

WILLIAM¹ OF WOBURN

First Generation

No. 6177

NAME: William¹ Chamberlain — Immigrant to New England about 1647

Father:

Mother:

Born: About 1620, England

Died: 31 May 1706 Billerica, Middlesex Co., MA, "aged about 86 years"

Buried: Probably Old South Cemetery, Billerica, MA

Married: About 1648, perhaps Boston, Suffolk Co., MA

Other Marriages:

No. 13674

SPOUSE: Rebecca

Father:

Mother:

Born: About 1625 (?), probably England

Died: 26 Sep 1692, "ye Prison," Cambridge, Middlesex Co., MA

Buried: Probably Old South Cemetery, Billerica, MA

Other Marriages:

CHILDREN

- M 8501 Timothy², b. 13 Aug 1649, Woburn, Middlesex Co., MA. Savage in his *Genealogical Dictionary*, erroneously states that he was born in Concord. He probably died young as no further record of him has been found.
- M 8502 Isaac², b. 1 Oct 1650, Woburn, Middlesex Co., MA. Savage in his *Genealogical Dictionary*, erroneously states that he was born in Concord. He served in King Philips War, as he was assigned to Sgt. Ralph Hills' garrison along with his father's family, on 8 Oct 1675 (*History of Billerica, MA*, P. 110). Probably unmarried. Died 20 July 1681, Billerica, Middlesex Co., MA, "aged 30 years."
- M 8503 William², b. About 1652, Woburn, Middlesex Co., MA. Married Deliverance Forbush (Ferguson/Ferguson), 20 Dec 1698, Watertown, MA. Died 20 Jan 1734, Lexington, MA. +
- M 8504 John², b. About 1654, probably Woburn (or Billerica), Middlesex Co., MA. Married (1) Deborah Jacquith, 6 Dec 1681, Billerica, MA; (2) —?—, about 1706 (?), perhaps Billerica, MA. Died 1 Apr 1712, Billerica, MA. +
- F 8505 Sarah², b. 18 Jan or 20 May 1655, Billerica, Middlesex Co., MA. Married John Shed, 9 Jan 1676/77, Billerica, MA. Died 17 Jan 1735/36, Billerica, MA. +
- M 8506 Jacob², b. 18 Jan 1657/58, Billerica, Middlesex Co., MA. Married Experience French, about 1690, perhaps Medford, MA. Died 11 Apr 1712, Newton, MA. +

William¹ Chamberlain (No. 6177) – Continued

- M 8507 Thomas², b. 20 Feb 1658/59, Billerica, Middlesex Co., MA. Married Elizabeth Hammond, 18 Apr 1682, Cambridge, MA. Died about Oct 1724, Newton, MA. +
- M 8508 Edmund², b. 15 July 1660, Billerica, Middlesex Co., MA. Married (1) Mrs. Mercy (—?—) Abbott (a widow), 26 Aug 1690, Billerica, MA; (2) Abigail —?—, about 1700 (?), perhaps Groton, MA. Died after 28 July 1740, Billerica, MA. +
- F 8509 Rebecca², b. 25 Feb 1662/63, Billerica, Middlesex Co., MA. Married (1) Thomas Stearns, 20 June 1688, Watertown, MA; (2) George Farley, 14 July 1699, Billerica, MA. Died before 17 Aug 1733, probably Billerica, MA. +
- M 8510 Abraham², b. 6 Jan 1664/65, Billerica, Middlesex Co., MA. Married Elizabeth Curtis, 9 Mar 1691/92, Newton, MA; (2) Mary Randall, 24 Feb 1697/98, Watertown, MA. Died before 17 May 1734, probably Brookline, MA. +
- F 8511 Ann², b. 3 Mar 1665/66, Billerica, Middlesex Co., MA. Unmarried. She was alive 2 Feb 1686/87. On 12 Dec 1726, the town of Billerica paid Clement Chamberlain £8:03 for “keeping” her and Dr. How 12S. for “doctering” her. This record infers that in her old age she had become a town charge.
- M 8512 Clement², b. 30 May 1669, Billerica, Middlesex Co., MA. Married Mary —?—, about 1691, probably Billerica, MA. Died Oct-Nov 1738, probably Billerica, MA. +
- M 8513 Daniel², b. 27 Sep 1671, Billerica, Middlesex Co., MA. Married Mary —?—, about 1694, probably Billerica, MA. Died after 22 Nov 1725, perhaps Massachusetts. +

BIOGRAPHICAL

Prentiss Glazier has formulated a hypothesis to account for the earlier origins of this man as well as his relationship to Thomas and Edmund Chamberlain, who appeared about the same time in New England. We reproduce his narrative “in toto,” with comments following:

Thomas Chamberlain, was clearly the eldest of three brothers, and in New England, took the lead which Edmund and William followed. It seems obvious that he was the Thomas who embarked from the port of Gravesend, England, for Virginia, in 1635, aged 20 years (*Hotten's List of Immigrants*); that in 1644, he was in a boatload of Puritans, headed by Capt. Daniel Gookin, (next-but-one in the 1624-25 ‘muster’ of Elizabeth City, Va., to ‘Francis Chamberlin, aged 45,’ from Virginia; that the ‘Mary Parker, aged 15,’ who came to Virginia from Gravesend on a following boat, became his first wife, and mother of his children; that she was sister of James Parker, soon afterward his partner in land purchases. The Parkers seem to have been from Billericay, County Essex, England, and from nearby Rayleigh.

Eighteen miles north of Gravesend is Billericay (Great Burstead parish); nine miles further is Chelmsford. Thomas was a pioneer of the Massachusetts town which became ‘Chelmsford;’ here he and Parker bought a six-mile tract, named it ‘Billerica,’ and sold farms to William and Edmund Chamberlain; we have reason to believe that wife Mary provided some of the money (perhaps inherited, brought by brother?).

A Thomas Chamberlayne was in Great Burstead in 1609 (and apparently a non-conformist). We submit that Thomas, Edmund, and William were probably sons of Francis¹ of Elizabeth City, Va., (perhaps by a previous marriage, to Agnes Haiden, 1615, at Ugley, County Essex); that they stayed with relatives at Great Burstead prior to emigration; and that Thomas named two towns which he helped found, after English towns dear to him.”

The foregoing theory seems logical and worthy of serious consideration in all aspects except the supposed relationship to Francis Chamberlin. On this one point, I emphatically disagree. It would be nice and neat to connect these three men to Francis Chamberlain, but there is simply no evidence. The fact that “a” Thomas Chamberlain lived almost next door to Daniel Gookin in 1623 (12 years before William came to Virginia) is of questionable significance. The mention of a Francis Chamberlain marrying an Agnes Haiden in County Essex in 1615 [some sources give this date as 1613], also lacks any real weight.

