

# FROM SLAVERY TO FREEDOM

## The history of the Stark family

### First in a series

The history of the Stark family, as written by Marie Stark-Wallace [1867-1966], is a moving chronicle of the first negro settlers on Salt Spring Island. In her manuscript, which she wrote at the age of 93, Mrs. Stark-Wallace traces her routes back to a town in Missouri where her father, Howard Estes, bought the family's freedom from slavery only to be driven out by the Klu Klux Klan.

The family moved west and settled in California, but state laws oppressive to blacks forced them to look elsewhere. They heard of the fir-covered hills of B. C. and decided to head north.

The manuscript, which has never been published, begins with the story of Marie Stark-Wallace's mother, who was born in slavery to the family of a German baker in Missouri.

It is said that memory is the heritage of old age.

It was to Sylvia Stark a diary richly filled with the strange and unusual happenings of her past life. It was on those occasions when she seemed to be living in the past, she would tell some of her early experiences, and I kept silent for fear of breaking the spell.

Although at that time I had no thought of preserving those memories, I was simply interested in listening to her tales. Some of those tales were very sad relating to the condition of the slaves. The blood of those poor tortured souls cries to God from the ground, but the Great Creator has a time set for judgment of the oppressor and a new life for the oppressed.

Sylvia Stark's maiden name was Sylvia Estes. She was born in Clay County, Missouri, in 1839 and was the youngest of three children who, with their mother, Hannah Estes, worked for a German baker named Charles Leopold.

### THEIR MASTERS' NAMES

Their father, Howard Estes, worked for a Scotsman named Tom Estes. The slaves bore the names of their masters. Sylvia's father considered himself lucky to be privileged to visit his family over the weekends.

The abolitionist movement sponsored by William Lloyd Garrison had been in operation since 1831. It was a menace to the slave owners. They tried to suppress it but to no avail.

Mr. Leopold was very much impressed with the movement. He said he was against slavery and would quit the traffic eventually, but he could not return to Germany.

He said all Germans going to the U.S. were under oath; if they ever held slaves, the penalty if they returned would be death. He said,



An early photo of Marie Stark and her younger sister Louise. Except for a short time in Vancouver, Marie spent all her life

on Salt Spring Island. She lived with her mother Sylvia and brother Willis until she married Joseph Benjamin Wallace in 1897.

Provincial Archives photo

"If I went back now, they would cut off my head."

Mrs. Leopold was not in accord with her husband; she thought they should conform to the southern rules for handling slaves.

### HER FIRST AWAKENING

It was one Christmas morning when little Sylvia had her first awakening. The children were very agreeable and were allowed to play together at this special season.

While waiting for their tree to be arranged in another room, they challenged who would be the first to see the tree. "I will," cried little Sylvia, and being small she crept in close to the door. When the door was opened she was the first one in. Suddenly, she felt herself jerked roughly back and Mrs. Leopold, scolding loudly, cried,

"Ni----, let the white children come first."

"Never do that again," said Mr. Leopold. He had put a nice doll on the tree for Sylvia, but the joy of Christmas was lost to Sylvia. That incident had served its purpose and never had to be repeated again. From that time on, Sylvia was thinking with the mind of a slave. When her mother became ill she was anxious and wondered what will happen to me if Ma dies; where will I go?

### ASSOCIATED WITH WORK

Sylvia's first recollections of her childhood days were associated with work. She said she must have been very small. She remembered that her mother used to tie her big apron around her neck and stand her up on a chair to dry dishes for the white folks, and there were so

many dishes to wipe.

She seldom took part in play with other children outside. Sometimes she would fight if other children were abusive but most of her time was spent learning to sew or knit. Her first knitting was done on broom straws. "When you learn to knit" her mother said, "I will get you some knitting needles."

She practically taught herself to read. The little Leopold child she used to nurse taught her the alphabet and when the white children did their home work, she would listen. When they went out to play and left their books, she would look at them and rehearse them to herself. Mrs. Leopold would have been very angry if she had known this was going on as it was against the law to teach a slave. With these small beginnings Sylvia learned to read.

### TAUGHT THEIR CHILDREN

Howard Estes and his wife were of the same mind in raising their children. Though at a great disadvantage themselves, not being able to read, they taught their children to pray and observe the Sabbath.

Sylvia never forgot the lesson her father taught her. One Sunday morning, their mother was working at the big house, and their father tended to the children. Sylvia had her new clothes on and could hardly wait for her father to finish combing her hair. She was so happy she skipped through the door. Quickly her father called her back, saying, "This is Sunday, now walk out with more modesty, not like a horse bolting through a barn door."

Sylvia never forgot the lesson, even after she and her son had grown old. When their hay was out in the field on Sunday and the clouds threatened rain, she would wait until the morning.

The Estes family went to church; of course the coloured people were seated back by the door but they were allowed to partake of the sacrament after the white folks had theirs. And the sermon, especially for the slaves, was "servants obey your masters". Every slave knew that part of the bible by heart.

Although Mrs. Estes could not read, she was not deceived. She said no one could convince her that God was the author of slavery. Sylvia remembered on one occasion the taking of the sacrament became positively loathsome, changing her whole concept of the performance. The minister used the low language of a boss to his slaves, ending with, "God knows you are a hard nation."

[Next week, part two of Marie Stark-Wallace's manuscript tells more stories of the life of the Estes family before their hard-earned emancipation.

# THE HISTORY OF THE STARK FAMILY

## The dawn of freedom

### Second of a series

*This second installment of Marie Stark-Wallace's manuscript includes the stories and conditions of the Leopold slaves of Clay County, Missouri. One of the Leopold slaves, Sylvia Estes-Stark, belonged to one of six black families living on Salt Spring Island in 1860.*

Life for the Leopold slaves would have been comparatively easy but for the nagging disposition of Mrs. Leopold. Perhaps she thought if her husband would not rule their slaves according to custom in a slave state, she would.

Mrs. Estes usually went through these eruptions calmly, although they made her angry. It came to a climax when her mistress called her to make a fire in the kiln when her hands were in the dough. So she explained to her mistress that she could not make it at that moment as she was making bread and did not want to spoil her bread.

Apparently Mrs. Leopold was out purposely to start a row. She said, "How dare you disobey my orders."

Hannah Estes was not afraid of the big German woman. Hot words passed between them. A quarrel was precipitated that nearly proved disastrous. When Charles Leopold came in he heard his wife's story which was very much distorted. He was very angry. He said he would be ruined if this went around, that he allowed his slaves to talk back.

### SHE WOULD HAVE FOUGHT

He held a menacing whip in his hand, but Hannah would have fought with all the strength she possessed if he had attempted to flog her. Her wild Madagascar blood was aroused. It was settled at last with a sound lecture to both women. Mrs. Leopold sobbing the while because her scheme to have Hannah flogged had failed.

At a considerable risk to himself, Mr. Leopold had on one occasion

quelled a race riot at an anti-slavery meeting. It made him very unpopular with the slave-holders. These eruptions worried Sylvia too. What troubled her mother, troubled her ever since that Christmas morning.

Life for Sylvia was surrounded with terrorism. It was not safe for coloured children to play outside of their own homes. They kidnapped coloured children and sold them down south to the cotton fields from whence they never returned. Sometimes a stranger would offer candy to Sylvia. She always refused it and ran home.

Look beyond,  
there's light for thee.  
Streaming o'er  
a turbulent sea.  
Soft it smiles,  
though distant far,  
The beautiful polar star.

### FINALLY SOLD

Sylvia remembered Harriet Tubman as one of the Leopold slaves. She appeared to be young, only a teenage girl, but she was stocky and strong, and a good worker. But she found it hard to work under Mrs. Leopold. She was finally sold to a slave-breaker. His business was making the slaves be submissive to their masters.

Often they were treated to a daily flogging. But when he tried to flog Harriet Tubman, to his surprise she flogged him, scratched his face, tore his clothing and pounded him so severely, he abandoned the cowhide and threatened to shoot her. She bared her bosom without flinching, saying "Shoot and be d---, I would rather die than live such a life." He shot low to cripple her.

Mrs. Estes visited her when she was layed up sick. To her she told her pitiful story. It was a long time before she could walk on that foot but her spirit remained unbroken, as her life showed for many years after that.

### CALLED 'MOSES'

That was not the only wound she received while trying to rescue her race. She was knocked unconscious while trying to protect a slave. She was called the "Moses" of her race.



SYLVIA STARK-ESTES

\$40,000 was offered for her capture.

Harriet Tubman saved her parents and hundreds of slaves through the underground railway, assisted by both white and coloured people, who took part in the underground work.

