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THE AGE OF GENTILITY: THE FORMATION OF AN ARISTOCRACY IN THE OTTAWA VALLEY

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> A man of education will always possess an influence, even in bush society : he may be poor, but his value will not be tested by the low standard of money...[1]

This was the judgment of Samuel Strickland, himself an Upper Canadian aristocrat, on the role of the gentleman in frontier society. Strickland's contemporary opinion clashes vigorously with the later view of North American frontierist historians who, in the tradition of Frederick Jackson Turner, have argued that the frontier environment destroyed the class distinctions imported from Europe. A. R. M. Lower, for instance, tells us that on the frontier, "Men were measured by their abilities for the task at hand... and by their qualities as neighbours.... The gentleman and the scholar did not count for much when it came to stump-pulling."[2]

These two views cannot be assessed accurately until social development in all the atomized communities of Upper Canada has been evaluated. This paper will look at one area — Carleton County — and attempt to discover some of the criteria for social leadership which applied there. It is a region peculiarly suitable for such a study. Until well into the 1840's, Carleton remained a frontier area, on the outward edge of significant settlement. And, like so much of Upper Canada, it was a commercial frontier, as the entrepôt of the lumber trade of the Ottawa Valley.

A strong aristocratic leaven came to Carleton County with its first large-scale settlement. In 1818, the assisted migrants of the 99th and 100th Regiments arrived at Bellow's Landing on the Ottawa River, and from there moved inland to Richmond.[3] Many of these settlers were half-pay officers, pensioned off by the British Army at the end of the Napoleonic Wars, seeking in Canada the gentle existence that their reduced circumstances no longer allowed them to afford in Britain. Their aristocratic society was buttressed by the migration patterns of the area. For almost a decade, the only other settlement of significance in the district was that of March Township, again an area dominated by half-

[1] Samuel Strickland, *Twenty-Seven Years in Canada West*, I (London, 1853), 81.
[2] A. R. M. Lower, *Colony to Nation*, (Toronto, 1946), 49.
[3] On the Richmond Settlement, see : *Illustrated Historical Atlas of Carleton County*, (Toronto, 1879); Andrew Haydon, *Pioneer Sketches of the District of Bathurst*, (Toronto, 1925).

pay officers. These groups were able to entrench themselves and their way of life before the next wave of migration arrived, with the construction of the Rideau Canal. Settlers arriving then were faced by a stratified social structure, and largely were absorbed into it. Indeed, the aristocrats drew new blood and new vigour from the merchants and soldiers of the canal migration, and their hold on social leadership in Carleton was thus strengthened. It was a hold which would not be broken until the political and commercial convulsions of the 1840's.

In attempting to explain the development of this ruling class, the first problem which arises is that of terminology. The usual terms of "aristocracy" and "élite" are each somewhat unsatisfactory, the one because of its European connotations of feudal structures, the other because of its tone of bureaucracy, of acquired rather than natural leadership. While both these will be used, the preferred term will be the more neutral "gentility." It carries with it implications of the ideal of the gentle life, of emphasis on breeding, which are highly appropriate in Carleton County.

From the beginning, at Richmond, there was little of that frontier simplicity, little of that stripping-away of civilized veneers that frontierist historians speak of. The basic amenities of a sophisticated community were provided at the founding of the settlement. There was a government-supported school, there were churches, there was spiritual support from Catholic, Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian clergymen. These educational and religious facilities tempered the effect of the frontier environment on the community; there was no need for the rising generation of Richmond to sink into that state of barbarism alleged to be typical of the American frontier experience. Their cultural baggage travelled well. The Richmond settlers, then, had the necessary prerequisites to maintain their way of life — schools and churches, a hierarchial military structure imposed by their terms of settlement and, above all, the desire to reproduce English landed society. Despite primitive surroundings, the Richmond gentry seemed convinced of their destiny to civilize America. Even more than in their own writings, this sense of destiny is revealed in the opinions of their critics, who were as irritated by the extravagant claims of Richmond as they were by the swamps and the miserable communications. Hamnett Pinhey of March Township was one who was less than delighted when he first saw Richmond in 1819.

