

James Wilson
1670-1743
Ireland to Maine

by

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The Wilsons of Topsham, Maine

A Tale of a Scotch-Irish Family That Thrived in 1700s Maine

In December of 2012, I started an incredible journey. My mother-in-law had moved in with us and my husband was querying her about family and genealogy. We quickly realized she no longer could remember her siblings' birth dates and so I turned to the Internet. After signing up for a two week trial with ancestry.com, I ran through as much of his mostly British family as easily possible and decided I wanted to do the same for my family.

My mother's family wasn't very interesting to me, lots of Brits and a serving of Scotch-Irish (actually a landed Irish family for many generations) but my Dad wasn't a southerner. I grew up in north Georgia and I knew his grandfather was from Boston. His grandmother was from Ireland and for some reason I thought the Boston branch was actually Irish as well. I was astonished when I was forwarded a short family history to find out the family was actually Scotch-Irish from Maine.

That started a near three year plunge into genealogy, Maine and New England. I had never even visited New England and I had little to do with any of my Yankee relatives growing up. I had a lot of catching up to do. In that process I became a genealogist and a Mainer, well as much as one can be without being born in Maine!

The original information compiled by a maiden librarian aunt in Massachusetts told the story of James Wilson who came to the New World on one of the Temple ships in 1719. Six children were listed and it was said that James died in 1731. It was also said he became one of the "sturdiest settlers of that town." Little else written in that document about those early years was probably true. I never was able to find where that quote came from and I had thought that a common name like Wilson would make it extremely difficult to find out more. Of course, I found Wheelers' book early on and was able to find references to a number of Wilsons:

Among the early settlers of Topsham were Hugh, Samuel, Robert, William, and Thomas Wilson; and an Alexander Wilson settled at Harpswell. Hugh, Samuel, Robert, William, and Alexander were probably brothers. Thomas, according to family tradition, was of no relation to the others of the name.

A James Wilson is called the father of Hugh, and so was probably father of Robert, Samuel, William, Alexander, and Jane, who m. William Alexander of Topsham, afterwards of Harpswell.

Hugh Wilson, son of James, was b. about 1729. About 1763 he bought 100 acres of land at Cathance. He had his leg broken among the logs on the eastern branch of the Cathance. An amputation was made by a physician from Casco (Portland), but he did not long survive the operation. He m. Elizabeth Hewey, who survived him and m. Timothy Weymouth. Ch. were : — Hugh; James, who d. s. in 1786 ; William, who m. Sarah Chase ; Betsey, who m. Jessie Davis, of Lisbon; Martha, who m. Ebenezer Farrin.

Samuel Wilson m. 1st, Mary Reed; and 2d, Elizabeth [Snow] Holbrook. He was licensed as an innholder at Topsham, by the Court of Sessions for Lincoln County, in Oct. 1762, and for each successive year down to Sept. 1766, when his last license was granted. He removed to Lisbon prior to 1790, and lived and d. on the farm owned in 1835 by Charles Thompson. Ch. by first wife were : — Hannah, b. Oct. 27, 1762; James, b. July 2, 1764; Susannah, b. May 18, 1766; John, and William. No ch. by second wife.

William Wilson settled in Topsham ; m. a Larrabee. Ch. were : William; John; Samuel ; Elizabeth; Isabella ; Hannah.

Alexander Wilson m. Catharine, dau. of Robert Swanzey. Settled on Merriconeag Neck (Harpswell). She d. 1764, aged 37. Ch. were: — James, b. 1747, d. 1838; Mary, b. 1749; Elizabeth, b. 1751; David, b. 1754; Esther, b. 1756; Jennet, b. 1757; Alexander, b. 1759; Swanzey, b. 1761; Catherine, h. 1763.¹

The Irishman, Thomas Wilson, was also described but no other Wilsons were mentioned. None.

1. George Augustus Wheeler, M.D. and Henry Warren Wheeler, History of Topsham, Brunswick and Harpswell including the ancient territory known as Pejebscot (Boston: Alfred Mudge and Sons, Printers, 1878), 860-861.

I'm actually just an academic (English teacher, writer) at heart so I wanted to confirm all that info. I wanted the whole truth. I quickly found out that it was extremely easy to pick up unconfirmed facts on ancestry.com. To be led astray, down the wrong path and into worlds of fancy. Folks had James being born in Scotland and of course a descendant of a royal branch. I started dumping in information like most folks, without confirming the facts. Somewhere along the line I decided I wanted sources. I wanted to know where the info was coming from. I ended up learning about genealogical proof standards, I ended up digging into the original source materials such as the Pejebscot Papers, held at the Maine Historical Society in Portland. I ended up in deed and probate books, originals and copies, in Wiscasset, Bath, York and Portland.

I took a DNA test and matched to third and fourth cousins still in New England and in Nevada, California and even Savannah, Georgia, where some of my first cousins from my mother's side live. Some of them were descendants of vaguely remembered cousins from New Jersey where my dad had grown up. Some of them were like me, wanting to connect in a Scotch-Irish family that had pretty much been torn asunder by loss of wealth, tuberculosis and a lack of births. Our stories were similar - with lots of dysfunction and alcohol. All of us were looking for "our roots", something to be proud of, something to hold onto.

I got carried away - so many folks who 'get into genealogy' tend to get obsessed - and I spent hundreds of hours tracing all descendants of James Wilson that I could find, over 22,000 so far. I finally decided that I needed to do something with all that info so I could claim I had not wasted all that time. So I wrote a book. A 400+ page book. With lots and lots and lots of footnotes.

