

# At War With Relatives

By Neil A. Patterson

The American Revolution created deep wedges in many families. Those called Tories remained loyal to the British Crown and others took up arms to fight for their independence. Much has been written about the Tories who joined British Units or formed Militia Units to fight along side the British Regulars. They fought against their neighbors, their friends and their relatives. There are stories of an uncle who attacked a Regiment in which he knew his nephew was part or a brother who was confronted with the fact that his brother was facing him across the battle line. The conflict wrenched families apart and others saw their brothers and fathers marched off to jail. When the Treaty of Paris was signed in 1783 many thousands of these Tories had made their way to Canada. They became the only settlers in what would become Ontario, the Eastern Townships of Quebec and large tracts of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

Twenty nine years later, when war again broke out between the United States and Great Britain, the young province of Upper Canada (Ontario) became the major battle ground. There were only 6,000 British troops spread across over two thousand miles of the Canadian border.(1) Augmenting these troops fell to the newly created County Militia and Volunteer Reg'ts.(2) In many cases the officers and non-commissioned personnel who formed these militia units were the same officers and men who had been the officers and the men of the militia and regiments which fought in the war for American Independence. The situation was complicated even further because of the arrival of what has been termed the "late Loyalist". These settlers, many from New York State, came to Upper Canada because of cheap land. Cross-border trading and cross-border marriages developed ties between the two countries, especially in the St. Lawrence Region.

Joel Stone, the founder of the town of Gananoque on the North side of the St. Lawrence, had served as a Recruiting Officer for Oliver Delancey's Loyalist Brigade in New York.(3) At the same time, his brother Leman collected taxes in Connecticut for the Litchfield Patriot Militia.(4) After the Treaty of Paris was signed, Leman tried to get Joel to come home; but Joel knew it was worth his life to return. However, his brother did help him arrange his marriage to Abigail, a Litchfield Widow.(5) A few years later, Abigail's daughter returned to Litchfield and married Benajah Malloy. In 1812, Malloy joined the U.S. Mounted Volunteers and served with General Dearborn in Northern New York State.(6)

Abigail's daughter renounced her marriage to Malloy and returned to Gananoque to care for her mother who had been seriously wounded in Forsyth's Raid on the town.(7) Joel Stone who was the commanding officer of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Reg't of the Leeds Militia was not in Gananoque at the time, but Forsyth ordered Stone's house to be shot up because he felt Stone was a traitor at the time of the Revolutionary War.(8) It was known from an informant, that Abigail was the only one in the house at the time of the attack. The informant was a member of the Leeds Militia and refused to fight against Forsyth when his Reg't arrived. There were 34 members of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Reg't of the Leeds Militia in Gananoque at the time and several of them refused to try to repel Forsyth.(9)

There were 386 men in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Reg't of the Leeds Militia and Stone's problem with the unit went all the way up to his 2<sup>nd</sup> in Command, Lt/Col Benoni Wiltse. A letter from Wiltse to Stone states why he did not wish to have himself or his relatives become aggressive in the conflict.(10) Many of Wiltse's relatives from Dutchess County, New York were enlisted in Regiments across the border. Stone placed Lt/Col Wiltse under arrest for treating his orders with contempt and preventing men from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Reg't Leeds Militia from following Stone's

orders. Stone also had concerns over the possibility of meeting his own relatives in any major conflict as 7 members of his family from Litchfield were in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Reg't of Connecticut Militia.(11)

When Gananoque had become established as a milling and trading centre, Stone brought a number of families from near his home in Litchfield to work at his mill or shipping businesses. It was compulsory for these men to belong to the Militia but they too were reluctant to possibly fight their relatives and former neighbors.(12) Militia troops had conflicting responsibilities as they were farmers. They had to plant crops and harvest them. Senior Commanders and the Legislature realized this and other than the Flank Companies, most were not called to travel far from their homes.

Benoni Wiltse, Solomon, Leonard and Samuel Soper had settled in Canada after the American Revolution. All four originally lived in Dutchess County, New York and moved to Vermont before crossing the border in the early 1790's.(13) Benoni settled in Elizabethtown and Solomon settled in Kitley, which are both in Leeds County. Leonard Soper settled in Graham Township, Lincoln County and Samuel Soper settled in Hope Township, Northumberland County.(14) All four of these men had brothers in the New York Militia.(15)

On February 22, 1813, Lieutenant Levi Soper lead a Company of Leeds Militia, including his bother Edward, on an attack on Ogdensburg, New York.(16) The Town was defended by Forsyth's Troops from Sacketts Harbour and included Volunteers from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Reg't of New York Militia.(17) The men of the 2nd under the command of Captain Miller were raised in Clinton County. Two of these Clinton County volunteers were Solomon Soper and Abraham Soper, both sons of John Soper. John Soper was a brother of Solomon Soper who had arrived in Kitley Township in Leeds County in 1792 and brought his son Levi and Edward with him.(18) The British Regulars and Canadian Militia captured Ogdensburg and a large amount of Military Stores. It was here that Levi Soper got the American Rifle Company coat that he wore for the rest of the war.(19) The coat now hangs in Fort York and has the name Soper under the back collar. Maybe the name Soper was there before Levi got it?

