

**The Survey of Leeds and Lansdowne Townships
by Lewis Grant**

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The Rear of Leeds & Lansdowne:

The Making of Community on the Gananoque River Frontier, 1796-1996

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The first step to prevent a recurrence of squatting on unsurveyed land, especially at the great falls, was to have a proper survey made of the Gananoque River country to end the confusion among local land board officials and provincial officials at York as to the more valuable locations being sought after in the unsettled back country. First, the township boundaries of both Leeds and Lansdowne townships would be cut out, posted, with a detailed survey of alternate concessions following, permitting both officials and land petitioners some basic reference points for ascertaining the relative position of lands they wished to be granted.

A deputy surveyor, Lewis Grant, who resided in the New Johnstown settlement in Matilda township, was chosen to conduct the surveys on the upper Gananoque. Grant was a recent arrival from Curran [sic], parish of Aberlour, in the Strath Spey part of the Scottish highlands. He was instructed in September 1794 to pinpoint the waterpower location claimed by Justus Sherwood, and in January 1795 he reported, "from the best information I can get that the Falls pet[itioned] for by Abel Stevens are the same that Capn Sherwood has Apply'd for, & from all I can learn are Vacant and do not fall into any Survey." Grant was in some little disgrace with the surveyor-general's department in the opening months of 1795 over his survey of Yonge the summer before. He apologised, "I am sorry my Conduct ... has not met with your approbation, but I can assure you the only reason I had for not surveying the Fifth & Sixth concessions was that I thought it would put Government to an unnecessary expence as the land is so bad that no person has settled thereon -- nor will they for a number of years." In future, Grant promised to "always comply with my Instructions in the most pointed manner."

In February 1795 Lewis Grant received a letter from Alexander Aitken, the deputy surveyor of the Midland District, directing him "to lay out a Township on the West side of the River and Lake Gananoque." He was "to proceed without delay, to the Southwest end of Mr. Fortune's line run in the rear of the Townships laid out on the river St. Lawrence and continue the same South Fifty four degrees West untill you cross the river Gananoque and there commence the Survey of a Township nine miles in width ... to front on said River or Lake, marking off the three first Concessions into lots of two hundred Acres each." Grant replied in March that it was "impossible to proceed on the Survey at this Season as the Ice on the Gananoque river and Lake is unpassable" but promised to "finish the Survey early in the Spring," if it was possible to procure axemen. On April 25th Grant reported "I am employ'd now hyring men to go out on a Survey on the River Gananoque." He hoped "to sett out in about three days -- but it is difficult to procure men."

The survey party set out for Gananoque, ascended the Gananoque River in canoes, and located Fortune's line at some point in early May. Grant proceeded to extend Fortune's line from the Short Point vicinity southwest to the rear of what became lot 12 in the tenth concession of Leeds near the present site of Morton. At this point the Gananoque River, or what today is known as Morton Creek, was within sight of Fortune's Line. Grant began opening his line in the forest "by cutting down any small trees or sappling & Blaz[ing] or mark [ing] the large [ones] on two sides -- a tree exactly in the line I mark or Blaze on two sides with three notches under." But upon "running the Southerly boundary of my Survey of the River Gananoque, as far back as the rear of the fourth concession," Grant "found it impossible to lay out a Township on the south west side of the River without interfering with the Townships on the River St. Lawrence or Lake." With ten days provisions left, Grant "determined to extend my concession lines across the River Gananoque," effectively running what became the boundary between Bastard and South Crosby townships and the

effectively running what became the boundary between Bastard and South Crosby townships and the concession lines between the first and second and between the second and third concessions of South Crosby, in order to "give a better Idea of the Country." He was so employed on the northeast side of the river from May 21st to 30th 1795, explaining that he had "not completed my survey back to the rear of the third concession as I was entirely out of Provisions except Pork -- owing to the incessant rains having lost about one hundred Wt of flour" and he was afraid to send to Kingston for a supply until the surveyor-general approved him crossing the river with concession lines.

