



# DESCENDANTS OF THE FOUNDERS OF ANCIENT WINDSOR

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## NEWSLETTER

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### HIGHLIGHTS OF OUR VIRTUAL SPRING PROGRAM

As was the case with last September's Fall Program and Annual Meeting, due to the coronavirus we were unable to gather in person for our Spring Program on March 13. However, we had 63 on hand via Zoom, the most for a Spring Program since March 2003, and it was wonderful that so many members from across the country were able to join us.



**Windsor Historical Society Archivist presented an overview of the Society's book and manuscript collections during DFAW's March 13 Spring Program**

Our "chat box" opened at 1:30 p.m. Shortly after 2:00 p.m., following welcoming and introductory remarks by President Richard Roberts, Michelle Tom, Windsor Historical Society's Archivist, and Kristen Wands, the Society's Curator, presented a brief overview of the Windsor Historical Society's facilities, collections, and services (see page 3) and discussed the recent series of Founders' biographies written for its newsletter.

The program included information about Founders Jonathan Brewster, Margaret (Barrett) (Huntington) Stoughton, Bigod Eggleston, James Eno, Matthew Grant, Thomas Holcombe, William Holmes, John Hoskins, Bray Rossiter, Frances (Clark) (Dewey) Phelps, and Henry Wolcott plus a show and tell of some Founders-related items from the Society's collection.

Although Kristen and Michelle work closely together to decide which Founder to write about, most "Founders Series" articles published to date have been prepared by Kristen. Criteria for researching a sketch include what is known about the individual, what has already been written about them, how much more there is to find out, and what potentially pertinent records are available. Biographical sketches completed to date are available at:

<https://windsorhistoricalsociety.org/category/windsor-founders/>

Kristen and Michelle welcome suggestions for future articles. Candidates for sketches do not necessarily need to adhere to the DFAW's list of Founders, and a goal is to incorporate women's history when possible. Contact [mtom@windsorhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:mtom@windsorhistoricalsociety.org) or [kwands@windsorhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:kwands@windsorhistoricalsociety.org).

Special thanks are extended to our Secretary/Webmaster Jenny Hawran and our Treasurer Paul Osborn for their assistance prior to and/or during our Zoom meeting.



**Kristen Wands, WHS's Curator, discussed several items in the Society's collection, including this document box attributed to the school of Deacon Thomas Moore.**

## **CORRECTING MISINFORMATION ABOUT HOLCOMB(E) FAMILY ORIGINS**

**Richard C. Roberts**

[Many thanks are extended to James H. Holcombe, DFAW #1319, for bringing attention to and supplying copies of the David Williams articles on the origins of this country's early Holcomb(e)s. RCR]

About 1864 the Rev. Amasa Holcomb (see DFAW Newsletter vol 36, no. 3, Spring 2019) began collecting materials for a Holcomb(e) genealogy. Following his death in 1875, his work was continued by Dr. William Frederick Holcombe. Portions of that material were incorporated into Henry R. Stiles' *History of Ancient Windsor*, but the bulk of it fell into the possession of Hiram Frank Holcomb and remained unpublished until it eventually became the basis for a treatment, *The Holcomb(e) Genealogy*, by Jesse Seaver in 1925 and a more extensive treatment, *The Holcombes: Nation Builders* by Hannah Elizabeth Weir McPherson in 1947 (McCracken, TAG 57:65). The *Hiram Frank Holcomb Genealogical Research Collection* is now in the custody of the Connecticut Historical Society, call number GEN029. Seaver and McPherson's books include misinformation about the origins of Windsor Founder Thomas Holcombe as well as the "Southern Holcombes" that in spite of corrections by later authors, has continued to be perpetuated in published treatments and on online family trees.

*Nation Builders* breaks down the various early Holcombe immigrants into:

- A Thomas Holcombe of Dorchester, Massachusetts and Windsor, Connecticut
- B John Holcombe of Hillwell (later Abington) Township, Hunterdon County, New Jersey
- C William Harcum of Northumberland County, Virginia
- D William Holcomb of New Kent County, Virginia

### **Thomas Holcomb(e)**

#### ***Thomas Holcomb(e)'s Parentage***

In 1950, in "The Parents of Thomas Holcombe" George McCracken showed that among other errors, Thomas was not the son of Gilbert and Ann (Courtney) as implied by Seaver and McPherson (TAG 26:109-110). In "Thomas Holcombe's Earlier Posterity" he states that "Thomas' Holcombe was born undoubtedly in England, most probably in one of the southwestern counties, but of completely unknown parents (TAG 57: 66)."

