



December 15, 2022

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/retsongeneology.html>

Christmas 2022

Let me begin this newsletter by wishing all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year 2023. We have lost a few dear Retsons in 2021/22 including Bill Retson 16 Mar 1925 - 08 Jun 2022, his son Dale Retson 01 Jun 1949 - 29 Apr 2021, and John Kenneth Retson 03 Jul 1940 - 04 Dec 2021. Losses during the recent covid 19 pandemic were especially difficult because visiting restrictions. Health issues surfaced among others which will be followed through 2023.



Christmas Ornaments

For many years now we have taken out these two items for the festive Christmas season. The ceramic Christmas tree was a made by Grace Retson in the pursuit of her hobby and it was given to us as a Christmas present many, many years ago. We gave the MacNichol Santa to Grace also many years ago and re-acquired it from her estate. Such decorations remind us of those who are no longer with us but fondly remembered. Enjoy those who remain among us and may their lives be filled with meaning and happiness,



Genealogy Education and Forensic Genealogy

We all have our hobbies and past the time leisure pursuits. Some do ceramics, some do crossword puzzles, some picture puzzles, some play bridge and other games. I do genealogy. Eventually most of us read books or take courses to improve our proficiency or skills in the endeavour. For some 4 or 5 years I have been taking courses from the National Institute of Genealogical Studies which was originally attached to the University of Toronto. In January it becomes the International Institute of Genealogical Studies headquartered in the United States. Commencing in December I am taking a course called Forensic Genealogy.

The term “forensic” simply means that the work done could have legal implications and may be used in court. Forensic genealogy typically involves cases such as locating missing heirs for estates or guardian cases, mineral rights, real estate issues adoptions and other potential legal issues. A subbranch of this, called investigative genetic genealogy (IGG) has been in the news lately with respect to cold case murders. On November 24 George Sutherland in Northern Ontario was charged in Toronto for the deaths of two individuals in 1983. Forensic genealogy is genealogy in “reverse” bringing family lines forward to the present. A major focus of forensic genealogy is finding living people.

In genealogy, you start with an individual and attempt to locate a pedigree, i. e. a line of ancestors. You attempt to identify as many siblings of an ancestor since each ancestor may have related documents such as birth,

baptismal, marriage and death records which may provide to leads to earlier ancestors. Forensic Genealogy involves reverse pedigrees and descendancy research. You start with an individual or his or her DNA, find a match filed by descendants of a common ancestor and then examine all the descendants of the common ancestor.

The first assignment in the course was to identify search that I had conducted for a living person during the last 5 years. What strategies did I use and the steps that I took to find the person? About a month ago while researching in my grandmother born Esther Jean or Jane Burns my memory turned to a trip, I took with my cousin, Rod McRae to visit my grandmother's sisters in Seattle Washington at the end of a University year in Vancouver. While there, we visited one of their children, then called Elizabeth Williams and her family. We took out two of the Grandchildren, the oldest of whom was approximately our age. I thought that this finding this individual some 55 years later would be a good subject for this question.

I started with the mother and with Ancestry subscription found a divorce and then a new marriage which gave me a new married surname. Next, I found a record of a death in 2007 and an obituary which listed the children with their married names in 2007. Next, I found a divorce record for the particular 2nd cousin I was attempting to track and subsequently a new marriage with a new second married surname. I also found a sibling with a new marriage name. I then found a Facebook name of this second individual and sent an email by Facebook. I never got a reply and didn't feel I should leave a message on Facebook.

According to a recent article located at <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/cold-cases-genome-testing-toronto-police-1.6666671>, it's an 'exciting time' for DNA genealogy in solving cold cases, a sub-field of forensic genealogy.

I can use the database of wikitree as an example. But first, an update on wikitree. By the beginning of October, out of 2046 possible ancestors in 10 generations, I had placed or connected myself to 222 Wikitree profiles on www.wikitree.com. To date, I have reached 257 (12.56%). Some of the ancestors were added by me and others became connected as the research of others intersected. Whitney and Severy Ancestors were some of those added during the past month. Both are families which emigrated in the 1600s, the Whitneys from England and the Severy from the Channel Islands.

Abigail Whitney 1717 – 1790 (see <https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Whitney-5502>) was the wife of John Robbins baptized at Killingly, Windham, Connecticut, whom I had previously researched. Wikitree provided information which led to his spouse and her ancestors. One of the benefits of well prepared profiles on wikitree is the citations to Articles which provide confirmation of one's ancestors. Of particular interest of Abigail is that she shared about ~0.39% DNA. What this means is that I can compare my shared DNA with another listed as sharing DNA. This gives physical evidence of our common heritage.

Now, if the police obtained a DNA sample from a murder scene in Killingly Connecticut that matched my .39% DNA, they could identify several generations of possible suspects including myself. At <https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Whitney-5502> you can look at some of her descendants by tapping on the descendant tab (See picture below and red circle). This produces a list of descendants. It might take several months of research to whittle down the number of likely candidates. Obvious, they can eliminate immediately all descendants who had died before the event took place. They would then begin coming up with a list of descendants who lived in the area at the time of the event. Since I have never lived or even visited Killingly, I

doubtlessly would never be considered a likely candidate. The Police can increase their possible candidates by using numerous databases such as Ancestry, Family Search.org, <https://www.americanancestors.org/>,

Abigail Robbins formerly Whitney

Born 9 Dec 1717 in Groton, Middlesex, Massachusetts Bay

Daughter of Cornelius Whitney and Sarah (Shepard) Whitney

ANCESTORS

Sister of Matthias Whitney, Mary (Whitney) Merrill and Joshua Whitney

Wife of John Robbins — married 25 Apr 1739 in Putnam, Windham, Connecticut

Mother of Rhoda (Robbins) Gould

SHOW DESCENDANTS

Died after 24 Oct 1790 after age 72 in Killingly, Windham, Connecticut, United States
GedMatch, FamilytreeDNA, 23&Me, MyheritageDNA and so on.



