

# THE STORY ABOUT NICKOLAS SAMSON

*As best remembered by his Daughter Ruby Konken (nee Samson)*



Nickolas emanated from the Doukhobor community and became a pilot in both the Canadian and then the American Air Forces. This was unusual from within the Doukhobor community, which philosophy is based on Peace and Love. This photograph was taken in Toronto, Ontario on January 27, 1941. Nickolas was registered in the RCAF as R87588.

What became more interesting to me, was that this person was the father of someone I knew well, Ruby Konken. Coincidentally, Frank, Ruby's partner and husband called me in the Fall of 2021 and asked if we could get together for a visit as they had moved from Victoria to the Rosewood Seniors Home in Trail, B.C. His reason, "it would be great to discuss items of mutual interest and visit."



I took this opportunity to suggest that I would want to discuss as one of the many subjects, Ruby's father, if she was willing. "Of course", Frank said and so we met at Tim Horton's for coffee, as Covid was a major health issue at that time.

Ruby's father, Nicholas Samson, was indeed a very interesting person. Ruby agreed to provide me with materials to do a story for possible entry into my blog in a future meeting.

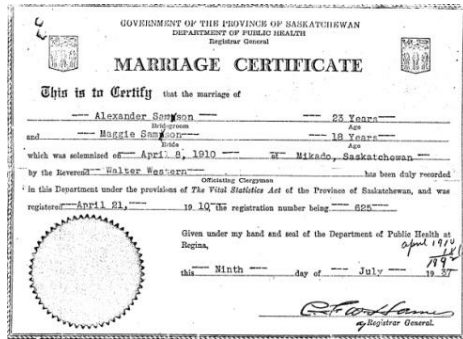
A Partial Family Tree of the Samson Family is a reference as an Appendix in Figure 1. It was assembled from information that Ruby accumulated over the years and now assists to follow this story.

The family of Alexander Samsonoff migrated with the main body of 7,400 Doukhobors as they were able to find haven in Canada from religious persecution directed at them by the Czar of Russia and the Archbishop of the Russian Orthodox Church. There were many who assisted the Doukhobors, in this endeavour, including the famed author, Leo Tolstoy and the Quakers.

The initial land grant by Canada was three (3) parcels of land that were dedicated to the Doukhobors in 1899, included a North Colony, a South Colony and a Colony near Langham and Blaine Lake, all located in the Northwest Territories at that time. It later became incorporated as the Province of Saskatchewan in 1905.

There were forty-eight Villages that were designed to accommodate these migrants and the Samsonoff family was settled into a Doukhobor Village near the later incorporated Village of Mikado. The Canadian National Railway named communities as they were developed along its railway tracks during 1905 through 1908.

Although, there is no definitive explanation as to why Alexander Samsonoff decided to change his name. There was turmoil at that time, amongst the religious Doukhobors: a left wing group was protesting Canadian government's administration of the original settlement agreement. This caused disruption and directed negative publicity within the greater Canadian public. Perhaps this may have precipitated the elder Samsonoff to "anglicize" the surname to Samson. It is not known whether the Samson family remained in the Doukhobor settlements or had elected to purchase land directly from the Canadian government.



This Writer did not research the actual date of the name registration but the adjacent document is an official copy of the Marriage Certificate that was registered on April 21, 1910 by the Reverend Walter Western in a solemnized ceremony performed by him on April 08, 1910. The Certificate was later registered on July 09, 1937 by the Register General of the Department of Public Health at Regina, Saskatchewan.

The Writer notes that the bride is listed as Maggie Samson which suggests that a Doukhobor ceremony may have already united the couple, much earlier, and thus her maiden name would not have been legal for this document.

Other members of the family of Alexander Samson, was as follows (see Figure 1):

- a. Helen Bayoff (nee Samson)
- b. Nona Sommers (nee Samson)
- c. Nickolas Samson
- d. Paula Baskin (nee Samson)
- e. Other siblings not in photo:
  - i. Bill Samson
  - ii. Dianne Campbell (nee Samson)



This undated photograph shows the siblings together, enjoying each other likely at the Samson Family reunion in 1978.