First of all, Francis was living at Elizabeth City, Virginia, in 1623-24, aged 45, with wife Rebecca, aged 37, and son Francis, aged 3 years. Even if he was the same man that married Agnes in 1615, why would he have left his three small sons in England and gone off to Virginia with a new wife and child? (In 1623, Thomas would have been about 8 years old; Edmund about 5 years, and William about three).

The strongest argument against this supposed relationship is that there is not one child (known) in the progeny of Thomas, Edmund, or William that bears the name Francis/Frances until the late 1790s. In those days of naming children after parents and relatives, it is illogical that not even one child or grandchild was named for their father.

There were many Chamberlain families in County Essex in the early 1600s. Without something more to go on, it seems useless to try and draw any definite conclusions. The genealogical criteria for suggesting a connection should be based on *probability* rather than *possibility*. Is it possible that Francis could be their father? Yes. Is it probable? No (my opinion). The degree of probability in this case is close to zero.

Glazier goes on to state that Hotten's list of 1635 also contains an entry for William Chamberlain, aged 15, who also emigrated from Gravesend, England, for Virginia. (Edmund's name does not appear in any passenger lists.) Glazier states that the brothers all came to New England with Daniel Gookin. Note that Thomas Chamberlain, Daniel Gookin, and James Parker were all made Freeman on the same day. If we only could be sure that the Thomas and William of Virginia in 1635, are one and the same Thomas and William, respectively, of New England a few years later, the case would be far stronger.

In January and February 1648/49, William and Edmund Chamberlain, respectively, appear in the Woburn records. These three, Thomas, William and Edmund have every appearance of being brothers, although there is no known record or document to state this claim. All three joined with neighbors in a petition to the General Court for a tract of land which was afterwards settled as Chelmsford, where Thomas and Edmund removed, while William was one of the proprietors of a large tract which came to be known as Billerica.

The bulk of the remaining biographical information is taken from the article on William Chamberlain, by George Walter Chamberlain, published in the *Chamberlain Association of American Annual Report for 1908-10*, as referenced. Hereafter certain statements by George Walter Chamberlain have been indicated by the initials “GWC.”

GWC states that William Chamberlain was married about 1648, and suggests it was in England. However, he also identifies William as the man who bought a house and lot from Francis Smith on 30 Oct 1647 (and sold it on 4 Jan 1647/48). Thus, it seems more likely that William Chamberlain married Rebecca in New England, most likely after he became an inhabitant of Woburn, Middlesex Co., MA, on 6 Jan 1647/48. While no record has been found, the marriage probably took place in or near Boston.

As of 1999, after considerable effort by many researchers, the ancestry of William Chamberlain has still not been definitely established. Of the forty proprietors of Billerica and Chelmsford with whom he was closely associated from 1648 to 1665, at least six are known to have come to New England from East Anglia, one from the County of Surrey and one from Kent. An abstract of every Chamberlain will which was probated in East Anglia between 1620 and 1700, Cambridgeshire excepted, has been obtained, and from that number, one abstract is given as follows:

“Francis Chamberlyn, senior, of Narburgh, County of Norfolk, made his will June 1, 1676, bequeathing to his sons William Chamberlyn and Clement Chamberlyn £25 each when they arrive at the age of 21; to his grandchildren Mary Woodhouse, the daughter of John Woodhouse, and to Alice Chamberlyn each £5; to his son Francis Chamberlyn ten shillings; to his son Thomas Chamberlyn his mansion house and lands in Pentry, the said Thomas and his wife Mary to be executors and Noah Clarke of Narburgh to be supervisor. Witnesses: John Roberts and Noah Clarke.” Will proved, Sept. 16, 1677, in the Consistory Court of Norwich.

The rare Christian name Clement found in this Narburgh family and which occurs in the early generations of our New England family is suggestive of kinship, although it may be a coincidence in names. The names William and Thomas are common in the majority of English families.

The parish registers of St. Mary, Reading, Co. of Berks, show that William son of John Chamberlain was baptized there 23 Jan 1619/20, but they also show that one William Chamberline was buried there, 28 Nov 1665, and another William Chamberlain, 8 July 1686. These data seem to indicate that this first-mentioned William Chamberlain remained and died there. An examination of all Chamberlain probate records for Berkshire from 1620 to 1700, shows no will nor administration of any one of the name living in Reading, although the parish register gives four, viz. Robert Chamberline, William Chamberline, John Chamberline, and William Chamberlain, presumably adults, buried there between 1653 and 1687. No settlement of the estate of any one of these has been found.

“6th June 1635. Theis under-written names are to be transported to Virginea imbarqued in the *Thomas & John*, Richard Lombard Mr [Master] being examined by the Minister de Gravesend concerning their conformitie to the orders and discipline of the Church of England: And tooke the oath of Allegiance. * * * * * Tho: Chamberlin 20 yeres.”

Between Aug. 21 and Sept. 2, 1635 [by inference]

“Theis under-written names are to be transported to Virginea imbarqued in the *Thomas*, Henry Taverner Mr [Master] have been examined by the Minister of Gravesend touching their conformitie in or Religion &c. * * * * Wm Chamberlin 16 yeres” [and 57 others]. (*Hotten's Original Lists of Emigrants, 1600-1700*, pp. 84, 127)

“A ship coming from Virginia certified us of a great massacre lately committed by the natives upon the English there to the number of 300 at least * * * . It was very observable that this massacre came upon them soon after they had driven out the godly ministers we had sent to them and had made an order that all such as would not conform to the discipline of the Church of England should depart the country by a certain day which the massacre now prevented: and govenour (one Sir Robert Berkeley a courtier and very malignant towards the way of our churches here) and council had appointed a fast to be kept through the country upon Good Friday (as they called it) for the good success of the king, etc. and the day before, this massacre began in the out parts of the country round about and continued two days for they killed all by sudden surprisal living amongst them and as familiar in their houses as those of the family”. [The massacre began, April 18, 1644].

“*Upon these troubles divers godly disposed persons* [including Capt. Daniel Gookin and others] came from thence to New England and many of the rest were forced to give glory to God in acknowledging that this evil was sent upon them from God for their reviling the gospel and those faithful ministers he had sent among them.” (Winthrop in his *History of New England*, 198, 199).

Savage, in a footnote, tells us that the ship which brought the “*godly disposed persons*” from Virginia to Massachusetts arrived, 20 May 1644. Daniel Gookin, Thomas Chamberlin, James Parker, Allen Convers and others were made Freemen of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, 29 May 1644. Did Thomas Chamberlain come with Gookin from Virginia and did William Chamberlain follow a few years later?