Abigail (Whitney) Robbins (1717 - aft. 1790)

Your 6th great grandmother

Abigail (Whitney) Robbins's Profile Edit Images Family Tree & Tools Changes

Comments Family Group Family Timeline Matches Sources

Descendants

Abigail (Whitney) Robbins married John Robbins (16 May 1716 - 1758) on 25 Apr 1739 and is the mother of one child and the grandmot details on up to five generations of descendants. Also see Abigail's DNA Descendants and Family Tree & Genealogy Tools for more view.



all this information becomes part of public database. Add to this all the information individuals place on social media such as Facebook and other such sites, genealogists can identify several descendants of common ancestors.

Who cares who your ancestors or the descendants of common ancestors are. My mother indicated she had no interest in knowing most while my father was quite interested in knowing. Some are interested in knowing they are descendants of Ancestors who also had famous descendants such as Presidents of the United States, Prime Ministers of Canada or famous persons such as Marilyn Munroe. I am fascinated knowing the number of descendants of common ancestors who were adopted, the various biracial individuals (white and black, white and native aboriginal), the number of ethnic groups represented (English, Scottish, Italian, French, Latino etc.) I relish learning the stories of so many individuals living all over Canada, United States, England, Scotland, Australia whose ancestors once shared a common origin, a common culture and who in part share traces of Common DNA. Shared DNA increases my sense of a shared humanity. Is there any logical reason why. None whatsoever. It is purely an emotional rather than a logical connection.

One Name Study - Researching Surnames

During the month of October and November I finished a course on One Name Study. A one name study attempts to such things as,

1. the origin of the name or early references
2. the name's meaning
3. relative frequency
4. distribution in geography and time
5. patterns of immigration and emigration
6. names variants and deviants

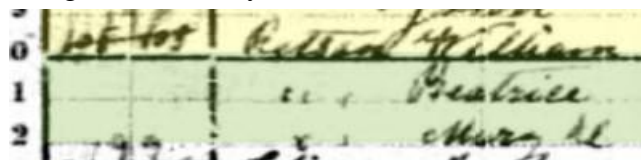
As I indicated in an earlier newsletter, I have started with the Retson name and down the road may do some work on the other 3 grandparent names, Clifford, Atkinson and Burns.

The issue of variants and deviants for Retson is interesting. In earlier times, not only did names get recorded with a wide range of spellings, but individuals themselves may have used many versions as well. Shakespeare for example spelt his name in six or more different ways over his lifetime.

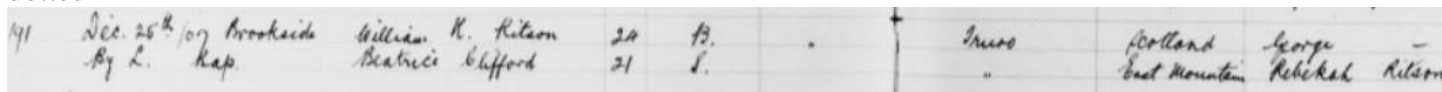
To date, while I am leaning to the accepted view that Ritson is the primary spelling and Retson, Ratson, Rutson are variants along with others. The term “deviant” has been coined to describe those apparent variants clerical errors in recording or transcription. That is, these are not spelling variants that the person concerned would actually have used.

A good example of a deviant of Retson found in the 1911 Canada census record: Census Place: 17 - Salmon River poll district, Valley, Colchester, Nova Scotia; Page: 21; Family No: 198. Almost every transcription of this family with the exception of Automated Genealogy at

<http://automatedgenealogy.com/census11/SplitView.jsp?id=71150> gave the family name as Betton. One can forgive the various transcribers when one sees the actual first recording picture, (To the right is the 1911 record for William, wife Beatrice and first daughter Mary D. Automated Genealogy transcribers were later local volunteers who most likely knew the local family.



On the other hand, the variant Ritson was used by at least two brothers in Canada from the early 1900s to at least 1921 census. (Below is a picture of the 1907 marriage registry for William R. Ritson complete with the dotted i



It is at time difficult to what is a variant and what is a deviant. Wikitree volunteers on the “England Project” accepted that the Baptismal records of the family in the 1770-1780s was “Ratson” but for Thomas Ratson (<https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Ratson-20>) requested that I add a note since after his baptismal record every record recorded him as Ritson. There were few records for Thomas’s ancestors. His father birth was record as Richd Ratson and his grandfather Richd Rattson. Were these deviants, variants or primary. The frequency of variants may vary over time and geographical area. Ritson is more frequent in England in earlier periods while Retson is more frequent post 1809 in Scotland and Canada in the 1900s onward. Retson One Name Study at <https://www.retson.ca/RetsonOneNameStudy.pdf> will record future progress on this study.

Additions to <http://www.retson.ca/retsongeneology.html> since April 1, 2022

Our Savery\Saverit/Severy Ancestors

<https://www.retson.ca/severy.pdf>

Our Whitney Ancestors

<https://www.retson.ca/whitney.pdf>

This newsletter was sent to individuals who have expressed an interest in this genealogy at some time. If you do not wish to receive future updates, please email me at jretson@shaw.ca and indicate so.