The underground railway was a network of secret routes operated by land and water. She being a woman of great strength and endurance, finally escaped through this system. Many times her life was in danger, but she always followed the north star while fleeing north at night with a band of refugees.

She lived through the Civil War and served as a scout in the northern army, and built a home for the aged in New York. The last they heard of Harriet Tubman was from a coloured woman

who nursed her in a home for the aged in Syracuse, New York.

### MADE A CONTRACT

The dawn of freedom came to the Estes family in 1849. The gold rush was on and livestock was in great demand. Tom Estes, Howard's boss, was sending cattle to California. Tom's two sons and Howard went as herders. The boss made a contract with Howard, agreeing to give Howard his freedom papers on receipt of one thousand dollars, allowing him the privilege of making the money in California.

Howard worked in the gold mines, made the money and sent it to Tom in care of his sons according to contract. Tom received the money, but refused to give Howard his free papers. Unwilling to be thwarted he made another \$1,000, sending it directly to Charles Leopold. It was carried safely in the pocket of a German friend and delivered to Charles Leopold.

### CLAIMED THE MONEY

When Tom Estes heard about it, he claimed that money too, on the grounds that Howard was his slave. Leopold contended that Howard was in a free state, and therefore a free man. Then Tom sued Leopold and was awarded \$800, but was forced to relinquish Howard's free papers.

The time seemed long while waiting their father's return. Sylvia saw the anxious strain of that long wait in her mother's face and how she frequently went away alone to the seclusion of an old shed. Sylvia was anxious about her mother, so one day she stole out to the shed and peeped through the crack. She saw her mother on her knees praying for the safe return of Howard, and that her children would be blessed and free.

*Next week, part three of Marie Stark-Wallace's manuscript tells of her grandfather Howard and his family's trek to California.*

# THE HISTORY OF THE STARK FAMILY

## Westward bound by wagon train

*Their freedom was finally bought, yet continual persecution drove Howard Estes and his family out of Clay County, Missouri, and west to California.*

*This third instalment of the History of the Stark Family begins on a westward bound wagon train.*

Sylvia remembered it was the first day of April, 1851, when they left Missouri.

They made a jolly start by making April Fool jokes, etc. Sylvia and her mother gathered wild greens, as they passed through the country and they had one last good feed of old Missouri wild greens.

The first station they came to was called Fort Pillar, said to be the place where the Red man, in a most strenuous battle, fought the white man for the freedom of the plains. It was then settled with white people.

### INDIAN CAMPSITE

Then they camped where there was good grazing for the cattle, Humbolt Creek. It had once been a campsite for the Indians. They met two white women, who as children had witnessed the slaying of their parents, a sister and a brother, and themselves captured by the Indians.

In time they were rescued. They were both married and still living in the same isolated district where stalked the ghost in memory of that dark tragedy.

Their story caused Sylvia and her mother apprehension for the future on the long trail that lay ahead. But in spite of the dangers attending the journey, Sylvia and her brother found life on the great plains something new and thrilling.

From the little prairie dogs barking and scampering at sight of them, to the stampeding of great herds of buffalo stampeding at sight of the caravan. Sylvia would gather the beautiful flowers while walking, only to throw them away. There was no place to put them.

### LOCUSTS

Sometimes swarms of locusts darkened the sky and fell about the wagons, creeping inside the canvas, getting into the cooking utensils and other paraphernalia; often the only fuel they had was sundried buffalo chips.

They made their pancakes and bacon taste smokey, but they ate them with relish; they had excellent appetites, then the mosquitoes were so thick they covered the lids of the pots while the cooking was going on.

Sometimes they were so parched for water they drank water from a stream where the carcasses of dead animals lay; it was hard for Sylvia's mother to get used to this. She went further up-stream only to find more cow horns protruding from the water; the stream was lined for miles with the bleaching bones of animals probably from drinking too much water; cold water on a hot stomach.

### EWES DEVoured

One awful sight on the journey Sylvia would not forget, seeing the ewes of the sheep too heavy with young to travel, left behind only to be devoured by ferocious coyotes. She tried to scare them by throwing stones at them. In this she had to be careful of herself, it was the time for her to listen to her parents' warning. In those days the immigrants felt they were fortunate if they themselves were not left behind as bleaching bones on the desert, or perhaps in a lonely grave.

When the sun came up big and golden above the distant horizon, casting its cheery rays over the trail, everybody was happy, but when the sun had gone down, the moon rose pale and shadowy and the coyotes howled around the camp.

An uneasy feeling was the result, every precaution was taken to safeguard the animals. A cordon of wagons was placed around the camp, the men slept with their guns stacked close to hand, ready for any emergency.

### DANGER

The first intimation they had of danger was on the night Jackson Estes, Sylvia's brother, was on guard; each one took their turn in guarding the camp.

He was sitting out in the bright moonlight, gazing at the mounds and shadows, then he said something told him to go and sit in the shade of a wagon. He had scarcely moved from his seat when an arrow whizzed past him and stuck fast in



HOWARD ESTES

Provincial Archives photo

the ground where he had been sitting.

Instantly the alarm was given and every man grabbed his gun, but there was not a sound, not even the howl of a coyote. Fearing the Indians might plan to raid the camp in the morning when the wagons were loaded and hitched, they left before dawn.

One evening they came to a good spot for camping, where there was plenty of grass for the animals. They camped early to let the animals graze. They were making themselves comfortable when someone put his ear to the ground to listen for sounds.

### SURROUNDED

They heard sounds alright, soon

After a long talk with him he finally agreed to accept gifts, such as flour and other provisions. They thought they were fortunate to lose only three horses to the Indians.

### BACK TO THEIR CAMP

Then the chief walked to his tent door and gave one loud whoop. Instantly the shouting ceased and all of the Indians rode back to their camp.

However, they did not trust the Indians, they left that place for fear they might attempt another raid in the morning.

As they continued their journey with watchfulness and care, they came upon eight men travelling on foot; they were a sorry spectacle, their caravan had been raided by the Indians rushing their camp and making off with their ready loaded wagons. In their haste they spilled a quantity of flour, all that was left to the men was the flour and a few cooking utensils.

One of the men slit the leg of his pants up to the knee, tied one end to hold the flour which they scooped up from the ground, they had travelled on this for three days, and were very glad for the timely contact with the Leopold caravan who shared provisions with them.

### BOOKS TAKEN

They thought it very strange too that all of their French books had been taken by the Indians. It was common to see herds of buffaloes grazing along the trail. They longed for fresh meat, they tried to shoot a buffalo calf, but it was a difficult matter to get close to the herd to shoot one, the old buffaloes formed a circle around the calves and kept them inside the circle while they were feeding. The buffalo bulls would fight if one got too close.

Then one of the cowboys of the camp rode quietly after a herd and shot a calf, then he turned quickly and galloped away. There was a terrible commotion among the herd, followed by a general stampede of the whole herd. When it was safe to return they skinned the calf and divided it to carry on their way; they had cutlets for dinner.

*Next week the Estes family continue their journey, which the Stark family history says took three days less than six months.*

everyone heard hoofs coming, in less time than it takes to tell, they were surrounded by a large band of Indians whooping and howling as they raced around the camp to make the cattle stampede.

But the poor beasts were too tired to run. Then they increased their howling, giving out terrible yells as they raced around the camp. Mr. Estes became uneasy, as the men were preparing to put up a fight, and he was the only man who had his family with him. You had better do something for these Indians, there are too many for us to fight.

Then they decided to give gifts to the chief, they went to his tent, fortunately he could speak English.

# THE HISTORY OF THE STARK FAMILY

## The Estes family arrives in California

### Fourth in a Series

This is the fourth instalment of the History of the Stark Family of Salt Spring Island, as written by Marie Stark-Wallace [1867-1966]. She wrote the manuscript when she was 97 years old. The continuing story now finds the family finally finishing the journey from Missouri to California by wagon train.

It was some time during the harvest when they came to Salt Lake City. They saw the farmers that lived near the lake driving swarms of grasshoppers into the lake. The floating mass of hoppers appeared to be over knee-deep.

It was sometime during the harvest when they came to Salt Lake City. They saw the farmers that lived near the lake driving swarms of grasshoppers into the lake. The floating mass of hoppers appeared to be over knee-deep.

They were treated with greatest hospitality by the Latter Day Saints. Their leader, Mr. Brigham Young, paid them a visit and invited them to stay for the winter and pasture their animals in a place called Mountain Meadows.

