

## Charles Brebner... Glenmuick, Tarland and Ontario, Canada

One of the biggest hurdles in connecting families that emigrated is proving that the person in Scotland is the same person as the one in the new country. If a couple emigrates with children whose birth dates are known, and the same sequence of names is found in a subsequent census in the new location, then that connection is can be verified. It becomes more complicated with the death of the original spouse and subsequent remarriage with additional children. Unless census records show an overlap of children from both marriages, then it is often difficult to prove that the husband of each family is the same man. Such was the case of **Charles Brebner** from Glenmuick, Scotland.

**Charles Brebner**, son of tailor **Isaac Brebner** and **Margaret Wright** in Tombea<sup>i</sup>, Glenmuick. He was christened 24<sup>th</sup> May 1803<sup>ii</sup>, and married **Anne Strachan** in 1829<sup>iii</sup>, having the following children<sup>iv</sup> in Scotland:

<b>Anne</b>	1829
<b>James</b>	1830
<b>William</b>	1831
<b>Isaac</b>	1833
<b>Robert</b>	1835

With the exception of eldest daughter **Anne**, who has yet to be found (but may have been in Huntly in 1851, and subsequently married after that time), all other children, lived in Ontario from at least as early as 1851. According to the History of Huron County<sup>v</sup>, the family came to America about 1836.

Another family of **Charles Brebner** and **Martha Morrison** was found living in Bosanquet, Lambton Co., ON from at least as early as 1861 (the 1851 Bosanquet, ON census is missing). According to that **Charles'** death certificate, he was born Aberdeenshire in May, 1803. They had (at least) six children:

<b>Catherine</b>	1849
<b>Neil Morrison</b>	1852
<b>Alexander</b>	1854
<b>Mary Ann</b>	1856
<b>George</b>	1859
<b>Ellen</b>	1861

Now two facts suggest to me that the above **Charles Brebners** are one and the same. First of all, I can only find consecutive records for a single **Charles Brebner**. The **Charles** married to **Anne Strachan** can be found in Scottish OPR records for christening and marriage. The second **Charles** is found in the 1861, 1871 and 1881 Ontario census records as well as his death in 1890. Both are recorded as being born in May, 1803.

The second fact is that none of the children's names in the two families are duplicated, which leads me to believe that **Martha Morrison** was the second wife of the original **Charles Brebner**.

Finding an 1851 Canadian census record would allow seeing if any of the children of the earlier marriage appeared with the second family. A search in the Library and Archives Canada determined that the 1851 Bosanquet census no longer existed, so I was about to give up when I discovered that the family was indeed enumerated in an 1851 Ontario census... but not in Lambton.

That 1851 Canadian census recently became available on ancestry.com, and in another stroke of good luck, that **Brebner** family were found, not in Bosanquet, but in Spencerville<sup>vi</sup>, Edwardsburgh Twp. in Grenville County in Eastern Ontario<sup>vii</sup>. As predicted, a **Charles Brebner** and wife **Martha** headed up the family, with children:

<b>James</b>	1828	born Scotland
<b>William</b>	1830	born Scotland
<b>Isaac</b>	1831	born Scotland
<b>Robert</b>	1833	born Scotland
<b>Charles</b>	1837	born Canada
<b>Margaret</b>	1838	born Canada
<b>Catherine</b>	1846	born Canada
<b>Alexander</b>	1848	born Canada

An added bonus were two step-children, likely from an earlier marriage of second wife **Martha**:

**Archibald McTagart** 1838 born Scotland  
**Martha McTagart** 1841 born Canada

The family lived in a frame house, and neighbours enumerated nearby ran grist and saw mills, which suggests that the property bounded the South Nation River in Spencerville. (See 1851 census image below.)



Left: Frame buildings in Spencerville

More information on the area may be found at the [Grenville County Historical Society web-site](#) or at their headquarters in Prescott.

A search for **Archibald McTaggart** on the IGI Family Search site as well as the ancestry.com 1841 Scottish census index came up blank, so it's likely that he was in Upper Canada by then.

