

The following tale was told by Elizabeth Bowman Spohn, 1805-1875, wife of Philip Spohn of Ancaster, daughter of Peter Bowman, UE, and granddaughter of Jacob Bowman.

My great-grandfather emigrated from Germany in the reign of Queen Anne. He settled near the Mohawk river, at a creek that still bears his name (Bowman's Creek). My grandfather, Jacob Bowman, joined the British army in the French war; at the conclusion of peace he was awarded 1,500 acres of land on the Susquehanna River, where he made improvements until the revolutionary war broke out. The delicate state of my grandmother obliged him to remain at home, while nearly all that remained firm to their allegiance left for the British army.

He was surprised at night, while his wife was sick, by a party of rebels, and with his eldest son, a lad of sixteen years of age, was taken prisoner; his house pillaged of every article except the bed on which his sick wife lay, and that they stripped of all but one blanket. Half an hour after my grandfather was marched out, his youngest child was born. This was in November. There my grandmother was, with an infant babe and six children, at the commencement of winter, without any provisions, and only one blanket in the house. Their cattle and grain were all taken away.

My father, Peter Bowman, the eldest son at home, was only eleven years old. As the pillage was at night, he had neither coat nor shoes; he had to cut and draw his firewood half a mile on a hand-sleigh to keep his sick mother from freezing; this he did barefooted. The whole family would have perished had it not been for some friendly Indians that brought them provisions. One gave my father a blanket, coat and a pair of moccasins. A kind squaw doctored my grandmother, but she suffered so much through want and anxiety that it was not until spring that she was able to do anything. She then took her children and went to the Mohawk river, where they planted corn and potatoes; and in the fall the commander of the British forces at Niagara, hearing of their destitute situation, sent a party with some Indians to bring them in. They brought in five families: the Nellises, Secords, Youngs, Bucks, and our own family (Bowman), five women and thirty-one children, and only one pair of shoes among them all. They arrived at Fort George on the 3rd of November, 1776; from there they were sent first to Montreal, and then to Quebec, where the Government took care of them - that is, gave them something to eat and barracks to sleep in. My grandmother was exposed to cold and damp so much that; she took the rheumatism, and never recovered.

In the spring of 1777 my father joined Butler's Rangers, and was with Colonel Butler in all his campaigns. His brother, only nine years old, went as a fifer.

But to return to my grandfather, Jacob Bowman: his captors took him and his son to Philadelphia, where he was confined in jail eighteen months. An exchange of prisoners then took place, and they were sent to New York; from there he, with his son and Philip Buck, started for their homes, not knowing that these homes they never would see again, and that their families were far away in the wilds of Canada. The third evening after they started for their homes, they came to a pond, and shot some ducks for their supper. The report of their guns was heard by some American scouts, who concealed themselves until our poor fellows were asleep, when they came stealthily up and fired. Six shots took effect on my uncle, as he lay with his hat over his ear. Five balls went through it, and one through his thigh. My grandfather and Buck lay on the opposite side of the fire. They sprang into the bushes, but when they heard the groans of my uncle, grandfather returned and gave himself up. Buck made his escape. They then marched off carrying the wounded boy with them.

They were taken to the nearest American station, where grandfather was allowed the privilege of taking care of his wounded son. As he began to recover, grandfather was again ordered to abjure the British Government, which he steadfastly refused to do. He was then taken to Lancaster jail, with Mr. Hoover. They were there fastened together by a band of iron around their arms, and a chain with three

links around their ankles, the weight of which was ninety-six pounds; and then fastened by a ring and staple to the door. In that condition they remained either three years and a half or four years and a half, until the flesh was worn away and the bones laid bare four inches.

Men, women, and children all went to work, clearing land. There were none to make improvements in Canada then but the U.E. Loyalists, and they, with their hoes planted the germ of its future greatness. About this time, my father with his brother returned from the army; they helped their father two years, and then took up land for themselves near Fort Erie.

My father married the daughter of a Loyalist from Hudson, North River (Mr. Frederick Lampman); he was too old to serve in the war but his four sons and two sons-in-law did. They were greatly harassed, but they hid in the cellars and bushes for three months, the rebels hunting them night and day. At length an opportunity offered, and they made their escape to Long Island, where they joined the British army. One of his sons, Wilhelmus Lampman, returning home to see his family, was caught by the rebels within a short distance of his father's house, and hanged because, as they said, he was a Tory.

At the restoration of peace, the whole family came to Canada. They brought their horses and cattle with them, which helped to supply the new country. They settled in the township of Stamford, where their descendants are yet.