I learned many things throughout this journey and in addition to the James Wilson genealogy, I feel that is important to talk about what I learned about researching the genealogy of some of the Scotch-Irish families in Maine. Some of this is Maine specific and some of this applies to genealogy in general. In no particular order:

1) First, if the Wilson family is any example, the Scotch-Irish were not as clannish as has been said - supposedly they tended to only marry within other Scotch-Irish families. This does not mean, however, they married cousins. That did happen but usually started in later generations when it became difficult to avoid. Marrying first cousins was actually quite rare, however. It's really fun for me to trace someone's lineage and find out they have married a cousin. Not necessarily so fun for the person to find out at age 65 her hubby is her distant cousin. It does, however, make family trees easier to accomplish when all you are doing is tying branches together. I did find more differences between those who settled on the coast in Maine and those who stayed inland. Coastal families had more babies and intermarried more - possibly due to island life being more restrictive. The Wilsons further inland had less babies or at least less that survived, reducing the numbers of available mates and raising the possibility of marriage to the English descendants who came mostly from Massachusetts. It all seems to describe a different historical path for the family than the Irish Thomas Wilson family or the definitively more Scottish family, the Alexanders.

2) In my opinion, the only way to do a genealogy is to map the families in an area. I started with the assumption there were multiple families named Wilson in Topsham/Brunswick to find that there just were not that many. Thomas Wilson, an Irishman, in Topsham and William Wilson (Elizabeth Spear) from Braintree, Massachusetts, in Harpswell were the only two other families in the tri-city area before 1800. Both of them were much younger than James and so were later getting to the area. In order to keep the three families straight, I literally found every person named Wilson in southern Maine before 1800. I did the same with every family that married in for several generations. Doing the Alex-

anders, I found every Alexander in the state of Maine. Casting a wide net can reap incredible results.

3) Original sources are just required. Sure, you can always quote any source and have it be a legitimate resource. Finding the original sources frequently pinpoints other sources, can clear up mysteries and may bypass mistakes. For example, the Pejeboscot Papers are frequently referenced in Wheelers' book. One has to search through a lot of folders and pages but gems exist that no one has documented outside those handwritten documents. Finding James Wilson's name on a list that may date from 1731 was an incredible find. Viewing old lists with Widow Wilson and her boys, Samuel and Hugh, on lists dating from 1746 and finding actual signatures from the Wilson boys was not expected. We are talking incontrovertible proof of James Wilson's existence, the survival of his widow past 1746, the confirmation of the parentage of two of his sons. The list goes on.

4) In general, don't head out to the geographical location to start your research. Old papers, deeds, genealogies can be found anywhere and rarely in the exact spot you would think. Historical societies, libraries, local and state, and multiple courthouses for one historical area is where the data is held. Some things only exist in one book; it's not logical. Keep open to the possibilities.

5) Don't forget on line resources. There are so many early books that have been made into digital versions and can be found in Google Books or archive.org. I've collected many vital records, genealogies and area history books that my digital bookshelf is sagging while my physical shelf is nearly empty. And my wallet is not depleted. I recommend doing every bit of digital research first. Keep track of your questions that need to be answered while in a physical location like a cemetery. Your research will be more efficient, less expensive and less physically taxing.

6) Sign up for ancestry.com. This is one expense I'll never regret. The hint system may not be the end all of professional genealogy but it can open new lines of investigation and those hints keep getting more appropriate and helpful. Money well spent. I hope I don't have to remind you though: just because it shows up on ancestry.com does not make it true.

7) Study history - world, national and area history. Genealogy is not just family and biological ties; it is also about movement of people, disease, wars and other outside forces. If an area has a prevalence of tuberculosis, the death rate among young people goes up. Lynn, Massachusetts, in the late 1800s and the shoe industry nearly killed off my direct family. That kind of trauma can affect generations of your own family and influence spousal choices, family moves and more.

8) A Maine specific note: I realized that those early Mainers stuck close to the original area. I was already aware that my southern ancestors birthed lots of babies and kept moving south and west. So many Georgians descend from families that had moved to Georgia from other areas and directly to Georgia. Some Mainers may have come from Massachusetts but that was more the English. Once the Scotch-Irish hit the shores, they hunkered down. The few who left sometimes disappeared forever from families. One branch of the Wilsons left Topsham for Iowa and then Alberta, Canada. Finding them was incredibly difficult and in the end hinged on a fateful visit to the Bath Courthouse and lots of original deeds. This is the only branch of my direct line that left New England!

9) I'm listing some of the source materials I accessed in the appendix but have to mention the most important Scotch-Irish resource. Written by Charles Knowles Bolton, the [Scotch Irish Pioneers in Ulster and America](#)² in 1910 can be invaluable. The earlier researchers in the late 1800s didn't have the information Bolton found. He accessed manifests and ship schedules and pulled out what he thought

2. Bolton, Charles Knowles, Scotch Irish Pioneers in Ulster and America (Boston: Bacon and Brown, 1910). Available: <https://archive.org/details/scotchirish00boltrich>

were Scotch-Irish names. His list of names and the actual ships are invaluable.

And that's a great lead in to the meat of the Wilson story.

The Arrival, 1718-1722

Ships laden with the Scotch Irish started arriving in Maine in 1718 and continued up to 1722. Bolton teased out what details were available about the ships³ and lists three arriving in 1718 and 1719 from Ireland and Londonderry and bound for the Kennebec (river) and Casco Bay. Most likely it was one of those ships that carried James and his family to the New World. Perhaps this one:

*[Name Not Given. Joseph ?] Philip Bass, master, from Londonderry; arr. Aug. 21, at Kennebec River (N. L. Aug. 17-24, 1719). 200 passengers.*⁴

Bolton states, "Temple could not persuade [Captain] Law and his company to continue their voyage to Connecticut, and on the eighth of September the "Maccallum" sailed out of Boston harbor, for the territory owned by the Gentlemen Proprietors of Eastern Lands, at the mouth of the Kennebec River."⁵

Settlers from the Maccallum and the succeeding ships spread towards Nutfield, New Hampshire, and into the Merrymeeting Bay cities of Brunswick (established as Township May 1717) and Topsham (subsequently laid out in 1717).⁶ Much of this land was purchased from the Indians in the late 1600s after King James granted a charter in 1620. Many of the Indians had vacated the area by 1713 after the Treaty of Portsmouth ended most of the regional strife.

