



Lieutenant-Governor Simcoe.

The former got large farms, the latter, small ones in lieu of a pension.

Lieutenant-Governor John Graves Simcoe arrived in 1792 with a stout heart, stout boots, a clever wife and a wilderness before him. He picked Niagara as his temporary capital, changed its name to Newark and established what William Girard called "a crude facsimile of English upper-class life, with balls and banquets and games of cards."

He also began walking around the shores of Lake Ontario and Lake Erie, day after day, sleeping and eating with flattered farm families. After covering fifty miles he wrote his wife:

"The shores of the Lake are, for a great distance, as high as the Falls of Niagara and several small rivers falling from that height make very picturesque scenes."

He took a particular fancy to land at the forks of a river and decided to make it his permanent capital. He had a specific model in mind. He named the site London and the nearby river Thames and its future streets Oxford, Waterloo and Piccadilly. The plan was not well received by the citizens of Newark, and the War of 1812 cancelled it before a single building was erected. Simcoe reluctantly moved his capital away from the border to York, a village described by a contemporary writer as "dirty and straggling" with sixty houses and one church. York, of course, became Toronto, and Niagara and London did not.

London

It took London some time to recover. It became the judicial centre of its district in 1826 and its first building went up the same year. An Imperial garrison arrived in 1837. By the time a plank-and-gravel road to Hamilton was laid down in 1840 London was a sizable place with a population of 1,100, including Thomas Carling and John K. Labatt, two gentlemen who would leave their names on many a tavern wall. Orlo Miller, a traveler of the time, described it:

"Around the city hub, the land . . . is rolling, rich, productive. Its people are wealthy, complacent, insular. Because the city sits squarely in the middle of this beauty, she is immensely rich, prideful, self-sufficient."

Today London remains pretty and prideful. It is the seat of Middlesex County and the metropolis of its region, with printing and lithography plants, breweries, biscuit factories, dairies and textile plants. Its 270,000 people also make auto parts and refrigerators and hundreds of other useful things, and it is the home of the University of Western Ontario and several smaller colleges. It has eight hospitals and a number of praiseworthy institutions including Dearness Home for the Aged.

Niagara-on-the-Lake

After Simcoe left, Newark changed its name back to Niagara and, when people kept confusing it with Niagara Falls, a smaller place, changed it again to Niagara-on-the-Lake. It competed with St. Catharines, and its port suffered a loss when the first Welland Canal was dug near St.



*Marti Maraden and Heath Lamberts in the Shaw Festival's 1982 production of *Cyrano de Bergerac*.*