

DESCENDANTS OF ROBERT SLIMMON & HELEN LINDSAY**Forward****(In Reverse Chronological Order)****Forward to the On-line Edition**

As research continues into the history of the Slimmon line, additional information comes to light, new members are found or details about their lives are expanded. Even research about the historical context of our ancestors can shed new light on what their lives were probably like. As well, the Slimmon descendancy charts grow as subsequent generations are added. For that reason, this on-line version is turning out to be a much more useful way of keeping ***Descendants of Robert Slimmon and Helen Lindsay*** more-or-less up to date.

You will also see that a small date notation has been added at the top of each page. This represents the date at which any particular section was last revised. Since each member of the first four generations has a section of their own, with page numbers starting at 1, each section can be expanded and revised independently. The date notation for some sections may therefore remain unchanged for months or even years while others may change more often as new threads in the fabrics of their lives are woven into their stories.

The July 7, 2013 version adds new insight into where Robert (~1790) may have been born and who his parents were likely to have been. It also provides much more biographical information about Robert Brunton (1.8.0) and the youngest Slimmon brother, David (1.9).

A “Background” section has also been added that attempts to shed light on the early history of our extended Slimmon family. As with any such effort, the research raises at least as many questions as it answers but, if nothing else, it helps to establish some historical context for the Slimmon name and, hopefully, the Slimmon line.

Carl Shiels, Regina

Forward to the 2011 Edition

The primary difference between this edition and that from 2007 is increased information—and hopefully accuracy—on the members of the first four generations. The amount of information available on the Internet is constantly increasing particularly here in Canada where extensive records have been kept since the mid 1800s. Although still quite time-consuming, I have been able to find dozens of original documents related to births, marriages, censuses and deaths for our Slimmon ancestors both in Canada and in Scotland.

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With almost every new discovery has come more questions and ideas for further research. For example, through the discovery of Robert Brunton, a grandson of Robert Slimmon (1790), I was able to find Robert Slimmon in the 1851 census. Prior searches had been unsuccessful because the family name had been incorrectly transcribed as “Himon”. According to the 1851 census, Robert Slimmon (1790) was born in “Edin. Midlothian”. “Edin.” was probably the abbreviation for “Edinburgh”¹ which means we now know where to search for Robert’s ancestry. But we also have the added question: “Who was Robert Brunton?”

Robert Brunton was first discovered in the 1861 census of Scotland, at age twelve, living with his uncle William Slimmon (1828). That was the same record in which William’s newly found younger sister Elizabeth Slimmon (~1834) appeared. It is possible that Robert Brunton was Elizabeth’s illegitimate son since he ended up travelling to Ontario with William and Elizabeth. On the other hand, he could also have been the (illegitimate or otherwise) son of one of the Slimmon sisters who remained in Scotland and who was unwilling or unable to take care of him. In any case, he married an Ontario-born English girl named Harriet Stickney and had at least two children. At some point, Robert Brunton will be added to the Slimmon family tree as and when we have a better idea of where he fits.²

Another discovery in the 1851 census was Robert Slimmon’s eight year old granddaughter named Hellen Nelson. Whose daughter was she? Robert’s daughter Hellen (1821)—age 29—was also living with him at the time. Could the younger Hellen have been her daughter? There is good reason to believe that Hellen (1821) eventually went on to marry a widower by the name of John Lindsay. What, if any, was the relationship between that John Lindsay and Robert’s wife Helen Lindsay (1790)? It was not uncommon in those days for marriages to take place between close cousins. As you can see, the areas for investigation just never really end.

The intriguing possibility and likelihood of further discoveries has lead to one clear conclusion. Since the history of the Slimmon family, even for the first four generations, is a long ways from been complete, the original decision to organize ‘the book’ in sections within sections is making increasingly good sense. As new information is found for any member of ‘the tree’, it can be added to their particular section without the need to reorganize the entire book. It also paves the way to being able to provide updated copies to all interested Slimmon cousins via the Internet. By posting each section and subsection as a separate PDF file on the Internet, family members can read them and, if

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- 1 There was also an area known as “Edinburghshire” but it appears to have been an alternate name for “Midlothian” so it would not seem reasonable to have used both references to the same area.
 - 2 Robert has now been added as 1.8.0 within William Slimmon’s biography (Section 1.8).

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they wish, print them for insertion in their own copy of ‘the book’. As was the practice with the information posted in advance of the reunion, information about living family members (currently those beyond generation four) will continue to be protected from public access through the use of passwords.