But by 1721, war with the Indians once again reigned. In 1722 war was declared that lasted 3 years. Named Father Rales, Lovewell's or Dummer's war, the root cause was disputed territory east of the Kennebec, the agreed upon boundary in the treaty. Settlers started moving into the area and Indians of the Wabanaki Confederacy eventually started pushing back.⁷

In June of 1722, Indians seized (and released) nine entire families in Merrymeeting Bay, not very far north of the Brunswick area where early settlers were living - bringing home the war to my ancestors.⁸ The next month on the twelfth Brunswick was "reduced to ashes".⁹

Bolton describes life then in Maine: "During these days of Indian warfare, pillage and reprisal, men were impressed for sentinel duty, and distributed in small groups at garrison houses throughout the frontier towns in Maine, which was then under the jurisdiction of Massachusetts. One of the unpleasant experiences of young Scotch Irishmen was to be met in the street by an officer and his attendants, and forced into military service. Many fell sick under the strain of such a life in the Maine woods, and through rough usage at the hands of officers. This ill-treatment fell heaviest upon the 'Irish', and particularly at the outset of the Indian troubles."¹⁰

At this point some of the more assumedly more affluent settlers fled permanently south towards Boston and to Pennsylvania. The ones left behind would be those who owned land and those who had no

3. Bolton, 133-153.

4. Bolton, 321.

5. Bolton, 142.

6. George Augustus Wheeler, M.D. and Henry Warren Wheeler, History of Topsham, Brunswick and Harpswell including the ancient territory known as Pejeboscot (Boston: Alfred Mudge and Sons, Printers, 1878), 29.

7. Father Rale's War, <https://goo.gl/rhq4zh>, accessed online 4/12/2014.

8. William Durkee Williamson, The History of the State of Maine: from its First Discovery, AD 1602, to the Separation, AD 1820, Inclusive, Vol. II (Hallowell: Glazier, Masters & Co., 1832), 114.

9. Williamson, 191.

10. Bolton, 227.

where to go. Some of hardy Scotch Irish would be included in that population who had no where to go.

A number tried to sail to Boston but were “warned off”. Included in those lists on “July 28, 1722 from the Eastward viz.1 [the following who from their names, notably that of McFarland, evidently came from about Merrymeeting Bay.]” is a Jean Wilson with 4 Children.¹¹ Bolton also lists Jean and a James Wilson as settlers of Merrymeeting Bay Scotch Irish Settlers, 1718-1722.¹² So it’s possible that James’ wife, who might have been Jean, was fleeing Brunswick within weeks of the incursion on July 12.

The Family

It has not been proven who James married or exactly where he came from originally. We believe he came from Scotland to Ireland just to go to across the ocean. They may have lived in northern Ireland for a while; I doubt if we will ever know for sure.

According to various sources, none definitive, James and his wife arrived in Maine with four children. Two more children were born in Maine. I have found no other mention of a Jean Wilson in Maine and for the moment feel safe in assuming she was James’ wife. It may be a bit of stretch to say her last name was Shaw but it is a possibility. There are Scottish traces of a Jean Shaw married to a James Wilson though I do not feel comfortable with any of that data.

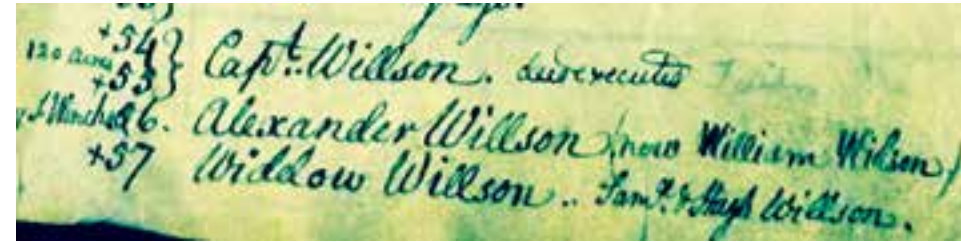
Tracing ancestors who were born or lived in Ireland has proved to be a daunting task. Record keeping in Ireland for Protestants may well be found in the Presbyterian churches but those records are not as well digitized as those in England and Scotland.

Also, the missing data can also be explained by what was happening in Ireland under Queen Anne as noted in chapter two of Bolton’s Scotch Irish Pioneers.¹³ If marriages were declared invalid and chapels closed, the protestants / Presbyterians may well have lost those church records (or they were destroyed by others) that would assist us now.

James did live in Brunswick first; his son Samuel² claimed in depositions that he was born there. The family did live in Topsham, however, before James’ death on 9 September 1743. The Pejebscot Papers list Widow Wilson living with Hugh² and Samuel² on lot 57 in 1746 with William² living on lot 56.¹⁴ (Hugh did not reach the age of majority until 1750.) There is also a list from that same time period (undated) that is a sign up list of those who want to live in Topsham. Those appear to be signatures with marks next to the ones who can’t write. It is entitled “A list of Settlers to be at Topsham (some of whome came) no date.”¹⁵ James Wilson’s name is on that list with a mark instead of a signature.

Wheeler says there were only 36 settlers there in 1746.¹⁶ A note in the Pejebscot list says 25 residents were there in 1747 and a number of people are listed as dead and or killed, such as William and John Mustard and James Potter with the last ones being James McFarland and James Crain.

Note the lot numbers on the left. This is dated 9 April 1746.¹⁷



Two deeds, one for Hugh² and one for Samuel², mention that the land had been previously “taken up by his Father James Wilson”.¹⁸ So James did live on and work the land in Topsham before his death.

James is buried in First Parish Cemetery (Marquoit) in Brunswick. The gravestone inscription makes his birth year around 1670.

*Here lies Buried
The Body of M^r.
JAMES WILSON
Who Departed this Life
September y^e 9th 1743
in the 73^d year
of his Age.¹⁹*

His granddaughter, Hannah³ (Samuel² and Mary’s daughter) who died in 1762 is also buried in First Parish²⁰ and, as her parents’ graves cannot be found today, they may be buried there as well. The First Parish Church was established in 1717 prior to James’ arrival and there wasn’t a church in Topsham during James’ life. Son William² may also have been a member as a William is listed in one parish record in December of 1762.²¹

The eldest known child was the daughter, Jane² or Jennet as she is frequently referred to. She was born 1706; her headstone lists her age as 92 when she died 7 March 1798.²² Her husband, William Alexander, was born that same year in Ulster, Ireland. They married prior to the birth of their first son, David b.1737, probably in 1736.²³ They lived in Harpswell next to her brother, Alexander Wilson.

