

*A Contemporary Account of the Navy Island Episode, 1837*

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The following account of the destruction of the "Caroline," etc., was written by George Coventry at the time, in order to be sent to England, where his people resided. It is dated at Chippewa, Upper Canada, 1838, and is in the form of a letter to his sister in England.

George Coventry, whom, when I was a boy, I knew in Cobourg, was born at Copenhagen Fields House at Wandsworth Common in the house "at the corner near the city road" and "within the sound of Bow Bell." His father was a ward of Baron Dimsdale of Thetford, and was placed by his guardian with Jones, Havard & Jones, merchants, in London. His mother was Elizabeth Thornborrow, from Lupton Hall, Westmorland, who was visiting at Sir Joshua Reynolds', when she was won by Coventry. Coventry, Senior, was afterwards a member of the firm of Jayson & Coventry, and seems to have been a man of literary tastes and considerable ability. The son was born on 28th July, 1793. He had the misfortune to lose his mother who died of cancer when Coventry was three years old. The lad was then placed in a Ladies' School, at Peckham, Surrey, kept by Mrs. Freith and her three daughters, one of whom, the elder Coventry afterwards married.

George Coventry was then sent to a Boys' Boarding School at Hitchin, Hertfordshire, kept by Mr. Blaxland, where he stayed for about three years. On the death of Mr. Blaxland, his undermaster, Mr. Payne, started a school near Epping Forest, which young Coventry attended until his fourteenth year when he was sent to Dover where he completed his education. He afterwards engaged as an employee in his father's firm, and in that capacity travelled over the greater part of Great Britain. He also visited France, where he thinks he saw at Fontainebleau some flowers, the offspring of certain plants which he had seen leaving Dover, a present from the Queen of England to the Empress Josephine. He came to Canada in the fourth decade of the 19th century, was an eye-witness of some of the occurrences of the Rebellion of 1837, and returned to England in 1838. Returning to this Province he lived for a time in St. Catharines; afterwards he was in Cobourg, then in Picton as editor of a paper there, then he returned to Cobourg and made that his home for the remainder of his life. He died at Toronto, February 11, 1870, and is buried in the St. James Cemetery at Cobourg.