

**William Lee’s Family History – The Lee Family’s Arrival in the Perth Military Settlement, 1816**

**Forward:**

This detailed family history by William Lee provides a colourful look at many sides of the early Perth Military Settlement, beginning with the migration of his ancestors - John and Rosetta Lee - from Gorey, County Wexford, Ireland to the Canadas in 1813. Following three years in Montreal, having secured options on land in the Perth Settlement, the Lees travelled there via Brockville. According to William, the family arrived on May 21, 1816, settling first on Drummond’s third concession, then acquiring property on Bathurst’s fourth line, and, with the completion of the survey of north Bathurst, in late 1816, joined a group of families that established the new communities on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Line.

William Lee, ancestor of local resident Mary Stewart, was born in 1867, and was a school inspector in Toronto.

The first 19 pages of this paper, which are not included, detail the Lee family’s early history and genealogy in Ireland, in a section titles “The Ancient History of the Lee Family”. The original with this excerpt may be seen at Algonquin College Library, Perth.

(Provided by Mary Stewart, Lee family descendant)



In 1812, John Lee received his discharge from the (British) army and decided to emigrate to Canada. He and his wife Rosetta set out for Liverpool on a ship owned and sailed by his brother Richard, taking with them their boy Richard, then but a year old. The grandparents begged to keep William of whom they had become very fond, and despite the feelings of the mother, their pleas were acceded to and the child remained in Gorey. In Liverpool, they found that it would be impossible to get sailing accommodations for some long time, so John Lee obtained a position in a tannery. Early in 1813, he secured passage in a sailing vessel bound for Quebec with a cargo of iron goods, cutlery, woollens and crockery as well as two hundred emigrants who hoped to find a better life in a New World than they could ever secure in the Old.

It was a long and tedious voyage across the Atlantic, with all the inconveniences of a sailing vessel in those days. The ship was crowded and accommodations were far from perfect, especially sleeping quarters. The passengers were obliged to bring their own food, but the ships casks provided an ample supply of water, though this water became foul and unpalatable as time passed. Early on the trip, they were delayed by head winds for ten days, but afterwards for about four weeks, they were blessed with fine weather and favourable winds. In the eleventh week they ran into a storm, a very severe storm of wind, rain, sleet, and cold. They were tossed about for three days and driven many miles off their course and into an ice-floe from the Arctic current. Unfortunately too, the ship started a plank and all men on board were called to assist at the pumps. For the rest of the journey the pumps had to be kept going continuously to keep the ship afloat. The wind ceased as suddenly as it had risen and all on board began to have hopes of once more reaching dry land.

Even before the storm there was much sickness among the passengers, sea-sickness, and considerable fever, almost like typhus, owing to the unsanitary conditions of the cabins. The storms aggravated the illness and there were three deaths on board, two adults and a little girl. All were buried at sea.

During this sickness Rosetta Lee was an angel of mercy, ministering to the sick of body and mind, till her very presence cheered the sick and downhearted back to normal. She was tireless in her attention to the sick who afterwards attributed their recovery to her kind and intelligent ministrations. In her work among the ill and helpless, she was ably assisted and encouraged by her husband, who, with his child, became a great favourite with the children on the ship. Another man who was a practical assistant among the unfortunate was an old retired sailor, Patrick O'Toole, who, left alone in the world, was seeking a new home across the sea to the west. In his baggage he had laid in a stock of rum, the spirits of the sailors, and this he offered freely to Rosetta to be used where she might think it of use to those in her care. Later this man O'Toole became so attached to the Lee's that he determined to remain near them right up to their home in the New World.

The ship landed at Quebec on May 19<sup>th</sup>, 1813 after a trip of fifty-three days.

All were delighted to put their feet once more on dry land, but their joy was short-lived for they found that they were little more than started on the long journey to the locations where they intended to make their homes. Many of them immediately set out to secure transportation up the river to Montreal, but John Lee and his wife determined to remain for a short time in Quebec to secure a good rest after the arduous ocean journey.

Three days later, they boarded a schooner for Montreal, and, after a rather pleasant trip of four days during which they made stops at Three Rivers, at the mouth of the St. Maurice River at Sorel, at the mouth of the Richelieu River, and at other small places, they landed at Montreal on May 26<sup>th</sup>, 1813. They remained in Montreal for almost three years where John Lee had no difficulty in getting a good position in a tannery. A few months after their arrival in Montreal their third son, called Edward, was born and early in 1815 another boy came to whom they gave the name John.

