

Chapter 4

“John Radclive”: His True Identity as Daniel James Ratley

The day after Radclive died in 1911, a reporter had a lengthy interview with a neighbor who said Radclive claimed to have hanged 450 people. The reporter thought the actual number was more like 150. As we have noted in the previous chapters, Radclive executed about 80 people in Canada, and we believe the inflated body counts were mythological. The reporter also went to the Radclive house at 54 Fern Avenue and, “a white-haired old lady with a face like a benediction came to the door.” She identified herself as the mother of the man who had died yesterday, but did not want to talk to the reporter who finally asked the cause of death. The mother replied, “He died as a result of drinking bad water in the Northwest... It brought out a rash on him, and with that came a spinal cord infection. He was ill seven months.”¹

I suppose that drinking bad water, instead of death because of alcoholism, sounds better to a loving mother. As we will note below, he died of cirrhosis of the liver. However, it may be that the mother’s story of an additional illness had some foundation. At the last hanging in Kamloops, a double hanging in 1910, all the hotels refused to take the hangman, and the sheriff stated he had a “shack” prepared for the hangman.² Perhaps the water associated with the shack was not as pure as it should have been?

¹ “Man Who Held a Gruesome Job,” originally in *Toronto Telegram*, reposted in, “Passing of Radcliffe,” *Ottawa Citizen*, Feb. 28, 1911, at 12; *Winnipeg Tribune*, March 4, 1911, at 2.

² Letter from Sheriff to A.G., B.C. Archives GR 0429.3163 Box 18, File 03 Folio 6597/10 1910.

At a small graveside service in Humbervale Cemetery (now called Park Lawn) attended by his mother and oldest son, the minister was quoted as saying:

We must not look down on a man who has been given a certain duty to perform at the hands of the Government. Mr. Radcliffe's duty was to hang men who were sentenced to death. He has, I understand, so hanged 150. We must not condemn a man for doing his duty. He is no more to be condemned than the judge who tried the unfortunate criminal... The man who has gone has been hated in his official position, unjustly...³

His estate was only valued at \$158.00 of which about \$58 was unpaid salary from the government. His son declined to administer the estate, leaving some company to deplete it all in fees.⁴ We presume that the little house on Fern Avenue must have been rented, or perhaps transferred before death to his mother. As reported, "He died at the home of his mother, 54 Fern Avenue."⁵

In a remarkable story that came out about a year after he died, a writer for the *Toronto World*, alleged that Radcliffe's wife had long since left him, and that his children had disowned him and changed their names, and at the end of his life, Radcliffe was full of remorse:

The remorse that comes over me is terrible and my nerves give out until I have not slept for days at a time. I suffered agony of mind that was terrible and began to feel as if iron bars tightened around me. I used to say to condemned persons as I beckoned with my hand, "Come with me." Now at night when I lay down, I start with a roar as victim after victim comes up before me. I can see them on the trap waiting a second before they faced their maker. They taunt me and haunt me until I am nearly crazy with an unearthly fear."⁶

Supposedly, Radcliffe no longer believed in capital punishment and suggested that all murderers, however heinous their crimes, should be allowed to live with their guilt in prison. He told the

³ "Public Hangman Died on Sunday," *Brantford Expositor*, March 1, 1911, at 10.

⁴ "Left Small Estate," *Kingston Standard*, March 6, 1911, at 1; *Brantford Expositor*, at 1.

⁵ "Radcliffe Dead," *Montreal Star*, Feb. 27, 1911, at 3.

⁶ Repeated in "On Radcliffe," *Brandon Sun*, Sept. 12, 1912, at 14.

