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### Halton's Pages of the Past

# Tragic Story Retold of James Campbell Family And How Strange Climax Brought Happiness

BY GWEN CLARKE

It would be hard indeed to find as poignant a story of pioneer life as that of the James Campbell family. But as we follow their family history we find one important detail completely lacking—the location of the lot upon which James Campbell settled. Perhaps a reader of this column may have that information and would be glad to pass it on.

Here is the story as far as we know it.

James Campbell, his wife Janet and their four little boys left Aberdeen, Scotland on June 1, 1833. It was a rough crossing and they were eight weeks on the rolling seas. During the trip the youngest child became very ill. There was so little that could be done for him. In a few days he was dead and was buried at sea.

On the 30th of July the Campbells landed at New York. To reach Upper Canada two routes were open to them—by stage coach or by boat across the Grand Erie Canal to Buffalo. Because it was cheaper they came by boat. From Buffalo a schooner brought them to Niagara-on-the-Lake. Here they took lodgings in a cheap boarding house.

**Bought Advice to Locate**  
While Mrs. Campbell and the boys settled in James Campbell got in touch with people in the village, asking advice as to the best location where government land could be bought. The Niagara district at that time was already well settled, with considerable number of houses, stores, taverns and lodging houses. It is conceivable that a stranger would not realize that conditions were very different farther inland, with settlers few and far between all waging a constant war against the forces of nature, to get even the barest living.

Several persons in Niagara advised Campbell to seek his fortune in the newer townships beyond Hamilton. This he decided to do, and was persuaded by the boys to take them with him. His wife he dare not take with him. Another baby being expected, the risk was too great.

So Janet Campbell was left at the boarding house, a stranger in a strange land, friendless and alone.

It was a sad parting as James and the boys set forth on their journey. The boys ranged in age from nine years to 16. The little party of adventurers travelled through rough country and virgin forests to the Gore district.

**Settle in Esquewaug**  
They slept under trees at night or sometimes in the log cabin of a friendly settler. They were advised to push on to Trafalgar, Esquewaug or Nassagaweya township where they were told the land was cheap. It was Esquewaug that James liked the best, particularly the Scotch Block, where he felt he was among "his ain folk" and it was here, in Esquewaug township, that he purchased 200 acres of land. It was a great day for the Campbell family to at last feel that the land on which they stood was their own.

On their way across country several places are mentioned at which the father and his boys stayed the night—at the home of Thomas Hunt, about nine miles from the Lake and also at the farm home of Joseph Standish, near Stewarttown. When they investigated their own land they found it very wild and wooded. They knew full well there was plenty of hard work ahead of them but they set to work with a will. Wolves howled at night and bears occasionally visited them, by day but a snug log cabin protected them from both the animals and the elements.

**Baby, Daughter Arrives**  
The wife and mother was sadly missed but they looked forward to the day when they would all be united once again, especially after a letter was received from Janet, delivered by an immigrant, telling of the safe arrival of a baby daughter, also named Janet.

As soon as the roads were passable in the spring James set out to fetch his wife and daughter to their new home. The boys were left in

charge of the farm, which at that time wasn't much more than a clearing.

James reached Niagara and found it particularly busy with immigrants coming and going. He went straight to the district where he had left his wife only to find the house burnt to the ground. He was not unduly alarmed—naturally Janet had sought refuge elsewhere—he shouldn't have too much trouble in locating her.

So he began a systematic search of every boarding house in Niagara. He inquired at private homes, at taverns and from store-keepers. But the answer was always the same. No one—not one single person—could give him any information about Janet Campbell and her children.

**A Valn Search**  
James became distraught, desperate with grief and anxiety. For a month he searched in vain from Queenston to every small settlement along the river. Defeated, and broken in spirit, he was finally forced to the conclusion his dear wife and child must have died in his absence—perhaps perished in the fire that destroyed the house in which they had begun their life. His first duty was to his boys. He took up life again for their sake in spite of his great sorrow.

When James reached home the boys were stunned at the news he brought them. But they had to be done and they worked diligently and well. In fact the physical exhaustion from the long hours of unremitting toil was their salvation. They and the passing of the years, eased their sense of loss. As time went on the family prospered.

In 1852, James, the oldest son, then about 25, was delivering farm produce in Toronto. At the last call on his rounds he saw a good looking girl sitting on the steps of the house. He greeted her and she answered him. Then, as if impelled by something from within, he asked the girl her name. She looked surprised but answered without any hesitation—"My name is Janet Campbell."

"Who were your parents?" asked James.

"I never knew my parents but I do know their names were James and Janet Campbell. Why do you ask?"

