

THOMAS ROY – SOURCES OF ARCHIVAL RECORDS

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- 1834** Letter, James Kerby, Fort Erie Mills, to Lt. Col. William Rowan, Secy. to Lieut. Gov. Sir John Colborne, 15 July 1834. Introduces Mr. Roy 'from Scotland', who has come to Canada with a view to settling and to make himself as useful as he can as an engineer. Roy has had the honour of addressing the Lieut. Gov. recently on the improvement of Roads in this province, a plan of which he submitted through Rowan. Appears to be personally known to several of Kerby's acquaintances in London. Came to his attention when Roy voluntarily offered his services to ascertain the practicability of a ship canal to avoid the rapids from below Kerby's mill to Fort Erie.
(National Archives of Canada [hereafter NAC], U.C. Sundries, RG 5, A-1, pp. 78074-75)
Remarks on Mr. Richardson's Pamphlet: and on the improvement of York Harbour by Thomas Roy, 12 August 1834. Manuscript
(Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Map Library, Toronto? Peterborough?)
Roy commissioned by some Toronto businessmen to survey the line of country between Toronto and Lake Simcoe for a canal or railway, 23 Sept. 1834. He proposed a railway. Related letters, accounts, reports and plans dating to 1834-36 are found in the William Allan Papers (S-123) at the Toronto Reference Library [hereafter TRL].
- 1835** Letter, Roy to Mayor of Toronto, applying for the position of engineer to report on the harbour and peninsula cut, 6 Mar. 1835.
(City of Toronto Archives [hereafter CTA], RG 1, Series B) His report on condition of Toronto Harbour, dated 31 Mar. 1835, survives also. (CTA, RG1, Series B)
Resolution of Toronto City Council to appoint Roy engineer in charge of taking the levels of the streets in the City, 16 May 1835. (CTA, RG 1, Series A) In a letter to the Committee of Council on Paving and Draining, 28 Sept. 1835, Roy resigned on account of the appointment of Mr. Blevins as superintendent of excavation, and obstacles put in his path by various officials.
(CTA, RG 1, Series B)
Roy examined practicability of taking water for a mill from Helliwells' brewery on the Don River, near Toronto, to the Don Bridge, 29 June 1835.
(William Helliwell Journals, Todmorden Mills Museum, Toronto, X-974.468)
Printed report by Roy to the Directors of the Erie and Ontario Railway Company on the country between the Welland River and the Niagara River at or below Queenston, 12 Nov. 1835 (Niagara Historical Society)
- 1836** Roy ascertained the fall of water on Don River near Toronto from Playter's Line to the log across Eastwood & Skinners' tail race, 13 Feb. 1836. (William Helliwell Journals, Todmorden Mills Museum, Toronto, X-974.468)
Communication from Roy on bringing water into Toronto presented to City Council, 18 Feb. 1836.
(CTA, RG 1, Series A)

Letter from Roy, Peter Street, Toronto, to Lieut. Gov. Sir Francis Bond Head, 1 Sept. 1836. Submits for consideration his thoughts on the lines of communication by which the interior of the country might be opened up; various measurements of elevation made in the different parts of the Canadas; and a study on the structure and position of the less known parts of the country.
(NAC, Upper Canada Sundries, RG 5, A 1, pp. 92711-13)

- 1837** Report and Plan by Roy of a Ship Canal from Niagara River to join the Welland Canal at the summit of the mountain, 6 Jan. 1837.
(Report in OA, MS 393 A-4-b; plan in NAC, NMC 21731)

Letter, Roy to George Gurnett, Mayor of Toronto, 5 Mar. 1837, enclosing copy of his letter to Hon. W.H. Draper, M.P.P., 23 Feb. 1837, expressing dismay with House of Assembly's resolution pledging £100,000 towards the proposed railway from Toronto to Lake Huron, which is a great mistake, since the line to Lake Simcoe is better.
(CTA, RG 1, Series B)

Scientific paper by Roy, *On the Ancient State of the North American Continent*, sent to the Geological Society of London was read before the Society
(*GSL Proceedings*, 2, 1833-38:537-38)

Upper Canada, House of Assembly. *Journal. Appendix 1837/8*
[Printed at the Patriot Office, 1838] "Report of Thomas Roy for Improving the Lake Shore road," pp. 382-383.

Plan and Section of a Ship Canal from Lake Erie to the Niagara River at the Village of Waterloo; Plan of a Canal between Fort Erie and Waterloo, [1837].
(NAC, NMC 21732)

- 1839** *British Colonist* [Toronto], 14 Aug. 1839, noticed handsome premises of Ross & Macleod at [SE corner] King and Yonge streets, Toronto, erected to Roy's designs.

