



KEMPTVILLE
NOVA SCOTIA



KEMPTVILLE

YARMOUTH COUNTY
NOVA SCOTIA



AN HISTORICAL SKETCH

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"No community, no matter how recent its origin, is so insignificant that its history is devoid of interest."—Extract from address by David R. Jack.



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INTRODUCTION.

BY ten years' residence in Kemptville in early life I was brought into neighbourly relations with the people of the community at a time that afforded me the opportunity of personal acquaintance with all but a few of the pioneer settlers of the place.

In the autumn of 1861, having finished a second term of study at the Normal School at Truro, under the principalship of the late Rev. Alexander Forrester, D. D., I graduated in class B, taking a first-class diploma from that institution to teach in the schools of the Province.

I then, by engagement with the trustees, became the teacher of the Kemptville District School (the district embracing the whole community), where my labours were continued for ten years and only ended after being elected a member to represent my native county of Yarmouth in the Provincial Legislature at Halifax.

These years embraced the introduction of the school law of 1864, providing for the support of schools by compulsory assessment, which was the beginning of a new era in the educational history of the Province.

Besides the provisions for the general support of schools the law authorized a special grant, called a Superior School grant, to be awarded to four, at most, of the best schools in each of the several counties of the Province. This school merited and obtained this extra grant for the few years it was available. Included in the enrollment of pupils in this school at different terms were a number from several other places in the County.

The first Inspector of Schools for the County of Yarmouth was Rev. Father Quinan, of St. Ann's Parish, Eel Brook, who resigned the position after a few months. Then Dr. G. Joseph Farish was appointed, who held the office from 1865 until his death in 1881.

It was during this period of residence in Kemptville as a school teacher the opportunity was afforded me of gathering much of the early

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history of the community and becoming familiar with the people, their social life and industrial pursuits.

And now in closing these introductory remarks I wish to say that in the years that have intervened it has frequently been my privilege, and more than an ordinary pleasure, to meet from time to time many whose names were enrolled as pupils of the school during the years here referred to, a large number of whom had gone far afield, and hear kindly expressions of remembrance of old school days and remarks of appreciation of the value those days had been to them; and I would here heartily extend to all of them yet living kind regards and best wishes for continued future happiness and prosperity.

THE AUTHOR.

Yarmouth, N. S., October, 1911.

KEMPTVILLE.



YARMOUTH COUNTY, in Nova Scotia, is triangular in form. In the north-eastern part of this county, inland, is the settlement or district called Kemptville. The name was given by the early settlers in honour of Sir James Kempt, the governor of the Province from the year 1820 to 1826.

The "Corner" near the bridge in this village is a picturesque centre affording an extensive view of scenic beauty.

The whole settlement embraces about sixty square miles of country and has an extent of thirty miles of excellent public highway, with five large bridges spanning the rivers, four of which are of iron construction.

Kemptville is divided into five school sections, each with suitable school buildings and necessary equipment to carry on the education of the children and youth of the community. Three churches serve the religious needs of the people. There are also three public hall buildings used by certain societies and for other public purposes.

This settlement is situated on both sides of the Tusket river and is in both Municipalities of the County, Yarmouth and Argyle.

The "Corner," a central point, is about fourteen miles distant from the nearest railway station (Brazil Lake) on the Dominion Atlantic Railway.

Kemptville in the past has been a place without through travel. All roads here terminate and beyond their terminations, far and away, are extensive forest regions. Beyond a

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certain point on the highway to this village travellers necessarily must return. This point is at the foot of Skinner's Lake, often called Mink Lake, where the road from Yarmouth through Deerfield and Carleton joins the road from Tusket.

Kemptville was first settled in the year 1820, the first settler being Abner Andrews. Then followed Nathan and David Andrews, after whom came James Hurlburt, the two Tinkham families and others. Nathan and David Andrews remained but a short time and then went elsewhere. On the tombstone of Mr. Andrews' grave in the churchyard in Kemptville is the following epitaph :

ABNER ANDREWS,
Born January 26th, 1793,
Died December 19th, 1877.
First settler in Kemptville.