> This spot [Pinhey said] had been strongly recommended to me as the Paradise of Upper Canada; it struck me then and has ever since as the Purgatory. It is surrounded by swamps and the Main street is below the bed of a small rivulet that runs nearly parallel with it. From thence for thirty miles runs a road; it might be aptly called the road to Ruin.[4]

[4] PAC, Hill Collection, 1798-1942, IX, Pinhey to Thomas Nixon, July 6, 1827, 2672.

The messianism which bothered Mr. Pinhey was to be found, as well, in his home township of March, settled shortly after Richmond.[5] His dislike of the chauvinistic Richmondaries, at least in part, sprang from the rivalry between the two centres for the leadership of the district. And the sense of destiny found in both can be traced back to the unusual makeup of their populations, to the large proportion of half-pay officers, men of education and experience. The role played by these officers in the development of the county casts into doubt that traditional view of the levelling influence of the frontier environment. Far from being levelled, a local compact gained control of social and political affairs in Carleton, and held it from the founding of Richmond to the 1840's.

In the early period, before the canal migration, the growth of this local compact was an entirely natural process. While most of its members held a variety of government offices, and some achieved considerable economic success, these were often a result of their hold in authority, rather than the cause of it. They rose, in effect, through a system of frontier *noblesse oblige*. In Richmond, the leadership pattern was ready-made when the settlers arrived. The officers logically dominated the men from the ranks, the officers were naturally entrusted with responsibility. This military ruling class was deeply imbued with an aristocratic point of view. They brought with them from Britain, and from their army experience, a sharp consciousness of class lines, an awareness of such socially vital abstractions as breeding, as a sense of honour. It was entirely natural that they should have attempted to impose their traditional pattern upon the new community. And in Carleton County they had the ideal milieu in which to work their experiment. In their splendid isolation of almost a decade, the good gentry of Richmond and March were largely free from the infection of earlier, lower-class migrations, such as disturbed the noble work of aristocracy in the Peterborough area. In these surroundings, in this isolation, it was easy enough to enforce a pattern, to take advantage of the natural division of labour and of function, to create something approximating the remembered gentle life of England.

After 1826, with a heavy influx of migrants, many of them illiterate and semi-savage Irish labourers, the close-knit aristocracy was forced into a major adjustment. It was an adjustment not only to a larger and more varied population, but to a new focus and a new economy as well. The new focus was Bytown, which rapidly replaced Richmond as the major town. The new economy was that of the timber trade, which brought all of the wealth, and the strife, of the commercial frontier to the metropolis on the Ottawa. But with their entrenched position, and

[5] The March settlement is described in Mrs. M. H. Ahearn, "The Settlers of March Township," *Ontario Historical Society Papers and Records*, III, (1901), 97-102.

with the aid of new natural leaders, the aristocracy was able to make the adjustment, and prolong its rule for two decades.

What were the criteria of selection for members of the élite in the pre-canal era ? Wealth, *per se*, does not seem to have been a decisive factor. Many of the officers could boast comfortably incomes, at least by Canadian standards. Some measure of financial solvency presumably was useful for an aristocrat, guaranteeing him the leisure necessary for community leadership. But money alone could not buy a place. In the nearly thirty years of compact domination of the area, the only conspicuous example of a man entering the oligarchy primarily due to wealth was Nicholas Sparks.[6] And Sparks was highly untypical of the rich, making his fortune in land and establishing himself as a philanthropist, who donated the sites for many of Bytown's public institutions. He was, then, something of a unique case. The generalization hold: one could not ordinarily buy into the gentility. Indeed, some members were chronically impecunious. The first commandant of the Richmond settlement, and founder of an important branch of the aristocracy, Colonel George Thew Burke,[7] was a notoriously poor manager of money, and was forced on several occasions to beg for government patronage to support his "numerous family."[8] Burke was not a solitary case among the often threadbare gentry of Carleton.

