

ROBERT HUTCHISON: A Name Long Treasured

A family history paper
prepared in December 1986
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revision and retyping 2008

Introduction

This paper is the first of a group of papers I hope to prepare, as a part of an ongoing Family History Project. It is my hope that by sharing with my family the stories and genealogies of those that have come before us, we might all grow in our love of history and in appreciation of the lives that have made ours possible.

This paper, written in December 1986, draws together the information I presently have about the four generations of Robert Hutchisons in our family. I have tried to separate fact from supposition, as much as possible and have included a list of references at the close. Research, for me, is a continuing process and I hope to glean much more information about our Hutchison family as time goes on. I will look forward to re-writing or supplementing this paper in the future.

My ultimate goal is to prepare a whole series of papers on the many members of our family and to share these with my children. This paper is directed to my brother Bob, the fourth in our known line of Robert Hutchisons.

With Love,
Pamela Hutchison Garrett, 1986.

Four Robert Hutchisons



Robert Hutchison, born 1857 in Ayrshire Scotland. Coal Miner in Southeastern Oklahoma, died 1926.



Robert Hutchison born in Indian Territory, 1901. Oklahoma City lumberman, died 1973.



Robert Hutchison, born 1928 in Oklahoma City. OKC lumberman, retired to Gunnison Colorado.



Robert Lawrence Hutchison, born 1951 in Oklahoma City, woodcraftsman in Colorado Springs Colorado.

The name of Robert Hutchison is not an uncommon one. Coming primarily from Scotland to the United States, I have seen it often as I research. But, this is a story of four men who share the name, and who have passed it from themselves to the next generation as a tradition. Surely it makes for a strong link between them. The first Robert Hutchison that we know of was born 17 February 1857 [1858] in Springside, Ayrshire Scotland. Certainly chances are good that his father also was Robert Hutchison, but that waits yet to be known by us. [Later research revealed that Robert Hutchison's parents were John Hutchison and Jane Faulds of Ayrshire Scotland.]

The history of Scotland, like any other, is long and complicated. One of Scotland's more interesting novelties is the Clan System, which began probably during the 12th century. Modern texts tell us that the Hutchison name come out of the famous McDonald Clan, or family group.

Our first Robert Hutchison landed in the United States in 1880, when he was about 23 years of age. His daughter, Robena Hutchison Crim, believes that he came to this country without his family. It would be difficult for us to know what brought him here. In "The History of Scotland" by Fry they comment, "Economic distress, uncertainty about the future and deep depression about the changes in Scotland's status combined to drive many able and energetic Scots to leave their homeland and seek new lives and fortunes abroad. Many others were driven off the lands worked by them and their ancestors for generations, notably in the Highlands. Some Scots emigrated because they were fired with the spirit of adventure." According to his obituary, Robert Hutchison settled in Rush Hill, Missouri upon his arrival in the US. Missouri has towns by the name of Rush Hill in Audrain county and Rich Hill in Bates county. Other family information suggests that he may have lived in Rich Hill, so this remains in question.

It was in Missouri that he met and married Isabella Wilson. It is interesting to note, according to family tradition, that Robert Hutchison and Isabell Wilson were born within ten miles of one another in Scotland, but they did not meet until coming to this country. Isabell Wilson was born 19 May 1867 in Ayrshire Scotland and came to this country with her family as a girl. The date of her arrival in the United States and the area in which her family settled are still somewhat in question. From information provided in her obituary and from her daughter, Robena Hutchison Crim, it would appear that she came with her mother, also Isabella Wilson, two sisters, Kate and Jennie Wilson, and two brothers, names unknown. [Isabell Wilson had one brother John Wilson.] They originally settled near Decatur Illinois. Her obituary suggests that she arrived about 1883, immediately prior to her marriage to Robert Hutchison, at the age of sixteen. [The Wilson family came to the US in 1881 and lived briefly near Decatur Illinois. John Wilson and Kate Wilson McKenzie remained in Illinois, but young Isabell Wilson, her sister Jane Wilson and her mother Isabella Wilson appeared to have moved on to Missouri about 1882-83, where other Wilson family members were living.]

