Chapter 4

THE FIRST FIFTEEN YEARS

Salvage From Wrecked Ship Building A Shelter
To Charlottetown Privation Because Of Plunder By Americans
Two Children Born Family Marriages Land Registry Records
Some Legends

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We left the Simpsons and their shipmates in mid-August, 1775, shipwrecked in the vicinity of Flat River on the south shore of the Island of St. John.

As stated earlier we do not know the destination to which they were bound. Since their barque had entered Northumberland Strait and was almost opposite Pictou when driven ashore, it seems probable that it was their destination.

Nor do we know the inducement that had been offered them to come to the new land. We do know that in a number of cases there was gross misrepresentation of conditions which would be found on arrival.

We have referred to the Annabella which was wrecked off Prince Town in October 1770. Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Stewart was the proprietor of Lot 18, in which Prince Town is located and the sixty families on board had been recruited by him as settlers for his land.

In describing Prince Town to these prospective emigrants Stewart showed them a plan of a town of considerable dimensions, with its numerous streets named. They were told that there were sugar trees, that all kinds of fruit was plentiful, that provisions were available in abundance and that fish were plentiful. Of course only the last item had any validity in fact.

How different was the reality when, during a late October snowstorm, their barque was driven on Darnley Point and wrecked with the loss of practically all their personal effects and provisions.

Similar glowing accounts of what one might expect were given by Robert Clark, a merchant of London, to one Thomas Curtis who, under the title "Voyage To The Island Of St. John's, 1775" published his description of the inducements offered and of the reality.

We quote from Curtis' account:

"Meeting with Wm. Hicks an acquaintance, who told me he had engaged to go to an Island in America, in the Service

"of Rob^{t} Clark Merch^{t} who had large possession, on the Island of St. John's, he said (that) as I had been accustomed to Timber, & Sawing, I might make a good fortune presently, & he would go with me to R Clarks house & hear what he said about it - Accordingly we went, & R Clark inform^{d} me 'he had some thousands of Acres of land to sell that were well stock'd with Timber, and that I might purchase of him as much as I pleas^{d} at 4d per Acre, for life, or 1s p^{r} Acre free-hold, that the Captain's, or masters of Ships which were frequently coming in, would purchase all I could Cut for Ship or House Building & that Sawyers were better paid for their labour, than in England, that the Rivers abounded with fish & the Country with game which were free for any one, that Deer & Turkeys were so plentiful that a person might shoot them some times from the Windows, & when at work in the woods might shoot enough to serve his family without loss of time - in short any man could live much more comfortable there, than in England'.

"He likewise inform^{d} me that, there were great numbers of fowls, and also Beasts such as Bears, & Foxes, whose skins were valuable & some Black Fox Skins were worth £5 each & many Other Advantages peculiar to this Island - & that he had a Vessel in the river bound there which would sail in about two Weeks. Accordingly I began to Settle My Affairs & prepare for the Voyage.

"Such a favorable Acc^{t} from so respectable a man I suck'd like Sack".

Curtis joined a group who sailed on the Elizabeth for Clark's holdings in the Island of St. John at New London, was shipwrecked in November, 1775 at Lot 11 some distance west of New London and after spending some time at Prince Town eventually arrived at their destination.

Curtis' report of the reality follows:

"When we arrived at New London I was mutch Surprized to see what a place it was, It being so very different from the Idea I had formed of it. I then begin to repent of my Voyage and wish my Selfe in Old London again; but wishes and repentance was now too late; but I soon came to the determination of leaving this place as soon as possible from the first View. . . . . On our right we could see a little row of Log houses and one large house on our left in all about Sixteen houses that on our left were the Agent lived might be two Story high but I believe none Else were. This comprized the whole of the famous new London".

In any case, whether or not similar inducements were offered, William and Janet with their eight children, having made the grueling trans-Atlantic crossing, found themselves with their shipmates stranded on the beach of a new and unknown land with no habitation anywhere in evidence.

Fortunately it was mid-August. The absence of shelter would not be too serious except when it rained. And they were able to salvage the ships' supplies including tools. Oral records tell us that they proceeded at once to build for themselves primitive log shelters.

The land was completely wooded. Somber stands of spruce, pine and hemlock with perhaps some birch and maple extended right to the shore bank.

Consequently before any shelter could be built it was necessary to fell enough trees to make a clearing.

The building of a log shelter would be a completely new experience and they would have to proceed by trial and error. But they were people of initiative and energy.

The walls would not present any great problem but a watertight roof would be a real challenge. Birch bark may have been used. A later method, when blacksmith made nails became available, was to make shingles by splitting pine blocks. But it is doubtful if the Simpsons had such nails.

Since it was past mid summer it was too late to put in any crop, nor was there any clear land even though it had been early enough in the season for planting.

The beginnings of agriculture on Prince Edward Island were necessarily primitive. Clearings were made by felling trees, but stumping was time consuming and arduous.

So, in order to get necessary food, potatoes were planted and grain sown among the stumps.

With no crop and very limited ship's supplies remaining, the main source of food was fish, which was plentiful.

But the outlook was grim. The coming of winter would mean an end to fishing. They could provide some salt fish but there seemed to be no prospect of any other food.

By some means contact was eventually made with the capital, Charlottetown, approximately 25 miles away by water, 35 to 40 overland.

For six years the Island of St. John had been a separate colony with its own Governor and Government. But its population was very small.

Charlottetown in 1769 consisted of two single story buildings, 56 x 26 feet and a number of log huts. By 1775 there were some additional buildings but it still was only a small village.

In August, 1775 Governor Walter Patterson returned to England in search of funds from the Home Government to run the administration of the Colony. Phillips Callbeck, the senior councillor, became Administrator and Acting Governor.

At this point in time the Simpsons and their shipmates became victims of the American Revolutionary War.

On October 21, 1775 George Washington sent two armed schooners from Marblehead, Massachussets under orders to proceed to the River St. Lawrence and there intercept two English brigs en route to Quebec with arms and supplies.

Disregarding their orders the two captains plundered five fishing vessels in the Gut of Canso and on the morning of November 17 entered Charlottetown Harbour.

Before the day was over they had completely plundered the town, taking all provisions, the furnishings and personal effects of the Government officials and had sailed away with Phillips Callbeck, the Acting Governor and Thomas Wright, the Surveyor-General as prisoners.

On the return journey they plundered three more fishing boats and accosted an English vessel with settlers for the Island from which they took as prisoner one David Higgins.

On arrival at American army headquarters at Cambridge the three captives were courteously received by George Washington who released them three days later.

He was very angry at the two captains for their disobedience of orders and severely reprimanded them, but none of the plunder was restored.

The three prisoners made their way to Halifax where they had to remain until navigation opened in the spring before returning home.

Now to link the plunder of Charlottetown with the Simpsons.

In "Journeys To The Island Of St. John" Dr. D. C. Harvey, former Nova Scotia Archivist and a native Islander makes the following statement:

> "In normal times provisions were scarce . . . . . in the same month as the Elizabeth was wrecked on the North Shore . . . . . two American privateers landed in Charlottetown, carried off the Acting Governor and plundered the stores that had been collected for destitute emigrants to Lot 57".

