

About This Series of Newsletters

This is No. 6 in a series of newsletters with the aim of broadly sharing our common family history. The “focal family” is that of James Nisbet and Helen Nicol who resided at Kirkcudbright on the southwest coast of Scotland in the early 1800s, raising 13 children. This story is about that family and their descendants.

Introduction

The previous issue, #5, related the stories of the 10 Nisbet children for whom no living descendants have been found. This edition will cover two of the three other members of that generation, the eldest, James, and the youngest, Mary Anna.

I will relate the stories of James and Mary Anna, and their children to the best of my ability. However, if others have additional information or corrections, I will happily publish such material in the next issue.

The Eldest Son: James Nisbet (1798-1849)

After their marriage in 1796, the newly wed James and Helen Nicol Nisbet remained in the Kirkcaldy area for about a year before moving to the parish of Lochgoilhead & Kilmorich in November 1797. James had secured a position as gardener at the Ardkinglas estate near Cairndow and it was in one of the nearby staff quarters that they welcomed their first child on April 25, 1798. Following Scottish tradition of the times, this son was dutifully named after the father's father, James Nisbet of Haddingtonshire.

James was one of the most common forenames for males in Scotland, having deep roots in Scottish royalty. Seven kings of Scotland with the name of James ruled at intervals between 1406 and 1688.

In November 1801, the family, which now included another infant son John, moved to Kirkcudbright when the James Sr. accepted a position as gardener for the Earl of Selkirk. According to William Nisbet's autobiography, all the children, including the girls, were sent to Kirkcudbright Academy after earlier being taught to read by their mother and attending a “dame's school” in the town. Clearly, the Nisbet parents highly valued a good education, and the results are evident in the writings that survive today.

In addition to the general English education, James and his brothers received tutelage in Latin and Greek.

The earliest record associated with James' adulthood is a newspaper article in the Inverness and Northern Advertiser of Friday, July 12, 1822 which announces that “The Hon. Sheriff-Depute of Argyll has been pleased to appoint Mr. James Nisbett, Writer in Tobermory, to be Procurator Fiscal of the northern district of that County.”

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The above clipping is from the Inverness and Northern Advertiser, July 12, 1822

Thus, it is evident that by the age of 24, James had established himself as a “writer” (solicitor or attorney) in the small fishing village of Tobermory on the Isle of Mull. After coming of age in Kirkcudbright, James must have acquired a knowledge of Scottish law, either by attending university, an apprenticeship, or a combination of the two.

In the early 1800s, a writer in a small town provided services such as wills, land titles, and contracts. The individual would have been a key trusted citizen and as in the case of James may have been named to posts within the local government and banking institutions. A “procurator fiscal” or PF served as the local public prosecutor for the county, investigating all sudden and suspicious deaths and preparing cases for prosecution by the Sheriff. The PF could also impose fiscal fines on individuals. It was a weighty responsibility for a young man.

Pigot's 1837 Scottish Directoy gives the following description of Tobermory:

“TOBERMORY is a thriving seaport in the island of Mull; 171 miles W.N.W. of Edinburgh, 62 N.W. of Inverary, and 30 miles N.W. of Oban. It encircles the extremity of a fine sheltered bay, and is one of the safest harbours among the Western Isles, being protected from the sound of Mull by an island which stretches nearly across the entrance, but leaving ample room at its northern point for the largest vessels to enter the harbour - though none but small craft can effect this at the south-east point, even at high water. The town is between two and three miles from the mainland of Morven, and derives its name from a celebrated well or spring, called Mary's Well, to which the vulgar superstitiously ascribed many imaginary virtues.”

I believe the term “the vulgar” in the above passage may refer uncharitably to Catholics.

Today, Tobermory is a popular tourist destination and hosts a well-regarded whisky distillery, aquarium and historical museum. Its picturesque main street, with its brightly painted houses lining the harbor's edge, has been the backdrop for TV shows and movies.

