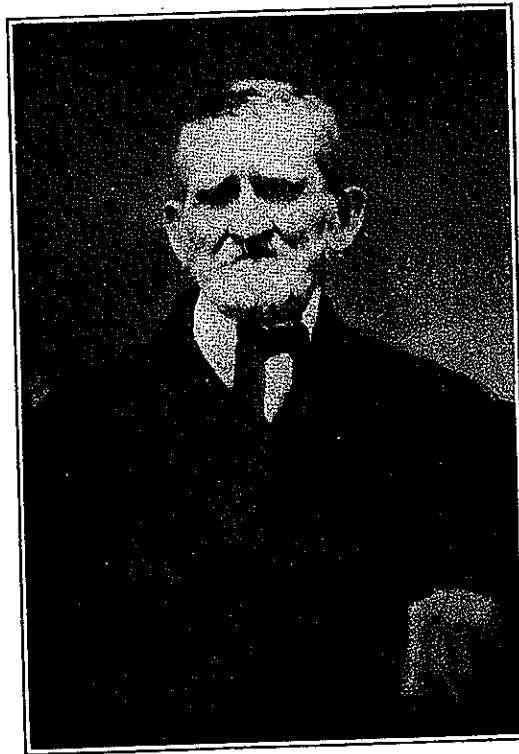


THEODORE de PENCIER

In the seventeenth century Theodore Christian Von Pencier came from Sweden as tutor to one of the Dukes of Brunswick. From him descended the subject of this sketch. He was born in 1750, and was probably a soldier from his earliest manhood, as he was a Captain in Baron de Riedesel's Dragoons that came to America with other German mercenaries to the assistance of Great Britain in the Revolutionary War. He landed at Quebec in June, 1776, with his regiment, and was attached to General Burgoyne's Army. At the Battle of Saratogo in 1777, Riedesel's Dragoons and other Hessian troops surrendered to the Americans. Riedesel was exchanged in 1779 and afterwards served on Long Island with the British.



In due course dePencier was returned to England, where he asked for and received an honorable discharge after the war was over. He then went to Germany, but only remained a short time, as he returned to Canada in the autumn of 1784.

The date of birth of Capt. de Pencier is not now known. He was married on or before 1784, as he mentions that he was granted rations for his family by Brigadier-General Hope.

He took up his residence in the Seigniorship of Sorel at the mouth of the River Richelieu, where Mr. Robert Jones was then the administrator, and appears to have lived there during his entire lifetime.

Upon his return to Canada he was granted ten guineas by Governor Haldimand and three hundred measures (acres?)

of land. Not having sufficient resources to clear the land, and being then untrained for bush life, he did not take possession of the land offered. He acknowledges that he was "too awkward to devote himself to business or too proud to learn to sell at a great price that which had cost but a trifle," also that hands "accustomed only to the use of the sword and the training of horses, were too weak to cut down trees and to sell them at a profit quickly and advantageously." He was further granted six months' rations for himself and family, with twenty Louis. With no employment to hope for, he decided to take up land surveying, for which his studies in mathematics had made him familiar.

His reason for taking up Land Surveying as a profession he gave in a petition dated Nov. 15th, 1817, to Governor-General Sherbrooke, as follows:—

"May one dare to depict to your Excellency the motive that induced to a proceeding so rash (on the part of a person) having little money (and) no protector? A basis of honesty and the high opinion formed of the English lofty mindedness were the chief motives; and once having experienced the happiness of the people living under your laws inspired the desire to live henceforth and to die under their benign influence. It was not without great sacrifices that your petitioner was able to carry out such a plan. There was the open prospect of a fortune within his reach in military affairs, for which the education of your petitioner was calculated, and which was rendered probably certain by the long service to the Ducal house of a father grown white under arms in the most distinguished ranks and who had poured out his blood for the English cause at the battle of Bergen, where he was wounded."

He obtained employment under William Chewett when the latter was placed in charge of Surveys in the Lunenburg District in 1786, but it was not until February 27th, 1789, that de Pencier received his commission as a Deputy Surveyor.

For his services as chain bearer from October, 1787, to April, 1788, he was paid at the rate of one shilling and sixpence per day for 162 days.

