

Report of the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Historical Association Rapport de l'assemblée annuelle de la Société historique du Canada

Report of the Annual Meeting

The Honourable Thomas McKay, M.L.C., Founder of New Edinburgh, 1792-1855

Francis J. Audet

Volume 11, numéro 1, 1932

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/300105ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/300105ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

The Canadian Historical Association/La Société historique du Canada

ISSN

0317-0594 (imprimé)

1712-9095 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cet article

Audet, F. J. (1932). The Honourable Thomas McKay, M.L.C., Founder of New Edinburgh, 1792-1855. *Report of the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Historical Association / Rapport de l'assemblée annuelle de la Société historique du Canada*, 11(1), 65-79. <https://doi.org/10.7202/300105ar>

THE HONOURABLE THOMAS McKAY, M.L.C., FOUNDER OF
NEW EDINBURGH, 1792-1855

BY FRANCIS J. AUDET

It is almost inconceivable that such a man should have found no biographer so far. For Thomas McKay was a man of standing in society, one of the founders of Bytown, a contractor of the Lachine Canal, of the Rideau Canal lower locks and of the Grenville-Carillon Canal; the founder of New Edinburgh, the owner of grist and saw mills, factories and stores; the builder of the two best known residences of Ottawa: Rideau Hall and Earnscliffe, which later became respectively the residences of the Governor-General and of the first prime minister of the Dominion of Canada, Sir John A. Macdonald;¹ the builder of the first Presbyterian church on Wellington Street where now stands one of the finest sacred edifices in the Capital, St-Andrews; the owner of the large tract of land known as McKay's bush which subsequently became the beautiful Rockcliffe Park; a colonel in the militia, a member of the Legislative Assembly for the county of Russell for seven years and, finally, a member of the Legislative Council of Canada for fifteen years. It may be that Thomas McKay was one of those unassuming Scotchmen who do things but are reluctant to have their photographs published or see their names on the front page of a newspaper, being satisfied with the approval of their own conscience. However that may be, he greatly contributed to the improvements of the town's business life and expansion and aided materially to the general prosperity of the country during more than thirty years. Mr. McKay was also one of the backers of the St. Lawrence and Ottawa Railway (at first known as the Bytown & Prescott Railway). Writing of the incipency of this enterprise Sir Richard W. Scott said in his "Recollections of Bytown": "As the Honourable Thomas McKay and his son-in-law Mr. McKinnon were taking a warm interest in the project,² in deference to their wishes, the line was located passing through New Edinburgh."

Thomas McKay was born at Perth, Scotland, in 1792. After leaving school, he learned the trade of a mason and came to Canada with his wife, in September, 1817. In the same year, another Scotchman who was to take a most active part in the early life and development of Bytown, emigrated to this country: Alexander James Christie, of Aberdeen, who established in 1836, the *Bytown Gazette*. Christie belonged to the medical profession but he preferred wielding a pen to a lancet, and he became a journalist. Christie and McKay must have met in Montreal if, indeed, they had not made the journey across the Atlantic together, for Dr. Christie went to live in the metropolis in 1819, when he became editor of the *Montreal Herald*. They both came to Bytown or, rather, to Nepean, as the place was then called, in 1826 and, as they were both tories, there were indeed, many a common tie between these two worthy sons of old Caledonia.

¹ The latter property was acquired, in 1930, by the Imperial Government for a home for its High Commissioner to Canada.

² As a matter of fact, McKinnon was the president of the Company.

The first Montreal City Directory shows that, in 1819, McKay lived at 29 St. Urbain street and plied his trade in that city. He worked for some time on the fortifications of fort Lennox, Ile-aux-Noix, P.Q., and in 1821 was one of the contractors of the Lachine Canal. This work was completed in 1825 and, the following year, we find him at the Chaudière Falls, on the Ottawa, employed with Thomas Burrows in the construction of the first bridge across the Ottawa. He afterwards built the lower locks of the Rideau Canal. McKay was present, on the 26th September, 1826, at the memorable meeting of Colonel By with Lord Dalhousie, on the brink of the chasm called the Chaudière, when His Lordship decided to create a town which was destined to become the beautiful capital of a great country.

The following appropriate lines are culled from the "Recollections of Bytown and its Old Inhabitants" by William Pittman Lett.

Thomas MacKay, who's worthy name
Is well known even to modern fame,
The worth which honest men revere
Deserves a fitting record here.
With mighty gangs he excavated
The ancient quarry situated
On west side of "the Major's Hill,"
Which modern hands find hard to fill;
The stones from thence by powder rent
To build the seven Canal Locks went.
The Sappers' Bridge, too, was erected
By blocks of limestone thence ejected.
Like many another rising man,
Mackay for ancient Russell "ran"
To use a term, which means to-day
That he runs best who best can pay!
The declaration found him seated
And his antagonist defeated.
New honors came his name to greet,
A Legislative Councillor's seat
Was given next to Russell's pride.
Clad with dignity he died.
And no more upright man has e'er
Deserving of the post sat there.

The first white boy born in Bytown, July 5, 1827, was named Thomas McKay Robertson. His portrait is in the Bytown Historical Museum.

* * * *

In 1838, Thomas McKay erected a fine mansion at New Edinburgh, near Bytown, and brought his family from Montreal. He erected grist and saw mills, a cloth factory and a general store near the mouth of the Rideau River and founded a village there which he called New Edinburgh.³ The saw mill which he built in 1846 and worked for eight years, became the property of J. M. Currier & Co. in 1854. It was subsequently owned by Senator Edwards. He also purchased one thousand acres of land and farmed a part of it. His several undertakings proved fruitful and he soon became rich and prominent in this part of the country. He then decided to enter the field of politics and was a successful candidate in the county of Russell, for the Legislative Assembly, at the general elections of 1834 and at those of 1836. He held his seat until the Union of the Canadas, in 1841. On the 9th June following, he was called to the Legislative Council

³ Now Rideau ward of Ottawa.



The HONOURABLE THOMAS MCKAY (1792-1855)
Member of Legislative Council and Founder of New Edinburgh
(From photo belonging to Miss Lily McL. Clark, of Elmwood, Ottawa)

of the new Province of Canada in which he sat until his death which happened at Rideau Hall, on the 9th October, 1855. Thomas McKay left an honored and respected name.

