

REGISTER  
OF  
**THE DESCENDANTS OF  
NEHEMIAH HUBBLE AND LUCRETIA WELTON**

FIRST EDITION

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## A TRIBUTE TO NEHEMIAH HUBBLE

### *THE FIRST CANADIAN HUBBLES*

We are Hubbles, wives and husbands of Hubles, children and grandchildren of Hubels, even grandchildren descended from Hubbell grandparents through who-knows-how-many greats. We form the vibrant Canadian branch of the Hubble family. We are a diverse group: men, women, and children, teachers, farmers, doctors, truck-drivers, consultants, mechanics, nurses, sales people, retired people, military people, and other occupations too numerous to mention. Undoubtedly, our diversity extends as well to our religious and political affiliations, our personal ideals, our family values, our hopes for our children. It might seem that we have more that divides us than unites us. Still, we are united by something outside our differences, something we might call our "Hubbleness". And in pursuit of that "Hubbleness" we have built and are preserving, a community based on our family in common--either through marriage or descent--is our connection to our foreparents, the founders of our Canadian family, the heroes of our generations--Nehemiah and Lucretia Hubble. For these reasons, I'm going to tell you the story of these two historically significant people.

It's not an easy story to tell. So much of it has been lost through the tyranny of history which tends to remember and record only the lives and words of elite peoples. And Nehemiah and Lucretia were not elites. Nor did they leave diaries, journals, or letters through which we might attempt a reconstruction of their lives. What this means, of course, is that we'll have to speculate about them, in effect, make some of this story up. And I invite you to contribute your own speculations, your own ideas about this shared family history. For it is through the telling of stories that families create their own meanings.

It is enormously important in Canada in the 1990s that we do construct alternative stories and histories to set beside the standard history books that leave our people out. By such efforts do we democratize history, acknowledge its contradictions and intricacies, making it, finally, speak about us. By such efforts we give ourselves a public voice and an authority to tell the things that we know best, or that we suspect might be true. Just like the politicians, the scholars, and the journalists, we are the makers of history, and we deserve, in this Canadian democracy, to have our say.

Let's start, then, in the 1700s, when Nehemiah and Lucretia were born. The date of Nehemiah's birth is contested. He is said to have been born in Plymouth, Connecticut in 1760, and this information is based on the belief that when he died, in 1859, he was 99 years of age. But if he was born in 1760, he was only 15 or 16 years old when he became the father of his first child, Elijah Hubel, and his wife, Lucretia, probably born in 1754 (the daughter of Thomas Jr. And Mary Cosset), to whom he was married in 1774, would have been 6 years older than he was. Neither of these circumstances--that he was a father very young and that his wife was in her twenties when he was still an adolescent--are unheard of. Still, they leave open the possibility that his actual birth date was a few years earlier.

It is likely that Nehemiah was a fifth generation American New Englander, descended from the forefather of virtually all the North American Hubbells, Richard, who was born in Worcestershire, England in 1625 and was among the earliest immigrants to the American colonies, arriving in the 1640s. Richard and Elizabeth Gaylord begot James, who married Patience Summers and then begot Andrew Hubbell, who married Sarah Purruick and then begot Elijah Hubbell, who married Polly Beardsley and then begot Nehemiah.

Growing up in a predominately Tory settlement of western Connecticut, Nehemiah joined a Loyalist militia unit, the Prince of Wales American Regiment, when the American Revolutionary War broke out in 1776. He was at that time the father of one son, also called Elijah, perhaps named after Nehemiah's father. We don't know why Nehemiah made this crucial decision to remain loyal to the British crown in spite of what was certainly intense pressure from politicians, neighbours, and maybe even family to side with the American Patriots, to fight for independence from Britain. Canadian historian Bruce Wilson tells us that nearly 500,000 American colonists remained loyal, about 16 per cent of the total population. Of those 500,000, some 8,000, among them Nehemiah Hubbell, actively served in Loyalist regiments. 8,000 doesn't sound like much of an army. But, indeed, George Washington's soldier Patriots numbered only 9,000<sup>1</sup>. Contemporary historians seem to agree that the American Revolutionary War was not simply a War of Independence in which the Americans fought the British for the right to self-government. The Revolutionary War was the first American civil war<sup>2</sup>. Brother fought against brother, neighbours disagreed and struggled for supremacy against one another, American men killed and mutilated other American men; they raped each other's wives and daughters, destroyed and pillaged other's farms, imprisoned each other. Neither side had the monopoly on righteousness or evil. Still, it wasn't easy to be a Loyalist in America in the 1770s and 80s. The costs of remaining loyal to the British were often enormous. Loyalists, and even those who assumed a position of neutrality, were often harassed and insulted, stripped of their civil rights, tarred and feathered, driven from their homes with only the clothes on their backs, thrown into jail, or even murdered by crowds of Patriot citizens. Under these circumstances, it is difficult to imagine why anyone would choose to war with the Rebels.

