

A. C. Buchanan and the Megantic Experiment: Promoting British Colonization in Lower Canada

J. I. LITTLE*

Between 1829 and 1832 a British settler colony was established on the northern fringe of Lower Canada's Eastern Townships, in what became known as Megantic county. The main aim of the chief instigator and manager of the project, "emigrant" agent A. C. Buchanan, was to demonstrate the viability of state-assisted "pauper" colonization, as long advocated by Colonial Under-Secretary Robert Wilmot-Horton. Buchanan's project was successful insofar as he convinced over 5,300 immigrants, the majority of whom were Irish Protestants, to follow the Craig and Gosford roads to the uninhabited northern foothills of the Appalachians. But the British government failed to apply this "experiment" elsewhere in Lower or Upper Canada, and the British settler community did not expand far beyond the townships of Leeds, Inverness, and Ireland because of their isolation from external markets. Instead, French-Canadian settlers moved into the surrounding townships, with the result that the British-origin population became a culturally isolated island of interrelated families that slowly disappeared due to out-migration.

De 1829 à 1832, une colonie de peuplement britannique a vu le jour au Bas-Canada, en périphérie nord des cantons de l'Est, dans ce qui deviendra le comté de Mégantic. L'instigateur et chef du projet, l'agent d'émigration A. C. Buchanan, avait pour objectif premier de prouver la viabilité, avec le soutien de l'État, de la colonisation par les « pauvres » que préconisait depuis longtemps le sous-secrétaire aux Colonies Robert Wilmot-Horton. Le projet de Buchanan a réussi en ce qu'il a convaincu plus de 5 300 immigrants, en majorité des protestants irlandais, de suivre les chemins Craig et Gosford jusqu'aux contreforts nord inhabités des Appalaches. Pourtant, le gouvernement britannique n'a répété cette « expérience » nulle part ailleurs au Bas-Canada ou au Haut-Canada, et la colonie de peuplement britannique a pris peu d'expansion au-delà des

* Jack Little is professor in the Department of History at Simon Fraser University. The author wishes to thank Gwen Barry, Hugh Johnston, Willeen Keough, Aaron Windel, Dale Wright, the anonymous reviewers, and this journal's editor for their helpful comments and suggestions, and to acknowledge the financial assistance of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

cantons de Leeds, d'Inverness et d'Ireland du fait de leur isolement des marchés extérieurs. Au lieu, des colons canadiens-français sont venus s'installer dans les cantons avoisinants, avec pour résultat que la population d'origine britannique est devenue un îlot culturellement isolé de familles apparentées que l'exode a lentement fait disparaître.

DURING THE summer of 1830 my Irish-born great-great-grandfather, James Little, became part of a government-sponsored project to introduce British settlers to the northern fringe of the Lower Canadian region known as the Eastern Townships.¹ This had served as the hunting, trapping, and fishing territory of the Abenakis since the late seventeenth century, but their villages on the south shore of the St. Lawrence were a considerable distance away from the new British settlements, and they were shifting their hunting ground to the north-shore Mauricie region.² As a Protestant from the county of Armagh, where sectarian conflict was coming to a head at the very time that he emigrated, Little must have felt some reservation about settling in another British-conquered Catholic colony. Like the Abenakis, however, the French-speaking *habitants* lived some distance away, for they had not yet begun to migrate from the seigneuries to the adjoining freehold townships.³ Presumably, then, any political concerns the still unmarried Little might have had were offset by the lure of available land within a 100-kilometre walking distance from the port of Quebec where he may have worked for a time as a labourer to earn the money needed to begin life as a colonist.⁴ At least as important to Little's decision, however, would have been the fact that several thousand British immigrants, including some of his relatives, were moving into the same Appalachian foothill territory.

Were it not for the initiative and efforts of emigration agent Alexander Carlisle Buchanan, those immigrants would simply have kept on sailing up the St. Lawrence River to Upper Canada or beyond.⁵ Buchanan's promotion of British emigration to the colonies reflected the ongoing concern of Britain's governing class that it was living in the shadow of a Malthusian crisis, with the problems

1 For a recent survey of British colonization, see Elizabeth Jane Errington, "British Migration and British America, 1783-1867" in Phillip Buckner, ed., *Canada and the British Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 140-59.

2 In shifting their hunting ground northward, the Abenakis intruded on the traditional territories of the Algonquins and the Atikamekw. See Gwen Rawlings Barry, *A History of Megantic County: Downhomers of Quebec's Eastern Townships* ([No city]: Evans Books, 1999), chap. 2, and "La « piste Bécancour » : des campements abénaquis dans l'arrière pays," *Recherches Amérindiennes au Québec*, vol. 33, no. 2 (2003), pp. 93-100; Claude Gélinas, "La Mauricie des Abénaquis au XIX siècle," *Recherches Amérindiennes au Québec*, vol. 33, no. 2 (2003), pp. 44-56.

3 See J. I. Little, "The Catholic Church and French-Canadian Colonization of the Eastern Townships, 1821-51," *Revue de l'Université d'Ottawa*, vol. 52 (1982), pp. 142-165.

4 No marriage record for Little has been found, but the two unnamed women listed in his household in the 1831 census were considerably older than he. His marriage to Agnes "Nancy" Woods took place soon afterward, for their first child was born in 1833. See Gwen Barry, *The Little Family and the Ralston Family of Megantic County, Quebec* ([No city]: Evans Books, 2002), pp. 112-116.

5 The term "British" includes the Irish in this study because the great majority were Protestants of Scots or English origin, and they were identified as British (as well as Irish) by Buchanan, as well as self-identifying as such. On this question, see Donald Harman Akenson, *The Irish in Ontario: A Study in Rural History* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1984), pp. 6-7.

of Ireland threatening to overtake England, Scotland, and Wales. He was faced, however, with the desire of successive governments to cut costs incurred during the Napoleonic Wars, as well as to undermine support for the radical opposition by avoiding expenditures such as subsidized emigration that appeared to be in the direct interests of particular groups of property holders. After all, the opponents of state-sponsored emigration argued, that option represented “a declaration that the government cared so little for the nation’s poor that they were content to export them to the furthest reaches of the empire.”⁶

Buchanan’s project did not involve state-subsidized emigration, and he was able to gain British government support and funding for his colony only by promoting it as an experiment to demonstrate that “pauper” emigrants could become successful settlers with a minimum of financial support from British taxpayers. He selected the northern section of the Eastern Townships for his project, largely, he suggested, because it would halt the expansion of American settlement in the region. (The expansion of the French Canadians from the seigneurial zone was clearly not a concern.) The chief advantage from Buchanan’s perspective, however, may simply have been that the townships in what would become known as Megantic county lay close enough to Quebec City, where he was based, to enable him to be personally involved in the project. The main challenge, as the absentee proprietors who owned much of the area’s land had found, would be to maintain a practicable road link through the swampy terrain where the Appalachians meet the St. Lawrence lowlands.⁷

Buchanan was able to claim that his experiment was a great success, given that an extensive area was colonized within a matter of only three years, but the British-origin population of Megantic did not expand far beyond the original three townships, leaving the surrounding territory to French-speaking families from the nearby seigneuries. Nor did the Colonial Office feel inspired to become involved in another such project at a time when British emigrants were flooding to Upper Canada without the incentive of government financial support, and when concerns were growing about the high cost of agricultural labour due to the ease of access to inexpensive land.⁸ Further efforts to introduce British settlers to the Eastern Townships would be left largely to the London-based British American Land Company, founded in 1833. In short, the ultimate lesson of the Megantic experiment was that the imperial government lacked the will, if not the ability, to establish a strong British settler presence in the largely French-speaking colony of Lower Canada or even to provide more than minimal support for the thousands of dispossessed British emigrants who landed on the docks of Quebec City.

6 David Feldman and M. Page Baldwin, “Emigration and the British State, ca. 1815-1925” in Nancy L. Green and François Weil, eds., *Citizenship and Those Who Leave* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007), pp. 135-139.

7 On the physical geography of the region, see Jean-Pierre Kesteman, Peter Southam, and Diane Saint-Pierre, *Histoire des Cantons de l’Est* (Sainte-Foy: Les Presses de l’Université Laval, 1998), chap. 1.

8 A partial exception was the Petworth emigration project of 1832-1837, but it was funded by private sponsors and parish contributions, not the British government. See Wendy Cameron and Mary McDougall Maude, *Assisting Emigration to Upper Canada: The Petworth Project* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2000).

In December 1827, a year after the rejection of the ambitious colonization proposal drafted by Colonial Under-Secretary Robert Wilmot-Horton's Emigration Committee,⁹ it became official policy that most of the public domain in the North American colonies was to be sold at auction by newly appointed commissioners of crown lands who would determine the upset price. As an enthusiastic promoter of pauper emigration and colonization, Wilmot-Horton – who had helped launch the project that settled approximately 2,500 Irish Catholics in Upper Canada in 1823 and 1825¹⁰ – subverted this policy by providing settlers with the option of leasing up to 200 acres (80 hectares) at an annual quit rent equivalent to the cash price divided over a 20-year period (that is, 5 per cent per year). To encourage poorer emigrants to become settlers, this plan exempted those who chose land in the wilderness townships from any payments whatsoever during the first seven years of settlement. The aim was not to establish a permanent class of tenants, however, for the land could be purchased at any time on payment of the 20 years' rent.¹¹ Rather, the quit-rent system was originally envisaged as a means of ensuring that a government loan to subsidize group settlement projects would be repaid by the emigrants themselves.¹² William Bowman Felton, who was appointed Lower Canada's first commissioner of crown lands in 1827, strongly supported this strategy, arguing that for the investment to be secure the government should settle at least 300 families, though the ideal scope would be 6,000 families in ten to twelve frontier townships.¹³ The person who would implement a version of this project was not Felton, however, but Alexander Buchanan.

Buchanan was an Irish shipping merchant in the Londonderry – British North America trade who also owned a saw and grist milling enterprise near Sorel, Lower Canada, with his brother James. As British consul in New York City since 1816, James Buchanan had directed thousands of Irish immigrants (mostly Ulster Protestants) northward to Upper Canada.¹⁴ Alexander himself claimed to have taken fifteen to sixteen transatlantic voyages with 6,000 emigrants, adding that

9 Preliminary steps had been taken to launch a limited colonization project in 1827, but it failed to get off the ground. The discouraged Wilmot-Horton finally resigned his position in January 1828, but he continued to promote his emigration bill until 1830. See R. N. Ghosh, "The Colonization Controversy: R. J. Wilmot-Horton and the Classical Economists," *Economica*, New Series, vol. 31, no. 124 (November 1964), pp. 385-400; H. J. M. Johnston, *British Emigration Policy, 1815-1830: "Shovelling out Paupers"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), chap. 5, 6, and 9.