It was a natural garden of grass and flowers surrounded by hills. There was only one entrance to the enclosure, and that was also the exit.

### STRANGE TALES

They would have stayed for the winter but Mr. Estes, having passed through that country before, had heard strange tales about Indians robbing and killing the immigrants in that locality. He suspected that the real source of the crimes had never been divulged. [\*see footnote]

Therefore, he decided to take his wife and family on, leaving the rest of the caravan if they wished to stay. He preferred to continue the journey alone in his own wagon rather than take the risk.

Then they all decided to make the mountains before the rainy season came on. Also, they had no desire to lose their help. They stayed for a week to rest their animals and replenish their stock.

During their stay in Salt Lake City they learned some of the customs of those peculiar people.

One day a woman came to see Mrs. Estes, perhaps more to relieve her troubled mind than just to pay a friendly visit. She said she and her husband had made a comfortable home for themselves, and were quite happy not knowing the laws of the country.

### ANOTHER WIFE

When Brigham Young visited their home, he told her husband he must get another wife, it came as a shock to them. They had small means, just enough for themselves, and they could not afford to leave their home.

Her husband contrived a plan. He would get an Indian woman for a wife. She could live in a tent and look after herself. This proved a bitter pill for his wife. She said I could Kill B--Young. The native woman was then living in her own tent looking after her half-caste child.

After leaving Salt Lake City they passed several stations, one station named Forgotten.

Sylvia recalled mainly because of its dire loneliness and what happened to the lonely couple, man

and wife, who lived there in the cabin.

### THEIR ONLY CHILD

Inside the fence surrounding the house was a tiny grave. It was the grave of their only child. A little girl, shot down while playing outside of her home. Struck with an arrow from the distant hills.

The father extracted the arrow from the child's body and since there was no habitation for many miles, the parents buried her there.

The mother wanted to leave that dangerous place, but the father was doing business there. Probably trading with the Indians in furs or hides, as many other stations did. Anyway, he wanted to stay.

When they came to Fort Kerney an anxious letter was waiting there for Mr. Leopold. His wife had heard that his caravan had been captured by the Indians, and all of the occupants slain. He wrote her immediately assuring her that they were all safe.

### TRAVELED SLOWLY

News travelled slowly across the desert. Mrs. Leopold's letter had been written more than a month earlier. The fastest mail for the desert those days was the "pony express", the name given for mail carried by horses.

On the trail they saw where caravans had been raided; what became of the occupants, there was no sign to show.

They saw wagon loads of buffalo hides going to market. The hides were packed flat on the wagons, piled high and strapped down like hay, drawn by oxen or horses, four and six span to a wagon.

The skinned carcasses of buffalo were not an uncommon sight along the way, and if they did not see them, they knew where they were by the ravens.

As they were passing through the hills the Estes wagon broke down, smashing a large jar of jam

of Mrs. Estes. She, however, regretted the loss of the jar, more than the loss of the jam. Mr. Estes managed to bolster his wagon sufficiently for the rest of the journey to California.

They had been exactly six months less than three days on the journey, when they reached Sacramento. There the journey disbanded. The Estes family went to the

mining district 60 miles from the capital, and four miles from a town called Placerville, where the miners took their maiden gold to exchange for cash.

\*It was some years later when Mr. Estes heard about the Mountain Meadows Massacre. One hundred and twenty immigrants, men, women and children, were lured into Mountain Meadows, where they were shot down and their goods were confiscated.

## Mountain Meadows scene of 'hideous crime'

A company of emigrants from Arkansas "Francher's Company" and their caravan went forward through the Mormon Settlements to the southwest. It could purchase few or no supplies; it could make no trades; it was boycotted.

Still it went on, until it came to a pleasant little valley known as Mountain Meadows - the famous Las Vegas de Santa Clara of the trappers - some 280 miles southwest of Salt Lake City and 30 miles south of Cedar City.

Isaac C. Haight, President of the Parowan Stake of Zion and lieutenant-colonel of the Iron County Militia, decided that as these intruders were heretics and blasphemers, detestable in the eyes of the Lord, they must die; but that as "no innocent blood must be shed," children under the age of seven should be spared.

### GAVE THE ORDERS

To John Doyle Lee he gave the orders for a massacre, and by Lee a band of Paiute Indians was incited to do the deed. An attack was made on the morning of September 13, and seven men were killed or mortally wounded; but the emigrants returned the fire, killing three Indians and wounding several more.

Lee, acting as Haight's messenger, had promised the Indians the protection of the Great Spirit, and this loss troubled them. They sent for him; he came up and after some parley promised reinforcements. Departing, he soon started back to the scene with 100 Indians and 75 Mormons, the latter remaining some distance behind.

On the evening of the 14th and again on that of the 15th the Indians attached were repulsed.

### SPIRIT REVOLTED

On the morning of the 16th a messenger arrived from Haight to Lee with final orders. Lee later testified that though his spirit revolted at the contents of the message, he felt that he must obey. The Mormons now joined in prayers and asked God's blessing on the bloody work they had planned.

At two o'clock Lee and a companion, under a flag of truce, visited the emigrants and told them that if they would leave their arms and wagons and return under a

Mormon escort to the settlements, their lives would be spared. The emigrants, no one of whom was an experienced frontiersman, accepted this treacherous proposal and marched out of their camp.

In front of them, lying in ambush, were most of the Mormons, some of them in Indian garb, and the Paiutes. At a signal they opened fire and then rushed upon their victims with knife and rifle.

### ALL BUT

In a few minutes all except 17 children were killed. These children, several of whom were wounded, were placed in a wagon and afterwards distributed among the Mormon citizens of Cedar City. The property of the victims was also distributed, but the Indians and the poorer Mormons asserted that they received little or none of it, and that Lee and the higher authorities got a disproportionate share.

The only person ever punished for this hideous crime was Lee, who by no means was the most guilty. In a Federal Court in September 1876, nearly 20 years later, he was convicted of murder, and on March 23, 1877, was shot to death at Mountain Meadows by a marshal's posse.

(Taken from the book, *The Road to Oregon*, by Agnes Laut).

Next week the Estes family history relates the hardships and joys of being free in California, although the family remains unaware of new state laws on the horizon which will be oppressive to blacks.

## December program

Salt Spring Island Trail and Nature Club's program for December is as follows.

December 4: there will be a walk and hike from the Holmes' property on Isabella Point. Jean King will lead the hike and Jean Holmes the walk. Meeting places, Centennial Park at 10 am, Drummond Park, 10.15.

December 11: Tom Fraser will lead a walk in St. Mary's Highlands. Val Keys will lead a hike in the Vesuvius area. No lunches required.

The club will hold its third annual unofficial bird count on December 8.

Last year 76 volunteers counted 95 species with a total of 16,468 birds.

Call Gertrude Smith at 537-9559, or Jean Holmes, 653-4285, if you are interested in helping with this project, "which is of great interest to the provincial museum," a club spokesman said.

 **Salt Spring Petroleum Products Ltd.**

SUPER PRODUCTS

- Residential Heating Fuels
- Industrial & Marine Products

**Specializing in Service**

The plant, Ganges Harbour: 537-5331  
Residence: 537-9209 or 537-9849

**W. Charles Beale**  
D.C.

**Chiropractor**

Corner of Fulford-Ganges & Beddis Roads, Ganges, B.C.  
Phone 537-9512 for appointment

**It is now legal to have your own STIHL on Salt Spring Island, so come in to HARBOURS END MARINA and get yours!**

Lots of new stock just arrived in time for Christmas

- \* Stihl Chainsaws
- \* Briggs & Stratton, Tecumseh Engines
- \* Ariens Tractors
- \* Honda Motorcycles, outboard motors, generators, pumps & much more

So wrap one of these gifts up and tell Santa to stick it.... Under the Christmas Tree.

**HARBOURS END MARINA**  
537-2932

**W.E. SMITH**  
**Dental Mechanics Ltd.**

**OPEN**

2nd Floor, Lancer Bldg.  
Ganges

MON. — TUES. — WED.  
9 — 12, 1.30 — 5

**537-9611**

Mail to Box 3, Fulford Harbour

## THE HISTORY OF THE STARK FAMILY

# The Estes settle in free California

### Fifth in a series

*This installment of the Estes' journey gives the complete story of their sojourn in California, as told by Marie Stark-Wallace (1867-1966).*

After a long and tiresome journey across the desert they arrived in California exactly six months less three days, on the journey.

The company disbanded, the Estes family located in the mining district about 60 miles from Sacramento, a small town at that time. They found an empty miner's cabin which they made into a comfortable home.

