

The earliest roads to Ogden: Pt 2 communicating with the wider world

Note to readers:

The following article attempts to summarise the development of road networks radiating out from the Township of Stanstead, prior to about the mid-point of the 19th century. This is a broad topic, on a subject few have given much thought to, but the road networks were of vital importance for the pioneer settlers of our region, and are deserving of some study.

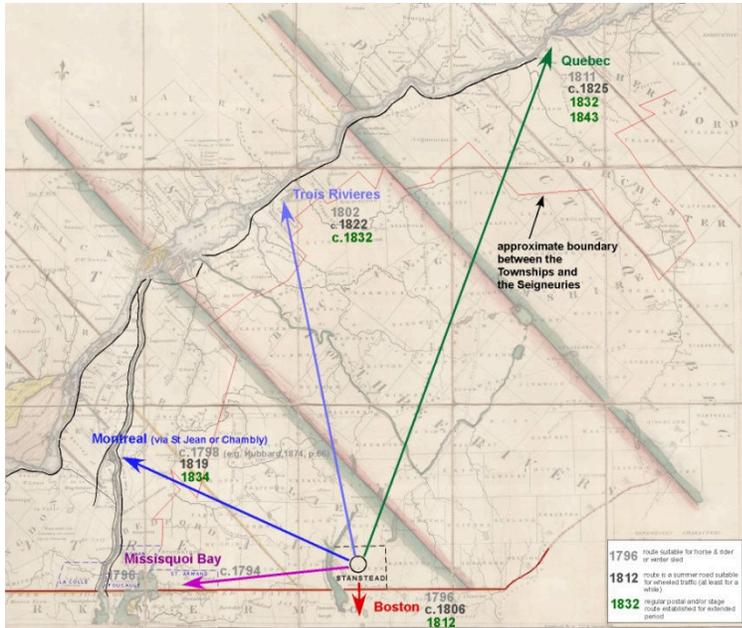
One individual who did give some thought to the subject was Jules Martel, a Jesuit priest who, in 1960, completed a comprehensive study (resulting in an M.A. from the University of Ottawa) on the historical development of roads and other communication routes in the Eastern Townships pre-1855. His 270 page dissertation was based on an exhaustive look at primary sources, particularly the countless petitions, and endless legislative debates, surrounding possible new road construction, and just as importantly, road maintenance.

I have shamelessly rode on Martel's coattails, and tried to distil his research down to a more manageable 34 pages. I have added some illustrations and summary maps that hopefully others will find useful. Much like the road networks I describe, my distillation is a bit of an ad hoc affair, but hopefully you will find it interesting nonetheless.

The earliest roads to Ogdén: Pt 2 communicating with the wider world

Roads to elsewhere!

Not all the roads built through the Township of Stanstead in the early years were solely to reach



clearings in the wilderness.

Communication with the wider world was important, particularly communication with the larger towns in Lower Canada of the day, these being Quebec, Trois-Rivières and Montreal. Although Jay's Treaty of 1794 legalized trade with the U.S., and connections to the south remained strong, pioneer settlers in the Townships increasingly looked to the St. Lawrence River valley for critical supplies, a market for their potash and pearlash exports¹, and any desired governmental assistance or judicial recourse.

Simple map indicating when land routes were established between the Township of Stanstead and major external centres, plus Missisquoi Bay. The three dates reflect the following: 1) the earliest crude road suitable for horse and rider, 2) the earliest attempt at stage service or road improvement sufficient for wagon traffic, and finally, 3) when stage service was established at least for an extended period, or at least summer wheeled road traffic was rarely interrupted.

Communication in the early 19th century was determined by the nature of the landscape (its physical geography or physiography), which in turn was dependent on the underlying geology. All of the Eastern Townships south and east of a line running from Stanbridge East to Granby to Warwick, are an extension of the Appalachians. This north-south trend of subdued mountains, running all the way from South Carolina to Newfoundland, is the product of continental collisions hundreds of millions of years ago. The end result is that the terrain has a "grain" to it, the mountains and river valleys tend to run roughly north-south, and this presented major challenges for Stanstead pioneers who might have wished to travel west (e.g. to Montreal). As a result, most of the earliest routes traced through the wilderness ran to the north, or to the south.

¹ For many years this was the only cash/barter crop worth exporting. Potash and the more refined product, pearlash, were a by-product of clearing the forests (and burning the residue). Early potash was used to make products such as soaps, dyes, glass, baked goods, and gunpowder. With so many uses, the demand for potash in England constantly grew. Unfortunately, the existing process was tedious, requiring a large amount of timber to create only a small quantity of potash.

North

Towards Trois-Rivières

Sometime prior to 1805, a dirt road was pushed north of Kilborn Mills (now Rock Island) on the border (grist and saw mills built 1804) some 36km to McDougall's and Pennoyer's mills (built 1795 and c. 1803 respectively on the Coaticook River in the vicinity of Waterville), then a further 15km through what is now Lennoxville to Hyatt's Mills (built 1796 at Grandes Fourches on the Magog River- now present day Sherbrooke). All four mills would have initially served the local market only, but their construction would have also spurred the development of new routes and the improvement of older trails, both within and between townships. Reasonable roads were required to transport sawn lumber by wagon, or to deliver grain in bulk to grist mills. The earliest Bouchette map (1805) indicates such a road and the years associated with the construction of the mills cited above, probably represent the earliest dates the **Kilborn Mills to Hyatt's Mills route** might have been cut through the wilderness. This significant endeavour may have been overseen by Timothy Hinman², given his extensive experience building settler roads in northern Vermont. We are told by Hubbard (1874,p.28) that only in 1808 was a road coincident with



Dufferin Street built, but that an earlier crooked trail lay somewhat to the west. Assuming Bouchette and Hubbard are correct, than the original road to Pennoyer's Mills would also have followed this earlier trail in the vicinity of Stanstead Plain.

Sketch of Kilborn Mills by Joseph Bouchette circa 1827. The view is looking

south across the border (approx. where the bridge is located) into Vermont. The sketch depicts this well-travelled route, a highway in its day. It is relatively wide, but not macadamized, un-cambered, and without any apparent ditches. Curiously, Bouchette only depicts pedestrians. This initial road to Hyatt's Mills (Sherbrooke) may have been constructed by Timothy Hinman. Eventually in 1811 it would be linked up with Craig's Road that led to Quebec.

The incentives for this regional road were probably twofold, one pragmatic, the other psychological. Connecting to Hyatt's Mills on the St. Francis River, meant access to an established transportation corridor (the river itself) to Lac St. Pierre, and then Trois-Rivières. By freighter canoe or raft during the warm months, or on the ice by sleigh in the winter, the River offered a dangerous, cumbersome³, but feasible means to get bulk goods to and from the larger market towns on the St. Lawrence.

² In the biographies of Hinman produced by both Bingham (1891) and Sangree (2002) mention is made of road work done in Lower Canada, but there is no specific and/or credible mention of which projects Hinman might have been involved with.

³ The many rapids on the St. Francis required numerous portages, and the ice was notoriously unpredictable. At least by 1799, the River route was used. Bouchette (1815) describes no less than 4 mandatory portages, plus an additional two portages unless the river was at a high water mark. See attached summary map.

Beyond this practical reason, there was also the simple desire to connect with one's neighbours, particularly in this period of initial settlement and extreme isolation.

The Stanstead road, marginally improved, is now our Dufferin Street/Route 143, with the exception alluded to above. This actually nicely illustrates the quality of inertia shown by most roads. Once they have been built, roads are largely self-perpetuating, and are changed or abandoned very rarely. The Stanstead road connected at Hyatt's Mills with a road leading south from Shipton Township (the settlement at Richmond), which ran about 40km mostly along the west bank of the St. Francis River, and was built in 1802. It was probably cut out of the forest by a crew of settlers under the general guidance of Elmer Cushing, the first pioneer of the Richmond settlement. Martel (1960,p.72) indicates that a group of townships⁴ including Ascot in 1802 agreed to contribute 12½ days of work for each resident settler towards the construction of a road "from John Ward's house in Ascot towards Nicolet and Trois-Rivières", but it is unclear that this is the same St. Francis road, or if not, was this other road ever built.

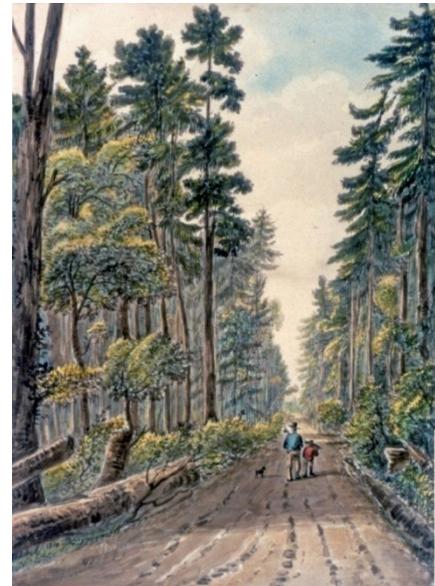


Sketch by Joseph Bouchette of the road running parallel to the St. Francis River, circa 1827. The retreat of the forest from the relentless efforts of the axe-wielding settler is clear to see. In 1802 a very rough road was cut from near Lennoxville to Hyatt's Mills (now Sherbrooke), then along the banks of the St. Francis River, north to Pierreville, on Lac St Pierre. This road was over time improved, substantially so in the early 1830's (i.e. after this view was published in 1832).

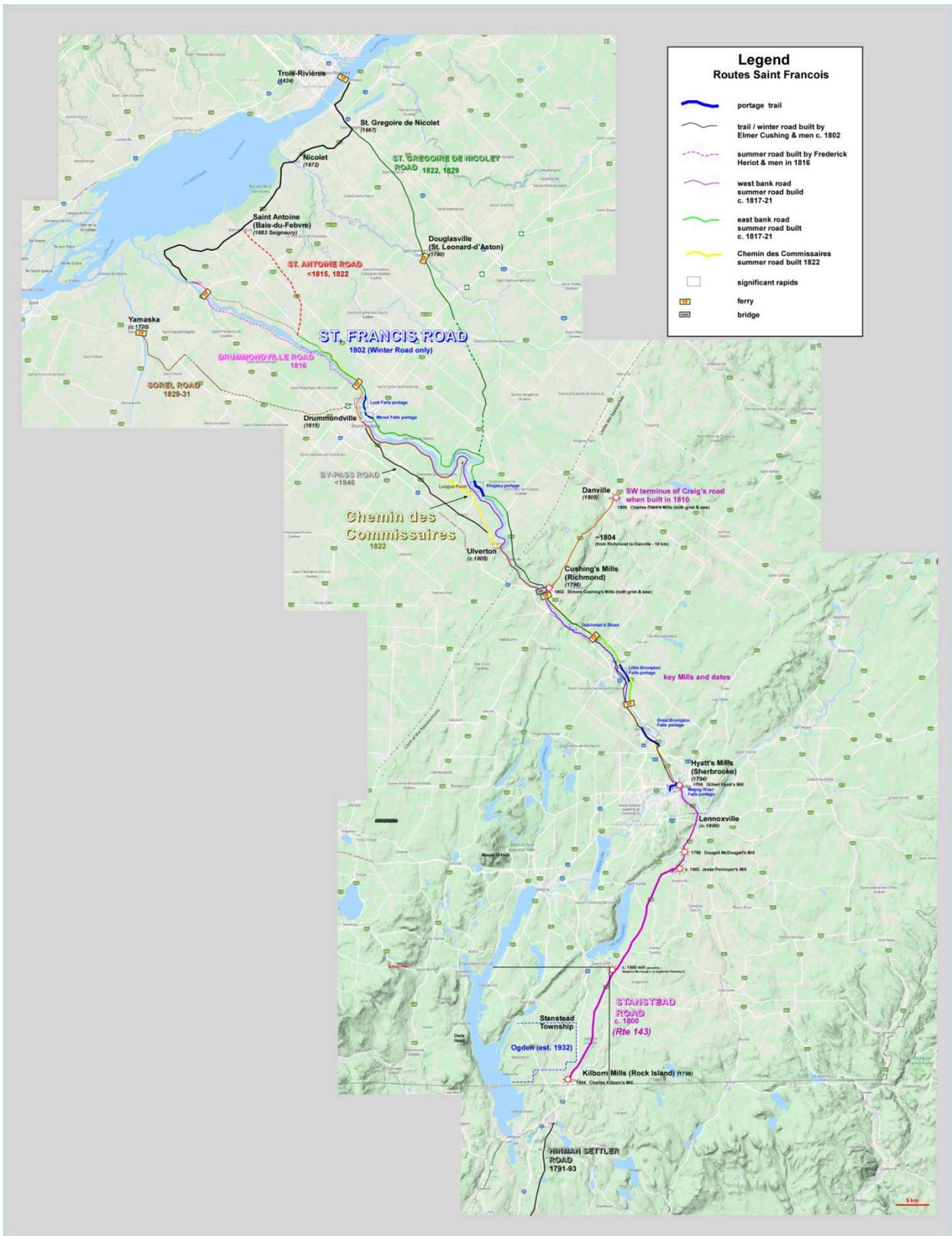
The image at left and the one above by Bouchette (drawn circa late 1820's), are misleading in that they portray roads somewhat later in the settlement process, with substantial clearings surrounding the roads. The image below, although not from the Eastern Townships, is probably a better representation of these first roads through the wilderness.