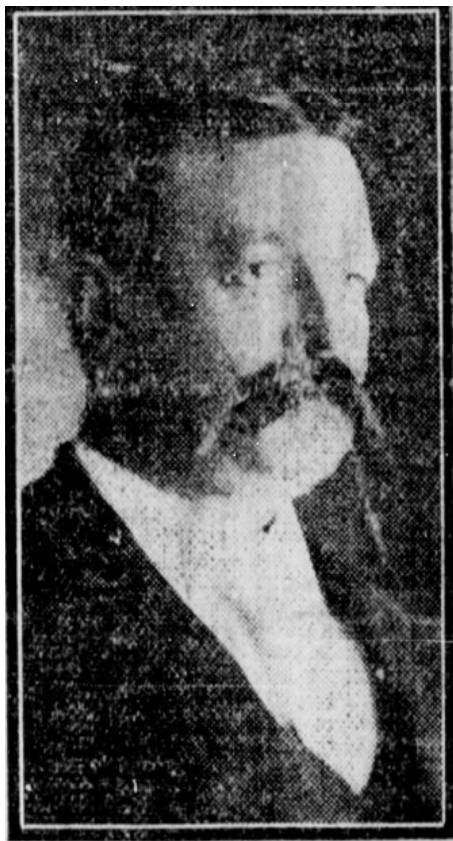
reporter, “When I am dead... tell the people that the hangman suffered the torture of hell on earth after he had killed a hundred persons. And I wish to God I could die right now. The strain is killing me.”⁷

These expressions of regrets cast doubt on our thesis that Radclive was a psychopath. However, we have some doubt as to the actual remorse of Radclive as opposed to his manipulative attempts to gain sympathy for himself. We also have some doubts as to the reliability of this reporter’s account, given that it appears to be an attempt to bolster the anti-capital punishment movement with an argument against capital punishment by the hangman himself.

This is the picture of Radclive found in many newspapers at the time of his death:⁸

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ From *Winnipeg Tribune*, Feb. 28, 1911, at 1.



I. MYTHOLOGY:

Various newspapers after his death attempted to give information about his life, utilizing the previous accounts which are of questionable reliability. As far as we know Radcliffe never provided any reliable account of his past life but rather allowed various speculative narratives to circulate. When he died, it was reported that he was born in Birmingham, the son of an English Clergyman and had graduated as a pharmacist, and even studied medicine for a time, and then he ran a drug store in England,

before he took to the sea.⁹ It was commonly asserted that as part of the Royal Navy he hanged pirates in the South Seas.¹⁰ There is no evidence for any of this. Others allege that he was an assistant to famous English hangman, William Marwood.¹¹ There is no evidence for this either. Another report stated his real name was Donald James Rattley, born in Birmingham, and that, “he had been a whaler, and a sailor, and a grocer and nearly everything else,” and finally was a chef at the Sunnyside club in Toronto.¹² Some of this is true, as we will see, but a great deal of the information on Radcliffe’s life was probably a myth. We now turn to what can be reconstructed with evidence.

II. HIS REAL IDENTITY:

We start with his official death certificate for Feb. 26, 1911, where his name was given as Daniel James Rattley (alias Radcliffe) of 54 Fern Ave., Toronto, 55 years old, born in England, with the occupation listed as “high sheriff,” and no information provided as to mother and father.¹³ The medical report states that he died of cirrhosis of the liver.

In the English genealogical records, we find a Daniel James Rattley (Ratley) born in January 1856 in Banbury, Oxfordshire.¹⁴ The date of birth is consistent with the Census of Canada in March

⁹ “Most Gruesome Job,” *Medicine Hat News*, March 16, 1911, at 4; Also see “Philosophy of the Hangman,” *Brandon Sun*, Sept. 12, 1912, at 14.

¹⁰ See Engel, *Lord High Executioner*, (Toronto: Key Porter, 1996); Martin Friedland, *The Case of Valentine Shortis* (Toronto: U. of T. Press, 1986); Kenneth Saunders, *The Rectory Murder* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1989).

¹¹ As asserted by Howard Engel, *Lord High Executioner*, (Toronto: Key Porter, 1996); Frank W. Anderson, *Hanging in Canada*, (Calgary: Frontier Publishing, 1973); Lorna Poplak, *Drop Dead: The Horrible History of Hanging in Canada*, (Toronto: Dundrum, 2017).

¹² “Passing of Radcliffe,” *Ottawa Citizen*, Feb. 28, 1911, at 12.

¹³ Ontario Deaths, 1869-1937, FamilySearch. Death certificate from Ontario Archives.