That was a day Sylvia would long remember, though the shadow of more than 70 years had fallen between. She could still recall those moments of ecstasy and calm, the look of joy on her mother's face as she went about cleaning the cabin and preparing for their first meal in free California.

Sylvia found a good pot for cooking meals by the fireplace, they gathered sticks and made a fire. "We'll have to work hard," her mother said, "but we are working for ourselves now." It was such a pleasure to be working for themselves, they were happy though penniless, and among strangers.

### AT FACE VALUE

Sylvia's father had one dollar with which he bought a small ham. The storekeeper told him he could have tea, flour, baking powder and a head of cabbage at face value. That was one time his face was of some value to him. Howard Estes was joyful and he thanked the man for his kindness. Mrs. Estes cooked a good dinner all in that one pot. She made dumplings and cooked them on top of the meat and cabbage. They enjoyed that meal immensely.

Then father and son went in search of other household necessities in deserted cabins. They returned with all the kitchen utensils they needed including a dutch oven: just what they needed for baking bread. The miners had made their stakes, leaving everything behind, and departed with their gold.

Sylvia's father was hired to work in the gold mines, while Sylvia and her brother panned the fine gold where once rich mines had been. They sold their gold dust and made, on an average, a dollar a day. They were very proud of their gains.

### INTO THE BANK

Every cent made was added to the family bank, which was a tin can hid under a bed. Their father was a man of saving qualities, if he only had a dollar left after all expenses were paid, he would lay that away.

The cost of living was high and the poorest grade of flour, sometimes smut wheat flour, was \$15 a barrel. When Mr. Estes turned to farming he raised his own grain and had it ground at the mill.

He sold butter, eggs and vegetables. His first hen cost him \$2.50. They raised fruit and tomatoes, but they were so cheap they had some to give away. Their farm kept them in good circumstances, but Mrs. Estes chose to take in washing. Pleated shirts, which were very stylish, were \$3 each, frilled dresses were from \$5 up.

Everybody wore white. Sylvia helped



Sylvia Stark and Marie A. Wallace

her mother. They made good money although the work was hard with no washing machines in those days. Sylvia had to iron her mother's shoulders with a warm iron for rheumatism while she was ironing clothes. They soon had money to buy a horse and wagon.

### HER HAPPIEST

Those days in the tumbled hills of California were the happiest days of Sylvia's life. When she and her brother found time to explore the country, they learned many of the peculiar traits of the California Indians. They made fires, and when the fire burned low they drove the grasshoppers into the hot embers. When they were roasted they ate them with relish.

When they killed the big gray squirrels, they pounded them to a pulp with stones, singed them and roasted them in the hot embers. When cooked, they ate them bones and all.

Their bread was acorns pounded to meal. The Indians were very poor, which Mrs. Estes learned when an aged and destitute Indian woman came to their house. They always gave her a meal and fruit or vegetables to carry home.

One day she came complaining that the old hog meat man had forbidden her to pick up acorns from under the trees, he wanted them for his pigs. There was a time when some of the native tribes used their free land to raise the yellow corn and make their own gardens.

### CHURCH MAN

Mr. Estes was a good church man. Often the family walked to church to give their horse a rest. Sylvia and her brother always had their shoes polished and shined for Sunday, but when they walked to church they went most of the way barefoot, carrying their shoes to put them on before entering the church, keeping them clean and bright.

Wherever you may go you will always find the gossiper. They said the Estes family were proud because they didn't go

to dances, but Sylvia and her brother were not guided by the thinking public. They obeyed their parents. They were following the higher precepts of morals. They had faith in their parents. Just as we may have childlike faith in God's word; faith in the Gospel.

Jesus said: Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.

Sylvia loved to walk through the red trails gathering wild flowers, California yellow poppy and red geraniums, such as are cultivated as tame flowers in B.C.

### LOVED NATURE

She loved nature, she loved life. All nature was life to Sylvia. The creeping deadly rattle snake also was there in hiding. When Sylvia heard the warning rattle, she left that place, but her mother killed the snakes with stones.

The miners were often bitten by these snakes. They had to have a doctor quickly or they would die.

During the summer season a thin cotton sheet was all the cover they needed on those hot nights. They were forced to keep their windows closed and nailed tight for fear of thieves in that mining district. Crime was a common experience.

One day a stranger came to the door and asked if Mr. Estes would loan him his horse and wagon. His wife and family had come across the plains and were waiting for him somewhere on the highway.

He had been around to all of his neighbours but none of them would trust him. As a last resort he came to the coloured family.

### NOT EAGER

The horse and wagon was Mr. Estes' main support and he was not eager to bestow charity and confidence on a perfect stranger, much as he would have liked, he had put his trust in a man when in slavery and gained his freedom.

But he also had been swindled and preyed upon through misplaced faith. However, the man's case was pitiful, he was destitute and had no one to turn to. Mr. Estes called upon his wife. He had great confidence in his wife's ability to judge character, although she had no education, she was just a pure-blood Madagascan.

She said he looks like an honest man, and she had seldom been mistaken in her estimation of character. So they loaned the horse and wagon to the man. Although it was not without some apprehension they waited for the man's return. Time passed, but finally he returned bringing his wife to see Mrs. Estes.

### AMAZING TALES

She told of her experience on the desert. It was another one of the amazing tales Sylvia had heard about the covered wagon. The woman's husband had made a home for his wife and family in California and had sent for them. The wife with her two small children joined a caravan owned by a man she knew and trusted, but when they had covered a great portion of the journey, far away from any habitation she discovered the man's real character. He threatened to put her out of the wagon for resisting his advances, but her courage and loyalty was unwavering. She felt she could not face her husband if she failed under this man's awful threats.

Finally he did put her out with her two small children and the bundle of her belongings and drove off and left them. She had an awful feeling alone on the great open space with two helpless babes. She prayed in agony. Indians, ravenous wolves, starvation raced through her distraught mind. Night was coming on, the sun had gone down.

### WOULD BE WELCOME

Any kind of human would be welcome now. She was looking back on the trail when she saw moving objects in the grey distance. As they drew nearer she saw that they were two coloured men with a donkey and all of their belongings packed on its back.

Her prayer was answered. She determined to beg them for help, although in the state where she came from they were not considered reliable. The two men were visibly shocked seeing her plight. Then she heard them say in lowered voices, "What can we do, we haven't enough grub for ourselves?" "But we can't leave her here."

Then they asked her if she could walk. "We'll put the children on the donkey," they said. She was only too glad to walk, although it made her feet sore.

By stinting themselves, they managed to feed the children until they came to a settlement of white people. Now you are with your own people, they said. They can look after you, and there they left her.

*Next week the Estes family decide to emigrate from California along with 600 other coloured people, leaving by steamship and overland by the Oregon Trail for destinations as far away as Australia, Victoria, B.C. and Salt Spring Island.*

## THE HISTORY OF THE STARK FAMILY

# B.C. spells freedom for the Estes, Starks

Sixth in a series

In this instalment some gaps in Marie Stark-Wallace's manuscript have been filled in with quotes from the B.C. Historical Magazine and information supplied by her daughter, Mrs. Robert Holloman.

"The emancipation of the slaves in the U.S. was a burning political question. The Negro people were dissatisfied with the laws of the country. They met at San Francisco to discuss how best they could improve their hard lot.

"A committee was sent to B.C. to interview the government. Governor Douglas received them and extended them a cordial welcome to establish themselves on British soil.

"As a result of the favorable report by the committee, 600 coloured people came to B.C., some came up on two pioneer steamships, Brother Jonathan and Pacific."

In 1858 Howard Estes decided to leave a comfortable home and go in search of greater freedom. The coloured people of California were becoming alarmed over general agitation under southern pressure to make California a slave state.

In 1852 the federal government had passed a law permitting the return of fugitive slaves fleeing to northern states to be returned to their owners in the South.

### TO WEAR BADGES

It was also required of all coloured people in California to wear a distinctive badge. Furthermore, the state legislature had taken what appeared to be the first steps against the coloured race. The effect was to deprive them of the ability to protect their property from spoliation by the white man.

A white person was protected by law from the testimony of a coloured person. Some of those coloured people went to Australia, some to the Cariboo mines and others to Victoria and Salt Spring Island.

Then in the mining district where Mr. Estes and Mr. Stark lived, certain laws governing mining operations, which were designed to protect the miners, seemed to clash with the homesteaders' rights. The Starks and the Estes were both preparing to leave California. They had heard about New Caledonia, as B.C. was then called. They longed for the freedom of B.C.'s fir-covered hills.

