



Valetta Sturgeon
At Bradford West Gwillimbury Library
Recorded in 1991

Valetta lives on Concession 14 of West Gwillimbury now Innisfil
Florence Blanchard, Ann Coffey, and Irene Moriarty are also present
About her husband's family and the community

Valetta was born in King Township and lived there until she was 8 and then moved to Nobleton. They farmed on King Creek Farm for 6 years then moved to Vaughan for 3 years. Then her brother got married so they moved back to Nobleton. Their family had split before where some stayed and worked on one farm and some went and worked on another farm. They bought a farm at Kleinburg and her mom, dad and two sisters went to that farm while Valetta and her older sister stayed at Nobleton then a year later moved to Kleinburg. The name Valetta dates back to the Boehr War. A neighbour came to her mom and said she had a name for her daughter. Valetta explains that her mom had several daughters and had probably run out of names to use. Anyways the neighbour said Transvaletta meaning the Transvaal in central Africa where the English were at war with the Boers and she was born when that part of the war was taken by the British.

Valetta says her mother had 13 children and Valetta was the youngest born in 1900. Of the 13 children there were 4 boys and 9 girls. One of the girls died at age 16 before Valetta was born. Her father was born in Canada but his father was from Scotland in 1796. Valetta met her husband at a girlfriends home after he came from overseas. Her husband is William Sturgeon. Valetta was at her friend's house for an anniversary service who was seeing William's brother so William was invited and that was the night they met in 1919. William and Valetta dated from July and they were married in November 1921 (two years later). It was difficult for him to see her in the winter but in the summer he had a car (they did not say where he was living making it an inconvenience). In 1919 William had returned from overseas and came back to working with his father on the farm. William's parents were Eliza Jane Tagert and Max Sturgeon and they lived on the 14th where Linwood Sturgeon lives today. When Mr. Sturgeon was younger he went to school at the Hollow and William Sturgeon went to Steele's corners for school. They came from Ireland. They lived in New York City for 11 years before buying land in West Gwillimbury in 1838 on the 14th line. They had three boys Linwood, William, and Leland. Linwood and William both farmed on the 14th line. Mr. and Mrs. Mac Sturgeon also adopted a girl named Sara. They went to church at Coulson's Hill, it was a Presbyterian church.

Near Steele's Corners coming down to the 14th concession the land owners were Mrs. WJ Steele, Granny Steele (little house torn down), blacksmith's shop belonging to Mr. Steele, Richies next, then Linwood's farm, then Peachman's which was an old Kneeshaw farm and the Peachman's only had it for 2 or 3 years, Moriarty Farm. Going down the hill there was at the corners just west of

the blacksmiths shop was the school house, Steele's Corners. They had a well close to the house. They still had to carry all the water into the house. Sometimes they would have to empty it out and bring in new water. Water had to be heated on the stove. Valetta did not make any soap after being married but did when she lived at home. To make soap they would take hard wood ashes and would save all grease that didn't use and then you gave it some lime*. The lime and grease would make soap. In the early 1920's for washroom accommodations they had an outside toilet. In the spare bedroom they had special chamber pots for them. Guests would not have to go outside to use washroom. To store food in the summer they would keep it in bags in the cellar. They grew most of their own food. They had two cement blocks in the basement risen up about 3 feet. Valetta did not belong to the beef ring but William's father did.

Valetta had five children, Florence Blanchard, Robert, Dice*, Jean, and Margaret. Florence was a teacher for about 12 years. Robert bought the Kneeshaw farm west of Bradford and farmed there from 1950-1974 and he married Dorris Pain from Aurora. Dice worked on the home farm. Jean went into training to be a nurse. She worked for the count of Simcoe as a public health nurse. Margaret became a nurse in Toronto and still does part time nursing. Jean married Robert Doubt. During World War Two the community supported it by in the area around Fennell's and Gilford they had card parties and the ladies in the church did sewing.