In 1791 he was instructed to survey the River Rideau from the Forks about two miles below Kemptville for a distance of nine miles up stream. On August 19th, 1791, he commenced the survey of the Township of Marlborough on the north side

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of the Rideau, and completed his work on August 31st. In this time he ran the boundaries of Marlborough and the first two concession lines, numbering the lots from the eastward. His assistant was John Stegmann, another German officer in the late war. There was a tradition among the old settlers in Marlborough that de Pencier was to have surveyed a range of townships along each side of the Rideau, and as he did not return after his surveys, they assumed for some time afterwards that he had died. He selected lot 18, concession 1, for himself, made a small clearing, and erected a shanty thereon. He also obtained a certificate for the lot and the broken front between it and the river, containing in all about 230 acres, and presented the certificate to Richard Duncan, President of the Lunenburg Land Board, who transferred it to his successor, John Munro. His application for the land was revived in 1815, and eventually the patent was issued and his son, Luke, took possession. In this same year he made a survey in the seigniority of Chateauguy.

The following from his journal is of interest:

"Sunday, Aug. 31st, 1791. We took the precaution this forenoon to bring with us a bottle holding five gallons to assist us in our work, which was commenced, and which being finished, we reckoned the distance to the boundary line, as was accustomed to be done."

In the Ontario Archives Report of 1905 will be found several references to Theo. de Pencier and his work as a Surveyor. The instructions for survey of Marlborough are given in full, and several interesting letters.

The instructions from the Surveyor-General were supplemented by brief instructions from the Land Board, signed by John Munro, Malcolm McMartin, and Richard Duncan.

On Aug. 13th, 1791, he wrote John Collins from Oswegatchie stating that he had left there on Aug. 1st, arrived in Montreal Aug. 3rd, left Montreal Aug. 6th, arriving at Oswegatchie Aug. 12th, and that he would enter the woods tomorrow. In this letter he registers a complaint against the method of surveying concession lines in the seigniories, then being followed by John Stegman, and describes the correct method. This letter was in French. The Surveyor-General's Department acknowledged this letter briefly.

It would appear that the Department considered that de Pencier's expense accounts were too high, as he had charged

£5 per barrel for pork, for which other surveyors charged £4, and there were claims of overcharges for time.

There can be little doubt that he exercised more care in his work than some of the other surveyors of the time, and owing to disputes that arose over his accounts, he became involved in litigation that impoverished him.

Between 1792 and 1795 he made a survey for the military authorities of a tract of land on St. Joseph's Island, Lake Huron, which caused him much future annoyance and trouble. A balance remained unpaid, which he was directed to attach to his account for the St. Francis survey by Governor Prescott, but when presented it was referred to the Military Department, but never paid.

He made a plan of the strait and fall of St. Mary's River under direction of Lieut. Brice of the Royal Engineers.

During the regime of General Robert Prescott, 1796-1799, de Pencier was commissioned to perform a critical survey on the St. Francis River. The Indians made claims which had been made under the French rule, but never settled. Owing to the difficulty in securing evidence, and the wrangling of the parties interested, he twice asked to be released from the work, but at last completed it. Boundaries were set and the survey approved, and an order for payment amounting to over four hundred Louis was issued. This did not, however, cover the cost of plans and books of field notes.

For about ten years de Pencier was employed by the Government to perform surveys, but it would appear from his reports and petitions that his statements of accounts were disputed and that he could obtain no satisfaction from the Deputy Surveyor General, Collins.

It is quite possible that his accounts were considered extravagant, as he had been an officer in the army for many years and may not have had the necessary practical experience in the bush to enable him to prosecute surveys as cheaply as some of the more experienced surveyors of the day.

He had made surveys in Marlborough, on the St. Francis River, and on St. Joseph's Island, Lake Huron, which payments were due.

Secretary Green was a "man of honor" but "arbitrary." The surveyor's claims were disputed and his appeals remained

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unanswered. He was driven to despair and growing desperate under the act of oppression, he bombarded with pamphlets those whom he thought able to procure him an audience. Bishop Jacob Mountain eventually succeeded in inducing the Legislative Council to appoint a committee to consider his claims and found £45 due the petitioner. The seventeen Louis balance on St. Joseph survey was not alluded to, but it was referred to the Military Department, who rejected it, saying it belonged to the contingent expenses. De Pencier appealed for a review of the matter, which was met by a peremptory refusal. He was again in despair, and his condition bordered on insanity. Without means to plead his cause in court, he secured a private audience with General Alfred Clarke, with the result that his claims were allowed, as he states, "to the last sous."

