



## Our Ancestors the Cliffords

by

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### Foreword

This is a work in process. I welcome corrections and additions to [jretson@shaw.ca](mailto:jretson@shaw.ca). There are two files. The first, <http://www.retson.ca/clifford.pdf> contains a story line on my ancestors. The second file, <http://www.retson.ca/Clifforddescendants.pdf>, is an outline listing of the descendants of our earliest Clifford ancestors. In this file direct ancestors are listed in Arabic numbers. Their children are listed in small roman numerals and their grandchildren are listed in capital roman numerals.

### Abbreviations

#### 1. Owen Clark and Mary Hayes

Our earliest catholic ancestor arriving in Canada was John Clifford, son of Owen and Mary Hayes (aka May). The Marriage record of son John Clifford in 1829 give his parents as Owen Clifford of the city of Cork and May Hayes both of Dartmouth. They had the following children

2. i. John Clifford b. 1803
- ii. Mary Clifford b. Jun 1805 bp 30 Jun 1805 in St Mary's, Cork city, Cork, Ireland, d. 1875 in Cork, Ireland; Age: 70

### Cork, Ireland

The cork from which Clifford emigrated was a city in south-west Ireland, in the province of Munster, which has a population of 125,622 in 2016. The city is situated on the River Lee which splits into two channels at the

western end and divides the city centre into islands. They re-converge at the eastern end where the quays and docks along the river banks lead outwards towards Lough Mahon and Cork Harbour, which is one of the largest natural harbours in the world by navigational area. In the late 17th and early 18th centuries French Protestants (Huguenots) arrived in Cork fleeing from religious persecution at the hands of Louis XIV of France. During the 18th century, trade in Cork's port expanded considerably. Cork merchants exported large amounts of butter and beef to Britain, the rest of Europe and North America. During the early 19th century the population of Cork expanded rapidly. By mid century Cork had a population of about 80,000. The increase was due to migration from the countryside as people fled from poverty and in the 1840s, a terrible famine. This led to extremes of poverty and overcrowding in Cork city during this century. Another effect of this influx was to reverse the denominational character of the city, which became predominantly Catholic again. In the later part of the 19th century the population of Cork declined slightly due to emigration, principally to Britain or North America. Cork and nearby Cobh became major points of departure for Irish emigrants, who left the country in great numbers after the Great Irish Famine of the 1840s. John Clifford left at an earlier point in time.

## **Some Communities Associated with the Cliffords in Nova Scotia <sup>1</sup>**

### **Shubenacadie Canal**

The Shubenacadie Canal is a Canadian canal in central Nova Scotia, linking Halifax Harbour with the Bay of Fundy by way of the Shubenacadie River and Shubenacadie Grand Lake. Begun in 1826, it was not completed until 1861 and was closed in 1871. Its length from its starting point from Halifax Harbour to its end at Cobequid Bay (Maitland is 114 km (71 mi). The Shubenacadie Canal was envisioned to facilitate transportation between Halifax and the agricultural, timber and coal producing areas of northern Nova Scotia and the Annapolis Valley. Construction was started in 1826 by the Shubenacadie Canal Co. which went bankrupt in 1831. Several Scottish and Irish stonemasons had immigrated to Nova Scotia to work on the project but were left stranded in the colony with few resources after the project had halted.

The canal's ongoing construction delays were partly responsible for the 1851 decision by Nova Scotia's colonial government to build the Nova Scotia Railway, which built lines from Halifax to Windsor and Truro by 1858. Railway construction created a short-term surge in canal traffic but a decision in 1870 by the Intercolonial Railway to replace the Waverley draw bridge over the canal with a fixed bridge blocked canal steamships and severely limited canal traffic, a conflict related to the frog wars which plagued rival railways crossings.

### **East Mountain**

The East Mountain that is associated with some of the Cliffords settlement is located about a mile south of the South Branch of the North River in central Nova Scotia. It was probably so named from its position on a "Mountain" east of Truro. The land was part of Onslow Township, but the early settlers probably came from Truro in the late 18th century. A Postal Way Office was established at Onslow East Mountain in 1864.

