

## **The Currie Family of Scotland in Cortland and Delaware Counties, New York**

*In the Scottish Lowlands, near the border of England, the old county of Selkirkshire lies west of Roxburghshire. The Currie and Hart families, their in-laws, and Laidlaw cousins lived in close proximity to each other in five bordering parishes in these two shires. Robertson Parish lies in both shires. Using Robertson Parish as the central parish, Ettrick Parish is bounded on the west; on the north by Ashkirk and Selkirk Parishes; on the east by Wilton Parish; and on the south by Hawick Parish. Hawick Parish also includes the settlement of Hawick. For many years, we persisted in the belief that my mother's great-grandfather, John Hart Currie, was born in Hawick because it was reported that he had departed from Hawick for North America; yet, it was not defined in that account whether Hawick was the settlement or the parish, or just a reference to the largest locale from where he lived or departed. Misbelieved, it was two decades before I found his parents' marriage record and his birthplace along with those of his siblings due the various spellings of Currie. This family story, researched by my mother and I from notes and collections of her dad (my grandfather), is a chronology about our Scotland born ascendants that became established in two New York State counties. As of this writing, the majority has stayed in these two counties now passing one hundred and seventy-three years.*

*Note: Some family surnames and names of farm settlements herein are spelled as they are found recorded in Scotland records.*

In 1841, when he was 22 years old, John Hart Currie left Scotland for North America. He immigrated with at least one other young man, Jim Irvin(e), who might be a maternal cousin. In brief biographies of Preble, New York citizens, the early 1930's Preble town historian wrote that John left "Hyak" (Hawick, Roxburghshire, Scotland) for North America that year, made a "short stop" in Delaware County, and then "went to Canada for four years". He returned to New York State and met his future wife, she wrote.

John Hart Currie is the second of five children of James Currie and Elisabeth Hart. Elisabeth was born and baptized in Robertson Parish, Selkirkshire, Scotland, in 1798, the seventh of nine children of George and Helen Knox Hart. George and Helen's older children were baptized in neighboring Wilton Parish, Roxburghshire, while the younger ones were baptized in Robertson Parish, Selkirkshire. Robertson Parish is about eight miles west of the Wilton and Hawick Parishes in Roxburghshire. We surmise then, the birthplace of James Currie is in the same region.

While Elisabeth was born in Scotland's lowland region (and thus, we presume James did, too) for reasons unknown to us, James and Elisabeth married in 1816 in Blair Athole, Perthshire Parish, at the foothills of the Scottish Highlands. By the birth of their first child, also named James, they had moved easterly to neighboring Creich Parish in Fifeshire, living at the estate of the Captain John and Elisabeth Walker Raitt family. Captain Raitt was an officer in the 42nd Regiment, Royal Highlanders.

Creich Parish is inland, about four miles below the Firth of Tay, on Scotland's east coast that opens to the North Sea. All of the births and baptisms of the Currie children are found in Creich records, born at the manor house, with the exception of their youngest, David, whose exact birthplace and date in Fifeshire remains unfound. (David, however, reports in other records that he was born in Fifeshire.) The five children of James and Elisabeth Hart Currie are: James (1817); John Hart (1819); George Raitt (1821); Margaret (1823); and David (1828). James and Elisabeth must have held Captain Raitt in high esteem to name two children after him. Nothing further is known at this time about eldest son James except for his birth date and christening place.

Senior James died in 1837 according to son David's Delaware County Currie descendants, but the whereabouts of his death and burial remains unknown. At some time before or after James's death, the Currie family returned to the lowlands. By the 1841 British census, Elisabeth Hart Currie and son David had returned to Robertson, Selkirkshire, residing at Borthwick Mains. That same year, John had left "Hyak" (Hawick) for North America. When he returned from Canada, about 1846, he was in central New York State and met Helen Beattie about one year later while they were working for a farmer on Meeker Hill in Tully, Onondaga County. Tully is a few miles northwest of the town of Truxton in Cortland County. John and Helen married in 1848. Helen is a daughter of Walter and Rachel Radcliffe Beattie, who migrated from Dumfriesshire, Scotland in 1840 bringing a majority of their children and grandchildren with them. After six or seven years of working in maturing canal towns in New York State, Walter and Rachel brought their family to Truxton to farm. At different times, the rest of their adult children arrived. Their eldest son followed with his family, migrating to Canada first where they lived for several years before relocating to Truxton; and two sons went to Herkimer County, New York, where they established a business. Helen brought two of her children on the voyage from Scotland and a third child was born in New York State.

