



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

## My 2020 Witch Hunt

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

In October November 2020

as I listen to American Television News and listening to poor Donald Trump and the various Witch Hunts he was experiencing I decided it was time for me to begin my own witch hunts. That hunt continues. To be perfectly clear I don't believe in witches but for some time, I believed that our ancestors were among those individuals who suffered the misfortune and injustice of being identified and charged with practicing witchcraft. From years of research, I was aware that many of our ancestors had lived in areas of Massachusetts which had suffered from mass hysteria and that at least 20 had been executed and over 200 charged. The name Salem has become synonymous for witchcraft and for more than 12 months the town's very definition: the Salem witch hunt.. The town today is now known as Danvers, Massachusetts. As I continue to research this period, I am astounded with similarities between that period in the United States and the present in terms of superstition, misinformation, lack of political and religious leadership and hysteria. There are points of differences – for example, the American Legal system in 2020 actually stood up fairly well rejecting all false Trumpian claims of massive fraud etc.

A website that is useful for identifying the targets is <https://www.adeaw.us/> and in particular <https://www.adeaw.us/ancestors/> which provides a list of such ancestors and their spouses.

However, the task of connecting to one of these 200 individuals is not an easy one. To date I have connected, Sarah Lord Wilson (My 8<sup>th</sup> Great Grandmother), her daughter Sarah Wilson, (My 7<sup>th</sup> Great Grandmother who subsequently married Joseph Preston) and 3 in-laws of my 9<sup>th</sup> Great Uncle, Thomas Preston (sisters Rebecca Nurse, Mary Eastey, and Sarah Cloyce. Only on May 8 2021, this month, was I able to eliminate Susannah North Martin as my 9<sup>th</sup> Great Grandmother when I found an article in The American Genealogist that provided evidence for discounting ancestor George Martin of Ipswich as a son of George and Susannah North Martin and a necessary link for establishing her as my 9<sup>th</sup> great grandmother. It appears that at least two well researched other genealogies had fallen into the same name error as me. Our George Martin lived in the same area and time but was not the son of George and Susannah.

The most direct ancestors were the Wilsons. Three paragraphs from the following website summarize the significant stories of the Sarahs (<https://www.legendsofamerica.com/ma-witches-u-z/>) (Look for entry on Sarah Wilson):

[Sarah Lord Wilson (1648-1727) – Sarah was one of the many women in Andover, Massachusetts who were arrested after the infamous “touch test” examination conducted by the Reverend Thomas Barnard on September 7, 1692. Sarah Lord was born about 1648 in Ipswich, Massachusetts to Robert and Mary Waite Lord. Her father was a prominent resident of Ipswich who served as Town Clerk from 1645 until his death in 1683. On April 24, 1678, Sarah Lord married the widower Joseph Wilson of Andover and the couple would eventually have four children. In 1692 when the infamous witch hysteria began, Joseph and Sarah

8th great grandmother	 <b>Sarah Lord</b> b: 1648 Andover, Essex Cty, MA d: 21 May 1727 Andover, Essex Cty, MA
7th great grandfather	 <b>Sarah Wilson</b> b: 31 Dec 1678 Andover, Essex, Massachusetts d: 1720 Ashford, Windham, Connecticut.
6th great grandfather	 <b>David Preston</b> b: Abt 1703 Andover, Essex, Massachusetts. d: Bef. Oct 1755 Oblong, Dutchess, New York, Uni
5th great grandmother	 <b>Elizabeth Preston</b> b: 30 Oct 1733 Windham, Windham, Connecticut d: 1766 Cambridge, Washington, New Yor
4th great grandfather	 <b>Hezekiah "Ki" Mosher</b> b: 18 Oct 1756 Quaker Hill, Beekman, Dutchess d: Aug 1821 Augusta, Ontario, Canada
3rd great grandmother	 <b>Sophia Mosher</b> b: 18 Apr 1799 Augusta Twp., 1654301, Ontario, d: 18 May 1880 Augusta Twp., Leeds & Grenville
2nd great grandmother	 <b>Robert Nicholson Spicer</b> b: 11 Aug 1832 Augusta, Grenville, Ontario, Cana d: 26 Nov 1904 Maynard, Augusta, Grenville, Ont
Great grandmother	 <b>Abigail Almeda Spicer</b> b: 13 Sep 1860 Prescott, Ontario, Canada d: 10 Jul 1940 Merrickville, Ontario, Canada
Maternal grandfather	 <b>Edward Elbert Atkinson</b> b: 26 Feb 1887 Merrickville, Merrickville-Wolford, d: 14 Jan 1957 Vancouver, British Columbia
Mother	 <b>Grace Elizabeth Atkinson</b> b: 11 Dec 1916 Waskada, Manitoba, Canada d: 04 Jun 2008 Truro, Colchester County, Nova S
Self	 <b>James Clifford Retson</b> b: 28 Jul 1948 Truro, Colchester County, Nova S d:

were living with their children in the south part of Andover and were active members of the Andover church.