Lot 57 is the Belfast district including part of Point Prim and the "destitute emigrants" referred to were the group in whom we are interested.

The reference to Lot 57 raises a question as to the location of their original shelters.

The lot line between 57 and 58 divides Point Prim down the center. Flat River and Pinette are in Lot 58 and are on the exposed outer shore. Belfast is in Lot 57 and the Orwell Bay side of Point Prim is more sheltered than the Strait shore.

Several early records, written and oral, say that they spent the first weeks in the Belfast district. We know that they had the ship's boat and it is possible that they moved their meager goods and chattels around the point to the more sheltered area.

It seems more logical to the writer, however, that they would build their shelters near the wreck where salvage operations could be easily carried out without transporting their goods a substantial distance. If this was the case Lot 57 was not definitive but referred to the general area.

Because of the plunder of Charlottetown it was not possible to send out provisions to the shipwrecked emigrants. Indeed Charlottetown itself was in very short supply. The problem was compounded by the absence of both the Governor and his Deputy.

In any case there seems to be no doubt that with the onset of winter, with food supplies practically exhausted, William made his way to Charlottetown, some records say on snowshoes, to appeal for help.

While we do not know definitely by what method of transportation they were moved, possibly by ox team, we do know that they were taken to Charlottetown, probably in the early winter.

We also know that the winter of 1775-76 was a very difficult one. To replenish food supplies after the mid-November plunder, under conditions that existed at the time, was an impossible task.

In the diary of one Benjamin Chappell to whom we shall refer later, under date Sunday, April 2, 1775, we find this entry:

"Mr. Mellish buried the remains of Jane Duport, age 12 yrs. who died yesterday for want of common necessaries of life".

Jane Duport was a daughter of a former Chief Justice of the Island who had died in May, 1774.

Between 1770 and 1775 several shiploads of settlers arrived and a functioning Colonial Government was taking shape. Governor Walter Patterson a native of County Donegal, Ireland arrived August 30, 1770. On September 19 he summoned some of the

principle citizens, caused his Commission to be read and appointed a Council of three men - Phillips Callbeck, Thomas Wright and Patrick Fergus.

On July 7, 1773 the first Assembly convened with Thomas Wren in the Chair as Clerk and Robert Stewart as Speaker. The next session began on June 26, 1776.

Written records covering the doings of William and Janet and their family during the next few years are limited.

Two entries in the Family Bible tell of the birth of their last two children:

"1776 our childe Charlotte was born in the Island of St. Johns, North America

1779 May 9 our childe John was born in the Island of St. Johns".

It will be noted that only the year of Charlotte's birth is recorded. We have not been able to find the exact date from any source. The Bible gives complete dates of the other nine births.

Most oral records which have come down through various branches of the family indicate that for at least the early years the Simpsons lived in Charlottetown.

William was a tailor by trade and there are a number of references to his having carried on his trade in Charlottetown.

That he was a tailor is confirmed by the baptismal record of the oldest daughter Margaret. It will be noted that the Dundercas Parish record stated:

"1759 Feb 16 William Simpson, Taylor in Gerbity & Jannet Winchester his wife had a child bapd & named Margaret".

We shall refer later to the general practice of the early settlers of making their own clothing but it is probable that Government officials and others in the Capital would require custom work and that William would find such employment.

That he did not confine himself to tailoring, however, is indicated by the report of two incidents which crop up many times in family legend.

According to one of these stories William owned, if not the first, one of the first horses in the Capital.

Wood was of course the only fuel and, as the owner of a horse, William's services were much in demand to haul firewood. Included among his customers were the Governor and the Roman Catholic priest.

The first story has to do with the Governor.

Early on a Sunday afternoon of a cold January day the Governor's servant came to William with the word that the Governor's home was out of wood and with instructions that he haul a load.

William told the servant to tell the Governor that he and his beast rested on the Sabbath and that he would haul a load on Monday morning.

In due course the Governor himself arrived and, after telling William that they were without fuel and suffering from the cold, ordered him to take a load of wood at once.

But Simpson was adamant. He pointed out that they knew on Saturday they were low on fuel and could have had it delivered then, that he and his beast rested on the Sabbath, and that he would take a load after midnight on Monday morning. With this the Governor had to be satisfied and he and his household spent a cold Sunday afternoon and evening.

The second story has to do with the Roman Catholic priest for whom William also provided fuel.

Most lumbermen know that green wood is a conductor of sound, that if a person scratches one end of a log with a pin it can be heard at the other end.

This gave Simpson the idea that this principle would be extended to provide for communication over long distances.

One day in conversation with the priest they were discussing some of the modern marvels of the day.

The steam engine, introduced by Thomas Savery in 1698 and improved by Thomas Newcomen in 1712 was in wide use.

Lewis Paul's spinning machine patented in 1738 was in use in London in 1740. And in 1770 James Hargreaves had patented the spinning jenny. James Watts' experiments with rotary power which began in 1763 made possible the driving of many kinds of machines.

In discussing with the priest these modern wonders Simpson ventured the prediction that someday man would talk across the Atlantic ocean, to which the priest replied,

> "My good man that is absolutely impossible. God Almighty Himself couldn't do that".

Perhaps somewhere in the Great Beyond the worthy clergyman is aware of television pictures and conversations between astronauts on the moon and the Space Center at Houston.

In 1780 William and Janet's eldest daughter Margaret was 21 and the family had its first marriage. John McNeill a young Scot from Argyllshire had recently emigrated to Charlottetown and he and Margaret were married. As one of the founding families of Cavendish we shall follow their story in a later chapter.

The first record of land transactions is also in 1780. In the Provincial Land Registry records, the General Indexer, there are entries which indicate that William leased grass and pasture lots in Prince Town Royalty for each of his four sons, who ranged in age at that time from 20 years to 1 year.

The Indexer record gives the name of the lessee, date of the lease, date of registry, name of the lessor and a description of the land lease.

The entries are as follows:

James Simpson 12 September 1780, 20 April 1789, Walter Patterson, Grant Lot No. 3, 1st division, G & Lot 132, Prince Town Royalty.

William Simpson 12 September 1780, 12 May 1814, Walter Patterson Lt-Govnr, Grant Town Lot No. 1, 1st Division, G & Pasture Lot 140 in Prince Town and Royalty.

Thomas Simpson 12 September 1780, 12 May 1814, Walter Patterson, Grant Lot 2, 1st division G & Pasture Lot 131 in the Royalty Prince Town.

John Simpson 11 September 1780, 12 May 1814 Walter Patterson, Grant Town Lot 4, 1st division, G & Pasture Lot 103, the said Prince Town Royalty.

It will be noted that the Lot in John's name is dated one day before the others. John at the time was one year four months old.

The other date difference was the registration of the Lot in James' name. This Lot was registered in April 1789. The others were not registered till May 1814.

James was ten years old in 1780, Thomas was twenty and William eighteen. It would appear that their father was concerned that they should have some land holdings.

It will be noted however that the Lots were taken only in the names of the four sons. William Sr. did not take any in his own name. This tends to strengthen the oral record that he had established a home in Charlottetown where he practiced his trade and that he spent at least most of the fifteen years from 1775 to 1790 there.

Some old records say that the original Simpsons lived for a time "on the old Higgins property" in Cove Head.

