

The Windham or “Oak Ridges” Settlement of French Royalist Refugees in York County, Upper Canada, 1798

BY

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The settlement of French Catholic *émigrés* south of “Oak Ridges,” some fifteen miles north of the present City of Toronto, in 1798, had its origin in political events in Europe.

The outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789 was marked by a most violent persecution of the French clergy and religious. These faithful servants of God and King were pursued like beasts of prey, proscribed and outlawed. Priests who remained on French soil were forced to choose between apostacy and death. Faced by this dilemma, thousands of them, both young and old, preferring to obey God rather than man, took, overnight, the road to exile, leaving behind them all that they possessed in this world. Besides those who sought an asylum in Italy, Germany, Spain, Switzerland, etc., thousands fled to England and to the Islands of Jersey and Guernsey. A number, directed by the Sulpician Fathers of Paris, came to the newly-formed United States of America,¹ and forty-five, in their misery, found a refuge in French Canada.

Besides these members of the clergy, thousands of Catholic laymen of the best blood of France were also forced into exile because of their attachment to the Royalist Cause. A colony of these Royalist refugees, directed and assisted by the British Government, arrived in York, Upper Canada, in the autumn of 1798. They formed the Windham² or “Oak Ridges” settlement.

On the 29th of May, 1790, the French National Assembly passed the infamous law known as “The Civil Constitution of the Clergy,” to which every bishop, priest and religious was ordered to swear obedience. To obey this constitution was to repudiate the authority of the Pope and to embrace schism and heresy. Those of the clergy who refused to swear were automatically deposed from their positions, exposed to every persecution and marked for

¹ Several of these priests later became bishops in the United States: Flaget at Louisville; Cheverus of Boston; Marechal of Baltimore; Dubois of New York; David of Bardstown.

² Named after William Windham, secretary at war 1794.1801. Windham was born in London, May 14, 1750, and was educated at Oxford. He died June 4, 1810. He was friend and protector of Puisaye.

prison and death.

Of 135 French bishops only four were weak enough to swear obedience to the “Civil Constitution of the Clergy,” while in all France 50,000 priests refused the schismatic oath. This constancy enraged the Republicans and a reign of terror was inaugurated. The massacres began in Paris. Priests and religious were murdered in cold blood, drowned, or starved in the hulks of broken vessels at the mouths of the Garonne and Charente.³ No consideration was given to the aged, the sick or the infirm. It was a general massacre. The axe and the guillotine were ever busy. Churches were sacked, monasteries and convents pillaged, and the work of red revolution went on in torrents of blood.

England opened wide her gates, and her Protestant King and her Protestant Government hastened to welcome the fleeing Catholic Royalist refugees and to assist them in every possible manner. Committees were formed and national subscriptions raised. From 1792 to 1799 a continual stream of *émigrés* poured in to the island but the charity and generosity of the English people towards them appeared inexhaustible. Even until the arrival of the last French exiles in 1799 English support never failed. The refugees were welcomed everywhere, above all in the homes of the English nobility. The British Government placed several residences at their disposal and on Nov. 4th, 1792, King George III threw open to them the royal palace at Winchester, in which 700 priests were cared for. At that time there were over 5,000 exiled priests or royalist laymen in the British Isles. Edmund Burke, the brilliant Irish orator, was the chief spokesman in behalf of the exiles, and he himself founded, in April, 1796, a Catholic school for the French orphans whose fathers had died on the scaffold or had fallen in the revolutionary wars. To this school the government made a grant of £ 600 a year.⁴

After the decree of the 26th of August, 1792, a real “sauve-qui-peut” occurred in France, and before the end of the year there were 5,000 French priests in England, not to speak of thousands of French laymen, many of them members of the French nobility. This emergency was met by a most astounding generosity on the part of the English people, so much so that, before the close of 1792, the total subscriptions in aid of the French refugees

³ The congregation “The Brothers of the Christian Schools,” an order at the time of more than 1200 members, was completely destroyed in France by the revolutionists. The Superior General, Brother Agathon, fled with a price on his head. His secretary, Blessed Brother Solomon, was captured and executed. The writer stood in the very hall in the old Carmelite Monastery in Paris where Brother Solomon and many priests and religious were chopped down. Their blood is still on the walls.

⁴ N. E. DIONNE in *Les Ecclésiastiques et les Royalistes Français réfugiés au Canada à l'époque de la Révolution – 1791-1802* (Québec: 1905).

amounted to more than \$2,000,000.00. In the ten years from 1792 to 1802 there was raised in Protestant England for the help of French Catholic priests and nobles the enormous sum⁵ of \$10,000,000.00. Chaos reigned in France, blood ran everywhere, so that before the close of 1795 the number of the unfortunate exiles increased to 8,000. The roads from the southern ports to London were crowded with them. They were penniless, for before they took shipping to cross the channel whatever money they had was taken from them under the pretext that neither gold nor silver should be taken out of the country.

