

METROPOLITAN  
TORONTO

Toronto Public Library  
 pamphlet collection

CANADIAN HISTORY

# Autobiographical Sketch

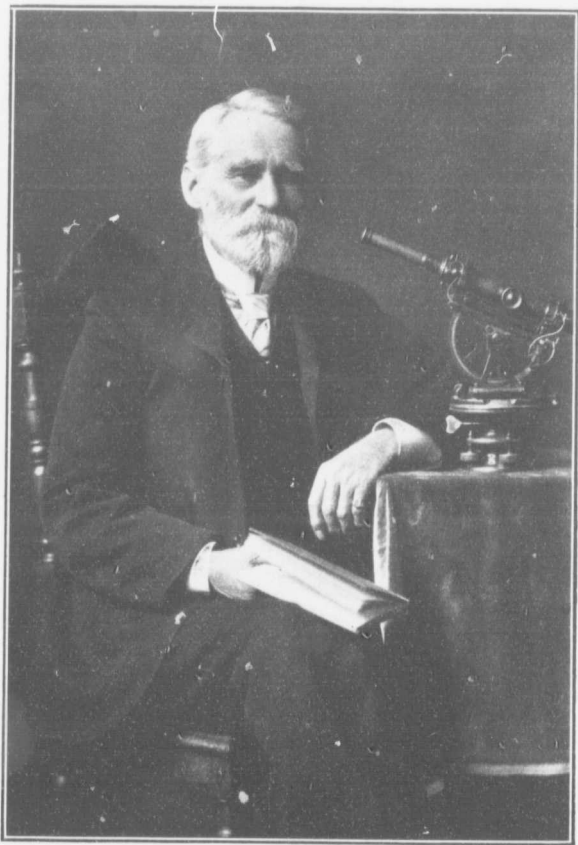
— OF —

# CHARLES UNWIN

O. L. S.



Printed by  
STEVENSON PRINTING COMPANY,  
184 Adelaide Street W.,  
Toronto.



CHARLES UNWIN,  
Registered Land Surveyor, 12th April, 1852.

920.071  
P124  
b16

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF CHARLES UNWIN,  
O. L. S.

*Read before the Association of Ontario Land Surveyors,  
at Toronto, 9th March, 1910.*

EARLY DAYS OF LIFE.

On the 30th of December, in the year of our Lord, 1829, I, Charles Unwin, the subject of this paper, first saw the light of day in the old town of Mansfield, in the County of Nottingham, England, and in due time was sent to a Ladies' School, whence, at the age of 9 or 10, I was ignominiously expelled, for spoiling a girl's hat! I was quite innocent (of course), but I suppose that I was getting too big for the school. I was then sent to a boys' school, kept by the writing master of the former school, and from there went to Grove House Academy, a much more aristocratic seat of learning. A short time after my admission to this Academy its Headmaster and the Principal of the Royal Grammar School joined forces, and I, with the rest of the Grove House boys, was transferred to the Royal Grammar School, which was established in the reign of Queen Elizabeth.

LEAVING ENGLAND — HO! FOR CANADA.

When I was thirteen and a half years of age my uncle, the late Charles Unwin, who was at that time a clerk in the Registry Office in Toronto, sent for me to come to that city. I may say that my father, James Browne Unwin, died when I was only about six and a half years old. There was living in Mansfield at this time a gentleman named Earnshaw, an architect and builder. My friends having learned that he was going to America, asked him whether he would take charge of my sister and me. This he most kindly consented to do, and right royally did he keep his promise, for had we been his nearest and dearest friends he could not have done more for us. We drove from Mansfield to Nottingham, some fourteen miles, in a stage-coach, thence went to Liverpool in a railway carriage. The third class cars were open, as I well remember, as before we got to Liverpool it had begun to rain. We arrived at Liverpool on a Satur-

day, and sailed for New York in an American sailing vessel named "Liberty" on the following morning. As we sailed away the church bells were ringing for service.