In the early 1940s in the winter they had to travel by horse and cutter or horse and buggy. They started ploughing the roads in 1941 and some winters were not as bad. 1942 did not have a hard winter. In 1944 there was a bad winter because they got trapped at the high school and the highway 11 was closed. They ask about Burt Hunt and Mr. Stevenson before those bakers that delivered bread to the houses were. Burt was the baker and Mr. Stevenson did the delivering. There were two Douglas's, Hugh ran the hardware store and they don't remember his brother's name. It was doctor Judge at this time. He later moved down to Toronto.

Valetta remembers her children going to Steele's Corners school having Halloween parties, and at the end of the year there was a community picnic and the people would bring the food for that, at Christmas they had a Christmas concert where children would perform, there was a school fair in Bradford. Florence remembers the school fair. The fairgrounds were located at the arena in Bradford where people curl. All her children attended Steele's corners and Bradford high. Valetta had her 90th birthday party July 22 1990 and there were 150 guests from their family. It was held at her son's home on the 14th line, Robert Sturgeon's home. Mr. Ruth Owen* and Bud Graham* the Reeve of West Gwillimbury and he did the county award too. A lot of neighbours and people from Aurora, King city, Nobleton, Barrie and Toronto all came. A teacher Elizabeth Mclour* who wrote the book the history of King Township whom Valetta has known since she was 8 attended. When Valetta was 8 she would go across the street to see Elizabeth who was 2 at the time while Valetta's mom was at work.

Max Sturgeon's parents came over in 1838. Max was a little boy at the time and his father was Robert James Sturgeon. They came from Ireland and landed in New York. He was a weaver by trade. Then they came to West Gwillimbury. The mother wanted them to come to Upper Canada because of the cheap land. She's buried in Coulson's Hill Anglican Church. This was the only cemetery at the time so everyone is buried there. William James is the son of Robert. First he was married to a Garbit* and had three children. This Mrs. Garbit was a sister to the first Mrs. Kneeshaw. Mrs. Kneeshaw lived exactly across the road on the Bell farm. They had the three

children _____, Mary who lived on the 11th concession, and John who was 6 weeks old when his mother died. William James married again after his wife died and had 3 more children with his second wife, they are Reverend Robert Sturgeon, Ellie or Eleanor who lived up near Mary, and Wilbert*. Valetta's mother's father came to West Gwillimbury to work at the Brandon's on the 2nd line. He also worked at her grandma's father's place down in King they correct from West Gwillimbury to King. It was in the Dunkerron area.

Valetta did not go to kindergarten but started at grade 1. She has no memory of school subjects or activities. She really started school at the Crawford school on the 11th line in King. Valetta went there until she was 8 years old. Valetta has two friends that were in that class that are still alive one is Mrs. Depew* who lives in Newmarket. Valetta corrects that Mrs. Depew went to the new Scotland school. Marjorie Archibald was in her catholic school at Nobleton and they still write back in forth. Valetta only remembers Lauren Sheerdowns*. Valetta does not remember any members of the Bell family. Her father and brother Ambrose worked the farm and that was her Grandfather Bell and it was on the 11th. Her great grandfather married a Dick girl so their family is related to the Dicks. Valetta says that she has a family history of the Sturgeons and that her daughter Jean made the family history and did a good job. Talk about having family histories in the library and ask to copy Valetta's for the library. Valetta used to bake a lot of cakes, pies, bread, and a lot of items when she was first married. Flour and sugar used to come in large bags. Occasionally they were bleached and would be turned into pillow cases and other items. Valetta used to do some sewing but no embroidery. Valetta says there was no television and less distractions and women did not go out as much so they were able to get more done. Tape cuts out midsentence and ends.

Banner image from the Bradford West Gwillimbury Public Library Local History Collection depicting cars lining Holland Street East. ID Number 3696. <http://www.ibidnet.ca/details.php?IDnum=3696>