But the American Loyalists indeed had their reasons. Though many Loyalists, like their Patriot counterparts, objected to the oppressive policies of the British in America, some earnestly believed that they were, nevertheless, better off under British rule. British rule, these people supposed, would eventually give them the freedoms they longed for, and without bloodshed. Other Loyalists, perhaps tenant farmers, jumped at the prospect of being granted freehold land for their service in the British militia, although it is doubtful that they guessed that they would find their freehold land ultimately in the wilds of Canada. Still others remained Loyalists as a result of their family and ethnic ties. As Janice Potter-MacKinnon writes, for most American people who flocked to the British Royal Standard, "Becoming a Loyalist and seeking refuge at a British base was a group experience"<sup>3</sup>. These individuals joined the Loyalist camp because their fathers, their brothers, their neighbours, and in some cases, their wives did. For them, it was an act of community.

The motives behind Nehemiah Hubbell's decision to take up arms in a Loyalist regiment are unknowable. But we can conclude, I think, that along with so many Americans who remained Loyalists, his choice was an uneasy and complex one. Maybe it was a combination of some of some or all of the factors I have already mentioned that propelled our ancestor to Loyalism.

We do know, however, that he served at least three years in the Prince of Wales American Regiment. In his 1797 petition to the Crown for a land grant, Nehemiah stated that he had been a member of the regiment for the duration of the war, from 1776 to the end in 1783. But muster rolls for the regiment proclaim him a deserter in 1779. This is the bone of contention he left to his descendants. For the Dominion Genealogists, who decide which pioneers will be granted United Empire Loyalist status and which will not, claim that this record of his desertion, coupled with the absence of his name on the 1789 Executive List of Loyalists, prevents our forefather from being granted official Loyalist status. This means that we can't write the initials U.E. beside our names. Personally, I have no trouble foregoing that privilege; my pride in my family doesn't require official sanction. Moreover, Loyalist status is, at best, a tangled web. Walter Stewart in *True Blue* asserts that the land boards that compiled the names of those who would be hereafter be known as Loyalists didn't do a very able job of it: "They included many who did not merit the distinction and left out many more who did, which, in the primitive conditions that then prevailed in the colony, was inevitable<sup>4</sup>". The names of 400 British regular soldiers, whose alternative was a court martial, were inscribed on that list, as were a group of German mercenaries. The list even included some Scottish immigrants who came to Upper Canada straight from Scotland and had not a smidgen of heritage in the Thirteen Colonies<sup>5</sup>. Of course, the list also names numerous men who made enormous sacrifices for their loyalty. But let's put this notion of sacrifice into perspective: the history of Canada is a history of sacrifices that people have made to come here and that they subsequently made to stay here--sacrifices that arose out of war, political oppression, gender and race. With most of our co-patriots, we Hubbles are here because of the sacrifices of our families.

Now, the issue of Nehemiah's desertion needs to be addressed. Desertion and temporary desertions were very common on both sides. It is not certain that he did indeed desert though he is listed as such in the muster rolls of his regiment after 1779. In the confusion of battle, which occasionally saw the virtual annihilation of entire units, he might have joined another regiment. Unknown to his company officers, he may have been taken prisoner by the Patriots. It is also possible that he did desert, with so many of his fellow soldiers, because he felt that his family needed his protection and care more than his political cause did. Remember, Lucretia was probably alone on their farm with two small children (Ezekial Allen was born in 1777). She could very well have been the object of unpleasant, even life-threatening Patriot attentions. The homes and properties of Loyalist militiamen were frequently confiscated, pillaged, and sometimes burned to the ground. Their families were often harassed, molested, and left penniless. Imagine the trials of Lucretia, left on her own with two toddling children. Not only did she have to provide food and shelter for them, she may have had to defend and protect them as well. History almost entirely ignores the contributions of women to the Loyalist cause. But from the few records that do exist, which show Loyalist women shepherding their families to safety, working inside and outside the home to obtain the food to feed themselves and their children, even, at times, standing up defiantly to Patriot crowds bent on destroying their homes, we can speculate that our foremother was undoubtedly busy and surely courageous too while her husband served in the Militia. Lucretia Hubbell deserves to be put back in our history.