After a five weeks' voyage we landed in New York and took a steamboat for Albany; thence we travelled by Eric Canal to Oswego, and thence by a steamer named "Rochester" to Toronto, landing there on Wednesday, the 28th June, 1843, about 9 a.m. We drove from the wharf in a little cab (with its door in the back of it) to my uncle's home. Our kind protector, Mr. Earnshaw, left his family at Oswego and brought us to the very house, just stayed to have a meal, and then returned to his family at Oswego, and continued his journey to Wisconsin. I did not think much of his kindness at the time, but after coming to years of discretion I came to the conclusion that there was not one man in a thousand who would have done so much for two children whom he had not even known before leaving home.

#### NOTES OF REGISTRARS AND REGISTRY OFFICES.

I may mention that the late Samuel Ridout, with whom my uncle lived, was his brother-in-law. Mr. Ridout was at one time Sheriff of the County of York, and at this time Registrar, not only of Toronto, but of the Counties of York, Ontario and Peel. The office was a small two-storey brick building standing on the north side of Adelaide street, opposite the Rectory of St. James' Church. If I remember rightly, the only clerks in the office were my uncle and the late John Ridout, who was Deputy Registrar, and subsequently Registrar.

I find in Robertson's Landmarks of Toronto, Vol. 2, page 673, that "in 1829 Mr. Samuel Ridout built at his own expense for the purpose of a Registry Office a small brick building on the north side of Adelaide street, opposite St. James' Church" (Rectory, C. U.). This building has been destroyed.

In 1849, while Mr. Ridout held this office, a law was enacted to the effect that no Registry Office should be kept in a private residence, but must be maintained in a public building. (The Registry Office in Toronto had previously been kept in the private house of the Registrar, or in a rented room).

At the same time the office was established as the County Registry. As yet there was no distinct City Registry, the city forming part of the county.

In accordance with the Act of 1849, the County built a small one-storey stone fire-proof building, where the office of the Gas Company now stands, on the east side of Toronto street, just north of Court street. This building was destroyed to make way for the building which now occupies the site.

In 1855, Mr. John Ridout, who had been Deputy Registrar for many years, succeeded on the death of his father, Samuel Ridout, to the office. Mr. John Ridout died Sept. 15th, 1894, aged 88. In 1859 the County and City Registrarships were divided. In 1875 the present brick County Registry building was erected at the northeast corner of Richmond and Clare (now Berti) streets. When the city and county offices were separated, Joseph Morrison became the first City Registrar. The present City Registry office was put up by the city during the time that Mr. Charles Lindsey was Registrar.

#### UPPER CANADA COLLEGE DAYS.

Upper Canada College was built in 1829, the year in which I was born, and to it my good uncle sent me within a week of my arrival in Toronto, and there I remained until March, 1847. The Masters were: Mr. Barron, Principal; Rev. Mr. Scadding, 1st Rector of the Church of the Holy Trinity, 1st Classical Master; Rev. Mr. Ripley, 1st Rector of Trinity Church, King street east, 2nd Classical Master; Rev. Mr. Maynard, Mathematical Master; Mr. De la Haye, French Master; Mr. Duffy, English Master; Mr. Cozens, Preparatory Master and Boarding-House Keeper.

#### A SATURDAY FIGHT.

When I came to Canada I was a little round-faced, chubby fellow, and full of fight when anyone called me names or made fun of my Nottinghamshire dialect. The son of a celebrated ironmonger, a boy who was considered to be a bit of a bully, was particularly fond of annoying me, and at last I was annoyed beyond endurance, so I decided to fight him. The day was Thursday, if I remember rightly, and as I was to go to a party that night and did not wish to have my face disfigured, I decided not to fight until Saturday, when we would have more time to settle our little affair. Saturday came, and with it the fight. We were both pretty well marked and the late Hutchinson Esten, son of Chancellor Esten, who was in the same (2nd) Form as I was, went home and with great

glee announced that Charlie Unwin had given Charlie Harris a licking. My uncle happened to be visiting at Mr. Esten's, and heard what Hutchinson said. At dinner that day he looked up at me and asked what I had done to my face. I said, "Nothing." Then he remarked that it looked as if some ironmonger had been wiping his hands on it, so I had to confess. Harris and I were the best of friends after, and he used to help me with my lessons.

