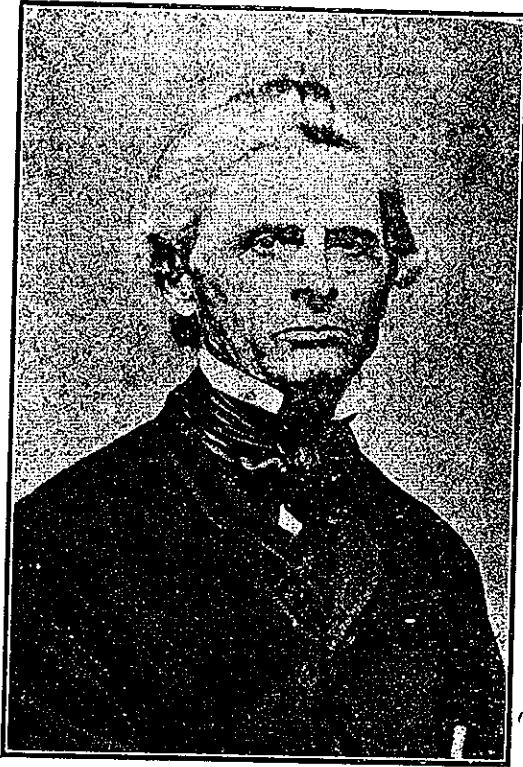


**EDMUND DECEW.**

Edmund DeCew was the son of John DeCew (or DeCou), of DeCew Falls, Thorold Township, in the County of Welland. The maiden name of Edmund DeCew's mother was Catherine Dockstader. He was born March 22nd, 1812. He received his common school education in the town of Thorold and afterwards attended the high school at St. Catharines.

John DeCou, the father of Edmund, was born in Vermont in 1766, and at the close of the American Revolution his father's family removed to Upper Canada, crossing the Niagara River at Queenston. John DeCou selected a property to his liking in the Townships of Thorold and Grantham, in-

cluding what is now DeCew Falls on Beaverdam Creek. He purchased one man's claim on one hundred acres for an axe and an Indian blanket, and another one hundred acres for a gold doubloon. He built the first oil mill erected in the Niagara Peninsula, and in the records of Thorold Township for 1801 we find DeCou's grist mill mentioned. He also built and occupied a large stone house near DeCew Falls, which is still used as a residence.

When the war of 1812-1814 broke out John DeCou, being thoroughly British, was appointed Captain of a company of Militia, and, although conscious of having to fight against great odds, determined to make up in courage what was lacking in numbers. After engaging in several skirmishes he was among the few prisoners captured by the Americans at the taking of Fort Niagara. Captain DeCou, with the other prisoners, was moved across the river and taken to Batavia, on the way to Pittsfield. After arriving at Pittsfield, Capt. DeCou, with twelve other officers, were selected as hostages, to be put to death in retaliation for the execution of some supposed Americans, who proved to be desert-

ers from the British army. These hostages were ordered to be sent to Washington for execution. Owing to the firmness of the British Commander-in-chief, who threatened to execute two American prisoners for every British prisoner put to death, the order for the execution of Capt. DeCou and his companions was countermanded, and they were imprisoned at Philadelphia, but they finally managed to escape through the chimney after cutting some of the heavy iron bars in the grating which would otherwise prevent their exit. All the prisoners reached the ground in safety except Capt. DeCou, who was the last. While he was descending their improvised rope broke and he was so severely injured that he was unable to flee with the others. He finally persuaded them to leave him to do the best he could under the circumstances. After waiting for some time, he recovered sufficiently so that he was able to proceed on his painful journey. He travelled at night, and, keeping away from the main roads as much as possible, managed to make fair progress. More than once he was befriended by kind-hearted women who protected him from capture, and after various vicissitudes he finally made his way to the home of some of his relatives near Bennington, Vt. Shortly afterwards he succeeded in crossing the border near Plattsburg and got in touch with the military authorities, who approved of his conduct, gave him his back pay and a free pass for home, where he arrived two weeks after his fellow-captives, who were exchanged as prisoners.

During Capt. DeCou's absence Lieut. FitzGibbon, Commander of the British forces at Beaverdam, made the DeCou stone house his headquarters, and also used it as a soldiers' barracks. It was here that Mrs. Laura Secord met Lieut. FitzGibbon after making her memorable journey from Queenston and St. David's by a circuitous route of about eighteen or twenty miles, in June, 1813. This fact is verified by Lieut. FitzGibbon in a certificate given by him to Laura Secord.

From 1799 to 1835 John DeCou held various municipal offices, such as assessor, collector or councillor for the Township of Thorold.

The name DeCew, like the names of many others of the first settlers of the Niagara Peninsula, is spelled in various documents in different ways; thus we find DeCue, DeCau, DeCou, while the present spelling is DeCew.

The DeCew family originally fled from France as Huguenots; and after several generations had lived in England, some of the name emigrated to Vermont, where John DeCou was born, as previously mentioned.

Edmund DeCew, after serving his apprenticeship in land surveying with Mahlon Burwell, who had his office in Brantford, received his commission as a Deputy Provincial Surveyor on July 11th, 1836. He then began the practice of his profession by opening an office at his home on the farm owned by him near DeCewsville, in the County of Haldimand. He soon became well known as a thoroughly reliable and competent surveyor and engineer throughout the whole Niagara Peninsula, and always retained the confidence and esteem of his many clients, including a large number of municipal councils. He was a man of superior ability, sterling character and sound judgment, and surveys made by him always stand undisputed. A large number of plans made by him as well as by himself in collaboration with his son, John, are filed in the registry offices of Welland and Cayuga.

Edmund DeCew was an expert geologist, and he and his son, John, made collections of fossils which they donated to several public institutions of Ontario.

For the Provincial Government Edmund DeCew made resurveys in the Townships of Crowland and Binbrook in 1852; in Pelham in 1859; in Thorold and Canboro in 1860, and in Bertie in 1869.

He took a prominent and active part in the Methodist Church and was a local preacher.

He married Ann Fawell on September 17th, 1833, and to them were born eight children—Mary Catharine, John, Leonard, Margaret Jane (who married Robert King), Egerton, Edmund, Thomas Henry and Sarah Ann, who married Joseph Wiederick. The only members of the family who now survive are Leonard, who lives in Flint, Mich., and the youngest daughter, Mrs. Joseph Wiederick, who is now living at Nanticoke, Haldimand County.

Edmund DeCew died on April 22nd, 1892, and was buried in the DeCewville Cemetery.

R. E. King of Cayuga, son of Robert and Margaret, and grandson of Edmund DeCew, is now the owner of the homestead, Lot 40, Con. I. of N. Cayuga.

Mrs. John Elder of Canfield is a sister of R. E. King.