



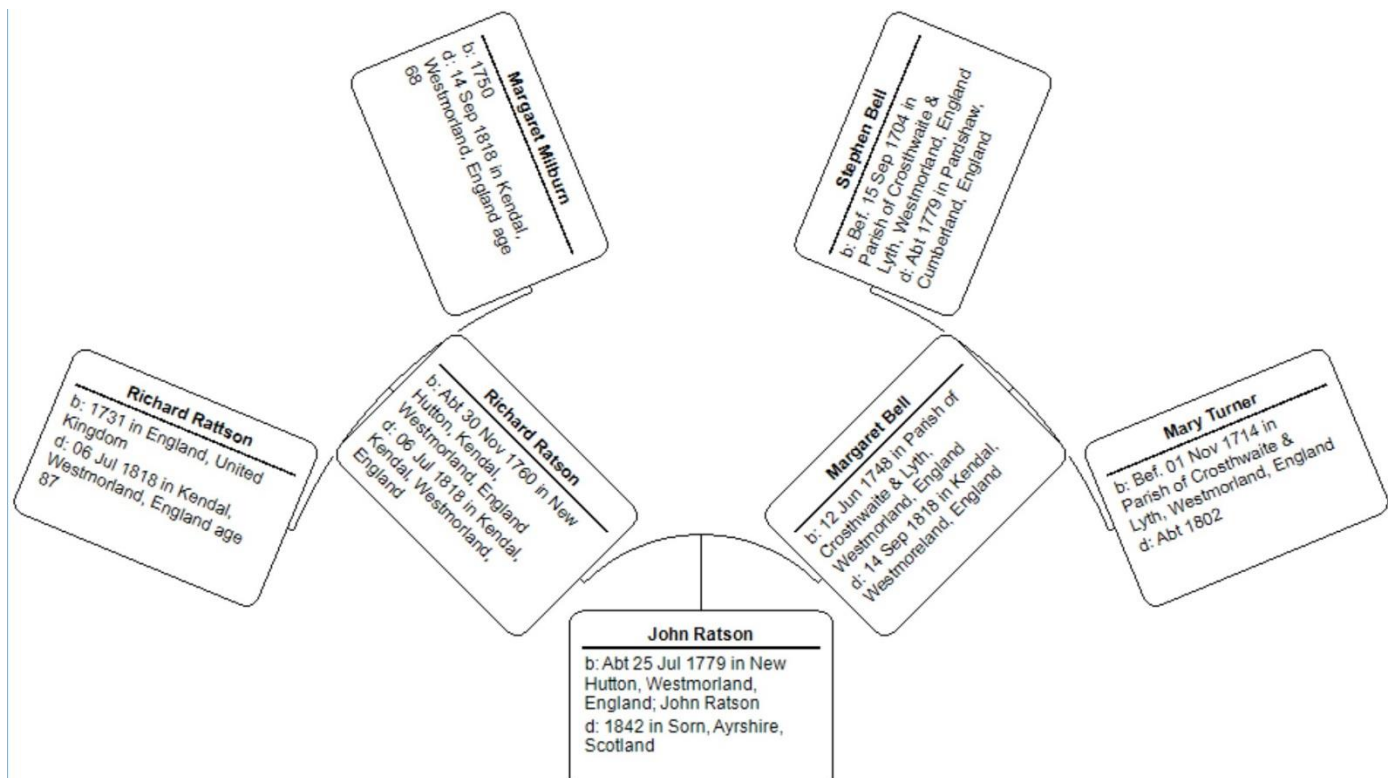
October 15 2022

This newsletter is dedicated to the memory of Grace and Clifford Retson and traces the genealogy of that couple. A website is located at <http://www.retson.ca/retsongeneology.html>

