

WILLIAM FRASER

Fraser's Highlanders took an important part in the capture of the City of Quebec in 1759 and there is a tradition in the Edwardsburg Fraser family that at the close of the campaign their ancestors were given the option of settling anywhere in the American colonies, or returning to Scotland, and they decided on Johnstown, N.Y. Upon the outbreak of the Revolutionary War, many of the name joined the Royalist forces and served during the period of the war. At the close of the war Wm. Fraser, Sen., Capt. Thomas Fraser, Capt. Wm. Fraser and Thomas Fraser were granted over 6,000 acres of land in Grenville County.

From the office of Archives, Ottawa, the following information has been obtained, from which it would appear that Capt. William and Capt. Thomas were twin brothers.

"Capt. Wm. Fraser of the Loyal Rangers, was born in 1749, probably in Scotland, and died in Dundas County about 1828. He was appointed Sheriff of Johnstown District 1803, and Colonel in first Grenville Regiment 1820. In 1792, when Governor Simcoe and Mrs. Simcoe travelled from Montreal to Kingston, they called at Capt. Wm. Fraser's. He was then living on Lot 17 in the first concession of Edwardsburg, but before 1804 he removed to the Township of Matilda, where he died.

"Capt. Thomas Fraser of the Loyal Rangers, was also born in Scotland in 1749. He was elected to represent Dundas in Upper Canada 2nd Parliament in 1797-1800 and represented Glengarry in 1808-1812 the 5th Parliament. In 1800 he was appointed Sheriff of Johnstown District. He was a son-in-law of the Hon. John Munro.

"The military records show that Capt. Wm. Fraser, Capt. Thos. Fraser and Lt. Wm. Fraser entered the King's service in 1777 and were in Major E. Jessup's Corps of the Loyal Rangers."

There is a tradition in the Fraser family that Wm. Fraser, Sen., was in Fraser's Highlanders at Quebec in 1759 and that he was at Wolfe's side at the hour of his death, but William, Sen., was then only about twelve years of age. It is possible that his father was the officer who was on the Plains of Abraham on this eventful occasion.

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Although Capt. Thomas appears to have been a more prominent man in the community than William, the descendants of the latter have no information or knowledge of Thomas, or of his descendants, if any. Probably, Capt. Wm. Fraser was born before 1749, although this is the date given in the Archives. His son, William, the surveyor, was born in 1766. There are several details in connection with the history of the Fraser family that have not yet been cleared up.

William Fraser, Sen., settled on the bank of the St. Lawrence, about three miles below Johnstown. He had the following children:— William (the surveyor); Richard Duncan; Capt. Thomas, known as "bon homme"; Peter; John; Jennie (married Mills) and Grace, who married Hugh Munro, one of the most prominent men in the Johnstown District. Munro laid out the greater part of the village of Cardinal and built for himself a magnificent manor house near the bank of the River St. Lawrence at the Westerly limit of the village, which was afterwards occupied by the late W. T. Benson, M.P., and recently acquired for school purposes.

William, the surveyor, was born at Johnstown, New York State, in 1766, and came to Canada with his father and uncle. In the list of surveyors published by the Government in 1862, the date of William Fraser's appointment as a surveyor is given as August 5th, 1847. This is obviously an error, as he was practising years before this and he was then 81 years of age. He may have been appointed as early as 1787.

He lived on Lot 16 in the second concession of Edwardsburg and his son, Thomas, lived there after his father's death with his widowed mother, who survived the surveyor about fifteen years.

William, the surveyor, had three sons and one daughter, as follows:—

- (1) William (3rd) born 1802, died 1887. He was a pilot on the St. Lawrence and was known as "Chub Fraser." He lived at Johnstown below Prescott.
- (2) Edward; (3) Thomas, who continued to reside on the homestead after his parents' death; and (4) Grace.

William (3rd) had four sons and one daughter—Wm. James; Hugh Allan; John; George and Harriett.

