

BATHURST INDEPENDENT EXAMINER

From the *Perth Courier* of February 22, 1918

Preamble

In 1918 the following article was furnished to the editor of the *Perth Courier* by prominent Arnprior lumberman Armond Burwash¹. When published, however, the *Courier* editor explained that “*the author is not known and Mr. Burwash is unsure how it came into his possession but says it may have [come] indirectly from the late George E. Neilson, who may probably have written the article*”.

That the author was probably George Edward Neilson (1834-1911)² seems a good guess. After first editing the *Pembroke Observer*, Neilson launched his own newspaper, *Neilson's Weekly*, at Arnprior in 1867 and published that journal until about 1900. At various times during this period, Neilson also ran a general store and served as Town Clerk and Clerk of the Division Court.

For his part, Neilson tells us that the subject of his article, an 1829 copy of the *Bathurst Independent Examiner*, came into his hands from Arnprior bank manager Gerald Jarvis (1873-1933)³, “*the grandson of ‘Judge’ Jarvis*”. The bank manager’s grandfather was Edward James Jarvis, born 1788 at Frederickton, New Brunswick, a judge from 1822 and Chief Justice of New Brunswick from 1828, who died at Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, in 1852.

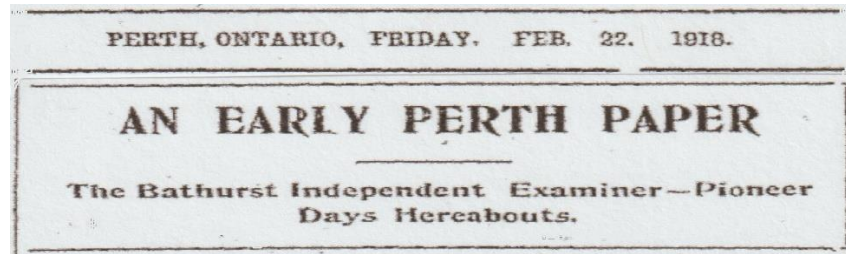
How a copy of Perth’s pioneer newspaper found its way into the “*old papers*” of a New Brunswick judge is unknown, but one might speculate that it had something to do with another Judge Jarvis. George Stephen Benjamin Jarvis, born in 1797, also at Frederickton, came to Upper Canada during the War of 1812 and became a judge in Ottawa District (Prescott, Russell, Carleton) in 1825, MLA for Cornwall in 1836, judge of Johnstown District in 1837, judge of Eastern District in 1842, judge of the United Counties of Stormont, Dundas, and Glengarry in 1849, and died at Cornwall in 1878.

That Judge George S. B. Jarvis, who, in 1829 was on the bench in Ottawa District, should have a copy of the April 21, 1829 issue of the *Bathurst Independent Examiner* would seem logical, and some relationship between Judges Edward and George Jarvis would provide the most obvious explanation of how a copy of the *Examiner* found its way to Charlottetown. However, while a family connection seems very likely, they were no more closely related than cousins.

¹ Armond Burwash (1855-1932) married (1890) Harriet E. Cranston (1861-1955).

² Married (1856) Margaret Richmond Hart (1837-1914).

³ Gerald Jarvis (1873-1933) married (1904) Jessie McIntyre White (1872-1906) and married (1920) Anna Irene Carry (1897-1996).



Through courtesy of Gerald Jarvis Esq., manager of the Bank of Ottawa, Arnprior, I have been favored with a perusal of a copy of the above newspaper, dated 21st August 1829. In a recent visit to relatives in Prince Edward Island, down by the sea, he found this relic among some old papers of his deceased grandfather, Judge Jarvis. As an old Perth boy, I was naturally much interested in seeing this copy of Perth's pioneer newspaper, the forerunner to the *Courier*.⁴ Believing that there are many in and around your good old town who would be interested, I have taken the liberty of culling from its columns a few items of bygone days.