It was during this trip that Lewis Grant prepared a sketch of the Gananoque River and lakes, showing the carrying places between what later came to be named Charleston Lake and Red Horse Lake and between Newboro Lake and Upper Rideau Lake. He explained, "In going up the Gananoque I mistook the East branch of the river for the West and proceeded up on to the head of the first Lake by that means." Hence the east branch, and the main river leading to Lower Beverley Lake, Grant sketched from his canoe, but the remainder of the sketch map showing the chain of lakes leading to Upper Rideau Lake "was taken from an Indian Plan of the River Gananoque and the adjacent country." He noted on the map that the "1st, 7th, & 9th Carrying places [on the river] cannot be made navigable for Boats or canoes without Locks -- the 5th, 6th and 8th Carrying Places might be made navigable for Boats at a small expence by clearing out the Stones and rocks and cutting the trees along Shore." Grant emphasized that the "7th [Lyndhurst] & 9th [Morton] Carrying places cannot be made navigable for boats or canoes without Locks -- the remainder of the river is navigable for Canadian Boats." He reported that the "East Branch of the river is navigable for Boats up to the head of the first [Charleston] lake." He cautioned however that although the upper Gananoque at Sand Lake was only "Half a day's journey from Kingston to the [upper] Gananoque in Canoes" the route connecting with the Catarqui River involved "a great number of rapids and Carrying Places." In the Seeley's Bay vicinity Grant sketched a cranberry marsh and lake, observing "This marsh Impassible in summer." In contrast with the good land he observed in much of Yonge, in the Stevens settlement at the future site of Delta, and in the Newboro vicinity, Grant again and again labelled the land in what would become Leeds and Lansdowne Rear as "Rocky Mountainous Country," as a clear warning to government to not encourage the folly of attempting human settlement in such an unwelcoming environment.

Lewis Grant's superiors, however, were not content to rely on the impressions obtained from a canoe; they wanted the Gananoque townships surveyed, and such surveys must begin with Leeds and Lansdowne townships. Any hopes for these surveys being done in the autumn of 1795 foundered on the inability to find men able or willing to work as axemen and assistants. In late September Grant reported "it was out of my power to procure men, owing to the Sickness at present prevailing over this part of the Province. On my way up to Kingston for Provisions I hyre'd four men but on my return found three of them sick." He mused about procuring "men from Lower Canada at a moderate rate by securing them for the winter" but worried that "part of that season I cannot work in the woods." Three weeks later it still was not in his "power to hire a party owing to the Sickly season." Somehow he managed to put together a winter survey party, although it is not clear how early this party set out for the Gananoque area. After procuring supplies they proceeded to the eastern boundary line of Lansdowne township the front part of which had been run by James and Hugh McDonell eight years earlier. Grant now "Began at a Post of the Messrs McDonell Starting on the East Boundary line in rear of the 1st [or broken front] Conc[ession]n, Township of Escot." Grant and his chainmen proceeded due north, placing posts marking the concession lines in Lansdowne township at intervals of 105.27 chains or 1.316 miles, and marking the width of the concession roads that eventually would be run down each concession line, with the axemen removing branches, bushes, trees or other obstacles that stood in the way of running a straight line.

Proceeding north they found rocky land covered with beech and maple trees giving way to low land and swamp along the width of the first concession. In the second concession marsh with alders and willows was followed by swamp, then stands of beech, maple and hemlock. Along the third and fourth concessions rocky ridges and rocks with hemlock and beech trees alternated with alder and willow marshes. After climbing a high rocky hill at the rear of the fourth concession they plunged into a deep gully in the fifth concession, and "could not continue the line with any degree of certainty in so mountainous a Country." They crossed the ice over a cranberry marsh at the rear of the fifth concession, before encountering mountainous terrain in the sixth concession covered with scrub hemlock and pine. They climbed to the top of a high mountain (Blue Mountain) and crossed a deep gully before the broad expanse of the great Gananoque lake (Charleston Lake) brought the survey of Lansdowne's eastern boundary to a halt.