At Montreal, John Lee found that owing to the war then going on with the United States, attention was being given by the authorities to the placing of settlers. Then, too, the influx U.S. Loyalists and the emigration of loads of people from Scotland towards the end of the last century and the beginning of this had taken up all the lands close to the St. Lawrence, which at that time was the only highway of all convenient use. This decided John Lee to remain in Montreal until there was something more definite in view.

After the experience of the War of 1812 – 14 the Government learned that the St. Lawrence, in case of war, was not a safe for transportation, so it was decided that a waterway should be opened from the Ottawa River to Lake Ontario at Kingston by way of the Rideau River, Rideau Lake and Cataraqui River, and that the country along the north west side of this waterway should be at once opened up for settlement. It was felt that colonization by disbanded soldiers loyal subjects from Great Britain and Ireland would ensure defence of the district, and would provide a leaven against disloyalty which, it was feared, was creeping into Upper Canada with settlers from United States. In a short time, too, would

provide a source of supplies for the army at the front. There was also considered that this would help to relieve the Old Country of many of the unemployed during a depression which was sure to follow the Napoleonic Wars.

In February 1815, a proclamation was issued by the authority of the home government offering special inducements to settlers for the Rideau district. Each settler was to receive a grant of 100 acres of land, subsistence allowance for eight months, and many implements that would be in a new settlement in the woods. But it was over a year before the whole scheme was implemented. It was not until March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1816, that Perth on the Tay, was established as the central depot for the distribution of settlers and the doling out of supplies to them, and only on April 18, 1816, was any settlement commenced there.

In May 1816, John Lee determined to take advantage of the Government offer of free land in the Rideau settlement. He had by this time added considerably to the stock of money he had with him from the Old Country and he set out in Montreal to supply himself with goods of all kinds which he learned would be necessities in a new settlement. He then engaged a wagon to take himself and his family and his store of goods to Lachine where they boarded a bateau for the trip up the St. Lawrence.

All went well on the way through Lake St. Louis, but at the head of this lake began the long and dangerous trip through the rapids. This part of the journey was a nightmare to the Lees with their three children. It was one series of rapids after another for miles and miles, the Cascades, the Cedars, the Long Sault. Frequently all the men aboard had to get out into the water even up to their waists to aid the boatmen push the boat up a steep rapid. Then, sometimes a tow rope was attached to the bow of the boat and horses on shore pulled the bateau for some distance. At nearly all the rapids the cargo and the luggage had to be unloaded to lighten the boat and taken by wagons to the head of the rapids while the passengers had to walk along the shore. At two of the worst rapids, locks had been built to overcome part of the rapid, but only part, at Coteau and at the Long Sault. At night, passengers had to land and find accommodation for themselves at taverns, at farm houses, in tents which they had brought along, or even out in the open under trees. Rosetta Lee was almost completely done in when, after twelve days of this, they at last landed at Prescott, notwithstanding the constant help given her with the children by her husband and by Patrick O'Toole, who still accompanied them.

At Prescott, John Lee visited the office of the Land Commissioner, Lieutenant Alex McDonnell and was given the location of three lots of land in Bathurst Township, just then being opened up by surveyors, from these, after seeing them, he was to select one. They then proceeded to Brockville from which place they were to go back into the country some forty miles into the new Rideau settlements. They arrived here May 17<sup>th</sup>, 1816, and on the next day, May 18<sup>th</sup>, word came to Brockville that several regiments had been disbanded at Montreal and at Kingston and that any soldier who wished might have free land in the Rideau Settlements. Three of these regiments were the Glengarry Light Infantry and the two "Foreign Legions", the De Leuron and the DeWatteville Regiments. At Cornwall, at Prescott and at Brockville were crowds of emigrants awaiting word that the new townships intended for their settlement were completely surveyed. These were Bathurst, Drummond, Beckwith, Montague – the parts of Burgess and Elmsley north of the Rideau had already been surveyed, likely along with the parts of the same townships to the south of the Rideau Lake.

At Brockville the Lees succeeded in getting accommodations for one night and in the morning, John procured a wagon to carry them and their effects to Perth. With them went a train of five wagons each loaded with settlers and their goods.

