

# Some of my ancestors were Scottish

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## Introduction

Your identity both as an individual and as part of a nation is crucially determined by where you came from...it is both politic and imperative to have a respectable pedigree...And if you don't know it, you invent it. <sup>1</sup>

In today's multicultural, cosmopolitan environment it is likely that our pedigree is multinational. Most of us are not pure anything but rather a mixture of many nations. And so, I start this monologue that I am not pure Scottish, but some of my ancestors came from Scotland. Closest in time my paternal grandfather, William Rankin Retson came from Fenwick, Scotland in 1903. Before him in time. Daniel McNab born 1827 Westerkirk, Dumfriesshire came to Canada in 1856 with Wife Jean Hope, Robert Burns born in 1824 Hawick, Scotland came to Canada in 1843

## Geology of Scotland

The history of the geography of Scotland is as fascinating as the story of the people of Scotland. It was once part of a continent known as Laurentia which moved around the surface of the globe. At one time it was in the southern hemisphere and later attached to the American continent before coming to form the Island we know as England and Scotland. (For further reference (see Magnuson, Magnus, Scotland, The Story of a Nation, pages 1-3). The climate shaped the character and culture of its people.

## Early Peoples of Scotland

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<sup>1</sup> Quote taken out of context from Magnus Magnusson's Scotland The Story of a Nation Page 42

Any desire to express Scottish identity as a form of ethnicity has an inherent weakness: there is not any one set of 'People' who form the backbone of a group which can be identified as modern Scots. Perhaps the strongest claim to indigenous status to Scotland is the Gaels. The Gaels gave Scotland its name from 'Scoti', a term used by the Romans to describe the Gaelic-speaking 'pirates' who raided Britannia in the 3rd and 4th centuries. They called themselves 'Goidi l', modernised today as Gaels, and later called Scotland 'Alba'. There is debate as to where the Gaels came from, some of the view that they came from Ireland. At the heart of the Gaelic kingdom – Dál Riata – was a formidable hill fort. The rocky outcrop of Dunadd, Argyll, was the location where Gaelic kings were inaugurated in a ceremony that symbolically married them to the land.

The 'Picts' another group were Celts who were located in the western outskirts of Inverness at Craig Phadrig . They were ultimately defeated by the Scotti . Another group known to the Romans as Votadini and to them selves as Gododdin were further South.

Another group the Angles came over from northern Germany first creating their own kingdom in England in East Anglia before moving north of England and on to Scotland. Still another group the Britons held a vast territory for a period.

Time and space does not permit me to cover the history of these early people who gradually emerged, were defeated or amalgamated into a conglomerate peoples of Scotland (For more information I would refer readers to See Magnuson, Magnus, Scotland, The Story of a Nation, pages 3-49). Nor can I cover in great detail the history of its early heroes / some might call villains including Macbeth, John Balliol, William Wallace, Robert Bruce, Mary Queen of Scots, and James VI (Union of the Crowns) which together with its religious history contributed to the character of its culture.

## **William Wallace and Robert Bruce**

### **Religious History**

Celtic –with the Norman invasion of 1066 England became Anglo-Saxons –Scotland remained Celtic. Scots were atomized, bottom up and tribal based on personal loyalties to chief and kinship, individual honour in belonging to the tribe

Fundamentalist Calvinism, fiercely independent, demanding responsibility for one's personal actions

### **England and Scotland**

#### **The Border Country and Lowlanders to 1730**

Character of the Scots-Irish was formed first and foremost in Scotland. Geography shaped it, cultural traits related to survival were its grist, and a particular form of struggle hardened and refined it. Deeply individualistic, never defined themselves by their ethnic identity.

### **Appendices**

#### **Scottish Ancestors**

Retson, Willian Rankin b. came from Fenwick, emigrated from Scotland in 1903; son of George Retson, son of John, son of John, Retson (Ratson), son of Richard Ratson, son of Richard Ratson  
Burns, Robert b. 13 Feb 1824 Hawick, Scotland emigrated to Canada in 1843 with wife Elizabeth Richardson

Daniel McNab born 1827 Westerkirk, Dumfriesshire came to Canada in 1856 with Wife Jean Hope, Campbell

Elizabeth Richardson b. 14 Nov 1823 emigrated with husband Robert Burns in 1843

## **Sources**

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## **Websites**

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/scotland/history/>