

First Settlers Of Brighton

By

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**Handout with Presentation on October 27, 2012
at “The Gates” as part of “October is Arts Month”**

First Settlers of Brighton

Introduction

“First Settlers of Brighton” was created in the form of an hour-long slide presentation at The Gates on October 27, 2012, as part of the “October is Arts Month” program of events at The Gates. This document accompanied the presentation as a hand-out to provide more details on the topic.

The Title Is WRONG!

As a history geek, I have to point out that the title of the presentation, “First Settlers of Brighton”, is technically wrong. If we divide the phrase in two, we can see that the first part, “First Settlers”, refers the first people who come to this area and create permanent homesteads, in effect, to settle. However, we know that these first settlers came in the mid and late 1790s and the first decade of the 1800s. We also know that the name “Brighton” did not exist at that time. It was initially applied to the fledgling village in 1831 when Joseph Lockwood was appointed first Post Master of the village and suggested the name Brighton based on his family’s origins near Brighton, England.

The title I used is a short, easy phrase that makes the point clearly enough but if I was to apply a slightly more accurate title, it might read something like “The First People to Settle Permanently on the Land Around Presqu’île Bay and the Land North into Cramahe and Murray Townships”. Of course, this title would not fit very well into the small box in the calendar for events at The Gates. So, “First Settlers of Brighton” it is!

The Region

Since there were no villages in the area when the first settlers came here, we need to discuss the first settlers in the context of a geographical area slightly wider than what we know of today as Brighton. Even the area of The Municipality of Brighton is not adequate to provide a wide enough scope to consider first settlers.

The map below is a snip of a modern road map showing the region we will cover, more or less. Brighton is in the middle with Colborne to the west and Warkworth to the north and Trenton to the east. Ever present is The County to our south east as well. While this is the general area in question, we need to look at this map with some imagination and picture white spaces with no coloured lines for roads or dots for towns and villages.



Try to visualise nothing but trees and meadows and streams, on the side of the lovely Presqu’île Bay, teeming with fish. This is the environment that greeted the first settlers when they came here.

First Settlers of Brighton

The Region – Alternative View

A different way to look at the region is through this segment of the Beldon County Atlas Map for Northumberland County which shows the three townships we are dealing with, Cramahe, Brighton and Murray. These maps were published in 1878 and are immensely useful for researchers working in genealogy and local history. In our case, the piece we are using is meant to orient the first settlers in relation to each other and to demonstrate their location in the region.



This is a segment of a map of Northumberland County taken from the web site that provides the Beldon County Atlas Maps. Published in 1878, this set of maps was sold by subscription. Besides the maps, a land owner could obtain a lovely representation of their homestead in charcoal sketch, ensuring a larger picture by paying a higher subscription fee. The most useful thing about the County Atlas Maps is that the names of property owners are written on the maps along with roads and creeks. The web site provides easy access to the maps as well as an index of names. You can even download the maps for your own use. <http://digital.library.mcgill.ca/countyatlas/search.htm>

First Settlers of Brighton

Indigenous Peoples

When we talk about “First Settlers” we should begin by mentioning the people that were in this area long before European settlers came to stay. There were communities of indigenous peoples all around North America for thousands of years before Europeans came. In many areas there was serious conflict between the occupants of the land and the newcomers. The result was uniformly bad for the long-time occupants.

In the area of Upper Canada north of Presqu’ile Bay the situation was quite different when the first settlers came in the 1790s. It has been stated that during most of the 1700s the area south of Rice Lake and between the Trent and Humber Rivers could be called a “No Man’s Land”. This was the case because most native communities had moved north of Rice Lake in order to avoid the violent raiding parties that came from south of Lake Ontario. As a result, the area emptied of human inhabitants. A few small groups were left around the Bay of Quinte and Carrying Place, and some other spots, but the numbers were limited. Most had moved away.

The history of this unusual situation is one of international geopolitical conflict and of local power struggles. The French had created settlements in Quebec and by the 1640s the Jesuit missionaries were trying to convert the Huron people north of Lake Ontario to Christianity, with varying degrees of success. The British took over the original Dutch colony of New York and made alliances with the Iroquois and some other tribes of New England. In effect, the native warriors became proxies for the large powers.

The Iroquois and other nations that eventually made up The Six Nations became more powerful and threatened the Huron’s with extinction, even after they moved farther north. The climax came in 1649 with a major Iroquois raid into the Midland area, where Father Brabeuf had established his mission at a large Huron village. There was a massacre and Father Brabeuf met Martyrdom. We can see a Shrine and historical sites near Midland commemorating this event.



Shrine to Father Brabeuf, near Midland, Ontario. From Wikipedia.

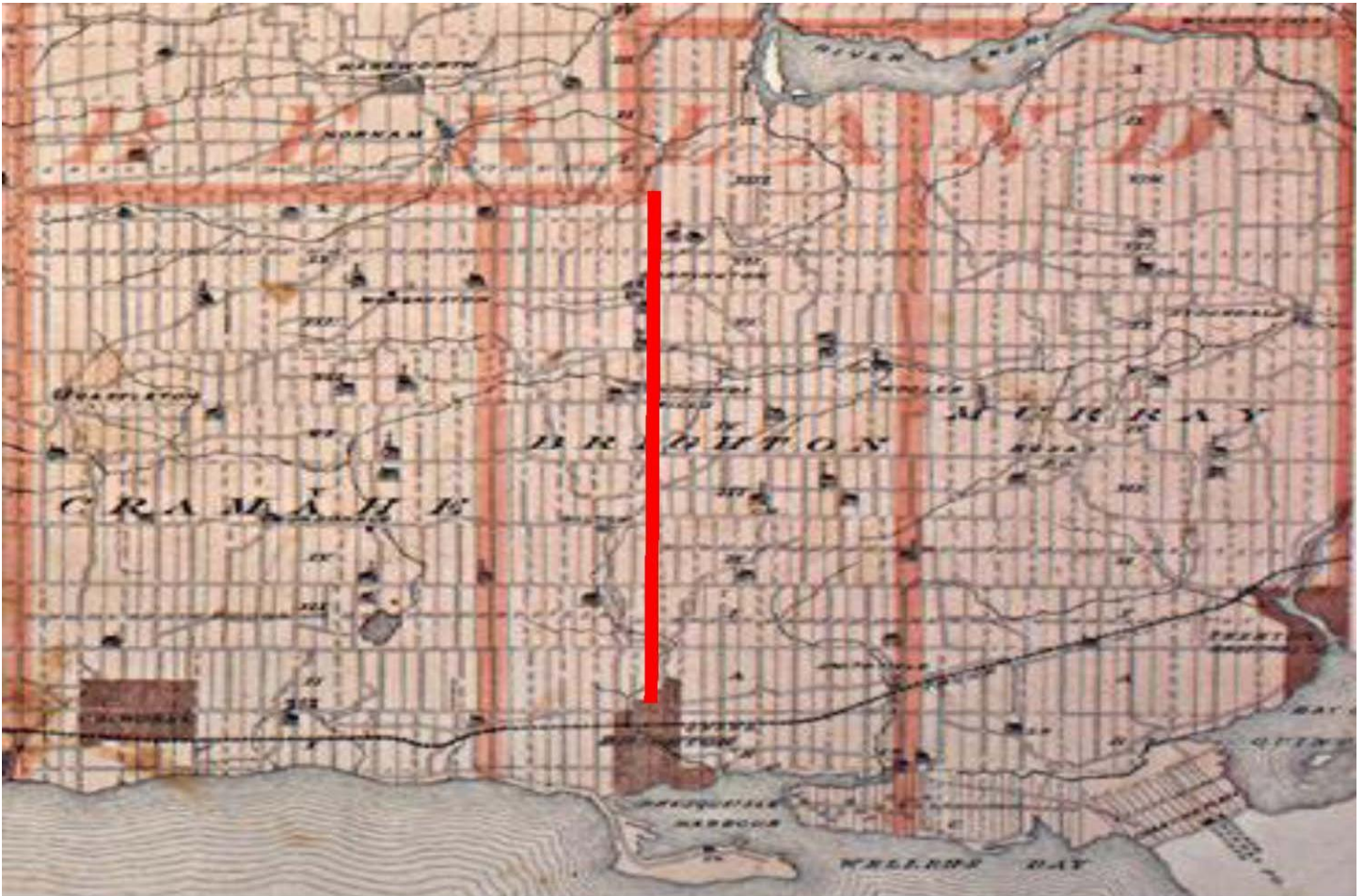
For the first settlers around Presqu’ile this meant that they would not have seen many native people in their immediate area of settlement. There would have been traffic down the rivers and on the lakes as much trading was done with the tribes to the north, but there were not many indigenous people living in or around the land where they settled.

First Settlers of Brighton

Boundary Between Cramahe and Murray Townships

Before we discuss “First Settlers of Brighton”, we need to be reminded that Brighton Township did not exist at the time of first settlement. Brighton Township was created on January 1, 1852, combining the east side of Cramahe and the west side of Murray, as well as the Presqu’île Peninsula.

When we consider the time of the first settlers, we must remember that the boundary between Cramahe and Murray Townships ran from Presqu’île Bay up to Percy Township. In modern terms, that would be described as Cedar and Prince Edward Streets in Brighton and slightly to the east of Hilton, Orland and Codrington.



Called “The Town Line”, this municipal boundary would become a mere lot line when Brighton Township was created. However, early roads often ran on Town Lines and there are remnants of these roads in today’s landscape. East of Hilton, Florence Chatten lives on her own little road, called Florence Road, which is likely a part of the old Town Line Road. Another piece of it would be McCann Road, north of Codrington.