A period of thirty years, from 1820, the year of first settlement, till about 1850, was most noted by the incoming of new settlers. It was during these years that about all the families and individuals coming in from other sections of the County made homes for themselves in this new district of country, then considered very remote. The following list of family names, comprising the names of all, or nearly all, of those worthy and enterprising pioneers of this community will be interesting to the reader. They are as follows :

Andrews,	Gray,	Forbes,	Gullison,
Hurlburt,	McGray,	Raynard,	Ring,
Gardner,	Valpey,	Wood,	Rankin,
Tinkham,	Crowell,	Killam,	Spinney,
Roberts,	Mangum,	Bower,	Piper,
Travis,	McKinnon,	Wheaton,	Grant,
VanAmburg,	Mood,	Byrns,	Bennison,
Churchill,	Hamilton,	Prosser,	West,
Randall,	Harding,	White,	Lee,
Goodwin,	Morton,	Pennington,	Licet.

Of these names sixteen were from Argyle, eleven from several places in the Township of Yarmouth, six from Tusket and vicinity and the Tusket Lakes, four from the County of

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Shelburne, two from England and one from the United States. The Hamilton name was represented in five families and Roberts in four.

After the year 1850 this community, in common with others in the Province as well as elsewhere, experienced a continual loss of population by removals abroad, sometimes by families, but more especially by the younger people from families going to the New England States and the far west. Three families, McGray, Wheaton and Mangum, moved away about the year 1862 and were pioneers in the new settlement of Knowlesville, Carleton County, New Brunswick. Others more recently have gone to the Canadian west.

In April, 1869, the population of Kemptville was as follows, made up of eighty-two families :

Central Kemptville.....	176
Rockingham.....	114
Goodwin's Section	79
James Prosser's Section.....	81
Rankin's Section.....	45

495

Probably the population has never numbered more since.

Settlers taking their lands on the western side of the river purchased from the heirs of grantees of the Township of Yarmouth or from persons who had become entitled to these lands by previous purchase. On the eastern side of the river, and also on the western side in the Township of Argyle, lands were obtained by grant from the government. Among the many, four of these are worthy of note. The first was made November 20th, 1824, to David Andrews, Abner Andrews, James Hurlburt, Alexander Andrews and Heman Gardner and contained one thousand acres. In the year 1828 a grant of one thousand acres was made to James Pearl, a native of Yarmouth and a Captain in the British navy. Capt. Pearl afterwards became Sir James Pearl. Much of this land being meadow naturally it was called "Pearl's Meadow," but is more commonly known

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by the name of "Big Meadow." Capt. Pearl afterwards sold these lands to Sir Samuel Cunard, the originator and promoter of the Cunard line of steamers. Sir Samuel in turn conveyed to Hon. Stayley Brown, who sold to resident purchasers in lots to suit their convenience.

A grant of eight hundred acres was allowed and made to Capt. Jesse Gray, of a regiment called the North Carolina Highlanders, that served in the American revolution (1776.) This grant bears date February 19th, 1828. Capt. Gray, a loyalist, came from South Carolina to Shelburne and lived at Argyle before finally settling in Kemptville. These grants of land to Capt. Pearl and Capt. Gray were rewards for services in the navy and army respectively.

One other large grant of land, probably one thousand acres, was made in 1826 to Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas N. Harris and has been called the "Harris grant."

The following names given to certain localities in various places in this new district of country in its earlier years of settlement, suggested by certain natural features or because of situation and yet as familiar as ever, should not be omitted here. These names are:—The Corner, the School House Cove, the Ridge, the Big Meadow, Gardner's Point, Gardner's Meadow, Gray's Road, Pearl's Lake, East Branch, Wallace's Ridge, Nepsideck Ridge and the Blue Mountains.

The School House Cove is a well known spot, a small area of an acre or two, at the head of a deep cove, so named, on the eastern side of the river about a mile above the Kempt bridge. Here was erected the first public building in the early years of the community, a small school house, which was also used as a meeting house for religious worship. The immediate grounds about it were used as the place for burial of the dead, with but few exceptions, for twenty-five or thirty years after the first settlement. It was here the children of those early years passed their school days, the people met and mingled in their devotions and religious services and laid to rest the remains of departed ones. Readily then does one

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conceive of abiding memories through succeeding years the people would associate with this neighbourhood centre and of the interest, even yet, remaining connected with it. Among the buried at this place are Capt. Jesse Gray, his wife, Sarah, and Mr. Mood, father of the late James Mood.

