

Francis Cooke Society Newsletter
January 2005
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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 group 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.

Contact Information

Members of the FCS are in communication through an e-mail group at:
Francis_Cooke_Society@yahoo.com.

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

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

Membership Chair: Judy Hughes, judyh@dnnet.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

President's Corner

I'm settling into my new place in Florida quite well now and am enjoying a more active lifestyle without all that snow and have taken up kayaking.

If anyone's New Year's resolution was to get more involved in family history, please consider taking on a bigger role in the Francis Cooke Society. We are always looking for new ideas! If there is anything particular that interests you, please let me know. Some areas we most need help in are: planning our first official meeting during the September Triennial Meeting of the General Society of Mayflower Descendants; maintaining a database of famous Cooke descendants; and working on researching the sixth generation of Cooke descendants.

Thank you to everyone who has donated money to help fund the monthly fee for our website. It is greatly appreciated!

Happy New Year, J. Scott McKay

Committee Updates

Charter and Bylaws: A committee is reviewing draft bylaws. There's nothing significant to report at this time. We will keep members informed on the status of this endeavor and resulting activities, such as election of officers.

Membership: If you are interested in becoming a member of FCS (no fee) or are a member who has not completed a membership form, please contact Judy Hughes at judyh@dnet.net or 295 Young Cove Road, Franklin, NC 28734 and she will send you a brief membership form.

Publicity: If you have ideas on how to spread the news about FCS, please contact Chris Chirokas at chirokas@comcast.net.

You are a Walloon!

By Richard Worthington

If you are descended from Francis Cooke, you are also descended from his wife, Hester Mahieu. She is usually described as a Walloon. We are also told that a Walloon is a French-speaking Protestant from Belgium.

But of course, there's more to it than that.

Political Wallonia:

Wallonia is a major province in what is today Belgium. See <http://www.artisanpress.u-net.com/Wallonia/wallonia.html> for a nice map. During the second half of the 16th century (the English Elizabethan Period), the Netherlands and Belgium (collectively called "the Low Countries") were controlled by Spain. After a bitter struggle for independence, a ten-year truce agreement was signed.

One of the reasons the Pilgrims may have wanted to leave Holland (part of the Low Countries) was that the truce was about to end. Their adopted hometown of Leiden, Holland had been the scene of a bloody siege between October 31, 1573 and October 3, 1574, when William of Orange flooded the surrounding countryside to prevent the Spanish from taking the town.

Linguistics:

The Walloon language is a dialect of French, but modern French is spoken in Wallonia today. In northern Belgium, the language was Flemish, and north of there Dutch was (and is) spoken.

Economics and Walloons:

Both Wallonia and northern France were centers of craft production, including textile manufacture. This is important to us because many Walloon and French textile workers migrated to Leiden, a major textile center. The immigrant workers brought new weaving techniques to Leiden, and helped revitalize the industry. Leiden wool cloth was usually made using English wool. Norwich, England was a major export center for wool. Does this ring a bell? The Cookes lived in Leiden and Norwich, and Francis Cooke was a woolcomber.

Protestantism and Walloons:

See <http://www.ccel.org/s/schaff/encyc/encyc02/htm/iv.v.cccix.htm>. The reformation in Wallonia, and the Low Countries as a whole, was influenced initially by the teachings of Luther, and by the Anabaptists. The teachings of Calvin, however, soon became the dominant theology among Protestants in the Low Countries and France. The result was the formation of two churches: the Dutch Reformed Church and the French Reformed Church (the Huguenots).

In Wallonia, the major Protestant theologian was Guy de Brs (Guido de Bray). Conforming essentially to the French Reformed Church, he helped spread Protestantism through Wallonia. Before he was executed for heresy by the Spanish, he drafted the Belgic Confession (<http://www.frcna.org/Creeds/Belgic/>), which is regarded as one of the major documents of the Reformation.

I hope this all makes sense--if it does, you will see that history explains how Hester Mahieu, a Walloon Protestant married an Englishman, and lived in Leiden and Norwich.