¹⁴ England and Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837-1915. Unless otherwise noted, all genealogy records come from Ancestry.com or FamilySearch.com.

of 1901, when Rattley using the name “John Radclive,” then 45, was listed as being born in England on January 30, 1856.¹⁵

Even though he used the name Radclive in Toronto directories and in various census data, Radclive admitted in 1909 that he was using a false name, and that neither Radclive nor Radcliffe was his real name.¹⁶ Previously it had been reported that in social life, Radclive sometimes used the name, “Thomas Ratley.”¹⁷ In the first major interview of him way back in 1890, he stated that his real name was “Thomas Ratley.”¹⁸

There is a recent book which imaginatively recounts the life of our hangman, and as such is a valuable read, but is based on the premise that our hangman’s real name was John Radcliffe, and the name Rattley or Ratley was an alias.¹⁹ The author then identifies a John Radcliffe who went to sea as a lad, married a woman named Sarah Gwyther, and eventually became the hangman in Canada. In my view this is the wrong guy, given that John Radcliffe and wife Sarah Gwyther at some stage moved from England to Scotland where they appear in the Scottish Census of 1891 and 1901. John, who worked in the coastguard for many years, died in 1930 leaving his estate to wife Sarah Gwyther.²⁰ This cannot be our hangman who died in 1911.

III. PARENTS:

While the death certificate lists him as Rattley with two t’s, he was born Ratley with one t. If we go to the 1861 English Census, we find Daniel James Ratley, age 5, born in 1856, living with his

¹⁵ 1901 Census of Canada.

¹⁶ “Hangman Admits Radclive in Not his Real Name,” *Montreal Star*, Nov. 20, 1909, at 3; *Vancouver News*, Nov. 30, 1909, at 27.

¹⁷ “Truskey Swings,” *Windsor Star*, Dec. 14, 1894, at 3; Bruce Deachman, “They Haunt Me,” *Ottawa Citizen*, Feb. 26, 2011.

¹⁸ For example, *Manitoba Weekly Free Press*, Nov. 6, 1890, at 6, plus numerous other newspapers.

¹⁹ Julie Burtinshaw, *Hangman: The True Story of Canada’s First Official Executioner* (New Westminster: Tidewater Press, 2022).

²⁰ Scotland, National Probate Index, 1876-1936.

parents. The family was living in Neithrop, Banbury.²¹ I guess that since Banbury is about 40 miles from Birmingham, Radclive might not have been exactly lying if he ever said he was born there. In the 1861 Census, his father was listed as John Ratley, age 27, and his mother was Emma Ratley, 25, and Daniel James had two younger siblings, George John Ratley, 1, and infant sister Clara Ratley. Father, James Ratley, at this stage was listed as a porter.

The hangman’s mother’s maiden name was Emma Heydon, born in Farnborough. She was pregnant before she married John Ratley. The marriage records say that John and Emma were married sometime in Oct-Nov-Dec. of 1855 in Banbury, while son, Daniel James, was born in January of 1856.²² His mother, Emma Heydon, came from a poor family of farm labourers at Farnborough. The family had seven girls and four boys.²³ Emma Heydon, at age 15 had already left the family and was a servant to a grocer-draper in Compton, Warwickshire.²⁴ When “John Radclive” whose real name was Daniel Ratley died in 1911, we believe that it was this Emma (Heydon) Ratley who was living in Toronto at Fern Ave. At some stage, probably shortly after her son died, she returned home and died at age 85 in 1922 back in Banbury.²⁵

The hangman’s father, John Ratley, came from a family of farm labourers in Banbury, and he had four brothers and two sisters, aunts and uncles to our hangman. As noted, our hangman had a host of uncles and aunts on his mother’s side as well. At the age of 17, John Ratley was also a servant to a grocer.²⁶ We see that the grocery connection is important in terms of tracing the history of our hangman. Both his parents were involved in the grocery trade in some capacity.

²¹ England Census of 1861.

²² England and Wales Marriage Index, 1837-2005.

²³ England Census of 1841, 1851 and 1861.

²⁴ England Census of 1851.

²⁵ England and Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1916-2007.