No definite record of this can be found, but the fact that the marriage record of their third daughter Helen to William Clark in 1789 gives her residence as Cove Head and that a mention of the marriage of the second son William to Mary Millar of Cove Head says "both of Cove Head" suggests the possibility that the whole Simpson family lived there immediately prior to their moving to Cavendish in 1790.

This must however remain in the realm of speculation as must the other suggestion that they lived for a time at West River.

We do know that Thomas born in 1760 lived for a time in Prince Town. We do not know when he moved there but it was apparently in the 1780's. On December 13, 1793 he married Margaret MacLean of Prince Town and in 1799 with four children moved to Cadman's Corner near Shemogue, New Brunswick.

In addition to Margaret, two other daughters and one son were married before the Simpsons moved to Cavendish.

In 1787 Christine, born in 1764 married William Hyde of West River (Meadow Bank) also born in 1764.

Two years later on March 4, 1789 Helen, born in 1766, married William Clark born in 1765. William and Helen were also co-founders of Cavendish. Both were living in Cove Head at the time. The marriage record reads "Married by Rev. DesBrisay, 4 Mar. 1789, William Clark, shoemaker, and Helen Simpson both of Cove Head".

1790 the second son William, born in 1762, married Mary Millar of Cove Head, born 1768.

Now we come to a Land Registry item of 1789:

"William Simpson 31 August 1789, 17 March 1791, William Winter, leased 500 acres, Township 23".

Interpreted this means that on the 31st of August 1789 William Simpson leased from William Winter, proprietor of Lot or township 23, 500 acres of land and that the lease was recorded 17th March 1791.

William, 56 years old, and Janet his wife age 54, parents of ten children and several times grandparents were about to start a new career and, the next year, to found a new community - Cavendish.

Chapter 5

THE FOUNDING OF CAVENDISH, 1790

Fiction And Fact Locating The First Simpson Home
The Simpson Household To Cavendish 1790
Establishing A New Home

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Before we proceed with the facts we think the reader will enjoy a bit of semi-fiction.

To appreciate the quotation which follows, turn back to the last paragraph of the preceding chapter and let your mind go back to the carefully documented story of William and Janet Winchester Simpson and their family over more than half a century.

Now for the fictional founding of Cavendish - an instance of unresearched folklore accepted as fact:

> "In writing a record of the Clark family in America, as I have been asked to do by members of the family, I admit that what is here recorded was secured from older members of the family, now deceased, and from people living in the neighborhood, of how the family lived for close to one hundred and fifty years. Therefore I record the story here as legend but will, nevertheless, try to put in writing what has been handed down from father to son through several generations.
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> "As the story goes, and as it has been told to the writer, a certain tall, blue-eyed, Scotch youth left Glasgow, Scotland between 1770 and 1774 and landed in England, where he met, fell in love with and married a beautiful young woman, named Helen of Winchester who was the only daughter of the Earl of Winchester. The young couple sailed to America, landing in Boston sometime during the middle seventies and there established a home and were living there at the time the Battle of Bunker Hill was fought.
>
> "This phase of the story seems to be quite authentic, since two letters written by the young wife from Boston to friends in England, stated that she did not like Boston because the hogs were wallowing in the streets. In one of those letters she signified their intention of leaving Boston for the colonies farther north.
>
> "However as the story goes, the young couple watched the battle in Charlestown through a spy-glass from their home on the south bank of the Charles River and when they noted the progress of the battle and the probable outcome, they

"decided to leave Boston. (We may assume from this that they were Loyalists.) They sailed for Prince Edward Island and landed in or near Charlottetown. At that time there were only three houses in Charlottetown.

"A Mrs. Graham, who died in Alma, Prince Edward Island about the year 1885, reported just prior to her death at one hundred and eleven years of age, that when she was a small girl living with her parents in a log cabin some little distance outside of Charlottetown, she saw this tall, good-looking, blond, blue-eyed man and his beautiful young wife as they travelled from the boat landing past her mother's cabin. With their dog-team they headed through the portage in the general direction of New London Bay. (A portage on P.E.I. is a narrow road or path through a thick wood and was used by the Indians to portage their canoe from one body of water to another. The portage here referred to may have been only an Indian trail.) At any rate Mrs. Graham said she knew the family in after years, and that his name was Simpson, his first name she could not be sure of and that his wife's name was Helen Winchester.

"One thing we know for a certainty--that young couple headed into the wilderness on that memorable day from the boat landing, over the snow and ice from Charlottetown to New London Bay, through the portage, and over ice to the head of the Bay with nothing but a dog-team to carry the young wife. With only a few provisions, some bedding, an axe and a musket they hewed out a home in the wilderness inhabited only by Indians and in the dead of winter.

"We picture this beautiful young woman, who was brought up in the home of aristocracy, probably highly educated in all the arts of the time. We think that she had to sit on a stump in the winter and broil deer-steak over an open fire in the snow for her man, who was busy from dawn to dark hewing and fitting together logs for their first home. She had courage. Methinks it was a small cabin and thrown together in a great hurry; but still Simpson, with his Scotch thoroughness and his knowledge of the use of tools, no doubt made a cozy place out of it, even with only an axe. But how they survived the first ten days in the bitter cold with not even a tent over their heads and their only food supply, the deer and partridge that Simpson shot in the surrounding woods, is vague. We cannot help but admire this rugged young giant for building a home in the wilderness and securing food for the mate he dearly loved--but we regard with reverence his young and beautiful wife who knew not how to knit a stocking or weave a blanket and probably not even knew how to boil water. But, nevertheless, with courage undaunted and a fierce love for her mate, she struggled by his side and helped him to found a home and propagate a race who have spread over the face of North America.

"All of this race are moved to honor a first of their ancestry in America, who instilled within them a clean blood stream. For this we are grateful, a rugged honesty for which we can never stop thanking them, an unselfish pride in the family circle, a home life which is the basis of present-day civilization, an undivided loyalty to the flag of the country of their adoption wherever they may live, and last, but most important of all, a firm and abiding faith in their Creator. These are some of the many blessings we have inherited from that first ancestry.

"Let us keep faith . . . May we maintain the standard as it was handed to us by the magnificent young couple who founded our line on this continent. They gave to the world such men as Jacob Gould Schurman, ex-ambassador from the United States of America to Germany. He is a man well-known for his energy, business acumen and strong unyielding diplomacy, who in a lifetime expanded Cornell from a small school of three hundred students to the magnificent university of today. There are many others I could call to mind. We respect those folks for their great achievements but we revere the memory of that famous pair of young lovers, who on that bitter cold winter day faced the wilderness with the supreme confidence that the wilderness would not break them down to the level of the common herd but rather with the confidence that they would break and tear asunder this same cold and ruthless wilderness and from it create a thing of beauty and of lasting value to man-kind".

We do not propose to identify the writer of the above. Suffice it to say that he was a descendant of William and Janet, a professional man fully competent in his field.

Nor do we think it necessary to comment on the fanciful story with its many obvious inaccuracies.

In the first paragraph of our introduction we referred to the regrets of the older speakers at the 1890 centenary of the founding of Cavendish that so little was known of the earliest settlers.

We have pointed out that this record is incomplete even after years of research.