REV. GEORGE MAYNARD.

On one occasion I, with about a dozen others who were not well up in their mathematics, had the enunciations of the first book of Euclid to write out for next morning. My sister and I were to go to a party that evening at Mr. Charles Small's (father of the late John Small, Collector of Customs here,) who was then Clerk of the Crown, and to whose hospitable house we were often invited. I did not like to miss the party, and knowing that if I did not do the imposition the master would "do" me in the morning, and that with this thought hanging over me my pleasure at the party would be very much diminished, I asked the Master, the Rev. George Maynard, if he would "kindly punish me now," which he did, much to my relief, as I then had no dread of the morning; the other fellows had it all to themselves.

MR. DUFFY.

One time the late Chief Justice Armour was requested by the English Master, Mr. Duffy, or as he was generally called by the boys, "Old Duffy," to examine our Form in Geography.

There was a map hanging on the blackboard at the end of the room, and Armour asked the head boy to point out the Tear. He went up to the map but could not find the Tear. The second and third boys also failed, and so on down to about the middle of the class where I was. When my turn came I, noticing a smile on Armour's face at the failure of the boys, and seeing a hole in the map, went up and pointed out the "tear" with a small "t." "Go up head, Unwin," said Mr. Armour, and there I was for a time—a short time.

DR. SCADDING.

One winter's morning the wind was blowing through a crack in the wall just at the small of my back, and I kept

putting up my hand and rubbing my back. Mr. Scadding (the late dearly beloved Dr. Scadding) said: "What is the matter with you, Unwin?" "Why, sir," I said, "there is wind enough here to turn a mill." This was a very common expression in Nottinghamshire where, in my boyhood days, many wind-mills were used to grind the wheat, or, as it was called, the corn.

#### DR. BARRETT.

Dr. Barrett was a great disciplinarian. One winter morning he punished two boys, Tom and John Helliwell, who had walked from the brewery at the foot of the hill at Todmorden to Upper Canada College, and were about five minutes late.

What would the boys of this year of our Lord think of walking three and a half miles through the snow and being punished for being a little late? I must say, however, that the punishment was not severe.

In these school-days my cousins used to shoot wild pigeons in what are now the Allan Gardens, and there was a swimming pool at the northeast corner of Carlton and Sherbourne streets.

#### CHANGES IN AND NEAR THE CITY.

On my way to the College, which was then between King and Adelaide, and Simcoe and John streets, I used to pass a very unpleasant smelling tannery, where the Toronto "News" office now stands, on the southwest corner of Adelaide and Yonge streets, known as Ketchum's Tannery. The proprietor was Jesse Ketchum, and one of our Public Schools is named after him. To this day Sunday schools in the city benefit by his bequest for prizes.

The General Hospital was at the northwest corner of King and John streets, where the Arlington Hotel now stands. During the emigrant fever in 1847 there were temporary sheds extending from the rear of the Hospital to Adelaide street. Our good old Bishop Strachan and the Roman Catholic Bishop Power were frequently seen ministering to the sick in these sheds. (I was then measuring the houses all through the city, of which more anon.)

Queen street in my school days was not opened between George and Caroline (now Sherbourne) streets, but was enclosed with the grounds of the Hon. William Allan, father

of the late Hon. George W. Allan. In fact it was not opened for some years after, for I well remember coming home from a long survey with my clothes in very bad condition and avoiding all the principal thoroughfares that I could, and going through the field in front of Mr. Allan's house (Moss Park) where Queen street with its fine shops is now travelled between George and Sherbourne streets.

