

Alexander Campbell of Adolphustown

By Jean Norry, 2011

My Loyalist ancestor Alexander Campbell (1729 – 1811) was described by many of his descendants, including myself, as a Lieutenant in the Loyal Rangers. He is listed as a Lieutenant on page 80 of “Rolls of the Provincial (Loyalist) Corps, Canadian Command, American Revolutionary Period”, a very useful little book by Fryer and Smy, published by the Dundurn Press. I inherited my father’s genealogy papers. He had a huge Campbell file with letters from distant cousins asking for information about Dad’s Campbells, but especially about Alexander and his military career as a Lieutenant. All these distant relatives had a mental fixation on the Black Watch, the 42nd Regiment that I couldn’t fathom. I thought that Alexander wasn’t involved in this regiment and this was a mistake that was passed around much like computer mistakes are propagated today.

So, when I started to do research on Alexander for a UEL Certificate I expected to find thousands of acres in his name because he had been rewarded with land for being an officer in the Loyal Rangers during the American Revolution. I thought his six daughters would have made petitions for land, as daughters of a Loyalist, naming him as an officer. But not so. Only one, his oldest, Ann Radenhurst of York (1769 – 18) made a petition for land in 1831, 20 years after her father had died. She referred to her father as Alexander Campbell of Adolphustown, gentleman. It was a big down-size of Alexander’s career. The Lieutenant idea began to evaporate.

I think Ann Radenhurst wanted money for her son’s house in Perth. He was Thomas Radenhurst, a lawyer and at one time the clerk of the Bathurst District, living in Lanark County. Now, she didn’t say she wanted money for her son’s house renovation in her petition... It’s just that 1831 is the same year for the petition and the renovations. This house is called the Radenhurst-Inderwick house today and it is described in some detail in “The Ancestral Roof” by Adamson and MacRae, on page 217. It is an early example of Ontario Loyalist style of architecture, often copied, and usually described as “in the vernacular”. It is just speculation that Ann Radenhurst helped Thomas with the house.

My next big problem was Archibald, the one and only son, (as described in Alexander’s will), who didn’t make petitions for land as a son of Alexander. He had arrived with his family in Adolphustown in June, 1784 with the Peter VanAlstine group when he was 15. He didn’t need to make a petition and this makes it difficult to prove he is the son of Alexander. However, Alexander made a will in April of 1811 wherein he left his farm to his one and only son Archibald and alternatively to his grandson Alexander. The problem is that it is typed, which makes it easy to read, but not suitable for the UEL application. The original hand written will, drawn up by James Noxen of Adolphustown on April 10th, 1811 isn’t available. I didn’t find it in the Ontario Archives nor at the Kathleen Ryan Archives at Queen’s University. However, this typed copy could be used along with other documents to make a Preponderance of Evidence.

Then there is a third problem about a possible extra daughter Eleanor who married Daniel Rose of the Loyal Rangers in Montreal in about 1782. Her son William was born in Quebec in 1783, according to Russ Waller's "Loyalist Families", page 375. Eleanor's father is listed as Alexander Campbell. She might be our Alexander's daughter, but she isn't mentioned in his will. Maybe she belonged to another Alexander Campbell, but it remains a good possibility that she is one of ours. If she was 18 when little William was born, she was born in 1765 or 1766 and she would be the oldest in our Alexander Campbell family... This Eleanor is a mystery.

However, there were several Alexander Campbells in Upper Canada who might have been her father. The most likely is Lieut. Alexander Campbell of Augusta Twp. in Leeds County. He had a brother James as an Ensign. There were no Eleanors in these families, but this other Alexander Campbell might be the cause for all the confusion about our Alexander of Adolphustown being identified as a Lieutenant.

Larry Turner wrote a book, "Voyage of a different Kind" a few years ago. It was about these Associated Loyalists, 199 refugees who came with Peter Van Alstine to Adolphustown in June of 1784. Most of these people were evacuated out of New York City at the time it was given over to the rebels in the fall of 1783. Larry Turner wrote a short description of each family in that group. For our Alexander he said on page 149 that it was easy to confuse other Campbell families with Alexander Campbell of Adolphustown and that many people had already confused the details. The details were that our Alexander had six daughters and one son and that he came from the Hebrides Islands near Islay in 1738 and settled in the Argyle Patent near Albany in 1765.

Larry described the other Alexander as having five sons and three daughters and his wife called Abigail Brown. He had a younger brother James. He had come from Inverary Castle in Scotland in 1756 and settled in Schenectady in 1762. So it seemed that this other Alexander Campbell had all the nice details. He had been a Lieutenant in the Loyal Rangers, he had been a ½ pay officer in Montreal, and had kept a tavern there and in his later years had represented Leeds County in John Graves Simcoes's first parliament at Newark in 1793. It was so easy to confuse these details, and many of us have done so. So, now after sorting them out, my Alexander has been down-sized to a gentleman of Adolphustown.