Despite the penal code then in force in England, French priests were allowed to say Mass and celebrate the divine offices wherever they wished, whether in London or elsewhere. They were allowed openly to build Catholic churches and chapels with money sent to them from France or from the Sulpician Fathers in Canada, and all this, thirty-five years before O'Connell secured emancipation for the Catholics of the British Isles.

Years wore slowly on and month by month the difficulty of finding means to clothe, feed and house so many *émigrés* became much greater. Many of the French nobles were in real want. Some, like Chateaubriand, were too proud to accept alms. He tells his own story as follows: "I was devoured by hunger; sleep had left me. I sucked pieces of linen steeped in water; I chewed grass and paper. When I passed before bake shops my torment was terrible. One winter evening, I remained two hours before a stall where dry fruits and meats were sold swallowing with my eyes everything I saw. I could have eaten not only the meats but also the boxes and baskets. I had no sheets and in the cold weather my coat and a chair added to my bed spread kept me warm."⁶

Priests and nobles began to look about for some means of earning a livelihood. They turned their hands to anything and everything. Some secured positions as professors of French or Latin, some found places as instructors in private families; academies and boarding schools absorbed many others; they taught music, mathematics or the sciences. We find parish priests, canons and learned theologians and nobles as merchants, soldiers, tailors, shoemakers, hatters, clerks or workmen in factories or laborers in the fields. While the priests and noblemen were so employed the women were equally busy. Ladies of the French nobility turned to needlework, hemming, stitching and sewing, while others became nurses or professors of piano or teachers in ladies' colleges.

This state of affairs lasted in England from 1792 to 1800 when, in the

⁵ A committee to handle funds for the laymen exiles was also formed. Msgr. de La Marche was a member and the Comte de Botherel, secretary.

⁶ Quoted by N. E. DIONNE in *Les Ecclésiastiques et les Royalistes Français réfugiés au Canada*.

latter year, there started amongst the exiles a return movement to France. It was not, however, until after the promulgation of the Concordat between the Holy See and Napoleon on April 18, 1802, that the movement became general.

At various times, even as early as 1793, the question of sending many of these French refugees to Canada was considered by the British Government. Bishop Hubert of Quebec was in sore need of priests⁷ for his seminary and his parishes⁸ and also for the many missions of his immense diocese which at the time stretched from Gaspé and Prince Edward Island into the Mississippi Valley and to the unknown boundaries of the great west. For years the British Government had objected, for political reasons, to the importation of priests from France.⁹ Now, however, that conditions in France had so changed, as red republicanism had run riot and as all French refugees in England were all ardent royalist sympathizers, the British government withdrew its opposition to the sending of French priests to her new dominions in North America. Colonies of French royalist laymen and their families, at the time resident in England, were to follow the clergy and thus the burden of the government at home was to be lightened.

The proposition for the removal of thousands of French exiles to Canada was a serious one and it entailed the expenditure of large sums of money, but the British government was ready to help most generously.

In order that everything might be carried out with order and according to an intelligent pre-arranged plan, the British government decided to send to Quebec, at its own expense, three French clergymen at the time domiciled in England. They were men of choice, Fathers Philippe Jean Louis Desjardins, Jean André Raimbault, and Pierre Gazel. Their mission was to make all arrangements for the reception and location of the *émigrés* in Canada. To these delegates was added a layman, a Canadian by birth, François Josué de la Corne de St-Luc, Knight of the royal order of St. Louis, who was in England at the time. The four delegates arrived in New York, Feb. 8, 1793, and on the 2nd of March they were welcomed in Quebec by the

⁷ At this time there were about 150,000 Catholics in the diocese of Quebec served by 140 priests.

⁸ From 1758 to 1765 there was not a single priest ordained in Canada as the British Government would not allow the appointment of a Catholic Bishop to the see of Quebec. Bishop De Pontbriand had died in Montreal on June 8, 1760. His successor, Bishop Briand, did not arrive in Quebec until June 28th, 1766.

⁹ English-speaking priests were none too welcome either. They were treated with suspicion and the Governor refused them permission to preach. A few came, however. Father Edmund Burke, later Vicar Apostolic of Nova Scotia, arrived in Quebec from Ireland in 1786, and about the same time the Rev. Roderick Macdonell arrived. The idea of the government was to impose on the French Canadians the Anglican Church as a state religion. In this they were not successful.

Lieut. Governor, Major General Alured Clarke, and by Bishop Hubert. As hundreds, and perhaps thousands, of exiled priests were expected, as well as an equal number of noblemen and gentry with their families and servants, preparations were begun on a grand scale to receive them. The ecclesiastics were to be temporarily accommodated at the Jesuit College and houses, at the convents of the Recollets at Quebec, Three Rivers and Montreal, and at the Sulpician Seminary, while the bishop could also place permanently a considerable number at work in his parishes, in missions, and in the religion communities. As for the laymen, they could be lodged in the barracks at Sorel, Yamichiche, etc. The Government at Quebec offered two whole townships, amongst the finest in the province, for the establishment of agricultural colonies where hundreds of priests, divided into communities of from twenty to thirty under a superior, might be employed.