There is no confirmed date as to when the Samson family moved to British Columbia but approximately 4,000 Doukhobors migrated to British Columbia, from Saskatchewan, during a period 1908 to 1912 following a land dispute with the Canadian Government. The Writer suggests that the Samsons may have moved during that time and settled in the Slocan Valley which also follows that they could have also been independent farmers in Saskatchewan and purchased private holdings in British Columbia, outside the mainstream Doukhobor community which encompassed the Christian Community of Universal Brotherhood (CCUB). CCUB was formally incorporated in 1917 and collectively, held all lands, equipment and chattels in Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia with small holdings in Manitoba.

The son, Nickolas, found work with a Jeweller in Trail, B.C., Peter Fredericks. He developed Jeweller's techniques very expertly and thus, designed and constructed an alarm clock that was

treasured by a family relative. He was very much aware of the general public discriminatory views on the continuing turmoil amongst Doukhobors. Some factions were also causing public and private property damage.

At some point in time, he met a pretty girl, from a Doukhobor settlement near Robson, B.C., Raspberry Village. Her name was Helen Relkoff, from a deeply religious Doukhobor family.



The Relkoff family was, initially, not too receptive with this suitor whose family was obviously not part of the "Doukhobor core", in their opinion. Samsons lived as independents and had even changed their Doukhobor name. This courtship was discouraged by the Relkoff family. When young Nickolas proposed, the family was reluctant to give their daughter away.

Obviously the attraction and love between Nickolas and Helen was too much to resist and the decision was to marry anyway and hope that the family will come to accept Nickolas Samson as family. The marriage took place in 1935.

The young couple began their married life and were blessed with two daughters

- a. Olga Samson, born April 13, 1936 on the left
- b. Katie Samson, born December 22, 1937 on the right



The family, initially lived in the communal buildings within Raspberry Village, near the Relkoff family.

Nickolas continued to be concerned as to his family's future within the Doukhobor community and their success in the Kootenays. He was considering moving his young family to the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. The opportunities would be greater in a larger community and the continuing Doukhobor ideological challenges would have a lesser effect on their future livelihood.

This became an immediate concern to the Relkoff family as they could not fathom a life for their daughter and grandchildren outside the Doukhobor community. This obviously introduced a new challenge to married life in the young Samson family. Nicholas had discussed the earning potential in the Kootenays with his counterparts and there was a general consensus that a move from the Kootenays would be beneficial for success.

The more Nickolas discussed this matter, the more his in-laws became very determined in their position that their daughter was not to move and the family atmosphere became fragile. Helen deeply loved her partner but her allegiance to her paternal family was devout. Her lack of schooling and knowledge of English was a concern and became distraught and unsettled as a result.

Nickolas then suggested a plan of action to his partner, similar to this:

- a. He would travel to the Lower Mainland and survey options for employment

- b. He would send support money to his family
- c. As soon as he could secure employment, he would come back and discuss a move for his young family

After a time, the resistance to a family move became even more rigid and Nickolas and Helen became convinced that a move away together, from the Kootenays, was less likely to take place.

World War II broke out in 1939. The Writer assumes that many of Nickolas's friends were joining the forces and Nickolas decided on the RCAF for reasons that will remain unknown.



Here the family was reunited in the Kootenays shortly before Nickolas was sent overseas. Ruby recalls hearing her mother cry into the night as she missed Nicholas very much.

Nickolas was shot down over Europe but was able to be rescued and returned to base. Little information is available on this time during his life and as well as the eventual transition that caused Nickolas to transfer to the USAF after his term in Europe with the RCAF.



Meanwhile Helen Samson continued to reside at the Raspberry Village in a Doukhobor Communal home and was courted by John Kabatoff. A marriage took place at some time in 1942.

In this photograph Olga is seven (7) years of age on the left and Katie is five (5) years old on the right.

Some of the difficulties that the sisters experienced at that time, included the adjustment from their birth father (who they had not seen since an early age), to a stepfather that was now sharing love while raising his own birth daughters Nila and Sharon.