Among the score or more of measures which Mr. McKay introduced or advocated while a member of the Legislature, may be cited: the application in 1836, of statute labour to several townships for improving roads leading to back settlements; the presentation of a petition from the directors of the Bank of Montreal for a charter of incorporation (a bill was passed on the 15th September, 1841, but was reserved for H.M.'s pleasure); the presentation of a petition from Nicholas Sparks, of Bytown, praying that certain property which had been taken by the Ordinance for the use of the Rideau Canal, be restored to him. In March 1845, Mr. McKay protested against the adoption of certain resolutions on the subject of granting sessional indemnities to the members of the Legislative Council. Four years later, he registered his protest against the passing of the Rebellion Losses Bill; against the granting of sessional indemnities to members of the Assembly; against the adoption of the address to Lord Elgin on the subject of the destruction by fire of the Parliament House at Montreal, and against the Municipal Bill entitled: "An act to provide by one general law for the erection of Municipal Corporations and the establishment of Regulations of Police in and for the several counties, cities, towns and villages in Upper Canada."

Mr. McKay was well known for his charity and benevolence. Besides giving his time and lending his men for the erection of the first Presbyterian church in Ottawa, as we stated before, he donated the ground on which St. Bartholomew's church is built and aided in its construction.

The little stone church built by McKay in 1828 was heated by box stoves and long stretches of stove-pipes. The pews were high backed and closed in. The pulpit was elevated and the precentor, with his tuning fork, was visible from all parts of the church.

Thomas McKay was one of a committee appointed in December 1828, to appeal to Sir John Colborne, Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada, for help towards a salary for a minister for the new church. The congregation obtained an allowance of £50 a year.

An undated petition (1828??) from the principal inhabitants of Bytown was sent to Sir Peregrine Maitland, Lieutenant-Governor of the province, asking for the appointment of magistrates and the erection of a court of requests. This petition bore, amongst others, the signatures of Colonel John By and T. McKay.

The extraordinary success of his ventures are a striking proof of what may be done in Canada by an enterprising man who applies himself diligently to his task. If he became a rich man, it was not by chance, but by dint of hard work intelligently pursued. It is by such men that empires are built.

Speaking of the construction of the Rideau Canal, J. L. Gourlay, in his *History of the Ottawa Valley*, says that Thomas McKay and John Redpath, of Montreal, "had to cart home, in Mexican silver half dollars, &c., their part of the profits of the contract." He adds further that: "There was a lull in the Canal works and Redpath and McKay built, with the idle men, the first stone church where St. Andrews now stands. . . . McKay was an elder respected highly in the church, and we often met John Redpath in Synod; a very strong man."

Now, these Mexican silver half dollars having to be carted away in Ottawa need a work of explanation. This will be found in William Weir's *Sixty Years in Canada* (Montreal, John Lovell & Son, 1903), chapter XIV, entitled *The Silver Nuisance*. It is too long to be reproduced here. It must however be remembered that Canada did not coin silver pieces until after the year 1858, when the government decided to introduce the decimal system in the currency of the country and to keep its accounts in dollars and cents. The depreciated American and Mexican silver pieces were still circulating in Canada to the detriment of trade and it took many years before remedial measures were introduced and put in force by the government. It may be added that Canadian government and bank notes were also scarce at that time, British and American money being freely used in commercial transactions.

Mr. McKay had married, on the 20th June, 1813, at Perth, Scotland, Ann Crichton. She was born in that city on the 13th May, 1794. She died at Rockliffe, Ottawa, on the 12th August, 1878. They had sixteen children. One of the daughters married John McKinnon, her father's partner in business; Elizabeth became the wife, in 1848, of Thomas Coltrin Keefer, C.E. After her death in 1869, he married her sister Annie. Jessie, the youngest, married on the 6th June, 1854, Thomas McLeod Clark, (son of John Clark, of Tain, Rosshire, Scotland), insurance and commission merchant. She died at Elmwood, Ottawa, 9th July, 1880. Another daughter Christina married Justice Robert MacKay of Montreal. The sons all died young and unmarried.

Mr. McKay had also served in the militia. He was appointed lieutenant-colonel commanding the first Russell Battalion, on the 19th February, 1838. On the 5th November, 1846, he was transferred to the command of the Fourth Battalion of the county of Carleton.

On the 30th November, 1844, while in Montreal to attend his parliamentary duties, Mr. McKay was admitted a member of the St. Andrews Society of that city. His certificate is signed by the Honourable Peter McGill, president, and John Armour, secretary.

In 1846, he thought that a holiday and a rest would do him no harm. Leaving aside his business cares and taking with him three of his daughters, he sailed for the Old Country. After visiting Scotland and England, they crossed the Channel and landed at Boulogne-sur-mer on the 25th June. Having obtained a "passe-port à l'Intérieur" from the police authorities of the realm, they left for Paris where they spent a few days. Before leaving the capital, Mr. McKay went to pay his respects to the British ambassador, obtained the visa of the embassy and returned to England via Havre.

Another Thomas McKay was a flour mill owner and had offices and a warehouse on Sussex Street, near St. Patrick. His mill was at the Chaudière Falls. He was a nephew of the Honourable Thomas, and one of his daughters, Alison, married Alexander Scott, who was the father of Miss Mary McKay Scott, well known some forty years ago as an able writer and a journalist, advocating the rights of women in Ottawa. This lady is still living and is over eighty years of age.

APPENDICES

Biography of Lieutenant Charles McKay.
Rideau Hall.
Earncliffe.

Extracts from Newspapers respecting the Hon^{ble} Thomas McKay and his family. (Most of these extracts however do not bear the names of the papers they are taken from nor their dates). They have been graciously furnished by Miss Lily McLeod Clark, of Elmwood, Ottawa, and I hereby tender her my most sincere expression of gratitude.

Biographies of Celebrated Canadians

BY H. J. MORGAN

LIEUT. CHARLES MCKAY

Charles McKay was the youngest but one of four sons who survived their father, the late Honourable Thomas McKay, M.L.C., of Ottawa, and was born in Montreal, 21st April, 1836, and educated at the high school of that city, and also in Edinburgh, Scotland, where he was at his studies when the Crimean war created so much military ardor amongst the youth of Britain. As a boy, he was remarkable for his steadiness, self-control and self-reliance, and a judgment beyond his years. Possessed of great personal strength and a fearless disposition, he was slow to anger; amiable and gentle in his deportment, and though not wanting in means of opportunity for indulgence, was temperate in all things.

