

## A HISTORY OF PERTH IN VERSE

In its edition of February 16, 1866, the *Perth Courier* published the following poem, describing it as a “*graphic history of our good town*”. The *Courier* did not identify the author but described its source only as the “*contribution*” of “*a poetical friend*”. Nevertheless, while we cannot be 100% certain, the author was almost certainly Robert Jamieson (1848-1932).

Jamieson was born at Kars, came to Perth as a teenager in the mid-1860s to study at the Grammar School and simultaneously worked in the local Post Office. He was employed briefly as a school teacher from 1866, but in 1871 went to work in the office of Archibald Cameron, Division Court Clerk at Perth. When Cameron died in 1873, Jamieson was appointed Division Court Clerk and held that post for 59 years. At various times, and for various periods of time, he was also an insurance and real estate agent, Secretary of the Perth Board of Education, Town Councillor, Municipal Collector of Taxes, Secretary and Librarian to the Mechanics Institute (precursor to the Public Library), Secretary/Treasurer of the South Lanark Agricultural Association, Returning Officer for Municipal and Provincial elections, board member of the Perth Electric Light Company, the Bathurst & Mississippi Macadamized Road Company, the Perth Cemetery Company and Royal Arcanum #1441 (a Fraternal Benefit Society). Jamieson also owned a farm at Elmsley Township C-10/L-26, on the southern outskirts of Perth, where he bred high quality Jersey and Ayrshire dairy cattle and traded in imported dairy breeding stock.

Our “*poetical friend’s*” verse is reproduced here with spelling, punctuation, capitalization, italics, etc. as in the original *Courier* publication.

### PERTH

#### Situation –

Perth, like its Scottish namesake, stands,  
‘Mid spreading fields, and fertile lands,  
    Upon the River Tay.  
Dense forests, and swamps, once were  
seen,  
Whose autumn tints and gorgeous green  
    Combined in rich array,  
Where now ‘The Model Town’ is found,  
With happiness and honor crowned,  
    Improving every day.  
Our town exists, where once the trees,  
Waved proudly in the stirring breeze –

The trees no longer stay.  
From Kingston, sixty miles or more;  
From Brockville, thirty-three or four;  
From Ottawa, some fifty-two;  
In Drummond Township, stands to view  
Our town – the town we all love best –  
Perth, Lanark County, Canada West.

#### Early Settlers –

Within these fifty years,  
Since eighteen hundred and fifteen,  
How many changes Perth has seen!  
Then came McPherson – first was he,

Where Perth now stands, to cut a tree;  
 Let not his name forgotten be!  
 Few months elapsed ere nobel bands –  
 Men with brave hearts and willing hands –  
 Began to cultivate these lands;  
 And soon the ‘Lanark Settlers’ came –  
 True, sterling men, of honest fame,  
 Our warmest gratitude they claim!  
 Let us revere the names,  
 And recognize the claims,  
 Of Ferguson, McMillan, Rice  
 McLaren, Taylor, Spalding, Bruce,  
 Young, Frazer, Campbell, Gray,  
 Kidd, Adams, Rutherford, and Scott;  
 These men should never be forgot –  
 God bless our Pioneers!

### Business –

In Perth, in good old days of yore,  
 Some forty years ago, or more,  
 ‘Craig Darroch’ kept a little store;  
 Now they are numbered by the score,  
 And business men we hourly meet,  
 On Foster, Harvey, Wilson, Gore,  
 Mill, Herriott, or Drummond Street.

Stores now are neither small nor few;  
 Eight blacksmiths’ shops stand out to view;  
 The Saddlers’ shops, now number four;  
 The Shoe shops, half as many more;  
 Banks, Tanneries, and Foundries three,  
 With nine or ten Hotels we see;  
 Drug-Stores of Gamsby, Kellock, Coombs;  
 A Photographic Artisan’s rooms;  
 And Mills erect on the Tay,  
 Saw, card and grind, both night and day.