On April 22, 1823, a few days before his 25th birthday, James married Margaret Brown at St. Andrews Parish on the east coast of Scotland. Research into Margaret's heritage has yielded little information, other than her birth year being approximately 1798. If she and her husband followed



Tobermory, Isle of Mull, Scotland

traditional naming conventions for their children, then we can infer that Margaret's parents were Mary and William Brown. Old parish records mention only one Margaret born to a William and Mary Brown in this time period, and that was recorded in the parish of Falkirk on January 3, 1798.

James and Margaret settled in Tobermory and on January 7th the following year Margaret gave birth to a baby girl whose death is also recorded in 1824. The infant had been given the name Mary Bell Nisbet, and two years later, when another girl was born, she too was christened Mary Bell.

At some point in the mid or late 1820's James was joined in Tobermory by his younger brother Henry. Henry was 11 years junior to James and likely served as apprentice in the law practice James had developed. In fact, the two brothers may have had a specific plan for Henry to take over the Tobermory practice because within a few years James moved his family to Edinburgh.

On June 17, 1830, the Nisbet household expanded with the birth of twins, James and Helen. This was the year another brother, William, aged 13, came to live with the family in Tobermory. William remained there about a year, writing and performing other duties in the office of his brother. In his later writings, William described the place as "*very bleak and dreary, especially in winter.*" The fact that the locals mainly spoke Gaelic instead of his own "*sweet and expressive dialect – the dialect of Galloway, Ayrshire and the Lowlands*" made the place feel even more unfamiliar.

At this time, young William described his 32-year-old brother as "*a man of some note and influence... and lived a higher style of life than I had been accustomed to.*" James was clearly successful in his career and he may have begun to sense that the remote village of Tobermory was limiting his potential.

On November 17, 1832, son William John was born and the family of six moved to Edinburgh soon after, leaving the Tobermory practice in the hands of Henry, who would remain there the rest of his life.

For many years James leased a house at No. 26 Northumberland Street in Edinburgh's New Town district, just a few blocks off the famed Princes Street. The attached "tenement" style house is still there and last sold in 2010 for £1.35M. The real estate listing described it as follows:

26 Northumberland Street is a magnificent, traditional Georgian town house providing accommodation over four floors, situated in the heart of Edinburgh's prestigious New Town and enjoying a sunny private garden and off-street parking for three cars to the rear. Built circa 1804, an attractive, curved stone staircase services the ground to first and second floor. The accommodation comprises on the ground floor an outer hall, inner hall, dining room, sitting/family room and butler's pantry with electric dumb waiter; on garden level hall, WC, large open plan kitchen/dining room, utility room, sun room, pantry with electric dumb waiter, front lobby and guest bedroom with en-suite shower room; on the first floor landing with shelved linen cupboard off, fine drawing room with three windows to the front, master bedroom with dressing room off and bathroom adjacent to master bedroom; and on the second floor - landing with cupola above, double bedroom with en-suite shower room, double bedroom with walk-in wardrobe, double bedroom 5 and family bathroom.



James Nisbet's House at 26 Northumberland Street, Edinburgh, as it appears today.

In 1834, James' father died at Kirkcudbright, and he took on a new role as head of his family of birth. As the eldest son, James, was looked to for decision-making and, to some degree, financial support. In 1839, James was instrumental in arranging for his youngest brother, Douglas to emigrate to America at the age of 19.

James and Margaret's sixth and last child, John, was born in Edinburgh on July 7, 1835. John, whose surname was at times recorded as Nisbett with two "t's," was likely named after James' brother who had died in 1831 at Caledon, Ireland.

The year 1839 brought tragedy to the Nisbets of Edinburgh with the death of James's brother Walter who perished that January while serving on a ship off the coast of Liverpool. Around this time, research indicates that one of the twins, young James, died at the age of 9. The other twin, Helen, would live another six years, but also died before reaching maturity. This was all too common in a time when childhood mortality was in the 30 percent range due to disease, malnutrition and accidents.