²⁶ England Census of 1851.

When we go to the English Census of 1871, we find that father, John Ratley, now 38, and mother, Emma, 36, and siblings, George, 11, and Clara, 10, were living in Town's End, in Neithrop, Banbury. At this stage, John was the operator of a grocer's shop.²⁷ Notice that even though he was only 15 at this point, our hangman, Daniel James Ratley, just like his parents before him, was not living at home by the age of 15. Rather he was a lodger in Aston Manor, Warwickshire, but listed as an assistant grocer who was out of work.²⁸

It is possible that at some point after this census of 1871, Daniel Ratley went out to sea, but we have no evidence whatsoever to confirm all the speculative references about being a sailor and hanging pirates and so forth. Radcliffe allegedly told one reporter that he helped hang pirates in the China seas, but this could just be part of the mythology he spun around himself.²⁹

We do not know why, but John Ratley, father of the hangman, died at age 44 in Banbury in April of 1877.³⁰ At this stage our hangman would be 21 years old when his father died. It is possible that our hangman was at sea and then came back to take over the grocery shop of his father. However, rather than taking over his father's shop, our hangman, Daniel Ratley, became an assistant at the grocery shop of a Mr. Parrott in Wycombe, as indicated by a report about a theft he witnessed in that store in 1878.³¹ Eventually his brother, George Ratley, would go into partnership with Parrott,³² and then take over the grocery shop in the town of High Wycombe.

In the next Census of 1881, mother, Emma, 45, was listed as a widow and as a grocer in Neithrop, Banbury, while sister, Clara

²⁷ England Census of 1871.

²⁸ England Census of 1871.

²⁹ Memoirs of H. Charlesworth, "Famous Burchall Trial Recalled," *Owen Sound Sun Times*, April 26, 1930 at 13.

³⁰ England and Wales Death Index.

³¹ "Re Witness to Theft," *Wycombe Bucks Free Press*, March 1, 1878, at 2.

³² "Notice of Partnership dissolution," *Bucks Free Press*, Oct. 31, 1884, at 4.

J. Ratley, 20, was still living with her.³³ Thus, we assume that Emma took over the grocery shop when her husband died, and for some reason Daniel ended up in a grocery store in Wycombe. But by the time of the 1881 Census, as we will note below, he was already married and living in Bedford where he was an assistant grocer.³⁴

IV. SIBLINGS:

Before we continue our narrative as to the history of our hangman, we note that he only had two siblings, a younger brother, George John Ratley, born on October 1859 in Banbury, and a sister, Clara Ratley, born in 1861. As noted, younger brother, George John Ratley, also became a grocer, having a shop on Oxford Street in High Wycombe.³⁵ He eventually went bankrupt as an owner in 1892,³⁶ but continued in the business as an assistant.³⁷ George had married Ann Purser in 1884 and when he went bankrupt, he assigned all of his property to his father-in-law who then dealt with the creditors. There were a number of lawsuits arising out of the bankruptcy.³⁸ George and wife Ann had one child, Annie Florence Ratley, born in 1885. We are uncertain as to the dates of death as to the hangman’s brother and wife. He may have died in London at age 73 in 1935, while his wife, Ann or Annie may have died at age 85 in 1951.³⁹

Our hangman’s sister, Clara Ratley, eventually married Arthur Clough in 1882. They had five children, one of whom died at a young age.⁴⁰ Arthur Clough, who became a newspaper compositor, died in 1915, and Clara died in 1929.⁴¹

³³ England Census of 1881.

³⁴ English Census of 1881.

³⁵ U.K. City and County Directories: Kelly’s Directory, 1887, and 1891.

³⁶ “Bankruptcy,” *Banbury Advertiser*, January 7, 1892, at 4.

³⁷ English Census of 1901.

³⁸ See lawsuits, *Bucks Free Press*, Dec. 4, 1891, at 2; and Feb. 5, 1892, at 3.

³⁹ England and Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1916-2007.

⁴⁰ English Census of 1901 and 1911.

⁴¹ See family tree on Ancestry.ca.

