

# John Alexander Ramage

## 1876-1939

I never met my grandfather, John Alexander Ramage. He passed away long before my parents even met. Growing up, my dad rarely spoke of his father, so grandpa Ramage remains a mystery to me.

My grandfather, John Alexander Ramage was the illegitimate child of Agnes Ramage and John McManus. In the parlance of the 1960s, he was their love child. Unfortunately, he was born on 2 Aug 1876 in Selkirk, Scotland, a time and place where they weren't as accepting of children born out of wedlock.

In fact, his birth certificate proclaims that he is "illegitimate." The extract entry of birth provides his mother's name as Agnes Ramage. However, his father is not listed on this certificate.

ACT ENTRY OF BIRTH, under the 37th Sect. of 17 and 18 Vict. Cap. 80.					
No.	Name and Surname	Year and Month	Sex	Name, Address, and Rank or Profession of Father, Name and Address of Mother, Name and Address of Registrar	Signature and Qualification of Registrar
	John Alexander Ramage	1876 August	M		(Signed) Agnes Ramage Mother
185	Illegitimate	70 On 2 <sup>nd</sup> 1876		Agnes Ramage Mother Thomas McManus Registrar Selkirk	(Signed) Thomas McManus Registrar

Extracted from the Register Book of Births, for the District of Selkirk, in the County of Selkirk, on the 18<sup>th</sup> day of August 1876.

The Scotland census records at Ancestry.com provide some insight into the family's dynamics. These census records indicate that my grandfather was raised by his paternal grandparents, Jane and Thomas McManus. At some level, the McManus family acknowledged him as their own, even if his parents didn't marry. In fact, the 1881, 1891, and 1901 Scotland census records list him as John McManus. Only summaries of the Scotland census records are available at [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com).

I have all sorts of questions about my grandfather's parents. How did they meet? According to John Ramage's birth certificate, his mother, Agnes Ramage, was a woolen darning. In the 1870s, Selkirk, Scotland which is located south of Edinburgh was the home of numerous woolen mills. These mills attracted a large number of workers from the surrounding areas.

Agnes Ramage remains somewhat of a mystery. There are very few records pertaining to her. I've located an Agnes Ramage in the 1881 Scotland Census. She is living in Selkirk, Scotland at the time of the census. Her son was born in 1876 and it would make sense that she would still be in the Selkirk area 5 years later.

The 1881 Scotland Census indicates that Agnes was born around 1859 in Cramond, Edinburghshire, Scotland. At the time of the census, she was employed as an Under Laundry Maid in the household of Hugh M. and Margaret G. Lang.

If this is the right Agnes Ramage and her birth year is correct, then she would have been around 17 years old when she gave birth to John Alexander Ramage.

The only other information that I have on Agnes Ramage is a photograph taken at the A R Edwards Studio on Tower Street in Selkirk, Scotland of an older woman. On the back of the photo there is a notation in my father's block printing saying "Paternal Grandmother." Is this indeed Agnes Ramage?

My grandfather's father, John McManus, was a native of Selkirk. The 1851 Scotland Census shows that he was born in Selkirk in 1848. That would have made John McManus 28 years old when his son John Alexander Ramage was born.

If the woolen mills brought John McManus and Agnes Ramage together, what prevented them from getting married?

John McManus went on to marry 2 different women and have a number of children by each woman.

On 31 May 1880 John married Elizabeth Tait. This couple had 3 children.

Helen McManus	1881
Thomas McManus	26 Jan 1883
Jean McManus	22 Jul 1885

After the death of Elizabeth Tait, John married Jane Ann Wilson. This couple had 5 children.

Walter Anderson McManus	11 May 1902
David Blythe McManus	20 Dec 1903
Isabelle A McManus	8 Mar 1905
James Hill McManus	27 Apr 1909
George Wilson McManus	3 Feb 1911

According to the 1901 Scotland Census, my grandfather, John Ramage, was living in Fraserburgh, Aberdeenshire, Scotland and working as a domestic groom for James and Euphema MacBain. He was still using the name of John McManus.

In October of 1906, his step-sister Jean McManus wrote a postcard to him requesting a loan of money. The following is a transcription of the post card.

Mr. J. A. Ramage  
Stables  
Scone Palace  
Perth

Dear Bro just a few lines to say I'm still in land of the living you will be wondering why I am writing to you but the reason is I have been getting a new dress & with me not been working I have been kept back & father has had a lot to do first & last so I couldn't expect anything from him so I was going to ask you if you could give me the loan of some money to help me to pay my dress. I will give it to you when I am working full again so if can do it please let me have it as soon as you can.  
much oblige  
your loving Sis Jeannie

This is the first time that I have seen anything, other than his birth certificate, that refers to my grandfather as John Ramage rather than John McManus.

I don't know if the loan of money was made or not. But the postcard indicates that he is well enmeshed in the politics of his birth father's family. It also implies that he knows where his step-sister Jean is living, since she doesn't provide a return address.

Does the address of the postcard mean that Grandfather John Ramage is working at Scone Palace? Could he be a carriage driver for the royal family?

In 1907, John Ramage immigrates to Canada arriving at the port of Quebec. I haven't

been able to find the record of his entry into Canada. Years later when he left Canada for the United States, another record was created. Some of the questions asked at the Border Crossing were "When did you arrive in Canada?, What was the port of entry?, and What ship did you arrive on? The answers John Ramage provided were "1907", "Quebec", and "Sicilian".

I wonder what prompted him to leave the country of his birth and go for the unknown lands of the new world. Perhaps it was to escape the stigma of being "illegitimate." Once he enters Canada all the records regarding him refer to him as John Alexander Ramage, which supports the family story that he was the illegitimate son of John McManus who later took his mother's maiden name of Ramage.