On May 11, 1793, the Abbé Desjardins wrote from Quebec to His Excellency John Graves Simcoe, Lieut. Governor of Upper Canada, and laid before him the object of his mission, asking him whether he would be pleased to receive French refugees as colonists in Upper Canada. His letter was delivered to Gov. Simcoe by Alexander Macdonell,¹⁰ sheriff of the Home district, who was in Quebec at the time. On July 1st, 1793, Governor Simcoe wrote the Abbé Desjardins a letter of encouragement and sympathy. It said in part:

“It would be an extreme pleasure for the government of Upper Canada to prove its devotion and obedience to His Majesty and its conformity with his kind intentions, by offering to the nobility and clergy from France an asylum as comfortable and as suitable as the infant state of the colony will permit. It may be good for you to know that the province of Upper Canada is inhabited principally by persons who were chased out of the United States of America because of their attachment to their King, an attachment which characterizes at this moment, the conduct of the loyal Frenchmen who suffer the horrors of exile. It will be for the French who will come to colonize Upper Canada an alleviation of their sufferings to live side by side with a people who can sympathize with them in their common misfortunes...

There are many advantageous locations on Lake Ontario and Lake Erie or on the banks of rivers navigable by boats. Space is not lacking for the reception of as many colonists as may arrive.

Allow me to add that, as far as my example and position can be useful, I am ready to welcome the group of Ecclesiastics and their companions with all sympathy and with a profound respect for their sufferings.

¹⁰ Sheriff MACDONELL was the grandfather of the late Senator Claude Macdonell, formerly so well known in Toronto, as also of the late Marie Macdonell, Mrs. W. M. German, and Senator General Archie Macdonell.

I have the honor to be with the most profound respect.

John Graves Simcoe”

Passage from Kingston westward was arranged for the delegates on one of the King’s boats. This correspondence decided the Abbé Desjardins to visit Governor Simcoe at Niagara as soon as possible. On Aug. 3rd we find him and the Chevalier de la Come en route for Navy Hall, the residence of the Governor. Niagara of that day is described by a traveller as follows:

“The town of Niagara (“Newark:”) contains about 70 houses, a court house, a prison and a building where the legislative assembly meets. Most of the houses are of wood. The upper part of the town, inhabited mostly by officials of the government, is very well built.”¹¹

The two French delegates were received by Simcoe with every courtesy. They remained for three weeks at Niagara and every aspect of the reception of the French refugees was discussed. The spot considered most suitable for a settlement was the shores of Burlington bay.

On their return voyage to Quebec the ambassadors halted for a few days at York where Simcoe was already engaged in laying the foundations of the new capital. We find them there on Aug. 28th and also on Sept. 1st, 1793. A few days later they arrived in Quebec.¹² They returned full of admiration for Governor Simcoe. “Active, enlightened, good and frank, he had the confidence of the country and also of the government.”¹³

We are now only at the year 1793 and many changes were to take place in Canada before the coming of the *émigrés* in 1798. Instead of the thousands¹⁴ expected, only a few dozens really arrived. Governor Simcoe himself left Canada in 1796 and the administration of the government passed into the hands of the Hon. Peter Russell.¹⁵

The idea of establishing a French Royalist Colony in Upper Canada had been taken up and resolutely followed in England by a dashing young French noble of talent and initiative by the name of Joseph Geneviève, Comte de Puisaye. He was possessed of a great fortune and he spent much money on his proposed colony of *émigrés*. The British Government had promised to

¹¹ *A trip to Canada in 1795, 1796, 1797*, by Isaac Weld, quoted by Dionne.

¹² DE LA CORNE now disappears. He was of a Terrebonne family. He died in Quebec Dec. 15, 1810.

¹³ By the Duke of ROCHEFOUCAULD, French Royalist refugee who visited America in 1795 and was entertained by Simcoe at Niagara. See *Life of Governor Simcoe* by Riddell.

¹⁴ At least 5,000 French exiles were expected.

¹⁵ The Hon. Peter RUSSELL was an Irishman, born in Cork in 1733, He came to Canada in 1792 and succeeded Simcoe in 1796.

pay all the expenses of the expedition but it did not do so and Puisaye, apart from the cost of the ocean voyage, bore most of the expenses himself. He was prodigal by nature and he generously loaned much money to his associates.