John Stewart⁵, printer and proprietor, was evidently a man of faith and enterprise to undertake the publication of a newspaper in those early days when subscriptions were paid for in cordwood or other like barter. It was customary also for three or four farmers to club together and join resources to pay for one paper, which thus became a sort of circulating library for their neighborhood. The copy before me was Vol. 2, No. 16, which indicates that this pioneer newspaper first appeared around June 1828.⁶ The size of the sheet is 29 X 26 inches, four pages and four columns to the page. The subscription price was 15s, exclusive of postage. It had a fairly liberal advertising patronage from merchants and tradesmen, besides several legal ads of Sheriff's sales of lands. The printing office was "*in the house on Gore Street, formerly occupied by Mr. I. Wylie*".

The heading 'Bathurst' denoted the district of the name, comprising the present counties of Carleton, Lanark, and Renfrew. Perth was the capital of all that large section of country. The Rideau canal was then in course of construction under the Military Engineer, Col. By⁷, for whom Bytown was named. At that time Bytown was but a hamlet compared with Perth. All of the public offices of the district were at Perth, and it was there that the courts were held and all other advertisements of Sheriff's sale of land. I see that some of the lands were situated in the Township of Nepean. John H. Powell⁸ was then Sheriff and William (Bill) Matheson⁹, Deputy Sheriff.

⁴ In 1834, when Dr. John Cameron (1798-1834) started the *Bathurst Courier* (which later became the *Perth Courier*) he purchased the press and type of the then defunct *Bathurst Independent Examiner*. Shortly after launching the paper Dr. Cameron died and his younger brother Malcolm Cameron (1808-1876) took over as publisher.

⁵ John Stewart (c1790-c1873), born in Ireland, educated at Trinity College, Dublin, had previously edited the *Brockville Recorder*, and came to Perth to teach at the Perth Grammar School before simultaneously becoming a publisher. He later studied law, practiced at London, Ontario, and, from 1867 to 1873, served as clerk to Federal Minister of Justice John A. Macdonald (1815-1891).

⁶ The Diary of Reverend William Bell records that John Stewart's press arrived in Perth, from Montreal, on March 21, 1828.

⁷ Colonel John By (1779-1836), Royal Engineers.

⁸ Not 'John H. Powell' but James Hamilton Powell (1773-1831) who was District Sheriff 1822-1831.

⁹ William Matheson (1778-1852) was, at various times in his life, Coroner, Bathurst Deputy Sheriff, Jailer, Drummond Township Collector of Taxes, Street Surveyor for Perth, Pound Keeper, hotel and tavern keeper and auctioneer.

Josias Taylor¹⁰ was postmaster at Perth. He advertised a long list of letters uncalled for, as was the practice in early days. Following many of the names were letters indicating residence. 'L' was for Lanark, 'B' for Bathurst, 'Be' for Beckwith, 'E' for Elmsley, etc., which would seem to indicate that the Perth post office supplied a large section of the surrounding country. These were the days when the Postman's horn was heard on the streets to announce the arrival of the mail.

Speaking of mails reminds me of the fact that postage stamps had not come into use, nor was prepayment required. The rates varied according to distance, the amount being stamped or written on each letter by the Postmaster. Old country letters being as high as 1s 6d. Local rates 2d 6d 9d and 1s. Envelopes had not come into fashion. Letter paper size only used for correspondence and was folded to the size of the present envelope and sealed on the outer flap with wafers or sealing wax.

As advertisements give information of the ordinary business of a town or village, it is interesting to note that the following were general merchants to Perth in 1829; namely R. Matheson¹¹, W. Morris & Co.¹², W. & J. Bell¹³, Glass & Cameron¹⁴, Josias Taylor, and F. H. Consitt¹⁵. The latter had bought out Benjamin DeLisle¹⁶, Glass & Cameron advertised their dissolution of partnership, Malcom Cameron to continue the business. Some of the dry goods then advertised have gone out of use, such as bombazine¹⁷ and others.

Some of the merchants evidently imported their supplies direct from the old country as they announced the arrival of the Brigs at Quebec with their new stock of fall and winter goods of various kinds. Robert Bell¹⁸ advertised that he had just opened out in the mercantile business at Morphy's Falls (Carleton Place).

