

COSFORD CHALMERS FORNERI



The history of the Forneri family, as presented by John King, M.A., K.C., in his book, entitled "McCall, Croft, Forneri; Personalities of Early University Days," dated 1914, reads like a mediaeval romance. The founders of the Forneri family were Frenchmen, who took part in the Crusades. The principal ancestral records, however, were confiscated by the Italian Government in 1821. Before the Reformation they were, of course, Roman Catholics, but were afterwards Huguenots. Upon removing from France to Italy they became Catholics again and settled in the once Imperial City of Rome a few

years before the massacre of St. Bartholomew.

David Emmanuel DeForneri was a lawyer, who married a daughter of a wealthy physician, which marriage brought with it a large property, including an estate called "Il Macagno," a few miles from the city of Turin, at which place James Forneri was born, in the Summer of 1789. During the French Revolution Italy was invaded, and the Forneris were driven from their home. His grandfather and father died from fatigue and exhaustion, and James was left an infant with his mother, one brother and three sisters.

After three years study in Divinity, James Forneri took up the study of law and was granted the degree of LL.D. at Rome, and in 1809 was admitted to the Bar at Turin, where his mother then resided.

In 1812 he was conscripted to serve with the forces under

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Napoleon in the invasion of Russia. After the Battle of Leipsic, which was lost by Napoleon, Forneri was captured by Cossack Irregulars and kept a prisoner for a short time. After many hairbreadth adventures he was discharged by his captors, and eventually reached his former home.

His family were ardent Royalists, but James was a Liberal at heart and took an active and prominent part in revolutionary proceedings at Turin. The Constitutionalists, as those in the Liberal Party were called, were, however, defeated by the Austrian forces in 1821, and Forneri embarked for Spain via Genoa. On May 25th, 1821, he arrived at Barcelona. Forneri and other Italian exiles, whose sympathies were with the Liberal Party, formed themselves into a Rifle Corps on the side of the Constitutional Party in Spain, Forneri being Captain. Conflicts took place in different parts of the country early in 1823, when civil war broke out. Louis XVIII. of France invaded Spain in 1823 for the purpose of reinstating the King. Forneri remained loyal to the Spanish Liberal Party. He was wounded in October, 1823, and taken prisoner. After a short time in France he was permitted to go to England. He arrived in London penniless in May, 1824. He obtained employment for a short time as teacher of Italian in a private school. His mother wrote him at this time, giving him a full account of the happenings in the family, and concluded her letter with the injunction "that he should never forsake the Holy Church in whose communion he was born and reared." Notwithstanding this, he was a Protestant from conviction, and died in mature old age a member of the communion of the Anglican Church. His mother died at Turin on June 13th, 1829, leaving a large estate, part of which was bequeathed to James Forneri, but unfortunately it was escheated to the Crown.

Forneri removed to Kingston-upon-Hull, Yorkshire, about 1829, where he appears to have remained for a few years, then returned to London, where he was married in St. Mary's Church, Islington, on March 13th, 1836, to Elizabeth Susannah Wiles, then sixteen years of age, a daughter of a prosperous English merchant.

Immediately after his marriage, he and his young bride set out for Belfast, where he had received the appointment of Master in Modern Languages in the Belfast Royal Academical Institution. This position he held until 1851, when

he received the offer of teacher of Modern Languages in the Windsor, Nova Scotia, Collegiate Academy. The offer included a free passage for himself and family across the Atlantic, and at an increased salary. This offer he accepted, and arrived in Nova Scotia about the end of November. Early in January he entered upon his duties. Some disagreement arose between Dr. Forneri and the Board of Governors, the result being that he decided to go to Australia, but before sailing he applied for a position in the University of Toronto. He arrived there with his family early in May, 1853, and on May 28th received the appointment to the Chair of Modern Languages, a position he held until after his wife's death, on August 18th, 1862. He was then retired, excepting as Instructor in Italian.