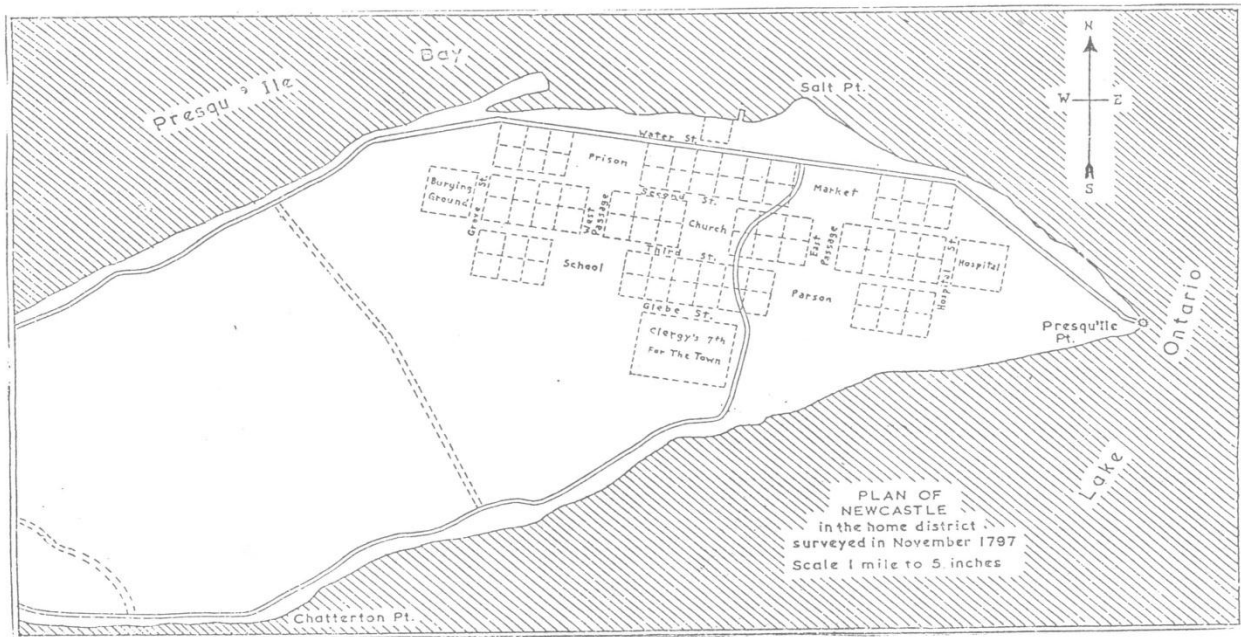
When we are discussing the location of early settlers, keep in mind that most will be in either Cramahe or Murray Townships and Brighton Township will get no mention in this context.

First Settlers of Brighton

Two Main Factors That Impacted How Settlement Happened Here

Presqu'ile Bay

Lieutenant-Governor John Graves Simcoe looked at the map of Lake Ontario and identified immediately that Presqu'ile Bay was the best protected port between Kingston, the supply depot for Upper Canada, and his new capital at York. Before he returned to England in 1796 he left instructions for a County Town to be surveyed and a court house and gaol to be built on Presqu'ile Point. The town would be named Newcastle, like the District it represented.



1797 Map of Newcastle - Courtesy of Proctor House

This map taken from "Presqu'ile", a history of Presqu'ile produced by Susan Brose and Bonnie Brown in 1994.

Unfortunately, the impact of the sinking of HMS Speedy on October 8, 1804 caused the county town to move to Cobourg, effectively abandoning the town of Newcastle. However, the excellent Bay was still there, providing a transportation hub for the east end of Lake Ontario and a major boon to the settlers of the area. Until there were passable roads across Upper Canada, the Bay served as an important jump-off point for settlers coming to settle up-country.

First Settlers of Brighton

The Danforth Road

One of the most pressing problems the government of Upper Canada encountered in the late 1790s was the transportation of people and trade goods from Kingston to the new capital at York and other points west. Increased settlement led to more meetings of officials and orders for surveys. The need to move food and clothing to the native peoples presented a constant demand for more and better transportation. In fact, the Administrator of Upper Canada, Peter Russell, specifically identified the lack of reliable transport as one of the main dangers the young colony faced at that time.

Two actions were taken to address this problem. First, two more gun boats were ordered to be constructed at Kingston to provide safe and reliable transportation of government officials and trade goods on the lake. These two ships were launched in 1798 and were named HMS Swift and HMS Speedy. Around Brighton, we know what happened to HMS Speedy, but we usually don't think of why the ship was built.

The second action was a contract with Asa Danforth to build a sixteen foot wide road from York to Kingston, at \$90 per mile. He set about the job very quickly in 1799 and finished it in 1800. The route was close to what we now know as Number 2 Highway, but not exactly. The Danforth Road did not go to Trent River (now Trenton) but instead went down to Carrying Place and Picton, across the water at Glenora to Bath, then to Kingston. An east-west road through the bottom of Cramahe and Murray Townships provided much better access to Prince Edward County and to other settlers along the shore of Lake Ontario. Roads like The Percy Road going north from the Danforth Road would form a transportation grid that was the lifeblood of the community for many years.

First Settlers of Brighton

Obadiah Simpson

Obadiah Simpson is said to be the first settler of Brighton. He is memorialized on a cairn at the entrance to Presqu'île Park. Records show that Obadiah Simpson brought his family to this area in 1796, settling on 200 acres at Lot 2, Concession 4, Cramahe Township. In modern terms, that is the property at the west end of Brighton, on the north side of Number 2 Highway and on the west side of Percy Street.



This was a very advantageous location because in only a few years the Danforth Road would be built along his southern boundary and The Percy Road would develop up the east side. In this immediate area, from Percy Street and stretching to today's Ontario Street intersection, a community called Bettes Corners would develop, named for one of the early settlers.

The story of Obadiah Simpson and his path to Cramahe Township is similar to that of many United Empire Loyalists who put their lives and property on the line for the King of England and, on losing the war, had to abandon everything. Obadiah Simpson was born near Wilmington, North Carolina, in a tobacco growing area. They were "Planters". At age 18, in 1776, he enlisted in Delancey's Regiment. By the end of the war he was in New York City and there he married Mary Lord. In the fall of 1783, the young couple were guests of the British fleet as it sailed from New York to Nova Scotia, carrying several thousand fleeing Loyalists. For a time Obadiah worked in the shipyards at Antigonish. For a brief time in 1791 he was back in New York but found it too hot there for Loyalists so he brought his growing family to Adolphustown in 1792. After a few years he was able to arrange his land grant and he came to Cramahe Township in 1796.

First Settlers of Brighton

On July 14, 1991, a cairn was rededicated in memory of Obadiah Simpson and his wife Mary Lord. The cairn sits at the entrance to Presqu'ile Park, just off the curve in the road heading down to the Park entrance.

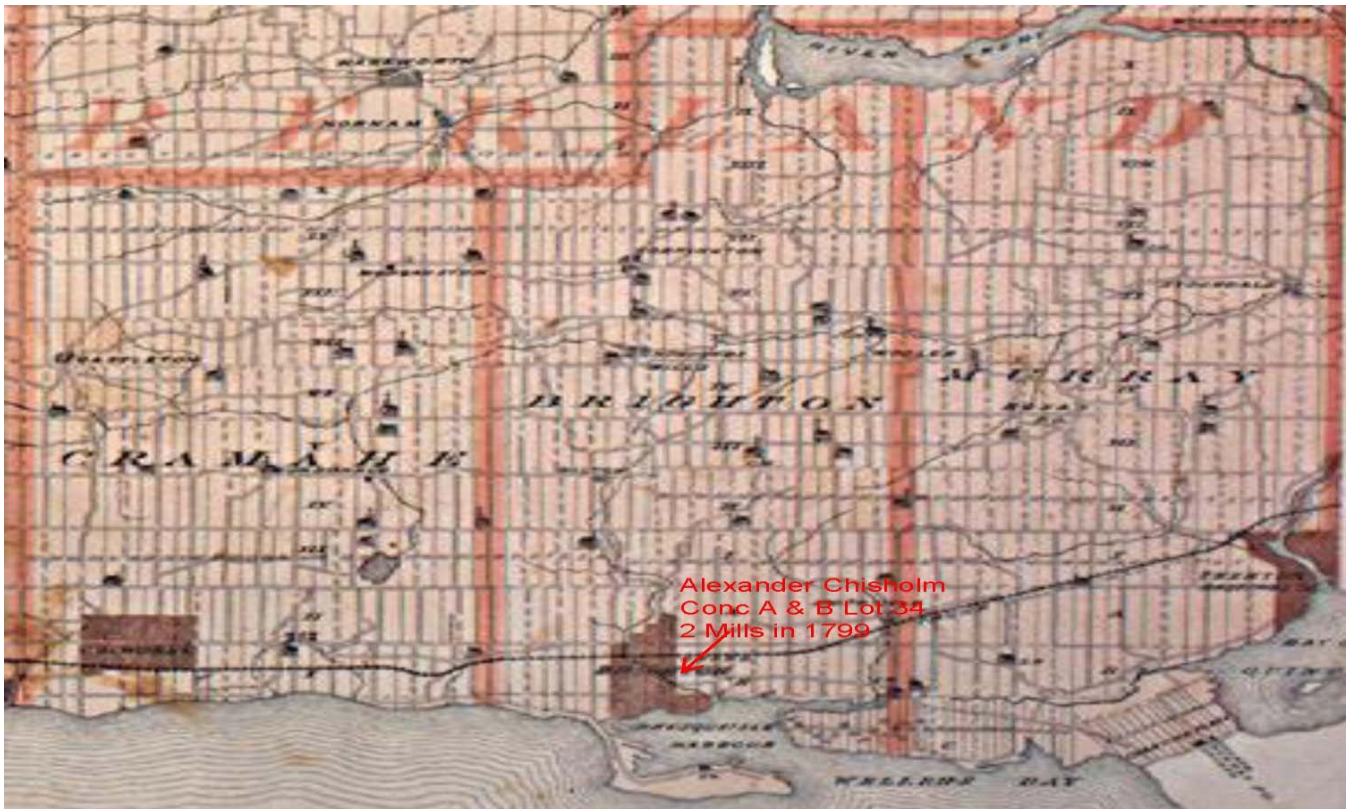
The cairn reads:

U. E. L.
REDEDICATED
JULY 14, 1991
IN YONDER SAND DUNE
LIE THE REMAINS OF
THE FIRST SETTLERS OF
BRIGHTON DISTRICT
OBADIAH SIMPSON
OF NORTH CAROLINA
1755 – 1809
AND HIS WIFE
MARY LORD
OF WEST CHESTER COUNTY, N.Y.
U.E. LOYALISTS DeLANCEY'S Regt.
SETTLED ON LOT 4 CON. 2
THEN Tp. OF CRAMAHE
NOW Tp. OF BRIGHTON
MARCH 1796
ERECTED BY THEIR DESCENDANTS 1931

First Settlers of Brighton

Alexander Chisholm

To the east of Obediah Simpson's homestead, a much different kind of settler was engaged in the enterprise of building mills. Alexander Chisholm was living at Meyers' Creek, later to be called Belleville, when he built a saw mill at the mouth of what we know as Butler Creek. He had looked around for an ideal place to build a mill and found this place, in Concession A, Lot 34 of Murray Township. The community badly needed saw mills and grist mills to service the growing settler population and a fellow with some resources and ambition could expect to have a town named after him if things worked out as planned.



Alexander Chisholm was born in Inverness Shire, Scotland in 1748. His family was Roman Catholic and supported Bonnie Prince Charlie, suffering mightily as a result. Many young men from this area found work in the British Army, travelling around the world, fighting for the Crown that had destroyed their homes. Alexander came to New York State in 1773 and found himself at the Siege of Quebec in 1775, and then at Lake Champlain in 1777. Records show he was a "Sutler for Burgoyne" which means he procured meat and grain from local farmers as Burgoyne's Army marched south into New York State, intent on invading New York City. After the defeat of Burgoyne's Army it is possible that Alexander Chisholm was held prisoner for a time before returning to Quebec.

After the war, he set up a fur trading post with his army buddies George Singleton and Isaac Ferguson at the mouth of the Moira River. After many petitions and much frustration, he gave up on obtaining a grant of land in that location for a mill and set his sights on Presqu'île Bay. More petitions resulted in refusal by the Government to give up the Reserved Land on which he had squatted, but he was afforded a Lease. His wife, Nancy, who was Captain Singleton's widow, was able to renew this lease in 1823 and eventually purchase the land. When Brighton was created in 1831, she and her son, John Singleton, became prosperous real estate brokers in the area.

First Settlers of Brighton

Aaron Greeley

Aaron Greeley was not a permanent settler in this area but he was very active in several schemes which impacted settlement in the region. There is a Census record in 1803 which shows that Aaron Greeley, age 31, was living in Murray Township. Family records also show that in the same year he married Margaret Rogers, daughter of Col. James Rogers and Margaret McGregor, members of the famous “Rogers Rangers” family of Haldimand Township. While the census record does not show a specific location, it is reasonable to suggest that he was living on Alexander Chisholm’s land at the mouth of Butler Creek.

We have seen that Alexander Chisholm could not obtain Lot 34, Concession A of Murray Township because it was Reserved and the government did not want to make an exception by granting it to him at that time. Instead, in 1799, he petitioned for a lease, citing the fact that he had built a four-saw saw mill on the land and was building a grist mill as well. These were all important “improvements” for the community as the demand for sawn lumber was growing and farmers had previously been forced to carry their grain to Trent Port or Picton to find a grist mill. At some point, Alexander Chisholm entered into a partnership with Aaron Greeley on this property.

Unfortunately for Alexander Chisholm, Aaron Greeley encountered a bit of trouble with his settlement schemes. Aaron Greeley and Asa Danforth (yes, the guy who built the road) proposed a settlement scheme to the government whereby they would search out settlers for Percy, Haldimand and Cramahe Townships, providing a list of names. The government would pay the pair a certain amount per name, expecting that the money would be used to facilitate the settlement of these people in the prescribed townships.

A few years later, in 1799, the government became uneasy with this arrangement because they received reports that very few settlers had come to the townships. A surveyor was sent out to see who was actually living there. The results were extremely unfavourable to Aaron Greeley and Asa Danforth because it showed a very small increase in the number of settlers in those townships and almost none of the names matched the list of expected settlers. As a result, the government suspected that fraud had taken place and they sanctioned the two men, retracting the large land grants they had been afforded in the context of the agreement.

Both men would have their side to the story and subsequent generations of researchers would comment about blame and culpability. However, the practical result of this scandal was that Aaron Greeley and Asa Danforth became persona non grata in Upper Canada and both would leave very soon. Of course, this left Alexander Chisholm holding the bag regarding the lease on Lot 34, Concession A of Murray Township. Eventually, he was able to establish the lease on firmer ground and maintain his mill operations.

First Settlers of Brighton

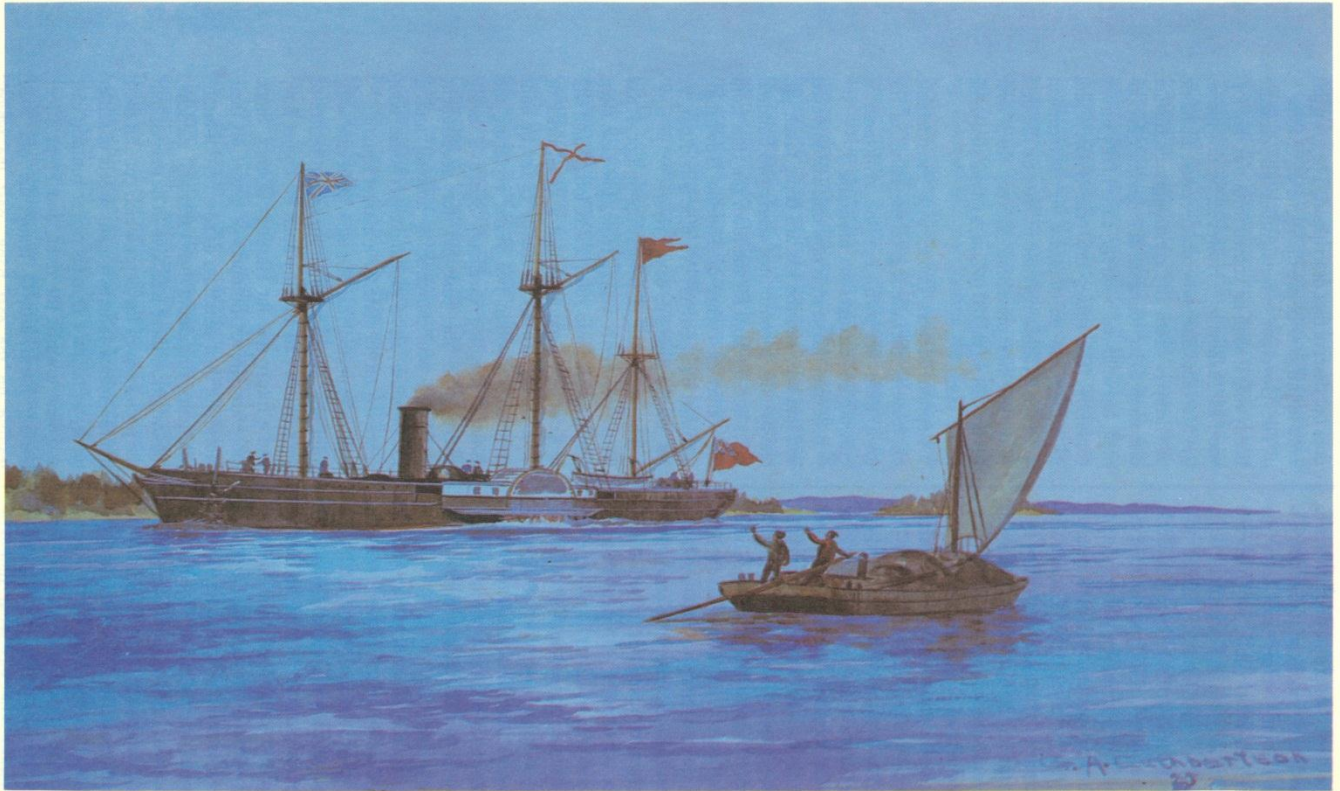
George Gibson

The importance of Presqu'île Bay to the development of this area is highlighted by the fact that several of the first settlers were ship captains who lived on Presqu'île Point. One of these sailors was George Gibson, an Englishman who came to Canada after the War of Independence was over and worked between Presqu'île and Kingston and the US ports during the 1790s. Family history shows that he settled on Presqu'île Point in 1802, the same year that the government of Upper Canada built the Court House and Jail for Newcastle District. As early as 1797, Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe had decided that this was a perfect place for the County Town of Newcastle District, naming the new town Newcastle, and laying out a plan with lots for churches, schools and residences.



