



April 15, 2023

This newsletter may interest particular those related to persons related directly or indirectly to Grace and Clifford Retson. My genealogy website is located at <http://www.retson.ca/retsongenealogy.html>

## **With a little help from my Friend the Spicers have expanded**

The history of researching ancestors is sometimes as interesting as the genealogy itself. Sometime progress is very slow and at other times the speed of summer lightening. Sometime finds come as a result of extensive research and sometimes they simply are given by a distant relatives who cross your path. The history of my research on the Spicer family is a good example. The genealogy of the Spicers is found at <http://www.retson.ca/spicer.pdf>.

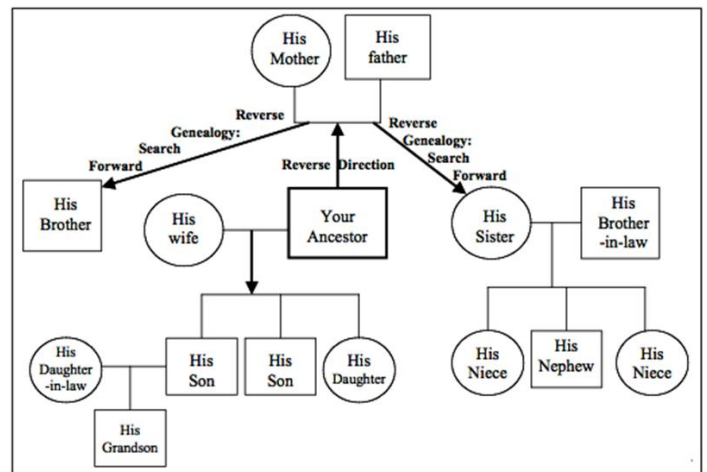
The starting point was Abigail Spicer known to her granddaughter Grace, my mother, as Grandma and to everyone else as Abbie. She died July 10, 1940, in Merrickville. My mother recalled staying with her in Ferland Saskatchewan when she was very young and sharing a bed. Unlike her Grandmother Burns who was quite stylish, Grace recalls she wore long skirts to the floor and 4 slips on at least one occasion. Unfortunately for me as a young genealogist I couldn't make the leap from Abbie Spicer to Abigail Spicer the name in all her formal documents. The breakthrough came from a telephone call from one Patricia McKay one day and a subsequent printout of several addition ancestors. Then the pace returned from that of the hare to the turtle and during the 2 decades slow painful research took me back to Ezekiel Spicer, one of our Canadian Loyalists. Again, with help from Patricia I purchased a book by Gavin K. Watt, A Service History and Master Roll of Major Edward Jessup's Loyal Rangers and got the names of his wife simply as "Elizabeth" and two sons Daniel and Ezekiel.

Most of the families trees on Ancestry had his wife as Luce Shepard but I could never establish this incorrect linkage. With additional years of research, I was able to establish a link from Abigail through other ancestors (by marriages) back to the Mayflower (1620) and Ancestors Francis Cook, his son John and Richard Warren all passengers on the Mayflower. Up until an email from a Jim Clarke received in March, these were the earliest ancestors arriving in America. Jim wanted to discuss my research with me and as a result of a zoom call I began to realize that in our history there were 3 Ezekiel Spicer, One born in 1716, one in 1741/42 and the son born in about 1757. What most others had done was to confuse The first Ezekiel with the second. Thus, while Luce Shepard was in my line, she was a generation earlier.

The records relating to the 3 generations were scarce. The Spicers were generally of a lower economic class than many other ancestors and in general there is less records available. In addition, possibly the fact that second Ezekiel was a Canadian Loyalist may also have contributed to the lack of information. I have been able to find only the name "Elizabeth" for this, Ezekiel Spicer's wife from the previous mentioned military records. Jim Clarke also passed on information of a manuscript by Susan Spicer Meech, and Susan Billings, History of the Descendants of Peter Spicer, A Landholder in New London Connecticut, 1911, available at archives.org. This manuscript provided valuable leads which I continue to research. Tentatively with out conclusive proofs I now believe that the ethnic background of the Spicers was not Irish, but rather English. With this later manuscript there is information that take us back even further back than the Plymouth Colony of the Mayflower to the Settlement of the Jamestown colony in Virginia and the arrival of our ancestors two years earlier in 1618. Unfortunately, these ancestors have not been as well known and as well researched as the Plymouth Colony or the Massachusetts Bay colony and hence the availability or knowledge of documentation is not as available.

