

HILDRETH HIGHLIGHTS

VOL. XXXI, NO. 4

July 2008

The Descendents of Leonarde and Emmate Hildrethe of Thirlby, Yorkshire, England

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Thirlby: Before 1600 to 1800

For over 200 years, from before 1600 to about 1800, the tiny hamlet of Thirlby, near Thirsk in Yorkshire, was the home of a Hildreth family—apparently just one Hildreth family—all of whom were descended from Leonarde Hildrethe and his wife Emmate.¹ Just when Leonarde and Emmate moved to Thirlby, it is impossible to say, because record keeping in Thirlby began in 1598 and their first child was born in 1601. So obviously, Leonarde and Emmate were already adults before the first of the vital statistics was written down in Thirlby. From the dates when their children were born, it is logical to assume that Leonarde and Emmate were born in around 1580. (To put that date in context, it is about half way through the reign of Queen Elizabeth I and before the defeat of the Spanish Armada!)

It is not surprising that only one Hildreth family lived in Thirlby. After all, even today, Thirlby has a population of only 120 people.² [It is interesting to note, however, that about the time when the last of the Hildreths were leaving Thirlby, in about 1800, the population was actually larger than it is today (167 people in 1823). So it appears that other families were also leaving at that time.]

Even though there was only one Hildreth family in Thirlby, there were other Hildreth lines within 30 miles or less of that hamlet from at least the late 1400s. For example, there were Hildreths in Kirby Sigston, Osmotherly, Easingwold, Gilling, Huthwaite, and Kilburn³, as well, of course, as in Gainford just over the Yorkshire border in County Durham.

Leonarde and Emmate had three children: Fraunces, b. 1601; John, b. 1603; and Elizabethe, b. 1605. There are no further records for Fraunces, but Elizabethe married a Georg Whitfield. Elizabethe and Georg had a son who died in 1637, when Elizabeth was 32 years old. More about John later.

Leonarde and Emmate both died in 1615 and were buried within three days of each other. One can only speculate as to the cause of their nearly simultaneous and untimely deaths (untimely in that their youngest child was only 10 years old at the time.) However, in England in 1615 there was an epidemic called “a burning fever,” which killed many people. So that might have been the cause of their deaths. [Little is known of this disease except that it coincided with an outbreak of “Hot Ague” (fever) elsewhere in Europe.]⁴

John Hildrethe, b. 1603, the only son of Leonarde and Emmate, had five children: two girls (Ann and Elizabeth) and three boys (William, Christopher, and Richard). (Please refer to the family tree on pages 4 and 5 for the first 8 generations of the Thirlby Hildreths.) There is no further record of Ann except possibly a burial in either 1700 or 1704. Elizabeth married Anthony Hazell in 1671. Anthony Hazell was from Sutton, a small hamlet next to Thirlby. There is no further record for William. Christopher married and had a son Solomon, who died at age three years. Christopher died in Thirlby in 1722.

The authors believe that Richard Hildreth, b. 1644, had a son, John. We say “believe” because there is no record of John’s christening (or birth). There always seems to be a weak link in every family tree, and this is the one weak link in the descendent tree of Leonarde and Emmate Hildrethe. As was mentioned, there was only one Hildreth family in Thirlby. So John—who was married in Thirlby in 1713 and who died in Thirlby in 1741—must have been related to the other Hildreths of that town. If John was married at age 32 years he would have been born in 1681. That would make him about the right age to be a child of Richard, who would have been age 37 years in 1681. And Richard’s father was named John; so it is logical that Richard would have a son also named John. Of course by this reasoning, John could equally well have been the son of either William or Christopher. But John had a son by the name of Richard, and (as far as we know) he did not have a son by the name of William or Christopher. Therefore, we believe that John is the son of Richard.

It is interesting to note that John’s wife was Judith Whitfield. Recall that John’s great aunt, Elizabethe, b 1605, married Georg Whitfield. Therefore, Judith Whitfield was likely John’s second cousin.

¹ *Transcripts of Parish Records for Felixkirk 1598 to 1837*, Northallerton Records Office, Yorkshire, England, UK

² <http://www.thirsk.org.uk/thirlby/>

³ *Hildreth Highlights*, Vol. XXI, No. 4, July 1998, “English Cousin’s Heritage”, by Steven M. Hildreth

⁴ http://hawkshome.net/misc_items/events/epidemic_timeline.htm

John and Judith Hildreth had five children. Two of children—Francis and Richard—lived to be adults. The other three—Ann, John, and John—died in early childhood.