Of other Perth businessmen and lines of business then carried on were Edward Docherty, who wanted an apprentice to the saddle and harness business, and Charles Miller¹⁹ advertised that he had commenced the saddle, harness, and valise business in the house of Patrick Ryan, near the Presbyterian church, but would remove in a week or two to the house then occupied by Mr. T. Wickham²⁰ nearly opposite the store of W. & J. Bell.

¹⁰ Josias Taylor (1784-1844), formerly of the 3rd Regiment of Foot and Captain of the Canadian Regiment of Fencible Infantry.

¹¹ Roderick Matheson (1793-1873), merchant and later Canadian Senator.

¹² Merchant brothers William Morris (1786-1858) and Alexander Morris Jr. (1782-1851).

¹³ Merchant twin brothers William Bell (1806-1844) and John Bell (1806-1849), sons of Reverend William Bell (1780-1857).

¹⁴ Merchants Malcolm Cameron (1808-1876) and his brother-in-law Henry/Harry Glass (1799-1866).

¹⁵ Francis Henry Consitt (1807-1859).

¹⁶ Benjamin DeLisle (c1780-c1860), former Lieutenant of the Canadian Regiment of Fencible Infantry.

¹⁷ A twilled dress fabric of worsted silk or cotton.

¹⁸ Robert Bell (1808-1894), son of Reverend William Bell (1780-1857).

¹⁹ Charles Miller (1785-1842).

²⁰ Probably Thomas Wickham, formerly of 54th Foot, English, ticketed September 1817 for Beckwith C-2/L-9(SW).

F. McLaren wanted an apprentice to the tailoring business, John Watson wanted an experienced miller, one experienced in oatmeal manufacture preferred. James Wall²¹ wanted an apprentice to the boot and shoe business. Thomas Barrie²² had commenced the boot and shoe business in the house between Dr. O'Hare's²³ and Mr. Anderson's²⁴ red building.

P. Robinson²⁵ as Commissioner of Lands notified those in arrears for rent of Crown Reserves to pay up. The following advertised various lands for sale in the surrounding townships; names R. Matheson, W. Morris & Co., J. McKay²⁶, Col. Marshall²⁷, John Ferguson²⁸, Mary Alston²⁹, and William Matheson.

Of the out-of-town advertisers were J. W. Coon, who announced that he had taken over the carding and clothing business formerly carried on by J. K. Boyce³⁰ at Shipman's mill (Almonte). J. Christie and H. Calder advertised several houses and lots on Wellington Street, Bytown, having a good view of the Chaudière Falls. Rykert & Simpson wanted 25 good stone cutters and 50 experienced drillers and quarrymen to work on the Rideau Canal at Smiths Falls.

John Teshack of Ramsay advertised the loss of a black Canton cape shawl between Bradley's and Shouldice's tavern on the way to Bytown, and for the return of which to Mr. Connell, postmaster, Bytown, or to the owners, reward of five shillings would be paid. A reward was offered for the return of strayed or stolen dog from Poonamalee, of the Labrador breed, and another advertiser from Greenfield, Glengarry, offered a reward for a lost hound.

The reading matter was what printers would call solid, meaning that there was little blank or white space. The columns were wider than the present 13 ems³¹, the four columns totalling a width of nearly the present five columns. Very little space was taken up with headings, leads or dashes. Scare heads and yellow literature had not then come into fashion. It would have been considered an impertinence for papers to take note of private family doings, such as recording the arrival or departure of their guests, or the personal allusions sometimes now made by country correspondents to a certain young man seen driving with a young lady.

²¹ Possibly James Wall, Army Corporal, ticketed September 1819 for Burgess C-8/L-1(SW).

²² Possibly the Thomas Barrie mentioned by Jean S. McGill in *A Pioneer History of the County of Lanark* (1968) who was located on Bathurst C-1/L-11 in early 1816.

