

MECKLENBURG TO LANARK

An Administrative Evolution

Following the Conquest (1759) the Quebec Act (1774) incorporated what are now eastern Canada and the southern portions of present day Quebec and Ontario into the British American Colonies. Excepting the Maritime Provinces, the rest of what is now Canada belonged to the Hudson Bay Company. Although the Counties we know today did not then exist, from 1788 the area that would become Lanark County lay in the District of Mecklenburg.

The American Revolution led to the Constitutional Act (1791) which separated Lower Canada (Quebec) from Upper Canada (Ontario) and in 1792 the territory which would later comprise Lanark County was placed within a newly created Midland District. A redrawing of district boundaries in 1798 located the area of modern day Lanark County in Johnstown District.

The Townships which comprise the first three tiers of today's Lanark County, including those created as the Perth Military Settlement, were initially part of Johnstown District. Elmsley Township had been surveyed in 1804 and Burgess Township in 1812. The core townships of the Perth Settlement were those of the second tier; Bathurst and Drummond, surveyed in 1816, Beckwith, surveyed in 1817, and South Sherbrooke surveyed in 1819. With the arrival of the 'Society Settlers' the third tier of townships was created with the 1820 survey of North Sherbrooke, Dalhousie, Lanark and Ramsay.

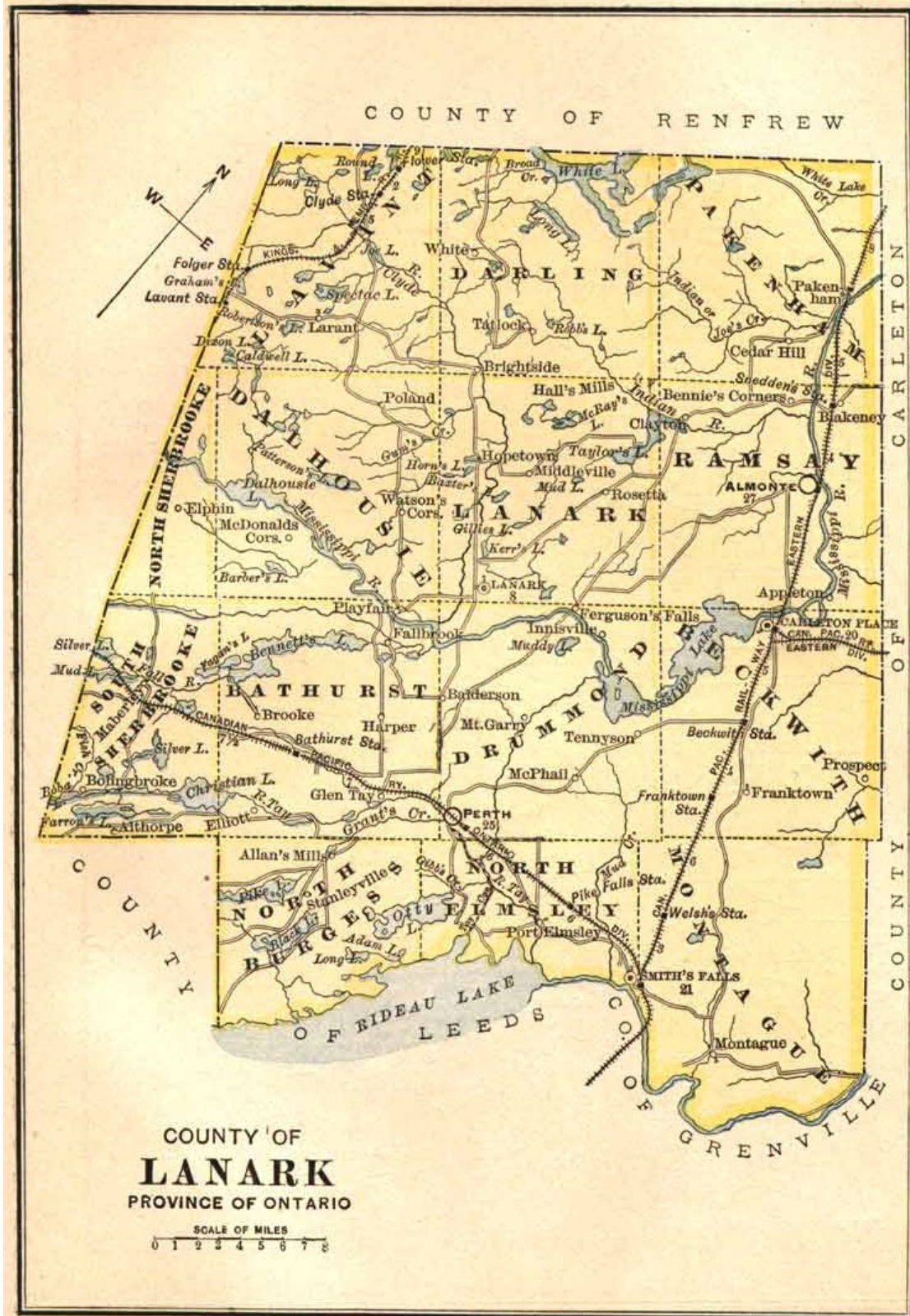
For six years, from 1816 through 1821, the townships of the Perth Settlement, together with the village of Perth, were governed and administered by the Settling Department of the British Army. Answering to Army headquarters at Quebec City local authority lay in the hands of Superintendents Colonel Alexander Macdonell (1762-1842) in 1815-1816, Captain George Fowler (1769-1822) in 1816-1817, Ensign Daniel Daverne (1784-1830) in 1817-1819 and Major James Hamilton Powell (1773-1831) in 1819-1821.

