



GEORGINA

Opening the Townships

The Carrying Place is an ancient portage route (45 km) from Lake Ontario to Lake Simcoe. This route was used for thousands of years by First Nations peoples, and beginning in the 17th century by French Traders and Explorers. This land was part of the Toronto Purchase of 1787. Fur traders set up south of the mouth of the Holland River and built a log shanty made of red pine. It was referred to in 1793 as “the old pine fort”. Simcoe would later refer to the area as “Fort Gwillimbury,” named for his wife’s father, during the War of 1812 when it served as a Naval and Military Depot.

The Americans had gained their independence from Britain through revolution [1765-1783], the Americans fought for control of land during the Northwest Indian War [1785-1795], and some American leaders supported the revolution in France which resulted in military conflicts involving Britain [1789-1802]; Napoleon would extend the conflict until 1812. Britain was anticipating further warring with the Americans. Under Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe the capital of Upper Canada was moved from Newark [Niagara on the lake] to York [Toronto] and Yonge Street was built, as a safer route to Georgian Bay and the Upper Great Lakes.

In 1817, with the Naval Disarmament of the Great Lakes, Commander William Bouchier of the Royal Navy, who had been Commander at the Naval Establishment at Lake Huron, was set to retire on half-pay, now that Britain’s wars were over with Napoleon, and the United States. Knowing that he was eligible for a free grant of land, he petitioned the government.

Bouchier’s petition [figure 1] was not successful. It appears he did not have the necessary accompanying documents such as a certificate stating he had sworn the various oaths required by law. His petition was not even read in council. Rather than go to York [Toronto] and swear the Oaths of Allegiance - he travelled to London, England and acquired special permission from Lord Bathurst, the Governor-in-Chief of British North America

The letter is dated October 1817. This reads:

Sir, I am directed by Lord Bathurst to acquaint you that his Lordship has granted permission to Captain W. Bouchier of the Royal Navy to proceed as a Settler to Canada and I am to desire that he may receive a grant of Land proportioned to his Rank in His Majesty’s Service. I have the Honor to be Sir, your most obedient, humble Servant, Henry Goulbrun

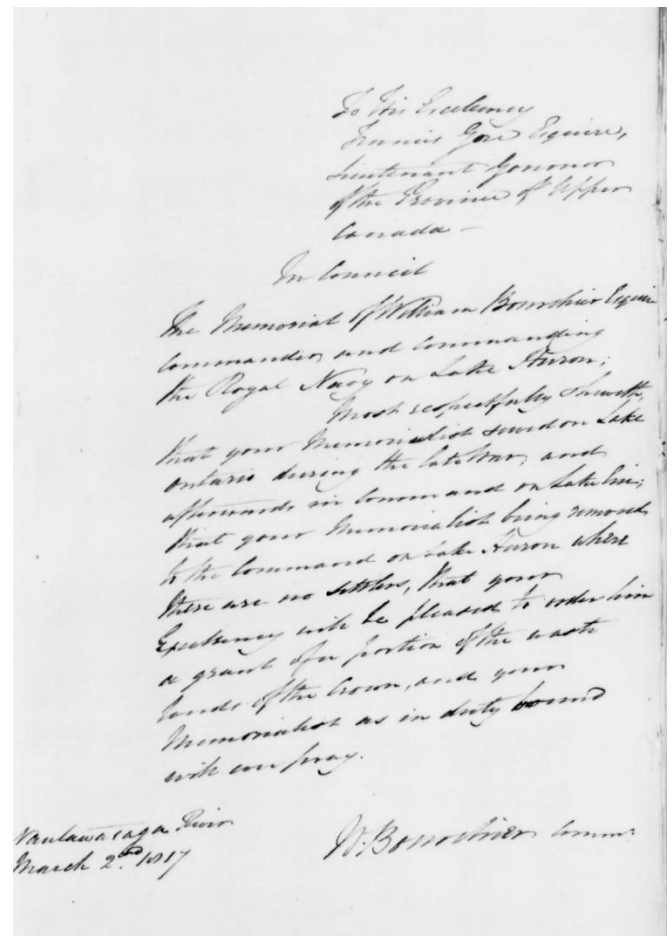


Figure 1 Bouchier's 1817 Petition; Library & Archives Canada, Upper Canada Land Petitions RG1 L3

Armed with this letter (that obviously has a little clout behind it) Bouchier returned to Upper Canada.

It is likely that on this return-trip from England, William was accompanied by his brother, James O'Brien Bouchier. It is also possible, that at this time other settlers accompanied the brothers. Unsourced histories state that John Comer was acquainted with the Bouchier's and he and his family travelled here with James. Bouchier probably left London immediately after getting the letter from Lord Bathurst, it is unsafe to travel the ocean over winter

Given the rate of travel from Quebec and Toronto in those days, Bouchier probably arrived in York in January or February. Here, he submitted his petition *and* letter from Lord Bathurst to the Executive Council. It was read in Council on February 4, 1818. The land was granted in the amount of 1200 acres.