No Thomas Chamberlain appeared in Virginia before the latter part of the seventeenth century, but one William Chamberlain was living in Charles City County in 1660 and died there the year following. From the absence of authentic records it is impossible to state whether the immigrants to Virginia in 1635 were, or were not, identical with the immigrants of the same name who appeared in New England within ten or twelve years of that date. Felt stated that there were 70 persons living in Virginia who petitioned for the Puritan clergymen to go there in 1643, but I (GWC) have failed to find in New England the list of names of the petitioners.

Like every surname, the name Chamberlain has many variations. In the first fifty volumes of the New England Historical Genealogical Register, it is found in twenty-two variations. These forms do not represent the variations used by the Chamberlains themselves, but rather the forms found on the colonial records of New England. When we realize that no standard of spelling was in general use among English people until about the period of the American Revolution, it becomes apparent how surnames were corrupted and varied in past centuries.

William Chamberlain, the immigrant, probably first appeared in New England in Boston, Massachusetts, as early as 30 Oct 1647, when he took a deed of a house and lot of Francis Smith, as follows:

9(9) [9 Nov] 1647: Francis Smith granted unto William Chamberlaine his house & garden together with the shopp & out houseinge unto the same belonging being bounded on the north with the lane [West Street], on the west with the Comon, [Mason Street], the high streete [Washington Street] east, & Richard Carter South & this was by an absolute deed dated: 30th October 1647: acknowledged the 9 (9) 1647, before Mr Hibbins. This was againe assigned to ffrancis Smith, see P. 126.”

A few months later he deeded this property back to Francis Smith as follows:

5(11) [5 Jan] 1648: Wm Chamberlaine assigned unto Francis Smith & his heires forever his house & ground thereto belonging formerly bought of the sd ffrancis being bounded on the north with the lane [West Street], on the east with the high street [Washington Street] Richard Carter on the south & the Comon on the west [Mason Street]. This assignment was dated 4 (11) [4 Jan] 1648. Wm Chamberlaine. This house was againe sould to Ri: Wilson p:” (*Boston Book of Original Possessions*, pp. 132, 126.)

Here on the southwest corner of West and Washington Streets William Chamberlain owned property from 30 Oct 1647 to 4 Jan 1648/49, a period of about fourteen months. All of the early antiquaries identified this man as William² Chamberlain [Henry¹ of Hingham] who settled in Hull, but was not married until about 1651. This was four years after William¹ Chamberlain purchased this home. While William Chamberlain, of Woburn probably had married about the time he became an inhabitant of Woburn, there is little doubt that the Boston man and the Woburn man of this name were identical. Francis Smith purchased this Boston property only a few months before he sold it to William Chamberlain, and appears to have resided there for many years after it was assigned back to him.

Two days after William Chamberlain disposed of his property in Boston, he was admitted an inhabitant of the town of Woburn—ten miles northwest of Boston—as the following Woburn town record shows:

“The 6 of 11 mo 1648: [Jan 6, 1648/49] William Chamberlin admited an Inhabitant of this Towne and permitted to buy land for his conuency in any place thereof provided hee unsetl not any inhabitant and bring testimony of his peacebl behaueor which is not in the least mesur questioned.” (*Woburn Town Records*, Vol. I, P. 13.)

In less than one month he received a grant of land there as the following town record shows:

“The 3 of 12 mo 1648: [Feb. 3, 1648/49] and Edmond Chamberlin John Parker and William Chamberlin are to have tenn Acres ether of them or twenty acres as the Committee shall see meete they are to lay it out as shall bee Best for the Towne and proprietors begining at that end next parly medow Brooke and a joyning to Reding line at the out side all the way to bee layd out to the persons as they are in order above Expressed (*Woburn Town Records*, P. 14.).”

“The 26th 7 mo 1650: [Aug. 26, 1650.] It is further ordered that Samuel Tidd shall have four acres of meadow laid out in a meadow called Drum Meadow to begin at which end he pleaseth and William Chamberlain to have the residue provided they continue to improve it to their houses they build (*Woburn Town Records* P. 16.).”

“Parly” Meadow and “Drum” Meadow are in the eastern part of the present city of Woburn but it is doubtful if the exact spot where William Chamberlain built his bouse in Woburn can be now identified.

The 10 of 11 mo, 1651: [Jan. 10, 1651/52] Thomas perce Edward Winn & William Chamberlin are ppointed a committee to looke on the inlargment Allen Convars desirs neer his hous and looke on an inlargment John Parker desirs and make a Return whether it will not bee prejuditiall to the Towne (*Woburn Town Records* P. 17.).”

The town records further show that he and his wife Rebecca had two sons, Timothy and Isaac, born there (not in Concord as Savage stated). The next two sons, William and John are also believed to have been born in Woburn, although it is possible that John could have been born in Billerica as this (1654) was about the time that William and his family moved there.

On 9 June 1652, the First Church of Cambridge made an agreement for the division of Shawshine. All of the communicants received allotments but comparatively few of the Cambridge settlers removed to Billerica to establish homes there. On 25 Mar 1654, the proprietors of Cambridge executed “the Great Deed” to the proprietors of Billerica granting the latter:

“all our respective rights & interest therein unto any part or parcall of the said land now called by the said name of Billerica also Shawshine * * * * exceptng & reserving our Joynt & respective interest that any of us have in the farme wherein John Parker now dwelleth comonly called by the name of the Churches farme (ie) the church at Cambridge.” To this document the proprietors of Cambridge and the proprietors of Billerica signed their names. “William Chamberline” signed “for Thomas Hamons Lott.” (See photograph of the autographs in the *Patten Genealogy*)

On 2 Nov 1637, the General Court made a grant of land in the following language:

“The Deputy, Mr. Dudley hath a thousand acres granted him wheare it may not pjudice any plantation granted, nor any plantation to bee granted wth out limiting to time of impot.” (*History of Billerica*, P. 3.) On May 2, 1638, this grant was enlarged and located “& the Deputie Governor to have his thousand acres on the northerly side of the said two great stones (wch stones were lately named the Two Brothers) * * * about 6 miles from Concord northwards, * * * close by the ryver-side that comes fro Concord.” “The Deputie Governor is to run a line easterly from the said stones so that hee may take in a meadowe on the other side of a hill [Indian Hill] & so to extend his thousand acres as farr northerly as hee will,” etc.

About 1639, the General Court increased Mr. Dudley's Farm by the addition of 500 acres. Some time before 14 June 1642, there was erected about two and one half miles from the “Two Brothers” the Shawshin house. After having been granted several times upon conditions, this territory of “Shaweshin” was granted to Cambridge, 7 Mar 1643/34, “provided the church & prsent elders continue at Cambridge.” Thus we see why the proprietors of Cambridge had a right to convey their interests in the township of Billerica, and why they did not settle it themselves.

