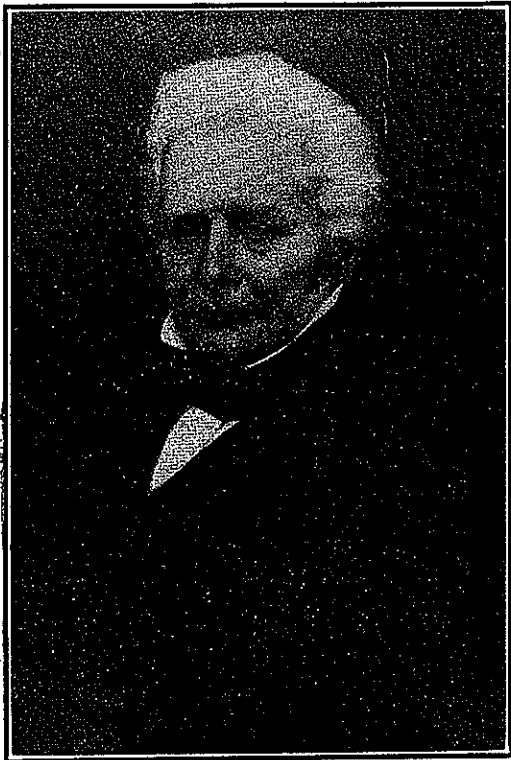


JAMES GRANT CHEWETT.



In the Annual Report of the Association for 1890, there appears an interesting biographical sketch of William Chewett, who may perhaps be looked on as the most distinguished of the pioneer surveyors in the Province. He arrived in Quebec in 1771, and at the age of eighteen was taken into the office of the Deputy Surveyor-General, John Collins, in 1774. He assisted Collins, as Military Engineer, when Quebec was besieged by the Americans under Arnold and Montgomery in 1775-76, and was continued in military employ, as Paymaster, until 1783, when he re-entered the Surveyor-General's office. There he remained un-

til 1786, when he was sent to Lake St. Francis district, to take charge of the surveys along the St. Lawrence and Ottawa Rivers, which had then been in progress three or four years. Here he remained until Upper Canada was set apart as a distinct province, and in 1792 he removed to Newark (Old Niagara). In 1793 Gov. Simcoe decided on York as Capital of the new Province, and during the years 1794 to 1796, the fortifications and public buildings there were erected. The first Parliament was held at York in June, 1796, and Mr. Chewett, for official reasons, removed to that place from Newark, when the Government was removed, and occupied a log house near the northeast corner of York and Wellington Streets.

On a plan of York dated June 10th, 1797, Isabella Chewett's name appears on the plan of the lot at the southeast corner of York and King Street (Isabella Chewett was the wife of Wm. Chewett and one of the (Archibald) McDonell family, of Long Sault, connections of which have occupied important public positions in Canada). On the same plan Wm. Chewett's name

appears in connection with the lot at the northeast corner of York and Market (now Wellington) Streets. The frontage of these lots on King and Wellington Streets was one-fourth of the entire distance from York to Bay Street. The family residence was on Wellington Street, about fifty yards east of York Street. Wm. Chewett built the lower storey of this house in 1799 and part of it was standing in 1890.

From 1802 to 1810 he apparently acted with Mr. Thomas Ridout, as Joint Surveyor General, the latter receiving the full appointment in 1810. Mr. Chewett retired from the Crown Lands Department in 1832, and from the Registrarship of the Surrogate Court, to which office he had been appointed in 1800, in 1840. His death occurred on September 24th, 1849, at the age of nearly ninety-six.

By his marriage with Isabella McDonell, daughter of Major Archibald McDonell, of Cornwall, in May, 1791, Wm. Chewett had three children—William, who died young; James Grant Chewett, the subject of this sketch, born November 9th, 1793, at Cornwall, and Alexander Chewett, born 1800, died August 22nd, 1872. The last mentioned became Court Judge at Sandwich, and the epitaph in the old churchyard there to his memory says, quaintly—"He was a learned and upright judge, known to the few because of his retired life, and known to the many because of his sympathetic and genial nature, which made him ever ready to listen, to counsel and to befriend. He was a philosopher and a philanthropist."