Seven children were born to John and Helen Beattie Currie: James (1849); Thomas R. (1850); William George (1852); Henry R. (1853); David L. (1859); Judah Pierce (1864); and Margaret Ellen, who died at age two, most likely born between either of her two youngest brothers. With the exception of Judah, the older children were born when this Currie family lived in Truxton. Sometime before Judah's birth, however, John and Helen moved, renting a farm on Preble's East Hill, a hill farm equidistant between the towns of Truxton and Preble and very much resembling the lands of their Scottish home. Shortly, they bought this farm and it becomes the ancestral Currie family homestead for three generations, over seventy years; and the land remains in the family.

Because of the absence of John's father and brother, along with John's stay in Canada, we cannot help but wonder if either of the Jameses had migrated to Canada and stayed. Had James, the father, served in the militia or military in the Perth and Fife shires? Had he served in Scotland's military in Canada? After all, these were the times of Britain's involvement in the Napoleonic wars; and the War of 1812,

the United States' war with Great Britain. Had John arrived in North America with brother James or followed him to Canada where James might have immigrated? Was John Currie in search of his father and brother?

Meanwhile, John's mother, sister, and brothers had remained in Scotland where his siblings married and started their families, too. Brother George married Margaret Andison in Hawick Parish, Roxburghshire, and they became the parents of nine children: Helen W. (1848); James (1849); John (1851); Elizabeth (1853); George Hart (1854); William (1856); David (1858); Margaret (1861); and Agnes (1865). Helen and James were born in Scotland. Margaret Andison is the daughter of John and Helen Wood Andison of Parkhead in Roxburghshire. George and Margaret primarily lived in Hamden, Delaware County, New York.

Sister Margaret married William Hogg, the son of Francis and Margaret Scott Hogg. William was born in neighboring Ashkirk Parish, Selkirkshire, and a neighboring parish to the aforementioned parishes. While residents at Woodburn in Robertson Parish, Margaret and William Hogg's marriage banns were announced and they were married in Hawick. Margaret and William are the parents of three children, all born in Scotland: Elisabeth (1845) in Robertson; Francis (1847) in Ashkirk; and Margaret C. (1850) in Robertson. Margaret's family and mother Elisabeth H. Currie settled in Delhi, Delaware County.

David Currie married Georgina Armstrong in Ettrick Parish, Selkirkshire, where they started their family. Georgina is the daughter of Alexander Armstrong. Ettrick Parish is about seven miles west of Robertson and fifteen from Hawick. Their children are: James H. (1851); Alexander Armstrong (1852); Jeanette Georgina "Nettie" (1854); and David George (1862). James and Alexander were born in Scotland. Within the year of their arrival to Delaware County, this Currie family first lived in Andes. By 1870, David and Georgina were caretakers of the poorhouse at Delhi. They later farmed in Meredith.

About nine years after John's departure from Scotland, the rest of his family began their migration to the U.S. although they all did not arrive together. George and Margaret Andison Currie arrived about 1850 with two children. Mother Elisabeth Currie arrived in the summer of 1851 with her daughter and son-in-law's family, Margaret and William Hogg and their children. Traveling with them aboard the same ship was Elisabeth's older sister and brother-in-law, Helen Knox Hart and David Laidlaw, and their six Scotland born children: Robert (1826); George (1827); Isabella (1831); Helen (1834); Margaret (1835); and Davina (1838). The ship's passenger list gives "Bovenia" (Bovina, Delaware County, N. Y.) as their destination. Uncle David and Aunt Helen had married in Robertson Parish, Selkirkshire, and their children (the Currie cousins) were born at Highchesters, Todshawhaugh, and Whithope in Robertson Parish where David had been a shepherd. Sadly, Margaret Currie Hogg, who had given birth

about nine months before their voyage, died shortly after their arrival to Delhi. David and Georgina arrived in 1854 with their two sons.

During the same time, in 1850 Truxton, as John and Helen started their family, John first worked for a cabinet and bedstead maker who operated a mill on Truxton's West Hill, and he was a farmer. Within five years, John and Helen moved into Truxton Village where John was a farmer for a number of years before they bought their farm in Preble. Meanwhile, in Delaware County at Delhi, following Margaret's death, William Hogg started his farm and he married Ann Fraser Wright, a widow, as his second wife. By the 1855 census, mother Elisabeth Currie was now employed in the Andrew Dougal household in Delhi (the Dougal's were also from Scotland); George and Margaret Andison Currie reported they had lived in Delaware County for five years; and David and Georgina's family were in Andes, in the county for 10 months, they reported.