We are told by Cleveland (1858) that this first road between Shipton and Baie du Febvre (Lac St Pierre), which paralleled the St. Francis River on its East bank, was "fifteen feet wide, and cleared only of fallen timber and small trees". In all likelihood it linked, but did not replicate, the numerous portage trails (in aggregate 11km) that circumvented the rapids and falls on the St. Francis. The route would have been adequate for sleds in the winter, but probably not for more than horse and rider in the summer (i.e. no wheeled wagons, stages, or carriages). Nonetheless this was the first land route opened to the long-established road network established during the French regime along the south shore of the St. Lawrence, which provided access to all three urban centres.

Although not from the Eastern Townships, this view, sketched by James Cockburn of the Kingston Road east of Toronto/York in Upper Canada circa 1830 is a wonderful stand-in for all the settler roads cut through first-growth forest. This uncambered, un-ditched, un-macademized dirt road looks to be about 15 feet wide, similar to the St. Francis River road cut in 1802.



⁴ The Council of Newport – a very short-lived polities that grouped several townships.



Modern map showing earliest roads to Trois Rivières along the St. Francis River

Although Cushing's winter road served a purpose, it was hardly adequate to the needs of the settlers.

Encouraged by a generous land grant policy instituted by Lower Canadian House of Assembly, in late July of 1815, 29 year old Lt.-Col. Frederick George Hériot, at the head of 50 demobilized soldiers from the Voltigeurs, Watteville and Meurons regiments, left Fort William Henry (Sorel) to go up the St. Francis



Frederick George Hériot

River in order to establish a settlement (Drummondville). Very shortly thereafter, Hériot appealed to the government for funds to build a summer road from Drummondville downriver to Pierreville, a distance of about 19 miles. For the first time ever, the Assembly voted to actually underwrite the cost of a new road in the Province⁵. In 1816 this road, nearly all on the west bank of the St. Francis, was completed by a Mr. Dormans and his work crew, for a cost of about £50 per mile. This road could take wheeled traffic, but suffered the fate of so many wilderness roads, a lack of resources to maintain it, and within a year or two it had degraded to a winter road, little better than Cushing's.

In 1817 the Assembly voted new funds, some £55,000, for new infrastructure (canals, roads, bridges and their maintenance) in the Province. And yet, in 1819, the St. Francis road was still "broken down". The road from the Baie-du-Febvre to Stanstead was left unfinished in the townships of Melbourne and Brompton and as a result, travellers often had to make five or six miles on the St. Francis River, which itself was almost impassable in certain seasons. Much of the £55,000 had gone towards the Lachine Canal, quite a bit had been left unspent⁶, and very little had trickled to the Eastern Townships.

As a result, by 1822, still only preliminary roadwork for two major roads tied into the St. Francis River route had been started. One was an upgrade/overhaul of the Elmer Cushing winter road on the east bank, starting from the village of St. Antoine and running southwest until it joined the east bank of the St Francis about 15km upriver from Pierreville in the Seigneurie of Courval. The other started from St. Gregoire de Nicolet, crossed the townships of Aston, Wendover, Horton, and Simpson, and stopped at the place called Longue-Pointe (a large meander bend on the St. Francis River) in the township of Kingsey. From there, the two roads formed a single road which followed the east bank of the river to Brompton, where it passed over to the other bank, connecting with the west bank road which had been extended from Drummondville through the townships of Wickham, Durham and Melbourne. The summer road network was thus complete, but still in a preliminary and quite rough form.

Two enterprising men of the region, were now appointed Road Commissioners, Frederick George Hériot and William B. Felton, and they resolved to take advantage of the best sections of these two bad roads to get a good one. Their proposed road directly connected Stanstead and the St. Lawrence River and was verbalized⁷ by the Deputy Voyer, Charles Whitcher in June of 1822. The route commenced in the

⁵ The funding of roads became a major driver for the development of local (municipal scale) governments (see separate article entitled "*The relationship between roads and the development of local government*").

⁶ In fact these funds were the last government largesse until 1831, when the infrastructure coffers were again refilled.

⁷ In essence, registered and approved.

south from the Township line of Hatley, headed for Sherbrooke, followed the west bank of the St. Francis to Brompton, where it crossed over (a ferry) and continued on the other bank to Richmond (another ferry); taking the west bank, it joined the Wendover crossing near Drummondville (yet another ferry), and ended its course at the boundary of the seigneurie of Courval.

This consolidated road, long known as the *Chemin des Commissaires*, stretched for 116 miles and necessitated three ferry crossings (the first bridge across the St. Francis wasn't built until 1846 at Richmond). It was improved every year until 1831, and evidently improvements were sorely needed. In 1829 it was described by a Mr. Evans in a lengthy memorandum to the special committee of the House of Assembly, as that "*miserable road on the west bank of the St. Francis which is barely passable in the summer.*"

The Honourable W.B. Felton, testifying before the same commission, assured that "*the most important communication with the Eastern Townships is the St. Francis route, but the people of the region are indifferent to whether it goes left or right (i.e. on the east or west bank); all they want is for it to be there, or for it to be passable.*"

In 1830, the same road is still being discussed in the same committee: "*Parliament has already voted with sums of money to improve this road and there has been a great deal of benefit... but it is still not enough*". The Hatley to Baie-du-Febvre road would require a grant of £3,100, of which £2,100 would be spent this year and the rest next year. If that is not enough, "*we shall have to resort to local taxation.*"

And the Township people supported the reports of their agents with their petitions. Thus, on January 27, 1830, the petitioners asked for no less than five roads (including the St. Francis road) that would facilitate their communications with Montreal, Quebec City and Trois-Rivières. The Committee recommended an allocation of £1,000. The following year on February 5, 1831, another petition was presented from settlers in Compton, Barford and Hereford, for a road (spur) from their townships to join the St. Francis route.

The people of Stanstead also presented their petition: £400 to complete the road from Stanstead to Sherbrooke. "*We spent the £136 we had in hand and made 5½ miles of good road. We ask £200 to finish that area (3 miles of swampy ground), and £200 to continue from Hatley to Stanstead.*"

Commissioner C. Menut⁸, for his part, reported, around the same date, that he had worked twelve miles of road between Drummondville and the Township of Durham and that he had spent £400; he asked for another £300 to finish. At the same time, he noted that "*overloaded wagons with narrow rim wheels quickly broke the tracks and something should be legislated on this subject*".

It was in 1829 when the Assembly voted on a new appropriation for roads, the first since 1817, including £1,000 for a road from Shipton to Saint-Grégoire, £900 to complete the road from **Drummondville to De Guire** (towards Sorel), and £500 for the Drummondville-Brompton section. In 1830, a further £400 was

⁸ Son of Alexandre Menut, for whom the Falls at Drummondville were named.

granted for the road from Drummondville to De Guire, and **£2,100 for the road from Hatley to Drummondville.**

In 1831, finally yielding to pressure, the purse strings truly broke. Among the sums granted were the following:

£11, 2s., 10d., to reimburse the commissioners for a sum advanced for Drummondville Road to De Guire;

£58, 17s, 1d., to complete the same route...

£200, to improve the road from Sherbrooke to Stanstead;

£500, to complete the road from the Township of Compton to the provincial line in Hereford (junction of the St. Francis Road);

£230, to improve the River Road in the Townships of Durham and Melbourne;

£360, to improve the main road in Brompton Township;

£500, to continue the road from the Baie-du-Febvre to the Drummondville crossing;

£300, to complete the Sorel-Sherbrooke road in the townships of Wickham and Grantham;

£200, to complete the road from the township of Grantham along the Saint-François River leading to the seigneurie of Saint-Hyacinthe;

£300, to make a path for the inhabitants behind Shipton through the Township of Kingsey to the St. Francis River;

(£3,000 to improve the navigation of the St. Francis).

By the early 1830's the St. Francis road was finally in good enough condition to be travelled twice a week by stagecoaches, carrying passengers and in time, the regular post. Furthermore by 1831 the new road linking Drummondville with De Guire, ultimately linking up with the Montreal Road at Fort William Henry (Sorel), was apparently siphoning off a significant amount of cargo that would otherwise be transported down the St. Francis River. The commissioner of roads reported that "*The improvements made on my way have brought about a great change in the mode of transport between the Townships and the St. Lawrence. Before last summer all freight was carried by ship (raft) on the St. Francis, but now long lines of wagons are taking the new route, carrying the cargo formerly destined for the said river.*"

In summary, the early roads that were pushed north, on either side of the St. Francis River, were ad hoc affairs, with little thought as to how they might be maintained, once built. Some rough roads were built, and then never utilized at all. As early as 1824, these inefficiencies were being complained about, in a report submitted to the Assembly by a Mr. Evans.

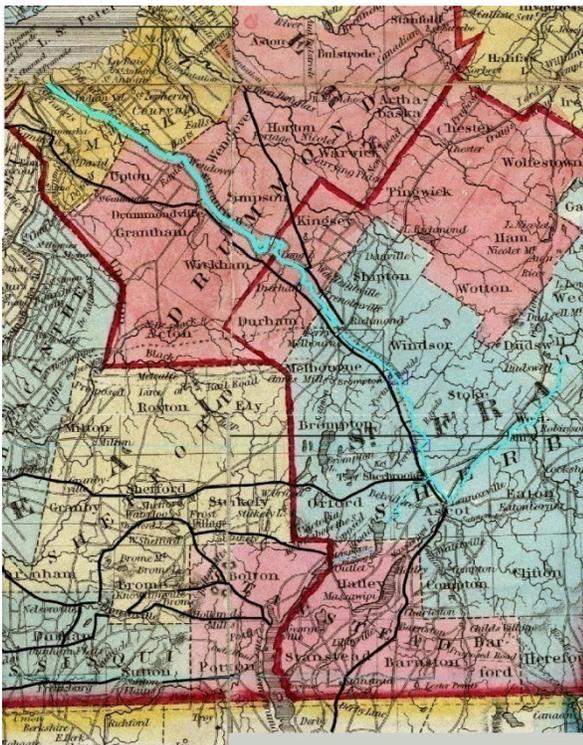
A few years ago the Government provided money to three commissioners who could not agree on a plan; each one plotted his course according to his immediate interests: one in particular, from the rear of Shipton (Danville) to Trois-Rivières, which has never been used and is overgrown with brush; the section of the left (west) bank of the St. Francis which has always been in a bad state; another from Kingsey to St. Gregory, which shortens the distance by eighteen miles, would require only £500 to complete; the Drummondville-Sorel road, which has not yet been opened, and which would meet a great need.

