

## **The Tale of Three Brothers Robinson**

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Once upon a time, there were three brothers Robinson, Peter, the eldest, John the middle son, and William, the youngest. They also had 3 sisters.

The three brothers Robinson were charming little fellows; pinky white with small blue eyes, fat cheeks and double chins, turned up noses with real silver rings in them or was that silver spoons in their mouths or silver cigarette holders??? The three brothers Robinson were always contented and happy. All day long they ran about the plantation, singing little songs to themselves and grunting.

### **Big Daddy Christopher "Queen's Ranger" Robinson**

Their father, Christopher was himself the son of a Virginia tobacco grower whose family owned lots of land and lots of slaves and grew lots of tobacco. Christopher was one of the Queen's Rangers, an elite special operations unit. He was a Loyalist which meant he had to flee after the 13 Colonies kicked out the King's army. Bloodshed always perpetuates patriotism.

Christopher lost everything as a result of his fealty to the Crown. He never recovered from losing his Virginia estate which was valued at 64,000 pounds sterling. He received only 17,000 pounds in compensation from the Commissioners appointed to investigate claims for losses arising out of the war.

As he lamented in a letter to a friend, "*I was born to better prospects.*"

Where then did his son get the idea that United Empire Loyalists were animated by "a feeling of satisfaction and pride in the exertion and sacrifices by which their fidelity was proved"?

Aristocrats are always inexplicably hungry for more lands. Once they have occupied, populated and depleted their own home domains, they send their sons out to occupy new lands and build colonies based on the home model of society. It's done by hook or by crook and more often by crook.

Christopher's commander, General Simcoe took care of his Rangers. They were trained to play special roles after territories were overrun. They would manage the development of settlements and resources in the new colonies wherever they might be. Other agents of psychological warfare, usually family members, would move in with religion and law.

When Christopher and his family finally settled in York on Lake Ontario, Simcoe, by then the Lieutenant Gov, appointed him Surveyor

General of Woods and Forests. Chris really knew his trees and could spot a potential navy ship mast from a mile away. He was also well read, becoming a lawyer in his spare time.

Then suddenly tragedy struck the Robinson family. Christopher took sick and died. Peter was just 13 years old, John, 7 and little William not yet 2 years old. Their mother, Esther soon remarried.

#### **Peter Robinson Population Purveyor**

#### **P & W Robinson Fur Traders**

Peter was out working as a clerk for the Small Claims Court when he was 15. His step-father, Elisha Beman, took him under his wing and showed him how to become a merchant, a trader. When wee William was old enough, Pete took his little brother under his wing and showed him the ropes too. The three brothers Robinson often worked together and always looked out for each other.

Pete was wheelin' and dealin' in everything from innkeeping (which always implied bartending as well), shipping, milling both grist and saw, making and selling booze, farming and land grabbing sales. His favourite thing was the fur trade. He liked to get out in the fresh air. He bought furs through his agents who went to the bush and sold goods to the traders and the Original People, things like tea, flour, sewing needles, copper pots, axes and ammunition for guns.

The fur bearing animals were trapped and killed by Indigenous men mostly. The hides were then scraped, cured and treated by the Indigenous women. Many long hours of work went into making the hides soft and pliant. The more work that went into them, the greater their value. Unfortunately, more animals were killed than necessary.

Warehouses in France were filled with unsold rotting pelts while wars broke out between Indigenous when whole areas were depleted of animals like beaver and deer. It was not an ecological or peaceful enterprise! Not free trade, it was a violent free for all.

Pete and William were positioned to make money out of the War of 1812, both as traders and guides who knew the bush well. A few years later, Pete even got into banking, being a director of the first chartered bank in the colony.

#### **Robert John Wilmot-Horton and his Friend Thomas Malthus**

Of the three brothers, Pete the "backwoods settlement" expert is the best known. The city of Peterborough on the Otonabee River near Rice Lake is named for him as well as a road near Almonte, Ontario.

