

Looking back... with Alun Hughes

DANIEL HAZEN, SURVEYOR OF GRANTHAM TOWNSHIP

The road network in St. Catharines is notoriously confusing — survey roads with 65° and 25° intersections, winding Indian trails, inconsistent downtown streets, the Queen Elizabeth Way and its service roads, Third Welland Canal roads, and impossible intersections like Geneva/Niagara/Queenston/St. Paul Streets.

The responsibility for this mess is shared by many. One who has to take a share of the “blame” is Daniel Hazen, who performed the original survey of Grantham Township in 1788. It was part of a 21-month crash program of surveys to provide land for refugee settlers following the War of American Independence. It was carried out under the supervision of Philip Frey, a Loyalist of Swiss descent. This article will first consider Hazen’s surveying activities, especially in Grantham, then examine his life in general.

The Philip Frey Surveys

The main British presence locally during wartime was at Fort Niagara on the east bank of the Niagara River. A dependence on imported supplies created a major provisioning problem, which led to Loyalist farmers being allowed to occupy the west bank in 1780/81 on a four-mile strip of land purchased from the Mississauga. The “Settlement at Niagara” was surveyed and mapped by Allan McDonnell in 1783.

The war ended in the same year, and there arose an urgent need to provide land for Loyalist refugees, disbanded troops, former Rangers and Natives. An area of almost three million acres extending to the Thames River was purchased from the Mississauga in 1784, and a tract 12 miles wide along the Grand River was given to the Six Nations under Joseph Brant. A partial survey in what became Newark Township was carried out by William Tinling in 1784, but there were no significant surveys until Frey’s arrival.

Frey was appointed as a Deputy Surveyor in 1784, and in January 1785 was assigned to Detroit and Niagara. He went to Detroit first, and did not reach Niagara until 1786. He carried out some surveys that year, but they were probably confined to areas where settlers were established (e.g. along Chippawa Creek). Formal surveys did not commence until June 1787, almost four years after the war ended; the delay in

surveys resulted in a significant amount of squatter settlement.

The first township to be laid out was Township No. 1 (later Newark and Niagara) in the summer of 1787. Assisting Frey was Augustus Jones, who went on to become Upper Canada’s leading surveyor prior to 1800. At first townships were identified by number; they were not officially named until after Lieutenant-Governor Simcoe’s arrival in 1792.

Later surveys in 1787 included Township No. 2, Stamford, and the first concessions of Louth, Clinton, Grimsby, Saltfleet and Barton. Township No. 3, Grantham, was surveyed early in 1788. Other surveys that year were Bertie, Crowland, Willoughby, Thorold and Pelham, and inland concessions from Louth to Barton. Finally Binbrook was surveyed early in 1799, making 14 townships in all. Some townships, like Niagara and Stamford, were laid out in full, but others, like Pelham and Thorold, only in part.

The Survey System

The method of survey was the front-and-rear system, which was unique to the Niagara Peninsula, and was one of several systems found in Ontario. The townships were modelled in part on the 6 x 6 mile townships of New England. Each township was divided into 100-acre parcels or lots arranged in rows or concessions. The concessions were 50 chains deep (1 chain = 66 feet) and the lots 20 chains across; one-chain road allowances were placed on each concession line and every other lot line. The partial lots along the shoreline or along major rivers were called broken fronts.

The baseline was surveyed first (usually it ran parallel to the shoreline), followed by the township outline; then the lot lines, the survey party moving back and forth like a shuttle in a loom. The front and rear of each concession was posted or blazed, but the concession lines themselves were not surveyed. The basic instruments were compass and chain.

Though the lots were always 100 acres, the Peninsula townships were not laid out identically, as the following examples illustrate:

1. Louth: east-west concessions, rectangular lots oriented north-south,
2. Niagara: north-south concessions, rectangular lots oriented east-west,
3. Grantham: angled concessions, parallelogram lots oriented north-south.

Daniel Hazen's Surveys

The first recorded work by Hazen was on the survey of Stamford, probably in November or December 1787; the survey party was led by Augustus Jones. An entry in the expense account (possibly drawn up much later by Jones) states: "Daniel Hazen has trouble in examining the sworn line, the account approved by Mr. Burch." The amount was £3 10s New York currency.

