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A SHORT HISTORY OF THE ROB FAMILY FROM THE DIARY OF
JOSEPH WILLIAM ROB.

Ralph Rob married on May 24th, 1792 at Topcliffe, Yorkshire, Mary daughter of John Smith of Wath, near Ripon, Yorkshire. Mary Smith was born at Wath on September 13th, 1770. Her father married Mary Milner at Thirsk on July 6th, 1769.

Ralph Rob had seven children. 1. Mary born May 7th, 1793. 2. John born March 13th, 1795. 3. Anne born May 5th, 1797. 4. Ralph born Novemer 23rd, 1799. 5. Margaret born March 7th, 1803. 6. Ellin born March 19th, 1806. 7. Andrew born March 3rd, 1808.

Ralph Rob came from near Stirling in Scotland. Mains of Mensty or Menstic Farm near Stirling was Ralph Rob's birthplace. Andrew Rob stayed on at the farm. Andrew and Ralph may have had a lawsuit about the farm. Andrew was probably Ralph's elder brother. Ralph bred the long horned, shaggy coated Highland cattle and won many prizes with them. John Rob, his son had several oil paintings of the best of these prize animals and also some of the heads mounted on boards to hang on the wall.

Ralph Rob first lived at Bourne, Lincolnshire in a house which belong to Lord Willoughby d'Ersby, now Lord Ancaster. Afterwards he bought land at Catton and Skipton on Swale but he lived at Thorpefields near Thirsk in a house belonging to Lord Leconfield. Ralph Rob was a successful man of substance. (In the book "The Drovers" by K.J. Bonsor 1970 it states, "Some of the English dealers were men of substance. Ralph Rob of Topcliffe, near Thirsk for instance, took £30000 with him to Falkirk Tryst in Bank of England notes early in the 19th century and returned with 12,000 head of cattle, having drawn bills for the balance of their purchase price. The profits on droving are not easy to calculate. A drove might consist of from a hundred to three hundred beasts, with one drover to every 50 or 60 animals, though much larger droves were sometimes collected. Those of important dealers in the early 19th century were numbered in thousands and sometimes stretched for several miles.)

Ralph's son, John, married Rebecca Dresser. John died December 23rd, 1856. He and Rebecca had eight children. 1. John Smith born 1825. 2. William Ralph

2

3. Joseph Dresser born January 2nd, 1828. 4. Rebecca, born 1830. 5. Caroline
6. Henry, born February 14th, 1834. 7. Mary Jane. 8. Elizabeth born May 20th,
1841. John Smith Rob died March 8th, 1895. William Ralph Rob died Nov. 23rd
1887. Henry Rob died May 26th, 1919

With regard to the spelling of the name Rob with one "b". I have seen the books which Ralph Rob used at school and in them he spelt his name with one "b". The writing was not that of a boy just learning to spell, nor were the books those which a boy would use during his first year or two at school so that the probability of a mistake is small. Moreover there were several books. I saw these at Thorpefields before Rebecca died which was on January 7th 1883. That shows that certainly about 1785 the name was spelt Rob and almost certainly if Ralph Rob spelt his name with one "b" when he was at school his father was using the same spelling which takes us back to the middle of the 18th century. It is difficult in the 20th century to get the name spelt with one "b" and it is not likely to have been more easy in the 18th century. The line of least resistance would be to use two "bs" so that it is more than probable that Rob is correct. Henry Dresser FRS, author of a book on birds which had a great sale in the latter half of the 19th century, who was a nephew of Rebecca Dresser, told me, though he gave no facts to support his statement, that he was sure that the name had been spelt with one "b" ever since the beginning of the 18th century.

Robs were probably members of the MacFarlane clan. On Nov. 26th, 1961 Kit Rob wrote a letter to Charles Rob saying, "About a month ago I did a Broadcast on alien plants and in my "fanmail" got a letter from an obviously crazy type at Hexham. I wrote and thanked him and told him he had spelt my name wrong. (He is a student of Scottish history) He was very interested in my letter and wrote me a whole lot which I can't now find about the Robs being MacFarlanes confirming our belief that this was so since which he has sent my letter to his friend Cameron of Aedgour - who it seems is one of the authorities on Scottish surnames. Cameron replied as follows; "The form Rob may be unknown in Scotland now - that is at the present time, but it was not always so. Nicholas Rob was a witness to a deed in Dumfriesshire in 1542, whilst John Rob was a citizen of Glasgow in 1557 - Entry money was paid by Jonah? Rob for the lands of Connetown in Stirlingshire in 1563. Barnsely notes, in what I expect was a Directory book that there were two families of that name situated in Yorkshire

③

about the end of the last century. AC" I thought this would interest you. I have no decent map of the Stirling area, but Mensty where we know we sprang from cannot be far from Cornetoun - so that may be us."