For the first twenty miles, the road travelled was fairly good. It went northward through the township of Elizabethtown with here and there a settler's farm with its shanty or log hut, to Toledo. This part of the journey was completed the first day. From there the road was a new one lately cut through the woods from Toledo, through Lombardy to the Rideau at Oliver's Ferry. This road was full of hazards. Several times their wagons were mired and only with great difficulty were they freed. On one occasion, a team of oxen had to be brought to their aid. Two of the wagons in the train upset, scattering the passengers and the contents over the ground. One man had an arm broken and a boy was almost killed. Over the best part of the road, it was one continual bump after another while over long stretches of corduroy the life was nearly shook out of the passengers. Late that night the party reach Oliver's Ferry and passed the night there, most of them in the open. Rosetta and her three children fortunately were taken in at the Ferry man's house and had a good night's rest. Next morning, all crossed the lake by ferry and began the last stage of their journey, six miles to Perth. All went quite well until they reached a swampy place over the Jebb Creek at the foot of Otty Lake. The water was high and over the road in some places and the whole space of some two hundred years was a series of mud hole and corduroy. All of the men of the party had to get out and assist the drivers to carry logs and stones to fill up spaces. Then, by hitching two teams to a wagon they finally made their way across. From there to Perth, the road was mostly on higher ground and the party reached their destination about noon, having taken six hours to make the six miles from the Ferry.

Rosetta and her three children found refuge at the depot with a Mrs. John Madden, in a shanty not far from the Scotch Line on what maybe is now Craig Street. John Madden was a mason and had just taken up a farm to the east of the Long Swamp, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> concession of Drummond. Most of the rest of the party had to camp in the open as the place was full of immigrants and disbanded soldiers waiting for their locations. The Lees arrived in Perth May 21<sup>st</sup>, 1816.

That afternoon, John Lee presented himself at the Land Office to a Mr. Daverne and was informed that the part of the Township of Bathurst in which his options were located was not yet wholly surveyed and that it would be impossible for him to find these lots until the survey was completed. This meant another delay and was rather discouraging, but he made arrangements with Mrs. Madden to keep Mrs. Lee and the children until he had made some definite plans.

That evening at a tavern he met a Mr. Thomas Williams with whom he at once struck up a friendship. This Mr. Williams had taken up land the South West half of Lot#1 in the 4<sup>th</sup> concession of Drummond and on the proposed road north westward from Perth to a new settlement in Lanark. Williams had already begun the erection of a log house, quite a substantial one, facing the 4<sup>th</sup> line on a hill at the front of his lot, and was in Perth seeking men to help with the work. John Lee, Patrick O'Toole and three other men, Thomas Echlin, Patrick Freeman and Patrick Dowdall volunteered to help and all arrived at the Williams farm next morning to begin work. The following morning, John Madden came and began the

erection of a chimney and flue. Within a week they had the house about completed and ready for occupancy.

During the week, Thomas Williams drew Lee's attention to the fact that the Ferguson house only about two hundred yards to the south east on Lot #1 in the 3<sup>rd</sup> concession, which had begun before the Williams house, had nothing done to it for all this time. On inquiry, they found that Mr. Ferguson was ill and would not be able to finish his homesteading on this lot for some time, and was in danger of losing his claim. John Lee, then and there, made a bargain with Ferguson to finish his homesteading, with the option of buying the lot, or a portion of it. The following week, with the assistance of the same men, the house was completed into a very comfortable residence and over an acre of ground was cleared about it. To this house, John Lee brought Rosetta and the children, Richard, Edward and John.

To the east of the house he built leaches and set up a potash-making outfit a potash kettle fitted into a suitable fireplace, two coolers, ladles, etc. all enclosed roughly. He also equipped himself with a team of horses, a wagon and a sleigh and erected a shelter for the animals. He furnished the house with available furniture among which was a four-poster bed which is today in the old house on the 9<sup>th</sup> line, with two of the posts cut off so that the bed could be fitted under the slant of the roof. Rosetta also had made for herself a wooden armchair which remained in the family until 1895, when it was lost, carried away by a neighbour.

Here John Lee prospered quite well in the potash business. Ashes were easily obtained for almost nothing from settlers who were burning the slash and the log piles in the process of clearing their land. There was a market for potash in Perth, but not at the highest market price since it cost so much to have the barrels of potash transported to the main market in Montreal. He put in the rest of the summer of 1816, until late in the fall, working steadily at this, while Rosetta, with her usual energy, set out at once to plant a small kitchen garden where she grew late potatoes, corn, pumpkins, cabbage, turnips, and onions besides some greens for early use. From the beginning on this lot, John Lee had in his mind the establishment of a tannery, but just now he saw no chance of getting together the necessary equipment. He did think, however of getting more land – he had a family of boys growing up. And when he learned that Lot#26, N.E. ½ in the 4<sup>th</sup> concession of Bathurst had reverted to the crown by the original locator, he put in a claim for it and, being a Protestant, he was given the lot. The former owner had built a one roomed shanty on the lot to the south of the forced 4<sup>th</sup> Line, but had done almost nothing else. Lee at once cleared a few acres near this 4<sup>th</sup> Line, but was too busy with other things to do much else.