[Robert Hutchison married Isabell Wilson in 1883 in Bates county Missouri.] Eight children were born to the marriage of Robert Hutchison and Isabella Wilson. Only four lived past early childhood. Their first child, John Hutchison was born 12 January 1884.

Their next four children, William Hutchison, Jane Hutchison, Isabell Hutchison and Robert Hutchison all died before reaching their third birthday. Family tradition tells us that Isabella Wilson Hutchison traveled back and forth across the ocean eight times and buried two of her sons at sea. This might suggest that William Hutchison and Robert Hutchison died as infants, possibly while traveling to visit family members in Scotland. Their last three children, Hazel Hutchison born 1893, Robena Hutchison born 1898 and Robert Hutchison born 1901 have all been known to us. Both Hazel Hutchison Richards and Robena Hutchison Crim are still living in 1986. As you see both the fifth and eighth child were named Robert Hutchison. The first Robert dying in infancy, they used the name again when another son was born.

I do not know the nature of the work Robert Hutchison did in Missouri, but I suspicion that he worked in the coalmines, as there were many in that area. In 1886 he and his wife, Isabell, and the first of their children came to Indian Territory, settling in what is now Southeastern Oklahoma. The family lived in several different communities in this area, including Krebs, McAlester, Lehigh, and Coalgate. Probably most of their time while their children were growing up was spent in Lehigh, Coal county Oklahoma. Again this was primarily a coal mining community. Robena Hutchison Crim tells us that her father worked in the coalmines of Scotland before coming to the United States. In Lehigh he worked as a weigher and forman at the #5 and #8 mines primarily. This apparently was one of the more important and responsible jobs in the mine area. Robert Hutchison had developed significant skills for his work over the years. But, coal mining was not the only work he knew. Robena recalls that he, at one time, attempted a furniture business in McAlester. During a visit to the Charles France Room (Oklahoma History) at the Downtown Oklahoma City Library I located a gazetteer and Business Directory of Indian Territory dated 1901. In the Lehigh section it listed Robert Hutchison as a seller of second hand goods. Apparently, Robert Hutchison intended to get out of the coal mining industry. It was dangerous and hard work. But, it was after these ventures into other fields that he returned to the mines.

Isabell Wilson Hutchison's mother, Isabell Donaldson Wilson, lived in Coalgate for a number of years, operating a bakery there. In her old age she came to live with the Hutchisons. I do not know when she died . . . [Isabell Donaldson Wilson died between 1907-1909.] Robena Hutchison Crim claims she lived to be 85 years old. Robena tells me that she is buried, probably with her daughter and son-in-law at the Lehigh cemetery. When my sister, Stephanie Hutchison Wallace, and I searched the cemetery in February 1986 we found no marker for her. There were three plots around the Hutchison headstone though. Only Robert Hutchison's name was on the stone. There was a small temporary placket stuck in the found to indicate the burial of Isabell Wilson Hutchison, but nothing to indicate his mother-in-law's burial. I would like to find out more about this and possibly have the graves more properly marked.

During these years in Southeastern Oklahoma, Isabell filled the traditional roles of wife and mother, raising their four children. John Hutchison was considerably older than the younger three children. He began work at a local lumberyard while our grandfather, Robert Hutchison, was still toddling about at home. Sometime around 1915 Robert and

Isabella moved off to Dallas and Galveston Texas with their younger children. But the children shortly returned to Coalgate area, living with their brother John Hutchison.

Robena Hutchison Crim tells a gruesome story about an event she thinks played a role in her father's death. Robert Hutchison was quite a pipe smoker. She described how he was always seen walking jauntily about town with his pipe in hand or mouth. One evening, as he was returning from work, he was walking along the wooden sidewalk, when he tripped and fell, ramming his pipe "clear through his throat". He eventually developed cancer and Robena felt it was directly related to this injury. Perhaps, though, it had connection with his many long years in the mines. Robert died in 1926, a year before his 70th birthday and is buried in the Lehigh cemetery.