10 See Helen I. Cowan, *British Emigration to British North America: The First Hundred Years* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961), pp. 68-80.

11 Gilbert C. Paterson, *Land Settlement in Upper Canada, 1783-1840* (Toronto: Sixteenth Report of the Department of Archives for the Province of Ontario, 1920), p. 161.

12 Johnston, *British Emigration Policy*, pp. 112, 127-128.

13 A British half-pay officer, Felton had acquired an extensive tract of land in the Eastern Townships following the Napoleonic Wars. As the region's first Legislative Councillor, he had organized a London-based land company to purchase all the crown reserves and one-third of the clergy reserves south of the St. Lawrence in the Districts of Montreal and Trois-Rivières. The Lower Canada Land Company's stated objective was to encourage British immigrants to settle in the Eastern Townships by transporting their belongings overland, as well as building roads, mills, churches, and schools. The project was stillborn, however, due to the financial panic of 1825 and the opposition of Governor Dalhousie. See J. I. Little, "Imperialism and Colonization in Lower Canada: The Role of William Bowman Felton," *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 66, no. 4 (1985), pp. 517-519, 527.

14 Johnston, *British Emigration Policy*, p. 120.

he had been “interested in” the removal of an additional 12,000 to 15,000 people from Ireland.¹⁵ Published in 1828, his lengthy *Emigration Practically Considered* attempted to revive Horton’s ambitious scheme by arguing that the repeal of the *Passenger Act* in 1827 (a repeal that he had opposed on humanitarian grounds because it removed restrictions on the number of passengers that a ship could carry)¹⁶ meant that much less money was required to establish a settler family than “hitherto assumed.” Now, £60 or even £45 would be enough for the removal of a man, his wife, and three children from the United Kingdom to British North America “providing them necessary implements, log-house and *fifteen months provisions*.”¹⁷ Aimed largely at “[p]oor destitute labourers whose habits of living at Home border on misery in the extreme,” Buchanan’s scheme, like that of Wilmot-Horton, assumed that the money spent by the government for transportation and settlement would be repaid by the emigrants. To appeal further to the parsimonious sensibilities of the British officials and politicians, Buchanan added:

I do not admit the Policy of taking a half-starved Irish Pauper from his miserable Hovel, and in the space of a few months not only making him the Proprietor of 100 acres of Land, but surrounding him with domestic comforts he never before witnessed.... I would let them feel and work their way and their ultimate success will be more certain. Let the Emigrant have enough to eat, with a Log Hut to shelter, with his Axe in his hand, and his Fuel at his elbow, but let that Food be of the most economical kind, such as Oatmeal, Potatoes, Fish, Indian Meal and a little Flesh Meat.¹⁸

Also inspired by Wilmot-Horton was Buchanan’s claim that English parishes could be persuaded to contribute funds because the annual poor rate represented fully half what it would cost to support a family in the colonies for a year or more. As for Ireland and Scotland, where there were no poor rates, emigration was already so extensive that the landlords would need to offer only partial assistance.¹⁹ Based on experience, Buchanan wrote, “The class of people that I would propose to emigrate from Ireland, – are destitute labourers, ejected tenants, and poor cotters

15 A. C. Buchanan, *Emigration Practically Considered; with Detailed Directions to Emigrants Proceeding to North America, Particularly to the Canadas; in a Letter to the Right Hon. R. Wilmot Horton, M.P.* (London: Henry Colburn, 1828 [CIHM 57324]), pp. 23, 64. Beginning in 1822, their cousin William Buchanan, also from Derry, operated charter ships on the Derry-Quebec route. See Cecil J. Houston and William J. Smyth, *Irish Emigration and Canadian Settlement: Patterns, Links, and Letters* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), pp. 48-49, 64, 87-88, 205-207. For a discussion of Derry’s links with British North America at this time, see pp. 81-89.

16 Buchanan had attempted to have the 1823 *Passenger Act* changed to allow for more passengers per ton and therefore lower fares, but he also prepared the initial draft of the bill that passed in 1828 providing some legal protection for passengers. His draft was considerably watered down in favour of the shipping interests. For details, see Johnston, *British Emigration Policy*, pp. 119-126; Oliver MacDonagh, *A Pattern of Government Growth, 1900-60: The Passenger Acts and their Enforcement* (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1961), pp. 67-72, 76-77, 338-340.

17 Colonel Thomas Talbot’s estimate to establish a family of five on the north shore of Lake Erie was £102 for a cow, a temporary shelter, implements, and twelve months of provisions, and this did not include transportation or land (Johnston, *British Emigration Policy*, p. 65).

18 Buchanan, *Emigration Practically Considered*, pp. 4-5, 19-21.

19 *Ibid.*, pp. 40-43.

who are now found a clog to the consolidating of farms and improvement of estates, and whose better condition at home can never be contemplated.”²⁰

Buchanan recommended that, in addition to various agents and officials in the United Kingdom and the colonies, a “general emigrant and land officer” be appointed in Quebec.²¹ After many months of lobbying in London, he gained this post in the spring of 1828, effectively making him a member of the Colonial Office.²² In appointing Buchanan, however, the British authorities were clearly persuaded less by his colonization scheme (Governor Dalhousie expressed concern about the expenses involved) than by his observation that the increasing tide of immigrants who landed at Quebec “were left to struggle about without any person to guide them or give them the least wholesome advice,” with the result that many moved on to the United States.²³ Buchanan argued that the gentry who wished to subsidize the emigration of their pauper tenants needed someone in Quebec to direct the arrivals and that “the great bulk of Voluntary Emigrants who go out generally possess *some property* and would gladly become settlers in Lower Canada and pay for their land, if proper arrangements were made to guide them.”²⁴

Buchanan’s scheme for assisting 100,000 immigrant settlers per year over a five-year period by providing loans totalling £500,000 was more economical than that being promoted by Wilmot-Horton, but it was probably not taken seriously by the Colonial Office.²⁵ The newly appointed emigrant agent was not content, however, to serve as a broker for British landlords or to offer piecemeal advice to families who came to his office in Quebec. When asked in February 1829 to inform Lower Canada’s Legislative Assembly as to how colonization could be encouraged, Buchanan replied that there were many areas well suited to the introduction of “industrious settlers, either emigrants from the United Kingdom or Canadians.” He focused principally on the townships to the west of the Chaudière valley (later known as the Megantic Tract), touting their access to the Quebec market, their availability as crown land, and the need to establish “some barriers against the monopolizing grasp of the Americans, who have already overrun the Eastern Townships.” This American presence was discouraging British immigration to the region, Buchanan warned, thus endangering “the security of our frontiers” which could lead to “the consequent loss to the mother Country at

20 *Ibid.*, pp. 23, 64.

21 *Ibid.*, pp. 44-45.

22 Peter Dunkley, “Emigration and the State, 1803-1842: The Nineteenth-Century Revolution in Government Reconsidered,” *The Historical Journal*, vol. 23, no. 2 (June 1980), p. 360. Buchanan claimed that his expenses and the business he had missed while attending Parliament had left him £500 out of pocket. See Library and Archives Canada [hereafter LAC], CO 384, Original Correspondence – Secretary of State, Emigration, vol. 20, pp. 216-217, A. C. Buchanan to Rt. Hon. R. W. Horton, September 11, 1827; and pp. 210-212, A. C. Buchanan to R. W. Horton, April 24, 1828.

23 LAC, RG4 A1, Civil Secretary’s Correspondence (Incoming), 1829, vol. 305, pp. 43-44, Dalhousie’s remarks (draft), August 6, 1828; Dunkley, “Emigration and the State,” pp. 358-359.

24 LAC, CO 384, Emigration, vol. 20, pp. 202-207, A. C. Buchanan to R. W. Horton, April 21, 1828.

25 Wilmot-Horton’s bill contained a plan for the emigration of 95,000 people with an advance of approximately one million pounds from the government. See Ghosh, “The Colonization Controversy,” p. 396; Buchanan, *Emigration Practically Considered*, pp. 74-83; LAC, CO 384, Emigration, vol. 20, p. 233, A. C. Buchanan to R. W. Horton, May 2, 1828.

no distant period of the most fertile portion of Lower Canada.” To the question of what would keep British settlers in the province, he replied that the majority of those who arrived in Quebec had no predetermined destination other than the preference of those from Ulster to settle in a British colony. Buchanan favoured the Irish and Scots as “best adapted for this Province,” adding that it was his “wish is to see the Emigrants generally from every part of the United Kingdom amalgamated as much as possible with the Native Canadians.”²⁶

French-Canadian spokesmen were becoming concerned about the increasingly overcrowded conditions of the long-settled seigneuries,²⁷ but Buchanan was clearly interested only in promoting British settlement. He claimed that emigrants’ success in the United States and Upper Canada was inclining others to follow in their footsteps, many never having the chance to set foot on shore at Quebec before being transferred to steamboats heading upriver. Taking advantage of the fact that Lower Canada’s name implied “a swampy, low, unhealthy situation and *visa [sic] versa* that Upper Canada is [a] high mountainous and elevated situation,” though the reverse was true, unscrupulous steamboat agents depicted Lower Canada “as mere desert, sure starvation, etc.” The result, the emigrant agent added, was that, of the approximately 29,000 settlers who had arrived in Quebec in 1827 and 1828, probably not 100 families had taken lands in Lower Canada.²⁸

Dominated as it was by French-Canadian nationalists, the Legislative Assembly to which this report was directed was clearly not inclined to promote British settlement in the province, but Buchanan’s lobbying finally paid off in London.²⁹ In the interest of strengthening the imperial base in Lower Canada, Parliament provided the Colonial Office with the authorization in 1829 to establish a sizeable number of poor British emigrants as quit-rent settlers in that colony.³⁰ While Buchanan’s 1828 pamphlet had ignored the Eastern Townships,³¹ he now focused attention on the area traversed by an arterial road from the south shore of the St. Lawrence near Lévis through the northern townships to the lower St. Francis river at Shipton township [see Figure 1]. Built between 1809 and 1811 by order of Governor James Craig, the road had been intended to provide access

26 LAC, RG4 A1, 1829, vol. 305, Buchanan’s Report [hereafter Buchanan’s 1829 Report], part 3, pp. 65-68, Questions submitted to A. C. Buchanan by House of Assembly of Lower Canada, Quebec, February 1829. On the preoccupation of British-financed missionaries with “anglicizing” the American settlers of the Eastern Townships, see J. I. Little, *Borderland Religion: The Emergence of an English-Canadian Identity, 1792-1852* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004).

