



This newsletter may interest in the genealogy and in particular those related to persons related directly or indirectly to Grace and Clifford Retson.



Last of a Generation

The last member of a generation, William “Bill” Armour Bateman Retson, passed away on June 8 2022 in Moncton, New Brunswick at age 97. Born in Bible Hill, NS, Nova Scotia, March 16 1925, Bill was a WW11 Veteran and served on the HMCM/L077, a devoted family man, who enjoyed gardening, boating and coaching hockey. He was the youngest of four children of William Rankin Retson and Beatrice Mary Clifford, being predeceased by his 3 siblings

Ratson, Ritson Retson

Another funeral, that of Kenny Retson, was held during the past month. Funerals provide the occasion for many surviving relatives to renew acquaintances and to share memories of the recently departed, and share family legends. I was not able to attend either funeral but one of my siblings who did, indicated an interest of a younger relative in the family legend of how the name changed from Ritson to Retson. He believed there was some scandal attached to the story. Family legends are like the game of “Telephone” where over the years as stories get passed from person to person bits of the legend are modified either by additions, deletions or modifications. Such is the case with our family name.

I first heard this family legend from my Great Uncle John at his farm on East Court Road in the spring of 1960 , over 60 years ago. I arrived on my bike from Salmon River and met John working in his garden. We talked for over 2 hours interrupted only by his kind wife who brought out cookies and milk. We talked about many serious subjects of which one was family background. We weren’t always Scottish you know, he began. Years ago one of our ancestors, a common English gardener eloped across the border of England and Scotland with his wife to be. Her people were ‘Nobles’ and didn’t approve of the marriage. She signed the marriage certificate and didn’t dot the I. Thereafter the name became Retson instead of Ritson. I misunderstood ‘Noble’ to refer to Aristocracy rather than surname and when I passed on the story to my parents they told me to ignore the story – it was simply was not true.

I never forgot this story and spent years researching to determine the individual ancestors involved.

George F. Black’s *The Surname of Scotland* indicates,

Retson, A surname recorded in the shires of Dumfries, Ayr and Dumbarton. A variant of Ritson

Ritson. Explained by Bardsley as “ ‘son of Richard from North England nick name Rich or Ritchie, , whence the patronymic Richison corrupted to Ritson. This is a familiar Cumberland surname. The Ritson family name was according to Joseph Ritson, a corruption of Richardson. In his ‘Memoranda’ he records

the genesis of the word thus Richardson, Richison, Richson, Ricson, Ritson A. Burd, Joseph Ritson, (A Critical Biography, Urbana, Ill. 1916, p. 13)

To date the earliest documented ancestor of our line was Richard Rattson or Ratson, born 1731, death at 87 years at Kendal, Westmoreland, England (FHL Film Number: 97377 Reference ID: pg. 182 #1451). Earlier records have his name spelled 'Richd. Rattson' his wife Margaret Millburn and his son Richd. Rattson. This son Richard was baptised in November 30 1760 still with the name Ratson. With the name Ratson, on September 30 1778 in Kendal Westmorland England he married Margaret Tarne, widow of William Tarn or Tarne, her maiden name being Bell. They had 5 children John, James Miles, Thomas and Elizabeth.

Son, John Ratson was baptised July 25 1779 in New Hutton Westmorland, England. The story I received from Great Uncle John was that her parents did not approve of the marriage and they eloped across the border. An elopement wedding is typically thought of as running away without telling friends or family, but that definition has changed over time. Now, an elopement wedding means that you are tying the knot and celebrating with just yourselves or a small gathering in a minimal, more casual fashion. In the former sense, John's marriage was not an elopement. Their marriage is recorded as taking place on June 26 1809 in Kendal Westmorland England and his name is given as John Retson. Father John was just short of 30 years and his wife Ann Bateman about 19. Because she was less than the age of 21 years required in England, to get married in England she would have had to get the consent of her parents. Why they didn't approve of the marriage is not known. Class, age difference or other reasons? They may not have approved of the marriage but they eventually consented to it. Possibly the reason for such consent might be explained by the birth of a son, John who was born less than 3 months latter in August 1809, also in Kendall. When they crossed the border is yet to be discovered but their second son James was born September 11 1811 in Sorn Scotland. Whether the name of our ancestors was ever Ritson as suggested by Black has yet to be confirmed. But in Scotland it became Retson.

Interesting enough some of the descendants of the children of John Retson born August 1809 did adopt the name of Ritson and our grandfather marriage certificate is given as William R. Ritson in 1907 (<https://archives.novascotia.ca/vital-statistics/marriage/?ID=123834>) as was his 1911 and 1921 Canadian census index as Betton or Ritson. To my knowledge he always used Retson in daily life. He indicated to me during his lifetime, that he was the descendant of 5 generations of molecatchers. I must say I prefer to be known as a descendent of 'a son of Rich' than a son of a Rat.

Genetic Genealogy and Inheritances

Genealogy has been of interest for thousand of years especially among the rich and powerful. Many persons considered it important to establish their ancestral connection with nobility or famous people. In the Bible the genealogy of Jesus is reported in two books of the Bible connecting him back to King David and even Adam and Eve although they are inconsistent with each other. To complicate further in Matthew, his lineage is connected through Joseph and not his so mother the virgin Mary. Some Christian Apologists suggest that one of the genealogy is actually through Mary although her name is not mentioned. For the last 20 years a new dimension has been added to genealogy with the introduction of DNA Tests. However, first you should first consider the risk of doing so.

The first risk is finding out something you don't want to. The following is the first paragraph of the introduction in Bill Griffeth's *The Stranger in My Genes: A Memoir*.