Owing to delays in payments, and to his expenses incurred at the capital, the small fund was so diminished that he received but little. "He, the falsifier, kept his position and died with all his honors, and the poor accuser was abandoned to his fate." So wrote de Pencier.

As his residence was at Sorel, and as he spoke the French language more fluently than English, his services as a Land Surveyor were frequently sought. He made seigneurial surveys for the people and occasionally for the Courts of Justice. He also surveyed 151 parcels of new lands for Mr. Jones, made reports upon 35 of them, and received payment for them at the usual price of one crown each.

Mr. Jones was succeeded by Mr. John K. Wells, whose policy was quite the opposite to that of Mr. Jones. He permitted surveys to be made by outside surveyors, and the reports in former surveys made by de Pencier were not asked for by Wells. De Pencier explained to Wells that it would be in the future interests of the seigneurie to call in the reports, issue the deeds for the lands and collect the costs of surveys made and for reports. Wells, however, was deaf to his entreaties. A long memorandum was then prepared by de Pencier and presented to Wells, but it would appear that he took no action thereon. "Pride took offense at the discovery of the smallness of his capacity in his administration of which the whole town is a witness. He avenges himself on the poor surveyor who, with a friendly intention, made it possible to

be useful, etc. Such a one shines in a low place, he becomes lost in a higher place."

"An ungrateful person is never just." So wrote de Pencier in a second petition to Governor Sherbrooke, dated Nov. 29th, 1817. He mentions making surveys for Mr. Nelson and Mr. Carter in the seigniority in 1804, this being the only date given. Although abstemious on principle and economical from necessity, he saw himself from day to day at the end of his resources and face to face with destitution.

From about 1799 to the close of his career he received no further instructions from the Government, owing no doubt to the litigation and troubles over former surveys.

He states in another petition, dated Nov. 15th, 1817, to General Sherbrooke, that he was at Quebec, when it was threatened by a French fleet under Admiral Richey, and volunteered for service, but Secretary Green received his offer in silence.

"The deepest wound which the heart of a soldier is able to receive recompensed his ambitious fidelity; not the least thanks to his good will were extended to him. He had nothing to lose, and if the fidelity which made him act had not been proof against everything, the resentment of such an affront would have been able to bring him to be false to his king, and to join a cause where he would have been received with open arms, and which would have preserved him henceforth from the humiliation which an adopted country heaped (on him)."

For fear of refusal he did not volunteer for service in 1813. "He saw medals of honor distributed to the young men around him, who had not even a smattering of tactics nor a theory of the art of war. They did their duty very well, but to prefer them to a trooper of nineteen years' apprenticeship seemed a paradox of precaution to your petitioner.

"Having enjoyed since infancy, and without interruption, the most enviable good fortune, and perfect health in a spare body, also nerves which not even fatigue had been able to bring to the point of bending before her, although exposed to the attacks of rheumatism contracted during the tardy, but fortunate, campaign of 1776, when the American fleet was sunk on Lake Champlain, and aggravated since in the survey of the River of Yamaska, of which the petitioners have since made the survey for twenty leagues from its mouth, in the last months of two consecutive winters. Scorning too much

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these bodily pains, etc., this scorn later revenged itself with an irresistible force, for on the 22nd day of December, 1814, the career of your petitioner as a surveyor ended."

He became a recluse after 1814, and the title of the "Hermit of Sorel" was conferred on him by the people—a "fitting" title emblematic in miniature of Diogenes the Cynic.

His wife and two children resided with him from 1814 to 1817, and it was largely due to her industry that the family was supported. He states that he became "indifferent to all things, the objects that formerly stirred his sensibilities lost their power, the contemplation of great events exhibited on this globe for three years became his only study and drove weariness from leisure, otherwise unsupportable."

