

The Uncommonly Common

The Story of James Wilson of Maine

and

His Topsham Descendants

by

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Preface

This is the culmination of family tree research gone horribly wrong. Sigh. Not really, but close, as I never intended to start a study of 20,000 family members. I am writing this as a gift to the descendants of James Wilson of Topsham, Maine, who arrived on America's shores in the very early 1700s. I might as well since I have all this information (and can write) - I do not know what else to do with it!

So here are some facts and information you need to know before you start plowing through this (or when you get confused later in your reading):

First, this not intended to be a study of the history but a story that uses history. I have used a variety of sources but part of the historical information outside the actual genealogical facts is based on online sources such as WikiPedia and not on academic historical texts. Where appropriate I have included sources in the chapters, but I also have included a source list in the appendix for reading that I think readers might be interested in.

Secondly, I am a writer and a genealogist. The writer came first and I mind my grammar and such like but I prefer to produce readable material. My relaxed style of writing is intentional - I hope you enjoy it. I actually break some writing rules in this book - I made some decisions on how I wanted things done and feel a little guilty at not minding my grammar p's and q's. It probably won't bother most readers but I do have to apologize for that because it does bother this English teacher and grammarian.

The one thing I have used occasionally to keep the stories more manageable is to put in parentheses the ancestor names such as (4th generation surname or full name⁴, 3rd generation³, 2nd generation², original ancestor¹). Hopefully, this convention will help. Each person has a added number as they are discussed to assist like this - name⁶. I do suggest using the table of contents pdf on the website as a guide when reading chapters. If you have the table of contents genealogy to look at, it will help you keep your place in the story.

- **There is no one who was born after 1900** included in this book unless that person is dead and is memorable in some way or is my generationally immediate family. After finding my family in a similar book with some mistakes, I realized that living people do not take kindly to their information being incorrect. I hope to avoid offense, and it was also necessary to put an arbitrary cut off date on families due to the size of the task. Full genealogies, which will be updated as information becomes available, are available on my website. Please see the appendix for more information.
- **Women are only referred to by their maiden name** (or former married name if maiden is not known).
- **Abbreviations:** a. for about, b. for born, m. for married, d. for died, unc. for unconfirmed.
- Unlike many genealogies, I am **not giving precedence to the surname line** - I generally am treating the daughters as equal to the sons as this is a study of all descendants and not just Wilson surnamed descendants.
- I have pulled vital records directly from the sources used to create the digital records where possible such as Mary Pelham Hill's Topsham records. She uses some abbreviations throughout and those are noted in the appendix. Specifically, P.R. stands for private record and T.R. stands for town record.
- I have taken other liberties with the footnotes and annotations. After I realized where the original records came from, I started just copying over the information and putting the town name and page number in parenthesis. Totally against any writer rules but a convention that cuts down on the number of footnotes and adds a bit of interest and often even information. If ever in doubt about the source, just refer to the appendix as all books and record sources are there.
- Once I added those original records I realized there need to be some more explanation about those records so that is provided on the page after next.
- Since many sources come with online URLs, I have added them in lieu of explicit genealogical proof footnotes. In doing so, I also used Google to shorten the links. This was all about conserving space and making the book more readable.
- I also want to state one other thing. If I have the source, I foot-

note it. If there is no footnotes on a date, that may mean there is no confirmation but it also may mean that there are several dates and the footnote maybe later in the sentence or paragraph. If you use this book as source material, please make sure you are using data that is confirmed. Check those footnotes!

- One unfortunate bit of news: I have determined that the deeds in Lincoln County from about 1826 to 1854 are not available. As of this writing, the Registry of Deeds is not admitting this problem so I don't know whether the actual deeds are missing or if the index is incomplete. This did put a wrench into this project and adds a bit of uncertainty into the data for those years. They are in the process of digitizing the records prior to putting them online so I am hoping this will be either corrected or explained sometime within the next year.
- One point about naming that you should know before you get started though this is explained when you find it. Junior is used to designate which person, not son of. Numbers are also used this way. So James Junior is the second James in the area. The other may not even be related. James 2, 3 and 4 are also possible. That's birth order of the like named people, not related people.

Last but not least, I'm as human as the next person; I make mistakes. I'm sure I don't have everything correct and would love to know when I'm wrong. Tell me: contact me via my website at <http://cvillegenie.com>. The only thing about a book in print is that corrections are hard. I will be posting a list of incorrect facts from the print edition once I receive confirmed data.

If you want to add to the story of your family, I welcome everything but don't promise to use it. I did try contacting folks for more information and offer up some of it for proofing by family members but found little interest from those I tried to contact.

One of the strongest possibilities that I didn't find a marriage and children for someone. I list folks as never married - anytime I do that, the truth is that that person may have and I just didn't find the information. So I simply may have missed a lot of folks! There are plans for updates....

Vital Records Abbreviations

Most of these hold true throughout the various record sources. The last (after widr) are only Topsham.

Marriages were declared as intentions first and then the marriage happened later much like today's engagements. So the second date mentioned in a marriage entry is the wedding.

Also, birth dates can sometimes be found by pure mathematics. Many stones had death dates with age at years, months and days, so some of the records only have death dates but with the information to figure out the birth dates.

I did occasionally truncate these records for space so the original record could have a bit more in them.

b. born

m. married

h. husband

w. wife

int. publishment of intention of marriage

inf. infant

s. son

d. daughter, died, day

U.S.C. - United State Census for 1850

wid. - widow

widr. - widower

L.V. - list of vaccinations given by Dr. Isaac Lincoln in 1810, incorporated in the Topsham Town Books viewable on microfilm.

G.R.I - grave stone record, First Parish Burying-ground, adjoining First Parish Church

G.R.2 - grave stone record, Haley Burying-ground

G.R.3 - grave stone record, Riverview Cemetery

G.R.4 - grave stone record, Eaton Cemetery

N.P. - newspaper record

P.R. 22 - family Bibles of James and Ezekial Purinton

P.R. 80 - Early History of Topsham by Cyrus Woodman in the Maine Historical Society, Portland, citation above.