



Leonard Jarvis Chapman b. 1829

PROGRESSIVE MEN OF MONTANA

Leonard Jarvis Chapman -

The truly worthy gentleman of whom we write has been long a valuable citizen of the Flathead Valley. He has had an adventurous and varied life in many of the early camps of the northwest and since 1887 has been connected in a high degree with the agricultural advancement of northwestern Montana.



The Chapman's are an old-time English family, coming down through early Colonial life in Massachusetts and Maine [then a portion of Massachusetts known as the District of Maine] to the present as prominently identified with pioneer life in various sections. and not alone that, for they have stood foremost in many lines of human endeavor in every generation from Pilgrim days to the present. His paternal great-grandfather, Benjamin Chapman, was son of a sea captain of Ipswich and died on the island of Granada in the West Indies. The family has intermarried with families notable in American history and New England life, and is connected with the Goulds, the Jarvis's, the Merrills, the Longs and others of equal reputation.

Ephraim Chapman, father of Leonard J. Chapman, was a drum major in the war in 1812, and, as was the usual custom of that day, varied his farming operations of the summer by the making of boots and shoes in the winter. Reading, study, thought and conversation along historic, moral and religious lines has long been characteristics of New England, and Ephraim Chapman was a true son of the soil. He was well educated for those days, and, as an ardent Democrat, knew well how to define his political creed by logic and argument. He was a ready and convincing speaker in lyceums, town meeting and the like. He had a cultivated voice and was one of the leaders of singing in the old Baptist church of Damariscotta, of which for years he was a valued member. He was quite a traveler and made several sea voyages. He built the schoolhouse of the home village and was prominent in all local matters. His wife, Nancy Chapman was his fitting mate. A woman of superior culture and gifts, she shared her husband the esteem of the whole people. Ephraim Chapman died on February 9, 1842, aged fifty-four. His widow lived on the hope place until her death sometime in the "eighties". In their family were eleven boys and two girls.

Leonard J. Chapman was the seventh son. His birth occurred at the Damariscotta homestead on September 7, 1829. New England lads are put to work early and our subject was fashioning shoes under the paternal roof before he was twelve years old. After his father's death, he continued at this work, and when fourteen was apprenticed to shoemaking with his uncle, John Chapman, at Nobleboro for four years. On completing his service, he went to Alderborough, where on his eighteenth birthday he hired out to work at his trade and in six months was the foreman of the shop, the largest one in the county. His motto was even then "The best or nothing," and in 1849, he went to the best factory in Quincy, Mass., and placed himself under instructions to learn more about his trade. After four months tuition he returned to Maine and was there married on February 26, 1850, to the cultured lady who has shared so many of his years of romantic frontier life, Miss Julia A. Chapman, a daughter of Elbridge and Catherine (Bartlett) Chapman, and a native of Waldoborough, Maine.

Mr. Chapman was a natural mechanic, and he desired a field for more extended research in this direction than existed in the trade he had so long followed, and after working at shoemaking a few months after his marriage he abandoned this and immediately entered a shipyard where he became a proficient workman until May 5, 1865, when he sailed from New York to California by the Panama route. From San Francisco he went at once to the gold fields, stopping first at Amador, where he built a church, and then

engaged in building mills in Calaveras County, at Tuolumne, Stanislaus, etc, until 1867. From this time to 1870, he he was erecting various kinds of wood-working machinery in San Francisco. In 1870, he was appointed foreman at the United State Navy Yard at Mare Island by Secretary Robeson, and held this responsible position for five years. Following this occurred a series of years in the mining region of Nevada and an acquaintanceship with those world-renowned producers of mineral wealth, Mackay, Flood, O'Brien and others. Mr. Chapman put in hoisting works, quartz mills, sawmills, water wheels, all through the mining country around Virginia City and his work was demanded in the most notable of the great mines. Later he was on the Carson putting in turbine wheels, etc., and in 1880 he was at work in Bodie, Cal., at an altitude of 9, 163 feet, where he put in a large Corliss engine for one of the mines. Continuing at this responsible but profitable employment he went to Gold Hill, at Virginia City, and this was his headquarters for four years. From Virginia city he went to Stockton, where during his three-years stay he erected mills, framed the large pavilion, superintended the construction of White and Thomas's mill and the building of combined harvesters for two manufacturing houses. His inventive power has been shown by valuable inventions patented by him. Did the limits of this work permit, many interesting reminiscences of life in mining camps could be drawn from Mr. Chapman's personal experience, showing strange conditions and adventures.



In 1886 his oldest son, an invalid, then a resident of Butler, went to the Flathead Valley to try the climate as a restorer of his health, and was a teacher of the half-breeds an the Flathead Lake and located a claim of 160 acres, the same now being the home of his father and mother. The accounts given by the son were so attractive that the parents came at once from California and made their home in this delightful spot. here they have since resided. Their health has greatly improved and here Mr. Chapman became the pioneer of the fruit industry of the valley. They brought the first piano into into this county. Since their residence here their life was been quiet and uneventful - quite idyllic. Mr. Chapman has worked with trees and bushes and plants, even more and more astonished at the wonderful revelations of the fertility of the Flathead soil, and he has now 125 trees in bearing, comprising apple, pear, plum, prune, cherry, etc., and luxuriant rows of currants, barberry, blackberry, black and red raspberry, with other large and small fruit intermingled. He has done more than this. He has taken thought and care of garden and farm products. As an evidence of this we would state that he has developed a variety of corn maturing a week earlier than the earliest variety heretofore known. A charming air of culture and refinement surrounds the home. all the current magazines and leading agricultural and horticultural journals are at hand. In such surroundings, this worthy couple are passing the pleasant autumn of active and useful lives. Mr. Chapman says his politics are "Jeffersonian, Lincolnian and Sumner," but he leaves political office-seeking life entirely alone. Their two children are Arno, Juan, now foreman of the printing department of Kalispell Bee, and, Leonard J. B. Chapman, connected with the First National Bank of Kalispell and leader of the Kalispell band.

Source:

The above biography of Leonard Jarvis Chapman was taken from the "Progressive Men of the State of Montana; pages 1430a-1430b; Chicago, A. W. Bowen & Co., Engravers and Publishers, 1904. NOTE: A copy of this book was located in the Salt Lake Family History Library, Los Angeles City Library, also at the Kalispell City Library.



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The picture of Leonard Jarvis Chapman was taken in the 1880's and is in possession of Leonard Burt Chapman, Anaheim, California

The picture of the Chapman cabin was taken May 2002 in Bigfork, Montana overlooking the Flathead Lake. This cabin was built around 1887/1888. Its construction is the square timbered type that is

common in the Maine area. It is still lived in and the original well is being used! Over the years, all but 10 acres have long been sold off.

The grave stone was put in place at the Big Fork Cemetery in 1996 by Leonard Chapman and Arno Chapman.

Note: All the above information has been found to be true, with the exception of the War of 1812 and possible "patent information"

Leonard Burt Chapman
Anaheim, CA 92802