

Canadian Born Children of Simeon Covell ?

In several places on the Internet it is possible to find references to Simeon John Covell, the United Empire Loyalist, having three sons born in Canada: Simeon COVELL born in 1776 in Ontario, Henry COVELL born in 1778 in Ontario and David COVELL born in 1780 in Ontario.

This paper is written to explore the evidence available and to refute the idea that Simeon had any children born in Canada.

The book, “The Settlers of the Town of Beekman” states that Simeon John Covell had four children born in the State of New York: John Hurd, James Franklin, Sarah and Susannah. There is general consensus that Sarah and Susannah are one and the same. Otherwise Sarah did not survive her infancy. The birth date for Sarah is recorded as 18 Sep 1775. Susannah’s grave stone reads, “departed this life May13, 1846 in the 71, year of her age” (i.e. born 1775).

Looking at the three supposed Canadian children, the birth date indicated for the younger Simeon would not be possible as it predated the first arrival of Simeon John Covell in Canada, as he fled the Battle of Bennington in August of 1777. Simeon was a county commissioner (some say Justice of the peace) and a successful businessman who had a running political battle with the Rebels starting about 1774 when he spoke out against the activities of the Rebels in what has become known as the Boston Tea Party. Simeon was imprisoned in Albany prior to March 1776 for refusing to join the cause according to statements provided to the British government by Mary Swords in connection with Simeon’s claim for damages suffered during the war. She noted that he was already in prison when her husband, also an unrepentant loyalist, was arrested and that Simeon was still in prison as late as March of 1777. Susannah Mosher died before 1780 in New York State.

Mary Swords evidence talks about Simeon’s ‘motherless children’ as follows;

“All which she the deponent verily believes to be true but did not go down herself to the Dungeon to see him, nor did she see him the said Simeon Covell after she saw him in Prison with her husband, the second time as aforesaid, until she saw him in New York in the year 1779 And she the Depon^t further saith, that she had often heard the aforesaid Simeon Covell and others say that his Little Motherless Children had been banished by the Rebels and sent to him into New York, which she the Deponent did then and now likewise verily believe to be true and further Saith not.

Mary Swords “

Simeon was released or escaped from prison by the summer and after recruiting a militia joined the British General Bourgoyne at the Battle of Bennington. Simeon was Captain of the 6th Company of the Queen’s Loyal Rangers (also known as Peters’ Corps). After his escape from Bennington to Canada in August 1777, he was granted permission to return to Albany to try to recruit a new Loyalist regiment in 1778. He was unsuccessful in this effort and returned to Canada.

The British government decision on Simeon Covell’s petition for compensation is perhaps the best evidence against the suggestion that he had children born in Canada, Simeon’s petition was accepted by the Crown in April 1784. A transcript of the petition, summary and decision are reproduced on my site www.mykidsancestors.com. The decision notes that Simeon has three children in America and suggests that if Simeon had dependants in “this country” his allowance would have been larger. It is hard to believe that the British Government would get this wrong.

Simeon’s next return to the United States is not until about December 1786 when he found his children

at Quakerhill, Dutchess County, New York. This information comes from a letter written by Simeon that was published in Historical Magazine (date and issue unknown). The letter suggests that the children had remained with friends and relatives since the war. Simeon also notes that he is planning to take them to Canada shortly after.

Simeon Covell's will, written in 1798, makes mention of only three children. It is a comprehensive will that even mentions and provides for the illegitimate son of John Hurd Covell and Jane Butler. It is hard to believe that such a caring man would have left out three living sons.

So who are these three male children? They are suspected to be grandchildren of Simeon's brother David and his wife Agnes Woodin. A David Covell Sr. and a David Jr. are recorded in the 1790 census in New York State. David Jr., living near Albany, has 2 sons at that time. Both Davids applied for land grants in Grenville County in early 1793 and received land in Augusta Township. One of the earliest Upper Canada census taken in Augusta Township in 1796 shows David Jr. has 4 sons and David Sr. lives only with his wife. David Jr. appears in the 1801 census for Augusta Township with 6 sons, and then in Montague Township in 1808 with 5. The Montague list gives the names as follows (calculated birth in brackets):

Covill David	age 40	(birth 1768)
James	age 19	(birth 1789)
Simeon	age 17	(birth 1791)
Henry	age 15	(birth 1793)
Stephen	age 13	(birth 1795)
David Jr	age 11	(birth 1797)
Rhoda	age 38	(birth 1770)

The names are all there but the dates are wrong.

David Sr. continued to live in Augusta. He appears as late as the 1813 census where he and his wife are listed in the "Over 60" columns. On the 8th of June 1815 the "Inventory of the Personal Estate of David Covell deceased" was filed by Dr. J. Jones. On the second page it says "David Covell of Augusta, Yeoman, deceased" and it has numerous signatures in the document, many of them notables or Covell relations; including Davies Holden, Eben(ezer) Sherwood, with the bond of Hezekiah Mosher, Nicholas Mosher and Agnes Covell. Agnes (I presume David's wife, nee Woodin) is the administratrix. The list of property seems inconsequential, amounting to 73 pounds in value.

Conclusion

All evidence suggests that Simeon John Covell did not have more than three children and they were all born in the State of New York.

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