27 The Legislative Assembly had appointed a Special Committee on Crown Lands in 1821. See Fernand Ouellet, *Economic and Social History of Quebec, 1760-1850* ([No city]: Gage Publishing in association with the Institute of Canadian Studies, Carleton University, 1980), pp. 281-298; J. I. Little, “‘The fostering care of Government’: Lord Dalhousie’s 1821 Survey of the Eastern Townships,” *Histoire sociale - Social History*, vol. 43, no. 85 (May 2010), pp. 197-198.

28 Buchanan’s 1829 Report, Part 3, pp. 68-69.

29 Buchanan’s 1828 publication had referred to “unhappy differences that at present exist between the Executive Government of Lower Canada and the Provincial Parliament,” rather optimistically claiming that “the subject of the controversy is local, and, I have no doubt, will soon exhaust itself” (*Emigration Practically Considered*, pp. 34-35).

30 Little, “Imperialism and Colonization,” pp. 519-520.

31 Mentioned instead were the Gaspé, seigneuries on the south shore of the St. Lawrence east of Quebec, the Saguenay to Lac St-Jean, and the St-Maurice regions (Buchanan, *Emigration Practically Considered*, p. 65).

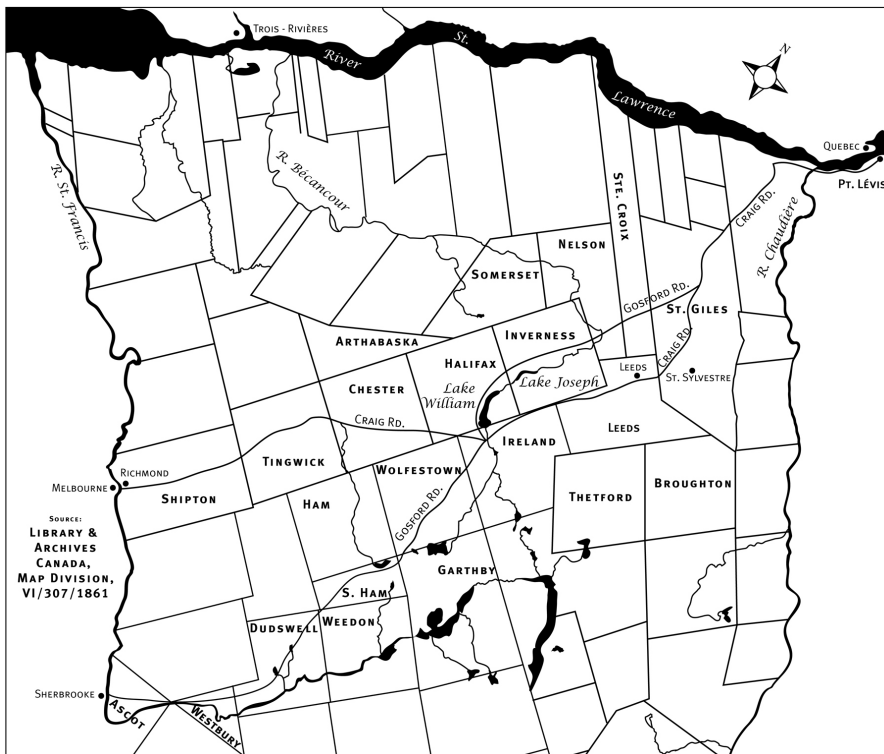


Figure 1: Routes of the Craig and Gosford Roads. Adapted from *Map of Part of the Eastern Townships of Lower Canada Exhibiting Colonization Roads*, 1861, Library and Archives Canada, NMC-42925.

to Boston and the American market, but it had been abandoned after the outbreak of war with the United States in 1812 and become largely impassable as early as 1815.³² Absentee proprietors who owned much of the land in the townships traversed by the road did very little to develop their holdings, with the result that the 1825 census recorded only 84 inhabitants in Leeds township and 165 in Ireland township.³³ The population of neighbouring Inverness township, which was only skirted by the Craig road, dropped from 84 in 1819 to eleven in 1821 and then reportedly to none in 1825, though the enumerator appears to have missed a few families.³⁴ Surveyor-General Joseph Bouchette reported in 1827 that the Craig road

32 Joseph Bouchette, *A Topographical Description of the Province of Lower Canada* (London: W. Fadon, 1815), pp. 572-573. This route had originally been surveyed in 1800 at the expense of the absentee proprietors. The *Quebec Gazette* reported in November 1810 that it had 120 bridges crossing 24 large streams, but road conditions were such that the stage service apparently operated only in winter, with sleighs leaving Quebec on Mondays and arriving in Boston the following Saturday. See Barry, *A History of Megantic*, pp. 43-45, 58; *Inverness Quebec/Canada* (La Corporation Touristique d'Inverness, 1987), pp. 26, 29. The fact that the route tended to follow a straight line over high hilltops meant that in certain areas there would be no settlers to contribute to its upkeep (*Quebec Mercury*, April 2, 1840).

33 *Journals of the Legislative Assembly of Lower Canada*, vol. 41 (1831-1832), Appendix Oo.

34 Little, "The fostering care of Government," p. 199, table I. On the first settlers, most of whom were Americans, see Dugald McKenzie McKillop, *Annals of Megantic County, Quebec* (Lynn, MA: D. McGillop, 1902, reprinted 1966), chap. 9, 20, 21; Barry, *A History of Megantic*, pp. 45-67.

was “very little frequented from obstacles that numerous swamps and windfalls throw in the way,” especially between Leeds and Shipton.³⁵ Finally, shortly before his term ended in 1828, Governor Dalhousie appointed an agent to promote colonization along the neglected road. To show their gratitude, 230 settlers in Leeds and (to a lesser extent) its neighbouring townships and seigneurial parishes forwarded a loyalty petition to Dalhousie in the spring of the same year, but poor road conditions left the area largely undeveloped despite being relatively close to the port of Quebec.³⁶

Dalhousie’s successor, Sir James Kempt, appointed Andrew Russell to be township agent for Inverness in the spring of 1829, authorizing him to spend up to £120 on “bridle roads” that would allow immigrants to inspect the “waste lands” of the township.³⁷ In preparation for the immigration season, Buchanan inspected the townships of Inverness and Leeds in the company of Russell and a prospective settler from Edinburgh, submitting a detailed report in June 1829. He remarked that the recently arrived Irish settlers in the “much settled” seigneurial parish of St. Gilles had made better progress than either the “Scotch” or Americans. There the Craig road was reportedly in excellent condition, but upon reaching Leeds the three men had to proceed on foot to Inverness because the road was “very bad, particularly where bounded by those extensive blocks of conceded land that meet us in every direction, obstructing the improvement and settlement of the country, and the principle of which is the extensive grants to the Frobisher family.” In fact, half the township of Inverness had been granted before the turn of the century to absentees such as North West Company members William McGillivray and Joseph Frobisher.³⁸

Plagued by mosquitoes and heavy rain, Buchanan and his companions followed a “shanty road” from the Craig road to the outlet of Lake Joseph (known locally as Loch Lomond) where they found an American squatter named Hart with a small log hut and eight or ten acres (3.2 or 4.0 hectares) “chopped down and under grass with a few potatoes,” all on Frobisher land.³⁹ Having warned Hart not to remain there, they borrowed his canoe and proceeded down the Thames (Bécancour) river,

35 LAC, RG1 L3L, Lower Canada Land Papers (microfilm C2540), “General Report of a Tour Performed Through the Province of Lower Canada by Jos. Bouchette, Esq., Surveyor General in the Summer of 1827,” p. 13306.

36 *Montreal Gazette*, March 3, 1828; *Journals of the Legislative Assembly of Lower Canada*, vol. 38 (1828-1829), Appendix PP, Minutes of Evidence, Rev. Michel Dufresne, Josiah King, D. H. Andrews, George Arnold, Francis Armstrong Evans, and William Hall. Barry (*A History of Megantic*, p. 64) estimates that there were 491 settlers in the future Megantic county in 1824.

37 LAC, RG4 A1, vol. 288, William B. Felton to Col. Yorke, Quebec, June 8, 1829. Commissioner of Crown Lands Felton reported that the crown reserves of Inverness were in the northeast quarter of the township and the clergy reserves in the northwest quarter, both about six miles from the Craig road. Kempt therefore approved of a £120 grant to build bridle roads into these blocks, but he rejected Felton’s recommendation that a building be erected in the centre of each block of reserves (LAC, RG1 L3L, vol. 21, Commissioner of Crown Lands, pp. 10973, 10977, Memorial for Sir James Kempt, received May 29, 1829).

38 Frobisher, who had soon acquired McGillivray’s lots, owned the southwest part of the township as well as 11,000 acres (4,400 hectares) in neighbouring Ireland township. His heirs exchanged their lots in Inverness for others in neighbouring townships in 1829. See Gwen Rawlings, *The Pioneers of Inverness Township, Quebec: An Historical and Genealogical Survey* (Cheltenham, ON: Boston Mills Press, 1979), pp. 15, 17, 22. On the absentee proprietors of the Megantic townships, see Barry, *A History of Megantic*, pp. 40-43.

39 On Hart, see Barry, *A History of Megantic*, p. 46.

which Buchanan described as “exceedingly beautiful averaging about 100 yards wide, and susceptible of improvement at a very trifling expense.” Downriver and near “the great falls” they met a settler named Percy who was from Buchanan’s own Irish neighbourhood and who had not seen a traveller since arriving in the fall of 1826. Buchanan was much impressed with Percy’s progress, writing that “the prosperity of this man is most conclusive and nearly incredible.”⁴⁰ The three men then returned by “a small shanty path passing a few new settlements” to the home of agent Russell in Leeds. By the time Buchanan reached Quebec, he had travelled 224 kilometres in three days, 45 of which were on foot and 24 in a canoe.

If the Quebec agent had harboured any doubts about Inverness in particular, his adventure had set them aside, for he reported that “I had no conception that so fine a country and a situation so susceptible of repaying the industrious farming Emigrant was to be found in Lower Canada.” In Inverness, Buchanan added, “The soil generally is excellent of a rich deep black and brown loam and clay in some parts a little strong.” As a result, “all kinds of grain grow to great perfection,” with wheat yielding 15 to 20 bushels (55 to 73 litres) per acre. The previous year’s harvest had been so good that Inverness and Leeds had provided “large supplies” to the French Canadians in neighbouring Lotbinière who had experienced a serious crop failure.⁴¹ Buchanan also praised the stands of hardwood timber and claimed that the “numerous rivers and small rapid streams” amid the “swelling hills” made the countryside “exceedingly healthy.” Furthermore, there was “excellent Batteaux navigation” for 30 to 40 miles (48 to 64 kilometres) upstream from Lake Joseph “into the township of Coleraine and the headwaters of the St Francis.” In the opposite direction, Buchanan envisioned an industrial settlement to be called Port York at the falls near Percy’s settlement (Lysander Falls), noting that from there the winding Bécancour was navigable to the St. Lawrence. In fact, he concluded, “a more desirable tract of Country is not to be found in this province or one better adapted for the encouragement of new settlers.”

