



Our Burns Ancestors

By

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John Burns	1750 -	Peggy Burns
Alexander Burns	1778 - 1896	Agnes Jaffray
Robert Burns (1)	1824 - 1901	Elizabeth Richardson 1823 -1844
Robert Burns (2nd)	1852 - 1929	Jean McNab 1858 -1941
Esther Jane Burns	1886 – 1962	Edward Atkinson

Surname and Pre-Canada History

The Surname Burns came from Burness and became Burns because it was pronounced that way in Ayrshire, Scotland.

1. John Burn and Margaret “Peggy” Burn

John Burns was born in 1750 in Scotland¹. He married Margaret Brown about 1768 in Cranbee, Fife, Scotland.

John Burn and Margaret Brown had the following children:

2.
 - i. Alexander Burns born in 1778 in Hawick, Roxboroughshire, Scotland (Baptism Jul 30, 1778).
 - ii. James Burn b.1780.
 - iii. Thomas Burn b. 1785.
 - iv. William Burn b.1785.
 - v. Margaret Burns b.10 Jun 1794 in Cranbee, Fife, Scotland.

¹ The parentage is suggested by son Alexander's baptismal record

2. Alexander Burns and Agnes Jaffrey

Alexander Burns of Hawick, Roxboroughshire, Scotland was a shepherd.

He married Agnes Jaffrey in Bedrule, Roxburgh, Scotland on 12 Mar 1803. She was born about 1785 in Steghel, Roxburghshire, Scotland. She died in 1847. He died on 22 Jun 1862 in Cavers, Roxburgh, Scotland.

They had the following children

i. William Burns, b. 24 Oct 1813 in Wilton, Roxburgh, Scotland, baptised 20 Jun 1853 in Hawick, Roxburgh, Scotland, m. Agnes Crawford in 1836 at Lilliesleaf Roxburgh Scotland, d. 28 Jun 1887 in Hawick Roxburgh Scotland. She was born in 1820 in Ashkirk, Roxburghshire. She died on 13 Mar 1891 in Hawick Roxburgh Scotland.

