

Sensebach Heritage

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A family history newsletter for:

Sinsabaugh Sensibaugh Sensenbaugh Sensebox
Sinsapaugh Sencabaugh Sencenbaugh Sencerbox
Sincebaugh Sencebaugh Sincerbeaux Sincerbox
Sensabaugh Sencibaugh Cincebeaux Sensaboy
Sensebaugh Cencebaugh Cincebox Senciboy
and other variations of the name

Pioneer Life on Prince Edward Island: Part I

by Kathie Sencabaugh

CHARLOTTETOWN, 8th June, 1876

Sir,

These questions are sent you, with the respectful request that you will answer as many of them as you can, and return the questions and answers to the undersigned. Stamps to pay postage are enclosed. It is not expected that any one will be able to give information on all subjects covered by these questions. The object is to collect everything of historical value relating to the early settlers of the Colony, to be preserved and utilized hereafter. The gentlemen engaged in this enquiry have no personal or pecuniary interest in the matter, further than the procuring of facts that may be useful for historical reference.

This brief set of instructions accompanied a questionnaire mailed in 1876 to certain elderly residents of Prince Edward Island. The precise number of questionnaires distributed is unknown, as is the precise number that were returned. Twenty-four of these questionnaires, however, survive today in the Provincial Archives of Prince Edward Island; and one of those surviving returns was completed by William Sencabaugh, son of William Sencabaugh the Loyalist.

The length and quality of the responses varies as widely as their place of origin. William Sencabaugh's answers fall somewhere in the middle. While nowhere near as detailed as the responses of his neighbor, John Brooks, a former schoolteacher, who covered both the front and the back of the pages, William's answers are much more informative than those of the laconic Wellington Compton, who tended to answer questions with an unadorned "Yes" or "No". William's questionnaire provides important biographical information, as well as images of pioneer life on Prince Edward Island.

Until his questionnaire came to light, those of us researching the Sencabaugh family had assumed that William Sencabaugh, Sr., had settled at Murray Harbour almost immediately after his marriage in 1788.

As his response to the first question indicates, William Sencabaugh, Jr., third son of the Loyalist William Sencabaugh and his wife, Ruhamah Hugh or Hughes, was born on January 31, 1796, not at Murray Harbour, but at Three Rivers, the name given to the area where the Montague, Brudenell, and Cardigan Rivers flow in close proximity to one another. In 1732 the Frenchman Jean Pierre Roma had established a farming and fishing operation in the area, which he named *Trois Rivieres*. In 1745 the British destroyed Roma's settlement, but the excellent location attracted new settlers toward the end of the eighteenth century. The Loyalist William Sencabaugh, as we now know, was one of these settlers, living at Three Rivers for a number of years before moving to Murray Harbour with his wife and three children in 1796. (See map on page 7).

In December of 1818, William Sencabaugh, Jr., married Elizabeth Street. They farmed

I was born in Three Rivers in January 1796 ... My parents and Hughs were refugees from the States, the time of [the] American war.

at Guernsey Cove, where they raised a family of seven or eight children. William also served three times as constable for Murray Harbour, in 1818, 1821, and 1825. The date of his death is uncertain, and his burial place is unmarked. With this questionnaire, however, we can now narrow the date of his death

to sometime between 1876, when he completed the survey; and 1881, when he fails to appear in the census.

My most sincere thanks go to Bea Irving of Prince Edward Island, who discovered William's survey among the hidden treasures of the Provincial Archives and alerted me to its existence. A transcription of William Sencabaugh's survey follows. The questions that William answered have been included in their entirety, together with the answers that William supplied. In the interests of clarity and ease of reading, punctuation and capitalization have been added, as well as the text in brackets.

1. Are you a native of P.E. Island?
2. Where and when were you born?

Yes, I am a native of the Island. I was born in Three Rivers in January 1796. In the spring following my parents moved to Murray Harbour. At that time there was only one family in the Harbour. Nicholas Hugh was his name. My parents and Hughs were refugees from the States, the time of [the] American war.

9. Who owned the first Mill in your settlement? Was it a saw, grist, carding or fulling Mill?

John Cambridge owned the first saw mill and grist mill both under one roof.

10. Where was the first Church built? Who built it, and what clergyman used to preach in your settlement? Before you had churches, where were religious services held? Did different denominations use the same building at different hours? Did they worship in barns? Were different denominations buried together?

continued on page 5