On 28 Feb 1651/2, Thomas Dudley, the Deputy Governor, conveyed “1500 acres,” “lying and being about 6 miles northerly from Concord,” for £110, unto Thomas Chamberline, Isacke Learned and James Parker all of Woburne in New England and all his right which he “hath therein by virtue of the said grants of the general Courts or by any purchase from any Indian,” provided the grantees pay £55 of money, oxen, steers, cowes, heifers or calves at his dwelling house in Roxbury upon 28 Apr 1653, and the “like summe” in “cattails or in corne” at the same place as follows: “£15 in wheate & £35 in Rye, pease or Indian corne” at Roxbury upon 28 Apr 1653, and the “like summe” in “cattails or in corne” at the same place as follows: “£15 in wheate & £35 in Rye, pease or Indian corne” on 28 Apr 1654 and annually until the full sum was paid.

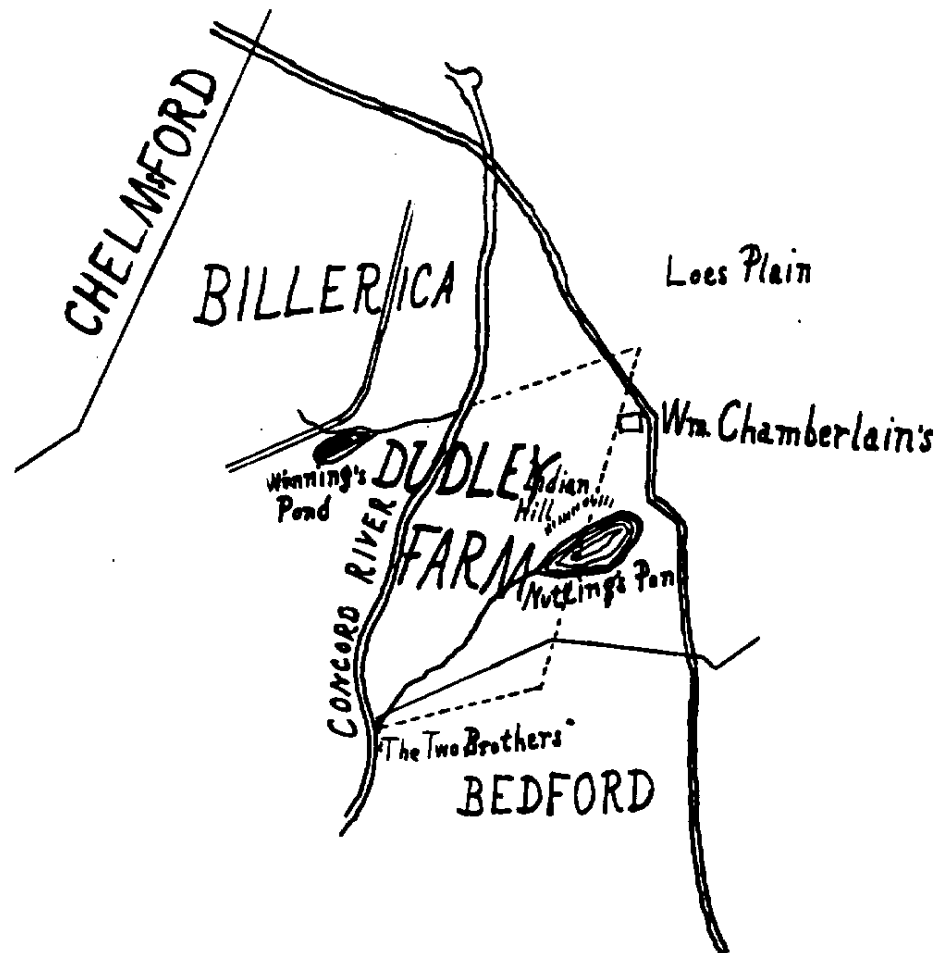
One of the proprietors of the Dudley Grant, James Parker, settled in Billerica and it is fair to assume that the twelve original settlers on the Dudley Grant as proprietors of Billerica delivered their products to Governor Thomas Dudley in payment for their lands. The deed was recorded 19 Sep 1656, showing that the Governor, or his heirs, had been paid in full before that date. William Chamberlain became interested in Billerica as early as 9 June 1652, and I conjecture that in that year he commenced to fell the primeval forests on the Dudley Grant. Presumably his family remained in Woburn until the next year when doubtless they removed to their log cabin home in the forest-girdled settlement of ancient Billerica. After 1652 there is no further record of the family in Woburn.

For thirteen years, 1652-1665, the settlers on the Dudley Grant held their title by possession or by some unrecorded agreement. Thomas Dudley's heirs permitted the proprietors to record their title 19 Sep 1656. On 6 Mar 1656, “Mary Chamberline of Chelmsford the wife of Thomas Chamberline” quitclaimed all her interest in the Dudley Grant unto William Chamberline, Edm: Chamberline and eight other settlers. About one month after Gov. Dudley's deed was recorded in Middlesex County, on 22 Oct 1656, Edmund “Chamberline” of Chelmsford, planter, deeded one dwelling house and about 50 acres in Billerica to William Baker, “bounded on the northeast with William Chamberline,” etc., “which land I * * * purchased both meadow and upland of Isack Lerner, Thomas Chamberline and James Parker, the whole being one twelfth of all that farme of 1500 acres by them purchased of the Worshipfull Thomas Dudley, Esq. deceased (*Middlesex Deeds*, Liber 1, P. 197).”

About 1656 James Parker, one of the proprietors of the Dudley Grant, removed from Billerica to Chelmsford, leaving the original settlers William French, George Farley, Benjamin Butterfield, Joseph Parker, Jacob Parker, John Stearns, Henry Jefts and William Chamberlain with later purchasers in possession of the Dudley Farm. Of the Cambridge grantees Goodman Hammond owned lot No. 50, containing 15 acres. This passed into possession of William Chamberlain 25 Mar 1654. From this time until 24 Nov 1665, it is to be inferred that he acted as agent for the proprietors of the Dudley Grant and at the expiration of that time received his title to 125 acres including his homestead therefore and that his services constituted “a valluable consideration to us well and truly paid by Wm Chamberline of Billerica, planter.” By their deeds of the same date the other settlers paid a “valluable consideration of money” for their shares of the Dudley Farm.

On Nov. 24, 1665, the surviving proprietors of the Dudley Grant, “James Parker and Thomas Chamberline of Chelmsford, Planters, for a valluable consideration to be well and truly paid by Wm Chamberline of Billerica, planter,” deeded him 125 acres “of that farme by us purchased of Thomas Dudley, Esq. deceased, both upland and swamp * * the upland bounded with Lt. Wm Ffrench on the south, Ralph Hill, Senr. west, Mr. Richard Champney north and the farme line cast (*Middlesex Deeds*, Liber 3, P. 152).”