His biographer states "that he was a small, erect, and fresh-complexioned old gentleman. He wore gold spectacles and carried a walking stick with the easy confidence sometimes noticeable in military men. Every student greeted him with a kindly salutation; his courtesy to all whom he recognized was that of a well-bred foreigner. As he politely raised his hat to some passing lady acquaintance he disclosed a high, intellectual-looking forehead, sparsely mantled with hair of snowy whiteness. There was something in the appearance of the venerable 'Professor of Languages,' as he was popularly called, which arrested attention and challenged remark. With the infirmities of age plainly upon him, his features still wore the ruddy health of youth; his keen, deeply-set eyes had in them an almost piercing brightness; force and decision of character marked every lineament of his face. Those who knew him well felt these to be distinguishing qualities of the man at once discernible in the snatches which he gave them of his strange life history. There was a tinge of the romantic running through it all; he had been a right gallant gentleman in his time, and his career altogether was a remarkable one."

He died on September 5th, 1869, and was buried in St. James' Cemetery, Toronto.

Professor Forneri had the following children:—

(1) Mariam Margaret, married Henry Reid, of New S. Wales, died 1907.

(2) Richard Sykes, M.A., B.D., Trinity College, Toronto, late Rector of St. Luke's, Kingston, retired, now of Peterboro.

(3) Cosford Chalmers, the subject of this sketch.

(4) Elizabeth Laura, married Dr. Henry Sutton, of Madoc, Ont.; died 1893.

(5) Edwigi Christina, married Frank Wooten, of Toronto; died 1914.

(6) James Ford, B.A., of Trinity University, Toronto; died in June, 1875, at New York.

(7) Sarah Consuelo, married Rev. Albert L. Geen, of Belleville.

(8) Henry David, Civil Engineer, Los Angeles, Calif.

Cosford C. Forneri was born at Belfast, Ireland, on September 5th, 1842, and was, therefore, nine years of age when he came to Nova Scotia with his parents, and eleven years when he came to Toronto. He took a course in Agriculture at the University, and was also a graduate of the old Toronto Military School. About 1861 he decided to become a Land Surveyor, and served his apprenticeship with F. F. Passmore, of Toronto. On July 9th, 1864, he passed his final examination as a Provincial Land Surveyor, and took up his residence at Madoc, where he remained for some years.

He entered into partnership with Charles F. Aylsworth and Lachlan Kennedy, the name of firm being Aylsworth, Forneri and Kennedy. Mr. Aylsworth withdrew after a short time and the two others continued to practise from 1866 to 1870. Kennedy removed to Manitoba, where he died many years ago.

On December 21st, 1868, he married Miss Isabeel Agar, of Madoc, Ont., daughter of Mr. Thos. S. and Mrs. Agar. Mr. T. S. Agar was a lawyer of repute of Maidstone, England, who came to Belleville with his wife in 1834. In 1863 he was appointed Superintendent of Schools for North Hastings, which position he held until his resignation, in 1873. He died on August 25th, 1887.

Mrs. Seager is the only surviving child of Mr. and Mrs. Agar.

Mr. C. C. Forneri performed the following surveys for the Provincial Government:—

1871—Madawaska River Surveys, probably timber limits.

1872—Part of Twp. of Macgregor and Winter Road from Prince Arthur's Landing to Black Bay, Lake Superior.

1874—Tier of Lots along Dawson Road.

In 1879 walked from Eagle River to Rat Portage.

When he completed the survey of the last township he and his party walked on snowshoes with dog trains to carry the luggage, the entire distance between Fort Francis, on the Rainy River, to Prince Arthur's Landing, in the neighborhood of 300 miles. This journey was made in the Spring time, and was, therefore, accomplished mostly at night. During the day, when the sun was warm and the snow soft, the party slept wrapped in their blankets, lying on the ice. The freezing at night improved the travelling conditions.

In 1875 and 1876 Mr. Forneri was employed on Subdivision Surveys in the vicinity of Rainy River, for the Department of the Interior, Ottawa, in what is now part of the Province of Ontario.

In 1877 Mr. Forneri had a contract for grading on the Canadian Pacific Railway.

He removed from Madoc to Prince Arthur's Landing with his family in 1871, or the year after the first Red River Rebellion, and when not employed on Government surveys he was busy making surveys for private parties, who had staked out mining claims, or in surveying timber limits.