It is difficult to piece together James's career in the city of Edinburgh. There are only a few mentions of him found in the newspapers of the period beginning in 1836 and those are very small and inconsequential notices. He did have the "Esq." suffixed to his name, which implied a relatively high degree of professional success and recognition. An 1844 article in the Edinburgh Witness listed James Nisbet, Esq. on the provisional committee of a new company, the Scottish Life Assurance Guarantee and Reversionary Interest Association. Later, in 1845 he was mentioned in The Scotsman, serving as secretary of the Edinburgh Western Cemetery Company. In the 1840s, a few published notices of bankruptcies and land sales included his name as the point of contact.

EDINBURGHII WESTERN CEMETERY COMPANY.

CALL OF REMAINDER OF THE STOCK.

THE DIRECTORS of the EDINBURGH WESTERN CEMETERY COMPANY hereby intimate, that to enable them to redeem the entire Feu-duty, and to prepare and lay out the Company's Grounds for sepulture forthwith, they have called up the remainder of the Stock of the Company, being Seven Shillings per Share.

This Instalment is payable at the Office of the Edinburgh and Glasgow Bank, in Edinburgh, on Monday, 2d June next.

Interest at the rate of five per cent. will be charged on any of this Instalment which may remain unpaid after that date.

By order of the Directors,
JAMES NISBET, Secretary.
Edinburgh, May 21, 1845.

Typical Edinburgh newspaper clipping with a mention of James Nisbet.

It is known from his mother's letters that James met with some misfortune financially as she referenced investments, shared with brother Henry, in which significant sums were lost. Still, James was solvent enough to periodically send small sums to his mother and spinster sisters, and he loaned brother William the funds needed to emigrate to America in 1842. Two years later, when William sent repayment for that loan, James refused to accept it and returned the funds to his brother.

On October 19, 1849, James died at home with his mother and family in attendance. The cause of death at age 51 is unknown, but Helen Nicol Nisbet referred to her son as "a most severe and long sufferer." Letters from earlier years mention that James and his family had to periodically leave the city of Edinburgh for the countryside to recuperate from health issues. James's death came just three days after the death of Henry's wife Mathilda at the Edinburgh Lunatic Asylum, four months after she had been declared insane and committed to that institution.

James was interred at Calton Hill Burying Ground in Edinburgh and left behind his wife Margaret, 51, daughter Mary Bell, 23, and sons William, 17, and John, 14. No records have been found that would shed light on what became of Margaret Brown Nisbet after the death of her husband but is inferred that she died sometime before 1873.

The Children of James Nisbet (1798-1849)

Mary Bell Nisbet (1826-1873)

As previously mentioned, three of James' six children died before his own death in 1849. His eldest surviving child, Mary Bell Nisbet b. 1826, had married a Francis Thomson on March 30, 1847 at Eccles, Berwick. Thomson was a 33-year-old native of Edinburgh and according to the census of 1851 he was a doctor of medicine. Mary Bell's uncle William Nisbet kept a photograph of their house inscribed "Residence of Mrs Thomson (Mary Bell Nisbet latterly Mrs Dewar) Scotland."



Mary Bell Nisbet, later Thomson Dewar, ca. 1865

After eleven years of marriage, Francis Thomson died in the town of Peterhead on October 4, 1858 and was buried in

the churchyard there. He and Mary Bell had no children and may have been separated at the time. His official cause of death was noted rather delicately as "*Immoderate use of Stimulants – For many years*" by the attending doctor.

Four years later, Mary Bell married another doctor, William Dewar, Esq. at Morpeth, England and they settled first at Newcastle-upon-Tyne in Northumberland and later at Dundee, Scotland. William contracted typhus from a patient and died in late January, 1868 at their residence in the Nethergate area of the city. They were childless. Mary Bell Nisbet Thomson Dewar died on February 15, 1873, at Dundee. her death record reports the cause of death as heart disease and inflammation of the kidneys. Her brother John signed the death certificate.