Organizing Our Research

Keeping our research organized, well documented, and safe can be a daunting task. Here's what is working for member Bonnie Poole:

I used Family Tree Maker on my old PC and loved it, but have Reunion for my new MAC. I love the Mac but would rather still have Family Tree Maker, but apparently they stopped making it for the MAC. I organized my smaller old photos, old letters and documents in clear archival photo sleeves and put them in notebooks by date. I want to find archival safe protective boxes to keep the rest of my larger photos and albums safe.

Recommended Websites

--Did you know that descendants of Francis Cooke and Hester Mahieu may be eligible for membership in the National Huguenot Society? Lydia Toso recommends checking out the Society's website at: <http://www.huguenot.netnation.com/general>. In addition to providing documented proof of lineal descent from Hester, there are other requirements such as being of the Protestant faith. The NHS website also has links to other organizations.

--Richard Worthington found that the Wisconsin Historical Museum website has a short biography and images of Florantha Thompson Sproat, daughter of the painter Cephas Thompson, a Cooke descendant. Included is the image of a portrait of Florantha that Cephas painted of her. Visit www.wisconsinhistory.org/museum/exhibits/framed/sproat.asp

Recommended Books

Member Bonnie Poole recommends the following books for taking care of treasured family belongings:

--“Crafting Your Own Heritage Album” by Bev Kirshner Braun, \$24.99. For genealogists, scrapbookers and family historians. A great book on how to take your old family photos and genealogy and create new albums.

--“Preserving Your Family Photographs” by Maureen A. Taylor, \$19.99. Information on how to organize, present and restore precious family images. This is an excellent book that offers more specific information about old photographs and documentation and how to care for them. It covers digital photography, scanning, and all that too.

--“Caring for Your Family Treasures” by Heritage Preservation. Text by Jane S. Long and Richard W. Long, General Editor Inge-Lise Eckmann. A concise guide to caring for your cherished belongings. This book is not specific to genealogy research. However, one usually has other family treasures and this book gives a good overview on how to care for them. It has a good section on caring for old paper items, documents, photos, etc.

I like all of these books very much. I find them quite helpful and highly recommend them to others who are caring for their family's treasured past. The prices mentioned are retail prices, but you might find a better price at Amazon.com or even ebay.

Member Profile—Scott Bill Hirst

By Chris Chirokas

Cooke Society member Scott Bill Hirst was featured in the December 21st issue of The Providence Journal. Scott was born at the local hospital in Westerly, but has always lived in the town of Hopkinton, Rhode Island, which was part of Westerly before 1757. Scott believes, but is not completely certain, that he is a direct descendant of the town's first settler, Daniel Lewis. Journalist Dave McCarthy refers to Scott as “one of South County's most interesting characters.”

A passion for politics is something that runs in Scott's family. Scott served for eight years as a Republican member of the Hopkinton Town Council and has also given his time to the Finance Board and the Conservation Commission. His grandfather was a Republican member of the Connecticut House of Representatives. Another ancestor, James Alexander Bill (first cousin of Scott's great-great grandfather James Leonard Bill) of Lyme, CT, was a pro-South member of the Connecticut legislature at the time when the state was very much anti-slavery. He named his sons Kansas Nebraska Bill, Lecompton Constitution Bill and Jefferson Davis Bill! Scott has attended a number of political conventions and conferences, and had his photo taken with Tim Russert while serving as an alternate delegate at the 1992 Republican National Convention.

Scott is also passionate about history and genealogy. He is past president of the Hopkinton Historical Association, and is expecting to be named president again this month. He belongs to many genealogy and family societies. Scott descends from Francis and Hester (Mahieu) Cooke's son John (who married Sarah Warren). He also descends from Mayflower passengers John Alden, William White and Richard Warren. Last year he was accepted into the Alden Kindred Society, which requires potential members to

submit their lineage for approval. One of Scott's family keepsakes is an 1891 check signed by his ancestors, drawn on the National Phenix Bank of Westerly, RI.

Scott is also a Freemason, an Odd Fellow, a member of the Elks, head of the New London County (CT) Grange, and Junior Warden of Franklin Lodge No. 20, F & AM in Westerly. Scott's e-mail address is: scottbillhirst@yahoo.com.

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