

**PERTH-ON-THE-TAY. A  
TALE OF  
THE TRANSPLANTED  
HIGHLANDERS**

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Perth-on-the-Tay. A Tale of the Transplanted Highlanders by Josephine Smith

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**JOSEPHINE SMITH**

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*P. J. L. L. L. L.*  
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# Perth-on-the-Tay

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JOSEPHINE SMITH.

# PERTH-ON-THE-TAY.



A TALE OF THE TRANSPLANTED  
HIGHLANDERS.



1661-

They Scotia's race among them share.

— Burns.

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BY  
JOSEPHINE SMITH,  
MERRICKVILLE.

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OTTAWA :

1901

## PROLOGUE.

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Low in a sandy valley spread  
An ancient borough rears its head,  
Still as in Scottish story read  
    She boast a race  
To every nobler virtue bred  
    And polished grace.

—Burns.

PERTH, county seat of Lanark County, Province of Ontario, is the outgrowth of the dovetailing of two issues confronting the Secretary of War, and the Secretary for the Colonies, after the hostilities in which England was engaged from 1812 to 1815.

The first, engaging the War Department,—how and where to place the discharged officers and soldiers in a self-sustaining position at the least possible outlay, while securing the comfort of the disbanded troops. The second, a question with which the Colonial Department had to deal,—how to settle as rapidly as might be the Province of Upper Canada with a loyal English-speaking people.

For more than fifty years England had held Canada, yet very little emigration had followed that of the United Empire Loyalists in 1784. The now independent United States of America were rapidly filling with a sturdy, independent, liberty-loving people. A letter of that date says they were "holding out great inducements to agriculturists from Europe." Therefore, it behoved the Home Government to bestir itself if it expected to hold what it had cost much blood and treasure to obtain.

The land was fertile and well watered, with many repetitions of what Captain Justus Sherwood

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Apr. 1912

describes, in a report of a trip from Glengarry to Kingston (or Cataraqui it then was) in 1783, "The very best site for a mill I ever saw."

But the romance and love of adventure which had, during the French regime, induced scions of noble houses, with a desire to add to the glory of La Belle France, to brave the dangers and endure the loneliness and privations incident to a removal from a civilized land to a trackless wilderness, had died out. Nothing now but promises from a responsible source of better homes than those left behind would induce anyone, high or low, to become settlers in Canada, about which very little was known in Great Britain.

So the two heads were "put together" (and two heads are always better than one), and out of the inner consciousness of the War and Colonial Bureaux, Perth was evolved.

Late in the month of May, 1815, three transports, the Atlas, Batiste Merechant, and Dorothy, sailed from Greenock with three ships' loads of Scotchmen, their wives and children. They reached Quebec the middle of September, and had the discomforts of their long voyage added to by the ship going aground before they reached Sorel. Tradition says the ships were chartered by Government at so much per month until they again reached Greenock; those who made the trip stoutly affirmed there was no other reason for the voyage consuming the time it did, than a desire on the part of the owners to make as many months as possible. Too late to proceed to their future homes, they were quartered for the winter at Brockville and at Prescott in a stone building still standing at Buckley's Wharf in Prescott, while a few single men went to Kingston.



The 18th of April, 1816, they were established on their lands; all but the very small children having walked from Brockville over a "blazed" road (that is, notches cut in trees to mark the way).

They set to work clearing—felling the trees and piling up logs—letting the sunlight in on the ground. Then hoed in wheat and oats—a plough would not have had room among the roots and stumps; and if it had, they had no horses to draw it; planted potatoes and made a kitchen garden, living the while in brush tents. Very few had time to get up their log shanties until fall.

In June the Glengarry Light Infantry Regiment of Fencibles, the Canadian Fencibles and the De Watteville Regiments arrived. A town plot was laid out, the Tay was bridged, the woods rang with the sound of the axe and the hammer.

This was the birth of the "Settlement on the Rideau."

The exact population in the fall of 1816 is given in a letter in the Addenda, also other interesting information regarding conditions at that date.

Perth is not all Scotch, many valuable Irish settlers came in 1816. The ships Canning, Duke of Buckingham, and Commerce brought hundreds from both Ireland and Scotland in that year. They settled in Elmsley, Burgess, Drummond, Bathurst and Lanark.

But the first settlers were Scotch, many of them Highlanders; they gave the town its name and character; and one finds many there, proud of their origin in the Emerald Isle, speaking with a Scotch burr. The hail town minds ane o' the tartan.

With two such sponsors to guard its minority, the infant village was bound to grow up a credit to itself and them. Still, from a voluminous corre-

spondence (part of which is appended), there seemed to be occasions when both guardians and ward had their little troubles. It was a Military Settlement under control of the Commander of the Forces, whose headquarters were in Quebec. There was no rapid transit in those early days; in winter a horse and sleigh were the quickest means of locomotion. There seems, from correspondence, to have been strenuous efforts put forth for the comfort of the settlers. But with conditions as above, what wonder is it that minor officers grew to feel that the so-called "Indulgences" proceeded from them personally, and that they acquitted themselves accordingly; forgetting that the forbears of those forming the "Settlement on the Rideau" had been part of the body politic in the old country, and were now simply receiving instalments of a debt owing them.

There were some glaring instances of favoritism, and lots were reserved for absentees, thus retarding cultivation of soil and growth of neighborhood. Then, for certain officials, there were long weary trips for which they received nothing but travelling expenses, no pay whatever being allowed for time. Stores were hauled from Fort Wellington, fifty-four miles away; when there came a time of scarcity those in charge had to suffer with the rest.

But the "hungry time" did not last many years as will be seen from correspondence in 1827 in Addenda. In five years every man had what he came for, a home of his own, his deed in his pocket. The Memorial *re* a member of Parliament brought to hand the wished for proofs of ownership.

In twenty-one years petty mistakes of officials, who were only human and prone to err, were forgotten, the infant had reached his majority, a wide-

awake, earnest, self-assertive man, with resources that made him feel very sure of the future.

That there is mineral wealth there the most superficial observer will remark on trips through the environs, that the manufactures and those of its younger sister, Lanark—also a Military Settlement—are of a high grade of excellence, you may determine by buying a garment made from cloth of their manufacture and finding yourself tire of the pattern long before a thread gives way.

That it is a goodly place in which to spend a week or a lifetime you will say after you have once been there.

Therefore, looking at the Perth of to-day, we cannot but commend the far-sightedness of the Secretaries who stood sponsors for the Settlement, and for the paternal care and attention they gave it, we give them their meed of praise. But the spirit that made Great Britain mistress of the seas came with the settlers. That is what made the Perth of to-day.

J. S.

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