

Diverse Destinies: The Butson Sisters, 1853–1954

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W Wesley Johnston inherited the Pickering Township Thomas Johnston Family Bible in 1954, and has been searching out his ancestors and cousins ever since. He holds master's degrees in mathematics and history. He has published numerous articles, and has done on-site family research in Canada, the United States, Germany, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, Cornwall, Scotland, England, and Ireland. His book, *Family Thickets: Deep Family and Local History*, shares his experience from more than a dozen family thicket projects in six countries. His books, *Researcher's Guide to Pre-Fire Records of Chicago and Cook County*, and *The Graphic Work of Berthe Morisot: A Collector's Guide and Catalogue Raisonné*, are the definitive works on the subjects. He is the *Historian of the U.S. 7th Armored Division Association*, and *Founding President of the American World War II Association Historians Consortium*, and has done research for over a dozen new monuments in Europe since 1994. His website is at www.wjohnston.net/famhist

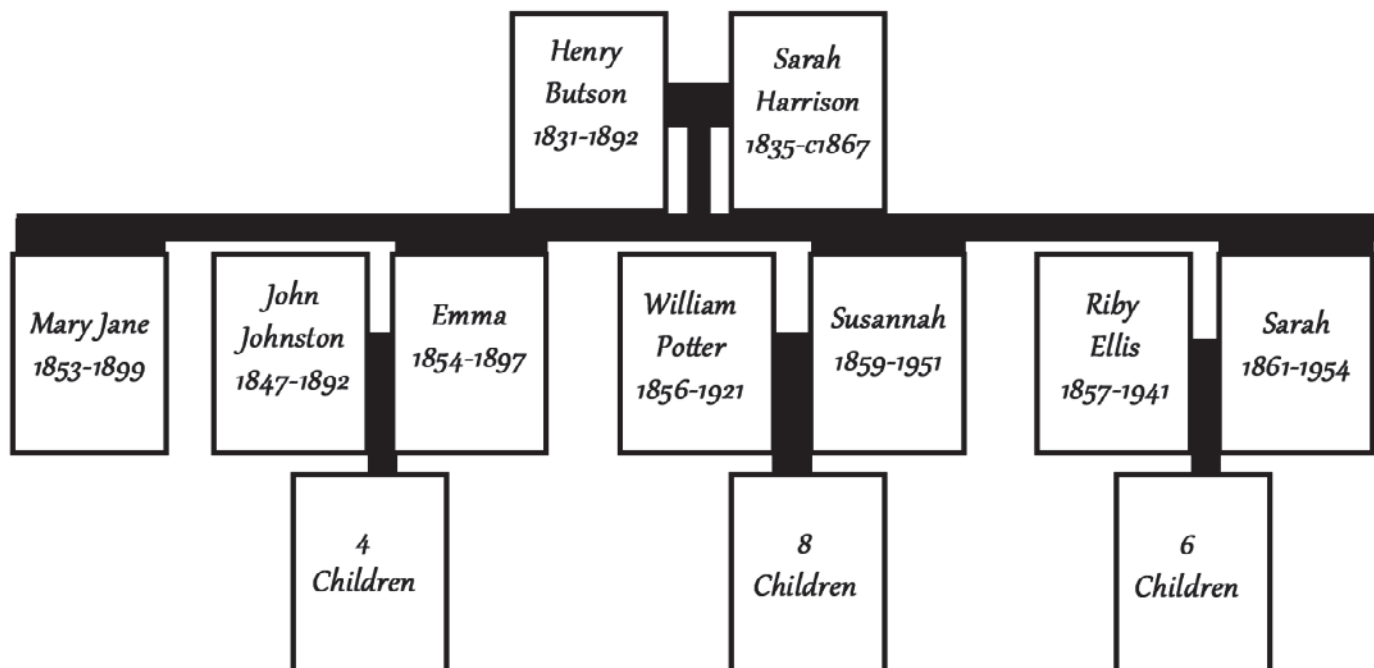
Keywords: Surnames: Butson, Harrison, Johnston, Potter, Ellis, Lamb Placenames: Whitby Township, East Whitby Township, Ops Township, Reach Township, Hibbert Township, Pickering Township, Darlington Township, Verulam Township, Ontario County, Victoria County, Perth County, Durham County, Chicago, North Dakota, Toronto, Port Perry

Abstract

The four daughters of Henry Butson and Sarah Harrison—Mary Jane, Emma, Susannah, and Sarah—lost their mother when very young, and lived highly different lives, spread far apart. Their mother, Sarah, died at about age 32, the same age at which the author's father died. This led to a deeper examination of this sad experience that the author shared with his second great-grandmother, Sarah's daughter, Emma. In 2012, he visited the far-flung graves of all four Butson sisters, and resolved to find out more about them. Two left Canada and died in their 40s. The other two stayed in Canada and lived into their 90s. One never married. Two left their husbands. One lost half of her children. Another saw all six of her children die, none as infants. This is their story, as well as it is thus far known.

Childhood disrupted

Henry Butson married Sarah Harrison in 1852.¹ Both lived in Ontario County, he with his father, Solomon Butson, on the 9th Concession of Whitby Township, and she with her father, Robert Harrison, just down the townline road on the 1st Concession of Reach Township. They soon moved with her parents to Ops Township in Victoria County. There, over the course of eight



The family tree of Henry Butson and Sarah Harrison

years, Sarah bore four daughters before she died. Henry remarried at Reach Township on 3 January 1868. So Sarah most likely died about 1867.²

Their daughters—Mary Jane, Emma (Emily), Susannah (Susan), and Sarah Butson—ranged in age from about 6 to 14 at the time of their mother's death. When their father remarried, the girls were sent to live elsewhere. In the 1871 census, they do not appear in their father's household.³ In fact, the girls have yet to be found anywhere in the 1871 census. So where were they?

Since three of the girls soon married in Reach Township, it seems most likely that they had been sent to live with relatives in Reach. In fact, the witnesses to two of their marriages were the daughter and step-son of their mother's sister, Mary Jane (Harrison) Lamb, wife of Hiram Lamb, at Manchester. However, there is no surviving record in the Lamb family of the Butson girls having lived with them. So they may have lived with their father's brother, William Butson, and his wife, Susan Adams, who then also lived in Reach Township. The Butson girls did not appear with either the Hiram Lamb family nor the William Butson family in the 1871 census.⁴ So the sisters' residence in 1871 remains a mystery.

