

Furse

Early History and the Furse Name

Furse is a topographical name from Devon for someone who lived on a piece of land that was thickly grown with gorse, a small prickly shrub with yellow flowers. The name comes from Anglo Saxon *fyrse* for gorse. The arms of Furse of County Devon, in the time of Richard I (1189 – 1199), are described as “Gules a chevron embattled and counter embattled between six halberts in pairs saltireways or” which means “a red shield with a gold chevron and six gold battleaxes crossed in pairs.” Thomas Furse of Crokenwell, or Crediton, in the County of Devon is mentioned in the Vistiation of 1620 and was descended from Thomas Furse and Alice, his wife, in the time of Edward III (1327 – 1377). However, the first Furse with whom we have been able to connect is William Furse, born circa 1803.



Generation One

William Furse

Born circa 1803 at Marwood, Devon.

Died before April 1895 at Barnstaple, Devon, Æt 91

William is shown on the census of 1851, 1861 and 1871 as a gardener at Upcott House in Barnstaple, which was owned by the magistrate Thomas W. Harding. William Furse married Elizabeth (born circa 1806, died 1885, Æt 79) Elizabeth is described on the census of 1861 as a charwoman. The 1881 census shows William, his wife Elizabeth and their grandson William residing in the Underwinnar Almshouses at Barnstaple. The 1891 census shows William as a widower, living at the Almshouse with his unmarried daughter Ann.

William and Elizabeth Furse had two daughters:

- Ann Furse born circa 1835 at Pilton, Devon. Ann was a servant; the 1871 census shows her residing at Vicarage House, Buckland, Monachorum, Devon where she was a housemaid working for the Vicar of the Parish, Richard Hayne and his wife. Ann was unmarried, and the 1891 census shows her as an inmate of the Underwinnar Almshouses, Barnstaple where she lived with her father.
- **Elizabeth Furse**, mentioned next.

Generation Two

Elizabeth Furse

Born circa 1842 at Pilton, Devon.

Died before April 1909 at Barnstaple, Devon, Æt 67

The census of 1861 shows Elizabeth residing at #41 Union Terrace where she was a house servant. Elizabeth was unmarried, and may have been associated with William Allen shown on the 1861 census as “aged 28, single, Painter/ Glazier, born in Barnstaple.” He was living on High Street with his parents, Theophilus Allen (age 69) and Mary Allen (age 68).

Elizabeth Furse had a son:

- **William Theophilus Allen Furse**, mentioned next.

Generation Three

William Theophilus Allen Furse

Born on June 26, 1865 at Ashford, Devon.

Died 1940 at Toronto, Canada; interred at Prospect Cemetery, Section 11, Grave 190.

William Furse was reputed by family tradition to be of German descent, but records clearly shows that he was born in Devon, a son Elizabeth Furse. William was raised by his grandparents, William and Elizabeth Furse. He is remembered as being grouchy. William was a painter, woodworker and later a foreman at the Dodge Manufacturing Company of Toronto which made, among other things, pulleys for block and tackle equipment.

William married on July 6, 1887 in Toronto to Catharine “Kate” O’Connor. The witnesses were Herman Kallmeyer(?) and Sarah Wilson and the minister was H. P. Hobson. Catherine O’Connor (also Connors) was said to have been born on May 21, 1863 or 1865 in Montreal, a daughter of Daniel and Margaret O’Connor (also Connors or Connors) of Montreal. Catherine died in Toronto, Ontario on July 16, 1916 æt. 51; thereby suggesting that the date of birth was 1865. Catherine was interred in the Furse Family plot (Section 11, Grave 190) in Prospect Cemetery, Toronto, Ontario.

The Furse family resided in “West Toronto”, also known as “The Junction.” This was a town built around the junction of three railways: the Grand Trunk Railway, the Credit Valley Railway, and the Ontario and Quebec Railway. It is in the area of Keele and Dundas Streets in Toronto.

