

# ***The Wood You Have Delivered***

## **The Scots of Scarborough and the Forest**

D. B. McCowan, P. Eng.

The Scarborough Exhibition of the  
Scottish Diaspora Tapestry

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

Sept. 24, 2016

**[www.mccowan.org](http://www.mccowan.org)**

# Thinking Like Telford

- 2016 is Scotland's Year of Innovation, Architecture & Design
- *Thomas Telford Engineering Challenge* -- A Pilot Project for Senior Technological Design Students
- Senior Technological Design student teams were invited to design a 36-foot long wooden model of the central unsupported span of the Menai Suspension Bridge by which to hang at least 240 panels of the Scottish Diaspora Tapestry at the Scarborough exhibition

# Telford's Menai Bridge



Arguably the world's first modern suspension bridge, designed ca 1820

# The Teacher's Design



# Scarborough Exhibition of the Scottish Diaspora Tapestry



# What's Thomas Telford got to do with Scarborough?

- Thomas Telford had been an Eskdale stonemason's apprentice under the father of David, Andrew and Archibald Thomson.
- The Thomson brothers later settled right here near St. Andrew's, Scarborough, in about 1797.
- Telford probably knew the Thomson brothers very well and correspondence may well have passed between them across the Atlantic
- Sharing stories of their pathways to solving problems and achieving successes...

- ...in two very different worlds
- On the one hand, stonemason-farmers winning over a thickly forested wilderness on the frontier of European civilization
- And on the other, a stonemason-engineer at the leading edge of industrial and economic change
- What about the evolution of their critical and creative thinking skills which enabled their respective successes?

# **Before the Sheep...**

## **There Were... Sheep...**

### **Lots of ‘em... On Some Farms**

- In 1792 there were about 100 score of sheep in the entire parish of Cumnock, Scotland – at a guess, two score sheep per enlarged and improved farm, at a time when sheep were known to be displacing people
- According to his testament, in 1614 John McCowan had “fourteen score” sheep on his two farms in southwest Cumnock – Whitehill and Changue
- Progressive tenants such as John McCowan had the capacity to effect change, even without the landlord’s involvement

# Land Management Change 1700-1750

- Some of the McCowan farmers tenanted two or more adjacent farms in Cumnock – probably at their own insistence:
  - Robert McCowan, 1702 (Barmilkhill and Robertoun)
  - William McOwan, 1713 (Robertoun and Orchyardtoun)
  - David McCowan, 1728 (Little Kairn, Craighouse & Glengyron)
  - Hew McCowan, 1742 (Barmickhill and Orcharton)
  - Andrew McCowan, 1751 (Burnockmiln & Hillhead in Ochiltree)
- More pronounced farm consolidation efforts by the *landlord* began in earnest after 1750 -- the age of “Improvement” was now accelerating

# Tenant-Lead Farm Consolidation

- It was the working farmer who could first see the abundant fruits of individual effort and keeping cattle fenced.
- It was the rural communicant, in the spirit of individuality, who questioned religious dogma – they formed new churches.
- As "*Shrewd intelligent emigrants, mostly from the south of Scotland, quite capable of appreciating the best productions of his gifted mind, so that he [Rev. George in Scarborough, Canada] had a constant stimulus to study.*"
- Many middle class thinkers probably also influenced the Scottish enlightenment. Many more practiced the fundamentals such that enlightenment became real.
- Some of these were true innovators.

# The Cooperative Nature of Agricultural Improvement

- Mills and millers:
  - Hugh McCowan, Pennyfadzeochmiln, 1720s
  - Andrew McCowan, Burnockmiln, 1750s
  - Processing produce from the farms
- Wrights and masons
  - David McCowan, wright in Ochiltree, 1740s
  - Hugh McCowan, wright in Mauchline, 1760s
  - Hugh McCowan, wright in Ochiltree, 1770s
  - Construction of enclosures (dykes) and structures / machinery for the coal industry (for the burning of lime)
- The landlord
  - Financing for improvement at 6% / year was typical

# Men of Capital and the Dot Farm Boom

*I am inclined to think if Mr. [William] McCowan was in possession of Auchingilsy for a few years that the system of farming which he would follow upon this farm which may be considered in a state of nature [ie unimproved], would induce other active and enterprising farmers to follow his example with lands in a similar state, and in this way increase the value of Lord Bute's Estate.*