The next segment of Grant's survey entailed running the boundary between Leeds and Lansdowne townships, beginning "at a post of the Mssrs McDonell in the rear of the 2nd Con[cessio]n Lansdowne." Along the width of the third concession of Lansdowne they first came across stands of beech and maple, then an alder marsh gave way to a stony ridge covered with hemlock and beech, on the other side of which was more swamp containing ash and elm trees. In the fourth concession of Lansdowne the swamp eventually gave way to the east branch of the Gananoque River, only to reappear in the fifth concession, before giving way to an extensive rocky ridge wooded with hemlock, beech, maple and basswood trees. In the sixth concession of Lansdowne they came across a swamp of ash and elm trees, then a creek running to the right, a small lake (later known as Cherry Pond and still later as Lime Lake), then hemlock-covered rocky land alternating with willow and alder marshes and ash-filled swamps. In concession seven they suddenly came out on a steep rocky cliff edge of the Gananoque River (Lost Bay), after crossing which, they came across what they presumed was the west branch of the Gananoque River (actually Grippen Creek), with swamps and marshes filled with hemlock, cedar and ash alternating with rocky ridges covered with hemlock, ash and beech trees into the eighth concession. Along the eighth and ninth concessions Grant noted his only reference in the winter survey to "good land" covered with stands of beech, maple and basswood trees. Otherwise the rest of the line north along the ninth, tenth and eleventh concessions was swamp filled with ash, elm, cedar and tamarack trees, interrupted by rock only in the tenth concession where Grant noticed the magnetic attraction caused by iron ore deposits that William Fortune observed in 1794.

At the rear of the eleventh concession of Lansdowne on the boundary between Leeds and Lansdowne, Lewis Grant scouted out the extension of Fortune's line he had opened the previous year, and "chained along Mr. Fortune's line or Continuation N:54 [degrees] E:40 ch[ains] 62 links to a Post on the Bank of the Gananoque [Lower Beverley] Lake." Then Grant's crew retraced their steps and proceeded to survey in a southwest direction for six miles a "Continuation of Mr. Fortune's line or [the] rear Boundary of the Township of Leeds." After crossing a small creek running to the right amid stands of beech, maple and basswood trees, the first two and a half miles otherwise consisted of rocky land covered with hemlock, which in the first and second miles proved so difficult to clear that Grant was "obliged to run [it] with a flag." Three miles along, immediately south of Morton village, he came across purple rocks wooded with beech, maple and basswood trees into the fourth miles, giving way to a cranberry marsh, a small creek, and an alder marsh with another creek. These two small creeks are those draining the Pierce's Flow area and Cranberry Bog. Stands of beech, maple and basswood trees in the fifth mile yielded to rocky land covered with hemlock and pine right through the sixth mile when they came to the west boundary of Leeds township. It is worth noting here that the rear boundary of Leeds township is roughly nine miles long, which means either that Grant's measuring of this particular line was faulty or else he began extending the Fortune Line where he left off the previous year and continue six miles to the western boundary of Leeds.

It is not clear what Grant's survey party proceeded to do next. A sketch map he later sent to the surveyor general in early April 1796 shows lots marked in the three southern concessions of Leeds and Lansdowne townships and six concessions of lots laid out in Escott, suggesting that he reposted the concessions laid out by the McDonells and added to them in Escott. Charged though he was with running all the alternate lines in these townships, by the fifteenth day of February he reported, "It was out of my power to compleat the Survey as my party got tired of the woods and left me," and one of his two chain bearers, Alexander Campbell, "had the misfortune to cut his foot in such a manner as to render him unfit to do his duty ... for several months." What was more, as Grant himself admitted, "I could not have continued in the woods longer than the first of March, as the Swamps open about that season." Grant discharged the men and returned home to Matilda, supporting Campbell over the next two months as he recovered, thereby ensuring one chain bearer when he returned in spring.

It is worth pausing to consider the significance of Lewis Grant's survey to the local region, before following him along the concession lines of Leeds and Lansdowne. Lewis Grant's survey of Leeds and Lansdowne townships not only was meant to stave off squatters from the Stevens settlement in Bastard, but was an initial response to development pressures coming from the south. In July 1795 Matthew Howard, a retired Loyalist officer, together with Foster Page and Archibald McNeil advised the provincial executive committee that they had "explored a tract of land situated by and near a falls on a creek that empties itself from the west into the lower Lake of Gananoque, which situation will admit of a good settlement, and that a number of inhabitants had been waiting several years with blank certificates." For themselves, Howard, Page and McNeil, still awaiting considerable grants, wished "to locate their lands where above stated together with the falls on said creek."

Page and McNeil, still awaiting considerable grants, wished "to locate their lands where above stated together with the falls on said creek."