The Furse family was residing at:

- o 9 Ostler Street in 1914 (marriage of William’s daughter Margueretta)
- o 201 Annette Street in 1916 (death of William’s first wife Catherine)
- o 3 Ostler Street in 1920 (William’s second marriage to Emma Jane Westlake)
- o 65 Laughton Avenue in 1936 (death of William’s second wife Emma Jane)

William, an adherent of the Church of England, forbade his wife to continue with the Catholic Religion and refused to allow the priest entrance to the house.

William and Catherine had the following children:

- **Herbert Walter William Furse**, mentioned next.
- **John Furse**, mentioned next.
- **Margueretta Furse**, mentioned next.
- **Irene Furse**, mentioned next.

William Furse married secondly on January 9, 1920 to Emma Jane Westlake, a spinster from Cornwall, England who was reputed by family tradition to have been an “old girl friend who came from Devon”. Emma Jane gave her age as 56 years as of January 9, 1920. Emma Jane died on Sunday, September 13, 1936 æt 74 and is interred in the Furse Family plot (Section 11, Grave 190) in Prospect Cemetery, Toronto, Ontario.

Generation Four

Herbert Walter William Furse

Born on February 3, 1888 at Toronto, Ontario.

Died February 1977

Herbert Walter William Furse was known as “Walter”. He married Mary Elizabeth May who was born on March 15, 1891. Mary Elizabeth was always referred to as “Aunt Lottie.” The Furse Family moved to St. Johnsbury, Vermont. Aunt Lottie died on March 1, 1981 in St. Johnsbury.

Walter and Lottie had the following sons:

- Herbert Lawrence Furse, born December 1, 1914 and died January 30, 1999. Herbert graduated from Harvard, served on minesweepers in the Pacific in WWII, rose to become assistant vice president of Youngstown Sheet & Tube Steel Company, and took early retirement to enjoy a second career as a antiquarian book dealer. Herbert married Mary Louise and they had the following children:
 - Herbert Lawrence Furse, Jr.
 - William James Furse
 - Raymond Walter Furse
 - Mary Kay Furse
 - Charlotte Rachael Furse
 - Louisa May Furse
 - Daniel Neely Furse, born on February 13, 1960 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and died on February 13, 2004 in Glenview, Illinois. Daniel was survived by his mother, wife, children, siblings, many nieces and nephews and a “menagerie of pets.” (from his obituary in the “Journals & Topics” Newspaper, Des Plaines, Illinois, dated Feb. 27, 2004)
- Walter Bruce Furse, died June 6, 1917 age 8 months and 28 days. Walter suffered from whooping cough for 6 weeks before his death, the immediate cause of which was reported as “dilation of the heart.” He is interred in the Furse Family plot (Section 11, Grave 190) in Prospect Cemetery, Toronto, Ontario.
- Rodger Keith Furse, born on May 31, 1922 and died on July 19, 2003. Keith graduated from Yale and then went on to get an engineering degree. Keith and his family lived in Fonthill, Ontario circa 1970. They appear to have moved away from Fonthill before 1976. He served in the RCAF and then worked for a number of companies, including Allis Chalmers. He and his partners purchased the nuclear components division of Allis Chalmers and became quite wealthy. Keith married first Catherine, who died of Alzheimer’s and second to Priscella. Keith and Catherine adopted:
 - Walter Furse
 - Skipper Furse
 - Catherine Furse

John “Buzz” Furse

Born on December 30, 1890

Died in 1911 and interred at Prospect Cemetery in Toronto, Canada, Section 11, Grave 190.

John married Nancy Horner, a sister of hockey player Reginald “Red” Horner. John contracted scarlett fever, and before he had recovered, he came down with diptheria. He died before the birth of his son. Nancy Horner died a few days after the birth of their son:

- John Sherman “Jack” Furse, born December 12, 1911 and died May 12, 1973. Jack was always referred to as a brother of Margueretta “Retta” Furse / Lumley (see *Lumley*), but he was also a nephew; he was a son of Margueretta’s brother John Furse. Jack was adopted and brought up by his grandfather William Theopolis Allen Furse. Hence, Jack was “officially” a brother of Margueretta Furse; William Theopolis Allen Furse was legally the father of both Jack and Margueretta. Jack graduated from University of Toronto and was President of Fairmont Railway Motors of Canada. Jack married Beatrice (“Bea”) on May 25, 1936. Beatrice died on March 9, 1983. We lost contact with this Furse Family in the late 1950’s; but Laurel Furse saw our internet web page in January 2005 and contacted us. Jack and Bea had the following children:
 - Sandra Edaire Furse, born September 26, 1941; died September 20, 1945 of peritonitis poisoning. Sandra was interred at Park Lawn Cemetery, Toronto. (Section S, Lot W806)
 - John Richard Furse
 - Laurel Furse who married Ted McSherry and had the following children:
 - Erinn McSherry
 - Brett McSherry

Margueretta Furse

Born, according to the 1901 census, on September 30, 1892. Note: Margueretta’s gravestone indicates that she was born on November 8, 1891. However, her name is spelled incorrectly as “Margaretta” on the gravestone, so perhaps the date of birth is incorrect as well.

Died on July 16, 1958 and interred at St. James Cemetery, Toronto, Canada.

Margueretta, remembered as “Retta” worked in the office of the Dodge Manufacturing Company of Toronto where her father was a foreman prior to marrying James Henry Lumley. (See *Lumley*, Generation Eight)

For the continuation of this line, see *Lumley* Generation Eight.

Irene Furse

Born on July 31, 1894

Died on Thursday, March 6, 1924, æt. 28, after the birth of her daughter Shirley. Irene is interred in the Furse Family plot (Section 11, Grave 190) in Prospect Cemetery, Toronto, Ontario.

Irene Furse is remembered as “Rheen”. Irene married William Richard Thomson (1896 - 1945). After Irene’s untimely demise, William Richard Thomson remarried to Gertrude Camplin (died circa 1960’s)

William Richard Thomson was a direct descendant of David Thomson and Mary Glendenning who were original settlers in Scarborough Township circa 1796.

Irene and William had the following children who were brought up by their grandmother Eva Thomson (née Barker) and Aunt Alice “Bub” Thomson who worked at the Toronto City Hall as a Special Nurse. Alice travelled around the city helping young mothers.

- Lionel Thomson, born on December 16, 1916 and died in the mid 1990’s. Lionel married Mary Helen McGarry (born August 15, 1910). Helen’s Family lived near Perth, Ontario; and they moved into the Town of Perth after their father died in 1929. Helen has two sisters: Elizabeth Eunice McGarry and Catharine Dorothy Lord whose husband died circa 1975. Lionel and Helen had the following daughter:
 - Patricia Ann Thomson, born January 8, 1945
- Shirley Thomson, born March 1924 Shirley married John Peter Hill. They had a farm in Haliburton with frontage on Lake Kashagawigamog which they operated as a summer resort under the name of Mistikoska Lodge. Shirley’s brother Lionel had a log cabin, believed to be the original farm house, on the property. Shirley and John converted Mistikoska Lodge into a fine home and retired there. Shirley and John had the following children:
 - Chris
 - Peter who married and had two children
 - Alison

Sources

Sir Bernard Burke: *The General Armory*, London, 1884

Hanks and Hodges: *A Dictionary of Surnames*, Oxford University Press, 1988

Margueretta Mae Lumley, my mother, daughter of Margueretta Lumley (née Furse)

Robert George Sewell, my father, whose Aunt Muriel lived on Scarlett Road in the same neighbourhood as the Furse Family.

Mary Helen Thomson (née McGarry), wife of my mother’s cousin Lionel Thomson.

Linda Adam, wife of William James “Bill” Lumley, a grandson of Margueretta Lumley (née Furse), who researched many obscure obituaries, cemetery records and other sources. This page would not have been possible without Linda’s research.

Shirley Hill (née Thomson), my mother’s cousin

Raymond Walter Furse, my second cousin

Laurel McSherry (née Furse), my second cousin

Library and Archives Canada, 1901 Census.

Archives of Ontario, Ministry of Government Services.

