

CAPTAIN JOHN SAVAGE AND THE SETTLEMENT OF SHEFFORD: FROM 1740 TO 1793 (PART 1)¹

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A copy of Jack Richardson's thesis on the Irish-born New York Loyalist, John Savage, came into my hands many years ago, when I was working on a later period of Eastern Townships history. I was immediately impressed by the depth of research and the quality of the writing displayed by this undergraduate essay, and have always felt it a pity that it was not accessible to a wider readership, particularly given the paucity of studies on the early settlement period of the Eastern Townships. The Brome County Historical Society has long had a tremendously rich collection of papers left by the township leaders who struggled to gain official recognition for their land claims, and these papers were microfilmed many years ago by the National Archives of Canada, yet they remain largely unexploited by academic historians or graduate students. The main exceptions are the unpublished doctoral dissertation by Gerald McGuigan, completed in 1962, and a number of entries in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*.ⁱ Also useful are Ivanhoë Caron's *La Colonisation de la Province de Québec: Les Cantons de l'Est, 1791–1815* (L'Action Sociale, 1927), Linda Hackett's *Eleazer Fitch, the First Leader of Stanstead Township* (Stanstead Historical Society, 1941), Harry Shufelt's *Nicholas Austin the Quaker and the Township of Bolton* (Brome County Historical Society, 1971), Rick Ashton's *Life of Henry Ruiter* (self-published, 1974), Bernard Epps' *The Eastern Townships Adventure* (Pigwidgeon Press, 1992), and Jimmy Manson's *The Loyal Americans of New England and New York: Founders of the Townships of Lower Canada* (Brome County Historical Society, 2001), but one will find very little on the subject in the regional histories recently published by the *Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture*.ⁱⁱ I am very pleased, then, that Mr. Richardson and the editorial committee of *JETS* have agreed to publish his valuable essay.

Hopefully, it will stimulate much-needed further research on the formative period of Eastern Townships history.

NOTES

- i Gerald F. McGuigan, "Land Policy and Land Disposal under Tenure of Free and Common Socage" (PhD dissertation, Laval University, 1962). The Savage entry by Marie-Paule LaBrèque, who did not have access to this essay, can be found in volume 6 of the *DCB*.
- ii Jean-Pierre Kesteman, Peter Southam, and Diane Saint-Pierre, *Histoire des Cantons de l'Est* (Québec: Les Éditions de l'IQRC, 1998); and Mario Gendro et al., *Histoire du Piémont des Appalaches* (Québec: Les Éditions de l'IQRC, 1999).

Introduction

In December, 1800, His Majesty's Land Commissioners at St. Armand, Patrick Conroy and John Ferguson, forwarded to the Governor-General of Canada a list of 39 men proposed as associates for the Township of Shefford, whom they certified as having taken the oaths and become actual settlers, with the exception of two or three who had helped the leader of the associates, Captain John Savage, with money and provisions. With this list came a petition from the leader for a grant for the township to himself and these men. These papers were referred to the Permanent Land Committee and recommended that the petition of Captain Savage be granted. Accordingly, at a Council meeting on February 10, 1801, it was resolved that a grant of 35,490 acres under the name of Shefford, bounded by the townships and tracts of Granby, Ely, Brome and Stukley be given to John Savage and his 39 associates. A Charter was ordered to be made out and the Governor's certificates under the Great Seal affixed. Then the Council turned to the consideration of other business.

What did this action of the Government represent? It was the incorporation into the political life of the Province of Lower Canada of a typical one of the Eastern Townships, a new element in the Province. It also represented the culmination of nine years of petitioning and development of the land, and the story of those years will give us some clue as to the nature of the new element. The story is mainly that of one man, the leader Savage, for without him the settlement would never have been started or have become what it was, and it is the history of this man that will explain best the development of the

Townships. To see him as a sort of benevolent despot in the little community, supplying it with some of its necessities, dispensing justice, employing men on the land and directing the settlement – a shrewd man where money was concerned, and an autocrat in the business of land settlement, but a kind, just and resourceful leader; his story shows us how this type of man took control of settling this region. And under him are the settlers – loyalists or “Loyal Subjects”, mostly Anglicans, coming west from the Eastern Seigniories, and republican, Methodist Vermonters moving in from the South, forming the two currents of settlement which were to influence the development of the Eastern Townships.

Economically, the community comes into contact with Missisquoi Bay, St. John’s and Alburgh; politically, these pioneers run up against what seems the rock of government officialdom at Quebec, and these two influences help to shape the township as an economic and political unit in Lower Canada. Savage, opening up the forest in Shefford, is obviously a different type of man from his acquaintance Conroy at St. John’s, and from Pennoyer, the Ruiters and Luke at Missisquoi; there is an even greater gulf between him and the veteran government servant Finlay at Quebec. Yet all are capable men, without whom the Townships would not have been built successfully.

Savage, and Shefford Township, are typical of early settlement of this district; he was the commonest type of Loyalist settler, a New York farmer, and as one of the first men to enter the forest here, is a typical pioneer. He also came up after a ten years’ stay in the Richelieu Valley, as did most of the Loyalist settlers in the Townships. The history of Shefford shows the delays in getting the Charter, unfortunately so common, the town is settled from the west and south-west, as half of the townships are.

The necessity of self-support produced a sturdy, capable type of settler and the common trials of early settlement resulted in a spirit of comradeship. Even the delay in obtaining the Grant had its value, for it meant that practically every man who got land by the Charter was a *bona fide* settler, and absentee land ownership was avoided in this township. It also, incidentally, resulted in a larger percentage of Americans than Loyalists in the population.

At the end we see a new Eastern Township born. It was something new in Canada, but it was something that was to give added vitality to the country, though at a later date it was to come into conflict with the French element. Besides and beyond this, it marks the pushing north of the forest frontier of America and the transformation of another patch of forest into a civilized community.

Backgrounds: 1740–1782

The man who was to make and mould the settlement of Shefford was striking enough in both person and character. John Savage was large and powerful, though he was no Elias Truax, the pioneer type who could walk his twelve miles a day at ninety-four: "I am so infirm that I cannot walk over my floor without a staff in my hand," he writes in 1820, and ends his letter with a pathetic postscript: "My hand shakes; I can't write." Yet when already middle aged he had cut his home from the Canadian forest. Such men were needed for the opening up of the Eastern Townships.

All who knew him were impressed by his character.

