

# Sergeant James G Jewell, badge #1488 (retired)

one man's story in celebration of Black history month

Over the past decade, many people have come to know James Jewell from his evocative and thought-provoking articles as "The Police Insider". Tackling issues related to crime and law enforcement James was never one to hold back his truth. He called them as he saw them. By the time he hung up his shingle last year, he recorded over 1.3 million views on his site.

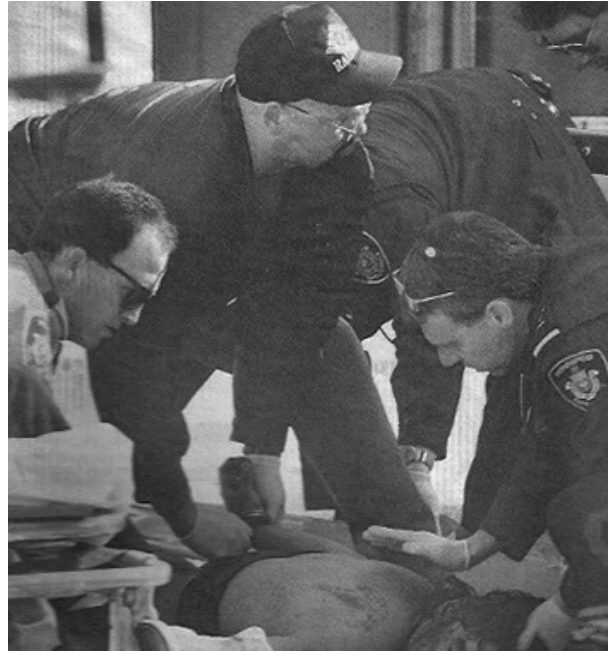
James gained his insight into the world of crime and law enforcement from his 26 years of dedication to the citizens of Winnipeg, 18 of which were spent as a detective in Winnipeg's organized crime, major crime and homicide units.

I had the good fortune of working with James for 25 of those years. We worked out of the same building for most of our careers and were promoted at the same time. Getting to know James gave me a deeper appreciation for the life skills he brought to the table that made him such an exceptional detective. I am honoured that he has allowed me to share his families journey with you for Black History month from the American slave trade to the Winnipeg Police Service

**Researched, written and edited by James G Jewell for John Burchill,  
Winnipeg Police, Chief of Staff**

"There is a set of peculiarities found in each branch of our family connection. When we combine any two or more characteristics and qualities from the various blood sources, each individual emerges uniquely unto himself." - Theodore Kenneth Jewell (James Uncle " the first Black Mayor of Kapuskasing, Ontario)

Theodore Jewell had a great love, passion and appreciation for his family. It was that passion that fuelled his efforts to document and share the biographical and historical information he discovered during his research into his family's origin.



Theodore learned the family's African connection originated with a man identified as Henry Dangerfield Lawson. (circa 1806 - 1861)

Henry was an escaped slave from Virginia (circa 1840) who travelled north like many escaped slaves who made it to Canada via the underground railway.

Escaping slavery was not an easy undertaking.

Henry was desperately pursued by his master and overseer who became separated as they tracked their runaway slave. When his master caught up to him, he immediately began to whip Henry from high atop his horse. Henry managed to overpower the man, pulled him from his horse and used the object of his oppression to strangle his master to death.

He left the man dead on the roadside and continued his flight to freedom in the north, eventually arriving in Peel County north of Guelph, Ontario.



*Ellen Jane Lawson (Jewell)*

"Henry Dangerfield Lawson was my 3rd great grandfather," James tells us.

"His son, Henry Dangerfield Lawson Jr. had a daughter, Ellen Jane Lawson, my great grandmother, who was described by my Uncle Theodore as a strong, ill-tempered, steel-spirited black woman."

Ellen suffered many difficulties in her life but had one well-placed friend, the wife of a Professor, who employed her as a domestic servant.

Theodore Jewell writes, "They had a firm, lasting, enriching, meaningful relationship, respect and affection grew between these two entirely different women. One a wealthy, high-born white woman, the other, a black woman, a slave's daughter."

In 1875, brothers William Arthur Jewell and Jonathan James Jewell, sons of a sheep thief, left Liverpool, England to immigrate to Canada, landing in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Jonathan settled in Halifax while brother William travelled by foot and lake ship to York (Toronto) in Ontario.

William had difficulty finding work in York and travelled to Guelph in Wellington County where he subsequently met and married Ellen Jane Lawson.

The couple had four children.



*Grandma, Grandpa & Father*

William Arthur Jewell died on August 1, 1926, leaving Ellen the onerous task of raising and providing for her four children. She managed to make ends meet by running a boarding house and lunch kitchen.

“For years the boarding house business was good and for years Granny Jewell enjoyed complete independence, some income and carried herself proudly. She was a woman of great spirit, pride and was deeply religious,” Theodore Jewell wrote.

Ellen Jane Jewell (Lawson) died on October 7, 1945.

At the time of her death a newspaper article reported, “One of Guelph’s leading colored folk, Mrs. Jewell died in her 75th year at her home on 81 Norfolk Street, Sunday morning.”

The article reports, “Before the Civil War in the United States, Mrs. Jewell’s maternal grandfather, William Still, operated the underground railway between Philadelphia and Canada for the escape of runaway slaves. He belonged to the group of pre-emancipation “free negroes.”

The article goes on to share a somewhat muted version of her paternal grandfathers (*Henry Dangerfield Lawson*) harrowing escape from the bondage of slavery.

“One of Ellen Janes's children was my grandfather William Arthur Jewell II. I’m sad to say I never met the man but from all accounts, he was a hardworking, dedicated father and husband,” James writes.

William Arthur Jewell II married Mary Elizabeth Nichol, a German woman who bore him a total of seven (7) children.

