



Website located at <http://www.retson.ca/retsongenealogy.html>

## **A New Year. A New Day. A New Dawn.**

With the new year I will turn my attention to our English ancestors. The information that I have gathered on our English ancestors to date is minimal and at time tenuous. In this newsletter I will commence with an overview of the period leading up to the emigration of our English which may be found from links located at <http://www.retson.ca/SomeofmyancestorswereEnglish.pdf>.

As I got further in this research, I noticed distinct differences between those who emigrated to Scotland and those who emigrated to the United States. As time went on, I began to form hypothesis to explain the differences. The first obvious difference was the time dimension: those who emigrated to what became United States emigrated by 1700 and the bulk of them before 1640. The families that emigrated to Scotland, in addition to being from Northern England did so after 1800. There were considerable changes over this period.

Those who emigrated to Scotland were located in Northern England and were found with the assistance of Nana Clark and Elinor Rawlings who provided me with the death record of John Retson who died in 1891 in Parish of Fenwick, Ayr, widower of Jane Hamilton, Molecatcher, 82 years 3 months, and son of John Retson and Ann Bateman. Assuming the accuracy of this information he was born in August 1809. The marriage of his parents first found at Ancestry Select English Marriages was 26 Jun 1809 a bit short of the normal 9 months of gestation. Eventually from a trip to Salt Lake City I found a baptism of John Ratson in New Hutton which established the age of the father at least 29 and the wife baptized on 18 Apr 1790 would be approximately 19. The story received from my great Uncle John was that our English Ancestor eloped across the Scottish Border because the Parents did not approve of the marriage. In fact, both marriage and birth took place in England and registered in the Parish of Kendall, Westmorland. Whether the parent's disapproval was based on class difference, age difference or immoral character can only be speculated but it would appear that the parents eventually consented to the marriage. Eventually I found John's parents Richard Retson and Margaret Bell (complicated by an earlier marriage to a William Tarne and Richard's Parents Richard Ratson and Margaret Millburn. Ann Bateman's parents were Thomas Bateman and Margaret Noble. These stories can all be found at <http://retson.ca/retson.pdf>, <https://www.retson.ca/bell.pdf>, <https://www.retson.ca/bateman.pdf> and <https://www.retson.ca/noble.pdf>. Research continues on these lines.

## **Our English Ancestors before 1640**

My work on our English ancestors before 1700 continues, but collectively, they bore vast similarities:

1. They were born in the reigns of the Tudor or Stuart monarchs. They emigrated from England, mostly before 1640, during a wave that has become known as the Great Migration.
2. They were quite religious but not sympathetic to the Church of England rites and ceremonies (They were Puritan at least in spirit. Many were persecuted and many became religious refugees).
3. They were not sympathetic to the monarch as time went on.
4. They were conservative in terms of desiring preservation of community life but otherwise strongly inclined to supporting individual rights (particularly in terms religious freedom for themselves, although they often denied it to others.)

5. They were relatively well off either a member of the aristocracy or a descendant. They were materially ambitious and adventuresome.

This period is perhaps the most interesting period of English history and ideas emanating from this period left the greatest impact on the future of the Anglo world. During this period several ideas were established that left their mark in subsequent generations: The Rule of Law, Rights to trial by jury and habeas corpus, First modern political parties, Free press, and Popular participation in politics. In order to situate our ancestors in the context of history, a brief review of the monarchs, events of religion life and the view of the correct world order.

The Tudors 1485-1603 Henry VII 1485 – 1509 Henry VIII 1509-1547 Edward VI 1547-1553 Mary 1553-1558 Elizabeth 1558-1603
---

Perhaps a note first of their material wealth. I do not wish to convey the perception that all our English ancestors were rich but merely to indicate that those that I have discovered to date were. I suspect there are at least two major reasons why this is the case. The first is that in general the well to do have more activities that get recorded then the poor and hence there is greater activities to record. Secondly, the well to do at the time were particularly in protecting their wealth and their status. Before the emergence of capitalism in the 1600 the predominant philosophical belief was determined by a concept of the great chain of being, and those that had wealth and status jealously guarded it. To do so the rich followed a practice of primogenitor where the bulk of the land and the wealth would be left to the oldest surviving son. Daughters, while they might veto a marriage tended to be married off to rich families so as to not to dilute the family wealth. Smaller portions of land or money might be given to subsequent males in order to allow themselves to establish themselves.