In 1832, when the *Chemin des Commissaires* was completed, Surveyor-General Bouchette made these comments⁹. It should be remembered that these roads were still just dirt roads, subject to rapid deterioration.

As for the roads along the Saint-François, the one on the right (east) bank is the best and most frequently travelled in summer; the other is used more in winter. The worst section of the summer road is between the seigneurie of Courval and Mr. Spicer's residence, a distance of about six miles, four of which, called the Savannah, are dangerous and almost impassable during the rainy season. The Simpson marshes are also in very poor condition for a distance of half a mile.

The following year (1832), before the committee of the Legislative Assembly, it was again Mr. Felton who made his report and severely criticized the abandonment of the roads along the St. Francis River. *"The impassability of these roads has always been and continues to be a barrier to the emigration of young men from the seigneuries."* He asked the Assembly to grant large enough sums of money to complete these roads, especially the one on the west bank. He also criticized the members for not distributing road subsidies wisely: *"You can't make a good road in one season and think you can neglect it afterwards; you have to spend a reasonable amount of money each year on the roads to keep them in good condition."*

Bridges were another sticking point. north of Sherbrooke, there were no bridges across the St. Francis all



the way to the St. Lawrence, a distance of 90 miles. At Drummondville, Frederick Hériot in 1832 argued: *"The construction of a bridge over the St. Francis between Wendover and Grantham is of primary importance... This is the route taken by the stagecoach from Trois-Rivières to Sherbrooke. A bridge would take 10 to 12 hours to build and save lives. Seventeen (have) drowned to my knowledge."*

The first bridge north of Sherbrooke to be constructed was possibly at Richmond in 1847 (according to Cleveland, 1858), but Bouchette's 1846 map shows this bridge already in existence, as well as one at Longue Pointe,but still not one at Drummondville¹⁰.

Portion of Bouchette map of 1846. Thick black line are those roads indicated on this map as "McAdamised and Post Roads". Whether most Post Roads were metalled is not known, but obviously the Post Roads were better constructed for all season travel. The map would also suggest that the principal road on the west bank was in places, now substantially removed west of the river. Possibly this reflects some of the re-routing by Felton and Heriot in 1830, but also additional

improvements at a slightly later date as well.

⁹ In fairness, Bouchette published his *The British Dominions in North America* in 1832, but based on data collected in the late 1820's. Also Bouchette could have been more critical, but was probably quite conscious of the intended audience for his publication. The work is a compromise between factual observation, and a potential tool for state propaganda.

¹⁰ The first bridge at Drummondville was not built until 1860.

The inhabitants of the border region were luckier in this respect. Between Sherbrooke and Stanstead, two bridges had already been built in the 1820's, and in 1834, they were asking £400 to repair them (the petitioners only got £200). As for their road to Sherbrooke, the residents of Stanstead and Hatley apparently thought it was a good one, except for a two and a half mile bad section, which still required £250 in repairs (Martel,1960).

With the union of the two provinces (1841) and the creation of the Board of Works, funds for the maintenance of "principal" roads became more of an annual expenditure¹¹, and the major routes gradually were improved. By 1846 the principal, or Post, roads along the St. Francis were of reasonable quality, and many of them may have been McAdamised (metalled with crushed stone). In places they no longer hugged the banks of the river, thereby eliminating the risk of washout during spring freshets. Road communication between Ogden and Trois-Rivières was now well established, at the dawn of the railroad age. Railways were to prove a double-edged sword for the road network, as will be discussed later!



Portion of a plan drafted in 1848 for a railroad route (never executed at that time) along the St Francis River. The proposed rail line is shown in red, but it also shows that the main road at that time was on the west bank. A less important road existed on the east bank but did not extend south of the Township of Windsor, terminating north of the Lesser Brompton Falls. Image courtesy of BANQ.

¹¹ However, some of the costs were devolved to newly established district councils, and these had difficulty raising the funds through taxation or in imposing statute labour. See separate article entitled "The relationship between roads and the development of "local" government"

Towards Quebec

Craig's Road

A road connection to Nicolet permitted a traveller on horseback to eventually reach the provincial capital, but it was a circuitous and arduous ride, much of it on rough trails prior to the 1830's. A more



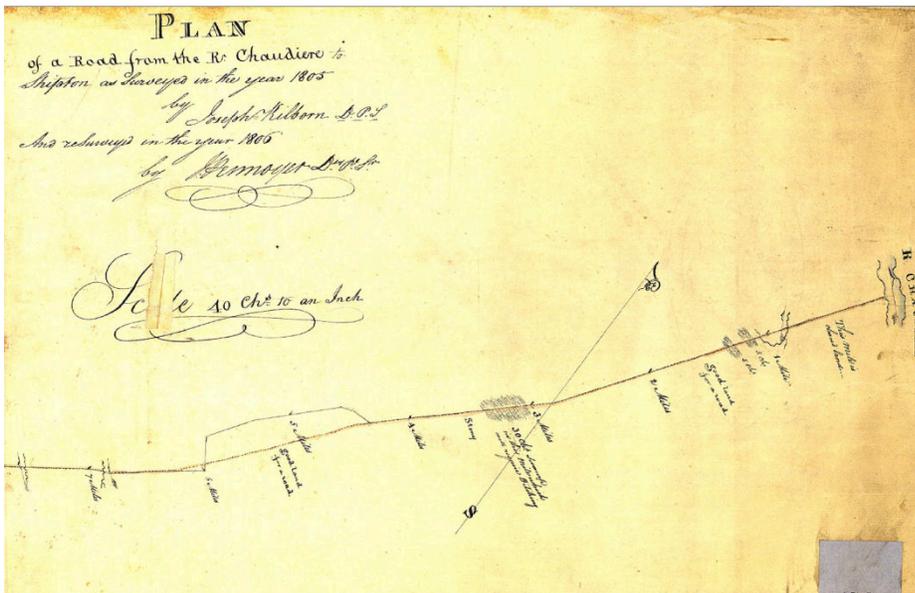
direct route from Quebec to the Townships, preferably on well constructed summer roads, could cut out 55 miles of travel and significant time. Such a conclusion had been obvious for some time. In 1800, deputy-surveyor Joseph Kilborn (also responsible for surveying Stanstead Township!) had been hired by Township leader Joseph Frobisher to mark out a suitable path from the Seigneurie of St Gilles to "Frobisher's" new Township of Ireland.

Governor Sir James Henry Craig

This distance represented a little less than one half of the total road distance that Craig's Road would eventually occupy, however no road was built at this time. In 1806 Henry Caldwell, owner of the St Lauzon Seigneurie, offered to pay for the construction of a road all the way to the Township of Shipton on the St. Francis, in exchange for a land grant amounting to 400 acres per mile of new road, distributed in the various new townships along the proposed route. Caldwell had Kilborn survey the rest of the route to Shipton, where a road had already reached east to the settlement of Danville.¹²

This is part of Caldwell's communication:

I submit to you the plan of this road laid out by Mr. Kilborn, showing that there will be sixteen to eighteen miles of road to be made through the seigniories of St. Stephen, St. Gilles, St. Mary, and about forty-eight miles through the granted townships and Crown lands. ... the territory is suitable for



cultivation and the opening up of a good road. A subscription has been opened for the purpose of financing the opening of this road (Mr. Hall advanced £130), but the amount raised could not permit the opening of (but) a small part of the said road, so that without sufficient aid from the Government our work will have been in vain ...

Small portion of the plan for a road between the Chaudière River and Shipton Township (about 64 miles) surveyed by Joseph Kilborn (in 1805), and Jesse Pennoyer (in 1806). Image courtesy of BANQ.

¹² Not that this route was necessarily the best. The Grand Voyer Antrobus said in 1812, "I could trace a multitude of great roads to Quebec City much shorter than Craig's Road".

the required produce to the town, and perhaps even the willingness of the neighbouring habitants to provide the city with its necessities, had reached their limits. As reported by the Quebec Gazette on November 1st, 1810, *"This great passage [Craig's Road] to the Townships give Quebec City a few expectations of independence, providing the needs of a growing population. Confined so far to the product [grain, meat, other food produce, firewood, fodder, etc.] of an ungrateful neighbourhood and a disqualified agriculture, we have always been forced to resort to higher [upriver] districts for our support."*

Thus the new road was viewed less as an aid to the Township settler, but as a much needed guarantee of access to supplies for the province's seat of government. The Quebec Gazette (ibid) grasped for superlatives, stating: *"We do not hesitate to call this book [road project] the most important local event since this province has become British."*

Eventually just under 400 soldiers would be employed. They cut down trees, dug ditches, built bridges, and drained swamps, to make a clean and workable dirt road, suitable for the passage of a stagecoach. Despite the unexpected difficulties and inclement weather, the work was done swiftly, and in just three months, with no loss of men to either disease or accident. Apparently by November 1st 1810, already 100 head of cattle from the Townships had passed along the road to Quebec. This was a very credible effort for 75 miles cut through wilderness. The road was fifteen feet wide, and included no less than 120 bridges, of which 24 crossed large streams (including the Bécancour River).

Almost as soon as the road was completed and the first snowfalls had blanketed the road, a (6-day) stagecoach (sleigh) service to Boston was inaugurated, commencing on January 10th of 1811. The stage service tried to run regularly in winter, but in the early spring with snow still on the ground, the service became unpredictable due to the rocks, debris, trees and stumps that emerged on the road, not to mention the extensive swampy areas after the initial melts. Punctuality of the stage was a non-starter. Nonetheless the schedule, as was printed in the Quebec Gazette of December 31st, 1810, struck an optimistic tone!

"The stagecoaches will circulate as follows: they will depart from Quebec City and Boston on the Monday of each week, to meet in Stanstead on Wednesday and arrive in Quebec City and Boston on Saturday of the same week.On Monday, they will travel from Quebec City via St. Nicholas, St. Gilles, Leeds to Mr. Brown's house in the Township of Ireland where the passengers will sleep. On Tuesday, they will go to Mr. Tilton's house on the St. Francis River, via Chester, Tingwick and Shipton. On Wednesday they will continue through Brompton, Orford, Ascot, Compton, Hatley, Barnston, Stanstead, to Mr. Salesbury's house on the 45° line at Stanstead. On Thursday, they will proceed through Derby, Salem, Brownington, Barton, Barton, Sheffield, Linden, St. Johnsbury, Barnet, Tygate, Newbury, to Haverhill, where they will connect with the stagecoaches going to Boston and other places in the United States."

On March 28, 1811, the Quebec Gazette reported that the coach from Boston, *"that had been expected the previous Saturday, finally arrived Tuesday, delayed by an early thaw, with flooding rivers, and trees blocking the road. The stagecoach of March 28 is the last of the season."*

Mr. Josiah Stiles, the stagecoach/sleigh driver was worried about the upcoming winter season. He wrote in November of 1811: *"I established a line of communication last winter from Pointe-Lévis to Boston by Craig's Road. I intend to start again this winter, but I'm afraid I won't be able to because of the many trees that fell across the road during the last storm."*

The House Committee on State Affairs, having considered Mr. Stile's complaint, or having considered the actual state of the road, *"humbly"* admits that the road no longer permits any communication with

the Townships. *"And since the market of Quebec City is now supplied by this road -, the committee is right to believe that if these trees obstructing the road are not removed, the price of provisions will increase considerably to the great detriment of the citizens of Quebec City, particularly the poor class. Consequently, we recommend that the road be cleared at public expense. ... According to informants, the cost of this work will not exceed £50."*

The growing tension with the United States, then actual war in 1812, forced the British army to station scouts on Craig's Road to monitor the possible advancement of US troops. Archibald MacLean, from Leeds, was hired as a scout and his mission was to encourage farmers to drive their herds to Quebec and slow the Americans by burning and demolishing all the bridges on the road, should an invasion transpire. Since the major battles took place in Upper Canada, MacLean had no need to execute such orders.