“One of those children was my father, William Arthur Jewell III aka “Bill”, born on October 22, 1928, in Guelph, Ontario,” James informs us.

Bill Jewell followed the path laid before him and continued the tradition of hard work and struggle. He left school with a grade 8 education so he could enter the workforce.

Employment was not always easy to find for uneducated people of colour. One of the few jobs available to men of colour during those days was working on the rail-lines as a Porter.

These were challenging times for Jewell - he was on the road working the Winnipeg to Vancouver route, serving the predominately white passengers who often called him, “George,” a common name used by Caucasian passengers to the men of colour who served them on the trains.



"It was just the way it was, we didn't have an identity to them, we were servants not worthy of having our own names, they either called us "George or boy", they seemed oblivious to how degrading it was," James recalls his father telling him.

"I remember him telling me how difficult it was being bi-racial, he told me the white community largely rejected him because he was too black, and the black community didn't accept him because he was too white."

(Bill Jewell was known as a fierce defender of members of Winnipeg's north-end Jewish community who faced considerable antisemitism. A National Film Board mini-documentary called "The Jews of Winnipeg" referred to him as a "one-man Jewish defence league in the days of the north end gang fights.")

"My father very much identified with the role of protector; he was famous for standing up for the "little guy." On reflection, it made sense that I ended up in law enforcement," said James.

On July 22, 1955, Bill Jewell married his wife Elizabeth (*Anderson*) and brought five children into the world.

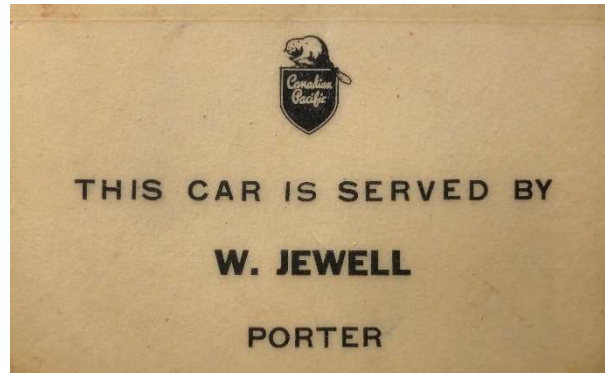
Elizabeth was a lover of all things horses and eventually convinced her husband to purchase a farm in Rosser, Manitoba.

"I didn't become aware of my bi-racial status until we moved out of the City of Winnipeg. The fact we were people of colour was driven home to us by a few less socially evolved people in our new community," James said.

"I didn't care much for school, I never thought I would ever be anything other than a labourer, so I dropped out of high-school during grade 11 with only a complete grade 9," James laments.

Years later, a seed planted by the RCMP during a visit to his high school started to take root.

"The RCMP came to our school and put a bunch of us through the paces. The physical tasks they made us perform were incredibly demanding. They inspired me tremendously - they emphasized discipline, handwork and respect. They made a lasting impression on me."



After working over a decade in physically demanding, labour-intensive jobs, James applied to the Winnipeg Police Service for a Constable position, he was 26 years of age and ready for a career.

“I really didn't have much to offer them at that time, other than maturity and a solid work ethic. I managed to get my GED and took on the mentality that I would double whatever physical standards they required.”

“The process took about a year and is easily one of the most difficult tasks I had ever undertaken at that point in my life.”

The reward was sweet.

On January 7, 1987, James received a letter from Staff Sergeant K. Porter advising him he'd been selected to begin his career with the Winnipeg Police Service as a member of Class #107.

“When I started with the WPS the organization was dominated by Englishmen, Scotsman and Irishmen. There were very few women or people of colour on the police force.”

“Even so, I never had to deal with any significant incidents of racism and I never saw anyone treated poorly because of their race or identity. If I had, I wouldn't hesitate to say so.”

“The diversification of the WPS had an enormous positive cultural impact on the organization. The efforts to diversify show the Service was truly committed to offering an equal and fair opportunity to everyone,” James said.

“At some point, they recognized the Service had to be more reflective of the community they were serving. I give them tremendous credit for coming to that realization.”

James would spend the next 26 years working in all aspects of policing from front-line patrol to helping crack some of the city's most difficult homicide cases.

He was promoted to Detective Sergeant in 2001, and Sergeant in 2005.

In 2013, James retired from the Service.

“I wouldn't want you to think a police career is an easy thing, because it's not. Police Officers are often exposed to the darkest elements of humanity, to grotesque crime scenes and are frequently subjected to emotional trauma. There are also internal stressors that seem to frequently test your ability to cope.”

“As you probably deduced, the ability to cope with struggle is in my DNA. It's a generational gift that was handed down to me that I tremendously cherish. I have

great strength because the people in my family tree had great strength. They were survivors therefore I'm a survivor."

In retirement, James started his blog "*The Police Insider*" where he wrote true crime stories and tackled issues related to law enforcement. His crime reporting resulted in guest appearances on CTV National News, APTN, CJOB and Mike on Crime. A great many of his articles were published and he was frequently quoted in print media.

He retired his blog in January 2020 after recording over 1.3 million views.

In 2015, James started a second career as an Instructor and Dean of Students at the Northwest Law Enforcement Academy where he is currently employed.

"Northwest Law has an extremely diverse student body with students who come from across the country, the Province and all over the world including Africa, India, Pakistan, the Philippines and Europe. It's an incredibly rich learning environment," James says.

"For me, it's the perfect ending to a perfect story - I truly love doing my part to develop the next generation of law enforcement officers."

I agree.

What could be better than that?

Footnote:

*James would like to express his appreciation to his Aunt Rosemarie Mazzocca of Guelph, Ontario, for her research and contributions to this article.*