

THE COUNT DE PUISAYE

A Forgotten Page of Canadian History

By Janet Carnochan*

Although the population of our Province of Ontario has been mainly recruited from the Mother Land (after the first settlement of the U. E. Loyalists), there have been, at different times, groups of settlers in particular spots, as of Highlanders in Glengarry under Bishop McDonell, of English agricultural laborers, of those who fled from the famine and fever in Ireland after the Repeal of the Corn Laws. There was, too, a German settlement in the year 1794, under Berczy, of sixty families settled near Markham; we also read of Governor Simcoe bringing from Russia men to teach the cultivation of hemp, and in the archives is a notice of a letter from the widow of one of these, her husband having died of a broken heart, his services being rejected when he reached London. And in our own day, though not in our province, the settlement at Gimli, Manitoba, of Icelanders, some of whom were remembered by Lord Dufferin, he having met them, described in his inimitable "Letters from High Latitudes"; and, later, the settlement of Doukhobors in the Northwest. But it is not generally known that after that frightful convulsion known as the French Revolution, when heads fell and blood flowed like water, there was an attempt to bring a colony of French refugees to find a home in Upper Canada, not far from this spot. That it failed is certain, and but few traces now remain.

Many years ago, when I heard the phrase used, "near the old French count's house," referring to a building about three miles from Niagara, on the river road to Queenston, the words contained nothing definite, little more than a legend or myth, with slight foundation in fact — little imagining that at a later date I should be engaged in tracing from various sources the history of the leader of this colonizing scheme, and the

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