The first step would be to repossess “the large tracts of waste land, particularly the Frobisher grants which clog communication in every direction,” thereby allowing “an uninterrupted space of from 50,000 or 60,000 acres of fine land” to be “immediately thrown open for settlement.” Then one or two “Barrack huts” should be erected for settlers at the outlet of Lake Joseph, which he would call Kemptville in honour of the governor, and a smaller one at the aforementioned Port York. Also, there should be a couple of flat bateaux for transporting the settlers’ heavy baggage because the Craig road from Leeds was “so hilly and bad ... that a horse could convey only a very small load.” As for the bridle roads leading into the new settlements, all the labour on them should be reserved for the colonists themselves.⁴²

40 Assisted only by his aging father, Percy had reportedly cleared 15 to 20 acres (6 to 8 hectares) and had harvested 300 bushels (10,920 litres) of potatoes to sell at 20s. per bushel (36.4 litres).

41 See Gilles Boileau, “La paroisse de Lotbinière lance un cri de détresse,” *Histoire Québec*, vol. 9, no. 2 (November 2003), pp. 41-44, <http://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1066ac> (retrieved July 30, 2012).

42 LAC, RG1 L3, vol. 49 (microfilm C2512), pp. 25305-25327, A. C. Buchanan to Sir James Kempt, Quebec, June 12, 1829.

According to John Richards, who was sent from London to investigate whether a uniform and economical colonization plan could, indeed, be adopted for the British North American colonies,⁴³ Buchanan's role was "to give every assistance to the emigrant upon his arrival, to protect him from imposition, to place him upon a lot, or find labour for him." As a result of hand-bills or notices being posted, Richards added, the emigrant agent's business "is universally known, and his office is generally thronged." Buchanan also kept lists of townships open for settlement and visited those settlements from time to time. Settlers were required to pay one-quarter of the purchase money of four shillings per acre as an initial instalment, though a "poor" man could take half a lot (100 acres or 40 hectares) as a quit-rent settler.⁴⁴ In his June 1829 report, Buchanan indicated that he did not anticipate that much could be done to promote the settlement of Inverness and surrounding area in the current season, before transportation routes could be improved and publicity arranged in the United Kingdom, but he underestimated his own powers of persuasion as well as the pressure caused by a situation in which, as historian Helen Cowan wrote, "the St. Lawrence shores stretching a mile and a half from Quebec were crowded with newly landed human beings."⁴⁵

Among the first emigrants to be diverted from Upper Canada were an advance party of fifteen Gaelic-speaking families from the Isle of Arran whose influential landlord, Lord Hamilton, had arranged for them to receive free grants in the Ottawa valley. Instead, they were persuaded by Buchanan to select lots on the shores of Lake Joseph in Inverness.⁴⁶ Buchanan also reported in early July 1829 that, during the previous ten days, he had forwarded to that township many more families, "mostly Scotch and English, and in general possessing considerable property."⁴⁷ There were logistical problems, however, for the Quebec agent claimed that he could settle many more families in the area if the crown lands office would not delay in providing him with lists of vacant lots, and Commissioner Felton expressed concern that the Craig road settlers were being directed to scattered clergy reserves. In support of Buchanan's project, Felton recommended that these reserves be acquired by the crown and that an equal number be set aside elsewhere for the Church of England.⁴⁸ Several weeks later, he reported that many lots in

43 Lillian F. Gates, *Land Policies of Upper Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968), p. 178.

44 Report of John Richards, in *British Parliamentary Papers*, 1831-32 (334), vol. 32 [hereafter Richards Report], pp. 32-33.

45 Cowan, *British Emigration*, p. 187.

46 Unfortunately for them, the land on the shore of Lake Joseph was still owned by absentees, so they had to settle for inferior land to the rear on what would become the Gosford road. The Arran settlers who followed later would protest the requirement that they pay quit rents. See J. I. Little, "Agricultural Improvement and Highland Clearance: The Isle of Arran, 1828-29," *Scottish Economic and Social History*, vol. 19 (1999), pp. 132-154, and "From the Isle of Arran to Inverness Township: A Case Study of Highland Emigration and North American Settlement, 1829-34," *Scottish Economic and Social History*, vol. 20 (2000), pp. 3-30.

47 LAC, RG4 A1, vol. 292, A. C. Buchanan to Lt. Col. Yorke, Quebec, July 6, 1829. Several settler families from Ulster had already spent several years in Quebec (Rawlings, *The Pioneers*, p. 18).

48 LAC, RG4 A1, vol. 293, W. B. Felton to Col. Yorke, Montreal, July 16, 1829. Felton had been instructed in 1828 to sell 100,000 acres (40,000 hectares) of clergy reserves a year until one-quarter were disposed of (Little, "Imperialism and Colonization," p. 528). The "Memorial for Sir James Kempt" received on May 29, 1829, stated that there were 35,193 acres (14,077 hectares) in clergy reserves and 73,330 acres (29,332 hectares) in crown reserves for appropriation (marked "approved") in the townships of Inverness, Leeds, Ireland, and Halifax (LAC, RG1 L3L, vol. 21, p. 10972).

Inverness were held under location tickets dating from 1822 to 1825 upon which no settlement conditions had been performed. He therefore recommended cancelling those claims “in order to accommodate the emigrants who have expressed their inclination to make immediate improvements on the same,” but the government simply continued to issue free grants to half-pay officers, discharged soldiers, and militia veterans between 1828 and 1831.⁴⁹

At the end of the shipping season in 1829, Buchanan reported that, of the 15,945 ship passengers who had arrived in Quebec that year, 3,754 had been settled in Lower Canada, an area “hitherto scarcely known to the British Emigrant.” Many of these people had been directed to Inverness township “in which an organized system for their immediate location was in operation.” Buchanan boasted that the 166 families (totalling 830 individuals) who settled in the vicinity of Inverness and the Craig road comprised “on the whole the most valuable body of settlers from the United Kingdom that ever located in the province of Lower Canada.” Among the 78 settler families who had arrived between June 1 and November 1 were 34 from Ireland and 14 from England, in addition to 30 whose passage had been paid by the Isle of Arran’s landlord (as noted above). Not all these families had gone directly to Inverness, however, for Buchanan noted that only 50 were working on their lands, with the others planning to start doing so in the spring. The capital they possessed amounted to £13,400, with the wide range of less than £5 for one family to £3,000 for another. To avoid being accused of irresponsibly settling a pauper family, Buchanan reported that the settler with only £5 had arrived early enough to plant a crop of potatoes “and with the assistance of labour is now very well off.”⁵⁰

Reflecting the fact that the Irish were the largest group of migrants to British North America even before the famine of the early 1840s, and that most were from the northern half of the island,⁵¹ the majority of the families who settled in Inverness and the surrounding area were Protestants from Ulster.⁵² Even though Presbyterians were more inclined than Anglicans to emigrate from Ulster, they may have been more drawn to the United States where they had longstanding family ties, for members of the Church of England and Ireland were as numerous as all the other Protestant denominations combined in the Megantic county of 1831, and they would still be the largest Protestant denomination in 1861.⁵³ An

49 LAC, RG4 A1, vol. 295, W. B. Felton to Col. Yorke, Quebec, August 12, 1829; *British Parliamentary Papers*, Emigration, vol. 21 (Shannon: Irish University Press [1968-1971]), p. 16, Statement of Free Grants to Military and Naval Officers under Regulations of 1 Aug. 1831. For a discussion of Felton’s attempts to reform the military grants system, see Little, “Imperialism and Colonization,” pp. 521-523.

50 Buchanan’s 1829 Report, Part 1.

51 Namely, Ulster and the neighbouring parts of Leinster and Connaught. See Akenson, *The Irish in Ontario*, pp. 14-15, 22-23; C. J. Houston and W. J. Smyth, “The Irish Diaspora: Emigration to the New World, 1720-1920” in B. J. Graham and L. J. Proudfoot, eds., *An Historical Geography of Ireland* (London: Academic Press, 1993), pp. 345-346.

52 Barry (*A History of Megantic*, p. 110) traced 171 of Megantic’s Irish surnames back to Ulster, 43 to Leinster, 15 to Connaught, and 15 to Munster.

53 Donald Harman Akenson, “Irish Migration to North America, 1800-1920” in Andy Bielenberg, ed., *The Irish Diaspora* (Harlow, UK: Pearson Education, 2000), pp. 116-117; David Fitzpatrick, “Emigration, 1801-70” in W. E. Vaughan, ed., *A New History of Ireland, V, Ireland Under the Union, I, 1801-70* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), pp. 565, 578. There were 842 Anglicans in Leeds, Inverness, and Ireland in 1831, and only 186 Presbyterians/ Congregationalists, many of whom were Arran Highlanders. Presumably,

Ulsterman himself, Buchanan undoubtedly influenced the decisions of those who moved to Megantic, but not to the extent that he selected each individual or family, for genealogical research has found kin clusters such as the Ralstons, Wilsons, Hendersons, Reids, Irwins, Bowmans, Davidsons, and Littles, who were interrelated before arriving in Inverness township.⁵⁴ The population enumerated in Megantic in 1831 was young, for 72 per cent of the males were under the age of 30, and 244 of the 581 males aged 21 and older were still not married.⁵⁵ The fact remains, however, that they conformed to Irish historian David Fitzpatrick's observation that "Irish emigration was essentially a family movement," rather than supporting Kerby Miller's argument that Irish emigrants were, for the most part, disinherited young men cast out by an increasingly individualistic, market-oriented society.⁵⁶ To refer to the example of James Little again, he may have been an unmarried young man when he left Ireland, but his mother, two sisters, and two brothers all appear in the records of Inverness township, and many of his neighbours were also his relatives. Even if Little's goal was to achieve the independence that would ensure his adult masculine status,⁵⁷ he did not conform to the ruggedly individualistic Irish Protestant stereotype that historical geographer Cole Harris and his co-authors describe as characterizing Upper Canada's Mono township; rather, he belonged to a tightly-knit community dependent upon mutual aid from the outset.⁵⁸

Cecil Houston and William Smyth stress that the early-nineteenth-century Irish emigrants were "typically to be found among the comfortable farming classes, who feared loss of economic status, rather than among those suffering from absolute penury."⁵⁹ But even the better-off families of Armagh's parish of Keady, where many members of the aforementioned Inverness kin network originated, leased only four to eight hectares. They produced enough grain and livestock to cover the land rent, church tithe, and state taxes, but depended upon home weaving and the spinning of flax to buy the essentials necessary for survival. This domestic economy was failing, however, as families who experienced overcrowding caused by the rising birth rate during the eighteenth century, as well as the shift

nearly all the 447 members of the Church of Scotland were also from Scotland rather than Ireland.