A genealogist once told me that people usually relocate in order to go to something rather than running away from something/someone. So, perhaps he immigrates to Canada in pursuit of the woman he loved, Mary Hogg.

According to her Extract Entry of Birth, Mary Hogg was born on 6 Aug 1877 to John and Isabella Davidson Hogg in Selkirk, Scotland. Mary appears to be the oldest girl of at least 9 children. The Canadian Passenger Lists, 1865-1935 show that Mary Hogg, her parents, and many of her siblings left Scotland for Canada in 1907.

The family must have departed from either the Edinburg or Selkirk train station to journey to Glasgow. Here, they boarded the ship called the Sicilian and arrived at Montreal, Quebec, Canada on May 15, 1907. Their ultimate destination was Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada.

But how and where did my grandparents meet? I have a photograph of John Ramage and Mary Hogg taken at the R. Clapperton Studio located at Meadow Cottage in Selkirk, Scotland. I don't think that this couple returned to Scotland after immigrating to Canada. If so, that means that John and Mary met in Selkirk.



On 7 July 1908, John Ramage and Mary Hogg were married at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada. I have located both civil and church records regarding their marriage.

St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church records are in Latin and indicate that John was already a Catholic while Mary Hogg had been a Presbyterian prior to her marriage. She must have converted to Catholicism in order to marry her husband.

By Christmas of 1908, they had their first child, a boy who they named John Alexander Hogg Ramage. His birth date was 21 Dec 1908. The math indicates that Mary Hogg was most likely pregnant when they got married in the Catholic Church. Unlike his father, John Ramage married the woman he got pregnant. Another family story is that John Ramage and Mary Hogg were married aboard ship. I have found no evidence of that shipboard marriage.

So how did John Ramage support his family? Was he a general laborer? My brother remembers my dad saying that he spoke English in school, French at home, and that they lived in a German part of Regina, so he also understood German. What would lead a Scottish family to speak French at home?

My brother, John Thomas Ramage, remembers my dad telling stories of how he and his brother Bill toughened up their feet in the summertime. It seems that the kids went bare foot during the summer. After having their feet ensconced in boots for the long Canadian winters, the soles of their feet must have been quite soft. Two methods for toughening up their feet were employed 1) running through cinders and 2) running down the hot railroad tracks. The trains in the early 1900s were probably steam engines fired by either wood or coal. The railway tracks could provide both the cinders and the train tracks needed to toughen up the kid's feet.

John and Mary went on to have another son, William George, on 18 February 1911 and a daughter, Agnes Isabella, in October of 1914. Agnes was named after both of her grandmothers, Agnes Ramage and Isabella Davidson Hogg.

Unfortunately, she didn't live very long, passing away in 1916. My dad said that his baby sister died when he was about 8 years old. Her official death date of 5 Feb 1916 corresponds with my dad's memory. Her death certificate indicates that she died of pneumonia. But I don't know where this little child is buried.

Three years later on 15 January 1919, Mary Hogg Ramage passed away. My mother, Marie Bossarte Ramage, says that Mary Hogg Ramage died in the flu epidemic of 1918. She is buried in the City Cemetery, Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada.

I spoke with the Saskatchewan Genealogical Society inquiring where Mary Hogg Ramage was buried. They e-mailed me with the following information:

There are three cemeteries in Regina and the only one that existed for your time frame is Regina Cemetery. I have checked and she is buried in their cemetery which is located on the corner of 4th Avenue and Broad Street.

Eleven months after the death of his wife, on November 1919, the remaining members of the Ramage family cross the Canadian border into the United States. They must have traveled from Regina, Saskatchewan to Winnipeg, Manitoba by train. The family had to wait several days in Winnipeg to be examined or interviewed before crossing the border. Their destination was Jacksonville, Illinois, USA. Here, John Ramage was taking his sons to join his birth father, John McManus.

John McManus, his wife Jane and all 5 of their children left Scotland in 1916 traveling on the ship called the Cameronia headed for the United States. They all passed through Ellis Island on 5 Sep 1916.

From New York City, they eventually traveled to Jacksonville, Illinois to join Tom McManus, his son by a previous marriage. The 1910 United States Federal Census shows that Tom and his wife, the former Mary Lowe, came to the United States in 1907. Tom was working for the C & A (Chicago and Alton) Railroad.

There are all sorts of questions raised by this immigration late in the life of John McManus. He was 70 years old when he came to the States. What made him immigrate at this time of life? It was 1916 and WWI was underway in Europe, but the U. S. hadn't yet entered the war. Perhaps he didn't want his sons entering the British military and fighting in the war. The people of Selkirk sent a lot of their young men into the British Army and were particularly hard hit by casualties in WWI.

The fact that John Ramage knew that his birth father was in the United States implies a continuing relationship with him. John Ramage must have corresponded with John McManus after the death of his wife, Mary. He was now a single man with 2 children under the age of 10 to raise. I wonder if he was looking for some assistance to raise the kids. But he seems to have waited 11 months to get this help. Perhaps, the slowness of the postal service between Canada and the U. S. contributed to the length of their stay in Canada after the death of his wife.

John Ramage moved in with his birth father and his family in Jacksonville, IL. In the 1920 United States Federal Census, the relationship between John Ramage and John McManus is acknowledged. John Ramage is shown to be the step-son of John McManus.

John Alexander Ramage passed away on 25 October 1939 and is buried in Calvary Catholic Cemetery in Jacksonville, Illinois.

On his death certificate, both of John Ramage's parents are acknowledged.

During his lifetime, John Ramage lived in 3 different countries on 2 different continents. Although his birth family accepted him to a certain extent, they never let him forget that he was illegitimate.