At his urgent request, while at school in Edinburgh, a commission was obtained for him in a line regiment, and on May 10th, 1855, he was gazetted to the 9th Regiment, then one of the strongest in the Crimea, the depot of which was at Preston, where he joined. So rapid was promotion in consequence of death vacancies, that on 21st December of the same year, he became lieutenant, without purchase, and embarked for Malta, where reinforcements were located to acclimatize them for the Crimea. In 1856, he sailed for Balaklava, where he arrived on the 11th March, after the fall of Sebastopol and the cessation of hostilities. On his return from the Crimea, he paid a visit to his family in Canada, which was abruptly terminated by the breaking out of the Sepoy rebellion, in 1857. He sailed with his regiment from Spithead, 5th August, 1857, arrived in Calcutta in November, and was sent up, in December, to Benares, where his regiment formed part of General Frank's division, in the march to Lucknow. At Benares he was laid up with fever, on his arrival on the 16th December, and did not come off the sick list until the 2nd of January. On the 4th, the regiment marched to Babudpoor. During this period his diary shews hard work—up at four every morning, and sometimes on his feet till midnight; frequently going the whole day without food, and sleeping where only soldiers have to sleep. On the 8th they were joined by two Ghoorka regiments at Mancahoo. On the 22nd they came up with the rebels at Secundia. Coming in from outlying pickets, on the morning of the 23rd January, young McKay was marched with the column to attack the Sepoys who were strongly fortified in the midst of a thick jungle. He writes, "while the guns were blazing away, the 97th and two Ghoorka regiments made a flank march, and sent out three or four companies, mine amongst the number, and blazed away at them,

we killed about five hundred, and had only four or five wounded; our fellows bayoneted them right and left, and gave no quarter; we took three guns, and burnt all the villages in the vicinity." On the 19th of February, they drove the rebels out of Chaundra. On the 4th of March, after a desperate fight at Moorshegunge, in which one of his brother officers (Smyth) was killed, General Frank's division marched to join Sir Colin Campbell's army before Lucknow, and on the 6th, the 97th were in the trenches, where McKay writes, they were "pounding and being pounded at", for twenty-four hours at a stretch. On the 10th, he was again "trotted off to the trenches," where, once or twice, while looking over the parapet, he narrowly escaped losing his head. "At about two p.m. on the afternoon of the above day," he writes, "the 42nd and the 93rd Highlanders stormed and took the Martiniere. As soon as the Sepoys saw our Highlanders advancing across the open plain towards them, they began to make for the town in great style. While in the act of bolting, we favored them with an unlimited amount of shot and shell, which falling among a crowd of them, would knock scores of the brutes over. On the 11th three companies, mine amongst the number, were marched toward the Ghoorkas on the left, and here we had no end of skirmishing for two days; we drove the fellows into the town, the bullets dropping thick amongst us, but fortunately wounding very few. On the evening of the 13th, we moved over to the Secundrabagh, and the 97th killed upwards of eighteen hundred Sepoys in this building. The place is full of human bodies, and here we had to sleep for the night. At eleven a.m. next morning received orders to advance on the Kasabagh, which was chock full of Sepoys; we trotted along at a pretty good rate, and when going up the different streets they peppered us in great style. On each side of the road, as we advanced, nothing but dead "niggers" were to be seen, for the live one kept pretty well under cover, and potted at us through loopholes, every house in the place being thoroughly loopholed. On our arrival inside the palace, then commenced the game, for we had to fight the brutes through each room as we went along. In the act of doing so our Colonel Ingram was shot through the head. Just fancy fighting through rooms far superior to any in England, and the tables therein covered with gold and silver ornaments. Had hard fighting all that night and next morning—found my Colt's revolver useful—tumbled over two swell looking Sepoys with it—kept on fighting till the 16th, when they all made their exit. I never slept out of my clothes from the 10th to the 20th, and for six nights at a time had not so much as one wink of sleep; we certainly had hard work for the number of days we were at it".

In announcing his death to his relations his brother officer says of Lieutenant McKay, "He was mentioned in the despatches by our colonel for his conduct at the capture of Lucknow, which was beyond praise."

He remained in garrison at Lucknow until January, 1859, when he was ordered to Banda, in Oude, a march of fourteen or fifteen days from Lucknow, where he was attacked immediately on his arrival by small pox, and carried off after three days' illness, on the 13th February, 1859, in the twenty-third year of his age.

In communicating the sad intelligence to his elder brother, his most intimate friend and associate in the regiment, writes: "I am sure it will be a great comfort to your brother to know that he was a good Christian, and upright and moral man, a brave, gallant and devoted soldier, and

did his duty manfully to his Queen and country, through many a hard days work. A nobler disposition and a better, kinder or truer friend could not be met with. I miss him fearfully, and I cannot even now feel reconciled to His decree 'who doeth all things for the best.' "It is needless for me to add," he says in another letter, "the great regret we all feel at his loss; with myself it is irreparable, as I can never expect to see his like again on earth. But it will gratify you all to know that a more gallant officer the Queen never had." About a year after receipt of the intelligence of his death, the following letter which explains itself, was received:—

("No. 16587.

" 12 " (Lr. 115).

"WAR OFFICE, LONDON, August 1860.

"MADAM,—I am directed by the secretary of state for war, to transmit to you herewith, a medal which has been granted for Lieutenant C. McKay's service as an officer of the 97th Regiment of Foot, to be retained in commemoration of his gallant conduct in the campaign in India.

"You are requested to acknowledge the receipt of the medal upon the form herewith enclosed.

"I am, madam, your obedient servant,

"B. HAWES.

"Mrs. A. McKay,

"Rideau Hall, Ottawa, Canada, America,"

Heu miserande puer!

Manibus date lilia pleuis;

Purpureos ut spargam flores, et fungas inani munere!

RIDEAU HALL

The following notes, are culled in part from a report of E. P. Rubidge, C.E., and architect, dated the 13th June, 1865, addressed to F. Braün, Secretary of the Department of Public Works.

