

SOME EARLY RAWDON SCHOOLS

The first British and Protestant settlers at Rawdon were mostly literate, as were some Irish Catholics. There was a strong tradition of the value of education in Ireland and Scotland for both boys and girls, due to the significant influence of John Knox and Presbyterianism, who believed that everyone should read the scriptures or hear them read in the common language. The early Rawdon colonists were motivated by their culture to demand that schools be within walking distance of their newfound wilderness homes so that their children could learn to read and write, as they did.

This is a selective, rather than a comprehensive story of schools at Rawdon. It is from my own historical perspective that is coloured my Anglo and Irish Protestant culture and makes use of the disparate material available to me, at present. The chronology has many gaps and I acknowledge that areas of great interest have been overlooked.

In writing UP TO R AWDON, I recorded instances of families moving to be closer to schools and one of these was of my great grandfather George Parkinson. In the nineteenth century, despite their shortcomings, the primitive one room, blended schools were able to lay the ground for those who went on higher education. Rawdon produced clergy for all the churches, as well as doctors, veterinarians and lawyers.

The population of Rawdon was shrinking and many older, original settlers sold to French speakers especially after separate schools were established and neighbourhood schools closed. It was essential for many that remained that schools should represent their culture and change threatened that. This discussion is mostly limited to the early nineteenth century.

First Rawdon School

The struggle for education was supported by the Royal Institution for the Advancement of Learning (or RIAL)¹ and schools at Rawdon began with the School at the Forks. I have written about it in the chapter *Christ Church, Rawdon, Early Days* in UP TO RAWDON. In May 1824, a citizen's petition to the RIAL requested a schoolmaster be hired and the signers pledged to support the construction of a schoolhouse. I explored this school in detail in the essay [Royal Institution for the Advancement of Learning](#). It opened in 1826.

Philomen Dugas was named a school commissioner and negotiated the acquisition of the property for the school for the RIAL. Dugas was educated in Massachusetts, as a Presbyterian and English speaker, and played a pivotal role. He supported the school in every possible way, including providing accommodation for the students and teacher before the school was built; most of his older daughters attended it. His wife, Martha (Patty) Edwards was Massachusetts born, literate and a believer in education; she signed with her husband and participated in his business interests. Initially a Protestant, her daughters received Catholic baptisms at St-Jacques-de-l'Achigan and she herself was baptized at St-Jacques on 21 April 1828, aged 42 years and 8 months.

The continued use of the school at *des Fourches* of the Second Range in the 1850s, is confirmed by Jean Gagnon in *Sous Le Clocher de St-Liguori*, published and printed at Joliette, 1979.

Plans for more schools

1826, August 7: Two letters in the RIAL correspondence highlight George Hobbs's role in advocating for a second school. He was one of the principal petitioners for this project which suggested that his neighbour's son, Joseph Eveleigh, be named as teacher. The Reverend J. E. Burton wrote in support of the scheme and suggested George Hobbs be named a school commissioner. Despite their efforts, only

the school at the Forks on the Second Range was confirmed, leaving many families far from a schoolhouse. See the section on Third Range, which follows, for when a school was actually built in 1830.

21 January 1830: Hugh Torney, as a trustee of Rawdon schools, acquired a location (one acre, without buildings) for 3 pounds from Henry Smith, the bailiff, who was located on what had been a Crown Reserve lot. He and Torney shared Lot Seven of the Second Range (source: December 30, 1830, Antoine Minier Lagacé, notary, St-Jacques). However, it is not known if this school was built.

Torney was a military settler from County Down, probably a sergeant in the Royal Artillery and was relocated to the Fifth Range around 1834, the additional land he received there was probably in recognition of his military rank. He was also a lieutenant in the Rawdon Militia and was an active vestryman of the Anglican Church.

Second Range

Gerard Brady reported on page 147 of *Une Bien Belle Histoire* that in 1847, in the old system before 1863, when separate Catholic schools began, there were 12 schools, with 527 students on several ranges in Rawdon Township.

The Journals of the Quebec National Assembly, 1852-1853² reported that S. D. Bayley [sic], a teacher with a diploma, had 21 boys 13 girls registered but there were 70 children in the district. Samuel D. Bailey and his wife Sarah Robinson, immigrated to Rawdon about 1845 and lived near George Robinson from Cavan, on the Second Range, who was perhaps a relative of Mrs. Bailey.

Some of these schools were attended by both French and English students, with instruction in both languages. Several teachers were Anglophones; Mary Jane Burbidge, born at Rawdon in 1831, was named a schoolmistress for the second season of the school in the second *arrondissement* in the 1850s. It seems there was resentment from some Catholic families because she was from a known Protestant family. She married a Rawdon man in 1863 and lived in Upper Canada. Some of this information is from p.124, 125, *Sous Le Clocher de St-Liguori*.

By 1870, most families sent their children to Rawdon for English instruction, although perhaps Firmin Dugas provided a room in his home for an English teacher, probably in the earlier years. (*Sous Le Clocher de St-Liguori*).