However the fact remained that the road, less than two years after its construction, was in very bad shape. The stagecoach service could hardly function. In 1814, the Surveyor-general Joseph Bouchette saw that the road was deteriorating again: *"At the beginning of the last war [of 1812], we had still made little progress, and since then, there has been no way to preserve the (now) decay(ing) portion of the completed road, so that now it is blocked by falling (sic) trees and other obstacles that make it almost as impractical as if it was still a wilderness."*

From a practical perspective, in the period 1812 to 1817 Craig's Road was essentially abandoned, as the government's attention was focussed on the war and its aftermath.

In 1817, a weekly postal service was inaugurated between Stanstead and Quebec City, via Melbourne. The journey was by horseback, but the period of more regular communication had begun. Post offices were subsequently opened in Stanstead, Hatley, Lennoxville and Melbourne.

From time to time, the government spent money for the maintenance and repair of the road (in 1818, 1825 and 1829), but the money always seemed too little, too late. The road was rehabilitated in sections, but as one section was recovered, another failed. For example in 1818 repairs to the road within the Quebec District were executed (see first map in this article for district boundaries), and a 12 mile branch road¹⁴ was also opened up to the Sainte Marie Seigneury. On the other hand the contract to repair the road and (re)build bridges in the Trois Rivieres District, was signed but never fulfilled.



Almost there!
This image painted by James Cockburn in 1833, entitled "Quebec from below Aubigny Church, Point Levis" illustrates the terminus of the route, which included Craig's Road, that led from the Eastern Townships, arriving at Point Levis, opposite Quebec. Judging by this view, the roads did not substantially improve as one approached "civilization". Nonetheless, this view would have been a welcome one for the weary traveller.

¹⁴ This was a summer road. A winter road had already been established in 1815.

Accommodation for stagecoach/sleigh passengers, and exchanges of horses, was also problematic, but obviously necessary. An inn was established for a while by a Mr. Palmer at the Craig Bridge (Bécancour River crossing), but the inn was neither satisfactory to the travelling public, nor did it produce adequate profit for its owner. It was soon abandoned. The road soon became unpopular because of the total absence of inns over a distance of sixty miles, of which a twenty-seven mile stretch had only a single settler's dwelling (Martel,1960).

There were many in the Townships who felt the money being spent to try and maintain Craig's Road should be spent within the Trois-Rivières District, to improve road access along the St. Francis and to build other more immediately useful roads. Residents in Quebec City had other views, and about a hundred signatories were on a petition for the road to be rehabilitated. They worried that *"the poor condition of Craig's Road was diverting Eastern Townships trade to other towns"*. Even the route for Craig's Road came in for early criticism. In 1812 the Grand Voyer Antrobus stated *"I could trace a multitude of great roads to Quebec City much shorter than Craig's Road"*.

In early 1829 Craig Road was declared impassable. It was described as a muddy stream, particularly the section between Danville and Leeds which was described as a "disaster." After hearing numerous reports with recommendations, a major overhaul of Craig's Road was conducted that summer, and by August of that year was completed for about £1600, at least in the section from Shipton to Leeds. In December of 1829 the road commissioners made a report and suggested an adjustment to the route which was accepted and by 1832 twenty miles of new road were opened that passed through the seigneuries of St. Gilles and St. Croix, the Township of Nelson, and the Township of Inverness, and somewhat later, was extended by 30 miles to join the old Craig Road in Tingwick. However due to a lack of ongoing maintenance the old story repeated itself, and this 30 mile stretch in 1834 was described as *"in the worst possible condition and resembled the dried-up bed of a torrent"*. Both the new and old Craig's Road were in a deplorable state and the politicians fought over which section should get monies for repair, based on contradictory claims as to which section had more families settled nearby.

Ideally road maintenance was left up to settlers who fronted the road, but there were hardly any settlers at all, for instance by 1832 only two families were settled along the Craig Road between Ireland and Tingwick. Most of the land was held by either absentee landowners, the crown, or the Protestant clergy, and none of these parties had an interest in devoting resources to the road's upkeep.

The Rebellion of '37-'39 was a distraction from road building or maintenance, nothing of course was done, and Craig's Road continued to deteriorate. As with the St. Francis route, the road gradually was improved following the creation of the Board of Works in 1841, and by 1850 the various branches of Craig's Road were largely macadamised and passable, except under exceptional circumstances (washout, bridge failures, etc.)

The Dudswell – Gosford Road

For settlers in the Township of Stanstead (including what is now Ogden), travelling all the way to Richmond before striking out to the east for Quebec, was obviously inefficient. A direct route from Hyatt's Mills (known as Sherbrooke after 1818) northeast to Quebec would be advantageous, and early on such a route was being contemplated.

One of the first promoters of such a road was Jesse Pennoyer, a deputy-surveyor under Samuel Holland, and a man responsible for surveying many of the new townships that came into existence in the 1790's. The same Pennoyer was the person who established a mill on the Coaticook River in about 1803. In April of 1805 Pennoyer first made an offer to the Quebec government to "*to open a road from the Connecticut River to the Chaudière River, in exchange for the grant of Crown land in sufficient quantity to cover the costs incurred*". In 1806, having received no response Pennoyer made a second appeal which makes for interesting reading, as it quite effectively states the case for establishing a new line of communication between the capital and the townships (including Stanstead) along the border.

The settlers in the Townships suffer greatly from the lack of roads that would give them access to the capital . The current distance from the border to Quebec City is 230 miles¹⁵... a more direct road would reduce it by at least 100 miles. There are several good reasons for such a project: the well-established townships of Stanstead, Barnston, Hereford, Hatley, Compton, Ascot, Eaton and Newport produce a large quantity of products specific to the Quebec market, such as potash, pearlasse, beef, butter, cheese, flax, hemp, and easy access to the metropolis would favour the cultivation of these products, most of which are currently directed towards American markets.... A single trader living close to the border was able to draw, this season, from the townships of Barnston, Hatley, Compton and Ascot, up to 600 barrels of potash and perlasse apart from wheat, corn, flax, butter, etc., which went to the United States. Here are my proposals for the opening of a road from the Connecticut River to St. Joseph on the Chaudiere River, about 91 miles, the first thirty miles of which, from the Connecticut River, is currently a roadway. To complete it, about forty-five miles are missing until Broughton, where a good road leads to the Chaudiere River. I have explored most of this territory and I know that the terrain is suitable for a road and for settlement. Wishing to make myself useful to my country, I make you the following offer". I will continue the road in question, including bridges over watercourses not exceeding eighteen feet, if you will compensate me by the grant of a portion of the vacant Crown lands in the townships of Weedon or Lingwick, when the work is finished and inspected by a person appointed for that purpose by the Government."

The authorities agreed, in principle, that Pennoyer's suggestion was in the public interest and that the concept of offsetting the cost of road construction through the allocation of crown land, was a viable solution. Pennoyer surveyed a somewhat different route in 1807, but it all came to naught. Potential contractors were disinterested in the *land for road building* proposition.

In 1815 the question was revisited due to a petition from a number of townships along the potential route, but only the District of Quebec funded a partial road in their territory, from Ireland to the middle of Wolfestown. The rest of the road, at least as a winter road, must have been pushed through to Eaton a short time later without government assistance, and this very rough trail from Ireland to Eaton became known as the "Dudswell Road"¹⁶, and was about 45 miles in length. The settlers continued to try

¹⁵ i.e. Stanstead Road to the St. Francis River Road, then the King's Highway eastward to Quebec City.

¹⁶ Apparently the road from Hereford on the border north to Eaton (30 miles) had been open already for some time and was well-maintained by the settlers along that route and had been approved by Charles Whicher grand voyer of the Eastern Townships in 1822.

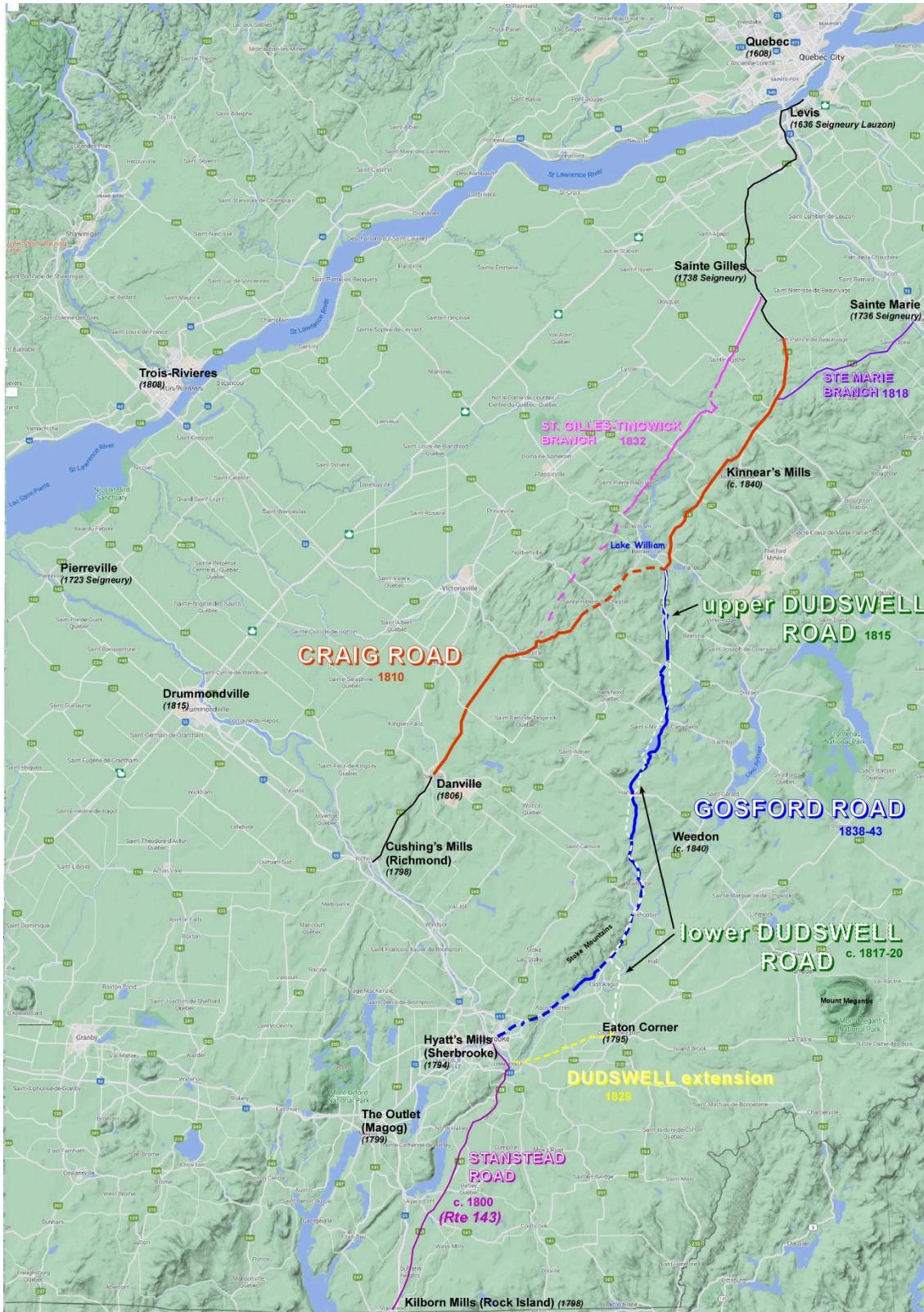
and maintain the road as a passable route over the next 14 years, and even managed to extend it along the east bank of the St. Francis to Lennoxville with a small grant of £750 in 1829. Only some further grants allowed the Dudswell-Lennoxville section to be made passable in 1832. The rest of the Dudswell Road remained a winter road. It was nonetheless still considered by road commissioner S. Brooks "*a communication of great importance, as it shortened the distance between Lake Memphremagog and Quebec City. I am still asking £750 to make it passable over its whole length*".