### MARRIED

In 1855 Sylvia Estes had married Louis Stark in California. The partnership of Louis Stark and Howard Estes began in Placerville. Together they farmed, raised cattle and horses and panned for gold in the hills.

Howard Estes and his son Jackson had worked as cowboys when they were slaves, driving cattle both ways across the continent.



The tombstone of Hannah, wife of Howard Estes and mother of Sylvia, in the Pioneer Cemetery of Christchurch Cathedral, Victoria. She died in 1868 at the age

of 62 years. She lived on the Estes farm in Saanich until she died and never moved to Salt Spring.

So while Howard Estes left by ship with the women and children, Jackson Estes and Louis Stark drove the cattle and horses north to B.C. via the old Oregon Trail.

Stark had sold all but 50 of his best cattle and had joined others of another company who were herding their cattle along the same trail.

### BY BOAT

Howard Estes sold his farm for what he could get and took the women and children to San Francisco and embarked on the boat *Brother Jonathan*. The boat was old and unseaworthy, but it carried a heavy cargo.

When the ocean was rough the boat rolled and creaked with every rising swell. They threw 40 head of fine horses overboard for safety. It was another pitiful sight that saddened the trip for Sylvia, to see those poor animals swimming after the boat, crying for help.

The boat landed at a place called Stillicum, Washington. This place was sparsely settled with white people and Indians. The family stayed in Stillicum more than a month waiting for the arrival of Mr. Stark with the cattle.

### BOUGHT SUPPLIES

They bought supplies from the farmers. These new settlers were poor, like most of the immigrants.

One family helped to solve their own problems. When they bought a sack of potatoes they ate the potatoes and planted the peelings, thus raising another good crop of potatoes.

When the men arrived with the cattle they went to Victoria, B.C., in a sailing vessel. Much of what transpired from the time they left Stillicum and their final landing on Salt Spring Island was not remembered.

The first thing Mr. Stark did after landing in Victoria, he secured naturalization papers for all of the family.

### IN SAANICH

Mr. Estes and family located in Saanich, where he bought property.

It is recorded that a Mr. Thomas Mitchell "in 1867 went out to South Saanich and bought 125 acres of land from a coloured man by the name of Estes and an interesting receipt dated March 26th, 1868, states that Thomas Mitchell bought of Howard Estes 21 head of cattle, small and big, 18 pigs, 24 chickens and turkeys, one wagon and harness, one plow, milking pans, etc., for the sum of \$650. The witness to the receipt was an old pioneer lawyer of Victoria, H. F. Heisterman."

Howard Estes' son Jackson still owned 100 acres which was not sold. "Howard Estes name appears on the 1874 voters' list but it must have been for the land that Jackson held, as the latter did not appear on the list at any time. Howard Estes is supposed to have gone to live on Salt Spring Island, but his son returned to the United States."

### LATER SOLD IT

Jackson Estes later sold his 100 acres in what is now called the Mitchell Valley, about half-way along Telegraph Road in Saanich.

Jackson Estes "does not appear to have done much farming, for in a few years he sold his farm and eventually started a brewery business in Victoria."

"The Gold Rush brought in some 25,000 Americans seeking riches. They materially influenced the life and thought of the community in those days, but many of them not in any elevating or lasting manner."

"They got all the gold they could find - and that was not much - and hied themselves back across the line where their welcome, we hope, was as great as the relief of the Canadians, to see them depart."

"They came for gold and brought no lasting contribution with them, but they made things noisy and sometimes troublesome while here. This was especially true to their attitude and actions toward the many Negroes who came about the same time, but not for the same reason."

### STIRRING EVENT

"These people were a humble, honest, industrious and deeply religious group. They came seeking liberty and a pleasant spot to call home. These things were promised by Governor Douglas and these they obtained with the complete backing of the governor."

Sylvia remembered that a delegation of coloured people called on Governor Douglas requesting permission to form a colony of coloured settlers on Salt Spring Island about that time, but he refused, saying it would be to the best interest of all to have a mixed settlement.

### ACQUIRED LAND

Some of those coloured people remained in Victoria and some went to Salt Spring and other places. Those who remained in Victoria acquired valuable property, and several took part in the city's municipal activities.

That was a busy time for the Starks. They were preparing to go to Salt Spring Island and there was a restless herd of cattle to keep in a corral and feed.

During the families' stay in Victoria, Mr. Louis Stark, with the help of Howard Estes, located a place on the northwest side of Salt Spring and built a cabin on it.

The place located by Stark and Estes included 2½ miles of continuous waterfront and extended a mile inwards from the sea. The property began at a point about half a mile south of Parminter Point and included Vesuvius Bay and ended three-quarters of a mile south of the southern point of Vesuvius Bay.

Next week Marie Stark-Wallace's manuscript begins on a bright day in 1860 when Sylvia and Louis Stark moved to Salt Spring Island.

## THE HISTORY OF THE STARK FAMILY

# Early settlers encounter hostile Indians

Seventh in a series

*This week, Marie Stark-Wallace's manuscript describes pioneering in the Gulf Islands in 1860.*

It was a bright day in 1860 when the Starks moved to Salt Spring Island. Sylvia remembered 1860 chiefly because John E. Stark, the second son, was born four months after they landed.

They came to the northwest side of the island in a sailing vessel. The cattle were lowered into the water with strong ropes. They swam to land and took the trail leading up to their home, lowing as they went on without anyone to guide them.

The passengers clambered down the side of the ship on rope ladders, and into two Indian canoes manned by two Indians, a man and his wife.

### LANDED WITH THEM

A Hudson Bay Co. man landed with them. Mr. Macauley, the Hudson Bay agent, offered to stay with Mrs. Stark and the two children while Mr. Stark went down to the settlement to get conveyance to haul their baggage.

While they were waiting for him, the two natives, with their natural keenness of sight, saw canoes in the distance. As they drew nearer the native and his wife became very much excited, showing fear. They said it was the northern Indians; they were hostile to the tribes inhabiting the islands in the strait. The Indian woman stole away into the bush near her canoe.

The Haida, or northern Indians, had several big canoes, seven or more, heavily loaded with furs. As soon as they saw the small group on the beach they turned and headed for the spot.

### EXAMINED CONTENTS

They beached their own canoes then



Known to Salt Spring Islanders as "the panther", Willis Stark was known for his great cougar hunting expertise. Willis and his two hunting

dogs were invariably called upon whenever a cougar was seen. He looked after his mother after his father's murder in 1895.

dogs were invariably called upon whenever a cougar was seen. He looked after his mother after his father's murder in 1895.

thought this would surely be his end. **SOON SURROUNDED**

He begged the Haida Indians to put him ashore anywhere but the Haidas tried to out-run them but were too heavily loaded. They were soon surrounded by a desperate band of men on the war path and heavily armed. "We will not kill the white man," they said to the Haidas, "but we will kill you."

So they agreed to let the northern Indians take Mr. Macauley to his destination and they all paddled to the head of the bay we call Ganges and put Macauley out.

They then went out into the bay and fought a most desperate battle with hundreds of local men to a comparatively small number of northerners.

Another account of that historical battle came in a newspaper published in 1932. It read that only one of the northern braves escaped, and he was so badly wounded it was doubtful that he recovered.

### HOSTILE

That was the time the local natives themselves were quite hostile. They held meetings with much Skookum pow-wow, Chinook strong talk, as they saw their beaches and hunting grounds usurped by the incoming settlers.

The sight of carcasses of animals lying on the beaches, their hides taken and the meat left to spoil. When an Indian came to one of such he made a clucking noise with his tongue, which indicated disgust. It only served as fuel to an already heated situation.

Salt Spring Island was officially named Admiral Island in 1859, but it still retained the name it had acquired in 1856, Salt Spring, a self name because of its salt springs.

According to the *B.C. Historical Quarterly*, 1951, there were 70 resident land owners on the island in 1860. The first white settlers were Mr. and Mrs.

Lineker and family who came in 1858. **SIX FAMILIES**

As Mrs. Stark remembered, there were six coloured families on Salt Spring Island in 1860 when the Starks came.

She said there were two old coloured people known as Grandpa Jackson and Grandma Jackson. Grandma Jackson was 112 years of age and Grandpa Jackson was 114 years of age. They did not stay long on Salt Spring.

Sylvia Stark's first sight of her new home on the island was an unfinished log cabin surrounded by trees and thick underbrush. It was anything but encouraging. It called for work, in which she would have to take part.

But one happy thought in this wilderness, it was their own and it stood for freedom. And that all absorbing thought was all the stimulus needed for the coloured settlers in those days.