In late December 1787 the urgent need for surveys forced Frey to place three parties in the field (though formal approval did not arrive until the end of March). The parties were led by Augustus Jones, Jesse Pawling and Daniel Hazen, so when Hazen surveyed Township No. 3, or Grantham, in the first three months of 1788 it was as party chief. The Grantham survey is dealt with in detail in the next section.

Following Grantham, Hazen worked under Augustus Jones on the survey of Clinton from April 1 to 24, 1788. He then resumed responsibility for his own survey party, first in Willoughby from April 27 to June 3, then in Crowland from June 20 to January 22, 1789. The Willoughby and Crowland surveys were partial, confined to settled concessions fronting on Chippawa Creek; the basic township survey was done by Thomas Welch in 1795. Hazen's local surveying career basically ended with Crowland, though he did do some work after that, e.g. Wainfleet in 1796.

In the late 1790s Hazen moved to Long Point and is sometimes credited with surveying Walsingham Township. That claim is uncertain, and if Hazen was involved it was under the supervision of others (likely William Hambly or Thomas Welch). However he did do some surveying in Walsingham and neighbouring Woodhouse, possibly even as late as 1827 (at age 72).

The Grantham Township Survey

The Grantham survey was executed in standard front-and-rear fashion, but was unique (until Caistor was surveyed) in that the lot and concession lines did not intersect at right angles. The baseline was drawn parallel to the Lake Ontario shoreline, presumably to

avoid the creation of awkward broken-front lots. The precise angle of the baseline was a bearing of S65°W.

Hazen started in the north-west corner of the township, alongside Township No. 1, which had just been surveyed, and proceeded south along the odd-numbered lot lines and north along the even numbered ones. He recorded in his field notes and marked on the ground distances of 51 chains (50 chains for the lot, one chain for the concession road allowance). At the north end of each lot line he turned S65°W for 22 chains, equivalent to an east-west shift (or lot width) of 19.94 chains (i.e. 19 chains, 94 links). The width should have been 20 chains, but this would have required an angle of 65.38° or a distance of 22.07 chains, neither of which was easily measureable with the equipment available. Therefore, 65° and 22 chains were convenient round numbers that simplified field operations and at the same time produced a close approximation to the desired result.

At the south end he moved S65°W for 22.50 chains, equivalent to an east-west shift of 20.39 chains, this to provide space for a road allowance required on every second lot line. Hazen does not seem to have surveyed the road allowances himself.

Clearly the Grantham survey differed from the norm in various ways: the "oblique" orientation of the concession lines; the parallelogram-shaped lots; the 19.94 chain lot width, creating lots of just less than 100 acres; and the 0.45 chain road allowances along the lot lines. To be fair, these probably weren't Hazen's decisions.

Present-day St. Catharines does not coincide with Grantham; it omits a portion east of the Fourth Welland Canal (now included in Niagara-on-the-Lake), and includes the eastern part of Louth. (For information about the growth of St. Catharines see my previous article in the 'Looking Back' series entitled "The Evolution of St. Catharines as a Municipality," published in September 2008.)

The survey lasted from December 27, 1787 to March 31, 1788, amounting to 96 days at a total cost of £62 14s 2d. Hazen himself billed for 96 days @ 4s = £19 4s. Assuming that 90 days were spent actually surveying, and given that the total length of the survey lines was 10,720 chains, or 134 miles, the average rate of progress was 120 chains or 1.5 miles per day, which is not bad considering that the survey took place in winter, the area was a wilderness of forest and swamp, dissected by ravines, and the Niagara Escarpment had to be crossed on almost every lot line.

Hazen's field notes are the only ones to survive from the Philip Frey surveys. They contain measurements, references to streams, swamps and the "mountain," (the Escarpment), plus an unexplained reference to a "proportion of survey in 1786." The survey party included various chain bearers and axemen, probably local settlers. The field notes are not originals, for they contain errors and corrections that make no sense for notes recorded in the field.

But Hazen did not survey the complete township. Lot line 23 (the western boundary) was not surveyed, and it was left for subsequent surveyors (or even settlers) to mark off a distance of 0.50 chains. As has been previously explained, this was equivalent to an east-west shift of 0.45 chains, which when subtracted from 20.39 gave a consistent lot width of 19.94 chains. But more importantly, twelve lots in the Merritton area were left unsurveyed. Regarding this, the field notes state: "the 10 Mile Creek people got a grant of No. 8, 9, 10 and 11 in the 8th, 9th and 10th concession which they wanted laid out another way therefore omitted." The settlers in question were two each of Bessey, Read, Newkirk and Ball. Whatever happened, the area was subsequently laid out in conformity with the rest of the township.