### **Manganese Mines**

This rural area is located between the Salmon River and South Branch North River about six miles north-east of Truro. The name was given when manganese was discovered and mined here. The land was part of Onslow Township and was probably settled soon after 1761 by Truro and Onslow township proprietors who had emigrated from New Hampshire and Massachusetts. A few barrels of manganese were mined here in 1880. In 1881, Mr. McLellan and Mr. Archibald were prospecting and obtained about fifteen tons of ore, but regular work had not been started. In 1891, a few tons of ore were shipped from the mine, but operations evidently ceased soon afterward. Farming is now the main industry.

### **Salmon River**

This community is located in the Salmon River Valley, east of Truro, and derives its name from its location. Settlement probably began soon after 1761 when Charles Cox settled on his interval lot on the south

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.colchester.ca/communities-cc#EastMountain>

side of the river. In 1866 the Pictou Branch Railway was completed through here. Farming was the basic industry.

### **Brookside**

This settlement is located between the Salmon and North Rivers, north-east of Truro in central Nova Scotia. The western section of East Mountain became subdivided into the local place names of Brookside and Upper Brookside, or “Jollytown” as it was called by a James Little. Eventually, David Little built a house beside Farnhams Pond near Bible Hill and called it Brookside. The name first included the settlement around the Mill Brook. Later a Post Office was established a mile up the brook and named Upper Brookside. “Upper” was eventually dropped except for Jollytown section which evidently then became “Upper Brookside”. Settlement probably began in the late 18th century.

### **3. John Clifford 1803-1881 Alice Kennedy 1804 - 1888**

John Clifford was born in Ireland, probably in Cork, Ireland<sup>2</sup>. He was baptised on 11 Apr 1803 at St Mary's, Cork city, Cork, Ireland. Other conflicting data is available. In the 1871 census his age is given as 65 and hence a birthdate of 1805. In his 1881 Canadian census, John Clifford reported his age as 80 and by this source John Clifford was born in 1801<sup>3</sup>. His gravestone in Robie Street Cemetery M-2#20 has his death as 23 November 1881 and age 90 hence 1791<sup>4</sup>. He married 20 Sep 1829 in the Lady of Mount Carmel, Prospect Church. Name given in the registry were John Clifford and Eleshia Kenedy.

Alice Kennedy, daughter of John and Eliza Kenedy was born in Nova Scotia about 1904<sup>5</sup>. She died in Nova Scotia 6 July 1888<sup>6</sup>. Little else is known about her.

Little is known about his early life. He emigrated from Ireland to Canada. His date of immigration to Canada has not yet been ascertained. According to Rebecca Jenkins his great-grand daughter, her mother Beatrice (Clifford) believed he worked on the building of the Shubenacadie Canal. He took up residence in the Dartmouth, Nova Scotia area. He married Alice Kennedy on 20 September 20, 1829 at the Lady of Mount Carmel, Prospect Church given their names as John Clifford and Eleiha Kenedy.

Clifford Archibald provides some information on John Clifford:

The first of these properties mentioned had originally been the Ten-Mile Road House (ten miles from Truro) in the days when the stage hauled freight and passengers from Truro to Pictou. This service had been inaugurated by a man by the name of Hiram Hyde. He had a grant of several hundred acres reaching from the old Pictou Road, north and across the south branch of the North River. He picked up an Irish immigrant by the name of Clifford in Halifax and turning the property over to him to be operated as a hotel, he went to establish the next one ten miles further, at Mount Thom.

Clifford was just the type for this sort of an operation. As well as food and a bed when necessary, the patrons could have the refreshment of their choice. He had a large stable, as all four horses were relieved every ten miles. This meant that considerable land was cleared to produce the necessary horse feed. When

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<sup>2</sup> Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Prospect, Nova Scotia, Marriage Record of John Clifford and Elisha Kenedy, Nova Scotia Archives, MG4, 11803, citing Genealogical Society of Utah, Roll number 866366, 1992,

See also John Clifford Household, 1871 Census of Canada, Nova Scotia, Colchester (district 199) Kemptown (sub-district h) page 5 line 12, digitized page of Census of Canada, 1881 for Image No.: 4396326\_242

<sup>3</sup> John Clifford Household, 1881 Census of Canada, Nova Scotia, Colchester (district 19) North River page 6 line 10, digitized page of Census of Canada, 1881 for Image No.: e008122511

<sup>4</sup> Robie Street Cemetery, Truro, Nova Scotia, Marker M-2#20 Book 88.16a date of death 23 November 1881.