A very cute story is told about the aging sailor when, in 1824, he was standing on the shore as a ship entered the Bay and rounded Salt Point, heading for the wharf. George Gibson immediately raised the alarm, shouting to anyone who could hear that the ship had no sails and was “afire”! As the ship drew up to the wharf, George’s son, Joseph, chided his father that the ship was not burning up – it was a **steam** ship. This was, in fact, the S. S. Frontenac, the first steam ship to enter Presqu'île Bay and the old sailor had lived to see the new technology in the flesh. The story was recounted by Isaac M. Wellington, grandson of George Gibson, who was a local historian and a popular baker in Brighton for many years in the late 1800s.

First Settlers of Brighton



REPRODUCED BY COURTESY OF THE CANADA STEAMSHIP LINES' MARINE HISTORICAL COLLECTION

GEORGE A. CUTHBERTSON

THE S.S. FRONTENAC, 1816

THE FIRST STEAM-DRIVEN VESSEL ON THE GREAT LAKES, BUILT AT FINKLE'S SHIP-YARDS, BATH, UPPER CANADA.

Painting of S. S. Frontenac, 1816 is taken from "Hans Walmeyer" by Jane Bennett Goddard, E.U.

First Settlers of Brighton

Charles Selleck

Another ship captain who lived at Presqu'île was Charles Selleck. It is not clear exactly when he came to Presqu'île, but we can expect he was sailing into the Bay during the 1790s along with George Gibson. In fact, he married Elizabeth Gibson, a daughter of his sailing associate. What we can say for sure is that Charles Selleck and his wife were engaged by the government as custodians of the large building that was built in 1802 in the village of Newcastle on Presqu'île Point. The building was built to house the Court House for Newcastle District as well as the gaol and the Selleck family lived in part of the building with responsibility for managing the property.

In his dual capacities as ship captain and custodian of the Court House, Charles Selleck would play a part in the story of the sinking of HMS Speedy. In July 1804, Charles Selleck and Thomas Paxton, the Captain of HMS Speedy, were on a ship becalmed off Weller's Bay when they discovered a large rock just below the surface. Soundings were done and records sent to Kingston and York so that ships might avoid the obstacle.

We can also expect that, as custodians of the Court House, Charles Selleck and his wife would have been working diligently to prepare for the unusually large group of visitors that were expected on HMS Speedy. There was to be a murder trial held at the court house and much needed to be put in order. The Attorney General and a Judge were to be accommodated according to their station which was not the common fare at Newcastle in those days.

Then, on the night of October 8, 1804, when HMS Speedy was blown past the entrance to Presqu'île Bay, Charles Selleck built a large fire on Salt Point, hoping that a beacon might help Lieutenant Paxton tack back into the Bay. Unfortunately a severe north-easterly snow storm hit and the ship was not seen again. Ironically, we know from recent research that HMS Speedy did, indeed, strike the rock that the two sailors had surveyed a few months before.

The sinking of HMS Speedy was a major tragedy for the Province of Upper Canada but it also had a very negative result for the town of Newcastle. In March of 1805, the Legislative Council voted to abandon Newcastle as the county town, because, as they said, it was in an "inconvenient" location. In a few years, Asa Burnham would donate land for a court house at the small village of Amherst so that Cobourg would be the County Town for Northumberland County.

On a more personal level, the large Court House building at Newcastle became the permanent home of Charles Selleck and his family. Unfortunately, the records suggest that he died in 1809 at the age of 49, although an important legacy of the man was the substantial building that became the homestead for the Selleck and Gibson families thereafter.

Josiah Dix Wellington

Josiah Dix Wellington was a ship captain from Massachusetts who likely sailed Lake Ontario during the 1790s and then came to live permanently at Presqu'île around the same time as George Gibson and Charles Selleck. In fact, his second wife was Elizabeth Selleck, widow of Charles Selleck and daughter of George Gibson.

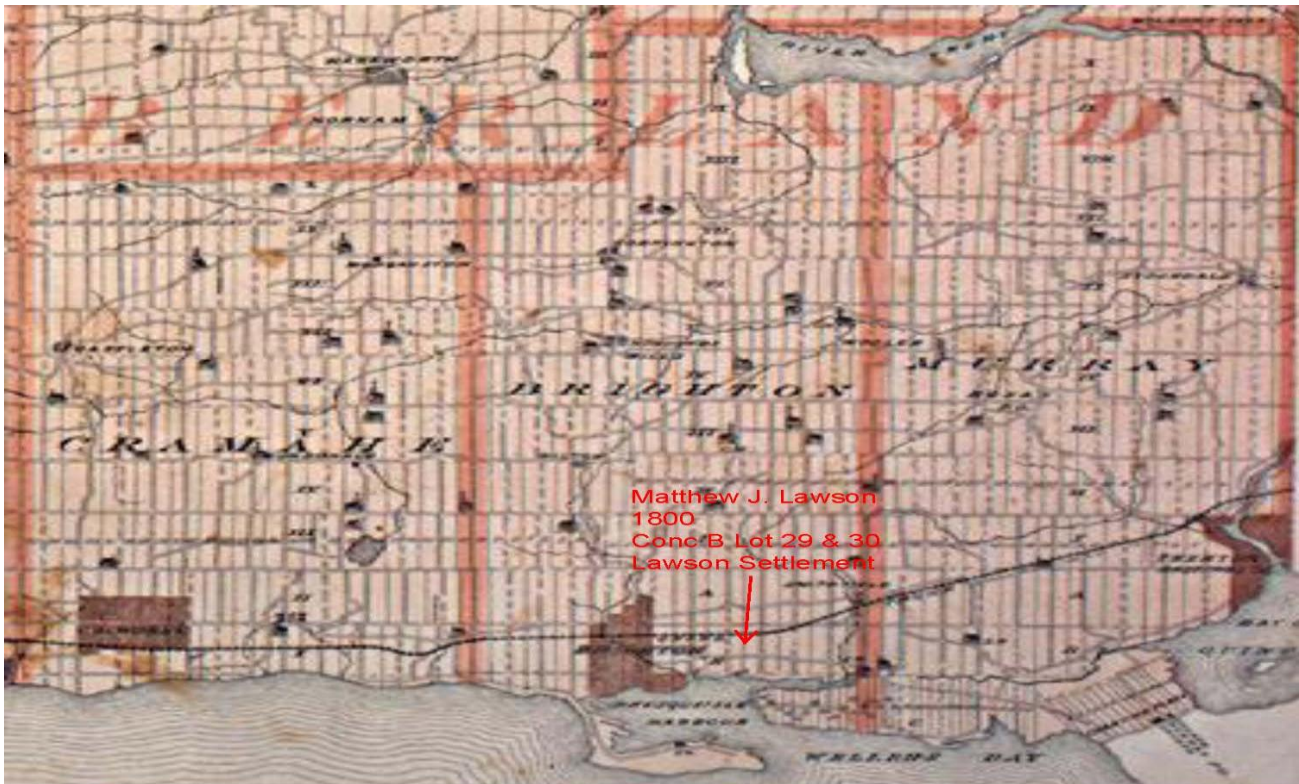
We know more about Josiah Wellington's son than we do about him because Isaac Maitland Wellington became a mainstay of the town of Brighton until his death in 1897. He was a popular baker from the 1850s to the 1880s at the northwest corner of Main and Divisions streets, where Max Young's Garage was located in the 1960s and a bank and convenience store are seen today. Isaac Wellington was also an active historian, researching and retelling many stories of the early years of Gosport, Presqu'île and Brighton, including the story of HMS Speedy. Also, the story of his grandfather, George Gibson, sighting the first steamship to come into Presqu'île Bay in 1824 is from the same pen.

First Settlers of Brighton

Matthew J. Lawson

The area we know of as Lawson Settlement became the home of Matthew J. Lawson in 1800. The location was Concession B, lots 29 and 30, east of Brighton and south of Smithfield. The flat, fertile land on the north shore of Presqu'ile Bay was very productive and the Lawson family grew large and prospered.

One of the most well-known stories in Brighton's past involves the Lawson family. The unfortunate victim of Dr. William Henry King's arsenic poisoning was his wife, Sarah Ann Lawson, granddaughter of Matthew J. Lawson. After her death, her body was initially buried in a family cemetery but after a series of exhumations to obtain evidence in the murder trial, she was buried at Mount Hope Cemetery, sharing a memorial with her infant son who had died in 1854.