When military control ended in 1822 a further division of Johnstown District created the District of Bathurst as that part of the former Johnstown District lying north of the Rideau River and included all of the territory which would later become Carleton and Renfrew Counties. The following year (1823) the fourth tier of Townships, consisting of Lavant, Darling and Pakenham, was surveyed and opened for settlement.

With the removal of military authority in 1822 most aspects of local affairs were placed in the hands of the 'Bathurst District Session of the Peace' composed of local Magistrates (Justices of the Peace) appointed by the Crown in the person of the Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada. Although this change theoretically brought local administration under civilian control, 18 of the first 25 magistrates appointed were half-pay military officers. These worthies were; Captain Joshua Adams (1779-1863), John Bell (1806-1849), John Berford, William Rutherford Fitzwilliam Berford (1806-1871), Captain George Bourke (1776-1854), Lieutenant Francis Cummings, Lieutenant Benjamin DeLisle (c1780-c1860), Sergeant John Ferguson, Lieutenant Alexander Fraser (1789-1872), Henry Glass, Lieutenant Henry Graham (1794-1846), George J. Joynt, Captain Anthony Leslie, Captain William Marshall (1774-1864), Lieutenant

Roderick Matheson (1793-1873), Captain Josias Taylor (1787-1844), Staff Surgeon Alexander Thom (1775-1845), Captain Joseph Maxwell, Lieutenant John McKay (d.1881), Ensign William Morris (1786-1858), Captain Alexander McMillan, Quarter Master John Watson, Captain James Weatherly, and Ebenezer Wilson (b.c1790).

Army Apothecary George Hume Reade (1793-1854) was the first Clerk of the Peace. Major James Hamilton Powell (1773-1831) was the first Sheriff.



Magistrates were appointed for indefinite terms and many would hold their post for 20 years or more. Laws were enacted and policies established by the Upper Canada Legislature,

but were largely implemented and administered by these local Magistrates. They were responsible for setting the District budget and priorities for community improvement, and supervised the men elected or appointed at the annual town or township meetings, to be sheriff, assessor, tax collector, path masters, fence viewers, pound keepers, etc. In their judicial function, an individual Magistrate held the authority to try, and summarily sentence, those guilty of a broad range of minor offences and to decide small civil cases. Cases beyond the jurisdiction of this 'Petty Session' were sent onward by process of indictment to Magistrates sitting together with a jury at the 'Quarter Sessions'.

When Upper and Lower Canada were joined in 1840 as the United Province of Canada its First Parliament enacted legislation in 1841 establishing municipal government for townships, districts, counties, towns and cities. As administrative lines were redrawn under this act, in 1842 Carleton County was separated from the District of Bathurst and joined to the District of Dalhousie which had been established in 1838. At the same time (1842) the southern Townships of Elmsley and Burgess were divided between the District of Bathurst and Leeds County. Those portions lying south of the Rideau River remained in Leeds County as South Elmsley and South Burgess, with those parts lying north of the river becoming North Elmsley and North Burgess in Bathurst District. In 1845 Montague Township (first surveyed in 1794) was attached to the District of Bathurst.

Justices of the Peace lost most of their administrative function with the establishment of elected councils in 1840 and then saw their judicial authority significantly reduced in 1845 when Judges, who had to be qualified barristers, were appointed by the Provincial Legislature to preside at Courts of Quarter Session. John Glass Malloch (1806-1873) as the first Judge appointed to the Bathurst District Court.

A revised Municipal Institutions Act in 1849 abolished districts and their councils and in 1850 the United County of Lanark and Renfrew was established with Robert Bell (1808-1894) elected as the County's first Warden. At the same time, September 1850, the Town of Perth was incorporated as the first urban center in the County, administered by its own council, and serving as the County seat. The first mayor of Perth was Dr. James Stewart Nichol (1811-1864).

On September 23, 1866 the United County was dissolved and the Counties of Lanark and Renfrew established as separate municipalities. Daniel Galbraith (1812-1879) was elected the first Warden of Lanark County. Perth continued to serve as the County Seat for Lanark. The Township Reeves comprising that first Lanark County Council were;

Bathurst – William Lees (1821-1903)
Beckwith – Patrick Struthers (1830-1927)
Burgess – M. Stanley
Dalhousie & Lavant – William Purdon (1804-1896)
Drummond – Abraham Code (1828-1898)
Elmsley – Duncan McGregor
Lanark – James Affleck (1813-1893)
Montague – John McGill Chambers (b.1805)
Pakenham – Young Scott (1803-1880)
Ramsay – Daniel Galbraith (1812-1879)
Darling – Peter Guthrie (1826-1914)
South Sherbrooke – Thomas Moore (1826-1887)
Town of Perth – John Doran (b.1826)
Smiths Falls – J.H. Gould

Lanark Village – William Robertson (1823-1903)

Various changes to the structure and authority of municipal governments continued to take place over the following years, with the most significant being the amalgamation of many of Lanark County's Townships, effective January 1, 1998. North Burgess, Bathurst and South Sherbrooke became Tay Valley Township. When amalgamated, Drummond and North Elmsley Townships chose to simply combine their former names as Drummond/North Elmsley Township. In the third tier, Lanark, Dalhousie and North Sherbrooke became Lanark Highlands Township. In the northern tier, Ramsay and Pakenham were combined (with the town of Almonte) as the Township of Mississippi Mills. Only the townships of Beckwith and Montague remain individual municipalities within their original 19th century boundaries.

- *Ron W. Shaw (2015)*