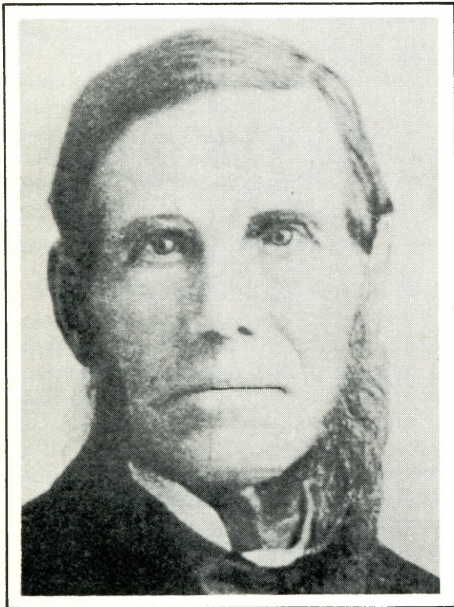


# Surveyors of The Past

—BY CHARLES FAIRHALL—



**J. M. O. CROMWELL**  
1819 - 1898

**B**ORN AT Road, Somersetshire, England, on January 1, 1819, J. M. O. Cromwell, where his parents, respected and prosperous citizens, then resided. Upon their deaths, the two children, J. M. O. and his sister, Ann, were well provided for, but the estate was left to the management of an uncle, who decided to emigrate to Canada with his two wards. He settled at or near Perth, Upper Canada, which settlement had been founded by officers and soldiers disbanded at the close of the War of 1812-1814.

The uncle indentured his nephew to a farmer, appropriated the inheritance, and left for the United States. Ann, who was some years older, had in the meantime married a settler named Glenn.

Young Cromwell, who was a frail boy physically, was so brutally treated by the rough pioneer farmer that he ran away, taking refuge with his married sister. He attended school and was so apt in mathematics that his teacher advised him to study for land surveying which advice he decided to follow. He frequently related in subsequent years that he worked and studied eighteen hours per day, and could demonstrate the six books of Euclid "when standing on one foot".

After a year's schooling, no doubt under a proficient teacher, he presented

himself before the Board of Examiners for preliminary examination, then to a greater degree than at present conducted orally.

He articulated himself to Josias Richey, a resident of Perth, and qualified as a Deputy Provincial Surveyor on October 1, 1846. He immediately began private practice at Perth, and was acknowledged as one of the prominent surveyors in the eastern part of the province.

The Counties of Lanark and Carleton were then largely virgin forest, but the greater part had been surveyed into townships, and concessions and lots posted in advance of settlement. However, as a large number of soldiers were disbanded in a very short time, the surveys had been performed by contract, one surveyor employing several unqualified assistants, the result being that many inaccuracies occurred and disputes followed. As the farms became cleared and wealth accumulated, the farmers required that the boundaries of their farms be correctly determined, as some had fenced and claimed more land than their deeds specified.

The lawyers and surveyors profited by these disputes and the lawsuits that followed. For years, the session of courts were cluttered up with boundary dispute cases. Litigants occasionally became beggared with the costs.

Mr. Cromwell became noted for the accuracy of his field work and disputants frequently agreed to abide by his survey instead of appealing to the courts. Whatever might be the result of a case at court, a feud between families frequently followed.

Mr. Cromwell carried on a general practice throughout the Counties of Lanark and Carleton retracing old lines, running side lines, making subdivisions, etc., in winter as well as summer, until 1890. It is reported that his evidence in respect to boundaries was never controverted, also that his surveyed lines were not disputed. He had in an unusual degree the confidence, not only of the public, but of the judges.

When the Hon. Alex Morris was a member of government, he offered Mr. Cromwell the position of Surveyor-General of Canada, which he declined. As he stated, he never asked for a position or favour in his life, nor did he ever hold a salaried position.

Numerous surveyors served their apprenticeships with Mr. Cromwell, most of whom he outlived. Some of the graduates of the "Cromwell School of Surveying" were: John A. Snow, 1847, Ottawa; John McLatchie, 1874; Robert Sparks, Ottawa; W. R. Burke, 1878, and A. W. Kippen, 1877, who was killed in action at Batoche in 1885, during the Riel Rebellion.

Four surveys were made by Mr. Cromwell in this province under Government instructions:

Lots 1-12, Con. 2, Bathurst .....	1850
Part Con. 10, North Elmsley .....	1855
Broken Front Con. A, N. Gower ..	1857
Part Con. Line, Con. 2, Nepean ....	1888

He married Miss Mary Watson, a daughter of a pioneer settler of Perth. There were five children, one son and four daughters. During his career as a surveyor, he accumulated a considerable estate, which he bequeathed to his family.

He died at Perth on October 19, 1898, from a malady that had been neglected.

## Eternal Vigilance Department

**T**HE LAW Society recently issued a brochure which has been distributed to the various supermarket pamphlet counters. This brochure was entitled "Buying a Home"; it indicated that the "lawyer will verify the dimensions and area of the land", "draw up a proper legal description of the property", with a photograph of certain books showing the areas of the lawyer's expertise. The word "surveys" was included in the titles of the books.

Our relationship and communication with the Law Society is excellent, and we were quickly in touch with them, once it came to our attention that this pamphlet had been circulated. The pamphlet is a direct copy in some regards, of a pamphlet put out some years ago, which at that time was recognized to be inaccurate. The Law Society has agreed to withdraw from distribution the one hundred thousand copies of this brochure, and we will be co-operating, hopefully, to present a joint brochure regarding the purchase of a home.

As many surveyors have brought this to our attention, we are pleased that we were able with the co-operation of the Law Society to have these brochures withdrawn within two weeks of their initial distribution. Although some will have been distributed, the majority of them are being brought back to the Law Society offices.