#### STAGE COACHES.

The stage coaches running to Montreal, and I think, Hamilton and Holland Landing, started from the corner of Church and Front streets.

The mention of Hamilton brings to my remembrance the fact that that place was quite a rival to Toronto in those days. There were two steamboat companies, one Richardson & Co., and the other Bethune & Co., having boats plying between the two cities. They had runners, or touters, soliciting passengers at the foot of Yonge street, and almost compelling people to take one or other of their boats. For a short time one company offered to take a passenger for nothing and give him his breakfast!

#### HOLLAND LANDING.

Holland Landing, before the Northern Railway was built, was a very stirring place. The steamer "Beaver" used to come down the east branch of the Holland River, and plied between Holland Landing and Barrie, Beaverton, Atherley and Orillia. But, alas! the old town is now very dead, and will, I fear, remain so until the much scoffed at canal is thrown open for business.

#### POST OFFICE.

When I first came to Toronto the Post Office was on the west side of Yonge street between Front and Wellington streets. When removed from there it went to the north side of Wellington street, where the Imperial Bank now stands. During my apprenticeship I had occasion to come to town from Weston on horseback, and turning round the corner of Yonge and Wellington streets, my horse slipped and fell, it being smooth shod and the planks of the roadway being wet from a recent rainfall. Wellington street was then planked, as was also Bathurst street, then called Crookshanks' Lane. From Wellington street the next move of the Post Office was to Toronto street, where the office of the



Assistant Receiver-General now is. From there it went to its present position on Adelaide street, facing down Toronto street. Before the present Post Office building was erected there was on its site a livery stable kept by a colored man named Mink, who had a daughter who was a fine-looking woman. It was commonly reported that he offered any respectable white man a handsome sum if he would marry this daughter. An American took the offer, and took his bride to the Southern States where he sold her into slavery.

It was said that Mr. Mink was quite wealthy, and I believe that he was pretty well off. He had a fine lot of horses and carriages. I drove a bride and groom in a carriage and pair from his stables one day in May, 1855, and a friend of mine drove in another of his carriages some more of the wedding party.

#### LEARNING THE PROFESSION.

On my leaving Upper Canada College I went to Weston to learn surveying with the late Col. Dennis, sometime Surveyor-General, but then simply John Stoughton Dennis, P.L.S., with whom I lived during my apprenticeship. I was very kindly treated by him and his household, then consisting of his grandmother and Aunt Stoughton. Within a short time of my joining his hospitable circle he took unto himself a wife, Miss Oliver, a lady from Kingston, and she, too, was very kind to me.

At the time of the wedding, Mr. Prosser (a senior pupil) and I were sent to stake out lots on the Indian Peninsula on Balsam Lake, and, before our return, to make a survey in the Township of Mara, where I had my first experience of a full house. There were, I think, twelve or fourteen in the one-roomed shanty.

To get from Balsam Lake to Atherley, where the steamer had left me, I had to go to Point Mara in a small boat, with provisions. A Roman Catholic missionary, a fine old French gentleman named Father Proulx, was desirous of going there also, but I had not room for him in my boat, so told him that if he could get a boat I would let him have a man to help him row. He got one, but it proved to be old and leaky, and those in it were obliged to abandon it and take to the land, where the walking was drier. I with my party got to Point Mara just as the sun was going down, and a beautiful sunset it was. We found a deserted shanty, the floor of which was well covered with apparently

clean straw. Being all very tired we soon turned in, and were mightily glad soon to turn out again, for the straw was full of fleas, as the cattle had been sleeping there. I remember that my underclothes were literally blue with them. I took off as many as I could before tramping to Balsam Lake, where we arrived towards evening. I was invited to have tea with a very nice family named Stephenson. But I shall never forget the misery I was in from those pesky fleas.