The pressure for development along the Gananoque River also came from the settlement at the mouth of the river, where, by 1795, Joel Stone was rafting timber to Kingston and as far east as Montreal. The site of Gananoque with its tow waterfalls had attracted two Loyalists, Sir John Johnson and Joel Stone, to petition for land on both sides of the river as early as 1787. The contest between them was settled in 1789 with Sir John Johnson granted 1000 acres on the east side, the more desirable land, and Joel Stone 700 acres on the west bank. Sir John Johnson built a grist mill by 1792 as the conditions of his grant required, but was otherwise an absentee landowner, as he had more significant properties and duties to attend to elsewhere. Joel Stone, by default, established himself as the principal landowner and leading inhabitant of this mill village, developing a sawmill in 1791 and becoming a justice of the peace in 1796. Whether supplying rafts of timber to Montreal or sawn lumber to Kingston, Stone's expanding business created a demand for logs to be floated down the Gananoque River.

It was Abel Stevens, however, who had more immediate designs on the timber along the upper Gananoque River. In a petition dated at Bastard on 15 January 1796, "for the promotion of the Settlement," Stevens requested lieutenant-governor Simcoe to grant him "the great falls on gananoque" together "with a sufficient Quantity of Pine timber, as there is no other falls having a sufficient Quantity of Pine timber that will furnish the s[ai]d Settlement with Boards and Planks for Buildings." So eager was Stevens to proceed that he claimed to have "the mill irons on hand and a Millwright ready to set up a Mill as soon as your Memorialist is established in the falls above cited."

Now that it was apparent Abel Stevens had designs on another site sought by Loyalists, the provincial administration dared delay no longer in surveying the rear concessions of Leeds and Lansdowne. As Lewis Grant's survey marked the promise of enduring settlement, and as his spring 1796 survey is well documented, it is appropriate to consider at some length his impressions of the countryside through which he and his party travelled from early May to early July. His work began at his home in Matilda in early April, writing letters to the acting surveyor-general, sending for axemen from Lachine, obtaining relevant papers and plans, and awaiting the arrival of his crew members. Six axemen arrived from Lachine by the first of May, and Grant hired William Fraser and the recuperated Alexander Campbell of Matilda as chain bearers. This party of nine men set out on the second day of May for the Gananoque country, sailing upriver to Kingston, purchasing provisions there, then returning downriver to Gananoque where they spent a day sharpening axes and baking bread. They then "Proceeded up the River Gananoque" in the small boat they brought with them, and "encampt at the Head of the 3[rd] Carrying place or Rapid" now known as Marble Rock. On Sunday the eighth day of May they "went up the East Branch of the River Gananoque & encampt on the 5[th] Cons. line Lansdowne" on the boundary between Leeds and Lansdowne townships.

Lewis Grant had not set about the survey of a new township. Rather, he simply was laying out the rear concessions of Leeds, Lansdowne and Escott within the outer perimeters or boundaries that he had run only a few months before. His crew moved east, the axemen cutting a line of trees to enable Grant and his chainmen to gain sightings along the front or southern edge of the fifth concession of Lansdowne; placing posts marking the width of roads that would travel north/south, lot widths, and indicating on the posts whether the lots were grants or reserved lots; and beginning to chain this line where they had left off in February. Upon arriving at the eastern boundary of Lansdowne the crew retraced their steps along the line they had cut out and moved their camp two and a half miles further north on the Leeds/Lansdowne boundary to the west end of concession seven of Lansdowne. Rather than incur the expense of running all the concession lines at once, by posting lot widths along the length of *every other* concession line the time and expense of the survey was substantially reduced, permitting settlers and squatters to locate their lots either by the front or rear end of the lot as the case might be. With time, when the respective townships were settled and the colony had more resources at its command, the concession lines that had been skipped could be surveyed. Moreover, there was an advantage to skipping concession lines in that it would encourage settlers to locate their homes across the road from one another along the surveyed lines, surely helping to promote the development of concentrated rural communities.

On the seventh line of Lansdowne Grant's party entered what is now Leeds and Lansdowne Rear. As they proceeded east they crossed rocky ridges covered with hemlock, pine and beech, interspersed with alder and willow marshes and ash swamps. At lot fourteen they came upon the east branch of the Gananoque River,

beyond it the great Gananoque Lake (Mud Bay on Charleston Lake) and near the Escott boundary they found mountainous terrain (Blue Mountain) and a cranberry marsh. Lewis Grant again observed a magnetic attraction in this vicinity.

