

The Canadian Pioneer Denison Family

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County York, England

. and .

County York, Ontario

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HISTORY · GENEALOGY

and

BIOGRAPHY



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RICHARD LONTON DENISON

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Early Origins

The names Denison and Taylor occur frequently in this record, both separately and in the combinations Taylor-Denison and Denison-Taylor. Both names are Norman in origin, and derive their beginnings in England from conquerors in the train of the great William, Duke of Normandy, who conquered England in the year 1066. Denison proceeds from a mythical Comte de Nison, and Taylor from Baron Taillefer, both of whom were soldier-commanders under William. It can be readily seen, therefore, that there is little connection between the name Denison and Dionysius, the Greek god of wine, or St. Denis the patron saint of France. The name Taillefer meant "Stature of Iron". The Saxon poet Wode wrote a poem about Baron Taillefer.

The name Denison was known to Yorkshire, England, from Norman times, but Parish registers are lacking prior to the middle of the seventeenth century, at which time, the name Denison appears in the Parish Register of Leeds, and there was a large family of the name in and about the city of Leeds, called Denison of Great Woodhouse, from which family we are undoubtedly sprung.

Four miles from Leeds, in a little town called Castleford, begins the earliest recorded history of our particular Denisons which I have thus far been able to uncover.

Francis and Mary Denison were married, and, about the year 1706, in the reign of Her Most Gracious Majesty, Queen Anne, they settled in Castleford, and bought a farm at Houghton in the suburbs of that town. The present church at Castleford, the Church of All Saints, was built in 1866, on the site of an earlier church of the same name, founded in the 13th century.

The present church has an ancient Parish Register, labelled, "A Register Booke of All Births, Burialls and Marriages within this Parish of Castleford, begun the 29th of September, 1653."

In this register are recorded the baptisms of all the children of Francis and Mary Denison. The register is written in Latin and Francis Denison is described as Franciscus Denison de Houghton, the reference being to Houghton, half a mile due south from Castleford, and presently known as Glass Houghton.

Their children mentioned in the register are as follows:

1. Anna (Anne) baptised June 2, 1707.
2. Guilielmus (William) baptised Oct. 5, 1708.
3. Franciscus (Francis) baptised Jan. 25, 1711.
4. Maria (Mary) baptised Mar. 3, 1713, buried Mar. 13, 1713.
5. Joannes (John) baptised Mar. 3, 1713.
6. Georgius (George) baptised June 24, 1716.
7. David, baptised Dec. 13, 1719.

Their father, Francis Denison of Houghton, was evidently an influential man of considerable importance, and probably fairly well educated, for a note in the Parish Register in the column that gives the churchwardens every year gives the following for the year 1709: "Robertus Webster et Franciscus Denison, Ecclesiae Guardiani et Supervisores Pauperum", that is to say "Robert Webster and Francis Denison Churchwardens and Overseers of the Poor".

Of the above children of Francis Denison, I have a record of John (Joannes) for which I am indebted to Mrs. Jocelyn Brock of England. The record is a short printed one of unknown authorship. In 1890 it was mailed to Mrs. Brock's father, Admiral John Denison, addressed c/o The Admiralty Postmaster, Singapore.

The author says he is a grandson of the above John Denison, and that he belongs to what he calls the Mooryart-Denison Branch of the Family. Mooryart appears to be a place name, possibly somewhere in the east like India or Singapore. John, from tradition in his branch of the family, eloped with a Miss Keagar, or Hagar, or Agar, of Guildford, Surrey, and settled at Pontefract, Yorkshire, having issue: 1. Stanhope, born 1753, 2. Asmackah, born 1754, 3. Frederick, born 1755, 4. Diana, born 1758, and 5. Marmaduke. Of these, Frederick, the writer's father, was born at Hedon, Yorkshire. In the old churchyard at Hedon is a flat stone monument, built on a brick foundation, and very dilapidated. The inscription on it reads: "Frederick Denison,

died Sept. 1844, and Ann, his wife, died Jan. 1842, aged 89 and 83 respectively. The Pontefract Register also gives that Marmaduke Denison married 1779 Elizabeth Nunn, in the presence of John Denison and Ann Hymer, and that John Denison in 1772 married Elizabeth Cawood. Of this second marriage to Elizabeth Cawood, John Denison had a son John, described as of Pontefract, who married there in 1805 Mary Webster, also of Pontefract. The above Elizabeth Cawood Denison was murdered in 1804 by an unknown assailant.

The record continues: "My father, William Denison, was brought up from his youth by his first cousin, Dr. Thomas Denison of Torrington Square, London, in whose house he lived. My father was Frederick, who was son of John, as above. My father on his return from a long residence in the East, in 1842, was on intimate terms with Dr. Denison, until the doctor's death. Both my uncles, one of whom is now alive, and the other who died two or three years ago, personally knew George Denison of Hedon well, and were also aware that their cousin, John Denison, had emigrated to Canada."

Of the above children of Francis and Mary Denison of Castleford, it is with their fourth son, George Denison, that this record is chiefly concerned. Like his father, George Denison was brought up on the land and his chief interest was farming. He dealt in grain, buying and selling it for profit. He is described as a cornfactor (grain-merchant) and later as a maltster. This calling took him over a wide area of Yorkshire and Lincolnshire.

One day he went up the river Trent, and stopped off at a watering-place called Boringham (now Burringham). Here he visited on business the Parkinson Brothers, John, William and Robert, possessed of a large acreage of grain, and dealing in the buying and selling of farm-lands. As it turned out, the Parkinson Brothers had something besides grain that interested George Denison--their pretty eighteen-year-old sister, Mary Parkinson. She was the youngest of the family, and had been born posthumously. George was thirty-five, Mary, eighteen, but they had fallen in love. George asked for her hand in marriage. Burringham was a small hamlet with no church. Mary was under age. A marriage-licence was a necessity. This was obtained in the City of Lincoln. The original is now on file in the Cathedral Library, Lincoln. It is to be found in Marriage-Bonds, 1752, No. 4, and reads: "George Denison, bachelor and cornfactor of Castleford, Yorkshire, and Mary Parkinson, spinster, Boringham, to be married at Wrawby-Brigg Chapel, May 14, 1752". George and Mary were married in the chapel of St. Mary's Church, Wrawby. The register says "May 14, 1752, by licence". Wrawby is $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles northwest of Brigg. It is built on an eminence. St. Mary's Church was rebuilt after a debased style in 1800, but retains its English tower, and some traces of the old fabric, such as a squint from the north aisle to the chancel, and a table-tomb to the Tyrwhit family in the chancel.

After marriage, George and Mary Denison settled at Hedon, Yorkshire, upon a farm called "Stockholm", $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile south of the town and just off the road to Thorngumbald.

Mary Parkinson's baptism appears in the Parish Register at Belton, Isle of Axholme, just across the river Trent from Burringham. In Latin it reads: 1733, Baptisat Maria, filia Roberti et Elizabethae Parkinson, 27to Junii. Other entries appear as follows: 1733, Sepultus, Robertus Parkinson, Feb. 28to (Mary's father. He died in February; she was born in June). 1747, Sepulta, Hannah, filia Elizabethae Parkinson, July 30th; 1747, Sepulta, Elisabetha, filia Elizabethae Parkinson, Oct. 2nd. --Nov. 1688, marriage of Robert Parkinson and Ursula Pyrork. Jan. 1689, baptisat Robertus, filius Roberti et Ursulae Parkinson; Dec. 1692, baptisat Anna; Apr. 1688, baptisat Maria, filia Joannis et Elizabethae Parkinson; Apr. 1688, sepulta, Elisabetha, ux. Joannis. (She died in childbirth.) The following children of Robert and Elizabeth Parkinson --Elizabeth, bapt. June 28, 1718, bur. July 1, 1718; Robert, bapt. Jan. 29, 1719; John, bapt. Jan. 6, 1721; William, bapt. Apr. 18, 1724; Hanna, bapt. Apr. 15, 1726, bur. July 30, 1747; Robert, bapt. Oct. 29, 1728; Elizabeth, bapt. Jan. 6, 1730, bur. Oct. 2, 1747; Mary (our Mary) bapt. June 27, 1733. Noting the number of burials occurring in 1747, it would seem that in that year there had been an outbreak of some disease--perhaps dread smallpox.

From Pedigree of Ryther of Bolton, Isle of Axholme, page 841, Vol. 52, of the Harleian Society Publications, we find that Mary Parkinson's father married Nov. 16, 1685 Mary Ryther. She died and he then married Mary's mother. The Rythers were an important family in Bolton. Their coat-of-arms is described: Azure, three crescents or. Rev. Wm. White, Vicar of Burringham, says: "A friend of mine has an old map showing the Parkinson farms on it. The Parkinsons dealt freely in the buying and selling of farms."

The Founding of the Canadian Branch of the Denison Family

Captain John Denison, founder of the Denison family of pioneer Toronto, or York as it was originally called, first saw the light of day in the little town of Hedon, Yorkshire, to which place his parents, George and Mary Parkinson Denison, had recently moved. Hedon lies midway between Withernsea on the ~~English Channel~~ and the great city of Hull, or more correctly Kingston-upon-Hull. The land at Hedon is low-lying slightly above sea-level, skirting the northern shore of the Humber estuary. Hedon is a typical example of an English borough of 1500 inhabitants. Its importance gone, due to its juxtaposition to Hull, it retains its old-fashioned square and cobbled market-place. In the centre of the town stands the tall Church of St. Augustine, one of the finest parish-churches in that part of the country. Another building of historical note is the Town-Hall, built in 1600.

Captain John Denison was born Nov. 20, 1755, baptised Nov. 27, 1755 at St. Augustine's. His father was present, but not his mother, at the ceremony, which took place at the beautiful carved font, an excellent example of the work of the 14th century in carving.

The church tower at St. Augustine's was begun in 1427, and took ten years to complete. The church is often referred to as "The King of Holderness", because of its majestic appearance. It is cruciform in shape. It consists of many fine examples of stonework distinctive of different periods of English history between the 12th and 14th centuries.

The town of Hedon was founded after the Norman Conquest by the Earls of Albemarle, as their port for the Seignory of Holderness.

John Denison was the second of four sons. The youngest, David, baptised Mar. 27, 1763, died in infancy and was buried at Hedon, May 1, 1763. The eldest, George, we do not know much about, except that he had a will, that he never married, and that he lived at Ickles, near Rotherham, Yorkshire. He left all his money to his mother, but it was not enough to take care of her. He was baptised at Hedon, June 17, 1753. He died at Rotherham, where there is a tablet in the Church of All Saints to his memory, "In memory of George Denison, late of Ickles, who died June 3, 1810, aged 56". He was buried in the north chapel of All Saints, and his memorial, is now covered up by an organ and cannot be seen. In the District Probate Registry of the City of York is filed George Denison's will, which reads as follows:

Last Will and Testament of George Denison, Junior.

This is the last Will and Testament of me, George Denison, of the Township of Brinsworth in the Parish of Rotherham in the County of York, Gentleman. I give and bequeath all my estates and effects whatsoever and wheresoever unto John Anton of Loughton-on-le-Moorthen in the County of York, Farmer, Upon Trust to collect in and place out at interest upon government or real securities and to pay and apply the dividends, interest and profits of the money so to be placed out unto my mother, Mary Denison of Hull, in the said county of York, Widow, for the term of her natural life, and in case the interest of the said money so to be placed out as aforesaid shall in the opinion of the said Trustee, his executors and administrators be insufficient for the maintenance and support of my said mother, then I direct that he or they shall pay and apply such part of the principal money so to be placed out at interest as aforesaid in and towards making up the deficiency thereof at such times and from time to time and in such manner as to him, my said Trustee, his executors or administrators, shall seem necessary, and from and after the decease of my said mother, I give and bequeath all my estate and effects then remaining unapplied and undisposed of, both principal and interest unto William Hall, son of



Above is the Parish Church of St. Mary, Wrawby, Lincolnshire, England, where George and Mary Denison were married May 14, 1752. Tower circa 1150, Nave, circa 1250, Battlements and Pinnacles, circa 1350, North Aisle, circa 1350. This is from a photo sent me by Rev. C.E. Curtis, Vicar of Wrawby.

After marriage here, George and Mary Denison took up residence at Hedon, Yorkshire, where they occupied a farm, called "Stockholm" $\frac{3}{4}$ mile south of Hedon, off the road to Thorngumbald. The place still stands, but is sadly dilapidated. This information about "Stockholm" I obtained from Gilbert E. Jackson, the Economist, in a letter, Oct. 22, 1951.

John Hall, late of Eccles in the County of York, Esquire, deceased, to and for his own absolute use and benefit and disposal, the principal to be paid him on his attaining the age of twenty-one years, and the interest thereof to be paid into the hands of his mother, Margaret Hall, in the meantime, to be by her paid and applied and disposed of in such manner for his benefit and use as to her shall be thought most advisable, And I hereby nominate, constitute and appoint the said John Anton and Samuel Hall of Hulton Hang, near Midlam in the County of York, Farmer, joint executors of this my last will and Testament, and I hereby revoke and make void all and every former and other Wills or Will made by me at any time heretofore, and do declare this to be my last Will and Testament.

