



# *The Bromley Sheaf*

*Bromley Historical Society Newsletter*

Issue 2, 2025

## **President's Remarks**

Question: Why be a member? And not just of the Bromley Historical Society. Why be a member of anything? Why join?

Of course, we don't always have a choice in the matter. I am a member of the family into which I was born but I never had any say in that. It was only a little different with my in-law family. I chose my husband but not the rest. They were part of a package deal. I didn't choose them. They didn't choose me. I've always been grateful that we fit together fairly well but if we didn't? I would still be a member of that group, as well.

Why be a member? Setting aside families and other involuntary organizations, why choose to belong to anything? Here are my top three answers.

Why be a member? Because we have a basic need to come together in groups. I can joyfully hide away at my country home and pretend that I am a member of a group of one, but it doesn't last. Before long I need to connect with some of my people. I am not an island (thank you, John Donne). I need to belong.

Why be a member? Because, when I find others who share interests and ideas, I want to be a part of that. To claim my place among them. I want to share my thoughts with others who will understand (or at least, listen). I want to hear what others think. Will we always agree? Of course not, but we have some things in common. A starting point.

Why be a member? Because, when there are groups whose reason for being is something I feel strongly about, I want to support them.

So, why be a member of the Bromley Historical Society? (You knew where I was going with this, didn't you?) Why? For the reasons I just named and probably a dozen more. Because we care about history. Not just dry facts but the stories of people's lives. Because we enjoy getting together and sharing ... and learning ... and celebrating the history of this area. Because it's important.

If you are a member ... thank you. If you haven't renewed your membership this year ... perhaps it's time.

***Patricia Van Gelder***

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## **Irish in the Ottawa Valley**

Gaelic language and culture originated in early Ireland, and then in the Middle Ages, extended to western Scotland, Wales and the Isle of Man. The word "Gaelic" was first recorded in English in the 1770s. It replaced the earlier word "Gathelik," which had been used as early as 1596. 'Gael,' meaning a 'member of the Gaelic race', first appeared in print in 1810.

Despite Anglo-Normans conquering parts of Ireland, and parts of Scotland becoming Normanized, Gaelic culture remained strong throughout Ireland, and in the Highlands, Hebrides, and Galloway of Scotland. However, when Ireland fell under English control, James VI (also known as James I) tried to subdue the Gaels and wipe out their culture - first in the Scottish Highlands with repressive laws, and then in Ireland by colonizing with English and Scots-speaking Protestant settlers. Although the Gaelic language was officially supplanted by English, it still remained – and remains – the main language in Ireland's Gaeltacht and Scotland's Outer Hebrides and pockets of the north-west Highlands.

Before the Great Irish Famine or Great Hunger (1845–52) occurred, Irish settlers had already made their way to British North America. After the War of 1812, Britain wanted to strengthen its hold over Upper Canada and stave off American expansion tendencies. The earliest settlers, arriving prior to the 1820s, mostly came from the Protestant-majority Irish counties in Ulster and the Midlands.

In the northern district of Renfrew County, a significant percentage of people have Irish in their ancestry. For instance, the 1901 census showed that 79% of the population of Eganville was of Irish descent. This was followed by Brougham at 69% and Bromley at 66%. Many townships had in excess of 50%.

Irish families were drawn to the Ottawa Valley due to the availability of land, employment in the timber trade or infrastructure projects, and government encouragement. The Valley's rugged terrain and vast forests were suited to people with prior agricultural knowledge and familiar with facing hardship.



Peter Robinson's Emigration Scheme brought Catholic settlers into mixed communities of Protestant Highland Scots and Ulster Presbyterians. Under this scheme, the first log homes were completed by November of 1823. Arriving before the worst days of the Famine, they often brought with them livestock, tools, and their Irish dialects of North Cork and South Tipperary. Unlike the later famine refugees who arrived destitute and traumatized, these settlers had some support and stability. They cleared the land and established farms. One significant Valley community was Mount Saint Patrick. By the time official surveyors arrived in the 1850s, they found there an established Irish-speaking Catholic community of 17 families.