The first death in the early community was that of John VanEmburg. In the year 1839 Heman Gardner, 1st, was drowned in the lake near his home. A fine hardwood tree can now be shown growing on the site of his dwelling on Gardner's Point about where was the fire place. The burial of these two persons was on their homestead farms near their dwellings, as were also the burials of Mr. and Mrs. Edward Tinkham. The remains of the latter two have, in recent years, been removed to the burying ground at the church. Mr. Gardner's name is yet connected with the point of land extending into the lake where he lived. Mr. VanEmburg's homestead included a point of land extending into the river just above the bridge, which has long been and is still called Prosser's point. On the eastern side of the river at the Kempt bridge was the Edward Tinkham farm.

The Ridge is a part of the settlement along on the road, about two miles eastwardly from the Kempt bridge.

The Blue Mountains to the eastward and north-eastward of the headwaters of the main Tusket river flowing through Kemptville, are referred to in Haliburton's History of Nova Scotia, Vol. II., page 183, as follows:— "The north-east stream, it is said, rises in the high lands lying between Annapolis, Liverpool and Shelburne, called the Blue Mountains. Previous to the discovery of America they contained the consecrated groves in which the vows and sacrifices of the Indians were offered to the spirits of the air. There are said to be traces of volcanic eruptions in these hills, and the savages still retain a superstitious awe of this scene of the religious rites of their forefathers."

The following named persons were the school teachers employed from time to time previous to 1870 and are yet well

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remembered by the older people of the community now living: William C. Williams, Zacheus Churchill, William Kinney, William V. Brown, Deliet Churchill, Henry Sabeau, Simon Sabeau, Mary Brown, Letitia Wilson, Abram Smith Lent and Albert Gayton.

The first school house at the Cove already mentioned was succeeded by a second one built on the western side of the river on the corner where the gold mine road leaves the main highway, about one-half mile northwardly from the corner. After this school house building had had its day a third school house was built, larger and more suitable than before had been provided, on the road on the eastern side of the river about a mile and a half from the Kempt bridge near Gray's road, and was usually called the "Ridge School House." This modest building is yet in existence and used as a hall.

Previous to the enactment of the school law of 1864 Kemptville had formed one school section, or district, as then called. Soon after 1864 the settlement, having increased in population and become more extended, was divided into five sections for school purposes as it now is.

In the year 1843 the people undertook to satisfy a long felt want and provide themselves with a meeting house as a place for religious worship. This year saw the commencement of the building and in 1848 it was completed. The site chosen was the corner, a central point. No doubt this acquisition by the residents of the place gave all a sense of satisfaction and was a time mark in the history of the growing community. But in recent years a new church building has taken the place of the old one, which in external appearance and internal finish is quite the equal of any such building to be found in country places anywhere.

About thirty years ago two other meeting houses were built in the Rockingham district of Kemptville, one of the Free Baptist denomination of christians and the other of the Methodist. The Methodist house has recently been acquired by the United Baptist denomination and the Free Baptist one

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by the primitive Baptist people.

In religious faith and doctrine the people of Kemptville always have been and are now almost entirely Baptists. Previous to the union of the Baptist bodies of christians in the province they were Free Baptists. Among the first settlers were three persons of the Church of England and for about twenty-five years, more recently passed, a small Methodist church was sustained. At the present time there are two churches of the United Baptists of the Maritime Provinces, and one comparatively small primitive Baptist church.

The first man to preach and hold religious services in Kemptville was David Flint, 2d, a lay preacher. Mrs. Flint was a sister of Nathaniel Churchill, the elder. The first ordained minister to visit the people and minister to their religious needs was the Rev. James Lent, of Tusket.

Among the ministers of the Gospel who labored among the people here in the earlier part of their history no name has been more prominent than that of the late Rev. Charles Knowles, of Tusket. His faithful ministry was quite continuous for many years and extended to near the close of his life.

The late Rev. Samuel W. Bennison, as a resident minister, laboured here about ten years previous to the year 1862. Also did the late Rev. Samuel K. West make Kemptville his home after 1862 during the remainder of his days, which numbered up a period of about forty years. He was not often regularly employed by the churches but preached as opportunity afforded. Not unfrequently did other ministers of the Gospel from time to time make visits to the churches here and supply the people with preaching and aid them in sustaining religious services. The present incumbents are the Rev. J. E. Gosline, in the United Baptist churches, and the Rev. A. A. Dalbeck, in the Primitive Baptist church.

The people's interest in temperance work manifested itself in the organization of a lodge of the Independent Order of Good Templars in the year 1863. The name chosen for this lodge was Forest Lodge. Afterwards another lodge of this Order was

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instituted called Columbia Lodge. More recently a lodge of the Independent Order of Foresters was established and carried on its work for several years.