Using this manuscript and a bit of “reverse” genealogy I have been able to identify several other lines of ancestors which I continue now to research backwards to earlier generations.

The definition of genealogy is “an account of the descent of a person, family, or group from an ancestor”. A recent blog that I read made a distinction between genealogical “searching” and genealogical “researching”. Searching consists of looking for genealogical information. Researching on the other hand consists of using organized and recognized methods and procedures to obtain the most accurate account as possible. Accuracy is fundamental to genealogical research. Without it, a family history would be fiction.



Fiction is interesting and entertaining. Most of us start with genealogical fiction and we differ to the degree that we gravitate to genealogical non-fiction. I have often told the story of how my great Uncle John spurred my interest in genealogy with the story that had as its plot line that we weren’t Scottish, but actually English. After years of research the truth of our mixed genealogical heritage is emerging – we are Scottish, Irish and English and throw in a dash of German and Swiss.

I engaged in both searching and researching. The manuscript brought to my attention by Jim Clark (a Spicer Descendant) would fall into the category of “searching”. The research that follows establishes verification of this earlier research..

When you take genealogical education courses from such institutes as the International Institute of Genealogical Studies (<https://www.genealogicalstudies.com/>) you are continually pushed to adopt Genealogical Standards. I am certainly moving in that direction but continue to deviate for reasons of convenience, short term costs and quite frankly pure laziness. I hope that when I do and mislead others I cause little long term harm. That harm might be reduced by my warning to treat my histories of our Ancestors located at <http://www.retson.ca/retsongeneology.html> as tentative histories which are constantly be revised and corrected.

The story doesn’t end when a new source is found. The source and the information it contains must be analyzed to determine the reliability it may have for a genealogical question that it may assist to answer. Sources are classified as original, derivative or authored. Genealogist are encouraged to find original sources whenever possible. A derivative record is any subsequent document or source which is derived from an original record. An example of an original record might ne a birth record made at the time of a birth. An example of a derivative record might be an index of births or a transcript of the birth record. Information found in the record might be primary, secondary or undetermined. Information from an original source may vary based who gave the information. A doctor’s information related to a death contained in an original death record with respect to the date and cause of death is primary information while the birthdate of the deceased is secondary unless it was given by some one who was present at the time of the birth

SOURCES	⇔	INFORMATION	⇔	EVIDENCE
<i>are . . .</i> DOCUMENTS, REGISTERS, PUBLICATIONS, ARTIFACTS, PEOPLE, WEBSITES, ETC.		<i>is judged by ...</i> INFORMANT'S LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION OR KNOWLEDGE		<i>is based on ...</i> RELEVANCE OF INFORMATION TO QUESTION & DEGREE OF EXPLICITNESS
ORIGINAL Record		PRIMARY (firsthand)		DIRECT (relevant / explicit)
DERIVATIVE Record		SECONDARY (secondhand)		INDIRECT (relevant / not explicit)
AUTHORED Narrative		UNDETERMINED		NEGATIVE (relevant / not explicit)

such as the mother. If one can not tell if the informant was present then the information would be regarded as undetermined.

The reason for the analysis is due to the errors which may arrive due to problems of biased information, problems of failing memories, errors in transmission of information. The manuscript is an example of an authored source. A manuscript written by a person is more likely to contain accurate information if it is prepared early following the events that it speaks to and if the person has a reputation of gathering multiple sources and verifying the information they report.

A manuscript prepared in 1911 on events which took place during the first fifty years of the 1600s is giving a report that may report on regional sources which should always be examined. Hence, while Meech document may provide valuable information the accuracy of such information must be verified. Some genealogist believed that such information should not be passed on until its accuracy can be ascertained. I believe that information can be passed on earlier, but one must recognize until verified the information provides fiction not facts.

The breaking of the brick wall of the Spicers led to research on various earlier lines of ancestors including the Shepards, the Parks, the Geers, the Busecots, the Chaplyn and many others which in time I will cover.

## **Coffee – wine of Muslims**

This month the local Genealogy Club held a workshop on titled “Writing Food Memories”. These kind of stories add interest and colour to our family trees and provide information to our future descendants. I had a great deal of difficulty in picking a particular “food memory”. My first time I had to prepare meals was in Toronto while attending law school at which time I bought my first cookbook: The Joy of Cooking by Irma S. Rombauer and Marion Rombauer Becker, a book that we still have in the house. However, in the basement of Devonshire house I learned more from a Chinese exchange student who used to drive the other students crazy by his habit of adding all his leftovers into a pot of Soup. Not only was the soup quite delicious he was multinational in his meal preparation and made an excellent Spaghetti, lo mien, chicken and vegetable dishes. The only meals that I cooked that caught his interest was pancakes, and corn patties, neither of which seemed to illicit many memory stories. My wife suggested that I write something about the recipes that she copied from my mother’s recipe box that came from my Grandmother. One she claimed was for making deodorant. Unfortunately, she hadn’t copied this recipe. The only menu that I found interesting was one for Haggis.