Finally, Archibald Acheson, Earl of Gosford, arrived in Quebec to become the Lt.-Governor. He wanted to follow Craig's example, to open a communication between Quebec City and the heart of the Eastern Townships. Realizing that Craig's Road did not follow an ideal route and did not provide the services that had been expected, he thought he could find a better route in the old Pennoyer (Dudswell Road) route. Gosford's tenure was very short, but this initiative was carried forward by his successor (Sir John Colborne) and from 1838 to 1843, a real royal road was opened from Quebec City to Sherbrooke, and was even continued in the direction of Montreal. The greatly improved road was named after Gosford.

Without constant upkeep it seemed that nothing built of "dirt" had much longevity, and by 1846 the road urgently needed about £2000 of repairs (which weren't granted as the "Government should no longer spend money on the maintenance of roads already open, since the settlers have undertaken to maintain them themselves"). By 1849 the Gosford Road, which had successfully replaced Craig Road, was now abandoned and was becoming an impassable quagmire. Mr. Baird, a civil engineer, wrote in that year:

A couple of barrels of flour nowadays form the load of a horse passing on Gosford Road. It has been allowed to deteriorate to such an extent that it is even dangerous for man and beast to venture there; the wheels sink in several places down to the axles, and it is quite common to encounter a car(wagon) stopped in ruts and the driver going for help.

The municipal districts had been entrusted with road maintenance in 1841 (and the amended law in 1846), but the law was poorly effective. In Megantic County, crossed by Gosford Road, no municipal council had even been legally established, and the settlers absolutely refused to do anything for the maintenance of this road; they said that it was the "road of the Government" and that it was up to the Government to see to its maintenance. Since the Gosford Road was really the only direct communication route between Quebec City and the Eastern Townships, the Public Works Department was forced to have the most urgent repairs carried out in 1850. But the problem was not solved; the province's entire highway legislation was outdated, and the time seemed ripe for an overhaul.

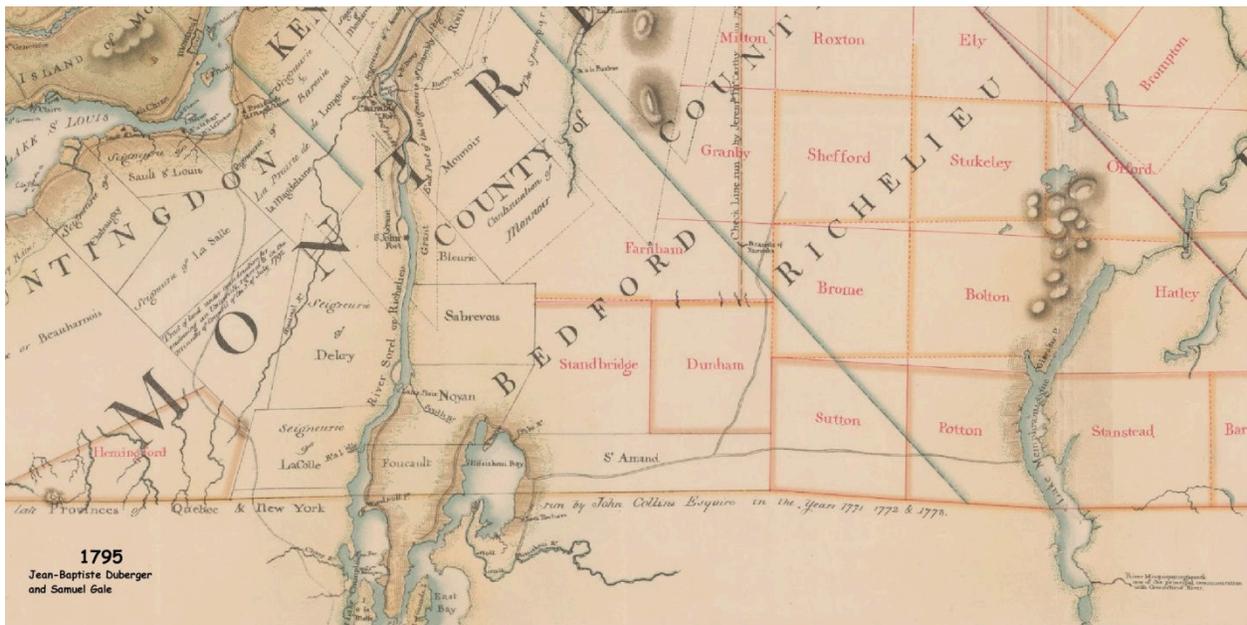


Map of the principal roads built before 1845 to connect the Eastern Townships with Quebec. Dashed lines indicate either a) there is a present day public road still existing which possibly mimics the original roads path, or b) there is no present day road, and the path is largely conjectural, or based on transposing (without much precision) data from old maps.

West

Towards Missisquoi Bay

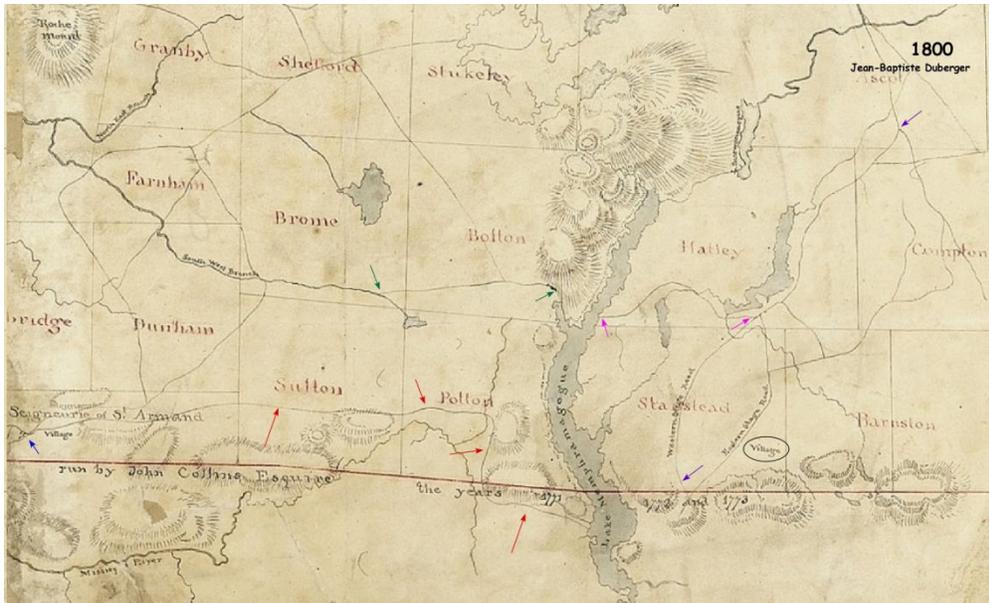
There were a number of early settlers in Stanstead Township, albeit in relatively small numbers, who were from Loyalist families¹⁷ who had re-settled in Caldwell Manor (Seigneurie of Foucault) and Christie Manor (Seigneurie of Noyan), and on the east shore of Missisquoi Bay. Their journeys to Stanstead and other townships around Lake Memphremagog, and their return trips for supplies and to grind grain, resulted in the cutting of trails, sufficient for horse and rider. The first map to hint at the existence of this trail leading from St. Armand to the west shore of Lake Memphremagog, was produced in 1795 by deputy-surveyors working out of Surveyor-General Samuel Holland's office in Quebec City.



Portion of map of Lower Canada compiled by Jean-Baptiste Duberger and Samuel Gale in the years 1794 & 1795. It shows a trail leading from the east shore of Missisquoi Bay (Lake Champlain) to the west shore of Lake Memphremagog. There is also an indicated trail leading across the Township of Dunham to Farnham. Interestingly, Samuel Gale was a Leader for the Township of Farnham. By 1804 the branch leading to Farnham was improved to the status of a winter road.

Even up until 1820, this route through the mountains was not considered passable for carriages/carts, but almost certainly stretches of the present *St Armand* and *Chemin du pinnacle* roads coincide with where it lay. The following map produced by Jean-Baptiste Duberger in 1800 possibly locates the trail with a little more precision.

¹⁷ Many of them of German extraction, and originally from the northern parts of New York province (later state).



Portion of manuscript map by J-B Duberger. The village (blue arrow) corresponds to where the former village of Pigeon Hill is located today. The red arrows point to the trail linking St Armand Seigneury with Lake Memphremagog, the map suggests that the trail reached the lake by skirting the south side of Bear Mtn. Other interesting features of the map are the western and eastern stage roads in Stanstead (purple), the floating village in Stanstead Township (black oval), the trail (pink) connecting the east shore of the Lake with the "Western Stage Road", and the trail leading to the head of Sargent's Bay (green) that seems to require that the traveler canoe up the Yamaska River to get to. Like many early maps it is an intriguing blend of best guesses, hearsay, and a measure of wishful thinking.

The settlers in St. Armand needed to communicate with the settlements downriver on the Richelieu, and ultimately with Montreal. In 1797 they petitioned the government to explore the land between the Pike and Saint John (Richelieu) Rivers to find the best location for a road, and this may have been the very first in a long list of pleas to government authorities for a better road system in the Townships. But none of this produced immediate results. In 1800, Governor Milnes appointed Hugh Finlay to investigate and report. His memorandum concluded with a recommendation that the development of the area required the construction of roads. *"This longed-for [summer] road,"* he continued, *"can be started where it is most needed at the present time, that is, from the head of Missisquoi Bay to Saint John, a (straight) distance of fourteen miles which, by the present "road" [my parentheses, I believe Finlay meant communication route], requires a journey of more than thirty-five miles, part by water often too shallow even for a canoe, part by trails almost impassable on horseback and completely impassable by carriage because they cross the Mandigos savannah bridged in "corduroy"¹⁸.*

Nothing came of the request. In 1808, a society (Bedford Society) was formed to open and maintain a road between Saint-Armand and Saint John, and to build bridges over the Richelieu and Pike River. As St. Armand, Dunham and Stanbridge started to be settled, communities were established at Frelighsburg, Abbot's Corner, Pigeon Hill, Saint-Armand, Dunham, Nelsonville and Sweetsburg, and a road network evolved to link them. Around 1815, a road was pushed north by the settlers that linked the Missisquoi area to Saint-Hyacinthe on the Yamaska. Some of the local roads became incorporated into the southerly stage road that ran from Stanstead to Montreal (the Lake Memphremagog Crossing Road – see next section).

¹⁸ These were not formal corduroy roads at all, but rather as some marshes did not freeze easily and they had to be "paved" with branches and even whole logs in order to cross, even in winter (Martel,1960).

Towards Montreal

With a population of 13,000 in 1810, Montreal was the second largest metropolis of Lower Canada. From Stanstead, as the crow flies, Boston is 315 km, Quebec is 200 km and Montreal is only 120 km. So notwithstanding that no useable roads reached directly west towards Montreal in the early 1800's, its proximal markets certainly spurred interest in such a route. Furthermore, some entrepreneurial traders in the early years of settlement, saw Stanstead Township as being in a geographically propitious position to promote and enhance the trade between Montreal and Boston. All that was required were some decent roads!

By the 1820's two separate roads had been cobbled together allowing Stanstead residents to reach Montreal. One received a great deal (but never enough) of government assistance. The second was barely supported and only existed through the efforts of the settlers themselves. These two shall be discussed in turn.

