

## **Nathan H Stevens** **Early Essex, Ontario Settlers**

*The Biographical Record of Essex County, Ontario tells us:*

NATHAN H. STEVENS, president of the Canada Flour Mills Company, Limited, of Chatham, County of Kent, is a representative of one of the early families of Ontario and is of United Empire Loyalist stock.

Adam Stevens, his great-grandfather, was born April 20, 1753, in England, and prior to the Revolution settled in Virginia, where he followed farming. Later he moved into the State of New York but being unwilling to bear arms against Great Britain he migrated to Ontario, settling in the County of Durham.

The Stevens family was one of the first to settle in that county, and their food at first consisted largely of fish and wild game. As soon as wheat could be raised bread was added to their bill of fare, though the grain had to be carried by boat to Niagara to be ground. This trip required several days, so by the time the flour was received the whole neighborhood would be in need of the "*staff of life*," and another trip would soon have to be made by another of the party.

Adam Stevens died in 1819. He married Polly Crosman, of Dutchess county, New York.

David Stevens, son of Adam, and grandfather of Nathan H. was born Nov. 16, 1777, and died Aug. 30, 1860. He became very wealthy, owning about 1,200 acres of land near Bowmanville, Ont. On the main road between Kingston and Toronto he erected a large building, still standing, which in the war of 1812 was used by the soldiers.

David Stevens purchased the first carriage ever owned in the township of Darlington, to which he drove a fine span of cream-colored horses, and his turnout attracted the attention of all he chanced to pass along the road.

David Stevens was thrice married, his first wife being Polly Burk, daughter of John Burk. Their union occurred about 1803 and was blessed with two sons and five daughters, of whom

- Enoch Stevens, father of
  - Nathan N. Stevens, was the eldest,

the others being

- Emma Stevens (*wife of Dr. Montgomery*),
- Vienna Stevens (*Mrs. Colton*),
- Sarah Stevens (*Mrs. Brown*),
- Mary Stevens (*Mrs. Argy*),
- Amelia Stevens (*Mrs. Tyler*),
- Elijah Stevens.

Polly (*Burk*) Stevens passed away in 1813.

## Nathan H Stevens Early Essex, Ontario Settlers

Enoch Stevens, son of David, was born Sept. 12, 1806, in the township of Darlington, where he grew to manhood.

On Sept. 19, 1830, he married Clarissa Hall, who was born April 20, 1811, at Oshawa, Ont., daughter of William Hall, of Oshawa. Clarissa's mother, whose maiden name was Trull, was of German descent, and her father was of English extraction.

William Hall was a successful man, at one time owning about 1,000 acres of land, known as "*Hall's Marsh*," in the township of Darlington, and this land is still in the possession of the family.

To Enoch and Clarissa (*Hall*) Stevens were born the following named children:

- David Stevens, born Oct. 15, 1831, married Aug. 20, 1856, Frances Thompson, and they reside at Courtright, where he is engaged in farming.
- Elizabeth Stevens, born March 8, 1834, married Dr. Tozer. Nov. 8, 1854; both are now deceased,
- William L. Stevens, born Jan. 8, 1836, is deceased; he married Feb. 17, 1858, Mary Thompson, sister of Frances Thompson, previously mentioned.
- Emma Stevens, born Jan. 8, 1838, died in her seventh year.
- Ezra Stevens, born April 28, 1840, is a very successful raisin grape grower in California. He married Martha Maria Ransom, Feb. 24, 1862; she died May 19, 1869, together they had two children:
  - Reuben Eugene, born Oct. 13, 1863, married Nov. 9, 1898, to Edith J. Fobb, and they have one child,
    - Denzil Nadeau Stevens, born Nov. 20, 1899.
  - Edmund Leslie Stevens, born Dec. 12, 1868, who died Nov. 7, 1875,

and he married for his second wife, on March 15, 1871, Emma Ellen DeHart.

- Nathan H. Stevens, is mentioned more fully below.
- Ira Stevens, born May 20, 1844, married Jan. 8, 1871, Lottie Toole, and resides in Montreal.
- Clarissa Stevens, born Dec. 15, 1845, died young.
- Sarah Stevens, born March 1, 1850, died Feb. 8, 1871.
- Matilda Jane Stevens, born March 1, 1852, died Dec. 17, 1869.
- Mary Frances Stevens, born March 1, 1855, died April 4, 1870.

