



May 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/retsongeneology.html>

Our Scottish Ancestors

Your identity both as an individual and as part of a nation is crucially determined by where you came from...it is both politic and imperative to have a respectable pedigree...And if you don't know it, you invent it. [Magnus Magnusson, Scotland The Story of a Nation, Page 42

In today's multicultural, cosmopolitan environment it is likely that our pedigree is multinational. Most of us are not pure anything but rather a mixture of many nations. And so, I start this monologue with a confession I am not pure Scottish. In fact, Ancestry indicates that I am less than 50% Scottish - 47% to be exact. Ireland, the second closest, Ireland is 20% at 27% followed by England and Northwestern Europe at 11%, Germanic Europe at 8% and Wales at 5%.

2 of 4 grandparents were Scottish, the other 2 were Irish.. Closest in time Scottish immigrants were my paternal grandfather, William Rankin Retson 1903, then before him, Daniel McNab who came to Canada in 1856 with wife, Jean Hope, and before them Robert Burns in 1843. Our last Irish Immigrants to arrive in Canada in either 1839 or 1840 was William Atkinson, wife Jane Coulter and some children including their son, Thomas Atkinson born 14 May 1830. Before them, John Clifford arrived in 1826. Earlier John Major Archibald emigrated to US in 1719 and his son, Samuel Archibald who also emigrated to the United States in 1719 emigrated to Canada in December 1762.

The genealogy of many of our Scottish roots has been more difficult to find, than our English and Irish roots. Part of the explanation lies in the fact that our English and Irish roots came to North America by way of New England and were better documented there.

I will begin by situating our early Scottish roots in Scottish religious and political history.

Religion and politics played a significant role in the life of our Scottish ancestors and the two were intertwined. John Knox, a significant player was born in Scotland around 1512 moved from Scotland to England and then Geneva where he met John Calvin. In Geneva he published his celebrated "First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women in 1558. He didn't mince words from his opening paragraph:

To promote a women to beare rule, superioritie, dominion or empire above any realme, nation or cities, is repugnant to nature, contrumelie to God , a thing most contrarious to his reveal'd will and approved ordinance, and finallie it is subversion of good order, of all equitie and justice.



Needless to say, he didn't get along with any female monarch in England or Scotland. In Scotland he preached measures as extreme as anything outside of John Calvin's Geneva. Blasphemers and witches were to be put to death. Adulterous women would be drowned, men beheaded, a child who raised a hand against his parent would have a limb cut off. He wanted nothing less than death for anyone practicing the Catholic Mass. He adopted much of John Calvin's concepts of covenant theology – that God and humanity have an agreement regarding eternal salvation – and predestination – that God has already chosen those who will be saved, and one's works in life cannot change God's decision. Those who God choose to save couldn't help but be saved and those who were not chosen could not be saved.

Every man and woman were encouraged to believe that he or she alone was responsible for ensuring they were doing things the way God wanted. Everything and everyone were under scrutiny all the time. The 1600s was an unprecedented time of intrusion by neighbours in other's private lives in search of immortality and wrongdoing.

The Protestant Reformation created the Church of Scotland, or 'kirk', Presbyterian in structure, and Calvinist in doctrine. When James I succeeded as king of England in 1603, he viewed a unified Church of Scotland and England as the first step in creating a centralised, Unionist state. Charles I succeeded his father James I on the latter's death March 27, 1625. Charles I with his Catholic wife had 9 children, 6 of whom survived into adulthood: Charles II, Mary (future wife of William II of Orange), James (future James II), Elizabeth, Henry (Duke of Gloucester) and Henrietta Anne. In 1636, Charles I issued a Code of Canons in an attempt to bring the Scottish Kirk into line with the practices of the Anglican Church under Archbishop Laud.