One question which may never be definitively answered is the alternative spellings of the Slimmon name. All of the records in Scotland seem to have maintained the “Slimmon” pronunciation although records from the early 1800’s often used the “Simon” spelling. That was probably because the recommendations for standardization of spelling practices (e.g. double the consonant to make the preceding vowel soft) had not yet been fully adopted. However, when we look at the records in Canada, the “Slimmon” and “Slemmon” spellings were often interchanged. Perhaps one of the most glaring examples is in the birth register for Mary Gertrude Slimmon (1.3.5.4). The information entered by the registrar—one M. P. Empey—included the child’s name spelled “Slemmon” but the child’s father, James (1.3.5), signed his own name as “Jas Slimmon.” Perhaps with his Scottish accent, the name sounded like “Slemmon” to English ears. (We have a similar problem in my family pronouncing “Shiels” without making it sound as though there is a “d” in it.)

Why some members of the Slimmon family—most notably my great-grandfather John Slimmon (1.3.4)—adopted the alterative spelling, will never be known for certain. Perhaps they just accepted the spelling that seemed easier for people to handle. In my great-grandfather’s case, he clearly knew better because he had explained to his grandson (my father) that the origin of the name was “slim man” (a suggestion that seems not to have any basis in historical fact.)

For purposes of this book, an attempt has been made to use the spelling most commonly used throughout the individual’s life. For example, in the case of my grandmother “Jennie” Slemmon (1.3.4.1), that is the spelling recorded on her birth record and which, to my knowledge, she used all her life. On the other hand, my great-grandfather John (1.3.4) was recorded at birth as “Slimmon” and that is how he was known through much of his earlier life, even though his name is spelled “Slemmon” on his grave stone.

As for the origin of the Slimmon name? According to The Internet Surname Database (surnamedb.com), there are two possibilities³:

It may be of Old Scandinavian origin, from the Old Norse “slaegr”, Middle English “sligh”, skilful, clever, cunning, expert, and was most probably a nickname denoting someone who was cunning or crafty, with the Olde English suffix “mann”, man, hence “slighman” a crafty man.

³ Discoveries described in the “Background” Section shed doubt on the validity of either of these theories.

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It may be of early medieval English origin, from the Middle English “sleze, sleye, slay(e)”, an instrument used in weaving to beat up the weft, a weaver’s reed or shuttle, and the suffix “mann”, and may have been an occupational name for a maker or user of the instrument.

My bias is to go with the first option with emphasis on the “skilful/clever/expert” aspect.

Carl Shiels, Regina

From “Descendants of Robert Slimmon & Helen Lindsay” prepared for the “07-07-07” Slimmon Family Reunion on July 7, 2007 in Kitchener, ON

My discovery of the Slimmon family came in quite a different way. My great-grandfather John Slemmon (1849) was, by all family accounts, a bit of a scoundrel. As a consequence, I had learned very little about his family other than where he had been born in Scotland, his date of birth, and that he had moved to Saskatchewan from Ontario, via North Dakota, following his daughter and son-in-law. On the other hand, my grandmother, Jennie Slemmon (Shiels) - known within the family as “Ma” - was a sweet and caring soul who everyone loved and admired. By good fortune and the ‘pack-rat’ nature of her daughter, my aunt Marjorie Shiels (Thibodeau), many of the old photos and memorabilia that Ma had brought west with her, or which had been sent to her from Ontario, had been well preserved and are now part of my family history collection.

As with most people, my ‘roots’ were not of great interest until I began to develop a sense of personal history (my gentler way of saying “getting old.”) Inspired by a cousin who had prepared an extensive history of my paternal grandfather’s line, I began to dig into the history of John Slemmon. That was about the time that the Internet was becoming a powerful tool for doing genealogy research. In almost no time at all, I was able to find the birth record of a John Slimmon (spelled with an “i”) in the right district in Scotland and on the right date. With the names of his parents now in hand, I was able to identify all of his siblings along with their dates and places of birth. Further research revealed similar information for his grandfather, grandmother, uncles and aunts.

Several month later, while vacationing in Ontario, my wife Maggie and I made a tour of the areas where my paternal grandparents were born and raised. Of course a visit to Hollen, Ma’s birthplace, would not have been complete

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without a brief visit to the Hollen cemetery where we soon discovered several grave markers with Slimmon names. I promptly took photos of each and wrote down all the details to compare them with the information gleaned from the Internet. To my delight, some of the names and birth dates lined up with those of g-grandfather John's uncles. It then became apparent that the family name, at least for most of my "Slemmon" relatives in Canada, continued to be spelled with an "i".

A subsequent Canada411 search on the Internet revealed that there weren't a whole lot of Slimmon's in Canada (only 80 telephone listings by latest count). Even more intriguing was the fact that some of them were right here in Saskatchewan! A couple of phone calls later and I was in touch with Earl and Bonnie Slimmon in Stoughton, only to learn that I had missed the 1999 Slimmon reunion in Calgary by a couple of months. I was, however, able to get a copy of "the book" from that reunion.