In the fall of 1816, after frost had set in, he joined a group of men setting out to locate Crown lands from the options given them. As most of these men were Catholics and none of them Orangemen or free masons, and as John Lee in Prescott, where he got his options, had been judged a Catholic, all of their options were in the back of the Township of Bathurst, in the 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> concessions, where the land was not so good as in the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> concessions. This discrimination was also shown in the distribution of the Government supplies promised to settlers and bred some trouble later.

Taking with them, in John Lee's wagon, supplies for a week or ten days, they set out along the town line between Bathurst and Drummond. This road was newly opened to Lanark and had several reaches of corduroy, which while making passable the swampy and boggy places, produced a very bumpy road. At the 8<sup>th</sup> line corner, now Balderson's Corners, they turned south westward for almost a mile and then in a northwesterly direction until they reached the 9<sup>th</sup> line at Lot#22. From there for nearly another mile, they were able to make their way through the woods southwestward along the 9<sup>th</sup> line until they reached Lot#20. They camped on Lot 20 for the night and next day set out on foot to view their options. After wearisome tramps through thick forest land for ten days, they finally selected lots. Nine of the men took lots on the 9<sup>th</sup> concession, eight of them lots on the tenth concession facing Bennett's Lake. The party returned to Perth and made claims for their lots. These were granted under the usual conditions and they received location certificates.

During the winter of 1816 – 17, these same men established a shanty on the hill on Lot 20 from which they set forth daily with about twenty workers whom they hired at Perth and got out logs for building purposes. Patrick O'Toole remained in the shanty as cook and housekeeper and rather took possession of the place, so much so that the hill on the road there has ever since been called Toole's Hill. As the logs were taken out on each farm they were squared, at least those intended for dwelling houses were squared, under the directions of Matthew Foley, who was an adept with the broad axe, and a good carpenter.

Besides logs for his house, John Lee had a pile of cedar logs cut and hauled to the proposed building site – these last for stables. Much the same was done on each farm, though most of them were content with enough material for small shanties for the present. This work of getting out the timber and of clearing a space of two or three acres about the site of the intended buildings took three months of the winter, during which time John Lee returned home for a day or two each week to melt down his potash and barrel it, to empty the leaches and refill them, and generally to look after work around home. During his absence, Rosetta had kept the leaches watered and the kettle of lye simmering.

In the spring, there was a series of "raising bees", with the usual refreshments as payment and ten new houses were raised and left ready for interior finish, and for roofing and shingling and flooring. John Lee's house became a six-room one with a large chimney in the kitchen-dining-living room. This chimney, by the way, was built by John Madden who came out for several of the settlers to do this kind of work. The house had, besides, a parlour (the room) with a bedroom leading from it, and three bedrooms upstairs. This house still stands in 1943.

The Spring and Summer of 1817 was a busy time for the Lees. He had three farms to homestead and in each of them, he harrowed in among the stumps crops of wheat and of oats, besides some early and some late potatoes and Rosetta saw to it that a fine vegetable garden was put in at their present dwelling. Then John had to attend to his potash, gather ashes, filling the leach, keeping the potash kettle boiling, melting and barrelling the potash and taking it to market. Besides he felt obliged to attend all the bees, logging, stumping, raisings, etc. Here it is worth noting that his temperate qualities always exerted a moderating influence on the men assembled at these bees.

M. Foley was left to finish the house on the 9<sup>th</sup> line and had come to live with his family in a house built by James Bowers on the N.E. half of Lot 18, on the hill just over a hollow, eventually called Mathew's (Mattha's) Hollow, a place where ghosts regularly appeared to persons traveling at night, especially in later years if they were returning from Perth by way of Armstrong's Corner's, Balderson's Corners or Harper's Corners, at each of which places there was at least one tavern. Foley, assisted by Patrick O'Toole, did all the necessary carpenter work in John Lee's house. He put in doors and windows, the floors, the stairs and partitions, and built a fine stoop of veranda across the front of the house, and a summer kitchen at the back door. And Patrick O'Toole, thinking of Mrs. Lee and all her kindness did some things of which he was very proud. He cleared a large space in front of the house of trees, stumps and underbrush so that a garden could be set out next year. Then, on the chance that Lees would have a cow or two when they moved to the new house, he built a milk-house, partly underground so that it could be kept cool by evaporation in warm weather. Also, he added a root-house so insulated that vegetables could be kept without fear of frost. Lastly, he dug a well at the foot of the garden. He struck a fine vein of cool water, walled the excavation with stones and provided a crock with which to draw up a pail of water. For all these things he felt amply rewarded by the enthusiastic praise of Mrs. Lee when she saw them.