Puisaye was born at Mortagne in the Province of Perche in Northern France in 1755, studied in the Sulpician seminary in Paris, and later took up the profession of arms. He rose rapidly and in 1791 we find him already a Colonel. He opposed the revolutionists and was obliged to flee to London in 1794 with a price on his head. From London he took part in 1795 in a naval expedition to Quiberon on the French coast against the Jacobins. The expedition was a failure and even the royalists blamed Puisaye. He thus became exiled for life. In England, he married Suzanna Smithers, who died before he came to Canada. Puisaye's Canadian enterprise was sympathetically received and hundreds of French nobles resident in England, with their wives and families, were anxious to join¹⁶ the expedition. Numbers gradually faded, however, and of all the applicants only 44 were ready to sail for Canada on the day appointed. Puisaye was nevertheless still undaunted. They embarked at Portsmouth on the "Betsey," a government boat, called for eight days at Weymouth, and then put out to sea. They reached Quebec on Oct. 7, 1798. That city of some 12,000 people, so beautifully situated, delighted them. Almost immediately Puisaye and D'Allègre de St. Tronc proceeded by land to Montreal. The other colonists went by boat, carrying their own provisions, and going ashore at night to sleep. They landed at Montreal Oct. 18, 1798. In a few days they were driven in carts to Lachine where boats for Upper Canada were waiting them. The weather was favorable and they sailed up the St. Lawrence in the beautiful sunshine of their first Canadian autumn, charmed with the splendor of the rich and variegated colors of the autumn forests on the shore land. "We may picture the fleet of 14 bateaux, two laden with passengers and 12 with furniture, bedding and other necessaries. Curious flat-bottomed sharp-pointed boats they were, propelled by oars and poles and equipped with sails."

On October 29th they arrived in Kingston, then a town of 100 houses, some of brick and stone but mostly of wood. They were welcomed by Major H. L. Spencer, the Commanding Officer of the Kingston detachment of the "Royal Canadian Volunteer Regiment of Foot," who gave them accommodation and every care. They remained in Kingston for a time and "the government stores furnished them with provisions, wood and candles." There Puisaye met the Hon. Richard Cartwright¹⁷ with whom he was later to carry on a large trade. In the meantime President Russell had wisely

¹⁶ *University of Toronto Studies, History and Economics*, Volume III, No. 1, by Lucy E. Textor.

¹⁷ *University of Toronto Studies, History and Economics*, Vol. III: *The Emigrés Colony at Windham*, by Lucy E. Textor.

counselled that, on account of the lateness of the season, it would be better that some of the colonists should remain in Kingston while others might go on to Niagara, as York could not afford adequate accommodation to so many distinguished guests.

Puisaye, D'Allègre de St. Tronc and a soldier, Marchand, again went on ahead to York, which they reached on Nov. 18th, while the Comte de Chalus remained in charge at Kingston. York was yet a village. The harbor had been surveyed in 1793 by the famous engineer Joseph Bouchette.¹⁸ The town site was fixed upon the bank of the Don and in 1794 building was begun under Simcoe himself. In 1797 the legislature met there for the first time in a building at the foot of Parliament and Berkeley Streets, the ground around which was yet full of the stumps of trees. When the *émigrés* arrived, there was neither church or school.

Lots were set apart by President Russell on Yonge Street, 15 miles north of York, for Puisaye and his colonists, and there he planned to erect his new town which he named Windham in honor of his friend and protector, the secretary at war. He remained several weeks in York and with the indomitable energy so characteristic of him he set out, late in November, up Yonge Street, with deputy-surveyor Augustus Jones, and in the northern forest, in the cold December weather, carried out the survey of his land. He did not like the location, which was characterized by high ridges, narrow swamp and stretches entirely without water. He worked on, however, and the survey was completed January 4, 1799. By this time he had decided not to settle there himself. He, therefore, took out no patents for lots in his own name on Yonge Street.¹⁹ His colonists would have to do the best they could, but he himself had wealth and he would seek another location. The following year he bought a farm²⁰ at Niagara, between Fort George and Queenston, and there he took up residence with his housekeeper, Mrs. Smithers, his mother-in-law, Wm. Smithers, his brother-in-law, the Comte de Chalus, and John Thompson²¹ and Marchand, his servants. He built a residence²² which

¹⁸ Joseph BOUCHETTE was a trusted friend of Simcoe and Gov. Carleton. It was his father, Jean-Baptiste Bouchette, who brought Carleton safely by boat through the American lines from Montreal to Quebec in the fall of 1775 and thus saved the latter city, besieged by Montgomery and Arnold.

¹⁹ Testimony of Walter C. CAIN, Deputy Minister, Land Office, Parliament Buildings, Toronto.

²⁰ He bought the farm on October 16, 1801, from Robert Isaac Dey Gray for the sum of £ 500. (Registry Office of the County of Lincoln.)

²¹ From the story of Puisaye as given by Lucy E. Textor and *Canada and its provinces*, Vol. XVII.