In consequence of his conduct in favour of the British Government, he actually suffered very considerably in his Person, and the loss of his Property Interest, by being Prosecuted, and imprisoned, by the authority that existed in the American Governments at the early stage of the War ...,

He left his home and family in pursuit of means for the support of the British Government in which business he consumed much time ...:

Such testimonials, warm beneath the eighteenth-century phrases and capitals, might be from the pens of friendly fellow-Loyalists; actually, they are over the signatures of five officers² of the Continental Army and Militia, only seven years after Cherry Valley had blackened most Tories in the eyes of New York revolutionaries. Even in 1819, his nephew Erastus Pratt writes him from Spencertown: "You have a great many friends and relatives here. Pray try to come and see them"; yet for thirty-six years he had never been back to his old home. As for his reputation among Tories, Colonel Abraham Cuyler of Montreal, former mayor of Albany and the most notable Loyalist in Canada, writes in the highest terms of his character; the testimonials of other men bear the same witness.

The qualities that made him so respected show themselves very clearly: courage and quick wit; the common sense and practical ability of the man who gets things done, which marked him out as a natural leader and even, as we shall see, led the Americans twice to nominate him for military and legal positions which he positively refused; an unassuming and kindly nature that gleams out of the documents ("Get us two bushels of wheat and one of corn... don't you do it if it is like to distress you.") and most important of all, his strong piety and passion for order, for organization and for justice. The magistrate who could give a legal decision against his own grandson in favor of a man

afterwards found to be in the wrong – “for I must decide according to the proofs brought forward,” the man who built a church in Shefford not for the practice of an emotional American Methodism, but so that he and his family could “learn their duty to their God and their neighbor” and wished afterwards “to settle with all my friends and give every man his just due” had a social consciousness that was very necessary in a pioneer settlement and spelling atrocious far beyond those of his friends at St. John’s and Missisquoi. Like General Bayley of Vermont, also a magistrate, he “could plough and fight better than he could write.” Penmanship was not a premium in pioneer life, but leadership and a social sense were. Conditions caught Savage up into the gradual pushing northward of the forest frontier and made him that new element in Canadian history, a frontiersman; his character made him something more.

How much Savage’s wife, the small fair-haired blue-eyed woman, may have influenced her giant husband, there is no indication; he does not mention her once in any of his early papers. But it is probably her neat writing that appears so often instead of his own in his account-books, and her rather melancholy religious nature (to judge from her choice of hymns) may have developed the piety he later showed. Certainly, the Canadian pioneer could have hardly existed without his wife. Of the influence of Colonel Henry Caldwell of Quebec, and the advice of other friends, we shall speak later.

Like so many of the Loyalists, and of the revolutionaries themselves, Savage was not American. He came “of a wealthy and influential family in the North of Ireland,” and in that most loyal corner of the Empire he was born in 1740. But he was still a youth when he came out to America with his uncles James and Edward, and took up land in Spencertown, near Albany and the Hudson River.

(Certain portions of the original manuscript are incomplete and have been left out.)

James soon became one of the leading politicians in the settlements.³ A politician John never was; ever practical, he was more occupied with the task of settling the land successfully and quietly, just as he was to be later at Caldwell’s Manor and Shefford. He had bought his large tract from the Mohican Indians (as did other settlers) and he was busy enough ploughing and building up his estate; sometime before 1769 he married Ann, daughter of Deacon Elisha Pratt of the Proprietors’ Meeting House, formerly a Connecticut man and in the true Whig

tradition; and all this time his reputation was growing in Spencertown, till in 1775 the Revolution so long impending began.

It is easy to see, then, how in those dozen troublous years before the Revolution he had not become identified as a strong Whig or Tory. But a Tory he was from the very outbreak of the war, no "fair-weather Tory" whose allegiance was decided by Burgoyne's southward advance, like so many New Yorkers. His elder brother and all of his wife's family were Whigs. But James was of that type; he had been active in the land disputes for several years. John's instinct for order decided him for the Royal cause early or late before 1775; we do not know.

His neighbours' uncertainty as to his sympathies is shown in his first contact with the Revolution. The Americans began to organize their militia early in 1775, and the Association, Congress's economic agreement of the previous year directed against the British Government's four obnoxious Acts, was passed by county and local committees and became a sort of Test Oath for militiamen. When the Chatham County militia was formed that May, Savage was chosen to command a company in King's District the chief officer for Congress in Spencertown – The Whigs evidently not realizing he was a strong Tory (revolutionary sentiment was never more widespread than that year). They came to him in his fields while he was ploughing, to secure his signature to the Association. He flatly refused; "and for that reason," he says, "I was called an enemy to their cause." He soon became an active enemy. He received a lieutenancy in a loyal corps raised by Governor Tryon. The local committee (part of that well organized Whig machine we have just seen in action) acted soon, and in February, 1776, Savage was sent by then to Albany jail.

The jailer ask'd the Guard what crime I was Guilty of. They made answer I was a Tory and had drank King George's health; then the jailer replied he did not accept People of that Capacity there.

After trialed by the Albany Committee he was imprisoned three days in the fort, finally being released on giving £500 bond for his behavior during the period of war and promising to remain on his farm.

In June, Spencertown voted for the Declaration of Independence and The Whigs were roused to greater activity. Two months later the irrepressible Savage was brought a second time before the committee. He had stayed on his farm, as required, but he had brought the mountain to Mahomet. "Enemies to their cause frequented my House," was the reason they gave. Three of his cattle were sequestered and he himself was ordered to a New England jail; "But on my way there, I slipt to the Woods from the Guard."

He was quickly becoming a very active Tory indeed; at this time he had twenty or thirty men under his command, mostly supported at his own expense. These he was to command either to New York (where Howe was just driving out Washington) or Canada (where Carleton's counter-attack was about to capture Crown Point); it was almost high tide for British hopes in America. In October, he decided for New York. However, a visit to a sick friend delayed him,

& coming back to my men we went into a Friends house to take some refreshments; being there a few minutes the Misstress came in and told us we was surrounded by a Party of Rebels. On hearing her I took my gun & Pistol and slept out Doors, then meeting at Capt. Salisbury and three others; having some dispute with them they dispers'd. Then making our way to my men in The Woods We was surrounded by between thirty & forty of the Rebels and after having some dispute with them we was oblg'd to Capitulate & surrender to them.

Sent in irons to Simsbury Mines (for he was now considered a dangerous man) he was "risq'd" on the way to Great Barrington.