An essential for a new settlement, a saw mill, had been started on the Fall River about two miles from Lees at the foot of a rapids below Bennett's Lake, and was supplying the settlers with boards, planks, etc., cut from logs they themselves had drawn to the mill. The settlers made their own shingles from cedar blocks split to proper thickness. They also made mortar for plastering, chinking and building chimneys from lime burned by Thomas Ryan on Lot 15 in the 8<sup>th</sup> concession.

In the midst of all this work, in June 1817, Rosetta got word that her sister, Martha, had arrived in Perth for a promised visit. She and her brother Thomas had left their home in Wicklow shortly after Rosetta had left for Canada. They landed in New York, went up the Hudson as far as Albany and thence up the Mohawk Valley and finally settled in Syracuse. Here Thomas got work in a blacksmith shop and Martha, then a youngster of 14 or 15, went into a dressmaking and millinery establishment. After Martha Wall had been in the Lee home two weeks and had got acquainted with the routine of the place, Rosetta determined it was a good time to carry out an undertaking she had in mind ever since she left Ireland. After getting Martha's consent to stay with her husband and children until her return, she made preparations and set out for Ireland to bring back to Canada with her, her oldest child, William. In due time, she arrived at Liverpool and in a few days got in touch with her brother-in-law, Richard, who was still running his ship from Gorey to Liverpool. He agreed to help her get William away from his grandparents by taking him on a long promised trip to Liverpool. He thought this could be managed within a month. In the meantime, she visited her father and mother, Walter Wall and Etta O'Sullivan, at their old home in Wicklow. She also made a trip to Lower Belmont, in Cork, to visit her uncles and aunts and cousins at the place of the ancestral home of the Walls, and to West Carberry, Cork, the old home of her mother's people, the O'Sullivans. Altogether, she had a very pleasant time after the unpleasantness of the ocean and quite a rest after all the hardships of pioneer life in a newly opened country.

On her return to Liverpool she was just in time to meet her two brothers-in-law, Richard and Edward, and her son, William, now a boy of twelve years. He was intrigued with the thought of a trip across the ocean and made no objection whatever to going with his mother.

When Rosetta was at her home in Wicklow she had a visitor in the person of Henry O'Byrne of Ballymanus, the man whom her husband, John Lee, had befriended nearly twenty years before at the defeat of the Irish "rebels" at Vinegar Hill. He was over forty years of age now and had been married for some years. He and his wife, Elizabeth Nuget, had a family of four boys and five girls. He had made up his mind to emigrate to America and hearing that Rosetta was at home, had come to get what information he could from her about conditions in the New World. Now Rosetta found him in Liverpool taking passage for America. There also were her brother, James, a blacksmith, and a cousin Michael Wall, from Carbery, who had been a failure at everything he was put at and was sent to America by his relatives to get him out of the way. She found also two other O'Byrnes, Patrick and Owen, brothers of Henry. These all intended to search out land and make homes to which they would bring their families later.

After a long trip, one which presented the usual difficulties and inconveniences of the times, they arrived in Perth and were joyfully welcomed home. The O'Byrnes spent a few days in Perth renewing old acquaintance with John Lee and strengthening old friendship. They then went out through the Township of North Burgess where each of them staked claim to a farm lot, all in the neighbourhood of lands taken up by discharged soldiers, mostly of the Foreign Legion, Adams, Mackler, Kuyper (Cooper). Henry O'Byrne located on Lot 12 in the 7<sup>th</sup> concession, Patrick O'Byrne settled on Lot 15 and Henry Kuyper on Lot 16 in the 8<sup>th</sup> concession, Adams took Lot 7 and Spiegler Lot 13 in the 8<sup>th</sup> concession and Mackler Lot 8 in the 9<sup>th</sup> concession. James Wall, Rosetta's brother, took Lot 1 in the 8<sup>th</sup> concession but later found farming in a new land most uncongenial and after doing the most absolutely necessary homesteading duties, he sold the land to a man named Graham in 1826 and opened a blacksmith shop in Perth. Here we find him advertising for an apprentice in the Perth paper in July, 1829.

All of these men became close friends of the Lees and others living in Bathurst, taking in their bees, dances, sprees, and fights, and other such friendly social entertainments. In all of these social affairs, Patrick O'Toole made his presence felt by regaling the crowd with tales and stories of his experiences before and after Trafalgar.