On May 23rd Grant's crew began posting the ninth concession of Lansdowne from west to east. They encountered beech and maple trees at first, but after crossing the "Bay of the River Gananoque" (Singleton Lake) they encountered rocky outcrops, between which they came across the Gananoque River running to the right, then later found it flowing to the left, and still later came across it going to the right again, and interspersed with stands of beech and maple trees. Stony land by lot ten gave way to high rocks on lot eleven, then mountainous terrain covered with hemlock from lots twelve to sixteen before the vastness of Gananoque Lake (Charleston Lake) at the east branch of the Gananoque River came into view.

Before setting out to post the eleventh concession of Lansdowne, Grant's crew on May 27th moved their temporary camp to "where the 9[th] Cons. line first intersects the Gananoque" (Singleton Lake). The next day they "Proceeded up the River to the big falls" at the site of Lyndhurst where they were "Employed in the afternoon building Huts for the Provisions." The east end of concession eleven began with a tamarack and cedar swamp, then a mixture of beech, hemlock and maples interspersed by ash swamps before they crossed the Gananoque River north of the site of Lyndhurst, beyond which was a cranberry marsh. At lot four Lewis Grant made one of only two references to "Good land" during this survey of Lansdowne and Leeds townships, otherwise he continually referred to pine and hemlock covering rocky ground, interspersed by an ash swamp on lot six. At lot ten he noted the west end of a small lake (Little Long Lake), at lot twelve he spied "a small lake [Red Horse Lake] in sight to the south," at lot thirteen he noticed the "end of a small lake [Bass Lake] to the north," and at lot seventeen he viewed a "small lake [Green Lake] to the north." These lakes were interspersed with rock outcrops covered with hemlock and marshes in turn, with the locale west of Green Lake described as mountainous. At lot nineteen they came to what is now called Webster Bay on Charleston Lake.

At the beginning of June amid continuous showers of rain Lewis Grant and his eight men moved their camp, returning to the boat they had left at the "Big fall, & proceeded down the Gananoque to the 5th Cons [of] Leeds to commence the survey of that Township." As the lots in the surveyed southern concessions already were numbered from west to east, from the Pittsburgh township line, Grant could not simply proceed with his survey from the Leeds/Lansdowne boundary heading west. His journal does not indicate the route taken by his crew, but after stopping for a day to bake a supply of bread, they then appear to have cut the sight line along the fifth concession proceeding west and then measured the posting back along this line from west to east.

After posting the fifth concession line of Leeds, Grant and his men on June 12th "moved the Boat &c to the 7[th] Concession of Leeds." In skipping the sixth concession line they missed viewing the high rock feature somewhat resembling an outdoor bake-oven where the west branch of the Gananoque River from South Lake flowed into Gananoque Lake; when Reuben Sherwood travelled along this route in a birch canoe in September 1807, he observed that in the "6 miles from South Lake to oven point" there was "no carrying place at all." On the seventh concession of Leeds, now that they had ascertained the widths of all the lots on the fifth line, Grant and his crew proceeded from the east end of the seventh concession, heading west, cutting and posting the line. From lot 24 to 19 rocky hemlock-covered ridges were interspersed by swamps filled with tamarack and cedar. Stands of beech, basswood and maple trees appeared on lot eighteen, then cedar and tamarack swamps resumed, interspersed with rocky ridges covered in hemlock and pine to lot thirteen. From lot twelve to lot eight the land continued rocky, but covered with beech, basswood and maple trees, followed by an alder marsh on lot seven. Then, from lots seven to one there were continuous stands of hemlock and maple on rocky ground, with pine giving way to basswood trees.