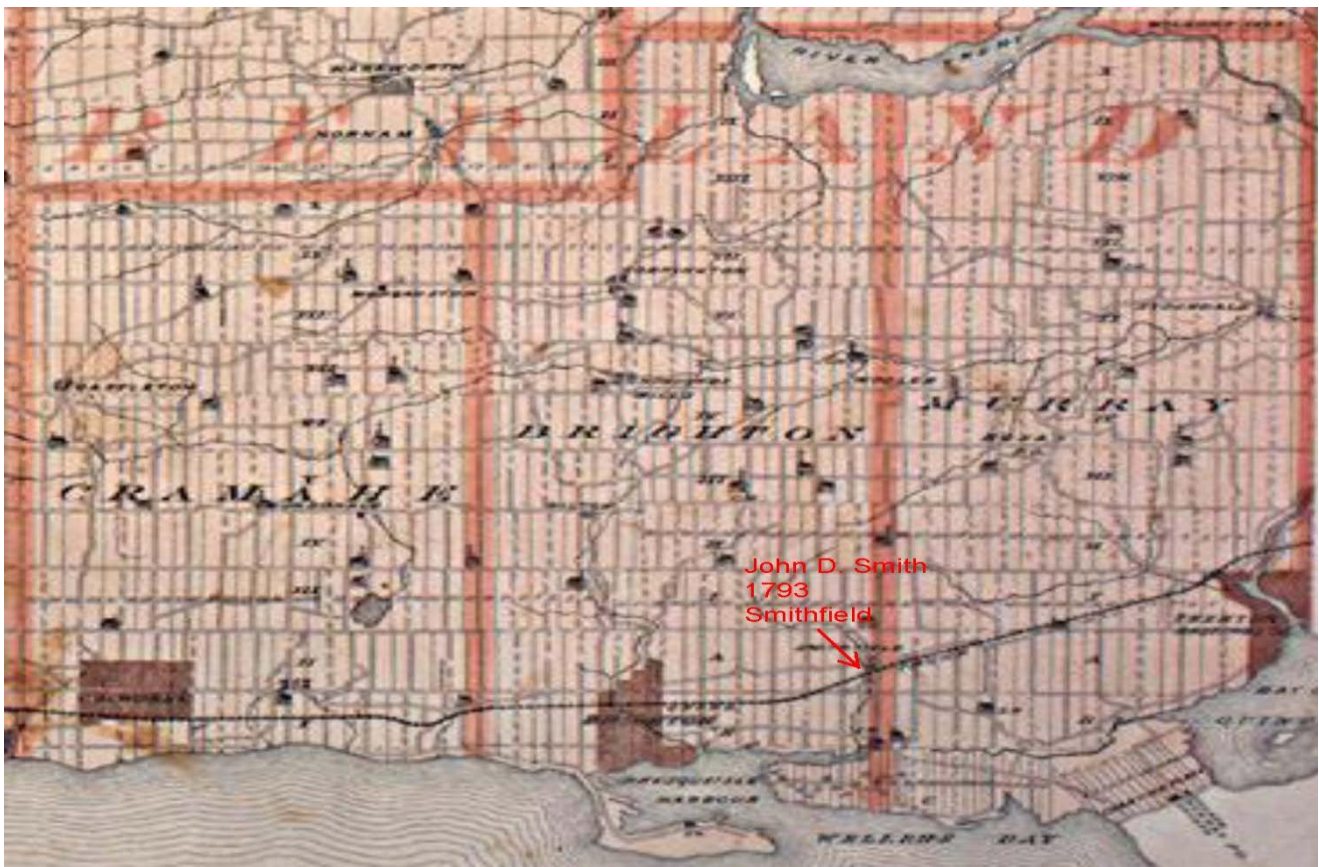


First Settlers of Brighton

John D. Smith

The records show that John D. Smith settled as early as 1793 at the small creek that would bear his name. The settlement would develop into the village of Smithfield. The very old Smith's Cemetery holds many of the early settlers and, while the cemetery itself does not exist today, the memorials have been dutifully assembled on a large wall which can be found behind some houses on the south side of the road near the creek.

The case of John D. Smith was a bit unusual at the time because he was not a United Empire Loyalist. In fact, he had fought for the Patriot side, in direct conflict with his brother Jesse who fought for the British. Around 1788, John D. Smith had married Mary McDowell, the sister of Rev. Robert McDowell who “.. was a minister serving parishioners between Brockville and York before 1800”. Rev. McDowell encouraged his sister and brother-in-law to settle in Canada, which they did.



First Settlers of Brighton

John Richard Bleecker

The settlement patterns of the 1780s and 1790s demonstrate a persistent southeast to northwest movement, in effect, from Adolphustown and Prince Edward up to Newcastle District, later to be called Northumberland. Briefly put, we can say that the first settlement at what would become Belleville and Trenton happened in the 1780s and settlement around Brighton happened in the 1790s. It took time to develop.

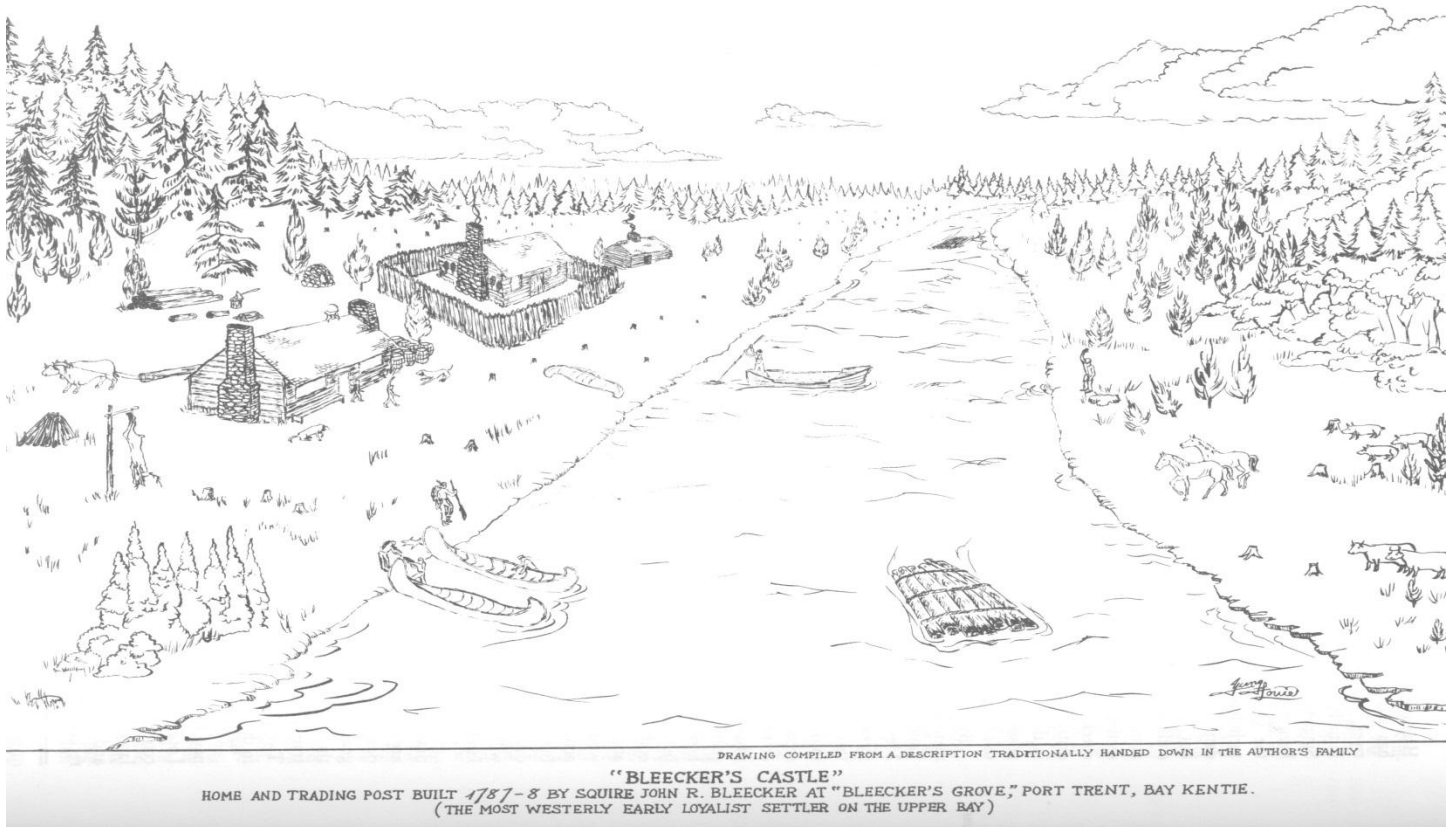
John Richard Bleecker is included in “First Settlers of Brighton” in order to demonstrate that land to the east of the Brighton area was settled in the 1780s, in this case at the mouth of the Trent River, present day Trenton. John R. Bleecker was only about eighteen years of age in 1786 when he finished work as a surveyor, took a land grant and built a cabin on the east side of the Carrying Place. From this vantage point he saw that the mouth of the Trent River was not occupied so in the next year he took a small grant of 34 acres on the west side of the Trent River, near the Bay of Quinte.



In 1788 John R. Bleecker married Catharine Walden Meyers, a daughter of his neighbour to the east, John Walden Meyers. John and Catharine built a log cabin, then a palisade around it and later a trading post. They engaged in trade with the Indians and the new settlers from this early date, becoming well respected by all those who did business with them.

First Settlers of Brighton

This sketch shows the Trent River looking north from the Bay of Quinte, sometime after 1788. On the west side of the river is the home of John Richard Bleecker and beside it is the trading post. The establishment was called "Bleecker's Castle". The sketch is from "Hans Waltimeyer" by Jane Bennett Goddard, U.E., a book of family history for John Walden Meyers, who was a prominent settler at the mouth of the Moira River. The book also provides much valuable information about the Bay of Quinte and area in the 1780s and 1790s.