In the fall of 1817, the Lees moved into the new house on the west half of Lot 18 in the concession of Bathurst, ten miles from Perth. Martha Wall remained with them for two weeks more and then returned to Syracuse.

The regular day by day routine of a backward settler's life was continued for John and the Lees. John continued to attend to his potash works on the 4<sup>th</sup> Line and to the homesteading of Lot 26 in the 4<sup>th</sup> concession of Bathurst. Here he built a small log house and cleared some acres for crop.

In 1818 another son, named James, was born. In 1820 came a daughter, whom they christened Frances. In 1822 another daughter, Ann, was born, and in 1823 their last child, another boy, Daniel, came to

them. For these last births Rosetta had the attention of Dr. Thom, who visited the Lees' home by horseback.

Rosetta never forgot her religion. She was imbued with the good old Irish faith and constantly worried over the impossibility of attending mass regularly. She recited the rosary daily and in this was joined by her children and even her husband, though a protestant, took part occasionally. She paid particular attention to William and the father. At very irregular intervals a travelling missionary priest came to Perth and Rosetta never failed to be present at Mass with all her children able to attend, and almost always succeeded in persuading her husband to accompany them. On the occasion of a missionary's visit, she had her children baptized, and never failed to receive the sacraments of penance and Eucharist. Her son, William and her husband, John, not being Catholic, did not participate and began to feel themselves rather out in the cold. Gradually they were won over by Rosetta's splendid example and came to feel that a religion that kept the allegiance of a woman under such adverse conditions must have a solid foundation. When, in 1820, a regular priest was sent as pastor to Perth, they both received instruction and shortly were infused with the grace of faith. John Lee, himself, was conditionally baptised (William had been baptised an infant in Ireland) and he, Rosetta, William, Richard and Edward all knelt at the altar in the Perth church and received Holy Communion.

Owing to the distance from town and to the poor roads, it was not always possible for the whole family to get to mass on Sunday, especially to go fasting. Many times some of the family with the father or mother walked the ten miles to church. During the Christmas season and the Lenten season, Father Lamothe, while he was in charge in Perth, held a "mission" for the 9<sup>th</sup> line people and another for the 8<sup>th</sup> line people to enable them to "make their duty". The 9<sup>th</sup> Line mission was held at John Lee's house and the 8<sup>th</sup> Line mission at the home of Richard Bennett. All the Catholics gathered the evening before at Lee's or at Bennett's and went to confession in preparation for Mass and Communion next morning. There never was known a case of anyone within reach failing to attend. These missions were extended ;and were continued down to 1874 or 1875 by successive priests of Perth, Father Lamothe 1820 – 21, Father Sweeney 1821 -22; Father McDonald 1822 - 38; Father McDonagh 1838<sup>1</sup>-1866; Father<sup>2</sup> Chisholm 1866 -1878; interregnum, Father McDonald 1873-1879; Father O'Connor (Dean) 1879 –

John Lee was a power and an influence in his own community. His sound judgments based on sane reasoning and well-controlled emotions made him honoured and respected amongst his fellows, so many of them hot-headed Irishmen, impulsive in nature, especially when even slightly under the influence of strong drink. Whiskey of all kinds was very cheap and it was a common fault of those times to take too much. The settlers in the backwoods felt that after the dreariness of their homes, usually far from the nearest neighbour, a drink or two was almost a necessity to arouse the jovial spirit which, in their opinion, was required at their meetings, dances, bees, etc. When John Lee was present this joviality spent itself in friendliness, but when he was not present and his restraining influence was not felt the joviality often showed itself in fights which, unfortunately, sometimes ended fatally and nearly

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<sup>1</sup> Original says 1833)

<sup>2</sup> Original says Dr.

always in injuring or destroying old friendships. John Lee had often to make peace between old friend neighbours who had quarrelled when neither of them was perfectly sober.

