

## ROY BURNS 1892-1985



Roy Burns

Roy Burns was born at Fort Pomme de Terre, Minnesota, just outside of Elbow Lake, to Wilfred Burns and Lily Mae Patterson. In April 1906, Roy moved with his parents, brothers and sisters to Bowville, Alberta, a community ten miles east of Carmangay. When they had arrived by train with all their farm animals, machinery and household effects in Lethbridge, they purchased wagons and travelled thirty-five miles to the homestead where Wilfred had built a house the year before. Wilfred and his older boys returned to Lethbridge to take out the remaining supplies. As it was then very busy in Lethbridge they were forced to sleep in the stable with their horses. Wilfred contracted pneumonia and passed away two weeks later. Lily stayed in Canada and with the help of Roy who was fourteen and his brothers Charlie, Frank, Phillip, Earl and Leslie, they assisted their mother in raising the younger children, breaking the land and establishing their new homestead. Lily also filed for her own homestead and completed all the requirements to obtain this land as well.

When Roy was young, each child in his family had a job to do to help run the Burns' family home. Roy's job was to help take care of his grandmother, Rachel Belyea (Bulyea) Burns. He heard many stories from her. Her family had arrived in New Brunswick in the first sailing from New York following the American Revolution. She told Roy about her life in New Brunswick and about the trip her husband, David Burns, and she made to Blenheim Township, Oxford County in Ontario in 1840 where they had a good life until the market for wheat stopped at the end of the Crimean War.

Rachel also told Roy about how David travelled to New Munich, Minnesota to trap furs for one winter. She then told Roy about her trip the next year with her twelve children by covered wagon from St. Paul, Minnesota where David met her when she first came to Minnesota. (The oxen yoke they used is still in the family.) After the family had lived in New Munich, Minnesota, they purchased Fort Pomme de Terre just west of Ashby, Minnesota. They operated a stagecoach stop for several years. There were many stories from this time. He heard about the great stagecoaches pulling into the old fort and of the "coureurs-des-bois" as they journeyed to Winnipeg with their Red River carts.

Roy's paternal great grandparents Samuel Burns Jr. and Hannah Brill\* were both born in New Brunswick where their families had settled following the American Revolution. Roy listened as she told the story of his great grandfather, Samuel Burns, coming to St. John, New Brunswick in 1782 as a baby. Roy's great, great grandfather, Samuel Burnes Sr., worked with John Parr helping to settle Parrtown where many of the Loyalists first settled. Samuel Burnes, Sr., Samuel Burns, Jr., and David received land grants in New Brunswick. David later received a land grant at Moscow, Ontario where David and Rachel first settled when they went to Ontario in 1840.

Roy's maternal great grandparents were Henry Bulyea and Elizabeth Purdy. Elizabeth's mother, Hannah Birdsall, was a Quaker.\*\* Hannah came to New Brunswick with her father Benjamin Birdsall, Jr., one of the many Quaker families who became part of a group of people who were exiled at the end of the war because of their beliefs. They did not want the established government overthrown by the rebellion. The Rebels would not accept the fact that their religion forbade them to fight. Hannah Birdsall married Archelaus Purdy after they arrived in New Brunswick. Archelaus was born at White Plains, Westchester, New York. The house where

Archelaus Purdy was born is still standing, and is known as the "Jacob Purdy House" after Archelaus' uncle who remained in the New York area. This house was the headquarters for General George Washington during the "Battle of White Plains."

Henry Bulyea and Elizabeth Purdy were married in New Brunswick. When Elizabeth died, Henry remarried and moved to Birr, Ontario. The log house that was built at that time has been refurbished but is still used by family members. Henry's parents were James Albert Bulyea and Jemimah Purdy. James was stripped of his clothes, ill-used and imprisoned when he crossed Rebel lines while he was visiting his parents, Hendrick and Angelica Storm Bulyea. He managed to escape. After he came into British lines, he served with Colonel DeLancy.

Hendrick and Angelica Storm Bulyea and their family were forced to leave their home at Cortlandt Manor near Tarrytown, and take refuge in New York where many refugees were forced to go during the Revolution. They were in the first sailing that arrived in New Brunswick in the spring of 1783 following the American Revolution. The first winter they settled on the Lower Musquash, on the St. John River. When the ice broke up in the spring, they were flooded out. Later they moved to Sugar Island, above Fredericton. The family packed their belonging into boats and made their way down river to Hendrick's third grant. It was Lot # 2 at Greenwich Hill on the Long Reach of the St. John, opposite Canton's Island. This land was called Oak Point Bay on the St. John River, Greenwich Parish, Kings County. It later became known as Bulyea Point. He farmed here until his death in 1802. Hendrick's parents were Jan Bulyea and Helena Williams and his grandparents were Louis Boulier, a French Huguenot, and Antje Konnick. Antje was one of the founding members of the Sleepy Hollow Church.

After Roy's brothers left home and married, he continued to live with his mother, Lily Mae, and take care of her and the farm. She passed away in 1929. Roy married Frances in 1931 and continued farming in the Carmangay district until he retired in 1973. Roy and Frances had three daughters who became a teacher, a secretary and an accountant. They all married and had families of their own. Because there was no school when he arrived in Alberta, Roy was a self-taught man. He was very involved in the community. He assisted with the upkeep of the Bowville Cemetery, looked after the Burns School as a janitor, and an inspector, boarded the teachers, and helped build the telephone lines. It was always said that if anyone needed help or food, Roy and Frances were there to help. Roy was always so proud of his United Empire Loyalist ancestry and passed this love on to his three children.



The Burns' Homestead

As of July 2001, there were 271 Burns descendants from the Wilfred Burns' family. They are living mainly in Alberta and British Columbia. This family played a major role in the settlement of the west and its development over the years.

Source: Documents of Audrey (Burns) Wirtzfeld UE, Calgary Branch UELAC

\* It is evident by Roy Burns' genealogy that he had several Loyalist ancestors as the result of many families and friends moving to the same location move en masse or in tandem – one group following the other. Because of this there was a tendency to intermarry within the same group or family.

\*\* A Christian sect of the Society of Friends founded by George Fox (1624-91). Many Quakers were driven out of the colonies during and following the American Revolution as their doctrine forbade participation in the war.

In Western Canada research to date has shown that there was a settlement established in Dand, Manitoba. For many years the Chapel at the University of Winnipeg was used as a meeting house. There are groups that meet in Alberta and British Columbia.