Clarissa (*Hall*) Stevens died Oct. 12, 1869.

April 20, 1870, Enoch Stevens married secondly to Alecia McMichael, daughter of Squire McMichael, of Blenheim, and to this union came the following children:

- Edith Stevens, born Feb. 12, 1871, is a trained nurse in Grace Hospital, Detroit,

## **Nathan H Stevens** **Early Essex, Ontario Settlers**

- John W. Stevens, born Feb. 17, 1873, married April 16, 1901, Miss Ida Burritt,
- Nina W. Stevens, born April 23, 1878, married a Mr. Labadie, express messenger on the Canadian Pacific railroad in British Columbia.

Enoch Stevens died Feb. 26, 1894, aged eighty-seven years, five months and fourteen days. His widow still survives.

Nathan H. Stevens was born Sept. 1, 1841, in Darlington township. In 1853 the family moved to Malahide, where they remained one year, and then settled in Harwich township near Blenheim, where Enoch Stevens purchased 809 acres of timber land.

This was the only opening in the timber between Blenheim and Rondeau harbor. Here Nathan grew to manhood developing his muscle in clearing the timber, which if it were now standing would make a millionaire of the owner. In 1854, 150 acres had been chopped. Some of the finest trees that ever grew were burned in log heaps, white ash six feet in diameter and seventy feet to the first limb, and black walnut the like of which cannot now be found.

On Jan. 23, 1867, Nathan H. Stevens married Ada Jane Burk, daughter of Erastus Burk, a merchant of Blenheim, who moved to California, and there, in 1869, became an extensive fruit grower.

Nathan H. Burk's son, F. B. Burk, is a leading educator, and at the present time Head Instructor of the San Francisco Normal School.

To Nathan H. and and Ada (*Burk*) Stevens, has come quite a large family:

- Rollin Howard Stevens, born at Blenheim, Jan. 7, 1868,
- Henry Joseph Stevens, born at Blenheim, Aug. 10, 1869
- Frederick Burk Stevens, born at Blenheim, April 16, 1871
- Joaquin Mokelumne Stevens, born at Pilot Hill, California, Nov. 26, 1871,
- Lloyd Hall Stevens, born at Blenheim, July 10, 1876,
- Douglas Nathan Stevens, born at Blenheim, Nov. 25, 1878,
- William Arnot Stevens, born at Chatham, Aug. 6, 1880,
- Grace Stevens, at Chatham, Feb. 1. 1886,
- Stanley Starr Stevens, born at Chatham. Feb. 15, 1890,
- Lloyd Hall Stevens, who died at Chatham, Jan. 25, 1895
- Grace Stevens, who died at Chatham, June 13, 1899.

Rollin Howard Stevens, M. D. married Mary E. Thompson, of Lapeer, Michigan, March 16, 1892. Rollin graduated from the Toronto School of Medicine, and the Ann Arbor (*Michigan*) School of Medicine, Rollin also took a term at Leland

## **Nathan H Stevens** **Early Essex, Ontario Settlers**

Stanford University, California, and a special course in Pathology at Ann Arbor after his return from California.

Rollin's wife is a graduate of Ann Arbor University, having the degrees of M. A. and M. D. Both Dr. Stevens and his wife stand very high in their profession in the city of Detroit. They have one child,

- Frances Eleanor, born Oct. 16, 1899.

Henry Joseph Stevens, who is a graduate of the Chatham Business College, and also of the London Military School, was married Sept. 27, 1893 to Ethyl Stripp, M. F. A., a graduate in Arts at Alma College, St. Thomas, a daughter of Thomas H. Stripp, of Aylmer, Ont. Their family consists of two children:

- Howard Clayton Stevens, born March 7, 1896,
- Grace Lenore Stevens, born April 14, 1897.

Frederick Burk Stevens, grain merchant at Chatham, married Maud Wall, daughter of John Wall, late merchant of Chatham, on June 18, 1896; they have one daughter,

- Mary Beatrice Stevens, born June 16, 1900.

