

Sir James John Jameson

The Knight

In his spare time when he wasn't working in his father's business, James John Jameson had explored the city of Londonderry, Ireland, and met many young men his same age who were serving in formal apprenticeships for various businesses. James John and they had a lot in common such as their age and the fact that they were all learning trades of some sort. But the difference was James John was learning within his family's business and the other boys were not. They were learning trades in formal apprenticeships within someone else's business with whom their families had an agreement which bestowed upon them a formal title of "apprentice."

Although business was bustling in Londonderry, there were insurrections in various hot spots throughout Ulster and surrounding areas. These hostilities were driven by-in-large by the deposed King James II with hired French forces and an Irish Catholic army known as Jacobites against the Protestant population and English rule. In 1688, these forces, consisting of thousands of soldiers, were nearing Londonderry with malevolent intentions. Seizing Londonderry would be an important strategic coup. It could serve as a fortress to amass thousands of troops which could be protected and then dispatched against English Protestant armies. It was close to the harbor where troops could land and depart. What's more, after eliminating the men and soldiers inside, the deposed King James II could hold the women and children hostage for negotiations.

Except for a high perimeter wall, the city was otherwise ill prepared for a large scale military attack such as this. The only military in the city was a garrison of 1200 "Redshanks" (nickname for kilt wearing Highlanders), and a few cannons. While city officials and the small military contingent struggled to formulate a viable strategy against such a large force, the thirteen "apprentice boys" with whom James John Jameson and a few other young men joined, immediately took unilateral action and closed and fortified the gates to the city. This solitary act was credited later with saving the city. Captain Thomas Ash of the garrison later

testified “While we were in the state of confusion, a few resolute apprentice boys determined for us; ran to the gates and shut them, drew up the bridge and seized the magazine.”

The attacking forces were deterred and forced to change their strategy to a starvation siege and mortar rounds lobbed over the city walls. In the event the gates or walls would be breached by the attackers, the garrison of Highlanders was prepared to fight fearlessly to the last man, which would be the case due to the overwhelming odds. Until then, there wasn't much they could do from inside. The siege lasted 105 days until ships and army under William of Orange drove off the attackers. But in their wake, the attackers left thousands of city dwellers dead from starvation, disease and mortar explosions.

After the attackers were driven away, intelligence of their location indicated that part of their force was hold up near Newtownbutler just south of Londonderry. James John and others wanted revenge for the deaths and destruction inflicted by the Jacobites. He and the others organized a volunteer army and headed south in search of them picking up more volunteers as they went. Whenever they sited small bands of Jacobites, they annihilated them. Then the main body of Jacobites was located and the two forces engaged. As the volunteer army began to overtake the Jacobites, they broke ranks and fled. By then a cavalry unit from the army of William of Orange arrived. The cavalry pursued the fleeing Jacobites and massacred them.

James and his fellow organizers were all knighted by King William and granted a coat of arms for their initiative, leadership and bravery in the Battle of Newtownbutler and for their part in saving the City of Londonderry. He was thereby respectfully referred to by his formal title of Sir James John Jameson.

With the arrival of armies under William of Orange and the ferocity with which the volunteers fought, the deposed King James II left his hired French army and the Jacobites in retreat and fled to Duncannon where he boarded a ship and continued fleeing to France abandoning his army and the Jacobites. For this cowardly act he became known by the Catholic armies in Ireland as “Seamus an Chaca” ((King) James the shit).

Although hostilities continued from time to time for a number of years, Londonderry was excluded from them. This local peaceful respite enabled Sir James to help his father make repairs to the shop and for them to return to a normal stable business again. Sir James continued to work in his father’s shop becoming an expert in that field and married Jannet, a young, local, Irish Protestant woman, in 1692. He and his father enlarged the living quarters attached to the shop for Sir James and his family which continued to grow with the addition of several children over the years.