Free again, he joined a party of twenty-four, "which I commanded." A natural leader, he seems to have taken control in whatever group of men he found himself. The Company set out toward Canada, for Carleton had just taken Crown Point. They only got as far as Cambridge Mountains. There, "We was hail'd in the Morning by two Men; We took them prisoners and made them believe we were Rebels" (there was huge uncertainty of who was friend or foe, or which side to fight for, in southern Vermont at that time). From these men, of Warner's Vermont regiment, they learned that Carleton had evacuated the ruined Crown Point. Short of provisions and with no good "pilot", they had no alternative but to turn back for New York. At Hoosick the party decided it was safer to let Savage go alone, promising to return to them as soon as possible.

His journey was through Waterbury and Guilford in Connecticut, and a two days' ship voyage brought him to the east end of Long Island. Always a rallying-point for Loyalists, he had picked up ten or more men on the way. But in New York he seems to have forgotten his 24 poor unfortunates at Hoosick. He got a company on Col. Tenning's Corps and on December 24th was sent out with dispatches and recruiting orders in pursuit of his men; he was taken prisoner in the Nine Partners. The discovery of the recruiting orders "brought on him almost every severity short of death"; his long terms of imprisonment (nearly four years in all) now begin. Legs chained under a horse's belly, he was taken thirty miles to Fishkill Barracks, kept there ironed hand

and foot for a fortnight and in January moved to Kingston jail, where he spent ten months in the same condition.

It was considered safer to move him into Whig Connecticut, to the large jail at Hartford. Even as a prisoner, his qualities of leadership again appear;

On my way there I found means to get one of my hands loose, as I knew the rest of the Prisoners would raise against them If I would only begin the Fray upon which I knock'd the Centry down,

(here the fragment of his detailed journal ends in true serial-story fashion); they had to hide in a swamp before they reached friends. But he was soon a prisoner again, at Windsor, Connecticut, and sentenced to be hung at last. Nothing could daunt Savage; he joked as they placed the rope around his neck, and his joke so pleased his captors that they threw him back into prison.

He must have remained in jail (at Norwick, Ct., and also Poughkeepsie) till around 1780 or 1781. The tide of war was now definitely against the English and Haldimand began his campaign of raids and surprises. The daring, almost story-book-hero Savage was just the man for this work – better probably at this than fighting colonial soldiers. He gave much service to Haldimand's scouts and attracted the attention of the Governor's secretary, Major Mathews. Of his actual fighting during this period there is no record.

Not once in his account does he mention his wife, his son John (born in 1769) or his daughters. They must have been safe, probably in Spencertown, where anti-Loyalist feeling was not strong. But in 1782 the "Patriots" grew more active even there and Savage, once more on his farm, could see that he would soon have to abandon his property and move his family to safety.

All through the war, indeed, he had been losing money steadily. Journeys to the committee (36 in all), costs of prosecutions and imprisonment (he was always kept in prison at his own expense), the loss of his crops while he was in Kingston jail in 1777 – altogether he calculated, he had lost £468 New York Currency during the war, apart from the loss of business due to absence from the farm. Yet he had not spared giving his money to equip men for the King. There is truth indeed in his proud claim to Lord Dorchester that

during the late American contest, no man more cheerfully abandoned his property, sacrificed for years his liberty or exposed his life to evident danger on secret service, in support of the royal Cause than your petitioner.

Resourceful, loyal and courageous, this man had done all in his power for the King in New York. He had now to apply those qualities in the building of a new home in Loyal territory. The only loyal territory lay to the north, in Canada and Nova Scotia, and of these two provinces Canada was the most easy to access. Up the Hudson and Lake Champlain from Spencertown laid an old-established route into the fertile triangle of Canadian land between the Richelieu and St. Lawrence Rivers.

This triangle was “the granary of Canada,” populated by the richest though most disaffected of the French-Canadian peasants, whose villages extended up the St. Lawrence as far as the Cedars and up the Richelieu or Chambly River to Fort Chambly. For the produce of the country, which was mostly agricultural, hay, grain and garden produce (good livestock was not then over-common in Canada) they had a market easy of access in Montreal, on the St. Lawrence, which had grown up through the western fur-trade into the largest town in Canada; there the market-place was opened every day at 6 a.m. in summer and 8 a.m. in winter, and the farmers flocked in, coming by cart, canoe or frequently “schooners, sloops and other such craft,” and for three or four hours they could sell directly to the customers in the market or on their boats without middlemen; of late the Richelieu Valley peasants, who were inclined to favour the American cause, had been suspected of hoarding wheat. Normally, they seldom sold wheat before March, and in spring and fall it was impossible to get into Montreal to sell any produce. All these commercial transactions had been governed by French law since the Quebec Act. Recent regulations due to war conditions had brought about abnormal economic conditions; Haldimand, duped by the Hon. John Cochrane, had allowed government bills to be sold on partial credit that was much credit and little cash. This method, against which Haldimand had begun to protest, but so far in vain, in 1782, was to cause a financial crisis next year through its pyramiding of debts. Meanwhile, under its influence, “business in the colony was blowing itself up into a gigantic bubble” and the rum and wheat markets had been cornered, resulting in disastrous prices. The movement onto the land had made labour scarce and wages high in the town. In the country, the *corvée* had been re-introduced during the war.

The roads by which the *habitants* brought their goods had greatly improved since a special *Grand Voyer* had been appointed for Montreal – kept up by the farmers along the routes, the highroads were 30 ft. wide and byroads 20 ft., with ditches and fences on either side, and marked by 8-foot poles in winter; bridges, somewhat narrower, had

Sleepers of cedar and floors of ash or red spruce logs. There were roads from Haldimand's new fort at Sorel up to Fort La Prairie on the St. Lawrence and Fort Chambly (rebuilt since it was burnt in 1776) on the Richelieu. Beyond Chambly there was a poorer path to the old fort of St. John's and Isle aux Noix, whence a portage led to Missisquoi Bay. The other posts on this well-guarded frontier, the Blockhouses at Point au Fer and Dutchman's Point, were accessible only by boat, and indeed the main highway into the rebel states was by water along Lake Champlain. West of the Richelieu was an empty country – the "Last retreat of the Schakicook Indians" crossed by only two rough roads from St. Lambert to Chambly and St. John's. On the eastern side, beyond Pike River and Missisquoi Bay, there was a rolling, wooded land that still defied settlement; it was a blank on the map, save from the two rivers piercing it, Yamaska and St. Francis. The latter apparently rose on the Canada Line in a large lake; "*Memorobka or Memphrimagoy*".

The *Grand Voyer* was assisted in his work by the local Captains of Militia, illiterate men but nevertheless leaders in the villages where they carried on the administration of justice. In Montreal there was a Court of Common Pleas and several Courts in Quebec; these were now bilingual and French Law (as the French seigniorial land-tenure) was now in force. This was much to the disgust of the only English element, the merchants, yet Haldimand at Quebec, supported by Mabane and the official class, still managed to preserve the system somewhat uneasily against their attacks in Council. But these disputes probably little troubled the peasants on the Richelieu or the regular soldiery garrisoning the forts.