Joaquin Mokelumne Stevens, B. A., graduate of Toronto University, and M. D. graduate at Ann Arbor (*Michigan*) School of Medicine, 1901. Frederick married Edith Burgess, daughter of Mr. Burgess, secretary of the Educational Department at Omaha, Nebraska.

Douglas Nathan Stevens, a graduate at Canada Business College, Chatham, is unmarried, and is carrying on commission business at Winnipeg, Manitoba.

William Arnot Stevens was purser on the steamer "*Cheboygan*," running from Chicago. He has just passed his first year as mining engineer at the University of Toronto and is now secretary-treasurer of the Canada Flour Mills Company, Limited, at Chatham.

Stanley Starr Stevens spent two years at a French school, known as Sabrevois College, Montreal, and is now attending the McKeough School in Chatham.

Soon after his marriage Nathan H. Stevens purchased his father-in-law's business, and for ten years was the leading merchant in Blenheim, and a prominent citizen, during seven years of this time being a member of the Schoolboard of the place and a member of the Building Committee having charge of the erection of the school building.

Nathan H Stevens, also served as Justice of the Peace to the great satisfaction of his constituents. In addition to all of this, Nathan Stevens

**Nathan H Stevens**  
**Early Essex, Ontario Settlers**

dealt in real estate, both farm and town property, in all of which he was remarkably successful.

On April 30, 1880, Nathan H. Stevens moved to Chatham, where for over twenty-four years he has been one of the most successful businessmen of the city. This is proven by the following article, which appeared in a local paper May 1, 1901:

*Twenty-one years ago, yesterday President N. H. Stevens, of the Canada Flour Mills Co., became a resident of Chatham. It was a fortunate day for the Maple City. For twenty-one years this kindly, generous, enterprising and public-spirited citizen has devoted his energies to the public weal, and the progress of the municipality. It is such men as Mr. Stevens who form the basis for civic greatness and prosperity.*

*For years he has interested himself in every progressive and philanthropic movement and his interest was whole-souled and inspiring. His generosity has been phenomenal. There has been no struggling and worthy cause that has sought his aid in vain, and his earnest effort has always been felt in church, business, humanitarian, moral and municipal development throughout his long residence here.*

*This morning the Planet interviewed Mr. Stevens upon his extended association with the Maple City.*

*“Yes,” he said, “I have been in Chatham twenty-one years yesterday. I moved here from Blenheim on the 30th day of April, 1880.”*

*“You have been a very busy man here in the city since you came.”*

*“Yes, a very busy life during the years 1880 and 1881. I was part of the time in Manitoba. In the spring of 1881, I joined in partnership with Arch, and John Campbell to build Kent Mills with the Roller process, being about the first roller mills in Canada. I have been interested in the mills up to the present time and have either built or helped to build all of the buildings we now occupy in our milling business. We first put up the mill and elevator on the block next to the river and south of Thames street, and have kept on building until we have covered all the ground from the river to Dover street, being across two blocks, also the iron barn east of King street, and have the two double houses east of the iron barn and south of Dover street.*

*Thus, with the residence on the north side of Dover street, which was purchased from the late Mrs. John Rice, you will see we have quite a hamlet now of our own.*

**Nathan H Stevens**  
**Early Essex, Ontario Settlers**

*During the twenty years since the Kent Mills were built by our firm, I feel safe in saying we have paid out in cash to farmers and others fully \$10,000,000."*

*"You have taken some interest in public matters, too, Mr. Stevens?"*

*"Yes, I have given part of my time. I occupied a seat in the town council in 1881, filling the position of chairman of Finance.*

*In 1885 I was appointed high school trustee and held the position until the year 1894. Was one of the building committee to erect the present magnificent Collegiate Institute. I resigned the position of school trustee to run for alderman in 1894.*

*Was elected and again held the position of chairman of Finance. I was also a director of the Erie & Huron railroad, from the time it was built until the road was sold to the Lake Erie & Detroit River Railroad. Was chairman of the old Mechanics' Institute and assisted in turning it over to the present Free Library.*

*Served as a trustee some few years on the General Hospital Board. Was President of a live board of trade for five years. Took an active part in and was Chairman for three years of the Chatham City Band Association.*

