



1798

Legacy
The Nelles Story

Pioneers, Loyalists, Founding Families



by

Dorothy Turcotte

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determined to build a replica of it here at The 40.

I immediately began to sketch a grand home for Elizabeth and our future family, a fine house to be built of stone from the escarpment above us. I must admit I felt a little smug about this. Although Johnson Hall is one of the finest houses on this continent, it was built of wood painted to look like stone. My house would truly be built of stone with walls 3 feet thick.

Johnson Hall is a substantial Georgian building, two storeys high with two large windows on each side of the front portico, and five windows across the second storey. A huge stone fireplace at each end of the house provides warmth to both levels of the home. This was the sort of home I aspired to. In winter evenings, I sketched my plans. At first, I did not include the dormer windows upstairs, but added them later. When my plans were complete, I wrote letters. I began to search out the very best masons to cut the stone for my house out of the escarpment above us. I also searched out the finest local black walnut for the panelling and wood trim in the interior. Through a newly arrived Scotsman of my acquaintance, James Crooks, I was able to order some fine door locks which arrived safely and were installed later on the doors to keep the premises secure. As important as the materials, however, were the workmen who would actually construct our home. With luck and a bit of searching, I found the right men for the job. On a trip to Niagara in search of the materials I wanted, Crooks introduced me to Samuel Waddell, a ship's carpenter from Kent in England. He had a team of experienced men who were willing to work on a dwelling house for a change. They came to The 40 almost at once to work with the labourers who by then were beginning to lay the foundation.

The first room built was of course, the kitchen with a six-foot fireplace with a cooking crane. Then other rooms

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Margaret, a challenge which she met very well although I know she was always a little resentful of the burden.

Elizabeth was well liked in the community, and people from all over Niagara travelled to The Manor to pay their respects. My girls and the neighbours kept a regular tea party running to provide refreshments for everyone who came, for most had come some distance, and could not be sent away without nourishment. It was a very solemn time.

On a sunny, crisp morning in April, our whole family walked from our home to the little log church where the Rev. Mr. Addison gave a fitting eulogy before we processed to the burial ground to see Dear Elizabeth laid under the sod. This was followed by a further reception at The Manor. As the afternoon wore on, I was glad to see that the mood lightened somewhat. The children began to run around on the lawn and laugh again, while the adult voices inside the house took on a more lively tone. How quickly life returns to normal.

One of the people who came to pay her respects was Maria, widow of Samuel Bingle who supervised the carpentry on our Manor. Maria is a delightful lady, quite vivacious and always smiling. Both Elizabeth and I had met her several times. After the funeral she wrote to comment on the day she had spent at The 40, and we continued to correspond after that. In fact, shortly after, Maria's father Francis died and was buried at St. Mark's, Niagara. I attended the funeral, and we continued to share our grief and friendship through our letters.

Perhaps it was a good thing for me that the war began to take on new life, for my duties as colonel demanded my attention almost immediately, and took my mind off the sad events at home. Once again the Americans were making threatening overtures against Fort George, and the militia was called back to duty.

On May 27th, Brig.-Gen. John Vincent was driven back