The Stuarts 1603-1714 James 1 (VI of Scotland) 1603-1625 Charles 1 1625 - 1649 Charles 2 1660 - 1685 James 2 1685-1689 William of Orange and Mary 1689-1702
--

Before the emergence of capitalism in the 1600 the predominant philosophical belief was determined by a concept of the great chain of being, and those that had wealth and status jealously guarded it. To do so the rich followed a practice of primogenitor where the bulk of the land and the wealth would be left to the oldest surviving son. Daughters, while they might veto a marriage tended to be married off to rich families so as to not to dilute the family wealth. Smaller portions of land or money might be given to subsequent males in order to allow themselves to establish themselves.

In 1485 the majority of English passed from a majority to a minority of less than 50%. In 1485 at the beginning of the Tudor reign, all men, women and children were Roman Catholic. All Catholics believed in an order called the great chain of being. The great chain of being was a hierarchical structure of all matter and life, thought by medieval Christianity to have a divine order decreed by God. The chain began with God and descends through angels, humans, animals and plants to minerals. The chain of being hierarchy had God at the top, followed by angels, next followed by man, then animals and plants and finally the mineral materials of the earth.

Each division except God, had divisions within, each having its order and place, providing relative order and stability. God has created all other beings and is therefore outside of creation, time, and space. He has all the spiritual attributes found in humans and angels, and uniquely has his own attributes of omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence.

In Christian angelology, angels are immortal beings of pure spirit without physical bodies. They were thought to have spiritual attributes such as reason, love, and imagination Within the division the hierarchy was as follows: Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones, Dominions, Virtues, Powers, Principalities, Archangels and Angels

Humanity was halfway down the chain. Humans uniquely shared spiritual attributes with God and the angels above them, love and language, and physical attributes with the animals below them. The Divine Order for humans: Kings, Queens, Gentry, Yeoman, Husbandman, Cottagers, labourers and then the poor. In the major towns and cities as time passed, a new class merchants class was added. Even within households, there was a Divine Order: Father, mother, sons, in order of birth, daughters, in order of birth, and then servants.

To defy the King was to defy God. Beneath the King was the nobility, about 40 to 50 families in 1485 who held inheritable titles. They started out as the King's military retainers and only males could inherit title and land. The male head of the family sits in the House of Lords. They owned between 5 to 10% of the land. They commanded annual incomes ranging from 3500 £ to merely 60 £. They practiced primogenitor where only the oldest son inherited land. Their wealth in the country implied large retinues called affinities with large numbers of servants including, estate managers, chaplains, household servants, tenants and political allies and clients, many of them housed in the nobles castle.

Below the nobles were the Gentry about 3000 in 1485. They often headed the ranks of these retinues. They were subdivided into knights who bore the title sir; the Esquires, the lowest level who were able to bear arms and finally the gentleman. The gentry might own multiple estates and collectively held 5 to 10% of the land in England. They generally looked after the day to day government of the king such as sheriffs, justice of the peace or commissioners whose job it was to raise militias for the king. Below the gentry were yeomanry, substantial farmers with secure tenure of their lands. What distinguish themselves from the gentry was that they actually physically work on their lands. Owning 2 £ of land entitled them to vote for the house of commons. They were the backbone of rural communities serving on juries and militia. Below the yeomanry were husbandman, who probably rented land and had a few seasonal servants. Below them cottagers who rented homes but had no land attached to them. They worked for landowners. The labourers below them did not even own a home – they lived in someone else's home where they worked. Finally, the poor.

Henry VII, the first of the Tudor line, defeated the usurper, King Richard III and united the Kingdom of England. His son Henry VIII came to the throne in a crest of popularity. Henry was given the title Fides Defender in recognition of his championship of the Church in 1524 but broke with the Church when the Pope refused to accept Henry's attempt to find his marriage to his first wife Catherine of Aragon annulled. The sole reason for his displeasure in Catherine was her failure to bear a male heir. In succession, Henry acquired 5 additional wives in an attempt to acquire a male heir. Henry acquired children by three successive wives, Mary I, Elizabeth I and Edward I but all died without male heirs. The religion of the monarch determined the religion of the subjects

A gentleman in England did no work. That was left to the commoners. Men were men. Woman lived a different life then there male counterpart. Imagine the life of a woman born in say 1520. She is raised in a prosperous English community before the hard times of the downturn mid-century. She is born into a catholic faith that has not yet been reformed. She spends her weekdays in the home helping her mother with chores looking after feeding the animals and looking after the children of which there are many and helping her father during the planting and harvest and on the sabbath she attends the church where she experiences the mysteries of the Latin mass. She prays for the King, the Queen Catherine and Princess Mary and the Pope. But then in her teenage years she now is bidden to pray for the King and Queen Ann, then Queen Jane and then Catherine again. Then she prays for Elizabeth, then not, then Edward, but no longer does anyone mention Princess Mary or the Pope. The images come down and then the Bible is introduced. The Latin is dropped, and the English introduced. Then the Latin comes back, and the images go back. It might be found troubling but her concerns were to more early matters – managing life during hard times and harvest.

