

James Hastings

In the County of Oxford in the Province of Ontario, Canada, between Woodstock and Galt, is located a country church which bears the name of Chesterfield United Church. In 1946 the church members celebrated one hundred years of Christian service and for the occasion a brief history of the Chesterfield Church was prepared by one of the earlier members of the congregation. It is interesting to note some of his opening comments:

"About 100 or 110 years ago, the district around what is now known as Chesterfield was being settled, largely by immigrants from Scotland. A few from England, Ireland and some of the European countries ventured to mix and settle in the district. These settlers bade farewell to the land of their fathers; many of them were never to see their native heath again. After having spent weeks in sailing vessels crossing the Atlantic, they pushed their way westward to select homes for themselves and families in the primitive forest."

"Chesterfield was given its name by the late George (Geordy) Baird, an ardent admirer of the then Lord Chesterfield. Mr. Baird was one of the earliest settlers in this district. The first to keep a Post Office and to open the first store, on the corner opposite the church..."

The Post Office and store have long since gone, and all that remains of Chesterfield today is the Church itself and the cemetery. The graves and markers bear silent testimony to those early families whose members have formed a part of the Chesterfield community over the years, and whose descendants today continue to cherish the traditions and memories of their forefathers. Among the most active and devoted supporters of the Chesterfield Church today are members of the Hastings Family still living in the district. (See Note 1 on page 6)

James Hastings was born in the county of Ayrshire, Scotland on the 7th October 1814. Very little is known of his earlier years, before leaving Scotland, or of his family. We do know, however, that he came from a farming family and spent much of his time tending the sheep. It is said that he knit his own socks while sitting on the hillsides watching over the sheep, (See Note 2 on page 6)

While a very young man he decided to travel to Canada, to seek his future in a relatively new land. He presumably made the voyage over as a temporary ship's hand, and became so proficient at running up and down the ships ladders that the captain wanted him to remain with them and continue on as one of the ship's crew.

After arriving in Canada he first settled at or near Galt in Ontario where he met Christiann McArthur. James and Christiann were married, at Galt, on the 4th October 1838, James was then twenty four years of age, less three days, and Christiann was seventeen. Christiann had been born in Galt on the 3rd March 1821. (See Note 3 on page 6)

James and Christiann settled a few miles from Galt, on a section of land which was then forest, but which was to be Glen Lee Farm, the Hastings homestead. James first built a log house and began the task of clearing the land and building the necessary farm structures. The log house and original erections no longer exist, having been replaced later by a larger permanent house and large farm buildings, which are in use today. The original log house stood near an old orchard just southeast of the present barn.

The Hastings farm was at one time the site of an Indian village. Over the years many arrowheads have been turned up when ploughing the fields. The soil in some parts of the farm still show evidence of ashes from the many camp fires. Even during the early days when James was farming the land, there was an Indian Wigwam located on one corner of the farm and the Indian squaws used to come to the Hastings house to get milk and eggs.

As a self-educated man, James Hastings had acquired considerable knowledge and skill as a veterinary. People came from considerable distances to obtain his help for sick animals.

Nine children were born to James and Christiann Hastings, five boys and four girls. The family outlines of which this is the beginning, is designed to include a separate section for each of these children.

James Hastings died on the 17th September 1889, at the age of seventy four. His wife Christiann, died in her ninetieth year, on the 28th September 1911, Both are buried in the churchyard at Ratho, a few miles from the Hastings farm.

Supplementary Notes Relating to James Hastings and Christiann McArthur

1) It should be clarified that our early ancestor, James Hastings, and his wife, Christiann McArthur did not attend church at Chesterfield. At the time they settled in the district the closest church was at Ratho, a few miles from the Hastings farm. They were members of the Ratho church and attended there with their children until James died in 1889. Both James and his wife, Christiann, were buried there.

It was not until 1846 that the Chesterfield Church was formed and it was not until 1880 that the Hastings family became connected with it. Alexander Hastings, after his marriage in that year, became a member of the Chesterfield Church and the Hastings family has attended there ever since. After James died Christiann attended at Chesterfield with her son Alexander.

2) Several attempts have been made to acquire additional information concerning the earlier years of James Hastings, but without very much success, thus far. Without knowing precise details as to his place of birth, such as the town, village, or district, it would be most difficult to obtain any documentary evidence, such as a birth certificate, or a baptism certificate. Prior to 1855 registrations of births, deaths, and marriages in Scotland were voluntarily recorded in the old parochial registers of each parish, and these registers were unindexed. Although it was known that James Hastings came from the county of Ayrshire, Scotland, it was not known from what particular district. It was thought that he came from near Ayr - from the same district as Bobby Burns.

The Scots Ancestry Research Society have searched the old parochial registers of Ayr (for Alloway, the birthplace of Bobby Burns) from 1810 to 1820, but no entry was found for James Hastings. The old parochial registers of the neighbouring parishes of Ayr, which are St. Quivoy, Newton-upon-Ayr, Maybole, Dalrymple, and Coylton, were then searched from 1810 to 1820 for the birth of James Hastings, but neither this nor any other Hastings birth entries were found to have been recorded in any of these parishes during that period. The search for some earlier traces of the family has not been abandoned but has been postponed for the present, so that attention could be devoted to completing at least some portion of the later family history.

3) Christiann was the daughter of Daniel McArthur and Catharine MacMillan. Daniel McArthur was born in 1796. It is believed that he came from Ayrshire, Scotland. He joined the church in Caledonia, New York, on the 3rd October 1814.(along with his brother Christian and his sister Margaret). A year or two later he moved into Galt, Ontario with a group of other Scots from the Caledonia area. He died in 1875 and was buried at the Galt cemetery.

Christiann had a younger brothers Alexander Harvey McArthur, who settled near Boonville, Missouri. Alexander had several children, two daughters, Mary and Ella, and two sons, Daniel and John. I am not sure if there were any other children or not. Mable Dodd makes reference to an older

daughter who died in 1877. In any case Ella, who never married, is the only one of the children still living.

Daniel McArthur married and lived in Iowa. He had two daughters whose christian names are Jennie Iowa, and Mary June.

John McArthur was a missionary in India for many years. John had two children that I have knowledge of, a daughter, Jane, and a son, Harvey K. McArthur. Harvey is a Doctor of Philosophy and a Hosmer Professor of the New Testament at the Hartford Seminary Foundation in Hartford Connecticut.