A far more reliable key was military rank. Men like Burke could carry over their leadership from the armed forces to the civilian community even, as in the Colonel's case, against the heavy handicap of incompetence. By 1822, the Governor General was expressing serious reservations about Burke's ability to administer Richmond.[9] But such pedestrian considerations apparently did no damage to Burke's reputation or his membership in the gentility. However, even military rank was no guarantee, if the aspirant was otherwise unacceptable — for personal

[6] Sparks was an employee of Philemon Wright at Hull who purchased much of the future site of Bytown in 1826 for £95. The land made him wealthy almost overnight when the Rideau Canal was commenced the same year. On Sparks : *Historical Atlas*, XIX; Lucien Brault, *Ottawa Old & New*, (Ottawa, 1946), 50 : Sparks' troubles with government over the land are chronicled in PAC, Sparks Family, 1821-1892.

[7] Burke, a native of Tipperary, Ireland, spent twenty-four years in the British Army, retiring as Captain of Grenadiers in the 99th Regiment. In 1818, he became commander of the Richmond Settlement, Colonel in the militia in 1824, served as member of the Legislature from 1824 to 1828, was appointed Registrar of Lanark County in 1824, was magistrate and commissioner of the Court of Requests. Biographical material on Burke : PAC, Upper Canada Sundries, v. 109, Burke to Sir John Colborne, September 1, 1831; Nicholas Flood Davin, *The Irishman in Canada*, (Toronto, 1877), 311.

[8] PAC, Upper Canada Sundries, v. 59, Burke to Sir Peregrine Maitland, February 8, 1828, 31015; *ibid.*, v. 109, Burke to Colborne, September 1, 1831.

[9] PAC, Dalhousie Papers, 1816-1833 (microfilm), Dalhousie to Maitland, March 13, 1822, 286.

eccentricity, for moral terpitude, for any one of a variety of reasons considered important by the oligarchs.[10]

The really important characteristics demanded were the correct attitudes on social and political questions, and the indefinable attributes of a gentleman. By their very nature, these qualities are difficult to describe. As Professor S. F. Wise has shown, in an article on toryism in sermon literature,[11] the early nineteenth century tory rarely articulated his beliefs, operating instead on a set of unspoken assumptions which any fellow gentleman might be expected to share and recognize. But a few examples may serve to illustrate some of the elements of the gentle tradition.

A sense of honour was an important part of the code, as an outward expression of an inner nobility. A family which showed this characteristic, to a fault, was that of the Streets of March Township. Captain Benjamin Street, a war hero of some reputation, fitted easily into the leadership pattern, as a magistrate, as a vestryman of the Anglican church, as a political influence. But, as his quarrels with his neighbours demonstrated, he was chiefly notable for the almost chivalric importance he attached to his honour as a gentleman. And with the Streets it was apparently a hereditary trait. It was in 1839 that Captain Street's son became involved in an affair worthy of the *ancien régime*. Allegedly insulted by one Bolton Read, Benjamin junior challenged his dishonourer to a duel. Read, of a less quixotic nature, ignored the call. The furious Street assuaged his outraged feelings by nailing up throughout the district a most remarkable notice. It explained Read's cowardice in refusing the affair of honour, and with considerable flourish, declared, "I post Bolton Read as a Poltron."[12] But no one found it ridiculous, except perhaps that ill-bred rascal, Bolton Read. It was odd behaviour for a frontier region, more in keeping, it would seem, in seventeenth century France. Yet this was far from an isolated incident. There were many challenges in this period, affairs in which the view of honour, if not the wording, was as archaic as Benjamin Street's. They were gentlemen in an old sense, the gentility of Carleton, and they settled their quarrels as gentlemen, not with uncouth frontier shoot-outs, or murders from ambush, or lynch law. Their sensitivity was part of the process of resisting the frontier environment. They determined to construct in the forest a faith-

[10] e.g. The eccentric Captain Andrew Wilson of Nepean Township and the immoral, quarrelsome Captain Weatherley of March : John Mactaggart, *Three Years in Canada*, I, (London, 1829), 270-272; C. C. J. Bond, "Alexander James Christie, Bytown Pioneer. His Life and Times, 1787-1843," *Ontario History*, LVI, (1964), 25.

[11] S. F. Wise, "Sermon Literature and Canadian Intellectual History," United Church Committee on Archives, *Bulletin*, (1965), 3-18. An excellent later articulation of the beliefs is to be found in Bliss Carman, "Of Breeding," in Carman, *The Kinship of Nature*, (Boston, 1903), 221-229.

