

Introduction

The Rawdon Township Transcriptions

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This booklet is the result of a project which will eventually see the entire assessment rolls of Rawdon Township published for family historians.

Why the transcribing project was begun.

The fall of 2003 saw the Stirling-Rawdon Public Library's celebration of 100 years of service to the residents of Stirling and area. A project to commemorate this special occasion, a room dedicated to historical and genealogical pursuits, was initiated by Head Librarian and CEO Chris Faiers and Stirling-Rawdon Public Library Board Chairman/Stirling-Rawdon Historical Society president Lewis Zandbergen in 2002. After more than a year of planning, renovations and the acquisition of computers, CD ROMs, a new microfilm reader printer and reels of data, the grand opening was held during Library Week in October of 2003.

Almost immediately those responsible for the changes were asked if the 1851 Rawdon Township census records would be available. Persons involved in genealogical pursuits know that the 1851 census for the township can not be found—anywhere; it simply has not come to light.

However, it was known that Assessment Rolls for the township did indeed exist and were probably close to any census records the group could acquire. An exploratory trip to the former Rawdon Township offices vault in Spring Brook uncovered a virtual "gold mine" of records, both assessment and tax rolls as well as several records from the 1860s which provided information about militia in the area.

A committee was struck under the Stirling-Rawdon Historical Society "umbrella" and plans were made to transcribe those records using a data base set up by members Barb and Bob Dawes. Permission to transcribe was given by Township of Stirling-Rawdon Council and work began in early 2004. It is expected to last for quite some time. (NOTE: Volunteer transcribers are always welcome.)

Where did the name Rawdon originate.

W. Hambly first described Rawdon Township in his diary of 1794; he was the person hired to survey the area. However, the name Rawdon already appears on a map outlining the Crawford Purchase of 1783, and appears (along with Huntingdon, Hungerford, Sidney and Thurlow) on a map of Upper Canada dated April 12, 1800. An official date of the naming isn't known.

Rawdon Township was named in honour of Francis Rawdon Hastings, 1754-1826, "a gallant soldier, an eloquent senator, and a popular statesman." Upon his father's death in 1793 Francis added the titles 2nd Earl of Moira and Baron Rawdon of Rawdon, York



Francis Rawdon Hastings, 1754-1826, 2nd Earl of Moira and Baron Rawdon of Rawdon, York County, Baron of Hastings, Hungerford, Botreaux and De Moleyns.

County, after his name. Upon his mother's passing in 1808 he also assumed the Baronies of Hastings, Hungerford, Botreaux and De Moleyns. A complete account of the life of Francis Rawdon can be found in the history of the Rawdon Family compiled by Stan Rawdon in 1990. A copy of this fascinating history can be found in the Stirling-Rawdon Public Library's Local History and Genealogy Room.

Short history of Stirling-Rawdon to 1858.

Rawdon Township and the village of Stirling shared their history until 1858 when the village became incorporated as a separate entity. The settlement of Stirling was made possible through the abundant water supply from a creek (now Rawdon Creek) which powered early mills.

In 1797 John Bleecker and Caleb Gilbert were granted Lot 11 Concession 1 in Rawdon Township. In 1803 Joshua Goldsmith was licensed to operate a still with a capacity of 53 gallons. Samuel Rosebush became the second still owner and was licensed in 1804; in 1804 Rosebush was listed as the only distiller in the county.

The summer of 1805 must have been a dry one for little hay was harvested. Farmers grew rye instead to feed their animals

severely impacting the availability of rye for distilling purposes. However, by 1806, after a recovery in hay crops once again allowed the growing of rye wheat destined to produce the amber nectar, several distilleries were in full production.

At this time the cluster of dwellings and businesses around the creek on the border between Rawdon and Sidney Townships was known variously as Rawdon Mills, Fidler Mills (after Edward Fidler, a prosperous mill owner), and even Seldon Mills for Seldon Hawley, a lumberman.

Throughout the early years of the 1800s settlers continued to arrive in Rawdon Township. By 1821 the population stood at around 200. By 1829 it had jumped to 329. Houses and small farms began dotting the countryside of Rawdon Township. Descendants of United Empire Loyalists moved north as the lands to the south filled; in the 1830s immigrants from Scotland, England and Ireland arrived escaping famine and unrest in their home countries boosting the numbers of settlers; between 1830 and 1835 the population of the township had almost doubled from 335 in the former to 625 in the latter. By 1839 residents of the township numbered 1,067. Upon the severance of village and township in 1858 the population stood at around 4,000.

Records in existence

The record books for assessment purposes are large (roughly 22 inches wide and 18 inches high when opened) and some are in very frail condition; as years go by they will continue to disintegrate therefore we are also compiling a digital archive.

Information is carried right across the two pages and we have chosen to print the records in this format. The first basic assessment for taxes is the 1838 record which named the owner/occupant of the land and gave details about the lot and concession number, as well as enumerating the numbers of cattle, horses and value of the property. These records are filled with names familiar to most researchers, Hubble, Hoard, Finkle, Lake, Horton and others.

Present members of the Transcription team are Bob Dawes, Barb Dawes, Pat Marshall and Lewis Zandbergen. Each person brings different strengths to the project.

We have only scratched the surface in this transcription work. There are many assessment and tax rolls to be completed. As stated earlier, more transcribers are always welcome.