We have also pointed out that in our research we have found many inaccuracies which we have been able to check out and correct.

We realize that there are many gaps, particularly in the genealogies which follow. We hope that some of them will be filled by others from records which have not been available to us.

But as the research has proceeded, we have been surprised and pleased with the large amount of verifiable information that has come to light from many sources. We have written many dozens of letters and have had almost one hundred percent response.

We have referred to inaccuracies. An error once included in a widely circulated article tends to be accepted and repeated.

An instance of this occurs in Walter Simpson's "Cavendish in the Olden Time", an otherwise accurate record published as a series in 1900 in the Prince Edward Island Magazine.

In the first instalment, page 341 he says: "Christina married a man named Taylor, and lived in Miramichi" and on page 342 "Janet married William Hyde of West River, and the large Hyde connection are her descendants".

A check of records shows that Janet, not Christine, married Donald Taylor and lived in Little Shemogue, N.B. not Miramichi. It was Christine who married William Hyde.

But, from many parts of the continent, copies of the Simpson Family Tree came to us perpetuating this error.

In Chapter 1 we have indicated where and, to some extent what, Cavendish has been and is.

Walter Simpson begins his 1900 series of articles on "Cavendish in the Olden Time" with this statement:

> "On the extreme north end of Lot 23, fronting on the Gulf of St. Lawrence, where the coast alternates between bold cliffs and long reaches of sand dunes, - lies the beautiful settlement of Cavendish. Just inside the coast line we have the peaceful lakes, teeming with 'speckled beauties' that make them the paradise of the true disciple of 'Izaak Walton'. Surrounding these lakes are low-lying, fertile fields, and groves of evergreen, making one of the prettiest pastoral scenes to be found in this 'Gem of the northern seas'.
>
> "Right on the borders of these lakes the first settlers commenced, one hundred and ten years ago, to fell the trees and build their unpretentious log houses, and to lay the foundation of this now prosperous community.
>
> "They were brave, intelligent, energetic, God-fearing men, who left their little all in the land of their birth, and crossed the stormy sea to hew out homes for themselves in what was then a wilderness. Little do we, who to-day in comfort enjoy the heritage that was secured to us as a result of their unremitting toil, realize the great privations they endured, in the early days, when they laid broad and deep the foundations of the mental and material prosperity which is ours to enjoy.

"The history of the settlement of Cavendish dates from the year 1790. In that year William Simpson, the ancestor of the Simpson family, - settled here. He was followed shortly afterward I believe, in the same year, by John McNeill and William Clark, - who married his daughters and were the founders of the McNeill and Clark families".

We have learned from the Provincial Land Registry records that on 31 August, 1789 William Simpson leased from William Winter, the proprietor of Lot 23, five hundred acres of land.

While we have known the approximate location of this land "right on the borders of these lakes" we have not until recently been able to establish exact lines.

The description in the lease gives the starting point as a stake driven in the sand, long since gone.

Now, thanks to painstaking searches of old documents by Harry Holman of the Provincial Archives staff, we are able to reproduce a copy of a survey made by Robert Fox in 1809 which locates exactly the boundaries of William and Janet's five hundred acres plus.

It also shows how the property was divided among himself, two of his sons, William Junior and James, and one son-in-law William Clark.

Also located to the east of the Simpson property is five hundred acres in the name of John McNeill, another son-in-law.

To help the reader visualize Cavendish as it was soon after its founding and again some seventy years later, we reproduce a copy of the 1809 survey, and from Meacham's Atlas of 1880, the maps of the north end of Lots 22, 23 and 24 - the districts of Bay View, Cavendish and North Rustico.

The survey and the map show the inner lake connected by an outlet to the outer one, which in turn has a larger outlet to the Gulf.

This latter was known as "The Sea Run" and one of our boyhood interests was to net gaspereaux, a fish much like a herring, as they were entering the lakes to spawn. They came in great numbers, so much so that a number of farmers netted them by the cartload to use as a fertilizer on the land.

William built his log cabin on a slight elevation between the two lakes and just inside the connecting stream. There was no basement and the logs of the cabin have long since gone.

But Jeremiah Simpson, who owned a part of the original property and who died in September 1961 and his son Reginald now living in the old home, have stated that on a number of occasions they have plowed up artifacts on the site of the original cabin.

The present day visitor to Cavendish who wishes to locate the spot may do so by proceeding from Cavendish Corner down the Cawnpore Road till it meets the Park Road along the shore. Turn left and drive west a little over three quarters of a mile.

Here, just to the right of the road, a hundred feet west of the parking lot and between the two lakes stood the first home in Cavendish, the log cabin of the founding Simpsons.

While the family did not move to Cavendish until the spring of 1790, we think it probable that the cabin was built during the fall of 1789.

William and Janet had ten children.

Margaret the eldest had married John McNeill in 1780 and now had a small family which they brought to their own cabin in Cavendish, we believe in the spring of 1791.

In 1787 Christine married William Hyde of West River (Meadow Bank). The deed to the land on which they lived was signed by Governor Patterson on April 4, 1786.

On March 4, 1789 Helen married William Clark. They came to Cavendish in 1790.

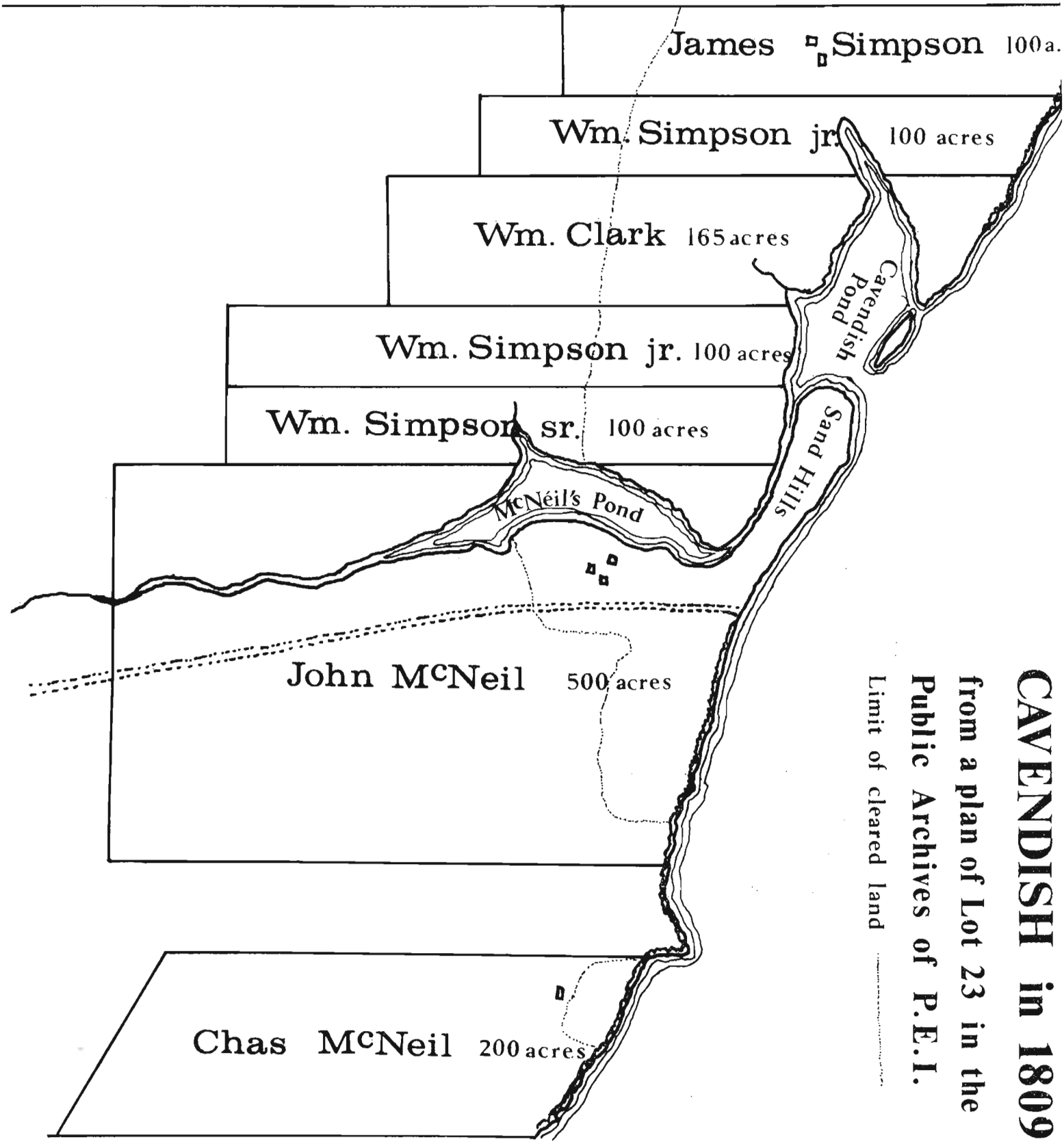
William Jr. the second son had married Mary Millar of Cove Head, February 13, 1790 and they came to Cavendish as bride and groom.

