

At War With Relatives

By Neil A. Patterson

The America 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 Lichfield 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 Lichfield Widow.⁽⁵⁾ A few years later, Abigail's daughter returned to Lichfield 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 2nd 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 2nd 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 2nd Reg't of the Leeds Militia and Stone's problem with the unit went all the way up to his 2nd 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 2nd 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 2nd 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 brother 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 2nd 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 2nd 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 1st 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 2nd. 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.