

# SIMSBURY

## Genealogical and Historical Research Library

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### The Mitchelsons of Windsor and Simsbury

#### William and Eliphalet, Tailor and Tavern Keepers

Windsor town records suggest that William Mitchelson arrived in Connecticut early in the eighteenth century.<sup>1</sup> The first mention of William is in Windsor's vital records, where his marriage to Mary Howard on April 26, 1713 is recorded.<sup>2</sup> Land records show that three years later he purchased a house on a two-acre lot in Windsor from James Eno.<sup>3</sup> In 1720 he began acquiring land in Simsbury's Scotland area, which is now part of northern Bloomfield.<sup>4</sup> After 1722 he is listed as a resident of Simsbury, where he died in 1734. Mary, who would outlive William by forty years, would raise their only son, Eliphalet, and daughters Mary, Margaret and Rizpa. Eliphalet would raise a large family to carry on the Mitchelson name in Simsbury and beyond.

Much of the life and work of William Mitchelson is to be found in the account book that he began on April 17, 1714, which is preserved in the Connecticut Historical Society.<sup>5</sup> The book reveals that he had a tailoring business while he lived in Windsor and that he eased out of that business and began selling spirits and light refreshments in the early 1720s, about the time he moved to the Scotland section of Simsbury. In addition to business accounts, this book has lists of names, indexed alphabetically and followed by page numbers that correspond to a missing account book (see page five for more details).

As was the practice at the time, most transactions were by barter, with periodic settlement of accounts by "reconing" (reckoning). William's accounting techniques leave much room for improvement. He often intermixes entries marked "to," "for," and "by" on the same page, making it difficult to separate debit from credit. In most cases, however, there is a clear monetary value assigned to the individual items. Also, at "reconing," when amounts were summed up, the math was generally accurate.

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#### About the Author

Robert B. McComb was born in Honolulu, Hawaii, but spent most of his youth in Washington, D.C. After serving for two years in the armed services, he entered the University of Maryland in 1946, where he received B.S. and Ph.D. degrees in Biochemistry in 1951 and 1955 respectively. He then joined the Biochemical Research Foundation in Newark, Delaware, where he worked as a research biochemist. In 1961 he accepted a position at Hartford Hospital where he worked as a research biochemist and later as Associate Director of the Clinical Chemistry Laboratory until his retirement in 1991.

His interest in the history of early Simsbury stems, first of all, from membership in Old St. Andrew's Church, Bloomfield, the oldest Episcopal church in Hartford County and, secondly, from his purchase of the pre-Revolutionary War home of the Mitchelson family, where he and his wife, Alice, have lived for the past thirty-four years. Dr. McComb is currently the historian at St. Andrew's Church and has recently written a book on the church's history.

An interesting entry on the first page of the book is an inventory of the estate of William's wife's deceased brother, Benjamin Howard, who had died on December 11, 1711, just a few months after returning from a military expedition to Canada. This entry closely matches the legal inventory presented to the county court on January 7, 1711/12 in which Mary Mitchelson, *nee* Howard, was named as executrix of her brother's estate.<sup>6</sup>

William's accounts for his work as a tailor cover the years 1714 to 1720 and include making coats, vests, breeches, waistbands, belts, stays, and gowns. Coats commanded the highest prices, in most cases ranging from eight to fourteen shillings. However, Captain Moses Diamond of Windsor was charged one pound, nine shillings and no pence (£1:9:0) for his coat, whereas a child's coat went for as little as five shillings.

The many breeches and vests William made were priced between four and seven shillings each. In the few instances where the material used in manufacture was noted, breeches were of leather and vests of either leather or linen. He also fabricated lesser numbers of whalebone stays (seven to twelve shillings), gowns (three to four shillings), stockings (two shillings), waistbands (one shilling) and belts (five shillings). In some instances William would only cut out the material and leave further work to the customer. For these minimal services he charged four to eight pence. He also repaired and mended various articles of clothing at reduced fees.

These items of clothing and the prices charged by William Mitchelson can be compared with those of a Farmington tailor, Nehemiah Street, who practiced his trade a half-century after Mitchelson.<sup>7</sup> The best comparison is for breeches, which Street made in large numbers. He charged between five and eight shillings for each, just a little higher than those by Mitchelson. In some cases a sale of breeches was accompanied by the sale of a jacket or coat. Jackets seem to have replaced the vests that Mitchelson produced in large numbers fifty years earlier. The range of prices for jackets was similar to that for breeches, whereas coats ranged in price from five to sixteen shillings.