**Story Is Confirmed**  
Briefly, this is the story that Janet related to the man who now insisted she must be his sister.

All I remember is living with a kind lady at Niagara. I thought for many years she must be a relative. But the other servants told me I was an orphan. In return for her kindness—she taught me to read and write—I worked as a dairymaid. When I was about 15 she told me my mother died of inflammation of the lungs when I was a few weeks old. My mistress then took care of me although all she knew about my mother was her name. Later she gave me a Gaelic Bible which she told me would serve as a clue to my identity should I ever find my father.

"Inside the flyleaf of the Bible there is this inscription—'James Campbell his book—to Janet, 1817.' The time came when my mistress could no longer afford to keep me so she sent me to friends here in Toronto—who have helped me to earn my living as a seamstress."

The Bible did indeed establish the identity of the girl and in a few days her father came to Toronto to claim his long-lost daughter, so heartbreakingly like the wife he had lost. There was great rejoicing when the family was at last united at the farm home in Esquewaug township. But where, exactly, was that farm home? And are there any descendants now living who can claim kinship with the Campbell family whose fortunes we have followed in the foregoing narrative?

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**BEAVER RESEARCH**  
MAPLE, Ont. (CP)—The lands and forests department has asked trappers to send all the beaver skulls they can find to the department's research station here. Skulls should be marked with the sex of the animal and the date it was caught.

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## Chronicles of



### Ginger Farm

Written Specially for the Acton Free Press by Gwen Clarke

"Distant fields are always green" an adage as true today as it ever was. During the last 10 years or so some of our farm friends have been very unsettled. They were undecided whether to stay on the farm or sell out. Some felt they were getting too old for farming... too much hard work; scarcity of farm help, most of it inexperienced added to their troubles. Farm properties were fetching good prices. It might be a good idea to cash in on a good opportunity, move to town, get a smaller house, less work for tired Mrs. Housewife and happily there would be an easier job in town for Mr. Ex-Farmer. He would need something to fill in his time anyway.

So, some of those friends of ours did sell out, others are still sitting on the fence. So what happens? Extracts from recent letters tell their own story. "We so often wish we were still on the farm. It would be wonderful to get away from this 'convenient' noisy suburban area. There are so many things that ever-lasting hum of the air-conditioner, the fan on the furnace, constant murmur of traffic, roar of the planes taking off from a nearby airport and static interference on the radio or television as a nearby neighbor uses his electric razor."

Another letter: "I would trade this city job any day to be back with the cows; to hear the steady rustling sound of cows nosing the hay in their mangers. I am making good money at my present job but I realize now that money isn't everything."

Then I meet and talk with a former farm-wife. In reply to my questions I get an answer something like this: "Yes, our house is very convenient, warm and comfortable even with a north-wester blowing. And of course there is far less work. But a life in a subdivision means living a life very different from what it was on the farm."

"Sometimes I stand at the open door, look along the street to other houses very like our own and I long with everything that's in me for the good, clean country air; to be in a house that isn't hemmed in by other houses. I just have an almost unbearable craving to get out of the house and into the country."

Then from the "fence-sitters" we hear this: "Well, we have practically decided to list the farm. We have looked out a lot in town and we think we'll build this summer. Anything will be better than slaving our hearts out the way we are now."

Well, that is what the other group thought too—the ones who have already sold out. Then why, after a few months away from the farm did they change? It seems to me the change is the natural result of the difference between fatigue and rest. Previous worry and overwork while on the farm resulted in a condition to which the only solution seemed to be to quit farming. At first the change seemed quite satisfactory. Then as mind and body became rested reaction followed. Less work meant more time to think. Presently strange surroundings and a new way of life began to pull. Eventually there came a restlessness born of years of living close to Mother Earth; and of daily dealings with creatures belonging to farm life—caring for them, knowing their welfare depended upon you, their master. And the farmer's wife for many years here had been a life that, in spite of hard work, had yet been a life of comparative freedom. Even a 100 acres could not make a boundary line for beyond it there was the horizon, and with the rising sun, and the beauty and promise of a new day. Or, at night, the restful fading away of the setting sun, which can never be seen to the same extent from the steps of a suburban home, hemmed in by similar houses, and by factories and other buildings. Last year, one friend who moved from the city to the country wrote to me—"You know, Gwen, until we came to live in the country, I never realized how beautiful a sunset could be."

What is the solution for farmers? Unfortunately it is a problem that can only be worked out by the persons concerned. But wouldn't it help considerably if there were a rest period between one move and the next? For instance, if a farmer sold his stock and implements in the fall but did not give up possession of his property until the spring he would get the necessary rest and not have to make snap decisions at a time when he was physically and mentally too tired to cope with his problems.

