

What's in a name anyway?

By Frank Phelan

On reflection, it seems quite a lot...

Living in or near Chaffey's Lock (with or without an "s" - but that is a different story), originally Chaffey's Rapids, then Chaffey's Mills, and ultimately and familiarly Chaffey's, we acknowledge the Chaffey family (Samuel Chaffey and his wife, Mary Ann (née Poole), brother Benjamin and nephews John, George and William) in the name.

Chaffey's is located towards the east end of Opinicon Lake. At the other end of the lake was located Lake Opinicon (note where "lake" appears in the two labels – a fine distinction). Lake Opinicon Village (still on maps as "Lake Opinicon") was a burgeoning outpost settled soon after the completion of the Rideau Canal and a site of sawmills (both water and steam), a grist mill, mines, lumbering, farms, cheese factory, boatbuilding and commercial fishing. At its core was a church, schoolhouse, general store and an Orange Lodge. Now a ghost town, its heyday was in the late 1800s and mostly abandoned by the 1920s.

On a census of 1880, John Poole, who ran a sawmill (brother of Samuel, who also ran a sawmill) listed the town where he lived as Savington. Where was this? Unknown for certain, but likely on the far side of Opinicon Lake from Lake Opinicon Village. The two brothers' sawmills were on opposite sides of the lake, clearly some element of competition between them. There was once a filing by John Poole with the Township of a plan for Savington Village, but it was not acted on and Lake Opinicon was. Even the Post Office was listed as at Lake Opinicon (once sited on the far side of Opinicon Lake along Post Office Gate Lane). Lake Opinicon Village effectively wrapped around the south end of Opinicon Lake from where Skycroft Campground is now, along the lakeshore to the SW, then around the end of the lake and northeastward to the site of Hunter's Mill at the outlet of Rock Lake Creek.

Why Savington? The Poole family came to Canada and this locality from Somerset in Britain and towns called Seavington. Maybe this is just a case of a simple misspelling while trying to honour the family origins. Nevertheless, this family made the arduous trek across the Atlantic and ended up here in the Chaffey's area and hoped to entrench a bit of their UK history in our locality.

At the same time, the Chaffey family and another local family of note, the Tetts arrived in the area. The Tetts settled at Bedford Mills, originally known as Buttermilk Falls.

Interestingly, all three families hailed from the same part of Britain. It is clear that the Chaffeys, the Pooles and the Tetts were interrelated and shared business interests (on both sides of the Atlantic). The Pooles hailed from Seavington St. Mary and Seavington St. Michael, the Chaffeys from Norton sub Hamdon and the Tetts from Hinton St. George, all located in Somerset, SW Britain. These three settlements are close together, sharing a triangle with sides 7.5, 6 and 3.5 km long. The area in Somerset was a sheep raising area and all the families were involved in farming, woolens, and sailcloth manufacture.

In Canada, the families settled close together as well. Distances between their respective settlements share a triangle with sides 7.5, 6.2 and 7.6 km long. Interesting symmetry! In our

area, the families continued to be interrelated and in business with milling, mining, and shipping ventures.

The names of the immigrant families of our area still persist (the three referenced here are but a small sample). Their tales of leaving Britain, sailing the Atlantic, arriving in Canada and finding their way into an unknown yet developing landscape are the stuff of legend. The full story may never be known. What were the causes of uprooting from Somerset? Why settle in our area specifically? How big a part of the story was it that the families were close before leaving and still close on arrival here? Whatever the full story, these 'intrepids' have certainly helped shape our local history and culture.

Footnote: Neil Patterson expounds on some of the business relationships of these families in his article on the Bedford Mills Enterprise which included four sawmills in the Newsletter of the Chaffey's Lock and Area Heritage Society.