The following illustration shows the location of the homestead of William Chamberlain.



It was located a little north of Bare Hill just southeast of the present village of Billerica, near where the Woburn road and the Concord road diverge. There is an old cellar there, from which has been obtained an old brick and a pewter spoon—relics of the bygone centuries, but the old house was removed before 1835, and perhaps long before that date. He received eleven grants of land from the town and must have owned at least 200 acres there. In 1664 the highway was built through his land “by his house upon ye farme” and he was granted four and one-half acres for damages (*Billerica Land Grants*). Grants were made to him of land at “Treeble Cove,” “on the Plaine north of Heeth Brooke,” on “the Pine Plaine,” “on the northeast side of Prospect Hill,” “in Heeth Meadow,” “on the west side of Concord River,” “in Heeth Swamp,” “west of the Great Pond called the Mill Pond,” in “Pond Meadow,” in “River meadow,” and at “French's Hill Meadow.”

“April 20, 1663, The Townsmen doe order that for the repaying the High way Ledinge from the Cuntry Rode that Leads from our Town to Concord to ye Cuntry Rode yt Leads to Shawshin: through the Land of Henry Jefts and Willi Chamberlin: and Leftent Willi Frenches land that: John Stern Henry Jefts and Willi Chamberlin and Willi French shall mend the way and make it passable and they shall set of there chrg on ye account of publiq chrg in high way worke.” July 3, 1663, he drew a lot on the west side of Concord River. His rate for the maintenance of Rev. Samuel Whiting for the year 1663 was £1: 00: 08. Jan. 29, 1667, at a “publich towne” meeting, he was one to consent “that any proposition shall be determined by a major vote of the town.”

In 1673, he was chosen constable of the town, serving for one year. At that time the New England town constables served warrants upon all freemen and freeholders for town meetings, warrants upon the selectmen for choice of jurors, warrants upon offenders against the laws; collected the country rates and the minister's rates and paid the latter to the settled minister of the township, who was for many years the only person in the township who received a compensation for his services at public expense. The accounts which William Chamberlain and other early constables rendered to the town of Billerica show that the rates were paid in rye, wheat, Indian corn and other New England farm products. The following illustration is a partial copy of an ancient document bearing William Chamberlain's signature as Constable.

According to this warrant,
Job Laine is chosen to serve on of grand jury
& John French, on of jury of tryalls. and both
warranted accordingly. 24:1st 1673:
William Chamberlain, Constable,

On 8 Oct 1677, the town of Billerica appointed tithing-men and placed under each the care of a half dozen families. William Chamberlain's family was under the care of George Farley. In May 1677 he was behind in his last year's rates to the amount of £4:02:05. This was on account of King Philip's War which ruined the property of many families all over New England. He was one of the forty inhabitants of Billerica who were in arrears for their rates due the Rev. Samuel Whiting 4 Jan 1685, his rate being £1:03:04.

Capt. Daniel Gookin and John Eliot, the Apostle to the Indians, visited the Wamesit Indians on the Merrimack river about five miles north of the Billerica settlement May 5 and 6, 1674, and heard the Chief *Numphow* declare that he would become a Christian. In Gookin's narrative (*History of Billierca*, MA, pp. 105-06) he gives full details of this visit. In that account Capt. Gookin said, "In this town [Billerica] they observe the same civil and religious orders as in other towns and have a constable and other officers." The "constable" to whom he here referred was Samuel Manning for 1674 and William Chamberlain for 1673, whose duties had been so performed that *Numphow* and his tribe refused to join King Philip one year later, and so the inhabitants of Billerica, although living in constant fear, escaped the cruel tomahawk and the loss of their homes, although they were domiciled in garrisons as the inhabitants of other towns were.

William Chamberlain probably belonged to the great middle class of Englishmen—the yeomanry, pronounced by Wendell Phillips to be "the best blood in Europe." He and his wife were both able to write and they probably possessed such general education as the English yeomanry could acquire. In settling in Billerica they were in a wilderness eighteen miles from Boston and within five miles of the Wamesit Indians on the Merrimack. Of their thirteen children only one could write. What was true concerning the lack of education in their children was likewise true of three-fourths of the children of the pioneers of New England who lived before the days of King Philip's war.

How William Chamberlain disposed of his estate does not appear in the county records, but a critical study of his land grants and of the deeds given by his sons convinces me [GWC] that they shared in his estate. The title to the 125 acres conveyed to him by the proprietors of the Dudley Farm was not traced by George Walter Chamberlain.

Rebecca Chamberlain was the mother of thirteen children, twelve of whom reached maturity and ten of whom left descendants. In 1692, the witchcraft delusion spread from Salem Village to Andover, Haverhill, Reading, Lexington, Chelmsford, Billerica and other towns. In 1816, John Farmer, the pioneer antiquary of New England, in his article on the early history of Billerica in referred to the death of Rebecca Chamberlain on 26 Sept 1692. He said that she was probably “a victim of the infatuation which prevailed at that time.” An examination of every paper in the Middlesex County Court Files from 1670 to 1700 has revealed many witchcraft cases, but nothing relating to Rebecca Chamberlain.

The town records of Billerica state that she “died in ye prison at Cambridge.” GWC stated that he had the documentary record of several of whom it was recorded that they died there on the charge of witchcraft. Both she and her husband were probably buried in the Old South Cemetery in Billerica. Here in Billerica, she spent forty years of her life and William Chamberlain about fifty-four years. He was the last of the original settlers of ancient Billerica to enter “into that peace that passeth understanding.”

The will of one Sarah Shelley, of Boston, carries genealogical significance as it provides good evidence that Rebecca was either her sister, half-sister, or sister-in-law. GWC further suggests Rebecca was probably a sister of Captain Isaac Addington. Because of its significance, the will of Sarah Shelley of Boston is reproduced verbatim et literatim [slightly edited]:

“I Sarah Shelley of Boston in New England Spinster, being sick in body, but through mercy of sound disposing minde. Knowing the uncertainty of this present Life do hereby revoke all former and make and declare this my last will and Testament.

First and principally I commit my Spirit into the hands of Almighty God my Creator hoping to receive full pardon and forgiveness of all my Sins and eternal Life and Salvation through the alone Merits of the Lord Jesus Christ my ever blessed Redeemer. My body I commit unto the dust to be decently interred at the discretion of my Executor hereafter named in faith of a glorious Resurrection.

And for my temporal Estate I will that it be employed and bestowed as in and by this my will is exprest.