This property, about 65 acres in extent, is situated on the right bank of the Rideau River, adjacent to the Ottawa or Grand River at their confluence, and being in the township of Gloucester, county of Russell. The grounds are undulating, partially wooded, and susceptible of ready improvement. The residence, erected by the Hon'ble Thomas McKay, about twenty five years since, and seated near the centre of the property leased, is of moderate extent, being only 75 by 47 feet on ground plan, and offered little pretensions to architectural appearance; the outer walls, built of the lime stone of the locality, shew evidences of disintegration on portions of the exposed surfaces.

The house can only be considered an ordinary dwelling of some eleven room, without including the basement and attic stories. The elevation of the ceilings of the best apartment is much too low, and in other respects the abode is deficient in many of the requisite of a modern mansion. A more ample water supply with proper drainage therefrom, have to be provided, and the location being in the limestone rock close to the surface will add greatly to the cost of these wants.

The stabling and out buildings are rude farm structures, and by no means suitable or becoming appendages to the residence of the Governor General of British America. These must be either renewed in whole or in part, or at least removed farther from the house to a more fitting site, according as the expenditure authorized will admit thereof or otherwise.

The report contains the following phrase: "In seeking to combine the existing, or old building, known as *Rideau Hall* . . ." This indicates that the house already bore that name. I have been unable to ascertain when the name was changed from "The Castle" to Rideau Hall. But, on the 12th of October, 1855, the *Ottawa Tribune* announced the death on the 9th of that month, of the Honourable Thomas McKay, at RIDEAU HALL, New Edinburgh. It is also quite possible that McKay called it Rideau Hall when he built it and that The Castle was merely a popular designation for this turreted residence.

This property was leased by the Government, from the McKay estate, on the 2nd August, 1865, for the term of twelve years, at a yearly rental of \$4,000, with the right of purchasing the property during the first three years for the sum of \$70,000, and afterwards for such a sum as might be determined by arbitration. The property was purchased by the Government on the 28th of July, 1868. It then amounted to nearly 88 acres, the consideration being \$82,000.

As will be seen by the annexed biography of Lieutenant Charles McKay, Mrs. C. Romanne-James has run astray when she writes: "McKay little thought what would happen to his castle when he went to the Indian Mutiny and died after he had won the Victoria Cross for bravery". Thomas McKay never went to India during the Mutiny, for the simple reason that he was then dead and buried. But his son Charles did and died of small-pox on the 13th February, 1859. About a year and a half later, his mother received a medal (not Victoria Cross) to be retained in commemoration of her son's gallant conduct in the campaign in India.

Rideau Hall was first occupied by the Governor General, Viscount Monk, in 1866. Among the many noble hosts of this vice-regal residence, one may mention the Marquess of Lorne and his wife Princess Louise and, later, H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught, brother of Edward VII.

GUESTS AT RIDEAU HALL

Among the guests of note who honoured the vice-regal residence, may be mentioned the following:—

Their Majesties King George V and Queen Mary as Duke and Duchess of York, in 1901.

Their Majesties King Praja-Dhipok and Queen Rambai-Barni, of Siam, in 1931.

Her Majesty Queen Marie of Roumania and Prince Nicolas, in 1926.

His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, in 1919 and 1927.

His Royal Highness Prince George, in 1927.

His Royal Highness Prince Arthur of Connaught, in 1918.

His Imperial Highness Prince Fushimi, G.C.B., of Japan, in 1907.

His Imperial Highness Prince Takamatsu, brother of the Emperor of Japan, and his consort, in 1931.

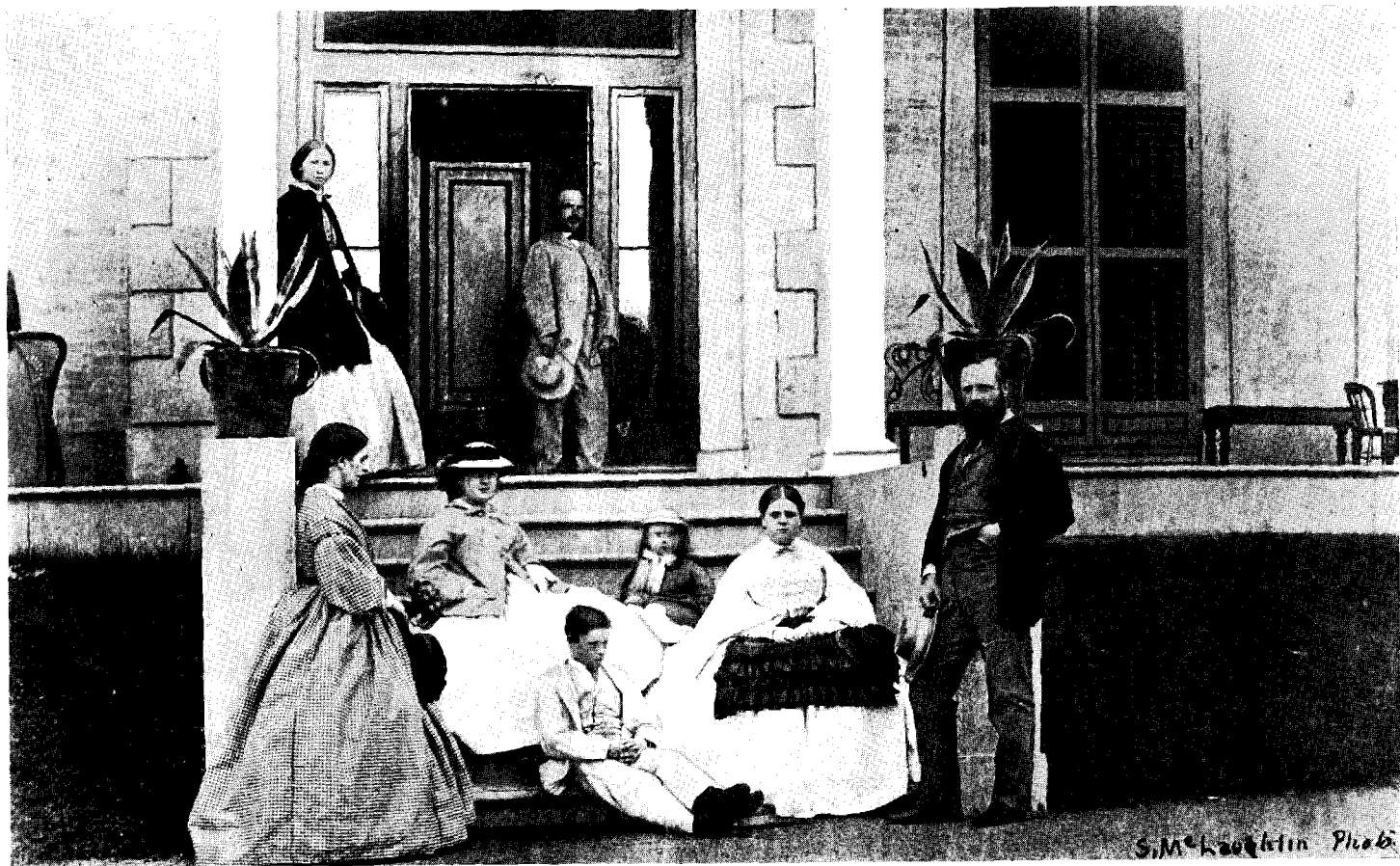
Chief Justice William H. Taft, ex-president of the United States of America, in 1914.