²² Half that house stands today, N^o. 19 on the River Road which leads down from Queenston Heights to Fort George. The house and property are owned by Willis K. Jackson of Buffalo, N. Y. Mrs. Rosetta Burback and her daughter Katheryn

he furnished in princely style with carpets, pictures, mirrors, clocks, a library of 1,500 volumes, rugs and furniture brought from Europe. On his table were costly silver plate and the choicest wines. He stocked his farm with horses, cattle, sheep, turkeys, hens and guinea fowl, built barns and sheds, and he tells us himself that he spent £ 5,400 in improvements. He bought also a lot in York where he built a house. When Puisaye left for England, his Toronto property was purchased by H. J. Boulton. He lived only four years at Niagara. On Feb. 1st, 1805, he made a sale of all his belongings in preparation for his departure. His Niagara residence passed into the hands of Quetton St. George and Farcy for a store, and the Comte de Chalus took charge of the Windham settlement. He made his way to New York by row-boat via Schenectady, accompanied by Mrs. Smithers, D'Allègre and St. George. He set sail for Europe on July 8, 1802. St. George returned in Puisaye's boat to Niagara. Puisaye spent ten years writing his memoirs. He became a British subject and died at Hammersmith, England, Dec. 13, 1827.

Of Puisaye's colonists thirteen reached York from Kingston on Christmas Day, 1798, with 10 tradesmen to clear the forest and build the houses at Windham.²³ While waiting they were victualled at York by the government. The work at Windham was now pushed forward with great vigor. Puisaye was on the ground himself directing everything. The men, sixteen in all, worked seven days a week, and on Feb. 14th the Comte de Chalus could report that there were already 18 houses erected with outside finished, and that a church and presbytery²⁴ and school were also built. In the spring several more members of the party from Kingston joined the Windham colony.²⁵ In the meantime President Peter Russell generously furnished help, farm implements, seed, grain and other necessities.

Hopes were still entertained that many more *émigrés* would arrive, for at a meeting of the Executive Council of Upper Canada held on Nov. 27, 1798, it was resolved that the townships of Uxbridge, Gwillimbury, and another not yet named, situated north of Whitby, should be put at the disposition of the Comte de Puisaye for his colonists with a reservation on

occupy the Puisaye home,

²³ They were the Vicomte de Chains, Captain de Poret and Lieut. de la Richerie and 10 others. The latter were: Champagne, Fauchard, Polard, Renoult, Pipet, Furon, Le Bugle, Padioua, Segeant and Nathaniel Thompson. See "Settlers 1794-1800," Public Archives of Canada, C. 619, p. 108.

²⁴ Bishop Denaut of Quebec writing from Longueuil on May 29th, 1799, to the Comte de Puisaye says: "Le detail que vous avez la bonté de me donner est très interessant, il m'enchante. Quoi! déjà des maisons commodes, une église élevée, un presbytère, une école baties." Public Archives of Canada, Puisaye Papers, pp. 76-78.

²⁵ Letourneau and Rouin came in February; Farcy, St. George, Boiton and Marseuil in March; the Comte and Vicomtesse de Chalus in May with servants.

Lake Ontario for a town and a commons. The council also granted to Puisaye for himself 5,000 acres of land.²⁶

The idea of supplying the whole colony near York instead of dividing the colonists into settlements along Lake Ontario and Lake Erie as first proposed by Simcoe came from Secretary Windham, and it grew out of the fear of so many French strangers in a province so lately won from the French authorities. President Russell, writing to the Duke of Portland from York on Nov. 21, 1798, has this to say: "I have chosen a location for the colony of French immigrants, a tract of land until now uninhabited and situated between this town (York) and Lake Simcoe, at an equal distance from the French settlements in Lower Canada and those on the Detroit River, as on account of their proximity to the seat of government, it will be easy not only to assist them, if they need help, but also to keep watch over their movements which will then be under the control of our administration."

The lots taken up by the Comte de Puisaye for his colonists were lots numbers 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59 and 60 on the east side of Yonge Street, that is, in the first concession of the township of Markham.²⁷ These lots start at Elgin Mills on the east side of Yonge Street, beginning with the property of the late James Fahey and running to the Summit Golf Club of today. He also received, on the east side of Yonge Street, lot number 61 in the township of Whitchurch. On the west side of Yonge Street he was granted lots numbers 56, 57, 58, 59 and 60 in the township of Vaughan. On lot 59 Jefferson Post Office now stands. He had also lot number 61 in the first concession in the township of King.²⁸ It was most likely on the lots near the summit of the ridge, where his settlers held property on both sides of Yonge Street, that he built the church, presbytery and school.

Construction was advancing speedily²⁹ but these high-born Frenchmen, unused to such a life of labor and privation, were rapidly becoming

²⁶ Puisaye's heirs in 1830 laid claim to 4,150 acres contending that he actually received only 850 acres out of all that was promised him. Patents for Puisaye's lots, N^o. 52, 53, 54 and ¼ of 58 on Yonge Street were taken out on Feb. 5, 1834 in the name of Rowland Winbourne, administrator of Puisaye's estate.

²⁷ Land Records, Parliament Buildings, Toronto (Kindness of Mr. Walter C. Cain, Deputy Minister). Lot N^o. 51, it appears, was granted to one Breton. Puisaye afterwards bought it.

²⁸ See Appendix for the lots granted each individual settler. Patentees were to build a dwelling home and occupy it within a year, clear and fence five acres, and open a road.