It is probable that Thomas, the eldest son, was living in Prince Town at this time. It will be remembered that in 1780 William Sr. had taken land there in the names of his four sons. Oral records tell us that Thomas spent his adult years in Prince Town where he married Margaret MacLean December 13, 1793, and from whence he moved with his family in 1799 to Cadman's Corner, Parish of Botsford, N.B.

This accounts for the five eldest children of the Simpson family. The five younger were still a part of the household, ranging in age from twenty-two to eleven years.

The decision having been taken to establish a new home in virgin country at Cavendish, we can imagine the preparations of the previous months.

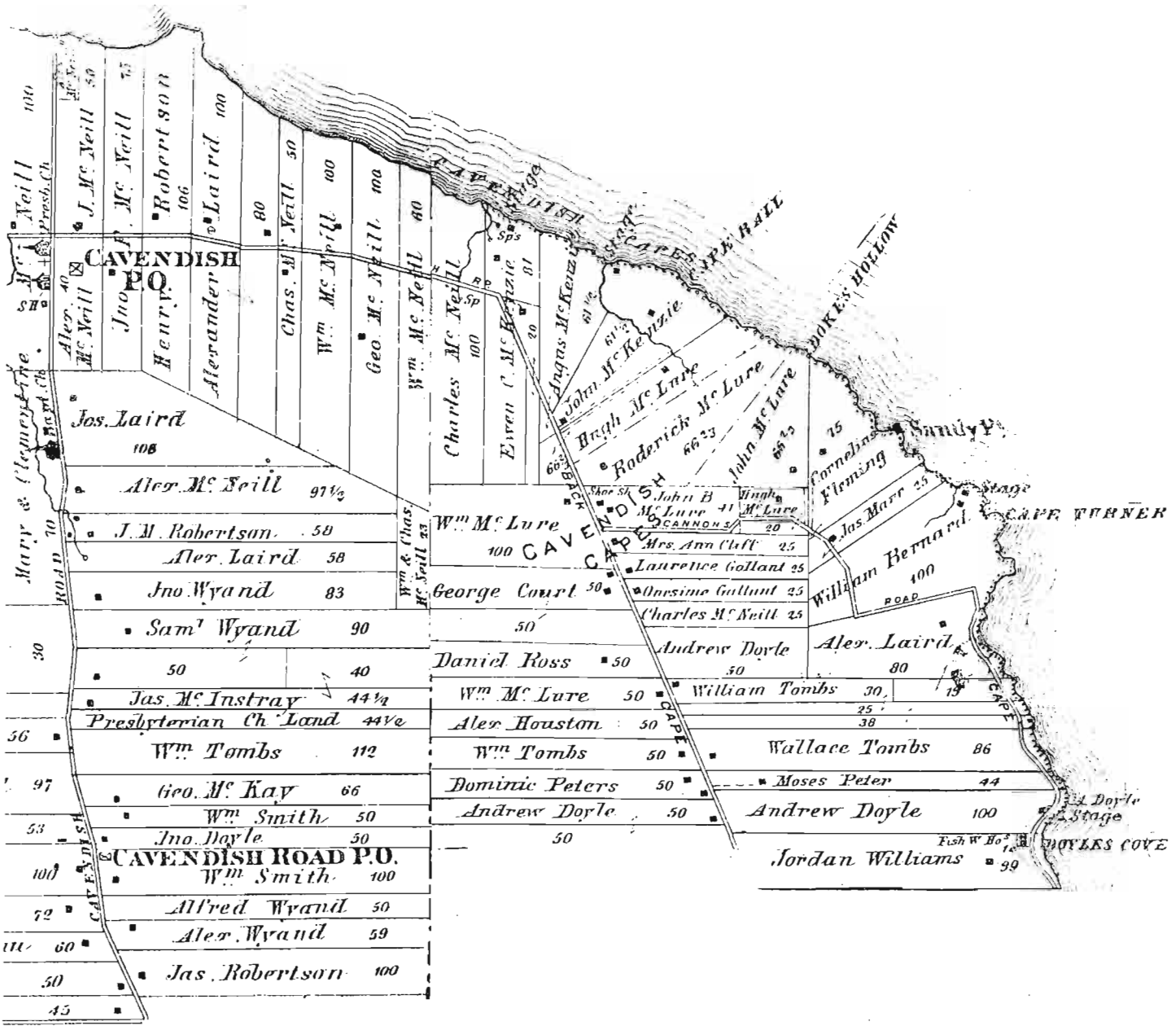
Involved were William and Janet and the five children who would make up their family unit. Also involved was William Jr., and his young wife and probably Helen and her husband William Clark.



CAVENDISH in 1809

from a plan of Lot 23 in the Public Archives of P.E.I.

CAVENDISH in 1880 (west half)



CAVENDISH in 1880

Since it was necessary to get to their new home as early as possible in the spring in order to plant some crop, we think the oral tradition that the original log cabin was built the previous fall is probably correct. In late April or early May some shelter would be necessary for the family.

Including William Jr. and Mary there would be at least nine persons in this first group of settlers. And it is probable that Helen and her husband William Clark, also arrived from Charlottetown some time during the spring.

Until the two younger Williams built their own cabins there would be eleven to shelter.

The 1809 survey shows that William Senior leased five hundred acres (which when surveyed proved to be 565) with a view to providing not only for himself but for two sons and a son-in-law.