"Promiscuous" settlers were a persistent problem for Frey's surveyors. Ideally the land should have been subdivided prior to settlement, and the lots selected at random, so that no one had preferential treatment (as was the case in the Kingston area). But this did not happen in the Niagara Peninsula, where surveys were seriously delayed and provisions were available on a sliding scale for three years only. The result was a rash of squatter settlement, especially in the east along the Niagara River and north along the Lake Ontario shoreline. Victualling lists drawn up in 1786 group them in three districts: Murray's (mainly Grantham), Tenbroek's (mainly Niagara) and Burch's (mainly Stamford). Squatters built cabins, cleared land, and many had been farming for three years or more before surveyors arrived. They did not take kindly to surveyors carving out lot lines that sometimes ran right through their farms.

Daniel Hazen's Early Years

Hazen was born on August 10, 1755, possibly in Massachusetts; his family moved to Sussex County, New Jersey when he was a boy. He served for six years in the 1st. Batallion, New Jersey Volunteers during the American Revolutionary War, possibly as a sergeant. He is said to have fought in two battles in 1781, Eutaw Springs and Yorktown, and to have been

captured twice and escaped both times. Writing much later, in 1815, he said: "In February 1777 I left everything that was near and dear to me, I went to New York and joined the British army, was shot at for sixpence a day, and taken prisoner by the rebels, pulled about from post to pillar, risked my life when running from them when marching along the road from one prison to another, for about seven years together, for the sake of my Sovereign Lord the King"

In 1782 he married Anna Ward Carty in New Jersey, and in 1786 came to Canada. A 1796 petition claimed he brought five children with him (though genealogical data suggests only three); he eventually had six sons and three daughters. Where he was initially is uncertain, though some say he came to Niagara via New Brunswick; he is not included in any early provisioning lists in Niagara. He began surveying two years later and very soon had his own survey party, so presumably he had previous experience, but the details are unknown.

As a Loyalist, he received a grant of four lots in the broken-front concession on the south bank of the Chippawa Creek in Crowland, a total of 460 acres. This was land he had presumably surveyed himself in 1789. It is not clear when he occupied it, but his name appears on township plan of 1795, and he received his Crown patent in March 1797.

However, in December, less than nine months later, he sold his land to James Macklem. Ironically the property description in the instrument refers incorrectly to the first concession. It may have been called that originally, but the concessions in Crowland were renumbered by Surveyor-General D.W. Smith, at least as early as 1794. The error meant that Hazen and his wife had to register a quit claim when Macklem sought to sell the land in 1824.

Having sold to Macklem, Hazen moved to Walsingham in Norfolk County. Two questions arise: why did he sell his land, and why did he leave civilization (comparatively speaking) for the wilds? One reason could be that Lieutenant-Governor Simcoe had longstanding plans for a military base and settlement at Long Point, and he did visit the area in 1795 (though he returned to Britain in 1796 before his plans could be implemented). But the main reason for Hazen's decision was expressed in a letter to Thomas Ridout, Surveyor-General on December 26, 1815: "...it is now the thirtyeth year since I came to Canada, all the settlers suffered much, and myself and family among them, I surveyed for Government about twenty-eight years ago, and waited twenty-five years

for my money, I had to sell my land I had in the Township of Crowland with a handsome improvement on it to get money to pay debts, that I contracted for necessities for my family when surveying, and then removed into the wilderness of Walsingham to my land there.”

The amount owed, as stated in Hazen’s petition to the Executive Council in July 1796, was £87 16s; he requested 1200 acres in lieu of payment. The Council could not do this, “but the petitioner is recommended to His Excellency’s consideration as a deserving subject.” A second petition was submitted in October, stating that he had already received 400 acres; he requested more at Long Point, and the Council ordered an extra 200 acres plus family lands. This did not stop Hazen from sending a grovelling letter to Surveyor General David W. Smith in May 1797:

“Honored Sir

As I am not like to get any pay from Quebec for surveying, I take the liberty to trouble Your Honor with a petition unto His Honor in Council, Beging Your Honors Pardon that I trouble Your Honor so much, and would at the same time Pray Your Honor to interceed for me to His Honor in Council and if His Honor Pleases to grant me land I should be very Happy to have Lots No. 12 & 13 in the 6th Concession and No. 12 & 13 in the 7th Conn. Walsingham if Vacant.

