

SIMSBURY

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The Cornish Family in East Weatogue Town Records Show Extensive Land Holdings

At least seven generations of Cornishes lived and died in Simsbury. Elisha Cornish, whose account book was the subject of an article in the Summer 2000 issue of this publication, belonged to the fourth generation in Simsbury. The death of his great grandfather, "Old Mr. Cornish," was reported in the town records in 1698. This gentleman is believed to have been born in England and to have emigrated to Connecticut before 1662. He apparently came to Simsbury to live with his son James, later known as Deacon James Cornish, a year or so before he died.

Deacon James Cornish was an early settler of the East Weatogue section of Simsbury, but he was not among those who were given grants by the Town of Windsor in the 1660s before Simsbury was set off as a town.¹ Cornish is first mentioned in the surviving records of the Town of Simsbury in 1684. We can't be sure that his name does not appear earlier because the town records, which began with Simsbury's incorporation in 1670, were partially destroyed by fire in 1680 or 1681. Incidentally, this destruction took place several years *after* all the buildings in the town were burned by marauding Indians in 1676 during the King Philip's War.

In addition to being a farmer, James Cornish was a carpenter and he apparently arrived after the town had a saw mill. (He is referred to in the town records as James Cornish Sr. up to 1720, after which time he is called Deacon James Cornish.) His first recorded land purchases, shown in a deed dated March 26, 1698 from Eliezer Hill, were twelve acres "on the plain," twelve and a half acres of meadow land, another three and a third acres of meadow land, a hillside lot of ten acres, and six acres on the western side of Mount Philip (2:61).² He also purchased a two-acre home lot at the foot of the hill south of the cart path to Hartford. He sold this lot with a house to Samuel Humphrey in 1702 (2:57)

About the Author

Dr. Thomas W. Sharpless has been researching Simsbury's early land records for several years, preparing to develop period maps. To write this article he drew on his research for material related to the Cornish family. This article augments "Elisha Cornish, 18th Century Man of Law," which appeared in the Summer 2000 newsletter.

The town land records are located in the Simsbury Town Clerk's office. Elisha Cornish's account book, the basis of the previous article, is located in the archives of the Simsbury Historical Society.

Deacon Cornish purchased an additional thirty-six acres in 1702 and 1703, bringing his holdings to more than eighty acres, primarily in East Weatogue. His home lot, located on the north corner of the Riverside Road turnoff from East Weatogue Street, he purchased from John Rue (or Rew) in 1704 (2:95). A house on that site is clearly labeled as his on the Simsbury map drawn about 1730. This map is preserved in the Connecticut State Archives.

The holdings of Deacon James Cornish reflect the land resources needed to prosper in colonial times. The house lot, for example, required the availability of potable water. Meadow land was suitable for hay and, if not too wet, for grain. The lands identified in the records as "meadow" are those lying below 160 feet in elevation, which corresponds to the floodplain of the Farmington River. Between 160 and 200 feet of elevation is the "plain" on which houses were built with gardens and orchards. Much of this land was used to grow barley, wheat, rye and Indian corn. The treed hillsides were a source of fuel, building materials, and acorns for roaming pigs. Later many of these hillsides became apple orchards. Upland meadows were typically used as pastures.

It is interesting to note that farmers in the colonial era generally grew their crops in common fields that were enclosed by common fences. This reduced the labor required to fence fields. In the 1660s, however, the General Court allowed Farmington, which at that time extended north as far as Simsbury, to have unfenced fields. When Simsbury hogs and cattle strayed into Farmington crops, they were impounded. After some controversy, the Court in 1667 directed Farmington to erect fences.³ Then in 1676 the Indians burned Simsbury's common fences, along with all buildings. Another dispute developed in 1685 with Farmington people, who apparently had removed the fence along their north border. The sites or former sites of these common fences are often mentioned in deeds, including Cornish's.

Deacon Cornish continued to expand his land holdings to become, by 1730, one of the most landed men in Simsbury. Some of his holdings were outside of East Weatogue. He acquired by purchase and by grants from the town seventy acres of land east of what is now the entrance to Penwood Park, along what was then called "the sidling way to Windsor." He also acquired more than sixty acres on the east side of "Little Philip" mountain in what is now Bloomfield. The town divided common lands among the townsmen from time to time; the 1723 distribution brought Deacon Cornish 165 additional acres at various locations, including Bushy Hill and the Pine Plain, which is in West Weatogue.