But in most cases we find farm work goes on until an auction sale brings it to a close. One day the farmer has his usual number of cattle, the next day he has nothing. No young stuff to feed, no cows to milk—and probably by the next week he has moved off the farm. The change is too drastic. It takes a strong personality to absorb such a shock—especially after preparing for an auction sale, which is more of a nervous strain than a year's work.

**SALMON IN BAY?**  
PORT ARTHUR, Ont. (CP)—Provincial lands and forests department officials say plans are underway to make Hudson Bay a future source of new commercial fish. Biologists here say Pacific salmon would find conditions similar to those on the Pacific coast.

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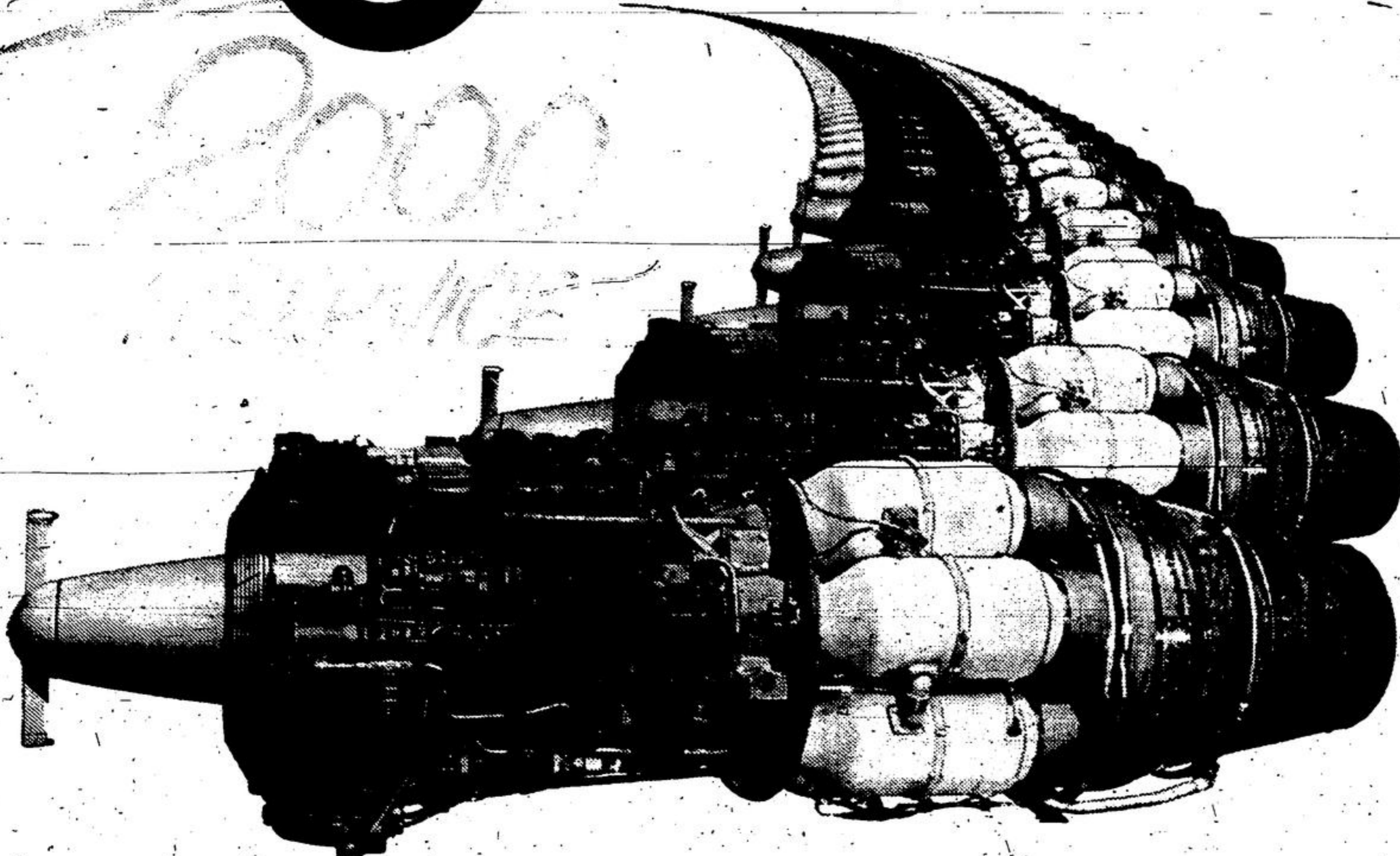
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