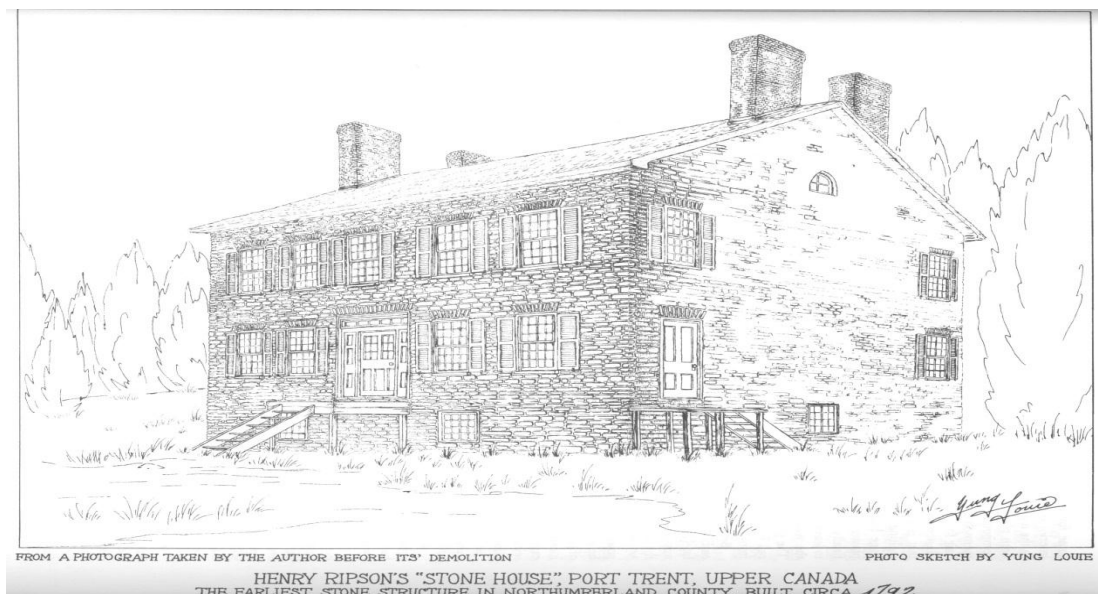
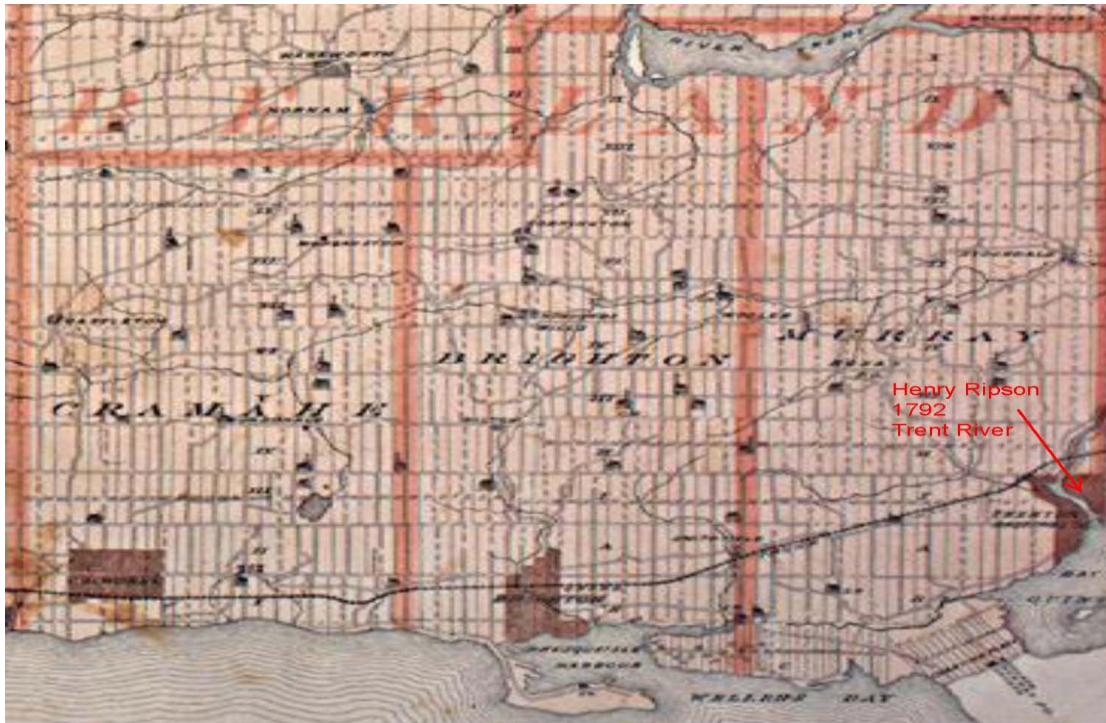


Taken from "Hans Waltimeyer" by Jane Bennett Goddard, E.U.

First Settlers of Brighton

Henry Ripson

Henry Ripson was a merchant who came to the mouth of the Trent River in 1794 with the intention of building and operating mills. He purchased land on the east side of the Trent River, across from John R. Bleecker. Besides the mills, Henry Ripson built the first stone house in Northumberland County, a very substantial home for the time which would be familiar to the community for many decades, called "The Stone House".

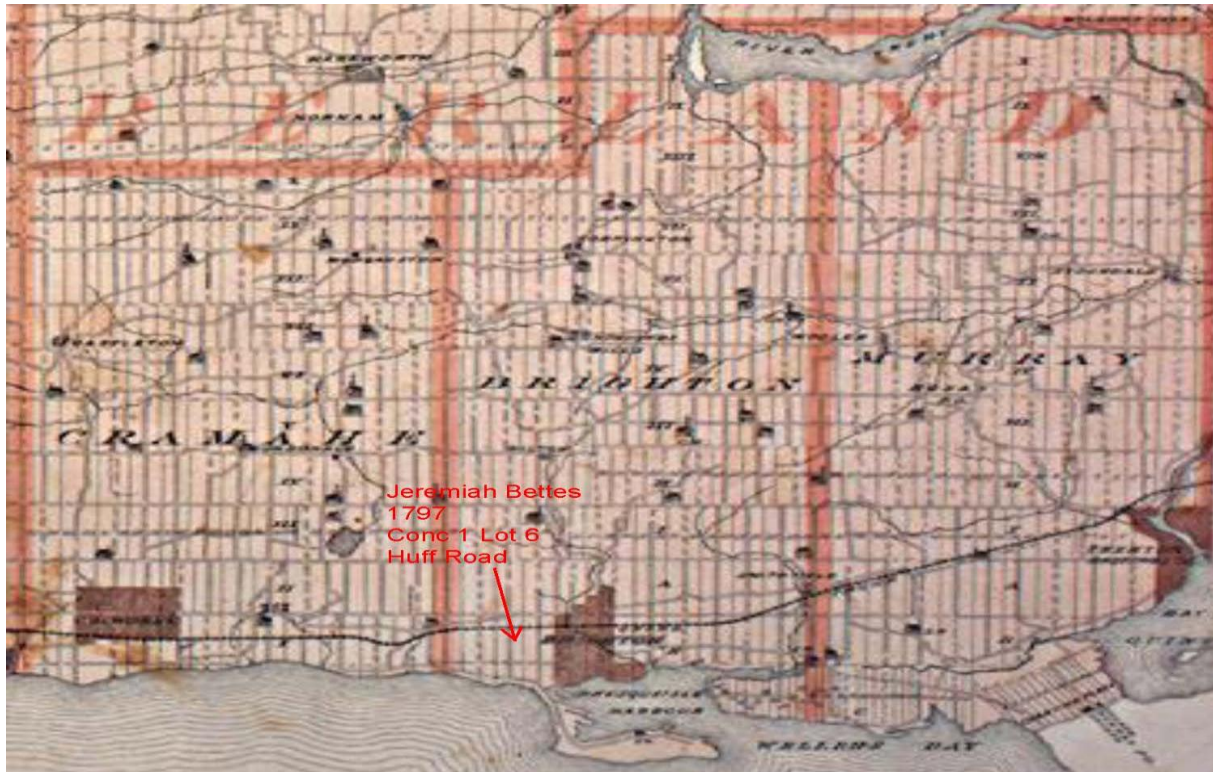


Taken from "Hans Waltimeyer" by Jane Bennett Goddard, E.U.

First Settlers of Brighton

Jeremiah Bettes

To the west of Obadiah Simpson's property several very early settlers are identified. Jeremiah Bettes is included in a list of "Original Settlers of Cramahe", taken in 1797. He is located on Concession 1, Lot 6, Cramahe Township, which would be at Huff Road, west of Brighton.



Jeremiah Bettes also owned lots 7 and 14 in concession 1 in the early years. Several members of the Bettes family were very active in business in the area through the 1800s. One needs only to review Land Registry Records in the early decades of the 1800s to see the activity of this family. There was much buying and selling of property as well as granting of mortgages. In those days there were no banks so individuals with ready cash could take on the role of banker for their community. This was a good thing because it helped the economy in the community move forward but it could be difficult when financial arrangements went sour and families came into conflict with each other as a result.

The greatest presence of the Bettes family in this location was in the 1850s when Harrison and Alexander, both grandsons of the old settler, operated mills on the creek at the north side of Main Street. Another grandson of Jeremiah Bettes, Barnabus M. Bettes, called Barney, operating the Temperance Hotel for a few years in the 1850s at 2 Ontario Street. The Temperance Hotel would remain an important landmark at the south west corner of Ontario and Main until it burned in recent years. The property is being turned into a park by the Municipality and a historical plaque will recognise the importance of what was once called "Bettes Corners".

First Settlers of Brighton

Jeremiah Scripture

Another early settler who was included in the 1797 list of “Original Settlers of Cramahe” was Jeremiah Scripture who we see as the owner of Lots 6 and 9 in Concession 1, Cramahe Township. He was originally from Massachusetts but had lived in Vermont during and after the War of Independence. Many Loyalists found refuge in Vermont which was under the tight control of Ethan Allen and not subject to the same persecution of Loyalists as other areas.