Deacon Cornish had four sons and three daughters by his first wife, Elizabeth Thrall, and two sons and three daughters by his second wife, the widow Hannah Hillyer Humphrey. Hannah was the daughter and sole heir of Andrew Hillyer, who on his passing left a considerable amount of property to his daughter. Additionally, Hannah's first husband was Thomas Humphrey, the son of Sgt. John Humphrey and the grandson of the pioneer settler Michael Humphrey. When he died in 1714, he passed much land to his son Thomas. However, by 1736, Thomas had moved to Windsor and had given most of his land to his mother, Hannah Cornish. Thus the children of Deacon and Hannah Cornish, although ten in number, inherited unusually large amounts of land. Deacon Cornish died in 1713/4 and Hannah in 1751.

One son, Benjamin, predeceased his parents and left no issue, so his portion of Deacon Cornish's lands were distributed among the other sons. Jabez Cornish inherited the home at Riverside Road.

The oldest son, Capt. James Cornish, lived on land that his father had purchased from Jeremiah Gillet. This appears to be the land on which the "saltbox" house stands (26 East Weatogue Street) or possibly a lot adjoining. He moved in 1747 to a twelve-acre site across East Weatogue Street, probably in the vicinity of 45 East Weatogue Street. Land with a dwelling house was split off this property in 1764 for his son Joel (8:535). In the course of time, Capt. James was able to assemble a large block of land extending from East Weatogue Street to the highest ledge on the western side of the East Mountains, which are in the present-day Penwood Park. One of these parcels of land was a fifty-acre strip near the Riverside Road turnoff. He gave this land to Joel in 1762 (8:496). The other, called Hell Hole Pasture, was a sixty-acre piece of land lying above the hill behind the saltbox house. Backed by the mountains in the present day Penwood Park, it was drained by Hell Hole Brook, which later became Powder Mill Brook. This area was referred to as "Lawyer Pasture" in the nineteenth century (25:361, 27:106). Capt. Cornish sold the pasture to his son Elisha in 1765 (9:185).

Elisha Cornish resided for three years in a house given to him by his father in 1743 (6:630). It appears to have been located near the northwest corner of the intersection of East Weatogue Street and the western extension of Hartford Road toward the river. Elisha moved to the saltbox house in 1746 (7:260). He, too, transferred large blocks of land to his children. In 1788 he sold forty acres easterly of his house to his son James and the adjacent thirty-five acres to the north to his son Elisha, Jr. (15:230, 15:229). He also left his children meadow fields in the vicinity of Horseshoe Cove, which his children and grandchildren would expand to make the farm we today call Folly Farm (18:121).