William sold spirits from his home, where they were consumed in most cases. These entries having to do with his tavern business were made in the years 1720 to 1724.<sup>8</sup> Customers had familiar Windsor and Simsbury names and they drank cider and rum, with cider by far the most popular beverage. Cider was most often dispensed by the pot, which was uniformly priced at three pence. Rum was dispensed by the pint or half pint and priced at one shilling per pint. According to historian Bruce C. Daniels, in eighteenth-century Connecticut "a tavern usually occurred on intertown highways at three- or four-mile intervals. Probably no Connecticut man was more than three miles from one, and most were far closer."<sup>9</sup>

Again we have a Farmington model for comparison prices and tastes. Timothy Root, a hat maker, also kept records of the beverages sold from his home, from 1741 to 1744.<sup>10</sup> Unlike Mitchelson's sales, rum markedly outsold cider and prices were higher. A pot of Timothy's cider cost from four to six pence and rum sold from two shillings to two shillings, four pence per pint.

The credit side of Mitchelson's account book shows that most payments were made with materials or services. Unprocessed grains, meat, fish, butter, and sugar were all used for repayment. The grains were valued at around five shillings per bushel, meat and fish at three pence a pound, and butter and sugar at eight and nine pence a pound respectively. Other items accepted as payment were wool and flax by the pound, as well as linen and silk by the yard. Three grades of

iron were used in payment; Canaan iron, being of the highest grade, was valued at two shillings, eight pence per pound. When service was offered in payment, it quite often involved labor to support William's tailoring business, such as, spinning, carding, dying or washing. Only rarely was cash used in payment.

The account book kept from 1733 to 1765 by blacksmith Samuel Hayden in neighboring Windsor gives us a chance to compare prices of goods bartered for services.<sup>11</sup> Wheat was priced at seven shillings per bushel in both men's books, but oats were a little higher at nine shillings in Hayden's. Tobacco, at three pence a pound, averaged two pence lower than that recorded in Mitchelson's book. As in Mitchelson's accounts, iron was priced according to the quality of the product, with old iron and refined iron valued at ten pence per pound and Canaan iron valued at two shillings per pound. These iron values are not much different from those recorded in Mitchelson's book twenty years earlier.

William's last entry into his account book was September 5, 1724. The next entry date was 1737, two years after William's death. Additional accounts were dated 1740 and 1741. It cannot be determined who wrote these accounts, but probably not Eliphalet, who was only ten years old by the latter date. However, the date of the next entry was 1753, when Eliphalet was twenty-three, and it includes his full name. The entry is a copy of a writ Eliphalet filed against Titus Brown of Windsor, whom Eliphalet claimed owed him £30. The last two entries were made in 1776 and 1779, during the American Revolution. In all, Eliphalet's entries amount to no more than two pages and deal with sales of products and services entirely different from those of his father.

Eliphalet's business activities are more clearly revealed in a daybook he kept in the years 1762 and 1763.<sup>12</sup> Like his father, he sold alcoholic beverages and vittles from his home in the Scotland section of Simsbury. During this period and up to the year 1770, Eliphalet was able to secure the tavern license required for selling liquor from his home. Eliphalet's daybook shows that he dispensed mainly rum and cider. Most of his sales were small amounts, a dram or gill, and these were priced at four pence per serving, one pence more than charged by his father. Most of Eliphalet's customers were males. One notable exception was the unmarried sister of William Gibbs, the first rector of St. Andrew's Anglican Church. On December 6, 1762 Elizabeth Gibbs purchased a pint of rum for one shilling.

After 1770 Eliphalet's name was no longer submitted to the county court for licensure as a tavern keeper. This may reflect his membership in the Church of England at a time when increasing friction was developing between the colonies and the mother country. Roger Viets, Eliphalet's friend and the rector of nearby St. Andrew's Anglican Church, in his letter to the sponsors of his church back in England, noted the loss of public office suffered by members of the Church of England.<sup>13</sup>

By Robert B. McComb

*The author would like to thank the people who assisted him during his research for this article. They include especially the staffs of the Connecticut Historical Society and the Windsor Historical Society, Ann Arcari of the Farmington Public Library, and Dawn Bobryk of the Simsbury Historical Society, who contributed information about the watermark mentioned in the article on page five.*

