ANN FRASER January 1, 2020

I set out to prove, or disprove, the story that my grandmother, Mom (Gladys) Campbell told me about the parentage of her father, John Robertson Murray. Starting with what we know, John Robertson Murray’s grave stone gives his birth year as 1872 and death year as 1948.

The 1948 death records at Manitoba Government Vital Statistics only have one Murray of the right age and sex, and that is John Robertson Murray who died January 27, 1948. This record shows he was born April 5, 1872. This gives us the birthdate.

Looking for the Murray family in 1872, we find the census records of Rathen in 1871 (one year earlier) show the Murray family living in Redhouse. We know this was our Murray family in Redhouse because the father is George Murray (age 59, born in Lonmay, farmer of 100 acres) and the mother is Barbara Robertson Murray (age 59 born in Lonmay), with son George (age 21 born in Rathen). This information matches with our known family history. There is also a daughter Margaret (age 15 born in Rathen). Earlier census records (see the next page) also confirm their residence at Redhouse.

The same page of the same 1871 census lists the Fraser family with father Alex D Fraser (age 62 born in Fraserburgh a labourer), mother Magdalene (age 60 born in Rathen), daughter Ann Grieg Fraser (unmarried and age 27, born in Lonmay)(Greig apparently misspelled), grandson Alex D. Fraser (age 11, born in Rathen, a scholar), and granddaughter Elizabeth C. Fraser (age 3, born in Rathen). This family’s father’s full name was Alexander Dalrymple Fraser, which is also likely the full name of the grandson. The Fraser family is listed as living at Rathen, and I believe they live in one of the Stonehouse farm’s buildings as evidenced by earlier records, and by the position on the census document between Redhouse and Stonehouse. These houses are less than ½ mile apart, on the same country road. I could not find a birth record for the grandson, Alex. On the birth record of the granddaughter, Elizabeth Craighead Fraser, we find the mother was Anne Fraser, domestic servant, and the birth is listed as illegitimate (which means the parents were not married). Elizabeth was born in Stonehouse on April 28, 1867. There is no father listed on the birth record, but the Rathen parish minutes of July 28, 1867 and December 1, 1867 state the father was James Willo or Willox from ‘Mddleton of Rosa’ who acknowledged being the father.

The parish birth record for John Robertson Murray, born on April 5th, 1872, at Stonehouse, gives his father as George Murray, farmer’s son, living at home, at Redhouse, Rathen, and his mother as Anne Fraser, domestic servant, and the birth is listed as illegitimate (which means the parents were not married). We can be certain that this George Murray was the 21 (turning 22) year old son, George Murray in the 1871 census. As the birth was at Stonehouse, this Anne Fraser must be the 27 (now 28) year old daughter of Alexander and Magdalene Fraser. There is no other Anne (or Ann) Fraser in Stonehouse, Rathen, in the 1871 census. There is no other Murray child born in 1872 in Rathen. So we see that John Robertson Murray was not Anne Fraser’s first child (Elizabeth was born before John)

The Life of Anne Greig Fraser

Variously spellings given are Ann, Anne, or Annie. ‘Ann’ is how it appears she signed her name on the birth records of her two children (Elizabeth Craighead Fraser and John Robertson Murray). However, on various records her name appears as Anne.

The earliest Scotland census found was in 1841, which lists the Fraser family living in the Parish of Lonmay, the village of ‘Cairness’. The family consisted of Alexander (age 30, an agricultural labourer), Magdalene (age 30), Margaret (age 10), William (age 3) and a name that looks like ‘Jessie’ (a female age 2). On “The Watsons of Scotland” website they give William’s name as William Leslie Fraser (born Oct 3, 1837, in Rathen and died June, 1871 in Thornaby On Tees, England).

I was unable to find our Murray family in an 1841 census.

The earliest record of Anne Fraser is found in the Parish of Rathen birth records, giving her birthday as April 2, 1844. Her father is Alexander Fraser residing at Stonehouse, and her mother is Magdalene Trail. Later census records show her as born in Lonmay, which is not at odds with her birth being recorded in the Parish of Rathen. Also included on this birth register is a son, William, born October 3, 1837, which fits with the 1841 census.

On the 1851 census, the Fraser family is living at ‘Stonehouse’ (hard to read) of Rathen. The family consisted of Alexander (age 43, born in Fraserburgh, an agricultural labourer), Magdalene (age 40, born in Rathen), and daughter Ann (age 6, born Lonmay, a scholar). Only these 3 people appear on this census with no mention of Margaret, William, or ‘Jessie’. With reference to census records, we can conclude that the Fraser family arrived at Stonehouse between 1841 and 1851.