Dr. Epitacio da Silva Pessôa, president-elect of Brazil, in 1919.

The Right Honourable Ramsay Macdonald, Prime Minister of Great Britain, 1928.



THE OLD RIDEAU HALL, 1865
Lady Monk and Daughter in a Quebec cariole.



LORD MONCK AND FAMILY
Rideau Hall, 1866



GOVERNMENT HOUSE, OTTAWA
1868



EARNSLIFFE
Sir John Macdonald's residence at Ottawa

EXTRACT FROM THE HISTORICAL ATLAS OF THE COUNTY OF CARLETON, PROVINCE OF ONTARIO, 1879

RIDEAU HALL, which, being the official residence of the Governor-General, should come next in order to the Parliament Buildings, although it is situated in the corporation of the village of New Edinburgh, and about two miles from Parliament Hill. It was built as a private residence by the Hon. Thomas McKay, a man early identified with the chief interests of Bytown, who became possessed of a large estate comprising over 1,000 acres of land in the angle formed by the junction of the Rideau River with the Ottawa. A more extended reference to this very prominent man will be found under the head of New Edinburgh.

As above stated, his former residence, with about 77 acres of land attached, was leased by the Government, on the 2nd August, 1865, for a term of twelve years, from his heirs, at a yearly rental of \$4,000 per annum, with the right of purchase any time within three years for \$70,000, or subsequently, within the twelve, for such sum as might be determined by arbitration.

The original building was of cut limestone, of 47 x 73 feet dimensions, and two storeys high. Immediately after the leasing of the property this building was enlarged and additional ones erected, as per designs of Mr. Rubidge, the then architect of the Public Works Department.

On the 1st September, 1867, an additional lot lying adjacent to the "Rideau Hall Domain" facing the Ottawa River, and containing nearly ten acres, was also leased by the Government at an annual rental of \$720, with similar privileges to those contained in the former lease.

On the 1st July, 1867, the date of Confederation, the improvements and additions to the grounds and buildings had cost the Government the sum of \$80,819.66, and "Rideau Hall" was then a building with a front 210 feet in extent, by a depth of 56, with a rear wing, 72½ x 74 feet. It was two storeys high, beside basement, and was ornamented with a verandah 134 feet in length; while at a convenient distance therefrom a brick cottage, 55 x 45 feet, had been erected for the private secretary of the Governor-General. Various other improvements had been added, including conservatory, vinery, laundry, winter carriage-house, coach-house, ice-house, stables, &c., while the grounds had been fenced, roads repaired, gravelled, &c., &c. In the spring of 1868 the Government decided upon the purchase of the property, and on the 28th July of that year the deed of sale was executed, conveying land amounting to within a fraction of 88 acres, the consideration being \$82,000; making the entire capital cost up to that date (besides rents) \$126,819.66.

THE RIDEAU

The euphonious name of Rideau given to the falls by Champlain has been happily preserved and became very popular. It was extended to the river, to the canal, to a series of beautiful lakes which are an expansion of the river, to a street, to Rideau Hall, the Governor General's residence, to a terrace and to New Edinburgh, when it became a ward of the city.

EARNSLIFFE

This beautiful residence standing on a height overlooking the Ottawa river, only a short distance above the Rideau Falls, was erected in the early fifties of the last century by the Honourable Thomas McKay for his mar-