Of the 600,000 Militia who were raised in the United States, it was the Militia from New York State that saw many of the engagements in Upper Canada with the British Troops and Canadian Militia. One of these, the New York 2<sup>nd</sup> Reg't contained many Sopers and Wiltses from Dutchess County and this unit was present at Niagara and Oswego.(20) Letters between family members prior to the war had kept up the family contact but it would be unlikely that they would know who was serving where.(21) They would, however, know that the Canadian Militia members would be aware that they might come in contact with a family member across the enemy line. This would be an even greater chance with the Americans who had earlier crossed into Upper Canada for cheap land.

Included here are the names and the units of the Stones, Wiltses and Sopers who were related and fought in the war of 1812/14.(22) This same comparison could be made with hundreds of other families who were in Canadian Militia Units. Soldiers who had fought brothers and uncles as Tories or Patriots, in this next generation fought as Americans and Canadians.

**War of 1812/14**  
**Sons, Grandsons & Nephews of Peletiah Soper**  
**of Dorset, Vermont that served in American Units**  
**(Originally from Dutchess County, N.Y.)**

Abraham Soper.....2nd Reg't New York Militia  
 Amos Soper.....36th Reg't New York Militia  
 Arunah Soper.....Case's Reg't New York Volunteers  
 Benjamin Soper.....Summer's Reg't Vermont Volunteers  
 Burtis Soper.....Roger's Reg't New York Militia  
 Edmond Soper.....36th Reg't (Miller's) New York Militia  
 Edmund Soper.....36th Reg't New York Militia  
 Erastus Soper.....Dixon's Reg't Vermont Militia  
 Evan Soper.....4th Reg't (William's) Vermont Militia  
 Greenwood Soper....Roger's Reg't New York Militia  
 Henry Soper.....Capt. Drakes New York Company of Artillery  
 Henry Soper.....2nd Reg't (Bedel's) New York Militia  
 Ira Soper.....36th Reg.t (Miller's) New York Militia  
 James Soper.....108th Reg't (Britain's) New York Militia  
 John Soper.....2nd Reg't (Bedel's) New York Militia  
 John Soper.....2nd Reg't (Van Hook's) New York Militia  
 Joseph Soper.....Vermont Militia Reg't of Riflemen  
 Joseph Soper.....Dixon's Reg't Vermont Militia  
 Josiah Soper.....Vermont Militia Reg't of Riflemen  
 Lemuel Soper.....Case's Reg't New York Volunteers  
 Lemuel Soper.....1st Reg't New York of Artillery (Sitcher's Battery)  
 Loring Soper.....2nd Reg't (Dutton's) New York Militia  
 Moses Soper.....2nd Reg't (Dealmather's) New York Militia  
 Nelson Soper.....Farrington's Reg't New York Militia  
 Ora Soper.....36th Reg't (Miller's) New York Militia  
 Palmer Soper.....2nd Reg't (Dutton's) New York Militia  
 Palmer L. Soper.....8th Reg't (Clarke's) New York Militia  
 Philo Soper.....14th Reg't (Stone's) New York Militia  
 Remember Soper.....Dixon's Reg't Vermont Militia  
 Richard Soper.....2nd Reg't (Bedel's) New York Militia  
 Solomon Soper.....36 Reg't (Miller's) New York Militia  
 Timothy Soper.....2nd Reg't (Miller's) New York Militia  
 William Soper.....2nd Reg't (Bedel's) New York Militia  
 Wolcott Soper.....Roger's Reg't New York Militia

**Sons, Grandsons of Pelatiah Soper**  
**Of Dorset, Vermont that served in Canadian Units**  
**(Originally from Dutchess County, N.Y.)**

Leonard Soper.....Durham County Militia  
 Timothy Soper.. .....Durham County Militia

John Soper.....Lincoln County Militia  
 Samuel Soper.....Lincoln County Militia  
 Levi Soper.....Leeds and Grenville Militia  
 Timothy Soper.....Leeds County Militia  
 Isaac Soper.....Leeds County Militia  
 Edward Soper.....Leeds County Militia  
 Samuel Soper.....Hastings Prince Edward Reg't

**War of 1812/14**  
**Brothers, Nephews and 1<sup>st</sup> Cousins of Benoni Wiltse**  
**Of Binnington, Vermont that served in**  
**American Units**  
 (Originally from Dutchess County, N.Y.)

