

## VONA E. SMITH UE

Vona Edna (DeWitt) Smith UE was born in Sandy Lake Manitoba, Canada in 1923 to Ira Smith DeWitt and Edna Belle Barker, the youngest of seven. She graduated with a scholarship from high school and enrolled in Brandon MB Normal School [Teachers College] and taught in rural schools in the Province. In 1942 she married Gilbert Doran Smith who served in the Royal Canadian Air Force. They moved to Vancouver BC in 1948. They have 4 children -- Corrine, Gilbert who has a daughter Kasia, Aida, and Julia who married Howard Webb whose children are Brennan and Jenna. The author has five UE certificates and her husband had seven granted by the United Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada. The children and grandchildren all have their certificates.



She has a lifetime interest in family history. Her mother was an American, a descendant of Ebenezer Judd who fought against the British in 1776-1783. She visited his grave near Syracuse, NY as well as the graves of her grandmother, Lovina Gertrude (Judd) Barker and great grandparents Philo and Mary (Adams) Barker in Brookfield MO. They had previously lived in North East, Erie County PA. Her grandfather, Wilbur Jay Barker served in the Union Army in the American War between the North and South and moved with his parents and sisters to Missouri after the end of the war. With his second wife and children, he moved to Manitoba in 1898. He is buried near Newdale, MB. Vona's mother was born in 1883, Grandfather Wilbur in 1843 and great grandfather Philo in 1803.

Vona DeWitt Smith is a skilled lecturer, journalist, researcher and mentor. Vona has lectured in Canada and the United States, has served as both a Loyalist Librarian and Genealogist for more than 15 years and is a past President of the Vancouver Branch of the UEL Association of Canada. Vona has been a major part in keeping the Association alive in BC working with others to help establish two new Branches in BC (the total now being four). It is Vona's dedication to research that has enabled so many British Columbians to affix UE (Unity of the Empire) after their names. This is the only hereditary title given by the Crown outside of Britain.

Vona is an expert in many areas of genealogical research: Atlantic Canada, Ontario, the United States, Palatines, and Loyalists, etc. Vona's personal library is a treasure of Canadian and American histories. She has travelled extensively across Canada and the US in order to do major research on her family, as well as writing her own book on Tierck Claeszen deWitt b. 1620 (son of Nicholaas DeWit) and his descendants.

Vona is also a master seamstress and has made innumerable ladies and men's period costumes complete with mob caps and tricorne hats. Many workshops, conventions, and luncheons have been graced by Vona's Loyalist costumes. The costumes were also featured on TV in the series *Genealogy and Basic Genealogy* (Rogers Community Channel) and in particular were worn at the 1994 BC Convention of the United Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada, held for the first time outside of Ontario.

Vona's book, *Tierck Clafsen DeWitt and Descendants of His Son Luycas DeWitt*, is a long awaited resource and treasure volume of her ancestors. Her book published in May 2004 can be found at Trafford Publishing, Victoria, BC. It is in a Format: Perfect Bound Soft cover (B/W) and is 340 pages in length. ISBN: 9781412019569.

The Vancouver Branch is honoured to nominate Vona E. Smith UE for the distinguished Phillip E. M. Leith Memorial Award. 2007 being the first year of its inauguration, eleven Pacific Regional UELAC branch members were nominated.

After the selection process, the chosen 2007 recipients were: Shirley Dargatz UE, President of Chilliwack Branch and Vona Smith UE, Past President of Vancouver Branch and former Genealogist and lecturer.