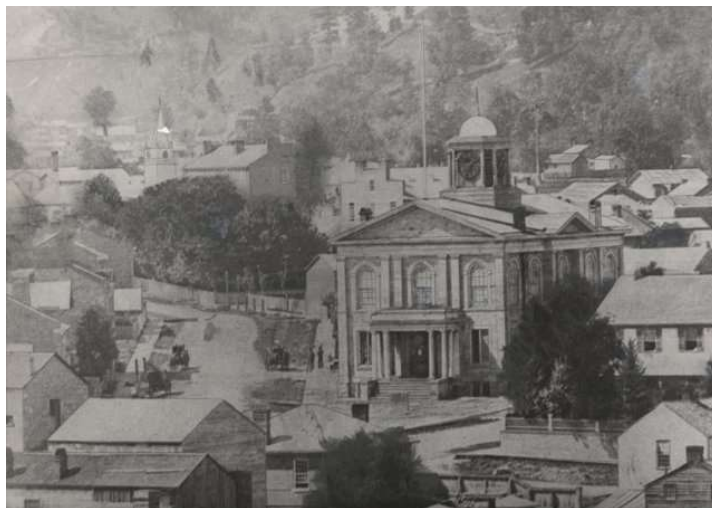




JAMES BELL EWART (1801-1853)

President, Dundas Town Council, 1859



MAYORS OF DUNDAS
A volunteer project of the Dundas Museum and Archives

JAMES BELL EWART (1801-1853)

MANUFACTURER

PRESIDENT, DUNDAS TOWN COUNCIL, 1849

James Bell Ewart was born to John Ewart and Janet Bell on 13 September 1801 in Dulwich, Surrey, England. He was christened on 02 November 1801 at the Old Jewry Presbyterian Church in London.

At age eighteen Ewart emigrated to Upper Canada where he found employment as a clerk in the mercantile firm of Thomas Clark and Samuel Street at Niagara-on-the-Lake.

In 1820 Ewart opened a store in Coote's Paradise, although he was still employed by Clark and Street. When he subsequently left their firm in 1825, he moved to Dundas and purchased the Dundas Mills from the estate of Richard Hatt.

On May 23, 1832, Ewart married a local woman, Mary Margaret Crooks. Their home was built at the corners of Hatt and Ogilvie Streets.



Mary Margaret Crooks (from C.0051)

That same year he became one of only nine storekeepers in Gore District licensed to sell liquor.

The Ewart home on the northwest corner of Hatt and Ogilvie Streets was later occupied by William Lash, also a director of the branch of the Bank of British North America and then in turn by his son, John F. Lash (married to Sarah Coleman), another director of the same bank.

A year later Ewart was made a Justice of the Peace and was promoted eventually to Chief Magistrate in 1846.

Ewart quickly dominated business in Dundas. Although his success was based on a diverse number of enterprises, his principal business was the trading and milling of grain. He built the customary distillery, cooperage and blacksmith shop along with the mill. Ewart also bought mills in Galt, St. George and Ayr.

In 1844 Ewart became the Dundas agent for the **Bank of British North America**. At about this time he built a home and bank at the location which is now 6 Hatt Street. When the bank opened, its vault, with its 15 inch thick brick walls, was located on the ground floor. As a security precaution Ewart is said to have installed a contraption which locked the vault and was threaded up to his bedroom from which he controlled access to the vault.



NOTICE

Is hereby given that the office of the Agency of the Bank of British North America in Dundas will hereafter be open for the transaction of business from Ten o'clock AM till Three o'clock PM at which hour it will be closed.

James B. Ewart

Bank of British North America at 6 Hatt Street (P-0154).

In addition to all his other enterprises Ewart served as the Postmaster of the Town from 1837 until his death in 1853.

In 1838 Ewart, in partnership with John Gartshore and Benjamin Babington established the Dundas Foundry. A disastrous fire in 1846 saw the partners incur heavy financial losses.

Dundas Warder and Halton County General Advertiser

November 16, 1848

NOTICE

The business heretofore carried on by James B Ewart and Co. at Dundas, at the Galt Mills, Galt and at the Gorman Mills, Waterloo, having terminated by the death of the late Benjamin Babington Esq...will, as formerly, carry on business...at Dundas in his own name and on his own account.

James B. Ewart, Surviving Partner

Further losses were incurred as a result of the Irish potato famine and repeal of the Corn Laws in Britain that same year.

The CORN LAWS (1794-1846) Enacted by Britain to protect agriculture from outside competition. In 1820 preference was given to colonial imports (including Canadian grains) through lower duties. In 1843 the Canada Corn Act allowed Canadian wheat to enter the British market at a nominal duty. When Britain repealed the Corn Laws in 1846 this was a hard blow to Canadian interests, which did, however, recover after 1850.

Toronto Examiner 1846

Allan MacNab's Great Western scheme has survived the explosion consequent upon the jobbing of the stock and its success is announced as unquestionable by some who are interested in it; but the truth is that the monetary aspect of the affair is gloomy.

From 1834 Ewart was a vigorous promoter of the London and Gore Railroad (predecessor of the Great Western Railroad) along with Alan MacNab.

**POPULATION of
DUNDAS in 1847:**

2075

In 1845 the two gentlemen travelled to London, England to arrange financing for their venture. By now Sir Allan MacNab had been knighted for his role in the suppression of the 1837 Rebellion led by William Lyon Mackenzie in Toronto.

Dundas Warder 1848

Dundas and West Flamboro Cricket Club

An adjourned meeting will take place at the Elgin Hotel this Monday, the 10th instant at 8 o'clock, when it is hoped that the Members will be punctual in attendance.