Besides, as seen from last Reports,  
 Perth large amounts of Grain exports;  
 The Lumber Trade, already great,  
 Increases at a rapid rate;  
 The Butter, Pork and Ashes Trade,  
 Have also great advances made;  
 While Mining, but of late begun,  
 Has up to several thousands run.

### Businessmen, Tradesmen, Etc. –

Five Allans, Botsford, Dunnet, Kerr,  
 Shaw, Meighan, Mair, O’Brien,  
 McLean, McLaren, Sibbitt, Wright,  
 Walsh, Farland, Devlin, Ryan,  
 Two Mathesons, two Hendersons,  
 Two Walkers, Thompson, Hart,  
 Brown, Wetherhead, and Andison,  
 With several more, take part  
 In business now, and do it well;  
 While Messrs. Morris, Despard, Bell,  
 In banking management excel.

J. M. O. Cromwell (famous name),  
 Is what we call a P.L.S.;

John Morris, also, is the same –  
 The meaning any one can guess,  
 McLean and Spillman paint our floors,  
 Walls, wainscote, ceilings, windows, doors.

J. Kennedy makes teeth of bone,  
 For those whom Fate has left  
 without;  
 Or else makes something for his own,  
 By pulling other people’s out.

G. Gilbert has a barber shop,  
 Where he will reap the bristly crop;  
 He does his business up complete,  
 And tho’ he *shaves*, is not a *cheat*.

Wright, Walker, Griffin, furnish suits;  
 O’Brien, Allan – shoes and boots;  
 Hart, Walker – books and papers new;  
 McLaren, Gemmill – “mountain dew”;  
 J. Mitchell – beer and bottled ale;  
 Hardware is kept by Martindale;  
 McLeod, two Butlers, Andrew Bell,  
 Have kettles, tins, and pans to sell;  
 At two fine shops we buy our clocks –  
 Northgrave’s and McNamara’s;  
 While J. McCulloch, Hicks and Cox,  
 Make rollers, rakes, and ploughs & harrows,  
 Gigs, buggies, waggons, and wheelbarrows;  
 James Allan, Laurie, Denison,  
 Supply the town with bread;  
 And Davies, at “Perth Marble Works”  
 Makes tombstones for the dead.

Mechanics, tradesmen, business men,  
    May God increase their store;  
May they, as years are passing on,  
    Be prosper'd more and more!

#### Travellers Facilities –

Once travelling was so very slow,  
It took at least a week to go,  
By trains, and waggons, and bateaux,  
    From Perth to Montreal.  
Trains that were used in former days,  
Were but a clumsy sort of sleighs,  
Which went in many devious ways;  
Now, trains are quickly run on wheels,  
And great delight a Perthite feels,  
As on he moves at railway speed,  
That far outstrips Mazeppa's steed;  
Or down the great St. Lawrence floats,  
In one of Hamilton's steamboats.

No longer now, a week we spend,  
Before we reach our journey's end;  
By railway first – the B & O –  
To Brockville, in two hours, we go;  
There we remain until we dine,  
Then start upon the Grand Trunk Line;  
At Prescott, and at Cornwall call,  
And take our tea in Montreal.

#### Buildings –

The School House once, some twenty  
square,  
Was but a wretched log affair;  
The School House now, is built of stone –  
A building Perth is proud to own –  
Accommodates three hundred scholars,  
And cost about four thousand dollars.  
R. Douglas is the builder's name,  
    A gentleman of portly frame,  
Commanding presence, stately mien,  
    A worthy subject of our Queen.  
Three thousand pounds the Market cost –  
We do not think the money lost;  
For 'tis indeed, a grand affair,  
And give the town a business air.

Judge Malloch's handsome residence –  
    Than which Perth has no other such  
Cost some four hundred thousand pence;  
    And Mr. Shaw's about as much.