Imprimis I will that all my just debts and funeral Expences be paid and discharged by my Executor in convenient time after my decease.

Item. I give and bequeath unto my Revered and much Respected Friends Mr Samuel Nowell Mr James Allen and Mr Joshua Moody all of Boston Forty Shillings apiece in money.

Item. I give and bequeath unto my cousens Captain Penn Townsend and Sarah his wife Five pounds apiece in money and to my Cousen Ann Peirce Five pounds in money and to each of my Cousen Townsends and Cousen Peirce's. Children now Liveing Forty Shillings apeice in money to be paid by my Executor into the hands of their parents for their use. Also I give unto my Cousen Rebecca Davenport's two children Forty Shillings apeice in money Vizt: Addington Davenport and Rebecca Davenport: Further I give unto the said Rebecca Davenport and Rebecca Townsend my two Silver Spoons, Rebecca Townsend to have that I comonly use. More to my Cousen Rebecca Davenport one new pewter pot and a Silver Bookin. [sic]

Item. I give unto my Cousen Isaac Addington Ten pounds in money and to his wife Twenty Shillings in money to buy a Ring.

Item. I give unto my good Friend Mrs. Dorothy Hawkins widow Twenty Shillings in money to buy her a Ring.

Item. I Release unto my Brother William Chamberlin, a debt of Six pounds which he oweth me and I give and bequeath unto my Sister his wife and unto her three daughters Twenty Shillings apeece in money: Farther I give unto my said Sister and her three daughters and my Cousen John Chamberlin's wife all my wearing Apparrell and Household goods of all sorts to be equally divided among them Excepting three small pewter dishes marked S:S: which I give unto my Cousen Sarah Sheds Children now liveing.

Item. I give and bequeath all the rest and residue of my Estate whatsoever unto my Sister Chamberlins Eight Sons to be equally divided to and among them, onely my two Cousens John and Clement Chamberlin to have the value of Twenty Shillings apeece over and above an equal Share with their other Bretheren.

Item. upon farther consideration I do give and bequeath unto Mr Roberts Sanderson, Mr Henry Alline and Mr Joseph Bridgham Deacons of the first Church of Christ in Boston, whereof I am an unworthy member to and for the use of the said Church and poor thereof, Ten pounds in money which Sume I hereby reserve out of the residue of my Estate willed to be divided as abovesaid. And of this my Last will and Testament I do nominate ordain and appoint my Kinsman Isaac Addington to be the sole and whole Exector. In Testimony whereof I have hereunto Set my hand and affixed my Seale. Dated in Boston the Second day of February Anno Domi 1686/7 Annoqz R:Rs Jacobi Angliae &ca: Secundi: Secundo.

Further I give unto each of my Cousen John & Thomas Chamberlins and my Cousen Sarah Sheds Childn: now liveing, Ten Shillings for ye raysing of Which I have some small Remnants of Goods by me Which my Executor may dispose of

Signu
Sarah s Shelley [Seal]

Signed Sealed and what is contained in these two pages was published by Sarah Shelley to be her last will and Testament in the presence of us.

William Griggs
John Ballantine
Martha Collings

Coram Viro Honorabili Josepho Dudleo Armiger o : April 21, 1686. [1687]

This Instrument being Presented y Isa: Addington Executor. Wm Griggs and John Ballantine made oath that they were Present and Saw Sarah Shelly Signe Seale & Publish the same as her last will and testamt and that when she so did she was of sound mind and memory to their best understanding and yt they saw Martha Collin Signe with them as witness. jurat at Supra AtteStr.

Tho Dudley Cler.”

The foregoing will appears to have been drawn by Isaac Addington, the distinguished colonial magistrate of Suffolk County, whom the testatrix called her “kinsman” and her “cousin.” The paper was folded together so that the contents were on the two inside pages of the paper. The person who drew up the will also wrote on the outside page in its middle part: “Mrs Sarah Shelley her Last Will 1686.” On the same outside page of the original will at least two other persons wrote: “Sarah Shelley Will April 21, 1686” and “Sarah Shelleys Will 21 April 1687” and “Sarah Shelleys Last Will Proved 21 April 1687.”

The testatrix was admitted to the First Church of Boston, 14 Aug 1670, and continued to live in Boston until her death, which occurred between 2 and 22 Feb 1686/87. During these sixteen years Sarah Shelley frequently loaned money to various persons. She, or another person of the same name, received a gift of five shillings by the will of Mrs. Anne (Fisher) Leverett, widow of Elder Thomas Leverett of Boston, on 15 Oct 1656. Elder Thomas Leverett made a nuncupative will bequeathing all his property to his “wiffe” Ann Leverett with no mention of other kindred. Elder James Penn of Boston made his will, 29 Sep 1671, in which he bequeathed to his wife Katharine (who subsequently returned to England) to his kinsmen Mr. James Allen and Penn Townsend, to his sister Mary Miner and to Sarah “Sheally.” In these instances no kinship to either testator is expressed.

From the will of Sarah Shelley it appears that Rebecca, the wife of William Chamberlain, was her “sister.” In legal usage the word “sister” sometimes meant own sister, sometimes half-sister and not infrequently sister-in-law, but the phraseology of this will excludes the latter interpretation as the words are here used. Our present knowledge fails to enable us to determine whether the word “sister” was intended to denote own sister or half-sister. The testatrix called the eleven children of her sister Chamberlain her “cousins,” by which it is plain that she meant her nephews and nieces. The word “cousin” was, of course, an indefinite term used as we now use kinsman.

In the same document she called the children of Capt. Isaac and Anne (Leverett) Addington of Boston her “cousins.” Did the word “cousin” applied to the Addington children have the same or another meaning from what it had in its application to the Chamberlain children?

In 1672, Gov. John Leverett sent to Old Boston in Lincolnshire for a transcript of the baptisms of his father's family which was sent him that year. On 15 March 1678/79, while Governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, he made his will mentioning all of the children of his sister Anne (Leverett) Addington, but neither Sarah Shelley nor Rebecca Chamberlain. His transcripts show that he was baptized in St. Botolph's in Old Boston 7 July 1616, and that the family consisted of thirteen children baptized between 1612 and 1632. These transcripts show that John Leverett had a sister Sarah Leverett bapt. there 26 Sep 1622. She does not appear to be accounted for but the transcripts fail to show any sister named Rebecca Leverett. (*Massachusetts Historical Collections, Fourth Series*, Vol. 2, P. 225.)

