



This newsletter may interest in the genealogy and in 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>
On the left side you will see a list of Family Roots.

Contextualizing our Ancestors

Since the last newsletter in which I reviewed the Mosher family I have discovered five new ancestors. I was assisted by a new tool added to Ancestry, StoryScout. This tool like Wikitree employs the research of many contributors to reach back to earlier ancestors. When you discover new ancestors by either tool, one must examine the new information to verify the work that proves the relationships between new and old, since genealogist can make mistakes. One of the common mistakes is choosing a same name individual that does not belong to your line. For example there may be more than one Jabez Mosher. In fact there are many. Careful research includes looking at many pieces of information to determine the accuracy of including this Jabez Mosher in our line. We must seek the context we need to understand the record, the event and the person. Context is drawn from our study of relevant, activities, culture and customs, religious activities and perspectives, occupations, social economic and political situations, language, historical events and maps and other diverse factors. While we use these facts to determine if we have the right individual to add to our line we also add to the picture of who the new ancestor is. We have more than a meaningless name on a tree. I will start with the end of the line Francis Cooke. Born about 1583 and who died April 7 1663 in Plymouth in what is now in the State of Massachusetts, United States.

One of the most interesting facts about Francis Cooke is that he was a passenger on a now famous boat known as the Mayflower. His son, John, came on the same boat as well as John's subsequent father-in-law Richard Warren. Thus on our maternal side, of 102 passengers on board we have 3 passengers. All three attended the first feast that became known as Thanksgiving.

10th great grandfather

	Francis Cooke
	b: 1583
	d: 07 Apr 1663 Plymouth, Massachusetts

9th great grandfather

	John Cooke
	b: 1607 Leiden, Leiden, Zuid-Holland, Net
	d: 23 Nov 1695 Dartmouth, Bristol, Massachusett

8th great grandmother

	Elizabeth Cooke
	b: 16 Mar 1641 Plymouth, Plymouth, Massachus
	d: 06 Dec 1715 Tiverton, Newport, Rhode Island,

7th great grandfather

	John Wilcox
	b: 1670 Tiverton, Newport, Rhode Island,
	d: 26 Feb 1717 Little Compton, Newport, Rhode I

6th great grandmother

	Rebeckah Wilcox
	b: 14 Aug 1711 Little Compton, Rhode Island, Brit
	d: 26 Jul 1752 Beekman, Dutchess, New York, U

5th great grandfather

	Jabez Mosher
	b: 02 Sep 1731 Tiverton, Newport, Rhode Island,
	d: 1810 Cambridge, Washington, New Yor

4th great grandfather

	Hezekiah "Ki" Mosher
	b: 18 Oct 1756 Quaker Hill, Beekman, Dutchess
	d: Aug 1821 Augusta, Ontario, Canada

3rd great grandmother

	Sophia Mosher
	b: 18 Apr 1799 Augusta Twp, 1654301, Ontario,
	d: 18 May 1880 Augusta Twp., Leeds & Grenville

2nd great grandfather

	Robert Nicholson Spicer
	b: 11 Aug 1832 Augusta, Grenville, Ontario, Cana
	d: 26 Nov 1904 Maynard, Augusta, Grenville, Ont

Great grandmother

	Abigail Almeda Spicer
	b: 13 Sep 1860 Prescott, Ontario, Canada
	d: 10 Jul 1940 Merrickville, Ontario, Canada

Maternal grandfather

	Edward Elbert Atkinson
	b: 26 Feb 1887 Merrickville, Merrickville-Wolford,
	d: 14 Jan 1957 Vancouver, British Columbia

Mother

	Grace Elizabeth Atkinson
	b: 11 Dec 1916 Waskada, Manitoba, Canada
	d: 04 Jun 2008 Truro, Colchester County, Nova S

Self

	James Clifford Retson
	b: 28 Jul 1948 Truro, Colchester County, Nova S
	d:

The second interesting facts involving these individuals is their religion- these individuals called themselves separatists. We now call them Pilgrims.

