

WILLIAM MARR OF MARKHAM TOWNSHIP, UPPER CANADA, ONTARIO

1. WILLIAM³ MARR (William², Lawrence¹) was born Mt. Bethel Twp., Northampton Co., Pennsylvania, 2 December 1772;¹ died Markham Twp., York Co., Ontario, 12 July 1862 ae 93 yrs.² He married ca age 25, place and date unknown, PHOEBE EARLS, born perhaps Whitehall, New York, 8 March 1779; died Markham, 10 April 1857 ae 79 yrs 1 mo 2 das, daughter of Joseph and Phoebe Earls; both buried Locust Hill Cemetery in the 10th concession.

On 9 November 1801, William Marr of Stamford [Niagara District] petitioned the Lieut. Governor of the Province of Upper Canada for settlement in the Township of Markham. He stated that he had come into the Province with a wife and three children, about two years ago [1799] from Pennsylvania, having a yoke of oxen, one horse, two cows, several hogs and other property. On 10 November 1801 he was recommended for 200 acres, lot 14, concession 9 in Markham. John McKerlie of Stamford had certified that William Marr came into the province ... and had behaved himself as an honest and industrious man.⁴ He was enumerated in the Berczy census of 1803: William Marr ae 27; Phebe ae 25; Anna ae 5; Joseph ae 4; Benjamin ae 2; and Mercy ae 1.⁵ William could legibly sign his name.

According to several accounts the three brothers Marr and other settlers took passage across the lake [Ontario] in a small schooner ... and landed on the beach called Little York [now Toronto], 30 April 1802. They travelled for two days through virgin forests before reaching their destination, having journeyed for 14 days. They immediately set about to build cabins and to clear the land in order to complete settlement duties, a precondition before a deed was awarded. A cabin, five acres of cleared land, and a road fronting their property were the requirements. William was deeded his land 6 February 1809. When provisions were needed a walk of 30 miles through the wilderness to Little York and back was *sine qua non* ... He connected himself with the Methodist Church in 1818 ... and early ministers who travelled through the township of Markham cannot forget the hearty welcome they received ... his home was also the place of worship in those early days ... after the death of his aged and beloved wife he took up his residence with his daughter, Mrs. Peter Willmot, on the 4th concession of Markham ... and on his death was conveyed to the 10th concession for burial.²

William Marr was a small boy during the American Revolution but, as he matured, a feeling of dislike toward the new American order evidently took root. By the time that he had settled in Markham, he was a confirmed supporter of the British government even though not a *bona fide* United Empire Loyalist. His obituary revealed that his family had suffered severely for their attachment to the Crown during the Revolution and that, throughout the War of 1812, he was actively engaged as lieutenant in a cavalry troop commanded by Captain John Button. For this service, on 1 July 1828, he petitioned the government for lot 9, concession 10, 200 acres upon which no settlement duty had been performed and he received a certificate from the Adjutant General of Militia as a sergeant of Button's cavalry troop. He was one of the first to volunteer in defense of British institutions during the Rebellion of 1837 although loyalty in his own family was divided. 2-6

Alem Marr, William's sixth child, was charged with treason for entering into the insurrection and fled the country, a circumstance that sorely vexed the family. On 3 January 1839, William Marr and six of his sons petitioned His Excellency Sir George Arthur, Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Upper Canada, Major General commanding Her Majesty's forces, for a pardon for Alem: "We the undersigned with the utmost deference and respect, beg to approach Your Excellency on, to us, an anxious and painfully interesting subject. We are a family composed of a father and six sons residing in the Township of Markham, the father one of the earliest settlers in the district having come to the province upwards of 38 years ago, and remained in the above township for more than 36 years, where he brought up a family of seven sons all with one unfortunate exception, distinguished for steady and undeviating loyalty and attachment to the glorious principles of the British Constitution, principles for which their ancestors forthfully contended through many a trying scene their grandfather having served with distinction as an officer in the Revolutionary War and the

father as a lieutenant in a troop of cavalry during the late war [of 1812] with the United States.

"And even though so far advanced in life being 66 years old at the commencement of the rebellion of last winter such was his zeal in his country's cause, that he accompanied the troops to Montgomerys [Tavern] and witnessed the dispersion of the rebels on that memorable occasion, and five of the sons on the first alarm, rushed with ardour and alacrity to the defense of the Capitol, the sixth being reluctantly detained at home by indisposition. We now humbly and diffidently beg to intercede with your Excellency for the only unfortunate member of this family, Alem Marr, who, straying from the proved fidelity of his nearest relatives, and being unfortunately seduced by vile associates, was unhappily implicated in the detestable schemes of traitors which ultimately compelled him to become an exile and an outcast in a foreign land.

"We would beg, however, to assure your Excellency that prior to the fight on Yonge street, he abandoned the rebel cause, and sorry and ashamed of his former conduct returned home, but dreading the outraged laws of his country, fled to the neighbouring states where he now remains truly repentant and yearning to return to his native land. Under these painful and mortifying circumstances, We humbly solicit your Excellency to take into favourable consideration, the case of the wretched fugitive, the sorrow of his bereaved parents now verging to the close of life, and that of his brothers so anxious for his return. Should your Excellency listen to our earnest supplication, and extend royal clemency to the repentant culprit, any security for his future loyalty and good conduct which your Excellency might require would be promptly and cheerfully given ... and would be gratefully remembered by your humble servants. (Signed) William Marr, Sen^r, Joseph Marr, Benjamin Marr, Jacob Marr, David Marr, William Marr, Jun^r, and John W. Marr. Clemency was granted, 30 January 1839."⁷

The abstract index of deeds for lot 14, concession 9, Markham Township, shows there were many transactions between William Marr and his heirs up to the year 1887 when the last owner, Henry Crosby Marr, conveyed, 28 February 1887, to John Isaac, the west three-quarters of the west one-half of this property. William Marr was enumerated in Markham in 1851 and 1861.⁹

Children of William³ Marr and Phoebe Earls:¹

- 2 i. Anna⁴ Marr, b. 26 October 1797 or 1798 ae 5 in Berczy Census.
- 3 ii. Joseph Marr, b. 8 September 1800 ae 4 in Berczy Census.
- 4 iii. Benjamin Marr, b. 2 October 1802 ae 2 in Berczy Census.
- 5 iv. Mercy Marr, b. 12 October 1804.
- 6 v. Jacob Marr, b. 14 July 1806.
- 7 vi. Alem Marr, b. 15 July 1808.
- 8 vii. David Marr, b. 2 October 1810.
- 9 viii. William Marr, b. 16 February 1813.
- 10 ix. John Wheaton Marr, b. 3 December 1818.