

WILLIAM FORSYTH, OF THE PAVILION: NIGARA FALLS ONT.

William Forsyth was born in 1774 in Pennsylvania, and was the son of James and Eunice Forsyth of Stamford Township, Niagara Falls Ont. He came to Canada in 1778 from the Wyoming Valley, and settled in Niagara Falls in 1784.

William married (first) to Mary Aycler. According to a letter from a Mr. Ray Bond of Chippawa, he states that a Mr. Ferguson, a brother of Bishop Harrison of Hamilton travelled on the same stage as William in 1831 and says "He proved to be an amusing travelling companion, a personage sufficiently shrewd and well informed". He told Mr. Ferguson that he was the son of the original settler, and had himself raised nineteen children; ten by his first wife and nine by his second.

A petition read on July 12, 1796, no. 45 states Wm. Forsyth was recommended for 200 acres, if not granted before. (The Simcoe papers, Vol. V. 1792-1796: Ont. Historical Society, page 224. On Apr. 27, 1797. William petitioned for 200 acres on behalf of his wife Mary, the daughter of a Loyalist. It was noted that Mary had one child born the previous year. Her petition was granted. (Public Records and Archives of Ont. 1930 page 133.

According to book A. Old Series, Township of Stamford, Niagara Falls Ont. No. 166, page 19: (Office of the Registrar of Deeds 20 Cross St. Welland Ont.) A deed of gift is registered on the eleventh day of Feb. 1800 between James Forsyth of the Township of Stamford yeoman, and Eunice his wife of one part; and William Forsyth their son, and heir: composed of part of lots 143, 144, & 146 in Stamford Township, containing 235 acres.

William Forsyth is best known as the builder and proprietor of the once famous "Pavilion Hotel" at Niagara Falls Ont. In 1821 he bought a piece of land bordering the Niagara River, not far from the great falls, which stood on the east side of Potage Road, a little north of Dunn St. It is located on the property now owned by the Falls View Tourist Camp. Here he built the Pavilion Hotel, a large house, nearly overhanging the falls, which had accommodation for about 150 guests. From here he built a staircase, later enclosed to the river level. He also acquired an interest in the Ferry that ran below the cataract. He also operated stage coaches that ran between Queenston and Fort Erie. On the 17, of Feb. 1821. William had bought up a petition in the Niagara District, in hopes that a law might be passed prohibiting the subjects of the U.S. from running stage coaches along the Niagara frontier of this Province.

In addition to the management of the most important hotel at the Falls, he had control of Table Rock and it seemed that Wm. Forsyth was seeking to monopolize trade. In order to control the tourist trade he enclosed the chain reserve, and built a high board fence across the upper bank shutting off the view of the Falls. This excluded the general public from free access to the falls. He contended he had the right to do this, however he was mistaken, as his deed did not give

him possession of the strip. Complaints speedily resulted, and a petition was sent to Lieut. Governor Peregrine Maitland. IN May of 1827 , Forsyth was warned to remove the fences, which he refused to do. Maitland, the Commander of the Military Forces blundered in not taking civil action, but instead employed military officers to level the fence, without consulting the Attorney general. Capt. Hillpots acting under Maitlands orders on May 18 of the same year, took with him a party of soldiers entered Forsyth's premises, in defiance or remonstrances and entreaties, cut and threw down the fences, leaving his crops exposed. His smitty was also destroyed,

Mr. Forsyth employed labourers to rebuild the fences the second time; but again acting under orders from maitland the soldiers tore down his fences, and this time destroying his crops of 60 acres. For these two actions Forsyth brought Civil Action and against the Sheriff and Gov. Phillipots ~~one~~, for the removal of this fence and the smitty. It was presented by John Mathews Esquire: ordered by the House Assembly to be printed Jan. 28, 1828. It read" Forsyth's petition for redress for two attempts to seize part of his land at Niagara Falls by acts of lawless Military violence, instigated by Sir Perigrine Maitland, and without process of Civil Law. He abjures the Assembly to protect therights of the people from the encroachment of Military power, Nad to secure from the British Government, jusice no longer obtainable in the courts of Upper Canada.

Forsyth lost in both actions, he lodged complaints with the Legislative Assembly, and a select committee of the Assembly was appointed. The Committee finally recommended that Forsyth be compensated for his losses, but no action was taken. The matter was brought up in the House several times and it dragged on until 1835.

The affair was a cause celebre in those anti-rebellion days; and did much to make the government unpopular, and to accentuate the strained relations between family Compact Government and the Assembly, and the hard feelings between the soldiery and the people of the country.

Forsyth Settles at Fort Erie

Forsyth, becoming discouraged and disgusted during the long litigation, finally made his so called bargain sale on July 20, 1832; which he sold to Thomas Clark and Samuel Street, the estate consisting of 470 acres including the famous Hotel.

Chief Justice Robinson, in a communication later dated at York Dec. 31, 1832 said:: Mr. Forsyth does not now occupy any part of the property in question, having sold it to persons, who I am convinced will never pretend that they have the right to enclose the public reservation, to which he asserted 1 chain. David Thorburn, M.P.P. for the third riding of Lincoln stated: "The general feeling of the country was opposed to the outrage by the Military, but I am aware that Mr. Forsyht never got any address. Forsythin his petition claimed that he was a marked man, with no possibility of getting justice; and that he sold his estate for \$15,000, less than it's

The Committee's final report entitled William Forsyth (while sustained great injury at the hand of the Military at the hand of Sir Perigrine Maitland, and others acting under his authority) to such compensation, for the wrong done him. Mr. Jones the surveyor, who had actually laid out the chain reserve at the falls in 1786, was still alive at the time of the Parliamentary investigation and pointed out the location of the reserve. On one occasion the Parliamentary investigation was held at the Pavilion House, and as stated before, Mr. Forsyth was forced to sell his entire holdings in 1832.

Chrysler was landlord of the Pavilion for a time, however it was afterwards designated Forsyth's Hotel after he removed to Fort Erie. In Feb. 1839 the Pavilion was destroyed by fire, making a spectacular blaze visible for several miles. It was rebuilt shortly afterwards, but never again did the volume of business of the former days. The second Pavilion House like its predecessor also fell victim of flames..

S. DE Veaux: account of the Pavilion::

"The PAVILION Hotel was erected by Wm. Forsyth. It was a large building calculated for the accommodation of many guests, and is kept by an accommodating landlord. Wm. Forsyth was one of the first settlers in this country, a man of enterprising character, and one who did much in making improvements around the falls".