

September 16, 1992

Ms. Gabrielle Blaschuk  
Information Services  
Cobourg Public Library  
18 Chapel Street  
Cobourg, ON K9A 1H9

Dear Ms. Blaschuk:

Last year you replied to my request for information on George Strange Boulton, and gave me several helpful leads. Since writing, my research has progressed to the point where I shall be making a research trip to Ontario. As I am traveling with my husband and able to spend only a limited amount of time in your community, I thought it best to write in advance to let you know my particular focus.

My great great grandmother was Anna Maria Walton Beck Boulton, second wife of George Strange Boulton. I would be interested in knowing where she was buried and any information about her life in Cobourg. She was an heiress from Schenectady, 42 years old with a teenage son, John Walton Romeyn Beck, when she came to Cobourg to become stepmother to Harriet, Georgiana and Edward Boulton, also teenagers. Her son remained, at least for awhile, at the home of his cousin, Catherine Beck VanCortland, at Croton, NY. Anna Maria Boulton died on December 12, 1862 in Peterborough. She is not buried in Little Lake Cemetery.

Georgiana Boulton married her step-brother, JWR Beck, on July 10, 1848 in Cobourg. There should be some record of them as Beck clerked for his father-in-law, George Strange, before deciding to enter the ministry. Any pictures you have of these people would be wonderful as I am attempting to identify 150 unlabeled pictures, many from Cobourg. I would be interested in Georgiana's grave, and also any records of children produced before 1851--the date of their first known living child. The family moved to Peterborough in 1857 when JWR Beck became Rector of St. John's Anglican Church. After bearing eight children, Georgiana Beck died in Peterborough on May 8, 1864 at age 37. She is not buried in Little Lake Cemetery.

Now things get complicated. JWR Beck's second wife was my great grandmother, Margaret Brown. Margaret Brown and her sisters came from Ireland in either 1840 or 1844. No one knows where they landed, but apparently they were trying to join relatives in Cobourg. A Landry family is mentioned. The sisters were Jane, Eliza and Catherine who married Mr. Sheppard, a customs inspector. After emigrating, Margaret's mother dies in 1844 in Albany trying to reach her brother in Sterling County, NY. We believe Margaret somehow came under the care of Mrs. Boulton, either as a companion, housekeeper or dressmaker. Therefore, I need census records to show the makeup of Northumberland Hall for the years 1841, 1851, 1861, 1871. Jane Brown can be placed in Cobourg in August, 1858 where she was staying with a Mrs. Ingram. Margaret Brown, after training in Toronto in Mrs. Lyon's establishment, opened two dressmaking shops in Cobourg, the first on April 2, 1859 at Henry Street. The second business resumed on May 1, 1863 on King Street between the Globe Hotel and the Registry



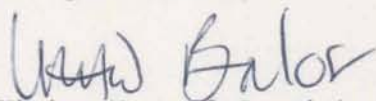
Office. I therefore need to look in City Directories to ascertain the existence of these businesses. On July 19, 1866, Margaret Brown married Rev. JWR Beck in Peterborough. Several members of the congregation believe Mr. Beck has "married his cook." This would presume Margaret Brown abandoned her business and went to Peterborough to care for Georgiana's eight small children, subsequently marrying my great grandfather.

There is also the matter of JWR Beck's severe reversal of fortune. He seems to have been a naive man who put his financial affairs into the hands of his father-in-law, George Strange Boulton. The Becks built, in 1860, an expensive, beautiful home in Ashburnham, known as St. Leonard's (now the site of St. Joseph's Hospital). By 1875, the house was so encumbered with debt and worthless third mortgages taken out by his father-in-law that the property was sold. The Becks were always referred to as "hocking the silver" in times of emergency. Some insight into the financial dealings of George Strange Boulton, particularly where they concerned Peterborough and possibly his son in law, would be a real treasure. The Boultons always said Beck spent his money foolishly on high living and too many children; the Becks claimed the Boultons ruined him. Luckily, a significant passage of time has elapsed to view these events with objectivity and sympathy. It could be assumed that the loss of money began around 1870 and culminated in selling St. Leonard's in 1875.