All About Religion

Religion has played a role in the lives of many of our ancestors. The pilgrims were an off shoot of the Church of England, often referred to as the Anglican Church. Henry VIII (the one with 8 wives), broke with the Roman Catholic Church in 1534 for personal reasons – the Church wouldn't permit him a divorce. When Henry became the head of the Church, all English citizens were expected, regardless of their religion beliefs, to join the church and contribute to its support. Up to that time all our ancestors in the British Isles were catholic and followed that religion's beliefs and practices. Their children would be baptised into that church shortly after their birth. The degree to which they believed Church dogma or merely meekly submitted to its demands varies from family and individual ancestor.

While Henry broke with the Established Church he maintained the most basic catholic beliefs and practices. Many modern Christian love religion but hate theology. Religion is our belief in God and our effort to live by that belief. Theology is rational thought about God. Modern Christians hate to talk theology. Possibly they don't know what they believe or they regard religion a mater of the heart (Fideism). Not Henry. Henry wrote a volume on the Seven Sacraments and a refutation of Lutheran errors which won him the title from the pope of "Defender of the Faith". He insisted on communion clerical celibacy, requiem masses and belief in transubstantiation. Henry removed the English Church from obedience to the Roman Catholic Church but he never messed with Catholic doctrine.

Henry was succeeded by his son Edward and upon Edward's death Mary. Mary switch the Country back to Catholicism. Mary was succeeded by Elizabeth 1 and the nation switch back to the Church of England.

Pilgrims, Puritans and Congregationalism

In subsequent issues I will discuss religion among our ancestors in Ireland and Scotland but here I will continue with the story in England. Many in England were not satisfied with merely a change in the head of the Church.

They wished to simplify or purify the church from within. They wanted reform. This group became known as dissenters or puritan. Some went further and wanted complete separation from the established Church. Some went further, They decried the power of the Bishops and other officials. These “Separatists” (Pilgrims) believed in a free church where the people were the church, where they could choose their own ministers and where they were answerable only to God. In the Northern counties of England, a group of Separatist met secretly to hold church services. They were persecuted, harassed and jailed. A group from Scooby, England fled to Leiden Holland in 1608.

The background of Francis Cooke is undetermined but by 1603 he was living in Leiden. Holland. His son John was born in Leiden. The best employment and business opportunities belonged to members who joined the guild open only to citizens of open only to citizens of Holland. Many separatist became citizens and could only get menial and low paid employment.. After awhile they became disillusioned with Holland and organize to move to America. In 1620 they left Holland, stopping in Plymouth England, before sailing on to America. . They had intended to arrive in the Virginia Colony but sailed too far North. The ship had “strangers” which had been hired to provide supports and services. In order to avoid a mutiny of some strangers when they found themselves outside the Virginia jurisdiction they signed a common agreement later called the “Mayflower Compact whereby they formed the first social contract for self government. Both Francis Cooke and Richard Warren signed the Mayflower Compact. According to Eugene Aubrey Stratton, in *Plymouth Colony: Its History and People: 1620-1691* (p. 25). Ancestry.com. Kindle Edition:

In accordance with their agreement with the Adventurers, the settlers were to live virtually a socialistic life, sharing everything in common, for the first seven years. Then the profits of the company were to be totaled and divided according to the number of outstanding shares. But by 1623 many were complaining that the industrious ones were working to support the lazy ones. It was decided to give every man, woman, and child the use of one acre of land to be cultivated as they wished for their own crops, although they would still cultivate the greater common lands for the company

The Pilgrims came to America to worship God in their own way but they were not champions of freedom. In turn they became self-righteous persecutors of dissenters in America. Between 1628 and 1635 more than 20,000 puritans (the reformers) including many ancestors on both sides of our family arrived at the Massachusetts Bay Colony North of the Plymouth Colony. The puritans exchanged their presbyterian orientation for the Pilgrim congregationalism orientation (Each Church was its own authority). The two settlements merged in 1691.