*Dr. McComb has begun research on an eighteenth-century account book kept by another tavern keeper in the Scotland area of Simsbury (now northern Bloomfield), Aaron Pinney. This report and more about the Mitchelsons will appear in future SGHRI newsletters.*

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> At this time there is no evidence as to the genealogy of William Mitchelson prior to his arrival in Windsor, Connecticut. Although two Mitchelson brothers, Edward and William, emigrated to Cambridge, Massachusetts, as early as 1636, there are no records indicating that any one of the three male offspring of these two brothers ever married or had children. So, it is not likely that these Massachusetts Mitchelsons are the progenitors of the Mitchelsons in this study. A number of Mitchelson families lived in the English-Scottish border area and it is possible that the William Mitchelson who settled in Windsor came there directly from Great Britain. His date of birth is unknown.

<sup>2</sup> Lorraine Cook White, ed. and comp., *The Barbour Collection of Connecticut Town Vital Records: Windsor 1637-1850*, (Baltimore, Maryland: Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc, 2002), 55:257. (Volume 2, page 176 in the original Windsor records.)

<sup>3</sup> Windsor Land Records, Windsor Town Hall, 4:88, James Eno to William Mitchelson, March 6, 1715/16.

<sup>4</sup> Simsbury Land Records (SLR), Simsbury Town Hall, 4:198, Samuel Allyn of Windsor to William Mitchelson of Windsor, May 14, 1720. This records the transfer of two pieces of property in the Scotland section of Simsbury, one of which was a home lot. Three more land transactions are recorded:

SLR, 4:243, William Mitchelson of Simsbury to William Mitchel of Windsor, 15 February 1722/23.

SLR, 6:176, Distribution of Common Lands. On June 24, 1723 twenty-four acres were laid out to William Mitchelson.

SLR, 4:67 (reversed), Distribution of Common Lands. On June 24, 1724 six acres were laid out to William Mitchelson.

<sup>5</sup> Account Book of William Mitchelson and his son Eliphalet, 1717-1762, MSS#55340, System #31586885, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut. During the current research the earliest date in this book has been found to be 1714. See the manuscript page forty-five..

<sup>6</sup> Hartford District Probate Records (microfilm), Connecticut State Library, Inventory of the Estate of Benjamin Howard of Windsor, 7 January 1711/12.

<sup>7</sup> Account Book of Nehemiah Street, tailor, 1767-1787, History Room, Farmington Public Library, Farmington, Connecticut.

<sup>8</sup> This type of service required a license from the County Court. Each year town officials recommended people for licensing. The Connecticut General Assembly devised and revised tavern laws on numerous occasions beginning in 1674.

<sup>9</sup> Bruce C. Daniels, *The Connecticut Town: Growth and Development, 1635-1790*, (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1979), 157-58.

<sup>10</sup> Account Book if Timothy Root, hat maker, 1738-1789, History Room, Farmington Public Library, Farmington, Connecticut.

<sup>11</sup> Account Book of Samuel Hayden, blacksmith, 1733-1765, Windsor Historical Society, Windsor, Connecticut.

<sup>12</sup> Connecticut Historical Society. Account Books, Anonymous, Reel IV, (microfilm). The daybook kept by Eliphalet Mitchelson was identified as his during the course of this research. The original daybook is no longer available. This roll of microfilm also contains a copy of the Mitchelson Account Book.

<sup>13</sup> Letter from Roger Viets to the Society for Propagation of the Gospel, 1766. Ecclesiastical Affairs Series #448, Connecticut State Library, Hartford. As early as 1759 Eliphalet Mitchelson was a member of the Church of England, as indicated by a Simsbury tax record for that year.

## The Mitchelson Account Book

The small book containing the Mitchelson business records differs significantly from standard account books of the same period. The book began its life as the index to another, larger account book, which apparently was lost. It was common practice back then to have a small, separate index book, called an alphabet, tucked handily inside, but not bound into, an account book. The two surviving alphabets for Simsbury blacksmith Isaac Ensign's account books are examples of separate indexes.