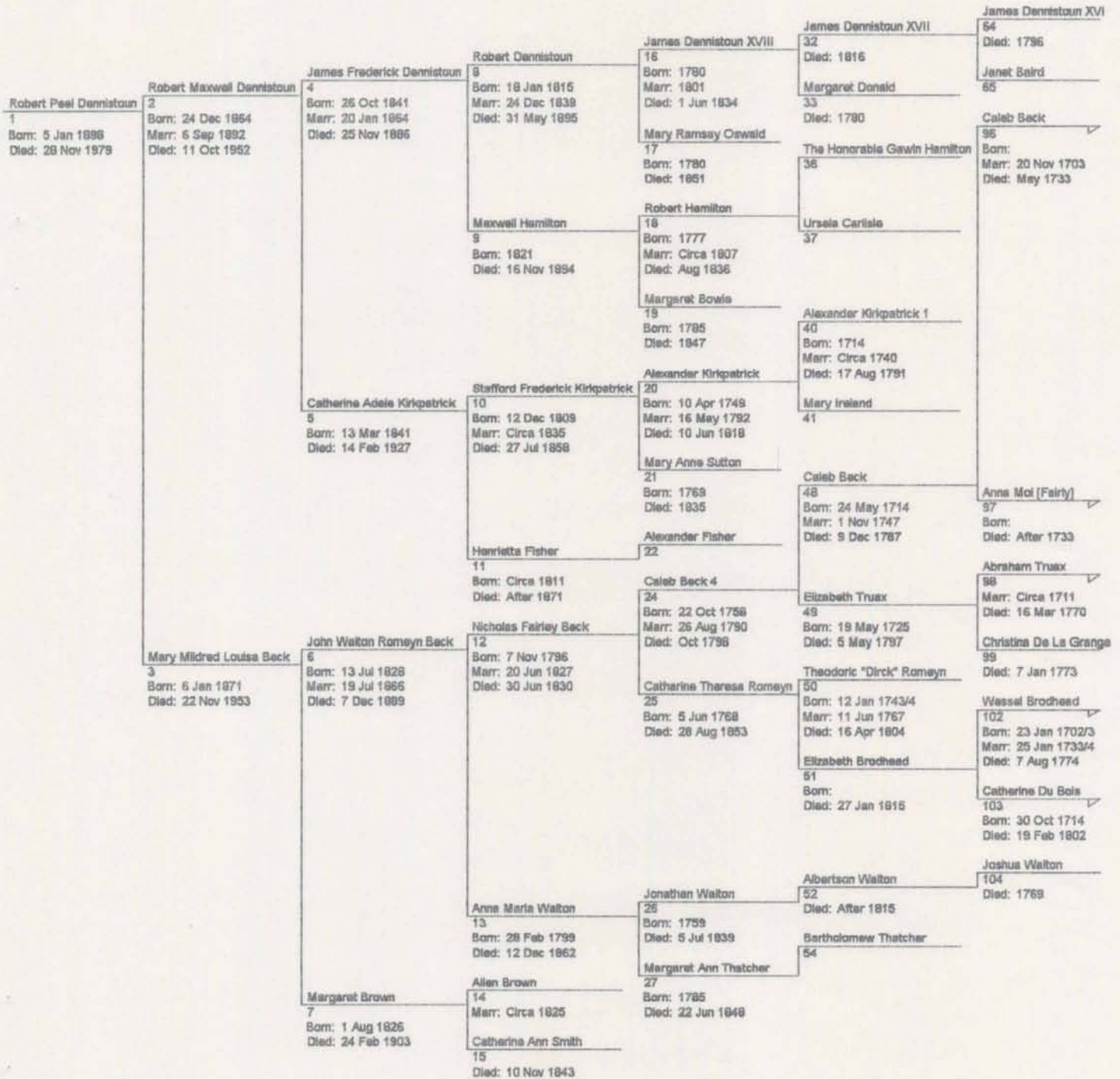
After the marriage of Margaret Brown and JWR Beck, some of the older children moved to Cobourg and lived with George Strange. At some point, the oldest son, George Fairley (b 1851) entered a mental institution where he remained for life. Harry Beck became a lawyer. Another son was lost at sea. Nicholas DuBois Beck became a Roman Catholic and moved to Edmonton. There are a great many descendants of this man. Anna Maria Beck became a nurse and died very young in Peterborough. What remained of the "first family" lived modestly in the Rectory with two small girls born to Margaret Brown when she was in her early 40s, my grandmother Mary Mildred Louise Beck Dennistoun and her sister, Georgiana Maud D'Eresby Beck Stevenson. I have always been bemused at Margaret Brown naming her first daughter after her husband's first wife. Perhaps it was not her idea! The girls were always known as Maud and Millie.

All this is much too long, and I apologize. I've enclosed some time lines and a pedigree chart which may help to sort this out. As Cobourg seems the center of many family mysteries, I am looking forward to visiting your library with great anticipation. I should be in your area approximately October 7/8, but we have no fixed schedule for our drive.

