

Francis Cooke Society Newsletter

April 2008

Vol. 6, No. 2

About the Francis Cooke Society (FCS)

The FCS was formed in 2003 when it came to the attention of several founding members that there was no existing family society named in Pilgrim Francis Cooke's memory. In addition to honoring Francis Cooke's contributions to Plymouth Colony, FCS serves as a forum for members to exchange information and assists descendants of Francis Cooke in acquiring acceptable proofs of eligibility for membership in the General Society of Mayflower Descendants.

President's Corner

Dear fellow members: We have moved past the holidays, hopefully all the snow has left where you live. It's nice to see the leaves on the trees and the flowers coming out. I just had some minor surgery done, and thank you to all who prayed for me. I now can enjoy life again pain free. I am also dieting, to try to get off medications. The Francis Cooke Society now has 302 members. Please remember that some of our officers might need help. Or if you can help in some other venue, do not hesitate to tell us. I hope you all have a pleasant Spring!

Sincerely,
Scott

"Cooke" Ancestor Gravestones

By Chris Chirokas

I recently visited some Plymouth area cemeteries to visit my ancestors' gravestones. I was so saddened to see the vast number of slate stones that are either totally ruined or illegible at the old burial ground on Main Street in Plympton. I think I broke a personal record for uttering the phrase "what a shame!" The condition of the cemetery highlighted how important the work is of people who had the foresight to transcribe old headstones, such as the "Old Cemeteries of Southeastern Massachusetts," transcribed in the late 1880s by Charles Thatcher. This incredible work is available on-line at the Middleborough Library's site: <http://www.midlib.org/dlib/cemeteries/oldcemeteries.pdf>.

My afternoon of cemetery hopping included seeing, for the first time, the stone I ordered for my great-great-grandfather, Seth Washburn (1828-1921), a Cooke descendant, who died and was buried in Plymouth. I was lucky enough to find his burial location and since he didn't have a surviving headstone, I looked into getting one. Because Seth was a Civil War veteran, I was able to order one through the government at no charge and Plymouth's cemetery department installed it free of charge. Seth's wife Mary Briggs Bumpus (circa 1839-1916) and father Ephraim Washburn (1794-1870) are said to be buried in the same small cemetery, also without surviving stones.

I've been unable to find the burial location of Seth's grandfather, also named Seth Washburn (1738-1826), whose first two wives were laid to rest at the Old Burial Ground in Kingston. I don't believe Seth is buried there as he was living in Plymouth at the time of his death.

This Seth's third wife was Deborah (Wright) Churchill, whose parents, Joseph Wright (1721-1804) and Sarah Brewster (1727-1812), are buried at South Pond Cemetery in Plymouth, where their stones survive. There is an on-line inventory (no photos) of South Pond Cemetery at http://www.geocities.com/gordonmacmann/South_Pond_Cemetery.html.

Joseph Wright's parents, Isaac Wright (1686-1766) and Mary (Cole) Wright (circa 1697-1759), are buried at the above-mentioned burial ground in Plympton. I knew this because of the excellent work of Paul Bumpus who shares many gravestone photos on his website. Isaac and Mary's stones are at: <http://www.geocities.com/sdbumpus/WrightFamily.html>. Isaac's stone could not be read in its current state, but I could make out most of Mary's inscription.

Isaac's father, Adam Wright (circa 1644-1724) is also buried at Plympton, although his stone is a newer replacement.

As expected, the gravestones of Adam's parents (Richard Wright and Hester Cooke) and his grandparents (Francis Cooke and Hester Mahieu) have not survived, but all died in Plymouth.

Mayflower General Congress

This year the 38th annual General Congress of the General Society of Mayflower descendants will take place in Plymouth, MA, on September 6-10. The March issue of "Mayflower Quarterly" has more detailed information on the Congress, including a registration form. If you don't receive MQ, take a look online at www.mayflowercongress.com.