But what is clear is that, at a young age, they had lost their mother and had to live well away from their father. They were not full orphans, but they were not far from it. Thus far, no record has been found of the extent of contact with their father after their mother's death. But it appears to have been distant at best. For example, at Mary Jane Butson's death in 1899 in North Dakota, her local relatives listed Mary Jane's next of kin as her father, Henry Butson, who was believed to be living in Lindsay, Ontario. In fact, Henry Butson had died seven years earlier in Detroit. So there apparently was no contact with him at all.

These four young girls had to make of their lives what they could, without their mother or their father. The choices they each made led them to very different lives. They spread out from Port Perry to Toronto to Chicago to Leeds, North Dakota. We will look closely at the life of each them, from the oldest to the youngest: Mary Jane, Emma, Susannah, and Sarah.

Mary Jane Butson (1853–15 Aug 1899, Leeds, North Dakota)

Different records give conflicting estimates of Mary Jane's birth year. The earliest record, the 1861 Canada census, gave her age at her next birthday as 7, which would put her birth about 1854–1855.⁵ Her sister, Emily (also known as Emma), with age 6 at next birthday, would then have a birth year of 1855–1856. Other records indicate that Emma was born between 14 January and 10 August 1854.⁶ So it appears that whoever gave their ages to the enumerator of the 1861 census used their current ages, and not their ages at their next birthday. Thus, Mary Jane's birth most likely came in 1853. Later records, as we will see, muddy the waters further.

Mary Jane appears in no other surviving census. The enumerators did not find the sisters in 1871. Mary Jane's later U.S. naturalization stated that she arrived in the United States in 1882 at "Huron" (Port Huron), Michigan, thus crossing from Sarnia, Ontario. So it seems very likely that she had lived for a while in the Staffa area of Hibbert Township in Perth County with her father's brothers' families, who had moved to the Huron Tract by 1861.⁷ Staffa's proximity to Sarnia made Sarnia the preferred crossing point for the Butsons of Hibbert. So it seems likely that Mary Jane was in Canada at the time of the 1881 census, but she appears to have eluded the enumerators. The U.S. enumerators almost certainly recorded her in the 1890 U.S. census. However, that is the only U.S. census that does not survive. And she did not live to see the 1900 U.S. census.

All four sisters pose different levels of mystery. But Mary Jane's mystery has few sources with which to penetrate it. She is the only one of the sisters who never married. She had no descendants. Thus, the following fragments give an incomplete picture of her life.

After the 1861 census, Mary Jane next appears in a known record as a witness to sister Emma's 24 May 1876 marriage to John Johnston in Reach Township. The document records both Mary Jane and Emma as residents of Reach Township.⁸

Eleven years later, on 05 July 1887, Mary Jane Butson filed her legal declaration of her intention to become a U.S. citizen (known as "first papers").⁹ She stated that she had entered the United States at "Huron, Michigan" in June 1882. Her sister, Emma, and her husband, John Johnston, had moved to Chicago in 1881. In 1882, Emma gave birth in Chicago to Fred Johnston on 10 August 1882. So Mary Jane may have come to help her sister during the final months of her pregnancy. Mary Jane would profoundly impact Fred Johnston's life, as he was the only member of the Chicago family to move "out west."

So it seems likely that Mary Jane came first to Chicago to stay with Emma's Johnston family. But by 1887, she had moved to Leeds, Dakota Territory. The Dakota Territory was later broken into the states of North and South Dakota, admitted to the Union on 2 November 1889.

Several of Mary Jane's Butson cousins had moved earlier to North Dakota. But while all the others lived far from Leeds, her cousin, Maria (Butson) Golding, came to live just outside of Leeds. Leeds is "out in the middle of nowhere," with no towns within easy journey. So the two cousins both living at Leeds seems intentional.

Maria (also called Edith) Butson's father, John Butson, brother of Henry, was the first of the family to move from Ontario County to the Huron Tract, arriving there by 1861. It seems very likely, as noted above, that Mary Jane visited her uncle John Butson's family in Hibbert Township before crossing into the United States.

John Butson's daughter, Mary Jane (Butson) Hoggarth, seems to have been the first of all the Butsons to move to the

Dakota Territory, where her family appears in the 1880 U.S. Census of Traill County, 155 miles southeast of Leeds, by road.¹⁰ John Butson's son, Solomon Butson, did not appear in the 1880 census, but did purchase land in Traill County on 23 June 1880. So it appears he had followed his sister's move to Dakota.

Thus two of Maria Butson's older siblings had moved to the Dakota Territory before she and her husband, James Golding, arrived with their daughter, Elveretta. It appears that James came first, and Maria and Elveretta came later. On 18 May 1886, James filed his declaration of intention to become a U.S. citizen at the Ramsey County courthouse, the county that then included Leeds, showing that he, too, had crossed at Port Huron.¹¹ On the 1900 U.S. census, the enumerator recorded James' arrival in the United States as 1886, but Maria and Elveretta as 1887.¹² Thus Maria arrived in North Dakota at about the same time that Mary Jane filed her declaration of intention. So it does seem that Mary Jane moved to Leeds because her cousin was going to be living on a farm just south of town.

What did Mary Jane Butson do to earn a living? What was she like? What were her favourite pastimes and things? How did she deal with the harsh North Dakota winters? How did she see the world and her place in it? Who had she chosen as her role models of how to grow from a girl to a woman? All of these questions remain unanswered. And so does the cause of her early death, since North Dakota does not provide cause of death information, even on a death more than 110 years ago.

Since her orphaned nephew, Fred Johnston, came to live with her in her later years, Mary Jane knew that her sister, Emma, had died in Chicago on 10 August 1897. But Mary Jane survived Emma by only two years—almost to the day.

Mary Jane Butson died at Leeds on 16 August 1899—a mid-summer death at age 46 (although her monument reads "Aged 44 Yrs"). She was buried in a lone grave in the Leeds Cemetery, a mile north of town. Her impressive monument remains in excellent condition.