²³ Dr. James O'Hare, former Army Surgeon, ticketed September 1819 for Drummond, C-10/L-12(SW) in April 1820, operated a practice next door to Adamson's 'Red House' Inn on Craig Street. He died during the cholera epidemic of 1832.

²⁴ This is probably not "*Anderson's red building*" but reference to the inn of John Adamson (1775-c1841), Perth's first inn and tavern, known as the 'Red House', at 55 Craig Street.

²⁵ Peter Robinson (1785-1838), Commissioner of Crown Lands, member of the Legislative Assembly, Legislative Council and Executive Council of Upper Canada. Known for his work in organizing the Irish (Ballygiblin) migration and settlement in Ramsay Township in 1823.

²⁶ Lawyer John McKay (1790-1840).

²⁷ William Marshall (1774-1864), former Captain of the Canadian Regiment of Fencible Infantry and one time superintendent of the Perth Military Settlement and the Lanark Settlement.

²⁸ John 'Craigdarroch' Ferguson (1780-1857), innkeeper and distiller.

²⁹ Likely the widow of Lieutenant John Alston, 70th Foot, who arrived 1818 and was ticketed for 800 acres, the allocation for a Captain and 300 acres more than the 500 acres due him at the rank of Lieutenant.

³⁰ Isaiah Keeler Boyce (1790-1875), brother-in-law of Daniel Shipman (1791-1853), founder of Almonte.

³¹ The em size of a font is equal to its point size. In digital typefaces, one point is equal to 1/72 of an inch. Twelve points make one pica. Six picas make one inch.

Settlers and residents having for the most part but recently arrived from the old land, as was natural, the papers of that day gave considerable space to English, Irish and Scotch news. Russia and Turkey were then at war and some record of their army and navy movements was given, although the news was three weeks old, the latest being a record of a naval battle at the mouth of the Bosphorus in which Turkey had succeeded in capturing of the enemy's brigs of 50 guns.

The great part of the front page was taken up with a report of a missionary sermon delivered by the Rev. William Smart³² of Brockville. This was only the conclusion of the sermon, but if the portion reported previously was equally lengthy the popular 20-minutes sermon had not then come into vogue.

Two columns or over were taken up with correspondence. In early days the editor was helped largely in making his paper locally interesting by his correspondents. Cutting sarcasm was the correspondent's chief method of silencing an opponent, and Latin and French phrases were largely used. One of the letters in the *Examiner* was headed "To Mr. Fee-Fo-Fum" and signed "Boo To The Goose". The reader may then guess the compliments between. A lengthy correspondent in the same issue apes Shakespeare and in dialogue fashion cuts and carves his foe. Of course, these letters are enigmas to us except that we gather from them that some of the engineers at Bytown were at loggerheads.

Little attention was paid to what we now designate as local news. A report was given of an address to the Rev. M. Harris³³, rector at Perth, by his parishioners at Franktown. The Rev. gentleman was about to visit his native country, Ireland, and he was severing his connections with Beckwith branch, much to the regret of the people there. The address was signed by Jacob Smith, John Smith, Robert Davis, George Nesbit, Peter Jones, and Thomas Kidd. Another local item, (which is made to do duty as an editorial as it was the only article placed under that heading), is a short report of the doings at the sitting of the High Court, as follows

"The Court of Oyer and Terminer, and assizes and nisi prius and General Gaol Delivery, in and for the District of Bathurst, commenced in the Court House of this town on Monday last, Hon. James Sherwood³⁴ presiding, After a highly respectable Grand Jury was called and sworn, the Judge delivered an able and appropriate charge, and the Court adjourned for the day. Since that up to the present time sundry civil actions of much importance have been tried but we have not had time to arrange our notes so as to lay a short detail of some of the most interesting before the public. In many of the trifling actions tried this will not be necessary. In some of more importance, however, we will give a brief outline of the proceedings next week. On Tuesday William Molesworth³⁵ was arraigned for breaking into

³² Presbyterian minister Reverend William Smart (1788-1876) who had been preaching at Brockville and in the Townships of Elizabethtown, Lyn Young, Augusta and Mathilda since 1811 and had first preached at Perth during the settlement's first few weeks in the summer in 1816.