### HADNT RECOVERED

They hung a quilt up for a door, and the neighbours came and helped Mr. Stark to put a roof on the house to keep out the rain. Sylvia had not recovered quite from the shock of their first landing. She found it hard to get used to their wild surroundings. It was so lonely being located in an isolated place quite a distance from the settlement.

There was no doctor available then. She was yet in her teens, and felt the need of a woman's advice and companionship. The first time she was left alone with her two small children she wept despondently. Her little son Willis tried to comfort her. Stroking her head soothingly, he said, "Don't cry, Ma. Let's go home." The only home he knew was in California.

But a change was coming to Sylvia. She would know the peace of a comfortable saviour. She would know why her mother used to hide away in the old shed to pray. She was often left alone with her children. There seemed to be no other way. Their neighbours were in the same predicament to some extent when their men went to town for provisions.

### GUIDING HAND

Looking back over those dark days, Sylvia often made the remark, "Now I can see the hand of God guiding me through all of my troubles, guiding me to a higher life."

Her husband was not sympathetic, so she would steal out into the woods to pray, although wild animals roamed through the bush; black bear, cougars, even wolves were on the island in those days.

But she was serving Daniel's God, the bush had no terrors when the urge came to pray.

Then one day as she lay on a couch, tired and self abandoned, these words came to her: "Fear not for I am with thee." (Isaiah, 41: 10)

It gave her joy. It was the answer to her prayer. On this wild and unconquered island she had found new life. She could not read the Bible and understand it without the help of those faithful missionaries of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, who visited the settlers and read the Bible to them, giving much needed help those days.

Four months after their arrival to Salt Spring a second son was added to the Stark family. They named him John Edmond. He loved adventure. He took up the trail where his parents left off and pressed further northward as a prospector and mineralogist.

*The next instalment relates the murder of a friend of H. Estes, Jiles Curtis, by Indians. Mr. Curtis was brought to the island by Mr. Estes to help with the Stark family farm.*



Another picture of Willis Stark (1856-1943), son of Louis and Sylvia Stark. He was born in California and came to Salt Spring with his parents in 1858. Except for one brief journey to Vancouver, Willis spent his entire life on Salt Spring Island.

### OFFERED TO HELP

In the meantime the northern Indians talked with Macauley when they learned he could speak their language. They offered to carry the Stark belongings up to the cabin, but Mr. Macauley explained to them that Stark had already gone for help.

When they learned that Macauley was visiting the Lineker family at the place where the Harbour House now stands, they said they would take him there as they were on their way to Victoria. Mrs. Stark believed they would have all been killed if they, the Haidas, had not been going south to sell their furs.

Mr. Macauley's story of his experience with the natives is that he accepted their offer to take him to the other side of the island. When they were out on their way and he was feeling quite safe they saw a large band of local Indians with many canoes coming after them. Macauley

# Stark family moves to "Fruitvale"

*As the danger of Indian harassment increases, the Starks move from their mountain farm at Vesuvius Bay. Their new farm was known as "Fruitvale" for the many fruit trees planted there by Louis Stark. The property amounted to nearly 1,000 acres and reached from the north side of Ganges Harbour to the southern shoreline of Long Harbour.*

Mrs. Stark seemed to be tireless in her efforts to make their home life enjoyable. She made hominy from the wheat and corn of their own raising, and sometimes boiled wheat had to be a substitute for bread.

When the missionaries came they ate boiled wheat too. Hominny and venison was a rare dish for them. Then Sylvia tried grinding the wheat in a coffee mill: the flour made good whole wheat bread.

The work of those early ministers, like that of the settlers, was fraught with hardships and danger. It was necessary for them to make long voyages across the water in stormy weather, frequently in Indian canoes.

## ADAPTED THEMSELVES

They gladly and thankfully took what accommodation their poor parishioners were able to give them. They adapted themselves to the same hardships their parishioners faced.

Some of the first Wesleyan ministers to come to Salt Spring were Thomas Crosby, who had been a missionary for many years to the Indians at Port Simpson, Rev. Sextsmith, Rev. White, Mr. Cornelius Bryant and Ebenezer Robson, who came to the island in 1861.

Mr. Robson was an outstanding minister of the gospel. When he came to the Stark home he refused to take the best bed they offered him. He said it was wrong to rob Peter to pay Paul. He preferred to sleep on a straw mattress on the floor.

He made himself generally useful: chopping wood, bringing water from the spring, even churning the milk when Sylvia was busy with the cooking. He loved fried clams and would sit on the beach waiting for the tide to go out so he could dig clams.

## FIRST TO JOIN

Cornelius Bryant was the first man to join the pioneer Methodist Church in Nanaimo. He brought his credentials with him from England. He also organized a band of young people as helpers to the church. They called themselves the "Band of Hope".

Sometimes he brought his wife to visit the Stark family. He taught Emmie, the oldest of the Stark family, to play on the organ. He took great interest in young people.

Not the least of all those early ministers was Mr. Raper. He was not an ordained minister, but he kindly took the pulpit in the absence of the regular ministers. Once Stark offered to black his boots for him before he went to church. Mr. Raper took it as a great joke when he discovered that his boots were blacked with panter grease.

An unbarked log, cabin school-house at the crossroads at Central, Salt Spring Island, served as a church for the Methodist ministers. A coloured man named Robinson taught the Sunday school and another coloured man, John Jones, taught school during the week.

The three oldest Stark children had their first schooling in that log cabin. They had to walk in a trail through dense woods up to their mountain home.



Emily Arabel Stark, who was born in 1857 on Salt Spring Island. She married James Clark in 1878 and died in 1890.

## ANGRY GROWL

Once the two oldest children were coming home from school when they heard an angry growl from the bush on the roadside. It might have been a panther. They couldn't see it nor did they have any inclination to look: they ran all of the way home. When their father took his gun and went in search of the animal it was nowhere to be found.

During the 13 or 14 years the Stark family lived on Salt Spring (before their brief sojourn on Vancouver Island) the slaying of the settlers by Indians continued. Several coloured people lost their lives that way.

Mr. Robinson and Giles Curtis were both slain about 1867 or 1868. Mr. Robinson, a very devoted Sunday school teacher, often sang this old sweet song to his pupils: "Children of the Heavenly King, as we journey let us sing." It was sung in the old tune with all of the quavers of a spiritual. I have often heard my mother sing it just as they sang it in the old log cabin school-house where she first learned it.

## THE LAST TIME

One Sunday he sang it to those brave children of the brave pioneers for the last time. He told Sylvia that next Sunday would be his farewell meeting. He had written to his wife asking her to come west but she refused to come to a wild country where the Indians were hostile, so now he was going back to her.



MARIE STARK-WALLACE

When next Sunday came and he failed to arrive, the congregation waited with growing uneasiness. Then a party went to his house at Vesuvius Bay where they found him slain in his cabin where he had lived alone.

One evening five Indians came to the Stark cabin on the mountain side. It happened to be on a Sunday when Mr. Stark was at home. The three children were asleep and the youngest, a baby was in the cradle.

## WALKED RIGHT IN

The Indians walked right into the house and began to examine everything in the house. They even counted the blankets on the bed while talking amongst themselves. Then one of the men took a gun from over the mantle where Stark kept several guns ready-loaded.

While the Indian was examining it, Stark shouted to him to be careful as the gun was loaded. Stark grabbed the muzzle and turned it away. "I know it's loaded," the Indian said, and tried to wrest it from Stark's hands.

Sylvia was praying silently, as she felt that the Indians had come to kill them. She knew that they were too many in number for her husband to have a chance.

In the scuffle Stark held on to the gun, turning the muzzle upward. Suddenly there was a terrific blast and the bullet went through the roof.

Immediately to the surprise of the Starks, the Indians left quickly. It is quite evident they were afraid of Stark who was known to be a good marksman and was not afraid of Indians.

## SAW THE GUN

An Indian going by the name of Willie had made an attempt on Stark's life. But Stark saw the gun sights glistening in the sun with the gun pointing towards him in the man's hands. Instantly Stark shouted to him, calling him by name. The man was afraid when he saw that he was detected and knew that if he missed Stark, Stark wouldn't miss him. He was trembling when Stark came up to him.

After that Stark was very careful: he always took his dog with him when he went into the woods.

After the appearance of those five Indians at their home the Starks felt that it was quite unsafe to live in that place, so they took a claim on the other side of the island.

They moved to a claim by the seashore where they could get plenty of seafood. Herring and smelt came up on the sand during the shoaling season and the farmers raked them up with garden rakes. The mussels were very large then and they hung in thick clusters on the rocks.