The two petitions to General Sherbrooke indicate that Capt. de Pencier was a man of scholarly attainments, highly sensitive, proud, but not a diplomat. For a few years after he qualified as a Deputy Surveyor, he was granted commissions for making surveys for the Surveyor-General. He became convinced that John Collins, the Deputy Surveyor-General, and Major Thos. A. Green, the Secretary, were not only withholding what was due him for surveys performed, but conspiring to defraud him. Appeals and delays reduced his finances, and the quarrel with his superiors deprived him of Government employment. He admits in one of his petitions that he was "peculiar in all his actions, in all his undertakings this bears the imprint of it and evident proof of this singularity." This was written in 1817, after three years of seclusion. He was ill, disappointed and impoverished, and it is possible that they should not be interpreted as a faithful description of the tragic events in his career. If his journals from 1785 to 1805 were available, they would probably throw many rays of sunshine on the two tragic petitions that are extant and from which we have quoted.

The date of his death is not known definitely, but it was probably in 1817.

Theodore de Pencier was twice married. The name of his first wife cannot now be ascertained.

There was one son, (1) Peter, by this wife.

His second wife was Dame Charlotte Bellefoil, by whom he had the following children:

(2) Luke, born 1785, died Nov., 1877. He was a Free Mason, and married Gertrude Onderkirk of Williamsburgh, Ont., who died in April, 1873, aged 79 years. They were both buried at Christ's Church Cemetery, Burritt's Rapids.

(3) Hortense, who married Shepherd of Sorel.

(4) Marie Josephine, who married Pierre Bellefeuille.

(5) Sophia, who married John Haines of Williamsburgh, "a dainty lady with golden locks."

(6) Another daughter, name now unknown, who married La Fontaine.

Luke de Pencier had five sons, as follows:

(1) William, 1811-1893. Married Amarilla Lane. Five sons and two daughters.

(2) Peter Theodore, 1812-1900. Married Sarah Eastman. Six sons and four daughters.

(3) Uriah, 1817-1866. Married Hannah Eastman. Three sons, Henry, Uriah Sidney and Theodore III., also six daughters. (Uriah Sidney only one now living).

(4) Louis, 1823-1893. Married Sarah McFadden. Two sons and three daughters.

(5) Isaac Walter, 1825-1912. Married Ann Carroll. Five sons and five daughters. He lived on the homestead in Marlborough.

Adam Uriah de Pencier, Bishop of New Westminster, B.C., is a son of Peter Theodore. Mrs. Frank K. Ebbitt, of Iroquois Falls, is a sister of the Bishop.

Percy de Pencier of Toronto is a son of Henry, and grandson of Uriah. Henry Percy de Pencier, Dome Mines, Limited, is a son of Henry and grandson of Uriah. He has two brothers and one sister.

Dr. Charles de Pencier of Montreal is a son of Uriah Sidney, and grandson of Uriah.

D. Brough de Pencier and T. F. of Toronto, and Harold, are sons of Theodore III. and grandsons of Uriah.

In 1857, Antoine de Pencier was established as a merchant tailor in Montreal. He may have been a son of Peter.

Mary, widow of Richard Goodwin of Spencerville, who now lives on the old homestead in Marlborough, and Rev. Charles

R., formerly rector of St. George's Church, Oshawa, are children of Isaac W. de Pencier.

The daughters of Luke de Pencier were as follows:

(1) Diana, 1815-1877. Married Elihu Adams. Seven children.

(2) Caroline, 1820-1890. Married Jeremiah Marcellus. Five children.

(3) Maria Sophia, 1829. Married George L. Burritt. Now living at Goderich. Four children.

(4) Eliza Ann, 1831-1912. Married Henry Moore. Five children.

(5) Julia, 1833-1912. Married Edward Burritt. Seven children.

The wife of Luke de Pencier was an ambitious, wise and courageous little woman. At the battle of Chrysler's Farm in 1813, she left two infants with friends and rode with the wives of other officers to witness the engagement, and when the enemy had retreated, she galloped her horse to headquarters over the dead and dying, to hear the roll call and assist in the care of the wounded.

Luke de Pencier received a pension for his services as a militiaman in the war of 1812-1814.

The portrait that accompanies this sketch is that of Luke de Pencier. No portrait could be discovered of Theodore de Pencier.

The greater part of the information for this sketch was contributed by Mrs. Mary de P. Goodwin of Kemptville, Ont., a great-granddaughter of Theodore de Pencier, to whom we are also indebted for the photograph. She resides on the Luke de Pencier homestead. The family changed the spelling of their name about one hundred years ago.