Jeremiah Scripture had become part of “The Keeler Group” which was a settlement project led by Joseph Keeler to settle several families in the area that would become Colborne. Olive Scripture, Jeremiah’s sister, had married Joseph Keeler before they came to Canada. Several groups had landed at Lakeport in 1793 and 1794 and started a settlement there. Around 1819 Joseph Keeler Jr. opened a store on the Danforth Road where the town of Colborne would later be formed.

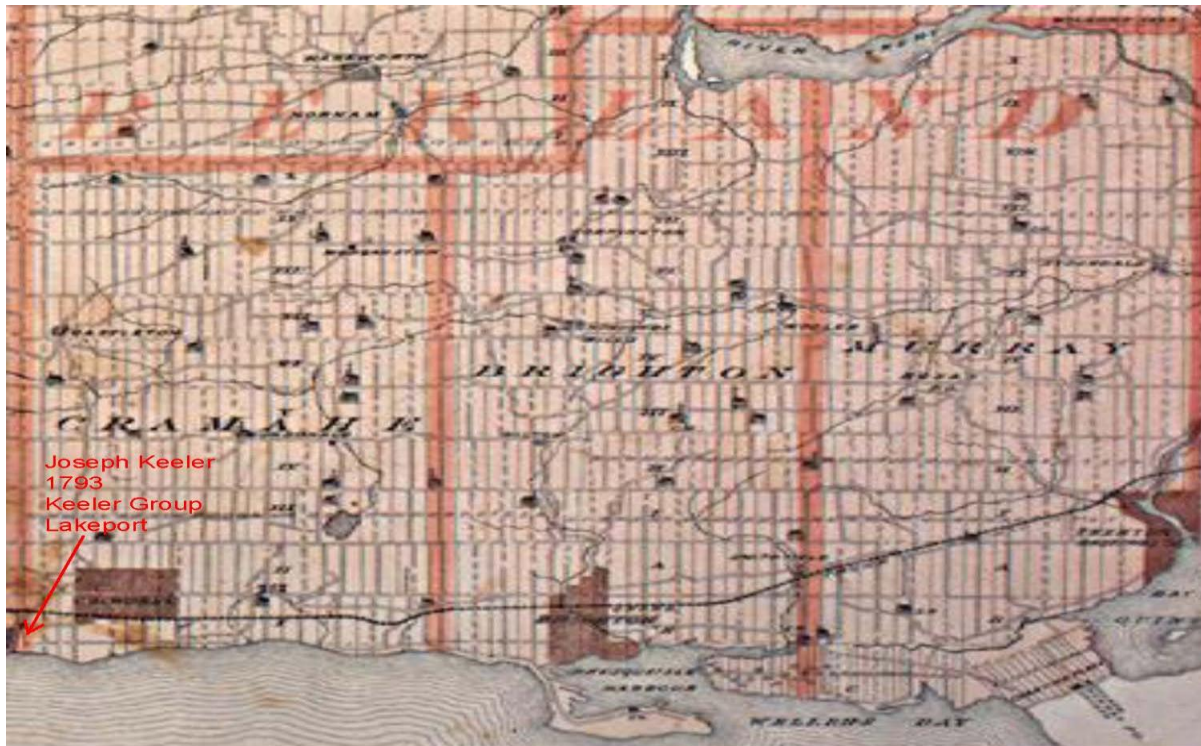


First Settlers of Brighton

Joseph Keeler

Joseph Keeler is considered the first settler of the Lakeport and Colborne area. He came from Rutland, Vermont around 1789 to establish a settlement at Lakeport. He returned to Vermont and in 1793 brought forty settlers with him, called “The Keeler Group” which included Aaron Greeley, a surveyor. Jeremiah Scripture was also part of The Keeler Group as we see that his sister, Olive, was married to Joseph Keeler.

This group was very ambitious, building several mills and developing wharfs to support lake shipping. The son, Joseph A. Keeler, was the founder of the village of Colborne and became a prominent merchant, holding various positions in the community.



Joseph Keeler settling at Lakeport may seem a bit outside the scope of “First Settlers of Brighton”, but when we consider the distribution of settlers from The Keeler Group around Haldimand and Cramahe Townships, we can see that this development was important. Jeremiah Scripture was one of the group who finally settled very close to Obediah Simpson and Jeremiah Bettes on the lake shore well to the east of his original landing point at Lakeport.

Besides that, Joseph Keeler’s settlement at Lakeport was considerable and productive in terms of mill facilities and lake shipping which all helped increase trade and economic activity in the area. While the early settlers may have lived some distance from each other, they did a lot of business over those distances – because they did not have a choice.

First Settlers of Brighton

Cyrus Richmond

There were also settlers north of Obediah Simpson's property. Cyrus Richmond was part of a very large Loyalist family from Dutchess County, New York. His name was included in the 1797 list of "Original Settlers of Cramahe" located at Concession 4, Lot 4, Cramahe Township which would later be the village of Hilton. Cyrus Richmond and his brothers would own land and have large families in the area, leaving the obvious legacy of Richmond Street which is the north-south street going through Hilton. This was also part of the Old Percy Road which means they located at a place where the main north and south traffic of the day occurred.

One of Cyrus Richmond's brothers, Jeremiah, married Pamela Bettes, daughter of Jeremiah Bettes, who we have seen to the west of Obediah Simpson's homestead. This family grew to include fourteen children and the youngest was Louisa Richmond who married John Herrington, one of the tragic fatalities resulting from The Breakaway on April 21, 1852. He was working in Lewis Shearer's saw mill northeast of Hilton when a small lake broke through its banks and cascaded down the creek, destroying the mill and killing Mr. Shearer and John Herrington, who happened to be working there that night.



First Settlers of Brighton

Daniel Masters

Even in these very early years, there were a few people living north of Hilton. Daniel Masters appears to have been the first settler in what they then called Cramahe Hollow, near the later location of the village of Codrington. A Crown Grant is on record for Daniel Masters in late 1797, giving him ownership of Lot 5, Concession 8 of Cramahe Township which is west of Codrington, on the west side of The Fish Hatchery Road. When I lived at Codrington in the 1950s and 1960s, The Houlihan family lived on that land and the Codrington Blue Jays played exciting fastball on the local ball diamond across the road.

Daniel Masters was a United Empire Loyalist from New Jersey and he had married Hannah Carl soon after the War was over. The young family, along with Hannah's father, William Carl, obtained grants beside each other in Cramahe Township. These two names are not well known in this area since most of the children moved away, except for Samuel Masters who raised a family in Percy Township.

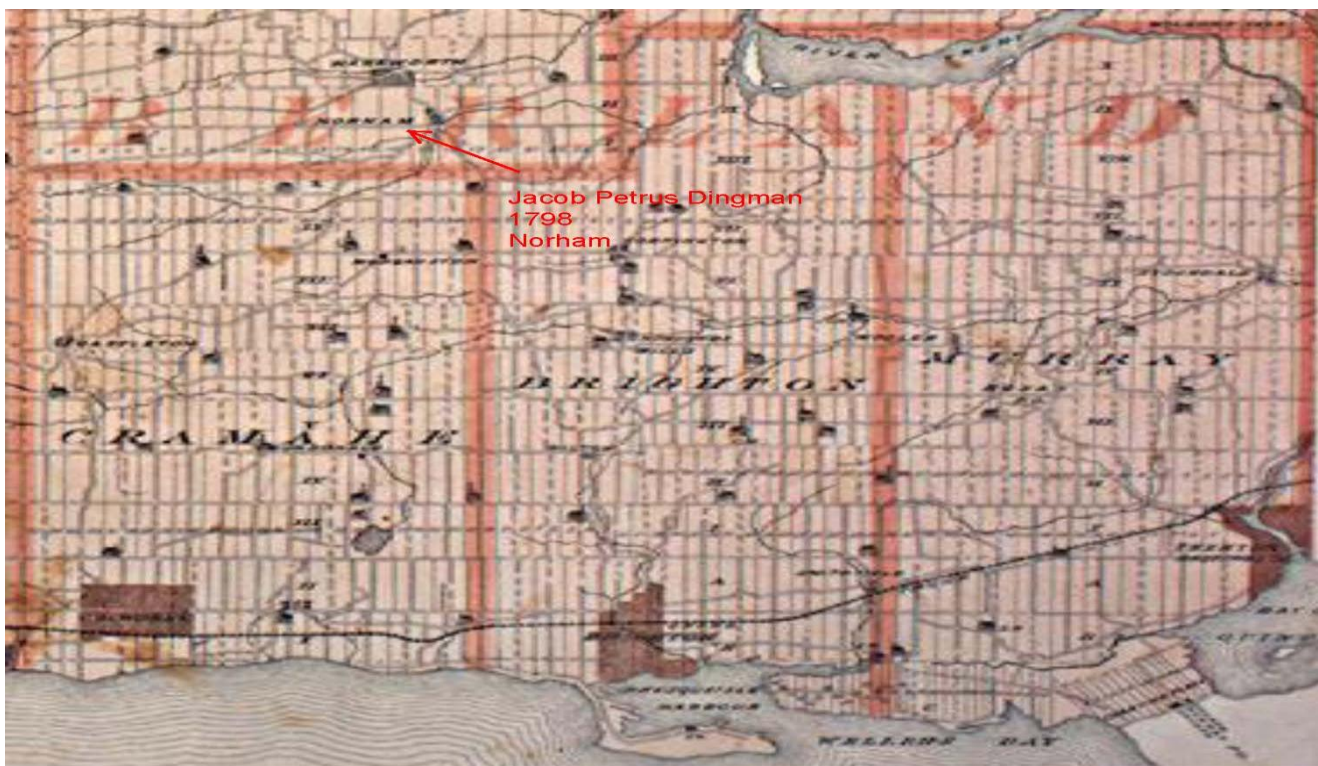


First Settlers of Brighton

Jacob Petrus Dingman

Dingman is a name that is well known in the north Cramahe and south Percy areas. While I was growing up, our neighbours to the west on Cramahe Hill were Dingman's. The first Dingman family to settle here was that of Jacob Petrus Dingman. Crown Land Petitions for his son John Dingman clearly state that they were located at the south end of Percy Township in 1798. They had lived south west of Napanee in North Fredericksburgh Township since being in refugee camps in Quebec during the war.