## PROWLERS

Very often the farmers lived on clams and potatoes when other necessities were scarce. However, living so close to the sea had its disadvantages; it was not immune from prowlers.

One day a native stole into the house silently in his moccasin feet; they always came in without knocking. He asked in Chinook: Ka mika kan? (Where is your man?). Sylvia answered in Chinook: Wake syah (not far away).

The dog was lying asleep on the floor. When the man spoke the dog jumped up and would have caught him by the throat if Sylvia hadn't prevented him; though with some difficulty.

That stopped the prowling. As a rule the Indians were quite friendly. They sold their commodities, salmon and all kinds of seafood and berries, when they were in season. The Indians needed the chickens (money in Chinook).

*Next week further tales of the early settlers on Salt Spring Island, by Marie Wallace [1867-1966].*

# THE HISTORY OF THE STARK FAMILY

## Roar of cannon heard by the Starks

### Tenth in a series

Louis Stark requested the government to transfer his pre-emption rights to another claim. Because of the fear of Indian trouble he had been forced to move his family, and could no longer find men to work on his farm.

One of the sounds heard by the Starks in their isolated home on the mountain-side was the roar of cannon over the north end of Salt Spring.

They learned that it was the rounding up of native suspects in the slaying of two Germans at Plumper Pass (now Active Pass).

Mr. and Mrs. Marks, with their son and daughter, were endeavouring to locate a place for a homestead near the pass.

### WENT FIRST

As they were leaving, the mother and son went first in their boat expecting the father and daughter to follow in their boat. They had gone quite some distance before they realized that the father and daughter were not following.

Fearful that something had happened to them they hastened back to the landing. All they could see was their boat burning on the beach. They dared not tarry for further search but hastened and gave the alarm.

Search was made for the father and daughter, but the Indians living at the pass seemed to know nothing about the matter. After a lengthy search they found the victims sunken in the waters of the pass.

### A CLUE

But no trace was found of the guilty parties. Finally a native gave the officers a clue. He told them to go to the Indian Village, Penellekut, on Kuper Island. It seemed that the informant could no longer hide the truth.

The officers then commanded the Penellekut tribe to give up the guilty parties or they would all be liable. This they failed to do.

Then came the gun-boats shelling the village. Still there was no response. Then very cautiously the officers entered the village only to find it deserted. All had fled but one, an aged blind woman. They gave her some tea and crackers, which she ate with relish. She was evidently very hungry.

It was a long time before they traced the guilty party to their hiding place, where they were captured.

### LEARNED OF CULTURE

Willis Stark learned something of the culture of the Vancouver Island Indians from Captain Verygood, a much respected man in the area. He said there were hiyou snows (big snows) on the island.

The Indians wore nothing on their feet more than moccasins and they went through those heavy winters without catching cold. They lived to see many moons. Now, after their contact with civilization, they caught cold the same as the white man.

My recollections of those early days on Salt Spring Island are like a dream gone dim with age. I first saw the light on a farm near the seashore, a farm that eventually took on the name of Fruitvale.

When Captain Scott bought it he



Often the early pioneers spent their leisure time in pursuit of the arts as this water colour by Marie Stark-Wallace illustrates. She

enlarged it and made a fruit farm. Louis Stark was the first man to the claim, he moved his family there to be safe from Indian trouble. I remember that a little white pig used to come into the house and they would feed him there. I also remember the noisy whales that came into our small bay.

enlarged it and made a fruit farm. Louis Stark was the first man to the claim, he moved his family there to be safe from Indian trouble. I remember that a little white pig used to come into the house and they would feed him there. I also remember the noisy whales that came into our small bay.

### TEMPORARY SHELTER

A small, unbarked log cabin stood inside the yard. It was a temporary shelter for the family while the big cabin was being built. After it was completed the small cabin was occupied by a pioneer family named Frederson, from the Hawaiian Islands.

They were coloured Hawaiians, perhaps the first of their country people to come to the island. They occupied the cabin until they found a place of their own. They were the first family to take the claim now known as the Mansel farm.

Whenever I went to their cabin Mrs. Frederson would always give me a cookie and one to her grandchild Rena. That was one reason I enjoyed going to see Rena.

Then our Dad, Louis Stark, took a claim on Vancouver Island in the Cranberry District, so called at that time.

I was too young to remember my age but I remember well the day we left Salt Spring. I carried the memory of that scenic path leading up hill through the blue grass

to a fence with bars that had to be pulled down before we could pass through.

### SEEN MANY HILLS

Since then I have seen many hills leading up from the beach on Salt Spring where the sea has made its bed. And there is a petrified log on the beach at Fruitvale, black and hard as though in transformation from wood to coal. It has been chopped and left as though the attempt had been made by a dull axe, perhaps a stone axe.

It was sometime in the early 70's when we embarked on the *S.S. Maud*, a mere tug boat but strong and seaworthy. It carried many head of livestock as well as passengers. The steward on the boat was a coloured man named Scott. We have his photograph yet, none the worse for age.

The *Emma* was the name of another boat running this route. Her cook was a coloured man also; they were good cooks.

### NO SNOW

There was no snow when we left the island but when we came to Nanaimo a thin layer had fallen. Two boys in knee breeches stood on the wharf watching the boat drifting in. Later we learned that they were the children of our neighbours in the Cranberry District.

Their father, Mr. John Richardson, came out with his wife, two sons and a daughter with a large band of immigrants

from England in 1854. They were six months coming across the perilous ocean from England to Nanaimo on a sailing vessel, the *Princess Royal*. Only the strong survived. The centennial of that event was celebrated in Nanaimo in 1954, when the pioneer torch was handed to the younger generations.

There was no school in the Cranberry District. Abe, Serena and I (brothers and sisters of Emma) had to go to North Cedar School which was well over eight miles from our home. We stayed in a log cabin built for the teacher. Other children living too far to attend school daily stayed in the teacher's cabin.

### HOME ON WEEKENDS

We had a jolly time playing together after school hours. We all went home over the weekend. I was always glad to see our mother coming to take us home riding on old Ginnie, our faithful bespeckled mare.

When the bridge was in repair, Emmie borrowed horses from a neighbour to wade across the Nanaimo River. Emmie had her own horse. The water was so deep in some places our feet nearly touched the water. I, for one, was very happy when we reached the other side.

On the other side of the river an Indian lodge stood plainly in sight of our cabin. On one occasion our teacher took her pupils on a visit to the lodge. It was a large, one-room building with no flooring. They made their fires in the centre of the room on the ground with an opening overhead to let the smoke out. All around the sides hung dried meat, venison, half-sides of salmon, clams and other dried meats preparing for winter.

### PART OF SCHOOLING

Seeing these object lessons was a part of our elementary schooling. In our home on Vancouver Island we had whole legs of venison dried, and we ate bear meat when it was dried and smoked. It tasted like bacon when cooked with cabbage.

We were really pioneering. When the Indians were going to have a feast they gave us curly lily bulbs. They said they were good to eat when roasted. They gave them in exchange for bread, but we preferred to plant them for flowers.

When we were going home we often passed by a young Indian on the roadside making a canoe. He was weeks and months chipping away on a large log, apparently a cedar log. Gradually it turned into a warrior canim (canoe).

The big end of the log was the front of the canoe. When we praised his handiwork he smiled his approval. The natives were pleased when we showed appreciation for their way of life. Louis Stark's home was a log cabin with flooring of pine logs, split and layed close together, the flat side shaved and polished. Two planks were not nailed down so they could be raised to get apples from a root cellar beneath the floor. The log cabin was surrounded with chips and stood on a low hill.

Next week the penultimate instalment of the Stark family history tells the stirring account of the murder of Louis Stark.

**S.S.I. Farmers' Institute**  
**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**  
**WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 30**  
**8 p.m.**  
**UNITED CHURCH HALL**

LOUIS'  
**Fruit Tree**  
**PRUNING**  
 AND/OR  
**SPRAYING**  
 Back for another season  
 REASONABLE RATES  
 Call  
**537-9525 or 537-2329**

**Bangert & Van Meel**  
**BUILDERS & DESIGNERS**  
**OF DISTINCTIVE HOMES**  
**537-5692 or 537-9657**

# THE HISTORY OF THE STARK FAMILY

## The murder of Louis Stark

*The final chapter of Marie Stark-Wallace's family history is presented here. The manuscript, which she wrote herself, was researched by Peggy Walker, a cousin of Mrs. Frank Waterfall of North Beach Road. Mrs. Walker spent four years tracing the history of the Estes and Stark families.*

Louis Stark was born on a plantation in Louisville, Kentucky. He never knew his own age, but he remembered seeing the stars fall in 1833.