Pete's brother John had a good friend, Robert John Wilmot-Horton who lived across the Big Salt Lake in the King's Court. The aristocrats at home were furiously dispossessing the People and driving them off the land. Constant sectarian violence was being fomented, inflaming riots and rebellions. Many people wanted to escape from the chaos when they heard about land for the taking on the other side of the Big Salt Lake.

R.J. in turn had another friend, Thomas "Pop" Malthus. While Mary Wollstonecroft was writing "The Rights of Women", Thom wrote up a theory about overpopulation, becoming the first expert on that topic. He figured that people would eat and reproduce until there was standing room only on the planet. Was he crazy or something??

Together, Pete's brother, "Judge & Jury" John and R.J. hatched a plan to kill two birds with one stone. Get rid of the Kingdom's disgruntled landless by moving them - at government expense - to the new colony and give them (somebody else's) free land which they would develop and protect for the King. Such people would be very grateful and therefore, loyal subjects.

John sent brother Pete with his expert knowledge to R.J. at the King's Court. R.J. gave Pete money to bring 568 Irish Roman Catholics to a new township called Beckwith which til then was being colonized by Irish and Scottish Protestants. The Protestants and Catholics who had fought each other back home in the Kingdom, were soon getting drunk and fighting. One brawl that took place at Alexander Morris' tavern in Carleton Place resulted in one death and a lot of sore heads.

The following year, after carefully interviewing some 50,000 applicants, Pete the People Mover selected a group of 2,000 souls who established the government financed community of Peterborough. After an arduous sea voyage and journey up the bubbling and dangerous Great River, they had to camp out under the stars near Kingston when preparations for them were not made in time. Pete figured it was a bonus tourist attraction for the indigent sponsored immigrants, arriving with nothing, zilch, the clothes on their backs and maybe a knapsack.

As R.J. reasoned, they are "*a better description of people than those taken out in 1823 although they are wretchedly poor*". The immigrants' doctor, George Reade referred to them as "*the lower class of the Irish*". This attitude was to persist for more than another century.

The Original People were always somewhere witnessing all these incredible happenings.

When he resigned from his position at the Colonial Office, R.J. got Pete a big promotion as the new Crown Lands and Clergy Reserves Commissioner as well as Surveyor General of Woods for the Colony.

While Judge John wrote the laws for the new Colony, Pete administered the Clergy Reserves Sales Act and other land deals. Each year, more and more immigrants arrived, many with very few belongings. Many of them had bad luck and were basically stranded in a strange land. Some didn't know how to use an axe. They had never seen such big trees before in their lives.

"People" Pete gave them part time jobs and helped them find places to live. But Pete could not keep track of his pounds and pence. His

bookkeeping was sloppy and expenditures were way over budget. Allegations of mismanagement and even skimming were growing louder. A deadly epidemic added to the confusion and desperation.

Pete was one of 3 Executive Councillors who approved the endowment of 44 Anglican rectories with land. This caused great outrage and agitation among the non Anglicans. Pete was later one of six Executive Councillors who resigned. In the midst of all the excitement and controversy, Pete took a stroke and died. Though he owned some 7,592 acres of land, much of it was sold to pay his debts and restore his reputation. He never married but had two children named in his will.

#### **John "Judge & Jury" Robinson**

Brother John was always the practical, brainy one, a sly fellow who was also quite charming and friendly. John "Touched by an Angel" had friends in high places. Doors always opened for him. As an adept lawyer he shaped the legislation of the Colony. He and his mentor, Preacher Man Strachan were smooth and influential. They always got the ear of the right person whether a Lieutenant Governor or a Colonial Secretary or a London banker.

When he became Judge and Jury, John got to sentence people to death which was done by hanging in those days. A number of people were charged with treason after the War of 1812 and the Rebellion of 1837. John wanted to set an example so he wrote a few death warrants. He was a very young man when he first held such reins of power and tasted the heady intoxication that goes with.

