

JOHN ESELSTINE

by Jim Long UE

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John Eselstine U.E. was the son of Isaac Esselstein and his wife Elizabeth Kelder. He was baptized on January 31st, 1748 in the German Reform Church at Germantown, Columbia County, New York. John stated in his army discharge of 1783 that he was born in the Parish of Livingston in the County of Albany. This Parish of Livingston owned by Captain Robert Livingston was a large parcel of land from the Hudson River almost to Massachusetts.

John married a local girl by the name of Catherine Cole or Cool and they had a small farm. They had two children, both boys. Abraham was baptized July 10th, 1771; the sponsors were Abraham Esselstein and Margaret Weis. Isak was baptized April 1, 1777 child of Johannes Esselstein and Catharina. Sponsors for Isak were Andries Cool and his wife Christina. These were recorded in the Dutch Reform Church, Hillsdale, New York.

At the beginning of the American Revolution the Loyalists considered the rebels as traitors, and at first tried ways to quell them. In 1777 the Test Law came into force and the loyalists then became the targets for charges of treason. Even so, John and his brother Peter decided to side with the British. They joined up with a local resident by the name of Henry Simmons. In total there were twenty-eight men who went with Simmons to Canada on August 17, 1777. When Lieut. Simmons and his men made it to the British camp they joined the King's Loyal (Jessup) American Regiment commanded by Lt-Col. Ebenezer Jessup.

This regiment fought under General Burgoyne at the battle of Freeman's Farm. John Eselstine stayed in this regiment for five and a half years before being discharged from his Majesty's Provincial Regiment Loyal Rangers on December 24, 1783 at Riviere du Chene, Quebec by Edward Jessup, Major Commandant Loyal Rangers. He was in the 7th company under the command of Captain John Jones. In Captain Jones' records John's age is 28 years, height to be 5 feet 10 inches, and time of service as 5 years 4 months. The General Haldimand papers at Quebec City 1784 lists Number 1989 as John Eselstine from New York Province who was a farmer and leased his land.

A provisional list dated Oct. 7th, 1784 is a list of disbanded troops settling in Township No.2 Cataraqui (Ernestown). It has Lieut. Simmons in charge and completing the list. It shows under Index #B983 John Asselstine with a wife totaling two. Remarks state "woman on her land". We believe this wife was Marie Langlois from the province of Quebec.

John Esselstine's statement appearing on the certificate at the time of his marriage to Marie Langlois in Quebec in 1784 would appear to be an error, created by wartime and primitive means of communication. In some manner he must have heard that his wife Catharina was dead or may have been injured and reported dying due to local skirmishes in and about Clavarack, New York, then "a Tory hotbed". The wives and children of both factions suffered as homes were raided and burned. The fact that John said that he was a widower, when he could have passed as a bachelor,

if he chose, makes it appear that he was innocently remarried to Marie Langlois in Quebec. Isaac, his son and Catharina, John's first wife, came to Canada expecting to locate him, but when they did, he had a wife and young children. What legal adjustment was made, we do not know. But a story related to us by Isaac's granddaughter is that "they found him with a wife and young children, so his first wife was resigned to his responsibility to take care of the young children, and continued life with her son Isaac".

Verbal information, handed down, is that when Isaac and his mother arrived from New York Province, they went to live with his mother's relatives in Adolphustown. From the record of Adolphustown settlers, it would appear the only Dutch Settlers there were from the same area of Columbia County, New York families would be Cool (Cole), Van Dusen and Van Alstine. All three families in early New York records appear much intermarried into the Esselsteyn families.

A provisioning list was made in 1786 which lists John Asylstyne at second Township above Catarauqui (Ernestown). It lists John, his second wife and a young daughter under ten with a ration per day of two and a half. This provisioning list was made by Lieut. Simmons, the same Henry Simmons that guided 28 men to Canada nine years before. John Aselstine Sr. and many more Loyalists did not file their "losses due to war". As communication was almost nil they could not be made aware of prospects of reimbursement.

In 1784 John Asselstine drew Lot 7 Concession 2 and Lot 17 Concession 4 for a total of 300 acres. In the 1785 location list at Township No.8 Muster Roll #11 we find John Aselstine as index No. E244. On Wednesday April 9th, 1794 the King's Court of Quarter Sessions was hearing the case of The King on the prosecution of Jack. a Negro, vs John Croisdell. John Asselstine was on the jury that found Jack the negro not guilty. In 1795 upon orders of Lt. Gov. Simcoe local justices of the peace were to make a list of land owners in Ernestown Township that were worthy of UE designation. John Asselstine was listed as #3184 on these records. Records from the National Archives show that John Asselstine was praying for family lands in 1797. It was recommended that John receive 100 acres of additional land.

On July 22, 1817 John Aseltine made out his will and left his beloved son Isaac five shillings sterling. His son Peter received his farm with his third wife Susanah living on the farm till her death. John Aseltine certifies that this Memorial was registered at the registry office on March 19th, 1822. So we know John was alive in 1822 and must have died after 1822 at the age of seventy-four.