V. FIRST WIFE AND TWO SONS:

If we are on the correct path, our hangman, Daniel James Ratley, who appeared as grocer's assistant in 1871, reappears as Daniel James Rattley (with a double t) when at age 25 he married Henrietta Nicholls on March 29, 1881 in Southill, Bedford.⁴² Henrietta was born on May 30, 1858.⁴³ Her father was a house painter, and she had two brothers.⁴⁴ In the 1881 Census, following closely on the marriage, Daniel James Rattley, age 25, and wife Henrietta Rattley, age 22, were boarding in Southill where he was listed as an assistant grocer.⁴⁵

At some stage, Daniel and Henrietta moved to Buckingham, which is not far from the hamlet of Radclive, perhaps the source of Daniel's chosen name when he came to Canada, because not long after they were married, John Heydon Rattley was born in January of 1882 in Buckingham.⁴⁶ There is little doubt that the biological father was our hangman. Notice that Heydon was the maiden name of our hangman's mother.

However, there is some doubt as to whether this baby was born to Henrietta Rattley. Several decades later in Ontario, when John Heydon Rattley was married in 1905, the marriage records listed his father as "Thomas" Ratley (the name that our hangman often used), and his mother was listed as Ida Hussey, not Henrietta Ratley or Rattley. As we will note below, we believe that Ida Hussey, born Ida Priest, was the woman who came to Canada with our hangman as his "wife." It is possible that this first son, John Heydon Rattley, who also was taken with them to Canada, was in fact a child of Ida Hussey, who had an affair with Daniel, before or after he was married to Henrietta. The alternative theory is that this John Heydon Rattley was a first son of Daniel and Henrietta,

⁴² English Select Marriages 1538-1973; England and Wales Marriage Registration Index 1837-2005.

⁴³ England and Wales, Select Births, 1538-1975.

⁴⁴ English Census of 1861 and 1871.

⁴⁵ England Census of 1881.

⁴⁶ England and Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837-1915.

and he was taken to Canada by his father and Ida Hussey at a young age. The balance of probabilities is that this first son was a child of Henrietta, because in a census several decades later she asserted that she had given birth to three children, two still living, and we presume the third one died in infancy.⁴⁷

On January 28, 1884, a second son, Harold Marmaduke Ratley (back to one t) was born in Buckingham, but he was not baptized until 1887, and this was at St. Mark, Battersea, in London. The baptism record clearly shows Daniel James Ratley as the father (listed as a traveller), and Henrietta as the mother.⁴⁸ We presume that the family, if still intact, had moved from the Buckingham area to London. Another theory, however, is that the child was probably baptized at the choice of the mother, the father having already disappeared by 1887, or in the process of moving to Canada with another woman.

In the next English Census of 1891, Daniel Rattley or Ratley cannot be found because he had long since left the country and was hanging people in Canada, and he had a new “wife” and family in Canada, along with the oldest son, John Heydon, from his first marriage. His first wife, Henrietta Ratley, was now listed as a widow, domestic housekeeper for the Blackmore family in Battersea, and with her is the younger son, Harold Ratley, 7, going to school.⁴⁹ She probably lied about her age as being 29, instead of 33, just as she lied about being a widow. Divorce was all but out of the question financially for most people, and frequently a woman would call herself a widow when her marriage ended.⁵⁰

Ten years later in 1911, Henrietta Ratley listed her age as 50 rather than 53, as born in Southill, and as a widow boarder, who was a worker at a Cherry Tree Farm in Lingfield.⁵¹ She died in

⁴⁷ 1911 England Census.

⁴⁸ Church of England Baptisms, 1813-1917.

⁴⁹ England Census of 1891.

⁵⁰ See the frequency in which divorced or separated women called themselves widows in the 1920's in my book, Alvin A. J. Esau, *31 Murders*, Exposit/McFarland, 2024.

⁵¹ England Census of 1911.

1913, at the correctly given age of 55.⁵² Ironically that is the same age as our hangman was when he died in 1911.