*Adam Crichton, Factor, 1825*

# James McCowan, 1773-1834

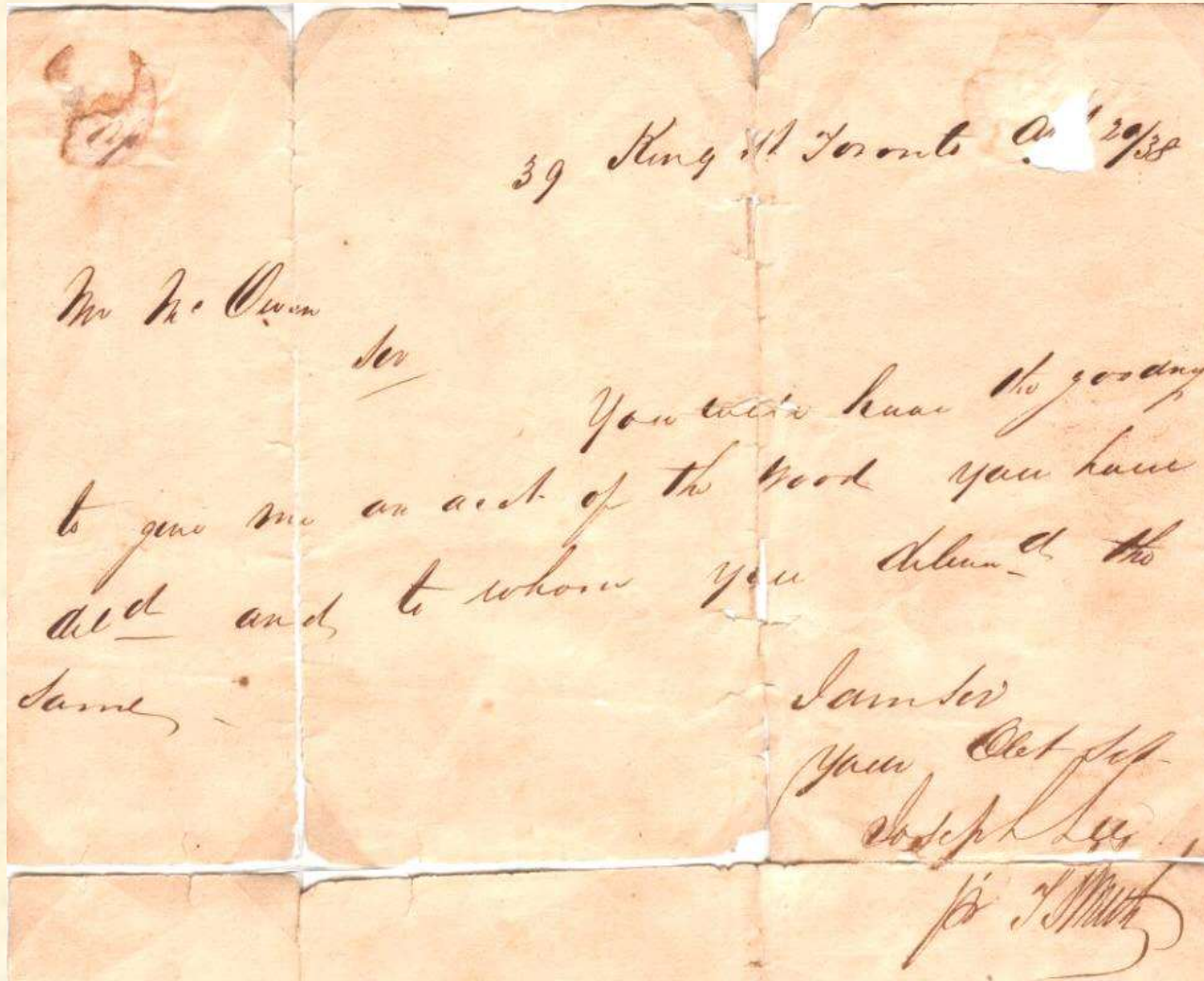
- 1797 at Garlaff coalworks: *“By the men belonging to the work and others employed thereat”*
- 1799: Emancipation of the coalminers – apparently including James McCowan
- 1799: Leaves Garlaff to take the lease of the Auchinbeg Coalworks in Lesmahagow, Lanarkshire
- Coalmaster, general contractor, grocer, farmer
- 1813: Erected one of the first steam engines in this part of the south Lanarkshire coalfield
- 1817: Installed an underground rail system
- Brought his large family to Scarborough in 1833