John and Rebecca Dresser were married in 1824 at Gretna Green. The Dressers lived at Topcliffe in a house on the East side of the road from Topcliffe to Catton, opposite the water mill on the River Swale. For some reasons Rebecca's parents refused to consent to the marriage and opposed it in every way. One night however, John Rob arranged to have a carriage waiting on the main road to the North which runs through Topcliffe. He then rode his horse to Rebecca's house. Her bedroom window opened on to the side of the house next to the road without any intervening garden or path. Rebecca got out of the window and rode off behind John to the carriage in which they drove away to Gretna Green and were wed over the anvil by the blacksmith. The window is the one at the South of the house.

In 1813 a horse called Otterington belonging to John Rob won the St. Leger, at Doncaster. Otterington's sire was Columpus and his dam Expectation. It is related that John Rob only entered Otterington for the race because some one made a bet of £1000 to £10 against him with John Rob. There are prints of this race at Catton.

Rebecca Rob born 1830 married John Richardson, a solicitor in Thirsk. They had one son named John Seavers Richardson.

Caroline Rob married Henry Tetley who lived at Bridge Herrick near Ripon.

Elizabeth Rob born 1841 married Thomas Clayhills of Darlington, a solicitor on Oct. 10th 1866.

Henry Tetley who married Caroline Rob was the son of the sister of Rebecca Dresser who married John Rob. Therefore he married his first cousin. Joseph married a sister of Sir Charles Dodsworth. Thirdly one of Henry Tetley's sister's married Obadiah Willans of Leeds. Joseph had three sons, William, Frank and Cadwallader. Obadiah Willans had three sons one of whom, James Tetley Willans married Henrietta Mary, Cissie, daughter of Joseph Dresser Rob. Henry Dresser, FRS. mentioned above was the son of Henry Dresser, brother of Rebecca Rob. He made a valuable collection of birds which he cured and mounted himself. This collection is now in the museum of Manchester University.

Joseph Dresser Rob born Jan. 2nd 1828 married Henrietta Elizabeth, daughter of

4

- 4 -

the Rev William Walker. She was born March 22nd, 1938 and died April 8th 1882. Joseph Dresser Rob died Dec. 4th 1876.

William Walker was vicar of Slingsby near Malton, Yorkshire. His wife was a daughter of the Rev. Henry John Todd. The following particulars are taken from the Dictionary of National Biography. "He was the son of the Rev. Henry Todd, curate of Britford, near Salisbury Wiltshire. He was born in 1763. From 1771 to 1779 he was a choral scholar of Magdalen College, Oxford. Later he was fellow of Hertford College, Oxford. Then a minor cannon of Canterbury Cathedral. Rector of All Hallows, Lombard Street, London from 1801 to 1810. Rector of Woolwich 1803 to 1805. Chaplain to the Archbishop of Canterbury and Librarian at Lambeth Palace. In 1807 he was appointed Rector of Coulsden, and in 1812 was made chaplain to King George III. In 1820 he became Rector of Strington in Yorkshire and Canon of York Cathedral in 1830. Archdeacon of Cleveland and subsequently, he was Chaplain to King George IV and King William IV and to Queen Victoria. ie four successive sovereigns of England. He married Anne Dixon who died in 1884. He died Dec. 24th, 1845. He was noted for his exceptionally acute and retentive memory. He published an edition of the works of Spenser, in eight volumes in 1805 and an edition of Milton's works in six volumes in 1801.

John Rob, born 1798, built a house at Catton on a raised peice of ground on the east side of the road to Skipton on Swale. He never lived in this house himself, but his son Henry, born 1834 did and his daughter Mary Jane lived there. Later on Henry Rob, son of Joseph Dresser Rob lived there.

*My Father
C.R.*

William Walker died at Slingsby in 1852. One of his sons became rector of Sleights near Whitby, another Rector of Burythorpe near Malton. One of his daughter's married her cousin, Thomas Walker and another married Arthur Jackson. William Walker's daughter Catherine lived with her sister, Henrietta Elizabeth Rob after her father's death and after Mrs. Rob's death she cared for her children until 1883 when she went to live with her other sister, Mrs. Walker. She died November 12th, 1912.