Sketch by Roy to illustrate a report on the state of the bridge over the Rouge River [just east of Toronto] and the roads approaching it, "by instruction of the Commissioners for improving the East Road," Sept. 1839
(NAC, Executive Council of U.C. State Papers, RG 1, E-3, v. 76, pp. 36-52)

John G. Howard, architect, Toronto attended a meeting 30 Sept. 1839 about raising the spire for St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Toronto; Roy had made a plan also.
(TPL, Howard Papers, L-26)

Letter, Roy to Governor-in-Chief. Charles Poulett Thomson, 30 Nov. 1839. Says he had travelled extensively in the U.S. before arriving in Canada in 1834. Includes observations on canals, transport, railways, climate, emigration, resources, etc. Urges closer connections between Maritimes and Upper and Lower Canada for intelligent and defensive development of their complementary resources. At the outbreak of 1837 Rebellion 400-600 labourers were working under his direction. Work stopped then and he supervised about 200 of the men engaged in improving fortifications.
(NAC, Upper Canada Sundries, RG 5, A 1, pp 128002-128037)

- 1840** Communication from Roy on supplying water to Toronto brought before City Council, 30

March 1840, and referred to a Select Committee (CTA, RG 1, Series A)

Plan and elevation by Roy for a "Breakwater Pier for the Front of the Proposed Embankment in the Harbour of Toronto," July 1840.
(CTA, PT-169-C, #7)

Plan of the Rondeau to accompany a Report by Roy upon the practicability of constructing a canal from thence to the River Thames, 12 Nov. 1840
(NAC, NMC 22090)

1841 Tender call, by Thomas Roy, for the construction of a wharf at the foot of Yonge St., Toronto. Plans and specifications may be seen at his house, 88 Yonge St., to January 4. (*Morning Star & Transcript* [Toronto], Jan. 2, 1841)

William Kerr, builder of the Yonge Street Wharf, asked J.G. Howard to take over supervision of the project, as Roy "had got himself out." 15 May 1841 (TPL, Howard Journals, L-26)

The Monthly Review, devoted to the Civil Government of Canada, a short-lived journal, published two pieces credited to Roy, and a third one by "a Civil Engineer of this Province," of which he was likely the author too. Vol. I, No. VI, June 1841, contained both a paper on road-making he addressed to a Committee of the Assembly on Turnpike Trusts (pp. 341-43), and "Toronto Harbour," a lecture read to the Toronto Mechanics' Institute (pp. 387-94). "A Civil Engineer's" article, "The relative Cost and Advantages of Macadamized, Plank and Timber Roads," appeared in Vol. I, No. V, May 1841, 312-17.

Roy published *Remarks on the Principles and Practices of Road-Making, as Applicable to Canada*. Toronto: H. & W. Rowsell, Printers. Advertisement for its sale at 1s 3p carried by *Chronicle & Gazette* [Kingston, U.C.], 28 July 1841.

Letter, Roy to Mayor and Corporation, City of Toronto, Nov. 6, 1841. Wants a correct north line on Front Street established before he begins work on William Ross's building at Front and Yonge streets.
(CTA, RG 1, Series B)

1842 Letter, Roy to editor of the *British Colonist* [Toronto], 16 Feb. 1842. On roadmaking. Does not have a high regard for plank roads.

Letter, Roy to Henry Sherwood, Mayor of Toronto, submitting his report on the levels on Church Street, 7 Mar. 1842
(CTA, RG 1, Series B)

Estimate by Roy for macadamizing Bay Street south of King Street, Toronto. 21 Mar. 1842
(CTA, RG 1, Series B)

Letter, Thomas Roy, C.E., to Henry Sherwood, Mayor, reporting on properties on King St., Market St., and Market Lane, Apr. 11, 1842.
(CTA, RG 1, Series B)

Roy met Charles Lyell, F.R.S. in Toronto, 14 June 1842. (Charles Lyell, *Travels in North America in the Years 1841-1842, etc.* New York: Wiley & Putnam, 1845, p. 85)

Designs and estimates for a proposed navigable canal from the deep part of the Humber [River, near Toronto] to Milton Mills, by Roy, July 1842.

(TRL, William Gamble Papers, S-246)

Roy died at his residence 28 July 1842

J. G. Howard attended Roy's funeral in the early evening, 29 July 1842.

(TPL, Howard Papers, L-26)

The Patriot [Toronto], 16 Aug. 1842, p3, c2. Death notice.

- 1845** The petition of Mrs. Jennet Roy was laid before the House of Assembly 22 Jan. 1845 for remuneration for her late husband's services in furnishing the Government with a geological section of the province. Canada, Legislative Assembly, *Journal*, Session 1844-45, Vol. 4, p. 189

With two important exceptions, the information above supplements that in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988, vol. VIII, pp. 760-61) and in an article, "Thomas Roy and his "Remarks on Roadmaking" (1841)," in the *Canadian Geotechnical Journal* (Vol. 25, no. 1, 1988, pp. 1-12), both written by Robert Legget.

The exceptions are corrections to Dr. Legget's pioneering work. He had speculated that Roy's roots were in New Brunswick. However, James Kerby's letter to the Lieut. Governor, 15 July 1834, reveals they were in Scotland, and that Roy was known in London too. Dr. Legget also thought Roy's survey for the Toronto & Lake Simcoe Railway probably introduced him "to the raised beaches above the present level of Lake Ontario, to which he then proceeded to devote such wide-ranging study." But Roy's letter to Governor-in-Chief Charles Poulett Thomson, 30 Nov. 1839, describes things happening in a different order: "After travelling extensively in the United States, I came over to Canada. Geological pursuits, more especially to investigate the former extent of the Great Lakes, was one object which I had in view."

Since 1982 the memory of Thomas Roy has been honoured by the Canadian Geotechnical Society through the presentation of an annual award to recognize outstanding contribution to the field of Engineering Geology in Canada.

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