VI. SUBSEQUENT HISTORY OF THE TWO SONS:

Son number one, John Heydon Ratley, eventually grew up in Canada in the household of the hangman, and second “wife,” Ida (Priest) Hussey. In a subsequent census record, he listed his immigration to Canada as 1889.⁵³ If this is correct, it means he spent his first seven years or so in England. Since we do not know when our hangman split with his wife, Henrietta Nichols, nor do we know whether son number one was a child of Henrietta or whether he was a child of Ida, we do not know if he was ever part of the original household, or whether he was raised solely by Ida in England. Keeping in mind that Radclive (Ratley) regularly lied in the various census records, he nevertheless claimed he immigrated to Canada in 1888.⁵⁴ This is probably correct, implying that Radclive arrived in Canada first, and after getting established, perhaps as the steward of the boating club, he then sent word to Ida and the first son to join him the following year.

John Heydon Ratley eventually got married in 1905. His wife, Alice Meehan, was an Irish Catholic, and they got married in a Catholic Church in Toronto.⁵⁵ As noted previously, he listed his father as “Thomas” Ratley and his mother as Ida Hussey. In subsequent census data, he was listed as a plumber in Toronto.⁵⁶ John and Alice had a son, John Victor Hayden Ratley born in 1906. In the Census of 1931, Alice at age 51, was working as a domestic servant in a household in Toronto. Her son, Victor, age

⁵² England and Wales Death Registration Index, 1837-2007.

⁵³ Canada Census of 1921.

⁵⁴ Canada Census of 1901.

⁵⁵ Ontario Marriages, 1826-1942; Ontario Roman Catholic Baptisms, Marriages, and Burials, 1760-1923.

⁵⁶ Canada Census of 1911, and 1921.

25, was listed as a brush salesman currently out of work.⁵⁷ She was still listed as married, and we might assume therefore that Alice and her husband were no longer living together? We cannot find information on the deaths of Alice and John. Did they change their names? Our hangman’s grandson, Victor Ratley, eventually married and had several children. Victor died in Abbotsford in 1984.

Harold Marmaduke Ratley, the second son of our hangman, was brought up in England living with his mother, Henrietta Nicholl Ratley.⁵⁸ There is some evidence that he may have been raised in poverty and sent to Canada as a British Home Child in June of 1894 at the age of 10 to work on a farm.⁵⁹ Did he know his biological father was the hangman of Canada, and did he eventually connect with his father and brother? All we know is that he married in 1905, a few months after his brother got married. At the age of twenty, he married Ida Griffin in Yarmouth, Elgin County, Ontario. The marriage documents list his mother as Henrietta Nichols (the first wife of our hangman) and father as “William” Ratley. William is the name of his maternal grandfather, rather than “Daniel,” his biological father.⁶⁰ This makes us wonder if he knew who his father was. Harold and wife Ida had a child, Bernice Esther Ratley in Ontario in 1910.⁶¹ That same year they moved to the United States,⁶² and they lived for many decades in the Detroit area, where Harold was a skilled machinist in the automobile industry.⁶³ At one point, while living in Highland Park, Michigan, he became a manager of a manufacturing plant.⁶⁴ Wife,

⁵⁷ Canada Census of 1931.

⁵⁸ England Census of 1891.

⁵⁹ UK and Ireland, Outward Passenger Lists, 1890-1960.

⁶⁰ Ontario Marriages, 1826-1942.

⁶¹ Ontario Births, 1869-1912.

⁶² Detroit Manifests of Arrivals, 1906-1954.

⁶³ See U.S.A. Census of 1910,

⁶⁴ U.S.A. Census of 1930 and 1940.

Ida, died at age 51 in Detroit in 1940,⁶⁵ while Harold died in 1966 in California at the age of 82.⁶⁶

VII. SECOND “WIFE” AND TWO DAUGHTERS:

When he came to Canada and settled in Toronto, Daniel James Rattley or Ratley, seems to have acquired a whole new second family. We believe that despite what he told census takers about the name and age of his wife, the new wife’s maiden name was Ida Priest, born in Wycombe in 1865.⁶⁷ Our hangman was born in 1856, so Ida was about nine years younger than him. It would appear that Ida Priest came from a fairly prosperous background given that her father owned a farm and had several servants.⁶⁸ At the age of 17, Ida Priest married George Hussey, age 25 in 1883.⁶⁹ He also came from a prosperous background, as his father owned a chair manufacturing firm that employed 35 men and 19 young people according to the English Census of 1881. George and his young wife thereafter had two children, daughter Winnifred in 1884, and son Tom, whose birth was registered in January of 1886, but was likely born in December of 1885.⁷⁰ Husband, George Hussey died in Wycombe in 1887 at the age of 29.⁷¹ We surmise that our hangman had an affair with Ida, before her husband died, or after she became a 22 year old widow with two children.