Historians maintain that Loyalist men had great anxiety and guilt about the families they left behind, and that their affectional ties often led them to desert their regiments. Additionally, the British government remained, for the most part, deaf to the petitions of various Loyalist soldiers and officers who asked for their families to be rescued from the colonies and brought to Canada. Women and children could act as spies and dissenters in the Thirteen Colonies while, according to military officials, behind British lines they were simply expensive burdens who needed to be clothed and fed<sup>6</sup>. So, if Nehemiah did indeed desert, we need make no excuses for him, considering the likely circumstances in which his political loyalty and his family loyalty were placed at odds.

One more point about his alleged desertion: in August 1780, just months after Nehemiah was listed as a deserter in the muster rolls, the Prince of Wales American Regiment was nearly wiped out in a four-hour battle with the Patriot army at Hanging Rock, North Carolina<sup>7</sup>. If he was a deserter, he did us all a favour by taking himself out of the fighting before the fighting killed him. Most of us would not be here if he hadn't gone on to father his eight other children born after 1781. It seems that Providence or Fate was looking after the Hubble dynasty.

After the war was lost and the Loyalist regiments were disbanded in 1783, the names of Nehemiah and Lucretia turn up in the 1788 baptismal records of the Dutch Reformed Church in St. Johnsville, New York, where they are mentioned as the parents of John Shubal, born 1785. Later baptismal records from Ernestown place the whole family in what was soon to be Upper Canada. Reverend John Langhorn writes that he baptized four of the Hubble children, Lavina Lucretia in 1790, Reuben in 1793, Peter in 1795 and Sarah in 1799. Nehemiah himself asserts in his 1797 petition for land that he and his family all resided in Canada from the year 1788. Perhaps John Shubal was baptized on the family's trek to Canada, which would have taken them through Patriot-held lands, such as parts of New York, and then to what is now Ontario, and the other children were later brought by their parents to Ernestown from Rawdon, where the family lived and worked. Or perhaps he was a travelling preacher, who baptized the children in Rawdon and later recorded these events in Ernestown.

A family story taken from a manuscript found in a Bible that belonged to Nehemiah's grandson (also named Nehemiah) says that Nehemiah initially travelled to Canada without his wife and children, accompanied instead by a brother and a cousin. They embarked in a small bateau. Along with a band of United Empire Loyalists under the leadership of Major Peter Van Alstyne, landing at Adolphustown in 1784 at a place called "Hagerman's Point". Many of the group remained in the area, but Nehemiah, his brother, and his cousin continued up the Trent River to Carrying Place and then trekked across the wilderness until they came to what eventually became known as Hubble Hill. Here they built their first homes, with Nehemiah choosing Lot 20, Concession 3, Rawdon Township, as the place where he would put down his roots. The three men returned to the United States, after spending some months clearing the land. Early in 1785, they returned to Rawdon, cut the timbers, and erected log houses on their properties, returning yet again to the United States. A couple of years later, the whole Hubbell family, Nehemiah, Lucretia, and their, by this time, six children made the migration to Rawdon and the British colonies. Daughter Sara Ruth in a letter to the *Brighton Ensign* in February, 1893 wrote that in cutting across Lake Ontario their boat sank in shallow water and Mrs. Hubble, being a small woman, found herself holding up two of her children in water up to her arms and thus remained until rescued by small boats. The family landed in Adolphustown and built small shanties at first, took up some land and stayed there for 11 years. Sarah Ruth Hubble was born at Adolphustown on the 6th of September, 1792. The other three children were also all born in Upper Canada. This story about our forefather's trips across the border, followed by the eventual establishment of the family in Rawdon coincides with the baptismal records mentioned previously. Furthermore, the 1878 *Historical Atlas of Hastings and Prince Edward Counties* confirms that the Hubbles were one of the 20 pioneer families of Rawdon Township.

Nehemiah's name turns up repeatedly in official records over the next few years. After the successful petition of May 1797, which resulted in Nehemiah and son Elijah being each granted 200 acres of land in Rawdon, Nehemiah's name appears, along with a number of others, on a second petition dated August 1797, requesting that the government erect a mill site near his home, a petition which was apparently denied because in 1798 his name is appended to yet another petition for a mill site. In 1807 and 1809 he is listed as a juryman for Newcastle District.

Nehemiah and family were living in Rawdon when the War of 1812 broke out. Again, according to Sarah Ruth in the *Brighton Ensign*, Nehemiah, loyal to the Crown and even though a man of many years, immediately mustered a company of horse troops, and he and his sons set out to join Brock at Niagara. On the way there they were instructed to halt at Captain Harkwell's post in the Roosh Hills where the company was separated and sent to different posts throughout the province to carry dispatches for the government. During the war three of Sarah Ruth's brothers fought at Lundy's Lane where the British troops drove the Americans from Queenston Heights and back across the Niagara River.