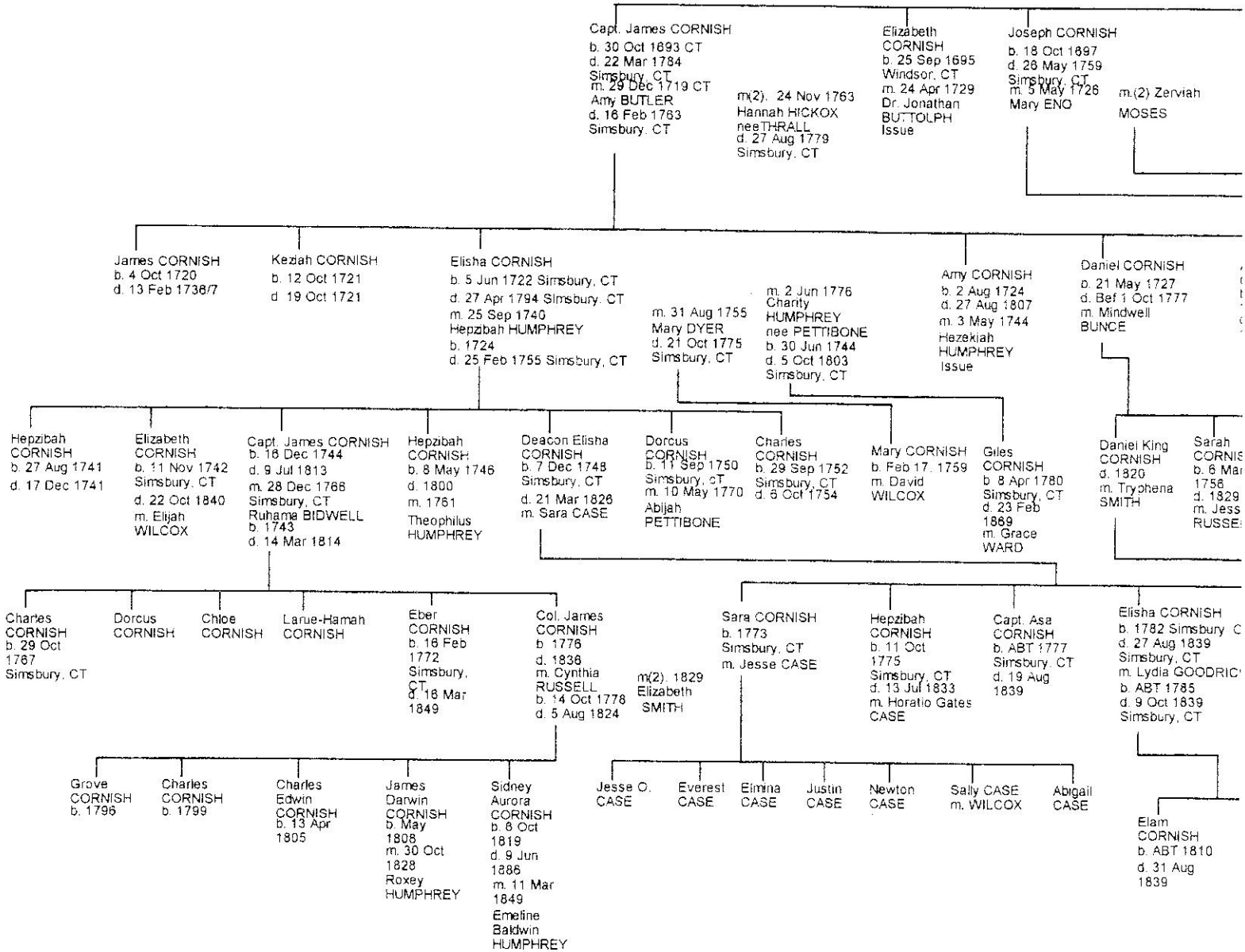
Col. James Cornish was Elisha's grandson through Elisha's son Capt. James Cornish (1744-1813). When Col. Cornish died in 1836 his estate included a 147-acre parcel extending from Horseshoe Cove in the west to the top of the ledge on the west side of Mount Philip. It was bordered on the north by the road to Hartford. A distillery on the property had been built by James Cornish and Martin Humphrey prior to 1834 (33:211, 36:368). Col. Cornish added significant pieces in 1829 when, after the death of Michael Moses, he purchased from Moses' several children numerous parcels adjoining his lands (35:39-40).⁴ It is interesting to note that in 1791 Michael Moses had given a lease to James and Zar Sturdevant to explore his property on the side of Mount Philip in exchange for 1/50th part of any mineral ores extracted (17:289). The "Col. Cornish Farm" was purchased from the colonel's heirs by John O. Pettibone in 1837 (35:246,531), who in turn sold it to Amon Latimer in 1846 (37:207). By this time the Cornish name is encountered significantly less often in the town records.

The name, of course, requires sons to carry it forward. Several of the Cornish lines had numerous daughters but only a few sons. An exception was the line from Capt. James Cornish's brother, Deacon Elisha. Deacon Elisha had three sons and three daughters. His sons Asa and Elisha inherited quite a bit of land and are prominent in the records.

DESCENDANTS OF J

James CORNISH
b. Prob. England
d. 29 Oct 1698 Simsbu
1st wife

Gabriel CORNISH
b. Prob. England
d. 24 May 1702
Westfield, MA
Issue



This lineage chart shows most of the Cornish residents in Simsbury in 1698. Not all descendant lines are shown. The chart emphasizes the notes giving the source of each entry and other information are *Connecticut: Births, Marriages and Deaths Transcribed from the Town Society, 1898*), *The History and Genealogy of the Cornish Families in Simsbury* probate records and Simsbury land records. Thomas W. Shar

