



GEORGINA

First Impressions

The following is an excerpt from a diary that appears to have been written by James Scott, a brother of Archibald Hamilton Scott, who came to Upper Canada with William Kingdom Rains with a view to create a settlement. Their time in Georgina was brief, but the diarist was clear on his impression of life in the bush. The Georgina portion of this diary begins:

Journal of Proceedings at Choppington Farm Township of Georgina County of York on the banks of Lake Simcoe, Upper Canada

1830

*Sunday 7th Nov^r As prior to this home from the complete destitution of anything resembling a chair or table its has been utterly impossible to keep any regular ac[count] of the proceedings of the party I must be contented with a sketch ã memoriã [from memory] or else hiatus inmut[?] valde defundus.ⁱ On or ab^t 23 Aug^t I landed at Cherry Bay – after 2 days passage down from the Holland river & found a hole cut in the woods or more technically speaking bush on which were 2 erections called *par courtesie* houses but a damned deal more like pigstyes les voila*



unidentified log book; Archives of Ontario, Historical documents collected by the Women's Canadian Historical Society of Toronto, Series F 1180-8

The work required in settling virgin forest into a farmstead was grueling. Thomas Mossington bought a property that had already been settled, though needed work as can be seen in a letter written to his brother in about 1830:

The Farm I have bought is in the Township of Georgina, and called Lot No 5 in the 8th concessions. It has about 40 acres cleared, a tolerable house, & but a very small miserable barn.

Others entered the township with a little more enthusiasm and set straight to work. William Sibbald arrived in November 1835 after purchasing land that had previously been settled:

1835

Nov 17 The morning was very rough. Arrived at Georgina about 10 Oclock A.M. landed at Jacksons Point. Had to come for our things in a scow, wind changeable with occasional showers of snow. Mr. Boucher came. Last trip of the Steamboat this season.

Nov 18 Alex. Bailie went to Bouchers mills for Lumber 200f. at 3/9p.f. George and Arch. mending fencing and clearing up about the place Was digging a drain. Chas. carpentering. Mother Mrs. Nicholl & I went to the store

William Johnson arrived in 1819. Judging from his diary the spirit of helping one's neighbour was a little more alive in the earliest days of settlement:

[1819]

Friday 12th went and entered on my lot with Peregrine- gave him a dollar for his day's work

Sat Novr 13th Cold and Wintery appearance. paid Captn Bouchier 1 dollar and 2 shillings York-

Sunday 11th a very fine day.

Monday 15th Novr- today I had a lesson from Mr. J. Bouchier in making a woven fence-

Tuesday 16th Novr. Went to a House-raising. Four of the [?] axe men are placed on the corners to notch the logs while the others are employed in bringing forward and raising them-

Having come to Upper Canada in 1829, a former military man on half pay, Henry Pilkington petitioned the government for land in the Gore of Toronto. He received land in Georgina. In 1830 he wrote to the government, his correspondence is recorded in the minutes:

Has settled in a back settlement. Wild land is no recompense for having sold out. Asks leave to publish the journal of his mission into the interior of Africa. Applies for employment.

It is evident that the life of a settler is not what Pilkington had hoped for.

All of the above mentioned settlers had a connection to the Navy or Army. The fact was that now that the wars were over, Britain could no longer pay all the officers it had. The result was forced semi-retirement in the form of half-pay and the promise of free land in Upper Canada. Many of Georgina's early settlers took advantage of this last best hope.

ⁱ [may be trying to express, in Latin, that if he waits, the memory will be changed or fade]