Joseph Dresser Rob, after his marriage to Henrietta Elizabeth Walker, lived first at a very old house called Leckenbury Old Hall

Ivy House Now Pulled down

Skipsy Now

(5)

Later on Joseph Dresser Rob moved to another house called Skipton Hall. He had eleven children. 1. John born March 2nd 1862 died August 3rd 1897. 2 Joseph born May 1st 1863 died May 3rd 1863. 3 & 4 Mary and Caroline, twins, born February 15th 1864 and died the same day. 5. Henrietta Mary born September 8th 1865. 6 Henry born October 4th 1868. 7 Georgina Born Dec. 18th 1866 died April 14th 1872. Charles born March 3rd, 1870. Alexander born Apr. 9th 1872 10. Grace born May 3rd 1873 11. Joseph William born Oct. 14th, 1876. Charles died Feb. 8th 1927. (The two sons of John Rob who left England were Alexander Rob who went to Kenya. In 1938 he came home and was ill and came into St. Thomas's Hospital where I saw him. He died between 1939 and 1945. John Rob emigrated to Canada and went to live at Quibel Ontario. I believe some of his family still live there. CGR)

Henry son of Joseph Dresser Rob born 1868, married in 1900 Muriel, daughter of Dr. Thomas Carter Mitchell of Topcliffe. They have three children alive. 1. Guy Henry born 1901. 2 Catherine Muriel born 1906. 3. Geoffrey Charles born 1909.

→ Alexander son of Joseph Dresser Rob went to Australia in 1889 married there and has several children. He lives at Hillyfields, Alma, Northampton. Western Australia. His wife's name is Elizabeth. GRANDFATHER OF ELAINE (DECEASED) SANDOZ PETER, RALPH & ROBERT

Grace married in 1900 Algernon Richard Prestwich and has one daughter, Grace Audrey, born 1902. *Now dead*

Joseph William, son of Joseph Dresser married Jan. 4th, 1906 at Swaffham, Norfolk Alice Maud daughter of the Rev. Canon Granville Smith. He has three children. 1. Margaret Mary, born Feb. 19th, 1907. 2. Charles Granville born May 4th 1913. 3. John Vernon, born Dec. 17th 1915.

Joseph Dresser, brother of Rebecca Rob, used to live at Skipton on Swale in a house near the bridge. He was bedridden for a long time before his death. We went to see him often as children, partly because he had an old housekeeper who often gave us "sixpence out of master's bag". He lay in an old four poster bed with red curtains all around it. He wore an old white pyramidal cap and as he lay propped up on the pillows with a fringe of white hair crowning his thin and wrinkled face he looked very like one of the illustrations in Dickens' books. The sound of a horse's hoofs or the wheels of a carriage would always bring his face to the window near which his bed was placed and as children we often waited

6

- 6 -

to see his nightcap appear. The first parson at Skipton on Swale was called Sweeting. He married Rebecca Rob's sister. She lost her sight when a bottle of soda water burst in her face as she was opening it. After Mr. Sweeting died she lived at Ainerby Quernow.

Joseph Dresser Rob died from enteric or as it was then called typhoid fever which he contracted at a dinner given by the Mayor of Ripon. Several others becamed infected by the the oysters probably. Dr. Clifford Allbutt was then on the staff of the Leeds Infirmary and he came to see my father. Twenty years later when he was Professor of Medicine at Cambridge and I was a medical student he talked to me about his visit to Skipton.

Henrietta Elizabeth Rob died of pneumonia in 1882. The people in the village always called her "Mrs. Joseph" and were very fond of her. She was also very popular in the neighbourhood. This I state on the authority of a parson who followed Mr. Sweeting at Skipton. His name was Willan. After my mother's death, her sister, Catherine Walker, who was a good deal older having been born in 1825 looked after the house at Skipton and we children until the eldest John came of age in 1883. Joseph Dresser Rob died without making a will, and in as much as his wife was also dead, his eldest son John, when he came of age in 1883, became the possessor of all his property which consisted of the house at Skipton on Swale as well as all the land. The reasons do not matter now, but John Rob sold the house and land at Skipton and went off with all the money leaving his brothers and sisters penniless. The uncles at Catton and Thorpefields took them in and educated them.

In October 1891 Henrietta Mary Rob was married at Topcliffe Church to James Tetley Willans.