Later arrivals, who came from famine-stricken Ireland, perceived that speaking Gaelic associated them with starvation, eviction, and colonial shame. Abandoning the Irish language was likely a strategy to survive and succeed in their new homeland. In addition to this, Gaelic was not taught in the schools, spoken from the pulpit, or used in public life. The Ottawa Valley's mix of Protestant and Catholic settlers led to English becoming the common ground for communication.

While compiling the 1901 census data, those gathering information may have had their own bias. "English" was often written at the top of a page and simply dittoed for each subsequent entry. As well, the fear of stigma or reprisal against families whose names were being recorded may have led these individuals to giving English rather than Irish as their language.

Compiled with information from:

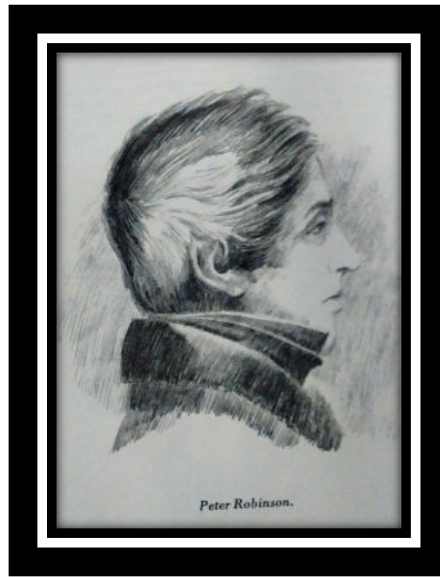
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaels>

*Valley Irish*, Carol Bennett & D.W. McCuaig, Juniper Books, 1983

Information provided by Dónall Ó Dubgaill



## Who was Peter Robinson?



Peter Robinson was notable Canadian politician and colonial administrator. He played a significant role in the early history of present-day Ontario and Canada. He is best known today for being a leading force in what is called the Peter Robinson Emigration Scheme. But who was he?

Born on November 1, 1785, in New Brunswick, he was the son of Christopher Robinson, a Loyalist who had served in the American Revolutionary War. Like many Loyalist families, they headed north, first to New Brunswick and then to Kingston and finally York (modern day Toronto) in Upper Canada. Following in his father's footsteps, Peter Robinson became a militia officer during the War of 1812, serving with great distinction.

Following the war, in 1817, he was elected to the Legislative Assembly of Upper Canada as the representative for the riding of York and Simcoe. In 1823, Robinson was asked by Robert J. Wilmot-Horton, Under-Secretary of the Colonies, to supervise the emigration of impoverished Irish families to Upper Canada.

The end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 had resulted in wide-spread agricultural economic depression. Added to this, the British government had introduced the Corn Laws, a series of tariffs and trade restrictions on imported grains. Designed to protect domestic farmers, this policy kept food

prices high, which favoured land-owners but led to the impoverishment of the farmers. In 1823, a Tithe Composition Act was passed, which required Irish farmers, no matter which denomination, to tithe in money, rather than in-kind, to the Church of Ireland. All this resulted in farmers being forced off the land they worked by low prices for their agricultural produce while at the same time they were being required to pay high rents to their landlords. They became known as reduced farmers.

The Peter Robinson Emigration scheme had two goals: to alleviate the severe poverty in Ireland and to promote the settlement of Upper Canada. The majority of emigrants who benefitted from this were from northern county Cork and southeastern Limerick. Others came from counties of Tipperary, Kerry and Clare, Wicklow and Kilkenny. Many had Irish or Gaelic as their first language.

The first emigration scheme brought roughly 500 settlers, who were mostly located in the Townships of Ramsay, Huntley, Pakenham and Goulbourn on the Ottawa River, near or adjacent to the Lanark and military settlements. It was so successful that the government approved a larger emigration scheme in 1825. In May 1825, nine ships sailed from Cobh, Ireland, carrying over 2,000 Irish emigrants to the Peterborough area around Rice Lake.

Emigrants were given free transportation to Upper Canada, provisions during the voyage and for an additional year following their settlement on the land, and the tools and utensils required to get established. Males between the ages of 18 and 45 years received 70 acres of land, with the option to acquire an additional 30 acres at a later date.

