

SCOTLAND AND BEYOND - A history of John Stewart the Bachelor  
By James Stewart

My father's history is all but lost except for vague childhood memories of stories he told of the Old Country, a picture or two, and a few pieces of paper. With a great deal of hesitation, I will try to reconstruct his story.....

TIME: EARLY 1800'S

Scotland had been free from war for about 100 years which had ended in 1707 when the Scot's joined the English in forming a new country, GREAT BRITAIN. With the truce and resulting peace, (Following countless generations of fighting), the Scot's were granted: Representation in the Parliament; Agreement that heirs to the crown would be Protestants; The established Presbyterian Church of Scotland would be maintained; And along with these and other cherished rights, public schools were established in almost every parish.

Scotland is divided into three geographical areas. The "Highlands" in the North - The "Uplands" to the South and the "Lowlands" in between. Dundee was located in the "Lowlands" on the Firth of Tay. Tay is the largest river in Scotland. The point where the river empties into the sea is called the Firth . In Florida we would call this a bay - Example: Apalachicola Bay is the body of water where the Apalachicola River empties into the Gulf of Mexico - The Firth of Apalachicola. Dundee, located on the North Shore of the Firth was actually 8 miles from the open sea.

It was in Gauldry by Dundee in the early 1800's that a son was born to the Stewart Clan. He was named Alexander. Fresh on his father's mind was the rebellion of the "Colonies" in America and more recently Britain's lost to the United States in the War of 1812. Alexander Stewart attended the parish school and there met a young "Lass" named Isobel Taylor. A few years later, when in their teens, they were married in a little country Presbyterian Church nearby. A tiny, country cottage on a hillside where the "purple heather" grew, became their home - for the rest of their lives.

To this marriage, one daughter, Jessie, and three sons, James, David, and John were born. I found in my mother's Bible an apparent treasured letter from Daddy's brother David. It was written from Dundee, Scotland, on January 30, 1893 when John Stewart was 28 years old and addressed to the Saints which I assume referred to their church.

30/1/93  
20 Lawson Place  
Dundee

To the Saints,

Having received a word from the Lord yesterday I pass it on to you. Put on the whole Armour of God. Eph. 6:11. For us to put on the Armour of God was to put on the Clothing that God is clothed with. Just look at what God is clothed with. It is His Armour & what people we might be clothed upon with such Armour. WE had a grand time at our meeting yesterday. We had a feast of fat things, of wines well refined, of Butter and Honey. Previously we had milk but now we have more solid food. In this service, Milk of the word became butter. Look at Isaiah 13: 6. You have had Jesus born in you. Butter and Honey shall he eat that he may know to refuse the evil and chose the good.

When you were justified you took the milk because strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age. But when Christ came in you, you had to get strong meat such as butter changed from milk. Solid food and before you could know to refuse the evil you had to eat the good things. Around 16 or before the child shall know to refuse the evil and chase the good. The land that shall abound shall be forsaken of both her kings.

Now to understand it you are the land that is to be forsaken of the kings. I can't tell all that I received at Mary's last night but this I will say, we were eating of good and rich things. We were in the Song of Solomon. It was indeed a Blessed time. I hope you are stepping out. I am going on. I saw just one Saturday what it was to do what Phinehas did, forget my own people, forget my brother or sister and keep my eye on God and act when the scriptures comes across my soul.

I saw how an earthly judge has to act. He keeps his eye on the law, if his own parents were before him, he would not see them. His eye would be on the law. See Him only. Then when we act we act according to God's Law, Oh, just to do it at all times. It is when we get our eyes on the people we spare the Agag and the Sprail and then we say we have performed the commandment of the Lord. Oh that he would make us singled eyed to do his will only.

David

We know nothing about my fathers brother, James Stewart or his sister, Jessie Stewart, except that they apparently stayed in Scotland. His other brother David Stewart was born in 1850. He married Margaret Smith, daughter of James Smith of Edinburgh, Scotland and Jean Thompson of England in the 1860-70 era. They had two daughters: Isobel Taylor Stewart who married Williams Edwards in Scotland in the late 1800's - Margaret Stewart who never married - these ladies were my father's nieces and he referred to them often. David Stewart and family moved from Scotland to the USA in the late 1800's - He died on November 7, 1901 and was buried in the Apopka, Fla. Cemetery. His wife, Margaret, died in Zellwood November 18, 1921 and was buried in the Apopka, Fla. Cemetery. She had lived in Zellwood for 12 years before her death. (Since 1909).

William G. Edwards, (Just died a few days ago) who now lives in Loxahatchee, Fl. and is Isobel Edwards' grandson has A framed needlepoint sampler done by her when she attended the Gourock Central School in Scotland. He states that all documentation was destroyed in a fire many years ago.

Isobel Taylor Stewart later married another Scotsman named William Edwards. They immigrated to America, to the Chicago area in the late 1800's, there William Edwards became active in the YMCA and the Dwight L. Moody Christian Crusades. His leadership qualities were noted by the chairman of the board of the Carson Pirie Scot and Company, John T. Pirie, who hired him as a manager of his summer estate in the Plymouth-Apopka Florida area. There he also became manager of the Laughlin Estate in Zellwood. (According to Jerrell H. Shofner's "History of Apopka").