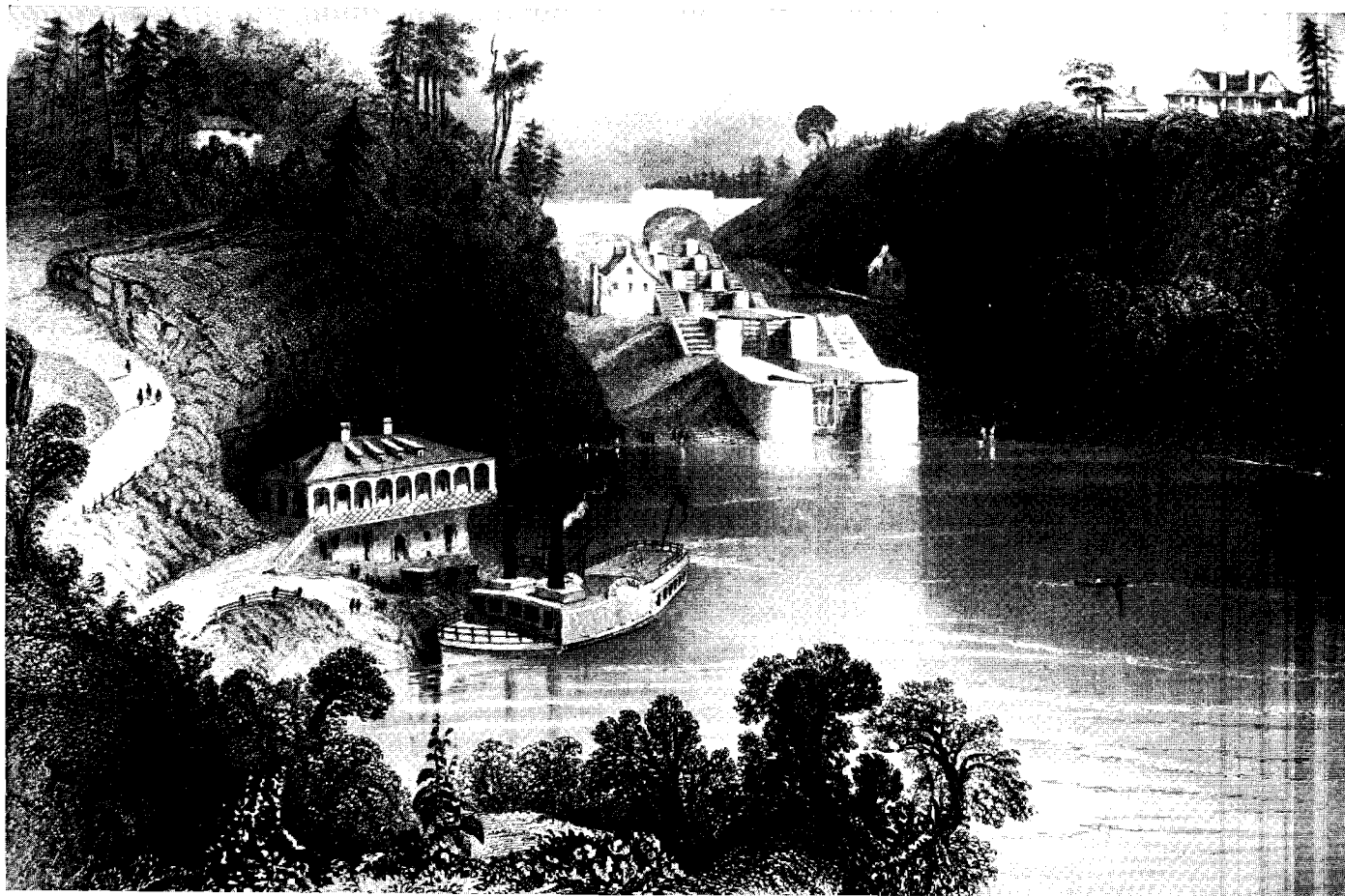
ried daughter, Mrs. John McKinnon. McKay was said to have given it the name of Earnsliffe, but others claim that the property was so called by Thomas Reynolds, at the instigation of Sir John A. Macdonald, when he purchased it. The City Directory of 1870-71 makes no mention of Earnsliffe but the Canada Directory of 1871 gives the residence of Sir John A. Macdonald as Earnsliff, Metcalfe Square. So it seems that the name dates from the year 1870 or thereabout.

On the 3rd June, 1870, Thomas Reynolds, superintendent and manager of the St. Lawrence and Ottawa Railway, acquired the property from Thomas McKinnon. It was used for a short time as a military hospital. In November of that year, Sir John A. Macdonald, prime minister of Canada, became tenant of the property. The owner, Thomas Reynolds, occupied it from 1872 to 1879. Major Holbeck, A.D.C. to Major General Luard, general officer commanding the militia of Canada, was tenant in 1881. Three years later, Sir John A. Macdonald purchased Earnsliffe and made it his home until his death in June 1891. In 1896, Major General Ivor J. B. Herbert was tenant. He was succeeded by Major General W. J. Cascoigne who kept it for one year. In 1898, Lady Macdonald occupied her house. The following year, she rented it to Major General E. T. Hutton. Dr. Charles Harriss bought Earnsliffe in 1901 and occupied it until his death in 1929. In 1930, the property was acquired by the Imperial Government for the home of its High Commissioner to Canada.

BYTOWN, C.W., JUNE 15TH, 1853

(Letter published in the *International Journal* of New York and Boston)

Bytown is at the head of the navigation of the Lower Ottawa, and at the entrance of the Rideau Canal. It is the metropolitan town of the county of Carleton, and was named in honor of the late Colonel of the Royal Engineers, under whose superintendence the canal was constructed and the town laid out. It has a population of 9000, showing an increase of 3000 within the last two years. Of its rapid growth an idea may be formed from the fact that in 1826 not a house was to be found upon its site. The Hon. Thomas McKay, who owns the village of New Edinburgh, was the first settler. In 1827 he directed the first tree to be cut. Where the canal basin now is was then a beaver swamp. The scenery about Bytown is exceedingly picturesque. Here are the Falls of the Chaudière—which have a reputation second only to Niagara. They are about 60 feet in height, and the fall instead of being perpendicular is gradual. Their width is about three hundred feet and although they have still a very grand and romantic appearance, I was informed that their grandeur had been considerably impaired by the slides erected on both sides of the river for the passage of timber. The name signifies a kettle or large boiling vessel. The water power here must be immense—perhaps equal to what I have heard stated—a million of horse power. Immediately above the Falls the river is 500 feet wide and studded with wood-covered islets. The land in the vicinity of the Falls, notwithstanding that it forms a portion of the town, has a number of beautiful groves that were once a part and parcel of the forest. In this respect at all events the place presents no indication of vandalism. But few things can be more pleasant to the eye or grateful to the feelings than the wild shade trees of the country. That there should be such a universal and wanton destruction



LOCKS ON THE RIDEAU CANAL

About 1840

From Bartlett's "Canadian Scenery"

of these is ever to be deplored and when we meet with an exception to such a ridiculous custom we are glad to make honorable mention of it. Close to the Falls the river is spanned in part by a Suspension Bridge, cost \$60,000. Another work of great interest is the Rideau Canal which commences here and connects the Ottawa with Lake Ontario. This is another military work constructed by the British Government for the transit of stores in time of war. It was commenced in 1827, as already intimated, by Colonel By, and completed in 1834. It is about being transferred to the Provincial Government. It cost nearly one million stg., or \$4,800,000. At Bytown there are eight splendid locks, overcoming a height of eighty-one feet. This canal is a series of different excavations, in all about 30 miles, rendering the Rideau River and Lakes navigable from Bytown to Kingston—a distance of 127 miles. I shall give a more full description of it in my next. On a bank 150 feet above the Ottawa (Barrack Hill) a fine view is commanded of the Falls and other scenery adverted to, as also of the surrounding country for many miles in every direction. The town is supported principally by the lumber trade and the agricultural interest. The land in the neighbourhood is fertile—the average yield of wheat being 15 to 20 bushels to the acre. The people are thrifty in their habits and of a frank and sociable disposition. Just prior to its settlement the greater part of Bytown was purchased by one of its present citizens for about £80. He thus became a millionaire—owns a considerable number of houses, and is still disposing of the more eligible building sites.