Sir James John Jameson (Jamison)

The Voyage to America

News of colonization in America made its way across the Atlantic to England and, naturally, to all of England's territories including Ireland. The news was that this was a vast new country with land grants, religious freedom and no international hostilities. English, Scottish, Irish, French and German immigrants were settling wherever they chose up and down the eastern seaboard. This opportunity, when compared to religious persecution, clan feuds, plagues, ominous English rule, battles and wars which had become permanently endemic with life in Ireland and Scotland, sounded like a fresh new beginning for those who were willing to make the long hard voyage.

Sir James John Jameson enjoyed working with his father and raising his family in the same house with his parents but his family had grown to quite sizable. He and his wife had seven children which already required another expansion of the living quarters. What's more, Sir James' first born son, John, and a local girl, both 14 years old, were inseparable. Then when she revealed her pregnancy her family would no longer allow her to live at home so the Jameson's took her in. The two were married before their first child was born and continued to have more children. Sir James felt his extended family had become too much of an unfair burden for his father's shop and living quarters. He considered many options but kept returning in his mind to America.

He discussed the prospect of living in an American colony with the extended family. Although his parents preferred that they stay with them or at least in Londonderry, they could understand Sir James' attraction to this new land. The rest of the family members were in favor of the idea. His father's blacksmith and foundry business had done well over the years and Sir James was able to put aside a respectable sum for the future. He was convinced that the beginning of their new

future was now so he purchased passage for his and his son's families on the Mary William departing Londonderry for Philadelphia.

The ship set sail with all aboard in the spring of 1713. The passengers were informed ahead of time that the voyage should take approximately 60 -75 days and to be prepared because food and water may very well have to be rationed. The first port of call would be the Virginia Colony then on to Philadelphia. Moments before the ship set sail, Sir James asked God's blessing upon the journey and his family. During the first few weeks the passengers seemed to manage well enough. During this period the Jameson's met some of their fellow passengers. There were Irish, Scots, Scots-Irish, German and English among the passengers. But then conditions began to decline. For the remainder of the voyage, the passengers endured foul weather, sea sickness, rancid food, stagnant water, dysentery, boils, lice and ailments of all descriptions. Some of the elderly and a few infants, whom the Jameson's met, were the weakest of the lot and, unfortunately, died at sea which was a most sorrowful and helpless situation. The Jameson's held up fairly well until John's wife went into labor. This was their seventh child but something went wrong. The baby, who they named Nancy, lived but the mother died. She was buried at sea. This was a terrible tragedy and gave some of the family cause to question their decision to sail to America. But with their faith in God and having the baby to care for plus four children under 5 took their minds off of the tragedy long enough that the family, although sadly, could persevere.

If these tragedies weren't bad enough for the passengers, their ship was attacked by pirates a day before arriving at the Virginia Colony. Led by the infamous "Blackbeard" who had been prowling in the coastal waters between Virginia and South Carolina, the gang of pirates threatened cannon fire. The captain had no choice but to order the crew to take her into the wind and drop the sails. The pirates boarded with swords, pistols and knives, and demanded all valuables. The pirates also confiscated gold and silver being delivered to the tobacco farmers of the colony as payment for tobacco that had been sold to businesses in Ireland. Sir James remembered the lesson passed down through many family generations from John in the Hebrides to hide most of the family's money when aboard a ship. So he had taken most of the gold and silver from the family's trunk without anyone knowing it and hidden it under a loose deck board far below decks. He knew if he took all the gold and silver the pirates would be

suspicious so he left just enough in the trunk for them to be satisfied. Of course the pirates took everyone's trunks which included Sir James' coat of arms, tartan and the rest of the family's clothing and valuables. But Blackbeard would eventually pay for his ruinous deeds to people and businesses. Five years later in 1718, Virginia Governor Spotswood had enough of Blackbeard's terrorism, harassment and theft in Virginia's waters. He commissioned Lieutenant Robert Maynard with a ship, sailors and soldiers, to track down and bring Blackbeard to justice. When Lt. Maynard found Blackbeard's ship, a fierce battle ensued resulting in the death of Blackbeard, along with some of his pirates and the arrest of the others.