The similarity of her monument to that of two daughters of James and Maria Golding seems to indicate that James and Maria provided for Mary Jane's final resting place and monument.¹³

Fred Johnston's father died in 1892.¹⁴ So his mother Emma's death in 1897 left him an orphan at age 15. Mary Jane probably took him in after her sister's death. The move to North Dakota greatly altered the course of his life, since he came to like the area. After Mary Jane's death in 1899, when he was only 17, he apparently did not return to Chicago to



Headstone of Mary Jane Butson

live with his brother George's family. He is not with them in the 1900 census.¹⁵ Thus far has not been found in the 1900 census. Perhaps his Golding cousins in Leeds took him in for a while.

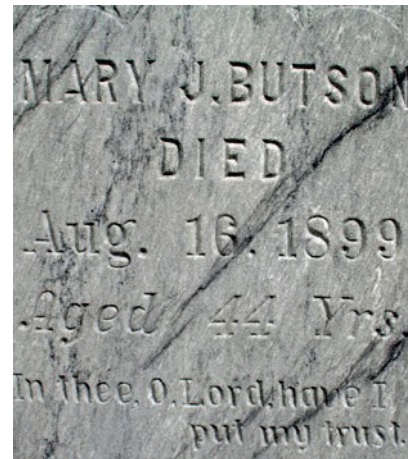
Fred was in Wisconsin in the 1910 census, living with George's family, as both did steam shovel work that temporarily took George's family away from Chicago.¹⁶ Fred's 1918 World War I draft registration was in Redstone, Montana.¹⁷ But in the 1920 census, he was back in Chicago with George's family, again as a steam shovel fireman.¹⁸ But in 1930, he was back in Montana, working as a hired farm helper.¹⁹ And it appears that he never returned to Chicago.

Fred lived in various places on both sides of the Montana–North Dakota border. Because both George and Fred moved often, they eventually lost contact with each other. Fred died at Sidney, Montana on 12 October 1967, where he rests with his wife, Louise, 260 miles west of his Aunt Mary Jane Butson's final resting place at Leeds.²⁰

Late in her short life, the spinster, Mary Jane Butson, briefly became foster mother for her nephew, Fred Johnston, touching his life deeply. But, as with her sister, Emma, Fred's mother, Mary Jane Butson's life ended in her mid-40s.

Emma (Butson) Johnston (1854–10 August 1897, Chicago)

The birth date of Emma (also known as Emily) remains unknown. The known records conflict about her age. The fact that her father, Henry Butson, could not read or write, according to the 1871 Canada census, probably means that the family kept no written record of her birth, so that they did not know the date in later years. The 1861 Canada census gives her age at next birthday as 6, but the enumerator



may actually have recorded her then-current age. Her 24 May 1876 marriage record shows her as 21, seven years younger than her husband, John Johnston. The 1881 Canada census shows John at 28 and Emma at 24, only four years apart. Her 10 August 1897 death record gives her age as 43. The most likely year of her birth was 1854.

As noted above, the enumerators of the 1871 Canada census did not include any of the four sisters. So Emma next appears in a record after the 1861 Canada census in her 24 May 1876 marriage in Reach Township with John Johnston.²¹

Prior to marriage, John lived with his mother, Elizabeth (Gray, widow Gibson) Johnston, and his Gibson step-siblings in Pickering Township, apparently on the 9th Concession in



John Johnston and Emma Butson

the hamlet of Balsam. And Balsam was where the newly married couple made their home.

Emma (Butson) Johnston gave birth to her first child, George Henry Johnston, 22 April 1877. John and Emma did not record the birth in official records.²² Nor did they record the birth of their second child, Walter Johnston, known only by his entry in the 1881 Canada census at age 11/12, explicitly recording his birth in May.

John Johnston, his half-sister Ellen (Gibson) Cook, and his half-brother, Christopher Gibson, all moved their families to Chicago in the early 1880s. John appears to have made the first move, since his son, George, recorded his arrival as either 1881 or 1882 in later U.S. censuses.

Emma gave birth to her third son, Charles Frederick Johnston, in Chicago on 10 August 1882. Again, the parents did not record the birth. The date is known only because Fred, as he was known, wrote it himself as his birth date in his 1918 World War I draft registration.²³

Nor did they record the birth of their fourth son, Ernest. The only record of his existence is the 1899 probate record of the estate of Emma's sister, Mary Jane Butson, in Benson County, North Dakota.²⁴ The record shows him age 13, thus born about 1886. However, he most likely had died by 1899.

By the 1900 U.S. census, only sons, George and Fred Johnston, survived. So Emma had seen half of her children die. And just as with the births, the deaths of Walter and Ernest have no official record. In his later years, George recounted the story of how his brother, Ernest, died. Ernest was ill, with fluid in his abdomen. The doctor who was supposed to do a procedure to drain the fluid had been drinking and did the procedure incorrectly, killing the boy. No story of Walter's existence or death has survived. They probably buried both children at Oakwoods Cemetery, where John Johnston's half-brother Christopher Gibson's daughter, Agnes Robina Gibson, was buried.

John and Emma Johnston probably first lived south of Chicago, near the Pullman railroad car factory. The earliest Chicago record of any of the extended family showed Christopher Gibson in the 1883 Hyde Park Township directory,

at 113th and Michigan Avenue.²⁵ His 9-year-old daughter, Agnes Robina Gibson, died on 1 August 1885 in Pullman, at 118th (then called Iron Street) and Michigan Avenue.²⁶ Her burial at Oakwoods Cemetery marks the first known connection of the family to the Hyde Park-Woodlawn area, well to the north of Pullman.

Emma and John's marriage did not last. Their descendants do not know the specifics nor whether they legally divorced—which seems unlikely, given their non-recording of their children's births and deaths. The perception is that Emma left John. And if they had first lived in Pullman, then the 1887 Hyde Park directory does support her leaving him. The directory (and also those for 1888 and 1889) recorded her as Mrs. Emma Johnston, living at the southeast corner of 62nd and Kimbark—not far from Oakwoods Cemetery and just three blocks from the future home of Barack Obama when he was elected U.S. President in 2008. So Emma had apparently left John by 1887, soon after the birth of Ernest.