Some of Our Ancestors were English Part 2

In part 1 I covered the names of many ancestors who emigrated to British North America (Pre-United States). The ancestors came from southern England. The Retsons (Our family surname) came from Northern England in what today is Cumbria located in the traditional Counties of Westmorland and Cumberland. Their story can be found at <http://retson.ca/retson.pdf> where updates will be posted. Research on this family was delayed due to the difficulty in locating the origins of John Ratson born in New Hutton and baptised July 25 1779 in Kendal, Westmorland, England. He married Anne Bateman June 26 1809 and had their first child John in August of the same year. John was born in England but the family had emigrated to Sorn Scotland by the birth of their second child James in 11 Sep 1811. A further delay in finding the origin of this family is that Father Richard, baptised November 30 1760 in New Hutton, married the Margaret Tarne, widow of William Tarne but whose maiden name I only discovered relatively recently. She was born Margaret Bell June 12 1748 in the Parish of Crosthwaite & Lyth, Westmorland, England. She married Richard 28 Sep 1778 after the death of her first husband. She died September 14 1818 in Kendal Westmorland. Margaret Bell was the daughter of Stephen Bell and Mary Turner.

The earliest Retson found to date was registered as Richard Rattson born about 1731. I have records of a marriage to Elizabeth Bank in 02 Jun 1764 but Richard's son Richard was baptised Abt. 30 Nov 1760 with given mother Margaret Milburn. Elizabeth died 12 May 1778. I have not found a marriage between Margaret Millburn and Richard.