On June 18th Grant and his crew "Returned to my camp on the River in 6th Conc[essio]n," the next day they "went down to Capt[tain Joel] Stone's for Provisions," and "Returned to my camp 6th Cons. Leeds" on June 20th. They then ascended the main branch of the Gananoque River to Singleton Lake, struck west over land until they found the Leeds/Lansdowne boundary, and then walked south along this boundary until they came to the east end of the ninth concession line of Leeds. They proceeded to cut and post this line, moving west through a tamarack swamp, then through stands of beech, maple and basswood trees that gave way to a marsh on lot twenty. On the afternoon of June 22nd Grant and his men were employed "rafting my Baggage over a small lake" (Grippen Lake) and moving their temporary "camp to Lot No. 17." Marsh and pine from

lots fourteen to eleven, then rocky land covered with hemlock and pine on lots ten and nine. Ash swamp on lots nine and eight was followed by alder marsh on lot seven, which, in turn, gave way to stands of beech and maple trees from lot seven to lot two, where rocky land covered with beech, poplar and hemlock trees appeared all the way to the western boundary of Leeds. Here Lewis Grant's survey of Leeds and Lansdowne townships came to an end, as it happened, on the fourth day of July 1796, although he did not discharge his men in Matilda until some ten days later.

Lewis Grant continued to work on the plans, diaries and field notes into August, making copies for the surveyor-general at Niagara and for the local land board. In a letter to the surveyor-general at the end of July, Grant observed:

I marked off the Gore in rear of the 12th Concession of Lansdown from East to West to accomodate Mr Abel Stevens Settlement as there are small improvements on almost every lot along the south side of Mr. Fortune's line from the North East Boundary of Lansdown to lot No. 8 -- on which the Inhabitants intend to build Homes if not reserved -- indeed it's the only land in the Part of the Township Survey'd by me that will settle for this number of years. I have also Sketched the River Gananoque between the Concession lines that you may have a better Idea of the situation of the River & Country. The falls on the River Gananoque petitioned for by Abel Stevens & Capt. Justus Sherwood are situated on Lot No. Two, Tenth concession Township of Lansdown.

As it turned out, the mill-site for which Matthew Howard in company with Foster Page and Archibald McNeil sought title was on lot one in the fifth concession of the yet to be surveyed South Crosby, the future site of Morton, and a water-power for which Abel Stevens had already petitioned. Fifteen years later another regional surveyor, Reuben Sherwood, complained over the discrepancies of Grant's survey, in running the seventh and ninth concession lines of Leeds from the east and west, respectively, and that Grant had not surveyed concessions four, six, part of seven, and concessions eight, ten and eleven in Leeds. Sherwood clearly was unaware of the challenge that the wild landscape of Leeds and Lansdowne Rear had posed for survey purposes, as contrasted with the flat townships he surveyed elsewhere in the region. As Lewis Grant concluded at the end of his trek through Leeds and Lansdowne, "I have had one of the most tedious and disagreeable survey s I ever was engaged in, owing to the great quantity of Partial Atractions along the different lines, but I endeavoured to be as accurate with the track as possible in so mountainous a country."

Despite the pressure of imminent development, Lewis Grant's survey was disappointing. Rather than confirm the indications of "good land for the production of wheat" that William Fortune had encountered along the northern boundary of Lansdowne township, Grant had, if anything, corroborated Gershom French's original bleak assessment of the local landscape being "nothing but Swamps, Rocks and Stagnated Water." In his extensive journeys along the township boundaries and concession lines Grant only twice scribbled "good land" in his field notebook, which amounted to fewer references to land capable of supporting agriculture throughout the entire rear sections of the two townships than Fortune had noted along the northern boundary of Lansdowne alone! As for the Gananoque River, the need to build three locks to make it navigable meant that there would be little impetus for settlement coming in from the south for some time to come. Lewis Grant's survey, on paper at least, prepared for a tidy vision of settlement, with straight concession lines running from east to west intersected every mile-and-a-half by forced roads running south to north in equally straight lines. The rocky ledges, gullies, mountainous terrain, swamps, marshes and generally stony land would make his tidy plan of roads impossible to impose on the landscape, and they would frustrate the development of farms within the neatly plotted lots along the concession lines.

One undoubted merit of Lewis Grant's surveys was to at last provide government officials and intending settlers with a guide to specific locations they could pinpoint on maps and to which they could refer in letters. Instead of puzzling over a request by petitioners in 1795 for a grant "for the Falls between the 3d and Fourth Lakes" on the Gananoque River, officials could now expect a more precise request for a location within a particular lot in a specific concession. Now the machinery of locating settlers on lots could proceed smoothly. Accordingly, when Matthew Howard and his associates in April 1797 renewed their application, they were assured that they would "be located in the situations and fall they pray for if the fall has not been already granted to Abel Stevens."

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