Of six good Churches Perth can boast;  
A Court House, Jail, Stores, quite a host;  
Fine Private Dwellings, Banks, Hotels,  
And Rink, where merry beaux and belles  
Meet on the ice to have a skate,  
And more along at rapid rate;  
Tho' "fallen angels" there are found,  
Yet joy and pleasure much abound;  
"Old Fogies" talk of "wasting time",  
And speak of skating as a crime;  
But, truth to tell, I do not think,  
There's any danger in the Rink,  
Except that some may get a fall,  
At which we laugh – and that is all.

#### Newspapers –

The *Standard*, and *Examiner*,  
    The first newspapers here,  
By Tally, and by Stewart own'd,  
    No longer now appear –  
The *Family Herald*, too, is dead,  
    But others occupy its stead.

The Courier was the first begun  
    In eighteen hundred thirty-four;  
'Twas published by John Cameron,  
    Who is, also no more;  
His days on earth were quickly done;  
His race was but too swiftly run –  
Beloved while living, mourned when dead,  
The next proprietor was one,  
    Who is now known to fame –  
The Honorable M. Cameron,  
    Well worthy of the name.  
May he have pleasure and success,  
And long enjoy true happiness.

James Thompson, Esq., was the *third* –  
    His course was just and wise;  
The *fourth* was Charles Rice, Esq.;  
    Now Clerk of the Assize;

Two worthy men, they worked with zeal,  
And sought to aid the public weal.

The *fifth* one – he who edits now,  
Is Mr. George L. Walker,  
Who knows his business, drives his quill,  
And is no idle talker;  
But one minds his P's and Q's,  
And has correct, enlightened views;  
His paper, now, at thirty-two,  
Is young and strong – as good as news.

Thus there's the *Perth Expositor*,  
The *British Standard*, too;  
But what we want three papers for,  
Is quite beyond my view;  
However, if they make it pay,  
I'm very glad to hear it;  
Tho' I am doubtful any way,  
If some of them come near it.  
T. Scott, the former publishes,  
B. Campbell prints the latter;  
They give us notices and news,  
And information scatter.

When editors are called to die –  
In printer's parlance 'knock'd to pi' –  
And most become "dead matter",  
This epitaph I would suggest:  
"Here lies an Editor at rest,  
Yet, tho' he lies, he was, forsooth,  
A man who always told the truth,  
And sought to do his very best  
All false reports to batter.

#### Orangemen, Freemasons, Etc. –

An Orange Lodge in Perth is found;  
St. Patrick's men go marching round;  
Freemasons, too, and Sons abound;  
"Come, join the *Orange* ranks," said one,  
To whom I thus refused;  
"Oh, I'm not Green enough for that,  
And beg to be excused."  
"Come, be a *Mason*," said my friend;  
"Oh, not at all," said I;  
"I'd sooner for a *Lawyer* be,

And that's the reason why."  
"Come, join the *Sons*," another asked,  
"Drink naught but sparkling water;"  
I said, "With all respect for thee,  
I'd rather join a *Daughter*".

#### Officials –

Court, County, Market, Council Clerks,  
Rice, Moffatt, Berford, Graham Brooks;  
Not one of these his duty shirks,  
Or tries cuts dodges, tricks, or quirks;  
Now let us at the Council look,  
R. Shaw, Esq., is *pseudo* Mayor –  
John Doran, Esq., is our Reeve,  
R. Douglas, Esq., Deputy –  
Two good officials, I believe,  
O'Brien, Allan, act together,  
United in the bonds of *leather*;  
This much, I'll say, for all the rest,  
They seem to do their very best  
To keep expenses down,  
And benefit the town.

McCaffery is Town Treasurer;  
Moorhouse collects our tax;  
T. Cosgrove is Head Constable,  
And Kellock is not lax  
In watching each and every cell  
And guarding all our 'Jail-Birds' well.

T. Cairns is Postmaster now,  
A civil, kind, obliging man;  
He has, besides, a *Sunday name*;  
MOVETHEPOSTOFFICEIFYOUCAN;  
Which, in plain English, is to say,  
The Office can't be moved away.