Francis, b. 1714, was a farmer. Francis had three children, Richard, Mary, and Sarah. There are no further records for Richard or Mary. More about Sarah later. Francis died in 1758 at age 44. At the time of Francis' death, his oldest child, Richard, was only 9 years old and his youngest child, Sarah, was only 1 year old. Nothing is known about what happened to Francis' wife and children after his death. One can only assume that they were taken in by relatives, most likely by Francis' brother Richard.

Sarah Hildreth, b. 1757, left Thirlby and ultimately settled in Norton in the East Riding of Yorkshire (just across the River Derwent from Malton)³. Norton is about 20 miles southeast of Thirlby. Sarah's departure from Thirlby might not have been a very happy one, because sometime after she left Thirlby, she had a son and there is no record of any father; so her son was presumably born "out of wedlock". This son, Richard Hildreth, was born in 1783 (christened 11 October 1783) in Hovingham, Yorkshire. (By co-incidence Hovingham is about half way between Thirlby and Norton. At that time, there were Hildreths living in the village of Oswaldkirk, four miles northwest of Hovingham. Were they relatives of Sarah? It is fascinating to speculate that she might have gone to them to avoid scandal in Thirlby).

It is, no doubt, appropriate that Sarah named her son "Richard," after her older brother and/or her uncle, one or both of whom probably acted as her father figure in the absence of the father who she never knew (because of his early death). Most, if not all, of the many Hildreths who have lived or are now living in Norton and the surrounding area are descended from Sarah and her son Richard. (Later, Sarah married Robert Gale in Norton.) More about Richard Hildreth later.

John and Judith Hildreth's other son, Richard, b. 1716, was a weaver. Richard had six children, Elizabeth, John, Thomas, Ann, Ellen, and Francis. At the time when his children were being born, Richard lived in Cleaves House in Thirlby. Cleaves is a small subsection of Thirlby, with High Cleaves, Low Cleaves, Cleaves Cottage, and Cleaves House. Cleaves House is still there and is thriving, and even the well still works! It is in a marvelous location with a view of the Pennines—a low-rising mountain range, sometimes called the "backbone" of Britain—30 miles away.

Richard's first child, Elizabeth, married John Anderson in 1795. (Until recently, there was a Margaret Anderson living in Cleaves House. The authors need to contact her to see if she is descended from John and Elizabeth Anderson.) More about Richard's second child, John Hildreth later. There are no further records in Thirlby for the other children, except Ann Hildreth, who married Jonah Curry in 1800. (This marriage, by the way, is the last recorded event for someone named "Hildreth" in Thirlby.)

John Hildreth, b. 1757, son of Richard Hildreth, married Ann Barwick in 1785. The marriage occurred in Sowerby, a suburb of Thirsk, about 6 miles southwest of Thirlby. John and Ann had four children Richard, James (Ann's father's name was James.), Mary, and Elizabeth. All four children were born in Northallerton, which is about 8 miles north of Thirsk. More about Richard later. No further research has been done on the other children of John and Ann.

The children of Francis Hildreth, b. 1714, and Richard Hildreth, b. 1716, were the last of the Hildreths to be born in Thirlby. *All* of the children of Francis and Richard were born in Thirlby. *None* of their grandchildren were born in that town (at least, no grandchildren with the last name of Hildreth). Thus, after more than 200 years of the Hildreth family in Thirlby, it abruptly came to an end in 1800.

Norton: 1800 to the Present

Richard Hildreth, b. 1783, son of Sarah Hildreth, married a Susannah in about 1807 in Norton. At the time of their marriage, Susannah must have been very young because the baptism of their first child was in 1808. Susannah died in 1819 at age 30 years so she can have been no more than 19 years old at the time she was married. There were many children born to Richard and Susannah in Norton between 1808 and 1819 but, as was the case in those days, few of them survived one year. However, several did and, in fact, Richard Hildreth is the ancestor of the very large Norton branch of the family which includes practically every Hildreth in the 2001 York telephone directory!

Two children who did survive were Francis, b. 1814 and John, b. 1817. More about John later.

After Susannah's death, in 1819, Richard lost no time in remarrying—in 1820. In fact, he had to. The girl was only 16 years old and she had a baby four months later. The girl's name was Elizabeth Wilson and Steven M. Hildreth has a copy of the certificate with Richard Hildreth's signature in spidery hand, looking as though he might have been coached to write it. Again, several children followed but only a few survived, notably Mark, b. 1823. The address for the births is given as Brickyards, Norton, which is off the Scarborough Road.

Richard Hildreth died in Norton, and he was buried on Christmas Eve 1835, which must have been a bit sad for the family. Most of the children were only teenagers.

John Hildreth, b. 1817, married for the first time in the Norton Parish Church in 1841. His wife was Elizabeth Hall, who was a dressmaker and the daughter of a farm laborer. Both of them were illiterate and could only make an X on the register. John was a farm laborer. (Someone remembers a very old man telling him that John was an expert maker of hayricks).