Robinson was a meticulous planner and organizer, which ensured success. He made sure that after the transatlantic voyage the emigrants received land grants, supplies and support to help them begin their new lives in Canada. He continued to advocate for their well-being, which brought him wide-spread respect and recognition. At the same time, he continued to pursue opportunities within the government, including becoming the Commissioner of Crown Lands.

Robinson brought his first-hand local knowledge and good sense to the

colonization schemes. But the demands of his work undermined his health in the last years of his life. He died on July 8, 1838, aged 49.

Compiled using the following sources:

- Wendy Cameron, "ROBINSON, PETER," in Dictionary of Canadian Biography, vol. 7, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003. [Link to full biography.](#)
- <https://nineships1825.com/peter-robinson/>
- <https://visitballyhoura.com/pages/peter-robinson-settlers-story>
- *Valley Irish*, Carol Bennett & D.W, McCuaig, Juniper Books, 1983
- *Peter Robinson's Settlers*, Carol McCuaig, Juniper Books, 1987

Detailed information on the 1823 passenger may be found at:

[Valley Irish](#), Carol Bennett & D.W, McCuaig, Juniper Books, 1983.

Detailed information on the 1825 passenger list on the nine ships may be found at:

<https://trentvalleyarchives.com/peter-robinson-ships-list/>



## **A Common Beginning But Distinct**

Irish, Scottish Gaelic, and Manx are closely related Celtic languages that have their origins in what is called 'primitive Irish.' Although they share a common beginning, each has evolved with distinct differences in pronunciation, vocabulary, and spelling.

When it comes to pronunciation, Manx has a softer intonation and has been influenced by English. Irish varies according to dialect, while Scottish Gaelic has a musical, rolling sound. In terms of vocabulary, Manx contains a number of English words, particularly those of the 19th and 20th centuries. Irish has developed a unique vocabulary that varies depending on dialect. Scottish Gaelic has a distinct vocabulary as well but shares some terms with Irish. As indicated above, spelling in Manx is heavily influenced by English, so it is different from Irish and Scottish Gaelic. Irish retains its older spellings, although in recent years changes have been introduced. Scottish Gaelic has also had spelling reforms.

Irish and Scottish Gaelic are closely related and may be partially understood by speakers of each other. However, Manx, because of its

distinct vocabulary, pronunciation, and spelling, is not easily understood by the other two sister languages.



## Learning the Language: Scots Gaelic at Home

By Libby LeBlanc, CEO, Admaston/Bromley Librarian

When my homeschooled daughter suggested that we learn another language together, I had just finished reading a historical novel featuring a Scots character who spoke with vivid turns of phrase and scattered Gaelic expressions. I found myself wishing I could understand those words naturally. Being half Scots myself, it seemed only sensible to explore the language of my not-so-distant ancestors. So, I suggested to Molly, my daughter, that we try our hand at learning an old but not forgotten language: Scots Gaelic. She was game.

Scots Gaelic (Gàidhlig) was once widely spoken throughout Scotland, particularly in the Highlands and Islands. It began to decline after the defeat of the Jacobite rising in 1746 at the Battle of Culloden. Bonnie Prince Charlie, who had attempted to reclaim the British throne on behalf of the exiled House of Stuart, was forced to flee Scotland after the loss. The traditional lyrics of the *Skye Boat Song* recount his dramatic escape in disguise across the sea to the Isle of Skye. In the aftermath of the rebellion, the British government imposed harsh measures aimed at suppressing Highland culture—banning tartans, disarming the clans, and discouraging the use of the Gaelic language. Over time, this led to a steep decline in Gaelic speakers. For me, learning Gaelic in 2025 is a small but meaningful act of resistance against the fading of a rich cultural heritage.

Molly and I have been picking up phrases and vocabulary and enough that we can now say a few things to each other that no one else in the house understands! It's lovely to say "good night" with *oidhche mhath*, or ask "Please pass the salt and pepper" with *salann agus piobar*. Our ultimate goal is ambitious but exciting: to read a full novel in Scots Gaelic.