James Grant Chewett was educated at Bishop Strachan's School at Cornwall, which school was removed to York in 1812. He served his apprenticeship as Surveyor to his father, and was appointed a Deputy Surveyor on March 6th, 1819. He served in the Militia, under his father, in 1813, when the Americans captured York. (There was long a tradition in the family that the lad secreted himself on the extreme point of the Island, and as the American flat boats of troops retired, after burning the public buildings, etc., at York, fired two charges of buckshot into them, doing considerable damage. The Americans replied by several volleys, but as the timber was dense on shore, and they feared an ambush, the cadet got off safely).

Mr. Chewett made the following surveys for the Provincial Government:—Tp. Albion, east part Caledon, 1819; Tps. Tay,

Orillia, Oro, Vespra, and Medonte, 1820; Military Reserve at Kingston and tract in Toronto Township, 1821; Grand Island, opposite Kingston, and Residue Township of Haldimand, 1822; Roche's Point on Cook's Bay, 1823; Town plot Keswick, 1824.

Mr. Chewett now received an appointment in the Surveyor General's office, which he held, in one form or another, for several years. Eventually he was made Deputy Surveyor General, in which post he continued until the Government was removed to Kingston in 1841.

In 1834 he prepared a plan of Toronto, a copy of which, reduced in scale, appears in Robertson's "Landmarks of Toronto," vol. IV. (Gov. Simcoe had enquired of Mr. William Chewett in April, 1792, "whether the Town of Toronto had ever been laid out?" it is interesting to note).

In 1833-34 the Chewetts built the "English Coffee House," at the southeast corner of King and York Streets, a noted landmark of Toronto in its day. On King Street, east of the Coffee House, were several shops on the Chewett property. The whole site was sold in 1855 to Rossin Bros. (connections of the late Mr. Samuel Nordheimer) who erected thereon the "Rossin House" Hotel. This was destroyed by fire in 1862. This fire was considered as one of Toronto's notable conflagrations, and a representation of it was used for some years as a show-card by the British America Assurance Co. By degrees the interests of the Rossins and others were acquired by Dr. Wm. Cameron Chewett (eldest son of Jas. G. Chewett), who had always felt that property which had been connected with his family since 1797 should not be alienated lightly. He obtained full possession in 1871 and the property, now known as the "Prince George" Hotel, is completely in the possession of the heirs of Dr. Chewett.

In 1835 Mr. Jas. G. Chewett was elected as Alderman of Toronto, and made Chairman of the Finance Committee. He became interested in the Bank of Upper Canada and was elected Vice-President. He was also elected first President of the Bank of Toronto, in 1856, which position he retained until his death, on 7th of Decemehr, 1862. The Bank possesses a fine portrait in oils, of Mr. Chewett, which can be seen by the interested in the vestibule of the fine new building opposite the Safety Deposit Department. It is worthy to remark that when Mr. Chewett became President the assets of the Bank were £260,633. In 1862 they had swollen to \$1,960,939, and in 1920

to \$100,000,000. While Mr. Chewett was President the Bank's premises were on Church Street, opposite the Cathedral, once rather a financial centre—the "British America," the "Western Canada" L. & S. Co., and the "Home Bank" having all had offices between Adelaide and King Street on Church Street. The Bank afterwards removed to the northwest corner of Church and Wellington Streets, and in 1913 to its present palatial offices on the southwest corner of Bay and King Streets. Mr. Chewett was also a director of the "Canada Permanent" for a time.

Mr. Chewett's kindness of disposition and courteous manners made him a universal favorite. He had evidently learned from his practice as a surveyor that if an obstacle cannot be surmounted, it can be "gone round," and the desired line resumed on the further side. He preferred as far as possible to foresee and avoid difficulties rather than crush or forcibly overturn them. This, naturally, made him loyal friends and few enemies. He was intimately acquainted with the country in which he was born and brought up, and to his life's close took an active and intelligent interest in everything coming under his observation.

As a spare-time hobby, Mr. Chewett made himself quite a proficient carpenter, cabinet maker, indeed. Articles of furniture that would not disgrace "Eaton's," made by his hands, still remain square and solid as the day he finished them. He also took an interest in marine architecture, and elaborate drawings of the design and construction of wooden schooners, made by himself, are in his note books. Also, he appears to have jotted down, in some of his pocket books, voyageur's songs, probably sung round the camp fire, some English, some French, the latter perhaps partaking a little too much for our ideas, of the "esprit Gaulois."