In his lecture to the prisoners condemned to die, he accused them of "*conspiring to introduce confusion and bloodshed where nothing else should have been found but contentment and peace*". He traced the cause of their "*dreadful fall*" to "*your willful forgetfulness of your duty to your creator, and of the purposes for which life was bestowed on you*", that duty being to be "*humbly thankful to a kind Providence, which had cast your lot in this free, and prosperous country*", as opposed, interestingly enough, to England, where they might have had to work in the mines under conditions of abject poverty. The prisoners had breached their covenant with God; they had "*indulged in a feeling of envy and hatred towards [their] rulers*".

John liked to do a lot of writing, letters, journals and copies of everything which in those days was all done by hand. When he was the 21-year-old acting Attorney General and being groomed for much greater things, he wrote to the Major General who was in charge of the colony during a big war, "*Sir*,

*Major Stuart communicated to me the object of his command here, and informed me of the reference you had been pleased to give him to me upon the subject. I told him that as Attorney General I could render him no assistance the matter proposed being wholly of a military*

*nature, and that I could not properly have any thing to do with it in my official capacity, as the measures contemplated were not of a nature to admit of legal interference -- Still as a private member of Society, and equally interested with all in the execution of the salutary object in view I would willingly and heartily give him every help I could by furnishing him with all the information in my power, and putting him in the way of procuring it."*

That's the long polite form. What he was really saying went something like this, "Dude, I can't do what your flunkey has asked me to do. It's illegal for crap's sake. But as a private, wealthy and powerful citizen, I can say off the record officially, that I agree with you that it must be done."

John goes on to emphasize that he is not giving "any official sanction" and if asked he will deny, deny, deny.

Then he writes quite explicitly, "The Country must not be lost by a too scrupulous attention to forms, and where the civil administration of Justice is found inadequate to our protection in times perilous, and unusual as the present, recourse must be had to measures more efficacious."

And in plain English, "Look, Dude, I've enclosed a form for you to use in writing up your orders for certain individuals that I suggest. They can tell you who the traitors are in their own communities and then you can go after the bastards. I have no prejudices when I name the following to assist you: Revd. Dr. Strachan, William Allan Esquire, Duncan Cameron Esqr., Thomas Ridout Esqr., Alexr Wood Esqr. and Capt. Peter Robinson."

Need we point out that Strachan and he are thick as thieves and that Strachan was his teacher and guardian growing up? Peter is his brother.

John assures the Major General that he will bust all the traitors and keep them in jail til they can be tried and punished. He signs himself as "your most obedient servant" which they all did in those days, especially the guys who wanted to be boss.

John was so well liked in the King's Court that he was made a Companion of the Bath and then created a Baronet of the United Kingdom. Everybody had to call him "Sir"! He was now officially an aristocrat and he didn't even have to take a bath.

Justice John was a great Thinker, especially when it comes to law. He was the quintessential lawmaker whose main interest was the economy and development of the colony guided by his version of Christian morality. He wrote the Trade Act for the Colony.

To the Loyalists, it was like being the Israelites in the Land of

Canaan. They believed they were God's Chosen People. Judicious John wrote, "when we turn to our New Colony, we find a country of large extent, with a soil unsurpassed in fertility, and a climate that admits of the cultivation of the very finest wheat; abounding in valuable timber, and in the most useful minerals, with the advantage of navigable waters running through it, and around it, in a manner that cannot be seen without admiring so beautiful an arrangement of nature."

John always forgot to mention that there were people already living in the land according to Ancient Ways they didn't want to change. Guys like John could care less what anyone else wanted.

Today, John's portrait hangs over the mantle of the Great Library at Osgoode Hall. The tiny shriveled man is dressed in voluminous flowing robes and sits in a large chair, looking like Little Boy Blue.

#### **Wiley Will Robinson the Woodsman**

William the Youngest had it all laid out for him. His brothers taught him well. His part was the piece de resistance. Peter had all the Indians hypnotized with ironwares and other goodies and John had the laws all set for the big ripoff. William just had to go in and make it all look legal with treaties.