The Outlet Road

Early accounts of the pioneers include stories of epic travels, almost always in winter, from the townships surrounding Lake Memphremagog, to Montreal, and the route from the head of the Lake west through the gap between Mount Brome and Shefford is indicated but not really located.

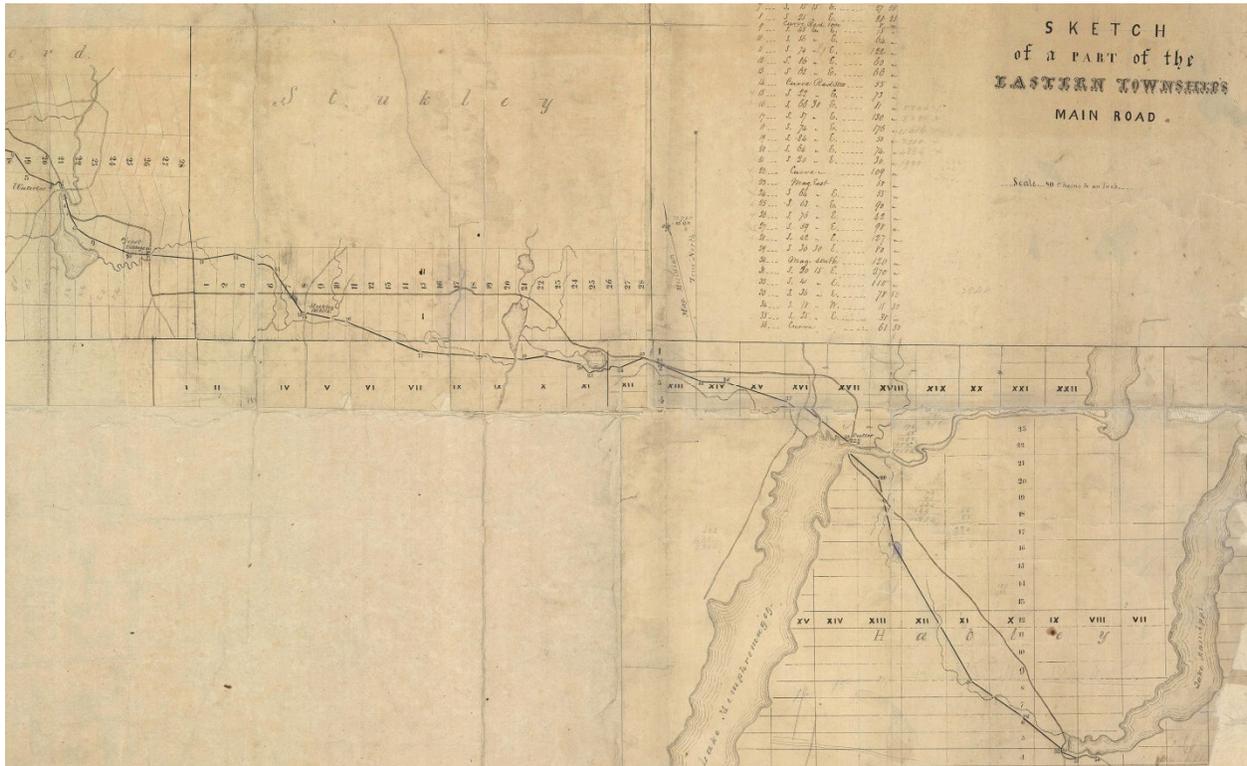
As early as 1807 a road had been laid out from Stanstead to the head of Lake Memphremagog with the intention of continuing it to the township of Granby by way of the north end of Lake Orford, that is, by following a dangerous path between the cliff of Mount Orford and the deep waters at its base. But this route was abandoned not only because of the dangers it presented; but also because the Grand Voyer did not approve of this road to Granby, as that township had not yet been colonized.

Prior to 1816, when the first government grants became available, settlers would have already managed, by their own means, to go - in winter - from Stanstead to Yamaska Mountain; thence across the Yamaska (by fording or on the ice), then the Richelieu (by raft/ferry), and on to Montreal. A road had been verbalized (ratified) for part of this distance, that is between Mount Yamaska and Shefford.

As has been already discussed, 1817 was the year that public funds (£55,000) were first appropriated to improve internal communications in the Province of Lower Canada. The Outlet Road was a beneficiary. Contractors Benjamin Shiller and Joseph Frigon were signed on to repair part of the settler-built road from Yamaska Mountain to the head of Lake Magog, which they completed as a winter road in 1818.

*Shiller and Frigon did their work well and cleared a **good winter road**. So we signed a new contract with the same contractors to make it a (summer) road that is now passable along its entire length, and we expect it to be finished by next August (1819). This road will open up direct communication with Montreal to all residents of the eastern and northeastern townships of Lake Memphremagog and a large part of the western townships of Lake Memphremagog. ... We regret that the sum made available to us is not sufficient to continue this road on two branches from the outlet of Lake Memphremagog; one from*

the east to the head of Lake Massawippi; the other from the south-east to the eastern part of Stanstead, where the inhabitants cannot make the nine miles of road that are missing.



Part of a plan of the main road leading west from the Outlet village (Magog) towards Granby and ultimately Montreal. It shows the existing road plus a proposed route of a new road. The plan is held by BANQ and is dated 1801, but there is no date on the plan itself and the author feels this date is too early. It seems much more likely that the plan is post-1818 when the rough trail to Montreal had been transformed by contractors Shiller and Frigon, into a summer road. One clue that this might be the case is the use of the label Lake Massawippi, instead of Lake Tomefobi, which was the older designation, and used by Bouchette as late as 1831.

By August of 1819 the passable summer road from Mont Yamaska to the outlet was complete. It went from Longueuil to Magog (and soon to Stanstead) via Chambly, Saint-Césaire, Yamaska Mountain, Frost Village, Shefford, Stukley, the head of Lake Memphremagog and Lake Massawippi. It will remain one of the busiest roads, the large trunk on which would be grafted a whole series of secondary branches extending in all directions. However the challenge of all dirt roads, indeed all roads period, is how will they be maintained and who will pay for the repairs.

We wish to point out to you that, in spite of the Government's generous allowances, all the work we are doing on these roads will become useless unless we adopt a method of obliging non-residents to provide their assistance in the maintenance of the roads, especially since the greater part of the aforementioned road passes over conceded but unoccupied territories . The road we have just made is now a good passable road and has served as such, but we know from experience that it will not remain like this for long.

Mr. H. Evans' plea in **1829** for roads in the Townships did not fail to emphasize the deplorable state that the Outlet Road had reached in under a decade:

The other road I wish to submit for the consideration of this Committee is the one running from the Township of Stanstead to Montreal. This road, which is bad and almost impassable, begins at the head of Lake Massawippi, in the township of Hatley; from there to the outlet of Lake Memphremagog, there are about eleven miles; the terrain being mountainous, this work would require, according to the best calculations, from £80 to £100 per mile. From the head of Lake Magog in Stukely Township there is a dangerous road of about seven miles, which would require about £100 per mile, and which is the only road to Montreal for the people of Stanstead. The total distance from Lake Massawippi to Stukely being about eighteen miles at, say, £90 a mile, the sum required would be £1,620. Then, through Stukely, Shefford and Granby, thirty miles, which would require £15 per mile, or £450, to be repaired, thus providing a route to Montreal from the townships near the boundary, and rendering great service to all the settlers in the townships through which it passes.

In January 1834 it was Commissioner T. Rose who noted that with the £200 received last year, "we were only able to rebuild or repair 2½ miles of road between Waterloo and Yamaska Mountain. In Stukely and Shefford, there are still nine miles to start over... **the rest requires considerable repairs, as it is even completely taken over by the forest in some places.** We need £4,800."

Henry Taylor, who travelled as a tourist on the road from Stanstead to Magog in 1839 noted: "I am told that many people in this area have left the province or are preparing to do so, so unhappy are they with the state of the road...".

In 1835, a new project was being realized: the construction of the Gosford Road, and its extension from Sherbrooke to Montreal via Saint-Elie, Lac Stukely, LaRochelle, Waterloo and Granby. This new extension would be named "*Chemin de Montréal*" and it would divert attention (and money) for a while from the Outlet Road, at least for the Stanstead-Waterloo section, where the two roads became one.

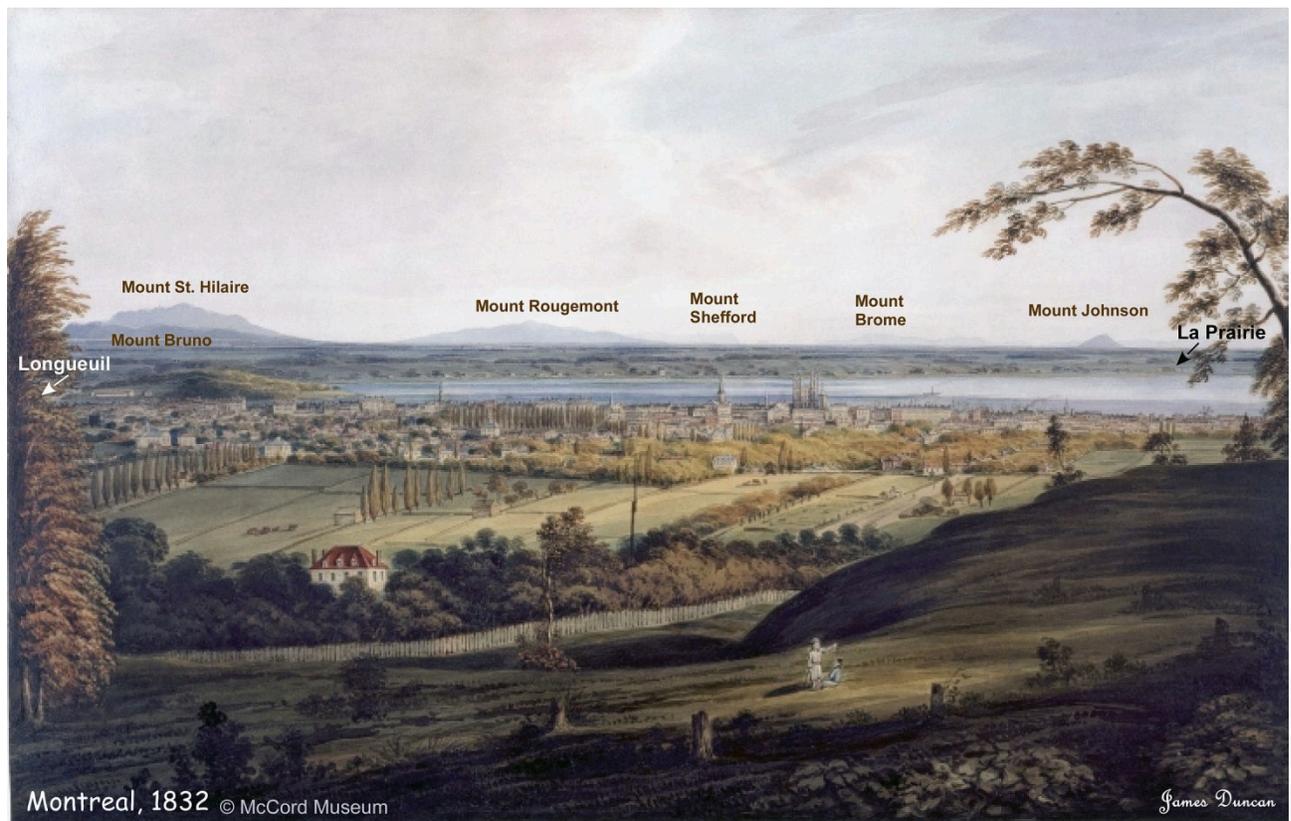
The soil of the parishes crossed by the *Chemin de Montréal* being clay-rich, often offered difficult passage during wet seasons, so this part of the new road was paved with wood of three inches thickness. But this "plank road" was a poor substitute for proper drainage and a macadamized surface that would shed water. *It was noted that "...for long distances the road passed through an exceptionally flat countryside and the carters trotted with heavy loads; this excess of work, helped by the temperature, soon broke the path."* The ruts were filled in with crushed stones, but this was not enough, and around 1846, the Orford portion of the *Chemin de Montréal*, it too was now being neglected.