Tunis Wiltse.....2nd Reg't (Mape's) New York Militia  
 David Wiltse.....Roger's Reg't New York Militia  
 Isaac Wiltse.....5th New York Cavalry  
 Robert Wiltse.....5th New York Cavalry  
 Henry Wiltse.....Dutchess County Militia  
 William Wiltse.....Consolidated Artillery New York Militia  
 Patrick Wiltse.....2nd Reg't Artillery New York Volunteers

**Benoni Wiltse and Brothers**  
**Of Binnington, Vermont that served in**  
**Canadian Units**  
 (Originally from Dutchess County, N.Y.)

Lt/Col Benoni Wiltse.....2nd Reg't Leeds Militia  
 Capt. James Wiltse.....2nd Reg't Leeds Militia  
 Henry Wiltse.....2nd Reg't Leeds Militia

**War of 1812/14**  
**Joel Stone's Brother, Nephews and Cousins**  
**Of Litchfield, Connecticut that served in**  
**American Units**

Francis Stone.....2nd Reg't (Sanford's) Connecticut Militia  
 Josiah Stone.....2nd Reg't (Sanford's) Connecticut Militia  
 Mark Stone.....2nd Reg't (Sanford's) Connecticut Militia

Rufus Stone.....2nd Reg't (Sanford's) Connecticut Militia  
 William Stone.....2nd Reg't (Sanford's) Connecticut Militia  
 Abner Stone.....2nd Reg't (Sanford's) Connecticut Militia  
 Daniel Stone.....2nd Reg't (Sanford's) Connecticut Militia  
 Lt/Col William Stone.....134th Reg't (Stone's) New York Militia  
 Bradford Stone.....16th Reg't New York Volunteers  
 E. J. Stone.....1st Artillery New York Volunteers  
 John T. Stone.....2nd Reg't Artillery U.S. Volunteers  
 Ezra Stone.....3rd Reg't (Belcher's) Connecticut Militia  
 Norman Stone.....Capt. Knapp's Co. Connecticut Militia  
 Sheldon Stone.....Capt. Bray's Co. Connecticut Militia  
 William Stone.....Howe's Reg't Connecticut Militia  
 Timothy Stone.....27th Reg't (Rossiter's) Connecticut Militia  
 Stephen Stone.....27th Reg't (Rossiter's) Connecticut Militia

**Col. Joel Stone**  
**From Litchfield, Connecticut**  
**Commanding Officer of the 2<sup>nd</sup>. Reg't Leeds Militia**

Col. Stone had no other known close relatives in the Upper Canada Militia.

**Notes**

1. Wikipedia, Encyclopedia on Line.
2. IBID.
3. Ontario Archives, 574 MU 2892.MS519, Joel Stone Family Fonds
4. IBID
5. IBID
6. IBID
7. Henderson, Robert, "A Tranquil River No More - The Raid on Gananoque", War of 1812 Website.
8. IBID
9. Ontario Archives, Stone Papers
10. IBID
11. Appendix Note
12. National Archives of Canada, W J (Bill) Miller Papers, MG 25-G370, R3990-0-6-E. Soper and Wiltse correspondence.
13. Ancestry.Com, Public Member Family Trees and Neil Patterson Public Member Family Tree.
14. IBID.
15. Appendix Note
16. National Archives of Canada, Militia Units, C Series, Record Group 8, Section 1, Vol. 678.
17. Watertown, N.Y. Public Library, History of Franklin County and History of Clinton County, State of New York 1854.

18. Ancestry.com, Public Member Family Trees.
19. Henderson, Robert, War of 1812 Website.
20. Watertown, N.Y. Public Library, History of Dutchess County, State of New York 1854.
21. Appendix Note.

## **Appendix Note**

# **WAR OF 1812 SERVICE RECORDS**

War of 1812 Service Records Direct Data on line Provo, UT, US Operations Inc. 1999. Original data: National Archives and Records Administration Index to the compiled Military Service Records for the volunteer soldiers who served during the War of 1812, Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Administration M602, 234 Rolls.

Congress authorized the President to accept and organize volunteers in order to win the war. This data base is a listing of men mustered between 1812 and 1815. It provides the names of nearly 600,000 men. Record group 94 of the Adjutant General's Office Micro Film M602 a total of 234 rolls of film. Indexed through Ancestry.com.

List of Family Tree Members from Ancestry.com combined with head of household annual Upper Canada District Census for 1812 to 1815 in the Ontario Archives and United States Federal Census for 1810 and 1820. Extrapolate persons by town or township and county and match with those who are listed in the militia for each county.