John had several children and so did his brother Francis and his half-brother Mark (who had married Mary Ann Magson from Appleton-le-Street in 1844). And so, by the 1851 census, there were a large number of Hildreths in Norton.

One of the children of John Hildreth's first marriage (David) came to have 11 children, one of whom became Alderman Francis Hildreth who was a farmer with a famous dairy herd at Hessay near York and he had sons Bryan and Frank and grandsons many of whom still live in the Hessay and Rufforth area.

John's first wife, Elizabeth, died in 1860 at age 37 years. By that time they were again living back at the Brickyards.

At the time of the 1861 census there was a 19 year old girl living in with widower John Hildreth in Norton and interestingly the enumerator originally put that she was a daughter but then crossed it out and put servant. In fact, she cannot have been a daughter because John Hildreth married her in the Norton Parish Church in 1863! Her name was Mary Ann Frank. She is a very interesting person. Again John Hildreth could not sign his name but she had a very literate hand and was a daughter of a schoolmaster from beautiful and remote Fryup near Danby in Eskdale, Yorkshire (in the North York Moors National Park). But she gives her father as already being dead on the certificate; so perhaps she was an orphan and came to Malton looking for work.

Their first child born in 1864 was Henry (but always called Harry). It was said that Mary Hildreth was extremely learned for her day and used to do translating for the foreign gentry who stayed at the Talbot Hotel in Malton for the horseracing. Two more children followed, and then came tragedy when, in 1872, Mary Hildreth died giving birth to a daughter Zillah, who also died. Mary was only 30 years old. John Hildreth soldiered on and eventually died in Malton in 1888 at aged 71 years. His death certificate says of "natural decay"!

Harry became a farm laborer and would have lived in at the farm all year. In 1881 at the time of the census he was working as a 17-year old farm servant in the Scarborough Road, Norton, living in with that family even though he was only a stone's throw from his father's house. Harry's by now elderly father John had one of the daughters of his first marriage acting as housekeeper to him.

In 1886, when he was 22 years old, Harry was at Mill Farm, Sledmere, Yorkshire, a fairly large farm, which would have had several farm hands and servants. It is a typical farm for the Yorkshire Wolds with a shelterbelt of trees and big agricultural fields rolling across the open 500-ft. high chalk hills.

At the farm, he met and married a 20-year-old servant girl called Sarah Ann Summersgill, who also lived in and who came from a large family in the straggling village of Weaverthorpe on the Wolds about 6 miles away. Her mother's maiden name was Ann Skelton (and she came from the next village of Helperthorpe) and Sarah's father also a farm laborer called William Summersgill and he hailed originally from Cheshire. Sarah had started work early in life; the 1881 census records her as living in at a big farm at Flixton, Yorkshire as a 14 year old servant girl. Harry and Sarah were married on May Day 1886 in the lovely little parish church of Sledmere. Father John was still alive and saw the event; he witnessed the register.

Harry and Sarah continued living at the farm and had the first two of their 13 children there. When father John died in 1888, Harry and Sarah moved back to the Brickyards, Norton thus continuing the very long link. All the rest of the children were born there. The house was a very small terraced house, what is called a "two up two down," that is, just two rooms on each floor. The children were put out to work as soon as possible! When they came back home, for example, for the Martinmas hirings, they had to share a bed "top to toe" with their younger siblings.

Harry gave up farm laboring and became a signal fitter on the old North Eastern Railway. In those days, the railways employed thousands. He worked a lot up the Newcastle direction and would very often be away for a week at a time, taking the food for the week away with him. He and the other men would probably sleep in the trackside huts. Some of them took big pies with meat on one side and apple on the other!

The "middle" child of the 13 was Herbert born 1896 (died Malton 1969), who had Donald (born Scarborough 1922), the father of Steven M. Hildreth (coauthor of this article,) whom many HFA members have met because he joined with them for part of the tours in 1996 and 2006.

Northallerton to Ripley to the USA: 1800 to 1850 to the Present

Richard Hildreth, b. 1789, son of John and Ann Hildreth, married Mary Wheatley in 1816 in Northallerton. Richard and Mary had six children, Ann, b. 1818; Jane, b. 1820; John, b. 1822; James, b. 1826; a second John, b. 1827; and Richard, b. 1828. It seems that Richard and Mary moved from Northallerton to Helperby to Knaresboro to Ripley⁵ over the course of about 10 years, because those are the towns in which their children were born. Richard and Mary recorded the births of their children in the family Bible. There are no church records for the baptisms of their children because the parents objected to "Baptism by Sponsors," the then current practice of the "established Church." The Bible is still in the Hildreth family; it is in the possession of James M. Hildreth of New Jersey (who is a descendent of James Hildreth, b. 1826).