This is a short account of Alexander Campbell's life story. He was born in Scotland, probably on the Isle of Islay, in 1729, (he was 82 when he died in 1811), with Duncan Campbell and Ann Lennox as his parents. His grandfather organized a mass exodus of his people to New York City in 1739 and 1740, with the plan of settling on a large tract of land promised by the British governor of the time. This "promised land" wasn't available when they arrived, or at least the deal fell through, and all these 400 people lived around Tappan on the northern edge of New Jersey for 25 years. I think Duncan, his father must have negotiated another deal and in 1765, 25 years later, they gathered the remnants of their group at Tappan and set off on foot to settle the Argyle Tract of 40,000 acres. This is north of Albany and east of Fort Edward in the area where the Hudson River makes a

grand sweep to the west. So, I think it must be that Alexander grew up in Tappan with Dutch speaking friends who had Loyalist tendencies. I can't really tell, but he must surely have recognized them at Sorel when they arrived with Peter VanAlstine in 1793. They would have been speaking Dutch in the New Amsterdam manner of speaking. It's possible that his wife was from Tappan. They were married at about the time of the migration up to Argyle. He never mentioned her name, but in his will of 1811 he called her his "dear and loving wife". Was this a legal term used at that time? I wonder if she knew she was nameless.

I doubt if Alexander Campbell ever joined the Loyal Queen's Rangers raised by John Peters. Evidently Alexander was out and about, making speeches and promoting loyalty to the British crown in Charlotte County. (Charlotte was re-organized into Washington County after the war.) In that old tattered book, "The History of Washington County" he is named as a Red Tory, along with Andrew Rikley, Michael Hoffnagle and Adam Lint and Gilbert Harris. I found a reference to a Duncan Campbell referred to as a traitor who lost half of his land grant in Goshen, but I couldn't tell if this was our Alexander's father or not. However, being a wily Scot, this Duncan had sold the other half before it was absconded by the rebels. Maybe this sale provided money for Alexander and his family to escape to Montreal. We don't know if this Duncan Campbell was Alexander's father unless I go to the Washington County Court House at Ft. Edward and search through the old records. But it is possible. I think Alexander Campbell and his family would have been a target for abuse in 1776. Anybody called a Red Tory must have been in trouble.

If Alexander actually did enlist in John Peters' Regiment, the Loyal Queen's Rangers, he was very lucky to get out alive. Most of Peter's Regiment of about 600 was killed at the battles of Bennington and Freeman's Farm in August of 1777. You can read the gruesome details in Mary Beacock Fryer's book, "The King's Men", on pages 213 to 218. General Burgoyne wanted local men in the forefront of the battle because he thought they would know the terrain. In October of that year Peters made a report that he had 65 men left. In his report he said 80 were missing and 122 had been moved to another regiment. And 24 were discharged and only 2 had deserted, but even so, this was a terrible blow for John Peters. Four years later, in 1781 his regiment was merged with two others and called the Loyal Rangers which is often, these days, called Jessups.

In Montreal Alexander and his wife were able to send their three oldest children to school. We know that Archibald was well enough educated to perform as the township clerk of Adolphustown town council meetings for three years. I found a reference to a payment of ten shillings to Archibald Campbell as town clerk for the year 1797, on page 59 of Linda Corupe's transcribed record of the "Minutes of the Court of the Quarter Sessions for Mecklenburg/Midland District". These council meetings were similar to the Town Hall meetings in New York State and New Jersey before the Revolution, but I doubt if Archibald remembered these. He was too young.

Mary and Ann must surely have been educated at a special school for girls in Montreal. They knew the niceties of upper class social life in their later years at York. Mary was the wife of Thomas Ridout and Ann was Mrs. Radenhurst of York. I think they had been

educated for this when they were in Montreal. The younger girls, Margaret, Jennett and Elizabeth and Sarah went with Alexander and his wife to Adolphustown and social life there in 1796 was probably pretty interesting, but not the same.

In the fall of 1783 Alexander and his family were still living in Montreal and he would have heard about the Peter Vanalstine group coming from New York City. They landed at Quebec and then proceeded up the river to Sorel. The provision lists of that winter of 1783 -84 show they were at Sorel. The British had built a new fort there a few years before this and they thought this would be accommodation for all the refugees. It seems to me that Alexander and maybe his wife too, had scurried around the city and found this group of old friends from Tappan. They had until the next spring to make their decision to join this group going west to the Cataraqui. These people from New York were called Associated Loyalists because they had been part of the support group bringing in supplies of food and wood to the population in New York. In years to come they were their neighbours in North Adolphustown and their children and grandchildren intermarried for a hundred years or more. The Hycks, the Bogarts and the Valleaus and the Mabeys, the Bensons, the Hagermans and the Christopher German family were the early settlers in North Adolphustown. Probably they all spoke Dutch, or some variation of it. Probably they all came from Bergen County, New Jersey.

In 1943 I over heard one of our teachers at the Napanee High School say that she had noticed that the students from Adolphustown had a Dutch accent. And I thought this was rather strange, so I mentioned this to my brother Mert and he was more puzzled than I was, and he said, "We don't know any Dutch people here". We lived beside a little village named after the illustrious Dorland family of Adolphustown but we didn't think of them as being Dutch. Their name was spelled Dorlandt in the old records.

Alexander Campbell was buried in Picton in 1811 presumably at the Old White Chapel cemetery. Stephen Conger J. P., kept the records for this church. He entered the death of Alexander Campbell of Adolphustown, as 10th of April, 1811. He was 82 years old. His will was made on the 6th of April, 1811. It seems that he had been staying with his daughter Jennett Miller, wife of Elisha Miller. Perhaps he lived with Elizabeth Valleau, his youngest daughter, wife of Hildebrand Valleau. Both Elizabeth and Jennet are buried at this cemetery in Picton. The Archibald Campbell family plots are in the Gosport Cemetery, on a high hill overlooking Hay Bay, in North Adolphustown.