He retained one hundred acres for himself. To William Jr. went two sections of one hundred acres each; to his son-in-law William Clark, one hundred and sixty five acres and to his third son James, one hundred.

The other son-in-law, John McNeill, who became a founder of Cavendish, took one hundred acres east of William Sr. on 1 April, 1791 and an additional four hundred 22 September, 1803 to make up the five hundred acres shown on the 1809 survey.

We think it probable that the Simpson family lived in Cove Head for a time prior to moving to Cavendish. We know that William Jr. was living there at the time of his marriage in February 1790.

To remove family and household goods, meager as they were, from Charlottetown to Cavendish in one operation would be an extremely difficult undertaking.

There was no direct road but there was a road to Cove Head. From there the only way to move their goods and chattels to Cavendish was by boat.

Whether they may have lived for a time at Cove Head or merely used it as a staging point is not definitely known. Certainly Cove Head Bay was their point of embarkation by boat to Cavendish.

Probably it was possible for them to charter a boat large enough to take them and their goods at one trip. The time would be dependent on the absence of drift ice on the coast, but would probably not be later than early May.

Since there was no harbour it was necessary to ferry ashore the people and their household effects and provisions.

MacGregor's British America outlines the essentials required by a settler in getting established on a new farm as follows:

> "A new settler, to be enabled to settle at once on his farm, and not to be afterwards obliged to work for others, in order to get provisions for his family, should have from 50 - 80 pounds in cash; this sum would include the probable purchase-money of the land, and the cost of necessary supplies. He should carry with him to his new farm, if his family consists of 5 persons: - 50 bu. potatoes, 2 bbls. flour, 1 bbl rye, Indian or oatmeal; 1 bbl. mackerel, 1 bbl. herrings, 1 - 2 bbl. beef, 5 gals. molasses, 3 gals. rum, 3 lbs. tea, 12 lbs. sugar, 1 milk cow, 2 axes, 4 hoes, 1 saw, 1 or 2 planes, 1 adze, 20 - 30 lbs. nails, 2 pots, 1 kettle, some tea-mugs, gridiron, frying-pan and some earthenware. He should besides this, have as much money as will purchase seed. The majority of settlers, however, have nothing but their industry to begin with; and, although they certainly suffer greater hardship, generally succeed as well as those who have a little means.
>
> "A day-labourer among towns may earn 3 - 4 s per day, finding his own lodgings and provisions. A labourer among the farmers in the country may always get £18 - £24 a year, and his board and lodgings found him.
>
> "Prices of items to be purchased at this time included sugar at 6 d to 8 d per pound while fine lobsters brought ½ to 1 d each".

How adequately the Simpson's supplies would measure up to this inventory we do not know. We do know that there was no source of supply within miles, except the fish which could be taken at their door; that in the event of illness there was no doctor within reach - they were completely dependent on home remedies; that the only social contacts were very infrequent - they had no neighbors within miles and that, with only crude shelters and scarce food and clothing, they were faced with clearing the forest before they could produce any crops, and of course there was no school for many years and no church.

Writing in the Montreal Gazette of December 26, 1972 Cecily E. Lein, an elementary History and Geography teacher says in part:

> "History teaches us that, in the beginning, it was the land that conditioned the people who stayed here. It was only the tough, brave, gutsy people, who could learn to live in harmony with the land, who could survive here; people who learned to love Canada not only for what it could give them but for what it was".

The spirit of these pioneers is shown by the comments of a Scotch wife who, having left her cosy croft in Scotland, saw for the first time the log cabin that was to be her home for some years:

> "Ah me! When I saw the wee hoose just made of logs my heart went to my mouth, and then I just thought 'if I cannot make my hoose to my mind, I can make my mind to my hoose. Anyway I could live in a hollow log with William'".

It was May 1790. Presumably a log shelter had been built, probably with a stone fireplace at one end for heat and for cooking, similar to the croft fireplaces of Scotland. The cooking crane had been hung with the iron cooking cauldron suspended. The meager furnishings had been put in place and the food stored away.

Outside, except for the little clearing around the cabin, was unbroken forest where ground must be cleared for planting crops to provide a living.

Ahead were days of unbroken toil from daylight till dark, felling and trimming the trees and breaking the land among the stumps to plant potatoes and to sow grain.

While both men and women toiled with axe and hoe it is probable that the two younger children, Charlotte 14 and John 11, were charged with the responsibility of providing from the lakes the speckled beauties and other fish which would be one of the main sources of food.

The family would of course have a boat and would avail themselves of the bounty of the sea, cod, mackerel, and various other kinds of fish and lobsters, all of which were very plentiful.

With winter ahead cod would be salted and dried in the sun and mackerel and herring pickled against the long weeks when ice would close the fishery.

But the two first priorities were clearing the land and building a log barn.

Oral records tell us they had a horse and at least one cow which would require shelter and a place for storing winter feed.

Clearing the land was essential to their continuing existence, and was their major concern. Felling and trimming the trees was the easier part of the procedure, stumping the land was the difficulty.

In old barns the writer has seen hemlock boards eighteen inches and more in diameter. Every tree had a stump to be removed and there were many stumps to an acre.

In this day of bulldozers to clear a piece of land is a minor undertaking. But the pioneer families had no bulldozers.

The procedure was to dig around the roots with a grubbing hoe, chop off the roots with an axe and if a horse or ox was not available dig out the stump by sheer manpower.

Where there was an animal to be brought into service, a windlass was constructed. The roots having been cut as described above, a chain from the windlass was attached to the stump and it was pulled clear.

But this did not complete the operation. When a certain area had been cleared the stumps had to be hauled to the side of the clearing and piled. Eventually after they had dried out they were burned. And the holes from which they had been taken had to be levelled with pick and shovel.

Then and only then could the beginning farmer graduate from his few potato plants and his little patches of grain among the stumps to a small level clearing.

Harvesting in either case was by means of a hoe or shovel for potatoes and a reaping hook for grain which was threshed by a flail on the floor.

With clear land came the wooden plow, a crude harrow, the scythe and gradually metal implements.

But the blacksmith with his forge and anvil was still some years in the future and the pioneer farmer was almost completely dependent on his own resources.

The land was fertile and fortunately very free from stone so that, once cleared, cultivation was comparatively easy.

And so long hours of hard labor soon began to show results. They toiled unremittingly. Soon here a furrow, there a furrow, then a field of waving grain; here a trail, then a path and ere long a road which linked the homes of a growing community; here a cabin, and a crude barn, then a house and the various outbuildings to meet the requirements of a productive prosperous farm; here a founding home, then their sons and grandsons and other families founding new homes, then a rural area of comfortable homes, prosperous farms, schools, churches, and good neighbors.

Such is the record of the founding and the foundation of Cavendish.

Chapter 6

THE CO-FOUNDING FAMILIES - THE EARLY YEARS

Why To Cavendish? Years Of Beginnings The First Decade
Slow Progress But Great Changes

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Progress is always relative.

In the fanciful quotation with which we began the preceding chapter William Simpson, "a tall, good-looking, blond, blue-eyed man" and Janet Winchester "his beautiful young wife", travelled from the boat landing by dog team over snow and ice in the dead of winter, to build themselves a log cabin, their future home at New London. Such would have been progress.