When the railroad now in course of construction from Bytown to Prescott is finished, the people of Bytown will be within two hours' journey of Ogdensburgh, and less than 24 hours of Boston and New York. Although the claims of the Bytown and Prescott Railroad have already been favourably noticed and strongly urged in the pages of the *International* still I think I cannot do better than give a resume of its prospects. The length of rail will be fifty-three miles. Estimated cost \$880,000. The road is already grubbed and cleared throughout, the grading is all under contract and thirty-five miles are now ready for the iron, the ties are on the ground for the whole line, and the bridges are well advanced. Over \$200,000 of the stock has been subscribed and that is principally a local subscription; the municipal council of Bytown takes \$60,000 worth. The total expenditure thus far has been \$207,000. A singular fact in connection with this enterprise, unprecedented I believe in the history of railroads and other large contracts, consists in the cost of the work and materials falling below the actual estimate of the engineers. The act of incorporation was only obtained in 1850. Capital \$600,000 with power to increase it to \$1,000,000. Shares \$40 each. We cannot too highly appreciate the value of this road as an important link in the great chain of international communication. Bytown is the chief seat of the lumber trade of Canada—and the extent of country on the Ottawa river to the North and West of Bytown is 75,000 square miles, an area larger perhaps than the whole of New England; the exports amounted in 1852 to over four millions of dollars. In regard to its trade with the United States it is sufficient to state that last year there were exported thereto one hundred and thirty millions of sawed lumber, board measure, and one million and a half of square timber. This trade also is rapidly increasing. The forwarding house of Jones & Robertson is engaged thus early in the season to forward about a million of lumber by the Rideau Canal, etc., to the Caughnawaga Railroad for Albany and Troy. Nearly all

the timber shipped is Red and White Pine. There is an export duty on this of a half-penny. It is also taxed for passing through the slides erected over the different Falls. From both these sources government realized in three years from the three largest firms engaged in the business the handsome sum of half a million of dollars. The timber trade of the Ottawa and its tributaries is possessed chiefly by two firms—Egan & Co., and Aumond & Co., the amount of capital they have at stake in the business is enormous and there seems to be no bounds to their enterprise. The house of Gilmour & Co. also engages very largely in the trade, especially on the Gatineau River. The pine forest of the Ottawa and its tributaries are considered all but inexhaustible, still their value is enhancing so rapidly that a tract on one of the tributaries which a few years ago could have been had by merely applying for a licence had become so valuable that last year Mr. Aumond paid £3000 for the privilege of the timber. The Government and Legislature, alive to the importance of this trade are disposed to afford every facility for its prosecution, and have at the last session of the Legislature granted \$200,000 for the purpose of removing obstructions to the navigation of the Ottawa.

The village of New Edinburgh is about a mile from Bytown, at the falls of the Rideau River. These falls, though inferior to those of the Chaudiere are very beautiful. From their graceful perpendicular descent they were called the Rideau, which signifies a curtain, and hence the name of the river. The water-power has been turned to good account by the proprietor of the village, who has created an extensive cloth factory—grist, saw, carding and fulling mills—stave, shingling and planing machinery, and a sash and door factory. The grist mills turn off in the course of the winter from 40 to 50 thousand bushels of grain, and when they were first started there was scarcely a bushel of wheat raised in that section of the country.

MR. MCKAY'S PLACE

Having had a letter of introduction to the proprietor, the Hon. Thomas McKay, I accepted of an invitation to his princely mansion, which is situated at a short distance from the village on the brow of a beautiful eminence—commanding a magnificent panoramic view of Bytown and the surrounding country. A description of this charming residence may interest the reader. The estate comprises over a thousand acres. Most of it is still in its primeval state. The front is laid out in parks with groves, shaded walks, a serpentine drive, and elegant hedges of cedar.

ABOUNDED WITH GAME

There is also a ravine which will shortly be dammed and converted into a beautiful pond. Beyond these are the vegetable and flower gardens—a greenhouse, summer house, and grotto. In the background is an immense thicket of woods abounding with game—as you enter its labyrinths you are suddenly charmed with the appearance of an artificial lake of great beauty, in which trout and other kinds of fish are enjoying their revels. But it would be doing injustice to the occupant of this Elysian retreat not to mention that he combines the useful with the beautiful—and has a good many acres of arable land in a high state of cultivation.

THE DAIRY

The dairy surely would make no contemptible appearance either, considering that there are eighteen milch cows of the Durham and Ayrshire breed. One arrangement on the place that I should like to see more generally introduced, was a most ingenious contrivance for raising water to a considerable height and conducting it to any part of the premises. It is an exceedingly simple piece of machinery and works something like an engine, forcing the water up a distance of about 60 feet. The cost of the machinery was about £4, and the rest of the work, including pipes, did not cost over £6—in all about £10. It was refreshing to see the cool sparkling streams dashing along in so many directions without cessation, as they issued from a never failing spring.