As mentioned previously, Robert Hutchison's oldest son John went to work in a lumberyard in Coalgate. After learning the trade he began his own lumber company and eventually opened lumberyards in many Oklahoma communities, including Coalgate, Lehigh, McAlester, Seminole, Atoka, and Oklahoma City. At some point he and his wife Virginia Aldridge moved to Laurel Mississippi where he invest well and made a great deal of money. They eventually retired to a lovely home in California, but friends in Oklahoma City convince John Hutchison to come to Oklahoma City and bail them out of financial trouble, which he did. Both John Hutchison and his wife are buried at Rose Hill cemetery in Oklahoma City.

Meanwhile, the younger Hutchison children grew up and married. Hazel Hutchison married Fred Richard and Robena Hutchison married Palmer Crim. Our grandfather, Robert Hutchison, met and married Edith Walden Tanner on 25 March 1922. Edith Tanner Hutchison, known to us as Maa, was working in the Lehigh Post Office when she met Robert Hutchison. Several sources have brought up the fact that Edith was the "prettiest girl in town". Pictures of her younger days do confirm this statement. The Wedding Announcement, published in the Coalgate newspaper, does not mention Edith Tanner's family. Edith was the daughter of Wyatt and Mary Lula Tanner. They were a struggling family in the nearby Wapanucka community. As I research, I am aware of the tremendous sadness, devastation and poverty, which was part of this family. I am more able to understand the pain that causes my grandmother rarely to speak of them. But, they were an interesting family and I hope, in the future, to share more of their story.

Robert Hutchison joined his brother in the lumber business and eventually came to Oklahoma City with his bride and went to work for Oklahoma Sash and Door Company. He attended Hills Business College for a while and prepared himself as a businessman. Around the time that our father was born, 26 November 1928, Robert Hutchison opened his first lumberyard. He bought an old chicken coop on Reno street, west of downtown Oklahoma City and began work. He has been described as a good businessman. He always had cash available so that he would get good deals on merchandise. At the end of World War II he began building houses. He would wholesale them out to WR Johnson Company and they were sold, mostly to veterans. The present lumberyard at 401 N Western was opened about 1941.

Robert Hutchison demonstrated that trait, which we often hear, associated with the Scots – He was tight with his money. He and his wife Edith rarely indulged themselves with luxuries, even though they made a good living. Together they raised three children. Doris Hutchison was born in August 1927. Robert Hutchison (our father) was born in November 1928 and Joan Hutchison in 1932.

From here, we know most of the story. There are events that have happened in our lifetime or have been frequently relayed to us. But, for the sake of the future I will tell them here. Perhaps someday, our children's children will be interested to know the stories of the 3rd and 4th Robert Hutchisons.

Our father, Robert Hutchison, grew up in a fairly prosperous family. Though Robert and Edith had few luxuries, they seemed to enjoy providing the best for their three children. All of their children attended Oklahoma City Schools. Our father also spent a few years at Wentworth Military Academy in Lexington Missouri. I've heard hints that his mom and dad thought he might benefit by a little serious discipline. Edith Tanner Hutchison obviously derived great pleasure from seeing her children well dressed and well thought of. While Robert and Edith lived a quiet, private lifestyle, their children enjoyed wide circles of friends. All three children attended Oklahoma University. Doris Hutchison married Jack Vickers of Wichita Kansas. Joan Hutchison married Roy Lebus and eventually settled in Eagle Nest New Mexico. Our father, whom we've always known as Bob jr, married Blanche Aubin Clarkson of Oklahoma City.

