

Jim Stewart

“proud of his Scottish and UEL heritage“



James Milton Vernon Stewart, U.E., B.Sc., P. Eng.
Photo (2006) courtesy of Lorna Stewart

From 1947 to 1951, James attended high school at Bow Valley Central High in Cluny, a small village near the Blackfoot Indian Reservation, sixty miles east of Calgary. During the summers he went back to Idlesleigh to work for his step-father doing track maintenance work for the CPR. In the fall of 1951 he registered with the Faculty of Engineering at the University of Alberta in Edmonton. With very little of his own money, his mother's last \$300.00 and loans and grants from the University he graduated in the spring of 1955 with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Petroleum Engineering. He had taken summer jobs in Lethbridge, Great Slave Lake, and Lloydminster. Jobs were plentiful in 1955. James was employed by Shell Oil Company and received training in Calgary, Regina, and Weyburn, Saskatchewan, and Texas. In the spring of 1957 he was transferred to Edmonton where he worked on the Athabasca Tar Sands at Fort McMurray. He also worked on many wells that Shell drilled in Northern Alberta.

In 1962 James married Lorna Edith Little who was working in the Shell Edmonton office. They both resigned and moved to Calgary that year. He went to work as a petroleum engineer for the Lewis Engineering Company Ltd. In 1966 he moved to Dome Petroleum Ltd. where he remained for 18 years. In 1984 he retired from Dome and took employment with Pan Canadian Petroleum Ltd. until his retirement in 1995.

James (Jim) was active at St. Andrew's Anglican Church, with the Little League Baseball Association, the United Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada, and the Alberta Family Histories Society. ¹



The four Stewart children (Sheila Yvonne, Jeffrey Nelson, Rebecca Louise, and Lorraine Alison) all have obtained degrees from the University of Calgary. They are shown above with their parents. Photo (1989) courtesy of Lorna Stewart

LOYALIST ANCESTOR INFORMATION ²

Generation 1: **James Milton Vernon Stewart** (b. September 19, 1932; m. 1962; d. April 10, 2011) and Lorna Edith Little (b. 1940)

Generation 2: **Joseph Milton Stewart** (b. Dec. 25, 1889; m. 1923; d. 1940) and Magny Viola Christianson (b. 1904; d. 1986)

Generation 3: **Joseph Stewart** (b. Oct. 1856; m. 1879; d.1925) and Martha Warner-McDowell (b. 1855; d.1902)

Generation 4: **Joseph Stewart** (b. 1827; m. 1845; d. 1888) and Francis Phoebe Heaslip (b. 1829; d.1864)

Generation 5: **Benjamin Stewart** (b. about 1797; d. about 1880) and Elizabeth Crysler (b. about 1798; died about 1878)

Generation 6: **Benjamin Stewart** (b. about 1758; d. about 1852) and Elizabeth (b. 1781; d. about 1852)

Generation 7: **James Stewart**, (b. about 1726; m. about 1750; d. 1822) and Mary Jemima Taylor (b. 1724; d. 1833)

James Stewart (later to become Stewart), the elder, was Jim's fourth great grand-father. He was a farmer, land owner, and possibly a tavern owner in Greenwich, New Jersey. In 1799, James was appointed Overseer of Highways and Fence Viewer at a town meeting in Newark, New York. ³

Additional information:

James Stewart, the elder, probably was born in Alva, Clackmannanshire, Scotland, about 1726. He came to New Jersey before the battle of Culloden in 1746 and married Mary Jemima Taylor (1724-1833) who was born on the Susquehanna River, New York State, about 1750. They had one daughter and six sons.

In 1772, the family moved from their farm in West Field, New Jersey to another farm west of Goshen in Minisink Township, Orange County, New York State. Because Governor John Graves Simcoe offered land to the "Late Loyalists" in 1793, James moved his family (minus one son) to Niagara Township about 1794. James Stewart was granted 500 acres of land. Each of his five sons and one daughter who went to Niagara received about 200 acres. All of these properties were in Rainham Township but there are no records showing that James took up residence there. He appears to have lived in Niagara. A notice of Jemima Stewart's death appeared in a newspaper stating that she had died at the age of 109 near St. David's in Niagara district where she had lived for 40 years.

Benjamin (born about 1758), Jim's third great grandfather, was granted his 200 acres on Rainham Road in 1809.

Benjamin married Elizabeth and they had three children. Their son, Benjamin (about 1797-1880) married Elizabeth Crysler (about 1798 – 1878) and their son Joseph, was Jim Stewart's great, great grandfather. ⁴

Jim Stewart's account is as follows. He writes,

James' 4th son, Benjamin Stewart, Sr. (my 3rd great-grandfather) was known to have taken up residence on his 200 acre land grant after the War of 1812 was over. An 1828 census at Rainham Township also shows his son Benjamin Jr., (my 2nd great-grandfather) residing on a 200 acre lot. In the 1840s I believe Benjamin Sr. purchased a small 70 acre farm from Lemuel Vaughan in Gainsborough Twp. Lincoln Co. about one and a half miles west of the village of Wellandport along the Chippawa River. Then Benjamin Sr. with his wife Elizabeth and grandson

Joseph (my great-grandfather) took up residence at the Gainsborough farm and were counted there in the 1851 census. Benjamin Sr. and Elizabeth were both deceased after 1851 and Joseph then took over the farm.