In 1637 Charles I replaced John Knox's Book of Discipline with a new Book of Canons and excommunicated anyone who denied the King's supremacy in church matters. He did this without the consent of either parliament or the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. Petitioners from across Scotland ask the King to get rid of the liturgy and appointed "Tables to represent the four orders of nobleman, lairds, burgesses and ministers. The king rejected the petitioner's demands and the Table set about preparing a "National Covenant of 1638. This covenant was signed by hundreds of thousands of Scots (became known as covenanters). The Covenant called for free parliaments and assemblies and pledged to defend the Reformed religion 'against all sorts of persons whatever'. The covenant was an important radical departure in Scotland's history as people took responsibility for their own actions. It marked the end of the medieval world.

Scotland was divided between those who supported the King provided he would give assurances for the religion, unity, and peace of Scotland and those opposed to the king. Charles who was losing ground in his civil war in England and in an attempt to play the Scots against the English Parliamentarians. delivered himself to the Covenanting army besieging Newark-on-Trent on May 5, 1646. The King however refused to make any concessions to accept either the National Covenant or the Solemn League and Covenant. The Scots transferred the king over to the English and left England upon the payment of £200,000 towards the massive costs of the Scottish contribution to the English civil war. Charles I was executed in 1649.

Following the execution of Charles I, the Scots were prepared to proclaim Charles II, king on 6 February 1649 provided he accepted the covenants. Charles II fled to Europe with Cromwell forces advancing only to return upon the death of Cromwell in 1660.

On March 28, 1661, The Rescissory Act, 1661 or Act rescinded and annulled all legislation of the Parliament in the years 1640, 1641. Charles II. The King issued proclamation for restoring church government by Bishops in Scotland, and the newly appointed Scottish prelates having received ordination from Sheldon, Bishop of London, in Westminster Abbey, went back to Scotland to take the government of the Kirk, and their places in the Scottish Parliament. This Act virtually meant a return to Episcopacy by which the Church Courts were bound to induct any minister presented by the Crown. After Bishops had been procured, consecrated, and seated

in the Scottish Parliament, severities increased steadily against the Presbyterians, who formed the majority of the population. All the ministers who obtained livings from 1649 to 1661 were held not to have been appointed at all and were thrust out of their jobs. They numbered nearly 400, and their expulsion caused great discontent in Scotland.

Congregations refused to attend Church to hear from the ministers replaced by the King. Instead, the deprived ministers set up new place of meetings in fields, woods, barns, or private homes. These clandestine meetings for worships were known as 'conventicles'. The common people who refused to attend Church were fined . Troops were used to break up conventicles and hunt down people who worshipped at them.

In 1681 The Test Act was passed requiring every office holder to swear an oath of loyalty to the king accepting royal supremacy in all spiritual and temporal matters. Government troopers roamed the country forcing anyone and everyone to 'take the test'. Refusing to answer the correct answer "God save the King could lead to instant death. Between 1681 and 1688 an estimated 18, 000 were killed A Martyrs' Memorial stands in the north-east corner of Greyfriars kirkyard in Edinburgh. Erected in 1796 and restored in 1776 built to commemorate those 'one way or other murdered and destroyed for the same cause'. Below Greyfriars Kirk down Candlemaker Row is an enclosure known as 'Martyrs Memorial Garden' which was opened in 1954.

On July 29, 1684, a party of 30 dragoons escorting some Covenanters prisoners were ambushed by a group led by our ancestors at Enterkin Pass. One of the soldiers was killed and several prisoners escaped. John Graham of Claverhouse caught six of the rescuers near Dumfries August 9 and they taken to Edinburgh. Our Ancestor James Harkness was taken prisoner but subsequent escaped. His brother, Thomas Harkness, and other relatives were captured by Claverhouse in Closeburn parish on 9 August 1684, and executed on 15 August in the Grassmarket of Edinburgh in 1685.