<sup>5</sup> Ellis A. Clifford, 1871 Census of Canada, Nova Scotia, Colchester #199, Sub district Kemptown #h, Page 5, line 5 age 66; ALLICE C. Clifford, 1881 Census of Canada, Nova Scotia, Colchester #19, Sub district North River Age 77

<sup>6</sup> Cemetery Index - Colchester County, Death date 6 July 1888 July, age: 85 Robie St. cemetery Truro #: 94 Marker Number: M-2#20, Book Number: 88.16a

the road was shifted further north to avoid two very steep hills, he shifted his operation to the other end of his property. This was when McNutts took over the first location.

Ray Johnson in *A Glance Backward* indicates that he may have come from a well-to-do family who sent him money regularly. It is believed that he first took up residence in Halifax in that part of the City that once was Dartmouth.

He subsequently moved to Colchester County, Nova Scotia somewhere on the Brookside Road, Brookside. Hiram Hyde a Truro entrepreneur hired him to operate Ten-Mile Road House at Manganese Mines. On Church map of 1864 it was called the J Clifford Hotel.

Both in Ray Johnson's *"A Glance Backward"* and Clifford F. Archibald's *"A Goodly Heritage"*, there is a story that John Clifford was somehow involved in the disappearance of a Syrian peddler, but he was never charged with any crime.

Mrs. Clifford appears to have been a well-educated woman and at a time when Catholics did not read the bible she read to her children.



See footnotes below<sup>7</sup>

John and Alice's children included

- i. Malvina Clifford born about March 5, 1831. She married Abel Wall (1821- 1899). She died March 5, 1899. They had a daughter, Elizabeth Alice Wall
- I. Elizabeth Alice Wall b. 22 Dec 1861 in NS, married Robert McLeod

<sup>7</sup> View digitized page of Census of Canada, 1901 for Image No.: z000036554, 1901 Census of Canada, Nova Scotia, Colchester #29, Sub district North River O Division Number 1 Page 17, line #19 Microfilm T6448

4. ii. James Clifford born October 31, 1838. He married Rebecca Nelson (born April 4, 1841 at Truro, NS) on May 27, 1863 in Truro Nova Scotia. He died June 25, 1905 in Bible Hill, Colchester County and She died Mar 18, 1924 in Salmon River, Colchester County, NS. (For Children see below)

iii. John Clifford born about 1840. He married Agnes (or Aggle) Nelson Apr 26, 1905 in Bath, Maine, US (John's second marriage at age 65, she is 37 born Aug 18, 1867 in East Mountain Colchester County Nova Scotia. She died June 6, 1927.

iv. Mary Ann Clifford, b. 1840, d. 26 Mar. 1913 Manganese Mines m John Andrew McCabe; b. 1840 d. 6 Dec 1927

I. Andrew Clyde McCabe b. 6 Dec 1875 Hantsport, Hants County, N.S. Canada d. 12 Oct 1877

II. Anne Marshall McCabe b. 17 Jun 1880 m. Harper Turner, d. 2 Jul 1972 Halifax, Halifax, Nova Scotia,

v. Elizabeth Clifford b. 6 October 1847 East Mountain; d. 25 Apr 1931, m. James King Carlyle; b. 15 July 1848, East Mountain d. 28 Dec 1928,

III. William Seymour Carlyle b. 20 May 1878 East Mountain, Colchester County, m. Ethel Jean Christie on 2 Dec 1903 in Greenfield, Colchester County, N.S. d. 2 May 1961, East Mountain,

IV. John Andrew Carlyle b. 9 Jun 1881 in Colchester County, Nova Scotia, Canada m Bessie Sterling, d. 1956, Truro, Colchester County, NS

Excerpts from Ray Johnson's A Glance Backward Page 28

"The Clifford's were probably the only Catholics in the area, and there was no church of their denomination within travelling distance. However, Mrs. Clifford did not neglect the religious training of her children. Each day she read the Bible with them, a custom which was not usual in Catholic families at that time. Thus, the Christian faith was maintained in the family, but the children were lost to the Catholic Church. The census of 1871 lists their son James as a Baptist, Timothy as a Methodist, and daughter Elizabeth as a Presbyterian! James Clifford was a highly respected member of the community and an Elder in the Baptist Church"

John Clifford passed away on November 23, 1881. His wife passed away six years later July 6, 1888. John and Alice Clifford are buried in the Robie Street Cemetery.