A vague family notion holds that Emma made her living doing laundry. The wife of her husband's half-brother, Christopher Gibson, Margaret (Hubbard) Gibson, also left her husband. Both women had seen one of their children die young after they moved to Chicago. The 1900 U.S. census shows Margaret as divorced and living at 708 West 60th Street, not far from where Emma had lived.²⁷

But by 1900, Emma had died. She died on 10 August 1897 at 1272 East 67th Street, at the age of 43, the first of the four sisters to die.²⁸ Her final illness began 10 months and 10 days earlier with the onset of pyosalpinx, the presence of pus in one Fallopian tube. The doctor wrote on her death record that her tube had ruptured. The immediate cause of her death was peritonitis, inflammation of the tissue that lines the inner wall of the abdomen, lasting four days. She suffered in life, and her lingering final struggle for life caused even more suffering and ultimately failed. She now rests in a lone grave at Oakwoods Cemetery, almost within eye-shot of the building where she died.

Emma lived long enough to see her son, George, marry Martha Boezel in 1896. And Emma saw her first grandchild, Walter, born in 1897. Two years after Emma's death, George and Martha named their second child for her: Emma Johnston was born on 7 August 1899.



Headstone of Emma (Butson) Johnston

Emma has the most unique known legacy of any of the four sisters. As Emma lay in her coffin in 1897 at the age of 43, her daughter-in-law, Martha, snipped a curl from Emma's hair and put it into a small box. And today, many years after Emma's death, her descendants still take good care of this unique family heirloom. Emma's blonde-brown hair looks as vibrant and soft today as it was 117 years ago.

Susannah (Butson) Potter (29 August 1859–21 October 1951 Toronto)



A snippet of Emma Butson's hair

The gap of about five years between Emma's and Susannah's births suggests the possibility of the birth of one or two children who did not survive until the 1861 Canada census. No records of such children have been found, but records of children of this area in this period are not good. So the Butson sisters may have had a brother or sister, but only the four sisters are known.

Susannah (who went by the name Susan) and her sister, Sarah, were baptized together 10 November 1862 at Ops Township, Victoria County, by Rev. D. Handie of the Wesleyan Methodist Church.²⁹ The record gives the birth dates of both girls. Susannah was born on 29 August 1859 in Ops Township, and resided there at the time of her baptism at 3 years of age.

Of the four sisters, Susan had the happiest and second-longest life. She had eight known children, only one of whom is known to have died as a child. With so many children, one would expect to find some of her descendants. But the search for her living descendants has not thus far been successful. So, all that is known to the author comes only from the documentary record.

In the 1861 Canada census of the family, noted above, she was the youngest of the family, age 2. The next known record is her 10 November 1862 baptism, noted above.

Then 18 years passed before her next record. On 2 February 1880, she married William Potter at Manchester, Ontario. She was 20 and he 21, with no religion recorded for either. Her cousins, William Lamb (actually her step-cousin)

and Etta Lamb, the children of her mother's sister, Mary Jane (Harrison) Lamb, witnessed the ceremony.³⁰ Since the marriage was at Manchester, it was probably at the Lamb family home. (The Lamb family are century farmers—actually now a century and a half—still in Manchester to this day.)

The couple settled, apparently immediately, in Darlington Township in Durham County, where Susan gave birth on 7 August 1880 to their first child, William John Potter.³¹ Thus Susannah had been pregnant when they married in February. The 1881 Canada census enumerator recorded all three of them in Darlington.³²

From 1882 to 1892, only after-the-fact records provide any information. Susan gave birth to their second child, Alexander Potter, 23 September 1882, at Enniskillen in Darlington Township, according to the delayed birth record filed in 1918.³³

The family seem to have eluded the census taker in 1891. They also continued the non-registration of births of their children that had begun with Alexander. The 1901 Canada census shows three children born in the 1882–1892 period during which William and Susan did not record their children's births: Alexander, Eva, and Earnest.³⁴ The 1901 Canada census included fields for everyone's full birth date, as well as age: Alex – October 1882 – age 20; Eva – June 1885 – age 18; and Earnest – 5 Nov 1890 – age 10. The date for Alex conflicts with his delayed birth record but is close. In the absence of other records, the census birth dates of Eva and Earnest remain unverified.

In her 34th year, Susan gave birth to Violet Potter at 111 Duchess Street in Toronto on 29 March 1893.³⁵ William Potter did report the birth, which is thus far the first known record of the family in Toronto.

The 1901 Canada census is the earliest known record of the children born from 1882 to 1892. The same is true of their location. In 1882, they lived in Darlington Township in Durham County. In 1893, they lived in Toronto. When they moved, why they moved, which children were born where—these are questions with no answers yet.

Susan and William Potter left it to the doctor to report their next child. Just a few weeks shy of Susan's 36th birthday, she gave birth to Emma Jane Potter at 385 Sackville Street on 5 August 1895.³⁶ Emma Jane may have been named for Susan's sister Emma (Butson) Johnston, or possibly for both sisters, Emma and Mary Jane Butson.

At age 38, Susan gave birth to Laura Beatrice Potter on 23 December 1897, still in Toronto but again at a new address: 1 Sumach Place.³⁷ And finally, at age 40, Susan gave birth to Robert James Potter on 21 November 1899, still in Toronto, but with no record of the address.³⁸

Susan's last child was the first known to die. Robert James Potter died 15 July 1900 at 1 Sumach Place, at the age of just under 8 months.³⁹ Cholera Infantum, of three weeks duration, took his life, as it did with a good number of other infants whose deaths were recorded on the same page.

Thus, of her eight known children, seven appeared with their parents on the 1901 Canada Census.⁴⁰ By the 1911 Canada census, only the four Potter daughters remained at home. Eva had not married. But Violet had married William Tolley and had a son, William, and the Tolley family lived with the Potter family. Although they were still minors, Emma and Laura both worked outside the home.