In 1714 the tailor William Mitchelson began setting down accounts in his alphabet. The alphabet/account book measures 3½ x 11½ inches. The cover is made of stiff paper and has an interesting design of intertwined leaves and flowers, faded now but with a trace of blue on the flowers. The book has forty-eight pages made by folding in half twelve sheets of paper. Entries also have been made on the inner sides of both the front and back covers, bringing the effective number of pages to fifty. On several of the pages a watermark is clearly visible and it has been identified as *London Arms*.<sup>1</sup>

Along the right edge of the book the pages have been clipped to form descending tabs that display the letters of the alphabet, except I and U which are omitted. The letters are drawn with colored ink, alternately red and black. Most pages have lists of several names that begin with the tab's letter and each name is followed by one or more numbers referring to pages, mostly pages one to thirty-two, in the missing account book. However, in two instances pages within the alphabet/account book are cited "Samuel Beamon, to ye backside of ye W" and "[Edmond] Edmonds Records att ye lettr P in [ ] Book."

Most of the notations in the book are entries of business transactions typically found in an account book. The book was reversed (flipped so that the back cover became the front). This was a common practice used with the handwritten record books of the time. The first two volumes of the Simsbury Town Records have pages that were similarly reversed. In the Mitchelson book, though, sometimes accounts were written on a page with the book in its original orientation as well as reversed, which makes it necessary to rotate the book to read entries that appear to be upside down. All these things make reading and interpreting the text a bit like working out a puzzle.

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<sup>1</sup> ARMS.069.1. *The Thomas L. Gravell Archive*. <http://www.gravell.org>. 8/29/02

### New Simsbury Church History for Sale at SGHRL

"...To Sette Ourselves in Gospel Order...": *A History of First Church of Christ at Massaco, Simsbury, Connecticut* by Lyman G. Potter has recently been published by the church. Reverend Potter was senior minister of the church for twenty-three years.

The 166-page, over sized, soft bound book, which has many illustrations, costs \$22.50.



Also, the Men's Fellowship of the Simsbury United Methodist Church has just published *A Fruit of the Spirit: The Story of the Simsbury United Church of Christ*. It can be purchased at the church for \$8.00.



## Some Recent Acquisitions

### Books

- 1841 Police Return, showing the Name, Age, Occupation, Sex, Country, Residence, Weekly Earnings, Nature of the Dwellings, and Other Particulars, of One Thousand & Thirty-Eight Destitute Persons within the City of Glasgow* by H. Miller, City Marshall and Superintendent of Police (donated by Margaret Lindauer)
- The Alumni Association of the University of Connecticut: Alumni Directory, 1990* (donated by Robert R. Gallucci)
- Ancestors and Family of William Arthur Welles* by Martin L. Welles (donated by the author)
- The Barbour Collection of Connecticut Town Vital Records: Weston 1787-1850, Westport 1835-1850, Willington 1727-1851, Wethersfield 1634-1868, Wilton 1802-1850, Winchester 1771-1858, Wolcott 1796-1854, Woodbridge 1784-1832, Woodbury 1674-1850, Woodstock 1848-1866, Windham 1692-1850, Windsor 1637-1850* (donated by the Abigail Phelps Chapter, DAR)
- The Beason Family* by Arline Beason-Peckham, B.A., and Charles Wesley Peckham Sr., Ed.D. (donated by Charles Wesley Peckham Sr.)
- A Beginner's Guide to British Reference Works* by Anne Wuehler (donated by Mary and Walter Mitchell in memory of Mary-Jane Guerry)
- Deaths in Boston, 1700 to 1799, A-L* by Robert J. Dunkle and Ann S. Lainhart (donated by Mary and Walter Mitchell in memory of Mary-Jane Guerry)
- A Fruit of the Sprit: The Story of Simsbury United Methodist Church* sponsored by the Simsbury United Methodist Church Men's Fellowship
- German Maps & Facts for Genealogy*, 2nd Ed., by Wendy K. Uncapher and Linda M. Herrick
- A Guide to Massachusetts Cemeteries* by David Allen Lambert
- Handy Tips for Genealogical Research in Scotland* published by The Everton Publishers, Inc. (donated by Margaret Lindauer)
- National Society Sons and Daughters of the Pilgrims: Lineage Book IV, V, VI, VII*, edited by Arthur Louis Finnell, Registrar General (donated by The Society, thanks to Nancy Pexa)
- History of the Irish Settlers in North America, from the Earliest Period to the Census of 1850* by Thomas D'Arcy McGee
- The Mariners of the Clyde and Western Scotland, 1700-1800, Part One* by David Dobson (donated by Margaret Lindauer)
- Marriage, Census and Other Indexes for Family Historians*, 4th Ed., by Jeremy Gibson and Elizabeth Hampson (donated by Margaret Lindauer)
- The Miller Family, A Walk in Time (A Work in Progress)* by Curt Arthur Miller and Doris (Langer) Miller (donated by Doris (Langer) Miller)
- Scottish Local History: An Introductory Guide* by David Moody (donated by Margaret Lindauer)
- "...To Sette Ourselves in Gospel Order...": A History of First Church at Massaco, Simsbury, Connecticut* by Lyman G. Potter (donated by the Church, thanks to Donna M. Hopkins, church historian)
- Uncovering your Ancestry through Family Photographs* by Maureen A. Taylor
- Vermont Newspaper Abstracts: 1786-1816* by Marsha Hoffman Rising, CG, CGL, FASG (donated by Adeline, Holly and Ed Ryan in memory of Mary-Jane Guerry)
- The Word in the Wilderness: A History of Old St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, 1740-2000* by Robert B. McComb (donated by the author, the church historian)