⁵ None of the distances that they moved were very great. Helperby is 16 miles south of Northallerton; Knaresboro is 10 miles southwest of Helperby; and Ripley is 5 miles northwest of Knaresboro.

Returning to the children, there is no further information on Ann. Jane married a man named Hinchliffe, and in 1862 was living in Blackburn in the County of Lancaster, England. (Her father, Richard, was living with her at the time of his death.⁶) The first John died in 1824 at age 2 years.

The last three children—James, John, and Richard—were all born within 34 months of each other, so that when the third of them was born, the first was not yet 3 years old! More about them later.

The family Bible of Richard and Mary Hildreth records that all three of these boys were born in Ripley in the home of the Rector (that is, in Ripley Rectory). How can that be? In 1826 (and the years that followed), when Richard Hildreth lived in Ripley, the Rector of Ripley Parish⁷ was a rich and powerful man. The Rectory is a huge Georgian mansion. And the church in Ripley, All Saints Church, is an impressive, large stone structure. So how was it that the children of a not so rich or powerful man came to be born in the Rectory? The answer seems to be that Richard Hildreth was a school teacher in Ripley who, for some reason, lived *in* the Rectory. Thus, his children were born in Ripley Rectory!

James Hildreth,⁸ b. 1826, at the time of his marriage in 1850 was a painter, and he lived in Bradford in West Yorkshire, England. Later, he moved to London, where he was the head waiter in a restaurant. In about 1870, he immigrated to the United States, where he started the Hildreth Varnish Company in Long Island City, New York. Perhaps it was James' experience as a painter that gave him the ability and interest to start a varnish company. Among other things, the Hildreth Varnish Company supplied the trademark green paint for Pullman rail cars. James died in 1903 in New York City.

John, b. 1827, immigrated to the United States on 13 April 1879. He arrived in New York City. He was naturalized in Holyoke, Massachusetts on Oct 21, 1886. At the time of his naturalization, John was a cloth inspector, probably at the Farr Alpaca Company, where his brother Richard worked (see below).

Richard Hildreth, b. 1828, lived in Middlesbrough in North Yorkshire, England in 1861⁹. Living with him were his wife, Martha, and his son John, as well as his father, Richard (b. 1789). Richard was also engaged in the textile business in Bradford in West Yorkshire, England. Bradford, which is about 9 miles west of Leeds, rose to prominence during the 19th century as an international center of textile manufacture, particularly wool. Richard immigrated to the United States in about 1870, and he went to Holyoke to work for the Farr Alpaca Company as the head of one of their departments. (At that time, Farr Alpaca Co. imported all of their heads of departments from England.)

For more information on James, John, and Richard and their descendents, refer to the articles "Richard or Thomas or ???" by George Adams Parkhurst, *Hildreth Highlights*, January 1984 and "New Branches On Our Family Tree" by Franklin P. Mason, *Hildreth Highlights*, April 1996.

By the way, some names of the American families descended from James, John, and Richard (other than Hildreth) are as follows: Mason, Knappman, Bergan, Wingate, Johnson, Moulton, West, Danser, Stephens, Evans, Sprague, Copland, Ponticello, Stelzle, Wolk, Berg, Green, Harden, Simmerly, Parkin, Moore, Malcom, Shaw, and Ballou.



About Franklin P. Mason II: Franklin P. Mason II is descended from James Hildreth, b. 1826 in Ripley, Yorkshire, England. James had four children Mary Jane, Ann Elizabeth, James Jr., and George. Ann Elizabeth, b. 1854 in England, married Franklin P. Mason I in 1882 in Wilmington, Delaware. The line from there goes Willard, Willard, Franklin II (four generations in all from James, b. 1826). Franklin P. Mason II was born in 1942 in Ossining, New York. He grew up in Westport, Connecticut, where he graduated in 1960 from Staples High School. He received his B.A. degree in Chemistry in 1966 from Kalamazoo College in Kalamazoo, Michigan and his Ph.D. in Chemistry in 1971 from the University of Oregon in Eugene, Oregon. He taught Chemistry at the college level for several years, most recently at San Jose State University in San Jose, California. He then became a Technical Writer and then Manager of Technical Publications at Finnigan Corporation also in San Jose. He retired after 20 years in Technical Publications.

Franklin is married to Christina (Tina) Potter Mason, and they live in Clayton, California. Franklin and Tina have four children: Karen, Ann Elizabeth, Franklin III, and Paul. Tina is a Dentist with a thriving practice in Clayton.

Descendants of Leonarde Hildrethe

