

VISCOUNT CANADA

By J. G. Hanna, P.M. Montreal, May, 1948
Published in MASONIC LIGHT, Vol. 1, No. 9

I noted in the April issue of Masonic Light, your query, "Who is this Viscount Canada?, and how came he a Scot to select as a name that of Canada, which was then a French colony?"

It just happens that in January last, in proposing the Toast to the Visitors in my own lodge of Argyle - one of the Red lodges in Montreal, I happened to give some account of this Viscount Canada, and the masonic connection of his family, who curiously enough, were the original

Baronets of Nova Scotia

The title of Baronet was invented about 1612, for the purpose of raising funds for the royal extravagances of James I, and the sale of these honours brought in thousands of pounds to the royal exchequer.

In 1628, a Scottish expedition sponsored by the king, and organized by Sir William Alexander, landed at Port Royal, in the present province of Nova Scotia, and captured it from the French. A vast area of the neighbouring country then became subject to the English crown and was deeded to Sir William Alexander under the title of Nova Scotia. Several other Scottish gentlemen, including Sir William Alexander's son, also known as Sir William Alexander, were in the venture, and they became known as Baronets of Nova Scotia.

Sir William Alexander, Jr. remained in command of the colony until the peace of 1632 compelled the return of the possession to France, when he returned to Scotland with most of the settlers.

It was apparently during the absence of Sir William Alexander Jr., in Nova Scotia, that his father, also Sir William Alexander, was created Earl of Stirling and Viscount Canada. His son Sir William thereupon assumed the honorary title of Lord Alexander.

The interest of the Alexander family with Nova Scotia did not cease with their return to the old country, indeed the records indicate that they were active in the affairs of the New World for many years. In fact, Sir William Alexander Jr. now known as Lord Alexander, was granted by Order in Council under date of April 22nd, 1635, as his share of all the lands, "all the coast from the St. Croix River to its head, then across to the Kennebec and up to its head, and northward to Canada Great River.

It is probable that the title of Viscount Canada, selected by his father when created Earl of Stirling, was taken from this Canada Great River, now known as the St. Lawrence. Historians are of the opinion that the origin of the name "Canada" came from the Huron-Indian word "Kan-Nat-Ta," signifying "the villages," and alluded to the small Indian settlements which were scattered here and there along the banks of the St. Lawrence.

J.G. Hanna (P.M.)