[12] PAC, Bolton Read, 1839, Declaration by Benjamin Street, September 25, 1839.

ful representation of what they had left in Britain, but instead produced a distortion, an exaggeration. Exaggeration was in the nature of the construction. Like the cotton aristocracy of the southern United States, they emphasized so heavily those things which set them apart, those rationalizations of their place in society — honour, culture, breeding — that they parodied, rather than mirrored, English customs.

The importance of these intangibles can be demonstrated, as well, in the political arena. Hear, for instance the explanation offered by Hamnett Pinhey,[13] member of the Upper Canadian Assembly, of his votes to expel William Lyon Mackenzie from the legislature. Pinhey employed many of the standard charges, claiming Mackenzie was a republican, that he had "talents too diminutive to obtain a position as a menial." But the core of the argument was that Mackenzie was unsuited to hold a position of responsibility because of his bad manners, his outrageous behaviour, his insults to the House. Those who had supported the expulsion, Pinhey declaimed, had "... voted Mr. Mackenzie a man unworthy to sit in the same room with them and ordered him out accordingly."[14]

The requirements for the gentility, in the age of the half-pay officers, were clear-cut. Education and good breeding were the keys. And the community made few demands, beyond adherence to the tory ideology of a stratified society, of insistence upon a state church, of sanctification of the British Constitution and the British connection.

The criteria became more complex after 1826, with the influx of population associated with the construction of the Rideau Canal, and with the growth of commercial activity. Many of the oligarchs of the pre-canal era maintained their position, but they were forced to adjust to the new conditions, and to welcome newcomers to their ranks. The intangible qualities of the gentleman were still important, the social and political doctrines of toryism remained inviolate. But, in the new community centring on Bytown, new requirements applied as well. Utility to the society was demanded, especially sponsorship of its chief economic activity, the timber trade. And, as we shall see, adherence to Bytown's peculiar myth of manifest destiny became as necessary as belief in the myth of gentility for aspirants to the aristocracy.

The inner core of the gentility has been identified for this paper by cross-checking the major patronage positions of the 1830's, by analyzing

[13] A retired English merchant, Pinhey came to March in 1819, where he lived a gentlemanly existence in his fine home, Horaceville. Among his many positions were the wardenships of the Dalhousie District and the County of Carleton. He served in the Upper Canadian Assembly, 1832-1833, and was appointed to the Canadian Legislative Council in 1847. Biographical material : PAC, Hill Collection, X, Pinhey to Earl of Bathurst, December 15, 1819, 3175-3176; *ibid.*, XII, memorandum, no signature, no date, 3740-3742; J. L. Gourlay, *History of the Ottawa Valley*, (Ottawa, 1896), 23-24.

[14] Bathurst *Courier*, February 13, 1835.

correspondence among community leaders, and by examining the major political campaigns of 1832 and 1841. Using this evidence to isolate the most important figures, and working back through their social and political associations, we can distinguish a local compact which held sway until the union of the two Canadas. The dominating members, on this basis, were Hamnett Pinhey, the squire of Horaceville in March Township, and Dr. A. J. Christie, and early settler in March and from 1836 the editor of the *Bytown Gazette*.[15] Others making up the inner circle included : the Burke family from Richmond; the Bytown postmaster, George W. Baker;[16] the Lyon family of Richmond;[17] and Daniel O'Connor, Bytown merchant.[18]

Studying the core group and their associates — a total of seventeen men[19] — certain similarities emerge. Perhaps because of the increased complexity of the society, and of the tasks its leaders were called upon to cope with, education became an important part of the measure of a gentleman. Daniel O'Connor, the Irish-born merchant, was well suited for the Carleton gentility, with his middle-class Irish background, his good manners, his safe opinions. And his quixotic spirit, which had led him to adventuring in South America on behalf of Bolivar, prepared him well for association with the prickly frontier aristocrats. But, in his diary, O'Connor singles out education as the key factor. "The educated class being very few," O'Connor explains, "the excellent education that I received gave me many advantages and I soon . . . became one of the prominent citizens of the town."[20]

Not surprisingly, given the weakness of the agricultural base of the district, and its isolation from the really profitable areas of government

15 A Scottish physician, Christie emigrated to Montreal in 1817. Editor of the *Herald* and *Gazette* newspapers there, he later moved to March, and then to Bytown. Doctor, editor, political influence, Christie also found time to serve as clerk of the Court of Requests, a public notary, clerk of the Township of Nepean, and clerk of the Peace in the Dalhousie District. See Bond., *op. cit.*

16 Baker came to Bytown from Woolwich, England, in 1832, as a half-pay captain from the Royal Artillery. Postmaster, returning officer, magistrate, member of the Dalhousie District council, Baker founded an influential dynasty in Carleton : *Historical Atlas*, L.