(How this supposed bride and groom got to a boat landing in Prince Edward Island during the dead of winter is not explained).

But there is nothing fictional about the reality of the progress made by this pioneer family and their descendants during the years following their venture of faith into the new life they had chosen.

We can only surmise at their reasons for making the move.

Far from the being bride and groom we have learned that William and Janet were in their mid-fifties with ten children ranging in age from thirty-one to eleven years when they went to Cavendish.

Why would a couple, well past the prime of life, who had settled themselves in the growing capital of the colony, leave the established order with its security, and go into the forest in a completely unsettled area to begin anew?

Perhaps it was the Scottish love of the land and the feeling of well-being it gives. We know that this was a factor in William's character. Had he not acquired land in Prince Town for each of his four sons, ten years earlier?

Perhaps it was concern for the economic well-being of his children and the belief that in the land more than anywhere else was economic stability and the assurance of prosperity.

And there may have been an even more compelling reason.

We know that William and Janet and their family, including their sons-in-law, were people of firm religious convictions. From the beginning there has been a strong tradition of high moral standards which has come down through the generations.

Rev. Theophilus DesBrisay, rector of the Parish of Charlotte who founded St. Paul's Church in Charlottetown, was so concerned about the low moral standards prevailing in Charlottetown that, while he carried out most of his church duties there, he established his home in the rural community of Cove Head.

It may well be that the Simpsons, with McNeill and Clark shared this sentiment.

Some may suggest that if this was a concern it was not logical to move to an area which had none of the institutions of religion, - no church, no clergyman.

But it must be remembered that the whole tradition of the Presbyterian Scot was that the parent assumed responsibility for the spiritual nurture of his children, while at the same time giving his devoted service to his church as a partner and aid. But the home with its teaching and influences was paramount.

The parent did not say "do as I say, not as I do". He realized that consistent example was the best teacher. Today's society could benefit from more of this philosophy.

Mary McNeill Lawson, Lucy Maud Montgomery's beloved Aunt Mary, in old age wrote a long letter to one of her nephews in which she outlined the history of the early McNeill families.

Referring to her grandfather John McNeill she says:

> "He married Margaret Simpson, daughter of William Simpson, who had emigrated from Morayshire, Scotland, a man of rare ability and Christian character, whose descendants filled a large space in the moral, intellectual, and religious development of the country".

We can picture the family conferences with regard to the proposed move, lasting over a considerable period of time.

And we can be very sure that the choice of site was not made lightly. These were intelligent, knowledgeable people who would carefully explore the potential locations with a view to finding arable, fertile, stone-free, reasonably level land, preferably with access to the sea. Fish were an essential part of the early economy.

We think there is no doubt that they carefully examined a number of possible sites. The years have proven the wisdom of their final choice.

The 1790s in Cavendish were years of beginnings. It is fashionable today to refer to the "horse-and-buggy" days - some with nostalgia, others in a derogatory sense.

But the 1790s were pre-horse-and-buggy. There were no buggies because there were no roads. On foot, by boat, at best on horseback were the means of transportation.

The telegraph was still over forty years in the future and it would be eighty-six years before Alexander Graham Bell was to say on March 10, 1876 "Mr. Watson, come here, I want you" and initiate the telephone.

It was an age of slow movement but it was an on-going period.

Progress was slow in keeping with the pace of the day, but there was progress. It was predicated on initiative, hard work, and intelligent use of the ingredients at hand.

There were no supermarkets, no department stores, no trades people, not even a little country store, practically no money. Except for the few things they had brought with them, they were strictly limited to what the land and the sea could provide and their ability to adapt such provision to their uses.

The summer of 1790, in addition to the founding of a community, saw the more personal beginning of at least two, probably three farm units. William Junior and son-in-law William Clark certainly built their cabins soon after arrival, and in the spring of 1791 son-in-law John McNeill with his small family joined the group.

Shelter had been provided by means of log cabins, crude and cramped, but still shelter and still "home".

Fuel was abundant for the stone fireplace and water was procured from a nearby brook.

To ensure a winter supply of water it is probable that a well was dug during the summer. The digging of a well was always a high priority.

The digging of a round hole five to six feet in diameter proceeded downward until an underground stream was reached which would provide a sufficient flow of water to meet the requirements of the home and the farm.

Having "struck water" at whatever depth, the next step was to build a circular stone lining leaving a core some three to four feet in diameter, from the bottom to the surface.

Next they would build the working mechanism for raising the water, a windlass, a round log about five or six inches in diameter with a handle at one end, mounted on two upright posts.

To the windlass was attached a rope with a bucket which was lowered by the windlass, filled with water and raised to the surface.

The final step in construction was the safety factor, a wall built around the well from hewn logs to a height of two and a half to three feet, often with a hinged cover. Children must be prevented from falling in.

Hand pumps, windmills for pumping water, and plumbing of all kinds were a much later development.

Water had to be carried from pump to house, heated in pots over the open fire until such time as stoves became available. The kitchen range of the mid-eighteen hundreds had a copper tank which held perhaps four to five gallons and gave a fair supply of warm water as long as there was fire in the stove.

Every home had a large wash tub and the drawing and heating of water for the Saturday night bath was a major operation, where there were several children. Since there was no bathroom, a corner of the kitchen was curtained off. While number one was having his bath the water was being heated for number two and so on until each had had a turn.

The toilet was a two holer out back. A hole was dug in the ground and the little building hauled over it. When it became filled a new hole was dug, the building moved, and the original hole leveled with clay. Toilet tissue was unknown, - not even an Eaton's catalog.

When sufficient land was cleared to provide pasture for livestock, every effort was made to lay out fields so that there would be access to a brook for summer watering. In winter the animals went to a trough near the well.

Fields for pasture meant fences to keep the livestock out of the crops. Here again the pioneers turned to the forest and the "snake" fence came into being.

Logs four to six inches in diameter were cut to a length of ten to twelve feet and split with an axe and wedge. The split logs were then laid, with the ends criss-crossed at a sufficient angle to hold, until a zig-zag fence three and a half to four feet high was laid.

The building of such a fence entailed a great deal of labor but once built it would last for many years and would turn all animals, including sheep.

There was little furniture, partly because there was little available space, and most of what they had was home made on the spot.

Pine was plentiful and easily worked. An experienced man with a broad axe could hew a plank almost as smooth as if it were sawn. It is even possible that they brought a saw and a plane with them.

Before water power was harnessed to drive a circular saw, which came fairly early, an ingenious method was devised for using a crosscut saw to make planks and rough boards.

A pit would be dug a little deeper than the height of a man and a frame built above it to carry a log.

A crosscut saw was about five feet long with large teeth and a round handle at each end.

One man would station himself above the log, the other in the pit below, and they would draw the saw up and down through the horizontal log to cut a board or plank.

It was slow, hard work but with large trees it did not take many planks to cover a considerable surface, for instance a floor, or to make necessary furniture.

In any case a table and benches were necessary, as were bunks for sleeping. The bunks were of wood, boards with a lip around to hold the mattress, and were usually double deckers and double bunks.

The mattress covers would have been brought with them, empty. The material available, initially, for filling them was dry grass which made a quite comfortable bed.

