

# *Layla Briggs*

Ferne Pauline (Layla) Briggs, U.E., the second youngest of five children, was born in Barrie, Ontario, but moved to Pembroke, Ontario, when she was five years old. At age 17, she moved to Montreal, Quebec and then on to Calgary in 1996 with the younger of her two daughters.

Having worked as an assistant for a doctor in Montreal, Layla was interested in the medical field and started working in stroke prevention at Foothills Hospital. From there, she moved to the Tom Baker Cancer Centre and then on to a position in Community Health. In 2005-6, Layla retrained (as well as working full time and doing a practicum) and is currently a Life Skills Coach and Career Advisor. Her hobbies include knitting, paper art, reading, gardening and she is passionate about midwifery.

Layla's daughters currently reside in the Iowa, USA, and Montreal, Canada.<sup>1</sup>



Picture of Switzer Crest courtesy of Layla Briggs

## LOYALIST ANCESTOR INFORMATION <sup>2</sup>

Generation 1: **Ferne Pauline (Layla) Briggs, U.E.**

Generation 2: **Ethel Amelia Switzer** (b. July 29, 1920; d. October 6, 1956) and Douglas Thornton Briggs (b. June, 1908; m. August 14, 1936; d. January 30, 1988)

Generation 3: **William Burns Switzer** (b. June 5, 1860; m. March 27, 1901; d. January 17, 1945) and Martha Jane Switzer (b. July 29, 1879; d. 1976)

Generation 4: **John Switzer** (b. January 27, 1819; m. November 21, 1843; d. 1901) and Emily Amelia Molyneaux (b. September 3, 1822; d. July 1923)

Generation 5: **Peter Guier Switzer** (b. 1786; m. May 13, 1812; d. 1864) and Elizabeth Ruttan/Rattan (b. about 1790)

Generation 6: **Philip Switzer** (b. April 11, 1757; m. January 16, 1784) and Patience Rose

### Ancestor Presentation

In Layla's words written in a speech given to the Calgary Branch of the UELAC on May 16, 2010, <sup>3</sup>

"The name (Switzer) was originally Schweitzer, a topographic surname, meaning someone living in Switzerland. It is believed that my ancestors left that land in search of religious freedom. They may have moved to Germany when Martin Luther was doing his famous work.

They settled in what is known as the Palatine in Germany, but the severe winter of 1708-9 set the scene for a mass migration of Palatines that was aided by Queen Anne of England.<sup>4</sup>

Of the many who fled the Palatinate, there were two brothers; Johann Michael and Johann Christopher Schweitzer. Johann Christopher is my ancestor. He was my fifth great-grandfather. Michael and Christopher, along with other families, were chosen as skilled husbandmen to settle on the property of Sir Thomas Southwell in Limerick, Ireland. Sir Thomas lived in Castle Matrix and had a large estate. The land was divided into plots for each family and Sir Thomas gave the tenants leases for 50 years. It was at this time that the Schweitzer name was anglicised to Switzer.



Castle Matrix, on the Southwell Estate, 2008  
<http://www.grantonline.com>

Johann Christopher's daughter, Margaret, married Philip Embury, a carpenter, who later became a Methodist preacher in 1758. Philip, who was very influenced by the great preacher John Wesley, built (along with the Methodists) a large chapel in the centre of Court Matrix. At the completion of the 50-year leases in 1760, Margaret, Philip, and Philip's cousins sailed to New York City on the Pery.



Philip Embury preaching on The Pery, 1760, before setting sail for New York  
 From *Ireland and the Centenary of American Methodism*, Willaim Crook. Hamilton. Adams & Co., 1866 <sup>5</sup>

Philip began to preach and teach in his home. This soon became too small for a growing congregation, so money was raised and a church was built in 1768-9. That church became known as John Street Church, the first Methodist Church in North America. This church still exists but it is not the original since it burnt down and was rebuilt in 1841. It was the fervor of the Hecks (Philip's cousins) and Emburys that brought Methodism to North America.