17 A half-pay officer and prominent Presbyterian, Lyon sat in the Legislature from 1830 to 1834, and from 1846 to 1848. He also served as a notary public and Crown Land agent : *Historical Atlas*, XI :x.

18 From Tipperary, Ireland, O'Connor emigrated to Bytown in 1827. A merchant, he was also a magistrate, commissioner of the Court of Requests, treasurer of the Dalhousie District and Carleton County, Chairman of the Grammar School Board, and a leading Catholic layman : Daniel O'Connor, *Diary and Other Memoirs.* (n.p., n.d.); the Ottawa *Union*, May 12, 1858.

19 G. W. Baker, J. Bareille, G. T. Burke, J. Chitty, A. J. Christie, D. Fisher, S. Fraser, J. Lewis, G. Lyon, E. Malloch, T. McKay, J. B. Monk, D. O'Connor, G. Patterson, H. Pinhey, N. Sparks, W. Stewart.

20 O'Connor, *op. cit.*, 30. This bears out the comments of Strickland, and of Catherine Parr Traill, who asserted, ". . . it is education and manners that must distinguish the gentlemen in this country. . . ." : *The Backwood of Canada : Being Letters from the Wife of an Emigrant Officer*, (London, 1846), 81.

patronage, many of the gentlemen were forced to make their livings in commerce. Six of the seventeen were retail merchants and one was a hotel-keeper. Only two seem to have been members of the learned professions, and their careers would underline the relative unimportance of the professions in this early stage of the community's development. Dr. A. J. Christie devoted most of his time to, and drew most of his income from, his newspaper and his local government posts. George Lyon, a lawyer, was too active as a businessman, Crown Land agent and member of parliament to give much attention to legal practice. Even in the 1830's, five of the gentlemen were half-pay officers, and one, Hamnett Pinhey, was a gentleman farmer, having retired from commerce before coming to Canada.

A striking aspect of the occupational backgrounds is the absence of lumber kings among the oligarchs, despite the overwhelming importance of the trade to the area. Two members, Thomas McKay and Nicholas Sparks, did have investments in timber, but for neither was it the prime source of income. And the major figures of lumbering — like Philemon Wright and Peter Aylen — are conspicuous by their absence. One reason may simply be that of time; a man building an empire in a risk-trade like timber did not have the leisure time necessary for community leadership. But the genteel code was probably more important. The Wrights and Aylen were unacceptable on social and political grounds. Philemon Wright, despite his prominence as the founder of Hull and father of settlement in the upper Ottawa valley, remained a rather uncouth Yankee. He did not impress the gentry with his credentials, and was far too busy building his community to try very hard to do so. Thirty years after the founding of Hull, Hamnett Pinhey, the archetype Carleton gentleman, still dismissed the Wrights as "old squatters."[21] The years of suspicion seemed verified in 1849. When a great riot broke out in Bytown over the Rebellion Losses Bill, the Wrights horrified the aristocrats by siding with the traitorous Reformers. Peter Aylen was even less acceptable. As well as a major figure in the timber trade, he was the leader of the Irish ruffian band, the Shiners, who terrorized the Valley in the 1830's.[22] Aylen and his Shiners, in fact, formed throughout this period a community within a community, a dislocated part of Carleton society which was dedicated to disrupting the fine social equilibrium established by the oligarchy.

Lumbermen did not, as a rule, belong to the leadership group before 1841. Nevertheless, the élite championed the interests of the lumber

[21] PAC, Hill Collection, IX, Pinhey to Jonas Jones, August 4, 1828, 2699.