Olga and Katie attended Raspberry School until grade four (4). The teachers at Raspberry changed their names to Eileen and Ruby respectively, as these were common first names held in the class. Then there was difficulty when report cards that needed signing by the parents. John Kabatoff wanted their surnames changed to Kabatoff because he did not understand his legal role as stepfather rather than birthfather. Ruby recalls family disagreements and the situation in the home was not happy for a variety of reasons.

The sisters then attended Robson School for grades five (5) and six (6). They continued to a secondary school in Castlegar for grade seven (7) and were taught by Mr. Sommers (husband to their Aunt Nona). Eventually they moved on to Stanley Humphries High School in Castlegar to complete their schooling.

Living at home was not too easy for Ruby and Eileen, who as a result decided to leave High School (Ruby before grade 10) and move to Trail where they rented an apartment at Lazeroff Apartments. Ruby found work within a Photography Shop where she learned much about the photography business. This was when at sixteen (16) she met the love of her life, Frank Konken.

A request had come from Ruby's Aunt Laura Verigin, to assist her with housework during Laura's pregnancy. Ruby accepted and moved in with the family of John and Laura Verigin in Grand Forks, B.C. She remained with the family to welcome home her 1st cousin Johnny J. Verigin Jr.

While all this was taking place with Ruby, their father was establishing a new life for himself in United States as a result of his transfer to the USAF.

Nickolas Samson married "Edna" McNutt on October 08, 1944, and they resided in Monaca Pennsylvania.

Nickolas travelled from Pennsylvania to his mother's funeral in the Kootenays, held on May 27, 1967.

Ruby described the arrival at the funeral of her father, which she had not seen since she was two (2). "As soon as I saw him, I rushed to hug him with my outstretched arms as he in turn hurried to meet me with his inviting arms. It was a very emotional moment in my life."

Ruby and Frank were part of Doukhobor Expo '67 Choir that travelled to perform at Montreal in 1967. A special visit, together, transpired. Here is Nickolas' family photographed in their hotel room in Montreal. David is on the left with his mother Edna, then Nickolas and daughter Nona. Daughter Barbara was unable to attend with the family.



The Nickolas and Edna Samson children are identified in the Family Tree (Figure 1):



Barbara Samson



Nona Samson



David Samson



At sometime after, or during his time in the USAF, Nickolas Samson became educated and graduated as a Nuclear Engineer employed by Stone & Webster Engineering Co., of Boston, Mass., retiring in 1986. His responsibility was with design of Control Systems for Nuclear Energy Plants.

Reports of gold in the Mineral, VA area turned a group of S&W personnel from North Anna into modern-day prospectors. Loaded with pans, shovels, and backpacks, Materials Engineer Ray Plurba, Control Systems Engineer Nick Samson, Electrical Engineer Eric Spurrell, Assistant Construction Supervisor Dewey James, and Power Engineer Bob Howe headed for Contrary Creek one fall morning.

To pan for gold, a pan with sloping sides is half-filled with sand and held under water. Rocks and pebbles are removed by hand. The pan is then rotated so that heavy particles settle to the bottom

and light sand washes over the rim. Eventually, a concentrate of heavy sand and - possibly - precious metal remains.

On this trip, the men found no nuggets, just traces of gold which had to be separated laboriously from the concentrate. They picked out flakes with tweezers. The finer "flour" gold was obtained by rolling mercury in the concentrate or by flushing the concentrate with nitric and hydrochloric acid to dissolve the gold. The acid was then distilled to recover the precious metal. After a day of hiking, digging, and panning, the S&W "sters" conceded that, even at today's high prices, panning for gold offers chiefly fun and adventure.



Gold panner Nick Samson looks for a likely spot at Contrary Creek.

Members of the Staff at Stone & Webster became interested in prospecting for Gold. This Newspaper article records the experience.

