

*Transcript of Letter from David T. Ralston to his son Daniel¹ in Oregon
in 1889.*

The letter was copied as written by an unknown descendant (footnotes by Ed Ralston):

March the 8 1889

Deare son and family I seat my self to let you know whe are all well hoping they will find you are all well and doing well. I have nothing strange to whrite times is prety close heare whe had 5 inch of snow on the 24 ove febuary and abig raine one top of that the last few days has bin very fine the peapol in heare is terable in debt and it makes times hard I dont know wen Jo and Jim nichols² will get out ore not the rest of the boyes is doing tolarble well elmer³ is at emporia going to school you wanted a history of the Ralston family my gnad father⁴ was from iearland and setteled at nashville tennisee when it was alittel indian fort he raised familys of boyes they ware in tennisee when the waare came up since then i nothing of them I have never seen atennesee Ralston but what was close kin Jou Ralston⁵ was a nephfew of my grand fathers and went to indiandia in averly day and raised a large family of boyes that is about all I know about the connectin there is and old man in your coutry⁶ buy the neale Johson⁷ acumberlang⁸ prechar that can tell you agood deale about the Ralston family him and uncle william⁹ commenced preaching together ifyou should see him I wold be glad you wold make your self knowen to him I will cove buy subscvibing self your father untill death

D T Ralston

to D W Ralston write when this come to hand

My best guess as to an interpretation:

March 8, 1889

Dear son and family,

I sit myself to let you know we are all well. Hoping they will find you are all well and doing well. I have nothing strange to write. Times is pretty close [?] here. We had 5 inches of snow on the 24th of February and a big rain on top of that. The last few days has been very fine. The people in here is terrible in debt and it makes times hard. I don't know when Jo and Jim Nichols² will get out or not [of debt]. The rest of the boys is doing tolerable well. Elmer³ is at Emporia going to school.

You wanted a history of the Ralston family. My grandfather⁴ was from Ireland and settled at Nashville, Tennessee, when it was a little Indian fort. He raised a family of boys. They were in Tennessee when the war came up. Since then, I have heard nothing of them. I have never seen a Tennessee Ralston, but what was close kin. Jou⁵ [Jos?] Ralston was a nephew of my grandfathers' and went to Indiana in an early day and raised a large family of boys. That is about all I know about the connection. There is an old man in your country⁶ by the name of Neill Johnson⁷, a Cumberland⁸ preacher that can tell you a good deal about the Ralston family. Him and Uncle William⁹ commenced preaching together. If you should see him, I would be glad if you would make yourself known to him. I will close by subscribing myself, your father until death,

D T Ralston

to D W Ralston write when this comes to hand

Was Joseph Ralston, who lived in Tennessee and moved to Indiana, David Ralston's nephew? Probably not – nothing in yDNA shows that David was Joseph's uncle, BUT it does show they were closely related, with a common ancestor only a few generations back. It is possible they knew each other, but more likely knew of each other and knew they were kin. David was probably called "uncle" in the sense of an elder cousin. From the definition of "uncle" per Wikipedia: "In some cultures and families, children may refer to the cousins of their parents as uncle (or aunt)."

¹ Eldest (living) son: Daniel Washington Ralston 1845–1904 living in Oregon. David Thompson was living in Kansas.

² Son-in-law and grandson: James Monroe Nichols 1848–1902 and Joseph Everett Nichols 1875–1957

³ Youngest son: Elmer Elsworth Ralston 1869–1953

⁴ David Ralston 1741-1831 – David Thompson Ralston was the son of David's son, Samuel Ralston

⁵ "Jou" was a transcription and probably not the intended. It might have been "Jon", "Jos", or other. The only Ralston found in census records that lived in Tennessee and moved to Indiana was Joseph Ralston 1760-1834, born in Ireland, died in Indiana. See further comments at end of document.

⁶ Daniel and Neill Johnson both lived in Yamhill County, Oregon, about 13 miles apart.

⁷ Rev. Neill Johnson 1802-1890, born in North Carolina, died in Oregon – studied at Cumberland College in Lebanon, TN, the school and hometown of Rev. William Ralston, uncle of David Thompson Ralston. William was likely the source of Neill's knowledge of the Ralston family.

⁸ Cumberland Presbyterian

⁹ Rev. William Ralston, youngest son of David Ralston.