Honoured Sir
Your Honors Most
Obedient Humble Sert.
Daniel Hazen”

A third petition in the same month requested 1000 acres in lieu of payment; the Council was sympathetic, but it could only forward the account to the Secretary of State. There were other petitions also; the situation was evidently quite complex, and the details are uncertain. However, Hazen did acquire 400 acres in the centre of Walsingham, and no doubt more elsewhere.

Hazen’s Later Years

In Walsingham Hazen had to start from scratch. His land comprised lot 10 in the 5th concession and lot 11 in the 6th concession, each 200 acres in area. In 1815 he wrote: “I had to make a road about five miles through a heavy wooded tract of land, at my own expense to get to my land.” However he persevered, and his farm was the nucleus of what became the

Hazen Settlement (probably the future village of Spring Arbor, the name given to the post office).

Hazen soon became a pillar of the local community. He became a prominent member of Woodhouse Methodist Church, with a reputation for eloquent preaching. He regularly walked to seivices (17 miles as the crow flies); his wife Anna accompanied him for quarterly meetings. He was a member of various juries (including Grand Juries, sometimes as foreman) at the Courts of Quarter Sessions in the London District. In addition, he occupied various township offices in Walsingham, including Clerk, Collector and possibly Constable.

From about 1811, however, Hazen’s life began to unravel. In March he wrote to Surveyor General Thomas Ridout, requesting “deputation as Surveyor,” and expressing concern about errors in the survey of Walsingham by Hambly and Welch; if corrected it would cause the loss of “28 acres of land that I have cleared together with house, barn and orchard.” The matter was still unresolved five years later.

On July 1, 1815 Hazen was hauled before the Court of Quarter Sessions and fined £10 “for neglecting and refusing to enter into Bonds as Collector of Walsingham.” On September 15 he was fined 5s for contempt of court, and ordered to “do five days of work in the course of two weeks.” On July 13, 1816 he was fined £2/10 “for neglect of Duty and contempt of Court,” possibly his failure to perform statute labour on roads.

Part of the problem, as is evident in a long letter written to Ridout on December 26, 1815, is that Hazen fell afoul of one John Backhouse, a very important figure in the area. Backhouse was born in Yorkshire in 1755, came to New Jersey in 1791, and eventually to Grantham in 1794. There he rented land from Queenston merchant Robert Hamilton on the Twelve Mile Creek, and ran a major dairying operation. He subsequently petitioned for land, and was recommended by Simcoe. He was awarded 600 acres in Walsingham, and later received 600 more. He became a miller, a pillar of the Church of England, Justice of Peace, Militia Captain and Lieutenant Colonel.

Hazen served as an arbitrator in a dispute between Backhouse and Jacob Byard, and made the mistake of finding for the latter in the amount of £275. He also had some problem with Alexander Hutchinson, Backhouse’s son-in-law, over a stray mare. Two sentences say it all: “This arbitration and this stray

mare has made so much enmity in them towards me and my family it appears nothing is too bad for them to do towards me or my family that is in their power to accomplish Hutchinson and Backhouse has done all they could here in the neighbourhood to hurt me, and the cause is, the aforesaid arbitration and stray mare.” As chair of the Quarter Sessions, Backhouse was certainly in a position of power over Hazen.

Hazen goes on to complain about other matters, being called a Yankee during the War of 1812 (in which he served) and “a disaffected man” by Thomas Talbot. His sons had health problems, John and Caleb being unable to see at night, and John almost dying of mumps. Problems acquiring land were experienced by sons John and William, and his daughter Lydia’s land was sold without her knowledge by her husband Luther Fuller, who then abandoned her; she failed to gain recompense. How these matters were resolved is unknown, though things may have improved later.

Hazen was nominated as a candidate for The Legislature in 1824, but was unsuccessful. According to the inscription on his gravestone (which has since disappeared) Hazen died at the Hazen Settlement in 1845, aged 90 years, 3 months and 19 days.

Daniel Hazen was a very significant figure in the early history of St. Catharines, and by all accounts had quite a hard time of it over much of his long life. Yet his name is not commemorated in any way, with no road, no building, no nothing named after him. He is deserving of recognition.

Principal Sources: (in addition to those cited in the text):

Credits: maps and layout (Loris Gasparotto); editing (John Burtniak).

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