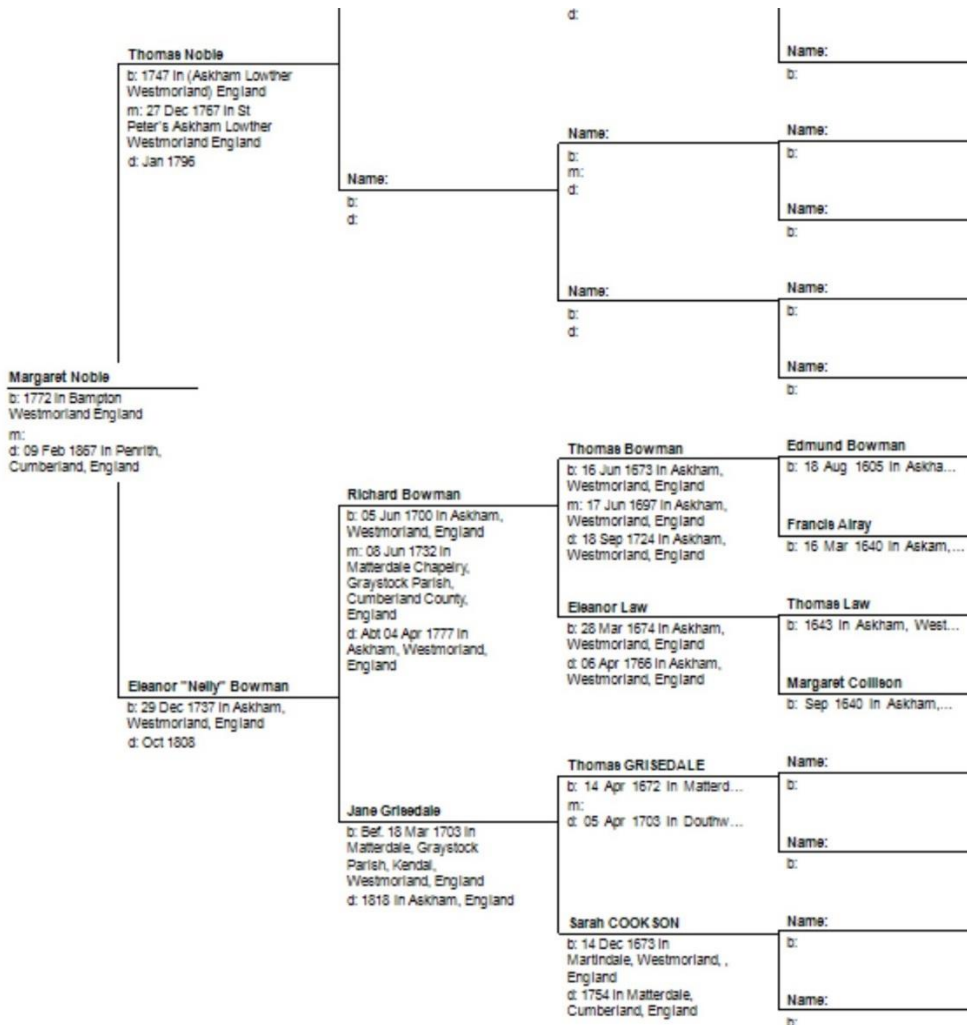


Returning to Stephen Bell father of Margaret Bell, he was baptised September 15 1704 in the Parish of Crosthwaite & Lyth, Westmorland, England, the son of James Bell and Maryan Garnett. He married Mary Turner 29 Apr 1739 in Kendall. Westmorland. He died about 1779 in the parish of Pardshaw, Cumberland, England.

James Bell was baptised February 27 Feb 1670 in the Priory Church, Cartmel, Lancashire, England. He married Maryan Garnett 12 May 1690 Parish of Crosthwaite & Lyth, Westmorland, England. The Bell story, to the extent it has been researched can be found at <https://www.retson.ca/bell.pdf>

Returning to Ann Batman wife of John Retson baptised July 25 1779, I have been a bit more successful in tracking a number of leads as to her origins. Particularly on the maternal side. My first lead came from my

Great Uncle John when I was but 12 years of age. He indicate that John was a gardener and married a Noble woman. I have little information on her father Thomas Bateman but her mother was Margaret Noble who had a distinguish heritage. I am continuing to research this line The story as found to date may be found at <https://www.retson.ca/noble.pdf>



Are all Retsons Related?

<https://one-name.org/> is the website for those interested in this question? However at the moment the name Retson has not been registered.

According to the Bible are all related to a couple called Adam and Eve. I have approached the problem in smaller chunks. When I find a individual bearing the Retson surname In record it in my Ancestry tree in the hopes of being able

eventually to tie in. At the moment I have discovered there are at least 4 separate lines of which the largest are the English-Scottish line to which I belong and the second one is the Greek American line. There is another line which I tentatively dubbed the German American line. This line may have run out of male heirs to carry on the name. There are many Ritson, the name from which it is believed that Retson is a variant.

Some Ritsons can be traced to Retson from which they reverted back to Ritson. In fact, in the early part of the 20th century some of our Retsons called themselves Ritson in Canada.

As I have identified separate lines, I have moved individual from my tree into their own separate trees. I will endeavour to report on it in the next newsletter. I have opened a page at <https://www.retson.ca/RetsonOneNameStudy.pdf> to keep track of these non-ancestral Retsons.

Culture Wars

“I used to believed in the “One” and then I realized there are many savings in the sea.” (first line from a current advertisement for Amazon on CNN)

The above advertisement on CNN caught my attention one night late in September between watching news of Donald Trump’s legal troubles and the Italian election of success for Giorgia Meloni and her party, Brothers of Italy. She is likely to become prime minister at the head of a far-right coalition with the League, led by Matteo Salvini, and Forza Italia, headed by Silvio Berlusconi. The advertisement was confusing to me as I suspect it would be to the secular audience in Canada. Only an individual steeped in fundamental religions would appreciate it or be offended by it. It did remind me of the incredible gulf between cultures in the United States and Canada but also the gulf between the beginning of the 20th century and the present in Canada.

On my last visit with my Aunt Doris in the summer of 2008 at her residence in an assistive residence in Truro Nova Scotia. Among other topics, we discussed life with her mother and father and the change of culture as it related to our ancestors. She related many stories which I am sad to say I did nor record for posterity. One story related to her first dance. Her father approached her one night and indicated he could use her help in cleaning his office at the Nova Scotia Agriculture Collage. He made the unusual suggestion that she dress up for the occasion. When she arrived at his office he indicated that it did not need her attention after all and since she was dressed up suggested that she attend a dance that was being held at the college. After the dance when they were heading home her Dad suggested that she did not have to share the news of the dance with her mother. I asked her what her mother thought was wrong with dancing. She indicated that it was never made clear but that she assumed it had something to do with sexuality and that might lead to breach of one of the 10 commandments.