This is the story of how a simple DNA test greatly complicated my life. The results suggested that I was not who I thought I was; that—incredibly—my father might not have been my father. It started me on an

unsettling journey that had me questioning my most fundamental beliefs about my family and my very identity.

Bill took a DNA test as a favour for his first cousin to assist in his genealogical pursuits. When the results came back he discovered that his “father” was not his father. How common is Nonpaternity? Overall, the incidence of misattributed paternity are estimated to ranges from about 0.4% to 5.9%. The discovery of previously unsuspected or undisclosed non-paternity may have both social and medical consequences.

Perhaps a little less dramatic but possibly more probable risk is discovering that you face an increased risks of suffering from certain inherited health conditions. I have tested with 23& Me, AncestryDNA, FamilytreeDNA and My Heritage. 23 & Me excels in the area of tying DNA testing and health issues. 23 & Me promises they will “automatically highlight any health report findings that could impact your or your family's health.” Some people want to know about increased risks they face – some don't. If you don't want to know - don't ask?

23& Me test results for myself report the results indicate indicated in the following table as well as non increased risks in a number of other health issues. With respect to Macular Degeneration. 23 &Me test 2 markers and I had one variant at each gene. The increased risk moves from 1 to 5.79 . With Late-Onset Alzheimer's disease, I have 1 variant in the APOE gene and this increase my chances of having Late-onset Alzheimer's from 1 to 2% to 4% for persons without 1 variant to 7% at age 75. At age 85 the increase rises to 20 to 23%. Other information in some of the testing sites give you likelihood of various traits and physical characteristics such eye and hair colouring and psychological traits based on surveys.

Age-Related Macular Degeneration
Result summary: Slightly increased risk
Hereditary Hemochromatosis (HFE-Related)
Result summary: Variant detected, not likely at increased risk
Late-Onset Alzheimer's Disease
Result summary: Slightly increased risk

The reports gives you various reputable websites that can give you more specific information. 23 & Me provide a lot of education about various genetic variants that possibly exists. A variant is a DNA difference between people. You may not have a particular medical condition but you might be a carrier. A carrier is a person who has one gene variant for a recessive health condition. Carriers typically do not have the genetic condition. However, they could pass the gene variant down to their children. If both parents are carriers, their child may inherit two variants and have the condition. 23 & Me may provide an indication of the absent of variants, the detection of 1 of the possible variants or an undetermined response.. Genetic conditions affect certain ethnicities more than others. Their tests do not diagnose any health conditions but can help you understand your chances of carrying a variant that could be passed down. This can be helpful for you or your relatives when having children. Other factors can also affect your chances of developing these conditions, including lifestyle, environment, and family history. Doctors quite often ask if any of your close ancestors have a history of various conditions such as cancer, heart conditions, diabetes and Alzheimer's. This information generally doesn't come from DNA tests but shared family information.

As I indicated in an earlier newsletter, I am scheduled to take a course entitled Genetics & Medical Family History to look at the health concern issue. In order to benefit from this course I am starting to collect and organize medical and health issues of our ancestors and their descendants. I welcome any information you might wish to share on your and your family medical history and medical inheritances. Issues of particular interests to me are Lactose intolerance, Celiac and gluten intolerance, Diabetes and Alzheimer's. The general information about the conditions and recommended websites were probably more valuable then the general information I received about the increased risk.

Genealogy and genetic genealogy bring in to focus our relationship with our past ancestors. A powerful book I would recommend is Maud Newton's *Ancestor Trouble* which I purchased during the past month. The first paragraph of its introduction:

I look like my father, move like my father, talk like my father. When I was a child and we went places together, we were a full-size and miniature version of the same windup toy, our strides clipped and jolting, brows clenched in concentration, pale legs eerily glowing in the brilliant Miami sunlight. I am unmistakably my father's daughter, but we're estranged from each other. The last time I saw him, more than a decade ago at my grandfather's funeral, he gave me a kiss. I don't expect he'll kiss me again.

This is a powerful book and raises questions about how we come to terms with the lives of our ancestors, possible influences on us -our inheritances, direct or indirect. We may find it difficult to accept some of our ancestors as anything less than admirable.

We may admit that we might have preferences among ancestors. Some we admire and others not so much.

One of my favourite ancestors was my Mother's mother Esther Jean Atkinson nee Burns. The picture to the left is a picture of a bronze statue that I "inherited" from my Grandmother Burns. It sat on top of my mother's China cabinet shortly after the death of her Mother, Esther Jean Burns and on top of our China Cabinet since I received it from my mother. The statute and its relation to my grandmother are shrouded in mystery. I can remember having early discussions about the stature but not with whom or when. The statute initially reminded me about my Grandmother's love of nature and her love of the nature poetry of Robert Burns, which she would share with me. As a young boy from grade 3 until just before her death in February 1961, I corresponded with her by slow mail, I in Nova Scotia and her in Vancouver. I would share my inner most secrets and she would give her wise counsel on how I should deal with life's challenges. I suspected my mother's favourite parent was her quite spoken father Ed Atkinson. However in researching his ancestors I discovered many connections in Ireland and Canada to the beginning of the Orange Order and the problems that still persist in Ireland today. I find my ancestors seemed to prefer talking about those they admired then report evenly about all. .



My genealogy website is located at <http://www.retson.ca/retsongeneology.html> On the left side you will see a list of Family Roots.

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

Our Bell Ancestors <https://www.retson.ca/bell.pdf>

Our Retson Ancestors <https://www.retson.ca/retson.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.