54 Rawlings, *The Pioneers*, p. 19; Barry, *A History of Megantic*, p. 115.

55 Males outnumbered females 1,222 to 970, but much of the gender discrepancy was in the youngest age cohort of age 13 and under (509 males to 399 females). This data is reported in Barry, *A History of Megantic*, pp. 104-105.

56 Fitzpatrick, "Emigration, 1801-70," p. 603; Kerby A. Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 57, 216, 272-273. For critiques of Miller's thesis, see Cecil J. Houston and William J. Smyth, *Irish Emigration and Canadian Settlement: Patterns, Links, and Letters* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), pp. 65-66; Bruce S. Elliott, *Irish Migrants in the Canadas: A New Approach* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988), pp. 239-241; Catharine Anne Wilson, *A New Lease on Life: Landlords, Tenants, and Immigrants in Ireland and Canada* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), pp. 4-5.

57 See John Tosh, "All the masculine virtues": English Emigration to the Colonies, 1815-1852" in John Tosh, ed., *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Essays on Gender, Family, and Empire* (Harlow, UK: Pearson Education, 2005), pp. 177, 181-182.

58 R. C. Harris, Pauline Roulston, and Chris de Freitas, "The Settlement of Mono Township," *Canadian Geographer*, vol. 19, no. 1 (1975), pp. 10-17.

59 Houston and Smyth, *Irish Emigration*, p. 21. They cite Buchanan as being in support of this claim (p. 51). On sources of capital to fund the migration, see p. 46.

from grain production to the less land-intensive raising of livestock after the Napoleonic Wars, began in the 1820s to face the accelerating mechanization of the linen industry and its movement to Scotland and England. There was also increasing sectarian violence, so it was presumably no coincidence that most of those who settled in Megantic had emigrated soon after the passing in 1829 of the *Catholic Emancipation Act* which extended the right to sit in Parliament to Roman Catholics. The result, for many Protestants, was the added sense that as a minority they had no future in Ireland.⁶⁰

As Phillip Buckner has recently observed of most British emigrants to Canada, the families who uprooted themselves from Armagh were not victims or “oppressed peoples who were forced to emigrate to escape abject poverty,”⁶¹ but they were clearly facing indigence, and many who moved to the Craig road townships in 1829 did depend on road work to raise enough money for necessities. Buchanan proudly reported that 45 kilometres of roads and pathways were made that season in Inverness “at a very trifling outlay.”⁶² Richards’ report to the British Parliament noted that £57 18s. was collected as first instalments and quit rents from 39 families in Inverness, which represented a significant contribution to the £98 15s. 9 d. spent on roads in the township. Rather than money advances, Richards favoured providing road work, as well as labour on a “public farm.” His rationale was that the settler “requires to be kept in a constant state of excitement and exertion against his first difficulties; some stimulant is necessary, and money is a sedative.”⁶³

Beyond Inverness, an additional 55 Irish, English, and Scots families, with £4,400 in capital, had settled in the nearby townships of Leeds, Ireland, and Broughton in the fall of 1829.⁶⁴ The local agent would later report that farmers from the parish of Lévis onward “have been greatly benefited by the money brought in by these settlers, and employed in purchasing their extra produce, and in hiring their horses and oxen, to transport their families, luggage and provisions.”⁶⁵

The year 1830 promised to be a still more propitious one as far as Buchanan’s project was concerned, for the Legislative Assembly loosened its purse-strings for roads into the Eastern Townships in an effort by the majority *Parti canadien* to woo the voters of the Eastern Townships region, which had finally been granted political representation.⁶⁶ One of the government grants was £400 designated for a more direct and less hilly route to Inverness from St. Gilles, thereby providing a good deal of labour for the new settlers. Buchanan was appointed one of the road commissioners. Eventually known as the Gosford road in honour of the governor-general, it ran through the centre of Inverness to Maple Grove in Halifax township,

60 Harris *et al.*, “The Settlement of Mono Township,” p. 3; Houston and Smyth, *Irish Emigration*, pp. 36, 43-45; Barry, *A History of Megantic*, p. 100, and *The Little Family*, pp. 7-17.

61 Phillip Buckner, “Introduction” in Buckner, ed., *Canada and the British Empire*, p. 18.

62 Buchanan’s 1829 Report, Part 1.

63 LAC, CO 384, vol. 26, Richards Report, pp. 112, 118.

64 Buchanan’s 1829 Report, Part 1.

65 *Journals of the Legislative Assembly of Lower Canada*, vol. 40 (1831), Appendix DD, minutes of evidence, March 4, 1831, Andrew Russell, agent for townships of Inverness, Nelson, Ireland, and Halifax.

66 See J. I. Little, *Loyalties in Conflict: A Canadian Borderland in War and Rebellion, 1812-1840* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), p. 61.

where it crossed the Craig road. The local agent reported in 1831, however, that the swampy nature of the land in St. Gilles meant that at least £500 (more than the total sum allotted) would be required for ditching and bridge-building before it would be passable for carriages.⁶⁷ Furthermore, petitioners from Inverness protested that many could not take advantage of the new shorter route because the Bécancour river, which bisected the township, was not easily forded in summer and seldom frozen deeply enough to support a horse in winter. They added that, unless the new road was completed for wheeled carriages and a bridge built across the Bécancour, they would be “exposed to encreasing [*sic*] hardships and regret that it will be impossible for them to hold out sufficient inducements to persuade their friends to settle around them, owing to the very great expense and difficulty of transport at present experienced.”⁶⁸

Such concerns did not prevent Buchanan from busily forwarding immigrants to Inverness in 1830. For reasons unknown, Richards – writing from Fredericton – gave Governor Kempt most of the credit, stating that “I can not pass this without a remark of compliment so justly due to the practical knowledge and experience of Sir James, who appears to me to be conducting this small experiment upon the best of all possible principles; and which in its progress goes hitherto to give evidence that settlements may be conducted with very small funds and that previous preparation is all that can be required for settlers.” Richards also claimed that the expenditure for the two years (obviously not including road work) was only £200, while the receipts were £300.⁶⁹ His official report recorded that, as of August 26, 1830, there were 750 settlers in Inverness, with 1,035 acres (414 hectares) in crop. Seventy-nine families had arrived since June 1, and there were 25 or 30 more “who had mostly engaged their lots.” Aside from 22,500 acres (9,000 hectares) in clergy and crown reserves, Richards reported, there were 10,000 acres (4,000 hectares) liable to escheat for non-fulfilment of settlement duties.⁷⁰ Indeed, Commissioner of Crown Lands Felton had written in June that “it does not appear to be possible under the present circumstances of the country, for the owners of the extensive tracts in question to fulfill the conditions of the grant.” Therefore, “any hope of success in establishing an emigrant population on a large scale in these townships must be grounded on the adoption of a system by which facilities will be afforded to the settlers that are beyond the means of the present proprietors of the soil.” Felton repeated his earlier recommendation that escheat proceedings begin as soon as possible, but no cases would ever be heard by the Court of Escheat despite his continued efforts.⁷¹

67 The new route to Inverness was thirteen miles shorter than via the Craig road. See *Journals of the Legislative Assembly of Lower Canada*, vol. 40 (1831), Appendix DD, minutes of evidence, March 4, 1831, Andrew Russell, agent for townships of Inverness, Nelson, Ireland, and Halifax; *Quebec Gazette*, May 27, 1830.

68 LAC, RG1 L3L, vol. 142 (microfilm C2548), pp. 69570-69575, Petition of the inhabitants of the township of Inverness to Lord Aylmer, 1831.

69 LAC, CO 384, Emigration, vol. 26, pp. 20-21, John Richards to R. W. Hay, Fredericton, September 17, 1830.

70 Richards Report, p. 33.

71 LAC, RG1 L3L, vol. 27 (microfilm C2504), pp. 14611-14612, William B. Felton to Colonel Yorke, Quebec, June 10, 1830. Felton identified 13,000 acres (5,200 hectares) of non-patented land to be reclaimed in the townships of Ireland and Halifax in 1831, and – following the inspection of lots along the Craig road

Because of Buchanan's energetic promotion of the area's colonization, the public land that was available for settlement filled up quickly. In June 1830 the *Quebec Mercury* reported that, due to the large number of immigrants, mostly from Yorkshire, who had recently gone to Inverness township, Buchanan had sent a bateau "loaded with Indian corn, oatmeal, flour, bread and other articles" to St. Nicholas, on the south shore of the St. Lawrence. The goods were being forwarded to protect the settlers from "the inconvenience to which these valuable strangers might otherwise be exposed, from the difficulty of procuring in so new a settlement a supply of provision, as well as to guard against any exorbitant demand being made upon them," clearly by the local residents. In an additional jibe at the French Canadians, the *Mercury* editor regretted that "some better mode of conveyance than the miserable market bateaux could not be got for these settlers, to forward them to St. Nicholas. The circumstances, too, of the boatmen being generally ignorant of English occasions much embarrassment to the Emigrant in getting to his destination."⁷² Within six months a ferry was under construction to run between Quebec and St. Nicholas.⁷³

According to the *Quebec Official Gazette*, more than one-third of the immigrants of 1830 remained in Lower Canada, as contrasted with only one-fifth the previous year and one-twelfth in 1828, when half had moved onward to the United States. Of the 28,074 emigrants who landed in British North America in 1830, 4,300 were reported to have settled in the District of Quebec. Of these, the *Gazette* claimed, approximately 1,500 (300 families) followed the Craig and Gosford roads to the seigneuries of St. Gilles and Ste. Croix, and the townships of Leeds, Inverness, and Ireland.⁷⁴ The families Buchanan encouraged to partake in his experiment in 1830 proved to be productive, for the census taken in the spring of 1831 reveals that an average of 11.3 acres (4.5 hectares) per household had already been cleared in recently settled Inverness. An impressive 133 bushels (4,841.2 litres) of potatoes per household had been harvested the previous fall, even though 77 of 153 settler families had arrived too recently for planting. Thus James Little, with his household of three unnamed males aged 14 to 29 and two unnamed women who were over 45 years of age, had arrived in time to clear nine acres (3.6 hectares) but not to plant any crops.⁷⁵ Indeed, the fact that the township's potato harvest was supplemented by an average of 31.2 bushels (1,135.7 litres) of grain (mostly wheat, barley, and oats) and that the average household owned

by a government surveyor two years later – the governor approved of legal proceedings for land in four townships. Owing to legal technicalities, however, no seizures were ever made in Lower Canada (Little, "Imperialism and Colonization," pp. 534-545).