In the morning we got a canoe and paddled to the peninsula, where were the remains of some Indian log houses. I revisited this spot in August, 1907, and gave my description of its present state in a paper read before this Association in February, 1908.

#### WALKING BETWEEN TORONTO AND WESTON.

When living in Weston I used frequently to walk to Toronto on Saturday night and back to Weston on Monday morning before breakfast hour, but not before I had taken some myself. The distance between the extreme points of my journey was about 9 or 10 miles. There were no street cars in those days, and a walk of nine or ten miles was not thought much of.

I well remember when walking home, on one occasion, falling in with an Irishman who carried an umbrella. The telegraph wires had recently been strung along Dundas street and when we heard the vibration, the Irishman, holding up his umbrella, exclaimed loudly, "Whisht! they're sindin' the news!"

Speaking of Dundas street reminds me that once in 1854 when we were going to spend the evening with my cousin, Mrs. Harrison, at Foxley, one of my sisters on arriving there discovered that she had lost her watch. She thought that most likely she had lost it in the bus, then running, I think, between the market and the asylum, but on our way home we found the watch lying on the sidewalk, where it had been for probably two or three hours.

#### FIRST TIME IN CHARGE OF A SURVEYING PARTY.

During my apprenticeship I was engaged in surveying part of the Townships of Bentinck and Glenelg. This was the first time that I had charge of a surveying party.

Before Mr. Dennis left me to continue the survey of Ben-tinck, he and I used to run the one a northerly and southerly line and the other an easterly and westerly one. I tried to be at the intersection first, and encouraged my men to try and beat the "boss." One time when the snow was pretty deep and we were working quite late, for I hated to be beaten, we got to where the intersection should occur, but we did not either see or hear the other party. We made all the noise we could, but got no answer, so we determined to make for camp, which was, I think, over two miles away. We made torches of dry cedar bark, so that by their blazes we could see the other blazes. One old man whom I had in my party got a good clip over an eye from a branch, and declared that fire flew out of it. One of the boys told him in fun that he saw it too, and in telling the story the old man said it was "true, for Tom saw it." When we got to camp we found to our disgust that the boss's party had not gone out, but had remained in camp making snowshoes out of cedar shingles and sole leather. My men tried them the next day, and said that they would sooner break track than use them—and they did so for the rest of the winter, each taking turns in going ahead.

#### A MAP OF TORONTO.

I also surveyed many Indian Reserves during my apprenticeship, but before these surveys of which I speak, Mr. Dennis conceived the idea of publishing a map of the city of Toronto.

The late J. G. Howard, I believe, gave him the outlines of many of the blocks, and I think that I may say that I measured every house in the then city, with the exception of the old and new garrisons.

Sir Sandford Fleming plotted the notes, and himself engraved the map on stone, and a more beautiful piece of lithography could scarcely be found anywhere. I assisted Sir Sandford in traversing the Garrison Creek which appears on the plan. The great drawback to this plan was that it was too small (12 chains, or 792 feet to one inch) to be of any practical value, but it made a beautiful picture, and was most accurately done. I had a mutilated copy of this plan which I prized very highly, and which I lent to Mr. J. Ross Robertson, who has, I understand, had reproductions of it made, one of which he has promised me.

Toronto has made great strides since I came in 1843. The population was then about 17,000; now it is said to

be about 400,000. Its eastern boundary was the Don (with the exception of the strip lying south of Queen street, then called the Kingston Road, and running to within about half a mile of the Township of Scarboro', or a little over three miles), and its western and northern boundaries were Dufferin and Bloor streets respectively.

#### SURVEY OF THE MARSH.

I made for the city a survey of the Marsh in 1872, a plan of which, dated 1873, is filed in the Crown Lands Department.

By power dated 19th July, 1877, I was appointed attorney for the city to settle and determine all and any questions and disputes between the city and property owners, with reference to the boundary between the Marsh and the broken front lots.