William John Nisbet (1832-1866)

The only reference to William John in family archives is a mention his grandmother Helen Nicol Nisbet makes in an 1844 letter to her son. "*James' oldest son William got his arm broke. I think it might be in May. It was a compound fracture and he never will have the use of it. It is his right arm. The bones are grown together. I was very sorry for the poor boy.*

At the age of 33, William John Nisbet was working as a clerk when he fell ill of an infection and died March 14, 1866 at the Royal Infirmary in Edinburgh. His sister Mary Bell was present. His death certificate indicates he was single at the time and no record of marriage or children has been found.

John Nisbet (1835-1919)

John was the only one of James' six children to lead a full life and have children from whom there are descendants alive today. John worked as a seaman and was in Dundee in 1873 when his sister Mary Bell died. Just 10 days after his sister's death, John married Jane Wildgoose on February 25, 1873 at St. Andrews Roman Catholic Chapel in Dundee.

Jane, also known within the family as Jeanie, was the daughter of Alexander Wildgoose and Catherine Williamson of Aberdeen. Given the religious inclinations of the Nisbet family, who were staunchly protestant, the Catholic conversion and marriage of John is intriguing. I haven't been able to determine what drove this religious conversion, but John and Jane raised their family in the Catholic faith and future generations continued along that path. In fact, one of John's descendants alive today, Father James Nisbet, is a Catholic priest on the central coast of California.

John and Jane Nisbet's first child, Mary, was born October 28, 1876 at Aberdeen. In late 1878, John and his family embarked on a journey to North America, stopping first to stay the winter with his uncle William Nisbet in Providence, RI. It was here that a second child was born on January 1, 1879, the boy was named John William.

The John Nisbet family emigrated to Canada in 1879, eventually settling in the area of Fort Garry, Manitoba where John and Jane ran a trading post and mercantile store on the



John Nisbet and Jane Wildgoose, 1873

frontier. Their second son, James Alexander Nisbet was born there in 1882, followed in 1885 by another boy, Robert Francis Nisbet.

From Canada, John maintained correspondence with his uncle William in Providence. In a letter to his daughter Helen in 1885, William noted that a recent letter from John had reported "*He and family are well and doing well – He sent pictures of his children and house – Quite a good house.*"

All four of John and Jane's children grew to maturity and married. Mary, later Mary Dumas, did not have children of her own, but all three of her brothers did and they are the forefathers of many descendants living today. John William's descendants are named Plouffe. James Alexander, who only had a single daughter, is the great grandfather of descendants in Canada named Lusk and Nobiss. Robert Francis was the father of six children. He emigrated to the United States and was the patriarch of a family that included no less than 23 grandchildren. There are some interesting and colorful stories about this branch of the Nisbet clan, but I will leave the telling of them to Robert's direct descendants.

John Nisbet died in 1919 at the age of 84 in St. Vital, Manitoba. Jane lived until the age 88.

Nisbet vs. Nisbett

Especially among the records of John Nisbet and his descendants I have found the Nisbet name often noted with a second "t" at the end. I believe this was not an intentional change in spelling but rather accidental in nature. The second "t" may have been added at the discretion of the person doing the recording of the marriage, death or other life event and not at the direction of the individual who was the subject of the record. For the purposes of this document, I have used only the single "t" spelling, though a number of records on which it is based contain the extra letter.

LIVED IN ST. VITAL
NEARLY SIXTY YEARS



JOHN NISBET.

The death occurred on Saturday at St. Vital, Man., of John Nisbet, one of the pioneers in Manitoba, aged 81. The deceased who was well known and well respected was one of the most successful merchants west of the Red river, and had been retired for a number of years. He was for many years postmaster at St. Vital. He was born at Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1835 and came to St. Boniface in 1859, from which place he removed to St. Vital in 1860. He is survived by three sons, John W., James A., and Robert Nisbet, and a daughter Mrs. J. P. Dumas, the wife of the well-known member at the Provincial legislature J. P. Dumas, St. Boniface.