In witness whereof, I have subscribed my name, this 28th day of May 1810.

George Denison.

Signed, declared by the Testator to be his last Will and Testament in the presence of us, who in his presence and in the presence of each other subscribe our names as witnesses. Ann Hall. J.R.Thurgar, Proved 26th October, 1810.

Thomas Denison, Captain John Denison's younger brother, was baptised at Hedon, June 9, 1757. He became an army surgeon and physician. It was this Dr. Thomas Denison who was John Denison's companion all through his school days, and their brotherly love for each other remained until the last day of their lives. Of their education I can find little, except that I conjecture that they were better educated than the average, being, as they were the sons of a successful, if not opulent, merchant. The military spirit was strong in them and at the early age of twenty or so they joined the Second West Yorkshire Militia as officers. In the Militia List published by the War Office in London in 1780, John Denison appears as an Ensign as of June 25, 1779, and his brother, Thomas, appears as Ensign, commission dated Aug. 25, 1779. In this year John was 24, his brother 22: In the List of 1782, John appears as lieutenant, commission dated Apr. 25, 1781, Thomas remains as ensign. In 1780, John Denison marched with his regiment to London to assist in putting down the Lord George Gordon Riots. Whether his brother did not go to London and therefore did not receive a promotion is a matter of conjecture. Perhaps Thomas Denison's rank of Ensign was an honorary one only, in view of his acting as assistant to the Army Surgeon. In the medical register of 1783 of the Royal Society of Medicine, London, Thomas Denison is given as a member of the Corporation of Surgeons, and in the appendix, under "Changes of Address" he is given as being in Hull. Although he is given as an Army Surgeon, he does not appear in the Roll of Army Medical Service. In the War Office Records of 1781, both John and Thomas Denison are mentioned as being officers in Captain Wade's Company of the Second West York Militia, commanded by Col. Stanhope Harvey. This muster book (No. 2398) is the oldest muster of this unit to survive among public records.

In 1782, Dr. Thomas Denison took up his practice of medicine at his residence in Bishopslane, in the Parish of St. Mary's Lowgate, Hull, and his parents came there to live with him, for when his father died and was buried at Hedon, Feb. 21, 1796, aged 81, and when his mother was buried at Hedon Feb. 19, 1815, aged 82, both entries in the Parish Register at Hedon say "From Hull". Subsequent to 1793, and prior to 1798, Dr. Thomas Denison moved to London, where he lived at the corner of Tottenham Court Road and Stone Street. He practised medicine for upwards of fifty years in London, later moving to 8 Tavistock Square, London, where he died on April 7, 1842, and was buried in a vault in the burial-ground of St. Giles-in-the-Fields, leaving the greater part of his independent fortune to Rev. John Dixon Hales, a clergyman, rector of St. John's Church, Richmond, Surrey, a nephew of his second or third wife, Margaret Hales, and leaving only £500 each to his own nephews and niece in Canada, the children of his brother, John. His brother, John had borrowed £270 from him which had never been repaid, and sister-in-law, Sophia Denison, had unfortunately informed him that his nephews had been having some disagreement as to the apportionment of an estate, as appears in a letter written by Sophia Denison to him, dated May 15, 1826, given later herein. Dr. Thomas Denison's will is filed in Court of Chancery Records, at the Principal Probate Registry, Somerset House, London (Folio 247 P.C.C. 1842). The wording is as follows:

Will of Dr. Thomas Denison, Surgeon, of London

In the name of God, Amen, I, Thomas Denison of No. 8, Tavistock Place, late of Tottenham Court Road, Surgeon, do make and declare this my last will and testament in manner following, that is to say, I order that all my just debts, funeral expences and charges of proving this my will be fully paid and satisfied and after payment thereof, I give and bequeath to the three sons of Mr. Lewis Hensley, Surgeon, and Harriet Ann Hales, his wife, deceased, to them jointly and to the survivors or survivor of them when the youngest shall arrive at the age of twenty-one years, the sum of One thousand pounds in 3 p. cent. consols with all the accumulation of dividends arising after my death untill the youngest surviving child shall arrive at the age of twenty-one years in equal shares and proportions, and in case none of the three children shall live to the age of twenty-one years, then and in such case, the whole shall become the property of their uncle, the Revd. John Dixon Hales, the Minister of St. John's Church, Richmond, Surrey, for his own use and benefit, and I appoint the said Revd. John Dixon Hales, the sole trustee as far as regards the above bequest of One thousand pounds 3 p. cent. consols so bequeathed. I give and bequeath to my nephew, George Taylor Denison, the oldest son of my brother, John Denison, deceased, of Toronto, Upper Canada, a promissory note, value £270, dated London, Dec. 2, 1819, with all the interest that may become due thereon, the note being given to me for money lent to the said John Denison, my Brother, my said Brother having charged by his will all his personal property with the payment of his debts and also detailed great part of his estate on the said George Taylor Denison and his heirs. I also give and bequeath to my nephew, Thomas John Denison, the second son of my said brother, John Denison of Toronto, Upper Canada, the sum of five hundred pounds sterling, clear of legacy duty, to be paid within twelve months of my decease and in case the said Thomas John Denison should die before me, the Testator, the above five hundred pounds sterling to be paid to his oldest child, be it male or female, when it arrives at the age of twenty-one years with all dividends and profits arising therefrom, clear of legacy duty. I give and bequeath to my niece, Elizabeth Sophia, the daughter of the said John Denison and the wife of John Taylor of Toronto, Upper Canada, the sum of five hundred pounds sterling for her own use and benefit, her receipt to be the only discharge to my executors for the payment thereof and if she shall not be alive at my decease the said five hundred pounds to be for the use and benefit of her oldest child, male or female, when it shall arrive at the age of twenty-one years, but in case she die without children the said five hundred pounds to be paid to the second child of my nephew George Taylor Denison, male or female, when he or she shall arrive at the age of twenty-one years with all the dividends arising therefrom to be paid clear of legacy duty. I give and bequeath to my servant-maid, Elizabeth Wright, the sum of nineteen pounds, nineteen shillings and sixpence. I also give and bequeath to my servant-maid, Sarah Condall, the sum of thirty pounds clear of legacy duty to be paid within three months of my decease. I hereby constitute and appoint my nephew, The Revd. John Dixon Hales, my sole executor and Residuary Legatee to my property of whatever kind undisposed of by this will or any Codicil annexed thereto dated this sixth day of July, 1840.

Thomas Denison (Legal Seal)

Signed, sealed, published and declared by the said Thomas Denison as and for his last Will and Testament in the presence of us, who in his presence and in the presence of each other at his request have subscribed our names as witnesses thereto.

William Waller. I. I. Harben, 12 Clements Inn, Gentlemen.

Whereas by my last Will and Testament, I have given to my oldest nephew, George Taylor Denison, of Toronto, Upper Canada, a certain promissory note, value £270, dated London, Dec. 2, 1819 with the interest thereon under the name of my late Brother, John Denison, late of Toronto aforesaid, deceased, Now in addition to the said bequest, I give and bequeath to my nephew the sum of five hundred pounds sterling money of Great Britain, Current in England to be paid him or his certain attorney twelve months after my decease. I also bequeath to my servant, Sarah Condall, the sum of twelve pounds over and above the sum of thirty pounds bequeathed to her in my said will and desire this further sum also to be paid clear of legacy duty. I further desire this to be taken as a codicil to my last will and testament bearing date the sixth day of July, One thousand eight hundred and forty, dated this twenty-fourth day of December, 1840.

Thomas Denison (Legal seal)

Signed, sealed, published and declared as a codicil to my last will and testament in the presence of Richard Hadley, 10 Marchmont St., Russell Square, Hairdresser, etc.,-- Wm Waller, No. 12, Clement's Inn, Gent^r.

In the goods of Thomas Denison, deceased, Appeared personally, Richard Hadley of Marchmont St., in the County of Middlesex and made oath that he is one of the subscribed witnesses to the Codicil to the last will and testament of Thomas Denison, late of Tavistock Place, Tavistock Square, in the said County of Middlesex, Deceased, the said codicil bearing date of the twenty-fourth day of December in the year One thousand eight hundred and forty, now hereto annexed, the deponent further made oath that the said Testator on the twenty-fourth day of December aforesaid duly executed the said codicil by signing his name at the foot thereof in the presence of this Deponent and of William Waller the other subscribed witness thereto, both of whom were present at the same time and thereupon this Deponent and the said Wm. Waller attested and subscribed the said codicil in the presence of the said Testator and of each other--Richard Hadley--On the eighteenth day of April 1842 the said Richard Hadley was duly sworn to the truth of this Affidavit, Before Me, A.F. Bayford, Sur.-- Pt. Edward P. Jenner, Noty Pub.

Proved at London with the codicil the 23rd April 1842 before the worshipful Herbert Jenner, Doctor of Laws and Surrogate by the Oath of Revd. John Dixon Hales, Clerk, the nephew, the sole Executor, to whom administration was granted having been first sworn duly to administer.

Note. 3 per cent. consols--- a contraction of "consolidated annuities", a government security of Great Britain. In 1751, a large part of the public debt, nine separate loans being in the form of annuities was consolidated in a 3 per cent. bond or stock, called 3 per cent. consols.--Funk and Wagnall's Dictionary.

In 1782, John Denison moved to the Parish of St. Mary-at-the-Elms, Ipswich, Suffolk, where he again took up the business of corn-merchant and maltster, which he had learned of his father. (In a document, D 1, No. 3, 1792, Public Archives of Canada, he is described as a Farmer and Merchant Miller of the County of Suffolk in England.)

In 1782, he came to know a family of Taylor of Dovercourt and Harwich in Essex, just across the river, Stour, from Ipswich, where he lived. Arthur Taylor was an influential man in the vicinity and owned large estates around Dovercourt, his family seat. Arthur Taylor had married Hannah Harwood, daughter of John and Mary Harwood of Harwich at the Parish Church of St. Nicholas, Harwich, Dec. 18, 1751, and had a family of nine children, many of whom died in infancy. Miss Flossie Taylor of Madison Avenue, Toronto, has an original sampler made by Hannah Harwood, and marked in stitchery "Hannah Harwood, 1742". It is possible that Hannah Harwood's father, John Harwood, was the Captain John Harwood, commander of the Salamander and Vernon privateers, who died of smallpox in 1745 as recorded in the Gentleman's Magazine, Vol. 15, page 273. Mrs. Jocelyn Brock of Troy Court, London, says that her brother, John Denison, a barrister of Lincoln's Inn, London, has a silver tankard that once belonged to John and Mary Harwood and which bears their initials. (It is the silver tankard which is mentioned in Sophia Denison's will, given later herein.)

Of this family of Taylor, I know of only two that survived to maturity, namely: George, baptised July 2, 1762, married Catharine, youngest daughter of Captain Pennings of the Royal Navy (privateersman) and they had issue, two children, Maria, second wife of Colonel George Taylor Denison, her cousin, and John Pennings Taylor, the older, Clerk of the Senate of Canada, and Sophia, the youngest of this family and the second child to survive and be our ancestress. She was born Oct. 13, 1765, and was baptised Nov. 20th following at the Parish Church of St. Nicholas, Harwich.

In 1781, John Denison, a young man of 26, met Sophia Taylor, then only 16. As she was underage to get married, they had to have the consent of her father, which was evidently obtained as he signed as one of the witnesses at the wedding. The entry in the Church Register at St. Nicholas', Harwich, reads as follows:

"John Denison of the Parish of St. Mary Elms, Ipswich, in the County of Suffolk, Bachelor, and Sophia Taylor, of Ye the Parish of St. Nicholas, Harwich, a minor, were married in the Chapel by Licence, by and with the consent of her Father, this nineteenth

At Harwich, Sophia Taylor had been a school-girl friend of Miss Elizabeth Russell, a young lady of considerable wealth. Elizabeth Russell had an elder brother, Peter Russell, who was well-known as a military man. Peter Russell had served as Assistant Secretary to Sir Henry Clinton in the American Revolutionary War. Russell was present at the Expedition against Savannah and Charleston, 1779-1780. Now he had come home with the news that his old commander, Col. John Graves Simcoe, of the old Queen's Rangers, had chosen him to be his secretary on a new expedition---this time to Canada. The Crown had appointed Simcoe to be the First Governor of Upper Canada. Peter Russell wanted to take his sister, Elizabeth, to Canada with him. She did not like the idea of migrating to the wild country this was in those far-off days, but she felt that she might feel better about it, if she could influence her good friend, Sophia Denison, and family to come along too. After many visits to the Denison's, and much talking, she finally prevailed upon them that Canada was the Land of Promise, and they consented albeit reluctantly, to go. The Russells had to set out right away, but the Denisons promised to follow.

