

# HILDRETH HIGHLIGHTS

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## RICHARD<sup>1</sup> OR THOMAS<sup>1</sup> OR ??

by George Adams Parkhurst

Most of us take it for granted that any Hildreth we meet is descended from either Richard<sup>1</sup> of Massachusetts or Thomas<sup>1</sup> of Long Island. Obviously, this is not necessarily the case. Other Hildreths have migrated to this country since the early 1600's.

It is reasonable to believe that we are all related at some point and the Hildreth Family Association recognized this as its Articles of Asso-

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## RICHARD<sup>1</sup> OR THOMAS<sup>1</sup>

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ciation state: "This Association is formed for the purpose of organizing into a friendly union and for the common good, all persons in America who have Hildreth ancestors or who are united by marriage to those who have a Hildreth ancestor, having in mind, but not necessarily limited to, the descendants of the two Puritan forefathers who bore the name of Hildreth....."

As our genealogical research continues, we have found connecting links to Richard<sup>1</sup>, or Thomas<sup>1</sup>, with some families whose relationship was previously not known. However, there are still several families that are still unconnected. Probably some of these trace their ancestry back to Hildreths that were late-comers to America. In a few cases we know this to be true and with the name Hildreth they must be good people. Richard and Thomas descendants have no monopoly on Hildreth virtues (virtues in the prejudiced viewpoint of those bearing the name, at least).

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## RICHARD<sup>1</sup> OR THOMAS<sup>1</sup>

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The following information from the Association's files is a case in point: During the celebration of Independence Day on Monday, July 5, 1875, a 23 year old youth by the name of John Hildreth descended upon the town of Holyoke, Massachusetts, having left his native England two weeks previously. John had been born on October 18, 1851 at Bradford, England, about 50 miles south of Durham County where Hildreths had been reported 400 years earlier. He was the son of Richard and Martha (Wood) Hildreth.

John immediately found employment and settled down to become a solid member of the community and actively participated in the affairs of the Holyoke Second Baptist Church. On October 21, 1886, he realized his dream by becoming a naturalized American citizen. "It was," as he said, the greatest day of my life." On October 8, 1879, he married Flora I. Ellison, who presented him with a daughter, Mattie Ellison Hildreth. However, he was saddened by the untimely deaths of both wife and daughter a few months later. He took, as his second wife, Kate B. Story, on June 13, 1883. They had five children, only two of whom lived to maturity. The youngest, Fannie Hildreth, was a teacher in the West Springfield, Mass. schools. The eldest child of John and Kate was Rev. Ellison Story Hildreth, who achieved recognition in the ministry.

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Grandchildren of the Rev. Ellison Hildreth, by the name of Ballou, now live in South Royalton, Vt. John Lane Hildreth, son of Rev. Ellison Hildreth, was living at the time of his mother's death in 1977, probably in, or around, New York City.

John Hildreth, the progenitor of this line, worked in industry until 1890, studying law part-time during the last two years. In 1893 he was admitted to the Massachusetts bar. Five years later he was named Associate Judge, a position he held until 1919 when he was elevated to Judge of the District Court, continuing to serve in that capacity until he retired in 1938. Judge Hildreth was one of Holyoke's best known and respected citizens.

There must be many "latter-day American Hildreths." The Association would like to welcome them as members and would also like to record their family histories for future generations.