On the 1918 delayed birth record of her son, Alexander, Susan is shown living at 146 Sumach Street in Toronto.⁴¹ The 1921 Toronto directory shows her husband, William Potter, a watchman, living in the rear of 146 Sumach.⁴²

On 22 May 1921, Susan's husband, William Potter, died at Toronto General Hospital, at age 64.⁴³ She was the informant, giving her address as 146 Sumach Street. He was buried the next day, on 23 May 1921, at St. James Cathedral Cemetery, where Susan would later be buried.

The 1921 Canada census was taken just ten days after William's death. Susan and daughter, Eva, were living together in Toronto at Rear 123 St. David Street, where Susan (as Susannah) is shown as owner and head of the household. Both Susan and Eva worked on their own account, washing clothes.⁴⁴

It seems odd that Susan would own a home at Rear 123 St. David Street only ten days after her husband died and she gave her address on the death record as 146 Sumach Street. The two addresses are just 550 meters apart. The 1922 Toronto directory shows Susan, widow of William, living at rear 146 Sumach.⁴⁵ So, clearly, she had not moved out of their home. Thus far, I have no explanation for this unusual situation. My best hypothesis is that William and Susan had bought the home on St. David Street for Eva, and that Susan was either visiting Susan when the census was taken, or else lived with her briefly before returning to her home on Sumach.

Susan lived the last 30 years of her life as a widow in Toronto. She died on 21 October 1951 at 50 Chatham Avenue, at age 92, of a cerebral thrombosis.⁴⁶ She was buried with William at St. James Cathedral Cemetery. Her daughter,



Resting place for Susan (Butson) Potter



Headstone of Susan (Butson) Potter

Laura (Potter) Bonet, apparently made the funeral arrangements.

Susan suffered the loss of her last child. But she saw most of her children grow up and marry and have children of their own. She had 41 years with her husband before he died, and 30 more years as a widow. Of the four Butson sisters, Susan is the only one to have found the pleasure of the company of her children and grandchildren in the older years of a long life.

Sarah (Butson) Ellis (2 July 1861–10 January 1954, Toronto)

Sarah Butson, her mother's namesake, was born on 2 July 1861 in Ops Township, Victoria County. As noted above for Susan, both girls were baptized in the Wesleyan Methodist Church on 10 November 1862, and the church record included their birth dates.

Sarah was about 5 or 6 years old when her mother died. Her father, Henry Butson, remarried with the widow, Mary Ann (Wilson) Irwin, on 3 January 1868 in Reach Township, with both the bride and groom residing in Reach.⁴⁷ But by 1871, the couple had moved to Verulam Township in Victoria County, where the Irwin family had earlier lived. But the four Butson sisters apparently remained in Reach Township. And they apparently eluded the 1871 Canada

census enumerator.

Thus, at a very young age, Sarah suffered the first two of many major blows that would make her life very hard. Hers was the most tragic destiny of the four Butson sisters.

The 1881 Canada census enumerator recorded Sarah in the home of farmer Lorenzo White's family in Pickering Township.⁴⁸ Lorenzo White was one of Pickering's earliest residents, but there is no known relationship of the Butsons and the Whites, so that Sarah may have been a governess or servant.

Sarah Butson married Riby Ellis on 3 July 1883 at Manchester.⁴⁹ Her cousin, Etta Lamb, witnessed her marriage, as she had for Sarah's sister, Susan, three years earlier. Since the Lamb family, the family of Sarah's mother's sister, Mary Jane

(Harrison) Lamb, lived at Manchester, the marriage probably took place at their home. The other witness was George Higginbatton, whose connection was probably to the groom but is not known.

The couple at first moved far away from Reach Township. Recall that in 1882, Sarah's sister, Mary Jane Butson, had apparently lived for a while with their father's brother John's family in Hibbert Township in the Huron Tract. It appears that this family connection also led the newlyweds, Sarah and Riby, to make a similar move. Their first child, Emma Georgina Ellis, was born at Clinton in Huron County in June 1884.⁵⁰ Riby reported the birth. Emma may have been named for her aunt, Emma (Butson) Johnston, but this is not known.

However, by 6 July 1886, their life in the Huron Tract had ended, and they had returned to Port Perry, where Sarah gave birth to their second child, Robert Henry Ellis, whose birth was apparently not recorded.⁵¹ But they did not settle in Port Perry. The unrecorded birth of their third child, John W. Ellis, in May 1888 was in Darlington Township of Durham County.⁵² And they kept moving. On 13 December 1889, Sarah gave birth in East Whitby Township of Ontario County to their fourth child, James Arthur Ellis.⁵³ And they kept moving. The 1891 census found them back in Reach Township, with Riby and Sarah and their four children: Emma, Robert, John, and James.⁵⁴

Thus they moved from Reach Township in 1883 or 1884 to Huron County, by 1886 to Port Perry, by 1888 to Durham County, by 1889 to East Whitby Township in Ontario County, and back to Reach Township by 1891. They moved six times in less than eight years. This had to be very hard on the family. But in 1891, they were all together. And it looked like they finally settled down in Port Perry. Sarah gave birth 17 January 1892 to their fifth child, Mary Jane Elizabeth Elvida Ellis, who went by the name Elvida.⁵⁵

But things changed dramatically in October 1894. They did remain at Port Perry, but tragedy struck when two of their sons died within three days. At age 4 years and 10 months, James Arthur Ellis died on 10 October 1894, followed by his brother, John W. Ellis, age 6 years and 5 months, who died on 12 October 1894.⁵⁶ Diphtheria took them quickly. James died after four days. John survived five days.

Sarah had given birth every year or two. But between her fifth (1892) and sixth (1896) children, the gap may indicate that she also lost a baby that went unrecorded. It may be that this was related to the diphtheria that took her sons. But without records or family or other information, nothing can be verified.

Two years later, Sarah, at age 35, gave birth on 11 May 1896 at Port Perry to her sixth child, William James Wesley Ellis.⁵⁷ He would go by the name James. This would be the last good news for quite a long time. Soon word would come from the States of the deaths of Sarah's sisters, Emma in

1897, and Mary Jane in 1899.

But Sarah's suffering still had a long way to run. And the next blow came early in the new century. On 2 July 1900, Sarah's oldest child, Emma Georgina Ellis, died at Port Perry of typhoid fever at age 16.⁵⁸ Emma was a seamstress. She had struggled against the fever for three weeks before she succumbed.