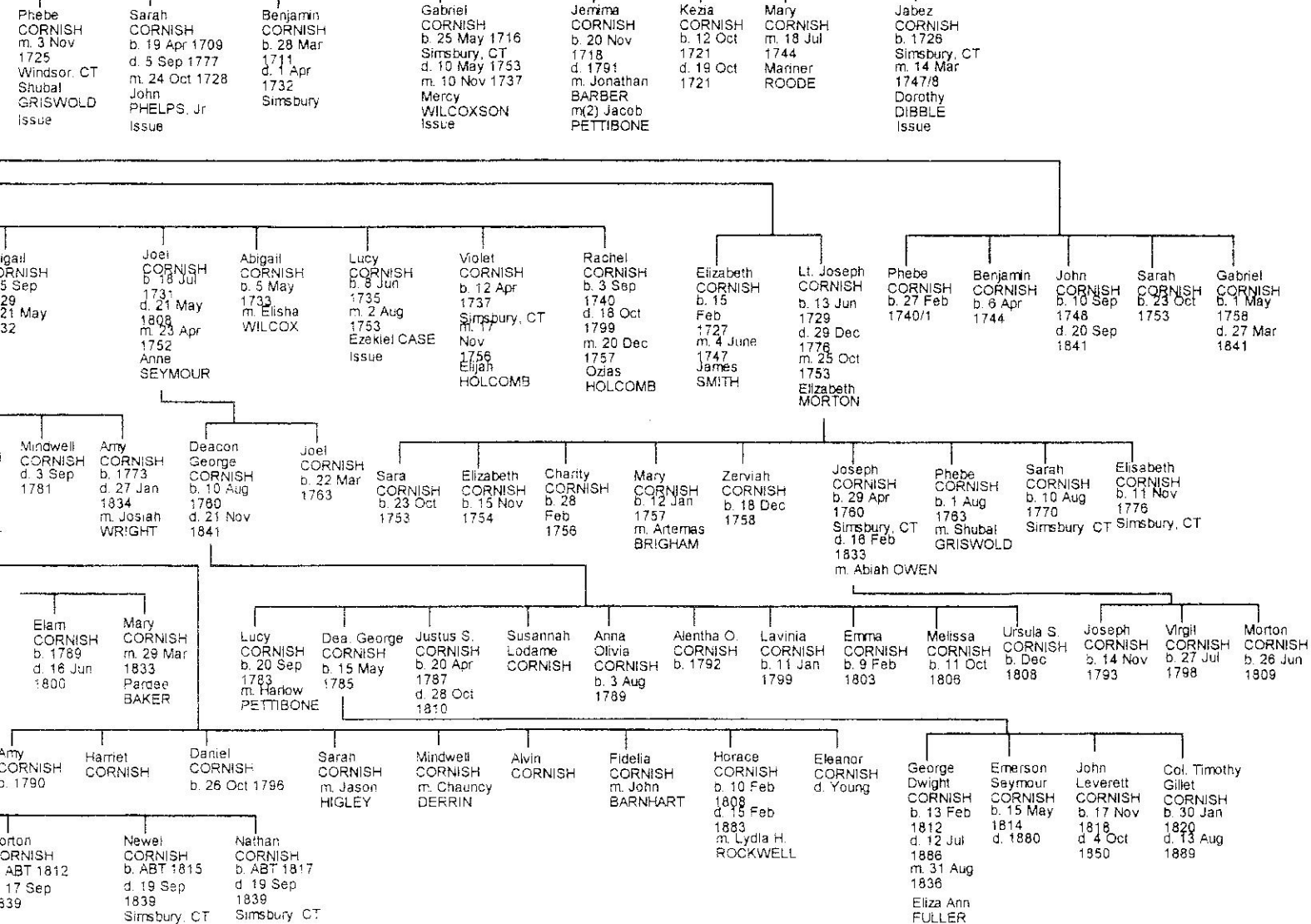
JAMES CORNISH OF SIMSBURY

CT

m.(2) Phebe LARRABEE nee
BROWN
d. 22 Dec 1664

Deacon James CORNISH
b. 1662/3 Saybrook, CT
d. 2 Apr 1740 Simsbury, CT
m. 10 Nov 1693 Elizabeth THRALL
b. 1 May 1667
d. 25 Jan 1713/4

m.(2) 15 Apr 1715
Hannah HUMPHREY nee HILLYER
b. 12 Dec 1681
d. 2 Dec 1751 Simsbury, CT



... through several generations, beginning with James Cornish who died
Cornish name bearers who lived in Simsbury.
... file at SGHRL. Data for the chart came from these sources: *Simsbury,*
Records by Albert Carlos Bates (Hartford: The Connecticut Historical
America by Joseph E. Cornish (Boston: published by the author, 1907),
... less prepared the chart using the computer program TreeDraw.