On September 7, 1692, the Reverend Thomas Barnard called certain members of Andover's elite to the meetinghouse. At the meeting, several of the Salem Village "afflicted girls" were present. After a short prayer, Reverend Barnard launched into a sermon describing the evils of witchcraft. He then began to conduct the "Touch Test," one of the most diabolical schemes of the witch trials. After these tests were conducted, Justice of the Peace Dudley Bradstreet dutifully wrote out the arrest warrants for 18 men and women who had been accused in the touch test. These warrants included both Sarah Lord Wilson and her 14-year-old daughter, Sarah, Jr. After all these people were imprisoned and awaiting trial, the Reverend Francis Dane formed a resistance movement against the madness. On October 15th, a number of Andover children, including Sarah Wilson, Jr. were released on bail. The Reverend Dane would continue to work for the release of the other jailed members and in January 13, 1693, Sarah Lord Wilson was also released on bond. On May 10, 1693, both mother and daughter appeared at the Superior Court of Judicature at Ipswich and were cleared. Notwithstanding the acquittal, they were required to pay for their maintenance in jail.

The family remained in Andover after the witchcraft scare subsided. Joseph Wilson died on April 2, 1718. Sarah died in Andover on May 21, 1727.

Sarah Wilson, Jr. (1678-17??) – Of Andover, Sarah was the 14-year-old daughter of Joseph and Sarah Lord Wilson. She and her mother were arrested for witchcraft on September 7, 1692, after the Reverend Thomas Barnard conducted his infamous "touch test." After spending six weeks in prison, she was released on bail on October 15th. Later, in January 1693, her mother was also released. On May 10, 1693, both mother and daughter appeared at the Superior Court of Judicature at Ipswich and were cleared. She went on to marry Jacob Preston on June 17, 1702, and couple moved to Ashford, Connecticut.]

However, before you get to our ancestors in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century a lot of preliminary work must be done. To get to Sarah Wilson (Preston) one has to find a minimum of nine links and each may have its problems. For example, the longest delay in establishing this chain was being able to move beyond my great grand mother known initially to me from information received as "Abbie Atkinson" wife of Ed Atkinson. The problem is all her official documents beyond Obituary had her name as Abigail or Abigail Almeda Spicer which would nor show up on a search of Abbie Atkinson or Abbie Spicer. In hindsight one wanders why it was so obvious to look for "Abigail" rather than "Abbie". But hindsight is always 100%.

Each step along the way presented problems. And at each new generation there are two parents to research – does one continue with the Spicer line or switch to the Mosher parent. There is a tendency to continue with the male line as such research tends to present less challenges.

And why would anyone want to learn about the alleged witches in one's family. The story of our alleged witches is part of the story of our Puritan and in terms of modern parlance "right-wing" ancestors. Persecuted for their faith in Europe they had hoped for a kind of utopia founded on biblical principles. They saw the New World as a new beginning , a second chance for humanity. Only 72 years after the arrival of the Mayflower, it

became blatantly obvious that humanity had blown it again. George Santayana is known for his popularly known aphorism, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it," (Reason in Common Sense, p. 284, volume 1 in [The Life of Reason](#). There is a similarity between that period in the United States and the current period in the United States. The Witch Hunts are part of the stories of the failure of humanity to give a healthy interpretation of their god's desires or intentions. The stories are about the frailties of humanity and religions to consistently serve the ends of human justice. The stories are about the lack of political and religious leadership in the search for and commitment to truth.

Paternal Side

**Our McManus Ancestors** <https://www.retson.ca/mcmanus.pdf>

The McManus family was Scottish family who never came to Canada. The line ended with the marriage of Mary McManus to George Retson on December 31 1871. It is her that we know the most information WE have little information about her ancestors. The earliest McManus we know is Francis McManus who married Jean McGraw

3rd great grandfather

	<b>Francis McManus</b> b: _____ Scotland d: _____
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Francis McManus married Jean McGraw. They had one child; Francis McManus born about 1832. He died May 24 May 1856 in Royal Infirmary, Glasgow. He was a coal miner. He married Margaret Armour, on Sep 15, 1851 in Sorn, Ayr, Scotland. She was born on Jul 29, 1828 in Sorn, Ayrshire, Scotland. She died on Apr 20, 1869 in St Cuthbert St. Catrine. Francis and Margaret Armour had two children: Mary McManus born about 1852 in Sorn and Francis McManus 07 Jul 1856 Milton, Glasgow, Lanark, Scotland who died at 13 months on August 2nd 1857.

2nd great grandfather

	<b>Francis Mcmanus</b> b: Abt 1823 Scotland d: 24 May 1856 Royal Infirmary, Glasgow
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Mary McManus, daughter of Francis and Margaret McManus, was born about 1852 in Sorn, Ayrshire, Scotland.