It was not until 1846 that funds were released to undertake a truly major overhaul on the Outlet Road, and to pay for the massive outlay it had been decided to turn the road into a turnpike (toll road). The road was to be straightened in several places, macadamized over a distance of 16 ¾ miles between Chambly and Granby, and finished in gravel as far as Stanstead.

Mr. Rigney, who in 1847 had been appointed superintendent of all road works in the townships, reported at the end of that year that "*the road is macadamized or paved between Chambly and Granby,*

twenty-nine miles. Three toll gates are now erected between Chambly and Abbotsford, and a fourth will soon be erected at Granby, but no tolls have yet been collected. Between Granby and Barnston, there are 43½ miles of contracted road of which 24¼ are completed, except for the bridges. From Barnston to Hereford, twenty miles, still nothing; also the road there is very bad. Amount required to complete the contracted work: £8,350, and for areas not yet contracted: £4,984."

By September of 1849; tolls were being levied at the four gates erected between Chambly and Granby. Much of the worst sections had been macadamized (a surface layer of compacted crushed gravel being applied) and in certain places a plank road was installed. However the latter may have been short-sighted as by 1850 Commissioner Bourret, complained that the planked sections of the road had caused great expense in maintenance, and that it was still in need of repair from one end to the other, since the planks were generally rotten and their replacement was becoming imperative. As for the gravel roads, "they are still good and have required few repairs". In 1851 the government sold the Outlet Road to the Chambly and Granby Planked and Macadamized Road Company. The tolls were taken out in 1855.



A view from Mont Royal towards the southeast and the Eastern Townships in 1832. Roads from that region joined the south shore of the St Lawrence at Longueuil and La Prairie where ferries (or ice roads in winter) conveyed the traveller to Montreal. From this perspective the Outlet Road discussed in the text, passed just north of Mount Shefford, and kept well south of Mount Rougemont, Saint Hilaire and Bruno, before reaching Longueuil. In this view Mount Yamaska is hidden behind Mount Rougemont. The Lake Memphremagog Crossing Road passed south of Mount Johnson (Mont St. Gregoire today) to reach La Prairie. Oil painting by James Duncan.

The Lake Memphremagog Crossing (Copp's Ferry) Road

The settlers of Stanstead Township did have another route to Montreal, one that may have been established even earlier than the Outlet trail. This route required a crossing of the Lake between the east shore (Georgeville) and (initially¹⁹) the west shore north of Gibraltar Point. In the winter the Lake would have been frozen by December so such a crossing was of no great consequence. In the summer it required a ferry, which was supplied by Moses Copp as early as 1797. The road, which ran to Saint-Armand through the townships of Brome and Dunham, was perhaps the oldest in the Eastern Townships. It had been opened, around 1791, by Gilbert Hyatt and others, and then maintained by the



Lithograph of sketch by William Henry Bartlett of Copp's Ferry circa 1838.

first inhabitants of Stanstead, Bolton and Potton. The discovery of the Bolton Pass in about 1794, shortened the route to get to the western shore of Lake Memphremagog, and the trail gradually was adopted as a winter road. It was later extended from Farnham, through the Monnoir seigneurie, past Mount Johnson (originally Mont Sainte-Thérèse, today Mont St Gregoire) to Chambly. The provincial authorities never attached great importance to this route and over the years did very little to maintain it.

But the people of Stanstead and the entire eastern part of Lake Memphremagog were of a different opinion and saw it as their most direct and expedient means to get to the Montreal markets. In 1825 they petitioned the government for assistance with this road, but their appeals were not heard. In 1830 they joined forces with others in the townships of Brome, Dunham and Farnham to request a grant of £2,000. Here was their argument: "*A (summer) road from Boston reaches Stanstead; another road exists from Montreal to Farnham²⁰; we want to make the connection. Several townships would be served; we have already put in over 1,000 hours of work, but the population is too scattered because too many lots are not inhabited, which means we spend too much money.*"

This time, they managed to get £1,000 (March 20, 1830). Although it was only half of what was considered necessary, the money was welcome. But the Government could not properly expect more than half the work to be done. So in November the Road Commissioners reported, "*We have spent the £1,000.... some sections of the road are being done... elsewhere, nothing. We've spent it on the more difficult and expensive parts. It would take another £2,000 to finish.... This would be the shortest route to Montreal.*"

¹⁹ In 1821 the west shore landing was changed to Knowlton's Landing in Sargent's Bay.

²⁰ In 1804, a road was built to link Saint-Armand to Farnham, and a few years later this section ran past Mount Johnson to the Richelieu River, where a communication with Montreal had existed for a long time. In 1816 a road was also built from Farnham to St. Cesaire, where it linked up with the Outlet Road.

But the next year they only got £500, and two years later (1833), £200. So the commissioners, with arms in the air, lamented: "*We have received only £200 to repair and improve fifty miles of road... it is not enough to make it a good driveable road, and we can only do the most urgent things.*" But the governor's secretary at once urged them not to go too far, for the £200 was to be spread over two years.



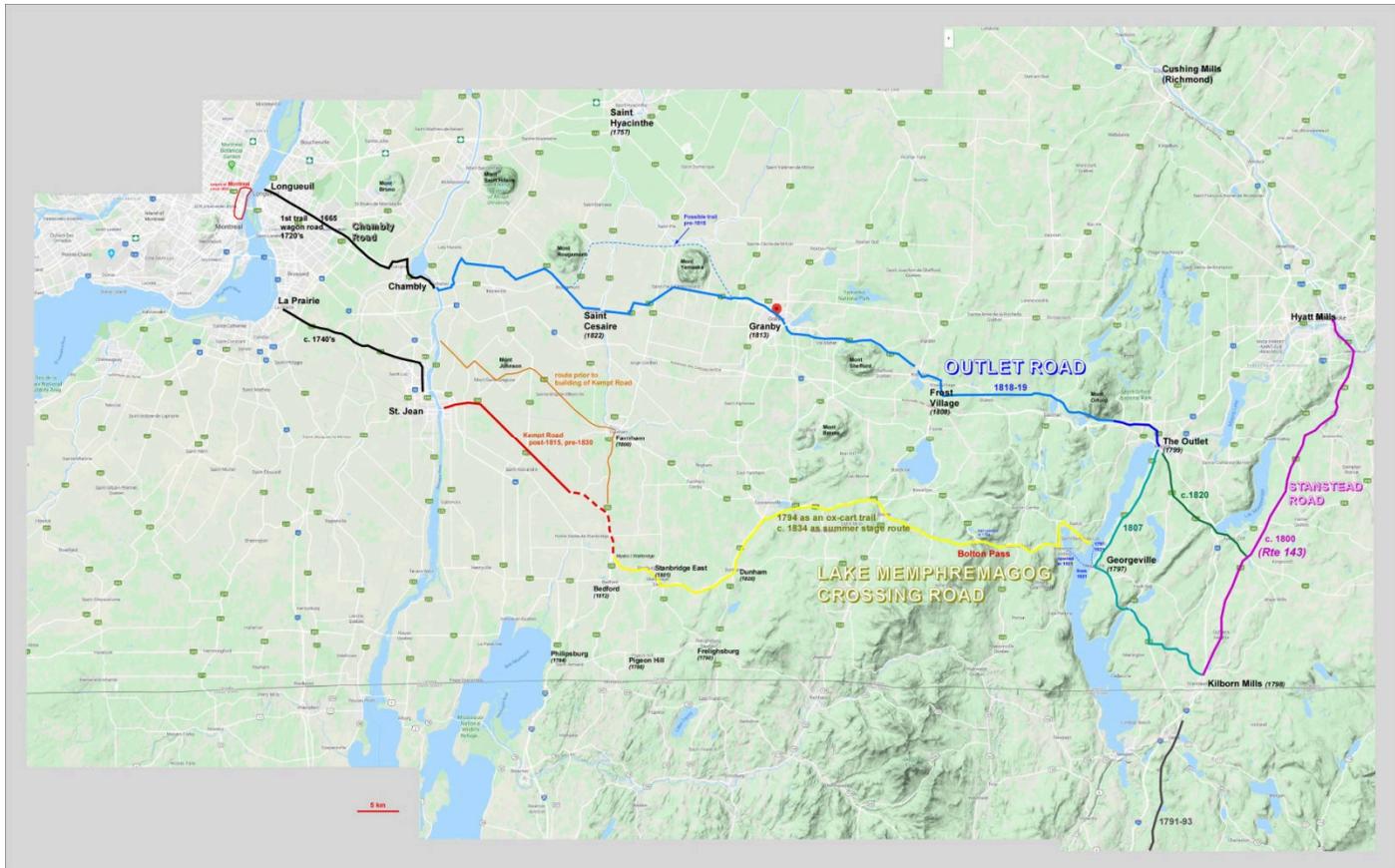
Two views of stagecoaches negotiating Bolton Pass. At left a painting by F.S. Schell, at right a lithograph from William Henry Bartlett.

In 1834, Mr. Marcus Child, testifying before the Committee on Internal Communications, had asked £1,000 "for this road to be continued on the east side of the lake, from Copp's Ferry to Stanstead, for not a penny has ever been granted for this road, through which the mail passes twice a week." Then he goes on to say:

This is the first road leading to Montreal, which the people east of Lake Magog opened in 1795-96. This road crosses steep, jagged terrain of mountains and swamps, and the rains have left it in a bad state. The cost of the road is £1,700, but it is sixty miles long, most of which the inhabitants have made themselves; they are anxious to continue it, but cannot do so, and rely on the goodwill of the Government.

(Mr. Child spoke of the "mail" - On this subject, Mrs. Watson reminds us that "the mail" was first brought to us, about 1826, by Timothy Smith, on horseback or sometimes by carriage. In 1834, Levi Stevans began driving a two-horse stagecoach twice a week from St. John's to Stanstead. His route took him through Philipsburg, Stanbridge, Dunham, Churchville, Brome and Georgeville. Parts of the road sometimes became a nightmare for the driver and a calculation for the travellers").

