

IV. Ongoing research

The focus of Gardner Research involves the Cape Ann event and deals with issues that are prior, during and after the fact until the present time. One might say, Essex County as the focus, as the times required a move to what became Salem, MA. It was there where the groundwork for the country was laid down, albeit that the power center moved to Boston. Essex County can claim temporal and moral precedence, of sorts.

1. Pseudo-wall (not brick, at all)

Heritage societies have an obligation to keep themselves from being hoodwinked. As such, their genealogists might exhibit themselves to have lead feet. Of late, the New England Historic Genealogical Society has offered to help the Mayflower Society with its application process. This is an example of using the techniques required to the fullest. And, the story of this section pertains to that theme.

A. Introduction

This case deals with a Mayflower descendant who is buried in a lonely grave in a small cemetery in one of the western states. There is no question about the lineage. His ancestors are in the silver books. Too, his brother has progeny in the society; one of his daughters has her progeny in the society. The particulars in this case deal with Chloe, a daughter of Lyman Porter, who died young, her daughter (Myra) also died young, then, her granddaughter (Gladys, Lyman's great-granddaughter) was adopted. This was not an uncommon situation.



Lyman Porter, grave

We give a few of the specifics in the next section, however, except for some additional information, we have had enough material for going forward for two years. Yet. Things sit. Why? That can be discussed later. The emphasis here is to continue what was discussed in the prior article: “Flyover country,” *The Gardner Annals*, Volume III, Number 1.¹ And, to bring in the larger issues related to this type of endeavor.

In terms of status, for each of the generations, we have gathered records as required where they were available. Where these were not found, we have documented why and collected additional material that pertains to determining the relationships. We will detail one example in the next section.

The TGA Vol III article² looked at a western family that was the merge of old families from New England, north and south. That is, there was a marriage of two people; one was of New England; the other was out of Virginia and its surroundings. The grave sites of these families are scattered through three states with one lone grave in a damaged state serving as a reminder of the trials of the western expansion.³ There are many examples, such as this, that Gardner Research is researching.

We were asked to help someone start the application process for membership in the Mayflower society using the lineage outlined in this article. In terms of timeline, the original work was done in the fall of 2015. This was our first Mayflower experience (baptism by fire, it turns out to be). By the summer of 2016, we had gathered the majority of the required documents. Also, we had identified where documents were missing and obtained collateral information. Part of that research was looking

¹ See this post <http://thomasgardnerofsalem.blogspot.com/2016/11/flyover-country.html>

² See TGA III (this document), page 7

³ <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/54700879/lyman-porter> - he was born (1819) in Wendell, Franklin, MA and buried (1898) in Fairfield, Clay County, NE.

for (and getting) a copy of the Probate Records. Too, we did side research based upon the history of the areas involved.

There were three problem generations identified in the application work. In the prior article, we gave an overview of the family, their heritage, and their movement through the western area. We gave a few details about the documents that had been retrieved and described how the claim can be supported. This time we look more closely at the problem areas and provide arguments for why this application ought to be considered complete.

From the human factor side of things, the girl (Gladys) who was adopted was quite successful and wrote of her life. Only two of her children were alive in 2016. Now, we have one left who is in her 90s. And, the Mayflower Society games the situation. The ancestor for the girl through her mother is John Alden. However, her father is a descendant of William Brewster. But, we sit on that in order to get this task done.

One wonders whether another State might have been more amenable to the requirements of the approach taken for this application. However, this is not science, so no such experiment can be done. As well, we broached the subject with the national group who said that States do their own thing. Imagine that.

B. Continuing work

In general, though, the Mayflower passengers (and some of the crew) would have held, themselves, to the Commandment of 'Honor thy parents' and would be interested in having their descendants identified regardless of whether those folks now belonged to a modern group. This would be a case of such honoring; how did it become an obstacle course? One might even suggest that the Mayflower folk would actively seek out descendants. We have done that ourselves with our little non-profit focus.