72 *Quebec Mercury*, June 12, 1830.

73 *Montreal Gazette*, December 13, 1830.

74 The figures are cited in *Quebec Mercury*, December 11, 1830, and *Montreal Gazette*, December 13, 1830. New Argyle in Ste. Croix had been settled by Highlanders from the Isle of Islay, as well as by immigrants from Ireland. See A. C. Buchanan, *Information Published by His Majesty's Chief Agent for the Superintendence of Settlers and Emigrants in Upper and Lower Canada for the Use of Emigrants* (Quebec: Thomas Cary and Co., 1832), p. 10.

75 One of the two women was most likely Little's mother Margaret, who signed as witness to her daughter's marriage in 1832. At least two of the three unmarried young men – all of whom were Anglicans who had arrived from Britain after 1825 – may have been brothers, though they do not appear in later records of the area (Barry, *The Little Family*, pp. 28, 113-115, and *A History of Megantic*, pp. 45-54).

2.4 cattle, 1.8 pigs, and 1.0 sheep, suggests that the local population was quite self-sufficient despite its lack of New World experience⁷⁶ and despite the recent arrivals who had not yet harvested any crops. This was just as well, for access to the Quebec market would have been a challenge with poor roads and only 20 horses in the township at the time of the census.⁷⁷

Felton's refusal as commissioner of crown lands to obey the Colonial Office instructions in 1831 to abolish quit rents, make land payments semi-annual, and charge interest⁷⁸ ensured that immigrants would continue to flock to Inverness and surrounding area in the third year of the colonization project. There was certainly still a considerable amount of land left to settle in the four main townships that Buchanan had targeted. The records of the commissioner of crown lands reveal that, as of April 1831, crown and clergy reserves that he planned to throw open for sale or quit rent totalled 8,100 acres (3,240 hectares) in Inverness, 10,800 acres (4,320 hectares) in Leeds, 2,800 acres (1,120 hectares) in Ireland, and 17,000 acres (6,800 hectares) in "resumable locations" in Halifax.⁷⁹ As for the large amount of land in these townships still owned by absentee proprietors, Buchanan wrote in early May that many of them "have expressed their readiness to cooperate in any way that I may point out, for getting their lands in a situation to receive Settlers." This included a new survey and concession roads, with the costs to be shared by the large proprietors and the government.⁸⁰ There is no evidence to suggest that the absentee proprietors did cooperate, but the government agreed to invest another £171 towards opening bridle paths to the crown lots that were to be sold, as well as £800 to finish the Gosford road to Inverness.⁸¹

The year 1831 promised to be a good one, for the *Quebec Mercury* reported in late May that a group of emigrants from Wiltshire who had gone to Megantic three weeks earlier "are now comfortably fixed, and many of them have got a crop of potatoes planted."⁸² When the *Albion* arrived from Plymouth on May 28 with ten farmers, six women, and eight children, Buchanan recorded that "[t]he Heads of these families being possessed of considerable means, I have forwarded them with Guides to Leeds and Inverness."⁸³ The fact that there were already established settlers in the area meant that Buchanan could also risk encouraging some poorer families to follow in their footsteps. Between May 14 and June 4, those sent up the Craig and Gosford roads included not only farmers and tradesmen, but also labourers on several ships out of Hull; miners out of Falmouth; labourers and

76 Referring to Irish settlers in Upper Canada, one study argues that "[e]xperience, personal contacts, and capital were all ingredients of a successful start in the bush." See Darrell A. Norris, "Migration, Pioneer Settlement, and the Life Course: The First Families of an Ontario Township," *Canadian Papers in Rural History*, vol. 4 (1984), p. 135.

77 LAC, microfilm C720, 1831 manuscript census, Inverness township.

78 Norman Macdonald, *Canada, 1763-1841: Immigration and Settlement* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1939), p. 335; Little, "Imperialism and Colonization," pp. 526-527.

79 LAC, RG1 L3L, vol. 21, pp. 10399-10403, April 22, 1831.

80 LAC, CO 384, Emigration, vol. 28, pp. 182-185, A. C. Buchanan to Lord Aylmer, May 7, 1831.

81 CO 384, Emigration, vol. 28, p. 181, A. C. Buchanan to John Richards, Quebec, May 26, 1831.

82 *Quebec Mercury*, May 21, 1831. The article added that a large number from Cornwall had settled in Leeds and Inverness.

83 LAC, RG4 A1, vol. 371, Chief Emigrant Officer: Statistical Reports (1831). See also LAC, CO 384, Emigration, vol. 28, pp. 160-161.

tradesmen out of Limerick; labourers out of Galway; labourers and servants out of Dublin; miners and farmers out of Plymouth; farmers and tradesmen out of Leith; tradesmen and farmers out of Newry; labouring servants out of Wexford; farmers and farm labourers out of Sligo; farmers out of Greenoch; and labourers out of Ross. The most popular port of embarkation, however, was Belfast, from where farmers, farm servants, labourers, weavers, masons, and “tradesmen,” nearly all of whom were “voluntary” (that is, unassisted) emigrants, arrived in six ships during that three-week period.⁸⁴ Despite the wide variety of occupational backgrounds, nearly every male settler in Inverness declared himself to be a farmer to the 1831 census enumerator. With no mills of any kind in the township, there were only four self-declared labourers among the 153 household heads, plus two blacksmiths, two schoolmasters, and one tavern keeper / farmer.⁸⁵

Meanwhile, the situation on the Quebec docks was moving beyond the emigrant agent’s control, for the British government’s eagerness to promote emigration in the wake of the Captain Swing riots in southern England meant that the *Passenger Act* was not being enforced.⁸⁶ Buchanan’s report for the week ending on June 4 concluded with the alarming statement that “[a] very great distress has been experienced this week by the Emigrants from the manner in which they have been hurried out of the ships and exposed to lay on wharves and from which cause much sickness has resulted. I have deemed it expedient to suspend forwarding Emigrants for the present to Craig’s Road settlement, unless such as are possessed with means sufficient to support themselves for at least 6 months, and as the demand for labour in this City and its vicinity is at present fully supplied, I recommend all those that can to proceed immediately to the Townships under settlement in New Castle district [Upper Canada].” But there remained the problem of finding enough steamboats to carry passengers further upriver, and Buchanan did continue to send selected settlers southward as the emigrant ships arrived, mostly from Irish ports, during the following weeks. Thus he recorded on June 10 that a ship from Derry had docked with 142 men, 110 women, and 58 children aboard, all of whom were farming families particularly recommended to him, and that he was advising them to examine the Inverness settlements. Inverness and Leeds were also particularly popular for the two shiploads of “voluntary” emigrants who arrived from Sligo on June 11 and June 16, but not all those who settled in the two townships were of this class, for the 90 “assisted” passengers (of 184) who had arrived on a ship from Liverpool on June 7 were said to have been “[c]hiefly provided for in Inverness and Leeds.”⁸⁷

According to a later report by Buchanan, many of the newcomers of 1831 were missed by that year’s census because they did not go to their lands before September or October due, no doubt, to the need to earn money as labourers.⁸⁸

84 LAC, RG4 A1, vol. 371, Chief Emigrant Officer: Statistical Reports (1831).

85 LAC, microfilm C720, 1831 manuscript census, Inverness township.

86 Dunkley (“Emigration and the State,” pp. 361-362) adds that by 1831 the parliamentary under-secretary at the Colonial Office, Lord Howick, favoured “a greater influx of British immigrants [to Lower Canada] to strengthen the moderate party against the French-Canadian radicals.”

87 LAC, RG4 A1, vol. 371, Chief Emigrant Officer: Statistical Reports (1831).

88 *Quebec Mercury*, November 3, 1832; *British Parliamentary Papers*, Emigration Series, vol. 19, p. 154,

That year, more than 150 families proceeded to the Megantic county settlements after October 1, although the *Montreal Gazette* reported that the bad state of the roads, with the washing away of several bridges, had prevented many more from doing so. Of the 55,000 emigrants who landed in Quebec in 1831, 17,500 settled in Lower Canada. Of these, 2,000 (350 families) chose Inverness, Leeds, Ireland, and adjoining townships, and another 1,000 selected land in the neighbouring seigneuries.⁸⁹ The census report for 1831 appears to have greatly underestimated the population of Megantic, then, for it is recorded as only 2,283, of whom only 1,357 were immigrants.⁹⁰

Buchanan was now able to report that nearly all the land in Inverness and Leeds was occupied, and he recommended that “the remaining lands in Halifax, Ireland, Chester, Tinwick [Tingwick], Somerset, Nelson, Arthabaska, and Thetford be reserved for Industrious Emigrant families arriving from the United Kingdom who will be called on to shew reasonable evidence of their becoming actual settlers.”⁹¹ His pamphlet “for the use of emigrants” published in 1832 admitted, however, that “at present there is no convenient road” to the townships of Halifax, Chester, and Tingwick, adding that the Craig road was “impassable for wheel carriage beyond Ireland.”⁹² The 1832 season would be a disappointing one as far as British settlement was concerned. Buchanan’s year-end report noted that the “extraordinary lateness of the spring” had contributed to the “almost impassable” state of the roads, preventing “strangers” from proceeding “any distance into the Southern districts.” The inclement weather also helped to explain the short supply of provisions, “particularly in the townships in the district of Quebec.” To make matters still worse, cholera had broken out in the middle of June, just as the roads were becoming fit for transport, with the result that local inhabitants refused to offer accommodation to immigrants. As a result, “many who were previously disposed to stop in this province, hurried off to Montreal, and from thence to Upper Canada.”⁹³

With the “prospect of the harvest being good, and near at hand” in mid-August, however, Buchanan finally felt able to advise “several respectable English families” to settle in the Craig road vicinity, adding that “I have much satisfaction

Extracts from Report, December 12, 1831. According to a sawmill operator in Quebec, one-third of his 40 employees were “old countrymen” with farms in Leeds and Frampton townships (*British Parliamentary Papers*, Emigration Series, vol. 19, p. 196, William Patton, Esq., to A. C. Buchanan, Burnet’s Wharf, Quebec, December 12, 1832).

89 With 26,500 new British settlers, Upper Canada was not far ahead of Lower Canada in 1831, though the margin would become much wider in future years (*British Parliamentary Papers*, Emigration Series, vol. 19, p. 159; *Montreal Gazette*, November 15, 1831).