*For a number of years Director and three years President of the Chatham Navigation Company. For several years have been Director of the Chatham Loan & Savings Company and have been connected with a good many other companies and some societies in our town.*

*A few years ago I associated myself with three other gentlemen and pulled down the old unsightly malt house and built the present handsome Riverside Terrace.*

*Yes, I hold the honorable position of one of His Majesty's Justices of the Peace, but my duties in this line have been very light since I left Blenheim.*

*"I have enjoyed the twenty-one years in Chatham very much. Both Mrs. Stevens and myself have been blessed with good health.*

*The people of Chatham have always shown us the greatest respect and friendship. I doubt if a more social lot of people could be found anywhere than we have in Chatham. Many familiar faces that graced the streets of Chatham when we first moved here have gone to their long home, but new ones have taken their places and the change has been so gradual that the people seem to be the same as ever."*

**Nathan H Stevens**  
**Early Essex, Ontario Settlers**

*“What do you think of Chatham’s future?” Mr. Stevens was asked.*

*“I am not a prophet, so it would be useless for me to say what the future of Chatham might be, but if I were to say anything it would be that Chatham’s future will be very much as its past, a good, healthy, sociable, sound city to live in, where industrious, law-abiding people can live and enjoy themselves, and where they have good schools, hospitals, free library, churches, climate, and the benefit of a splendid market, and surrounded by as rich a fruit and agricultural country as there is in America.”*

Since the above was written they have purchased the four lots with the brick house known as Senator Northwood’s block, and the house has been converted into magnificent office quarters, comprising seven rooms, finished in quartered oak, with metallic ceilings, and plate-glass windows. The property now extends three blocks, from the river.

On the same day the above interview was printed the Planet published an editorial, which was, in part, as follows:

*Mr. N. H. Stevens, president of the Canada Flour Mills Co., has just turned the twenty-first milestone of his residence in the Maple City. Men of his calibre are too scarce to allow the occasion to be passed over without a word of eulogy and congratulation, of commendation upon his loyal citizenship, of public gratitude for his whole-souled, valued and lasting services.*

*Chatham owes much to Mr. Stevens. With the best interests of the community ever before him he has devoted time and energy to all branches of public service. His generosity to every worthy object and institution has been conspicuous and unlimited. His practical cooperation in all the causes of right and progress has been phenomenal. He has been, in truth, a citizen of whom the municipality is proud and to whom she is profoundly grateful.*

*The Planet bespeaks Mr. Stevens the city’s congratulations upon the twenty-first anniversary of his adoption of her citizenship and conveys the sincere hope that he may long be spared to stand amongst her most popular and deservedly distinguished sons.*

Another issue shows the enterprising business spirit of Mr. Stevens, and we again quote:

*On the twenty-eighth of August [1899], through the courtesy of N. H. Stevens, the Planet published an interview with that gentleman on his return from a business trip through New York State, in which he pointed out that there was*

**Nathan H Stevens**  
**Early Essex, Ontario Settlers**

*a strong likelihood of a scarcity of beans and recommending the farmers to hold their beans for the prospective high prices. As a result, the farmers of the bean raising counties have realized at least \$50,000 more than they otherwise would have done by selling at that time.*

On the occasion of the trip mentioned, Mr. Stevens ascertained that in a short time an immense quantity of beans would be required by the Americans for Porto Rican shipment and that it would be necessary to secure them from Canadian farmers.

The New York houses counted on securing their tenders by hurriedly buying up the beans ere there was any scarcity, and hence Mr. Stevens' advice through the columns of the Planet.

As a result, the Kent Mills Co. received the tender for the Porto Rico beans and realized a very handsome profit, while the Canadian bean raising farmers secured an advance of from ten to fifteen cents per bushel on the regular price.

It is conservatively estimated that over \$50,000 of American money was thus realized by our Canadian farmers in this bean growing part of the country. The profit is the result of Mr. Stevens' enterprise and foresight and his courtesy in making his advice public through the Planet.

Mr. Stevens is now getting ready for a trip to the old country, on a bowling tournament, for although he is in his sixty-third year he is as enthusiastic over bowling on the green as any other lovers of that sport, though they may be many years his junior.