Great grandmother

	<b>Mary McManus</b> b: 1852 Sorn, Ayrshire d: 29 Mar 1937 15 St. Ninians Road, Preswick, S
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In the 1861 Census at age 10, she is residing with Alexander Armour her maternal grandfather at 8 St Cuthbert St. Sorn Ayrshire. I have not been able to locate 1871 census

Paternal grandfather

	<b>William Rankin Retson</b> b: 22 Feb 1884 Townhead, Fenwick, Ayrshire, Sc d: 14 Jul 1975 Bible Hill, Colchester County, Nov
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She married George Retson on 31 Dec 1871 in United Presbyterine Church, Catrine, Sorn Parish Ayrshire, Scotland. He was born on Apr 06, 1848 in Sorn, Ayrshire, Scotland. He died on Dec 01, 1910 in Gardrum Farm, Fenwick.

Father

	<b>George Clifford Retson</b> b: 19 Dec 1912 Bible Hill, Colchester, Nova Scoti d: 17 Feb 1997 Truro, Colchester County, Nova S
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In the 1881 Census, age 29 Mary is residing at Main St. Fenwick with husband George 32, and children, Margaret 8, Jane 6, Mary 3 and John 1 along with 20 year old servant Jessie Watt.

Self

	<b>James Clifford Retson</b> b: 28 Jul 1948 Truro, Colchester County, Nova S d: _____
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In 1891 census Mary age 39 is residing at Town Head Farm with Husband George age 42, and children, Margaret 18, Jane 16, Mary 13 and John 11, George 9, William 7, and Annie 4.

In 1901 age 49, she is residing at Gardum, with husband George age 52, and children, Margaret (Maggie) 28, Jane 26, Mary 24 and John 21, James 9 and Thomas 6. Son George who would was now 19, lived at Molemouted Farm, Galston as a General Farm worker. William 17 resided at a Cousin's home at Glaisnock Old Cumnock Town St as a Flesher Apprentice .

Mary suffered the loss of four of her 10 children during her lifetime. Daughter Janet was born 22 Aug 1890, and died 1 month later on 24 Sep 1890 of Pneumonia, Annie had died on 05 Jan 1896 at age 8. Margaret died tragically in Canada after leaving Scotland less than a year earlier. Thomas died in France in 1917

In addition to the loss of four children, Mary also lost three sons to Canada: John, George, and William.

John emigrated to Canada arriving in Halifax aboard Siberian on 22 Apr 1902. William followed, leaving at age 19 on 25 Apr 1903 from Glasgow, Scotland for Halifax, Canada on board the Mongolian. A George Ritson is listed as a passenger on the Ivernia from Liverpool England to Boston Massachusetts in the Canadian Passenger List arriving 16 Jan 1908 and later he in a passenger along with James Retson on board the Orthia on 27 May 1911. George reports on a later census that he entered Canada in 1907. James returned to Scotland. Margaret came to Canada and married Alexander George Archibald in 19 January 1914 and died 18 December at Glenelg, St Mary, Nova Scotia. The husband remarried and had several children.

She died on Mar 29, 1937 at the age of 85 at 15 St. Ninians Road, Prestwick, Scotland.

## Death and the Natural Order

We all die but we generally expect parents to die before their children, and older siblings to predecease their younger siblings. Grace Atkinson was profoundly affected by the death of her 8 year old brother Robert at her age of 12. Both Paternal Grandparents William Rankin Retson and Beatrice Clifford experiences the deaths of many siblings. William born in 1884 lost his sister Annie (1886, 9 years old ) at the age of 2, his sister Janet (1890 , 1 month) at the age of 6, his siter Margaret (1914, age 42) at the age of 30, his brother Thomas (1917 age 23) at the age of 33, and George (1959, 79) at the age of 75. Obvious certain deaths would have more impact than others.

His Wife Beatrice born in 1887, lost her sister Nanette (1896, age 27) at the age of 9 years, her sister Mary Alice (1899, age 35) at the age of 12, sister Lena M. Clifford (1901, age 11) at the age 14 years, sister Sarah Pearl Clifford (1902, age 19) at the age of 15, Others siblings died before she was born, brothers David Lorenze 1878, age 12), Noble (1878, Just short of 2 years). Think of the impact on the Parents. We are perhaps not as cognizance of the affect on siblings.

Additions/Deletions to <http://www.retson.ca/retsongeneology.html> since April 1 2021

Lord	<a href="http://www.retson.ca/lord.pdf">http://www.retson.ca/lord.pdf</a>
Martin	<a href="http://www.retson.ca/martinpreston.pdf">http://www.retson.ca/martinpreston.pdf</a>
McManus	<a href="https://www.retson.ca/mcmanus.pdf">https://www.retson.ca/mcmanus.pdf</a>
North File deleted	
American Ancestors	<a href="http://www.retson.ca/SomeofmyancestorswereAmericansword.pdf">http://www.retson.ca/SomeofmyancestorswereAmericansword.pdf</a>
Retson Genealogy Newsletter April 2021	<a href="http://retson.ca/retsongenealogynewsletterapr2021.pdf">http://retson.ca/retsongenealogynewsletterapr2021.pdf</a>

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