The widow of Elder Thomas Leverett in her will bequeathed to her son “John Capt. Leverett”, to her “daughter Leverett” by which she meant daughter-in-law and to her “daughter Anne Addington”, 15 Oct 1656—from which it is inferred that only two of her children were then living. The parish register of St. Botolph shows that Mr. Thomas Leverett and Anne Fisher were married there Oct. 29, 1610, and since Sarah Shelley and Rebecca Chamberlain were one generation younger than Thomas Leverett and his wife, it is apparent that they could not be sisters to either. Therefore, the kinship of Capt. Isaac Addington's children to Sarah Shelley and Rebecca Chamberlain did not originate in the Leverett family and must have come from the Addington family.

It is evident that neither the author of the *Addington Genealogy*—Thaddeus William Harris, M.D., nor the authors of the Leverett Memorials indicated any relationship of either family with Sarah Shelley and Rebecca Chamberlain. The Memorial stated that Elder Thomas Leverett was reputed to be the father of sixteen children—the transcripts from St. Botolph's show only fourteen and of that number only three have been identified in Boston in New England. Is it likely that Elder Thomas Leverett left beyond the seas eight or ten living children from fourteen years to six months of age and came in 1633 bringing only three children? Only two of these are mentioned in Mrs. Anne Leverett's will in 1656. Either death removed these children early or else there was intentional neglect to recognize family ties in Mrs. Anne (Fisher) Leverett's will.

Mrs. Anne (Leverett) Addington was living in Boston in New England 29 Jan 1656/57, when she appeared in court and made oath to the inventory of her mother's estate. Her subsequent career appears to be a mystery as I have found no further record of her; neither has Savage nor Pope published a later record of her.

Rebecca Chamberlain was marriageable in 1648 and became the mother of thirteen children and was, therefore, probably born between the years of 1625 and 1634. She and her sister Sarah Shelley were of the same generation as Capt. Isaac Addington and his wife Anne (Leverett) Addington, and since they were not sisters of the latter, they were likely to have been either own sisters or half-sisters to Capt. Isaac Addington who appeared in Boston in New England as a “single man” before 6 June 1640, and lived here until his death in 1652.

But the will of Sarah Shelley described her as a “spinster” as did the inventory of her estate—both in the handwriting of Isaac Addington, Jr. Across the outside page of the will the scrivener wrote: “Mrs Sarah Shelley her Last Will 1686”. If “spinster” and “Mrs” as legally used by Isaac Addington were intended to imply that she was a maiden, then the family name of Rebecca Chamberlain was probably Rebecca Shelley, which is the point in question. Granting that to be true, then they were, I (GWC) believe, half-sisters to Capt. Isaac Addington of Boston, 1640-1652.

At the time this will was drawn the title “Mrs.” was used as a title of respect to any gentlewoman—that is to one who belonged to the gentry and not to the yeomanry. It was also a title applied to married women and widows to distinguish them from singlewomen. In New England previous to the administration of Sir Edmund Andros as Governor marriages were performed by civil magistrates excepting those solemnized by clergymen of the Church of England.

At a later period the ceremony was performed by both the civil magistrates and the Puritan clergy. In many localities the latter most carelessly wrote the title “Mrs.” indiscriminately before the name of every woman whose marriage they recorded. As to the legal usage of the word “spinster” in New England before the American Revolution, it appears to have been applied to both maidens and widows, both were free from the marriage contract, both were single, both were unmarried and both were therefore ‘spinsters’. Rarely this discrimination appears in legal documents in New England and in Old England. Sarah Osgood, a widow, and the mother of three children came in the *Confidence* in 1635 and was called a “spinster”; Martha Wilder, a widow, and the mother of Mary Wilder of Hingham was called a “spinster”; Rebecca Binney, the widow of Samuel Binney of Hull, in her deed to James Dawson of Boston was styled a “spinster”; “Susannah Satchwell of Haverhill spinster-widow and executrix of the will of Theophilus Satchwell of Haverhill deceased” deeded Stephen Kent, Sr. land in Haverhill (*Essex Antiquarian* Vol. 10, P. 11). Administration on the estate of Jane Bryan [sic] of Teddington, County of Middlesex, England, “*spinstex*”, deceased, was granted for the benefit of Elizabeth Bryant [sic] *legitimate daughter* of the deceased on 23 June 1674 (*Prerogative Court of Canterbury*, 1674).

The estate of Sarah Shelley amounting to £234:13:41½ was not an insignificant property for a singlewoman to possess in the town of Boston between 1670 and 1687. Her home was well furnished and it may be assumed that this property did not represent her earnings either in Bostontown or elsewhere but that the larger portion of it was an inheritance. Had she received this from her parents, her sister Rebecca Chamberlain would have been likely to have received a considerable portion of which there is not the slightest evidence.

For these reasons I (GWC) believe that Sarah Shelley was a “spinster-widow” whose estate had fallen to her by the death of a husband and she, being left alone in the world, decided to pass her last years in Boston near her nephews and nieces but I do not *know* that she was a widow. Whether she was an own sister or a half-sister to Capt. Isaac Addington or a more distant kinswoman my researches have failed to disclose. The time will doubtless come when this puzzle will be solved—probably from sources of information from beyond the seas.

Inventory of the Goods and chattles of Sarah Shelly late of Boston Spinster dec'd
apprized 22ond ffebruary 1686/87 by us the Subscribers (*Suffolk Probate*, Liber 9,
P. 350):

William¹ Chamberlain (No. 6177) – Continued

	£	s	d
Imprimis: One Flock Bed, 2 feather Boulsters 3 pillows and pillow beers, Two paire of blanketts and Coverlett	£05	00	00
It. one Bedsted and Cord	£00	10	00
One Trunk containeing Linnen	£00	05	00
It. Ten white aprons 24 handkerchers, 24 caps, 10 pr of cuffs, 6 underneckcloths and other Small weareing Linnen, 4 pr thred Gloves, 3 pr Leath ditto	£03	10	00
It. 14 Sheets and a Cotton blankett	£08	08	00
It. 48 Pillow beers 16s one Table cloth, 14 napkins 15s	£01	11	00
It. 5 Shifts 20s, ffive blew aprons, 2 course towells 6/	£01	06	00
It. 1 pillow beer course Towell and old blew apron	£00	02	00
It. Woollen weareing apparel of all Sorts muff and Gloves	£08	07	00
It. Silke hoods and Scarfes 30s, one Trunk 7s, one bible 3/	£02	00	00
It. One Trunk 3/, Rye meale 2/	£00	05	00
It. 6 flagg bottom Chaires, 1 wainscott Chaire & Stool	£00	15	00
It. One Cupboard and Counter	£00	07	00
It. 5 Small Low Formes 2s, 4 pr old Shooes & 1 pr pattens 5s	£00	07	00
It. 7 Small pewter dishes 14s, one Chamber pott, pint pott, small cupp, one Porringer 2 Spoones and grater 8s	£01	02	00
It. One new pewter quart pott or three pint	£00	03	00
It. 2 Sinall Brass Kettles, Skillett, Iron pott and hookes 8/	£00	08	00
It. Earthen ware and Glass bottles 4s, Straw hatt and baskett 1/	£00	05	00
It. ffire shovell, Tongs, Tramill and broken doggs	£00	05	00
It. Smoothing Box and heaters 2/6, Spinning wheel 3/	£00	05	06
It. One Reete and Iron Lamp	£00	01	00
It. Lumber 4s, one Cord and halfe of wood 15s	£00	19	00
It. one Small box for Linnen	£00	02	06
It. 2 Silver Spoones and one Silver bodkin	£00	17	00
It. Cash	£00	18	08
It. 1 yd Course Holland 2s, 1 yd ½ finer Holland att 5s	£00	09	06
It. 14 yds Scotch cloth att 18d per yd	£01	01	09
It. 7¼ yds Dowlaix att 2/2 per yd, 1 Ell course dowlax 1	£00	16	08½
It. 5 yds course Shirting Holland att 2 per yd	£00	10	00
It. 1 per ½ of ribbon 12/ Tape and ffilliting 2/	£00	14	00
It. Flax 10s, 2 yds blew Linnen att 9d per yd	£00	11	06
It. 2½ yds alamode att 4s	£00	10	00
It. Provisions 6/	£00	06	00
Apprizd by us Ephraim Savage, Arthur Mason	£42	19	01½