Continued from page three.

However, the younger Elisha was the victim of a calamity. He and his four sons died in August and September 1839. His wife, Lydia (Goodrich), succumbed that October. Abigail Eno Ellsworth wrote in 1936 about the row of six graves in Simsbury Cemetery for this family, and said, "According to a story that I have heard from my grandmother and aunt, Elisha Cornish and his son Elam went on a trip to New York where they contracted a very contagious fever from which the entire family died. Mrs. Ellsworth commented, "Although there were so many families of Cornishes in the early days of Simsbury, there have been none by that name living in Simsbury in my remembrance."⁵

The Cornish name did not die out completely; many resettled in other towns and states, particularly after the Revolutionary War. They are remembered in Simsbury for the places they once owned, like their saltbox house and the area that has become Folly Farm.

by Thomas W. Sharpless

Notes

1. Lucius I. Barber names some men given grants in East Weatogue before 1670. They are John Moses, Josiah Hull, Nathan Gillet, Daniel Clark, Thomas Maskell, Michael Humphrey, Mr. Henry Rose, Samuel Marshall, Joseph Phelps, John Gillet, John Pettibone, and Jn^o Gillet. Some of these men did not settle on their grants, but transferred or sold them to others. This list is taken from Barber's *A Record and Documentary History of Simsbury, 1663-1888*. (Simsbury: Abigail Phelps Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, 1931), pp. 28-35.
2. Throughout this article references are made to the Town of Simsbury's land records. The bold number is the volume, followed by the page.
3. Barber, pp. 47-48.
4. See also *Simsbury Probate Records*, Volume 9, pp. 214-218.
5. Abigail Eno Ellsworth, et. al., comp., "A Record of the History of Some of the Old Homes of Simsbury," p. [47]. This is a study done in 1936 by Mrs. Ellsworth, historian of the Abigail Phelps Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, and her assistants in connection with Simsbury's celebration of the Connecticut Tercentenary. Copies of the manuscript can be found in SGHRL, the Simsbury Historical Society and the Simsbury Public Library.

SGHRL UPDATES

Thank you to everyone who has inquired about purchasing *Simsbury Cemetery Gravestone Inscriptions, 1688-2000*. Author Joyce Cahill is adding a few finishing touches to her manuscript. You will hear from us just as soon as the book is ready for publication.

Remember the Spring Talk! Look for information on the back cover.

Some Recent Acquisitions

Books and Pamphlets

- Aetna Life Insurance Company: Its First Hundred Years* by Richard Hooker (donated by Margaret Donohue)
- Ancestry of Philip Joseph Currier* compiled by Philip Joseph Currier (donated by Salmon Brook Historical Society)
- Bicentennial Quilt: 1786-Granby, Connecticut-1986* (donated by Carol Laun)
- Centennial: Frederick H. Cossitt Library, 1891-1991* by Carol Laun and Gladys Godard (donated by Carol Laun)
- Chronicles of Lake George: Journeys in War and Peace* by Russell P. Bellico (donated by Doris Rothe)
- The Connecticut Barbers: A Genealogy of the Descendants of Thomas Barber of Windsor, Connecticut, Second Edition*, by Donald S. Barber, M.D.
- Early New Brunswick Probate Records, 1785-1835* by R. Wallace Hale (donated by Carol Laun)
- Granby, Connecticut: A Brief History, 1786-1986* (donated by Stephen E. Simon)
- International Vital Records Handbook, Fourth Edition*, by Thomas Jay Kemp (purchased through the generosity of Bruce Hale, Sr.)
- List of Parish Registers and other Genealogical Works* edited by Frederick Arthur Crisp (donated by Carol Laun)
- Litchfield: Portrait of a Beautiful Town* compiled, edited and in part written by Henry L. Shepherd (donated by Doris Rothe)
- Nova Scotia Vital Statistics from Newspapers, 1769-1812 and 1813-1822*, two books compiled by Terrence M. Punch (donated by Celia Roberts)
- Nova Scotia Vital Statistics from Newspapers, 1823-1828 and 1829-1834*, two books compiled by Jean M. Holder (donated by Celia Roberts)
- Nova Scotia Vital Statistics from Halifax Newspapers, 1852-1854*, compiled by Jean M. Holder (donated by Celia Roberts)
- Vital Statistics from Halifax Newspapers, 1835-1839 and 1840-1843*, two books compiled by Jean M. Holder (donated by Celia Roberts)
- The Windham County, Ct, County Court Records, 1726-1732* by Marcella Houle Pasay (donated by Frank B. Pinney)

