What's in a Northumberland name?

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Flashbacks

Northumberland County's fertile farm land and the ports of Cobourg and Port Hope drew United Empire Loyalists (UEL) from the American Thirteen Colonies after the War of 1812 and while boundaries have changed over time, the county's present population is about 82,000 with an expanse of 735 square miles (1,905.97 sq. km.).

Today there are seven large municipalities and believe it or not some 65 smaller villages, hamlets and 'corners' within Northumberland. What may surprise you is the history of their dubbing.

The Municipality of Port Hope, for example, dates back to about 1779 when native Cayugas called it Ganaraske for the river that runs through it. By 1793, UELs were settling in what became Smith's Creek. Oddly enough, after the War of 1812, it was briefly called Toronto, but was renamed Port Hope by 1817. The village became part of the District of Newcastle(DN) in 1849 along with neighbouring Durham County.

Traditionally settled by English, Irish and Scottish, primarily, it seems odd that at least three Northumberland communities - Cramahe, Hamilton and the former Hope Township were titled after Lieutenant-Governors (LG) of Quebec. Though the present day office of LGs in Ontario came into being after Confederation in 1867, the post remained a continuation of the first governorships of Upper Canada in 1791, which had branched out of LGs in the Province of Quebec.

The town of Cobourg and the county seat began as a small group of villages like Hardscrabble and Amherst and was briefly titled Hamilton before being integrated into the DN. In an unusual move, it was called Cobourg in 1818 after Leopold of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld, a future king of Belgium. The township of Hamilton that surrounds present day Cobourg was designated for Henry Hamilton, again a LG of Quebec from 1782-1785.

The town of Brighton was founded in 1851 and styled after the larger port of Brighton, England. More surprisingly, nearby Presqu'ile beach was baptized by French explorer Samuel de Champlain on his second expedition to Canada in 1608.

Cramahe Township was so named for Hector Theophilius de Cramahe, another LG of Quebec. It's biggest village is Colborne, originally termed Keeler's Creek after Joseph Keeler who opened a store there in 1819, but it was later renamed for Sir John Colborne, LG of Upper Canada in 1829.

Alderville First Nations, a sub-nation of the Ojibwas and formerly known as Indian Reserve 37, has been home to the Mississaugas since the early 1800s and is autonomously governed.

The Municipality of Trent Hills was created in 2001 by amalgamating Campbellford and its neighbours, but the town traces its history as far back as the early 1800s when again UELs were drawn to the area by large land grants along the Trent-Severn waterway. Seymour Township was settled by Scottish brothers, Lt. Colonel Robert and Major David Campbell and known then as Campbell's Ford.

Many patronymics like Cold Springs, Green Acres, Gully, Loughbreeze, Spring Valley and Woodland, to suggest a few, are obviously named for their natural surroundings. Camborne is Cornish for "crooked hill."

English influences top the namesakes in Northumberland, with Alnwick honoured suitably after the castle in Northumberland, UK. Bewdley was founded in 1833 by William Bancks hailing from Bewdley, England, who attempted to establish a "gentlemen's colony." In this county you also have the Britishness of Brickley, Carmel, Castleton,

Carmel, Castelton, Codrington, Crowe Bridge, Dartford, Dunnette Landing, English Line, not to forget Griffis Corners, Gore's Landing, Godolphin, Grafton, Hastings, Healey Falls, Hilton, Hoards Station, Myersburg, Roseneath, Salem and more.

There's the patter in Percy, Percy Boom, Petherwicks, Purdy and the well known Precious Corners.

Scottish heritage is a close second in county designations. Baltimore, for example was penned for settler John McCarty who emigrated from Baltimore, County Cork in 1805. Other locations show their Gaelic tilt, as in Burnbrae, Burnely, Connelly, Dundonald, Fenella, MaCracken Landing and Sunnybrae.

Wicklow has Irish roots while Little Germany and Kellers denote a Germanic decent and Haldimand has an English-German background. Shiloh is simply biblical.

So what is in a Northumberland name? Well, to name it, a wealth of history that makes us proud of each and every part. By the way, the origin of name Beale comes from Northumberland, UK, that meant "bee hill."

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