### Compact Disc

- City Directories: New York 1886-1894, Selected Cities & Years* by Ancestry.com (donated by Muriel Winzer)

**SIMSBURY MARRIAGES**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Birthplace</b>
Sept. 21, 1869	Frederick H. Lampson	23	Mechanic	Granby
	Mary McKew	23		Thompsonville
Nov. 18, 1869	Timothy Wilcox	49	Farmer	Simsbury
	Mary Wright	45	Farmer	Hartford
Nov. 20, 1869	Mathew Cooper	30	Farmer	State Virginia
	Mary Elkey	21		Granby
Nov. 3, 1869	John Mosely	35	Farmer	Westfield, Mass
	Helen Nobles	27		Westfield, Mass
Sept. 29, 1869	Thurber J. Hull	23	Laborer	Ohio
	Hattie E. Buckland	19		Ellington
Sept. 15, 1869	Charles V. Hillyer	27	Merchant	Granville, Ohio
	Caroline M. Cowles	25		East Granby
Dec. 1, 1869	Allen McLean	32	Preacher	Simsbury
	Annie Belden	29		Simsbury
Feb. 16, 1870	George M. Phelps	24	Farmer	Simsbury
	Abbie J. Case	24		Simsbury
Apr. 24, 1870	Lyman Kellogg	51	Farmer	Palmer, Mass
	Elenora Pease	54		Somers, Conn
May 1, 1870	Patrick Perkinson	21	Farmer	Ireland
	Ellen Falvey	22		Ireland
May 4, 1870	John Baldwin	29	Farmer	Ireland
	Ellen Cusick	25		Ireland
June 30, 1870	Oliver F. Perry	30	Bookkeeper	Canton
	Laura J. Latimer	23		Simsbury
June 25, 1870	Arelus Walters	25	Farmer	Chickopee, Mass
	Mary S. Holcomb	21		Granby
May 26, 1870	Wilbur F. Hubbard	27	Joiner	Haddam
	Martha E. Bull	23		Simsbury
July 2, 1870	William A. Noll	23	Farmer	New York
	Christine Merriman	26		Windsor
Aug. 14, 1870	Thomas Morton	67	Farmer	England
	Lucinda Andrus	51		Simsbury

This continuing series on Simsbury's early marriage records has been copied by Stephen E. Simon from microfilmed records at the Connecticut State Library.

## SGHRL UPDATES

The Board of Directors of the Eno Transportation Foundation, based in Washington, D.C., held its annual meeting in the Simsbury Free Library September 5-6. Furnishings and artifacts from the office of the late William Phelps Eno, founder of the foundation, are on permanent display in the library. Richard Wagner, vice-chairman of the library's Board of Trustees, hosted both boards at a luncheon at Hopmeadow Country Club.

Joyce Cahill has been busy speaking about her book on the gravestone inscriptions in the old section of Simsbury Cemetery. The book was published by the Simsbury Free Library last fall. She addressed the Abigail Phelps Chapter DAR in Simsbury on October 18 and the Susan Carrington Clark Chapter DAR in Meriden on November 15. If you would like to hear her slide lecture, plan to come to the Coffee House Lecture at the Simsbury Historical Society on the evening of January 9.

Bob McComb's fine book *The Word in the Wilderness: A History of Old St Andrew's Episcopal Church, 1740-2000* has just been published and can be purchased at the church, in Bloomfield.

Save the date **Saturday, May 17, 2003, 11 A.M.** SGHRL will welcome a representative from the Connecticut State Library in Hartford who will speak about the many resources at that library for those researching family history. As always, our Spring Talk is free and open to the public.



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