John Nisbet Obituary, January 28, 1919

The Youngest of the Nisbet Children: Mary Anna Nisbet (1823-1863)

Mary Anna was the thirteenth and last of the children of James and Helen Nicol Nisbet. She was born December 27, 1823 in the gardener's cottage on St. Mary's Isle at Kirkcudbright. Her mother was 45 years old and her twelve siblings ranged in age from James, 25, down to Douglas, 2. Her father, James, was head gardener and land steward for the Earl of Selkirk and had worked there for over 20 years. He was a valued member of the lord's staff.

The household of Mary Anna's early childhood must have been a bustling one. Some of her older siblings had gone off to begin their adult careers, but at least nine of them were still at home - attending school, helping with chores, etc. The gardener's residence was a two-story stone building with living room, parlor and kitchen downstairs and three bedrooms above. There was no running water, it had to be fetched from a nearby well known as "The Monk's Well." In winter, heat would have been provided by the five fireplaces downstairs and one upstairs.

Much of Mary Anna's childhood is left to our imagination as there is little documentation from that time. If she received the same education as the other children, she would have at first been home-schooled by her mother and then sent to the local academy in Kirkcudbright. Older siblings may have helped tutor young Mary Anna. After her father died when she was only 10, finances were extremely tight and the means for a formal education may have been hard to come by.

In 1830, Mary Anna, aged 7, is mentioned in a letter by her mother as a witness to the death of her older brother Robert. After her father's death in 1834, she moved with her mother to a rented house in the town of Kirkcudbright where she no doubt assisted with household chores and learned to "work at the needle" as her five older sisters had.

1840 saw Mary Anna move with her mother to Glasgow after Douglas had gone to America and all the other children were laboring at whatever work they could find. In Glasgow, she and Helen lived in a rented house at 14 Renfrew Street, along with several of her older sisters.

Like her sisters, Mary Anna did not have a strong constitution and according to her mother's letters she suffered from various fevers and other ailments as a young woman. Especially in the city of Glasgow, contagious diseases were rampant at the time.

Unlike her two sisters who married later in life, Mary Anna was engaged to be married before age 30. A letter from Helen to William in 1852 announced, "*I am sure you will be surprised when I tell you that she is going to be married to a Mr. Ferguson.*" Mary Anna and Peter Ferguson married on August 31 of that year in the parish of Barony in Glasgow.

Peter Ferguson was 33 and worked as a warehouseman for the firm of Crooks and Jones. His parents were Duncan Ferguson and Janet McPhee (McVie). He and Mary Anna made their home in Glasgow not far from her aging mother, now 74. Mary Anna's first child was born in February 1854 but only survived about 9 weeks. The child's body was interred at Sighthill Cemetery on April 19 in a plot purchased that day by Peter. We do not know if it was a boy or girl as the interment records only read "child" and later references to the infant read simply "Mary Anna's baby." In looking over the pertinent page in the interment records, about 30% of the deaths were of children under the age of 2. The noted causes of death for many include whooping cough, though the Ferguson baby's death is attributed to "Weakness."



Peter Ferguson (1819-1863)



The only known photograph (hand tinted) of Mary Anna Nisbet Ferguson, circa 1856-60, shown with one of her young children

Apparently, Mary Anna had had a difficult delivery and according to her mother “she was nearly gone.” Thus, Helen was quite concerned and made sure to be in attendance when Mary Anna’s second child was born on May 22, 1855, a girl they named Helen Nisbet Ferguson. Two years later, on May 12, 1858, another girl arrived, Isabella Ferguson, later to be known as “Belle.” Between these two births, Mary Anna was in the room when her mother, the matriarch of the Nisbet family, Helen Nicol Nisbet, passed away in February 1856.

On May 28, 1862, Mary Anna gave birth to a son, but his father did not live to see the child’s first birthday. Peter Ferguson died of “*Disease of liver about 2 years and incipient disease of the heart a few weeks*” on February 23, 1863. He was buried at Sighthill Cemetery near his infant child who had died four years prior.