It was the year 1792. John Denison sold all his possessions that he could not take with him. He had an auction-sale. One of the auction-sale hand-bills was kept as a souvenir by Mrs. Denison, and it was handed down to her daughter, Elizabeth Sophia Taylor, to her granddaughter, Maria Taylor, who put it in a "tin-box" mentioned earlier, to her descendant, Miss Flossie Taylor, Madison Ave., Toronto, who sold it among other things to Mr. Alexander Galt, who felt it was too valuable to be destroyed and who had the foresight to place it in the Alexander Galt Collection in the Public Archives of Ontario. From there, I managed to secure a photostat of it. The sale took place on Thursday, June 7, 1792. The articles advertised for sale were as follows: four-post bedsteads with handsome carved foot-pillars, crimson damask, white dimity, and chency hangings, with bedding; tables, chairs, chest of drawers, pier and dressing glasses, mahogany bureau, Wilton and Scotch carpets, a 2-foot 6, windup coalrange, patent oven, a 40 gallon copper, washing ditto, sweet beer casks, 2 powdering tubs with pork, and kitchen requisites. Catalogues were to be had at The Packet, Manningtree, an old hotel which still stands. The sale was to begin precisely at ten o'clock on account of the number of lots. The handbills were printed by W. Keymer, Colchester. The sale was conducted by Barlow and Bannell of Statton, and a receipt exists dated June 12, 1792, signed by Mr. Bannell in favour of John Denison for £1118 11s, also in the Alexander Galt Collection.

So the Denisons took leave of their friends, and visited John Denison's parents and John Denison's brother, Dr. Thomas Denison, who were all living together in Bishopslane Street, Hull, where Dr. Thomas Denison was practising medicine.

While there, Captain John Denison received the following letter from his brother-in-law, George Taylor of Dovercourt, Harwich, Essex. The letter is dated Dovercourt, July 7, 1792, and addressed to Mr. John Denison, at Mr. Denison's Surgeon, Hull, Yorks. It reads as follows:

Dr. Br. (Dear Brother)

I was exceedingly happy at the sight of your letter, wherein you inform'd me of your safe arrival; and I think the passage must have been very pleasant and expeditious, as you had the Wind fair. (Note: They went to Hull by sea.) I have only to pray for as fine a voyage to your destin'd port, as you have now experienced. Present my respectful Compliments to your father and mother and especially your brothers, whom I have the pleasure of knowing. (Note: The Father and Mother were George Denison of Hodon, but at this time of Hull, and Mary Parkinson Denison, his wife. The Brothers were George of Rotherham, and Dr. Thomas Denison, at this time of Hull, at whose home they were all staying.) Let me recommend you to leave The² with your² BE as he has intimated a desire for the child. (Note: Thomas John Denison, later of Weston) I flatter myself he will take as much care of his Morals as you possibly can. Since your departure from hence, Sam^l has wrote a scandalous Letter to me concerning the Whatch, making a demand of his fourth, which by his account is 2£ 10 s; and as he insists upon it, will (with your Leave) pay him in the followingmanner; that is, what trifling sum may be over 3£. (Note: Samuel was George Taylor's brother; The Whatch was a ship. They were privateers-men.) Your cart I sold to Powling for 7£ and the above mentioned 3£ is sent from my own pocket as Cash had of Shoarman, entirely to make the conveyance more convenient by a 10£ note, which will be duly received, I hope likewise give satisfaction.

STUTTON, SUFFOLK.

To be SOLD by AUCTION,

By Bartolo and Bunnell,
On THURSDAY the 7th of JUNE, 1792,

The Household Furniture, China, Brewing and Dairy Utensils,

Of Mr. JOHN DENISON, of Alton-Hall Mill, (leaving this Country)

COMPRISING four-post bedsteads with handsome carved foot pillars, crimson damask, white dimity, and chency hangings, with bedding, tables, chairs, chest of drawers, pier and dressing tables, mahogany bureau, Wilton and Scotch carpets, a 2-foot 6 wind-up coalrange, patent oven, a 40-gallon copper, washing ditto, sweet beer casks, 2 powdering tubs with pork, and kitchen requisites.

CATALOGUES to be had at the Packet, Manningtree, place of sale, and of the Auctioneers,
The sale to begin precisely at ten o'clock on account of the number of lots.

COLNESTER: PRINTED BY W. KAYMER.

yours Affectionately
C Taylor
CATHERINE FENNINGS TAYLOR

your ever respectful
Geo Taylor

ABOVE - GEORGE
TAYLOR'S
SIGNATURE

Yours
Thos Denison
DR. THOMAS DENISON
OF LONDON



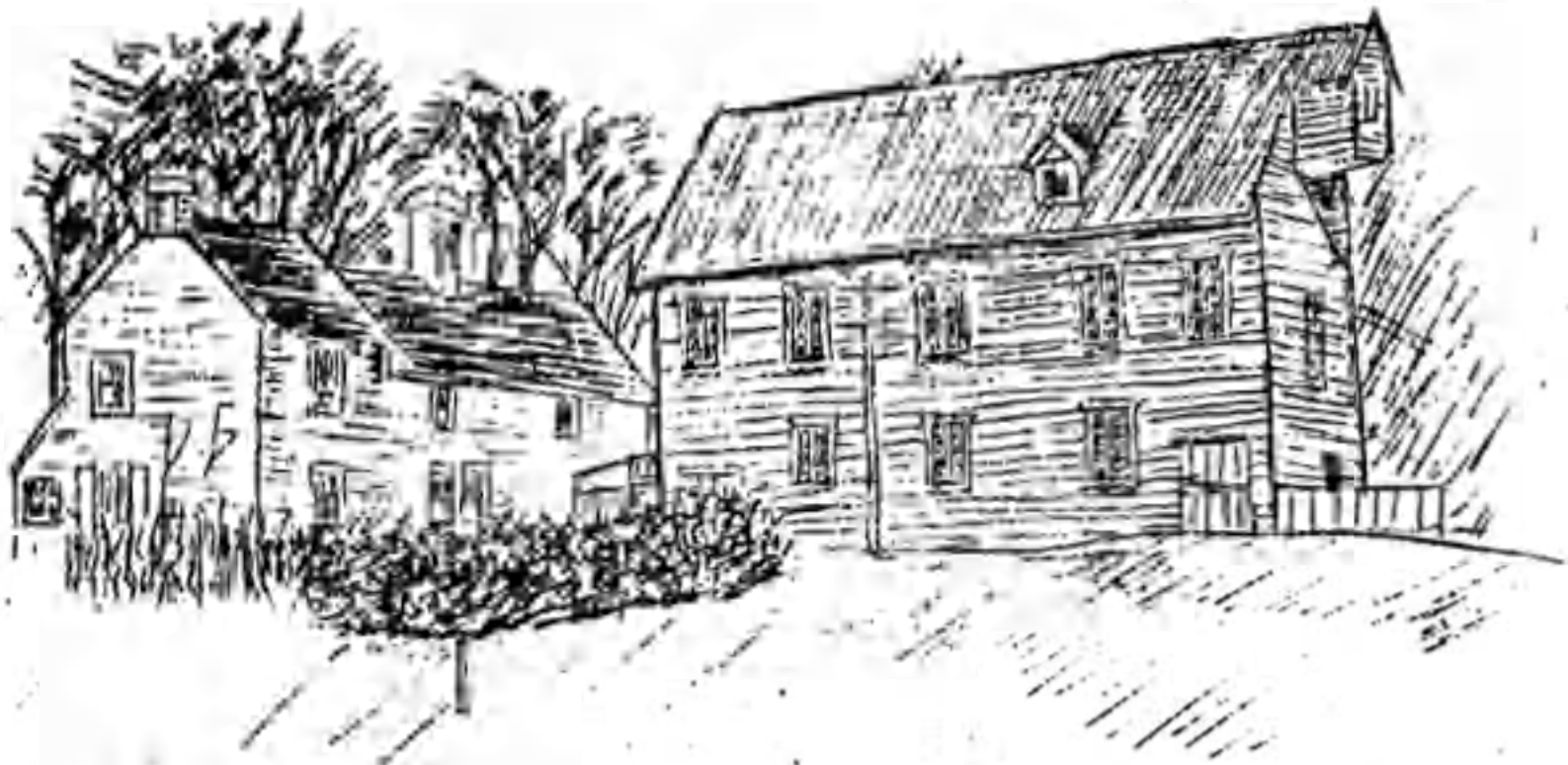
THE ONANDAGA

Your affectionate lover & those husband
John Fenning

JOHN FENNINGS TAYLOR THE ELDER IN LOVE LETTER TO BETSY.

June 12th 1792,
Paid Mr John Denison the sum
of £67-11-11 for selling
By Auction sundry Good Effects
June 7th 1792 including Duty & every Expence
£ 11. 18. 11
W Bunnell

Facsimile of the Receipt which Mr. Bunnell the Auctioneer gave to Captain John Denison, when Denison paid him for his Services in selling Denison's Household Effects at Public Auction just before the Denisons left England for Canada.



Alton Hall Mill House, where Captain John Denison and Family Lived, and Alton Hall Mill, which Denison operated in 1792 just prior to Leaving for Canada.

Both are situated on the Property of Alton Hall, Stutton or Holbrook, in Suffolk, England.

Mrs. Taylor with her sister and myself were at Colchester Fair on Thursday last, and spent a very agreeable day. By answer to this, acquaint me the name and burthen of the ship, also the Captain's name. But if time will not permit you to write before you leave England, let me have a letter, while upon your Voyage. Put it on board some Ship bound for England, and it should reach me if not directly after your arrival in New York. Captⁿ Gunthorpe has been very successful the last Three Weeks, having made three seizures, in the last of which he took the Viper with 400 Tubs, 1 Cwt. of Tea and 14 Cwt. of Tobacco. (Note: They were privateersmen who raided enemy ships of cargoes bound for various ports of Europe. According to the law of the time, the cargoes then became theirs to sell as they wished.) Kitty joins in Love to you, and Sister, and Children, as do all your Harwich friends, in respects to you both, and believe me to be, with Regard, your ever respectful Br. George Taylor.

Present my love to my dear Sister.

Kitty's love to Sophia and has settled the Bill with Pladge must once more conclude with wishing you a safe Passage to America and a quick return. (Note: "quick return") Kitty would have wrote to Sophia but wanted time. She will however embrace the first Opportunity.

It is a pity that the reply to this letter was never preserved.

On Wednesday, July 11, 1793, the Denisons (not knowing it at the time) quitted forever the shores of their native England, and sailed forth from Hull, through the English Channel, and out onto the broad waters of the Atlantic in one of the smaller sailing vessels of the day, probably a frigate of about 28 guns. They would soon pass the famous islands of the Azores, where in 1591, Sir Richard Grenville held at bay a flotilla of fifteen Spanish ships until his own, The Revenge, was but a wreck. The actual crossing of the ocean was probably an unpleasant and tiresome one, with the chill and damp of the spray and rain, the constant lurching of the ship causing bruised knees, and a leaky cabin in which to sleep. The Denisons arrived at New York in September then in all the rosy glory of a North American autumn. The remainder of the trip was overland in an ox-cart to Oswego, which required three weeks of steady travelling, such was the wild condition of the country. In some places they may have had a corduroy road of the kind that the early settlers made by cutting down the trees of the forest and placing their trunks crosswise on the road, the spaces being filled in with mud. The result was a very bumpy path for the ox-carts which of course had no springs to lighten the shocks.

From Oswego, they journeyed to Kingston to spend the winter. Kingston was a small settlement of only 50 houses, one house only being of stone and that belonging to a merchant. There was a small garrison in Kingston, and a harbour of ships.

On May 10, 1793, John Denison petitioned Governor Simcoe for a grant of land, 1000 acres in the Township of Edwardsburg, County of Grenville, north-east of Prescott, but in those days such business took a long time to complete, and while still waiting for this grant of land, John Denison built a residence in Kingston. In October of 1793 he entered into a contract with Joseph Forsyth of Kingston, whereby he was able to rent a lot of ground, malt-house and brew-house for the period of one year with all appurtenances for the cost of £120 current money. The original agreement is in the Public Archives of Ontario. It is in the form of an indenture, and notable in the wording of it is a penal clause to the effect that if either party to the contract were to default on their agreement, the defaulting party agreed to pay the other £1000 indemnity. John Denison lived up to his contract for the one year, but discovered that the brewing was unsatisfactory as there was no barley grown in that part of the country. Moreover he was dissatisfied with the rigours of the New World, and longed to get back to his native Yorkshire. However he had given his word that he would remain. This is how the pledge to remain had come about.

It happened on this wise. On April 15, 1795, John Denison boarded the armed sloop Onondaga, a vessel of 12 guns and 80 tons burthen which was owned by the Provincial

Government. He sailed up the St. Lawrence and across Lake Ontario to Niagara. This journey is recorded in the Niagara Gazette, April 18, 1793, which mentions the arrival of the armed sloop "Onondaga" at Niagara from Kingston after an agreeable passage of 36 hours. Among the list of passengers is one, "J. Denison".

