

ROBERT RANDALL AND THE LE BRETON FLATS

CHAPTER I.

THE GRANT.

Robert Randall the Grantee from the Crown of the Chaudiere water power and the land adjoining was of promising temperament, restlessly active, indomitably courageous and optimistic. In 1798, then a young man of respectable connection, large pecuniary resources and good credit, he left his quiet home in Maryland and migrated to Upper Canada, with the intention of engaging there in various enterprises. He settled near Niagara Falls. There he erected his forge and commenced the manufacture of cast and bar iron. He was the first manufacturer of wrought iron in Canada. Shortly afterwards he purchased a large grist and saw mill at Niagara Falls, known as the Bridgewater Works. In a petition to Sir Francis Gore in 1809, now on file in the Archives at Toronto, Mr. Randall states that the first wheat flour manufactured in Upper Canada for the European Market was ground in his Bridgewater Mills. Besides his establishment at Niagara Falls Mr. Randall had a large mercantile business at Cornwall, where, being a devout churchman and of progressive character, he built the church for the adherents of the Church of England to worship in.

Randall was essentially a pioneer and doubtlessly his curiosity and interest in the great hinterland to the north was aroused by what he heard on his visits to Cornwall. At this period there was not a single settler in what is now the County of Carleton. In fact it is doubtful if there was anyone residing at any distance north of the St. Lawrence River. There were small settlements of the United Empire Loyalists at what are now Prescott, Brockville, Cornwall, Gananoque and Kingston, but these were mere hamlets in the neighborhood of which the hardy exiles from the United States had cleared the forests and were struggling to eke out an existence on their farms. From this settlement north to the banks of the Ottawa stretched an unbroken forest.