14	Charles Brebner	Tailor & Farmer	Scotland	Free Pruby		44	X
15	Martha Brebner		do	do		35	X
16	James Brebner	labourer	do	do	Seneca C. W.	22	X
17	William Brebner	labourer	do	do	Seneca C. W.	20	X
18	Isaac Brebner	Sailor with Father	do	do		19	X
19	Robert Brebner	labourer do	do	do		17	X
20	Charles Brebner		Canada	do		14	X
21	Margaret Brebner		do	do		12	X
22	Archibald McTagart	stepson	Scotland	do		11	X
23	Martha McTagart	step daughter	Canada	do		9	X
24	Catherine Brebner		do	do		4	X
25	Henry Brebner		do	do		2	X

It's interesting to note that **Charles** was shown as both tailor and farmer, and that son **Isaac** was also shown as being a tailor. Trades often ran in a family, although from subsequent census data, both father and son seemed to have abandoned that line of work. **Charles'** father in Glenmuick was a tailor, as were several other descendants of this family.

Son **Charles Brebner** born in 1837 in Ontario married **Melissa McLellan** about 1868<sup>viii</sup>, and settled in Northwood, IA where the family had (at least) three children. The family then moved to California. His birth date would place him after the last child in the first **Charles Brebner** family, and before the first child in the second, and his birthplace of Ontario in 1851 and subsequent census data confirms his place in this family as a child of **Charles Brebner** and **Anne Strachan**.

If **Charles'** wife **Anne Strachan** had died in Spencerville, then there might be a record, but a subsequent check of graves and burial records in St. Andrews Presbyterian Church found nothing.



Left: St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Spencerville

From this it seems likely that **Charles** married **Margaret** at some point after the birth of **Martha McTagart** in 1841, confirming that children **Charles** and **Margaret**, both born in Canada were from his earlier marriage to **Anne Strachan**.

By 1861 the family had moved west to Bosanquet Township, where **Charles** farmed for his remaining years until 1890. The 1861 census<sup>ix</sup> shows the family in a log house:

<b>Charles</b>	51	born Scotland
<b>Martha</b>	40	born Scotland
<b>Catherine</b>	10	born Canada
<b>Neil</b>	8	born Canada
<b>Alexander</b>	6	born Canada
<b>Mary</b>	4	born Canada
<b>George</b>	2	born Canada

And step-daughter:

<b>Martha McTagart</b>	16	born Canada
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Tracing daughters who married before consistent Ontario marriage records were available presents another problem. In smaller communities, it's often possible to check census data for areas where the family lived. In some cases, daughters and their new husbands started their married life living with or near to the parents, especially in farming communities. Knowing the married surname allows a death record search, which will often turn up parents names, but without that, the process can be very much one of trial and error. Later Canadian censuses do show birthdates, although be warned that while the day and month of a birth are often correct, the year, especially in the case of women, may be more optimistic than accurate!

At this writing I have not located some of **Charles'** children. But as always, I'm convinced that the next discovery will be just around the corner! More research also must be undertaken to discover the origins (and fates) of those adopted **McTagart** children.

The elusive connections among the Glenmuick, Tarland and Coull **Brebner** families are gradually being revealed, and I expect that further discoveries in these genealogies will be forthcoming soon.

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<sup>i</sup> Tombea was a farmhouse between Aboyne and Ballater on the South Deeside Road. A visit in 2007 revealed that the original buildings no longer exist.

<sup>ii</sup> Old Parish Record Index

<sup>iii</sup> Old Parish Record Index, 18 JAN 1829, Tarland & Migvie, ABD.

<sup>iv</sup> Old Parish Record Index

<sup>v</sup> History of Huron County

<sup>vi</sup> "By 1821 Peleg Spencer was operating a grist-mill and sawmill on the South Nation River on a Clergy Lot he had leased in 1817, having previously owned a sawmill on the site from 1811 to 1814. David Spencer, son of Peleg, took over the mills in 1822 and patented the mill lot in 1831. By 1828 an Inn was located near "Spencer's Mills" and a settlement developed. David Spencer had a village plot surveyed in the 1840's and a post-office called "Spencerville" had been opened by October, 1846. In 1851 the village numbered some 250 inhabitants with a tannery and other industries, as well as Spencer's mills, which were later rebuilt in stone across the river." From *The Founding of Spencerville* Historical Plaque.

<sup>vii</sup> Edwardsburgh Township borders the St. Lawrence River in Eastern Ontario, and runs from Cardinal in the east to Prescott in the west, and north by Oxford and South Gower Townships. The family lived in a frame house in Spencerville. (Driving: Highway 416 from Ottawa to Prescott, Exit 12, County Road 21, 12 km north of Hwy. 401).

<sup>viii</sup> 1900 Osage, IA census (ancestry.com) gives length of marriage at 32 years.

<sup>ix</sup> Library and Archives Canada, 1861 Census, Bosanquet Township, Lambton Co., Ontario; Film C-1040.