

File 111 Burton's letter to the Archdeacon of Montreal, 11 April 1829

L'Assomption 11 April [sic] 29

Dear Archdeacon

His Lordship our Bishop, in his last favor to me, intimated that, he had been considerably pressed by business but that should be the case now, and as I know it is the same thing, to write to you, his oculus, as to him; I take the liberty of troubling you at present, with an official communication, of considerable consequence to the Episcopalian Church ----- I have been contending for some time with an unprincipled fellow, for the glebe of this Township¹, of which he has taken unlawful and unsanctioned possession—The man, who has been in possession when you were here Le Rivier² departed: immediately upon that occasion, I gave general notice that, no person should re-occupy the premises, as I laid claim to them for myself and my successor – Notwithstanding this notification, a man named John Sadler³ placed himself forthwith in the shoes of the original squatter – Many Letters have passed between the Agent & myself upon the subject: and some letters have also been exchanged between the Civil Secretary Col. Yorke and me upon the topic: & I have finally brought the affair to a very interesting and important crisis – The Governor has ordered Sadler to be dispossessed by the Agent, as he had no title, nor location or any ticket⁴ – And I have drawn the conclusion from promises contained in one of our Civil Secretaries [sic] letters (altho' he has not expressly & explicitly indited the declaration) that, as the natural consequence of Sadler's expulsion from the Glebe, I am to be put in possession of the premises for the time being in my own right, and as a trustee for my successor – By the tenor however, of the Agent's letter, which is enclosed, it will appear, he has taken a different view of the subject; & to have him finally set right, through the medium of the Government, is the object of this letter – To me the Glebe

is an object. I have enough of land in Rawdon: particularly as I mean to remove, soon as possibly, from a corner to the centre of my mission, for the benefit of my parishioners, my personal convenience, and general professional satisfaction. But I am already of opinion, as well as others of better understanding and more knowledge than myself, it is of vital consequence to the interests of our Church, that I should succeed in the undertaking: and the best mode to mature it, to a favorable result is, to place it under existing critical circumstances, in the hands of the dignitaries of our establishment ----- I have already succeeded in establishing, in this neighbourhood, a respectable protestant settlement, in despite of Canadian influence: & if I am now instrumental in establishing, in the hands of the Minister of our religion, all the Township glebes, in the teeth, of Presbyterian interest, I think, I shall have deserved well from my brethren. This procedure has indeed given mighty umbrage to the Presbyterians of this place, as they assert an equal right mentally, if not expressly, to the bone of contention: however, if I should succeed, in what I think is conscientiously right, I can not for their sentiments or opposition—They speak at present of sending a second petition, relative to the removal of the approved site of the Church, on the front of the Township: and to deprive me of my fees: but Presbyterians surely can have no influence nor votes, in Episcopalian matters, and my Flock

will not join them in their machinations: at least, not more than some half dozen scamps, who were concerned, in the promotion, of the last unfounded and unprincipled complaint to his Lordship, the nature of which you have investigated – The Surveyor General and the agents of Townships have been divided, in their constructions, to set apart, in each Township, two hundred acres of land for a glebe, with the understanding that, from

it, in the want of a church, court house, or session house, being built, a corresponding portion of Land should be annexed to each, Now supposing three such edifices should be eventually built in this or any other Township, five acres would be enough for all those purposes –two acres for a church: yard and Church __two acres for the School & play ground and one for the Session House, Let me ask then, what is to be done with the remaining one hundred and ninety five acres, it must be given either to the Clergyman for a glebe or remain a waste. Take the reverse of the supposition, and how absurd will the arrangement appear! sixty six & a half acres for the church yard of one Township, sixty six and a half for a session house, & sixty six acres & a half for the school__ Upon the diagram of each Township, there are two hundred acres set apart for the Clergyman as above stated, and the word glebe, written upon the lot so designated, in large characters: and the circumstance corresponds, with the general instructions given to Surveyor General and Agents as already alluded to __ Upon the which I have no doubt, of the intention of the late Majesty with regard to those glebes nor of the intention of the Government of Canada, who had gotten and given instructions, with respect to them: neither have I the least doubt if the business is followed up as it ought) of our eventually accomplishing and establishing a very desirable right__ My ancestors, for many years back were clergymen; & _ I have always heard it said that, it was most dishonorable, for a church man to abandon, through interest or pusillanimity, the right of his ancestors ----- With this honorable impression imprinted therefore on my mind – I disfuse [sic] from my heart, the threats & enmity, of a few black guards, belonging to the most infamous Township in the Canadas' _____ Rawdon _____ I am happy to inform you, Protestantism is thriving progressively in every corner of my parish _ Rawdon excepted _ The reason Rawdon does not meliorate is many respectable families⁵ have quit the unhallowed spot – To show

you how matters pressed elsewhere, I had on Sunday last, at a new preaching station, thirty three miles from this, where I have been only twice, a congregation of one hundred and fifty persons, and forty communicants Mr. Jeffries the butcher, who is now a Captain of Militia, has just called to say that my sons must attend him, as militiamen, at parade, every fourth Sunday at eleven o'clock, the time of divine service – The Act of Parliament states that, the members of “all religious communities” are exempt from all militia service, that being the case, I think, two of my boys, who are on his Lordship's books for holy orders, are exempt - for surely it would be a great insult to say that his Lordship the Rev'd Prebendary Burton and his divinity students did not constitute a “religious Community” If this construction however, is not just on the act, I must beg his Lordship, will have the goodness to recollect his promise, to get the young folks special exemption from his excellency- The eldest Meredith nineteen years of age is now in Ireland- The papistical doctrine of doing evil, that good

may arise from it, is not one of my maxims. My sons will not break the Sabbath, to serve the state- Pulcre et decorum est pro fratria more, is a fine sentiment; but I prefer the latter & so do my boys si "deus nobiscum quis contra nos? I have the Honor to be

Dear Archdeacon your very
faithful Servant
JE Burton

PS

In case my sons are not exempted from attending militia service amongst fellows who would be glad to clean their boots at home, I shall start, let the consequences be what it may, with all my animate & heavy baggage from Rawdon in twenty four hours from the receipt of your letter.

¹ Unfortunately, he does not state the location. Burton had Lots 13 – 16 on the first Range but added the Letters Patent for an additional 200 acres at 1 / 12 in 1836. I believe this could be the Glebe lot which he wanted to hold on to?

² Possibly this was François Larivière who headed a family of 8 on the 1825 Census, apparently a squatter and not on 1831 Rawdon Census.

³ Sadler received a ticket of location for 7 / S 11 in March 1826 and was living there in 1831 and for which he received Letters Patent in May 1832. His 16 year old son was granted Letters Patent for 6 / N 15 in the same month.

How did he come to be on Burton's Glebe lot, too? Perhaps other family members were tending his interests on the 6th and 7th ranges while he attempted to garner a third location. He was part of a large and complicated family group - his sister was married to Arthur Hamilton (File 59) and his wife was (believed to be) a sister of James Mason, who was Burton's some time driver. To add further confusion, his address was given as 2 / 18 in March 1828 (RIAL Letter 447 / 9608) which was also Arthur Hamilton's address.

⁴ Settlers received a Ticket of Location naming the lot and range which they were authorized to occupy without which they had no legal right to be on the land and could not apply for Letters Patent or ownership. Squatters were settlers without Tickets of Location.

⁵ Perhaps this is a reference to Samuel Knowlton, File 112, who moved to Montreal.