Arriving at Niagara, Denison went to Navy Hall, which was really Government House. It had no charms from an architectural stand-point, and was as crude and primitive as the log-cabins of the pioneers. Entering Navy Hall, Denison craved an audience with his old friend, Peter Russell. As it so happened, Governor Simcoe himself was there too. Denison told of his dissatisfaction with pioneer life and of his intention to return home to York, England. He felt it behooved him to make this known, since he had come on the solicitation of Russell and Russell's sister, and could not return without notifying them. The Governor expressed deep regret at his decision, thinking privily that colonists of Denison's type were difficult enough to induce to come to Canada in the first place, and were a real loss to the country if they did not remain. "You may not like Kingston", said Simcoe, "but you have not seen the new capital of Upper Canada which we are building.--the town of Dublin." "Dublin", quoth Denison, "You have your audacity to ask a Yorkshireman like myself to set foot in a place called Dublin of all names." "Very well," replied Simcoe, "you name it for us, Denison. We will call it any name you suggest, provided that we have your promise to remain in Canada." "In that case", said Denison, "call it York. I said I was going to York. Call it York, and I will go there and settle." Simcoe and Denison were both true to their word. Denison went to York and settled, and Simcoe named the new place York to satisfy Denison. On May 2, 1793 the name was officially published as York. Of course it was gasetted to be in honour of the Duke of York, who had won notable victories in Flanders but in actual fact it owed its name to this incident in the life of our ancestor, Captain John Denison. The Yorkshire nomenclature was later extended to take in other places in the vicinity. We to-day have the rivers, Eumber and Don. We have Scarborough, York County and Township--only a few of the names which trace their origin directly to the influence of the Denison family. In Toronto, we have the following street-names which owe their origin directly to the Denisons:-- Ballevee, Bordon, Brookfield, Denison, Dawson, Deverscourt, Fennings, Hopbourne, Lippincott, Ossington, Rolyat (Taylor spelled backwards), Rusholme, and in Weston, St. John's, Denison, Lippincott and Lawrence.

On Oct. 20, 1792, Peter Russell, having heard that his friend, John Denison, had arrived at Kingston, applied for 200 acres of land for him in the neighbourhood of Toronto. John Denison, in his petition of May 10, 1793, dated at Kingston, acknowledges this grant, but says that he deems it too small to sit down upon, and applies for 1000 acres of land in the Township of Edwardsburg, as mentioned earlier. This was not granted until Aug. 13, 1799, when he had already left Kingston for York. The History of Leeds and Granville, by F.W.H. Leavitt, Brockville, 1879, page 120, says that Denison received lots 12 to 16 in the 5th concession. The records of the Granville County Registry Office at Prescott show that on Feb. 11, 1804, Denison sold lots 12, 13, and 14 to Silas Cook, and on July 3, 1800, he sold lots 15 and 16 to Joseph Forsyth, the man from whom he rented the malt-house etc., as told earlier.

On Nov. 16, 1796 in Kingston, when he had decided to reside in York, Denison made another petition, this time on behalf of his wife, Sophia, and his four sons, George Taylor, Thomas John, Charles and John. This reads: "As the wife of your Memorialist has never drawn any lands in this province, he prays your Honour will be pleased to order her the usual grant of 200 acres, and such other portion to each of his sons as your Honour in your Wisdom from the Premises might deem fitting." This was granted, as a receipt exists, dated Sept. 29, 1818 at the Receiver General's Office, York, which says: "Mrs. Sophia Denison, through her husband, Captain John Denison, has paid into this office, three Pounds, five Shillings and two Pence, the patent fee under regulations on 1796 on 200 acres of land--also one Pound, seven Shillings and six Pence, like Pro: Currency, the fees of survey thereon--the Land is located in Vaughan."

On June 9, 1797, John Denison signed another petition worded as follows: "Your petitioner being desirous of following his business of brewer in the Town of York humbly prays for a front lot near the water convenient for that purpose." The next day, June 10, Peter Russell, wrote to D.W. Smith, Acting Surveyor-General thus: "Having



John Denison

taken the enclosed warrant of survey from Mr. John Denison for £50 Halifax currency which I lent him two years ago, you will oblige me by obtaining the sanction of the Council that a patent may be made out immediately in my name for it." So having obtained his front lot convenient for brewing, he had already arranged to turn over the deed for it to his friend, Peter Russell, in payment of the £50 he owed.

In 1796, the Denisons moved their worldly goods to York. They probably sailed on this same ship, the "Onondaga", or one of the other similar small ships which sailed Lake Ontario and which were owned by the Provincial Government. Peter Russell was there to greet them. He housed them at Castle Frank on the Don. Castle Frank had been built for Governor Simcoe as his official residence, but apparently Simcoe never lived there. At any rate, it was vacant at the time.

Dr. Scadding in his book, "Toronto of Old", gives a fine description of Castle Frank, thus: "Castle Frank was a rustic chateau or summer-house in the midst of the woods, on the brow of a steep and lofty bank which overlooks the vale of the Don. Castle Frank itself was an edifice of considerable dimensions, of a oblong shape; its walls were composed of a number of small, carefully hewn logs, of short lengths. The whole were the hue which unpainted timber, exposed to the weather, speedily assumes. At the gable end, in the direction of the roadway from the nascent capital, was the principal entrance, over which a rather imposing portico was formed by the projection of the whole roof, supported by four upright columns, reaching the whole height of the building, and consisting of the stems of four good-sized, well-matched pines, with their deeply chapped, corrugated bark unremoved. The doors and shutters to the windows were all of double thickness, made of stout plank, running up and down on one side and crosswise on the other, and thickly studded over with the heads of stout nails. From the middle of the building rose a solitary, massive chimney-stack. The road which at present bears the name Parliament Street shows the direction of the track through the woods to Castle Frank. A depression in the dry sand just beyond the fence which bounds the Cemetery of St. James northward, shows to this day the exact site of Castle Frank. Castle Frank was the first dwelling built by the white man at the town of York."

The Denisons were granted lot #4 at the north-east corner of Front and Bay Streets. Here they occupied an abode which is described by Scadding as an ornamental cottage on a front lot with a convenient water lot adjoining. This arrangement was made for them by Peter Russell. Whether Russell built the cottage or not, we do not know, but it was on the lot which John Denison had turned over to Russell in payment of the £50 loan. While living there, their infant daughter, Elizabeth, died Oct. 14, 1801. At that time there was no public burying-ground, no churchyard and no clergyman. John Denison buried the baby in his garden. He read the Anglican service himself before the small group of friends who had gathered there. Amongst them, undoubtedly stood Peter Russell and his sister, Elizabeth, after whom the child had been named. (Later, when the Denisons moved to Black Creek Farm on the Humber in Weston, the little body was re-interred at that place in a portion of the Denisons' garden. This was the real beginning of the private Denison cemetery on St. John's Road, Weston, presently known as St. John's Cemetery-on-the-Humber.)

The Denisons' next residence was "Petersfield", so named after Peter Russell. Petersfield stood on the north side of Queen Street at the head of Soho Street. The title to the property was vested in Peter Russell. Scadding says: "Our own recollection of Mrs. Denison is associated with Petersfield, the homely coziness of whose interior, lighted up by a rousing fire of great logs, piled high in one of the capacious and lofty fireplaces of the time, made an indelible impression. The venerable Mrs. Sophia Denison was a fine old English matron and mother of the antique, strongly-marked, vigorous, sterling type. She was one of the Taylors of Essex, among whom, at home and abroad, ability and talent, and traits of a higher and more sacred character, are curiously hereditary."

At Petersfield, the Denisons had a negro slave-girl, Amy Pompadour, who had been legally given to Mrs. Sophia Denison as a Christmas-present from Elizabeth Russell. Sophia Denison later set Amy free.

There was considerable gardening-land attached to Petersfield, and this land was supervised by John Denison on behalf of Peter Russell during the years 1804 to 1807. The principal crop was "bluonose Potatoes". They sold for Four Shillings York Currency the bushel delivered, and Three Shillings cash and carry. Advertisements to this effect

frequently appeared in the settlement's two newspapers, the Oracle and the Gazette.

After leaving Petersfield, the Denisons acquired 1000 acres of land at Weston near the river Humber. They called this, Black Creek Farm, because of the stream that ran through the property, which they nicknamed Black Creek because of the darkness of its waters. The creek is called by that name to this day.

John Denison set aside a portion of this land as a cemetery proposed to be known as St. John's Cemetery on the Humber. This great family memorial still remains. It is situated at the west end of St. John's Road, Weston, just where that road joins the river Humber. Captain John Denison constituted this cemetery with right of burial to those only of his blood with their wives and husbands respectively. However, Captain Richard Lippincott, and his wife, George Taylor (father of John Fennings Taylor the Elder) and Dr. De la Hooke's father were buried there---none of whom were "of his blood". Up till 1853, the cemetery was purely private property. In that year, however, Col. George Taylor Denison the first of Bellevue executed a conveyance whereby the burying-ground and several acres of glebe-land adjoining it should become a portion of the endowment of a church proposed to be known as The Church of St. John. The conveyance is No. 49938 registered at York, Samuel Ridout, Registrar, June 25, 1853. In 1930, there was a lawsuit conducted in The Supreme Court of Ontario, whereby the legal representatives of the family sought to recover the property from the Church of England, since it was claimed that the said Church had not fulfilled their part of the bargain. The family got the cemetery back and also the \$14,000. endowment, but the church received some \$1200. for land adjoining it which had been sold, and on which the late Admiral John Denison and others had paid a large sum in taxes to keep it from going to sale at an un auspicious earlier time. The \$1200. went to a Church in the vicinity with which the family had never at any time been connected. Those who had paid the taxes never did receive their money back. The writer, as eldest heir male of the family, was very grateful to Admiral John Denison and the others for not pressing their claim for taxes, as he received some \$800. which was greatly needed at the time to complete his education. Some of the writer's ability to write this article as well as he has done, is undoubtedly due to the unselfishness of the dear old Admiral and the others. The cemetery is now administered by a corporation of representative descendants of the family who live for the most part in the Toronto district. The \$14,000. endowment is held in perpetuity by the Supreme Court of Ontario who pay a small rate of interest annually for its use. This interest is scarcely adequate to pay the caretaker's salary. In October 1951, the various descendants of the family were asked to contribute to a fund to increase the endowment and make sure that our early ancestors' wishes that the cemetery be kept up in good condition for all the future of the world be forever fulfilled.

The late Mr. Ernest De la Hooke once showed me an old map which set forth the various portions of this original Black Creek Farm and the names of the descendants who owned them.

George Taylor was the husband of Catherine Fennings. He was a brother of Sophia Taylor, wife of John Denison. He was also the father of John Fennings Taylor the Elder. As related earlier, he had contemplated going to Canada from England as early as 1792, but somehow he had not done so. It was now the year 1812. There was war with the New England Colonies which became the United States of America in 1776. George Taylor had had reversals in business. He still believed that Canada was the Land of Promise, so he set sail for Canada, leaving his good wife and family behind and hoping to secure sufficient means to set up his family in the New World. However, his health was bad, and he was twenty years older than he had been in 1792. The New World was too strenuous for him, and in the late fall of 1812 he died at York and was buried at St. John's Cemetery on the Humber. In those days, messages took ages to cross the Atlantic, and we find George Taylor's widow writing a letter concerning him to Sophia Denison at York long after George Taylor's demise, but she appears to be unaware of her husband's death. The letter speaks for itself, and I believe that Catherine Fennings Taylor later received sufficient help from her father, who was not poor, to take care of herself and her family. The letter is written from London, England, May 27, 1813. The address is given as C/O Misses Taylor and Jarman, No. 8, Billiter Lane, Leadenhall Street. It reads as follows:

My dear Mrs. Denison,

I received a letter from you last November, and I assure you that it gives me great pleasure to hear from you. I have felt, and I do feel this year, what you must have experienced for more than twenty years. I expect and hope Brother was with you about the time you wrote your last letter. (Note: It would have been clearer if she had said My Husband instead of Your Brother, either appellation of course would have been correct.) I, and all his children, have wondered at not receiving one letter from him since his arrival with you. I received two or three letters during the early part of his passage. The ship he went out on got back to England in October or November last, and left my husband safely landed. I was surprised that he did not send me a letter by the captain if he had arrived safely with you. How surprised you must have been to see him. I do hope that he notified you in advance, and did not come without your being prepared to see him, for it would have been too much for your feelings to see him that had not wrote to you so long. It was not for the want of my reminding him, nor because he forgot you, as we have often talked over old times, when we used to spend the time together at our house with our little ones. I think since, those were our happiest days, though I hope, my dear Mrs. D., you have not felt quite so much as I have, though then, there is no doubt but you have had your trials. You had many trials before you left us. Mine began soon after that, but when I look back upon all the people that you and I knew when we were young, I can see but few that have escaped trouble---some more than others. I have put off writing as long as I could, in hopes of having a letter. I feel what you have felt so often. I was at Miss Montburn's where my Maria is, a few days ago, and she offered to get a letter carried to you by a friend going some way up the country. I suppose that the War we have with America may be the cause. We often talk of it and think that that must be the reason we have not heard from Mr. Taylor. Sometimes I think something must have happened to him in coming to you, and that you have neither heard nor seen him. Pray let me hear as soon as possible. I am sure if it rest with you, I shall have a letter. I call'd at Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Denison's after I received your letter. She was very cool about your letter you wrote to her after you had been gone from England fourteen years. Mr. D. talked of writing and I gave him your address. Your brother, George Denison, is dead, I believe above a year ago. Your Mother, Mary Denison, is very well. I find they have to support her. Your brother, George Denison, left what he had to his mother, but I find that the person he was with, left him in debt, and they have kept his property back. I have nothing to relate to you out of my own family, as your Brother brought the news all with him when he left home. I gave up the house, and I was obliged to part with all my children. My dear little one, only two years old, she is at school with her sister Harriett at Mrs. Holphant's. They are very fond of her, and she of them. She can say everything, and is very much grown. She is very pleased to see me when I go, but I always leave her with regret. I have not seen my father since my husband went to Canada, nor has my father done anything for me, nor for the two girls at school. I have been obliged to depend upon George, my son, for their support. My daughter, Mary, was married the 12th of May after her father left us. They live in the Kent Road. He is a very kind and good husband. George was married the 8th of October following. He lives with his wife's father and mother. He is likely to be a father before the year. Your Brother knows these parties and will tell you about them. Poor me was obliged to take a situation in a nursery, and deprived of a home, both myself and children. I am not comfortable by any means, never being only mistress in my own house before. I do not wish to make you feel uncomfortable about me, but I only wish George had not gone to Canada leaving us so poor. I hope if he is with you that he does something for his livelihood, and that he will make enough money to take us over. If we outlive my father we shall have something to help us through life. George never kept anything from me when he had it, nor neither will I from him partaking with me. All the children send love to their father, and accept, dear Sister, our love to you, Mrs. D., and all your dear children, and I remain, yours affectionately, C. Taylor.

My friends inquire of you often.

The above mentioned son, George Taylor, was probably the one that was the father of John Jennings Taylor the younger.

In 1815, Col. George Taylor Denison the First bought from Lt-Col. Sir E.B. Littlehales, Bart., Military Secretary to Governor Simcoe, Park Lot #17 and part of Park Lot #18, in all about 156 acres, now that part of Toronto which is now bounded by the streets, Queen, Bloor, Bathurst and Spadina. To be exact it was a little narrower than that, as it is described as five chains east of Bathurst and five chains west of Spadina. On this property, the same year Denison built Old Bellevue, cutting just enough of the trees of the forest to let the light in. How very damp it must have been! The exact location of Old Bellevue is what is now the north-east corner of Denison Ave., and Denison Square. The present Denison Avenue was the carriage-drive up to Old Bellevue from Queen Street. It was fringed on either side by great trees whose long branches met in a flourish across the road, affording ample shade against the summer sun and wonderful wind-protection in the winter. I always like the story of the rockery that stood on Denison Square commemorating the spot where the last wild bear was killed in Toronto.

The year 1815 seemed a record year for the Denisons, for in that year the Denisons also purchased Park Lot # 25, containing 100 acres, now presently bounded by the streets Queen, Bloor, Ossington and Dovercourt. This park lot had been owned by Mr. David Burns, a surgeon in the York Volunteers, who, by a conveyance dated Mar. 29, 1815, transferred it to Captain John Denison for the consideration of £200. On Aug. 28, 1845, Mrs. Sophia Denison transferred this land to her oldest son, Col. George Taylor Denison "except the mansion-house, known as Brookfield House, and four acres". Brookfield House and the four acres went to her son-in-law, John Pennington Taylor the Elder. Brookfield House stood at the north-east corner of what is now Queen St., and Ossington Avenue. It was shaded by great willow-trees and was surrounded by a flower-garden and large lawn. In extract from a letter written by one, W.H. Pardee to John Pennington Taylor, Clerk, The Legislative Council, Quebec, dated at Toronto, 14th Feb. 1853, reads as follows: "Brookfield House--- I have to-day had an interview with Jas. Henderson who has succeeded his uncle in the land agency business on this subject. He thinks that a person who is desirous of purchasing the place and who has employed him to treat for it, would give £2500 for it, but not all cash. He thinks he would give £1000 in cash and the rest in time."

Old Bellevue was the oldest of the Denison family homesteads in the Toronto area. It was occupied until 1887. It was the residence of Col. Robert Brittain Denison, and my late good friend and relative, Francis Napier Denison, founder of Gonzales Observatory, Victoria, B.C., was the last member of the family to be born there. The next oldest homestead was Rusholme, which is at the corner of Dundas Street and Rusholme Drive, and which is now designated as 10 Rusholme Drive. It was built in 1839 by Col. George Taylor Denison the Second. It is still in the occupancy of the family, being to-day the residence of Harold Denison, Captain, Royal Navy, Retired. Old Rusholme was named after the great park-like estate in England of Joseph Denison, purchased 1824, near Manchester in Lancashire. On the grounds of the Toronto Rusholme a gate-keeper's lodge once stood. There was originally a long driveway and many trees.

Next on the list of old homesteads of the Denisons comes Old Dovercourt, the residence of both Colonels Richard Lippincott Denison the First and the Second. To-day it has been razed, and its site occupied by a building 32-38 Churchill Ave. According to Robertson's Landmarks of Toronto or my interpretation thereof, there were in fact two homesteads on the same spot and both called Dovercourt. See Robertson's Landmarks Vol. 1, page 112. The first one was built in 1838, the second one in 1853. "Where Ossington Ave., now runs, there was in 1853 a lane leading through the woods and fields to the house Dovercourt, then in the course of erection" an old record states. On the left of this path stood a fair-sized cottage, built by Col. George Taylor Denison the First and used later as a distillery. The trade was discontinued in 1848. Dovercourt itself stood among spacious lawns. The west wing was pulled down in 1894. Some of Old Dovercourt still remained as late as 1934, and could be identified by the triple chimney-stack, the only one of its kind in the whole district. In 1895, Col. R.L. Denison the Second moved to North Grimsby Township, where he built Inglemount on the Ridge Road near Grimsby, where the writer was born in 1910. This house was occupied by members of the family till 1912. It still stands, and I had the pleasure of inspecting its interior last summer. It is presently occupied by a Ukrainian family called Gorichak.

Old Dovercourt was named after a district of Dovercourt near the port of Harwich in Essex in England, the home of the Taylors. This district got its name from the Manor of Dovercourt, two miles up the river Stour from Harwich. In Saxon times, the castle or Manor of Dovercourt belonged to one, Ulvinnas, who espoused the cause of Harold against William, Duke of Normandy, and when the war was lost, Ulvinnas was dispossessed. The

Dovercourt lands were awarded to a Norman, Alberic de Vere, whose youngest daughter married Roger Bigod, Earl of Norfolk. To her proud and warlike husband went as a dowry the Manor of Dovercourt. In the course of time, these estates came again into the possession of the Crown and were granted to the Earls of Oxford. A modern owner of the castle is Lewes Peak Garland.

Then, one must not forget to mention Heydon Villa, that great park-like estate that was owned by Col. George Taylor Denison the Third. The name Heydon had its origin in the name of Hodon, the home town of Captain John Denison. Heydon Villa is now turned into an apartment block called Heydon Villa Apartments.

Early Life in York

In 1821, Elizabeth Sophia Denison, later the wife of John Fennings Taylor the Elder, wrote a letter to her aunt, Mrs. Thomas Denison of London, England. The letter is dated at York, August 5, 1821, and is preserved in the Ontario Archives. She says in her letter "My dear Aunt, It is with much pleasure, I have again the opportunity of addressing you. I am afraid from your long silence, my letter of the 20th February 1820, in answer to your kind one received by my Papa must have miscarried, or I am certain from my extreme desire which I therein expressed of hearing from you and my uncle would have ensured a reply long ere this, but the letters by the mail are not transported from this western country with the regularity they are from England to America. Under that impression, I shall again express my thanks to you for your kind letter and present accompanying it, also to Miss Hale for the drawing of the late Queen of Scotland which she was kind enough in sending me, which I received with an equal pleasure as I did your favours, and I shall treasure it as a token of her remembrance and although not personally acquainted, I hope to be gratified so much by your keeping up with me in future a regular correspondence. The present will be favoured by Mrs. Hall, formerly a resident in your city and since one of my most particular friends in York, but through family afflictions is obliged to return to her friends in England. The vacation of my school commenced yesterday, during which, part of it will be spent on a visit to the Falls of Niagara, when I hope to be able in my next to give you a full description of them, which I dare say will be pleasing to you, as no doubt you have often heard them praised for their beauty; and the other part will be devoted entirely to study. I am about a piece of embroidery which I expect to finish as soon as I can obtain chenilles to answer the purpose, but they are rare articles here, and I doubt very much if I can get them all, unless I write to England purposely for them. Music is a branch of polite education I have a great taste for, and my Papa has promised to procure a pianoforte for me, if he can meet with one here, which is likewise doubtful as there is little occasion for them in the wilds of Canada. I must conclude, my dear Aunt, with to pray and trusting shortly to have the pleasing sight of a few lines from you, and feeling confident that this will reach you safely with my love to you and my dear Uncle, and kindest remembrances to Miss Hale, in which my Mama, Papa, and family join me, and I remain, my dear Aunt, your affectionate niece, E. Denison.

Elizabeth Sophia Denison was eighteen years old when she wrote this letter. The Miss Hale referred to was probably a great friend of Dr. and Mrs. Denison of London. I would like to speculate that this Miss Hale was Margaret Hale who later became third wife to Dr. Thomas Denison. In any event she was a relative of Rev. J. Dixon Hale, whom I mentioned earlier in connection with the will of Dr. Thomas Denison. I do not know whether Elizabeth Sophia Denison ever learned to play the pianoforte or not, but she was definitely musical, as music ran in the family. Elizabeth Sophia's description of the Falls of Niagara would be very interesting, were it preserved to us. However, another ancestor of mine, this one on my Mother's side of the house, Rev. James Lynn Alexander, wrote a long poem describing Niagara, called "The Wonders of the West, or a Day at the Falls of Niagara in 1825" which tells all that she could have told and more. I have an ancient printed copy of this poem, and there is a copy in the Ontario Archives.

Captain John Denison died at York, Oct. 28, 1824, and his son, John, died Jan. 5, 1826. In the following letter of Mrs. Sophia Denison to Dr. Thomas Denison, London, dated Mar. 16, 1826, she tells of the shadow of gloom that had fallen across the lives of the little Denison family in this early day at York in the wilds of Canada. Sophia Denison says: "My dear Brother, I have just heard of the Reverend Doctor Strachan going to England, which gives me the pleasure of writing to you. (Note: In those early days, such an event as anyone going on visit to the old land heralded a letter from everyone in



Sophia Taylor's Coat-of-Arms. Note the Nautical Cord Which Surrounds the Shield and Seem to Recall her Privateersmen Ancestry in Old Harwich.

the community, everyone asking that their letter be posted on arrival in the old land.) Your letter favoured by Mr. Taylor, I received with the greatest pleasure, and I was happy to find you and Mrs. Denison in good health. I should have answered it before, but having so much sickness and affliction in my family has been the total reason for my not writing. I am sorry to say, my dear Brother, that the subject I am going to mention to you, is not only as melancholy to you to read, but as painful to me to write. Little did I think when I wrote you last, that this letter would be so much like the one you received from me last spring. (Note: She wrote at that time to tell of her husband's death.)

On the fifth of January, after a very short illness, my dear son, John, departed this life. His complaint was a violent inflammation on the brain (Note: probably a mastoid), which he bore with Christian patience. This boy, you did not know, as he was born in Canada. It is highly gratifying to me when I think what a good son and brother he was. I can safely say, without flattery, that his character was without blemish. He was much respected and beloved by all who knew him. His loss, I feel to my heart, as he was one of my protectors and providers. This is a great trial to me to lose both Johns, father and son, in the space of fourteen months. My affliction is great and my troubles are almost innumerable. My daughter is in a very bad state of health, and has been so for many months past. Her present complaint, which she now has, and what she has had since the seventh of last September, is the rheumatism. She has undergone many trials of cure, but at present without effect. She has undergone the painful operation of a caustic, being the preparation of an issue. The pain was most violent, for surely I thought for one hour that she would have gone into convulsions, but it could not be done by the lancet on account of the repeated blisters on the very spot where it was to be done. The great relief, that she has found from what has been done as yet, is the warm bath. We have no public bathing places here, so we have to make what we can, do in our houses. Her rheumatism is fixed across her loins, and from her hips down to her ankles. Last summer she had the pleurisy, and she, and her poor brother that now is no more, had the influenza, a complaint that has prevailed very much in this part of the world, and which has been fatal to many.

