

Additions to Birchard Family History

This document contains materials sent to Edna Laughter, the author, followed by her comments and clarifications. For more information, contact her at elaughter@comcast.net.

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Cathy Jones of Bloomfield Hills, Michigan (jones.cathy38@gmail.com) has submitted the following thoughts:

I think most of us would like to claim someone famous (or may even infamous) as their ancestor, however, it's always good to do a reality check. Family lore has it that Mary Moore Morrison (mother of Ellen Morrison Birchard and mother-in-law of Nathan Birchard, #886) was the youngest sister of Sir John Moore. Well, here are a couple of things to consider.

A. John Moore (Sir John's father) was a physician who was born in Scotland in 1729 and died in England in 1802. He married Jean Simson, the daughter of John Simson who was a Scottish theologian. She was born in Scotland in 1735 and died in 1820. The couple had a daughter, Jane (1758-1843) and then five sons. So, if one does the math, John would have been 70 yrs old when Mary was born. Although not impossible, it seems highly unlikely. Jean would have been 64 yrs old!!

B. If that isn't enough, Mary Moore is reported to have been born in Belfast, Ireland, and not Scotland, as all the other Moore's above were. I haven't been able to verify who her parents were but it seems pretty clear that John & Jean Moore weren't, and therefore, Sir John was not her brother. So, another one "bites the dust."

I found this article [see THE BIRCHARDS OF BIRCHARDTOWN: THE FOUNDERS OF MOUNT ALBERT By J. M. Walton on the following pages} in the Archives of Canada www.archivescanada.ca. It appears to have been written after 1937 as the author makes reference to a letter that was sent from Kenosha, WI to Mt Albert in 1937. He also mentions Wm Henry (past tense) and the 4 children. Wm died in 1915.

Background provided by Edna Laughter based on material found on Wikipedia:

Sir John lived in England from 1761 to 1809. He was a British soldier and General. He joined the British army in 1776 and first saw action as a lieutenant in the American Revolution in the 82nd Regiment of Foot in 1778 when he was only 17. He was elected to the British Parliament, where he served from 1783 to 1790. It was said of him, "*Moore's contribution to the British Army was not only that matchless Light Infantry who have ever since enshrined his training, but also the belief that the perfect soldier can only be made by evoking all that is finest in man - physical, mental and spiritual*".

Sir John took command of the British forces in the Iberian peninsula during the Napoleonic wars in which his army was defeated but gained a tactical advantage over a French army. He was fatally wounded at the Battle of Corunna. He was buried wrapped in a military cloak in the ramparts of the town; the funeral is celebrated in a well known poem by Charles Wolfe (1791–1823), *The Burial of Sir John Moore after Corunna*, which begins:

*Not a drum was heard, not a funeral note,
As his corse to the rampart we hurried;
Not a soldier discharged his farewell shot
O'er the grave where our hero we buried.*

Background from the The Pioneering Quakers, Vol II:

On Page 213, Nathan Birchard's (#886) wife, Ellen Morrison, is named as the daughter of Mary Moore. Mary Moore is listed as Sir John's sister.

Background from The Wandering Scots, Volume III:

On page 133, Sir John Moore is listed as Mary Moore's brother and Ellen Morrison's uncle.

Notes from Edna Laughter: I have been troubled with much faulty family lore that has led me astray more times than I care to think about while doing the research for the two Birchard family history books. I had military records from the National Archives that did not match family lore. This delayed finding Elisha Birchard's roots at least two years. After his father was identified to my satisfaction, more family lore indicated Elisha's roots were in Goshen, Connecticut. That claim had to be discarded when it became apparent that the Birchard family never did live in or own land in Goshen. Now the family lore about the early years of the Birchards in Upper Canada is in question. I very much want to find the earliest dated material that describes those early years. I do not know when this article was written but Cathy Jones says above that it must have been published after 1937. With that in mind, it is apparent that there is older dated material describing those early years.

I have a reference to "unpublished written material" by Isaac James Birchard, "The Canada Branch of the Birchards of America" that is in the East Gwillimbury, Ontario, Public Library. When I sent a copy of Volume III, The Wandering Scots, to that library, I asked the librarian to try to find that material and to look for a date; either when it was written or when it was donated to the library. There is no way of knowing where J. M. Walton obtained his source for the article he wrote. My mother, Edna Rear Manning, wrote an account in 1962. She did quote Isaac James Birchard, her grandmother's youngest brother. I do think the Isaac Birchard material may be the source of the account of those early years in Birchardtwn.

This search for the source of the early Ontario history is certainly open to anyone who would like to participate in solving this genealogical puzzle.

The following is the article mentioned above by Cathy Jones. I have corrected the known mistakes by inserting the facts, as I know them. Many of the records were taken from Land Records in Toronto.