Third Range School

Settlers from the Third and Fourth Ranges petitioned on June 15, 1827 to the RIAL for its sanction "in establishing a School House ... on number twenty one of the third range." This request was recommended March 13, 1828 but not immediately acted on. Later, fifteen settlers from lots 20 to 28 of the 3rd and 4th ranges signed an appeal through Roderick McKenzie (a Major, he was the Senior officer of the Rawdon militia) that Mrs. Mary Holmes be appointed their school mistress. W. G. Holmes, the husband of Mary (Price) Holmes was the school master, on the 1831 Census, and used the school's address, which was also that of trustee John Robinson. The Holmes were associated with the Forks school until 1830.

The location, Lot 26 of the Third Range, was chosen by the "legally elected Trustees of the 4th section of the act for the encouragement of elementary education" – they were John Robertson [sic Robinson], Edward Tighe and Edward McGie. It was acquired from William Eveleigh, husbandman, for seven pounds. The farm of trustee John Robinson was to the front of the school, with Dean Byrne [sic Burns] to the rear and at the sides were Alexander Connolly [sic] and Andrew Irvine [sic Irwin]. The trustees constructed the schoolhouse, on cleared land and correctly acknowledged the "generosity of his Majesty the King".

The trustees were John Robinson, Patrick Cassidy, Connolly Cassidy, James Cahill, Alexander Connolly and appointed unanimously, from both the Protestant and Catholic communities. There were no Francophone landowners or residents in this district in 1830. The following signed, (their locations are from other records): John Robinson, Thos. Lane 3 / S 25, Patrick Casaday [sic Cassidy] & Conely Casaday [sic Cassidy] 3 / N 28, James Cahill possibly at 3 / S 28, Thos. Mitchell 4 / 25, James Robinson 4 / S 25, Andrew Irwin 3 / 25, George Pollock 4 / S 25, Owen ^{X his mark} McDermott 3 / N 25, William Robinson 4 / S 28, Thomas Robinson 4 / S 28, William Cole either 3/ 28 or 4 / S 28, Alexander Connolly 4/ S 26, John Burens [sic Burns or Byrne] probably at 4/20, there were 2 men of this name at two locations. (source 30 Dec. 1830, Antoine Minier Lagacé, notary, St-Jacques.

1852-1853: JQNA reported Thomas Lane had the government school but that it was in bad condition with 45 boys and 20 girls enrolled. Was this the school at 3/26? JQNA confusingly also states the Third Range had no schoolhouse and 43 children went to neighbouring schools. There were 60 children in the district.

Fifth Range

In 1834, Rawdon had a new Anglican priest with a great interest in education (John Lawrence [Milton](#)). At this time, Thomas Warren Cartwright, was a Rawdon schoolmaster and the vestry clerk at Christ Church. The Vestry Minutes published on the UTR website mention “resolutions towards establishing a combined elementary and classical school” and that a school was of vital importance regarding “moral and intellectual improvement and deserves the most serious consideration.” It was resolved that all matters relative to the school be in the hands of Trustees, three from each religious denomination in the Township”. However, there was much dissension and suspicion about what was taught in “Sunday Schools and one does not learn how matters were resolved. However, Milton was much abused and left the Township.

We know that Mr. Bourne, the priest who followed him at Christ Church Rawdon, stated in a parish report in 1838, “There is but one elementary school in the township conducted by a lady from the United States whose support is chiefly derived from friends at home.” It is my belief that she was Fidelia Cook, the daughter of Solomon Cook, an American settler and entrepreneur [Solomon Cook](#) and Family. She married Mr. Bourne in 1841 and died following childbirth in 1845. Nothing further has been found in support of this or details of the school. The Cook property was in the Fifth Range and parts of it were acquired by the Anglican Church.

1852-1853: JQNA reported the Village school was in the house of Luke Daly, the School Commissioner, he was a merchant, aged 58, on the 1852 Census. There were 46 boys, 26 girls and 115 children in the district. John Rogan was the teacher, with diploma, who was 30 in 1852 and had married Mary Rowan of Rawdon. He and his father were both farmers at Rawdon in 1852.

On the 1861 Census, he is 38, school teacher born in Ireland and living between Henry Pigott and Richard Blagrave who were at Lot 13 of the Seventh Range. The location of his school is not mentioned and perhaps it was outside and not in the village.

Sixth Range

William Eveleigh, husbandman “by these presents voluntarily did renounce and abandon ... to Mr. John Robertson [sic] , Edward Tighe and Edward MacGie [sic McGie] all of these persons legally elected Trustees of the 4th sections of the act for the encouragement of elementary education, Selected, to serve as such in the said Township of Rawdon, a lot of land situated sixth range, lot number twenty one.

It was bounded in front by Michael Cummings [not known to me but Edward Reinhardt was there in 1831], behind by George Hobs [at 7 / 22] on the SE by James Wade [6 / 20, 21] and on the north east by George Copping. The lot was the property of John Eveleigh & son in 1821 and passed through various owners including George Copping]. It was "all cultivated land with a house thereon erected that the said trustees had built for a school" and obliged to make any alterations. Eveleigh "the sum eight pounds Halifax currency . . . a full receipt granted and passed "to the vendor [who] has made good to the said purchasers on whose behalf they are now acting".