Recently I was canvassing some drawers at my grandmother Hutchison's house and came across a letter written by my dad to his oldest sister Doris Hutchison when he was at Wentworth Academy, and two letters written by my mother to her soon-to-be sister-in-law, Joan Hutchison. It was a delight to see my parents as real young people, not much unlike myself when I was in my late teens – writing about friends and parties and clothes and “who is pinned to who”. It was a lovely insight to see my father's tender devotion to his sisters and my mother's childlike excitement at the prospect of being a bride. Perhaps one of the most revealing items from the letters was the thought from my mother to her fiancée's sister, who was vacationing at her families Colorado cabin, “I'm thoroughly jealous of your and am dying to be way up thar in them mountains! . . . I keep hinting to Bob about how crazy I am 'bout the place but all he does is just shiver . . . I still have hopes of becoming a good fisherwoman one of these days, but Bob still has his doubts. Well, you know as much as I do about where we're going on our honeymoon. Bob refuses to tell me . . . “ As the story goes, Bob did grant her wish and take her to the Colorado mountains for their honeymoon, and now, 36 years later, they call it their home.

Bob Hutchison and Blanche Aubin Clarkson married in September 1950 and set up housekeeping in Oklahoma City. Not long after their wedding, Bob was called into military service and went off to Germany. Just 9 ½ months after the wedding Blanche gave birth to their first child, a son, who they named Robert Lawrence Hutchison. Of course, this is you I speak of, born 5 July 1951. This was followed by four more children, Pamela Sue Hutchison born 3 July 1953, Stephanie Aubin Hutchison born 26 January 1956, Thomas Rowland Hutchison born 5 April 1959 and Susan Elizabeth

Hutchison born 21 June 1961. Much like the generation before, this family grew up in Oklahoma City. Perhaps when I reach old age, I will feel ready to reflect on this family group.

As I have prepared this paper I have thought about those things that have lent continuity to these men named Robert Hutchison. Of course I never met my great-grandfather so I can only imagine what he might have been like. I remember often visiting my grandparents Hutchison though. I have always delighted in my grandmother, Edith Tanner Hutchison. Even to this day, when she is very old, sickly and confused, I still see her interest, concern and love for her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. I think that I was always rather afraid of my grandfather Hutchison. He was a good man and never unkind to me, but I always suspicion that he had little patience for children. But, there were so many times when he took us to the cafeteria for dinner and I loved him for that chicken, mashed potato, green bean, and chocolate icebox pie dinner. In his way I think he was pleased with the generations following him. As I look at my father and my brother, I think perhaps a serious approach to life is passed down thru the generations just as a name is. Certainly I have seen much joy and laughter from these men, but more so I recognize that devotion to hard work. I believe it must be a Hutchison tradition that we are called to work hard at the things we do. A disciplined life seems tempered by kindness and thoughtfulness toward others. The Robert Hutchisons all seem to be very private men, quiet and reserved but thinking men. In their ways, they have contributed to their communities though they have seldom been civically involved. All four Robert Hutchisons have called themselves Episcopalians. Though they have not been greatly involved in the church, I think each one has given thoughtful consideration to their creator. Education has seemed to follow the trends of the day, each man having greater opportunity for education than the one that came before him.

It is hard to say whether the name of Robert Hutchison will be found in the family in the future. Certainly times change and traditions must be set aside. But, I hope that by sharing this paper with you, you can have a sense of your connectedness with the past and be inspired to reflect upon what the name of Robert Hutchison might carry into the future.

Sources

Telephone interviews with Robena Hutchison Crim, daughter of the first Robert Hutchison and the sister to our grandfather, Robert Hutchison. She was known to us as Aunt Bea. These interviews were made primarily in 1986.

Interview with Bob Hutchison, our father, remembering his father, family, and other relatives.

History of Scotland, by Plantagenet and Fiona Somerset Fry, 1982.

Tartans: Their Art and History, by Ann Sutton and Richard Carr.

Hutchison Family Bible. Family information was written down from this Bible by my mother, Blanche Aubin Clarkson Hutchison, in the 1970's when the Bible was in the possession of Robert and Edith Hutchison. At this date in 1986, we are not able to establish the whereabouts of this Bible.

Federal Census Records. Oklahoma Historical Society.

Trip to Southeastern Oklahoma in February 1986, visiting Coalgate County Court House, Coal Miners museum, Lehigh Cemetery, and local Lehigh resident, Ruby Branan.