On the other shore of Champlain, New York State reached Canada. But here there was no real settlement north of the old forts at Crown Point and Ticonderoga.

Through this tract of Land runs a Chain of Mountains which from lake Champlain on one side and the River St. Lawrence on the other side shew their tops always white with snow but altho this one unfavorable circumstance has hitherto secured it from the claws of the Harpy Land Jobbers yet no doubt it ... will in future furnish a comfortable retreat for many Industrious Families.

For good or ill, trade with Canada must pass through Vermont – Vermont which marked the northward advance of the forest frontier, soon to enter Canada.



Colonel Caldwell's manor house

Source: Missisquoi County Historical Society, 2nd report (E.T. collection) (1907) – p. 20a

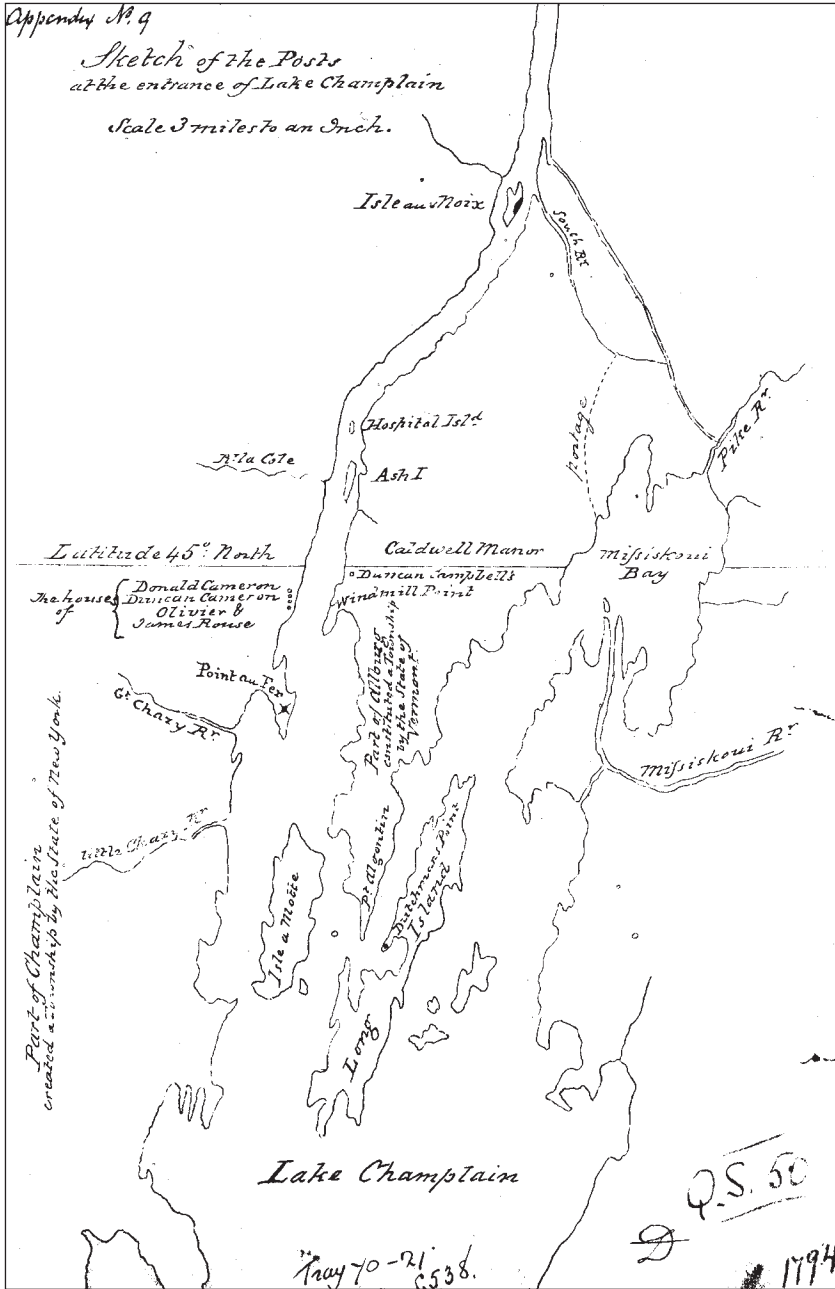
Caldwell's Upper Manor: 1782–1792

The growing tumult of revolution in the colonies was such that even at the start of the War despairing Tories began to abandon their homes and make their way north to Canada. After Saratoga and Fort Stanwix the stream of these refugees swelled greatly and started to flow more rapidly. Many came in up Lake Champlain under flags of truce; others were brought in by Haldimand's "rescuing expeditions"; still others by the private scouting parties all the time descending into the States. By recruiting parties, too; for if most of the United Empire Loyalists (as they early came to be called) were civilians seeking a haven of peace, many others came to join the Tory regiments mustering in Canada, who needed all the loyal Americans they could rescue from hostile districts.

By the summer of 1782 there were 1700 of these Loyalists gathered in the Richelieu – St. Lawrence triangle; they were mostly concentrated at the forts of St. John's, Chambly and Sorel, and so the Richelieu Valley became the first centre of Loyalists Settlement. For two years, before these new Canadians spread out into Upper Canada, the Gaspé and the Maritime Provinces, the constant stream of immigration was backed up there, and the concentration at the three forts was increased, or settlement was begun at other favourable spots all along the valley.

Of these other spots, many singled out for their new home the tongue of land which runs down into Lake Champlain between Missisquoi Bay and the Richelieu. It was the old French seigniory of Foucault, recently granted to Colonel Henry Caldwell of Belmont, near Quebec (member of the Legislative Council and formerly one of Wolfe's men); from this it became known as Caldwell's Upper Manor. There was a blockhouse here on the neighbouring island of North Hero at the place called Dutchman's Point; with Point au Fer on the western side of the Richelieu, it was the first Canadian post the refugees saw, their first stopping point in their flight from the States. The blockhouse commanded this end of the lake, and offered easy communication with both Canada and the New England colonies. Caldwell himself, fond as he was of money, encouraged settlement, seeing the lucky opportunity to secure an income from his new lands. By September, 1782, then, Haldimand "received letters from Vermont and the Colonies."

