

I N V E N T O R Y

MECKLENBURG / MIDLAND DISTRICT

COURT OF QUARTER SESSION MINUTES - 4 VOLUMES

14 April 1789 to 16 July 1790  
16 Jan. 1793 to 14 Apr. 1796  
(?) July 1796 to 22 Apr. 1800  
7 April 1813 to 23 Jan. 1816  
and marriage oaths 1794, 1804, 1827.

LUNEBURG / EASTERN DISTRICT

COURT OF QUARTER SESSIONS MINUTES - 1 VOLUME

15 June 1789 - 30 Jan. 1802.

From 1899 to 1901, Adam Shortt published the Minutes of the Court of Quarter Sessions of Mecklenburg in the Queen's Quarterly. There are numerous footnotes but Shortt makes it clear that he did not print the complete minutes. Shortt also notes that the minutes for 1791 - 3 and January 1804 to January 1807 are missing.

The present location of the manuscript minutes July 1800 to January 1813 is not known. The following list is of the minutes published in the Queen's Quarterly:

VOLUME VI

July 1899	p. 51, 14	Apr. 1789	- 12	Jan. 1790
Oct. 1899	p. 137, 13	Apr. 1790	-	July 1796
Jan. 1900	p. 243,	Sept. 1796	- 10	Oct. 1797
Apr. 1900	p. 324, 23	Jan. 1798	- 28	Apr. 1801

VOLUME VII

July 1900	p. 65, 30	Apr. 1801	- 27	Apr. 1803
Oct. 1900	p. 145, 1	June 1803	- 23	Apr. 1811
Jan. 1901	p. 223, 25	Apr. 1811	- 24	Apr. 1815

THE DISTRICTS OF UPPER CANADA

Proclamation of Lord Dorchester, 24 July 1788, created 4 districts in what was to become Upper Canada:

1) Luneburg, 'bounded on the east by the eastern limit of a tract lately called or known by the name of Lancaster, protracted northerly and southerly as far as our said Province extends, and bounded westerly by a north and south line, intersecting the mouth of the river Gananoque, now called the Thames, above the rifts of the St. Lawrence, and extending southerly and northerly to the limits of our said province, therein comprehending the several towns or tracts called or known by the names of Lancaster, Charlottenburg, Cornwall, Osnabruck, Williamsburg, Matilda, Edwardsburg, Augusta, and Elizabethtown'.

2) Mecklenburg, extending from the western limits of Luneburg to a north and south line intersecting the mouth of the River Trent at its discharge "into the head of the bay of Quinty and therein comprehending the several towns or tracts or known by the names of Pittsburg, Kingstown, Ernestown, Fredericksburg, Adolphustown, Marysburg, Sophiasburg, Ameliasburg, Sydney, Thurlow, Richmond & Camden.

3) Nassau, extending westerly from Mecklenburg "to a north and south line intersecting the extreme projection of Long Point into the lake Erie", and

4) Hesse, comprehending "all the residue of our said Province in the western or inland parts thereof: of the entire breadth thereof from the southerly to the northerly boundary of the same."

The four original districts--renamed in the opening session of the first parliament of Upper Canada by 32 Geo. III, c.8, the 'Eastern', 'Midland', 'Home', and 'Western' districts--had, by 1 January 1800, been increased by subdivisions to eight, the Johnstown, Niagara, London and Newcastle districts having been thus formed. These eight districts are described in the Act 38 Geo. III c. 5. At the same time the number of counties was increased and in some cases their boundaries were changed. The territories contained in these districts in 1800 were as follows:

EASTERN DISTRICT - Counties of Glengarry, Stormont, Dundas, Prescott, Russell.

JOHNSTOWN DISTRICT Counties of Grenville, Leeds, Carleton, (Carleton county, then altogether west of the Rideau River, including part of the present Carleton, Lanark, and part of Renfrew, was later divided into the counties of Carleton and Lanark by 4 Geo. IV, c.5.)

MIDLAND DISTRICT Counties of Frontenac (to which was added at this time the old county of Ontario), Lenox and Addington, Hastings, Prince Edward, 'with all that tract of country which lies between the district of Johnstown and a line drawn north sixteen degrees west from the northwest angle of the township of Rawdon, till it intersects the northern limits of the province, together with all the islands in the Ottawa River, wholly or in greater part opposite thereto'...and so on.

It was not until 1849 that the County succeeded the District as a division for municipal and judicial purposes. From the formation of the districts in 1788 until 1841 the management of local affairs in each district was committed to the District Court of General Quarter Sessions of the Peace, composed of magistrates appointed by the Governor or Lieutenant Governor in Council. The system of municipal government by appointed justices was, of course, of British origin, where, until 1835, the rural districts of England were governed by the absolute patriarchal sway of the justices of the peace. But this system had also been introduced and developed in the American colonies; the Loyalists would therefore be accustomed to such a system. The powers of these courts were many and varied, and included much of the work later (after 1841) entrusted to municipal councils.

Adapted from the article by George W. Spragge, reprinted in Profiles of a Province (Ontario Historical Society, 1967).