This William did in 1843 and in 1850. As more and more settlers were pouring in, more land was needed to satisfy their appetite. There was huge mineral wealth in the region. Anishnaabek were already agitated over mineral companies moving in unannounced. The chiefs demanded reassurance and clarification. A familiar face, Wiley Will's experience in the fur trade helped him smooth out the Indigenous's concerns.

Wiley Will CONvinced some Anishnaabe chiefs to sign away their territories along Lakes Superior and Huron, to the tune of millions of acres/hectares of land in exchange for small sums of money and apparent confirmation of Indigenous right to hunt and fish.

These chiefs were either running a scam themselves or rather gullible and desperate people. More likely, things never unfolded the way that colonial historians write it up. Most Anishnaabek had no intention of giving up the land. How do we know this? Because that's what living Anishnaabek are saying today. Just listen! It's not our Way to sell the Land!

Wiley Will did not work alone. Some of his cohorts and accomplices in Treating with the Indians were Captain Charles Anderson, Thomas Gummersall Anderson, brother-in-law Samuel Peters Jarvis, Colonel James Givins, Wemyss Simpson and George Ironside.

Thomas Gummersall Anderson had lain the ground work for "Trick or Treaty" Will when he published a report on Treaties in 1849. T.G. who'd gotten into the fur trade too, was a smooth diplomat and "friend

of the Indians". Loyal British allies like Chiefs William Yellowhead, Sr & Jr., signed the treaties.

All these colonial con artists also had other family members working in different departments like Justice and War. Some of them had earlier been involved in the fur trade and had had "country wives" and thus children who were Indigenous. There was a lot of intermarriage between these families as they consolidated their power and wealth in "Nova Britannia", ie on Turtle Island. It was some sort of an incestuous affair.

The making of treaties was so effortless for Will Robinson that he had time for many other ventures such as the Welland Canal which the Six Nations had invested in. He took charge of all the finances of running the canal. He said he wanted to give his "personal attendance on the canal until it was rendered navigable."

William Robinson became Chief Commissioner of Public Works, seeing to road building from Toronto to Penetanguishene and between Barrie and Orillia.

Will was active in politics, being an elected member of the Legislative Assembly on and off, especially during treaty making. He was an Executive Councillor and on many Commissions. A staunch imperialist, he had strong views on the Clergy Reserves issue in support of the Church of England. He dabbled in railroad development.

Shortly after the signing of the 1850 treaties, "Trick or Treaty" Will was on a commission to monitor the Canada Land Company which was speculating in ... land! They were selling land the Crown had "given" to the established churches, quite a debacle in itself. The prevailing confusion was a smoke screen to cover the thugs' tracks. Will was always flippin real estate in some guise or other - it was always stolen land!!

#### **Next Generation - John Robinson Junior**

The things the three brothers Robinson set in motion are still playing out today. John's son, John followed in his father's footsteps, becoming a big railroad man as well as Lieutenant Governor of Ontario.

John Jr. was a contemporary and peer to Alexander "Perthite" Morris, next generation Treatyman, responsible for the legalized theft of millions of square miles of Anishnaabek territory through the numbered treaties.

Both John Jr. and Al were lawyers, land speculators, railway developers and politicians. They picked up where their dads left off. It was a multi generational plan unfolding but the plan was very flawed. It ignored the many consequences which up to now are accumulating like a bad debt or toxic waste that just won't compost down.

Famed for his "animal energy", pugilist John Robinson Junior loved to fight, any kind of fight, fists or words were all the same to him. Born into the Toronto elite, all doors were open to him. He worked for a time in trade with Uncle Will. Then he caught RailRoad fever.

John Junior hatched all kinds of schemes to raise money for rail development. He got into Toronto municipal politics, whatever angle would further his cause. He was a big player in the Northern Railway. He also wanted to build a canal. He backed public waterworks and a big new jail in Toronto. Then he moved on to federal politics and John A. MacDonald's government.