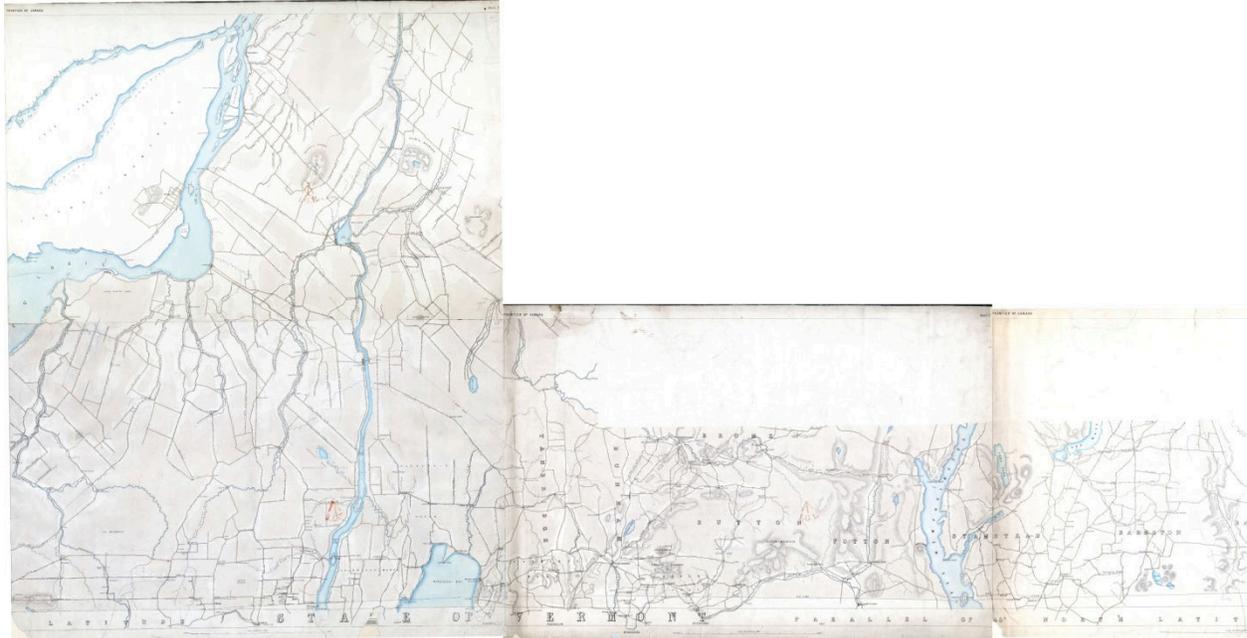
In the period 1835 to 1845 no new appropriations for road improvements in this area arrived, but finally in 1846 funds were released to ameliorate the Saint John to Stanstead road through Stanbridge and Georgeville, and the Bolton and Sutton connections. These improvements included some macadamisation (paving with gravel).



Map of two principal routes by which settlers of the Township of Stanstead made their way to either Saint Jean or Chambly, and thence by long established roads, to Montreal. The date of 1819 when the Outlet Road was completed as a summer road passable by wagons and stagecoaches is well established, due to government appropriations required to pay for it. Prior to this date a rough winter trail, along a very similar route, had been in place for probably about fifteen years.

The dates associated with the Lake Memphremagog Crossing Road are less certain because this road was settler built with relatively few government grants for improvements over the years (despite its popularity). In the period 1795-96 the woods were cleared sufficiently for the route to become a reasonable winter road. A winter stage to and from Montreal was operating on this road by 1824 by Peasley, Copp and Bullock, and Martel(1960) states this is also the first year postal service linked Montreal and Stanstead. Mail was being brought to Stanstead from Montreal by horseback and sometimes by carriage in 1826 by Timothy Smith. In 1834 Levi Evans was driving a 2-horse stagecoach along this route during the dry season.

For both of the old routes, and with very few exceptions, present-day public roads still coincide with their paths.



The map above was draughted in 1839. It was a military map surveyed on the orders of Colonel Charles Gore. During the 1837-38 Rebellion in Lower Canada there were many Patriote sympathizers in the United States and conflict between Britain and the USA was a distinct possibility. The British desperately needed to know the lay of the land (topography, settlements, road networks) along the southern frontier so an uptodate survey was initiated. The resulting map provides a remarkable portrayal of the existing road network at that time. Unfortunately it does not extend north to cover the Outlet Road route.



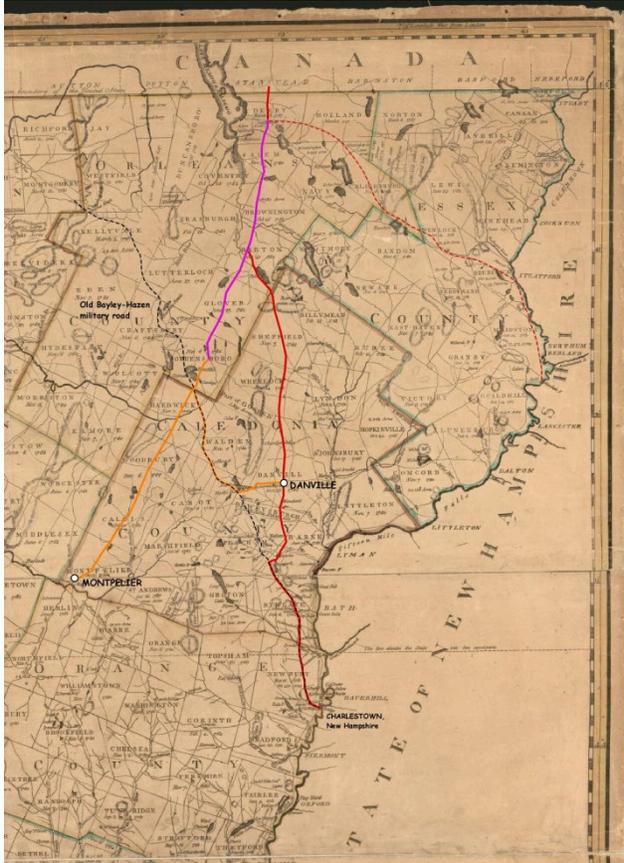
A higher resolution version of the same map is available on Heritage Ogden's website.

At left a formal portrait of Colonel Sir Charle Gore. He was the same colonel soundly defeated by the Patriotes in the Battle of St Denis on November 23rd, 1837. It was said of Colonel Gore in 1837 that he was a better quartermaster general than he was a field commander.

South

Towards Boston

The first settlers of Ogden (Stanstead Township) were all Americans, mostly from different parts of New England, who were here because potential farm land, of fair to very good quality, could be obtained at reasonable prices²¹. For many years, if not decades after establishing their pitch in the wilderness in the southern Eastern Townships, strong ties to their birth country remained. Beyond unsevered family attachments, their primary source of supplies, and the principal market for their saleable produce,



remained the United States. It is not my intent to detail here the multitude of routes available to reach the major market towns in New England, but I will sketch the most likely roads taken by Ogdenites, as they first started on a journey south in the very early 1800's. We are aided in the exercise by the detailed maps produced by James Whitelaw, surveyor-general of Vermont, the first one published in 1796.

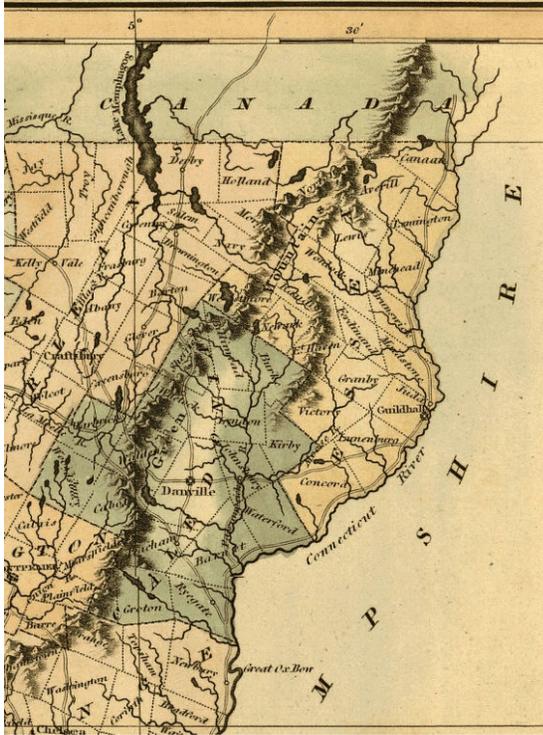
Portion of Whitelaw map of 1796 showing the northeastern portion of Vermont, annotated to highlight the most likely routes that settlers and/or traders from Stanstead Township would have taken to access New England markets, or reach relatives and friends. The purple line extending from Greensboro Town²² to Derby, represents the settlement road first built in the period 1791-93 by Timothy Hinman and his men. The most commonly used routes would have gone towards Danville²³, then on to Newbury, VT or Charlestown, NH on the opposite shore of the Connecticut River. From this point, good roads existed going south on either side of the Connecticut. Thin black dashed lines represents the Bayley-Hazen military road built by the Americans in the 1776 and extended in 1779.

The development of roads in northeastern Vermont proceeded rapidly. In 1795 the northern terminus of postal service was Newbury, but even by then southern Vermont was blanketed by roads. By 1806 the roads in the north were such as to allow postal service (twice a month) to reach Derby, just south of Stanstead, and by 1812 a weekly service was provided from Wells River to Derby. In the period 1790 to 1820, the US went through a turnpike (toll road) craze, with the profit motive driving substantial road building, although most eventually proved unprofitable and many were abandoned. By contrast, the Eastern Townships developed very few toll roads (see Towards Montreal).

²¹ Indeed for free largely, but with an obligation to clear about 7 acres in the first 7 years of settlement.

²² It is confusing, but in the States, Town refers to what we call a Township, not merely a large village.

²³ In the first decade of Danville's development, it experienced rapid growth of industry along its brooks and rivers and was the most populous town in the area. It was designated as the shire town of Caledonia County and hosted the Vermont legislative session in 1805.



Portion of 1820 map of Vermont published by F. Lucas of Baltimore, showing the major roadways at that time. Note that a road is now established on the west bank of the Connecticut River, all the way north and into Canada. According to Martel (1960) the extension north of this road would be the very rough wilderness road built around 1820, the Hereford-Lennoxville road, referred to as "Old Snag Road".

Epilogue: Impact of Railroads

Long before any railroad actually reached Ogden and the Tomifobia Valley (in 1870), the impact of the railroad on roads in the Eastern Townships had become profound. Since the inauguration of the Champlain and St. Lawrence Railroad in 1836, it was obvious that this new mode of transport was going to revolutionize the movement of goods and people. Railroads were both much quicker, and much more cost effective. Just as they killed the canal business, so too did the railroads quickly eliminate any long distance shipment of freight by teamster wagons, or people by stage coach. By 1853, a railroad reached Sherbrooke, connecting this town with Laprairie (Montreal's south shore), Pointe Levis (opposite Quebec), and Portland, Maine (ice-free port on the Atlantic). Coaticook was on this route. By 1867 the Passumpsic & Connecticut Railroad had reached Newport, Vermont, and provided relatively easy access to Boston. So long before railroads actually reached Ogden private and public money was almost exclusively being invested in railroad projects, and the inter-urban turnpikes and highways were simply allowed to wither (and deteriorate they did!).

Two other outcomes of the railroad are worthy of mention. Rail transport opened up more distant urban markets to farmers of the area. This would ultimately profoundly change the face of agriculture in the Stanstead area. Rail stations in the near-neighbourhood quickly became vital local transportation hubs, and as a consequence the demand for better wagon roads radiating out from these stations, also increased. This forced local councils to improve the road networks in their jurisdiction. Farmers needed to get their produce out, and their supplies in, as efficiently as possible! This became paramount as dairy became the predominant activity, and refrigeration rail cars (invented in U.S. around 1875, but first wide-spread use in Canada in 1890s) allowed our local producers to supply the Montreal (and other urban) markets with fresh milk.

The final outcome falls in the category of unintended consequences. Railways require a stable, well-drained roadbed. This "*ballast*" is made up of crushed rock, also a key ingredient²⁴ of improved or "*macadam*" roads. The exponential growth of railroads, led to an exponential growth in the demand for crushed rock, which in turn opened up new quarries and new technologies (mechanical crushing and seiving). The relative ease of transport of heavy bulk material in rail cars, also allowed for the delivery of aggregate to townships and municipalities, that had no local resource. The beneficiaries, were the dirt roads that could be *macadamized*.

²⁴ However what makes good ballast, would only be a part of the recipe for a good road surface. Ballast is relatively coarse, washed/cleaned (free from fines and organics), crushed stone with a uniform size typically 1¼ ". The very permeable ballast will quickly drain rainwater that falls on its surface. In contrast, base and sub-base layers for roads will be mixtures of differing sizes of aggregate (which could be crushed stone, or gravel, or both), ranging from fine up to 3". The compacted upper surface of the road is expected to be quite impermeable, and will shed rainwater that falls on its surface.

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