

**JOHN STINSON**  
by William Stinson

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John Stinson's parents were part of a group of Scots-Irish immigrants from the Londonderry area of Northern Ireland. They crossed the Atlantic and settled in Londonderry, New Hampshire in 1728, joining friends and relatives from Ireland who included the Starks, Nichols, and Hogg families who had emigrated a few years earlier.

John's parents' burial place in East Derry Cemetery (now called Mount Forest Cemetery) is still clearly marked by a double slate gravestone: John Stinson died Feb. 6, 1785 in the 89th year of his life and Mary Hogg Stinson died Oct. 4, 1793 in the 90th year of her life. John Sr. and Mary had 11 children, 8 boys and 3 girls; the eldest, William, accompanied them as a 3-year-old on their voyage to the Colonies.

The seventh child, John, born 1739, along with his siblings William, Samuel, David, Mary, Archibald, and James settled in new territory being opened up west of the Merrimack River in southern New Hampshire. This land, part of the Masonian Grant, was granted to Archibald Stark of Londonderry, N.H. in 1751 for the establishment of a new township. This settlement was called Starkstown (now called Dunbarton N.H.). The founding settlers of the area included, in addition to a number of Stinsons and Starks, James Rogers and his sons James and Robert Rogers of Ranger fame. It should be pointed out that John Stark, son of Archibald Stark became a General in the revolutionary forces, even though his early military training came through service in Robert Rogers' Provincial Ranger Companies.

John Stinson, son of the Londonderry settlers, John and Mary, married Elizabeth Smith in late 1762 or early 1763. They settled on land in Starkstown where they had 3 children, John jr. born Mar. 2, 1764, Jean born Feb. 6, 1766, and Nancy, born in June 1768. With a young family it took courage and determination for John to remain loyal and refuse to sign the Rebels' Association Test when confronted in Dunbarton in 1776 especially when many of his friends and neighbours, including all of his brothers, then living, failed to follow his example. In September 1776 John, along with William Stark, went over to the British at New York. This not only was the beginning of 8 years of disrupted life and separation from his family but also led ultimately to the founding of a Loyalist family in Upper Canada. In New York under the British military John was posted to several other units before he finally received a warrant as a Captain in Col. Robert Rogers' Battalion of Kings' Rangers, authorized under General Sir Henry Clinton, Commandant of the Central Region.

In 1781 after a recruiting expedition out of New York, Capt. John Stinson rendezvoused with 40 recruits at Castine on the Penobscot River in Maine. On returning to New York from Castine by ship the vessel was captured and taken into Newburyport. John was held prisoner, taken into Boston and held there, at times being on parole. On Dec. 18, 1781 one Robert Smith recognized John Stinson and reported that he had been seen repeatedly passing between New York and Dunbarton. As a result the Governor of Massachusetts cancelled his parole and ordered him

confined to jail. Later the military transferred him from place to place, finally holding him prisoner in Castletown, near Rutland, VT.

On Aug. 10, 1782, he was released on parole to be exchanged for a rebel prisoner, a Captain John Smyth held by the British in Quebec. He made his way to St. John's, Quebec and reported to Major James Rogers on Aug. 21st, who sent him to General Haldimand, the Commander-in-chief of the Northern region. Haldimand finally agreed to the exchange but ordered John Stinson to Quebec City immediately so that he could return by ship to New York via Halifax.

Being back in New York when peace was proclaimed April 19, 1783, John immediately proceeded to Dunbarton to arrange for his family and to get evidence of his losses. He was seized and imprisoned from mid-June 1783 to late May 1784, even though the Treaty of Separation was signed Sept. 3, 1783. As a result of this long imprisonment he lost his half-pay and was unable to arrive in Upper Canada until mid-summer 1784.

His first land grants in Upper Canada consisted of lots 10, 14, 16, and 1/2 of lot 13 on the West side of West Lake in the 2nd Concession of Hallowell Township in Prince Edward County. This grant was formally registered Nov. 20, 1801, approx. 700 acres.

Subsequently John Stinson, as a Captain in the King's Rangers, along with Peter Van Alstine, John Huyck, Paul Huff, and Peter Dorland - all officers in Cuyler's Corps - petitioned at the weekly meeting of the Land Committee on Friday, July 2, 1790, "to have all officers of every American Corps settling in the province put on the same footing as those in the 84th Regiment." This was later approved by the Governor-General on January 17th, 1791. As a result of this ruling, John Stinson received an additional 2,150 acres, made up of a 100-acre portion of lot 35, concession 4 of Cramahe Twp in Northumberland County, and 2,050 acres west of Consecon [then part of Ameliasburg Twp, now part of Hillier Twp].

John Stinson remained settled on his original land grant between Bloomfield and Wellington. It was here that he was buried in July 1813, alongside his first wife Elizabeth's marked grave of Aug. 16th, 1796. Their son John followed them here in Jan. 1842. This John was appointed one of the first Justices of the Peace of Hallowell Twp when it was established in 1797. He was also elected to the Upper Canada House of Assembly for the 5th Parliament in 1811-12, as well as for the 6th Parliament, 1812-1816. Such activities are measures of the Loyalist John's contribution through his son to his new country.