²⁹ In June, 1799, the following workmen arrived: J. B. Valiere, blacksmith, his wife and six children; Benjamin Mainville, his wife and six children; Louis Garaux, blacksmith; and Marguerite Robinson. Letter of Comte de Chalus to Prescott, March 12, 1799: "Settlers, 1794-1800," p. 53.

discouraged. Who could blame them?³⁰ Puisaye had assured them that there was to be formed in Upper Canada a regiment of soldiers composed of 1,000 French *émigrés* under the command of Puisaye as Colonel, with the nobles who accompanied him, who were all trained to military life, as officers. They held on, however, and worked at Windham for several years but they endured great privations and some of them were in great misery. Lieut. Governor Peter Hunter, writing from Quebec on the 11th of Oct., 1799, to the Duke of Portland, says: "From a list drawn up by Angus Macdonell we find that of the *émigrés* at present in Upper Canada, five reside at Niagara and twenty are on their lands at Windham. These latter have cleared between 40 and 50 acres, and, if I am to believe them, they are entirely without pecuniary resources. There are also 21 workmen to whom President Russell has granted rations."³¹

On the 3rd of June, 1802, there remained only thirteen *émigrés* at Windham. The settlement was now called "Oak Ridges." From a letter written by Lieut. Gov. Gore to Lord Windham on Oct. 1st, 1806, we see the state of affairs at the Windham Colony at that date. Gore says: "They [the *émigrés*] live quietly but some of them are not well off; those who have devoted themselves to agriculture have suffered reverse of fortune because of their lack of skill in clearing the land."³²

Who really were these French noblemen who sought refuge in Canada? They were all apparently military friends of the Comte de Puisaye. Of the Comte de Puisaye we have already learned something. Brave to rashness in behalf of the royal cause, for which he had several times risked his life, he came to Canada most highly recommended by Windham. Amongst the others, the outstanding figure of the company was Jean de Beaupoil, Marquis de Sainte Aulaire, confidant of Louis XVI, who had seen 37 years of military service and seven campaigns. He was accompanied by the Marchioness and their son Hippolite and a cousin, Gui de Beaupoil, who had been a page in the court of Marie Antoinette. Beaupoil, who had come as far as Kingston and who already realized the failure of this enterprise, apparently had a misunderstanding with Puisaye, whom he accused of deceiving them. In July, 1799, he returned to Lower Canada with Coster de Saint-Victor. He was without funds; he and the Marchioness suffered great privations; and he had much difficulty getting shipping back to England.³³ He later entered the service of Russia. In 1817 he returned to France and was made a Field

³⁰ Some of the soldiers and workmen also abandoned Windham and fled to Montreal or the Illinois country and engaged in trade.

³¹ Archives of Canada, quoted by Dionne, p. 420.

³² Quoted by Dionne in *Les Ecclésiastiques et les Royalistes Français réfugiés au Canada*, p. 152.

³³ The Marchioness of Beaupoil and her son were still in Montreal in June, 1802.

Marshal.³⁴

Jean Baptiste Coster de Saint-Victor, an ardent royalist and friend of Sainte Aulaire, was born at Epinal in 1771. He had fought in the Vendée under Puisaye against the republicans, was arrested, escaped and fled to England. He had been promised a military post in Canada by Puisaye. Realizing the failure of Puisaye's plans he decided to return with Ste. Aulaire to Europe. He too encountered great difficulties, for he was penniless. He had been obliged to borrow money from Puisaye. Neither Saint-Victor nor Ste. Aulaire ever reached York or Windham. Saint-Victor, on his return to France, joined a conspiracy against Napoleon and, with eleven others, was executed June 25, 1804.

D'Allègre de St. Tronc held two lots on Yonge Street, which he improved but for which he never received patents. He was a very close friend of Puisaye, with whom he lived for a time. Originally from Provence, he came to Canada from San Domingo. He had been a Major General in the French army and he suffered much for the royalist cause. He returned to England and was employed by the British Government under Puisaye.

Lieut. Colonel François de Marseuil was an elderly gentleman who had seen many campaigns and who bore many scars. He was Puisaye's mentor and he depended on Puisaye for funds. He received, in all, grants of 4,965 acres of land. He was still in Canada, married, but ruined financially, in 1815.

Colonel Augustin Bolton de Fougères, who had fought in Brittany for the royalist cause, received in all 3,362 acres. He married into the Willcocks family in 1802, but his wife died in 1804. He returned to Europe in 1810.

Captain Ambroise de Farcy du Roseray became Puisaye's partner in the fur trade and his other commercial enterprises. He received the patent for his land at Windham on October 21, 1806. Quetton St. George, who returned to Europe in 1815, met de Farcy in France, whither he had gone in 1806, and when writing to a friend in Canada on April 30, 1818, has this to say: "De Farcy will never change his character. He is ever careless about his business. He is a poor man."