Everyone has a favorite book, and mine is *Anne of Green Gables*. While I treasure many books, this one has always stood apart. It has been famously



translated into 37 languages, and most recently, it added a 38th: Scots Gaelic. The Gaelic edition is titled ***Anna Ruadh***. I don't know if it's nostalgia or the memory of my grandmother introducing me to the story at just the right age, but ***Anne*** has traveled with me through every stage of my life. I know the story well, and I think it would be deeply satisfying to read it in Gaelic and perhaps share it aloud with others.

Though our progress is modest, learning Gaelic has brought unexpected rewards. It has led to a deeper connection to our roots, a sense of accomplishment, and a quiet joy in discovering a nearly lost treasure. Language carries culture, memory, and belonging. As we learn each new word, we reclaim a small piece of Scotland's living history and in doing so, make it part of our family's story too.

**Is e cànan an lùib cultair.**

***Language is at the heart of culture.***

(Traditional Gaelic Saying)



### **A Long Presence**

There has been a long history of German immigration to Canada. The earliest were soldiers who came to New France to assist with the French military in the New World. At the time of the British conquest of New France, nearly 200 families living in the St. Lawrence Valley were of German origin. This was the oldest cohesive German settlement and it developed between 1750 and 1753, with the arrival of 2,400 Protestant farmers and tradesmen from southwest Germany who had been promised land by British agents to give added strength to Britain's efforts in Acadia.

The American Revolution brought a wave of United Empire Loyalists to Lower and Upper Canada in the years following the war. Among these were Germans who formed the largest group of non-British descent. Arriving as early as 1776, most were the children of emigrants who had left the Palatinate (Bavaria) for New York and came North to the British territories.

Next were the Mennonites of Pennsylvania who were Anabaptist farmers. They were pacifists who were uneasy with the war fueled by American nationalism and so wanted agrarian land which could be worked by their large population of roughly 50,000. Once they had acquired sufficient acres in Waterloo County, chain migration began with transplanted families bringing with them the Pennsylvania-German culture.

Germans began settling in the Ottawa Valley during the 1800s. As in previous years, the Canadian government actively recruited settlers to the Upper Ottawa Valley. They were often landless farmers and skilled craftsmen, who were drawn by the promise of farmland and a country where they could continue their cultural and religious traditions. The first wave arrived in the late 1850s, with a significant increase in immigration between 1879 and 1884. They came primarily from Pomerania, Posen, Brandenburg, Mecklenburg, Silesia, and Saxony, and established communities in the townships of Alice, Wilberforce, Bromley, Admaston, North and South Algona, Petawawa, and Westmeath. They also settled in the Bonnechere and Madawaska Valleys, particularly around Palmer Rapids, Quadeville, and Killaloe.

The settlers had to clear the land, removing stumps and many stones. It was a daunting challenge, but here among people from their own regions, they could continue their traditions, speak their language, and celebrate special occasions with their music and songs.

German immigration continued through the years with a large cohort coming following the Second World War. More recently, the Old Order Mennonites have established a colony in Admaston/Bromley. Today, German Canadians represent approximately 8.1% of Canada's population, the sixth largest at over 2.9 million people.

#### Sources:

Harvest of Stones, of Stones, The German Settlement of Renfrew County, Brenda Lee-Whiting, University of Toronto Press, 1985

<https://genealogyensemble.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/the-german-churches-and->

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[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ottawa\\_Valley](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ottawa_Valley)

<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/german-canadians>

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## **Strong Family Roots and Traditions**

August Friedrich Wilhelm Lemke was born on July 13, 1863 in Hermelsdorf, Pommern, Prussia. He was the youngest of four children of Daniel Freiderich Lemke and Justine Frederike Kell. August's elder sister, Karoline Charlotte Emilie, born in 1854, had emigrated to Canada, as unlikely as it seems today, when she was seven, where records show there was a Lemke family, who had settled in the Lemke Lake area of Petawawa Township in the early 1860s. August himself came to Canada in 1881, also settling in the same area.

Little is known of August's early days in the region, although family lore does indicate he worked in the timber industry. On June 12, 1885, he married Ida Augusta Heideman. Ida had been born in Alice Township on November 24, 1865, her parents, Frederick Heideman II and Wilhelmine Butt (Buth), having emigrated from Hamburg, Germany three years earlier on May 3, 1862. Tragedy dogged this couple, who lost their first born son in 1864, followed by Wilhelmine in 1870 during childbirth, and another son subsequently in 1871. Despite this, the family flourished, buying a 100-acre parcel of land that straddled the township line of Petawawa and Alice Townships.