Either William² or Robert² was James Wilson’s oldest son; the dates are very close.

Robert² may have been born about 1714 and though he is mentioned in the Wheelers history, little information has been found about him. All indications are that he never married but did have a share in the saw mill. There is a deed dated 1763 selling that portion of the sawmill to his brother Alexander² that wasn’t registered until after Robert’s death in about 1783. (Lincoln County Deeds, 17:149) A probate record of the administration after his death by Samuel² Wilson is dated 12 Aug 1783. He was declared insolvent then so I don’t see how that came to pass as the number of assets to liabilities do not add up. Besides the saw mill portion, he also had one old boat, an old bedstead, some plates and bottles (3:113)

Probated 12 Ap., 1783. [II. 187.] Robert Wilson, late of Topsham. Samuel Wilson, residing at little River. so called, Adm’r, 4 June, 1783. [II, 188.] David Reed, of Topsham, and Enoch Danford, of Brunswick, sureties. Inventory by Andrew Dunning, of Brunswick, Actor Patten and James Wilson, both of Topsham, 12 Aug., 1783, .£36: o: o. [III, 113.] John Merrill and Actor Patten, both of Topsham, commissioners to examine claims. [III, 113.] Account filed 4 Jan., 1787. [III, 129.]²⁴

There are some references to Robert in a list for Captain Adam Hunter’s militia company from 1757.

11. Bolton, 231.
12. Bolton, 238.
13. Bolton, 15.
14. Pejebscot Papers, 3-35.
15. Pejebscot Papers, 4-73.
16. Wheeler, 43.
17. Pejebscot Papers, 3:35.

18. Lincoln County Deeds, 3:206, 3:235.
19. Findagrave.com, gravestone and personal photograph, <http://goo.gl/CvMTWt>.
20. Findagrave.com, gravestone and personal photograph, <http://goo.gl/vle5Fb>.
21. Wheeler, 375.
22. Findagrave.com, gravestone photograph, name is Jennet <http://goo.gl/6d1Oiy>
23. Clemmons, 15.
24. William Davis Patterson, The Probate Records of Lincoln County, Maine: 1760 to 1800 (Portland, Me, 1895), 121.

The four Wilsons listed together are the brothers: Hugh², Robert,² Samuel² and William².²⁵

He appeared to live in Harpswell, proven by deeds that read “Robert Willson of Harpswell” (3:172) and it was his brother in Harpswell to whom he sold that sawmill portion.

Born about 1715, William² married Isabella Larrabee, the daughter of Benjamin Larrabee, a well-known figure at the time. (William² and Isabelle are my fifth great grandparents.)

Alexander² was the third son born around 1716; he married Catharine Swansea (Swanzy) around 1746 but moved about 16 miles away to Harpswell closer to the ocean and raised his family away from Topsham.

The two youngest brothers, Hugh² b.1729 and Samuel² b.1722 or 1732, would have been late in life children for James. As we know that Jean tried to flee the Indian wars in 1722, no telling where she actually went and how long they might have been separated.

Wheeler says “In 1722 the fourth Indian, or Lovewell’s, war commenced, and the situation of the settlers here became so disagreeable that they nearly all abandoned their homes, and it was not until about 1730 that the settlement was renewed.”²⁶

It is quite understandable if they had put off having additional children until the area was safer - after the Dummer’s War treaty in 1727. Permanent Topsham settlers did not appear until after 1730 and many families that did remain did not even have homes in years prior to that but resided inside fortifications.

The oldest daughter, Jennett², did wait until about age 30 to marry and bear her first child in 1737. William² may have been 35 when he married in 1749; Samuel² was nearly 30 if not 40; Robert² most likely did not marry at all. All details that lend more indicators of the hard times in the area; interestingly, all marriages except one happened after James’ death. Both William² and Hugh² married in 1749, Alexander² in 1746, Samuel² in 1761 and James’ wife possibly remarried in 1750.

There is a record of a Mrs. Elisabeth Wilson announcing intentions to marry Walter McDonall of Georgetown on 31 Dec 1750.²⁷ I cannot find any Elizabeth Wilsons married or not from any Wilson family in the area before 1750, so that Elizabeth may have been James’ wife (maybe even a second wife). There is no actual marriage record however for a McDonall marriage. Vital records of Georgetown show a large concentration of “Mc” names - but only one listing for Walter and that is the marriage intention.

Hugh² (James¹), Hugh the Eldest

Hugh² was the first cabinet maker in Topsham. He was also the first of the family born in Maine in about 1729. He amassed quite a bit of property quickly and seemed to have been a bit of a controversial fellow. He was part owner of the first dam and saw mill with his brother William² in 1753²⁸ and served as Topsham’s first constable after its incorporation in 1764.²⁹

He built a house in Topsham in 1750 which is on present day Winter Street and is listed on the walk-

25. Wheeler, 879.

26. Wheeler, 37.

27. Topsham, II, 284.

28. Pebscot Papers.

29. Wheeler, 183.

ing tour of Topsham³⁰ as an example of the Center Chimney Cape style. The present owner told me that there used to be a tunnel under the house from the basement to the edge of the land where it drops down. That was an escape tunnel to use if threatened by the Indians. One of the advantages of placing your house on land edged by cliffs!



This is the photo I took in 2016 which is the driveway side, not the road side which would normally be the front.



Here is almost the same view from the 1995 brochure which is closer to the original house. The picket fence on the right delineates the road.

Hugh holds a permanent place in Topsham history for an accident that led to a leg being amputated when he caught his legs between mill logs on the eastern branch of the Cathance River.

He died about age 40 after the operation on 9 June 1769.³¹ Wheeler says this was the first work-related accident in the area.³²

His marriage to Elizabeth Hewey produced at least three sons, including Hugh³ and William³. There was also a James³ who died early and two daughters, Martha³ and Elizabeth³, as well.

“Elizabeth and Hugh Wilson (the eldest), [], P.R.80. [Elizabeth Henry and Hugh Wilson of T., int. Sept. 5, 1759, p.R.106.]