[22] Aylen and the Shiners are described by : Miller Stewart, "King of the Shiners," in Ellen Stafford, ed., *Flamboyant Canadians*, (Toronto, 1964), 63-81; an article by Charles Mair in the Toronto *Week*, August 18, 1893. The Shiner troubles of 1835, when they almost seized control of Bytown, are chronicled in PAC, Upper Canada Sundries, v. 152-156.

community. The vital importance of the trade to Bytown and Carleton made such a posture essential for an aristocracy which, in part, maintained its preeminence through its social utility. Some members had long recognized the key role of timber in the Canadian economy. Dr. Christie, for instance, had been a staunch champion of the trade even before he moved to the Ottawa, when he was editor of the Montreal *Herald* between 1818 and 1821. With other gentlemen, however, conversion came only when the trade assumed dominance in Bytown. Hamnett Pinhey had strongly attacked lumbering, in the early 1820's, as a profligate waste of resources, and as a bad moral influence in the community.[23] His tone altered considerably in the next decade, however, when to attack the timber trade would have been to commit social and political suicide in Carleton.

The aristocracy proved itself useful to the lumber community in a variety of ways. The members elected to the Upper Canadian Assembly advanced the cause of the trade at the seat of government. Four members of the gentility — Christie, Sparks, Simon Fraser and William Stewart — were to be found on the executive of the Ottawa Lumber Association, formed in 1836 to provide self-government of the trade. Only Sparks among the four had any significant economic interest in the business. Christie, through his newspaper, the *Bytown Gazette*, was an effective propagandist for the lumber community. And, as late as 1855, we find the lumberers still looking to the old leader for support. When the timber trade was under attack from agrarian interests before a parliamentary committee on public lands in that year, the lumbermen employed as their spokesman James Henry Burke, son of the founder of Richmond, even though Burke was not personally involved in timbering.[24]

Social utility was demonstrated in other ways, as well. The gentry provided the driving force behind most of the community-service organizations. They encouraged population growth in the Bytown and Ottawa Emigration Society[25] and eased the severity of the depression of 1837 with the Bytown Benevolent Society.[26] The vigilante group set up to police the town in 1835 — the Bytown Association for the Preservation of the Peace — was a more active expression of their desire to serve the society they led.[27] Their dedication, their willingness to expend time,

[23] PAC, Hill Collection, IX, Pinhey to Henry Goulbourn, April 2, 1821, 2544-2546.

[24] *Journals of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Canada*, 1854-1855, App. M.M., Report of the Select Committee on Management of Public Lands.

[25] On the first executive in 1841 were Baker, G. R. Burke, Christie, G. Lyon, Pinhey, Stewart.

[26] Among the officers were Baker, Burke, Chitty, Patterson.

[27] On the Managing Committee were Baker, Burke, Christie, Patterson, Stewart.

effort and, if necessary, courage on behalf of the community was the other side of the coin of privilege.

Men who governed their lives by the myth of the gentleman were ideally suited to concern themselves with the vital abstractions which gave hope and distinction to a community like Bytown. An important buttress of the position of the gentility was its advocacy of the "manifest destiny" so characteristic of the area. Its importance as a commercial entrepôt, its central position in the two Canadas, its excellent communications via the Ottawa River and the Rideau Canal seemed — in the eyes of its citizens — to mark out a unique place for Bytown, to make it the logical commercial and political capital of the provinces. Especially among the upper classes, already convinced of their own call to carry on the civilizing of North America, there developed a sense of mission in this society, a sense of having been chosen for greatness. Bytonians frequently referred for authority to the Delphic utterances of the former Governor General, Lord Dalhousie, who had visited the area in 1822, four years before the town was founded. In appropriately mythic fashion, Dalhousie and Hamnett Pinhey had been sitting in the arcadian meadow which was the future site of Bytown. Pointing to Parliament Hill, then a bare knoll, the Earl is alleged to have intoned to his companion, "... would you not be startled... were I to add that on that eminence... that one day may be the seat of Government."[28] The townsfolk kept the faith, convinced of their fated greatness by a curious combination of geography, commercial ambition, and *noblesse oblige*:[29] kept the faith until 45 years later the dream came true.