# **Energy: From Coal to Falling Water**

- This former coalminer and coalmaster knew the importance of energy
- The very steep Gates Gully ran through McCowan's rented farm between Kingston Road and Lake Ontario
- An extraordinarily high-powered sawmill could be built here

# The Wood You Have Delivered

McOwan Evidently had a Sawmill, 1838



# The Scarborough Panels

- Celebrating the relationship between Scottish settlers and the Ontario forest almost 200 years ago

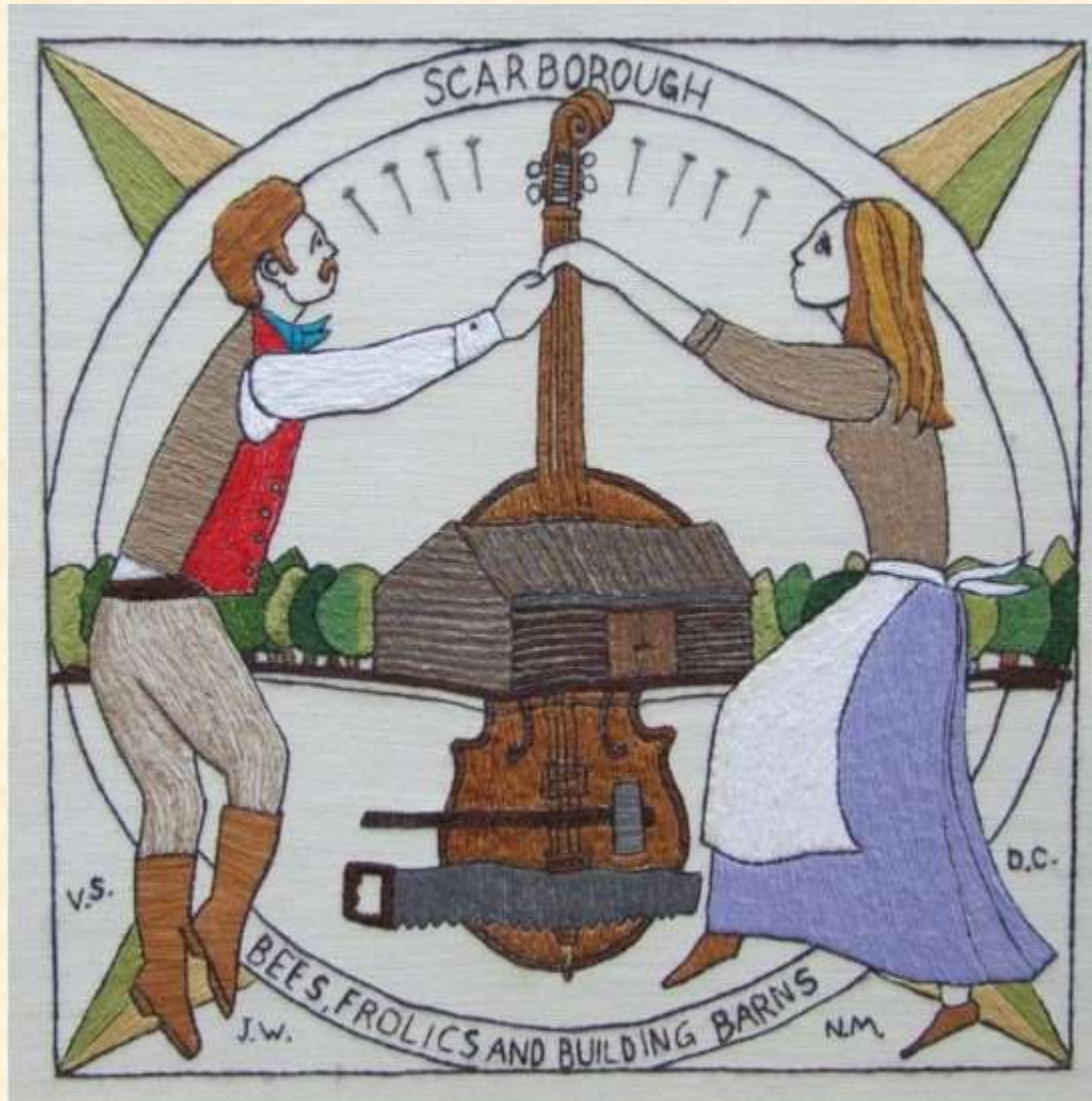
*From Croft to  
Clearing*