Six months later, the new baby, also named Peter, just 13 months old, followed his father to the grave at Sighthill. The cause of the infant’s death is difficult to decipher on the death record but includes the word “*debility*.”

Mary Anna’s heart must have been broken, and her will to live may have been weakened, after losing her husband and young son within half a year. On August 17, 1863, she succumbed to a condition that is also difficult to determine from the handwritten notes of the attending physician.

Thus, by late summer 1863, the Peter Ferguson family had diminished such that only two orphaned girls remained, Helen, 8, and Isabella, 5. Family documents indicate that Mary Anna’s older sister Isabella, who had married late in life to a widower with three grown children, took the two girls into her home in Edinburgh. Another sister, Helen Nisbet Hamilton, who attended at Mary Anna’s death and lived nearby in Glasgow may have taken the girls for a period of time as well. Isabella Nisbet Wilson had recently been widowed herself and was living with her stepson George Baillie Wilson. Within five years, however, she too died. Isabella Nisbet Wilson had been the last of her generation of Nisbets remaining in Scotland.

Following the death of his stepmother in 1868, George Wilson and his wife, who was coincidentally named Isabella as well, became guardians for Mary Anna’s daughters, now aged 13 and 10. George was 24 and his new wife 21, so one wonders what the dynamics were in the household. For whatever reason, the situation was not tenable and within three years the two Ferguson girls were taken into the custody of their uncle Douglas Nisbet of Charleston, South Carolina.



Douglas Nisbet

Douglas was a shipping agent which facilitated him travelling several times to his homeland over the years. In 1871 he and the teenaged Helen and Isabella boarded the steamship *Europa* at Glasgow, bound for New York. They arrived October 3rd and made their way to Douglas's home in Cheraw, SC. Douglas had married Sarah H. Turner in 1853 but that union had produced no children. Now, 18 years later, they instantly had two daughters to raise, Helen and Isabella.

Helen Nisbet Ferguson (1855-1934?)

Douglas lived less than six years after bringing Helen and Isabella Ferguson to America, but by the time of his death they were young women. Family documents state simply that Helen Nisbet Ferguson "returned to Scotland." In a letter to his daughter in February 1885, her uncle William in Providence reported that "*Nelly was well at last accounts,*" using the familiar nickname for young Helen.

Recently, writing on two old photographs has provided leads to Helen's adult life. That notation reads "*Helen Nisbet Ferguson (Roberts)*." This indicates that Helen married a man named Roberts. The photos were taken at the Helsby Photo Studio in Denbigh, Wales and present an attractive young woman, possibly in her mid-twenties. The Helsby studio only operated in Denbigh 1876-1883 and this is evidence that Helen had indeed returned to the UK from South Carolina.



Undated photographs of Helen Nisbet Ferguson Roberts, taken in Denbigh, Wales

Tracking Helen after her return has been difficult. If the notation on the photo is correct, and she married a man named Roberts, then this helps narrow the possibilities. In fact, I've found only one record of a Helen Ferguson wed to a Roberts in the appropriate time period. A Helen Ferguson married a Job Roberts at West Riding, Yorkshire, England in

March 1891. Later census records report this Helen Ferguson was born about 1855 in Glasgow, indicating the strong likelihood of a match to Mary Anna's daughter Helen.

Assuming this is the correct Helen Ferguson Roberts, she led a long life in England. Her husband Job was a coal "hewer" (miner) and they lived in gritty coal towns in the Yorkshire area. On December 10, 1893, Helen Roberts gave birth to a boy they named Ernest, and that appears to be their only child. The 1911 census indicates that Ernest followed in his father's line of work – at age 17 he was also employed as a coal miner. Helen Roberts died April 24, 1934, age 78, of "senile decay." Her son Ernest did not marry and was accounted for in the 1939 census as a single coal miner working in Hemsworth in the county of York. He died in December 1951.

If the above story regarding Helen Nisbet Ferguson is correct, then it appears there are no descendants of the James and Helen Nicol Nisbet family alive today who are natives of Scotland or the UK.