Construction of the C. P. R. westward from Prince Arthur's Landing was commenced in the year 1875, and in 1879 rails had reached Eagle River. Mr. Forneri was then surveying for a Mr. Gibbins in the vicinity of Rat Portage, where he contracted pneumonia, and died on August 15th, 1880.

In November, 1879, Mrs. Forneri, with an infant three weeks old, returned to Madoc from Prince Arthur's Landing, intending to remain there while Mr. Forneri was making a new home for his family at Rat Portage. She was at Madoc when his death occurred, but she did not learn of it for two months afterwards.

In September, 1881, Mrs. Forneri journeyed from Madoc to Rat Portage on business connected with the estate of her husband. She travelled by train and steamer to Prince Arthur's Landing, now Port Arthur, thence by contractors' construction train to Eagle River, at that time the end of the rail. From this point she went by canoe via Lake of the

Woods to Rat Portage. On this trip she was accompanied by her sister, Mrs. James Fitzgerald, Mr. Fitzgerald, and the children of both families. Mrs. Forneri's youngest daughter was then a delicate child less than two years old. George Derry and Charles Flett, both now living in Kenora, were the guides and canoe men on this trip, which took about twelve days. At the mouth of Big Stone River they met Mr. C. W. Chadwick, now local Master of Titles and Registrar of Lands at Kenora, with his wife and daughter, who were travelling from Hawk Lake.

The children of Mr. and Mrs. Forneri were as follows:—

(1) Stodhart S., born at Madoc, October 10th, 1869; Mining Engineer, Haileybury, Ont.

(2) Felix F., born at Prince Arthur's Landing, September 18th, 1871; Editor, "Morden Times," Morden, Man.

(3) Elizabeth L., born at Prince Arthur's Landing, June 17th, 1873; married J. J. Sheridan; died November 15th, 1918.

(4) Cosford C., born at Prince Arthur's Landing, October 1st, 1875; Stationary Engineer, Rat Portage. Died December 5th, 1916, at Port Arthur, Ont.

(5) Muriel I., born at Prince Arthur's Landing, October 31st, 1879; married John Armstrong, Keewatin, Ont.

In 1883 Mrs. C. C. Forneri married Edmund Seager, O. L. S., whose biographical sketch appeared in the 1923 report.

Mr. C. C. Forneri's abilities and sterling character won for him an honorable position, not only in his profession, but in the community.

He was a Mason and a member of Shuniah Lodge, No. 287, at Prince Arthur's Landing and served as Worshipful Master for a couple of terms.

Charles Batstone, P. L. S., 1875, and Wm. H. Furlong, P. L. S., 1877, served their apprenticeship with Mr. C. C. Forneri.

Mr. Elihu Stewart has contributed the following additional information respecting Mr. Forneri and the surveyors who were employed on Lake Superior during the early years of the Canadian Pacific Railway.

After passing his final examination in the Spring of 1872, Mr. Stewart went to Lake Superior to prosecute surveys for a mining syndicate. At this time Silver Islet was yielding spectacular values in silver, and there was a great mining

boom in the Lake Superior District. Prince Arthur's Landing was the headquarters for mining prospectors and surveyors. There were then located at this point four surveyors:—Arthur C. Crickmore, Charles F. Miles, A. B. Scott and C. C. Forneri, but the last mentioned then had the largest practice. Mr. Stewart went back to Ontario for the Winter. He was in Prince Arthur's Landing again in the Spring of 1873, and returned East in the Autumn. In the Winter of 1875-76 he made a subdivision survey of five or six townships on Rainy River, about half way from Fort Frances and Lake of the Woods. Mr. Forneri was engaged in the same district in the Summer of 1875 and the greater part of the Winter.

Mr. Stewart arrived at Prince Arthur's Landing about November 10th, and eventually reached Fort Frances, a distance of about two hundred miles, his party of ten hauling toboggans made in the bush by them at Lake Shebandowan. They arrived at the point where their surveys were to commence before Christmas Day, and finished his work in April. At Prince Arthur's Landing he dined at Mr. Forneri's on his way home.