I am very sorry to say, that it is not in my power at present, to take up your Brother's note. I must beg leave for your patience, as I have not the money at present. I assure you, my dear Brother, I am left embarrassed. Do not be surprised when I tell you that Mr. Denison kept this a secret from me. I knew nothing of it, till I read it in your letter. My daughter desires to send her best regards to Mrs. Denison, and begs that she will excuse her not writing by this conveyance, as she is very unwell; but she will do herself the pleasure, as soon as she gets better. Pray favour me with a letter, as soon as you conveniently can, as it gives me great pleasure to hear from you both. I am afraid that I will tire you out, reading about my troubles, but I will now conclude with mine and my sons' and my daughter's kind love to you and Mrs. Denison. I remain, yours, truly and sincerely, S.D.

The note mentioned above is the one mentioned in Dr. Thomas Denison's will, £270. As this letter is written to a doctor, it is not surprising that the illnesses are described in such detail. John Denison, junior, evidently died of a mastoid, or tumour of the brain. Betsey, the daughter, although apparently a great sufferer, nevertheless lived to the age of 86.

When Elizabeth Russell died in 1822, her will read in part: "To my beloved friend, Mrs. Sophia Denison, £480 for her sole and separate use exclusive of her husband, and for which her receipt alone shall be good, this bequest to be so secured that the said Sophia Denison shall have and enjoy the interest thereof during her life, the principal thereof to be let out or vested in lands for the sole use of her daughter, Elizabeth Denison. To my friend, John Denison, her husband, I leave and bequeath £50, and any debt or debts he may happen to owe me at the time of my decease." It would appear that John Denison had been in the habit of borrowing from Miss Russell as well as from her brother, Peter Russell. It is said that the Denisons had prior to this always expected a large share of the Russell fortune at the decease of the two Russells who had no legal heirs. The Denisons were disappointed in this hope.

A Great Mistake in Captain John Denison's Will Causes Great
Concern and Divides His Children and Widow

Captain John Denison wrote his last Will and Testament himself without benefit of a skilled lawyer. As always happens in such cases there was a great mistake in it. As pointed out to me by my good friend, Martin Kolso, the Crown Attorney, John Denison's will disposes of his real estate only, and does not make provision for the disposition of his personal property. According to Sophia Denison, the chief error was that John Denison did not use the phrase, "and his heirs and assigns" in mentioning the various beneficiaries. This resulted in the bequests constituting only life estates. This meant that when the various brothers and sister died the estate that had fallen to them went to the heir-at-law, which, by the old right of primogeniture and male succession, caused all Captain John Denison's property to come in time into the hands of the eldest son, Colonel George Taylor Denison the First of Bellevue. I have no record of what arrangements George made with his brother, Thomas John Denison of Weston, but certainly the arrangements with his sister, Betsy, were, in the opinion of John Pennings-Taylor the Elder, her husband, most unsatisfactory. John Pennings Taylor certainly was not what could be called poor, and probably our ancestor, George, did not feel he was doing any wrong in accepting what had fallen to him due to the mistake in the will. If any present member of the family object to my telling this tale, I am sure they will forgive me when they consider that money was regarded in a different and much more important light than it is even regarded to-day. In those days, without money, one was definitely a pauper; there were no old age pensions, mothers' allowances, and such, and without money one had to rely on the charity of relatives or starve. It can be readily seen why Col. G.T. Denison the First, when he died in 1853, left an estate which was the largest probated in Ontario up to that time. He not only received all the Denison money, but he received a nice dowry from each of his four wives. He was also very clever in business, and he increased his holdings, by wise investments as well as hard work. One record states that when he died he held over 1000 acres of land in what is now the City of Toronto, probably another 1000 acres in Weston and Richmond Hill, and £250,863. He was a good father and provided well for his children. I will now give you Captain John Denison's will, and the Letters of Administration issued to Sophia Denison in the estate of John Denison, Junior.

Home District)
Surrogate Court)

By William Warren Baldwin, Esquire, Surrogate for the Home
District of the Province of Upper Canada,

To All to whom these presents shall come, Greeting-----

Know ye, - That on the day and date hereof, before me, at York in District and Province aforesaid was proved, approved, and insinuated the last Will and Testament of John Denison, late of the Township of York in District and Province aforesaid, Esquire, deceased, (having whilst he lived, and at the time of his death, divers Goods and Chattels, Rights and Credits within the said Home District) a true copy whereof is hereunder written, and the execution of the said last Will and Testament is hereby committed to Sophia Denison of the Township of York in District and Province aforesaid, Widow, of the said John Denison, the only Executor in the last Will and Testament named, who being duly sworn well and truly to administer the Goods and Chattels, Rights and Credits of the said Deceased, and to exhibit a true and perfect Inventory thereof, together with a just and true account of such Administration unto the Registry of the Surrogate Court of the said Home District when she shall be thereunto lawfully required.

In testimony whereof I have set my hand and seal of the said Court, this Thirteenth day of June in the Year of Our Lord, One thousand, eight hundred and twenty-six.

W.W. Baldwin, Surrogate, Home District, 13th June 1826.

W. Chewett, Registrar.

A true copy of the last Will and Testament of John Denison, late of the Township of York in the Home District of the Province of Upper Canada, Esquire, Deceased-----

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L. P. Hensler



In the Name of God, Amen-- The Ninth day of April, 1824, I, John Denison of the County of York in Upper Canada, being sick and weak in body, but of perfect mind and memory, thanks be to God,-- Therefore calling unto mind the mortality of my body, and knowing that it is appointed to all men once to die, do make and ordain this my last Will and Testament---That is to say principally and first of all, I give and recommend my soul into the hands of Almighty God that gave it, and my body I recommend to the earth to be buried in decent Christian burial at the discretion of my Executrix, nothing doubting but at the General Resurrection, I shall receive the same again by the mighty power of God, and as touching such worldly estate with which it has pleased God to bless me in this Life,--I give and devise and dispose of the same in the following manner and form, I give and bequeath to my dearly beloved wife, Sophia Denison, whom I likewise constitute make and ordain my sole Executrix of this my last Will and Testament, all and singular my Lands, Messuages and Tenements by her freely to be possessed and enjoyed during her life, with all my household goods, Debt, and moveable Effects---

I give and bequeath to my son, George Taylor Denison, after my wife, Sophia Denison, decease, Lot #3 in the 4th Concession in the Township of York, west of Yonge Street, and then for him to leave it to his Children as he pleases.

I give and bequeath to my son, Thomas John Denison, after my wife decease, Lot #5 in the 4th Concession in the Township of York, west of Yonge Street for his Life, and then to come to his wife, so long as she continue his widow--It is my wish that this arrangement shall be fulfilled so far--after this I leave it to my son, Thomas John Denison, to leave to his Children as he pleases--

I give and bequeath to my son, Charles Denison, after my wife decease, Lot #3 in the 5th Concession, west of Yonge Street in the Township of York-- It is my desire that this Lot after my son, Charles Denison, decease, shall go to his male heir, if he has no male heir, it must go to the male heirs at law, and so continue forever--the fence which goes round the burying-ground, I request they will keep in good and substantial repair.

I also give and bequeath to my son, John Denison, after my wife decease, Lot #4 in the 5th Concession, west of Yonge Street, in the Township of York.

I likewise give to my sons, Charles and John Denison, after my wife decease, Park Lot #25, and the south half of Park Lot #25 in the Township of York.

I also give and bequeath to my daughter, Elizabeth Sophia Denison and her heirs, after my wife, Sophia Denison, decease, Brookfield House, with four acres of land across the front of the south part of Lot #25 in the Township of York.---

And I do hereby disallow, revoke and annul all and every former Testaments, Wills, Legacies and Bequests, and Executors by me in any ways before named, willed and bequeathed ratifying and confirming this and no other to my last Will and Testament.

In witness whereof, I have herunto set my hand and seal, the day and year above written.

Signed, Sealed, Published, Pronounced and Declared by the said John Denison as his last Will and Testament in the presence of us Subscribers.

Legal Seal, Signed, John Denison.

Witnesses: Julius M. Sandford, John Gorton, Chesterfield Sandford.

Letters of Administration in the Estate of John Denison the Younger

Home District)

Surrogate Court) Letters of Administration to the Estate of the late John Denison the Younger of the Township of York in the Home District of the

Province of Upper Canada, Yeoman, Deceased:

By William Warren Baldwin, Esquire, Surrogate for the Home District of the Province of Upper Canada. Whereas Sophia Denison of the Township of York in the Home District and Province aforesaid, widow, did by her Petition to me directed set forth that the said John Denison the younger, her son, departed this life on or about the fifth-day of January in the year of Our Lord one Thousand, eight Hundred and twenty-six, Intestate, possessed of some personal and real Estate within the Home District of the said Province and that the Petitioner is advised of Counsel, that she is well and best entitled to take out Letters of Administration of the Goods and Chattels, Rights and Credits, which were of the said John Denison the Younger at the time of his death, or lawfully accruing within the said Home District. The Petitioner having prayed me that Letters of Administration might be granted unto her, of all and singular the Goods and Chattels, Rights

and Credits, which were of the said John Denison the younger, deceased, at the time of his death or lawfully accruing within the said Home District, upon the Petitioner giving the usual security faithfully to administer the same according to Law. Administration, therefore, of all and singular the Goods and Chattels, Rights and Credits, etc., as aforesaid, is hereby granted unto the said Sophia Denison, she having given Bond unto the Registry of the Surrogate Court aforesaid and made oath faithfully to administer the same according to Law, and render a just and true account of the Administration when she shall be thereunto lawfully required.

Given under my hand and seal of the said Court the thirteenth of April in the year of Our Lord, one Thousand, eight Hundred and twenty-six.

W. Chewitt, Registrar.

W.W. Baldwin, Surrogate, Home District.

Letter of Sophia Denison to Dr. Thomas Denison, corner of Stone Street and Tottenham Court Road, London, England, Carried by John Taylor.

York, U.C., March 15th, 1825.

My dear Friend,

I will once more endeavour to accomplish a design which I have so many times attempted to do, but my health being so much impaired and my spirits so much oppressed since last autumn that I really do not feel like myself. I trust and hope that you have by this time received a letter to apprise you of that melancholy death of my dear Husband which took place on the 28th of October last at 7 o'clock in the morning after a long and lingering illness which he bore with resignation and fortitude. This touches me to the heart. I must, my dear Friend, change this depressing subject. I was last November taken ill and remain so for some time and have been much indisposed all winter, so totally confined to the house that I have not been able to get out even upon business which required my earliest attention. Your poor Brother made his will. I have no doubt but you will be surprised when I tell you he made it himself, and I am sorry to say that he has made a great blunder in it, but poor fellow all I could do or say I could not prevail on him to the contrary, he has left the whole of his property to me for my life, after that, the Children take it according to his direction. My son, George, is in possession of the property his father left him, and has been in possession ever since he has been married, but he has not got the deed of it. That is to remain with me. Also my son, Charles, and John, and my daughter, are living with me, as they are all single. Whatever he has left to his children, he has left it to them and their heirs but not their assigns. This he did with a view to secure the property for the benefit of his own children, but he has made a very serious mistake in what he has left to Charles and John, as he has not mentioned their heirs and assigns, so of course these lands he has given to them amount to nothing more than a life estate. It then will go to my son, George, as heir-at-law. So if ever those two boys are married and have any family, and death should take them before their wives, of course the poor children and their mothers are truly thrown out of everything. This certainly makes me very unhappy, as it is a shocking thing. This is not only a very hard case but a very cruel one, as the very lands my poor Jack has left them, these two boys obtained by their strictness of attention to business and industry. (Note: Charles and John had cleared these lands themselves.) Your brother would not have done it intentionally, that I am confident of, for could he but know it, he would be very unhappy. I bless the Almighty God, although I am left a widow, I am not left entirely unprotected, for I am blessed with sober, steady and industrious, affectionate Children. Your poor Brother left me executrix to his will, and no person else but myself, which, at the time he proposed it, I made every objection, but not one of them would he hear to. I wish very much he had taken my advice in getting a professional man to have made his will, and then there would not have been the omissions there are now. What I have enclosed in this letter, I have no doubt you will have any objection in taking a share of with me. I wish from my heart, my dear Friend, that I were living within a few miles of you, so that I could have the pleasure of asking for your advice, not only in my affairs in business, but also in the medical line. Then, I should hope I could get some relief from that painful complaint, the rheumatism, what I am so much troubled with in my head. I am afraid I have tried your patience. I will conclude with my sons and daughter uniting with me in kind love to you and Mrs. Denison, and believe me, your sincere Friend, J. Denison.