Their children included

I. Agnes Burns b. 1 Oct 1837 in Ashkirk Roxburgh Scotland, d.15 Oct 1900 in Hawick Roxburgh Scotland.

II. Alexander Burns b. 16 Oct 1838 in Ashkirk Roxburgh Scotland,d. after 1851 in Hawick Roxburgh Scotland.

III. James Burns b. 5 May 1838 in Kinross, Kinross-shire, Scotland, d 1840.

IV. Helen (Ellen) Burns b. 2 Feb 1845 in Hawick Roxburgh Scotland,d. young.

V. Catherine Bunyan Burns b. 27 Dec 1846 in Hawick Roxburgh Scotland, d. 26 Jun 1919 in Castleton Roxburgh Scotland.

VI. John Burns b. 4 Mar 1849 in Hawick Roxburgh Scotland, d. young.

VII. Margaret Burns b. 11 May 1851 in Hawick Roxburgh Scotland d. young.

VIII. William Burns b. 20 Jun 1853 in Ashkirk Roxburgh Scotland, d. 13 Mar 1891 in Hawick Roxburgh Scotland.

IX. Thomas Burns b. 30 Jun 1855 in Hawick Roxburgh Scotland, d. young.

X. Walter Burns b. 20 Dec 1857 in Hawick Roxburgh Scotland, d. 10 Apr 1923 in Edinburgh Midlothian Scotland.

XI. Robert Burns b. 29 Jul 1860 in Hawick Roxburgh Scotland, d. young.

XII. George Burns b. 19 Jun 1863 in Hawick Roxburgh Scotland, d. 06 Aug 1963 in Hawick Roxburgh Scotland.

XIII. Georgina Jeffrey Burns b. 10 Dec 1865 in Hawick Roxburgh Scotland, d. young.

- ii. Alexander Burns b. 3 Dec 1820 in Wilton, Roxburgh, Scotland, m. Janet Michal Nichol, 15 Jan 1858 in Casleton, Roxburgh, Scotland, d. 1896. She was born in 1829 in New Casthton, Roxburghshire, Scotland. She died in 1920. Their children include,
 - I. Margaret Burns b. 1845 in Wilton, Roxburghshire.
 - II. Agnes Janet Jeffrey Burns b. 5 Jul 1865 in Cavers, Roxburgh, Scotland.
 - III. Mary Burns b. 9 Jun 1862 in Cavers, Roxburgh, Scotland, 1937.
 - IV. William Burns b. 15 Nov 1869 in Cavers, Roxburgh, Scotland, d. 1948.
 - V. Alexander Burns b. 12 Sep 1860 in Cavers, Roxburgh, Scotland.
 - VI. John Nichol Burns b. 8 Jun 1867 in Cavers, Roxburgh, Scotland, d.1892.
3. iii. Robert Burns b.13 Feb 1824 in Wilton, Roxburgh, Scotland (Hawick nearby), m. Elizabeth Richardson, in 1844 in Brussels, Ontario. 3 in Ecclefechen, Dumfries, Scotland. (See Below)
- iv. George Burns born 24 April 1826 Wilton, Roxburgh, Scotland

3. Robert Burns (1) 1824 - 1901 Elizabeth Richardson 1823 -1844

Robert Burns, son of Alexander Burns and Agnes Jeffrey was born 3 Feb 1824 in Wilton, Roxburgh, Scotland (Hawick nearby). Various manuscripts indicate that Robert was the youngest of seven sons, not all of which have been identified to date.

Robert was a tailor in Hawick, Scotland. He also served a brief period in the Enniskillen Dragoons before leaving for Canada at the age of 19 in 1943. He had no knowledge of any manual labour but farmed near Brussels in Huron County, Ontario when he came to Canada. Without experience he built himself a shelter, cleared a section of his land, cutting timber, removing stumps before putting in his first crop with oxen.

Elizabeth Richardson, daughter of Samuel Richardson and Helen McMin, sailed to Canada in 1844 being at sea six or seven weeks. She was born on 14 Nov 1823 in Ecclefechen, Dumfries, Scotland. They married he at age 20 and her 21 and lived on the farm near Brussels, Ontario

Their children include

- i. Alexander Burns, b. 1845 Brussels, Ont. d Merrill, Wisconsin
 - ii. Agnes "Nancy" Burns, b. 1849, Brussels, Ont. d. 1865 m. Mr. Pugh
- 4 iii. Robert Burns, b. 14 May 1852 Brussels, m. Jane McNab, Dec 1929 Regina, Sask.
- iv. James Burns, b. 1855 Brussels, 1864 d. Brussels. Killed by a kicking steer.
 - v. Elizabeth (Lizzie) Burns b. 27 Aug 1858 m. Richard Joseph Stewart in 1876, d.4 Nov 1925
 - vi John (Jack) Burns, b. 1860 7. Esther Burns, b. 1863

He died of cancer in Brussels Ontario September 10, 1901, His wife died in Brussels on February 9, 1903



4. Robert Burns (2nd) 1852-1929 Jane “Jean” McNab 1858 – 1941

Writing in "The First Century of Langford 1881-1891 W. I. Burn indicated that Robert (2nd) was one of eleven children born to Robert Burns and Elizabeth Richardson in 1853. He in fact was born 14 May 1853 in Brussels, Ontario. He married Jean McNab in Ontario on 4 December 1878 (Marriage registry give surname as McNabb) in Morris Township, Huron County.

In the spring of 1881 along with infant daughter Grace they travelled by train to somewhere passed Portage la Prairie at the end of the line. Their first homestead was at Elkhorn. The land at Elkhorn was not very productive and in 1884 or 1885 they moved to Neepawa where Jean's parents had settled. There they homesteaded on a quarter section at Neepawa (SW ¼ 17-14-15.) purchased by his father-in-law Daniel McNab on January 7, 1881.