From his earliest recollections he wore a one-piece garment of coarse home-spun cloth, his only covering. It served, too, for a sleeping gown. The children's cabin was a dirt floor.

The children slept on old mattresses, with rags for a covering. For their dinner a large pot was placed in the centre of the one big room. There were no seats. Each child had a spoon and a piece of cornbread, and they all ate from that one pot of stew.

### KEPT A NURSERY

In spite of these handicaps, Louis grew up to be a strong young man. He was the son of a white slave-master who kept a nursery and taught Louis how to graft fruit trees.

Under another master, he learned the trade of a barber and worked as a barber on the boats plying the Mississippi River. It was never learned how he stood with his boss, but the slaves sometimes worked and shared their money with the boss. Otherwise they must have free papers to work for themselves.

During this time Louis shaved the notorious Jesse James, who was fleeing from the police and wanted to hide his identity.

Louis Stark went to California during the gold rush. If he was a free man, his free papers could not be trusted, for he had to pass as a Spaniard to hide his identity.

It was there he met his wife, Sylvia Estes. They were married in 1855. Their two oldest children, Willis and Serena, were born in California, the rest of the family of seven were born in British Columbia.

### TO CANADA

Because of the possibility of the laws in California being changed to make it a slave state, the Stark and Estes families decided to join a group of free slaves (Howard Estes, Sylvia's father, having bought his family's freedom) from San Francisco, and migrate to Canada.

It was learned that Sir James Douglas, whose mother was West Indian, would be partial to the petition of the coloured people. A delegation had gone before to ask permission from Douglas, then governor, to settle in B.C.

So in 1858, with a group of 600 to 800 free people, they came to B.C. and settled in the Saanich Peninsula. Different members of the group scattered to various sections of B.C., some settling in Victoria. Land could be obtained at the rate of 20 shillings per acre, one-quarter to be paid on taking possession.

### AN OATH

The taking of an oath of allegiance was required for citizens to enjoy all the rights and privileges of a British subject. In 1860, Louis Stark, with his wife Sylvia and their two children, arrived on Salt Spring Island.

In the early 70's Louis sailed from Salt Spring Island to a new home in Nanaimo. His son Willis stayed on Salt Spring with his mother, and his other son, John, was prospecting on the Stikine and Skeena Rivers.

After farming on Salt Spring, Louis moved to Nanaimo, where he lived for some time before purchasing a farm in the Cranberry district, outside of Nanaimo.



This early post card shows Willis Stark who was famous on the Gulf Islands for his cougar hunting abilities.

### A TEACHER

Emma, his daughter, trained in Nanaimo for her teaching career. On August 1, 1874 (this information obtained from school records) she was engaged to teach in a one-room school in the Cedar district.

The children who lived a long way from the school boarded with Emma. One of the students was Marie Stark, her younger sister. On weekends Emma rode home on the back of her horse with Marie riding behind her. Their legs dangled in the water of a stream they had to cross. In the winter they went back to school on a home-made sleigh, pulled by oxen.

Emma taught for several years at a starting salary of \$40 a month. On December 27, 1878, she married James Clark in Victoria, B.C.

She died on July 30, 1890 at the age of 33, and was buried on Salt Spring Island. Her grave is next to her grandfather's, Howard Estes.

### STARK'S CROSSING

About three-quarters of a mile away from the old farmsite in the Cranberry district stands the intersection of two roads known as Stark's Crossing. The size of the property that Louis owned is not officially recorded, although some area residents say the property contained two lakes.

Louis Stark's nearest neighbour was a butcher by trade. Every week the butcher killed a lamb for Stark, keeping a quarter for himself.

It was this neighbour who brought the tragic news to the authorities in Nanaimo. He said that he and Stark were out hunting sheep the day before without success.

When they came to the butcher's place they were tired. He said he tried to persuade Stark to have tea at his home, but Stark would not stop. The butcher said that Stark wished to go to his own cabin.

### DIDN'T APPEAR

So he gave him a pit-lamp to light his way. The story told was that they were to meet at the butcher's house and go out again the next day. Next day Stark failed to appear so the neighbour went to his house. The door was not locked so he went inside and felt in the ashes in the fireplace; they were cold.

Then he searched for him, but did not find him until night came on. Stark's hat and cane were found in the bush not far from the road leading to the home of a man who was unfriendly to Stark. His body was found at the foot of a cliff. The Chinese man who worked on the Stark farm had also disappeared, and his disappearance was to remain a mystery.

John Stark had written to his father, naming the day he would return. That was good news to the old man, quite naturally he would tell the butcher, as well as other friends.

### FOUL PLAY

When John came back, he took over the care of the animals on the farm and then wrote to the authorities in Victoria. He asked their assistance, as his father's death hinted at foul play.

He wrote several letters before he got an answer. His last letter said that anyone who had paid taxes in the country as long as his father had, deserved some recognition. The answer came immediately, and a detective was sent to the farm.

John never knew why the delay in answering his letters, but the detective seemed to have such small interest in the case that John dismissed him and hired his own detective and worked with him.

John and the butcher were very friendly. He told John that the owner of the mine then in operation had given him \$50,000 for some technical advantage he had shown him about the new mine.

### COAL

Louis Stark's property contained large amounts of coal which were owned by Stark but were under development by mining interests based in Victoria.

It was strange too, that the man on the street knew more about the case than John himself. One man told John he would tell him who killed his father and all about the case when he got the opportunity. That man was drowned in Cowichan Lake. That closed another avenue to the murder.

There had been a man arrested for the murder but he successfully produced an alibi and was released from the charges.

Another man who offered information to John was a Scotsman who lived in northern B.C. He telegraphed John, saying to hold the investigation until he arrived. He was murdered in Prince Rupert on his way to Nanaimo.

### BRIBES

John and the detective soon discovered that the man caught near the trail where the hat and the cane were found was not the guilty party. They also discovered that bribes were given to men whose duty was to guard the lives of the public.

Willis, John's brother, joined him at the farm. By now they were suspicious of the butcher. One day the butcher invited them to dinner. They both had pistols, so

if there was any intimation of food poisoning, they would shoot him down before they died in true western style.

The butcher seemed to be getting suspicious of John. Once he came to John's house, holding an axe handle in his hand. He was so restless, John thought he saw murder in his eyes, so he took his gun from the wall and pretended he was cleaning it, slyly watching the butcher. This lasted until the butcher went home.

### WENT HUNTING

It was strange that the butcher seemed to take John's detective in his confidence. He and the detective often went out hunting together. One night they were camping out. The butcher said to the detective, "I like Willis, but I don't like that John."

"If you will help me put him out of the way, you will be well paid for it." This knowledge came back to John. From then on he never slept in the house alone at night. Sometimes he rode his horse as far away as Wellington and stayed all night with friends, then returned the next day.

One evening John went to the butcher's to get his milk. He still continued to take milk from him, regardless of the risk, as he was still working with the detective.

He was standing on one side of the cow while the butcher was milking on the other side. Suddenly a flash from a pistol-shot underneath the cow sent a bullet whizzing past John. All John said was, "Now I know you," and left immediately.

### ARRESTED

He had collected all the evidence he thought necessary for a conviction. He had the butcher arrested, not for attempted murder of himself, but for the murder of his father.

An autopsy revealed that the tale the butcher told was entirely false. The victim had eaten his breakfast shortly before his death and the remains were three days old, instead of a night and one day.

Congelment was complete before the limb was broken. The stable dirt on his boots showed they had not gone through the bush. A single concussion showed there had been no fall from a 1,000 ft. cliff. Also a hunter gave evidence that he hunted birds along the foot of the cliff on the same day the butcher claimed that he was searching for Stark, but the hunter said he saw nothing on the rock where the remains were found.

### FREED

After all the evidence and witnesses were heard, the butcher was allowed to depart. The hunter said he would not have given his testimony if he had known the case would prove a failure, for he had to live in the district.

The last evidence, proving his tale was false, came too late to be classified with the other evidence. A cougar had caught a lamb from the barn and John thought to look in a thicket close to the barn to find it. He did not find the lamb, but he found a bundle of soiled clothing his father had been in the habit of taking to a neighbour to be laundered.

It was the belief of the people who lived in the area, and members of the butcher's family later agreed, that the butcher had been paid \$50,000 by the mining company to kill Stark. The murder was in 1895.

But he had been set free and allowed to proceed to England with his wealth.