Thus the 1901 census Port Perry enumerator found Riby and Sarah Ellis and their three surviving children: Robert (14), Elvida (7) and James (5).⁵⁹ Riby was a tinsmith, employed 12 months of the prior year, for which he earned \$250. Sarah was also employed, as a servant, for nine months of the prior year, for which she earned \$150.

Three years later, on 11 February 1904, their oldest surviving child, Robert Henry Ellis, died in Port Perry at age 17.⁶⁰ He died of heart disease, following six months of rheumatism.

In the 21st year of their marriage, Sarah and Riby Ellis had now lost four of their six children. The youngest was 4 years and 10 months when he died. The oldest was 17 years and 7 months.

At some point, Sarah left Riby and moved with their two surviving children to Toronto. The exact date remains elusive, but by 1911, two records place them at 91 Sydenham Street in Toronto. Sarah's daughter, Elvida, married Louis John Fitze on 27 February 1911, with both giving their address as 91 Sydenham.⁶¹ And the 1911 census shows Sarah and son, James, at the same address, she a dressmaker and he a messenger.⁶²

GNR. ELLIS DEAD.
Bearing many gunshot wounds and his left leg amputated, Corp. William James Wesley Ellis, 42½ Bolton avenue, died in hospital August 16 at the age of 21. He went overseas in March, 1916, in the 59th Battalion, was transferred and received his promotion on the field, and has been at the front since June of last year. He was an only son. Born in Port Perry, he came to Toronto 11 years ago, and was employed here as a teamster.



Corp. W. J. Ellis.

Toronto Star - September 5th, 1917

Obit for Corporal William James Wesley Ellis

Sarah probably made the move to Toronto in hopes of improving their lives. And to some extent, she succeeded. Elvida married, and on 17 October 1911, at 91 Sydenham Street, she gave birth to her first and only known child, John Louis Fitze, Sarah's only grandchild.⁶³ And Sarah saw both her daughter, Elvida, and her son, James, achieve what none of her children had done: they reached their 18th birthday alive.

But the world was about to change for the worse. World War I began. And James was overseas in the Canadian Army when he reached his 20th birthday in 1916, and his 21st in May 1917. It was to be his last birthday. He died in France on 15 August 1917, of shrapnel wounds to his left thigh, resulting in "traumatic amputation."⁶⁴ Once again, for the fifth time, Sarah suffered the death of one of her children.

Sarah's only surviving child, Elvida, doubled her brother's age. But on 22 February 1934, at age 42—at about the same age at which Sarah's sisters Emma and Mary Jane Butson had died—Elvida died at 80 East Lynn Avenue in Toronto.⁶⁵ And so, Sarah had seen all six of her children die.

Sarah's husband, Riby Ellis, suffered the same fate, seeing all of his children die. He died in 1941. Sarah died on 10 January 1954, and was buried at Pine Hills Cemetery in Scarborough.⁶⁶ Hers is the only one of the four sisters' graves that has no marker.

Sarah probably saw her grandson, John Louis Fitze, marry. Both he and his wife were later buried at the same Pine Hills Cemetery where Sarah lies. They apparently had no children, thus closing out the descent of Sarah's line.

Still So Much to Know

While the author has visited the grave of each of the four sisters and has amassed the many facts that at least allow us to know the outward shape of each of their lives, many questions will never have answers. The answers lay in their thoughts. And they apparently left no diaries or letters. Nor did they interest a journalist to record their thoughts. So we do not know how they came to make key decisions in their lives. We can only compile the external evidence and surmise from that, some of which may be correct and some not—with no way of knowing which is which.

The four sisters made their decisions and choices. They moved apart, living very different lives. So little has survived from these girls, born in the 1850s and 1860s. Only two of the sisters have surviving descendants. And thus far, these descendants have not found each other. Perhaps something that Emma did may shed light on Susannah's thinking, or vice versa. But now all four of their stories, as much as they have thus far been learned, have at last been bound back together. Sisters they began, and sisters they shall forever remain. §

1. 1861 Canada West Personal Census of Ops Township, Victoria County, Enumeration District 4, stamped page number 52, line 46, explicitly gives 1852 as the year of their marriage.

2. Henry Butson (age 32 of Reach, born England, son of Solo-

man [sic]/Jane) to Mary IRWIN (age 29, of Reach, born Dublin, dau of Rob WILSON/Mary WILSON) 3 January 1868 [on next page - by George Jamieson, Can. Presbyterian Church, Prince Albert]; witness : John NOTT, Borelia (Ontario County Marriage Register vol. 3 p. 26 [minister information on p 27])

3. 1871 Canada Census of Verulam Township, Victoria County. District 52 (South Victoria County), Division 2 (Township of Verulam), p. 63, family 226. Henry Butson is shown as unable to read or write.

4. Hiram Lamb family: 1871 Canada Census of Reach, Ontario County, District 49 (North Ontario County), Division 2 (Township of Reach), p. 65, family 232. William Butson family: 1871 Canada Census of Reach, Ontario County, District 49 (North Ontario County), Division 4 (Township of Reach), p. 352 (also numbered 28), family 100.

5. 1861 Canada West Personal Census of Ops Township, Victoria County, Enumeration District 4, stamped page number 52, line 48.

6. The 1861 census was taken 14 January 1861. Her age at death 10 August 1897 was 43.

7. John Butson family: 1861 Canada West Personal Census of Hibbert Township, Perth County, Enumeration District 3, stamped page number 27, lines 28-34.

8. Schedule B – Marriages, Registration District of County of Ontario. Division of Reach. p. 316, marriage 30 (stamped number 007867).

9. Latter Day Saints Family History Library microfilm 2,196,710, item 9, Benson County Declarations, vol. 9, p. 34.

10. 1880 U. S. Census of Traill County, Dakota Territory, Township 144 Range 49, Supervisor's District 15, Enumeration District 16, p. 2, lines 35-38. Mary Jane (Butson) Hoggarth was born 16 Jan 1853 in Pickering Township. So it is important to distinguish the two 1853 Mary Jane Butson cousins.

11. Latter Day Saints Family History Library microfilm 2,196,714, North Dakota, Benson County, Naturalization Records, Certificates, Folder 1, Number 263.