Mail accommodation, established between 1850 and 1860, was for a number of years only weekly. Then followed a bi-weekly mail that has long since given place to a daily mail service. The names of the first two mail carriers, yet well remembered, should be mentioned. These were the late James H. Hamilton, Esq., and the late William Prosser.

Telephone communication has been established with Kemptville since the year 1885, or about that time.

The occupation of the people has almost entirely been confined to two natural industries, farming and lumbering. The extensive forest growth produced the material for timber and lumber and the land when cleared, composed of what could be called very good soil, readily produced a good variety of farm products. Extensive meadow lands on the rivers and brooks have always assisted much in the farm department of cattle raising.

Early in the settlement of this district with its heavy forest growth primeval, the saw mill became a necessity. Hence a large number have, from time to time, been built and operated, the number being at least ten or even more. There was Hurlburt's Mill, Gray's Mill, Uncle George's (Gray's) Mill, Morton's Mill, Roberts' Mill (sometimes called the mud mill), Raynard's Mill, Rankin's Mill, Randall's Mill, the Gang Saw Mill and eventually the steam mill at the bridge.

The great drawback in the carrying on of this industry was getting the product to market. This had to be done almost entirely in the earlier years with ox teams over roads necessarily poor indeed. The teaming out was the discouraging and wearing part of each year's toil that of necessity had to be performed. Lumber and timber and other products had to be taken to market, usually to Yarmouth or Tusket, and the necessary articles of living and things required in the occupations of the people taken back on return. The river, however,

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soon became a way of transportation and relieved the work of teaming of lumber and timber. In recent years the manufacture of lumber in this district has much declined, the logs from the adjacent forest ranges being taken down the Tusket river to Tusket and there being sawed by the Dickie & McGrath Company. However the expressions "teaming out," "rafting," and "the drive" are yet well remembered.

In the year 1883 gold was discovered near the foot of Crawley's Lake (often called Back Lake), about half a mile from the highway on the western side of the river. The gold was found in quartz veins in the bed rock comparatively near the surface. This mine has been worked intermittently since discovery and now is rewarding the present operators with some increase in production with encouraging prospects. Altogether quite an amount of money has been expended in the development of this gold district which has considerably aided the prosperity of the community.

Quite an industry has become established in the production of blueberries, the trade in which, about thirty years ago, was commenced, and for years continued, by Mr. Asa Robbins, of Tusket. In 1909 the expenditure of money in Kemptville in connection with this industry amounted to \$2000.

In communities as they increase in population there becomes the necessity for the country store. Some one is soon found having a turn for shop keeping and trade. Not until about thirty years after the first settlement was a shop for trade, in a small way, opened in this place. The names first connected with shop keeping in Kemptville were those of William Prosser at the corner, and James H. Hamilton, Esq., a little later on the Ridge. In after years business was engaged in at different times by Charles K. Hurlburt, Crowell & Clements (Henry Crowell and Comfort Clements), Frank Prosser, Albert Poole, Capt. Aaron Shaw, and a firm called The Kemptville Lumber Company. At the present time Allen M. Gates and John W. Harding each have stores of goods at the corner and are looking after the trade and business of the district.

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This district is well favoured by varied natural conditions. Here is found a fine undulating country with numerous lakes and attractive rivers of considerable size. Far and away in every direction are to be seen extensive ridges of land, covered with hardwood growths of timber, between which are less elevated lands producing forests of soft woods such as the pine, fir, spruce and other kinds of trees. An idea of the extent of lake features probably can best be shown by giving the names of these beauty sheets of water. They are: Skinner's or Mink Lake, Salter's Lake, Pearl's Lake, St. Andrew's or Beaver Lake, Crawley's or Back Lake, Harris Lake, Clear Water Lake, Solomon's Lake, Nepsideck Lake and Barrio Lake. In addition to these there are probably a few others. The two rivers forming the centre valley of this region are the main Tusket river (the part of it here often called the Kempt river) and the Little river, a large and important branch of the Tusket river, flowing down from the north out of the County of Digby. The confluence of these two rivers shows some beautiful scenery quite in the centre of the village. Another tributary of the Tusket river here is the east branch, a little to the north-east of the settled part of the district.