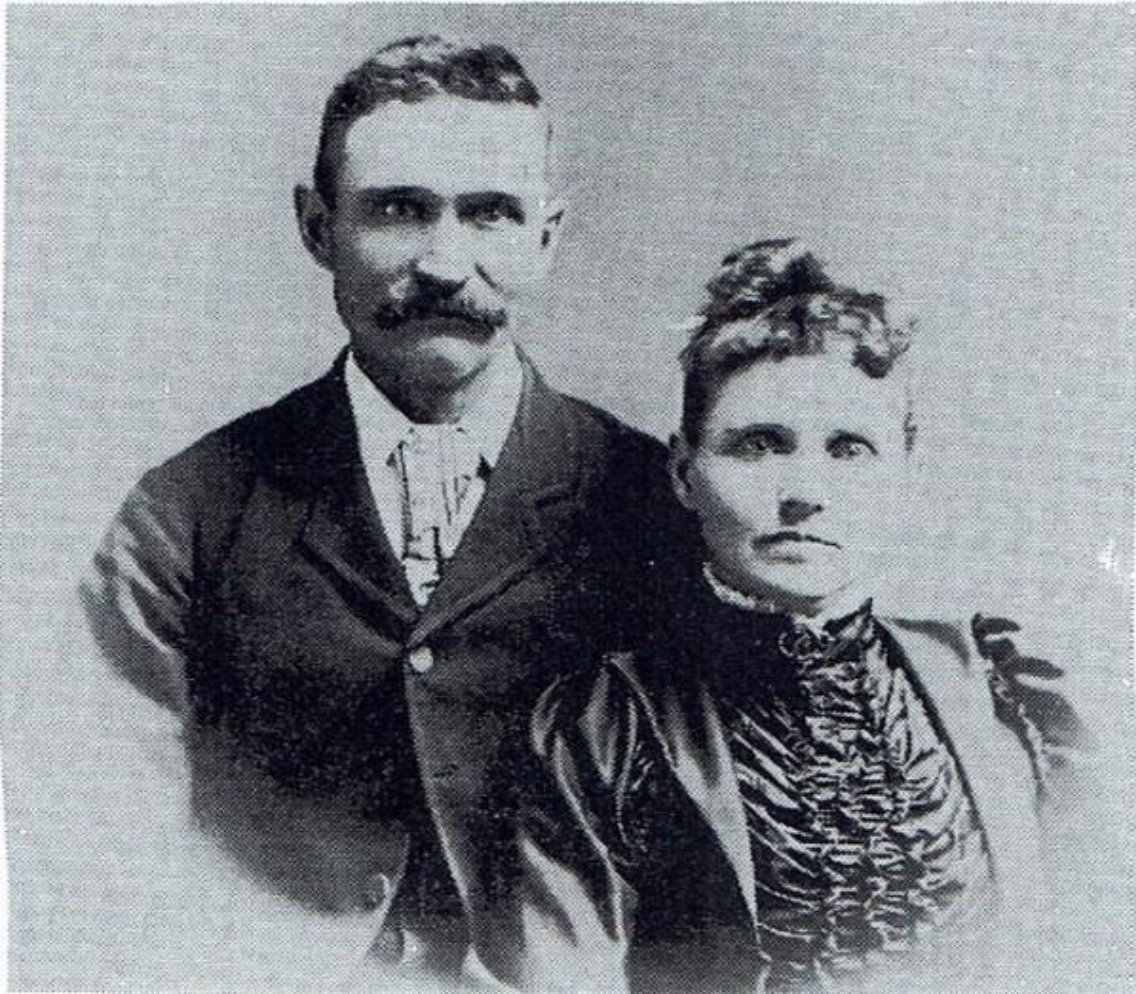
It was hard going initially. When they had a crop failure there was not enough money from the previous crop to carry on. According to Robert, after a total failure they lived through a whole winter by trading horses. He had a good team in the fall and kept trading for a poorer team getting a little money “to boot” . At the end of the winter he had a very poor team but was able to put in a crop with it. He same winter he tried to make a little money by hauling wood from Riding Mountain. He would leave home about 4.A.M driving 18 miles. After cutting the wood he would star his homeward journey hoping to sell his load of wood or exchange it for merchandise.

While time were at times tough they always had food , mostly products from their own farm. The children were well dressed for Jane (McNab) Burns was a wonderful sewer. She would at time sew for neighbours but would never accept money as this would have been a reflection on a man for his wife to work for money.