12. 1900 U. S. Census, Schedule 1-Population, North Dakota, Benson County, Beaver Township, Supervisor's District 199, Enumeration District 15, sheet 14, lines 91-98.

13. Their oldest daughter Elveretta Golding died 3 Nov 1900, just 2 months after their then youngest daughter Luretta Golding died 4 Sep 1900 – just a bit over a year after Mary Jane Butson's death.

14. Cook County Clerk Vital Statistics Department, "Report of Death", Registration Number 3339, signed 12 March 1892. He died 11 March 1892 at Cunningham and Morgan Avenues in Mt. Greenwood, Illinois, and was buried the next day at Mount Greenwood Cemetery.

15. 1900 U. S. Census, Schedule No. 1 – Population, State of Illinois, Cook County, Hyde Park Township, City of Chicago, Supervisor's District 1, Enumeration District 1103, sheet 7 (stamped A), lines 23-29. George Johnston's family was living with his wife's sister's family, Bert and Josephine Young, at 7242 Dobson Avenue.

16. 1910 U. S. Census, Population Schedule, State of Wisconsin, Monroe County, Town of Greenfield, Supervisor's District 6, Enumeration District 130, sheet 8B, lines 62-66.

17. "United States World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918," index and images, FamilySearch (<https://familysearch.org/>

pal/MM9.3.1/TH-1942-26276-35111-26?cc=1968530 : accessed 29 May 2014), Montana > Sheridan County; A-O > image 3689 of 5803; citing NARA microfilm publication M1509 (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.).

18. 1920 U. S. Census, Population Schedule, State of Illinois, Cook County, City of Chicago, Ward 7, Supervisor's District 1, Enumeration District 443, sheet 8B, line 81-87. George's son Walter is at the same address in the prior household, also as a steam shovel fireman, with his wife and two children. George was a steam shovel engineer.

19. 1930 U. S. Census, Population Schedule, State of Montana, Sheridan County, School District No. 30, Supervisor's District 4, Enumeration District 46-24, sheet 1A, lines 3-5. He was living on the farm of Charge and Jessie Grant.

20. State of Montana, State Board of Health, Division of Records and Statistics, "Certificate of Death", State File No. 67-5151, Local Registrar No. 794. He died at Sidney's Community Memorial Hospital, with his usual occupation as Laborer on Irrigation Project.

21. Schedule B – Marriages, Registration District of County of Ontario. Division of Reach. p. 316, marriage 30 (stamped number 007867).

22. George Henry Johnston himself was the source for the date.

23. Ancestry.com. U.S., World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2005. Original data: United States, Selective Service System. World War I Selective Service System Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration. M1509, 4,582 rolls. Imaged from Family History Library microfilm.

24. Sent to the author in 2012 by the Benson County Recorder's Office with no citation of record group or number.

25. Connorton's Hyde Park and Englewood Directory, 1883, p. 334 (accessed on Latter Day Saints Family History Library microfilm 2,156,556).

26. Cook County, Illinois, 1885 Death Certificate 9089 (accessed on Latter Day Saints Family History Library microfilm 1,239,966).

27. 1900 U. S. Census, Schedule No. 1 – Population, State of Illinois, Cook County, Town of Lake, City of Chicago, Supervisor's District 1, Enumeration District 941, sheet 15 (stamped A), lines 21-22.

28. Cook County, Illinois, 1897 Death Certificate 8872 (accessed on Latter Day Saints Family History Library microfilm 1,033,044).

29. Canadian Wesleyan Methodist Church Baptismal Registers, Volume 2, p. 390 – Township of Ops (accessed on Latter Day Saints Family History Library microfilm 1,759,293).

30. Archives of Ontario; Series MS932_34, Reel 34 (accessed at http://search.ancestry.com/Browse/BookView.aspx?dbid=7921&iid=ONMS932_34-0660) – p. 304, County of Ontario, Division of Reach, Marriage number 5 (stamped number 008176).

31. Archives of Ontario; Series MS929, Reel 44 (accessed at http://search.ancestry.com/Browse/BookView.aspx?dbid=8838&iid=ONMS929_44-0722) – p. 334, County of Durham, Division of Darlington, Birth number 35 (stamped number 022415).

32. 1881 Canada Census of Darlington Township, Durham County, District 128 – Durham West, Sub District A – Town of Darlington Division 3, Schedule 1 – Nominal Return of the Liv-

ing, p. 36, lines 5-7.

33. Archives of Ontario; Series MS929, Reel 44 (accessed at http://search.ancestry.com/Browse/BookView.aspx?dbid=8838&iid=ONMS933_9-1375) – Delayed birth record 981983

34. 1901 Canada Census of Toronto, District 117 – Toronto East, Sub-District A, Polling Subdivision 13, Toronto Ward 1, p. 14, lines 17-25.

35. Archives of Ontario; Series MS929, Reel 119 (accessed at http://search.ancestry.com/Browse/BookView.aspx?dbid=8838&iid=onms929_119-0337) – p. 196, County of York, Division of Toronto, Birth number 1182 (stamped number 040981).

36. Archives of Ontario; Series MS929, Reel 130 (accessed at http://search.ancestry.com/Browse/BookView.aspx?dbid=8838&iid=ONMS929_130-0247) – p. 452, County of York, Division of Toronto, Birth number 2727 (stamped number 041234).

37. Archives of Ontario; Series MS929, Reel 141 (accessed at http://search.ancestry.com/Browse/BookView.aspx?dbid=8838&iid=ONMS929_141-0052) – p. 25, County of York, Division of Toronto, Birth number 148 (stamped number 001148).

38. Archives of Ontario; Series MS929, Reel 145 (accessed at http://search.ancestry.com/Browse/BookView.aspx?dbid=8838&iid=ONMS929_145-0317) – p. 283, County of York, Birth number 3830.

39. Archives of Ontario; Series MS940, Reel 16 (accessed at http://search.ancestry.com/Browse/BookView.aspx?dbid=8946&iid=ONMS940_16-0234 and http://search.ancestry.com/Browse/BookView.aspx?dbid=8946&iid=ONMS940_16-0235) – Register of Deaths, County of York, Division of Toronto, 1900, Death number 1935.