Due to the great controversy in the family concerning the division of the estate of Captain John Denison, there had been much hard feeling. George had not been to see his mother for fifteen or eighteen months. George had heard that the family had been corresponding with his uncle, Dr. Thomas Denison of London, and George was rather unhappy about the whole thing. So he determined to go to England, take with him what documents and letters he had, and endeavour to convince his uncle that he had acted justly, and as a man accused to justify himself. (Incidentally, this was the occasion when George visited the College of Heralds in London, and enquired concerning our coat-of-arms.)

Early in June 1827, George broke his long silence, and visited his mother at Brookfield House. He told her of his intention of visiting England, and asked if she had any letters which she wished delivered. The following is the letter which Sophia Denison wrote, and which George delivered to his uncle at Tottenham Court Road, corner of Stone Street, London.

At this time, George Denison had been a widower for four years, and had been the father of eight children, six of whom were living at the time. While in London, George met his second wife, Maria Taylor, who was a sister of his brother-in-law, John Fennings Taylor, the Elder. They were all first cousins. Before leaving England, he married her in London, on September the first, and brought her back with him to York, Upper Canada. I have not been able to discover at what church they were married, as the general registry of such information at Somerset House, London, did not begin till several years later. I suspect that the marriage occurred at one of the churches named St. Giles.

The child which they had, Frederick George Denison, lived only between Sept. 6, 1828 and Sept. 26, 1828. Due to complications following this birth, Maria Taylor Denison the mother died at Old Bellevue, Feb. 2, 1831. This may have been another cause of John Fennings Taylor the Elder feeling bitter towards George, as Taylor may have held George responsible for his sister, Maria's death, though I have no evidence to support this inference. Here is the letter, which is dated at York, June 11th, 1827.

My dear Brother,

Doubtless, my dear Brother, you will be greatly surprised at receiving this letter from the hands of my son, George Denison; not more so, will be your surprise than mine was a few evenings ago, after keeping himself from me for fifteen or eighteen months, then calling merely to say that he was going to England, and that if I had any letter to send, he would take it--- at the same time telling me that he had got a copy of his father's will, and other documents and papers--- then he says---"as it is reported I have robbed the family"--- that convinces me that he is suspicious of me. Therefore, I have no objection to your showing him my letters to you for my defence. Also, my daughter wishes me to say that she will be very much obliged to her aunt to do the same for her. I have every reason to believe that my son George's documents and papers are a collection from all quarters, and that they are for the intent purpose of convincing you, if he possibly can, of the many services which he has been to me since the death of his father, and of the offer which he made to his brother, Charles, which was to give him a deed of a piece of land where I live, provided his brother Charles gives up the burying-ground lot. This, Charles thought was unreasonable on this account that your Brother put his business into his son Charles' hands when he left Canada for England, so of course all debts contracted since that time, and I may say before that time, stand against Charles, as poor Mr. Denison got Charles to place his name on many papers with his own. This has embarrassed Charles very much--- and then for George to want the lot I have mentioned as a compensation for the other lot was too much.---- My son, Charles, has been extremely ill all this spring with a fever and an inflammation on his lungs, but is now somewhat better. My sons and daughter desire their kind love to you and Mrs. Denison. Mr. John Taylor begs his Compliments. I remain, yours truly and sincerely, S. Denison.

P.S. I hope that you will do me the favour to write me.

Here is a letter by John Fennings Taylor the Elder to his mother-in-law, Sophia Denison, who was incidentally also his aunt, and it is in this manner that he always addresses her. The letter is dated at Toronto, 21st October, 1839, and begins, My dear Aunt.



Armorial Book-Plate of Colonel George Taylor Denison the First Taken from an Original to be Found in the Old Family Bible which used to be in St. George's Chapel, Dovercourt.

The above coat-of-arms is recorded to belong to John Denison, Brookfield House, York, Upper Canada. In heraldic terms it is describable thus: "Argent, a bend sable between a unicorn's head orased gules in chief and a cross-crosslet fitché of the last in base. Crest: A dexter cubit arm in bend, vested azure, cuffed argent, hand proper pointing with forefinger to an estoile or." This is the book-plate which George had made up in England when he visited that country as recorded elsewhere. In 1905, Admiral John Denison says, discovering that our arms was no longer correct for our Canadian family, I paid into the College of Heralds, London, £50., and had them difference our arms to distinguish our Canadian branch of the family from the English family heraldically.

My dear Aunt,

I am induced to address the following letter to you from a sense of duty I owe to Betsy and her children; and as the subject about to be entered upon, may not have occurred to you in as forcible a light, as I doubt not it will hereafter, I must at the same time earnestly request that you will not deem me guilty of being actuated by any improper motive in thus drawing your attention to it.--

The topic referred to, is the real property, which, under the will of my Uncle, was settled upon you as tenant for life;-- The unwarrantable possession thereof, taken by George (it being without your sanction or desire) is the cause of complaint, and which I am quite certain you will readily admit to be natural.--

I shall commence from the year 1828 when George assumed the payment of certain debts of the Estate, which I will call roundly £300, but of course you will well know they were much within that compass, and from the same period, he has taken possession of nearly the whole of the real and certainly all of the personal property, and received the benefit arising therefrom.--

Now the ordinary personal property at Charles' decease, I cannot from memory give you an accurate account of, and neither perhaps can you, but I believe the following Schedule will be found correct as far as it comprises the Chattels therein mentioned, (viz.)

	Probable Value.
Two Lumber Wagons	£30.
One Pair of Horses	£30.
One Set of Harness	£ 5.
One double horse pleasure wagon	£20.
One Yoke of Oxen	£15.
Two Steers	£ 5.
Farming Utensils &c., and a flock of sheep (say)	£25.
Stop poles taken out of the swamp which George sold for	£12.10.0
Stone sold from off the land to the road trustees which Richard stated to be one season at	£75.
A large quantity of cedar posts cut from out of the swamp--- pine trees for building timber, and cord wood-- stone sold at other times, than that above mentioned, and other goods probably omitted in this schedule, say to the moderate amount of	£82.10.0
	£300. 0.0

By which it is shown that the amount of the demands even supposing them to have reached the sum of £300., have been liquidated.

Then with regard to the landed property, that is to say the Homestead, being 146 acres, the Burying-Ground Lot or farm at the Humber, and the Clergy reserve leased lot at the same place, but without bringing into account George's own lot at the Humber or Thomas' and therefore not the piece of land left to Betsy.

Acres		Per Year
100	The 100 acres Richard occupies (which at the rate Dunn the butcher pays for the adjoining lot of Givens' without the dwelling house &c., and not near so much land is Burying-Ground Lot	£50.
		£30.
5	Boremaster's house and five acres	£21.
6	6 acres sold to me for £150 interest upon the principal	£ 9.
4	4 acres sold to Thornhill for £200. interest upon do.	£12.
4	4 acres sold to me for £200. interest upon do.	£12.
27	27 acres are still in George's own occupation say at the same rate given by Dunn to Givens which is 10/- per acre equal to	£13.10.0
146 acres	Benefit derived annually of what is yours.	£147.10.0

It will be soon then that I have not estimated your interest in the Clergy Lot which might have been turned to good account.

Recalling to your recollection the unfortunate manner in which my Uncle erred in making his will, by which fatal error, and that in judgment alone, George inherits nearly the whole of his property, I do trust as it is now in your power, and feeling assured of your desire to do justice to your two other children, that you will unhesitatingly and

without delay make your last will and testament leaving to whom you please your plate and household furniture, and to George, Thomas and Betsy and to each of them one third part of the whole of the yearly value or rents of the aforesaid land in which you are a tenant for life, share and share alike.--As George would then receive an equal portion by your will and at your decease the whole of the land besides, surely he could not have in truth any reason to complain.

I would also remind you of the account which George so frequently has stated to be due by Thomas to him, and which assuredly he will press him to pay sooner or later, and such being the case how satisfactory and comfortable it will be for Thomas to have in his power through your will to meet such demand, besides leaving a surplus sum whereby to aid in the hour of need his large and necessitous family.

I have already proved to you that George benefits by me £21 annually and which has continued for several years, and when it is recollected what peculiar circumstances were connected with the purchase for Betsy of the four acres on the hill, I allude to the loss I sustained in England on the one hand, and the good fortune that George met with in receiving by my sole agency, what was due to my dear sister, Maria, on the other hand, in consideration of which I have always thought, and do still think, and ever shall continue of the opinion, that George ought to have been thoroughly satisfied with receiving the principal sum of the purchase money without being so hungry as to desire interest also, and more particularly as he has chanced to light upon nearly the whole of his father's property unintentionally and by mere accident, and also considering that it was with his sister that he was dealing.--

I have long since had the foregoing subject upon my mind and having now discharged what I really believe to be my duty, it remains with you to determine whether your children so far as it is now in your power shall all share alike at your decease, or whether in the event of your not declaring such will by so solemn a testamentary declaration, George is to grasp all your personal property as well as his father's real and personal estate and thereby again publish to the world that he is heir-at-law, and so defy his only surviving brother and also his sister in obtaining relief.

I remain, my dear Aunt, with every affection, your nephew,
J.F. Taylor.

In order to show that Col. George Taylor Denison the First was not such a bad fellow as he is pictured in the foregoing paragraphs, I will give you a letter written by him to his mother, Sophia Denison, Lot Street, York, U.C., from Bellevue, dated December 30th, 1839. It reads as follows:

My dear Mother,

As I told you the last time I saw you that I could not meet with what I wished to get you for a Christmas present, I wish you to accept these two half-eagles and lay them out in something that you may wish for yourself, and not keep them to look at, for that will do you no good, nor anyone else.

I remain, your ever dutiful son,

G.T. Denison.

In Sophia Denison's handwriting appears this additional note on the letter.
Dec. 30, 1839.

Let this present speak for itself,
Sophia Denison.

The following letter was written by Dr. Thomas Denison to John Fennings Taylor the Elder, Legislative Council Office, Toronto, Upper Canada, favoured by Mr. Rowsell.

London, Oct. 12, 1840.

My dear Sir,

I take the opportunity of Mr. Rowsell's return to Canada to thank you for your two letters, your Mother-in-law being the subject of them. It was not in my power to answer any part of them, having no recollection of any circumstances to which you alluded. I hope that you will continue to use your best endeavours to promote peace and harmony in the family of which you now form a part.

I remain, my dear Sir,

Most affectionately yours,

Thos. Denison.

Pray make my best love to your dear wife, my niece.

Here is a letter of John Pennings Taylor the Elder to Mrs. Sophia Denison, Brookfield House, Toronto, Upper Canada, dated at Kingston, 5th July, 1841.

My dear Aunt,

Always knowing that legally I could not successfully oppose the collection of George's claim against me, still I most certainly believed that he could not refrain from feeling that under peculiar circumstances (and which I may add are most certainly tormenting his breast and will continue to inflict a wound there to the hour of his death) he would doubtless have acted more equitably towards me.

However, as I find he is disposed to be harsh, cruel and unjust, and as his trust is now put in the having a longer purse than falls to my lot, I feel it to be more to the ease and comfort of yourself and family at large to give way.

I therefore will agree, however unjust, (of course I mean in an equitable light) that George shall receive back the lot of land upon surrendering up my bond to be cancelled, and a release against all claims and demands to the time of executing it.

I remain, my dear Aunt, your affectionate nephew,

J.F. Taylor.

Sophia Taylor Denison's Court Gown worn at the Court of King George III

Reminiscent of those turbulent, momentous days of King George III when now history was created on the North American Continent, is a beautiful, quaint gown which was worn for presentation at the court of King George III, by Sophia Taylor, later wife of Captain John Denison. This exquisitely designed gown, with hand-painted floral pattern sprinkled over a background of heavy white silk, is as fascinating as a garden patch in June, with its tiny bouquets of pink and blue flowers. Only an artist would have created this charming frock, with its hooped skirts and side paniers, the tiny tight-fitting bodice, with elbow sleeves, adorable with frills of lace. With it, went little black curls which Sophia Denison donned for occasions of festivity, and also little white satin slippers which she had worn on her wedding-day. She must have thrilled as she walked through the town some summer's day, carrying a miniature black parasol with carved ivory handles.

Preserved also is a black crepe bonnet which Sophia Denison wore to market, and a lovely black silk cape of ample folds designed to wrap wide hooped skirts. Preserved too is the gorgeously patterned carpet-bag of flowered velvet with a tiny padlock, which accompanied Sophia Denison when she went ajourneying.

Sophia Denison's Cookbook.

The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy, 1782, and bearing the autograph of Sophia Denison is still preserved. A recipe for orange pie demands the use of 16 eggs; the icing required 24 egg yolks. The icing might be perfumed as you please. The concluding chapter deals with the making of perfumes. To make French Rouge: Take some carmine and mix with face powder to make as pale as you please. The book also tells how to make yeast.

The residuary legatee of the estate of Dr. Thomas Denison of London was the Rev. Canon John Dixon Hales. Here is an inscription to his memory on the foundation stone of Christ Church, Kew Road, Richmond, Surrey, England.

To the Glory of God, and in memory of Canon John Dixon Hales, M.A., For more than 40 years, the Vicar of St. John's, Richmond, this church is built.