In Debts Oweing and Standing out at the time of the decease of sd Sarah Shelley Vizt:

	£	s	d
From Nathl Johnson of Roxbury since Rec'd	£04	03	06
From Obadiah Sale by Obligacon For wch also there is a mortgage	£62	19	00
From Thomas Skinner, Phillip Squire &c. by obligacon since Rc'd	£52	16	09
From Samuel Boughton by Bill besides Interest	£05	00	00
Cash recd since of the late wife of Hugh Baboll	£01	04	00
From Hugh Baboll due by bond and mortgage	£16	04	00
From Captn Townsend by bill £40 with Interest att 6 5s per Ct from 9 June ult to the time of her death neer 8 months	£41	13	00
Due upon a Pledge £6: 6: 0 whereof 25s is since Rec'd	£06	00	00
She affirmed from George Woodward of Watertowne for money Lent	£01	00	00
She affirmed from John Shed of Bilerica for ditto	£00	08	00
Per Isa: Addington Exector: Whereof I Crave allowance for Funerall Charges and other disbursments pd	£17	04	09
For Probate of will and Inventory	£00	07	00

Mr. Isa Addington Execr made oath that this accot Containes a just and true Inventory of the Estate of Sarah Shelly of what hath come to his knowledge and that when more appeares he will Cause it to be added.

Jurat Coram J. Dudley Esqr April 21: 1687
Attestr Tho: Dudley Clerk

Compiler's Notes

The available evidence at hand seems to connect Sarah Shelley with Rebecca Chamberlain, as well as with Isaac Addington Jr. In my opinion, the foregoing information relating to these three people is insufficient to draw any definite conclusions of the exact relationship that existed between them. While there seems to be no question that these three people are connected in some fashion, the question is how?

Many people who have agonized over this issue seem to think that Sarah Shelley was a brother of Isaac Addington Sr. Yes, perhaps Sarah Shelley was an Addington, but this doesn't prove that Rebecca Chamberlain was an Addington. The inconsistent wording used by Sarah Shelley in her will adds to the confusion. She calls Rebecca Chamberlain a sister, William Chamberlain her brother, and their children "cousins." She calls Isaac Addington Jr. a "kinsman" and not her nephew, and so forth. Thus, it is fruitless to draw any definite conclusions from this terminology.

It should be obvious by now that Sarah Shelley is the focal point of the matter. Thus, the first issue relating to Sarah Shelley is to try and decide whether or not, she was a maiden lady (spinster) or a widow. Here again, the ambiguous wording of the ancient documents and usage of that era does not answer this question. As previously stated, the term "spinster" does not always indicate a maiden lady. Often it refers to a single woman who had been previously married, but was later widowed. Moreover, the records call Sarah Shelley both spinster and a widow, and so again, there is no unequivocal proof.

The fact is that Sarah Shelley left a fairly good estate, and so the next question to be posed is: "How did she acquire her means?" The only logical explanation is through an inheritance. If she was a sister of Rebecca, and inherited her estate from a parent it would surely seem that Rebecca would also have inherited, and this was not the case. Of course, this scenario presumes that she and Rebecca were blood sisters from the same parents. Sarah and Rebecca could have been sisters, half-sisters, step-sisters, sisters-in-law, or not related at all. If they were only half-sisters or step-sisters, Sarah's estate could have devolved from other than their common parent.

In my opinion, the most likely hypothesis is that Sarah Shelley was a widow with no surviving children, and she inherited her estate from a deceased husband. The evidence at hand certainly suggests a relationship between Sarah Shelley and Isaac Addington, and between Sarah Shelley and Rebecca Chamberlain. However, I know of no evidence that links Rebecca Chamberlain and Isaac Addington. The Addingtons were an affluent family, and it is strange and very hard to believe that if Rebecca Chamberlain was a sister of Isaac Addington Sr., that neither she nor any of her children were ever mentioned in any of the Addington documents.

The most rational explanation suggests that Isaac Addington Jr. and Rebecca Chamberlain were not related by blood, but that he was related by blood to Sarah Shelley, who in turn was related by blood to Rebecca Chamberlain. The whole matter could be settled if the exact relationship between Sarah Shelley and Rebecca Chamberlain could be resolved. As already pointed out, they could be related in any one of a number of different ways.

A possible scenario to fit the above conditions suggests that Sarah and Rebecca had the same mother, but not the same father; i.e., the father of Isaac Addington Sr. and Sarah Shelley married a woman who had been previously married and that Rebecca was a child by her mother's first marriage and Sarah a daughter by her father—Addington. However, they may have been step-sisters, and not been related by blood at all. Another possibility is that Rebecca could have been a relative of Sarah's deceased husband (assuming she had one) making her a sister-in-law.

The only way to resolve this matter is for someone to really research Sarah Shelley, to see if a marriage record can be found, the death of her supposed husband, and so forth. In conclusion, it is simply impossible with the evidence at hand to be sure of Rebecca Chamberlain's maiden name.

PREPARATION OF THIS RECORD

This record was prepared by the late David C. Chamberlin Sr., using data obtained from various sources as listed. Comments and additional information are welcome and should be sent to the World Chamberlain Genealogical Society. < www.chamberlain-society.org >

Email: CorrSec@chamberlain-society.org

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[DISK ID LN6177]