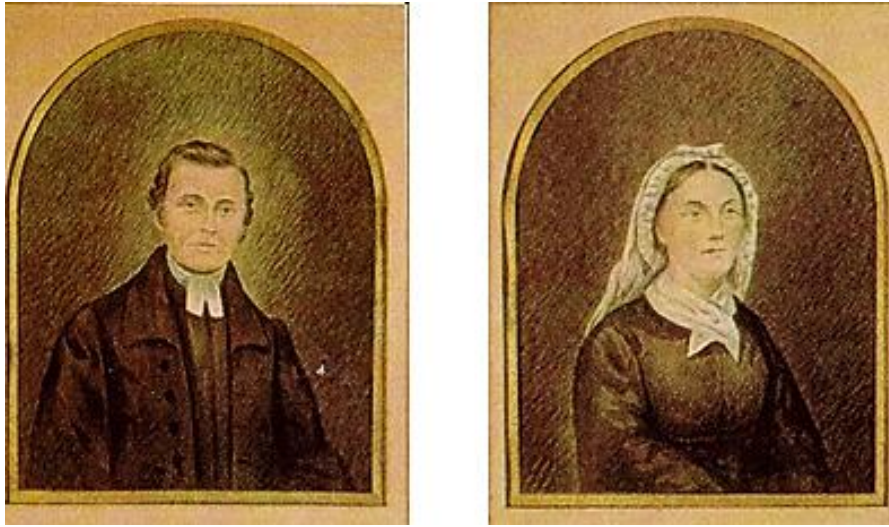
Philip Embury preaching in his cottage to Paul and Barbara Heck, John Lawrence, and the servant, Bett. Margaret Embury is missing.  
Artist Unknown. Courtesy John Street Church <sup>5</sup>



The present John Street Church, blocks from Ground Zero  
Founded 1766

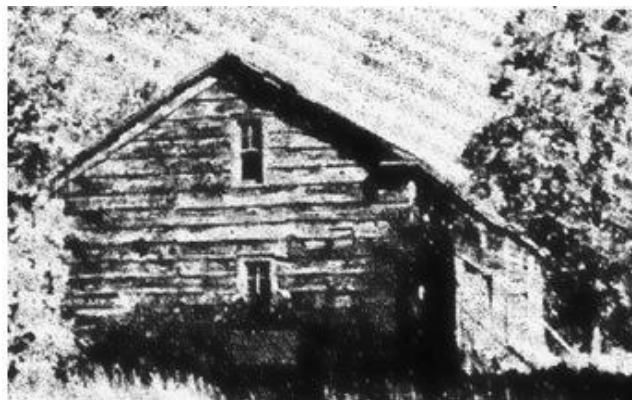


Peter Switzer, Margaret's brother, moved his family from Ireland to New York State possibly to be with Margaret after her husband died in the 1775.



(Left) Philip Embury (Imberger) and (Right) Margaret Switzer Embury Engravings after John Barnes' 1773 painting, printed in New York by Daniel T. MacFarlan, 1878

Margaret later married John Lawrence and Peter moved his family into the barn shown below, that they converted into a living area. This building exists today and many descendants of Philip come to visit it.”<sup>3</sup>



Peter Switzer's first family home, the end of Philip Embury's barn that was converted into a living area in Camden Valley, New York <sup>5</sup>

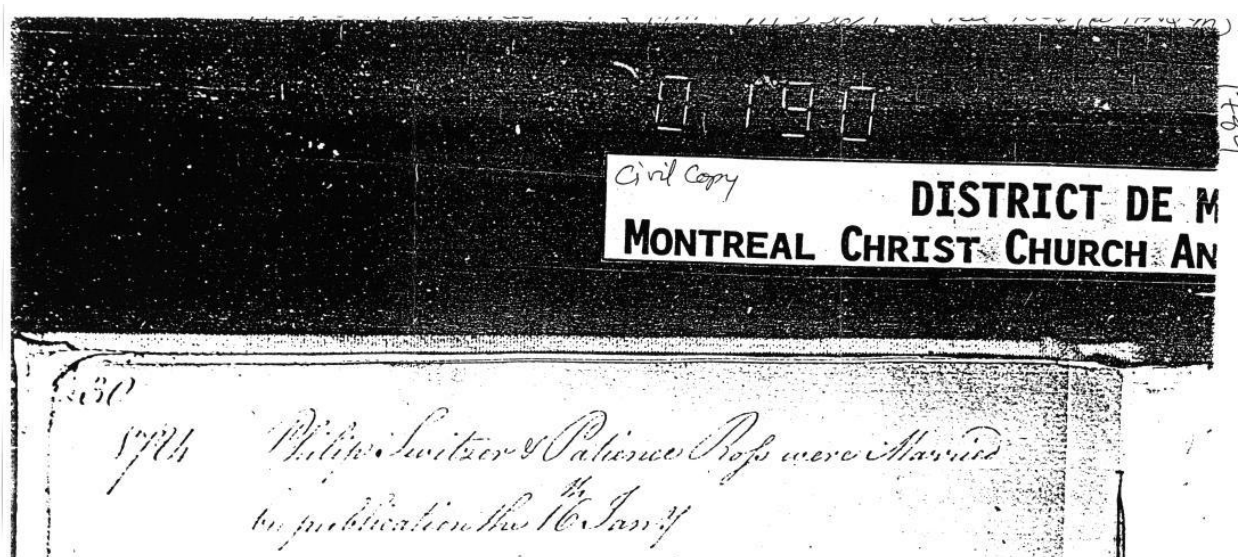
Layla comments on Philip, her third great grandfather, “What a life Philip had: born in Ireland, he travelled across the sea as a teenager and a few years later he was thrust into a war. He met his life partner, Patience (Rose), and together they had twelve children. He was part of developing a new country.