In 1823 Nehemiah and Lucretia are recorded as having transferred some of their property in Rawdon to their grandson Barce Hubble. In 1825, Nehemiah deeded Lot 20, Concession 3 to his son Peter Hubel. We believe that he and Lucretia are buried somewhere on this land.

From our point of view, among the finest gifts that Nehemiah and Lucretia gave to early Canada were their ten children: Elijah, Ezekial Allen, Nehemiah Jr., Polly, John Shubal, James, Lavinia, Reuben, Peter, and Sarah Ruth. But we have still more reason to be proud. Nehemiah and Lucretia, as well as the many Hubble families who, following them, helped to settle this province of Ontario, contributed to the creation of a democratic nation whose principles we cherish today. One of the many myths surrounding the Loyalists depicts them all as a conservative people, a band of English colonial elites who came to the various British colonies in Canada, trailing their distinguished lineage's, in order to establish a hierarchical society that would preserve their special privilege. In fact, some ninety per cent of the Loyalists were not elite and only 8 per cent were of English origin. These Loyalists were farmers, tradespeople, urban labourers, artisans, soldiers, hunters and trappers. The ethnicity of this larger group was also diverse: it included Americans, English, Scottish and Irish people, Indians, Germans, Dutch and African people. From the earliest times our country has been multicultural. What these Loyalists brought to the land--in direct contradiction to the elites' determination to set up an oligarchic form of government--was a democratic impulse. An English gentleman travelling to Upper Canada in the 1820s has this to say about the "peasants" he found there: ". . . the utmost harmony prevails in this colony, and the intercourse of its people is characterized by politeness, respect, and even ceremony. They are hospitable and, on the whole, extremely willing to help each other in cases of difficulty--but the most extraordinary thing of all is the liberality which they exercise towards emigrants, in immediately admitting them to live on an equality with themselves; for any poor starving peasant who comes into the settlement will meet with nearly the same respect as the wealthiest person in it . . ." And, towards the end of his book he adds, "There is a freedom, an independence, and a joyousness connected with the country . . . No man of any sensibility could view Canada with indifference, or leave it without a sensation approaching regret<sup>8</sup>". Considering that this particular Englishman derides the "attitude of equality" that he finds among the people of Upper Canada--people, it seems, who repeatedly failed to show him the deference he felt his "superior" station deserved, who repeatedly spoke to him as an equal, these words of his are high praise.

So this is the legacy our pioneer ancestor left to us, this attitude of quality, this tolerance of difference, this joyousness and freedom. We have not in our history always lived up to these high ideals. In fact, we seem to have made it part of our national character to be somewhat smug about the virtues of being Canadian and in that smugness we have sometimes allowed these ideals to slide. But though we have occasionally failed, the ideals of our ancestors continue to be good ones.

Finally, it seems fitting to leave with you the words of another Hubel, my grandmother Keitha Ferguson Hubel, who, with Florence May MacMullen, produced one of the first books on the Hubble family in Canada. Forty years ago she wrote, "We are not descended from the kings of Ireland, nor are we a forgotten branch of the English nobility. This record portrays only the efforts of ordinary, hard-working

people to achieve a satisfactory portion of peace, comfort, and prosperity in the land they have chosen . . . These were great Canadians [who] truly laboured for a greater Canada against great odds<sup>9</sup>. I read this passage for the first time when I was a young girl. It convinced me then and to this day that the best family pride resides, not in the titles or distinctions of our ancestors, but in knowing and appreciating "the efforts of ordinary hard-working people."

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#### End Notes

1. Bruce Wilson, *As She Began: An Illustrated Introduction to Loyalist Ontario*, Toronto and Charlottetown, Dundurn Press, 1981, p. 13.
2. Walter Stewart, *True Blue: The Loyalist Legend*, Collins, Toronto, 1985, p. 8 and Robert S. Allen et al., *The Loyal Americans: The Military Role of the Loyalist Provincial Corps and Their Settlement in British North America, 1775-1784*, Ottawa, National Museum of Man, 1983, p. 2.
3. Janice Potter-MacKinnon, *While the Women Only Wept: Loyalist Refugee Women*, Montreal and Kingston, McGill-Queen's UP, 1993, p. 40.
4. Stewart, p. 183.
5. Stewart, p. 184. See also Wilson, pp 103-104.
6. Potter-MacKinnon, pp 81-93.
7. Allen et al., p. 15
8. John Howison, *Sketches of Upper Canada*, Edinburgh. Oliver and Boyd, 1821, pp 174-269.
9. "Souvenir Hubble Reunion Clan, 25th Anniversary, July 1974", p. 52.