There he played gymnastics, quite a sophist, pretending to support both sides, he knew how to manipulate. John Junior was involved in a huge land sale to "English capitalists" who regrouped as the Canadian Land & Emigration Company when everyone was getting incorporated and shifting the inevitable liabilities. The deal involved 439,000 acres in Haliburton County.

John moved to Algoma just before Al Morris went west to treat with the Indians at Lake of the Woods. John and others like Fred Cumberland were laying track as fast as they could. John slipped under the radar during the Pacific Rail Scandal that brought down the first federal government of Canada. Later John Junior was brought to task over election campaign contributions but this didn't stop him. He was rewarded with the Lieutenant Governorship of Ontario. He lived his last days in his house, "Sleepy Hollow" at College & University in Toronto. He died suddenly in Massey Hall just before he was to speak to a gathering of Tories.

Today, look at the hundreds of land claims that can never be resolved. If they are, it turns out to be a sellout, some secret deal where a few profit and the majority are further disenfranchised, if that is possible.

For the three brothers Robinson, in the end, "Persistent" Pete Robinson died with a load of debts that brother "Super Imperialist Just us" John took care of. "Trick or Treaty" William died childless after dispossessing the Original People of millions of square miles of our territory, thus condemning our children to poverty, starvation and utter humiliation. To what end??

Kittoh

#### Notes and Sources

The Tale of Little Pig Robinson by Beatrix Potter

#### Robinson Treaties:

1843 Signatory Chief William Yellowhead;  
1850, Part 1, Sept. 7 Lake Superior Signatories: W.B. Robinson, Chiefs Joseph Peandechat, John Iuinway, Mishemuckqua, Totominai/Totomencie, and principal men of the Ojibwe, Jacob Warpela, Ahmutchinagalon/Ahmutchiwigabou, Michel Shelageshick, Manitou Shainse, Chiginans; Witnesses: George Ironside

(Superintendent, Indian Affairs), Arthur P. Cooper, (Captain Rifle Brig), H.M. Balfour (2nd Lieut. Rifle Brig), John Swanson (Chief Factor HBC), George Johnston (interpreter), F.W. Keating; 1850, Part 2, Sept. 9, Lake Huron Signatories: W.B. Robinson, Chiefs Shinguacouse, Nebenaigoching, Keokouse, Mishequonga, Tagawinini, Shabokishick, Dokis, Ponekeosh, Windawtegowinini, Shawenakeshick, Namassin, Naoquagabo, Wabakekik, Kitchepossign by Papasainse, Wagemaki, Pamequonaisheung, Maisquaso, Muckata, Mishoquet, Mekis and principal men of the Ojibwe, John Bell, Paqwatchininini, Mashekyash, Idowekesis, Waquacomick, Ocheek, Metigomin, Watachewana, Minwawapenasse, Shenaoquom, Oningegun, Panaissy, Papasainse, Ashewasega, Kageshewawetung, Shawonebin, Mishiquetto, Asa Waswanay, Pawiss; Witnesses: Arthur P. Cooper (captain Rifle Brig.), George Ironside (S.I.Affairs), F.W. Balfour (Lieut. Rifle Brig), Allan MacDonell, Geo. Johnston (interpreter), Louis Cadott, J.B. Assikinack, T.W. Keating, Jos. Wilson, T.G. Anderson (S.I.A.), W. B. Hamilton, W. Simpson (Wemyss), Alfred A. Thompson.

The Dictionary of Canadian Biography has bios on many of these individuals. The information must be taken in context to be properly useful.  
<http://www.biographi.ca/index-e.html>

Here's a checklist of items for top early colonial elitists: 1. land speculation, 2. fur trade, 3. transportation, 4. Slavery, 5. banking, not necessarily in that order. Usually some family member is involved in each category so that every family has all categories covered. If not, then they are of another social tier in the hierarchy. This list does not include law which in time, it must. Throughout the 19th century the legal aspect became more and more predominant in business dealings.