While records are at times hard to come by, a tentative picture is beginning to emerge of the genealogy of the Harkness of Scotland (see <https://www.retson.ca/harkness.pdf> .) For those interested in more gory details of the raid of our ancestors footnote 4 gives a number of websites that give much greater details of their stories:
<https://drmarkjardine.wordpress.com/2014/04/12/claverhouses-raid-on-mitchellslacks/> ;
<https://electricScotland.com/bordertales/vol1story103.htm> ;
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dalgarnock#Covenanters> ;
<https://drmarkjardine.wordpress.com/2018/11/04/the-covenanters-of-the-enterkin-pass-attack-of-1684-history-scotland/>

A Scottish emigrate on his emigration was shipwrecked on an island where he survived for a considerable period before being discovered by a later ship blown off course. The Scotsman shows these later survivors his new life that he has created for himself - his home, his garden, his barn his yard. One of the survivors notices two almost identical building in the distance and asks the Scotsman about the two buildings.

The Scotsman replies, "The first building is my church".

"And the second?" ask the survivor.

"Oh, that is the Church I don't go to."

You almost have to be a Scot to get the joke. The humour in the joke is the religious bigotry that cuts across the history of Scotland. In the 1600s at which time genealogy begins every Scots was a religious bigot. The Episcopalians distrusted the Presbyterians. The Presbyterians held the Episcopalians in contempt. Both loathed the Catholics who kept their heads down secure in the knowledge that all Catholics were going to hell anyway. And to the South, the Anglicans the persecutors.

The Covenanting period left different legacies for Scotland. It represented a mainstream dissent which was totally alienated from the new, restored Episcopalian Church; but it was also alienated from the extremists. What emerged was a very serious fissure in the culture of Scottish Protestantism, which would continues

splitting, re-uniting and splitting again right through the next three centuries. In the middle of the nineteenth century, it would be at the root of the Disruption, the war between the Free Kirk and the Established Church of Scotland.

The Spare and the Monarch

The Coronation of Charles III has taken place on May 10. Our ancestors in England, Ireland and Scotland suffered under his distant ancestors Charles I and Charles II. The belief of his ancestors in the divine right of Kings has been replaced by the notion of government by consent of the people and constitutional monarchy. Given the tragedies suffered by the populations of England, Ireland, and Scotland under the hands of Charles I and II it is surprising to some that Elizabeth chose the name Charles for her first born and future King of England.

The Scots forget their history except for American romanced versions of William Wallace (1297) in the vein of Robert Burns celebrated 'Scots Wha Hae' and Robert the Bruce (his reign 1306-1329). Even Robert Burns is portrayed as a loyal monarchist in polite annual celebrations. The population is generally aware that the Catholics in Ireland, the Indigenous in many countries and the Blacks in particular suffered as a result of feelings of superiority and privilege of the British Monarchs but do not realize that most have ancestors who suffered persecution, loss of life, liberty and religious persecution and in fact many left the British Isles for such reasons.

Henry Charles Albert David Mountbatten-Windsor, better known as Harry, along with his wife, Megan, netted a cool \$11 million for Netflix series on his separation from his family and \$110 for a book, *The Spare*. Perhaps the term might actually be better applied to the whole concept of the Monarchy which in today's environment appears to be a spare fiction. The notion may have made sense in the middle ages when England was Christian and the established order was supported by the concept of the chain of all beings where everything fit into a vertical hierarchy from God on top, a hierarchy of angels from Seraphim, Cherubim, to Archangels and common angels, then Kings, Queens, Nobles, the Gentry, landowners, Freeman, labourers and those who did not even have a residence but lived with others. In 2023, the England and Wales are legally a Christian country with an established church, the Church of England, and a monarch as its titular head. However, Christianity is no more the majority in the country having fallen to less than 46% in 2021. In general, the population does not approve of the notion of inherited privilege by birth.

Due to the inability to agree on the alternatives and constitutional rigidities it is highly unlikely the monarch will be replaced in Canada in the near future. However, in Canada, recent polls suggest that a small majority, between 56 to 60 of Queen, said Canada should reconsider maintaining the monarchy. This could be achieved by simply elevating the Governor General to the head of state in the same fashion that in 1949 the Supreme Court was elevated to the court of last resort in the judicial system with out recourse to appeal to the Privy Council of Great Britain.

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

Our Harkness Ancestors <https://www.retson.ca/harkness.pdf>

Our Irving Ancestors <https://www.retson.ca/irving.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.