Periodicals

- Berkshire Genealogist: Winter 2000, Spring 2000, Fall 2000, Winter 2001*
- The Connecticut Nutmegger: March 2000, June 2000, September 2000, December 2000*
- The Dutchess: Spring 2000, Fall-Winter 2000, Winter 2000-2001*
- Family Chronicle: March/April 2000, May/June 2000, July/August 2000, September/October 2000, November/December 2000, January/February 2001*
- Genealogical Helper: January/February 2000, March/April 2000, May/June 2000, July/August 2000*
- The Godfrey Quarterly: April 2000, July 2000, October 2000*
- Heritage Quest: September/October 2000, November/December 2000*
- New England Ancestors: Spring 2000, Summer 2000, Fall 2000, Holiday 2000*
- The New England Historical and Genealogical Register: July 2000, October 2000*
- The SAR Magazine: Winter 2000, Spring 2000, Summer 2000, Fall 2000*
- Windsor Historical Society News: January 2000, March 2000, May 2000, July 2000, September 2000, November 2000, January 2001*
- The Wintonbury Drummer: August 2000, February 2001*
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SIMSBURY MARRIAGES

Date	Name	Age	Occupation	Birthplace
Jan. 7, 1865	Thomas Wade	21		England
	Sarah O. Arrough	20		England
Jan. 4, 1865	Lewis B. Gillett	22	Farmer	Simsbury
	Dethalia A. Case	21		Simsbury
Feb. 13, 1865	George Lorimer	22	Dyer	Scotland
	Jane Everett	20		New York City
Dec. 16, 1865	Charles Taylor	21		England
	Mary Letrell	21		England
Dec. 12, 1865	Sylvester T. Cook	21	Farmer	Colebrook, Ct.
	Mrs. Eliza Simpson	22		England
Jun. 28, 1865	Abram Siddelle	23	Farmer	Platskill, NY
	Ellen H. Howard	22		Simsbury
Jul. 21 4, 1865	Edward M. Edgerton	25	Farmer	Suffield
	Charlett M. Swift	21		Suffield
Dec. 18, 1865	William Welch	22	Farmer	Poughkeepsic, NY
	Catherine Dieglan(?)	20		England
Dec. 7, 1865	William H. Smith	22	Clerk	Troy, NY
	Sarah Johnson	22		Albany, NY
Jul. 13, 1865	Timothy Gladding	25		New York
	Georgiana Peck	18		New York
Jun. 21, 1865	John H. Wentworth	27	Agent	Farmington
	Fanny J. Marks	27		Simsbury
Jun. 1865 (married at Bristol)	Julius Ward	25	Waggon Maker	Granby
	Sarah E. Warner	21		Bristol
Dec. 12, 1866	James Granger	44		Sidney, NY
	Nancy Alvord	38		Springfield, Ma.
Nov. 24, 1865	Harrison Woodford	25		Avon
	Mary E. Case	23		Simsbury
Nov. 13, 1865	Frank McAuliffe	24		Chicopee, Mass.
	Bashia(?) Thurston	23		Simsbury
Jul. 19, 1865	Albert J. Hart	27		Farmington
	Ella N. Barnard	18		Bloomfield

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

SPEAKER ON GENEALOGY

“Searching for Those Elusive Irish Ancestors”

Janet Pestey, Speaker

Janet Pestey is a retired educator whose maternal grandparents were born in Ireland. Mrs. Pestey is a board member of the Connecticut Society of Genealogists and a volunteer at the Woodbridge Family History Center. She has given programs or classes in family research at Eastern Connecticut State University, Manchester Community College, and Wallingford Adult Education.

Saturday, May 12, 2001

11 A.M

At the Library

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