My father, John Stewart was born near Dundee on October 8, 1865. This was, of course, during the Civil War in the States. Dundee was a city of more than 160,000 at the time...perhaps the size of Tallahassee, Florida today. I have a post card , from that era, showing the view from one of the surrounding hills. It states that Dundee's most striking feature was a 156 ft tower that overshadowed the busy street scenes below. This remarkable tower was built 600 years earlier but strangely seemed to be a contemporary part of the city, according to the inscription on the card. Extensive shipbuilding was carried on and it was a noted manufacturing center for textiles and a trading center for linen and jute. There were large engineering establishments and a branch of the northern seal and whale fishery was also located there.

According to daddy's stories, a few miles from Dundee is beautiful country with hillsides covered with purple heather and the air so crisp and clean you just vibrate with good heath. Little cottages dot the hill side and valleys where peasant families tended their herds of sheep and grew crops on every inch of usable soil. He also told me there were two classes of Stewart's - The Royalty and the Peasants - he always assured me that we were peasants. Their's was a rugged, hard life with bitterly cold winters that developed a hardy, self-sufficient, and proud people. Daddy was such a person!

He was probably the youngest child of Alexander and Isobel Taylor Stewart. He attended a parish school near home and told me that he went through the "fourth stanza". We have no idea as to what the equivalent today would be but I do know that he was very literate and loved to read and I would often see him writing in what must have been his journal - Sadly every page of which has long since been destroyed - How thoughtless we are of such important things. When he was seven (1872) a new educational boarding school type of system went into effect in Scotland and John went to a boarding school along with the other children. Then, instead of going on to complete his education at the University of Edinburgh, he hired out as an apprentice in the GARDENING TRADE where he learned to work with flowers, shrubs and all kinds of growing plants and knew how to propagate them and identify them by their Latin names. In today's world he would probably be a horticulturist or nurseryman. After completing this, he apprenticed out to learn another trade - STONE MASON. Similar to a present day brick mason but instead of bricks he worked with the ever abundant Scottish stones. When I was a small boy, I remember him telling me that the Scot's always learned two trades just in case they could not make a living at one, there would be the other to fall back on.

Since his earliest remembrance, John loved to travel and as a young boy made many visits to the HIGHLANDS where he learned to wear kilts and dance the "Highlands Fling"; learned to play the bagpipes and concertina; developed a great love for the outdoors; for wild things; and the beauty of the mountains and hillsides covered with "heather".

When he reached the age of 18, he wanted to see beyond Scotland and with his parents permission, saved up enough money to pay for passage to America. In the year 1884 (The same year our old farm house at Mt. Pleasant was built) he left the "Old Country" as he always thereafter referred to Scotland and came to America. He recalled going through the immigration ritual of Ellis Island. That first trip he did not see the Statue of Liberty...it had not yet been completed but did see it on subsequent trips into New York Harbor. (He crossed the Atlantic 20 times) I today can imagine the enthusiasm, awe, and curiosity of a youth of 19 roaming the streets of New York City as he set out to seek his fortune.

He went to Chicago, where his nieces Isobel and Margaret lived and he became active in the Dwight L. Moody Crusades ...the Billy Graham of that era. He told me tales of his work on the Chicago skyscrapers. Later he moved to Atlanta, Connecticut and then to Florida in 1889 where he went to work for William Edwards who managed the Pirie Place - the Errol Estates. Strangely or maybe not so strangely, just a few miles from Dundee, Scotland, is a town named ERROL.

John T. Pirie of Lake Forest, Ill., later president and board chairman of Carson, Pirie, Scott and Co., a Chicago Dry goods firm, began spending his winters at Plymouth in 1892 and afterward spent most of his winters there for the next 48 years. He built one of the most celebrated winter residences in Central Florida, calling it Errol Estates. He made it into a showplace, not only for the houses but grounds as well. My father built the spacious fire places and chimneys from stone for these mansions....and he grew the hundreds of scrubs, azaleas, palms that were planted on the thousand acre grounds. He spoke

of Mr. Pirie as if they were on a first name basis and told us of conversations he had with him. Daddy was a devout Christian and believed in telling others when they were ethically or morally wrong. He called this "rebuking" a person. He told us of having to rebuke John T. Pirie once. It speaks well of Mr. Pirie that he did not fire my father on the spot.

About this same time, James Laughlin of the Jones and Laughlin Steel Co., of Pittsburgh built a winter residence in Zellwood. I find in my mother's pictures a photograph of him as a young man in kilts so he must have been a Scotsman too. He completed the Sydonie House on a 200 acre estate and spent most of his winters there from 1886 to 1919. William Edwards became manager of this estate also, and daddy worked there doing the same kind of work as he did at the "Pirie Place" - as we called it. The Errol and Sydonie estates eventually comprised some 7000 acres. During this era J.W.Paul arrived.... I now wonder if the Paul Place, two miles south of Zellwood, where many years later mother and daddy often visited, could be the same Paul.