Two things soon became apparent from the 1999 Slimmon Family Tree book. First, the rest of the Slimmon family knew as little about the John Slemmon line as we knew about them. Second, the process of updating the 'tree' manually would be greatly simplified if the data was all added to the genealogy program on my computer. With the help of my then daughter-in-law Candy, all of the information from the 1999 book was soon digitized (with a remarkably small number of errors).

For the 2007 reunion, my initial thought was to simply generate the indented genealogy charts that the program, The Master Genealogist, will generate automatically, but those tend to be rather boring and academic. Why not start adding pictures? I had a number from Ma's collection that I could now place in the tree. Surely there must be more. Tom Slimmon in Calgary and Barbara Johnson in Ontario both responded to 'the call' with several photos of varying quality. Soon the book started to come alive with faces and anecdotes. No longer were our Slimmon/Slemmon ancestors just names with associated dates and places. Their rather stern faces began to peer out at me from the now much less distant past. I am certain that, with time and the distribution of this edition of "the book", more original photos will begin to appear and they can be added to future editions.

Clearly "the book" must be considered a work in progress and, as with family descendancies themselves, it will never be truly finished. With that in mind, I have tried to organize it in such a way that updates and additions can be

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made without having to re-work the entire thing. For this edition, the first four generations have been assigned uniquely numbered sections and subsection. The starting section - Section 1 - is of course for Robert Slimmon, our starting point - at least for now. His children have then been assigned subsection #'s 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 and so on with page numbering restarting at 1 for each new subsection. Subsequent generations follow the same numbering format up to generation four. Fifth and subsequent generations have been relegated to those boring indented charts, simply because of the sheer numbers that are involved. Future editions of "the book" might begin to fill in more details for those generations as well.

Not only do the subsection #'s and page #'s appear in the footer of each page but I have listed the descendancy line as well. For example, the footer for subsection 1.3.1.5 indicates that this is the line from Robert (1790) through Robert (1818) through Robert (1842) to Ann (1876). A side benefit of the numbering scheme is that, at a glance and reading the numbers from right to left, one can tell that Ann was the fifth child of Robert (1842) who was the first child of Robert (1818) who was the third child of Robert (1790).

From the forgoing example, it becomes obvious why the year of birth has been added to each first name. The Scottish tradition of naming the first born male after the paternal grandfather and the second born male after the maternal grandfather guarantees that names quickly get recycled, particularly when they didn't seem to use many names to start with.

Each name in the indented descendancy charts also has a number in brackets. This should not be confused with the year of birth. It is a unique index number - assigned in the sequence that they have been added to my genealogy program - that allows easy look-ups for subsequent corrections and additions. The number (1) appears beside my name - not because of any special status I have assigned myself but because, several years ago when I first started using the program, I started with my own information and then began to expand backward and forward from there.

I have declared copyright on this book not for selfish reasons or to stifle further development of the Slimmon family tree. It is primarily to prevent misuse of the information - particularly as it relates to posting it on the Internet. From personal experience, I can say that it is something of a shock to discover personal information posted on the Internet by some overzealous relative who wants to show off his work for all to see. It is my belief that any such posting

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should be restricted to deceased persons only and even then with the most basic information possible unless thoroughly researched for accuracy.

I would like to thank Carole Slimmon in Calgary and Barbara Johnson in Agincourt for helping to coordinate the updates for this edition of “the book”. As noted above, the photos from Tom Slimmon and Barbara Johnson have added immensely to the personality of the book. I would especially like to acknowledge the work undertaken by James A. “Jim” Slimmon in Saskatoon who first realized the value of documenting the genealogy of Robert Slimmon and who was the inspirational spark that got this whole project started.

Carl Shiels, Regina

From “The Slimmon Family Tree” printed for the 1999 Slimmon Family Reunion

When research on the Slimmon Family was begun, it was thought that “The four Slimmon brothers came to Canada, in their twenties, from Muirkirk, Lanarkshire, Scotland, in 1844. They settled first in Darlington Twp, Ontario Co., near Whitby. In 1854, with their Watson friends and in-laws, they moved to Peel Twp., Wellington, County.”

It was later found that “the original John, Robert and James were part of the family of Robert Slimmon, who married Helen Lindsay on May 28, 1816. They lived in Quothquan, which is about eight miles Southeast of Lanark. Other members of the family were Margaret, Helen, Grizzel and five children who died in infancy and who were buried in Quothquan.” It seemed difficult to get confirmation of William’s birth.

Research in 1993 by Barbara and Murray Johnson, right at Quothquan and nearby Lesmahagow, showed that the four brothers could not have come over together in 1844. Robert’s last recorded Scottish child was born in Scotland in 1849, while William’s marriage was recorded in Register House in Edinburgh in 1863. Barbara’s and Murray’s biggest thrill, however, was in finding the actual grave and headstone of Robert and Helen Lindsay, the father and mother of us all, near an old abandoned church in Quothquan.