While it is impossible to measure the significance of social utility, a willingness to work on behalf of the community does seem to have been necessary for acceptance into the élite. And it certainly helped strengthen the aristocrat's hold on power. Indeed, this may well have been a general pattern in Upper Canada. Elites, like those in Carleton and Kingston which had something useful to offer to their districts, which championed the economic interests of their communities, were successful in maintaining themselves. In contrast, the stubborn resistance of the Talbot clique to changing conditions led to a steady erosion of its dominance over the western section of the province.

One further factor which can be isolated easily is that of religion. No dissenter won a place in the gentility. The bulk of the prominent members were Anglicans, the next largest group were adherents of the Church of Scotland, and two were Catholics. This, of course, was in the

[28] PAC, Hill Collection, I, Pinhey to A. Christie, 1844, 44.

[29] A piece of eternal lyric in the first issue of the *Bytown Gazette*, June 9, 1836, gives an excellent summary of the messianism. It visualizes the swarm of tourists who would soon come, "raptured" by the beauty, to pay suit to Bytown, and confidently predicted that "the day is on the wing" when Bytown would be crowned as capital.

tory tradition of Upper Canada, where even non-Anglicans were required to accept the essential role of the Established Church within the British Constitution, if they were to prove their loyalty and worthiness.[30]

All members of the gentility were staunchly Tory, and they were close observers of the political scene. However, an active role in provincial politics was by no means necessary for inclusion in the Carleton élite. A seat in parliament seems to have been less desirable than were the prestigious local offices. Among the most important aristocrats, George Burke and George Lyon both had extended service in the Assembly. However, Hamnett Pinhey sat in the House for only little more than a year, Dr. Christie did not run for office, and Daniel O'Connor was defeated in his one bid. And Pinhey, for one, was not at all certain that the effort of winning an Upper Canadian election was worth the trouble. After his victory in 1832, which had involved considerable wining and dining of the electorate, the squire ruefully reported to Colonel James Fitzgibbon, "I might have had a rotten borough in the Imperial Parliament, for one half the amount, this very enviable one cost me."[31] His ambivalent feelings were probably resolved the following year, when his election was voided for irregularities.

Representation was often left to fringe associates of the gentility. Edward Malloch, for instance, who sat for Carleton from 1834 to 1840, and from 1848 to 1854, was a good member, with safe political opinions. But he was the son of a shoemaker, and took little part in social activities or community-service projects. Two reasons can be offered for the relative depreciation of the membership in the Assembly. One was the impotence of parliament to affect affairs in the area. The Ottawa was isolated from the rest of the province, its economic interests were unique. Despite the impeccable loyalty of its members, Carleton was unable to interest the Upper Canadian government in the affairs of the area. Improvements on the Ottawa were ignored in favour of the trunk roads and the Welland Canal in the heart of the province. Requests for police aid to control the Shiner bands were rejected.[32] The major concerns of the community, then, were not pursued in the Legislature, but rather through self-help within the Valley, or through direct appeals by the elite to the lieutenant governor. A second consideration was that the prolonged absences a parliamentary seat necessitated could weaken local contacts, consume time which might be spent on more socially useful local ventures.

30 R. E. Saunders, "What was the Family Compact ?", *Ontario History*, XLIX, (1957), 176.

31 PAC, Hill Collection, IX, Pinhey to Fitzgibbon, April 30, 1832, 2814.

32 For example : *Journals of the Legislative Assembly of Upper Canada*, 1836, App. 150, Report of the Select Committee on the Improvement of the Ottawa River, 6; PAC, Upper Canada Sundries, V. 199, Petition of the Inhabitants of New Edinburgh to Charles Buller, July 16, 1838; *ibid.*, v. 155, G. W. Baker to Lt. Col. Rowan, July 13, 1835.

Provincial politics came to have direct utility for the community only in 1841, with the election of the first Assembly of the new Province of Canada. The Ottawa, as the great central highway of the provinces, was accorded new importance by the government. And union was the first phase of the Bytown dream. The aristocrats worked hard to fulfill the commercial promise of union by fighting for improvements on the river. At the same time, they maintained a constant agitation on behalf of the second phase — making Bytown the capital of the Canadas.