[Mrs. Elizabeth Hewey of Brunswick, T.R.4.]” (Topsham II, 130)

Hugh did not prepare for his death; he died intestate while his children were all under the age of 11.

“Hugh Wilson, late of Topsham. Elizabeth Wilson of Topsham, widow, Adm’x, 30 Aug., 1769. [I, 173.] Thomas Willson and Samuel Wilson, sureties. Inventory by Thomas Wilson, Robert Gower and Actor Patten, all of Topsham, 3 Oct., 1769, £649:

11: o. [I, 191.] Account of Elizabeth Weymouth, Adm’x, 9 Mar. 1787. [111, 137 and 245.] Samuel Thompson, of Brunswick, guardian unto William minor son, 17 Sep., 1787. [111, 160.]”³³

Elizabeth did remarry 9 years after Hugh’s death so the children were raised by their mother, a step-father (for a while) and William’s guardian, Samuel Thompson. (Samuel Thompson is the father-in-law of my fourth great grandfather, John³ Wilson)

Weymouth, Timothy of T., formerly of Berwick, and Mrs. Elizabeth (Hewey) Wilson, wid. of Hugh the eldest, []; they parted, he d. in Brunswick, she in T., P.R.80.” (Topsham II, 273)

As I said, Hugh² bought land.

His first recorded purchase in 1759 was the 100 acres allowed him on the Cathance River, the unnumbered lot on the map from 1761. (1:441). He then bought half a lot “taken up by his Father James Wilson” which becomes lot 58. (3:206) He, William², Samuel² and others bought 3/4 of an acre with the

30. Topsham, Maine, Historical Walking Tour, A Publication of the Topsham Historic District Commission, 1995, 1997.

31. Topsham II, 398.

32. Wheeler, 318.

33. Patterson 45.

privilege of building mills in what came to be named Granny's Hole. (LC 1:443) He kept adding bits and pieces over the next few years: 15 acres (LC 3:207), 53 acres (LC 2:213), 50 acres (PP 4:205-207) and 5 acres (LC 4:145). I either missed some deeds at Lincoln County or not all of the older deeds were there: some of this I pulled out of the Pejebscot Papers.

But also in the Pejebscot Papers was a surveying mistake that Hugh² obviously didn't want to deal with. Stephen Getchell, the surveyor, made some error that needed to be corrected later. Belcher Noyes wrote a letter afterwards that called Getchell a "poor, miserable, shuffling Fellow" and said he had received numerous complaints about him.³⁴ That mistake was settled by giving someone else more land but then in 1768 Hugh² was accused of altering a deed, changing 40 rods to 50 rods so that he had laid claim to 25 acres more than the deed was supposed to contain.³⁵ The deed to this day, however, still reads 50 rods so though the Pejebscot Proprietors had decided to pursue this in the courts, they must not have prevailed.

He also was embroiled in other controversies sometimes alone and sometimes with his brothers - it might have been all about water rights and trespass to get the rights they needed. I suspect this was about the saw mills but more study is needed in the Pejebscot Papers to untangle all of it.

In 1789 three men were appointed to split his estate. This would have been as the youngest, William³, was not yet 21.

Elizabeth was given 1/3 of the home lot that ran from the Androscoggin to the Cathance which should be where the 1750 house is today. (That is the widow's dowry which by law, the widow was to receive 1/3 of the estate.) That was carried to an extreme as she also got 1/3 of the house, 1/3 of the barn and two days in the saw mill every week.

Son Hugh³ received 30 acres of the homestead, 1/3 of the barn, 2/3's of the house and 1/5 of the 5 acre meadow lot. William³ Junior (called that because there was an elder William², his uncle) received 66 acres and 2/3 of an acre in the meadow lot. Martha³ (and husband Ebenezer Farrin) got 30 acres of the home lot, 1/3 of the barn, 1/6 of a pasture and 1/2 of the small meadow lot. Daughter Elizabeth's children received 61 and 1/3 acres of the home lot and 1/3 of the pasture lot. Each also was allowed five and 1/2 days of the saw every four weeks.

At the end of this probate record (19:378), Hugh² is refusing to agree because he says he has paid some bills that should be shared by the others. This controversy was never resolved before he died in 1799.



Hugh's signature & requested meadow acreage, Pejebscot Papers

William (James¹), William the Eldest

My fifth great-grandfather, William² b.abt 1715, married the daughter of Captain Benjamin Larrabee, Isabella.

"[----] and William Wilson the eldest, the Innholder, [-], P.R.80. [Isabella, int. July 29, 1749, p.R.106.] [she of Brunswick, he of T., T.R.4.]" (Topsham II, 158, under Larrabee)

34. Pejebscot, 164-165.

35. Pejebscot, 2:18.

William the eldest, the Innholder, and [], Larrabee, [----], p.R.80. [Isabella, July 29, 1749, int. p.R.106.] [he of T., she of Brunswick, T.R.4.] (Topsham II, 288)

Mr William Willson of a place Called Topsom and m^{rs} Isabella Larrabee of Brunswick intends marriage to each other Brunswick July 29 1749 (Brunswick, 117)

Isabella Larrabee Daughter of the above named Benjamin and Mary Larrabee was Born November 27th 1731.

"Isabella, Widow, Oct. —, 1798, a. more than 70 y., C.R.I. [w. William, Oct. 17, in 66th y. of a., G.R.2.]" (Topsham II, 398)

Capt. Benjamin Larrabee was the agent of the Pejebscot company who had been given in 1737 "full power of attorney to execute deeds to the settlers in Brunswick and Topsham".³⁶ Though William married into an influential and rich family, he did so a year after Benjamin's death in 1748.

William² and Isabella had at least seven children, sons William³, John³, and Samuel³ were listed in his will dated 1762 as were daughters Mary³ and Isabella³. Other daughters not mentioned in the will were Hannah³ and Elizabeth³ who must have been born after the will. He probably wouldn't have worried about changing the will since it states there should be money given to his daughters in a equal share.