On the same 1851 census, the Murray family is living at Redhouse in Rathen. The family consisted of father George (age 39, born in Lonmay, farmer of 85 acres, employing 3 labourers), mother Barbara (age 39, born in Old Pitsligo), and 6 children; the youngest of which was George (8 months old, born in Rathen). We have the baptism record for George born July 9, 1850, and baptized August 16th of that year. The other children were: Elspet (age 12, born in Old Pitsligo), William (age 12, born in Fraserburgh, a scholar), James (age 8, born in Fraserburgh, a scholar), Alexander (age 5, born in Old Pitsligo, a scholar), and Harriet (age 2, born in Old Pitsligo).

On the 1861 census, the Fraser family is living at Stonehouse in Rathen, with father Alexander D. Fraser (age 53 born in Fraserburgh, an agricultural labourer), mother Magdalene (age 50 born in Rathen), daughter Anne G. Fraser (age 17 born in Lonmay, a domestic servant), daughter Jane R. Fraser (age 9 born in Rathen, a scholar), and grandson William Fraser (age 3 born in Rathen). On “The Watsons of Scotland” website they give Jane’s name as Jeanie (born Oct 7,1851, in Rathen). Grandson William Fraser’s birth record indicates he was born August 14, 1857, in Stonehouse and his mother was Margaret Fraser, a domestic servant (Anne’s sister, Margaret would have been about 27 years old at the time of William’s birth). William’s birth is recorded as ‘illegitimate’ which means his parents were not married. There is no reference to his father in the birth record but the parish of Rathen minutes for October 11, 1857 state the father was Charles Greig.

On the same 1861 census, the Murray family is still living at Redhouse Farm in Rathen. The family consisted of father George (age 49, born in Lonmay, farmer of 90 acres, employing 4 labourers), mother Barbara (age 49, born in Pitsligo), and 6 children. The children are: Elspet (age 22, born in Pitsligo, domestic servant, unmarried), James (age 18, born in Pitsligo, plowman, unmarried), Alexander Lovie (age 15, born in Pitsligo, agricultural labourer, unmarried), Harriet (age 12, born in Pitsligo, scholar), George (age 10, born in Rathen, scholar), and Margaret Robertson (age 5, born in Rathen, scholar). From the Harriet’s and George’s ages and birth places we can determine that the Murray family moved to Rathen around 1848 to 1850.

Earlier (on the first page) we looked at the 1871 census. As we now know, John Robertson Murray was born on April 5, 1872. On February 21, 1874, George Murray married Elizabeth McRobbie, a domestic servant, who lived at ‘Ferniebrae’, Rathen. They had one child, a daughter Elizabeth Georgina Barbara Murray, born on February 8, 1875, at Redhouse, Rathen. The mother Elizabeth died 5 days later on February 13, 1875 at 23 years old. On June 16, 1877, George Murray married Elizabeth Thom.

What happened to Anne Fraser after the birth of John Robertson Murray, in 1872? The 1881 census shows the Fraser family living in Stonehouse Cottage. The family consisted of Alexander (age 72, born in Fraserburgh, a gardener), Magdalene (age 70, born in Rathen, a gardener’s wife), Ann Greig Fraser (age 36, born in Lonmay, unmarried, gardener’s daughter), granddaughter Elizabeth ‘Willox’ (age 13, born in Rathen, scholar), and granddaughter Mary Ann Isabella Fraser (age 3, born in Kincardineshire, Banchory). Elizabeth would almost certainly be Anne’s daughter born in Stonehouse on April 28, 1867.The birth record for Mary Ann Isabella Fraser shows she was born in the parish of Banchory Ternan, in the county of Kincardine, on June 10, 1877 to William Fraser, journeyman blacksmith and Isabella Mearns. William Fraser and Isabella Mearns were married June 11,1866. This William Fraser (born October 3, 1837) is the son of Alexander and Magdalene Fraser.

On the same 1881 census, the Murray family no longer live at Redhouse. Instead, they are living at Glendaveny Cottage, in the Parish of Peterhead. This place is referenced in ‘The Murrays Come to Canada’, by Jessie Murray. The family consisted of George Murray Jnr (age 30, born in Rathen, farm overseer), his wife Eliza. (age 25, born in Fraserburgh. This was Elizabeth nee Thoms), son John (age 8, scholar, born in Rathen. This was John Robertson Murray), son George (age 3, born in Rathen), and son James (age 1, born at the Rathen Cottage). Sadly, James died December 27, 1881 in Glendaveny. Not on the census is daughter Agnes Hendry Murray because she was born a few months after the census (born July 14, 1881, at Glendaveny, Peterhead). This means the Murray family left Rathen and moved to Glendaveny around 1880, after James was born, and before Agnes was born, and before the 1881 census was taken April 3, 1881. Also not on the 1881 census is daughter, Elizabeth Georgina Barbara Murray, whose mother was Elizabeth (nee McRobbie). She would have been about 6 years old during the 1881 census (born February 8, 1875, at Redhouse).