This stone was laid by H.R.H. Princess Mary Adelaide, Duchess of Teck, on Saturday, Oct. 14th, 1893.

(The Duchess of Teck mentioned above was mother of Queen Mary, Queen of His Majesty, King George V).

Time rolls on, and on November 22, 1852, we find Sophia Denison, sitting in an upper room in an ancient house on Mount Carmel Street, Quebec City, awaiting two lawyers who will make out her will for her. Mount Carmel Street runs north and south in the Upper Town of Quebec City, and is just west of the Chateau Frontenac Hotel. It is a short street running from the brow of the cliffs northward to a small fenced-in park, Mount Carmel. There are several old houses on Mount Carmel Street to-day, any one of which might have been the house, the home of John Pennings Taylor the Elder, when he was

Clerk of the Senate. This is the inscription on the gate of the little park called Mont Carmel. "On this height, called Mont Carmel, there stood in 1690, a stone wind-mill whereon was mounted a battery of three guns and which served for a redoubt during the Siege of Quebec by Phips, it was called "Le Cavalier du Moulin"

Sophia Denison's Last Will and Testament

Dated at Quebec, 22 November 1852, No. 2243, Filed at 1½ p.m., 10 January 1853 as No. 13545--13/9, Reg. B. Vol. 35, Page 377--C.N. Montizambert, Registrar.

On the Twenty-second day of November in the year of Our Lord one Thousand eight Hundred and fifty-two, at the request of Sophia Taylor, relict of the late John Denison in his lifetime of the City of Toronto in the Home District and Province of Canada, We, the undersigned Notaries Public duly admitted and commissioned for that part of the Province of Canada formerly called Lower Canada and residing at Quebec went to the residence of the said Sophia Taylor relict as aforesaid of the late John Denison, in Mount Carmel Street in the Upper Town of the said City of Quebec, and then and there being, we found the said Sophia Taylor, sitting in a chair in a room in the second flat of the said house, sick of body, but of sound and disposing mind, memory, hearing and understanding as appeared to us the said Notaries by her manner and conversation who declared unto us that considering the uncertainty of the hour of death she was desirous of making her Last Will and Testament in order to arrange her temporal affairs and the better to be prepared to leave the world whenever it might please Almighty God to remove her.

Whereupon she, the said Sophia Taylor, relict as aforesaid, of sound and disposing mind as aforesaid did accordingly publish, dictate and name her Last Will and Testament word by word to John Simpson Hossack, one of the said Notaries in the presence of Thomas T. Gauvin, his colleague, being all the time present as follows, that is to say: First and principally I recommend my soul to God who gave it, and my body I commit to the earth to be decently interred according to the rites of the Church of England, and as to such worldly estate as God in his infinite goodness hath bestowed upon me, I give and dispose of in Manner following, that is to say: Two hundred Pounds now in the hands of my grandson, Richard Lippincott Denison the Elder, commonly known as the "Principal Sum" secured to me by a bond. I will devise and bequeath the interest due thereon at the time of my decease unto Richard Lippincott Denison the Younger. As to the Principal Sum, the following bequests.

£50 to Arthur John Taylor of the City of Quebec, student at law.

£50 to my granddaughter, Elizabeth Sophia Denison, daughter of my son, Thomas John Denison, now deceased, who resides with her aunt, my daughter, Elizabeth Sophia Denison Taylor.

£50 to my granddaughter, Maria Taylor.

£50 to my granddaughter Sophia Charlotte Taylor.

And as to such plate as I shall be possessed of at the time of my decease:

To Arthur John Taylor, a silver Tankard, silver Pepper Castor.

To Alexander George Denison Taylor, a silver Wine Strainer.

To Charles Walter Taylor, Silver Salt-cellars with spoons to match, two silver table-spoons.

To Maria Taylor, one silver sugar-basket and tongs thereto belonging, one large silver cream-jug, one silver tea-strainer with odd tea-spoon.

To Frederick Seletto Taylor, one half-dozen tea-spoons.

To Albert Gunthorpe Taylor, one pair of Silver Sugar-tongs.

To Sophia Charlotte Taylor, one silver Papbots with spoon, one small silver cream-jug, one half-dozen tea-spoons and coral.

To my daughter, Elizabeth Sophia Denison, one Silver Porringer, one silver Marrow-spoon.

Signed: Sophia Taylor. Thomas T. Gauvin, and J.S. Hossack, witnesses.

Note: The latter part of the above is an abstract, as the original is too verbose.

With the death of Sophia Taylor Denison came to a close the era of the first generation of Denisons in York, later Toronto. As many of my documents have dealt with the mistake in Captain John Denison's will, and his son, George's insatiable desire to grab everything, George Denison appears in a rather bad light. On the contrary he was

a fine sort of person in every other respect, an unforgettable personage, a distinguished soldier, an excellent horseman, a good father and a loving husband. Mrs. Jocelyn Brock of London, England tells this interesting story about George.

"One day, Elizabeth Sophia Denison (later wife of John Fennings Taylor the Elder) was entertaining a prospective suitor in the drawing-room. The young man seems to have been very curious to find out Elizabeth Sophia's age. He suggested that they look at the old family Bible, and as they came upon the fly-leaf with the record of her birth, she admonished him not to look. However, he forcibly took the Bible from her, and in the struggle that ensued, she grasped the forbidden page and tore it from the Holy Book, and then ran sobbing with it from the room. On discovering what had happened her brother, George, was furious. He entered the drawing-room, picked the young man up by the scuff of the neck and an unmentionable part of the trousers, and escorted him out into the garden, where he administered a horsewhip mercilessly. This is how justice was carried out in those far-off days. No police court proceedings followed."

However, my late father-in-law, Magistrate Jones, in his book, *Pioneer Crimes and Punishments*, tells of George Denison being haled into court on April 23, 1817, and on being directed to find surety for his good behaviour, George made use of disrespectful and abusive language, and was committed to goal until he paid £100 fine. George Denison was the type of man, who, if attacked by a wild bull in a field, would promptly spring upon the animal's back, and beat the beast into subjection with a stout club.

George Denison was a clever horseman, as clever a horseman in his younger days as ever mounted a steed, and to the last day of his life a splendid whip.

George Denison's first wife was Esther Borden Lippincott, whom he married on Dec. 18, 1806 at her home in Richmond Hill, Ontario. The ceremony was performed by the curate or rector of St. James'. She was only fifteen years old. They obtained their marriage licence by going to see Mr. Stanton, the Issuer of Marriage Licences at York. Dr. Scadding says his office was a structure of the secondary brick period, and that it was situated on Peter Street. George Denison and Esther Borden Lippincott went to see Mr. Stanton on Dec. 11, 1806.

When the War of 1812-14 broke out, having only sixty men to do the work, George Denison cut Dundas Street through the forest from Garrison Common to Lambton Mills, enabling communication between these two points to be maintained throughout the war.

His father, John Denison, was Captain of the 3rd York Militia at the time. George and his brothers were privates. Thomas John Denison and Charles Denison, his brothers, were present at the famous Battle of Queenston Heights. The former aimed the gun from the battery that sank at midstream a frigate loaded with Americans, drowning them to a man; the latter got a ball through his hat, while picking off the sharp-shooter who killed General Brock. Charles became an ensign in the 3rd York as of Dec. 25, 1812, having been a private in Cameron's Company. Thomas John Denison became a supernumerary ensign in the 3rd York, Apr. 8, 1813, having been a private in Heward's Company. George, on the same date, became a supernumerary ensign, having been a sergeant in his father's Company, and having joined Ridout's Company Oct. 16, 1812.

George Denison was sent from York to Army Headquarters at the Niagara Frontier with a large sum of money (about \$40,000.) in his saddle-bags. This was to be used as army pay. As he approached the town of St. David's, he met a dragoon galloping at full speed towards him. The dragoon asked if he was the one with the large sum of money. At first he was inclined to deny it, but he was told that the enemy had captured St. David's, and was coming his way, and that he must return at once. Two more dragoons came in sight, chased by a party of enemy cavalry. George turned his horse's tail to the enemy and fled. This is the only record of a Denison running away from the foe, and even at that it was to save \$40,000. of His Majesty's army pay.

On April 27, 1813, an enemy fleet anchored off Toronto. Fourteen U.S. ships rode the waves near the Harbor, and more than 1600 American troops invaded. On this fateful day George Denison was sent with a party of men to burn the shipping in the harbour to prevent it from falling into enemy hands. While he was heatedly arguing with a naval officer who was refusing to have the torch applied to his ship, they were all taken prisoner. The rest of George's family were also taken prisoner, and remained prisoners for six months.

Here are a number of examples taken at random from Sophia Denison's memorandum book. The writing is a true copy of hers; as nearly exact a facsimile as I can make it with a spiko on a stencil. The watermark on the paper of her memorandum book is "I LINDA DALE"

January 1st Memorandum Book 1829
 14 Mrs George Denison made me
 a present of a handsome lace Cap
 On the 12th Dec^r 1828 Mrs Geo Denison
 made me a present of 8 3/4th black
 Lustring for a dress — on Jan^r 8th 1829 x dress
 Mrs Geo Denison made me a present
 of a handsome Silver Thimble.
 On Christmasday Dec^r 25th 1828 I dined
 with my daughter Elizabeth Sophia
 she made me a present of a handsome
 lace Cap and the day before the next.

July 7th 1838

My son George J Denison gave
 me a handsome brown silk
 Umbrella.

May 25th 1835

I lent my son Thom John Denison £2..10..

On Feb^r 17-1829 Mrs Geo Denison
 made me a present of a black Bombazette
 Petticoat — and below from the ending of an old letter.
 and believe ~~you~~

Sincerely friend

J. Denison

THE DENISONS WERE CHURCH BUILDERS

Besides building for themselves very fine old homesteads, the Denisons were also church builders. Needless to say, all the churches were of the Anglican Faith, and there is no record of a Denison confessing any other religion.

In the early days of these records, the need for churches was very great. In 1801, there was no church and no clergyman, as related earlier. The Denisons observed divine service in the home, and two family Bibles exist from which they read aloud, each taking a turn at reading. In 1857, the Denisons built The Denison Church, or as they called it, St. George's Chapel, Dovercourt. It was a pretty little ecclesiastical structure which stood on the north side of Churchill Avenue opposite the broad handsome thoroughfare, Lakeview Avenue. St. George's Chapel was built on the grounds of Old Dovercourt, slightly to the east of it. It was really a country church with no parish or ecclesiastical district assigned to it. It was erected by the Denisons with a view to providing a family place of worship, and at the same time ample accommodation for such strangers or visitors who cared to attend. Fifty people could be comfortably seated within its walls, and more than that number by recourse to chairs. There was a small chancel seating twelve, a communion table, and a reading-desk. For many years after it was built, the only other Anglican place of worship within some miles was the chapel of Old Trinity College, which was only open to visitors on Sunday mornings. In 1857, the only other structures in that entire, now thickly-populated district were Dovercourt, St. George's Chapel, one or two small houses and a brick-fronted cottage, (Jameswood Cottage). With the building of St. Anne's Church the need for St. George's Chapel no longer existed, and it was pulled down in 1891.

Out of St. George's Chapel evolved St. Anne's Church, which was built in 1862, Colonel Richard Lippincott Denison being the first lay representative to the Synod of the Diocese in June of 1863. He was churchwarden of St. Anne's from 1863 to 1878. Others of the family holding the same office were John George Denison, Col. Clarence Denison, General Septimus Denison, Charles Leslie Denison, and Alfred Wright whose wife was a Denison.

In 1857, Colonel Robert Brittain Denison erected entirely at his own cost the Church of St. Stephen, which stands on College Street at Bellevue Avenue, and is famous as Toronto's first church to pioneer in Radio Broadcasting of its Services, a practice which continues to this day due to the outstanding ability of the Rev. Canon J.E. Ward, its Rector. In 1865, the entire edifice was destroyed by fire, but it was rebuilt to the original design. Inside may be seen a memorial to the memory of Colonel Robert Brittain Denison.

Among the promoters of the building of St. Phillip's Church, Spadina Avenue was Col. R.B. Denison, who is also recorded to have donated £12:10:0 Old Halifax Currency towards the building of St. Mark's Church, Toronto Junction.

Arthur Richard Denison was the architect of St. Andrew's Church, Toronto Island.

The family have always been connected with St. George's Church, John Street and probably assisted in its building.—Col. R.B. Denison was a churchwarden there the same year that he built St. Stephen's.

The latest edifice resembling a church built by the family is the Mortuary Chapel erected at St. John's Cemetery on the Humber in 1930 to the memory of Colonel George Taylor Denison the Second of Rusholme by his descendants.

This volume is the second of a series, and will likely be followed by a third volume. If there are sufficient members of the family desiring me to continue to give them a copy of more of the records which I have collected,

Richard Lenton Denison, 191 Dawlish Avenue,
Toronto, 12, Ontario,
Canada.