The initial log house was simple with hooked rugs on the floor and crocheted tidies on homemade chair backs. The log house was replaced by a large house, barn and granary. They enjoyed community pleasures such as barn raisings, quilting bees, picnics, dances, church suppers and school concerts. Their oldest daughter Grace died in a diphtheria epidemic in June 1889 at the age of nine.

The family was brought up in the strictest Presbyterian tradition. It was a grave sin to sing anything but hymns on Sunday. Elizabeth Burns recalls her brother Robert being reproved for whistling Annie Laurie on Sunday. Shoes were polished Saturday night and the girls' dresses starched and ironed. On Sunday they drove six miles to church in Neepawa where even the youngest child was expected to sit still during the long Presbyterian service. Usually the attended Sunday school in the afternoon where Jane taught a class of boys. Robert was on the Board of Management. Frequently the family would be invited to have dinner with friends in town between morning service and Sunday school. The family kept open house for friends on the farm and many people would drive out from Neepawa for dinner or have their children spend a week's holiday in the country.

He retired from farming in 1917 and moved to Regina, renting the farm to son Bob who had been given the first quarter. Robert died in 1929 and his wife in 1941.



Their children include,

- i. Grace Burns, b. Mar 1880 in Brussels, Ontario; d. 4 Jun 1889 at Neepawa, Manitoba
- ii. Elizabeth Richardson Burns, b. 20 Apr 1882 at Elkhorn, Manitoba; d. 1955 at Regina, Saskatchewan
- iii. Margaret Emma Burns, b. 4 Sep 1883 in Elkhorn, Manitoba; m. John (Jack) Alexander Stevenson, 15 Jul 1913; d. 17 Oct 1957 in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan; They had two children Jack Burns Stevenson, b. 15 May 1914, d. 01 May 1981, Elizabeth Jean Stevenson, b. 12 Sep 1916 who married Bill Dixon; three children Donald William Dixon, b. 19 May 1948, David John Dixon, b. 19 Jul 1949 and Margaret Dixon, b. 1952, d. 1952
- iv. Robert Burns (3rd), b. 2 May 1885 in Neepawa, Manitoba; d. 30 Nov 1950 at Neepawa, Manitoba. In 1917, he married Florence Cruickshank from the Oakdale district. They lived on the family farm after Robert's parents retired to Regina and had three children, Robert (4th), Agnes and Jean. A new house was built on the farm in 1917 after the original structure burned. All the furniture, doors and windows were saved by friends and neighbors who came by to help. The 1920's were prosperous and enjoyed a rewarding lifestyle. The 1930's were plagued by dust storms but eventually four-foot-high fence walls were built. Each fall, a load of wheat was taken to the "grist mill" and exchanged for enough flour to last the winter. Wood was cut and hauled either from

Riding Mountain or the Sand Hills. In the fall of 1936, a polio epidemic hit the district and all three children were stricken. The youngest daughter, Jean, died at age 10. Robert and Agnes grew up on the Neepawa farm attending the local Osprey Grade School and then Neepawa High School. Robert married Doris Osborne of the Eden district, and Agnes married Earl Tomlin of Neepawa. Agnes and Earl Tomlin raised two children, Richard and Penny. They have two grandchildren, Darin, son of Richard, and Katie, daughter of Penny. Agnes and Earl moved back to Neepawa.

Robert and Doris resided on the home farm from 1946 to 1958, after which they moved to Neepawa where Bob worked as a car and implement salesman while continuing to operate the farm. Robert (4th) died in 1980.

5v. Esther Jane Burns, b. 26 Jul 1886 Neepawa, Manitoba; m. Edward Elbert Atkinson, 25 Jan 1912, d. 13 Feb 1962 at Vancouver, British Columbia, See below

vi. Mary Olive Burns, b. 6 Feb 1888 in Neepawa, Manitoba; m. Roy William Egbert Loucks, 16 Aug 1916, in Regina, Saskatchewan d. Jun 1982 at Regina, Saskatchewan. They had two children,

I. Jessie Isabelle Loucks, b. 17 May 1917 in Regina, Saskatchewan, m. Bob Foster 03 Jul 1944 in Baltimore, Maryland, died 1998 in Vancouver British Columbia

