then in favor of his son.

Senator Vidal was married on December 8, 1847, to Catherine Louisa, eldest daughter of Capt. W. E. Wright, R.N., of Town-

ship of Moore. They had seven children: Emeric Alexander, Alexander Keith, William Malcolm, who predeceased him. The other four are still living, namely, James Henry, New Westminster, B.C.; Herbert Penrose, Vancouver, B.C., and two daughters, Mrs. T. W. Nisbet, Sarnia, and Mrs. D. B. Gardner, Toronto.

Senator Vidal died at his home in Sarnia on the 18th day of November, 1906, being in his 88th year, his mind perfectly clear up to a few days before.

His early education was very thorough, and he was quick to learn, and fond of study. He could read at four years of age, and never lost his love for reading. A special taste for mathematics and drawing served him in good stead in later years, and accuracy being always his aim, each map, or other piece of work was as well done as he could do it.

With the same ruling passion, he never spoke nor wrote careless or slovenly English; thus, he was the despair of the Hansard reporters, one of whom told him frankly that he did not like reporting his speeches, for he never repeated himself, and his sentences were so concise that nothing could be left out, and he spoke rather rapidly.

He was an expert sailor and swimmer, and a great lover of nature, which wholesome taste balanced the delight he had in reading, chess, and other brain work. He loved his fellows and was ever ready to help those about him. In the words of Jean Ingelow, "The old man was a good man, and his work was done."