

GEORGE GIBSON

About the year 1815, John Gibson came to Canada from Ireland, and eventually settled in the Township of Grantham, where the Methodist Church now stands. The farm was known as the Nellis Farm. He married Mary Read.



George Gibson, the second son of John and Mary Gibson, was born in Grantham on January 11th, 1837. He first attended a school on Niagara Street about a mile south of what is now known as Port Weller. This was a log and frame building with shingle roof. His next school was the Grantham Academy or Grammar School, distant three miles from his home. This school is on Church Street, St. Catharines. For years it was a Collegiate Institute, and is now a ward school. After three or four years at this school, he attended Upper Canada College, Toronto, 1850-1854.

In his reminiscences published in the St. Catharines Standard, in 1920, he states that he and his father went to Toronto by the steamer "Chief Justice Robinson" about January 1st, 1850. They embarked at Niagara, but could not enter Toronto Harbor owing to ice which extended beyond the Queen's wharf over a quarter of a mile. Sleighs came out on the ice to convey the steamer passengers to shore.

Upper Canada College was then located at the northwest corner of King St. and Simcoe St. There was one main building with cupola, five buildings for the masters, and one for resident pupils. There were thirteen teachers.

When at Upper Canada College, the first sod of the Northern Railway was turned, the first railway in the Province.

A locomotive was built for this railway at Good's Foundry at the northeast corner of Yonge and Queen. It was transported from the foundry to the railway on the esplanade at a point between Bay St. and the Queen's Hotel, by laying sectional movable tracks down Yonge St. This notable event took place on May 16th, 1853, and was observed by young Gibson with other Upper Canada College students.

On April 1st, 1854, he completed his studies at U.C.C. and decided to become a Land Surveyor.

On June 19th, 1854, he became articled to George S. Rykert, P.L.S. During his three years' apprenticeship, Mr. Rykert was appointed Town Engineer at St. Catharines, and was also employed on right-of-way surveys for the Welland Railway from Port Dalhousie to Port Colborne. Mr. Gibson qualified as a P.L.S. on April 10th, 1860.

After qualifying he practised at Woodville, U.C., until 1865 when he removed to Lindsay. He only remained there a short time, then went to St. Catharines where for some years he was employed as assistant to Frank Shanly on the construction of the Welland Railway.

About 1871 he acquired a farm about two miles east of the city limits of St. Catharines, where he continued to reside until his death.

In 1863 he made a survey of Thorah Island in Lake Simcoe for the Government, but the actual field work was done by Mr. H. D. Lumsden, then an articled student to Mr. Gibson.

In 1872 he began surveys for the then proposed Welland Canal enlargement, upon which work he was employed by the Dominion Government for twenty years. He assisted the land valuers, and set stone monuments to mark the canal lands from Port Dalhousie to Port Colborne.

In 1883 he made surveys and prepared plans of lands flooded between Dunnville and Cayuga, caused by increasing the height of the dam built across the Grand River at Dunnville, to divert water to the Welland Canal at Welland.

In 1889 he resurveyed the west boundary of the Town plot of Niagara.

Mr. Gibson had five articled students during his forty years of active practice. Hugh David Lumsden, Peter Burnet, David Kyle, William E. Tench, and Joseph Dickson, of whom

Kyle and Dickson did not qualify as Surveyors. Tench moved to Detroit where he became a prominent contractor. Dickson was an assistant engineer on the Welland Canal. (For sketch of Rykert see report of 1916, and for sketch of Burnet, report of 1917).

Mr. Gibson married Margaret Sinclair at Woodville about 1863. Her death occurred in March, 1879. His second wife was Gertrude Donaldson who died in 1921. He had no children by his first wife, and one child, a daughter, by his second wife, who died at twelve years of age.

In 1915 Mr. Gibson wrote the Chairman of the Committee, "I am now quietly resting my oars, taking solid comfort, studying up the science of life, in order to find out how much of a man I am."

His last illness was of short duration. He was buried in the McNab Cemetery.

The accompanying portrait is taken from a photograph of Mr. Gibson when he was fifty years of age.

The names of Mr. George Gibson's brothers and sisters are as follows:—

Mary Ann (m. Franklin), Township of Grantham.

Elizabeth Jane, spinster, Township of Grantham.

John, Township of Grantham.

Eliza (m. Bate), Toronto.

Lucinda (m. Hosteller), Detroit.

Susan (died in infancy).

Almeda (spinster), Township of Grantham.

Albert, Township of Grantham.

To Margaret E. Addison of St. Catharines, a niece of Mr. Gibson, we are indebted for some of the family history. There are now living about seven nephews and nieces of the late George Gibson, but no direct descendants.