In 1890 John Smith Rob left Thorpefields and moved into the house at Skipton on Swale in which Joseph Dresser had previously lived. He died in 1895.

Life in the country when I was growing up at Catton was very different from what it is now. There was no parcel post. The nearest telegraph office was at Thirsk and five shillings had to be paid for the delivery of a telegram. There were no "safety bicycles" only the "penny farthing" kind. The roads were never rolled with a steam roller. The stone for mending them was broken to the right size by men who sat by the side of the road with hammers with long handles. The broken stone was then spread over the road and the wheels of the traffic vehicles rolled it in. Not infrequently one of these loose stones became fixed in the hoof of a horse and many people carried a small tool with them which they used to pull the stone out.

The winters of 1880 and 1881 were very severe and the water of ten froze in the jugs in the bedrooms and several times there was ice in the milk. In Oct 1981 there was a very violent gale which did a great deal of damage.

The nursery at Skipton was papered with pictures taken from "The Graphic". Among the pictures I remember was one showing the arrival of "Cleopatria's Needle" in London, one of Lord Salisbury, Disraeli and Bismark at the Congress of Berlin, one of General Roberts marching into Kandahar, one of Rorke's Drift, one of the death of the Prince Imperial, one of Cetewayo, and one of the Tay Bridge Disaster.

In 1881 all the cooking and laundry work was done at home. All the jam, pickle, bread, cakes etc., were made at home. The bacon and ham was cured at home. The only vegetable and fruit available were those grown in the garden which means there were not apples for example from February to October. The village butcher "killed" twice a week - a sheep early in the week and a bullock later in the week to provide beef for Sunday dinner. Game in the autumn and rabbits, fowls, ducks, geese and turkeys filled up the gaps. Fish was not often seen except in cold weather when it could be hawked around.

Ordinary candles were made at home by pouring melted tallow into tin moulds with a wick of string down the middle. Wax candles were a luxury. The sugar was bought not in neat cubes but in conical loaves which had to be cut up into peices of convenient size with a special cutter.

Everybody said that the agricultural labourers at both Skipton and Catton were very generously treated by the Robs. The family made it a point of honour to be generous to others, though wasterfullness of all kinds and luxury of any sort was discouraged at home. The wages paid were as high as any paid in the district. In addition each household was given two pints of milk every day and was allowed ground to grow his own potatoes in one of the fields each year. At Christmas each family was given a large piece of cheese weighing about two pounds, about half a pint of rum and a large flat fruit cake called locally a Yule Cake. Anyone who came to the house with a message or a parcel or for any other purpose was always given "a bite to eat" which meant a good feed of meat and bread and a pint of beer or some tea and cake.

8

There were some interesting local customs which have now gone out of use. First "The Lucky Bird". Mr. Morris of Nunburnholme told me this custom dated back to long before the Norman Conquest. Originally, the custom was to give a present to the first person who wished you a Happy Christmas. At Skipton and Catton and I believe in other parts of Yorkshire this developed into some boy from one of the cottages coming to the house early on Christmas morning and singing an old rhyme. This developed into a nuisance because the boys tried to get in front of one another and so came at unreasonably early hours, and also if two boys came at the same time they fought. It was therefore decided that a boy should be chosen each year from the largest family in the village. Instead of shouting under the windows at Catton as he used to he was let into the house about 7.0 am. He then sang the rhyme in the hall and was given Yule Cake and a shilling and went off. The words he sang were these.

"Lucky Bird, Lucky Bird. Chuck Chuck Chuck.

Master and Mistress it's time to get up.

I wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year,
a pocketful of money and a cellar full of beer,
A fine fat hen and a new calven cow,
And Master & Mistress, how do you do?

I wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year
So please will you give me a Christmas Box?"

Another custom regularly observed was "The Waits", a party who used to go around from house to house at Christmas singing carols and hymns. One of the party played the tunes on a fiddle. After they had sung they were given cakes and ale. At the end of the harvest it was the custom to give all the workmen what was called "The Mell Supper." The Mell was the name of the last sheaf of corn to be brought in. When it was hoisted on to the stock the foreman climbed onto a cart and shouted out a rhyme which I cannot recollect, but it began with words to this effect, "Bless the day that Christ was born

We've gotten the Mell of Mr. Rob's corn."

and it went on to tell how it had been mown and put into sheaves etc. Instead of a supper it became the custom to give each man a shilling in addition to his wages. This, I believe, has now been entirely given up.