#### 4. Deacon James Clifford 1839 – 1905 Rebecca Nelson 1841 - 1924



James Clifford, son of John and Alice Clifford was born in 31 October 1838 Bible Hill, Colchester County.

Clifford F. Archibald in “A Goodly Heritage” speaking of John Clifford indicates,

However, some of the best people in the community later could trace their ancestry to that same immigrant hotel keeper. A son James Clifford was an elder in the Baptist Church at East Mountain. He was a living example of what James in his Epistle exhorts the believer to be. He married Rebecca Nelson, no religious slouch herself.

Rebecca was born in Truro on 4 Apr 1841. It is believed that they had 10 children. Their children include,

- i. Infant Clifford, a stillborn, evidence for the existence of this child is sketchy.
- ii. Mary Alice Clifford b. 1864, 15 Apr 1899 m. 2 September 1899 John Henry Archibald, V. Maynard Brown Archibald, 26 Jan 1891 m. Helen Mc- Gregor Dustan and had two children Joan Dustan Archibald and Marjorie MacGregor Archibald,  
VI. Rebecca Dell Archibald b. 09 Apr 1892 in Manganese Mines, Colchester County, NS, Canada, d. 02 May 1957. m. Frederick Johnson on 15 Dec 1915 in Valley Station, Colchester County, NS
- iii. David Lorenzo Clifford b. 1866, d. 29 May 1878 died of Diphtheria.
- iv. Nanette known as Nettie Clifford b. 1868 or 1869, Married Howard Mills (b. 1854), d. 1896 buried Acadia Mines  
VII. Faye Christine Mills b. 30 Dec 1888 d. 26 Jul 1981 Newton, Massachusetts  
VIII. Max H. Mills b. 21 May 1894 in Londonderry, Colchester, Nova Scotia, Canada d. Feb 1979 Magna, Salt Lake, Utah, USA

- v. Benjamin Scott Clifford b.13 Aug. 1871, m. Lilly Taylor 27 Dec. 1899 d. 3 Jul. 1965
- IX. Mrytle Mae Clifford 23 Sep 1900 in Brookside, Colchester County, Nova Scotia, m. Roy Vance
- X. Matthew Lloyd Clifford b. Nov 1909 Nova Scotia, m. Cora Lavenia Anderson 10 Nov 1932 in Valley, Colchester, Nova Scotia, Canada, d. 18 Aug 1979 in Prince Rupert, British Columbia, Canada
- vi. James William Clifford b. 1874, East Mountain Colchester County, NS; m. Ethel May McNutt (b. Feb. 3, 1884) Brookside (daughter of William McNutt and Mary B. McNutt known as May, moved off to Chase BC. D. 21 May 1946 No Children
- vii. Noble Clifford b.1876, d.1878 died of Diphtheria d. 26 May 1878 age 1 Yr. 10 Months
- viii. Lena M. Clifford b.1879, d 1901 died of TB 27 Feb. 1901 age 21 yr.
- ix. Sarah "Sadie" Pearl Clifford b. 25 June 1882 Colchester County, d. 20 Jan 1902 died of TB age 19 years.
- 5. x. Beatrice Clifford b. 16 February 1887 in Brookside, Colchester County, N.S. d 16 Sept. 1958, (See below)

Only 4, Mary, Nettie, Benjamin Scott, and Beatrice lived long enough to marry and leave offspring. The family faced one tragedy after another. 1878 brought the death of David and Noble of diphtheria. Two girls who looked after others with TB also succumbed in 1901-02. Another child was born stillborn.

James Clifford became a deacon of the Baptist church on the Brookside Road. His Grandson, Cliff Retson indicates that he was highly regarded by people who had known him. He reports that his funeral was heavily attended. Someone referred to him as "nature's nobleman." Cliff Retson named his second son James Clifford Retson in recognition of the high regards he had for James Clifford.