90 *Quebec Mercury*, February 4, 1832; *Journals of the Legislative Assembly of Lower Canada*, vol. 41 (1831-1832), Appendix Oo. The 1831 census reports that arrivals since 1825 totalled only 479 of 754 residents in Leeds, 679 of 853 in Inverness, and 163 of 440 in Ireland (LAC, microfilm C720, 1831 census, Megantic county).

91 LAC, RG4 A1, vol. 371, Chief Emigrant Officer: Statistical Reports (1831).

92 *Information Published by His Majesty’s Chief Agent*, pp. 10-11. Buchanan was mistakenly presenting two roads as one, for the Craig road ended in Shipton, and it was the Gosford road that passed through Dudswell.

93 Buchanan’s report for the week ending June 23 stated that two people had died of cholera on the Craig road in St. Gilles (*British Parliamentary Papers*, Emigration Series, vol. 19, pp. 191, 198, Buchanan’s Report to Lord Aylmer, Quebec, December 12, 1832).

in reporting the healthy and favourable situation of the settlers in that part of the country, and the total absence of the cholera.” In December, the local agent for Leeds reported that the demand for labour throughout the year had exceeded the supply and that there was “no real cause of distress felt in this neighbourhood.” Of the 10,200 immigrants who had settled in Lower Canada in 1832, however, only 750 had gone to the Eastern Townships, and the Megantic experiment had effectively run its course.⁹⁴

Buchanan had envisioned a thorough mixing in this frontier zone, reporting proudly in 1832 that he had succeeded in locating in Inverness and Leeds “about an equal number of Scotch, English and Irish Emigrants and I find the best results from such an Amalgamation.”⁹⁵ Judging from the 1844 census for Megantic county, however, the ratios were actually closer to 63 per cent Irish (only a small minority of whom were Catholics), 22 per cent Scots, and 15 per cent English, though the Irish population may have been more inclined than the Scots and English to sink roots in the county.⁹⁶ Furthermore, rather than mixing with settlers from other parts of the United Kingdom, at least in the first generation, families tended to seek out others from the same homeland areas, as reflected in local names such as Ulster, Yorkshire, Dublin, and New Hamilton,⁹⁷ and political jealousies divided the Congregational Arran Scots from the Anglican Irish majority. The lack of a cohesive local elite ensured that this was the strongest centre of resistance in the Eastern Townships to the government’s tax-assessing municipal and school reforms of the 1840s.⁹⁸ In the 1850s, the Corrigan affair, in which a local Irish Protestant was murdered by a group of Irish Catholics, resulted in a deep rift between the two groups who had settled alongside the Craig road in the Lotbinière parish of St. Sylvestre.⁹⁹

In the early 1830s, however, the Megantic project was generally considered by colonial authorities to be a signal success. John Richards reported in 1831 that “[t]he settlements are conducted with much skill, economy, and practical

94 Upper Canada had attracted 35,000 immigrants (*British Parliamentary Papers*, Emigration Series, vol. 19, pp. 195, 201, Buchanan’s Report to Lord Aylmer, Quebec, December 12, 1832; and p. 204, W. M Phillips, Esq., to A. C. Buchanan, Leeds, December 26, 1832).

95 LAC, CO 384, Emigration, vol. 28, p. 186, A. C. Buchanan to Lord Aylmer, May 7, 1831.

96 The Irish who settled in eastern Upper Canada’s Montague township at this time were more persistent than the other colonists. See Glen J. Lockwood, “Irish Immigrants and the ‘Critical Years’ in Eastern Ontario: The Case of Montague Township, 1821-1881,” *Canadian Papers in Rural History*, vol. 4 (1984), pp. 161-164.

97 Buchanan claimed to have assigned these names to the Inverness settlements, but it seems more likely that the settlers did so themselves, in most cases (*British Parliamentary Papers*, Emigration Series, vol. 19, p. 154, Extracts from Report, December 12, 1831). Buchanan’s report for 1832 can be found in Adam Fergusson, *Practical Notes Made During a Tour in Canada and a Portion of the United States, MDCCCXXI, the Second Edition to Which Are Now Added Notes Made During a Second Visit to Canada, MDCCCXXXIII* (Edinburgh: William Blackwell and London: T. Cadell, 1834), pp. 355-356.

98 See J. I. Little, *State and Society in Transition: The Politics of Institutional Reform in the Eastern Townships, 1838-1852* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1997), pp. 144-148, 160, 202-205; Barry, *A History of Megantic*, p. 162.

99 See D. Aidan McQuillan, “Baurivage: The Development of an Irish Ethnic Identity in Rural Quebec, 1820-1860” in Robert O’Driscoll and Laura Reynolds, eds., *The Untold Story: The Irish in Canada* (Toronto: Celtic Arts, 1988); Matthew Barlow, “Fear and Loathing in Saint-Sylvestre: The Corrigan Murder Case, 1855-58” (MA thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1998). There was a much higher ratio of Irish Catholics in the southern part of Lotbinière county than in Megantic (Barry, *A History of Megantic*, pp. 100-101).

knowledge, and will be frequently referred to in case of the adoption of any system of emigration.”¹⁰⁰ In 1833 W. B. Felton referred to the “experiment” as evidence that a limited amount of government support would pay rich dividends. Of the 53,120 acres (21,248 hectares) originally available in Inverness and Leeds, 27,900 acres (11,160 hectares) had been sold at four shillings per acre, and 20,100 acres (80,400 hectares) had been granted free (presumably referring to quit rent grants, since very little land was granted free to the British settlers), leaving only 9,000 acres unsold; yet the government expenditure had been less than £240. Some progress had also been made in neighbouring Ireland and Halifax, but there were still nearly 30,000 acres (12,000 hectares) available in those two townships.¹⁰¹

The success of the Megantic project was largely due to Buchanan’s personal efforts, for he did much more than simply direct settlers to that general area. He reported in the summer of 1831, for example, that due to the lack “of a regular system for guides or settling agents immediately in connection with this office,” he had “found it necessary to proceed this week about forty miles up Craig’s Road to make arrangements for getting several respectable families located.”¹⁰² He also invested personally in the area, applying for a crown lot in Inverness and promising to build “a small log cottage for myself to occasionally stop during the winter months when my official duties are not so pressing.” A large log barn that he planned to erect “would always be found open to the strange Emigrant.” Then, in 1832, Buchanan asked that the grant be expanded to 500 acres (200 hectares) for what he referred to as an “asylum farm,” on the grounds that he had eighteen acres (7.2 hectares) cleared and in crop, a dwelling house and barn on one lot, a log house on a neighbouring lot in which he had established a blacksmith, and a house and stable on yet another neighbouring lot, totalling over £500 in improvements.¹⁰³

When Megantic was granted representation in the Legislative Assembly in 1832, Buchanan contested the county’s seat. After a long, hard-fought contest, however, he lost narrowly to Quebec resident Anthony Anderson who had reportedly brought a number of absentee proprietors to the polls.¹⁰⁴ Buchanan appears to have been quite popular among the settlers, for a meeting in Leeds passed resolutions protesting “the attempt to trample on the independence of the

100 Richards Report, p. 33. This assessment ran counter to Richards’ general bias towards private associations of capitalists rather than government involvement in colonization. See Gates, *Land Policies*, pp. 178-179.

101 LAC, RG1 L3L, vol. 21, p. 10911, Sketch of the result of the experiment commenced 1829-30 for opening certain townships, January 10, 1833.

102 LAC, RG4 A1, vol. 371, Chief Emigrant Officer: Statistical Reports (1831).

103 LAC, RG1 L3, vol. 49 (microfilm C2512), pp. 25330-25332, A. C. Buchanan to Sir James Kemp, Quebec, July 7, 1830; p. 25329, C. Yorke to the Chief Justice, Quebec, July 10, 1830; p. 25335, Surveyor-General Bouchette’s report, August 3, 1832; pp. 25336-25338, Extract of a report made by a Committee of the whole Council, with A. C. Buchanan note; pp. 25339-25342, A. C. Buchanan to Commissioner of Crown Lands, Quebec, April 23, 1832. Buchanan’s property was reportedly sold in 1835 to the county’s second MLA, John G. Clapham of Quebec (*Quebec Mercury*, July 30, 1835).

104 *Quebec Mercury*, March 13, 24, 29, and 31, 1832, and April 3, 1832. Anderson was said to have a farm on the north side of the little St. Charles river, on the outskirts of Quebec, “which would do credit to any country” (*Quebec Mercury*, October 18, 1832).

County, by the introduction of a foreign influence, in violation of the manifest right of the resident voters to choose their Representative.”¹⁰⁵

Efforts to attract British settlers continued, for the MLA who succeeded Anderson, John G. Clapham, sent a promotional letter in January 1835 to the newspaper owner and MP for his native Leeds in England. Given his picturesque imagery, Clapham was clearly addressing members of the genteel class, for he wrote that Megantic was like Yorkshire in that it was “particularly adapted for grazing” with its “continuous succession of mighty swells; magnificent but useful; possessing the advantage of being clothed with forests and verdure to their summits.” Clapham listed the mills in each township, noting what he considered to be excellent sites for towns and adding that Lake William in Halifax township “will give this section of country a preference with men of taste; it swarms in a variety of fish, and its waters, deep and pure, are admirably adapted for aquatic recreations.”¹⁰⁶ Rather than British immigrants, however, it would be French Canadians who subsequently settled in Halifax and the townships beyond.

The greatest challenge would in effect be to stem the tide of British settlers migrating away from Inverness and the surrounding townships as the growing political crisis in Lower Canada prevented the government from addressing their needs. Convinced, for example, that the absentee proprietors were an obstacle to further development, the settlers petitioned in 1833 for a reformed road law that would impose a tax or its labour equivalent on all proprietors and double that amount on absentees, but without avail.¹⁰⁷ Clapham wrote to Lord Aylmer in 1835 that “[t]heir eyes are thus naturally turned to a way to escape from this cross fire in the conflict, and great numbers of valuable yeomanry and loyal British subjects are now actually endeavouring to dispose of their properties, to flee to the Western States.” To support his plea that the road work commenced the previous year be renewed, Clapham stated that “[i]t would give great numbers something better to do than murmur and complain, and afford them the means of purchasing at the close of the working season, that necessary clothing, which may prevent some from perishing, as occurred during the last winter, from the want of it.”¹⁰⁸

When Aylmer replied that “circumstances over which he has no control” precluded him from offering assistance,¹⁰⁹ Clapham wrote to Colonial Secretary Glenelg on behalf of the settlers of Megantic, stating that “[t]heir prospects, which had been cheered by the hope of relief, through the means of that public work,

105 *Quebec Mercury*, April 5, 1832. Local lore, however, claimed that Buchanan had subsequently ignored the county out of spite for losing the election (Barry, *A History of Megantic*, pp. 82-83).