The Puritan theocracy forbade dancing, card playing, smoking, mince meat pies, Christmas celebrations, and banned all musical instruments except drums, trumpets and jew’s harp. Early congregational worship and architecture was severely plain: lengthy sermons, Bible readings, unadorned meeting houses. Their numbers declined. Early in the 1800s Congregationalism split into two parties: Trinitarian and Unitarian. The Unitarians eventually dominated the 14 congregations, captured Harvard and the original Pilgrim Church in Plymouth.

Baptists

Many Baptist churches are an English Product and an off shoot of the puritan movement. Roger Williams who parted from the Massachusetts Bay Colony (driven by the puritans) for Rhode Island might be regarded as having established the first Baptist Church in 1639. Baptist churches are founded upon two principles of personal liberty and freedom of belief. Baptists were congregationalist who had become convinced that if churches were to be composed of only believers, then baptism should be restricted to persons who were able to give account of their own faith and undergo believer’s baptism.

Our first Baptist ancestor came from the paternal side of the family – the Nelsons and Lynds. It isn't exactly clear when the Nelsons became Baptists but the influence would appear to be Henry Alline, born June 14, 1748 in Newport, Rhode Island, to William Alline and Rebeccah Clark. In the fall of 1760, he moved with his family to Falmouth, Nova Scotia. At the age of twenty-eight he had his third religious experience and at this time he became committed to preaching the gospel and served as an itinerant preacher throughout Maritime Canada and Northeastern New England from 1776 to 1784. Alline rejected the power structures in the church, its idea of predestination, and many of its traditions and ceremonial practices. The new teaching revealed that all people have free will and therefore can be reborn into a personal relationship with God. Under the traditional Congregational churches only appropriately educated and ordained ministers were eligible to preach. This weighed heavily on Alline who but for the American Revolution might have received such education in New England. Despite his misgivings he began preaching in Falmouth, particularly after his neighbors heard he had become a New Light and sought his advice and asked him to lead them in prayer. In 1776 he began preaching at Newport, the township adjacent to Falmouth. That same year, both Falmouth and Newport formed churches with his assistance. These churches were anti-Calvinist in nature and generally rejected traditional Congregationalism. In 1778 the Horton/Cornwallis townships sought his assistance to establish a Baptist church. This church was the first Baptist Church in Canada. The following year this Church along with the Falmouth and Newport New Light churches ordained him. Despite his success, he was not accepted by all he encountered. Opposition rose against him from those who thought he was a destabilizing factor to the social order of the day - primarily government representatives in Halifax, as well as the Anglican clergy. Ministers of various other Protestant sects also opposed him on theological grounds, the Newlights jettisoning of an educated and 'properly' ordained ministry, and assuredly the loss of parishioners which eroded both tithing flows and the clergy's status within their community hierarchy. The epitaph on his tombstone reads "He was a burning and shining Light, and was justly esteemed the apostle of Nova Scotia."

Rebecca Nelson, married James Clifford, son of Catholics, John Clifford and Elizabeth Kenedy. He was born in Nova Scotia October 31 1838. His father, John Clifford was baptized in Saint Mary's Catholic Church Cork City Ireland on April 11 1803. He emigrated to Nova Scotia in 1826 and married Alice Kenedy in the Catholic Lady of Mount Carmel, Prospect Church, Halifax County on September 20 1829. I have little knowledge concerning the depth of their faith. What is known is that Alice read the Bible to the growing children, not a common practice Catholics of the period. None of the six children born to this Catholic couple remained in the Catholic church moving to Church of England, Presbyterian, and Baptist Churches, the religion of their respective spouses.

James Clifford was known as a Baptist Evangelist. His daughter, Beatrice Mary (Clifford) Retson was the Adult Baptist Sunday School Teacher at the First Baptist Church in Truro. Six children of her son, George Clifford Retson were baptized in the First Baptist Church in Truro but currently none attend a Baptist Church.

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

Cooke <https://www.retson.ca/cooke.pdf>

Wilcox <https://www.retson.ca/wilcox.pdf>

Retson Genealogy Newsletter September <http://www.retson.ca/retsongenealogynewslettersep2021.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.