Isabella "Belle" Ferguson (1858-1929)

Mary Anna's younger daughter Belle Ferguson arrived in Cheraw, South Carolina with her Uncle Douglas in 1871 at age 13 and lived there the rest of her life. I have not discovered much about Belle's life as a young woman after Douglas died in 1877 and direct descendants of hers may be better able to tell her story.

From family letters, we know Belle maintained a close relationship with the family of her uncle William Nisbet in Providence, RI and made several visits there over the years. Belle was particularly close to her cousin Jessie Gibson Nisbet, William's eldest daughter, who was about 10 years Belle's senior. Jessie had married Alexander Munro in 1872 and was known as Jessie Nisbet Munro. When the time came, Belle named her second daughter after her cousin.

An 1885 letter by William Nisbet reports, "*We heard from Belle Ferguson – She is teaching about 15 miles from Cheraw.*" Other records indicate she may have been a music teacher.

Public records show that she married William Pearson Breedon on April 2, 1888 at Cheraw, SC, which implies she had continued to live there with Douglas's widow Sarah during the intervening years. 1888 is also the year Sarah died at Cheraw and was buried next to her husband in Old Saint David's Episcopal Church Cemetery.

The Breedens established their home in Bennettsville, SC where William became a well-known livestock dealer. Their property was known, at least within the family, as "The Breedon Plantation." They raised three children to adulthood, Lindsay Kistler Breedon (1889-1960), Helen Ferguson Breedon (1890-1953), and Willie Belle Breedon (1899-1972). A daughter, Jessie Nisbet Munroe Breedon (1897-1900) died before her fourth birthday.

After her marriage, Belle maintained contact with the Rhode Island Nisbets and made at least one visit with her

young children in tow. Her cousin Jessie's daughter Catherine Nisbet Munro later became a doctor and - likely due to Belle's influence - moved permanently to South Carolina in 1913. When Belle died on May 30, 1929, her death certificate was signed by Catherine at the State Hospital in Columbia. Belle was 71 and had died of heart disease. She is buried with her husband at Oak Ridge Cemetery in Bennettsville, SC.

All three of the Breeden children had families of their own and there are descendants alive today with surnames such as Breeden, Paluselli, Try, Bennett, and Paschal.

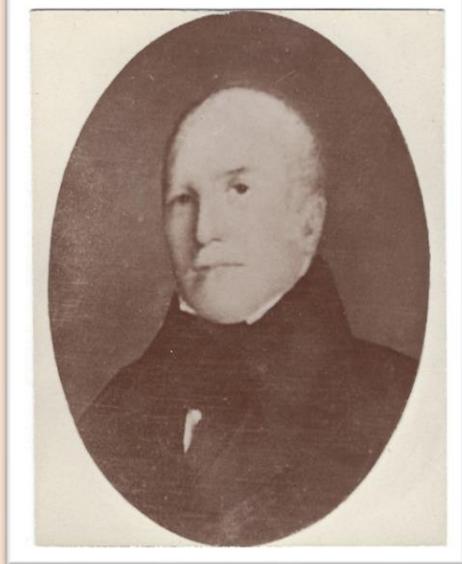


**Isabella "Belle" Ferguson Breeden
October 1896**

End of Issue #6

This concludes my storytelling regarding the eldest and youngest of the children of James and Helen Nicol Nisbet. For the descendants of James and Mary Anna, I hope you have enjoyed reading about your distant ancestors. Maybe I have inspired you to "pick up the story" and document the other generations that have come since!

In the next (and possibly final) issue I will focus on the one remaining child who has descendants alive today - my great great grandfather William Nisbet (1816-1886). He told the story of his own life in vivid detail in his 1886 autobiography, so I will be trying to summarize and add some new information about his children. Stay tuned!



MYSTERY CORNER

This photograph, found during a recent move, was sent to me by Cousin Martha Rogers in VA, a descendant of William Nisbet through Jessie Gibson Nisbet.