THE FOLLOWING IS TAKEN FROM AN UNKNOWN NEWSPAPER WITH NO DATE

Thomas McKay, after completing his contract on the canal, established himself in New Edinburgh acquiring what is now known as the McKay Estate, including the water power of the Rideau River which he purposed to utilize for driving mills. These he had constructed at the present time and a few still remain who remember the old mill wheel, long displaced by the more economical modern turbine or central discharge wheel. I like the associations of "the old owken bucket, the moss covered bucket" and of the old mill wheel as "in its slime and moss it slowly sped around". Very few of the old over or undershot or breast wheels remain in existence anywhere to day. McKay's mills stood close to the right hand side of the falls and were on a much smaller scale than the group at present standing there. There was no bulkhead then in at the brink of the falls, but from the bridge there was a rapid of broken water to the fall. Now the head of water must be fully ten feet higher than then. The water power was used to drive a flour mill, a brewery and a small sawmill. The flour trade was done principally with the Gatineau district from which the wheat was obtained. The brewery was at one time leased and run by Mr. McTaggart, but was originally built by McKay, and subsequently carried on by him. In 1846-7, John McKinnon married Miss McKay and left the Bank of British North America and then took charge of a portion of McKay's business under the firm of McKay and McKinnon—McKinnon lived in the stone building situated near the corner facing the east end of the bridge, and presently occupied by the Street Railway company. He subsequently built "Earnscliffe" occupied by Sir John A. Macdonald. He was a prominent man in the scheme for connecting Prescott to Bytown by the St. Lawrence & Ottawa R.R. It may be interesting to state that the Hon. Thos. McKay commenced the erection of Rideau Hall in the year 1838 and completed it sufficiently to reside in it the following year. The survivors of the family are now only Mrs. T. C. Keefer formerly Mrs. John McKinnon and Mrs. McKay, widow of the late Judge McKay of Montreal, both of whom reside in Colorado—of McKay's sons, one, or I think, two were drowned at New Edinburgh—one was Lieutenant in the army and died—John, one of the best of young men, while a student at Queen's college contracted a cold which ended in consumption while Thomas, the youngest, lived only a few years later. Mr. T. M. Clark married the youngest daughter and old residents will remember the ceremony, performed amid the booming of cannon.

PERTHSHIRE MEN IN CANADA

A SCOTSMAN'S REMINISCENCES

Last week, there visited Perth, Mr. Thomas M'Leod Clark, of Ottawa, Canada, who came over to the mother country on a visit to his native town of Tain, Rossshire, and who took advantage of the opportunity to stay a short time in Perth in order that he might show his daughter, who accompanied him, the birthplace of her grandfather, the late Hon. Thomas McKay of Rideau Hall, Ottawa, which is now the residence of Lord Aberdeen, the Governor-General.

Mr. Clark, who married a daughter of the late Hon. Thomas McKay, also went out to Canada as a young man about fifty years ago to push his fortune, and at a time when Canada was in considerable turmoil owing to the disaffection being shown in many quarters against the British Government. The Radicals of the Province of Upper Canada were led then by a Perth man, named William Lyon Mackenzie, who organized companies of the disaffected people and had several engagements with the troops in the neighbourhood of Toronto before he was defeated and driven into the States, from where, however, he continued, along with other sympathizers, to harass the Government.

OBITUARY

MACKAY, Thomas Jun^r.

It is our melancholy duty to record the death of Thomas McKay, Esq^r., the only surviving son of the late Hon. Thomas MacKay. Of all the men who have, by their industry and their genius, served to build up the Ottawa country, no one is more entitled to the gratitude and admiration of his fellow-colonists than the late Hon. Thomas MacKay. All his energies were directed towards benefiting the Ottawa Valley. The mills which he erected at New Edinburgh are in themselves a lasting monument of his enterprise and patriotism. It is therefore painful to reflect that one whose memory must ever be fresh in the grateful remembrance of his countrymen should have now no living representative bearing his name. Of a large family of sons, who once grew like olive plants round about his table, none now survive. Several of them found a watery grave—one died in the service of his country in the Indian rebellion—two fell victims to consumption, and now the last of all follows his brothers to an early tomb.

Called away at the early age of twenty-seven the deceased had little opportunity of displaying the talents with which nature had endowed him. The writer occupied the same desk with him at the school of the late Rev. George Wardrope, and only remembers him as a warm, generous hearted boy, a prince of good fellows among his playmates, courageous to dare and prompt to do. During the general election of '63 the deceased first adventured on the platform as a speaker. It was in the contest between Bell and Hunter in Russell, in which he took an active part warmly espousing the cause of the former. Those who heard him speak at that time will agree with us in saying that if he had lived to take that place in his country's service to which his position, his education, and his talents entitled him, he would speedily have been acknowledged as one of the foremost speakers in Parliament, and as a debater of no ordinary merit.

OBITUARY

McKAY, Mrs. (1878)

The many friends of Mrs. McKay, widow of the late Hon. Thomas McKay, will regret to learn of her death which occurred yesterday at the advanced age of 85 years. The deceased lady was born in Perth, Scotland, 13th May, 1794, was married 20th June, 1813, and came to Canada with her husband in September, 1817, residing in Montreal until 1827 when they removed to New Edinburgh, in which neighbourhood the deceased lady has lived over half a century, first at the Rideau Falls, then at Rideau Hall, and lastly at Rockcliffe. In her lifetime, Mrs. McKay brought happiness to the homes of many a distressed family, being noted for her charitable disposition and warm-heartedness. Her demise will be deeply regretted by a large circle of friends.

DIED

CRICHTON, Ann

At Rockcliffe, near New Edinburgh, on Thursday the 21st August, Ann Crichton, widow of the late Hon. Thomas McKay, aged 85.

The funeral will take place on Sunday at four p.m. Friends will please accept this notice. (1878.)

The funeral of the late Mrs. Thomas McKay took place yesterday afternoon. Religious services were conducted at the house by Rev. Mr. Haney. The funeral cortege was a very large one, and the remains were interred in the family vault near Beechwood cemetery. The pall-bearers were Messrs. Allan Gilmour, H. V. Noel, R. Blackburn, W. Clegg, John Durie, G. P. Baker, J. M. Currier, and A. Drummond.

MacKAY, Elizabeth

At New Edinburgh, near Ottawa, on the 22nd inst., Elizabeth MacKay, beloved wife of Thos. C. Keefer, Esq. (1869).

MacKINNON, Thomas

At Rockcliffe, New Edinburgh, on the 19th July, Thomas, eldest son of the late John Mackinnon, Esq., and grandson of the late Hon. Thomas Mackay, aged 24 years.

MacKAY, Jessie

At Elmwood, Ottawa, Ont., Jessie, wife of T. McLeod Clark, and youngest daughter of the late Hon. Thomas MacKay.

McKAY, Christina

Mother of the Honourable Thomas McKay, born in 1761, died at Rideau Hall on 10th August, 1857, and was buried in the family vault, Beechwood cemetery. She was 88 years of age.

MARRIED

MacKINNON, ANN

At Rockcliffe, near Ottawa, on the 26th ult., by the Rev. B. B. Keefer, of London, Ont., Thos. C. Keefer, Esq., to Ann Mackinnon, eldest daughter of the late Hon. Thos. MacKay.