

CHAPTER VII.

THE COMING OF COLONEL JOHN BY

In September 1826 Colonel By arrived on the banks of the Ottawa with full power and authority by Statute,—

“to explore the Country lying between Lake Ontario or the waters leading therefrom and the River Ottawa, and to enter into or upon the lands or grounds belonging to any person or persons, bodies politic or corporate, and to survey and take levels of the same and to dig, get, remove, take, carry away, and sell earth, soil, clay, stone, rubbish, trees, roots of trees, beds of gravel or sand, or any other matters or things which may be digged or got in or out of any lands or any grounds”,—

or in other words, By was to construct a canal from Kingston to the mouth of the Rideau River.

Up to this time the present City of Ottawa was almost a wilderness. Nearly the whole of the present Lower Town—and a great part of Upper Town—was an impenetrable swamp. What is now Parliament Hill was a densely wooded hemlock ridge. Two squatters, Berry and Firth, lived down near Richmond Landing. Nicholas Sparks had a few months previously taken up his abode on what is now Sparks Street, between Lyon and Bay Streets.

In the whole Township of Nepean, according to the Assessment returns for 1826, the year of By's arrival, there were 682 acres under cultivation. The style of agriculture may be judged from the fact that there was one stone house, one two-storied house built of squared timber, and two one-storied houses of similar construction. The rest were ordinary log houses. There were two shops to provide the inhabitants with the necessities of life, and those same inhabitants possessed forty-seven horses and eighty-three cows. The total assessment of the Township was £4291.12.0, and the taxes collected for the year amounted to about eighty-five dollars.

With the advent of Colonel By, however, came an influx of