According to Jerrell H. Shofner's "History of Apopka" it was during this period that the Zellwood school was rebuilt following a fire to the first school (which had been built of poles in 1877). The first telegraph went into service in the area....Clay and shell were generally used for road construction following Indian Trails.....but pine straw was even used...later marl and brick became common. Pine land was selling from \$20 to \$40 per acre...daddy told me that when he first came to Plymouth he could have purchased all the land he wanted for \$25 per acre.... The TO&A railroad, later to become the Seaboard opened for business in 1886.

A cherished letter of John Stewart's was a letter from Mary Simpson to him on 9/3/98. He would have been 33 and been in America 14 years. She wrote from Dundee about a Helen who must have been a great disappointment in John's life. I now wonder if she had been a "great love" of his that was lost...was she the reason he waited until his 58th birthday to marry? Nor do we know who Mary Simpson was.

Sept. 3, 1898  
Tay Bridge Station,  
Dundee.

Dear John:

I just feel like writing you about your souls welfare. I saw Jessie (John's sister) and she was telling me how you met Helen. Also that you were just a little disappointed. Understand me John: Jessie spoke as if you had a right to be disappointed. She thinks you are the man and no mistake & so I said nothing but I thought something. Its true, death is the gate to life: But when we are caused to suffer the loss of all things the old man makes a struggle for life and often lives after we have put our self down quite thoroughly over our fancied humility, feeling we have done that which was our duty as commanded us. Now John just go back with me a little while and let us get into the interest of the heart...Your heart and MINE. Did you really die in this matter. (?) Did you die at (Cannot read the name of this place) and then go to your own burial at Gauldry. If so why was you disappointed (?) Or why did you expect Helen to act different(?) All she had to do was to say amen to your death. Cover you up out of sight. Give you the usual clap with the spade and the thing was done never to have a resurrection. Perhaps you think this is to strong but I can't see it any other way. Was it possible John that you was just in another dress & shirt. You expected them to see in your acting so noble a mirror where by they could see their own smallness and fall down and worship that God was in you of a truth and was disappointed because things was not according to the program of

the flesh - the old man(?) Who will have just a little bit of glory out of everything: I was disappointed John and all this went through my mind. I said it dearest(?) but no one else. If I am wrong John, put this away from you but if God has found you out, give him thanks and bless his holy name.

I don't know what to say about my own soul. Only this, God is very near me and this letter. If it does not apply to you, is not lost for it has searched and found out me.

God Bless you John...Grow in Grace and in the knowledge of the Lord. Read this in Gauldry for my Lord's Sake.

Mary Simpson

In between his travels around America, John Stewart made 20 trips across the Atlantic to the "Old Country", apparently with his various employees blessing because he always returned to a waiting job. I have a picture of him, sitting on a trunk, on horse drawn wagon with William Edwards at the reins, his wife Isobel (Daddy's niece) at his side holding two small boys, probably James Stewart Edwards, and David Edwards. The year would be 1903 or 1904 - Daddy's age 38 or 39. He was either, coming or going - On his head was a large hat and on his face a look of anticipation. I often saw that huge trunk as a boy...it was too large for a closet so it was left at the foot of my bed on our back porch in Zellwood.

On one of his visits to the "Old Country", during World War I, he was returning to fight for his country. He volunteered for service but was turned down because of his age of 50 but was accepted as a home guard volunteer. We still have his registration card for this. Crossing the Atlantic was extremely hazardous and the ship on which he was a passenger, was torpedoed by a German U-Boat. It sank and daddy spent an entire night in a lifeboat in the frigid North Atlantic before being rescued. He told me he lost everything except the clothes on his back...lost his kilts, the Stewart Plaids, his concertina and his bagpipes. He never replaced the bagpipes but when a child I listened as he sometimes played another concertina.

After the war ended in 1918, he returned to America for the last time. This was between November 16 and 29, 1919... according to his passport. He again went to work for William Edwards who by now had become the area's most vigorous leader. In addition to managing the two largest estates in the area, he was president of the Plymouth Citrus Fruit Growers Association, head of the Apopka Board of Trade formed to encourage development in the area and was a prime mover in the opening of the Apopka State Bank... served on the Orange Council of Defense and Herbert Hoover's Food Administration

The "Boom" was on. The Holly Arms Hotel at Zellwood was built in 1915...William J Howey laid out Howey-in the Hills...The Oaks Hotel was opened in 1916 ...The Lake Standish Lodge was in full winter service and the Zellwood Inn was operated by Elijah Letsinger and his wife Lige and Aunt Lizzie. (All of these hotels were in operation when I lived in Zellwood and Plymouth).

John Stewart still loved to travel and on one of his trips to Indian Springs, Ga. (A Christian Camp Ground) and Atlanta he met Gladys Viola Davis and his life was changed forever. He was 58.

\* Note -Sent to John Hoyt, Ann Edwards Anderson, Leah Graham, by William Mark Stewart 08-20-2007 Thank You Mark!