# Scarborough Logging Bee



# Bees, Frolics and Building Barns

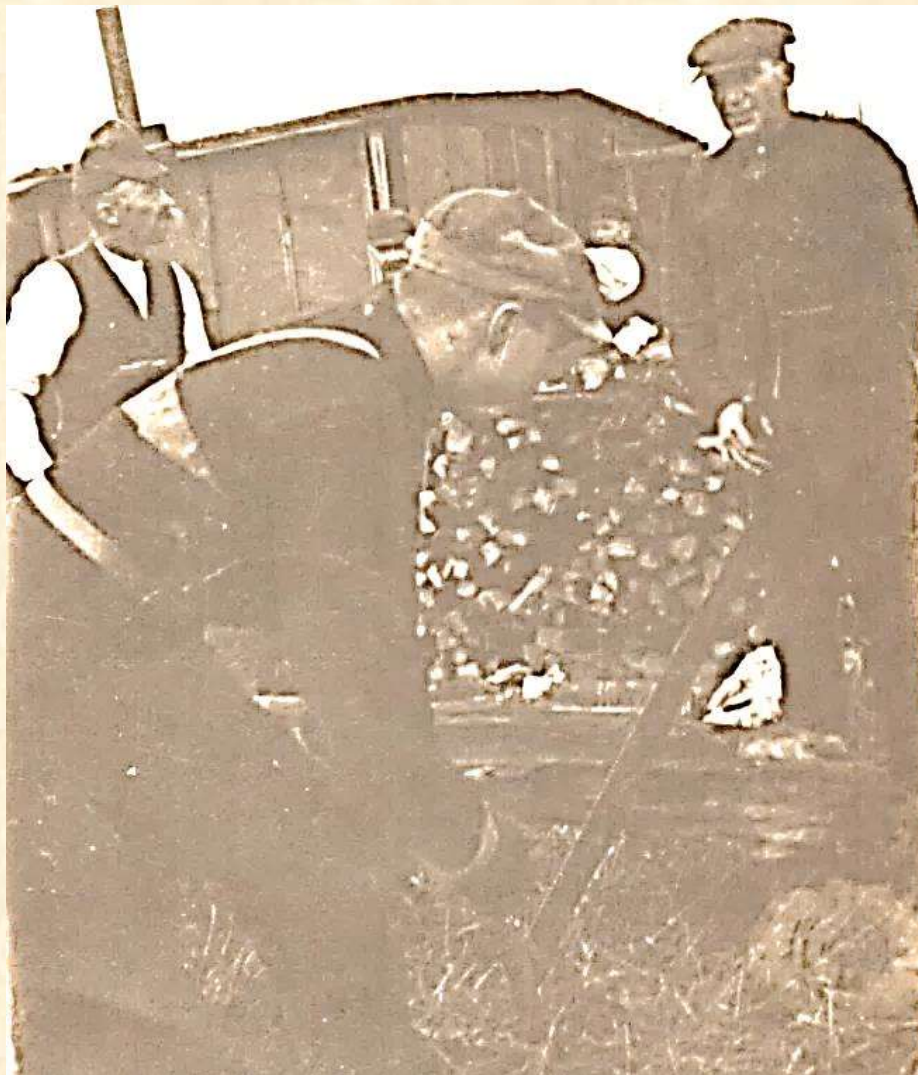


# Killed By a Falling Tree



# James Weir's Timber Tug

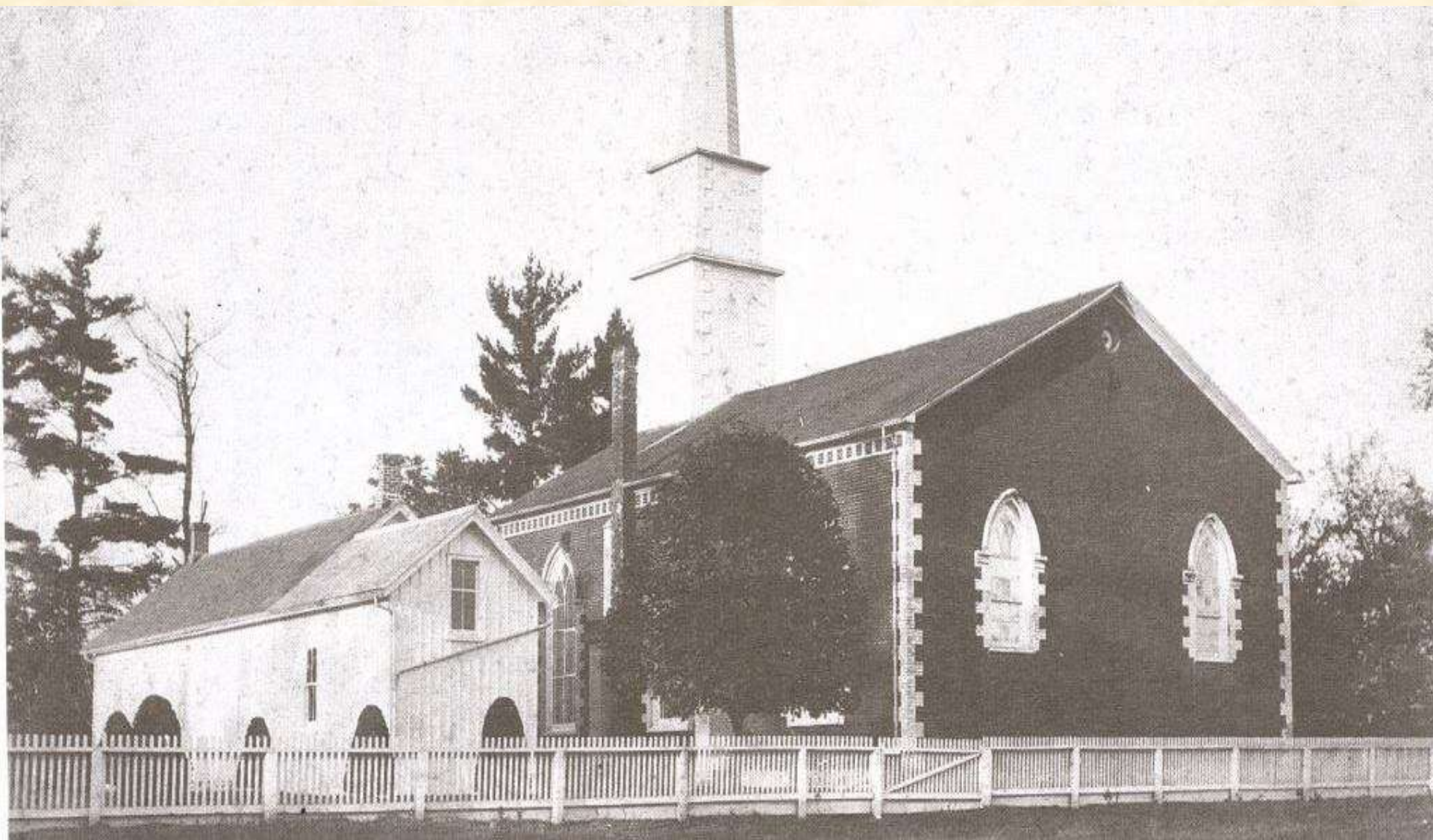




# William P. McCowan's Log House



Scarborough Jan 26  
 An agreement between W P  
 McBowen of Scarborough of the  
 first part and Jas Bishop  
 of Box Grove of the second part  
 W P McBowen of the first part  
 does agree to sell to Jas Bishop  
 of the second part all white  
 oak laying and standing  
 except one green stub near  
 the north east corner on  
 Lot No 13 born by Scarborough  
 for the sum of 160.00  
 One hundred and sixty Dollars  
 all timber to be removed by the first  
 of April 1893 any left after that date  
 Bishop of the second part has no  
 claim on W P McBowen  
 Jas Bishop





# The James McCowan Memorial Social History Initiative



Placing the Scottish-Canadian farm family  
within the larger context of their community

**[www.mccowan.org](http://www.mccowan.org)**

**Many thanks for your attention**

**Questions and Comments?**