Until 1841, Carleton politics were characterized by the Tory factionalism so apparent in many Upper Canadian communities. With Reform never a factor, the Tories were free to feud among themselves, to engage in tests of strength between rival groups within the gentility. The campaign of 1832 was the classic example of this factionalism. Hamnett Pinhey stood forth on behalf of the March gentry, against the Richmond-backed candidate, James Boulton. There had apparently been a breach of faith by the Richmond gentlemen, which embittered the contest. After March Township had supported the Richmond resident, Captain Lewis, in 1830, it had been understood Pinhey would receive their cooperation.[33] Coloured by this alleged Richmond treachery, the election was as violent and corrupt as any Tory vs Reform fight. The feelings of the Pinheyites were graphically described in the lyrics of the mock epic, *The Tale of a Bytown Ram*, written by Dr. A. J. Christie about the election.

> The Richmondaries think that under Heaven,
> Theirs is the cleanest healthiest spot to live in,
> Where men can feed on Tormory Cods and Ducks
> And die of ague, dysenteries and flux....[34]

Such canards were effectively answered by the Richmondaries, who circulated rumours that Pinhey was Jewish. And Richmond enjoyed the last laugh, for Pinhey's short-lived victory was thrown out by the Assembly when evidence was produced that a number of unfranchised citizens had voted for the squire of Horaceville.

The bitterness of 1832 was short-lived, for whatever their differences, the gentlemen recognized their basically common interests as aristocrats. In 1836, when the issues of loyalty and radicalism were clear-cut, Hamnett Pinhey was to be found giving his wholehearted support to the Tory candidates, Lewis and Malloch, both his erstwhile enemies from Richmond.[35] Tory factionalism was a luxury which could be indulged only so long as the genteel ideal was in no danger.

By the late 1830's, a fully developed ruling compact can be distinguished in Carleton County — one essentially similar to the groups

[33] PAC, Hill Collection, IX, Pinhey to Fitzgibbon, April 30, 1832, 2815-2818.
[34] *The Carleton Election or the Tale of a Bytown Ram*, (n.p., 1832), 6.
[35] *Bytown Gazette*, June 30, 1836.

dominating so many of the atomized communities making up Upper Canada, but one more effective and more closely-knit that most. Before the social and economic convulsions of the 1840's, the combination of the changes wrought by British free trade, and the wave of famine Irish which flooded the area, this compact was showing evidence of fulfilling its mission. It was well on the road to becoming a functional aristocracy. The interconnections of the families were becoming ever more complex. Intermarriage linked the élite families — the Lewis' to the Streets and the Lyons and the Pinheys; the Pinheys to the Christies; the Pattersons to the Letts and Hintons. The aristocracy was taking on the appearance of one big happy family.

This "family compact" had one of the essential characteristics of an aristocracy — position and power were inheritable. By the 1840's, posts of prestige, and monetary value, were being passed on to the sons of the oligarchs. For instance, the sons of G. W. Baker and Hamnett Pinhey were successively clerks of the Dalhousie District Council. Captain Lewis was followed as an M.L.A. by his son, John Bower Lewis. The Lyon family, key members of the Richmond branch of the aristocracy, illustrate the point well. The father was member of the Assembly for Carleton from 1830 to 1834, and from 1846 to 1848. Two of his offspring were also in parliament, G. B. Lyon-Fellowes sitting for Russell from 1844 to 1859, and his brother, Robert Lyon, representing Carleton in the first Dominion parliament. A third son was reeve of Richmond in 1850-1851. The examples could be multiplied, but a pattern is already clear. Intermarriage and inheritable status, before the catastrophes of the 1840's, were producing a viable aristocracy.

Returning to the quotations which began this paper, both would seem to be applicable to the Carleton experience. The man of education indeed possessed an influence, unaffected by the "low standard of money." While Professor Lower's virtues of stump-pulling and good-neighbourliness were hardly prime considerations in Carleton, his remark strikes to the core of the selective process, when he explains that "Men were measured by their abilities for the task at hand." Social utility to the substance and the myths of the community joined adherence to the gentle ideal to produce an effective ruling group. They governed long and, by and large, they governed well, the Carleton aristocrats, in this their age of gentility.