On the back it is inscribed "James Nisbet 1772-1834." The item is clearly a modern era photo, possibly taken as a copy of an older photo or a painting.

Could this be the one and only image of James, the patriarch of the Nisbets of Kirkcudbright? Whoever wrote the notation on the reverse side thought so!

Commercial photography was not developed until the 1840s-50s, well after James had died in 1834. However, once it became available, it was not unusual for families to have earlier painted portraits photographed in a studio in order to preserve and widely share the image. The timing is such that this could have been the scenario here.

My questions for you are:

Does this look like a photo of painting?

Do any other cousins have either the original painting or a photograph similar to this one?

Help solve this mystery!

A Nisbet Cousin Directory?

To date I have made contact with about thirty members of the 6th and 7th generations of the Nisbet family.

Several of you have asked about publishing a directory of Nisbet cousins, but I am reluctant to share contact information due to privacy concerns.

Still, I know some would welcome hearing from other members of our clan. If you want to enable other Nisbet cousins to contact you, please let me know and I can include your email address in the next newsletter. If you do not opt in, I will continue to keep your contact information private.

ANCESTOR ARTIFACT ADDENDUM

Here I feature one of the family heirlooms I've inherited from the Nisbet line.

Below is a page from a scrapbook that belonged to my great grandmother Helen Nisbet Ross, daughter of William Nisbet and granddaughter of James and Helen Nicol Nisbet. William's brother Douglas was a shipping agent who emigrated to South Carolina in 1839. His profession afforded him the opportunity to travel, including several trips back to the country of his birth. His last visit to Scotland, in the summer of 1876, was less than 9 months before he died at the age of 56.

While in Scotland, Douglas visited the graves of his father, mother, and sisters in Kirkcudbright and Glasgow and returned with pressed leaves from the gravesites. Helen carefully preserved these specimens and recorded their origin as a remembrance of aunts and grandparents she never had the opportunity to meet in person.



Three Generation List for the James and Helen Nicol Nisbet Family

1st GENERATION						
James Nisbet (1772-1834)		Married September 9, 1796 Abbotshall, Kirkaldy		Helen Nicol (1778-1856)		
2nd GENERATION				3rd GENERATION		
CHILDREN OF JAMES AND HELEN NICOL NISBET	Born	Died	Spouse	GRANDCHILDREN OF JAMES AND HELEN NICOL NISBET	Born	Died
James Nisbet	1798	1849	Margaret Brown	Mary Bell Nisbet	1824	1824
				Mary Bell Nisbet	1826	1873
				James Nisbet	1830	~1839
				Helen Nisbet	1830	~1845
				William John Nisbet	1832	1866
				John Nisbet	1835	1919
John Nisbet	1801	1831	Martha McMekin	Joanna G. (Joey) Nisbet	1831	1860
Margaret Nisbet	1803	1854				
Walter Nisbet	1805	1839				
Robert Nisbet	1807	1830				
Henry Nisbet	1809	1867	Matilda Ann Douglas	Mary Miles Fletcher Nisbet	1831	1850
Helen Nisbet	1811	1867	James Hamilton			
Isabella Nisbet	1813	1868	David Wilson			
William Nisbet	1816	1886	Catherine Angus	James Nisbet	1843	1904
				John Angus Nisbet	1844	1908
				Henry Nisbet	1846	1849
				Jessie Gibson Nisbet	1848	1912
				William Douglas Nisbet	1850	1894
				Helen Nicol Nisbet	1852	1922
				Catherine Douglas Nisbet	1854	1925
Jane Wedderburn Nisbet	1818	1855				
Elizabeth Catherine Nisbet	1818	1855				
Douglas Nisbet	1820	1877	Sarah H. Turner			
Mary Anna Nisbet	1823	1863	Peter Ferguson	Infant Ferguson	1854	1854
				Helen Nisbet Ferguson	1855	1934
				Isabella "Belle" Ferguson	1858	1929
				Peter Ferguson	1862	1863