I was unable to find George Murray (senior) and Barbara (nee Robertson) Murray in any 1881 census. Subsequently, George died June 28,1886 at Mile-End, Aberdeen. His death was reported by daughter Henrietta R. Halliday, of Blackhill, Lonmay. Barbara died November 21, 1890 at 34 Esselmount Avenue, Aberdeen. Her death was reported by son Alexander Lovie Murray of 206 Great Western Road, Aberdeen. George Murray (Junior) came to Canada in August of 1889. His wife Elizabeth, and their family, followed in August of 1890, except daughter Elizabeth who sailed from Glasgow on September 19, 1891.

On the 1891 census, the Fraser family is still living in Stonehouse in Rathen. By this time Annie G Fraser is head of the household (age 47, born in Lonmay, unmarried, a grocer). Living with her are her daughter Elizabeth Milne (age 23, born in Rathen, married), grandson William G Milne (age 4, born in Rathen), granddaughter Isabella Milne (age 2, born in Rathen), niece Mary A Fraser (age 13, born in Kincardineshire, Banchory, dressmaker), and nephew William Greig (age 34, born in Rathen, unmarried, gardener and church officer).

Who are these people in the 1891 census? Firstly, Anne’s father and mother are deceased. Alexander Dalrymple Fraser died January 3, 1883 in Stonehouse, Rathen. He was the son of Alexander Fraser, a joiner (deceased), and Christina Fraser (nee Burnett) (deceased). We have the marriage record of Alexander and Christina who were married January 19, 1806. The death was reported by Alexander’s son William Fraser who was living in Banchory Ternan at the time. This is likely the William Fraser, born October 3, 1837,

Anne’s mother, who was born Magdalene Watt Trail, died October 7, 1883, in Stonehouse. Her parents were George Trail, a crofter (deceased); and Elizabeth Trail (nee Bruce) (deceased). Magdalene’s death was reported by Magdalene’s son William Fraser who was living in Banchory Ternan at the time. Again, this is likely the William Fraser, born October 3, 1837. Regarding Magdalene’s parents, we have her father’s record of baptism (June 29, 1774 in Strichen), marriage (to Elisabeth Bruce on September 5, 1792 in Fraserburgh), and his death (April 1822 at Middletack, Rathen). Middletack was a farm in Rathen.

Sadly, then, Anne lost both her parents in the same year.

Continuing with the 1891 census, daughter Elizabeth, is who we saw first in the 1871 census as Elizabeth C Fraser. Grandson William G Milne was the son of Anne’s daughter Elizabeth and her husband John Milne. William’s birth registration shows he was born January 4, 1887, at Stonehouse in Rathen. This birth registration shows his father, John, is a farm servant and indicates John and Elizabeth were married on November 28, 1885, in Rathen. We have this marriage register and it shows Johns age as 24 and Elizabeth’s age as 18. They were married in the public school in Rathen. John’s occupation was farm servant and Elizabeth’s occupation was domestic servant. John’s address was Newmill in Rathen, and Elizabeth’s address was Stonehouse in Rathen. Parents were John Milne (farm servant), Elizabeth Milne (nee Lauder), and Ann Fraser (householder)

On granddaughter Isabella Milne’s birth registration, it shows she was born January 2, 1889, in Stonehouse, Rathen. This birth registration shows her father, John, is a farm servant and indicates John and Elizabeth were married on November 28, 1885, in Rathen.

Mary A Fraser, listed on the 1881 census as Mary Ann Isabella Fraser (born June 10, 1877) was the daughter of Anne’s brother William. No birth record of a William Greig was found in Rathen for the appropriate range of years, so it is possible that he is the William Fraser (son of Anne’s sister, Margaret) noted above with the 1861 census, who later may have taken the last name of Greig. The parish of Rathen minutes for October 11, 1857 state the father was Charles Greig. The birth year would be correct, and he is the nephew of Anne G Fraser.