Later, when grain had been harvested, straw was used as a filler and later still, after poultry became a part of the farm menage, feather pillows and eventually that ultimate of luxury and warmth, the feather bed, came into being.

These early mattresses were called ticks although the name tick properly refers to the cover only. Funk and Wagnalls defines tick as "the stout outer covering for a mattress".

With limited space shelving was important and boards would be sawn for this purpose.

It was not long before benches were partially replaced by chairs, with the rocking chair and the kitchen lounge becoming the last word in comfort.

The Simpson home was past the need of a crib but this piece of furniture would be an essential in the Clark and McNeill homes, and soon in that of William Junior.

As time went on open shelving gave place to kitchen cupboards and chests of drawers, all home made from local materials but many of them showing a high standard of workmanship.

Without doubt one of the essential pieces of furniture which our founding families would bring with them was a spinning wheel.

And very early sheep would become an essential part of the livestock of the farm. The family was almost completely dependent on sheep's wool for clothing and blankets.

The process leading to a home spun suit or a pair of socks or mitts began with the growth of an annual fleece of wool by the sheep.

This was shorn, usually in early June, when weather was warm enough that the sheep would not catch cold.

Foreign substances had to be picked out by hand, a slow, tedious task because the wool usually collected a mass of seeds, burdocks, dried leaves, twigs, pebbles and whatever other small objects with which it came in contact.

Following washing in several waters or, in an openwork basket in a flowing brook, the wool being continuously agitated, the fleece was dried outdoors. During this period there was a certain amount of bleaching. During the process of washing, the wool became badly matted.

To prepare the fiber for spinning it had to be picked over again and the fiber disentangled. This was done, up to a point, by hand.

Then carding came into play, a process whereby two hand cards were used, wooden rectangles about four by nine inches, with a handle, each filled on one surface with small nails or steel pins. The cards were dragged across each other forcing the fibers to lie parallel, removing any remaining impurities and arranging the fibers in the form of a small web.

The web was then drawn into a loose strand called a roll, as part of the preparatory process for spinning.

This was a summer procedure. Spinning, the process whereby the fibers were made into yarn or thread, was often left for the long fall evenings. For the women, many winter evenings were spent knitting socks, mitts, sweaters, stocking caps and other pieces of wearing apparel.

There were few early settlers who failed to develop a skill in weaving. There were few whose outer garb and often whose inner as well, was not the product of their own farm, the wool carded, spun and woven in the farm kitchen.

Our founding families could not go out to a shoe store and buy footwear. They had to make their own. To make shoes they had to have leather, and to get leather they had to tan the hides of the cattle or other animals they raised. This meant that they had to convert an easily decomposed substance into one that would resist putrefaction and stand up to long wear.

It is not our purpose to go into the lengthy and somewhat involved process of tanning. Incidentally the name tanning comes from the tawny, yellowish brown color of the finished product.

Having prepared the hide the actual tanning was done with an astringent acid procured from the bark of one of several kinds of trees such as hemlock, oak, willow or sumac, all of which were available.

The acid toughened the skin, condensed it and coagulated all the albuminous matter to preserve it from rotting.

Having prepared the leather, wooden lasts had to be carved to the approximate size and shape of the foot to be fitted and the making of the shoes would proceed.

When they were ready to wear, sheep tallow was rubbed in, and later applied at intervals, to make them water resistant.

Home made harness was also necessary and was made from the leather tanned at home.

Since William and Janet's son-in-law William Clark was a shoemaker our founders were probably better shod than the average pioneer family, and their beasts of burden had more comfortable harness.

As years passed, itinerant shoemakers began to go from home to home, staying with the family until they made the shoes and harness required. But the settler still had to provide his own leather.

Shoes had no laces and were usually at least ankle high, often knee high, and quite tight fitting. Hence, inside every kitchen door was a wooden boot-jack which fitted over the heel to assist in removing the shoe.

Kerosene had yet to be discovered and electricity was far in the future. For light, in addition to the glow of the fire, they had to make candles. These were made in tin molds, round cylinders, closed at the bottom, except for a small hole through which the wick was anchored. They were usually a little under an inch in diameter and often attached in a group, of four or eight, or more.

The ingredients were a fiber wick attached to the bottom of the mold in the center and to a cross piece above to hold it in place. Melted tallow was then poured in and left to harden thus forming the candle.

No home can operate without soap, but again these early settlers had to depend on their own resources. They had brought with them tested recipes using only materials readily at hand.

They knew nothing about the chemical balance necessary between the fatty acids from beef tallow or lard and the alkalies provided by the hardwood ashes they used. Scientists did not learn these secrets till early in the nineteenth century. But they knew that their recipes worked.

While the log cabin was made as draft proof as possible, the heating system was not too efficient, and fire was not ordinarily kept on overnight. Winter nights could be very cold. So for bed warmers planks, or sometimes stones, were heated before the open fire and put in the bed, sometimes also put at the children's backs to retain heat.

In the preceding pages we have tried to picture something of life as it was during the first decade in Cavendish.

There were four log cabins along with whatever out-buildings had been erected. William and Janet Simpson with their younger children were near the junction of the two lakes. Immediately to the west was William Jr. and his wife Mary Millar. Next to him on the west were William and Helen Simpson Clark. To the east, having arrived in 1791, were John and Margaret Simpson McNeill.

By 1800 each of the three younger men had young families of several children.

It is also probable that James, the third son, who married Nancy Woodside in 1798, built a cabin on his hundred acres to the west of William Clark. Fourteen years were to elapse before he moved to Bay View, the next district to the west and established the homestead on which the writer was born and grew up.

We began this chapter with the words "Progress is always relative".

A fast-moving young person of this age of speed would probably see the first decade of the history of Cavendish as a period of inertia and semi-stagnation.

But to the participants in that period of beginnings there was little of idleness and much of challenge as, with only the resources within themselves and in the land and sea, they met and mastered one by one the problems as they arose.

It took men and women of great physical strength and stamina and of strong character to face the unremitting toil, the problems often apparently insurmountable, the loneliness, and the lack of very elementary physical comforts.

But, from the beginning in the unbroken forest of 1790, the year 1800 saw much cleared land under cultivation, a rapidly growing number of livestock, with the necessary barns

to house them, a steady improvement in the ordinary creature comforts of living, the happy voices of grandchildren, in short five happy homes where faith, understanding, mutual trust and cooperative effort were moving toward an even better future for all.

Progress was indeed relative. To the participants it may have seemed slow, but it was definitely progress.

In these first chapters it has been our purpose not only to introduce the reader to the founders of Cavendish, but also to cover in some detail the nature of the country, the conditions under which life was lived, the primitive facilities available to them, developed by their own initiative and toil from the limited resources at their disposal and the way in which they met and overcame almost insurmountable problems.

At this point Cavendish was a community. Homes had been established. Young families were growing up. Land was being cleared. Roads were being opened. Community industries were being established.

The next seven chapters will deal with people - the families of the four children of William and Janet Simpson who, with them, were co-founders of Cavendish; the other children of William and Janet who established homes elsewhere; new families with different names who moved into the community; and a brief report on some of the early families - kin by marriage, who were closely linked with the Simpsons, McNeills and Clarks.

Much of the detail of this information will be found in the genealogical charts in the appendix.