Dundas Warder 1848

California Gold News

***The digging and working gold continues to increase on the Sacramento placer...I have in my hands several pieces of gold about 23 carats fine, weighing one to two two pounds and I have it from good authority that pieces have been found weighing sixteen pounds.
Thomas O'Larkin Esq. navy Agent of the United States.***

James Ewart was an active supporter of the development of transportation, which of course, facilitated his business interests, as well as those of other Dundas entrepreneurs of the day.

He held shares in the Desjardins Canal Company and was a founding director of two road building companies - the Dundas and Paris and the Guelph and Dundas roads.

In 1840, Ewart became the owner of the water rights on Spencer Creek from Creighton Road to Main Street. He subsequently enlarged the dam which was located west of McMurray Street.



Ewart's Dam (GN-0262)

James Bell Ewart, as a leading businessman in Dundas, was highly visible in the life of the community. In 1838 he opened a new street from King Street to Hatt Street as far south as the entrance to the lane to the late Richard Hatt's home, Ogilvie Terrace. The new street was then named Ogilvie Street.

Dundas December 1, 1848

Dundas and Hamilton

CONVEYANCE

James Lee begs to inform the Public that his well- appointed conveyance for Passengers and Luggage will, until further notice, leave the Elgin Hotel, Dundas every morning at 9 o'clock precisely for Hamilton and return leaving Mitchell's Hotel, Hamilton at precisely 2 o'clock pm. Fare each way for passengers 1 shilling 3 pence - for parcels and according to bulk.

J.L. would further intimate that he has removed his Recess and Livery Establishment from Main Street to King Street next to Collin's Hotel.

In 1840, Ewart donated land, which had been part of his *Carfin Farm* around Ogilvie and Hatt Streets, for the construction of the first St. James Anglican Church on Hatt Street. He served at the church as an elected vestryman. Ewart was also a prominent member of the St. Andrew's Society and was politically active.

Ewart was elected in 1849 by the Town councilors to preside as President of the Town Council.

This year saw the passing of the General Act for the election of Municipal Corporations, replacing all former acts and putting an end to town meetings and providing for elected town councils.

In this same year, nearly 14,000 tons of produce were shipped via the Canal and 2200 tons of goods were imported consisting mostly of salt, crockery, iron, coal, grinding stones, sugar and molasses.

The year 1849 also saw the founding of two new schools in town. One was started by Bessie Riddler. Bessie, a teacher, had come to Dundas as a young woman, engaged to marry a young Englishman, who had drowned in a shipwreck while on route to the wedding. Bessie never married and dedicated herself to education for the next fifty-four years. She died in 1903 at age 85. Her school building is incorporated in the Ellen Osler Home at 34 Hatt Street.

Under President Ewart the Town Council voted to purchase the lot at St. Andrew's Square, current site of the Armoury, for a new Fire Hall. The land had belonged to the heirs of Richard Hatt.

Dundas Warder and Halton County General Advertiser
Dundas, Canada West
Friday morning, November 9, 1849

Desjardins Canal

A meeting of the stockholders of the Desjardins Canal Company will be held at their Office in the Town of Dundas ON MONDAY THE 26th Day of NOVEMBER next for the election of two Directors in place of James B. Ewart and James Hamilton Esqrs. who have for the last two months absented themselves from the regular meetings of the Directors

James Bell Ewart died on December 17, 1853.

Accompanied by a large funeral cortege, his remains were interred at the Crooks family

cemetery at Crook's Hollow. He was later re-interred at the Grove Cemetery and his name and those of two of his children are engraved on the Crooks family monument. The two children, Jesse 1833-1833 and Jesse 1835-1842 pre-deceased him.

His wife, Mary Margaret Crooks, who was born in 1815 in West Flamborough, survived him until 1876 when she died in Brighton, England.



Crooks Family Monument, Grove Cemetery, Dundas 2014

JAMES BELL EWART

PRESIDENT, DUNDAS COUNCIL, 1849

DUNDAS TIMELINE

1825 Ewart purchases the Dundas Mills from the estate of Richard Hatt.

1837 Northwest Rebellion of Louis Riel

1838 Dundas Foundry opened- Ewart partner with John Gartshore & Benjamin Babington

1844 #8 Hatt Street built - British Bank of North America - Ewart Agent

1845 Ewart & Sir Allan MacNab travel to London, England to arrange financing for the London & Gore Railroad, predecessor to the Great Western Railroad

1849 William Osler is born - raised in Dundas

WORLD TIMELINE

1848 Gold Rush - Fraser River area - Canada moves to create British Columbia

1849 Edgar Allan Poe, 40, dies of alcoholism in Baltimore

1849 Cholera first linked to the water supply in London

1849 Citizens of New York die in anti-British riots provoked by Irish gangs

1849 Frederic Chopin, 38, dies of consumption in Paris

1849 Thousands flock to the California gold rush

1849 **General Act** enacted for erection of municipal corporations, replacing all former Acts and putting an end to the Town Meeting. In its place an elected Township Council with a Town Reeve was established. (Part of reforms from Lord Durham's Report)
History of Ontario page 319

SOURCES

Dictionary of Canadian Biography

The Province of Ontario: A History Vol. 1, Jesse Edgar Middleton (page 319)

Dundas Warder & Halton County General Advertiser, Dundas Museum & Archives

True Banner & Wentworth Chronicle

Ancestry.com

History of Dundas, Roy Woodhouse, Volumes 1, 2, & 3.

Millennium A Chronicle of World History Year By Year