Before the war, the large Dingman clan had lived around the town of Kinderhook, on the east side of the Hudson River, a bit south of Albany. The family was torn apart by the war, some taking on the Patriot cause and others maintaining their loyalty to the King of England. This was a nasty war where brother fought brother and father fought son. After the war, parts of a family might be disowned by other parts.



The Dingman's were one of only three families that settled this early in Percy Township, being accompanied by the Brunson and Merriam families. We might speculate that this group of families came to this location deliberately and possibly with some help from the British Navy. After the loss of the American colonies, and now engaged in the fight with Napoleon, the British Navy was desperate for large stands of oak to build ships. To the west side of Percy Township and into Alnwick, there is the area we still call Oak Hills. The Trent River and in particular Percy Boom, provided a ready transportation route for logs cut on the hills of Percy, dragged across to the river and sent down to the Bay of Quinte.

The Dingman's became active in this trade and were heavily involved in the later lumber business all through the 1880s and into the early 1900s. This is also one more reason why The Percy Road developed as it did – to support the new communities in the south of Percy.

First Settlers of Brighton

Asa Weller

Asa Weller first came to Upper Canada in 1790, taking Lot 1 at the Carrying Place. He had been born in Dutchess County, New York, but his family had moved to Manchester, Vermont, when he was young. Now he was an ambitious and far-sighted young man, ready to make his mark on a new land. He selected the Isthmus at The Carrying Place as a location that had great potential for business, anticipating lots of settlers moving into the area in the coming years. He could see right away that the main problem would be moving boats from the Bay of Quinte to Wellers Bay and on to Lake Ontario. Here he pinpointed his opportunity.

We might think that Asa Weller is outside the region to be considered when dealing with “First Settlers of Brighton”. However, the enterprise that Asa Weller established at a very key point in the transportation system of Upper Canada would have major impact on the traffic and settlement of people and goods into Presqu’île Bay and down The Danforth Road. His was one of the most important and interesting establishments of the day and it deserves attention.



Asa Weller built a highly unusual system for moving boats across The Carrying Place. He laid down wooden rails and built a wagon with wheels that would run on the rails. The wagon was large with sides extended outwards. Boats were lifted onto the wagon and secured with ropes and then a team or two of oxen pulled the wagon along the tracks, to the other side of the isthmus. The boat was lifted off the wagon and placed in the water to continue its trip.

This system worked so well that the government and the army supported Asa Weller with this and other services he developed on the site. It is said that during the War of 1812 there were at times as many as 2,000 American prisoners of war camped at The Carrying Place waiting for their boats to be moved along the tracks.

First Settlers of Brighton

Asa Weller did very well with his bateaux railway. In 1810 he built a large house near the middle of the portage at Carrying Place, a home that was known as the “Tap House” or “Middle House”. Whatever folks called it, the house was certainly known as one of the grandest homes in Upper Canada at the time.



COURTESY MR. AND MRS. THOMAS QUINN

RECREATED FROM BLUEPRINT

ASA WELLER'S "TAP HOUSE" OR "MIDDLE HOUSE"

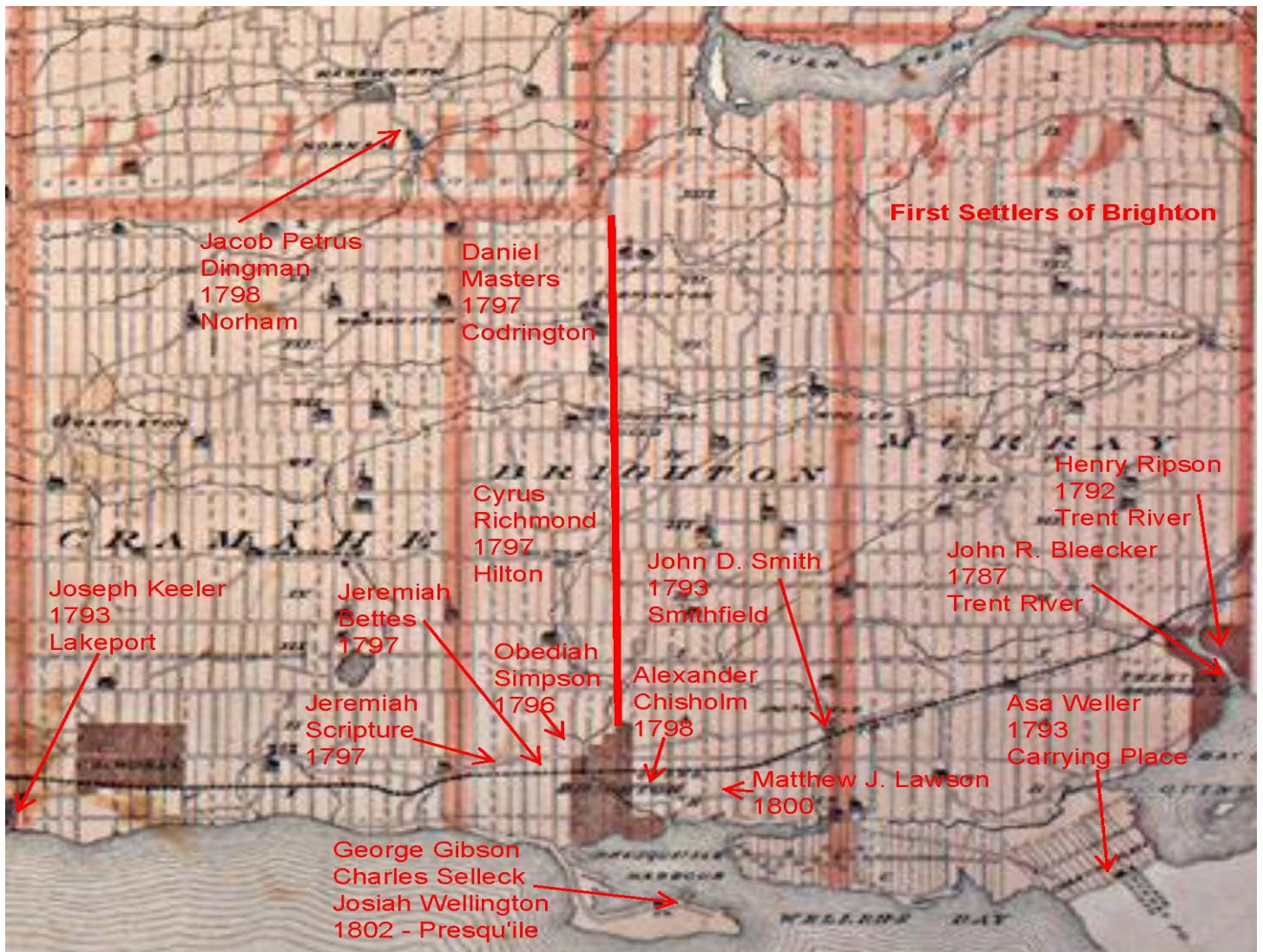
BUILT CIRCA 1810

THE PORTAGE ROAD, CARRYING PLACE
UPPER CANADA

Taken from "Hans Walmeyer" by Jane Bennett Goddard, E.U.

First Settlers of Brighton

Map Showing All First Settlers Discussed



First Settlers of Brighton

Resources

The information included in this document came from many sources, such as:

www.treesbydan.com

This is my web site which contains detailed family tree information for the people discussed in “First Settlers of Brighton” – and lots more. There is also a “History” section which provides PDF copies of my various history writings. Feel free to have a look and take what information you want.

<http://digital.library.mcgill.ca/countyatlas/search.htm>

The Beldon County Atlas maps are available on this McGill University web site. You can search the index for names of people to find or you can open the large version of a township map and then download it to your own computer.

Hans Waltimeyer by Jane Bennett Goddard, U.E.L.

This is a wonderful compilation of history of the Bay of Quinte in the 1780s and 1790s, based mostly on the life of John Walden Meyers who settled at Belleville and had a distinguished career as a spy during the War of Independence. While it does not concentrate on the Brighton area, it provides good information about Asa Weller and the activity in those early years around Presqu’ile and Carrying Place. There is much about the beginnings of Belleville and Trenton.

Pioneer Life on the Bay of Quinte

This well-known history of many of the families that settled around the Bay of Quinte is always a useful source for Brighton local history since so many people moved up to Brighton from Prince Edward County over the decades. Information needs to be used with discretion, but there is lots of it here.

History of the Settlement of Upper Canada (Ontario) With Special Reference to the Bay of Quinte by William Canniff

William Canniff’s book was published in 1869 and is a very authoritative source for early Upper Canada history.

The Russell Papers

This is a collection of letters and documents from the papers of Peter Russell, Administrator of Upper Canada from 1796 to 1799. Lieutenant-Governor John Graves Simcoe returned to England and appointed Russell as Administrator while he was gone, leaving very few documents and less power in his hands. These papers shed light on the inner workings of the government of Upper Canada, such as it was, and the problems they were dealing with. Much thanks to Brighton Public Library for tracking down an Inter-library Loan for this important document.