1852-1853: JQNA reported that John Wright was the instructor of 25 boys and 10 girls at the 6th range school. He was from Londonderry, Northern Ireland and died, aged 76 [sic] in 1865. He was the father of Florella Wright (Mrs. James Copping).

Seventh Range

1852-1853: JQNA reported a school in a government house. Abraham Watters was teacher with 65 students. He came as a settler from King's County to Rawdon in 1828.

Eighth Range

George Keo of Lot 24 of 8th range sold to John Robertson [sic], Edward Tighe and Edward McGie the legally elected Trustees of the act for "the encouragement of elementary education in the Township of Rawdon", a lot of cleared land, a house was constructed by the trustees. It was bounded in front by Robert Wilson [7th range], on rear "by one Greenan" [sic possibly Michael Greenan], on southeast by William Scroggy and to northeast by Michel [sic W. Mitchel] The purchase price was five pounds fifteen shillings; they paid two pounds, ten and owed was the balance of three pounds, five shillings as found in the files of Antoine Minier Lagacé, notary, St-Jacques, December 30, 1830.

Perhaps it is relevant to mention that George Keo had been a ship builder and George Copping had reported attending church at Mr. Keo's on Sunday, November 10, 1839. It was said that Mrs. Keo (Catherine Gross Bonner), a widow, had been a school mistress in Montreal before her second marriage in 1819.

1852-1853: JQNA reported that a teacher at School #5 was paid for six months and left.

Ninth Range School 1853

1852-1853: the JQNA reported the 9th Range school was under construction on govt land. There were 54 boys and 30 girls in district needing an instructor.

From UP TO RAWDON page 421

At mid-century, Henry Johnston applied to purchase the north-west half of Clergy Reserve Lot 4, of the Ninth Range. He was the Irish born son of Henry Johnston and his wife Margaret. This was negotiated by Alexander Daly, a neighbour and the agent for Rawdon settlers; he was the enumerator of the 1861 Census. Mr. Jean Langevin of the Crown Lands Department had no objection to the application. (Upper Canada Land Papers, LAC Microfilm C 2114 Bundle 6, #8) and an Order in Council, dated 24 March 1851, permitted Henry Johnston to purchase the whole of the north-west half and was Henry's address at the 1861 Census.

Henry and his wife Eliza Nulty could sign their names but it would seem, though literate, they often marked with an x but they were involved in the education of the rising generation. In March and April 1853, Mr. Langevin wrote to the Inhabitants and School Commissioner of School Municipality No. 7 concerning an application for "a free grant of one superficial acre of land for the site of a School House ... to be taken off the west corner of the NE ½ of the NW ½ Crown Lot No 4 in Ninth Range which spot is

unimproved.

Henry at this date had not “availed himself of said order and [once he] affixed his ordinary mark to the Petition, the agent Alex’r. Daly having reported that Johnston is desirous that the prayer of said petition should be granted. [Mr. Langevin saw] no objection to this being done as authorized.” As a result, a school was built on a corner of the farm for the children of the area including Henry’s own growing clan. (Upper and Lower Canada Land Papers, LAC Microfilm C2802, Bundle 7, #18).

10th Range

The JQNA reported that John Brigham, who I am unable to identify, taught 43 students in a rented house, there was no titled lot and no location is suggested.

The 1852-1853 the JQNA stated that Charles Brown was the teacher at school #10 and had 43 students, and there is no title for this lot. Brown was an Irish Catholic, 30 years old, married with 4 children in 1852. He lived at Tenth Range, Lot 4 that was owned by John McGuire (Holtby Map) his neighbour on the census who moved to Minnesota c. 1872. Daly says the school is on 8th Range which seems doubtful as Brown lived on 10th. I could not locate him in 1861.

Rawdon Village School c. 1880s



The Rawdon village schoolhouse was photographed for a postcard c. 1900, the gate was on Metcalfe Street and it was built in the 1880s. With the consolidation of rural schools, c. 1909, a new school was built at this location.

To the immediate right, across the street, facing the school was Crowe’s Store with the roof and chimneys of their house visible behind it. St. Anne’s Convent is dimly visible in the distance. Children wanting to learn piano studied with the Sisters at the convent. The house at right was Leslie Copping’s, he was a municipal councillor 1925 - 1945 (description by Beverley Blagrove Prud’homme).

Conclusion

Through the persistent efforts of settlers and commissioners, Rawdon developed a network of schools that was intended (in 1830) to serve both English, French, Protestant and Catholic communities, ensuring that education was accessible to the area's growing population.

¹ It was created in 1801 under an Act of the Legislative Assembly of Lower Canada (41 George III Chapter 17), An Act for the establishment of Free Schools and the Advancement of Learning in this Province.

² JQNA: From the Journals of the Quebec National Assembly, 1852-1853, which I will henceforward abbreviate as JQNA. All information was from Luke Daly the secretary-treasurer of the Rawdon school commission. The inspector reported: "his books in good order". Catholics and Protestants attended the same schools. June 3 & 4, 1852 all the Rawdon schools were on holiday. He stated there were 190 boys and 99 girls, and under the term children 196 (apparently not registered in school) total 485.