By the 1901 census Annie Fraser (age 56 or 57, born in Lonmay, family domestic servant, unmarried) was living in the village of Boddam in the parish of Peterhead,at the address of Upper Stirling Brae, with her daughter Elizabeth (age 33, born in Rathen) and son-in-law John Milne (age 39, born in Peterhead, employed as a granite polisher) Also in the Milne family are son William G Milne (age 14, born in Rathen, scholar), daughter Bella G Milne (Isabella, born January 2, 1889; age 12, born Rathen, scholar), daughter Annie Milne (age 9, born in Rathen, scholar), daughter Mary J Milne (age 7, born Rathen, scholar), daughter Heln T Milne (age 4, born in Rathen), son John Milne (age 3, born Rathen), daughter Elizabeth C Milne (8 months, born in Peterhead), and cousin Mary A Fraser (age 23, born in Kincardineshire Banchory, dressmaker, an employee working at home, unmarried). Cousin to Elizabeth Milnes, Mary A Fraser is the daughter of Anne’s brother William Fraser and his wife Isabella Mearns. You will recall she was listed in the 1881 census as Mary Ann Isabella Fraser.

In the 1911 census Anne Fraser (age 67, born in Lonmay) is still in the village of Boddam, in the parish of Peterhead, at ‘Whinbush Cottage at Upper Stirling Hill, living with the family of her daughter Elizabeth (age 43, born in Rathen) and son-in-law John Milne (age 49, born in Peterhead and employed as a crofter and general labourer). Elizabeth reports being married for 25 years, having had 9 children born alive, with 9 still living. Also in the home are son William Milne (age 24, born in Rathen, not married, employed as a stone cutter of monuments), daughter Mary J Milne (age 17, born in Rathen, not married, teacher-student), son John Milne (age 13, born in Rathen, in school), daughter Elizabeth Milne (age 10, born in Peterhead, in school), daughter Jessie Milne (age 7, born in Peterhead, in school), daughter Maggie (age 2, born in Peterhead). Also in the home is Mary Ann Fraser (age 33, born in Kincardineshire Banchory, dressmaker, an employee working from home). Daughter Maggie is Margaret Milne whose birth register shows she was born December 20, 1908 at Upper Stirling Brae, Boddam. Her parents were John Milne, crofter and Elizabeth Craighead Milne (nee Fraser).

Unfortunately, as census records are sealed for 100 years, 1911 is the last census record available. On January 17,1933, Anne Greig Fraser passed away at Upper Stirlingbrae, Boddam, Peterhead. Her death register shows she was a domestic servant and single. She was 88 years old. This register lists her parents as Alexander Fraser, farm servant (deceased) and Magdalene Fraser (nee Trail) (deceased). The informant was granddaughter Margaret Milne (Elizabeth’s daughter) who was present, and living with Anne, at the time. This last record of Anne uses the spelling ‘Ann’, which is how she signed her name on her two (Elizabeth and John) children’s birth registers.

The Scottish word ‘brea’ means hillside, so Stirlingbrae refers to the side of Stirling Hill which is located adjacent to the village of Boddam. This is similar to, or the same location as, both the 1901 and the 1911 census.

Still to know

Many questions have been answered, but there is still more to know. For example:

* Who were the parents of grandson Alex D Fraser in the 1871 census? I was unable to find his birth record. However, on another record I was able to find an Alexander Dalrymple Fraser born October 11, 1861, to Margaret Fraser, with no father listed. Margaret could be Anne’s sister who already had one son, William (on August 14, 1857).
* What is the ancestry of Anne’s father, Alexander Dalrymple Fraser? His death record gives his parents’ names, but I was unable to find his marriage or his birth record.
* What is the ancestry of Magalene Watt (nee Trail) Fraser? Her death record gives her parents’ names, but I was unable to find her marriage or her birth record. We have the baptism, marriage, and death records of her father, George Trail, but less information about her mother (Elizabeth Bruce).
* What became of the next generation, and following generations after the children of Alexander Dalrymple and Magdalene Fraser. We know the children of Anne G Fraser who were John Robertson Murray (we know this line), and Elizabeth C Milne (who had at least 9 children). What became of Jessie and Jane? Are there descendants of this family still alive, today?
* Where does the name Craighead come from? It is the middle name of Elizabeth (daughter of Anne G Fraser) but does not appear anywhere else.
* The 1871 census for Redhouse has a person named Isabella Willox (or Willot), 23 years old and born in Rathen, whose occupation is ‘General Servant (domestic)’. How does this person connect with the father of Anne G Fraser’s daughter Elizabeth Craighead Fraser (born on April 28, 1867); that father being John Willo or Willox?
* The 1901 census for Rathen shows a William Greig living at the Cairns of Memsies. He is 44 years old, born in Rathen, and a farmer & gardener. He is married to Alexandria who is 40 years old, born in Peterhead. Could this be the nephew of Anne Fraser seen in the 1891 census (who was age 34, born in Rathen, unmarried, gardener and church officer)?