In 2018, for the first time since George E McCracken's articles, David Williams, a published British researcher, published an analysis of Holcomb(e)s in England who were candidates for the ancestry of the North American lines. In the *Magazine of Virginia Genealogy*, Volume 56, Number. 4, he repeats McCracken's previous disclaimer about Gilbert as Thomas' father: "Gilbert sold the estate and mansion of Hole in 1605 to the Bartlett family ..." and "died without issue in 1623 leaving his estate to his brother-in-law, Richard Bonython." He cites the will of Gilbert and parish registers (56, no. 4:276).

#### ***The Mary and John***

Burton Spear, in *Search for the Passengers of the Mary and John 1630*, follows the lead of Seaver and McPherson stating that "Thomas Holcomb came on the 'Mary & John' in 1630, alone, at the age of 29 (6:39). However, McCracken, states that "He is usually said, with some reason, to have come on the 1630 voyage of the ship *Mary and John*, but there is no proof of it, all passenger lists for that voyage being hypothetical (TAG 57:66)." Robert Charles Anderson, in 1993, discussed his criteria for establishing a synthetic passenger list for the 1630 voyage of the *Mary and John* and published a list of probable passengers (NEHGR 147:148-161). Thomas Holcombe is not on that list; it appears unlikely that he was on that ship. In *The Great Migration Begins*, Anderson shows him as migrating to New England in 1633 but does not include the name of a ship (GMB 2:966).

#### ***Thomas Holcomb(e)'s Wife***

Seaver, p. 9, shows Thomas as marrying Elizabeth Ferguson, "born in England", a fellow passenger on the *Mary and John*. McPherson, p. 10, shows Thomas as marrying widow Elizabeth Ferguson, born in Wales, a passenger on the *Mary and John*. Spear says that "He married Elizabeth Ferguson 14 May 1646, also a 'Mary & John' passenger (6:39). However, in 1964 Selim Walker McArthur and Donald Lines Jacobus note that "her maiden name has been stated as Ferguson, without proof or probability (*McArthur-Barnes*, 169)." Further, Robert Charles Anderson points out that date frequently given for that presumed marriage is Thomas' date of freemanship and that such a marriage is not found in the Dorchester records (GMB 2:966). Although Thomas did marry a woman named by Elizabeth by about 1634 (assuming that she was the mother of all his children), her surname and ancestry remain unknown.

### ***Thomas Holcomb(e)'s Tombstone***

Burton Spear reports that "When the descendants of Thomas Holcomb moved to Granby, Conn., they removed his tombstone in Poquonock (Marshall Phelps Rd.) and took it with them. They may have also moved his remains. They inserted the 1657 stone into an obelisk-type monument in the Granby St. cemetery...." He goes on to say, "Some time after 1934, some members of the Holcomb family demolished the monument, threw it into a dump and replaced it with a modern granite monument... (Spear, p. 39)." In "Genealogical Vandalism: Thomas Holcomb's Tombstone" (TAG 44 (1968):58-60) McCracken corrects numerous errors inscribed on a modern granite monument in Granby Street Cemetery, Granby where Thomas' alleged original 1657 headstone and perhaps, according to one tradition, his remains, had been moved from the Poquonock section of Windsor. Although not mentioned by McCracken, it should be noted that as of 1929, the earliest headstone in the Old Burying Ground, Poquonock, was that of Ebenezer Holcomb who died 17 December 1722 at the age of 57 (Cem. Insc., p. 84). Most of Windsor's earliest settlers were buried in Palisado Cemetery, and most early markers have not survived. It seems unlikely that Thomas was buried in the Poquonock, unless on the family homestead, or that a 1657 marker would have survived.

### **The "Southern Holcomb(e)s"**

In 1925 Jesse Seaver recorded the tradition that the "Southern" Holcomb(e)s descended from three brothers, William, Richard, and John but concluded that an Andrew Holcombe was John's ancestor. In 1947 McPherson treated William Harcum (McPherson C) and William Holcomb (McPherson D) separately, but her work led some subsequent researchers to blend the two distinct families into one, with William, Richard, and John placed as sons of a William Holcomb and his wife Hannah. In a thorough study published in the *Magazine of Virginia Genealogy*, Volume 56, Number 4, David Williams concludes "that there is no evidence that William Harcum [who was married to a Hannah, perhaps a second wife] and William Holcomb 'the Vestryman' are one and the same person;" provides evidence that William, Richard, and John "were almost certainly brothers, or at least very closely related;" and reconstructs lines of descent from William D to the early "Southern" Holcomb(e) families in Virginia and the Carolinas.

### **DNA Evidence and Holcomb(e) Relationships**

In a subsequent article in the *Magazine of Virginia Genealogy*, Volume 57, Number 2, David Williams cites an analysis done by the Holcombe DNA Project at Family Tree DNA that confirms a genetic relationship between Thomas (McPherson A), John (McPherson B), and William (McPherson D) but not finding any relationship between those men and William Harcum (McPherson C).

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