

The Elkins Family in Newfoundland

Although Elkins is not a common name in Newfoundland, early records show that there were at least three Elkins males living there during the mid 1800s. George Elkins, born 1836 in Blandford, Dorset, drowned in Hermitage Bay on the south coast in the spring of 1860. The same parish records an Augustus Elkins, age 30, who died at Harbour Breton in 1864. The relationship (if any) of these two men is unknown, nor can I confirm any connection between them and my own Elkins ancestors.

My family traces it's existence back to William, the third known Elkins. Born in Salisbury, England 1815-1820, he arrived on the island sometime before 1849. In May that year, he married Rebecca Grunter in Greenspond, Bonavista Bay.

A mystery, of sorts, is attached to the story of William's first years in Bonavista North. My grandmother, Mary Jane (Roberts) Elkins, told me that William and his brother came to Newfoundland together, but the brother drowned. She also mentioned there was some confusion about the pronunciation or spelling of the Elkins surname. (I have seen Newfoundland records and documents pertaining to our family with spellings such as Welkins, Helkins, Etkins, Alkins and Eakins). Other researchers have also surmised a possible link between Robert Wilkins, who drowned near Cape Freels around 1870, and my great great grandfather, William Elkins. However, to my knowledge, no connection has been confirmed between these two men.

William and Rebecca Elkins had at least seven children:

- James baptised in 1849 at Greenspond
- John baptised in 1852 at Cold Harbour
- Samuel baptised in 1855 at Cold Harbour
- Robert William baptised in 1857 at Greenspond
- Ann Maria baptised in 1859 at Greenspond
- Jeremiah baptised in 1862 at Greenspond
- Rebecca Granter baptised in 1865 at Greenspond

In 1871 William was listed in Lovell's Directory as living in Shambler's Cove, which was located west of Greenspond, on the mainland side of Pond Tickle. That is the last I know of him until his death twenty-three years later in Seal Cove, Fogo District.

So what became of the first generation of my Elkins family to be born in Newfoundland?

1. No further record has been found for James, the first born son.
2. Ann Maria died when she was just a year and a half old.

The remaining five children all married and had families. Although their descendants are living in many different parts of the world, many are still to be found in the Newfoundland settlements where these children of William and Rebecca first settled.

3. John married Amelia Preston in 1878, and had the following children:

- William George born in 1879, baptised in 1882 age 3, died 1886
- Theresa Rebecca Jane baptised in 1881, Pool's Is, died 1886
- Beatrice Lillian born in 1887 (mar Ernest E. Hunt in 1907, had 5 children, died in 1972)
- Clara born in 1891 (married the widow Art Blackwood in 1913, had one daughter)
- Robert Herbert born 1898, died an infant

John spent most, if not all, his married life in the Safe Harbour, Bonavista North area. At one time he was said to have tried raising sheep in Candle Cove, but that venture met with little success. According to Wilfred Osmond, John lived next to his brother Robert in Safe Hr, in what was known as 'the Gut' (early crown land grants for that area refer to it as 'Little Safe Harbour'). His name appears on the 1898 and 1904 Census for Safe Hr., along with his brother Robert. Both of them are included in a Directory published by Ayres & Sons (date unknown) as living in Safe Harbour along with their younger brother Jeremiah. John is believed to have died sometime in the late 1920s, his

wife died before him, in June 1900. After her death he lived with his daughter, Clara Blackwood. (If anyone has further information about this branch of the family, please contact me.)

4. While it has been documented that three of William and Rebecca's children lived in Safe Harbour (John, Robert & Jeremiah), it seems that Samuel went in an entirely different direction. His travels around the coast led him to Fogo District, and in 1887 he married Selina May Shepherd (1863-1931) on Indian Islands. Selina was the daughter of Absalom and Catherine (nee Smith) Shepherd who were originally from Conception Bay.

Samuel and Selina's children were:

- Levi born in Western Arm, Rocky Bay in 1888 (no other information)
- Jeremiah born in Western Arm, Rocky Bay in 1889 (died in 1908)
- Arthur born Southern Arm 1890 (mar Mary E Marriott in Halifax, died 1954)
- Alpheus born in Musgrave Harbour in 1892 (died in 1908)
- Rosanna born Aspey Cv in 1893 (mar Archelaus Wellon in 1915, died 1966)
- Janet born in Aspey Cove in 1898 (married Arthur Goodyear, died 1971)

In the 1890s Samuel and Selina built a home in Seal Cove, Hamilton Sound (between Aspen and Ladle Coves). It is said that Sam's father, William, came to Seal Cove to help him build his home, and that is where he died in 1893. Although no headstone marks his grave, he was buried in Ladle Cove Methodist Cemetery by J. Wellon.

When Sam and Selina's son Arthur was about seven years old, he moved away to live with a Rafuse family in Nova Scotia. About nine years later, their remaining two sons, Alphaeus and Jeremiah, drowned when the trap skiff on which they were sailing capsized off Noggin Cove Head in November 1908. After this tragedy, all that remained of Sam and Selina's family in Seal Cove was their two daughters, Rosanna and Janet. There were no male heirs to carry on the Elkins name there. Rosanna married Arch Wellon, remained in Ladle Cove and had ten children. Janet married Arthur Goodyear, moved to Carmenville and had five children. Arthur married Mary Marriott in Halifax in the 1920s and had one daughter, Wilena. Samuel died in 1915, Selina in 1931. They are buried together in Aspen Cove United Cemetery.