The men who were coming north now were mostly the stubborn Loyalists who had stayed in the colonies until Cornwallis's surrender extinguished their last real hope of success, and persecution broke out in earnest even in New York State. That summer it had reached Spencertown; the "Patriots" obliged the Rev. George Gillmore, teaching school in the town, to leave his family and escape through the woods to Canada, reaching St. John's in the fall. Such persecution could not pass Savage by, though he was respected enough by his townspeople, for the revolutionary fury was reaching its height; he now determined to move into Canada. In August he set out for St. John's, probably on a trip of reconnaissance; he passed up through New Canaan, Badcock, Arlington and Castleton, and reached East Bay on Lake Champlain by the 15th. Five days later he was at St. John's, having traveled up the Lake, unlike Gillmore. His note-book records 38 "Letters Carried," probably for distribution for acquaintances and friends who had already fled to Canada. The list of names (writers or addresses?) includes several we shall hear again – "Wm, Sole", "Christian Whier", Richd Ferguson." In a neater hand is a long list of goods which may be his wife's shopping list for St. John's: 3 pairs of purple leather gloves, "some pins", green tea, and a list of cloths which has the flavour of the age – black mode (silk), book muslin, "Cambrick", lawn, green Persian and "2 barcelona handkerchiefs". They dressed well even in small colonial towns in the eighteenth century, and even places like St. John's would seem to have drapers with considerable stock.



Sketch of the Posts at the entrance of Lake Champlain.

Source: The Loyalists of the Eastern Townships of Quebec, p. 22. 1984.

The Bicentennial Book Committee, The United Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada.

On September 16, 1782 he set out again for Spencertown. The next day he reached Dutchman's Point; he passed on in the morning, noting laconically in his diary "the 18th Left Dutchman point got 19 mile that Day." On the 22nd, he reached Castleton and the last entry in the book follows on the 23rd: "got to pollet payed my account at pollet." (Fawlet, Vt) He was still several days' journey from New Canaan and farther yet from home. When he arrived at Spencertown he had been 51 days away, "at 61 - £15:6:0" with additions expenses of £18 (items of lodging on the way and costs at St. John's probably). From all this he subtracts: "By Expenses - £10:0:0 John Garrison and Samuel ones D." It looks as if part of his expenses were paid by others at Spencertown. The reason for his visit to St. John's becomes more of a mystery.

If he had marked out Dutchman's Point that autumn day as his future home there is no sign of it in his diary. But underneath his expenses for the journey is the notation "November 1th (sic) 1782 at Duchman Point." It stands alone with a sort of finality, as if Savage was saying: "On this day I arrived at my new home."

"The Quebec Almanac" for 1815 has a table of distances on the Montreal-Albany route. Six miles south of Windmill Point on the boundary is Savage's point, and at the spot that still bore his name over 20 years after his departure John Savage started to lay out his farm. It was some miles from the end of the "Missisquoi Tongue" and beyond that, across a narrow channel, was the protecting blockhouse at Dutchman's Farm,

Savage had come in the first wave of settlers on the Manor which commenced, as we see, after that September. In November, the month he arrived, Haldimand had become so alarmed at the growth of the border settlements, from which he feared international friction could result, that he sent word to the States that no settlers would be allowed on the shores of Lake Champlain. Next March this warning was reiterated by Captain Justus Sherwood, the commander at Dutchman's Point, who told the Vermonters "they must not presume to improve" beyond "Middlebury Falls, North and East, for the west side, and the chair of the Green Mountains for the eastern boundary of the Connecticut River people."

It was little use the Governor or Sherwood issuing these orders; Loyalists and Vermonters still came in to Caldwell's Manor. There were forces at work, too, to season Haldimand's anxiety over possible causes of friction with the colonies. Vermont was playing a game of diplomacy, trying to incite Congress to admit her into the Union, and she now pretended to be ready to become a British colony again. In

April, 1783, Ethan Allen wrote to Sherwood (who had become one of the negotiators with Vermont appointed by Haldimand),

earnestly requesting that the loyalists in Canada might be settled near Vermont, as the private cabinet of Vermont had resolved to give every possible encouragement to loyal subjects in Canada to remove to the northern part of the State,

to help form an anti-Congress party strong enough to force union with Canada. A Mr. Campbel from Boston visited Sherwood, too, with a plan for the speedy settlement of the northern part of Vermont and the Grand Isle by distressed Loyalists still in the States. In June, the governor received a memorial from the Loyalists praying to be allowed to locate on the Manor, and for the next year refugees from the south and members of the disbanded Loyalist regiments at St. John's were coming in. It was now that Savage finally moved on his farm. He could not remain any longer at Spencertown; on May 6 the inhabitants had "voted to confiscate the property of the Tories and not allow them residence in the district."

He moved his family and belongings up to the Crown Point, and in the latter part of August he obtained passport for himself and his brother Edward from Haldimand at Quebec

to pass from thence to Crown Point and to bring his family and effects to the Loyal Blockhouse to stay without let or hindrance until further orders.

In October he returned for his cattle and on the 31st to set out from Crown Point by boat with other refugees –

"Mr Champan", "arles", "Bolfus", "Burget" (Conrad or Garret Burghedt" and "John Clark": but "Parsons Gilmor" (Rev. Geo. "Gillmore";

Smith came through the woods and may have driven the cattle. On November 3, the Captain commanding Isle Aux Noix ordered the officers at Dutchman's Point to give him any assistance he needed in bringing the cattle into the province.

The settlement into which Savage now came was the gathering place and for a while the home of a great number of men who were to go out ten years later and open up the Eastern Townships, Savage among them – Christian Wehr, the leader of the Associates at Missisquoi Bay; Gilbert Hyatt, the leader of Ascot; Minard Yoemans, the leader of Ditton; Patrick Conroy, the founder of Frelighsburgh; Captain Henry Ruiter, who served as Captain of Loyal Rangers in British Army reinforcements during Revolutionary War and who was

to settle Potton Township; Alexander Schutt, an Associate in East Farnham; Joseph Dolph ("Dolfus"?) in Barnston; William Soles and John Smith, in Sutton; John Mock and Towner, who were to follow Savage to Shefford; John Gibson, one of the first men to settle in St. Armand East; and numerous others. Many of them were bold men of Savage's type such as Capt. Justus Sherwood, who helped the Allens in the famous rescue of Remember Baker from the New Yorkers in 1772 and had fought bravely at Bennington; Capt. Meyers, who nearly captured Schuyler in 1781; and Luke Carscallion, who had seen his son nearly hanged before his eyes rather than renounce his loyalty. Yet, among all these, we shall see, Savage was one of the most prominent; and it was his steadiness and trustworthiness that seems to have gained the esteem of other men.