Aunt Helen and Uncle David Laidlaw settled in Bovina where they bought land, engaged in farming, and were members of the United Presbyterian church. All of their children married: Robert married Juliette Mitchelle and resided in Little Delaware; George married Jane Hume and resided in Bovina; Isabella married William Wight of Delhi; Helen married William Cook and resided in Bovina; Margaret married a second George Currie (see below) and they lived in Bovina; and Davina married Archibald Foreman and they also lived in Bovina.

### **Second George Currie**

A second George Currie family lived in Delaware County at Bovina and due to the duplication of family first names—and both Georges' wives were named Margaret, it was initially difficult to unravel who belonged to whom. After considerable research, we found second George is seven years younger than first George, and both Margaret's' last names were learned from Scotland records. Second George was born in 1828 to "Peggy Currie" in Ettrick Parish, Selkirkshire, and the very parish where David and Georgina would later marry and live. In 1841, George and his mother were living at Craighill in Ettrick Parish. While we have not yet determined his Currie lineage through his mother, we speculate whether or not Peggy was a sister of missing father James Currie. It appears that this second George, when a single man, may be the same George Currie who sailed from Scotland to the U.S. with David and Georgina's family in 1854. None-the-less, second George is directly related to Cortland and Delaware County Curries by his marriage in Delaware County to their first cousin, Margaret Laidlaw, the daughter of Helen and David as previously mentioned. Second George and Margaret Currie were the parents of six children all born in Delaware County: Helen "Ellen" (1860); Margaret (1863); Elizabeth (1867); George L. (1869); Janet "Jennie" Isabella (1872); and David George (1875). Their first four children died between 1870 and 1871 ranging in age from one to ten years old, leaving two children: Jennie, who married Arthur D. Hoy; and David George, who married Mary Belle Logan.

Among John and Helen Beattie Currie's seven children, five reached adulthood, four married, and three had children: James had three children, Henry R. had three children, and Judah P. had thirteen children. The majority of present day descendants of John and Helen Currie reside in central New York State emanating from Preble, New York. The two eldest of Margaret and William Hogg's children married and had children. Of the nine children of George and Margaret (Andison), at least five married and had children. All of David and Georgina's four children married and had children. Their second son Alexander went to California in January 1874 with four other young men from Delaware County. There he stayed, married, and where his children were born. Both surviving children of second George and Margaret (Laidlaw) married and had children just as did all the Laidlaw cousins.

### **Conclusion**

Photographs and letters sent from the Delaware County Currie's to John H. and Helen Currie in Preble survive today from the interest and effort of John and Helen's grandson and his wife, William H. and Estella Currie (my mother's parents (my grandparents)), who in their own right became Preble town historians. In one letter, brother David Currie wrote from Delaware County to John with news of the day. In another letter, his daughter Nettie wrote to her Uncle John responding to his obvious inquiry about the whereabouts of certain Currie family and his Laidlaw cousins in Delaware County. She responded by telling him where everyone was living, and that cousins Robert and George Laidlaw had died at young ages "some time ago". Nettie also wrote to her Aunt Helen, John's wife, with news of the birth of her son, George Currie Wilson. Nettie married John Wilson as his second wife and raised their son with John's two children with his first wife, Elizabeth "Lizzie" Elliott (who died after giving birth to their second child.) The letters speak to visits made to Delaware County from Preble with messages to be sent back to Preble cousins. Via personal knowledge and the stories of his father and these letters, William and Estella were able to locate and correspond with our Currie relations in Delaware County and Alexander's California family; thus, began putting together some pieces of old family history. My grandparents were invited guests and attended Glendenning family reunions in Delaware County in the 1960's. We deeply appreciate and are indebted to two of George and David's descendants and to the early Preble town historian for her endeavors for obtaining and publishing biographies of Preble townfolk.

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Additional resources: FamilySearch.org (OPR records); Delaware County NY Genealogy and History Site; *The Statistical Accounts of Scotland 1791-99* and *Statistical Accounts of Scotland 1834-45*; Scotland Census records; Passenger Records; and old maps.