#### Schools –

Once, children at the *District School*,  
Knew something well – it was the *Rule*;  
They wish'd the school, some pleasant day,  
Would go to LEE-ward or de-Kay;  
Or hoped some log would tumble down,  
And kill their teacher right up BROWN!

Now the Grammar School, they learn  
Their real *interest* to discern;  
Now, Mr. *Hart* wins youthful *hearts*,  
While useful knowledge he imparts;  
He teaches merry girls and boys  
To *add* to one another's joys;  
From one another's cares *subtract*,  
And *multiply* each kindly act;  
How to *proportion* and *divide*  
The hours that o'er them swiftly glide;  
To *practice* virtue, and reduce  
All envy, malice, and abuse;  
How to *extract the root* of pride  
And many other things beside;  
He teaches Grammar, Reading, Classics,  
With History and Mathematics.

Mr. McDowell, *Aide-de-camp*,  
Too, helps the noble cause along;  
While Dr. Thornton, in Common School,  
Instructs the youth in many a useful rule;  
Nor must the lady-teachers be forgot:  
Miss Laurie, Forgie, Smitherman and Scott.

There also is a Separate School,  
Where Cosgrove and Miss Feeloy,  
Both deeply versed in knowledge sound,  
Communicate it freely.

Perth views her schools with honest pride;  
Knows how their scholars have been tried,  
And proudly thinks of honours won  
By Thornton, Kellock, Patterson,  
McLean, Hart, Kerr, and Matheson,  
Who all, at College, ranked A-1.

But we must not forget the name  
Of one who may remembrance claim –  
One who endeavored to advance  
The cause of education here –  
Whom all that value sterling worth,  
Should honor and revere –  
A man of candor, upright, free, sincere,  
We mourn his loss; we shed a silent tear,  
And hold the name of M. McDonnell dear.

Now, let me here record the name

Of one whose pupils hold him dear –  
Who gained their friendship and esteem –  
Who ruled by love, and not by fear –  
We love the man, admire his work,  
And bless the genial Mr. Burke.

#### Population –

Perth's population now amounts,  
According to the last accounts,  
Compiled from latest Rolls,  
To near three thousand souls.

Some fat, some lean, some large, some small  
Some stout, some thin, some short, some tall  
Some quiet youths, some sportive blades,  
Some married folks, some cross old maids;  
And Perth can boast of ladies fair,  
With deep blue eyes and golden hair;  
While lovely girls are hourly met,  
With eyes and tresses black as jet,  
Which is the better of the two,  
The brilliant black or melting blue?

What would earth be without a fair one's smile  
To cheer our hearts – our weary hours beguile?  
What would earth be without those lustrous eyes,  
Whose tender glances we so highly prize?  
Without those beaming eyes and smiling face,  
This earth of ours would be a wretched place,  
A world forlorn, deserted, drear,  
Nor would I ask to linger here.

May all our girls lead happy lives;  
May they become true, loving wives,  
And fond, devoted mothers;  
God bless all lasses on this earth,  
But bless the pretty girls of Perth  
Much more than any others!

Our MLC, MPP, Judge and Sheriff –

The Honorable R. Matheson  
Has long been M.L.C. ;  
A. Morris, Esq., also is  
Our present M.P.P. ;  
The former is a man of worth,  
Integrity and zeal,  
Who strives to do his duty well,  
And seeks the public weal;  
Whose sands of life are nearly run –  
Who when his life shall end,  
As full of honours as of years,  
Shall to the grave descend.  
And may the latter gentleman,  
By all his actions show  
That what he does, is ever done  
May he have happiness and health,  
Joy, humour, wealth and fame,  
And leave behind him when he dies,  
A clear, unsullied name.

J. Malloch, Esq., is our Judge –  
A Judge of good report,  
Who shows true dignity and ease,  
Presiding at the Court;  
A genial, social, gentleman –  
One whose addresses tell,  
He loves a joke, enjoys a laugh,  
And wears the ermine well,  
God bless His Honour, grant him health,  
Peace, comfort, happiness and wealth.

