

HUGH BLACK

The subject of this sketch was born on April 26th, 1792, in the Parish of Kilmartin, Argyleshire, Scotland, where he received his early education. He also attended lectures at Edinburgh University.

There is a tradition in the family that when passing through the estate of Lord Malcolm, on his way to school, he discovered that the sundial was some degrees in error and reported the matter to the manager, who was surprised and disposed to resent the advice of a school boy. It was sent to London, found in error, corrected and returned. Lady Malcolm afterwards took an interest in him, and induced him to go to Cuba as accountant on a sugar plantation.

In 1811, he left Scotland, and spent some years in Jamaica and Cuba. He then came to New York, then in 1818 to Aldborough in the County of Elgin in Upper Canada. He was not satisfied, however, with Col. Talbot's despotic methods, and left there for the Township of Esquesing, where he settled permanently, near the Village of Norval.

His father, John Black, and his mother, Janet Campbell Black, with four sons and two daughters, came to Canada about 1815, and settled in Nassagaweya.

John Black and his wife were buried at Sodom burying ground in Nassagaweya.

On April 20th, 1820, Hugh Black was appointed a Deputy Provincial Surveyor in Upper Canada. He practised as a Land Surveyor at Norval until 1826, when he purchased a farm, and as many other Surveyors of his period did, he also managed his farm.

He was noted for his accuracy and his work was seldom questioned.

His compass is now in the possession of his grandson, Hugh Black, son of George Black, of Lot 14, in the 4th concession of Esquesing, about seven miles north of Milton, and five miles south of Georgetown, and to whom we are indebted for practically all the material for this sketch. Despite a year's searching, he was unable to find a portrait or photograph of his grandfather.

Hugh Black was methodical, and kept each year's field notes and documents in a separate cotton bag made for the purpose. One day during the Upper Canada Rebellion, in 1837-1838, when he was absent from home, the loyalists made a bonfire on the street at Norval, and the notes, together with a much prized old clock, were destroyed. The loyalists were pretending they were searching for William Lyon Mackenzie, then a proscribed rebel.

The subject of this sketch had a remarkable memory, was well read, and had a great faculty for entertaining company from an inexhaustible fund of humorous anecdotes.

He was a short thick set man, and one of his peculiarities was that his teeth were all double teeth.

He was well known throughout a large section of the country.

About 1822 he married Mary Barnes. They had nine children, as follows: Fingal, Jane, Malvina, Cremina, George, Josephine, Charles, Marion and Helen, the two last being twins. Three additional died in infancy.

For six years after qualifying as a Land Surveyor, he lived at Norval, then moved to Lot 14, concession 4 of the Township of Esquesing, his home being known as Dunstaffinage.

He died on January 20th, 1854, and was buried in an old burying ground in the Scotch Block. When his widow died, about twenty-five years later, his body was removed and buried beside hers in the Limehouse cemetery. The monument to him is, however, in the Georgetown cemetery.

Col. A. J. vanNostrand states that F. F. Passmore, P.L.S., informed him in March, 1886, that Hugh Black planted a stone monument at the northeast corner of Queen St. and Yonge St., Toronto, in 1834.

The following work was done by him for the C. L. Department:

Survey Boundary between Saltfleet and Binbrook, 25th August, 1830.

Survey line between Concessions 1 and 2, E. Flamboro, 20th January, 1831.

Park lots, Charlotteville, 29th January, 1853.

Long Point, Lake Erie, 28th February, 1853.