Ida Hussey (Priest) disappears from the English records because she left for Canada under an assumed name to be with our hangman, while the paternal grandparents brought up her two children. What kind of character, or perhaps kindlier, what kind

⁶⁵ Michigan, Death Certificates, 1921-1952.

⁶⁶ California Death Index, 1940-1997.

⁶⁷ England and Wales Birth Index, 1837-1915.

⁶⁸ England Census of 1871.

⁶⁹ England and Wales, Marriage Index, 1837-1915.

⁷⁰ England and Wales Birth Index,

⁷¹ England and Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837-1915.

of circumstances, would lead Ida to abandon her children with her late husband’s parents, and take off to Canada?

We have no evidence that Daniel James Ratley divorced his wife, or that Daniel and Ida Priest Hussey were ever married. Perhaps our hangman was both an adulterer and a bigamist?

In the 1891 English Censes, the children of Ida (Priest) Hussey, Winnifred, 6, and Tom, 5, were living with the Hussey grandparents in Wycombe.⁷² Winnifred was still living there at age 16 in 1901, when her grandparents were aged 80 and 76.⁷³ In the census of 1911, Winnifred was a domestic servant in Wycombe.⁷⁴ It appears that Tom eventually came to Canada, married here, and had a family.⁷⁵ He died of cancer at age 58 in 1944.⁷⁶ Winnifred died in England in 1971.⁷⁷

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Now turning to the Canadian records, in the census of 1891, living in Toronto, John Radclive, age 35, born in England, was listed as a labourer. This would be after Radclive was already acting as a hangman, but before his official appointment in 1892. He was listed as having a wife, Martha, 29, and son, John, 8, also born in England, and two girls, Madeline, 2, and Blanche, 1, born in Ontario.⁷⁸ We believe that Radclive lied to census takers about more than his name. For example, “Martha Radclive” was not the real name of the so-called wife, and also her age does not match Ida Hussey Priest who would have been a younger woman of around 26 or so, rather than 29. We believe that the son listed as “John Radclive” was John Heydon Ratley and the age given on the census as 8, was not too out of line, although the correct age would have been 9 rather than 8. As to the two daughters, we can find no Ontario records whatsoever of their birth under the name

⁷² English Census, 1891.

⁷³ English Census, 1901.

⁷⁴ English Census, 1911.

⁷⁵ Canadian Census of 1921.

⁷⁶ Ontario Deaths, 1869-1947.

⁷⁷ England and Wales, Death Index, 1916-2006.

⁷⁸ Canada Census of 1891.

Radclive, Rattley, or Ratley. There are no subsequent Canadian records either, as far as we can determine, dealing with them.

The next Canadian Census of 1901 provided more detail as to the alleged birth dates, even though the writing was terrible and hard to discern. Living in Toronto, John R. Radclive, 45, born on January 30, 1856, was listed as a “machinist.” His wife, age 38, was now called Sarah (instead of Martha as per 1891 Census), and she was supposedly born on Dec. 9, 1862. Again, we believe that this was false information. Son, John H., 15, listed as working in a factory, was said to be born on March 11, 1883. If he was 8 in the last census ten years ago, why was he only 15 now, instead of 17 or 18? John Heydon Ratley was born in January 1882, not March 11, 1883. Madeline, 11, was supposedly born on May 18, 1889, and Dorothea (Blanche), 10, was said to be born in August of 1890. The date of immigration for the family was given as 1888.⁷⁹ As we have noted, it may be that the “wife” and son arrived in 1889, not 1888. Indeed, while oldest daughter, Madeline, was listed as being born in Canada, she may have been born in England or at sea. We do not think the hangman could be trusted to give accurate information for census purposes.