It seems that the genealogists like to make the whole endeavor to be some type of ordeal which is not necessary. Be that as it may, the issues involved seem to be more personality (and opinion) oriented rather than fact. As well, we have seen, published by the New England Historic Genealogical Society (NEHGS), their work in this type of case where the Mayflower group accepted the application that was built on a bit of circumstantial material. Hence, such work establishes a precedent, one would think. Though, the NEHGS provides a service of this type for a fee.

Besides, the circumstantial issue here is minimal. We have bunches of information.

So, let's look more closely at the detail. In the problem areas, we have two mothers (descendants of Lyman and Caroline) dying young. The granddaughter and daughter, respectively, of the two women had to be put out for adoption. However, there are sufficient documents to show what happened and to illustrate the continuity of the family.

About Lyman Porter - The work to document Mayflower descendants gives us a place to start. Mercy Dorman was a descendant of John Alden and Priscilla Mullin.⁴ Her parents were Seth Dorman and Sarah Thayer. Sarah's parents were Ephraim Thayer and Sarah Bass. Sarah's parents were John Bass and Ruth Alden. Then, Ruth was the daughter of John and Priscilla.

⁴ *Mayflower Families Fifth Generation Descendants, 1700-1880*. (Online database: *AmericanAncestors.org*, New England Historic Genealogical Society, 2017). From *Mayflower Families Through Five Generations: Descendants of the Pilgrims who landed at Plymouth, Mass., December 1620*. Plymouth, MA: General Society of Mayflower Descendants, 1975-<2015> - Vol. 16, Part 4, Page 255

Mercy married Benjamin Porter. Benjamin was the son of William Porter and Phoebe Dorman. William was the son of Joseph Porter and Ann Hawthorne. And, Joseph was son of John Porter who arrived in Hingham, MA in 1635.⁵

Benjamin and Mercy had a son, Noah, who is mentioned in the Mayflower book that covers five generations. Noah married Asenath Smith and had a son, Noah, who married Nabby Comins. Noah and Nabby were the parents of Lyman Porter.

Other children of Noah and Asenath were Elijah, Reuben, Joseph, Ransom, Catherine, Royal, Anna, Noah, John, and Warren. This Noah, son of Noah and Asenath (with his sons Reuben, Lyman, Joseph, and Warren), moved west and was a pioneer in the western part of Illinois and further.⁶

Lyman is mentioned in the Porter book with his parents and siblings, but it, merely, mentions that he was in Nebraska. Prior to Lyman Porter arriving in Nebraska, he was in Kentucky and Illinois. In Kentucky, he married Caroline Hopwood. Lyman and Caroline are in the Census together from 1850 through 1880. Too, we have lots of material related to the Porters in Illinois with respect to their business and social dealings.

About Chloe (Porter Jackson) – In the 1850 Census, Caroline’s mother and her siblings are living with her and Lyman. Caroline’s father had died. The Hopwood family was out of Virginia (which we have documented). Caroline’s mother was a Fox. Kentucky was one of the major ways to venture out in the western movement. Of note is that little Chloe, who was the first to die as a young mother, is mentioned in the 1850 Census, as is her brother, George. But, George died in 1856. His death record noted that he was the son of Lyman and Caroline. There is another clue. Chloe had a sister (Emmira) born in Kentucky, too, on whose record is Lyman and Caroline as her parents. And, in the 1860 Census, we then see: Chloe, no George, and her sister (Emmira). There were other siblings. Of note is that Caroline died in Los Angeles. She moved there after Lyman had died and was buried in Nebraska. In the 1910 Census, Caroline is living with Emmira and her children. And, Emmira is noted as Caroline’s daughter.

About Myra (Jackson) Gill -- Chloe married Thomas Jackson in Illinois. Thomas is of Virginia families, too. Thomas and Chloe are in the 1870 Census with Myra who is an infant. But, Chloe died in 1872. Myra was pre-toddler. We have the tombstone photo with the cemetery record for Chloe. Later, while reviewing the probate records, we find that Thomas had remarried, however he died in 1879. The probate records (Illinois) show that a brother of Thomas was made executor and another was made guardian of Myra. The probate records also show that Myra was the heir of Thomas, with her stepmother. By then, Lyman and Caroline had moved further west. Myra was with Lyman and Caroline in the 1880 Census as their granddaughter. Probate records show that Myra was in Nebraska and not Illinois. There was a settlement of Thomas’ estate, including part distributed to the stepmother who went back to Kentucky. Myra’s uncle did help her keep property in Illinois. Myra grows up, goes to college in Illinois, and marries a railroad man (Arthur Gill) in 1893. Her marriage record notes that Thomas Jackson and Chloe Porter were her parents. Myra and Arthur have a daughter, Gladys.