All good wishes,



Vivian Maxwell Dennistoun Boulos  
2205 Bigelow Avenue North  
Apartment 6  
Seattle, WA 98109





TIME CHART FOR MARGARET BROWN BECK

by

Robert Peel Dennistoun

1972

August 1, 1826: Born in Northern Ireland. Taken from the church tablet at St. John's. Born 8-1-1826. The Tablet: In loving memory of Margaret, widow of the Reverend Canon Beck, M.A., Born August 1, 1826 at Newbridge, Ireland. Died February 24, 1903 at Peterborough, Canada. She Hath Wrought Good Work. (Where did the parish get this information?)

June, 1840: Death announcement in the "Canadian Churchman" states that Margaret Brown arrived in Canada in 1840 (when she would have been 15 as family lore states. If she arrived in 1843, she would have been eighteen.)

A note in Mildred Beck Dennistoun's handwriting (not found) says that her grandfather, Allen Brown, died in Ireland. The Brown family came to New York in 1840. "My grandfather having died in Ireland, my grandmother brought the..."

June, 1843: Leave Ireland for Canada. A letter from Margaret to M.B. Hall, North Sterling, Cayuga County, NY dated November, 1843. She was 15. (This does not jibe with her birthdate. Where is this letter. Does she say she is 15? It appears rather that she was 18).

Her mother, Mrs. Brown has died. Margaret now in the family of Dr. Potter, Episcopal clergyman at Albany. This letter is to My Dear Uncle: saying that they left Ireland last June and landed in Canada. Catherine was left behind with Uncle Hugh. Jane was brought to Canada and left with Mr. Leary and Eliza was left with "My father's sister." She ends, "his affectionate niece." Another scrap of paper in my possession states that Catherine Ann Smith Brown died in New York in 1841.

November 1843 - August 1858: No known record of where Margaret Brown lived. Thought to have lived with Mrs. Boulton (who was married to George Strange Boulton in 1840) to help her with the three children left by his first wife. If that is the case and Margaret Brown cared for/helped with Harriet (17 in 1843), Edward Trevor (13 in 1843) and Georgiana (16 in 1843), it would explain why Harriet and Edward were buried in the Beck lots at Peterborough). (Need to find all available censuses for Cobourg 1840-1866 for record of Margaret Brown).

1851: Little Lake Cemetery incorporated (relative to burial of Georgiana Boulton Beck who was buried in Cobourg).

August 17, 1858: Margaret Brown in Toronto studying to be a dressmaker at Mrs. Lyon's establishment. Letter from Anna Maria Walton Beck Boulton in my possession written on that day from Northumberland Hall.

April 2, 1859: Announcement of dressmaker at Cobourg.

1859/1860: A second reference to St. Leonard's being built during these years. Beck still has money.

May 1, 1863: Resumed business of dressmaker at Cobourg.

1864: Georgiana Boulton Beck dies leaving eight children.

1860 - 1874 The Beck family lived at St. Leonard's in Ashburnham. Previously, the Beck family had resided in a pleasant family home "Trafalgar" now on Nicholl's Oval. A second source indicates St. Leonards was built in 1865. Which?

July 19, 1866: Married to John Walton Romeyn Beck at St. John's Church, Peterborough by the Rev. Mark Burnham.

May 29/30, 1867: Georgina Maud D'Eresby Beck born.

January 6, 1871: Mary Mildred Louise Beck born.

1874: St. Leonard's sold due to loss of Rev. Beck's independent fortune. "The family was always hocking the silver," Robert Maxwell Dennistoun.

December 7, 1889: Death of husband John Walton Romeyn Beck. Does Margaret have to leave the Rectory now and move to Toronto?

July 13, 1892: Marriage of Maud Beck to Arthur Stevenson at Toronto in Bishop Strachan's School chapel. (Living in Toronto?)

September 6, 1889: Marriage of Mildred Beck to Robert Maxwell Dennistoun in Peterborough, ON. At some point, Margaret Brown returns to Peterborough where she has a small home on Water Street. (Robert Maxwell Dennistoun's mother takes to her bed for three days upon hearing the news that her son is to marry Millie Beck).

February 24, 1903: Margaret Brown Beck died at Peterborough, age 76 years, at the home of her daughter, Mildred Beck Dennistoun. (Did this date come from the Death Certificate? Who gave the information. Would confirm birthdate of 1826.)

Notes from Mildred Beck Dennistoun's bible (in her handwriting): Death of John Walton Romeyn Beck, Saturday, December 7, 1889. Aged 61. Anna Maria Boulton, on 12th inst at residence of her son, John Walton Romeyn Beck, wife of George Strange Boulton of town of Cobourg, in 64 year. Shepherd (mother's sister) October 13 at 133 Park Street, north of ? Catherine Brown, wife of Francis Shepherd of H.M. Customs, age 56 years.