VIII. SUBSEQUENT HISTORY OF SECOND “WIFE” AND DAUGHTERS:

As early as February 1892, there was a press report that the hangman’s wife and daughters had left him.⁸⁰ This was not long after the Census of 1891 which we have noted above and coincides with the beginning of the second decade of Radclive’s career, which I have described as his “descent into hell.” Apparently Ida Priest Hussey Ratley could not live with the fact that her “husband” was a hangman and she left him and went back to England, taking their two daughters with her.⁸¹ As to the second wife, and daughters, Madeline and Blanche, we have some probable, but not

⁷⁹ Canada Census of 1901.

⁸⁰ “The Hangman,” *The Sault Star*, Feb. 13, 1902, at 1.

⁸¹ *Brandon Weekly Sun*, Sept. 12, 1912, at 14.

definitive, history as to their movements after they fled from their hangman husband and father and allegedly went to England. Rather than changing their name, we find that the wife and daughters retained the Rattley name, although they did not use the name Radclive.

The youngest daughter, Blanche Dorothy Rattley, born in Toronto in 1890, arrived on a ship from Liverpool to New York City in May 1910 at the age of 20.⁸² She subsequently worked as a model, and over the years we can trace her residences in Manhattan, trips back and forth to England, and further information that both her parents were born in England.⁸³ This sure looks like the youngest child of our hangman. We also have confirmation as to the identity of the second wife of the hangman, because when Blanche Rattley married a real estate mogul, Stephen Egan, in Manhattan in 1925, the record states that Blanche’s father’s name was Daniel Rattley and the mother’s maiden name was *Ida Priest*.⁸⁴

Now a few months after Blanche Rattley moved to New York in 1910, we find that an *Ida Rattley*, said to be a widow, and giving her age as 44, also arrived in New York on a ship from Southampton.⁸⁵ She travelled with her daughter, Gladys M Rattley Taylor, age 23, and Gladys’s son, Harold Taylor, age 2. When they arrived in New York they gave information as coming from the residence of “A. Priest,” living at Clapham Common in London. This is further information that our hangman’s Canadian “wife” was probably *Ida Priest*, and that Blanche was her daughter, as well as the young woman Gladys M. Taylor, whom we believe was the oldest daughter listed in Canada as *Madeline Radclive* in the Census of 1891 and 1901. We also find that on several trips back to England, Blanche gave a contact address in New York for her mother, confirming that her mother now lived in New York.⁸⁶

⁸² New York Passenger and Crew Lists.

⁸³ New York State Census, 1915 and 1925, U.S. Federal Census of 1920 and 1930, various New York Passenger Lists.

⁸⁴ New York City Marriage Records, 1829-1940.

⁸⁵ New York, Passenger and Crew Lists, 1820-1957.

⁸⁶ New York Passenger and Crew List for Sept. 25, 1920, and for Nov. 24,

As we follow Ida and her daughter Gladys and grandson Harold through the records, we find that they continued to live together and were still doing so in 1940.⁸⁷ Gladys, listed as a “widow” worked for decades in New York in women’s neckwear sales.⁸⁸ We do not know when she married a Mr. Taylor, presumably in England, or whether her husband died or whether she separated from her husband to live with her mother in New York. Census data states that both Ida and her daughter, Gladys, were first married at age 17.⁸⁹ Gladys was listed as also born in England, although this may have been done out of convenience. Our hangman’s second “wife” Ida Rattley may have died in 1943.⁹⁰ We do not know when daughter Gladys Taylor died or when our hangman’s grandson, Harold Taylor died.

Even if we are wrong about some parts of this genealogical trail, we still may conclude that the private life of our hangman seems to have been rather complicated, to say the least, and consistent with the messy sexual and marital relationships often found among psychopaths.

1921.

⁸⁷ United States Census, 1940.

⁸⁸ U. S. Census of 1920, 30, and 40.

⁸⁹ United States Census, 1930.

⁹⁰ Find a Grave Index, FindaGrave.com.