On dole day, when the settlers received the allowances in supplies promised them by the Home Government, there was always a great crowd in Perth, who after getting refreshments at some of the eight or ten taverns then in town, proceeded to the "Red House" on the bank of the Tay. Here Daverne was in charge up to 1820, when he decamped, and no Irish Catholic could get just treatment. Laverne's successor in fact, all the Government officials, were military men and were either Orangemen or Free Masons and the subordinates, acting according to the wishes of these officers and of some of the other officials in Perth did everything they could to rouse the ire of the Irish with the avowed intention of irking them into open rioting and thus giving the officers an excuse to have them ousted from their holdings. John Lee was always looked on as a protestant by most of these officials and generally they treated him fairly. Besides, by his influence with other Irish men, particularly those from the eighth and ninth lines and from Burgess, he kept most of them out of serious trouble until the whole question of injustices to Catholics was reported to the Government by the Bishop of Kingston, the Rt. Rev. A. MacDonnell, who happened to be in Earl Bathurst's office when a biased report of some disturbance at Perth came into the Colonial Office. The Bishop was able to make things clear to the Earl, and did not forget to tell of John Lee's good efforts to keep peace. Not long afterward, John Lee received a personal letter from Earl Bathurst thanking him for the service he had rendered not only to Perth officials, but especially to his Irish friends and to the good name of the settlement. The passage of this letter through the post was noted by the officials and not long afterward, John Lee received an invitation to dinner at the home of the Presbyterian Minister, Rev. Wm. Bell. This dinner was in honour of the Lieutenant Government of Upper Canada on the occasion of a visit to Perth. He went to the dinner and met there, besides the Governor, the Anglican minister, the Catholic priest, the Rev. John McDonald and several of the government officials. Bell and the petty officials fawned on the governor and when they saw that His Excellency seemed to be interested in Lee and his conversation, they tried by faint praise to belittle him. They told stories of the orgies of the Irishmen and slyly connected Lee with these sprees and suggested it was a pity such a fine man had to live and work manually with such low people. Lee defended the Irish settlers and pointed to the bad example set them by the townspeople, especially by the government officials who made it possible for eight hotels to flourish in a small town, that the occasional visits of the settlers certainly must have provided but a small portion of the revenue of these taverns. The governor made a remark afterward that Lee was a real gentleman though he did his own work even to cleaning dung from his own stable. For a long time afterward, the Irish Catholics were treated with somewhat more justice, especially when John Lee presented himself on their behalf.

A thorn in John Lee's side was Michael Wall, who, being a relative took advantage of the relationship and sponged on Lee's friends in town and country. John felt it was his responsibility to at least keep him out of trouble. He frequently had to be bailed out of jail because of disturbances he raised. In January 1851, John Lee had to get out of a sick bed to sponsor a bond for him when he was bound over to keep the peace.

A Bathurst Courier was established in Perth in September, 1835, by James Thompson succeeding a paper published in Perth from 1829.<sup>3</sup>

On December 4<sup>th</sup>, 1824, William Doran sold his hotel at the corner of Drummond and Harvey Streets to William Cross.

In 1829, a man named Evans living on the Lanark road near the 9<sup>th</sup> Line of Drummond, being enamoured of a girl in the neighbourhood murdered his wife and was not found out until some time afterward, through a remark of his five year old child, and after he married the girl. He was hanged in Perth. His skin was tanned and several people had razor straps made from it.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> of June 20-21<sup>st</sup> the home of Patrick Foley in South Sherbrooke was burned and Foley's six children, the oldest 15 years, lost their lives in the fire. Foley was in Perth that night having driven a neighbour, Mrs. O'Brien, in to see the doctor while Mrs. Foley stayed in the O'Brien house to look after Mrs. O'Brien's sick child. The Presbyterian minister, Wm. Bell, in his diary recorded this event stating, in his usual anti-Catholic venom, that Foley and his wife had come to town to go to confession and both had got drunk and were unable to go home to attend to their children. Years after, only recently in fact, Archie Campbell, grandson of ? had this item published in the Perth Courier, thus showing his biased mind.

Another sordid event or series of events occurred in the 1840's. Nancy Harper, a rather young girl, daughter of Mr. Harper of Harper's Corners, and sister of Mrs. McCue and of Mrs. Foley, was married to a man named Sly of South Sherbrooke. The marriage was an unhappy one and she left Sly taking their daughter with her. Later, she went to live with John Bowes, son of Patrick Bowes of the 9<sup>th</sup> Line Bathurst, as his wife and a son was born to them. Sly also took another woman and raised a family. At a logging bee on McEwan's farm near the 10th line, on the side leading to Anderson's mill, at which were present John Bowes' father and also Thomas Foley. The morality of John Bowes' and Nancy Harper's actions was commented on and, as the men were pretty well filled with liquor a fight started between Thomas Foley and Patrick Bowes. Foley finally struck Bowes such a blow under the chin that he was knocked down, struck his head on a stone and died later from the effects. Foley was tried for murder in Perth but was acquitted on the grounds of self-defence.