According to Wheeler, "In 1762, Samuel Wilson was licensed as an innholder, and for each successive year, down to September, 1766, when his last license was granted....This last year, William Wilson is mentioned in the Pejebscot Papers as an innholder in Topsham. He was licensed in 1761, and an Isabella Wilson in 1767. The precise locality of the two inns kept by the Wilsons is not known, but they were doubtless within the limits of what now constitutes the village of Topsham. The reason for this supposition is, that Samuel and William Wilson owned lots in 1768 opposite the fort, and in 1773 there was a tavern kept at Topsham Ferry by a Mr. Wilson."³⁷

In the vital records and in deeds and other papers, William² is frequently referred to as William the Innkeeper. I didn't run into any information about a tavern at the Topsham Ferry so it must have been in the town records. I did go through a fair amount of them but it would have been easy for me to miss it due to the quality of the microfilm and handwriting.

William was one of the prime people involved in the Granny's Hole saw mill. He purchased the land for it from John Patten in 1762 (3:2) and then divvied it out to the others (3:23). In the end his boys inherited his portion.

The Church of the First Parish in Brunswick lists "William Wilson, received December, 1762"³⁸ two months after his will in October. A new minister had been ordained in November which may have prompted his joining. The estate inventory does include a pew in the Brunswick meeting house but also there is mention of "half of the ground for a pew in Topsham meeting house".

William's will was written on 1 Oct 1762 when he obviously got very ill and was thinking he would die; two daughters, Elizabeth and Hannah are not mentioned but the will was probated on 13 Aug 1766 so they must have been born between 1762 and 1766. Elizabeth's husband was born in 1766, however, so I doubt she was born much before his death.

"In the Name of God Amen the Twenty first Day of October 1762 I William Wilson of Topsham in the County of Lincoln Husbandman being Very Sick and Weak in Body but of Perfect Mind and Memory. Thanks be Given to God : Therefore Calling unto mind the mortality of my Body and knowing that it is appointed unto all men once to die do make and ordain this my Last Will and Testament That is to say, Principally and first of all I Give and Recommend my soul into the Hands of God that gave it and my Body I recommend to the Earth To be Buried in decent christian burial at the discretion of my Executors, nothing doubting but at the General Resurrection I shall receive the same again by the mighty Power of God and as touching such worldly Estate wherewith it hath pleased God to bless me in this Life I give demise and dispose of the same in the following manner and

36. Wheeler, 31.

37. Wheeler, 298.

38. Wheeler, 374.

form

Imprimis. I give and bequeath to my well beloved sons viz, William Wilson, John Wilson & Samuel Wilson all and Singular my Lands Messuages and Tenements with all the Right I have in any Saw Mill or Mills Together with all my Household Goods, Chattles, Debts and moveable Effects by them and each of them freely to be possessed & enjoyed I likewise give and bequeath to my well beloved Daughters Mary and Isabella Willson so much money to be raised & levyed out of my Estate by the aforesaid William John and Samuel Wilson to pay to the aforesaid Daughters as shall make all my Children to have an Equal Share--

Item. Constitute make and ordain Isabella my dearly and well beloved Wife my Sole executrix of this my last Will and Testament and she the said Isabella to have the Income of said Estate till all the heirs come of age unless she Should marry before that Time And I do hereby utterly I disallow revoke and disannul all and every other former Testament, Wills, Legacies and Bequests and Executors by me in Any ways before named, willed and Bequeathed, ratifying and Confirming this and no other to be my Last will and Testament In Witness whereof, I have hereunto Set my Hand and Seal the Day and year above Written William Wilson and a Seal

Signed Sealed published pronounced and declared by the Said William Willson as his Last Will and Testament in the Presence of us the Subscribers Thos Willson James Potter Sam^{el} Moody Wm Alexander Executors

*Probated 13 Aug., 1766. (1:94)
Inventory by Thomas Willson, William Alexander and John Merrill, 1 Sep., 1766, £297: 12: 6. (3:195)*

I thought at first that he was buried in Haley cemetery next to his wife. There are bits of stone left at the head and the foot of that grave but no cemetery records exist that list him or the next graves which I believe to be his son Humphrey and his wife Nancy. Then I realized that Haley Cemetery didn't exist at that time. Isabella was one of the first buried there in 1798. He could have been buried in Topsham's First Parish or even in Brunswick First Parish since he seems to have joined before his death. That was where his father and niece are buried - they were the only deaths previous to his in the family. That may have been the reason he joined First Parish after he wrote the will; he may wanted to have been buried there.

There is one mention about Isabella in Wheeler's history.

As an illustration of the indefinite manner in which many of the roads are recorded, the following is copied : "The Road begining at Issabella's Barn Running to William Alexander's house was laid out by the Selectmen in October 1774." It is, perhaps, needless to say that we have found no allusions to Isabella's barn elsewhere.³⁹

That may have put the road he is talking about up in the meadow lands near the Cathance since the only the only piece of land that William Alexander's name is on to was next to William Wilson's (on the 1768 map), possibly near and/or parallel the path of route 201 today.

Last but not least, William's legacy lived on after his death when the children donated a hundred acres to be designated for a school.⁴⁰ I'm not sure how that land was originally obtained or which parcel was donated. On the map dated 1768 there is a school lot above lot 56 which William owned. The donation is dated 1769. It could possibly be that the boys donated lot 56 to be added to the other existing lot or else the boys had already told them about the donation but it had not been officially recorded when the map was made. I think the knowledge was there before the map was drawn.

I can find no evidence of any of William's children living in the area of lot 56. All the later deeds I found were on the Cathance River, not the Androscoggin. The inventory taken at the time of his death does not actually describe where the land and buildings were, but they were assessed at 160 pounds. That may have been only on the plots where the mills were but it only says "land and buildings thereon". Five acres of meadow land were also listed.

Also included were two Bibles, five books, various farm tools, animals, a dozen plates, a looking glass, two guns, two pistols and more for a total estate worth about 297 pounds.