Ray Johnson, grandson of John Henry Archibald relates a story about James Clifford:

Grandfather Archibald was always known as John Henry. He grew up on his father's farm and worked for a time in the manganese mine, where he broke his hip in a rock fall. They managed to bandage him up and got him to bed and called the doctor. The doctor, whose competence may be questioned, commented them for their work but did nothing for the patient. After the doctor had gone back o town, James Clifford, a neighbour who had taken an interest in young John Henry, heard what had happened. He was furious. H itched up his horse and made a quick trip into town. He stormed into the doctor's office and demanded to know why nothing was being down for John Henry. The doctor said that anyone that badly hurt usually died anyway. Mr. Clifford ordered the doctor to go back to Manganese Mines and do what he could for John Henry. This must have been an unusual experience for the doctor, for doctors were usually treated with a respect which bordered on reverence. The doctor returned as ordered, and John Henry recovered.<sup>8</sup>

James Clifford died on 25 Jun. 1905 Rebecca, his wife lived another 18 years passing away on 18 Mar 1924.

## **5. Beatrice Clifford 1887 – 1958      William Rankin Retson 1884 - 1975**

Beatrice Clifford, daughter of James and Rebecca Clifford both of Irish descent, was born 16 February 1887 in Brookside, Colchester County, Nova Scotia. She was the youngest daughter of James Clifford and Robert Nelson. She married William Rankin Retson 25 December 1905 in Onslow, Colchester County, Nova Scotia approximately two years after he immigrated to Canada. He was born on February 22, 1884 in Fenwick, Ayrshire, Scotland. He died July 14, 1975 in Bible Hill, Colchester County. They had four children,

- i. Mary Doris Retson b. 19 Aug 1909, m. Lawrence Thomas Hancock 29 Jun 1933 in Bible Hill, Colchester d. 31 Oct 2008 in Truro, NS

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<sup>8</sup> Johnson, Ray, (1989) A Glance Backward, Page 21

- I. Leslie Margaret Hancock
- ii. George Clifford Retson b. 19 Dec 1912 m. Grace Elizabeth Atkinson 26 Jul 1941 Ottawa, Ontario, d. 17 Feb 1997 in Truro, NS
  - I. William Edward Retson
  - II. Madeleine Jane Retson
  - III. James Clifford Retson
  - IV. Mavis Ruth Retson
  - V. Donald George Retson
  - VI. Robert John Retson
- iii. Rebecca Jean Retson 18 Nov 1917 in Bible Hill, m. William Angus Jenkins 01 Jul 1943 at Truro, NS, d. 23 Sep 2015 in Truro, NS
  - I. Catherine Faye Jenkins m. Charles Peter Langtry
  - II. Heather Jo Jenkins m. Robert MacDonald
- iv. William Armour Bateman Retson b. 16 Mar 1925 in Bible Hill, m. Eldora Poirier 1946 NB, (2) Clara Emma Parlee 08 Nov 1963 in in Moncton, NB
  - I. Victoria Sylvia Retson
  - II. Dale William Retson

Beatrice Clifford came from a cultured family. When her family would write letters, they would write them in the form of poetry. Beatrice Clifford had a love of poetry. She had graduated from Colchester Academy. She was a school teacher in Valley and maybe Bible Hill as well.

She was a very religious. She was a Sunday school teacher at First Baptist Church in Truro for many years. In the early years Beatrice, strong puritan background rose to the top. There were no cards – at least in the house or to the knowledge of Beatrice Clifford, no dancing, no drinking and church attendance was compulsory. Doris Hancock relates that her father took her to her dance at the Agriculture College when she was in grade 10. Similarly, it was her father that gave her some money to buy cards in Truro to play “45s” when some boys from New Brunswick were going to arrive and required some entertainment. None of the children held any resentment to their mother – it was her religious convictions. However, none either to choose to maintain her rigorous views with respect what was “of the devil”.

She had rheumatoid Arthritis before the end of the twenties. On her husband’s birthday February 22, 1946, she had a stroke which paralyzed her left side. She did not think she was going to survive but lived another 12 years. She was bed ridden much of that time. She died September 16, 1958.

They took Margaret Jennings from the NS Training School to help in the home.

## The Clifford Line

Owen Clifford and May Hayes

John Clifford 1803 – 1881 and Elisha or Alice Kenedy or Alice Kennedy 1804 – 1881

James Clifford 1839 - 1905

Beatrice Clifford 1887 – 1958

## Abbreviations

abt.	About	aka.	also known as
b.	born	d.	died



m.	married	NB	New Brunswick
NS	Nova Scotia		
NSARM	Nova Scotia Archives and Record Management		
p.	page	PEI	Prince Edward Island
yr.	year	yrs.	Years
US	United States		

### **Bibliography**

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