

## JAMES MILTON VERNON STEWART

James M.V. Stewart is the 3rd great grandson of James Stewart Sr. who was born at Alva, Clackmannanshire, Scotland in about 1726. He came to New Jersey as a young boy before the Battle of Culloden in 1746. He was illiterate and could not sign his will before his death at age 96 in 1822. About 1750 James married Mary Jenima Taylor who had been born and raised along the Susquehanna River area of New York State. She died in 1833 at the age of 109 years near Niagara Falls. They settled on a small farm at West Field, New Jersey about seven miles west of Elizabeth in Essex County. One daughter and six sons were born between 1750 and 1775. In 1772, due to the early hostilities with Britain, the family moved from New Jersey to a small farm a few miles west of Goshen, in Minisink Township, Orange County of New York State.

The story of the Late (or Simcoe) Loyalists in Upper Canada has never really been told, either due to neglect or due to the extreme pressures exerted by the early Loyalist settlers. They felt that these Late Loyalists were traitors who had collaborated with the American Rebels and should not be accepted and given free Crown Land Grants. But Governor Simcoe did welcome a lot of these late comers into Upper Canada so that by the War of 1812 the Late Loyalists outnumbered the Early Loyalists by a ratio of about 4 to 1 according to Professor Dennis Duffy of the University of Toronto.

During the American Revolution, James and his eldest son, Joseph, signed the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Rebels at Goshen in 1775. Joseph had three tours of duty in the rebel army in southern New York State. James and his family remained on the farm at Minisink until Governor John Graves Simcoe offered Crown Land Grants to the Late Loyalists (Simcoe Loyalists) in 1793. In 1794 James brought his family to Upper Canada and resided at St. David's-Virgil, close to Niagara Falls. They applied for land grants for himself, one daughter and the five sons who came north with him. Governor Simcoe granted the family a total of 1900 acres of Crown Land between 1797 and 1809, situated in Concession 2 of Rainham Township, Haldimand County, Upper Canada. The location was about forty miles from Niagara Falls, west of the Grand River and south of the village of Cayuga.

When the War of 1812 broke out James's youngest son, Enoch served in the Royal Artillery on the British side. He died in 1813, not from military action but from disease. At the conclusion of the war the fourth son, Benjamin Stewart, Sr. took up residence on his 200 acre land grant. The 1828 Census at Rainham Township shows his son Benjamin Jr. living on a 200 acre lot. In the 1840's Benjamin, Sr. purchased a small 70-acre farm from Lemuel Vaughan in Gainsborough Township, Lincoln County about a mile and a half west of the village of Wellandport along the Chippawa River. Benjamin Sr. with his wife Elizabeth and son Joseph took up residence at the Gainsborough farm. After the deaths of both his parents, Joseph took over the farm. He married Francis Phoebe Heaslip about 1845.

Joseph and Phoebe had eight children. The third son Joseph, Jr. was born in October of 1856. He was raised on the farm at Gainsborough and subsequently moved to the Orillia and Georgian Bay area to gain employment in the lumber mills. Joseph, Jr. made good wages as a sawyer in the mills but he was constantly moving from one mill to another.

In 1879 Joseph, Jr. married Martha Warner-McDowell whose family lived near Barrie, Ontario. They had two daughters and one son, Joseph Milton Stewart (called Milton) who was born on Christmas Day 1889. Things went well for the family until Martha, who had worked very hard as a practical nurse and mid-wife in the community of Victoria Harbour contacted pneumonia and

died at the age of 48 in 1902. Milton went to live with Martha's sister Mary Murdoch in Orillia, Ontario.

Circumstances were becoming difficult for Joseph and he was tired of working in an assortment of lumber mills. Because of that and combined with his recent losses, he couldn't resist the lure of cheap land out west (\$10 for a homestead quarter section) and the opportunity to make a man out of young Milton. Joseph had 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.



Joseph Stewart 1856-1925  
and Joseph Milton Stewart 1889-1940

The first few winters Joseph and Milton both worked at a lumber mill near Fernie, (Hosmer) British Columbia. In 1908 they each filed on a homestead quarter section plus an additional pre-empt (or option) quarter for Milton. These homestead claims were seven miles north of Shaunavon, Saskatchewan - a few miles east of the Cypress Hills.

The first winter at Fernie, Milton contacted the dreaded typhoid fever and almost died. Joseph was badly shaken and tried to protect Milton from everything, including hard work. They survived the flu epidemics during World War I. Milton married 18-year old Magny Viola (Violet), the eldest daughter of Gisli and Anna Christianson at Shaunavon on February 19, 1923. They had three children Doris May, Viola Jean and James Milton Vernon. The Christiansons were Icelanders whose families had immigrated to North Dakota in the early 1880's, and had come to Saskatchewan in 1910, where they had homesteaded two miles southwest of the Stewart farm. Unfortunately, the hard times and drought drove Gisli to commit suicide in 1934.

Joseph 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. Because of this the Stewart farm at Shaunavon performed well until Joseph died in 1925 at the age of seventy-one. Milton had to take over, and although he was pretty adept with numbers, he was definitely not a farmer. The farm started to deteriorate and went downhill rapidly when the depression and drought of the 1930's came along. Milton died 23 July 1940 – another farmer destroyed by hard times on the prairies of Western Canada.

The mortgage company took over the three-quarter section farm and the three children, when evicted, went to live with their grandmother Anna Christianson on a small farm at Semans, about eighty miles north of Regina, Saskatchewan. Violet, with no specialized training or education went to work for farm neighbours for \$5.00 a month, plus her room and board. In 1946 James went to live with his uncle on another farm until that farm was sold. He stayed for a year with a farm neighbour until his mother sent for him to join her in Alberta at a small hamlet called Iddesleigh about one hour north of Medicine Hat. He arrived just in time for the oil boom following the famous oil discovery at Leduc.

From 1947 to 1951 James attended high school at the Bow Valley Central High School in Cluny, Alberta, a small village near the Blackfoot Indian Reservation, some sixty miles east of Calgary. During the summers he went back to Iddesleigh to work for his stepfather doing track maintenance work for the Canadian Pacific Railway. 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 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. He was employed by the Shell Oil Co. with training in Calgary, Regina and Weyburn SK, before spending a 9-month training experience in 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, he married Lorna Little who was also 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 Co. Ltd. In 1966, he moved to Dome Petroleum Limited where he remained for 18 years. In 1984, he retired from Dome and took employment with Pan Canadian Petroleum Limited until his retirement in 1995.

Their four children all have obtained degrees from the University of Calgary. James is active at St. Andrew's Anglican Church, with the United Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada and the Alberta Family Histories Society.

Source: James Milton Vernon Stewart UE, Calgary Branch