Another fatality arising out of too much whiskey happened near the same time. Two brothers-in-law, John Dowdall and Thomas McGarry, close friends spent the day in Perth after they had brought in a load of produce. They had some cross words at a hotel and on the way home in the evening, they kept shouting epithets at each other from their respective wagons. Then Dowdall tried to pass McGarry and go home, but McGarry, in an ugly mood, prevented him from passing. Dowdall got out of his wagon and climbed into McGarry's to force him to let him go by. In the fight that followed, McGarry fell on a cradle blade in his own wagon and received a fatal cut. Dowdall was charged with murder but was acquitted. Years afterward, Dowdall's son became priest, one of the most influential priests of the Ottawa diocese, a strong advocate of total abstinence. McGarry's son, Thomas, became a lawyer in Renfrew and entered

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<sup>3</sup> What name?

politics and became Provincial Treasurer in the Ontario Government. He was much addicted to drink and when under the influence could be managed by no one so well as Father Dowdall.

The Lees in their home on the 9<sup>th</sup> line of Bathurst were far from any established school and this they regretted very much since the boys were growing up without any kind of a school education. William, of course, had a good elementary education before he left Ireland and his father and mother tried to make use of for the rest of the children. But William was not a scholar although he was very fond of reading and in the evenings when he had no other interests, he read for the whole family. In this way, there was some kind of culture and with the interest thus around and with the aid of Rosetta in any spare time she had, the two girls, Ann and Fanny, learned and write. The boys did not succeed so well and most of them passed through life without being able to even write their own names. Later a log school house was built on township property on the corner of the 9<sup>th</sup> line and the side road leading back to Anderson's mill. It was not until 1878 that a half acre of land was bought from James Keays, the owner of the S.W. half of lot 21 in the 9<sup>th</sup> concession to be used as a school grounds, and a new frame school was built just back of the old log one.

In 1827, William Lee, John's eldest son was married to Mary Byrne, daughter of Henry Byrne of N. Burgess. The marriage was solemnized in the Perth church by Rev. Father McDonald and witnessed by the two fathers, John Lee and Henry Byrne, while the two mothers, Rosetta Wall and Elizabeth Nugent were also present along with many other relatives and friends on both sides. A very enjoyable reception and entertainment was held that afternoon and evening at the home of Henry Byrne in the 7<sup>th</sup> line of B. Burgess. Mary Byrne was probably the most popular girl in Burgess and was said to be the prettiest girl who ever entered the Perth church. She inherited her beautiful person from her mother Elizabeth Nugent and has handed it, even to her expression to at least 4 generations. A great-great-grand daughter of Elizabeth Nugent today has the same beautiful person and the same expression of countenance to a remarkable degree of likeness. At this party were present Henry Byrne's other daughters, Mrs. Spiegle, Mrs. Power, Mrs. Tovey and the brothers of Mary, Edward, Thomas and James, besides cousins, children of Patrick Byrne and Owen Byrne.

On the marriage of William, John Lee gave him the farm on the 9<sup>th</sup> line on condition of some provision for his mother in case of the death of his father. The rest of the family moved to a house on the S.W. half of Lot 22 in the 8<sup>th</sup> concession of Bathurst which John Lee bought from John McNamara. Later he bought the N.E. half of the same lot from William Holmes. In 1834, he sold the rear of the N.E. half of this lot to William Keays, and in 1837 he sold the rear S.W. half also to Williams Keays, and in 1847 he sold the front halves of these lots to William Ledger. When he sold the first lot and house to Keays he moved back to the lot on the town line where he first lived and at once established a tannery there, a business in which he had wished to engage ever since he came to the Rideau settlements. He got the deed of this property from John Ferguson in 1837. In 1839, on April 9<sup>th</sup>, Edward Lee, John's third son married Mary Kondrad, daughter of Marcus Kondrad, a soldier discharged from the Foreign Legion in 1816, who had taken a farm in the 2<sup>nd</sup> concession of Bathurst. John Lee gave part of the lot on which he lived, the part with the potash works on it to Edward and he worked at the potash making for two years, when he sold the place to James Walsh and moved to the farm of his father-in-law, Marcus Kondrad. In 1840, John Lee, in trust for his son John, staked the S.W. half of Lot 16 in the 5<sup>th</sup> concession of Bathurst,

but before that, in 1838, for his son James, he bought N.E. half of Lot 2 in the 4<sup>th</sup> concession of Drummond. This lot he sold to Thomas Williams who, in 1842, married his daughter.

Neither Richard Lee nor John Lee nor James Lee cared much for farming and generally worked at other things. Richard worked much of his time as a young man at Doran's Mill at the head of Bennett's Lake, while John did the same kind of work at Fallbrooke in a sawmill and in a wood mill. James was much of a wanderer and worked at odd jobs in many places. He was often away from home for two or three years at a time.