

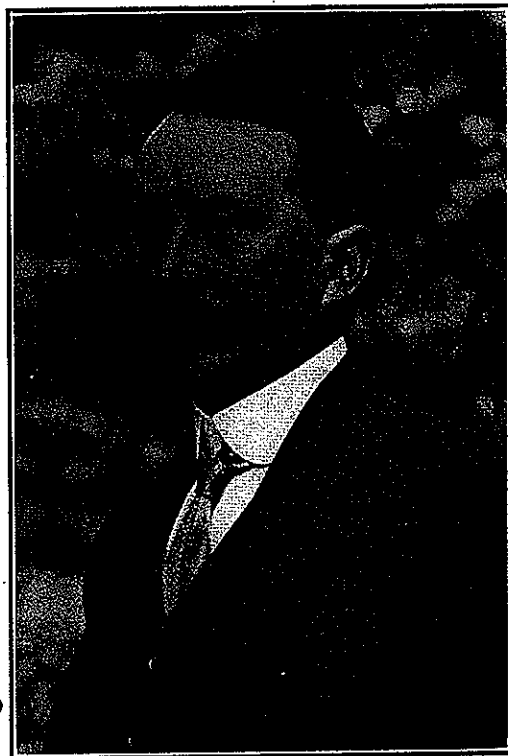
J. F. WHITSON.

The subject of this sketch was born in the Township of Osprey, County of Grey, Ont., near Singhampton, on July 13th, 1864. Of Scottish parentage, the son of David Whitson, a contractor in stonework, he seemed to inherit the qualities of industry, enterprise, and perseverance which have characterized that race in the development of this country.

His education, begun in the local public school, was later carried on at the Collegiate Institute, Collingwood, with the object of becoming a school teacher, and finally in the then School of Practical Science at Toronto. In April, 1883, he passed the preliminary examination, before the Board of Examiners for Provincial Land Surveyors, and was articled for three years as a pupil of Mr. Elihu Stewart, of Collingwood. During this period his capacity as a leader of men was demonstrated to a marked degree in surveys of Crown Lands.

Upon the receipt of his commission as P.L.S., April 9th, 1886, he took up the practice of that profession, and was a member of the firm of Stewart and Whitson, with headquarters at Collingwood, until the year 1890. The opening up of New Ontario then attracted him and he continued his practice as a land surveyor as a member of the firm of Whitson and Rorke, with headquarters at North Bay and Sudbury.

Having completed an extensive survey of timber berths in the District of Rainy River, under instructions from the Department of Crown Lands, in 1890, he was attached to the Surveys Branch of that Department, and thereafter continued



in the service of the Provincial Government in various capacities, for the remaining thirty years of his life.

During his service with the Surveys Branch, he became widely known by those having business with that Branch for his grasp of all the details pertaining to it, and he unwittingly made many friends by his voluntary aid, freely rendered, when complicated searches were to be made. He also kept in touch with timber and mining explorers in the north, and thus became an encyclopaedia of the wealth of timber minerals and water power as yet undeveloped. When the discoveries at Cobalt, since of so much importance to the world, were made, he was commissioned by the Minister of Lands, Forests and Mines, to adjudicate between rival claimants, and he discharged this difficult duty in his usual fair-minded way. Like Mr. William Ogilvie, of Klondyke fame, he declined to make personal gain of public affairs.

Upon the establishment of a Northern Development Branch for Ontario, in 1912, Mr. Whitson was chosen by Sir James Whitney as the most capable man to be made Commissioner in charge of all the expenditure and work involved in that great undertaking.

His sterling honesty and unremitting devotion to duty enabled him to fill this position with justice to the public and to the individual, despite the political complications inevitable in all work of this nature. At the time of the great fire in the District of Temiskaming, in 1916, he was early on the scene, and spared himself neither day nor night in the labor of relieving the sufferers and burying the dead. This work resulted in a serious illness, from the effects of which he never fully recovered.

Mr. Whitson was one of the first to realize the possibilities of the Great Clay Belt of Northern Ontario as an agricultural asset to the Province, and assisted in the establishing of a number of experimental farms and garden plots along the line of the Temiskaming and Northern Ontario Railway and the National Transcontinental Railway. By means of these it was shown that several varieties of wheat and oats in those latitudes produced good yields and excellent results were obtained with cabbages, beets, tomatoes, turnips, potatoes, and peas.

Under Mr. Whitson's supervision Trunk Roads were constructed from Gravenhurst to Sault Ste. Marie via Sudbury; from Sudbury to Pembroke via North Bay; from Cochrane west and south; from Fort William to Pigeon River.

On the 8th of June, 1898, Mr. Whitson married Miss Annie M. McAlpine, daughter of the Rev. John McAlpine. Mrs. Whitson, one son and daughter survive him, as do also two brothers and three sisters.

He held the position of President of the Association of Ontario Land Surveyors, 1911-1912, and was at one time President of the Association of Old Boys for Grey County, and was for a time an officer in the corps of Guides, Canadian Militia.

It was in the midst of his multifarious duties as Commissioner of the Northern Development Branch at his headquarters in Sudbury, that the call came, and he passed away suddenly on June 12th, 1920.

OWEN McKAY.

In 1840 Owen McKay, Sr., emigrated to Canada from Ireland, and settled on a farm five miles from Forester's Falls, in the County of Renfrew, in the District now known as Grant's Ridge, where he continued to live until his death. He was married in Dundalk, County of Louth, Ireland, in 1837, to Ann Dolighan. They had five sons and one daughter, as follows: — Patrick, born Jan. 24th, 1838, died March 5th, 1853; James, born Dec. 31st, 1840, died Feb. 7th, 1915; John, born May 24th, 1842, died Feb. 27th, 1918; Thomas, born Feb. 5th, 1844, now living at Beamsville, Ont.; Owen, born March 5th, 1847, died Dec. 8th, 1920; Margaret, born Aug. 26th, 1850, now living, married Wm. Black, of Forester's Falls, in April, 1871.



Owen McKay, Jr., was educated at the public schools, but