René Augustin, Comte de Chalus, and his brother, Jean Louis, Vicomte de Chalus, both received grants of land on Yonge Street at Windham, the former 650 acres and the latter 350 acres.³⁵ The Comte's total grants amounted to 4,650 acres. He lived for some time with Puisaye at Niagara. He

³⁴ *Canada and Its Provinces*, Vol. XVII.

³⁵ Later on, after the year 1807, the Vicomte de Chalus received the following additional grants of land from the Crown: In the township of East Gwillimbury 400 acres; in the township of North Gwillimbury 400; in the township of Uxbridge 600 acres; and in the township of Reach 1,200 acres. The grant was made to him Oct. 9, 1815. — Records of Land Office, Parliament Buildings, Toronto. See also Appendix.

later sold his grants and returned to France. The Vicomte received grants totalling 5,000 acres. He and the Comte remained sixteen years in Canada, living in York or at Windham.

Perhaps the most talented and certainly the most enterprising and persevering of Puisaye's colonists was Colonel Laurent Quetton St. George, Knight of St. Louis, a young man with a business education. As a soldier, he had fought with Puisaye at Quiberon³⁶ and had won the confidence of his superior officers. He was much pursued by the republicans, so to hide his identity and protect his friends remaining in France, he, on the advice of Puisaye,³⁷ changed his name to St. George.³⁸ Coming to Canada with Puisaye, he married in Canada a French-Canadian wife, the sister of Hon. Judge Vallière de St. Réal, by whom he had two children, a son, Laurent Auzé and a daughter, Marie.³⁹ Quetton St. George left the development of his 400 acres of land on Yonge Street to other hands and engaged in the fur trade. He made considerable wealth, but later met with reverses. He opened, says Dionne, fur counters at Orillia and Niagara, and had for partner Captain Ambroise (Antoine) de Farcy until the latter left Canada in 1805. St. George lived in York⁴⁰ from 1805 to 1815. When Farcy left he hired Captain Augustine Boiton, whom he placed in charge of his store in Kingston.

In the fall of 1815 St. George returned to France.⁴¹ There he married a second time and lived in ease near Montpellier. He died at Orleans on June 8, 1821. By his second marriage he had one son Henry, born March 15, 1820. Henry came to Toronto in 1847 to claim his father's properties, which in 1831 amounted to 26,000⁴² acres. One of his daughters died in Toronto, Aug. 22, 1848, and her remains are buried in a vault⁴³ under St. Michael's

³⁶ *Canada and its Provinces*, Vol. XVII, p. 51, etc.

³⁷ Puisaye had changed his own name and was known as "The Marquis of Breccourt."

³⁸ He landed in England on St. George's day. His brother Etienne died on the field of honour in France, Dec. 8, 1798.

³⁹ Laurent Auzé was educated in the Jesuit College in Montreal and became a notary in Quebec. The daughter Marie was educated in the convent of St. Germaine-en-Laye near Paris. — *Les Ecclésiastiques et les Royalistes Français réfugiés au Canada*, by Dionne.

⁴⁰ His house was situated at the N. E. Corner of King and Frederick Streets and was the first brick house in Upper Canada. — Robertson's *Landmarks of Toronto*.

⁴¹ When he left Toronto he left the management of all his property and business to John Spread Baldwin. He was a friend of the Baldwin family and he had borrowed money from them. He intended to return to Canada.

⁴² *Canada and Its Provinces*, Vol. XVII, p. 51.

⁴³ The inscription on the vault is in Latin: "Maria Joanna Quetton St. George, nata Lutetia; Parisiorum, die 13^a Septembris, A.D. 1846, ad cælum migravit Toronto, die 22^a Augusti 1848, ætatis suæ anno primo mense undecimo, et die nona."

Cathedral. A second daughter became a Sister of Charity in France.⁴⁴ He lived on a beautiful farm near Aurora, to which he gave the name “Glen Lonely,”⁴⁵ a mile and a quarter east of Yonge Street, lot number 7 in the second concession of Whitchurch township. His hospitality was well known and he entertained his friends with all the polish and courtesy of a French gentleman. He died on Jan. 5, 1896, and is buried “to the east of the chancel wall of St. John’s (Anglican) Church near Jefferson Post Office on Yonge Street.”⁴⁶ His burial in a Protestant cemetery would apparently indicate that in his later years he neglected the practice of the Catholic religion in which he was raised.