39. Wheeler, 542.

40. Pejebscot Papers, 2:19.

Samuel² (James¹)



Samuel's signature & requested meadow acreage, Pejebscot papers

Samuel's birth year may be 1722 or 1732. Both Alexander and Hugh's graves still exist and the dates combined with the ages makes Alexander born in 1718 and Hugh in 1729 but in depositions still in existence in the Pejebscot Papers Samuel states his age, 55, 61 and 63. These are dated in a different hand, obviously after the fact and the ink is darker as if years later. Those dates and ages make Samuel's birth year 1732 but he also states in one that a brother is seven years older than him. 1732 makes Hugh 5 years older and 1722 makes Alexander 4 years older. I also found another deposition summary that said a deposition where he states he is 67 is supposedly from 1796 - making him born in 1722.⁴¹ So the numbers don't add up to give us a solid birth year.

The Pejebscot papers hold several copies of depositions, letters and deeds - they are not always marked as copies though it is obvious that some are since duplicates exist. That lowers my trust level in them as factual documents. One deposition where Samuel states he was 55 in June in 1787 is viewable on line at the MaineMemory.net site.⁴² The full collection is held by the Maine Historical Society in Portland.

Samuel married Mary Reed and then later Elizabeth Snow⁴³ after Mary's death.

Samuel and Mary Reed, a sister of Col. John Reed, [---]. He rem. to Lisbon prior to 1790, P.R.80. [int. Dec. 11, 1761, P.R.106.] [both of T., T.R.4.] (Topsham II, 288)

Mr Sam^l Willson & M^{rs} Mary Ried Ju^r both of Topsham Intend Marriage Brunswick Dec^r 11th 1761 (Brunswick, 122)

Holbrook, Elizabeth (Snow), Mrs. (wid. of Abijah H. of Harpswell) and Samuel Wilson (his second w., no issue), p.R.80. (Topsham II, 135)

No birth or death days or even months are known for either Samuel or his wives but it appears that Mary was still alive in 1781 and received 6 shillings at the death of her father, John Reed. Mary is listed as the wife of Samuel Wilson in that will.⁴⁴

Item I give to My Daughter Mary the wife of Samuel Wilson Six Shillings to be paid by my Executor.⁴⁵

But then in 1 Jan 1799 we find in a probate record for David Reed, Samuel's brother-in-law:

*Division of personal estate among widow, mother, Jane, wife of Joseph Foster, Martha, wife of Joseph Randall, Hannah, wife of Robert Potter, Margaret, wife of Robert Jack, Elizabeth, wife of John Soule, Charlotte, wife of John Herrin, **the representatives of Samuel Wilson and wife, deceased, and the representatives of John Reed, deceased, 4 Jan., 1799.**⁴⁶*

So Mary died between 1781 and 1798. Since she was not removed from her father's will by the time he died in 1795, her death date then might have been between 1795 and 1798.

The only Elizabeth Snow I could find traces of was born 3 Nov 1743 in Brunswick⁴⁷ and married Abizir Holbrook in 1762 in Brunswick.⁴⁸ I could not find a death date for Abizir to help pinpoint when she and Samuel may have married.

41. Pejebscot papers, 9:38

42. Maine Memory network, <https://goo.gl/S24snK>, accessed 21 May 2015.

43. Woodman, Cyrus, A History of Topsham, Maine, Scrapbook, 1835 (Archival material, Maine Historical Society, Coll. 1498), 65.

44. Patterson, 258.

45. Patterson, 258.

46. Patterson, 261.

47. Brunswick, 19.

48. "Maine, Marriages, 1771-1907," <https://goo.gl/e41xvP>.

Samuel² was the only Samuel in the area except for his nephew, son of William².

According to Wheeler, Samuel² was “licensed as an innholder at Topsham, by the Court of Sessions for Lincoln County, in Oct. 1762, and for each successive year down to Sept. 1766, when his last license was granted.”⁴⁹ He is listed in one deed as Samuel the Innkeeper.

Samuel² did get the ferry license:

*On September 8, 1761, Samuel Wilson was licensed to keep a ferry over the Androscoggin River, about one hundred rods below the falls, and gave bonds in the sum of £20 for the faithful discharge of his trust. He was permitted to demand and receive of every passenger three “coppers,” and three “coppers” for each horse ferried across. The Topsham landing-place was at first, probably, a short distance east of the present village burying-ground. Later, about 1783 to 1796, it was near the point at the end of the iron railroad bridge, which then went by the name of Ferry Point. During this later period, the ferry was kept by Brigadier Samuel Thompson.*⁵⁰

From that description I assume the ferry then was somewhere near where the railroad bridge is today.

He was a surveyor of highways in 1764⁵¹ and was involved in the saw mills along with Hugh² and William².

Wheeler claims “He removed to Lisbon prior to 1790, and lived and died on the farm owned in 1835 by Charles Thompson.”⁵² He did move to Lisbon (Little River Plantation) but he did not die in 1835. The first mention of Little River was in a deed from 1787 where it is said that he was of “a place called Little River”.⁵³ The Little River Plantation was part of the Pejepscot Purchase and is now in the area of Lisbon Falls.⁵⁴

Other deeds also mention Little River (Lincoln County 27:195, 40:60, 40:65) and in the probate records he is said to be late of Lisbon. (14:320)

Another deed (3:25) he buys land “taken up by his Father James”.

The original mention of the move and death was in the Cyrus Woodman papers (held at the Maine Historical Society) with no mention of death date. It also said the farm in Lisbon was ‘now’ owned by Charles Thompson, not owned at the time of Samuel’s death. Wheeler was incorrect about the death date and living on any land owned by Charles Thompson.

That probate record was to name his second wife Elizabeth administrator of his estate because he died without a will. That first notice is dated 30 July 1810. The inventory of his estate recorded on 20 Aug 1810 does not include any land and is valued at only \$81.44 but there are debts totalling \$475.17 - all signed notes. In the inventory are listed 3 bed quilts, bedstead, chest, trunks, table, desk, chairs, rocking chair, linens, cow, pig, flat irons, crane and dishes/crockery. (14:401).