106 LAC, RG4 A1, vol. 502, John G. Clapham to Edward Baines, Esq., MP, Quebec, January 19, 1835.

107 *Quebec Mercury*, January 22, 1833. For post-1833 complaints about absentee proprietors, see, for example, *Quebec Mercury*, October 2 and December 27, 1834; see also the evidence of James Keough of Ireland township in *Report of the Affairs of British North America from the Earl of Durham (1839)*, [hereafter *Durham's Report*], Appendix B, p. 78. An effective local taxation system would be introduced only with the *Municipal and Road Reform Bill* of 1854. See J. I. Little, “Colonization and Municipal Reform in Canada East,” *Histoire sociale - Social History*, vol. 14, no. 27 (May 1981), pp. 94-121.

108 LAC, RG4 A1, vol. 502, file 7-10 February 1837, John G. Clapham to Matthew Lord Aylmer, Quebec, June 20, 1835. See also *Quebec Mercury*, July 7, 1835.

109 LAC, RG4 A1, vol. 502, file 7-10 February 1837, H. Craig (Civil Secretary) to J. G. Clapham, Quebec, June 22, 1835.

and the tide of emigration that would follow in its train, will now be ready to despair, and impugn the wisdom, foresight, and justice of the British Government, which they have been accustomed to look upon as the wisest, the most just and powerful in the universe.” To Clapham’s plea for “a more than ordinary degree of consideration,” an unsympathetic Glenelg replied through the governor-general that, even if he had such funds at his disposal, “he could not allow himself to doubt, that the House of Assembly of the Province would act in other than an impartial spirit, in the distribution of the Funds at their command for Public Works.”¹¹⁰ Though this was clearly an optimistic statement given the growing anti-British sentiment within the *Parti patriote*, which controlled the Legislative Assembly, it did approve of a £400 grant to improve the Gosford road from St. Gilles to Inverness in late December of 1835.¹¹¹

That grant was none too soon, for Buchanan admitted that same month that, even though the settlements in Inverness and Leeds had made considerable progress, “the bad state of the public roads, in addition to other disappointments, has materially damped the spirits of the original settlers.”¹¹² Whether or not the grant had a significant effect on the Gosford road, a number of quit-rent settlers had apparently abandoned their farms by 1837, and others protested that they could not afford to pay the back rents due to the lack of road work and the “untimely frost last season.” Inverness petitioners claimed that most of them “are prevented from attending on religious instruction altho’ it is brought home to their very doors, on account of their wretched appearances.”¹¹³ The “indulgence” of delaying the quit rent collection was granted,¹¹⁴ but this did not solve the problem of the poor harvest and lack of employment. William Colclough, member of the Royal College of Surgeons in London, complained in the spring of 1837 that he had been induced by Buchanan to set up practice in Leeds seven years earlier, but “circumstances, arising from various causes, have totally changed the prospects of this county. Instead of being as it then was, the place of settlement anxiously sought for by almost every Emigrant, it is now forsaken by all who had means enough left to permit them to do so, and has few other occupants than those whose embarrassments prevent them from leaving it.”¹¹⁵ The outbreak of the Lower

110 LAC, RG4 A1, vol. 502, file 7-10 February 1837, Jno. G. Clapham to the Right Honorable Lord Glenelg, Quebec, June 25, 1835; S. Walcott to J. G. Clapham, Quebec, November 3, 1835.

111 LAC, RG4 A1, vol. 502, file 7-10 February 1837, “To the Constituency of the County of Megantic,” Quebec, December 24, 1835. The *Patriotes* may have been courting political support in the county, for local resident Robert Layfield had only narrowly lost the previous election, and he would be arrested in 1838 as a *Patriote* sympathizer (Little, *Loyalties in Conflict*, pp. 70, 72).

112 LAC, CO 384, Emigration, vol. 41, pp. 394, 396-397, Buchanan’s Report on Emigration, December 12, 1835.

113 LAC, RG4 A1, vol. 503, file 11-17 February 1837, petition of quit rent inhabitants of the township of Inverness in the county of Megantic, February 15, 1837; vol. 506, file 5-8 April 1837, Charles Drury to Stephen Walcott, Quebec, April 5, 1837; Petition of the Quit Renters of Leeds, County of Megantic, Lower Canada, to the Earl of Gosford.

114 See the June 26 brief response to Clapham’s plea on behalf of the quit renters (LAC, RG4 A1, vol. 502, pp. 80-81, J. G. Clapham to Archibald, Earl of Gosford, Quebec, February 8, 1837).

115 Colclough was applying for a position at the quarantine station on Grosse Isle (LAC, RG4 A1, vol. 508, p. 26, William Colclough to Earl of Gosford, Leeds, April 17, 1837). On the exodus, see Rawlings, *The Pioneers*, chap. 3.

Canadian rebellion in the fall of 1837 would soon provide a sharp reminder of one reason why many of the settlers had left their Irish homeland, though Clapham reported that the Megantic settlers were anxious to organize “more against the predatory incursions of a half-starved population in the seigniories ... than from any organized hostile invasion” of the isolated territory.

The pioneer English-speaking settlers had, in fact, generally raised good crops, attracting French-Canadian buyers who were desperate for provisions during the later 1830s.¹¹⁶ There were also local cases of poverty, however, for some old commuted soldiers who had settled on small free grants in Ireland township were said to be “miserably destitute for winter clothing and bedding” in the fall of 1838.¹¹⁷ And conditions remained dire the following year when the surveyor and crown land agent Andrew Russell reported that the Craig and Gosford roads were both “in a bad state of repair.” The result, he wrote, was that the settlers of Inverness could reach Quebec only by foot “or by a long detour, to get into the Craig’s road, which, although bad is not actually impassable.”¹¹⁸ Perhaps not surprisingly, the chain migration process had already been effectively truncated, for 90 per cent of all English-speaking settlers in Megantic and Lotbinière South had arrived by 1836.¹¹⁹ Buchanan would claim to have demonstrated that the surplus population of northern Ireland could be transplanted to the North American colonies humanely and at a minimal cost to taxpayers,¹²⁰ but the British government was no longer interested in emigration projects. Dogma, now, was Edward Gibbon Wakefield’s theory that not only was colonial progress being hindered by the lack of wage labour for large-scale farms but the cost of emigration could be transferred to the colonies by the sale of their crown lands.¹²¹

Even though he had assisted many thousand impoverished immigrants to Upper and Lower Canada and could rightly claim to be the progenitor of the emigration service in the United Kingdom, Alexander Buchanan was largely forgotten after he died in 1840.¹²² Not only was the emigrant agent less part of the

116 According to the *Quebec Mercury* of December 16, 1837, hundreds of people from the seigneuries had visited Megantic looking for work, to sell or barter their manufactured goods, or to beg. A little over a year later, on March 2, 1839, the *Mercury* reported that 40 to 50 sleighs were arriving daily from “the French lower settlements” to exchange their domestic manufactures for food, “as they have little money.”

117 *Quebec Mercury*, December 16, 1837; LAC, MG24 A27, Durham Papers, vol. 2, pp. 329-330. R. Symes to Sir John [Colborne], Quebec, October 19, 1838; and p. 331, Harvey Vachell, Travelling Missionary for the SPG, Quebec, October 17, 1838). On the local economy, see Barry, *A History of Megantic*, pp. 212-216.

118 *Durham’s Report*, Appendix B, Public Lands and Emigration, Minutes of Evidence, Lower Canada, p. 68, evidence of Andrew Russell. In addition to describing current conditions, Russell provided a useful history of settlement in the Megantic townships.

119 Barry, *A History of Megantic*, p. 86. On the chain migration of Tipperary Irish Protestants to Upper Canada, see Bruce Elliott, *Irish Migrants in the Canadas: A New Approach* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1988); Barry, *A History of Megantic*, pp. 317-319

120 LAC, CO 384, Emigration, vol. 41, p. 57, A. C. Buchanan to Lord Glenelg (private), Near the Giants Causeway, Co. Antrim, July 18, 1836.

121 Ghosh, “The Colonization Controversy,” pp. 390-393; Johnston, *British Emigration Policy*, pp. 166-168. Interest in state-assisted emigration did revive somewhat in the late nineteenth century, and again in 1922. See Howard L. Malchow, *Population Pressures: Emigration and Government in Late Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Palo Alto, CA: Society for the Promotion of Science and Scholarship, 1979); Feldman and Baldwin, “Emigration and the British State,” pp. 136-141.

122 Cowan, *British Emigration*, pp. 149, 187. Houston and Smyth’s recent overview of Irish settlement in Canada (*Irish Emigration*), fails to mention the Megantic project, and Macdonald (*Canada, 1763-1841*)

national epic in Britain than the soldier or the missionary,¹²³ but the descendants of the more than 5,300 immigrants Buchanan directed to the Craig and Gosford road settlements between 1829 and 1831 had nearly all left the area by the late 1950s when my parents finally sold their hillside farm adjacent to the one established by James Little and his family. The fact remains, however, that an English-speaking community did survive for several generations as a small island of closely interrelated Irish-and-Scots Protestant descendants, testimony to the limitations of anglicizing colonialism in Lower Canada, but also to the strong attachments that were forged to that culturally and economically isolated place.¹²⁴

gives the credit to W.B. Felton. It was largely due to Buchanan's efforts that the first emigration officer was appointed at Liverpool in 1833 (Dunkley, "Emigration and the State," pp. 364-365), but he does not appear in either the *Dictionary of National Biography* or the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*. He is sometimes confused with his nephew of the same name who replaced him as emigrant agent in Quebec during the winter months of 1833 and on a regular basis beginning in 1835. See Macdonald, *Canada, 1763-1841*, p. 21; Wesley B. Turner, "Buchanan, Alexander Carlisle," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 9, p. 97. (Turner's biography is of the younger Buchanan.)

123 Tosh, "'All the masculine virtues,'" p. 187. On the theme of British colonial officials, see David Lambert and Alan Lester, eds., *Colonial Lives Across the British Empire: Imperial Careerism in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

124 The English-speaking population of Megantic would near its census peak as early as 1861, when it was recorded as 6,465 souls. (Canada, *Census Reports*, 1860-1861, 1870-1871). Although there are only a handful of English-speaking families left in rural Megantic, the Orange Order's Twelfth of July picnic is still held every year in Leeds township as a homecoming event for the widespread diaspora (Rawlings, *The Pioneers*, pp. 35-36; Barry, *A History of Megantic*, pp. 252-260).