What is most difficult for us to understand is that the *émigrés* led by the Comte de Puisaye had no priest in their party on their ocean voyage. It was well known in England that priests were wanted in Canada and the British Government had waived all objections. It is still more inexplicable that the *émigrés* proceeded onward from Quebec into the forests of Upper Canada without a clergyman, above all as Father Philippe J. L. Desjardins and Father Raimbault, whom the British Government had sent over to look after the French refugees, were still in Quebec.⁴⁷ In 1798 there was no priest in Upper Canada between Glengarry and Windsor, a distance of 500 miles, except the Rev. Edmund Burke,⁴⁸ who labored as a missionary in the Upper Country from 1794 to 1801. Puisaye’s colonists and the other Catholics at York were without spiritual help of any kind. Bishop Denault had promised Puisaye a priest but he never came. Writing from Longueuil to Puisaye on Nov. 3, 1798, the bishop says: “Ce printemps, soit qu’il me vienne des prêtres d’Europe, ou qu’il n’en vienne pas, je crois, que je pourrai vous en envoyer un qui sera

⁴⁴ Mr. James WALTON of Aurora says that a daughter Jeanne died at “Glen Lonely,” where Mrs. St. George lived for many years. Like her mother, Mrs. St. George finally returned to France.

⁴⁵ Scadding in his Toronto of Old says that Henry Quetton St. George inherited “Glen Lonely” farm from his father. This is an error. Henry St. George bought the property (Lot 7) on July 2nd, 1852, from the Rev. J. W. Small and his wife for the sum of \$7,899.40. Later he bought portions of Lots 6 and 8. At his death the Toronto General Trusts, administrators, sold the property to A. J. Pattison for \$12,800.00. “Glen Lonely” is occupied today by S. C. Snively. (From R. L. Boag, Registrar, Newmarket). The land office records at the Parliament Buildings, Toronto show that lots 7 and 8 in Whitchurch Township, east of Yonge Street were originally given as a grant by the Government on Dec. 1, 1798 to Win. Bond.

⁴⁶ The epitaph on his monument is as follows: “In most loving memory of Henry Quetton St. George, born at Lengarren, France, March 15, 1820, died at Glen Lonely, Jan 6, 1896.”

⁴⁷ Father Pierre GAZEL returned to France in 1796 and Father Desjardins in 1802. Father Raimbault died in Canada in 1813.

⁴⁸ The Rev. Edmund BURKE, later Vicar Apostolic of Nova Scotia and Bishop of Zion, in partibus, with residence in Halifax.

uniquement chargé du soin de votre colonie naissante.”

On May 29, 1799, His Lordship wrote again to Puisaye: “Le premier (prêtre) qui mettra le pied sur cette terre vous est destiné.”

Puisaye’s hopes were destined to disappointment, and his colonists struggled on in a spiritual wilderness depending solely on the occasional visits of the missionary Father Edmund Burke. Such is the tragic story of Puisaye’s colony of *émigrés* of 1798. The enterprise was a dismal failure and not a trace of the settlement remains today.

APPENDIX

LAND PATENTS

Con. Lot	Name	Part	Acres	Date of Patent
MARKHAM TWP. — EAST OF YONGE ST. :				
1 52	Rowland Winbourne (for Puisaye estate)	All	190	Feb. 5th, 1834
" 53	(René Augustine, comte)	All		
54	(de Chalus)	S½	285	Oct. 21st, 1806
" 54	(Jean Louis, Vicomte)	N½	285	Oct. 21st, 1806
55	(de Chalus)	All		
" 56	Michael Fauchard	S½	95	July 8th, 1807
" 56	(Le Chevalier de Mar-)	N½	285	Dec. 31st, 1806
57	(seuil)	All		
" 58	(Jean Louis, Vicomte) (de Chalus)	S¼	47	May 15th, 1807
" 58	Lt. Col. Augustin Boiton	N½ of S½	47	July 8th, 1807
" 58	René Letourneaux	N½	95	May 17th, 1807
" 59	Quetton St. George	N½	95	July 12th, 1806
" 59	John Furon	S½	95	Dec. 10th, 1806
" 60	Ambrose de Farcé (Farcy)	All	190	Oct. 21st, 1806
WHITCHURCH TWP. — EAST OF YONGE ST. :				
1 61	Ambrose de Farcé (Farcy)	S½	95	Oct. 21st, 1806
" 61	Michael Saigeon	N½	95	Mar. 22nd, 1820
VAUGHAN TWP. — WEST SIDE OF YONGE ST. :				
1 56	Francis Renoux	N pt.	157	Mar. 21st, 1820
" 56	Michael Saigeon	S¼	52	Mar. 22nd, 1820
" 57	Julien LeBugle	S½	105	Mar. 5th, 1808
" 57	James Marchand	N½	105	June 26th, 1820
" 58	Ambrose de Farcé (Farcy)	S½ of N½	52	Oct. 21st, 1806
" 58	(René Augustine) (Comte de Chalus)	S¼		Oct. 21st, 1806
" 58	Rowland Winbourne	N½ of S½		Feb. 5th, 1834
" 58	(Quetton St. George)	N¼		
59	()	All	262	July 12th, 1806
" 60	(René Augustine) (Comte de Chalus)	All	210	Oct. 21st, 1806
KING TWP. — WEST SIDE OF YONGE ST. :				
1 61	René Augustine			
	Comte de Chalus	S½	105	Oct. 21st, 1806
1 61	(Lient. Col. Augustin)	N½		
1 62	(Boiton)	All	315	July 8th, 1807