Joseph married Francis Phoebe Heaslip in about 1845 and they had a family of eight children. The third son was my grandfather Joseph, born in October, 1856. He was raised on the farm at Gainsborough and subsequently moved to Orillia and Georgian Bay area to gain employment in the lumber mills. Joseph made good wages as a sawyer in the mills but he was constantly moving from one mill to another. In 1879 he married my grandmother Martha Warner-McDowell whose family lived near Barrie, Ontario. They had two daughters and one son who was my father, Joseph Milton Stewart, born on Christmas day, 1889. Things went well for the family until Martha became very ill in 1902. She had worked very hard as a practical nurse and mid-wife in the community of Victoria Harbour. She contacted pneumonia and died at the age of 48 years so Milton went to live with Martha's sister Mary Murdoch in Orillia.

One of Milton's older sisters died after childbirth in 1904.⁵

EMIGRATION WEST OF ONTARIO

Lorna Stewart provided the photo (about 1907) below showing Jim's grandfather, Joseph Stewart (left), and his father, Milton Stewart. They were the first of Jim's family to emigrate west of Ontario.



Jim writes,

Circumstances were becoming difficult for my grandfather Joseph in Ontario. He was tired of working in an assortment of lumber mills and that combined with his recent losses, he couldn't resist the lure of cheap land out west (\$10.00/homestead quarter section) and the opportunity to make a man out of young Milton who was playing hockey, drinking and carousing with a group of young fellows in Orillia. Grandfather Joseph owned about \$20,000, which was a great deal of money at the time; so it was westward-ho to Saskatchewan via the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1907.

The first few winters Joseph and Milton worked at a lumber mill near Fernie (Hosmer) B.C. The first winter at Fernie, Milton contracted the dreaded typhoid fever from impure water supplies near the mill and almost died. Grandpa Joseph was badly shaken and tried to protect Milton from everything, including hard work. They managed to survive the flu epidemics during WWI.

In 1908 they each filed on a homestead quarter section plus an additional pre-empt (or option quarter) for Milton. These homestead claims were 7 miles north of Shaunavon, Saskatchewan, a few miles east of Cypress Hills.

Milton married 18-year old Viola (Violet) the eldest daughter of Gisli and Anna Christianson who had a homestead about two miles southwest of the Stewart farm. They were married at Shaunavon on February 19, 1923. The Christiansons were Icelanders whose families had immigrated to North Dakota in the early 1880's and on to Saskatchewan in 1910. Unfortunately, the hard times and drought drove Gisli to commit suicide in 1934. In any event, Milton and Violet had 3 children. Their first child was Doris, then Viola and finally myself, James.

My mother told me that Grandpa Joseph was a terrific guy who could do wonderful things. She said he was a great handyman who could repair almost anything. He was a fine carpenter, mechanic, farmer, horseman, a good cook, and a crack rifle shot who could hit a deer or antelope on the dead run. He told her that he had learned to speak some Gaelic at home during his boyhood at Wellandport, Ontario. He indicated how much he missed his dear wife, Martha, the lady with the large grey eyes, whose family had rushed northward to Upper Canada from Kentucky when the American Civil War had broken out in the 1860s.

The Stewart farm at Shaunavon performed well until Grandpa Joseph died in 1925 at the age of 71 years. Then Milton had to take over and although he was a dreamer and a raconteur who was pretty adept with accounting numbers, he was definitely not a farmer. The farm started to deteriorate and really went downhill when the depression and drought of the 1930s came along. We were a family on welfare (relief) during the latter years of the 1930s, but Dad still managed to buy liquor and tobacco to satisfy his habits. He had a very bad case of emphysema and would cough heavily until 3:00 am, whereupon he would light up again and cough the rest of the night. He died in Shaunavon in 1940 – another farmer destroyed by hard times on the prairies of Western Canada. The mortgage company took over our $\frac{3}{4}$ section farm, we were evicted and went to live with our Grandma Anna Christianson and her sons Carl and Earl, on a small farm at Semans, about 80 miles north of Regina, Saskatchewan. My poor mother, who had no specialized training or education, went to work for farm neighbours for \$5.00 per month plus her room and board.

I lived with my Uncle Carl on the farm until 1946 when he sold out and left the farming business. Then I stayed with a farm neighbour named Eddie Maguire for one year. In 1947, my mother sent for me to join her out in Alberta at a small hamlet called Iddesleigh about 1 hour north of Medicine Hat. I came out by train from Regina just in time for the oil boom.⁵



Left photo: Jim, aged 16 years, in 1948
Photos courtesy of Lorna Stewart



Right photo: Jim, aged 13 years, in 1945

Literature Cited

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2. UELAC certificate application for James Stewart Sr., 1996
3. Minutes of Town Meetings (Newark), 1799, Microfilm 193-1
4. Combe, Donald L. and Myrna Perry, *James Stewart the elder, United Empire Loyalist of Rainham and Niagara, A history of his family*, Published by author, 2007. ISBN: 978-0-9731757-2-1
5. Stewart, James, Personal Memoirs, permission granted by Lorna Stewart, 2012