II. William Wentworth Loucks, b. Jun 1921, m. Helen Louise Macaulay 01 Sep 1944 in Ste. Hyacinth, Quebec d. 20 Mar 2010 in Toronto, Ontario. They had three children Heather Louise Loucks b. 29 Apr 1945 in Montreal, Quebec; Roy William David Loucks 30 Oct 1946 in St Thomas, Ontario, Canada; Robert Macaulay Loucks 10 Mar 1952 in Toronto, Ontario.

vii. Grace Ellen Burns, b. 9 Mar 1890 in Neepawa, Manitoba, m. Frank Inches Cochran, 1927 in Regina, Saskatchewan; d. 1970. They had one child, Margaret Grace Cochran, b. 07 Nov 1929

viii. Agnes Isabel Burns, b. 4 Jun 1898 in Neepawa, Manitoba; m. Frank Sidney Guthrie 1926, d. 18 Sep 1977 in Seattle, 1977 Washington, U.S.A. Two Children, Isabel Elizabeth Guthrie, b. 27 Dec 1929, Frank Burns Guthrie b. 13 Oct 1932 in Seattle, Washington

5. Esther Jane “Jean” Burns 1886 – 1961 Edward Albert Atkinson 1887-1957

Ester Jane Burns, daughter of Robert Burns and Jane McNab, called Jean, was born July 26, 1886. She told part of her story to her daughter in 1952 in the 3rd person:

She] was born just 14 1/2 months after the son Robert. She graduated from grade 11 in Neepawa and then attended Normal College in Winnipeg for three months where she got a second-class certificate.

Jean taught school for eight and on January 25, 1912 married Ed Atkinson 25 January 1912, a plumber and tinsmith. They lived for five years at Waskada, Manitoba, [1912 to 1917] and during this period three of their four

children were born; Ethel Jean born October 30, 1913; William ["Billie"] Burns, July 24, 1915; and Grace Elizabeth, born December 11, 1916.

On November 6th [1915] Billie underwent an operation for an obstructed bowel and succumbed six hours. He was buried in the Burns' plot at Neepawa Cemetery. During the five years at Waskada this family found financial going hard and in 1917 moved to Kerrobert, Saskatchewan. Ed worked for wages for one year, then, with little capital, undertook to set up his own shop. Obstacles which seemed insurmountable were overcome but whenever prospects looked brighter illness smote hard. In November 1, 1920 a son, Robert Donald was born. During his first year he suffered with digestive ailments and that year Jean was bedridden with both arthritis, neuritis, the doctor's verdict being that she 'd never walk again. However, she did, but the next year was laid up again for three months. Three years later, in 1924, Ed was unable to work 98 days. Then in 1926 Jean underwent the first of a series of major surgeries and in December 1928 Donald had an appendectomy operation and thirty days later died December 30, 1928 at age 8. He was buried at Kerrobert.

In the depression she entered several essay contests to win several prizes including a contest, "Why every woman needed an electric Iron." and first prize in a contest with Saskatchewan Phoenix.

In 1937-38 her husband worked in Timmins taking a course in air conditioning. In the winter of 1942-43 he worked his trade at an internment camp in Medicine Hat. In the fall of 1943 they moved to Meyerthorpe, North of Edmonton. In the summer 1944 he set up a gunsmithing and plumbing business in Wilkie, Saskatchewan. In 1948 they moved to Vancouver. Ed died in 1957 and Jean in 1962.

Jean had a rough life with several operations. She belonged to a women's missionary society.

After the death of her husband she traveled to Nova Scotia where she met all her grandchildren. She read to them and one James (the present author, then called Clifford) and in about Grade 3 was particularly fond of her. After she returned to Vancouver he corresponded with her for some years before she passed away.

She died 11 February 1961 in Vancouver. She was buried in Mountain View Cemetery, 5455 Fraser St., Jones new Block 20 A, Plot 14 Disc 214

Sources of Information on Burns in Canada

Burns, Elizabeth The Burns Family in Canada, 29 March 1952

Burns, Esther Jean (Burns) Atkinson, *Historical Record of Robert Burns 11 and His Family*, April 11, 1952.

Burns, W.I. "The First Century of Langford 1881-1891, in Neepawa Book