These settlers held their lands by lease from Caldwell; in January, 1784, against the wishes of Haldimand he had advertised in the Quebec "Gazette" that he was willing "to let out forever on the most reasonable terms" his 50,000 acres of land on Lake Champlain which was mostly in 100-acre lots, to construct grist and saw mills for the settlers, and if necessary build a church and procure a clergyman "of the persuasion of the majority of the inhabitants." On September 2 of that year he appointed Savage his attorney to grant permits of settlement for the part of his seigniory south of the boundary; he had known him since 1782 and recognized this practical resourceful man as the best agent he could appoint. Major Mathews, the Governor's secretary, who should have been a good judge of character, had also recommended Savage to Caldwell, Savage, on his side, was much impressed by Caldwell. Perhaps, at first, this was a Tory's reaction to the man of wealth and influence, the Legislative Councilor at Quebec; but it later developed into a strong regard for a man who, always alert and jealous for his own interest though he might be, came to Savage's aid more than once in later years. Savage was always ready to take Caldwell's advice; he had swum now into the orbit of a new star, and was to remain there for some time to come.

The quality of the land the Loyalists had settled on was good; "Missisquoi Tongue" was fertile and well-wooded, and well adapted for stock-raising. We have seen Savage brought his cattle from Crown Point; in the same note-book he gives what is probably his list of cattle about that time, with their weights – a white ox weighing 740 lbs, four two-year-olds totaling 1600 lbs. each, and 9 yoke varying from 1150 to 1850 lbs. each. He soon turned many to beef (for provisions were scarce in the district) and seems to have become the butcher for the Manor. We have his accounts for part of November 1783 (the exact

length of time is not known) and he notes selling 1422 lbs. of beef (at 3d. a lb.) and 233 lb. of tallow (at 4d. a lb.) bringing him over £80; this was to a large number of individuals, and also the 29th regiment at St. John's and the militia. In addition, Mr. Towner bought 17 ox-hides, 1263 lb. in all, at 3d. a lb. and a sheep at 5/-. There is elsewhere an item, "one head and pluck" at 3/- and another at 3/6 (a pluck is part of a sheep). Other notes "the Beef and Skins sold ... £149:8:9." And "wate of Beef hides and taller – 10850 PDS" gives some ideas of the extent of his trade at that time. Mr. Walter Chapman seems to have sold some of the beef for him – £17 worth at the fort at Isle Aux Noix. Some of the cattle he killed he may have bought, for he notes 3 items totaling over £43 paid to Alexander Scad, John Holt and Lieut. Ferguson.

Savage, then, seems to have provided beef for the community; flour was obtained after 1783 from the new grist mill at Burlington in Vermont, more than 25 miles away, for there was no Canadian mill so near; to this they took their grain in an open boat. Wheat could be obtained from Vermont at over 6/-the bushel. There was probably a considerable trade with Burlington, for there, on the Onion River, the rebels had made great progress in settlement. Their nearest real market in Canada was at St. John's, now growing into a flourishing Loyalist community. But Savage seems also to have had commercial dealings with Isle Aux Noix and D. Phil.'s and Gordon's farms on Grand Isle. In 1784 Haldimand, annoyed at the Manor Loyalists' persistence in settling on the boundary, cut off the provisions they had formerly received, like all other Loyalists, from the Government. Great distress resulted by August, and they petitioned the Governor "for the same benefits as if they had settled on Government lands"; but in vain. Good land and provisions were what the Loyalists at Sorel complained they lacked in December, 1786, and it was a common Loyalist plea. By that time, the Caldwell's Manor settlers had the former, but were feeling the want of the latter.

The killing of these cattle brought in considerable money to Savage. He was probably better off than most of his neighbors though he had to mortgage his land at Save's Point to Caldwell next year for £81,

or his account book records a number of loans - £9:11:0 to Towner, £6:8:8 to Chapman, and several items of one or two "ginnes" to others. Guineas, it would seem, were coins in fairly common use there; he marks them down as £1:3:4 each, for the sterling coinage was of higher value than the currency employed in accounts.⁴

There was some lack of actual cash, resulting in three-cornered transactions: "payed Mr. Brown £0:12:0 for Costell and gileres," "Patt Ciligian (Pat Carigain) payed 3/9d. for Burgat and my Self." Often this was done by means of orders on paper; Savage mentions an order of his on Carscallion for which Osborne owed him 1:15:8. Such orders were usually of this nature:

Caldwell's manner July 29, 1790 Mr. Wood Sir Please to Let the Bairer Daniel Bigel have three shillins and you will oblige our friend Elij Denis

(The quaint ending seems to have been the regular formula.)

"Notes of hand" ("For value received I promise to pay ...") were also used as legal tender:

Received Mr. John Savage two notes of hand against Peter Carigen & E. Savage to the among Thirty Pound Thirteen Shilling and four pence; H. Curry (Halifax Currency) which I promise to ac't (account) to him for or return him the note

S. Johns.5
Dutchmans Point
26 March – 1784

In April, 1784 George III approved of Haldimand's policy of discouraging border settling. Soon afterwards Captain Sherwood, the man who had built the fort at Dutchman's Point in 1781 and who had been the real life of the settlement, left the Manor and joined Jessup and Rogers in their new project in Upper Canada: with him went the majority of the Loyalists in the district, urged on by the prospect of free and fertile land and fearing that the Governor might refuse them provisions if they remained any longer on Lake Champlain. Their numbers had already been depleted in February and the following months by the migration of a band of stubborn men to the east side of Missisquoi Bay, where Haldimand had repeatedly refused to let them settle. The governor struck them from the provision list, but they held out. "I shudder to inform you," said, Sherwood "that nothing but Superior force shall drive them off that land." The Governor had refused William Marsh permission to settle on Lake Memphremagog with a number of men the previous year, but now he could not prevent the first foothold being obtained in the Eastern Townships. Under Wehr and Conrad Best the settlement grew, and had spread several miles east by 1792. They began to dissuade settlers from going to Upper Canada to Sherwood's annoyance; "at St. John's", he said, "Mr. Wehr, Alexr Taylor and John Martin (low fellows) are foremost in

this work [...] Ward & Hills are now at this place blowing the coals of sedition like two furies.”