After a brief layover in the Virginia Colony, they sailed on to Philadelphia. Upon docking, the Jameson's witnessed further human suffering and atrocities – human slavery. Those passengers who were unable to pay for their passage immigrated with the understanding that they could work off the cost through opportunities for indentured service (slavery by contract). In this arrangement, the wealthy and business owners (purchasers) would meet these passengers at the dock and pay the ship's captain for their passage and then the immigrants would work for the purchaser for a number of years in exchange, typically seven years. What the immigrants didn't know was the purchasers often only took some of the family members resulting in family separations scattering the members all over the colony. It was a heart wrenching site to see children and parents all crying and wailing and trying to hold on to each other as they were being torn apart and then not being able to see each other for years, if ever again. The immigrant's who were still sick upon arrival at the port, were not purchased and consequently had to remain on board until they were well enough to be purchased for work or they died from their illnesses. In the 1700's, 50 to 90% of the immigrants aboard vessels to American colonies were indentured servants. They consisted, by-in-large, of Irish and a smaller portion of Scots-Irish, German and even English. The number of victims who suffered this unscrupulous act of enslavement has been estimated to be half a million. Worse than indentured servitude, in the 1600's, England captured or arrested 300,000 Irish men for rebelling against English rule, separated them from their families and sold them as slaves to the colonists. Subsequently, in that same century, 200,000 Irish women and children which were the families of the captured men or men killed in the rebellion, were also sold as slaves to the

colonists. Not one of these men, women, or children was offered as an indentured servant. Although the importation of slaves was later outlawed in Pennsylvania in 1712, the acts of slavery and indenture servitude were still legal.

This horror is what the Jameson's, a family of 16, saw as they were stepping foot on American soil for the first time. Their compassion and sympathy for those passengers left them with feelings of emotional dread and helplessness. With tears of their own they thanked the Lord for their good fortune to have been able to pay for their passage and stay together, for they would have certainly been separated too. Once they recovered from the shock of some of their fellow passengers' inhumane treatment, they had an overwhelming sense of being lost and bewildered. They were used to having a house to come home to, a bed to sleep in and an environment familiar to them. Not only that but they had also known in Londonderry where to purchase food, goods and supplies, and where not to. But not then - not at that moment. There was no one to greet them, no family nor government representative (at this time in American history there was no immigration or registration process for new immigrants). They could only stand there holding what little was left of their possessions after the pirate robbery and gaze at the colonial city with horses and wagons and people scurrying here and there. After what seemed an eternity of no one uttering a word, Sir James said, "We must first eat. Then find someplace to sleep for the night. Tomorrow, we will know what to do."

Sir John, feeling the pressure of getting his extended family settled in this strange land, couldn't sleep the entire night. He left before daylight and returned with meat, bread, milk and water for the family. Then he immediately left again. He decided to find a blacksmith or iron foundry where he could obtain employment for himself and possibly for some of his sons. In doing so he could get his family settled nearby his work until they could get better acquainted with Philadelphia and America, and determine where the possibilities may be for a land grant to start their own farm. Fortunately, Sir James was conversant enough in English from the lessons he received as a child from the Protestant Clergy that he could communicate sufficiently with English speaking people as he made his way through the city.

The search was fortuitous for Sir James and his family. He discovered a large scale blacksmith shop near North 2nd Street. It was in an emerging industrial area of the City which eventually became known as Elfreth's Alley. This shop had been experimenting with iron casting over the past year. They had started casting iron cook pots. However, they just recently received a contract for church bells for several churches from the Bishop of the Philadelphia Diocese and heard that there may be opportunities for cannons and mortars for two British forts sometime in the future. This meant that they needed to expand their operation and hire a master blacksmith with casting experience to supervise the casting work, such as he, plus hire more experienced workers. The fact that Sir James could communicate with Irish, Scottish and English workers was all the better. He would start next week.

The family had rented a large house near the shop and had been settled for seven years. During this time the quality of their lives was good and they were settled and content. After seven years the adults had finally managed to save enough to purchase land for farms. They heard about excellent farm land some sixty miles west by southwest of Philadelphia. Ultimately they helped settle a new township there named Little Britain Township where their surname was changed by the land records clerk to Jamison.