40. 1901 Canada Census of Toronto, District 117 – Toronto East, Sub-District A, Polling Subdivision 13, Toronto Ward 1, p. 14, lines 17-25.

41. Archives of Ontario; Series MS929, Reel 44 (accessed at http://search.ancestry.com/Browse/BookView.aspx?dbid=8838&iid=ONMS933_9-1375) – Delayed birth record 981983

42. The Toronto City Directory, 1921; Might Directories Limited; p. 1211.

43. Archives of Ontario; Series MS935, Reel 274 (accessed at http://search.ancestry.com/Browse/BookView.aspx?dbid=8946&iid=ONMS935_274-0802) – p. 155, Deaths, County of York, Division of Toronto, Death number 2942 (stamped number 003941).

44. Sixth Census of Canada, 1921; Population; Ontario District 131, Sub-District 40 in Toronto East, p. 1, lines 37-38.

45. The Toronto City Directory, 1922; Might Directories Limited; p. 1269.

46. St. James Cathedral Cemetery records, sent to the author by the Cemetery staff in 2010.

47. Archives of Ontario; Ontario County Marriage Register, volume 3, folio 26, return number 23, 28 Jan 1869 by George Jamison.

48. 1881 Canada Census of Pickering Township, Ontario County, District 132 – Ontario South, Sub District A – Pickering Division 3, Schedule 1 – Nominal Return of the Living, p. 41, lines 12-17.

49. Archives of Ontario; Series MS932_44, Reel 44 (accessed at http://search.ancestry.com/Browse/BookView.aspx?dbid=7921&iid=ONMS932_44-0276) – p. 36, County of Ontario, Division of Reach, Marriage number 6 (stamped number 008745).

50. Ontario, Canada Births, 1869-1913, accessed on Ancestry.com 10 August 2010 (http://interactive.ancestry.com/8838/ONMS929_65-0151/2007894).

51. No birth record has been found. His birth date is from the 1901 census. His birth location is from his death record.

52. No birth record has been found. His birth month and year are calculated from the 1891 census and from his 1894 death record. His birth place is from his death record.

53. Ontario, Canada Births, 1869-1913, accessed on Ancestry.com 10 August 2010 (http://interactive.ancestry.com/8838/ONMS929_95-0076/1288449).

54. Census of Canada, 1891, Schedule No. 1 – Nominal Return of the Living, Province of Ontario, District No. 101 - South Ontario, Sub District C – Township of Reach No. 2, p. 5, lines 16-21. Riby is shown as a Farm Labourer.

55. Ontario, Canada Births, 1869-1913, accessed on Ancestry.com 10 August 2010 (http://interactive.ancestry.com/8838/ONMS929_111-0676/1928376).

56. Ontario, Canada, Deaths, 1869-1938 and Deaths Overseas, 1939-1947, accessed on Ancestry.com 10 August 2010 (http://interactive.ancestry.com/8946/ONMS935_72-0454/1835705).

57. Ontario, Canada Births, 1869-1913, accessed on Ancestry.com 10 August 2010 (http://interactive.ancestry.com/8838/ONMS929_133-0632/461824).

58. Ontario, Canada, Deaths, 1869-1938 and Deaths Overseas, 1939-1947, accessed on Ancestry.com 10 August 2010 (http://interactive.ancestry.com/8946/ONMS935_98-0177/1620566).

59. Fourth Census of Canada, 1901, Schedule No. 1 Population, Province of Ontario, District No. 98 Ontario South, Sub District B, Polling Subdivision 3 in Port Perry, p. 2, lines 36-40.

60. Ontario, Canada, Deaths, 1869-1938 and Deaths Overseas, 1939-1947, accessed on Ancestry.com 10 August 2010 (http://interactive.ancestry.com/8946/ONMS935_117-0045/2039334).

61. Ontario, Canada, Marriages, 1801-1928, accessed on Ancestry.com 10 August 2010 (http://interactive.ancestry.com/7921/ONMS932_186-0208/3486644).

62. Fifth Census of Canada, 1911; Schedule No. 1 Population by Name, Person, Description, etc.; Province of Ontario, District 123 Toronto East, Sub District 2, Enumeration District 3 in Toronto City Ward 2, p. 30, lines 43-44.

63. Ontario, Canada Births, 1869-1913, accessed on Ancestry.com 10 August 2010 (http://interactive.ancestry.com/8838/31527_211842-00165/2435167).

64. Toronto Star Obituary, accessed at the Canadian Virtual War Memorial (<http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/collections/virtualmem/Detail/304624>).

65. Ontario, Canada, Deaths, 1869-1938 and Deaths Overseas, 1939-1947, accessed on Ancestry.com 10 August 2010 (http://interactive.ancestry.com/8946/VRD-CAN1933_102641-00792/2810326).

66. Pine Hills Cemetery records, sent by the Cemetery staff to the author in 2010.

Tracks Through Time

This year's Conference theme is **Tracks Through Time**, in honor of the 130th anniversary of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) – the National Railway of Canada. It was built partly as a promise to British Columbia upon its entry into Confederation on 20 July 1871.

In very short time, however, it became known as the immigration train of Canada, as millions of immigrants from the British Isles and Eastern Europe came across the Atlantic Ocean on ships, with their sights on Western Canada and the free land available to them for farming.

During construction, the CPR became involved in the sale and settlement of land (1881), in the acquisition of the Dominion Express Company (1882), and the acceptance of commercial telegraph messages (1882).

For family historians, the opening of the West (Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia) by immigrants has proven to be the land of opportunity for research in many genealogical societies, archives, libraries, and museums that dot the landscape nationally. A good place to start is with **Peel's Prairie Provinces** at <http://peel.library.ualberta.ca>. It has references for directories, newspapers, maps, and books. The genealogy society of Manitoba is at <http://www.mbgenealogy.com>, the Saskatchewan society is at <http://www.saskgenealogy.com>, the Alberta society is at <http://www.abgenealogy.ca>, and the British Columbia society is at <http://www.bcgsc.ca>

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The **Name Game** is a service provided to OGS members (free) and the general public (on payment of \$10 per entry)*.

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