5. The fourth son of William and Rebecca was Robert William, born about 1857. His burial record states that he was born on Pool's Island. That is where married Rebecca Parsons, daughter of William and Lenora Parsons of Pinchard's Island, in 1880. Noah Jeans and George Knee were their witnesses. A couple of years later, Uncle Bob and Aunt Becky, as they were known, were living in Safe Harbour.

They had the following children:

- Frederick Parsons born on Pool's Island in 1881 (died in Safe Hr 1900)
- Lenora born Safe Hr 1883 (mar Alan Carter 1905, died Corner Brook 1981)
- Annie Barbara born Safe Hr 1885 (mar Benjamin White 1907, died Corner Brook 1963)
- William Garfield born Safe Harbour 1888 (died Safe Harbour, age four)
- Abram Walter born Safe Hr 1890 (married Jane Roberts 1913, died Corner Brook 1977)
- Edith Melvina born Safe Hr 1892 (never married, died Safe Hr)
- Irene born Safe Hr 1894 (married William Vincent, died Newtown 1923)
- Rosanna Pelly born Safe Hr 1901 (mar Herbert Sturge 1918, died ca 1929)
- Frederick Garfield born Safe Hr 1902 (married Bride Skinner, died Toronto)

In 1886 Robert Elkins and Robert Atwood obtained a joint crown land grant in Safe Harbour for the sum of three dollars. According to this grant, they acquired about 10 acres of land in what was referred to as 'Little Safe Harbour'. This area was known locally as 'the gut'. Robert Elkins, like most men living in Safe Harbour, was a fisherman. He also made fish casks.

Robert and Rebecca's two oldest sons died at a young age, leaving only two males to carry on the Elkins name (Abram, my grandfather, and Frederick Garfield). Lenora, Annie, Abram and Fred all moved to Corner Brook after the International Pulp and Paper Company opened there in the 1920s. Shortly thereafter, Robert and Rebecca moved there as well. Rebecca died in Corner Brook in 1935,

Robert in 1941. Four generations later, the only descendants to carry on our Elkins surname come from this family.

6. The only daughter of William and Rebecca to reach adulthood was Rebecca Grunter, born about 1864. She married Joseph Barefoot, the son of George Barefoot and Susan Sheppard, in 1881 on Pool's Island.

Rebecca and Joseph had five children:

- Keziah born 1880 (married Stephen Noble in 1899, died Pool's Is 1964)
- Ann Marie born 1883 (no other information)
- Israel George born 1885 (married Susannah Blackmore Spurrell in 1908, died Pool's Is 1976)
- Hedley Marshall born 1894, died 1897
- Robert Joseph born 1903, died 1904

Joseph and Rebecca lived their lives on Pool's Island and some of their descendants are also still living there today. Joseph died there around 1935. Hubert Rogers related this story about his burial: "Joseph Barfoot died when I was 9 years old. It was in January of 1935, I think. I know because we had a horse and my uncle used to take the coffins to church, but he was sick at the time.. I was asked if I could take the coffin to the church, so my parents harnessed up our horse, Prince, and I pulled Joseph Barfoot with horse and sled up to the church and then to the graveyard.". I have no information about the death of Rebecca. (If anyone knows anything about her, please contact me.)

7. The youngest of William and Rebecca's sons, Jeremiah, was born in 1862. His mother likely died when he was a young boy, as he was raised by Robert and Jane (Vivian) Ferris of Hare Bay. I have not been able to determine if the Ferris family ever lived in Safe Harbour, but they were documented in Hare Bay as early as 1891 when Robert was granted Crown Land there. Jeremiah married Elizabeth Ann (Lizzy) Collins, the daughter of Thomas and Emeline (Vivian) Collins of Hare Bay at Greenspond in 1895.

Jeremiah and Lizzy had five children:

- Frederick born 1897 (married Susannah Abbott, died Hare Bay)
- Daniel born 1898 (married Elva Wiseman, died Hare Bay 1986)
- Emily born 1902 (married Adelbert George Roberts 1924, Forteau, Labrador, died St. Anthony 1989)
- Joseph born 1905 (married Carrie Hunt, died Hare Bay 1968)
- Jane Farrage born 1907 (married Jeremiah F. Cooze, died Hare Bay 2000)

After Jeremiah died, Lizzy remarried to the widower Theophilus Wells of Hare Bay (sometime after 1931). Some of the descendants of Jeremiah and Lizzy still live in Hare Bay today.

So this is the story of the early Elkins in Newfoundland as I know it. There are still some puzzles to be solved, among them:

- a) Where and when did William's wife, Rebecca Grunter Elkins die?
- b) When did Rebecca Elkins Barfoot die?
- c) Where and when did John and Amelia Elkins die?
- b) Who was the brother who came to Newfoundland with William, and what happened to him?

One clue might lie in the parish records for Ladle Cove. Fred West sent me information of a burial from the Ladle Cove Parish Records, dated sometime between 9 Nov 1876 - 13 Jul 1878. The surname is listed as Helkins, no first name or age is listed. Could this be James, the oldest son of Rebecca and William, who would have been in his 20s by then? Could it have been Rebecca, wife of William, or could it be William's brother who reportedly drowned? Samuel Elkins did not marry Selina Shepherd until 1887, and at that time he was listed as living on Indian Islands. It is not known if he lived in the Ladle Cove area before 1888 when his first child, Levi, was born in Western Arm, Rocky Bay.

Perhaps I will never know the answers to these questions, but if anyone has any information about this, or any further information on the Elkins family as described above, I would like to hear from you. I also have more details about most of the above families which has not been included here.

Information Sources: Family Bible; family interviews, documents & correspondence; oral histories; sharing of knowledge from many friends; Newfoundland's Grand Banks; NFGenWeb; PANL Parish Records; St. John's Daily News.

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