Then one day while driving my granddaughter (grade 9) to her job after school and stopping to purchase a meal at Tim Horton. She wanted a fancy coffee to drink. Growing up at home myself and siblings were encouraged to drink milk and the idea of children consuming Coffee was a non-starter. Our conversation around coffee gave me my topic – coffee.

Many of the things that happen to you, happen not due to any great planning or forethought on your part but due to purely random unplanned circumstances. Such is my story about how I became a coffee drinker. I started University at Dalhousie in 1966 with the intention of taking an Honours BSC majoring in Psychology. The first year went as expected and I earned a mark of 90 in Psychology the second highest mark in a class of 700 students. The second year among other courses I signed up to three courses in Psychology at the 300 level as required for an Honours degree. The initial term was difficult and in February while giving blood at my first Blood Donation drive I met a pretty little red head from UBC who was attending a year at Dalhousie on a Scholarship from the Canadian Union of students who suggested that if I wasn’t enjoying myself at Dalhousie where I was taking 3 - 300 level courses after Psychology 100. She suggested I apply for the same scholarship and attend University of British Columbia.

In my 4<sup>th</sup> year of University, I had a change of plans in which I decided to change from an Honours degree in Psychology to a straight BA, and in doing so only had to complete 4 out of 6 courses to graduate. But since it cost me no more to take 6 courses than 4, I signed up for 6. One of the courses Personality turned out to be very boring and I lost interest in diligently applying myself in the second term. However, when the final exam schedule was published I found out that the exam in this course was one week later than the second to last scheduled exam so I thought I might as well spend the week studying for the exam. I used to sit beside another pretty looking girl in this class and I ask her if I could xerox her notes for the year since I had not been particularly engaged with the course. I planned on using her notes to study the course during the last week.

The week before exams while playing cards with among others, a Shar Mahmood I was told what I thought was a ridiculous story concerning coffee, the plant which was discovered by goats at a monastery and the drink was used by Muslims to assist them to wake for prayers. He suggested that I should start drinking coffee to be able to study longer during the week of study. The story of the Goats who would never sleep was so preposterous that I never forgot it. I started to drink coffee which I found so distasteful. To begin with I took the coffee with spoonfuls of sugar and plenty of milk until I could drink 2 or three cups a day. The long and short is that I mastered the course in one week and actually passed the exam with a mark higher than the girl whose notes I borrowed.

An interesting addendum to this story is that years later when I started to develop headaches around the Christmas vacation and ask the doctor he suggested I keep track of the number of coffees I drank after the Christmas break as I might be suffering from coffee withdrawal. Much to my utter surprise I found that I was in fact drinking about 15 cups a day. I gradually reduced this to a maximum of 3 a day

When I started to prepare for the Club's meeting I google coffee and found a book, Jacob, H.E.. Coffee: The Epic of a Commodity (p. 6). Skyhorse. By coincidence I found the Kindle Edition was on sale for \$.99 and bought a copy. To my surprise, the book started out with the story of the goats. And what in the plant kept the goats awake. In the year 1820, a German chemist, Runge, extracted it for the first time. It belongs to the class of bodies known as alkaloids, and its chemical composition is expressed by the name of trimethyldioxyypurin, known for short as caffeine.

Additions and revisions to <http://www.retson.ca/retsongeneology.html> since March 1, 2023

Our Wilson Ancestors	<a href="https://www.retson.ca/wilson.pdf">https://www.retson.ca/wilson.pdf</a>
Our Grindall Ancestors	<a href="https://www.retson.ca/grindall.pdf">https://www.retson.ca/grindall.pdf</a>
Our Whitney Ancestors	<a href="https://www.retson.ca/whitney.pdf">https://www.retson.ca/whitney.pdf</a>
Our Spicer Ancestors	<a href="https://www.retson.ca/spicer.pdf">https://www.retson.ca/spicer.pdf</a>
Our Shepard Ancestors	<a href="https://www.retson.ca/shepards.pdf">https://www.retson.ca/shepards.pdf</a>
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