The Samson desire for education and success was inherent in Nickolas's daughter Ruby as well. Following surgery in Grand Forks, complications set in and Ruby was hospitalized in the Trail for six (6) weeks. With time on her hands, at age forty-six (46) she decided to continue with her education. She qualified and competed with over a hundred (100) applicants, then was part of the twenty-five (25) accepted into the Selkirk College's School of Nursing to attain a degree in Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN).

Ruby practised Nursing for many years as she raised her family and participated in a family musical, recording and performing pursuit with her partner and children.

The Samson Family had grown in Canada as well. Here is a press release on a reunion held at the Yale Hotel, in Grand Forks, B.C., in 1978.



The caption in the newspaper read as follows "A family reunion of the descendants of Alex and Mary Samson was held last Saturday night at the Yale Hotel. Family members from as far away as Los Angeles and Virginia were present. Members of the original family who were present are: Nona Sommers, Nick Samson, Paula Baskin and Helen Bayoff.

The opportunity for family enjoyment was further experienced with the following photos



Ruby and her father Nickolas



Nicholas and his granddaughter Stefanie Zaytsoff



Daughters Ruby, Nickolas followed by daughters Eileen Plotnikoff and Nona Samson

Konken residence in Grand Forks, when Ruby's father's family from USA, visited after the family reunion in 1978.

The above pictures (Samsons with Konkens in Grand Forks). This photograph was taken of Edna with her step grandson, Jamie Konken (Frank and Ruby's son).



This opportunity of the Samson and Konken families visiting in Grand Forks resulted in bonding of Ruby with her father's extended family from USA. Ruby recalls a very enjoyable time at their home in Grand Forks, B.C., Canada.

Nickolas Samson passed away on January 04, 1994. A letter from his wife Edna Samson, to Nickolas's sister Nona Sommers, advising of his passing with an appended Obituary.

108 Oakcrest Rd.  
Monaca, Pa 15061  
January 10 1994

Dear Nona & Bob,

I want you to know that Nick had been ill for a long time, he had a number of strokes for the past two years. He was a very private man & did not wish to discuss his illness. I cared for him at home when he couldn't walk without the aid of a walker since April '93. The children & I gave him constant care & I promised him never to go to a Nursing Home. He died at home with his children all here by his side. He had a heart attack on Jan 4/94. He was my life & we deeply loved him always. I am enclosing the article from the paper. I hope you are well.

Edna's Family

Received  
Jan 21 1994  
RB

**Nicholas A. Samson**

Nicholas A. Samson, 78, of Center Township, died Tuesday afternoon, Jan. 4, 1994, in his home, following an extended illness.

Born Oct. 30, 1915, in Canada, a son of the late Alexander and Mary Samson, he was a resident of Center Township since 1981, and was employed as a nuclear engineer with the Stone and Webster Engineering Co., Boston, Mass., retiring in 1986.

Surviving are his wife, Wilena Edna McNutt Samson; a son and daughter-in-law, David and Barbara Samson, Greenville, Pa.; two daughters and sons-in-law, Barbara and Joel Benard, Toronto, Canada, and Nona and Broward Horne, Monaca, and four grandchildren, Jesse, Joshua, Nicholas and Scott.

A private service for the immediate family only was held Wednesday in the SIMPSON FUNERAL HOME, 1119 Washington Ave., Monaca.

The family requests no flowers.

Memorial contributions may be made, if desired, to the Beaver County Heart Association, 1260 North Brodhead Road, Monaca, Pa. 15061.

It appears her father's second wife did not seem to consider his first daughters as family, as they were not noted in the obituary. A disappointment to Ruby.

This story has shared the success, love, sadness and some despair experienced by all members of the Samson family which is a common result when a family is disrupted. In this instance religious understanding was imposed on a young couple who were in love. The responsibility for this travesty can be shared by various members of the families in that there was no compromise.

The Writer never met Nickolas Samson. It is obvious that he was a loving man as is evident in all the Love he was able to expound on both of his families in two (2) countries.

The Writer wishes that he could have met him.

Information for this article was provided by Ruby (nee Katie Samson) Konken and composed by Elmer Verigin.

Dated: June 24, 2022  
Castlegar, B.C. Canada