My father settled on his land near the fort; he drew an axe and a hoe from Government. He bought a yoke of yearling steers; this was the amount of his farming utensils. Mother had a cow, bed, six plates, three knives, and a few other articles. It was the scarce year, on account of the rush of Loyalists from the States who had heard that Canada was a good country, where they could live under their own loved institutions, and enjoy the protection of England.

The amount of grain that the U.E. Loyalists had raised was hardly sufficient for themselves; still they divided with the new comers, as all were alike destitute. After planting corn and potatoes, they had nothing left. My father cleared two acres, on which he planted corn, potatoes, oats and flax; his calves were not able to work, and he had to carry all the rails on his shoulders until the skin was worn off them both. This was the way he made his first fence. In the beginning of May [1789], their provisions failed; none to be had; Government promised assistance, still none came. All eyes turned toward their harvest, which was more than three months away; their only resource was the leaves of trees. Some hunted ground nuts; many lived on herbs; those that were near the river, on fish. My father used to work until near sun-down, then walk three miles to the river, get light wood, fish all night, in the morning divide the fish. carry his share home on his back, which they ate without bread or salt. This he did twice a week, until the middle of June, when the moss became so thick in the river that they could not see a fish; still they worked on. and hoped on every day. My father chopped the logs and they had milk for their breakfast, then went to work until noon; took their dinner on milk; to work again till night, and supped on milk. I have frequently heard my mother say she never was discouraged or discontented; thankful they were that they could eat their morsel in peace.

Their only crime was loyalty to the Government which they had sworn fealty to. The God of Heaven saw all this, and the sword of vengeance is now, in 1861, drawn over the American people (now they know how to appreciate loyalty), and will perhaps never be sheathed again until they make some restitution for the unheard-of cruelties they inflicted upon those most brave and loyal people.

At the close of the war they were liberated. Grandfather was sent to the hospital for nearly a year, but his leg never got entirely well. As soon as he was able to walk, he sent for his family (it had been eight years since he saw them): they had suffered everything but death. Coming in the boats from Quebec, they got out of provisions and were near starving. He never had his family all together again. He drew land near the Falls of Niagara, where he went to work in the woods, broken down with suffering, worn out with age; his property destroyed his land confiscated, and his family scattered;

without money or means, and worse than all, without provisions. Still, to work they went with willing hands and cheerful hearts, and often did he say he never felt inclined to murmur. He had done his duty to God and his country; his own and his family's sufferings he could not help. Theirs was not a solitary case; all the Loyalists suffered. The Government found seed to plant and sow the first year; they gave them axes and hoes, and promised them provisions. How far that promise was fulfilled, you well know; they got very little; they soon found that they had to provide for themselves.

As soon as the wheat was large enough to rub out, they boiled it, which to them was a great treat. Providence favoured them with an early harvest; their sufferings were over, and not one had starved to death. They now had enough, and they were thankful. Heaven smiled and in a few years they had an abundance for themselves and others.

I have no memorandum to refer to. I have just related the tale I have often heard my parents tell, without any exaggeration, but with many omissions I have not told you about my father's sufferings in the army, when, upon an expedition near Little Miamac, he and some others were left to carry the wounded. They got out of provisions: went three days without anything to eat except one pigeon between nine. I will give you his own words. He says: The first day we came to where an Indian's old pack-horse had mired in the mud; it had lain there ten days in the heat of summer; the smell was dreadful; still some of our men cut out slices, roasted and ate it; I was not hungry enough. The next day I shot a pigeon, which made a dinner for nine; after that we found the skin of a deer, from the knee to the hoof. This we divided and ate. I would willingly, had I possessed it, have given my hat full of gold for a piece of bread as large as my hand. Often did I think of the milk and swill I had seen left in my father's hog trough, and thought if I only had that I would be satisfied.

Such were some of the sufferings of my forefathers for supremacy. They have gone to their reward. Peace to their ashes!

Yours, respectfully,

Elizabeth Bowman Spohn

P.S. One thing more I must add: My father always said there never was any cruelty inflicted upon either man, woman or child by Butler's Rangers, that he ever heard of, during the war. They did everything in their power to get the Indians to bring their prisoners in for redemption, and urged them to treat them kindly; the officers always telling them that it was more brave to take a prisoner than to kill him, and that none but a coward would kill a prisoner; that brave soldiers were always kind to women and children. He said it was false that they gave a bounty for scalps. True, the Indians did commit cruelties, but they were not countenanced in the least by the whites.

E. S.

Source:

The Loyalists of America and Their Times: From 1620 to 1816, by Egerton Ryerson, D.D., LL.D. Chief Superintendent of Education for Upper Canada, Vol. II, 2nd Edition, pp.265-270.

Submitted by John Haynes.