James Allan of Prescott and Wm. Douglas Fraser of Toronto are sons of Wm. James.

Capt. Thomas ("Bonhomme") Fraser was a half pay officer and was wounded at Lundy's Lane. He had six sons and three daughters. Miss Mary E. Fraser and John Fraser of Johnstown are children of Capt. John, one of sons of Capt. Thomas, born 1810, and grand-children of Capt. Thomas. Capt. John served at the Battle of the Windmill in 1838, after which he received his Major's commission.

The name of Thomas Fraser also appears in the Government List of Land Surveyors, the date of his appointment as Deputy Provincial Surveyor being August 4th, 1825.

It does not appear reasonable to assume that Thomas, the surveyor, was the Sheriff and M.P., nor is it probable that he was a brother of William, the surveyor. This is not important as he made no surveys of which records can now be found.

Peter Walton Fraser of Black River, New York, is a son of John Wells Fraser, grandson of Simon B. Fraser, and great grandson of Peter Fraser, brother of William, the surveyor.

Col. R. D. Fraser was a son of Thomas, the Sheriff and M.P., was also a Member of Parliament and an officer in the Militia. He took part in the battles of Chrysler's Farm, 1813; Ogdensburg and at the Windmill in 1838. Col. T. W. Fraser, son of Col. R. D., was Captain in the 56th and exchanged to the 2nd West Indian. Dr. A. H. Fraser of Brockville, the youngest son of Col. T. W. Fraser, was staff surgeon in British Army during the Crimean War. He also served as surgeon in the American Rebellion.

In March, 1816, Wm. Fraser was instructed to subdivide the gore or land lying between the 9th concession in the Townships of Edwardsburg, Oxford and South Gower. The last paragraph of the instructions reads as follows:—

"The Hon. Thomas Fraser of Edwardsburg may make choice of a lot or two in the tract you are about to survey."

In 1817 he surveyed the Township of North Sherbrooke. The following note appears on a plan of Fredericksburgh made by Publius V. Elmore in 1835:—

"This plan of the 1st concession, I have added on from Messrs. McDonald's and Fraser's field notes to show the connection between the concessions."

It is rather remarkable that there are no plans or documents in the Registry Offices for the Counties of Dundas and

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of Grenville, drawn or prepared by Wm. Fraser or Thomas Fraser.

William Fraser, the surveyor, died at his home on May 20th, 1852, aged 86 years. He was buried in the small cemetery near the banks of the St. Lawrence about three and one-half miles West of Cardinal on township lot known as "The Commons."

RICHARD BIRDSALL

The subject of this short sketch was born near Malton in Yorkshire, England, in 1799. He was educated for the Navy, but after the death of his father he decided to come to Canada. He arrived about 1814, and for a short time taught school near Montreal. He then took up the study of land surveying and was admitted to practice in Upper Canada in 1819. He was then a resident of York. In the following year he was associated with Gabriel Lount and his son, George Lount, on the survey of the Township of Innisfil.

He appears to have gone into partnership with Hon. Zacheus Burnham as general contractors of Scott's Mills (now Peterboro) and in 1825 he laid out the Town of Peterboro. Some of the streets were named after Mr. Birdsall's daughters.

Mr. Birdsall made the following surveys for the Provincial Government:—

Township of Otonabee—July 29th, 1819.

Town of Peterboro—Oct. 18th, 1825.

Part Township of Smith—Jan. 15th, 1830.

Re-running boundary line Canada Co.—Sept. 24th, 1834.

In making surveys for the Crown he received one half his pay in land valued at one dollar per acre and the other half in money.

Although not an expert bushman when with the Lounts, he eventually became one. He was a powerful man and a hard worker. It is reported that when surveying townships he organized two parties, each working one day and moving camp the following day. To obtain flour it was then necessary to ship wheat from Cobourg by flat boat to Kingston, where the nearest mills were operated.