

IX.—*The Second Legislature of Upper Canada.—1796-1800.*¹

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The fifth and last session of the First Legislature of Upper Canada began at Newark (Niagara), on the 16th of May, 1796, and closed on the 3rd of June. The four years' life provided by the Constitutional Act was thus filled, as the first election took place in August, 1792. Mr. D. W. Smith, in his record of offices, published in my paper of last year, gives 18th August, 1796, as the date of his election; we therefore conclude that the general elections were held in August, just four years after the holding of the first.

Lt.-Governor Simcoe and his advisers had well understood that the evacuation of Fort Niagara by British troops was only a question of time and mutual arrangement and therefore the holding of the Parliament at Newark was but a temporary convenience. The permanent location of the capital therefore was of deep concern and Simcoe's travels through the province were doubtless in great measure for the purpose of selecting points advantageous for towns and government works. The general scheme that he had in view would appear to have been that Kingston, Chatham, Penetanguishene and York were to be naval bases and that the capital should be located in the interior. We are told that he had set his heart upon a site at the Forks of the Thames where a town to be royally named Georgina should arise, to become in time the seat of government. The Governor-General of Canada, Lord Dorchester, did not see eye to eye in all things with Lt.-Governor Simcoe. At length, however, in 1796, the forts were to be handed over to the United States, and hence the importance of moving the capital from Newark. The lands on the north shore were purchased from the Indians in 1787, and in 1788, Mr. Aitkin laid out a town-plot near Fort Toronto, in accordance with instructions from Surveyor-General John Collins. In 1792, Simcoe determined upon York as the name of the county from Durham west, and he gave the name York to the harbour on August 27, 1793.

Simcoe had a very favourable opinion of York, for on a promontory overlooking the valley of the Don he built his rustic house called Castle

¹ This is the second of a series of papers on the Legislature of Upper Canada. The first dealing with the origination of the Legislature and the members of the first Legislature 1792-1796, appeared in the Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada published last year.—C. C. James.