In Mr. Chewett's day Governments were evidently no better off than they are now. His services were often paid in grants of lands, which he did not want and could not use. He would sometimes give 100 acres of land, in what is now a first-class "front" Township, for a Winter's supply of firewood, or some provisions. He had a chest in his lumber room which the writer has seen quite full, if such a term may be used, of patents of lands he never entered on. These deeds had, many of them, the old large round seals, hanging by tape, and were favourite playthings of his grandchildren.

Sometimes, too, grave big-wigs of the law would come and solicit permission to go through the contents of this old chest, in hopes of getting light on some involved title to lands Mr. Chewett had surveyed.

Mr. Chewett married, on October 6th, 1825, Martha Smith Robison, born at Napanee, and a sister of Mr. T. Robison (or Robinson) who afterwards became Treasurer of Kingston. She was only seventeen at the time.

He had issue—Wm. C. Chewett, born August 16th, 1828, died 1897. Alex. Cartwright Chewett, born 1830, died 1897. Mary Chewett (also now dead).

The eldest son, W. C. Chewett, who married Martha S. Ranney, a Devonshire lady, was first graduate in Medicine at the Toronto Medical School. He was interested in the stationery business of Maclean & Co., on the south side of King St. East, though probably he did not take any prominent part in its mercantile operations. The firm of Maclean sold out to Copp Clark & Co., but during its continuance the Canadian Almanac for 1856 appeared, "compiled by W. C. Chewett, with astronomical tables specially verified for the N. A. provinces." Dr. Chewett built the second pressed brick house in Toronto.

Alex. Cartwright Chewett, in partnership with another, had, it is believed, the first works for rolling iron and steel in Ontario, at Kingston. A well-known bank manager assured the writer that as a small boy in Kingston it was his greatest delight, as soon as school was over, to run off to Chewett's works and see the red hot iron rolled.

Mary Chewett married Henry Torrance, of Toronto (who predeceased her) and died at Collingwood, where she had gone to reside with her (only) daughter, now deceased. Two sons survive, the elder, Wm. P. Torrance, a well-known railway lawyer, until recently member of the firm of Kingsmill, Saunders & Torrance; the other, Arthur, in Cleveland, Ohio.

A son of Dr. W. C. Chewett, Henry James Chewett, born January 17th, 1867 (died in England, December 2nd, 1917), studied engineering at the School of Practical Science, Toronto, graduating 1888. He took his degree of B.Sc. and C.E., University of Toronto, in 1893, and published a text book on mining operations.

Dr. Chewett's other living children are A. R. Chewett, of Bushy Heath, England; Ethel K. Chewett, of the same place, and Mary G. Sims, presently of Brampton, Ont. A son and daughter predeceased him.

Alex. Cartwright Chewett is survived by three daughters—Mrs. Hooper, wife of Dr. E. Hooper, of Toronto, and Misses K. R. and Helen Chewett, of the same place. A son and daughter predeceased him.

As Carlyle somewhere says, it is interesting to know somewhat of the appearance and character of a man in whose labors we have become interested. It may then be allowed us to say that Mr. J. G. Chewett was a little under middle height, had a very deliberate manner and walked with a slight stoop. He was essentially a genial man, but, also, decided in any views, taken after consideration. A man of most loyal sentiments, as might be expected from one whose father had written in 1793 that the loyalty of Gov. Simcoe was such as to make the heart of every true Briton jump for joy. An ardent, if quiet lover of his country, and a true British subject. He used to "line up" his little grand-daughters when they went to see him, on Sundays (as was the custom) and each having been provided with a tiny drop of wine in her glass, the old gentleman would call on them to drink solemnly "Health to Her Gracious Majesty the Queen, God Bless Her."

Of his brother, Judge Chewett, of Sandwich, an amusing anecdote is told. Judge Chewett's wife and daughter were smugglers "dyed in the wool." (Is it not W. D. Howells who asserts that a woman not an incurable smuggler is not normal). The worthy judge was much distressed by this, but could not stop it. He therefore made a compact with the customs people to report to them the value of all the articles he found had been smuggled by the ladies, and paid the duty thereon, every quarter, unknown to them.

This sketch has been prepared by W. A. Sims, of Brampton, and the portrait has been taken from the oil painting in the Bank of Toronto.