J. Thompson, Esq., is the name,  
Our worthy Sheriff bears;  
He is an upright, honest man,  
Who minds his own affairs;  
Kind-hearted, generous and free,  
Long may he live and happy be –  
Long may he fill his present berth;  
And be an ornament to Perth!

Professional Men –

*One Clergyman* instructs the youth –  
The Rev. Thomas Hart, B.A.,  
Whom, while our citizens esteem,

His pupils honor, love obey.  
Six others speak the World of Truth,  
And seek to show the narrow way.  
The Preacher I admire the most,  
Is one who is himself a host;  
His style is good, his language free,  
And his initials – J. B. D.

The Rev. R. L. Stephenson  
I trust will prospered be;  
And also hope that on his Church,  
A *Spire* he'll shortly see.  
The other *four*, who yet remain,  
Are Messrs. Hansford, Knutt, and  
Bain  
And last of all, tho' not the least  
Father McDonnagh, R. C. Priest.

May all these Clergymen be blest;  
And when from earth they go,  
May they enjoy eternal rest,  
Where pleasures ever flow.

Messers. A. Morris, Deacon, Fraser, Shaw,  
McMartin, Buell, Beynon(?), practice Law,  
The second soon will be a Judge –  
An honour none to him will grudge;  
Indeed, I hope, he yet may be,  
Chief Justice Deacon, L.L.D.  
And when the last 'subpoena' comes,  
Commanding their appearance –  
The 'summons' all must soon obey –  
From which there is no 'Clearance' –  
May all our lawyers reach the shore,  
Where 'precepts', 'writs', 'injunctions', 'wills',  
'Fees', 'mortgages', 'deeds', 'codicils',  
'Advices', 'actions', 'lawyers' bills',  
'Costs', 'suits', and 'trials', are no more.

*Five Doctors*: Wilson, Howden, Horsey,  
J. Kellock, Nichol, practice physic;  
No quacks are they, but men of skill,  
Yet folks must die, do what they will,  
And spite of powder, drug or pill,  
There is no cure for phthisc(?);  
For no M.D., I'm very sure,  
Has ever found the 'Perfect Cure';

Tho' some apply a sticking plaster,  
To keep the folks from going faster.  
When Death, whom none can disobey,  
    Whose summons must be heeded,  
Doth bid our Doctors come away,  
May they arrive where pains and ills,  
And dozes, powders, drugs and pills,  
    Are neither known nor needed!

Here let me name two Clergymen,  
    Whose deeds we ought to cherish –  
Who preached at Perth for many years –  
Who were among our Pioneers –  
    Let not their memory perish,  
Let young and old remember  
    The names and actions well,  
Of Rev. Michael Harris,  
    And the Rev. William Bell.

A doctor too, not long deceased,  
    May our remembrance claim –  
A skilled Physician, tender, kind –  
Let all who knew him, bear in mind  
    James Stewart Nichol's name.

#### Volunteers and Firemen –

Should any Fenians dare appear,  
They'll meet a warm reception here,  
From many a loyal Volunteer.  
Two Companies we now possess;  
And 'may their shadows ne'er grow less',  
As to the van they bravely press;  
May they defend their country's cause,  
Uphold her Liberty and laws;  
For Truth and Freedom nobly stand,  
And be an honour to our land!

Perth has a hundred firemen bold –  
    Two companies of Red and Blue,  
In summer's heat, and winter's cold,  
    Prepared their duty still to do.  
Our Firemen and our Volunteers  
Are worthy of three times three cheers!

Now, at the close, I wish to say  
To all the citizens of Perth,  
May you be prospered every day,  
And long remain on earth;  
Should war arise, or trouble come,  
May each and all of us be seen  
Most nobly striving to defend,  
Our Town – our Country – and our Queen

Finis –