TIME CHART FOR JOHN WALTON ROMEYN BECK

July 30, 1828: Born at Schenectady at a quarter before 12 on the morning of the 30th day of July, 1828. Family bible. (Other sources state born on the 13th of July, 1827. Memorial window at St. John's born at Albany. Did his wife give this information? She was born in 1827 and possibly did not want to appear a year older than her husband).

1830: His father, Nicholas Fairley Beck dies in Albany and baby brother, Charles Thatcher Beck dies in Schenectady. Anna Maria Walton Beck has taken her two small children, one ailing, and returned to the Walton family home where she lives as a young widow keeping house for her wealthy parents until her marriage ten years later.

1840: His mother, Anna Maria Walton Beck (age 42) marries George Strange Boulton of Cobourg, Ontario. Probably Walton is sent to Van Cortland Manor House at Croton on the Hudson to be raised by his older cousin, Catherine Theresa Beck Van Cortland.

1842: Residing at Croton on the Hudson because there is a painting of him done there when he was fourteen. References in old letters indicate he was raised there after his mother married and moved to Cobourg.

1843 - 1848: School years. One account has him at Harvard Another at Upper Canada College. Where and when does he decide to take Holy Orders?

Clerked for his step-father, George Strange Boulton at his law office in Cobourg.

July 10, 1848: Marries Georgiana Boulton (born 1827), daughter of George Strange Boulton of Cobourg.

1851 - 1857: Missionary at Rice Lake and several small parishes surrounding Cobourg. A missionary was a "priest in charge" of a parish that lacked an endowed rectory. The Rice Lake parish had three points: Gore's Landing, and probably Harwood and Bewdley.

1853 - 1857: Walton Beck's salary was paid by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. (This is Anglican?)

18 November 1852: Assists the Rev. J. Shortt, Rector of Port Hope in a marriage ceremony at St. Peter's, Cobourg. Assisted by the Rev. Walton Beck, M.A. (Was this an honorary M.A. See clipping from Trinity College).

Decides to enter the ministry. (Where does he take Holy Orders).

January, 1851: Birth of first living child. Walton 23 years old and Georgiana 24. They have eight children--possibly more. The first five children (1851 - 1857) were born in Cobourg. After 1857, came to Peterborough as Rector of St. John's.

1 November 1857: First record of Walton Beck at St. John's, officiating at a

baptism. (The plaque in the church states that Beck arrived in 1856.)

Becomes Rector of St. John's Church, Peterborough at age 29. Considered young to have this post (and with five children). However, reading the town history of Peterboro, it appears there were other young ministers with large families, so this may not have been unusual. Walton Beck's independent means were noted when it was decided to give him the position. Some sources state that he was a protege of Bishop Strachan. It should also be noted that his wife Georgiana Boulton Beck's father was a member of the powerful Family Compact.

As there was no rectory provided, it is more likely that the church welcomed the independent means as an indication that the Beck family would be able to provide their own housing.

1860: Builds a large house in Ashburnham called St. Leonard's.

1862: Anna Maria Walton Beck Boulton dies in Peterborough at age 63 while visiting her son and daughter in law at their new home in Ashburnham.

1864: Georgiana Boulton Beck dies. Buried at Cobourg.

July 19, 1866: Marries his second wife, Margaret Brown. Service performed by the Rev. Mark Burnham. Some townspeople remark that Beck has "married his cook." Does this indicate that Margaret Brown came to Peterboro to take care of Walton Beck and his eight children after Georgiana died? What happened to the dressmaking business in Cobourg. CHECK THE DIRECTORIES IN COBOURG.

May 30, 1867: Georgina Maud D'Eresby Beck born.

13 February 1869: George Strange Boulton dies. Did his father-in-law ruin Walton? Apparently there were many worthless mortgages taken out on St. Leonard's which was encumbered with debt. ("They were always hocking the silver," Robert Maxwell Dennistoun.) Was Northumberland Hall sold now? There is a story of Margaret Brown Beck traveling to Cobourg to buy at auction the "Beck silver" with her own money that presumably belonged to Anna Maria Walton Beck Boulton. George Strange's daughter, Harriet, and son, Edward, were still alive.

January 6, 1871: Mary Mildred Louise Beck born.

1874: St. Leonard's was sold. The family had had a severe reversal of fortune. Walton Beck believed the house was being sold to the church, but it passed to a Mr. Campbell, lumber merchant.

February, 1880: Arthur Romeyn Beck is lost at sea while serving in the British Navy aboard the Atalanta.

December 7, 1889: Walton Beck dies at Peterborough after a lingering illness and an incapacitation of many months. His family leaves the Rectory and moves to Toronto. He was age 61.

1903: Margaret Brown Beck dies in Peterborough at age 75. She had returned to a small house on Water Street. Her two married daughters live nearby.