A very few remained at Caldwell's Manor; the most prominent ones were Patrick Conroy, who moved south across the forty-fifth parallel, and John Savage. Savage had taken no part in the dissensions that had rent the Settlement; he had gone quietly about his work of improving his farm and supplying his neighbours with provisions, instead of “blowing the Coals of sedition.” Yet merely by staying he had defied Haldimand. The ferment of the place, the company of so many active men of pioneer spirit, and his close acquaintance with the *Seigneur* who had himself acted in opposition to the Governor's wishes in advertising land, these must all have developed in him an opposition to Quebec officialdom and its views on land settlement. They probably guided his actions here and in Shefford less than a natural desire to settle his land as soon, as well and as completely as possible, for he was a level-headed man. Here, however, he had his first taste of the difficulties with the Government. In December, 1783, he petitioned for government patronage. It seems to have been refused. Caldwell in 1782 said that he received no compensation “owing to some informality in the time and mode of his application.”⁶

The depopulated Caldwell's Manor, most of which was not known to be south of the boundary-line, soon attracted the attention of the Vermonters. That very April the Vermont Council requested Colonel Ebenezer Allen to take possession of Dutchman's Point as soon as the English should evacuate the blockhouse; but though most of the Loyalists had left, the garrison stayed on. The isolation of the Missisquoi Tongue, which nature had made a part of Canada, but saved it from settlement by any but refugees and outlaws. Now Vermonters, moving north from the Onion River, began to flow into Grand Isle, North Hero and Caldwell's Manor. The growth of their influence is shown by the name Alburgh (corruption of Allensburgh) given to the town that was coming into being near Windmill Point as a result of the influx. The dissension-racked Loyalist settlement was giving place to a community of energetic, commercially-mined Vermonters of the Yankee type, and the district was losing its entirely agricultural aspect. The district was not taken under Vermont supervision, however;

there is no kind of civil or military government exercised among the people of the place except what was derived from ourselves by rules adopted by us at meetings of our own vicinity by which we banished thieves and other criminal offenders and enforced by other rules compliance to awards or arbitrators in civil disputes

and when persons were banished from the province of Canada and were brought to the line and suffered to come into our vicinity we drove them from us.⁷

As Governor Chittenden of Vermont said, Alburgh was “too much a rendez-vous for outlaws.”

These new inhabitants were not willing to lease their lands from Caldwell. He was a Canadian; and, moreover, Col. Ira Allen, brother of Ethan, was claiming the Manor by a Vermont township grant made in 1781 before the settlement. Early in 1785 the two claimants met at Quebec and talked over the matter, Allen, it appeared, was willing to take land elsewhere in the state if Caldwell could get his grant confirmed by the Vermont legislature. This, unfortunately, the latter did not succeed in doing. Meanwhile, however, he told Savage to continue giving settling permits as usual and to consult Capt. Samson the commander at Isle Aux Noix, “in everything that Regards my business.” Then the tenants, nervous for their lands after Caldwell’s failure in Vermont, decided to apply for the lands in their own right. Caldwell was furious: “they are not aware of the Consequences of their wanting to break such Solemn Engagements,” he wrote to Savage in February 1786,

for if they wish to Get Free from their Engagements I have the same Right to get quit of Mine and Repossess myself of the lands that they have Improved ... the tenants need be under no uneasiness on the Account. They may hurt themselves but can’t hurt me.

He would be down that month on the Manor, “Where I should be Glad to Meet all the tenants, & get from those that own me as much as they can Spare.” The tenants, were probably less eager. A Mr. Young would be in Vermont in March to assert his rights and get a final sanction for them; too, he advised the tenants to put in claims before the now Loyalist Commissioners at Halifax and he would try and help them.⁸

At that time Caldwell was bringing down a clergyman to perform Divine service at the Manor. He was doing all he could to buttress both the English Church and State in Alburgh, for two years later he brought down commissions for both Savage and Patrick Conroy of Captains of Militia “in the circle of St. John’s” and promised the tenants that he would establish British civil government. Conroy, who was also appointed a J.P. tried to carry out Caldwell’s promise. He moved his home south of the line and “issued some few precepts and took some affidavits,” but the tenants continued their old mode of

government, and he was forced to go North of the line to hold his courts. He was less successful when he tried to call out his company in 1791; only one-third embodied, and when he was forced to leave suddenly on business, the Vermonters jocularly proclaimed him a deserter "and offered as a reward for his return one peck of potatoes."

Vermont's entry into the Union in January 1791 finally forced a crisis. In June of the next year Alburgh organized itself as a Vermont town. Savage was even appointed a J.P. for Chittenden County in 1791! He refused to serve and was replaced by a Samuel Mott. Canada and Caldwell had both ceased to pay much attention to Alburgh, and election writs for the Assembly of 1792 were not issued south of the line. The garrison at Dutchman's Point was strengthened however, and a British armed schooner put in the lake. Friction soon arose; the goods⁹ of Conroy and Yoemans were ordered to be attached on a charge by the Widow Grant. On June 8, 1792, Enos Wood, the Vermont sheriff, arrived at Conroy's house; Conroy had gone to Judge Dunn's at Missisquoi Bay, and his wife was in bed, but Yoemans was there.

The Deputy Sheriff then told Minard Yoemans that he would seize on the cattle – He was answered that if he did, he must abide the consequences. On which the Sheriff seized on Minard Yoemans by force, and said they would tie him, on which he made resistance, in the act of which his coat was torn.

Released "upon promising to be humble," Yoemans went and gave information to Savage and Capt. Dechambault at Point au Fer. These sent soldiers after Wood, and he and most of the cattle were seized when about to cross by the British and taken to St. John's.¹⁰

This affair caused an international incident. It can be seen that Conroy and Savage would now become very unpopular. A few years previously he and Mr. Campbel had helped Allen in settling Loyalists on the Manor, but when it became clear that the latter was playing politics, they abandoned him. Allen now took revenge. By June 1792 he was attempting to drive Savage from the farm, and it was obvious he would soon succeed.

Savage would soon leave Caldwell's Manor for his final home. The past ten years had been, after all, but a preliminary state in his settlement in Canada. But all these events and these conditions had played their part in influencing his future actions in a more successful settlement. Most important of all, he had his introduction to Canada, and to Quebec officialdom, with its attitude toward settlers.

Into the Forest: 1792–1793

By the year 1792, then, it had become very clear to Savage that he would soon be forced to abandon the farm at Alburgh. His immediate task, since he could not tell how soon the blow might fall, was to make arrangements for a new home in Canadian territory. The political situation in Vermont was about to drive him from Caldwell's Manor; but at that very time the political situation in Canada was determining the direction of his wanderings.