³³ Reverend Michael Harris (1795–1856), first Anglican priest at Perth.

³⁴ It seems odd that the *Examiner* would incorrectly name the judge, but it was almost certainly Justice Levius Peters Sherwood (1777-1850) on the bench that day. There appears to be no record of a judge named James Sherwood in the same time frame. Moreover, on August 17, 1829, four days after the publication date of the *Examiner* edition discussed here, it was Justice Levius Peters Sherwood who sentenced Thomas Easby to death.

³⁵ Probably William Moulsworth/Molesworth, born England 1779, former Private of the 41st Foot, settled September 1819, Drummond Township C-5/L-21(NE), or perhaps a son also named William.

the store of Mr. F. H. Consitt, merchant of this place, and carrying thence money to a considerable amount. On prisoner's pleading guilty he was committed to the cell to await his sentence. The trial of Thomas Easby³⁶ will come on today”.

This last mentioned trial proved the truth of the adage that ‘murder will out’. Easby lived near the Mississippi River on the road from Perth to Lanark. One night his cabin was burned, and his wife and two children perished, only Easby and a little son of four years of age having escaped. Easby had murdered his wife and children and then set fire to the building. The little boy took alarm and hid himself under an outbuilding or he would have shared the same fate. Easby’s story of accidental firing was accepted at first, the little boy was taken charge of by Mrs. William Matheson³⁷ of Perth, and Easby went to Bytown. Shortly afterward as the little boy was playing in a room in which Mrs. Matheson was reclining in rest, he took a small stick of wood from the fire and attempted to set fire to her clothing. Having been chided for doing so he innocently said that that was what his father did. Further investigation followed. Easby was arrested and, at the trial referred to above, was found guilty and afterwards hung.

Among the other interesting items in this copy of the *Examiner* is an extract from the *Kingston Herald* relating to the commencement of bar iron manufacture at the Marmora Iron Works, the quality of which was said to be equal to the best imported. Another item taken from the *Kingston Chronicle* is interesting as showing that even at that early date public attention was directed towards making a canal from the Ottawa River to Georgian Bay. The Chronicle said:

“We learn that Col. By, the enterprising engineer of the Rideau Canal, is about commencing a survey of the interior of the Province, from the Ottawa River to Lake Huron with a view to ascertain the practicability of opening a canal by that route and also ascertaining the extent of the chain of lakes which are known to lie in that direction. We understand that Lieutenant Dennison³⁸ of the R. E., a gentleman well qualified for the undertaking, is to have charge of the survey, and to be accompanied by Dr. Dunlop³⁹, Warden of the Forests, and Mr. Baird⁴⁰; Clerk of Works.”

About two columns of space was given to an article headed “Rideau Canal, from McTaggart’s⁴¹ *Three Years in Canada*. The extract given is a report of the engineer in charge of that portion of the survey of the Rideau Canal in the vicinity of Bytown, which would be particularly interesting to people in that neighborhood as it minutely describes the land and water formations as then existing from the mouth of the present canal to a distance of eight miles up the river. Evidently an alternative route by the Chaudière rapids and across a swamp to the Rideau was also noted. This route was not favored by the engineer in charge. He however, stated that it would be easy to construct a short branch canal of about five miles from the Rideau Canal to Bellows Bay above the Chaudière rapids. He favored such a branch canal as it would, he said, “only

³⁶ In August 1829 Thomas Easby was convicted of the murder of his family and sentenced to death. See *The Devil Visits Drummond* elsewhere on this website, <https://www.perthhs.org/documents/neighbor/shaw-the-devil-web2.pdf>

³⁷ ‘Mrs. Matheson’ is probably the wife of Deputy Sheriff William Matheson (1778-1852). It must be noted, however, that this version of events does not agree with the more common account in which young Joseph Easby was living with neighbors Thomas and Martha Richardson at Balderson when he began babbling about what ‘Papa did to Mammy’.

³⁸ Lieutenant William Thomas Denison (1804-1871), Royal Engineers.

