

REV. JOHN STUART
by Okill Stuart

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Okill Stuart, a descendent of Kingston Loyalist, Rev. Dr. John Stuart, gave a most interesting and entertaining talk to the branch on the Stuart family. John Stuart was the son of Andrew Stuart, who had migrated to America from County Tyrone, Ireland and settled in the then-named Province of Pennsylvania. John was born in Pennsylvania, March 10, 1740 and was first a schoolmaster there. He was drawn to enter the ministry, however, partly through his friendship with William White (later Bishop of Pennsylvania), and in 1770 travelled to England where he was ordained. He and his wife, Jane Okill Stuart, took up residence following at Fort Hunter, New York, where he was missionary to the Mohawk Indians. Joseph Brant lived with the Rev. Stuart, acting as his interpreter during this time and the two worked together translating parts of the Bible into the Mohawk language. It is reported that during the troubles of the Revolution John Stuart temporarily buried the church silver from the Chapel of Queen Anne in the church grounds. The chapel is still standing and can be visited.

In 1781 John Stuart, his wife and three eldest children moved to Montreal where John became the chaplain to the Second Battalion. In 1785 he moved to Kingston and became minister to the residents of the town and missionary to the Mohawks at the Bay of Kente (Quinte). He travelled extensively and established missions for his church from Cornwall to York. He was asked to serve as one of the first judges of the Court of Common Pleas in Upper Canada but declined the honour feeling that his parochial duties came first. His house in Kingston was near the water. He died at the age of 71 and is buried in St. Paul's churchyard.

His eldest son, George Okill Stuart, having been ordained in 1801, was asked to succeed his father as rector of St. George's Church, and he served in this position for 50 years. Archdeacon Stuart, as he became, built three houses in Kingston, two of which are still standing. The most famous is Summerhill built on what is now part of Queen's University campus and home to principals of the university for many years now [note: no longer a home, but used for official receptions and alumni offices].

The third son of Rev. John Stuart was James Stuart who became solicitor general of Lower Canada and later attorney general. In 1840 he helped draw up the Act of Union and he was named Chief Justice in 1841. He was later given a baronetcy.

Okill Stuart [who addressed Kingston Branch in March, 1987] is a descendant of Andrew Stuart, second son of the Rev. John Stuart.