He had sold by deed his part of the sawmill in 1772, recorded in 1802 (65:98), and his part of the long dam to son James in 1797 (40: 65). He had amassed a fair amount of land, 190 acres in 1787 (27:195), 65 acres in 1761 (4:195), 30+ in 1764 (3:235), and 100 in 1757 (3:8). I don’t know where the sales of those lots are but I certainly could have missed something in the records though missing all of that is odd. I keep getting the feeling that there are missing records between Lincoln and Sagadahoc Counties.

49. Wheeler, 860-861.

50. Wheeler, 547.

51. Wheeler, 183.

52. Wheeler, 861.

53. Lincoln County, 27:195.

54. Lisbon, Maine, <http://goo.gl/ezKrNQ>, accessed 21 May 2015.

Topsham became part of Sagadahoc in 1854 and this all had to be put together between two court houses.

Samuel² and Mary had five known children: Hannah³, James³, Susanna³, John³ and William³ but I was only to trace the children of one, James³ who moved north to Belfast.

Alexander (James¹)

Alexander Wilson was born before the family’s arrival in New England; his tombstone lists his age at about 56 which means he would have been born around 1718 probably in Ulster. Settling in Harpswell before his marriage around 1746, he, like others at that time, waited until he was about 30 to marry.

*Alexander dug his cellar next to G---- lot and cleared about 3 acres of land, got y^e timber for his house ready for raising, but was drove off by y^e Indians after he had been at y^e fight wth Col. Harmon at Summerset all which cost him considerable.*⁵⁵

In 1758 at the first recorded meeting of the district it is noted that “Alexander Wilson and Andrew Dunning should be a committee to settle with North Yarmouth, and to receive whatever money was due the town.”⁵⁶ (Andrew Dunning would provide one daughter-in-law to him later.) As the town’s representative, his name appears regularly in Wheeler’s history.

He also was a tradesman: by about 1762 “Andrew Dunning and Alexander Wilson were also in trade; that is, they were licensed retailers, and had a stock of goods which they disposed of to the settlers when called upon, but they probably did not confine themselves exclusively to that business.”⁵⁷

Alaxander Willson and Katherin Swainey Both of Brunswick intends marriage to each other Agust the 19 1746 (Brunswick, 116)

Catharine Swanzey b.1727 d.5 Jan 1764⁵⁸ of Harpswell is said to be the daughter of an Irishman, Robert, and his wife, Lillie May Isaacs. There is nothing on record for any Swanzey in the 1700s and there are very few Swanzey in the United States. Swanzey, New Hampshire, is said to be a spelling of Swansea and seems to be the main origin in the US of the name spelled that way. Most genealogical records spell her name as Swanzey but the children and grandchildren named Swanzey seemed to spell it in various ways. Alexander died 26 March 1774 according to his tombstone.⁵⁹

Alexander’s name is on lot 56 in Topsham but William must have taken it when he got of age after Alexander moved to Harpswell. Alexander and Catharine left a legacy in their property now called Wilson’s Point. Their descendants occupied that land until 1949.

“We have been told that the first dwelling on the property was a simple ‘log cabin’ near the high cliff on the shore. It was likely to have been built by Alexander Wilson, who also established a small shipyard on his land in Wilson Cove near the point. Alexander and his nephew John Alexander built the first craft there. Its size and name are not known, but, in May 1763, the town voted to pay Benjamin Jaques, Alexander Wilson, and John Alexander the sums assessed against them for the sloop built the previous year.”⁶⁰

They had nine children, James³, Mary³, Elizabeth³, David³, Esther³, Jennet³, Alexander³, Swanzey³, and

55. Watson, S M, Maine Historical and Genealogical Recorder, vol. IX (Portland, Maine: 1898) 198..

56. Wheeler, 163.

57. Wheeler, 621.

58. Findagrave.com, gravestone, <http://goo.gl/D1hjdP>.

59. Findagrave.com, gravestone: <http://goo.gl/Adg3CT>

60. Harpswell Heritage Land Trust, <http://goo.gl/2Goy6K>, accessed 29 March 2015.

Catharine³. Eight of those children survived but only three had children, James³, David³, and Alexander³. All remained in Harpswell.

Alexander married a second time after Catharine's death to a Sarah Cloof; however, I was not able to find any other information about her.

Alexander Willson of Harpswell and Sarah Cloof resident at Harpswell were married Aug 12 1766 (Harpswell, 22)

Jane "Jennet" (James¹) A Dynasty All Her Own - The Alexanders

Last but not least is Jennet, Jean or Jane, the only known daughter. Wheeler refers to her as Jane, as do the notations in Hill's vital records and commonly the plain Jane name of Jane is variably treated - I have run across Jennett, Jennet, and Jenet more often than Jane for the 1700s in Maine. Her gravestone has Jennet.

Her husband, William Alexander, was the child of David Alexander and his mother is unknown. His father came to Maine in 1719 with the Robert Temple ships just as James and Jean Wilson did, possibly on the same ship.

Alexander, William of T. and Harpswell, and Jane Wilson, sister of Elder Hugh, [], P.R.80. (Topsham I, 38)

Jane² and William had seven children, David³, James³, William³, Elizabeth³, John³, Samuel³, and Hugh and they together produced almost 50 grandchildren for William and Jane².

Many of their descendants still live in Maine (and Harpswell) today. I am presently writing a book on all the Alexanders of Maine and have many others who are probably related as the William Alexander in Topsham may have been either a cousin or brother of David Alexander.

DNA

One surnamed Wilson and one surnamed Alexander agreed to have DNA testing done in 2017. The Wilson results were extremely disappointing with no matches in the FamilyTreeDNA.com Wilson project. This could indicate James was not a Wilson after all or that he actually lost most of his family before he left. Though the family tree is definite, there also could have been a break in the actual tree and the living Wilson is not actually related at all. Hopefully, more Wilsons will test and give us some more data.

Even more interesting is the Alexander DNA test. The Alexander project has definitely linked these Alexanders to the Alexanders of Lanarkshire, Scotland. David Alexander is the earliest US entry in the project but they also settled in Virginia, Canada, South Carolina, Pennsylvania and New York and arrived in the 1800s, some directly from Scotland. That though is disappointing because it doesn't tell us where David himself specifically came from though makes stronger the possibility that Ireland was a stop along the way to America.