This part of the country is a favourite resort for sportsmen in the way of fishing and hunting. The rivers and lakes abound with trout that supplies the angler with all the pleasure and recreation his pursuit may desire. The moose, the monarch of the forest, is fairly plentiful, and the hunters, with rifles, led by guides, during the season quite infest the forest in various directions and seldom return without a full gratification of their quest. As deer have recently been placed in the forest and are rapidly increasing, the hunters' sport in the future will not be confined to the one animal, but his opportunities for game will be considerably increased. This resource of fish and game affords lucrative employment to quite a number of qualified men as guides to conduct and lead parties of fishermen and hunters on the rivers and through the forests. In the earlier years of the settlement the inhabitants, or at least quite

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a number of them, found considerable profit in trapping and hunting fur bearing animals, which were then comparatively plentiful.

The tourist seeking resort in the country for leisure and recreation should be reminded that here he will find conditions that will satisfy his seeking and afford him genuine pleasure. Previous to the time of the first settlers, when the forest was primeval it is evident the Mic-Mac Indian had a particular place of gathering at times at and adjacent to where the Kempt bridge crosses the river near the Corner, as Indian relics have been discovered and obtained from mounds of earth, evidently burial places. These relics can be seen, with other collections, in one of the museum or library rooms in Yarmouth.

Mention should be made about the new road surveyed a few years ago and now being constructed extending from a point near the corner in a north-westerly direction crossing the Carleton river, or Hersey's branch of the Tusket river, in Forest Glen to the Dominion Atlantic Railway station at Lake Annis. This road is nine miles in length and will be of great advantage to the Kemptville community when completed, as it shortens the distance to the railway by five miles.

However, a railroad, either a branch or a through line, is the one evident necessity for the extension of settlement in this extensive district of country and the cultivation of the many square miles of good farming land yet untouched. Not alone would there be the extension of settlement and the development of a farming industry, but at once there would be the establishment and promotion of a large lumber and timber industry that now depends for its success upon river transportation that cannot always be relied upon. Then there are other industries that would, no doubt, be established from the productions of the forests, affording more or less employment of labour.

Looking back in review over the names of the early settlers of Kemptville there appears to be but little to warrant making distinctions in the way of prominence or particular leadership. The people, as a whole, were industrious, prudent and persever-

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ing and possessed the courage necessary to meet and overcome the obstacles and hardships incident to the life of pioneers in new settlements. That they did not confine their attention and efforts entirely to material interests is clearly shown in provisions made for their own and their descendants' educational, moral and religious needs. Without intention to do injustice to any one, mention may be made of the following persons by name:—

Abner Andrews had the distinction of being the first settler and became a man of considerable means for his time and the place in which he lived.

Jesse Gray, a man of military training and service, had reached the rank of Captain in a regiment before coming to Nova Scotia. He had served in a regiment called the North Carolina Highlanders, engaged on the loyal side in the revolutionary war.

Nathaniel Churchill, senior, a Justice of the Peace and Deacon of the church, was a man of influence in the community and did a good part in directing and promoting matters of public interest. He was born in the year 1795, a son of Ephraim Churchill, and one of a family of thirteen children. Mr. Churchill's own family consisted of nine children. His son, Nathaniel Churchill, junior, after his younger years in his native village, became largely engaged in ship-building and ship-owning at Tusket and Yarmouth and died the present year (1911) at an advanced age in Caledonia, Queens County. He was thrice married, his first wife being Lydia Ann Crosby, daughter of one Deacon William Crosby.

Mrs. James Cushing, a sister of the younger Mr. Churchill, so well known for her benevolence in assisting with her ample means charitable and religious objects, is still living in Caledonia, where she has long resided.

Before the final paragraph of this sketch reference may be made to a sad and melancholy occurrence of the past. On the night of the 26th of September, 1864, the dwelling of Mr. Samuel Hamilton accidentally took fire and was rapidly

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destroyed. By this unfortunate accident Mrs. Hamilton and three of the younger children of the family perished. When the fire had made considerable progress, awakening the family, Mrs. Hamilton heroically rushed to the chamber to save her children. This brave and devoted effort was not successful and mother and children were victims together in the devouring flames.

Brevity, consistent with the retention of the necessary facts and the relation of what may be of interest to be preserved for the future, has governed the production of these pages. At many points material at hand would tempt an extension of the narrative. Should these records here made prove to be fairly correct and complete the writer will experience a degree of satisfaction that will be a sufficient reward for the effort made. It is hoped that this sketch will be the means of preserving the history of the commencement and progress of an interesting community for a period of nearly one hundred years and afford material for some one in the future, qualified for the task, to produce a history of the district that has here been under consideration, such as the time may demand.

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