As a result of her mother's death, Ida was taken into the home of Charles and Caroline Hass. In fact, in the 1871 census for Alice and Fraser Township, Ida, age five, is shown as living with the Hass family. In some records, her name is given as Ida Heideman, while in others as Ida Hass.



August and Ida had 11 children, beginning with Mary Louise in 1886 and ending with Edwin Milton in 1909 - six girls and five boys in total. All were born healthy and they thrived in the rugged rural setting, with the closest town being Pembroke. The family resided in a two-storey brick farmhouse that was built prior to the purchase of the farmstead by the couple. Over the years, a large frame structure was added, possibly built by August. Farm outbuildings were erected over the years.

The children attended the one-room schoolhouse, SS Number 7, Petawawa, a mile from their home. The family worshipped in the Zions Kirche, a one-storey building erected in 1897 on land donated by the family. The congregation, affiliated with the Evangelical United Brethren, was composed of German families. It served both as a religious and a social centre. On its cornerstone is the German word "Gemeinschaft", which means a social group united by common beliefs and values.

The range of years between the birth of the eldest and youngest children allowed August and Ida to have many helping hands for the farm-work and so the family prospered. The happiness of the family is demonstrated by the name they gave to their farm, Sunshine Farms. A large portion of the farm is on Petawawa sand. August began the tradition of planting Red Pine, well suited to that type of soil. Like the couple and their children, who had long lives, these seedlings thrived and matured.

After a life of farming and raising a family, August passed away in 1940, at age 77. Ida went to live with her daughter, Lorinda, who had a bakery on the Main Street, in Pembroke (where Ulrich's is now), working alongside her until her death in 1946, age 81. The couple is buried in the Zions Kirche Cemetery.

As Dave Lemkay, their great-grandson, writes in his book, *Pines in the Sand* (Rivercourse Communications, 2024), "From a small farm in Petawawa Township, Ontario, the Lemke family has branched out to many parts of North America, and indeed the world."

Note: As the author also notes in his book, the spelling of the name Lemke has changed over the years, with some keeping the original spelling and others using Lemkay. This reflects two things - the anti-German sentiment during World War I; and census takers, who in the early years had little education, anglicized names or transcribed names as they heard them. A Lemke family history was to appear in Brenda Lee-Whitting's *Harvest of Stone*, but unfortunately did not.



## MARK YOUR CALENDAR:

### UPCOMING 2025 TALKS

- |                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Sunday, July 13<br>2pm      | Gaelic Roots: The Irish Language in the Ottawa Valley<br>Donàll Ó Dubgaill<br>Old Town Hall<br>498 Micksburg Road    |
| Sunday, August 17<br>2pm    | Pines in the Sand – Lemke Family Roots and Branches<br>Dave Lemkay<br>Old Town Hall<br>498 Micksburg Road<br>Osceola |
| Sunday, September 14<br>2pm | A Man for Our Times: Thomas D'Arcy McGee<br>Sean Conway<br>Old Town Hall   |

498 Micksburg Road  
Osceola

Sunday, October 19  
2pm

Renfrew Highland Pipes and Drums  
Old Town Hall  
498 Micksburg Road  
Osceola

Sunday, November 9  
2pm

*The Great War: The Irish and the Ottawa Valley*  
Mark McGowan  
(Dan Gorman Memorial Talk)  
Location TBC

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## JOIN US!

**Become a member of the BROMLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

- **Renew your annual membership – Individual \$10.00 or Family \$15.00.**
- **Send your cheque along with your name, street address and e-mail coordinates to: Bromley Historical Society, c/o Box 1, Douglas, ON, K0J 1S0.**
- **Charitable donations receive a tax receipt.**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Telephone Number:** \_\_\_\_\_ **E-mail Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**I wish to join as: Individual \$10.00 \_\_\_\_\_ Family \$15.00 \_\_\_\_\_**

**I wish to donate: \$\_\_\_\_\_.**

**Yes, I would like to volunteer. My interests are:**