

The Robert Land and Clement Lucas, Jr. Families

The story below on a loyalist family during the Revolutionary War was given over CKOC Radio Station, "The Forum" in October 2010 by Pat Blackburn of the Hamilton Branch UELAC.

The material has been taken from a speech by a descendant of Robert Land, Brian Land, at the plaquing ceremony for the Hamilton Cemetery at 777 York Blvd. across from Dundurn Castle.

"United Empire Loyalists were the refugees of the American Revolutionary War, 1776-1783, loyal to King George III and fought on the side of the British. They were forced to leave the 13 colonies during and at the end of this seven years war. Approximately 30,000 displaced people became the pioneers, early settlers and new immigrants of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, St. Lawrence Valley, north shore of Lakes Ontario and Erie. Their loyalty to King George III entitled them to petition for a free land grant. The facts in the petition had to be proven and they were allocated acreage in size depending on the rank held in the Revolution by the individual who was applying for such grant.

Our story today is on the Robert Land and Clement Lucas, Jr. families.

Robert Land Sr. was born in New York in 1738 and married Phoebe Scott in 1756. They had 5 sons and 3 daughters. Robert Land was a courier for the British during the Revolution. This was a very dangerous and risky job delivering messages within and behind enemy lines. The fate of these couriers if caught was hanging.

In 1779 he was captured by rebel militia and brought before a military court in Minisink, N.Y., charged with spying for the British. He was found guilty and sentenced to death by hanging but his conviction was overturned by General George Washington on the "grounds that as an inhabitant of one of the states" Land was not subject to the jurisdiction of a military court. Land was released on bail to await his new trial but he jumped bail and joined a small party of Tories heading for Niagara. The party was discovered, Land was shot, but escaped to New York City where his family was now located.

Robert's wife, Phoebe, and some of their children had to flee the family estate in Pennsylvania for New York. New York was thought to be safe as it had remained British during the war. The eldest son, John, remained at the homestead in Pennsylvania.

Robert Land, Sr. resumed his courier services in 1780, traveling between New York, Niagara and Montreal. In August of 1782 Land arrived in Niagara but was not able to leave to rejoin his family now in New York before the war ended. At the end of the war Robert Land received a grant of 200 acres near Lundy's Lane, Niagara.

When the war ended in 1783 all the loyalists who had gathered in New York were to be evacuated. Many families similar to the Lands were separated. Sailing ships arrived and the loyalists were loaded and set sail for Nova Scotia/New Brunswick. Phoebe and her four children were part of the immigration. Phoebe and her eldest son, Abel, were granted land as loyalists along the St. John River in New Brunswick.

The Land family lost contact with one another. They did not know if Robert was alive. However, records show that Robert Land was still drawing rations at Niagara in 1784 but was likely already settled at the Head-of-the-Lake (Hamilton). He erected a dwelling at what is now the corner of Barton and Leeming Streets. As a Loyalist he petitioned for land and on May 3, 1791 was assigned Lot 11 on the 3rd Concession of the Township of Barton containing 100 acres. He farmed, hunted and fished and grew the area's first wheat.

In 1791 Lieutenant's John Graves Simcoe's land grant policy in Upper Canada was attractive. Phoebe, in New Brunswick, had heard of a "Land" living at the Head-of-the-Lake. Woman's intuition ...and Phoebe, with daughter Abigail and son, Abel, left New Brunswick and returned to the homestead in Pennsylvania. The journey was to end in Upper Canada. Son, John tried to persuade them to resettle in Pennsylvania but they were determined to resume their journey to Niagara.

Abel Land had served under Simcoe in Virginia during the Revolution and he thought this would assist him in being granted land by Simcoe.

Phoebe's intuition was correct and after ten years apart the family was reunited with Robert at Hamilton.

In 1794 Land again petitioned for land and was granted another 300 acres at Burlington Bay. In addition, Land was granted 200 acres for each of his sons. Through grants to his sons and daughters and through purchases, the Land family came to own a solid block of over 1,000 acres. This property extended from the Bay to the Mountain, bounded by Sherman Avenue on the east and by Wellington Street on the west.

Robert Land assisted in laying the foundations of an agricultural empire in the former fur-trading realm in the Niagara area. He was the first wheat and corn grower in Hamilton.

Abel altered the shoreline by building a wharf, constructing a fleet of rugged bateaux and carried on a limited forwarding business.

Ephraim and Robert, the youngest, were yeomen rather than commercial operators. They cultivated plots west and south of the present Wentworth and Main streets in Hamilton.

Robert Land was a quintessential early Hamilton settler in Ontario – a magistrate in the 13 Colonies who was deprived of his office and his lands in the new United States, a United Empire Loyalist who was sentenced to death by an American Court martial for his work for the British, a frontiersman who wrested a living out of the Ontario wilderness and one of the founders of Hamilton.

You may see the Robert Land Vault at the Hamilton Cemetery across from Dundurn Castle on York Boulevard. This cemetery has been plaqued as a “Loyalist Burial Site” as part of the Hamilton Branch project for bringing to the attention of others the early UELs who came to the area and contributed to its advancement.

The story is not over as there is a connection between the Lands, Hughsons and Clement Lucas Jr.’s family. When Phoebe Land and two of her children left New Brunswick for a roundabout voyage to Hamilton, there were two married daughters left behind.

Daughter Rebecca and her husband Nathaniel Hughson (any Hamilton member will recognize the name “Hughson”) moved their family from New Brunswick to Barton Township in 1798.

Daughter Phoebe married Clement Lucas Jr. at Gagetown, New Brunswick. Clement Lucas Jr. arrived on the ship “Bridgewater” from New York to Parrtown, New Brunswick at the same time the Land family arrived. Clement Lucas was a boat builder. He petitioned for and was granted land in the County of Sunbury.

Phoebe and Clement had eight children. In 1807 the family left New Brunswick for Head-of-the-Lake to be with the other Land families. It is possible that the move was because Phoebe was ill. Phoebe died one year after her arrival in Upper Canada.

Once again Clement Lucas made a petition, this time to Francis Gore Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Upper Canada and received a land grant for 200 acres of waste lands of the Crown. This land is situated below Lakeshore Road in Burlington on the west side of Walkers Line.

Clement Lucas fought on the side of the British in the War of 1812.

He and Phoebe are buried in the Mount Vernon Cemetery in Burlington, Ontario.

Submitted by Pat Blackburn, Education Chairman, Hamilton Branch, October 2010