⁵ Porter, JW (1878) *A Genealogy of the Descendants of Richard Porter, ... Also, some Account of the Descendants of John Porter Burr & Robinson*, Page 251.

⁶ Clarke, SJ (1878) *History of McDonough County, IL*
<https://archive.org/stream/historyofmcdonou1878clar#page/n7/mode/2up>

Gladys, the adoptee -- Gladys was born in 1893. Her mother, Myra (Jackson) Gill died, in 1893. The 1900 Census shows Gladys with her grandmother, Phylura Gill. Gladys is seven; her grandmother is sixty-seven. We did find information about Gladys' father (was still alive when Myra died; he remarried). When Phylura was dying, she asked a neighbor couple to adopt, and to take care of, Gladys. Gladys wrote that she remembered that cold winter day of her childhood. The 1910 Census shows the Defibaughs, with Gladys. Gladys is seventeen. In 1913, Gladys married. Her marriage license shows her parents to be Myra Jackson and Arthur Gill. When Gladys died, in 1987, her death certificate showed her parents to be Myra Jackson and Arthur Gill. One wrinkle is that Gladys used the name of Defibaugh when she married, but her parents were identified on the document. We did not ask for the adoption records but used the story written by Gladys for her daughters when they were older (one of her children is still alive). Gladys and her husband were quite successful and active in the community.

What we have here is little Chloe being disrespected, essentially. She had the misfortune to having been born in an undocumented fashion. But, she was with her folks for the next couple of decades as recorded by the faithful U.S.A. clerk who was marking names for the Census. Her sister, Anna, has progeny in the Mayflower Society. In fact, Anna, and her children, were in Los Angeles, at the same time as Caroline and Emmira, according to the 1910 Census.

Young Chloe is seen to be with Lyman and Caroline in the Census records with her siblings for several years. We know that Lyman and Caroline are the parents of Chloe's siblings. When Chloe died, we have record of Lyman noting that Myra is his granddaughter; her mother was Chloe. There are lots of side records that can build into several stories. The invisible person type of thing? But, why ought Chloe be forgotten? The advent of the stepmother warps things a bit.

Genealogists have lead feet, it has been written. Of course, a conservative stance can help protect one from bad choices. However, too, genealogists do not prove the lives. Wait, it's the documents that give one being? These folks, our ancestors and others, lived and died. Any modern proof system adds not one iota to that. We are very near getting to map-territory issues. Too, a modern group that would weed out descendants for whatever reason has it wrong. We know. You see this attitude rampantly running across the landscape. They have to ask you to join.

So, then, one might ask: why don't you document descendants? If some are deemed not worthy to join the society, well, they would, at least, have their heritage identified. And, the religious tone? Ought we mention the prodigal son (and many other tales)?

Incidentally, yes, we have accomplished applications for persons who wanted to join many different types of heritage societies. In one case, I was told that it was one of the best applications that they had seen written. This case was really the first time that an arbitrary road block was put in the way. You know, we heard a woman bemoaning the experience but didn't pry. She did, eventually, get her okay. This case? Not a peep. And, we have made many attempts to open the discussion; nope, door is closed.

Hence, I bounced back to do an overview mode to see if there might be lessons to be learned. Too, there is no ax to grind. I am eligible for none of these groups being a late-comer. I have attended many meetings as a guest and have had very interesting discussion. My role (motive) is strictly truth and sustainability.

We know, too, that comparing the 300th and the upcoming 400th (and the 200th of the expansion) might get some attention over the next decade (or two or three – as New England can party for years).