Her mother was a conservative Baptist and held many of the norms of the denomination at the time – no alcohol, no dancing, no playing cards and so on. Her father on the other hand came from a “more practical” background and religion. As an example,

“God forbad us to work on Sunday but cows still had to be milked on Sundays. God could have designed cows that did not produce milk on Sundays but since he didn’t he must have meant us to use our heads and read the Bible with common sense.”

The children loved and respected their mother but outside of her sight followed their fathers more “practical” orientation. While he attended the Baptist Church in Truro with the family he never became a member.

Grama Beatrice Retson was the daughter of James Clifford, who was baptised as Catholic but who became a deacon in his adult years in a Baptist Church on Brookside Road, Colchester County. Her grandmother Alice Kennedy Clifford, was a Catholic who read the Bible to her children – not a common practice for a Catholic in the day. None of their children retained their catholic faith - all becoming members of the spouses’ churches. Beatrice learned her Bible well and taught the adult Sunday School class at the First Baptist Church in Truro. A fellow choir member, Bert Nichols, indicated to me during my senior choir days that a Minister who attended her class had told Bert that she knew her Bible better then he and he would seek her counsel when confronted with seeming inconsistencies. She recognized inconsistencies and her answer to many of them was to express humility and confess she simply didn’t know how to reconcile the inconsistencies. My father indicated that once upon a time he would be frustrated with this response. One belief that she held sacred, (held in common with

her father James Clifford but not her grandfather John Clifford) was in the “priesthood of all believers”: Only the individual, no matter how well educated or trained in theology, and no matter what title or authority conferred upon him or her from any church could, with God’s help, determine the correct interpretation of scripture.

My wife and I, after returning to Truro, attended the adult Sunday school class taught by my father. He would remark to me often, that he wonder how many in the church could tolerate the class since he followed his father’s lead. He would prepare all week for the class and I regarded him as a Biblical scholar. In his studies he adopted a historical-critical approach which takes account of the fact that the biblical texts were written long ago, in a cultural matrix very different from our own, and that attempt to understand the texts first of all in the context of that ancient setting. This approach demonstrated that the Bible was composed of many books, written by many persons over a lengthy period of time, and included different types of literature. This approach undercut the effects of appeals to certain denominational positions that had been based at least to some degree on a reading of the Bible as God’s dictated word.

While my grandmother was upset that Lot’s wife did not have a name - she was simply Lot’s wife, my father wondered why she should be turned into a pillar of salt merely for looking back on her hometown and why would God destroy all other life in the town including innocent children. The Church we attended, might be regard as somewhat liberal and belonged to a seven member association known as free Baptist. In time, all my siblings gravitated to other non-Baptist churches and the Church eventually closed, granting its building to social active membership who continued its service to the community. My father and mother both consumed alcohol (in moderation), loved to dance and played a mean game of Bridge.

At the local level here in Kenora, Ontario, the cultural war is just below the surface. The largest issue is how to deal with the ever increasing drug problem with increasing homelessness, increasing needle and litter, increasing temporary shelters, tent cities and the issue of poverty. Interconnected is the race relations issue with 50% of the population being indigenous. A specific issue is the support for a safe injection site and the adoption of harm reduction and medical approach versus loitering bylaw and greater legal enforcement. While there is not the rampant individualism experienced in the United States and by the Freedom Convoy the anti-science, anti-government and individualistic orientation then is beginning to take hold. By and large Canadians, much more so then other Americans believe that the Government should care for its citizens there is still a more strongly held value that any transfer of monies and supports to families and children should not impeded the incentive to work. Further, while in Kenora, there is a general acceptance of harm reduction strategy to the drug problem, there is a stronger value that nothing should be done to deter tourism or scare out of towners from shopping in the Town for fears for personal security. Hopefully some degree of conmpassion will continue to dominate our new town council that will be elected in the coming week.

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

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

Retson One Name Study <https://www.retson.ca/RetsonOneNameStudy.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.