Philip and his brother-in-law, Garrett Miller, were forced to sign a bond of allegiance to the Continental Congress on April, 1776. This was a convention of delegates from the 13 Colonies that became the governing body of the United States during the American Revolution. They met up with Justus Sherwood in 1776 and joined the British. In 1777 Philip set out from St John's, Quebec, with the army of Lieutenant General John Burgoyne whose men called him "Gentleman Johnny" because he treated his soldiers well in a time when that was rare. On an expedition to the Champlain Valley, Philip was taken prisoner August 16, 1777 at Bennington battle. He escaped only to be retaken a few weeks later. The following spring, Philip's father, Peter, paid 100 pounds for his release. On January 01, 1783, he was a Corporal in the 4<sup>th</sup> Company, Loyal Rangers, again under the command of Justus Sherwood.<sup>5</sup>

Patience Rose was about 15 when Rebel forces confiscated her father's farm in 1777. Below is a quote from an article by Marvin Millis.

*At the time of the Battle of Saratoga, Henry Young, U.E., was a lieutenant in the King's Royal Regiment in New York. In his statement dated second February, 1816, he declared that Patience (then Rose) did venture her own life sundry ways in aid of His Majesty's Forces. He further claimed that Patience, through her assistance, had saved his life along with the lives of many more troops. Undoubtedly she was of valued assistance to the troops being a Saratoga resident. She and other young people would have known the lay of the land—little nooks, crannies, hiding places—from having hunted for wild berries and from playing hide-and-seek.<sup>7,8</sup>*

The Rose family relocated to Fort St. John in southern Quebec where they lived in military camps and where Patience met Philip Switzer. Patience and Philip married in Montreal on January 16, 1784. He was the first of the Switzer family to locate in Ernestown, Ontario, and he received land grants at Ernestown, Addington County, Ontario. (Cpl. Switzer's original lot was drawn in 1784 at Ernestown.<sup>2</sup>



Above Marriage Register of Philip Switzer and Patience Rose, January 16, 1784, was viewed by Layla Briggs at Montreal Christ Church Anglican in 2007.<sup>6</sup>

Three summers ago (2007), I met a distant cousin of mine, Bob Switzer, who lives in Belleville. He drove me around the area and I got to see some Loyalist places, including the tiny hamlet of Switzerville, named after my Loyalist ancestors.”<sup>3</sup>



Above is a photo of the sign for Switzerville, Ontario  
Photo (2007) courtesy of Layla Briggs

## **EMIGRATION WEST OF ONTARIO**

Layla's oldest brother, Denzel (Don) Briggs was the first of her immediate family to move west of Ontario. Layla and her younger daughter arrived in Calgary to be with Layla's sister, Gladys Renaud, in 1996. It was in Calgary that she embarked on a new independent life.

### **Literature Cited**

1. Briggs, Layla, Personal Communication, 2013
2. UELAC certificate application for Philip Switzer, 2010
3. Presentation to the UELAC, Calgary Branch, May 16, 2010
4. Schulze, Lorine McGinnis, *Irish Palatine Association Journal*, No. 7
5. Lapp, Eula C., *To Their Heirs Forever*, Mika Publishing Co. Belleville Ontario, 1977
6. Switzer, Robert and Bryant Taggart, *A Switzer Genealogy*, March 7, 2009, from [switzergenealogy.com](http://switzergenealogy.com)
7. Fryer, Mary B. and William A. Smy, *Rolls of the Provincial Loyalist Corps*
8. Millis, Marvin, *Patience Rose, teen Loyalist: a not-forgotten heroine of Saratoga*.

### **Additional Document**

1. Muster Roll for 1784 (ref: #B982).