The Constitutional Act of 1791 had finally established land-tenure by free and common socage in Lower Canada for those who desired it. Such land was Crown Land, not, as the Seigniories, privately owned, and so could be obtained by grant instead of purchase. Calculated to attract an English-speaking population into the vacant lands of the province, this clause of the Act resulted in the combined movement into those districts of the Loyalists from the Seigniories (where land was still held by the old French tenure) and a number of Americans, mostly Vermonters, hopeful of a better chance to make a living in Canada. Of all the unoccupied Crown Land, the most fertile and the most easily accessible for both these classes of settlers lay in the practically unexplored tract from the Richelieu to the Maine boundary which William Marsh and his companions had hoped to open up eight years before. From the River Beauce to the "Canada Line" there was no settlement on this land except at Missisquoi Bay; yet it was fertile enough, as its thick forests testified, and was well stocked with game and fish. Into this district, soon to be known as the Eastern Townships, Savage now decided to move his family; some time before June 1792 he began to take steps to obtain a township grant there.

The Governor's instructions following the Constitutional Act had restored almost completely and elaborated the method of granting lands in common socage introduced at the Conquest. These lands were to be granted in townships – if on navigable waters, of 9 miles frontage and 12 miles depth; if inland, of 10 miles square. They could be taken up either by separate individuals (but this was not common) or by groups of "Associates". The latter always acted through an "agent" or "leader", one of their numbers who undertook to negotiate with the government, meet the expenses of survey, open a road to the township, and settle the required number of persons on the land. In return for these services, he was allowed a larger grant of land than the others; as we shall see, his was a far from profitable job. The agent first petitioned the Government for the land, giving the amount and location desired, and accompanying the petition with certificates of his character, power to act for his associates, and ability to improve the

township. The Committee considered this petition; if satisfactory, the Surveyor-General was directed to issue a warrant of survey for the township, the survey to be carried out within six months, and half the cost to be borne by the Government, half by the agent. The land was divided into 200-acre lots (or "rights of land") and Crown and Clergy Reserves were set aside; no associate was granted more than six lots. The oath of allegiance and a declaration to maintain and defend the Government were then administered to the associates.¹¹

Finally, the patent or charter granting the township was issued, a patent which became null and void if settlement on the land was not made. It was in this last period between the taking of the oaths and the granting of the charter that the delays so common and so important a feature of the early history of the Townships occurred – delays whose cause we will examine later.

When Savage chose his associates, or when they chose him as agent, is not known. But by August 1, 1792, we have correspondence to "Mr. John Savage and Associates" in which 14 are listed: Ithiel, Crosby and William Towner; John Smith, John Wood, John Clark, Daniel Munro, Thomas Waywood, Andrew, Edward and Colby Brown, David Willcooks, Edward Simpson, and Nathaniel C. ...ne¹² probably mostly from Caldwell's Manor. These seem to be at any rate the nucleus of the original band of associates; very few were still of the company when the charter was granted ten years later. It is likely that there were others in the first group, for forty was the usual number for an inland township of ten miles square, such as Shefford, and there also exists an agreement date 1792 between Savage and Thomas Franks, of St. John's, for five rights of land. From this document it would seem that each associate made a separate agreement with the leader for a stated number of lots, promising to settle as soon as the town was surveyed, and to pay his equal proportion of surveying, charter fees and all other expenses that should arise in obtaining the patent.

Associates chosen, the next step was to present the petition and obtain the Warrant of Survey; for this a journey to Quebec was necessary and Savage, as agent, had to take it. Among his certificates of character included with the petition, which was in his own name only, are those already mentioned from Henry Caldwell and the inhabitants of Spencertown, and his own statement of his services during the Revolution. His expense account dates this journey "June 5th Til August"¹³ but he twice mentions that it took 97 days (eloquent testimony to traveling facilities, though this, of course, was for the round trip) so that he arrived back on the Manor September 10; "August" must refer to the time during which he was actually in

Quebec. On the fourth of that month he received his grant from the Governor in Council as leader of the associates of the township of Shefford, to comprise 64,000 acres. He was allowed a personal grant of 12 acres, but his associates' shares were held over until the survey should be completed. On the 18th, probably after he had started off on his return journey, the Warrant of Survey was issued; already by letter of August 1st (addressed to Caldwell's Manor; he may have already left Quebec) the Surveyor-General had requested a deposit of £15 before the surveying could be started.

Hardly was Savage back at Alburgh before he set out again, this time to see and explore his future home; he spent ten days in the middle of September on this "Exploring". Then, the blow he had been expected fell at last, and one night in October, 1792, he was forced to leave his farm hurriedly with his whole family, and make his way by Ox-sled to Canadian territory.

To be continued....

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NOTES

- 1 This is the first part of A.J.H. Richardson's thesis. Readers will be able to follow Captain's savages journey and settlement of Shefford from 1793 to 1801 in the 25th issue of *JETS* which will be published in fall 2004.
- 2 Two, it is true, are relatives.
- 3 He was later a member of the New York Assembly.
- 4 Since 1777 Canada had used "Halifax Currency" (5/- to the dollar) and Caldwell's Manor followed the Canadian system, rather than the New England currency (6/-to dollar) employed in Vermont till the introduction of decimal coinage in 1795. Savage marks many accounts "Lawful Money". Later, probably after more Americans moved in, they used New York currency (8 "York shillings" in a dollar). In papers of 1784 "h Curry" is mentioned: in 1790, "York Money".
- 5 Lt. Solomon Johns, of the Kings Rangers, who reconnoitered the Catarauqui district in 1783.
- 6 Savage himself declared later that he had "never solicited or any way obtained the smallest regard from the Government for his Service." But a petition of 1783 is in existence in the Haldimand papers, and the certificate of February 1786 from Spencertown point to the possibility of a later memorial.
- 7 Benjamin Marvin of Alburgh in 1792.
- 8 Savage's Certificate from Spencertown of February 16 was probably for use in putting in a claim now.
- 9 The list of these gives some idea of property in Alburgh at the time. Savage probably had much the same: "one Grey horse his improvements his square oak timber that lays upon his premises"; "three Oxen, three Cows and Bull, two Calves, and one Year old Heifer."
- 10 The testimony of the different witnesses is contradictory. The above is as brief a summary as possible.
- 11 To remedy some abuses in the granting of land, Commissioners were appointed to each district to inquire into the character of applicants, to administer the oath of allegiance and the declaration, and to see that the associates had settled and improved the township before the charter was granted. The Commissioners who dealt with Eastern Township applicants were Henry Ruitter, Jacob Ruitter and Philip Luke, Esqrs and Mr. Jesse Pennoyer, at Missisquoi Bay; Patrick Conroy at St. John's and René Boileau at Chambly.
- 12 Probably Nathaniel Coffin, an associate of Compton in 1802.
- 13 Yet, if we are to believe Minard Yoemans, he was on the Manor on June 8th.