I defined a boundary between the city and the different owners, and planted cedar posts from 9 to 10 feet long along the lines, and had iron caps put on the tops of these posts. I planted a post with crockery and a broken iron pot at the intersection of the Lake shore and the line between lots 4 and 5, commonly called the arbitration line from the fact that in a law-suit between the owners of these lots the jury could not agree, and the matter was settled by arbitration.

There were cut stone monuments planted on the south side of Danforth avenue, then called Danforth road, or if I mistake not, the Don and Danforth road; on the north and south sides of the Kingston Road, and, I think, on the north side of Queen street.

#### RETRACING OF WINDMILL LINE.

I made a survey of the windmill line, or rather retraced it from information got from the late J. G. Howard and the late George Gooderham, or, if not George, one of his brothers. Mr. Howard gave me a point on Tinning's Wharf (at the foot of York street), and Mr. Gooderham one where the old windmill used to stand, and I produced the line westerly. The mill was doing a grinding business for some years after my coming to Toronto. My plan of the windmill line is dated January, 1884, but the survey was made some little time before that date.

## ENTERED SERVICE OF CITY.

On Saturday, the 7th December, 1872, I with the late Weymouth Schreiber, the late Samuel Ridout (son of the former Registrar Samuel Ridout), the late Nicholas Maughan afterwards Assessment Commissioner), the late W. Kauffman, Thomas McCaul and Patrick Hynes were appointed valuers, afterwards assessors, for the city of Toronto, the late Mr. S. B. Harman being our Chairman. Of these eight it will appear that five are dead; those still living cannot expect to be here much longer.

I was assessor until January, 1905, when on the 25th day of that month, I was appointed City Surveyor which office I still hold. The work is congenial to me. Two of my assistants who have been in the office for about 20 years, were before in my own office.

I have served under the following Mayors: Jos. Sheard, Alex. Manning, F. H. Medcalf, Angus Morrison, Jas. Beatty, jr., W. B. McMurrich, A. R. Boswell, W. H. Howland, E. F. Clarke, R. J. Fleming, Warring Kennedy, John Shaw, E. A. McDonald, Oliver A. Howland, Thomas Urquhart, Emerson Coatsworth and Joseph Oliver, and now have as head of the municipal system George Reginald Geary.

## BUSINESS PARTNERS.

During my professional life I have had among others the following partners:

Under the firm name of Wadsworth & Unwin, Mr. Vernon B. Wadsworth, now manager of the London and Canada Loan and Agency Co., and Mr. R. H. Coleman, now Commissioner of the Canada Company. Under the firm name of Wadsworth, Unwin & Browne, Messrs. H. J. Browne and W. A. Browne.

Under the firm name of Unwin, Browne & Sankey, Mr. Villiers Sankey, who was afterwards City Surveyor, and to whom I succeeded in that office on his joining the Grand Trunk Pacific staff. Under the firm name of Unwin, Foster & Proudfoot, my cousin, Mr. Fred. L. Foster, and Mr. H. B. Proudfoot.

My last partners were Messrs. C. J. Murphy and H. L. Esten, under the firm name of Unwin, Murphy & Esten, from which partnership I retired in 1896, although the firm name remains unchanged.

Great has been the expansion and many have been the changes in this city of Toronto since first I entered it.

Wonderful has been the increase in importance of my beloved adopted country, especially since it began its career as a Dominion on July 1st, 1867.

Marvellous have been the mighty strides of the great British Empire during the days of the years of my life under George the Fourth, William the Fourth, Victoria the Good—remembered, honored and revered—and her worthy son, Edward the Seventh, the "Peace Maker."

May the City of Toronto, the Dominion of Canada and the Empire continue under the blessing of the All Father to grow towards the Light, and increase, not only in material things, but better far, in moral fibre and spirituality and in the Fear of God. May their peoples realize that "a good name is rather to be chosen than great riches," and may their desire be to "keep innocency, and take heed unto the thing that is right, for that shall bring a man peace at the last."