If any members of the Francis Cooke Society plan on attending, maybe we could organize a meeting or at least a social gathering. Please email Chris at Chirokas@comcast.net if you are attending and we will keep a list going for communication.

Website Spotlight

By Chris Chirokas

The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) has increased the amount of information available on-line. Visit the genealogy section at: www.archives.gov/genealogy.

ProGenealogists, a family history research group, has compiled a list of the top 50 genealogy websites for 2008 at www.progenealogist.com/top50genealogy2008.htm.

Dale Cook, likely familiar to many for his readiness to help fellow researchers on the Rootsweb Mayflower, Barnstable and Plymouth, among other, email lists, has started a Plymouth Colony Forum, that uses messages boards grouped by theme for those doing research in what is now Plymouth, Barnstable and Bristol counties. Anyone can "lurk" to

read posts, but to post one needs to register. Check it out at:
<http://plymouthcolony.net/forums>.

Scott McKay found this website interesting: <http://www.bloodlinesofsaalem.org/>. Includes history of the Salem Witch Trials, including a timeline, famous descendants of the accused, resources, and links.

Plymouth Rock Portico Getting Facelift

By Chris Chirokas

I recently took a quick side trip to Plymouth after my youngest child's soccer game in the area, and she asked if we could go see Plymouth Rock. Unfortunately our timing was off, as the famous rock is covered as the portico receives some needed work. I'm aware of the controversy surrounding the rock's story, but it's still a fun thing for kids to see. The recent March issue of Mayflower Quarterly has a blurb on the work being done, scheduled to be completed in May.

NEHGS On-Line Seminars

For members of the New England Historic and Genealogical Society, one of the many benefits of membership is the on-line seminars available at www.newenglandancestors.org. I have been gradually going listening to those of personal interest, taking notes as I go, and find many of them quite helpful. Subjects range from a three-part series on getting started in genealogy to applying to lineage societies. I found David Lambert's seminar on transcribing gravestone inscriptions very useful and put his tips to good use.

Membership Information

If you are interested in joining the Society (there is currently no fee charged) or you are a member who has not filled out the membership form, please contact Dianna Saario at dsaario@comcast.net.

New Members

Welcome to our newest members:

- Laurie Sutherland of Sugar Grove, Illinois, who descends through Jacob 2 Cooke and Damaris Hopkins.
- John White of Kennebunk, Maine, whose line comes through Mary 2 Cooke and John Tomson.
- Myra Kromer, of Dallas, Texas, a descendant of Jane 2 Cooke and Experience Mitchell.

The 6th and 7th generation project

One of our current projects is publishing a book with the 6th and 7th generations of Francis Cooke descendants, continuing where the GSMD Silver Book left off.

If anyone has copies of wills or probate for their family from the 6th and 7th generation Cooke descendants, please consider sending copies to Dianna for inclusion in the book.

Dianna Saario is managing this project and has put an amazing amount of time into this effort. She works on verifying each line submitted, which sometimes entails quite a bit of work. Dianna and Valeria Reckert also help many Cooke descendants with their research. Thanks Dianna and Val for all the time you give to the Society and its members!

Contact Information

Members of the FCS are in communication through an e-mail group at **Francis Cooke Society@yahogroups.com**. Please go to our website for instructions on how to subscribe. This is our primary means of communication, so it is important to subscribe!

The FCS Website: <http://www.FrancisCookeSociety.org>

President: J. Scott McKay, scottsfamilytree@aol.com

Membership Chair and head of the 6th and 7th Generations Project: Dianna Saario, dsaario@comcast.net

Secretary and Genealogy Coordinator: Valeria Reckert, LadyGenes@comcast.net

Cooke Historian: Richard Worthington, rlworthi@wisc.edu

Publicity Coordinator and Newsletter Editor: Christine Chirokas, chirokas@comcast.net

Back issues of the FCS Newsletter are available for viewing at www.franciscookesociety.org.