³⁹ Dr. William ‘Tiger’ Dunlop (1792-1848), formerly Surgeon of the 89th Foot, then Canada Company Warden of the Forests.

⁴⁰ Nicol Hugh Baird (1796-1849), Clerk of Works, Rideau Canal (replacing John McTaggart).

⁴¹ John McTaggart (1791-1830), Clerk of Works, Rideau Canal (prior to Nicol H. Baird) and author of *Three Years in Canada* (1829).

require two small locks of seven feet lift each and would open up navigation a distance of 40 miles up the Ottawa into a fertile country now rapidly increasing in population". So level was the land between the Ottawa and Rideau at that point that he said some of the water from the intervening swamps flowed to the Ottawa and some to the Rideau and during spring flood that some of the Rideau water flowed to the Ottawa.

It only remains for me in conclusion to refer to a paragraph of Rev. Mr. Smart's sermon; it was so prophetic and is so applicable to present day needs that it is well worth copying. The Rev. Gentleman said;

"In conclusion my Christian friends: We not only live in an eventful period and history of the world, but also in an interesting country. What is now a thinly settled British Colony is destined to be a mighty empire, bounded perhaps, on the south by the river St. Lawrence and on the north by the Pacific Ocean⁴². What is now a howling wilderness will become fruitful field; and where are now only a few wondering tribes of savages, will be rising cities with all the arts of civilized life. Receiving as we do now the redundant population of Great Britain and Ireland and other parts of Europe, this country may be the abode of millions of the human family.

We live at the forming period of a mighty empire. Independent of the duties we owe to the present generation, our children, and their descendants, what an awful responsibility rests upon us connected with future generations. My friends, the duty of moral and intellectual culture are imperatively demanded at our hands.

Yes, the opening prospects of our country, the sentiments of enlightened patriotism, obedience to the command of God, and the love we ought to bear to imperishable souls of men, and the claims of a crucified Saviour, all required that we should now form the future character of this now rising world while the elements are within our control.

And what we do, we must do quickly. The tide of population will not wait until we have settled any metaphysical point of theology and every canon of theology and every canon of church government. The mighty swell rides higher and higher and will soon break down every barrier erected by civil government for the preservation of social orders unless speedily strengthened by the principles of correct sentiments, of piety to God, and enlightened views of our duty and obligations to society.

Open the floodgates of impiety and no constitution of civil government, however excellent, or rules however good and wise, can preserve us from revolution, anarchy, and ruin."

The Rev. gentleman's forecast of Canada's extension from ocean to ocean and of the cities of the plains at a time when the far west was almost unknown except to the Hudson Bay trader, is therefore somewhat remarkable, but neither he nor any other foresighted statesman of his day could possibly have foretold the wonderful advancement which has been made in the arts and sciences with so short a period as eighty years. The world moves.

⁴² Reverend Smart seem to have been geographically challenged.

Postscript

The printing press on which the *Bathurst Independent Examiner* was produced arrived in Perth from Montreal on March 21, 1828. It was installed in a room at John Adamson's 'Red House' Inn⁴³ and produced the newspaper's first edition a week or two later.

Publisher John Stewart organized a network of 27 subscription agents, from Hamilton to Montreal, and by the end of its first year claimed to have 521 subscribers. Collecting the 15-shilling subscription payment, in cash or in-kind, proved nearly impossible, however. The newspaper survived from April 1828 until early 1832 when it drowned in red ink. It was then purchased by Francis Henry Cummings (1786-1834), founding editor of the *Brockville Gazette*, but went under again in less than year. Its press was then sold to mill owner William Tully (1778-1845) who re-launched the effort as the *British Constitution*. That venture also lasted little more than a year and, in 1834, the press and type were sold again, this time to Dr. John Cameron who launched the *Bathurst Courier & Ottawa General Advertiser*, the weekly journal that evolved into the *Perth Courier* and survived until 2006.

- *Notated by Ron W. Shaw (2023).*

⁴³ It was later moved to the Wylie house on Gore Street near the river.