Our English ancestors, discovered to date, arrived during the first of the Stuarts reign. James 1, the first of the Stuarts, who succeeded Elizabeth I on her death in 1603. He had been brought up a Presbyterian in Scotland but had his quarrels with John Knox's Presbyterians who refused to acknowledge his absolute right to rule as he pleased. He appointed Church of English authorities who were more amenable to his desires and sided with the Bishops against the Puritan movement which wished to sweep all Roman Catholic rites from the Church services and to revert to primitive usages which laid stress on preaching and prayer, rather than ceremonial and sacraments. He refused to give up the episcopacy (rule by Bishops). His son Charles I, while brought up and

tutored by a Scottish Calvinist disliked the type of Church service which most Puritans approved. In 1633, he appointed Archbishop Laud and attempted to impose a service book drawn up in London which would bring all in line.

While the chain of being was supposed to place everyone with a hierarchical order, there was conflicts. Cities caused challenges. Capitalism that began to expand in the 1500 created a merchant class. There was always the questions as to who wielded power on earth, between the pope and the King.

The story of the Thomas Whitney (Gentleman) is typical of our ancestors of the time.

(<https://www.retson.ca/whitney.pdf>) Thomas Whitney was born about 1550 in Westminster (Now part of Metropolitan London, England. He married Mary Bray, daughter of John and Margaret (Haslonde) Bray, May 11583, St. Margaret's, Westminster, England, She was baptized 24 Dec 1564, St. Margaret's, Westminster, England, and was buried 25 Sep 1629, St. the Church of England in to compliance with Margaret's Church, Westminster, England. They had 13 children of which 4 died in infancy and only 5, John Alice, Thomas, Francis and Robert, survived into adulthood. The rich tended to have more children then the poor, possibly due to the practice of the rich using "wet nurses". Lactation, among poor women as well as poor nutrition reduced the rate at which children were born to the lower classes. The number of deaths can not but affect ones outlook on life.

Children were farmed out early in the period in England. Son John was apprenticed February 22, 1607, son Robert on November 8, 1624 both at the ages of 14 years. John was apprenticed to William Pring of Old Baily, London, a "freedman" of the Merchant Tailor's and John became a full member on March 14 1614 at the age of 21. The family were initially satisfied with James 1 who removed the uncertainty that followed the demise of Elizabeth 1. However, as time rolled on they became increasingly dissatisfied with James 1 who, while raised as a presbyterian in Scotland had no desire to be controlled by church members who elected Elders to govern the Church rather than follow the dictates of bishops chosen largely by or with the consent of the Monarch. Dissatisfaction increased with his son Charles 1 who increasingly wanted control over his subjects and supported episcopacy and bishops such as Archbishop Laud who wanted to bring attenders of the Church of England in compliance with bishop rule, church rites and ceremony. Towns and cities were expanding due to the influx from rural areas notwithstanding that the death rate exceeded the birthrate. Towns and cities began to conflict with the rural acceptance of the chain of being. By 1625 several factors caused disillusionment in England. The Plague of 1625 killed 20% of London greater then the great plague of 1665. Inflation challenged the people. Tension between the sovereign and Parliament continued to mount including the beginning of challenging the divine right of kings. Dissatisfaction with government financing and foreign wars predominantly the work of the Duke of Buckingham aspirated the upper classes of England. By 1929 when the Company of Massachusetts Bay was formed to encourage movement to the North America arena many of our ancestors joined the migration to the new world. This mass emigration took place during the 1630s prior to the civil wars in England

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

<http://www.retson.ca/SomeofmyancestorswereEnglish.pdf>

Our Gaylord Ancestors <http://retson.ca/Gaylord.pdf>

Our Gould Ancestors <http://retson.ca/Gould.pdf>

Our Phelps Ancestors <http://www.retson.ca/phelps.pdf>

Our Stebbins Ancestors <http://retson.ca/stebbins.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](mailto:jretson@shaw.ca) and indicate so.