THE BIRCHARDS OF BIRCHARDTOWN: THE FOUNDERS OF MOUNT ALBERT by J. M. Walton

This community was established by a family of Quakers who came to Upper Canada from Vermont. Samuel Birchard and Rufus Birchard bought 200 acres from John Allen Haight by deed dated the 19th of March, 1821, but receipts and other documents show the Birchards came to Upper Canada in 1814 or 1815. *[EML: The Yonge Street Monthly Meeting granted Quaker membership to Rufus on October 15, 1812, so Rufus was in Upper Canada by that date. He was probably the first of the three brothers to arrive in Canada. Samuel's request that his Ferrisburgh, Vermont, Monthly Meeting membership be transferred to Farmington, New York appeared in the Farmington Men's Meeting records in November 1814. By that time, Samuel had already left Farmington and was on his way to Upper Canada. He arrived in Upper Canada sometime after November 1814. I carefully went through all the available Quaker Monthly Meeting records from both Ferrisburgh and Farmington. A copy of the Farmington Monthly Meeting record requesting Samuel's Quaker membership transfer is duplicated on page 186 of The Pioneering Quakers.]*

Israel, another brother, joined them a year or so later, and he bought the farm on the crown of the hill south of Mount Albert. *[EML: Since Israel was admitted to the Yonge Street Monthly Meeting in December, 1821, he was living in Upper Canada by then.]*

Photographs of the original Samuel and his wife, Ruth Pearson Birchard, in quaint Quaker costumes, are in the archives of the York Pioneers at Sharon. *[EML: This picture is shown on page 106 of The Pioneering Quakers.]*

Ellen Birchard, the mother of James H. Birchard, was a sister of Mrs. Pickering of Zephyr. Ellen's mother was Mary Moore Morrison, a sister of Sir John Moore, famous in song and story, who was killed at the battle of Corunna during the Napoleonic wars. *[EML: Cathy Jones refutes this claim in the accompanying article.]* Ellen was the youngest of the family and Sir John was the oldest. Two other brothers were killed in the same war.

Mary was born at Belfast, Ireland, and her husband was a Scotsman. They came to Canada and settled at Montmorency, near Quebec. They were three months crossing the Atlantic and when they were about half way across the ocean, a storm drove them back to within about 90 miles from their starting point. They soon left Montmorency and went 30 miles south of the St. Lawrence River, where they bought 300 acres of land. Here Ellen Morrison was born. They were the only Protestant family on the district. The father was a full-fledged Free Mason and all the neighbors were Roman Catholic. He saw that there was no one but of that faith for his daughters to marry and he decided to move to Upper Canada. When this became known in the community no one would buy his property and he had to abandon it. They came to Scott township and bought 200 acres (lot 24 in the first concession).

Isaac J. Birchard was a school teacher, one of the best Ontario ever had. He was the author of an authorized textbook in arithmetic, His two sisters were also school teachers and the intellectual standards of the family were high. *[EML: Martha Birchard McMillan was a teacher, but I am not aware of any other sisters of Nathan who taught school. Edna Laughter. Isaac's contributions to Canadian education is listed on page 227 of The Pioneering Quakers.]*

The first Birchard came to America in 1636 from Sussex, England, and settled in New Jersey and the first land they bought has remained continuously in the name of Birchard to the present day. *[EML: The first Birchard to come to America was Thomas Birchard, who came in 1635 from Fairsted, Essex, England. He first lived in Boston, Massachusetts, then Roxbury. The only ancestor of Nathan Birchard's that might have lived in New Jersey was Esther Burroughs Bidgood who was married Willam Bidgood (#921) in Haddonfield, New Jersey. (See page 72, The Pioneering Quakers.) There was another family that was connected to the Birchards who lived for a time in Jersey. Rachel Widdifield, who married John James (#986) was born in Hardwick, Sussex County, New Jersey. Luella Bassett, wife of T. E. McMillan (#1116) was descended from this same Widdifield family.]* **The family increased and went north and west, and members filled many offices in the government and the army during the Revolutionary war. Elisha Birchard, accompanied by two brothers, went into Vermont, but they were both killed in the war. [EML: This piece of family lore is unsubstantiated. There are no records of Elisha having two brothers, although it is possible, but unlikely, that he had two stepbrothers. This is discussed in more detail on page 156 of The Pioneering Quakers.]**

Samuel Birchard was born in Vermont in 1789 and later came to Upper Canada, where he married Ruth Pearson at her home near Uxbridge on the sixth concession, known then as James Corners. *[EML: Samuel was born in 1787. His wife, Ruth Pearson, was born in Whitchurch Township, York Region, Ontario. Uxbridge Township is in the Durham Region. James' Corners, located in Uxbridge Township, was developed by Ezekiel James Jr, (#963), Ruth Pearson's uncle. Pages 202-203 of The Pioneering Quakers describe the development of the James' Corners area. The map on page 192 of The Pioneering Quakers shows the relative locations of Mount Albert and Whitchurch.]* **Members of the Birchard family have filled official positions in the U.S.A. One was the governor of New Jersey, one district attorney of New York City, another director of the mint under President Grant and Matthew Birchard of Ohio was a judge of the supreme court. Vice-President Rutherford Birchard Hayes came from this line. [EML: Rutherford Birchard Hayes was President of the United States, not Vice-President. He was a Birchard by adoption. His adopted grandfather, Roger Cornwall Elias Birchard, was the illegitimate son of Sarah Jacobs who married Elias Birchard (#127). After Elias and Sarah were married, Elias adopted Roger whose birth father's name may have reflected the given name of "Cornwall". (See pages 98, 99, 103, 111, 114-116 of The Quiet Puritans.)]**

The family annals show that none of its members has ever been in prison or convicted of crime but the family historian who gives this report says quaintly: "There is a possibility they have been too sharp in being caught."

In a letter from Kenosha, Wisconsin, addressed to Miss E. Leek, Mount Albert in 1937, this additional information is found. The name of Mount Albert was originally Birchardtown, later the name was changed to Newlands and at the time of the visit of the Prince of Wales to this country, it was renamed Mount Albert. *[EML: Birchardtown was called Mount Albert at least two years prior to Prince Albert's visit in 1860. Although it was officially changed to Mount Albert in 1865, the name "Mt. Albert" was being used as early as 1858 when the Newmarket newspaper had news from "Mount Albert". (From a letter to Edna Laughter from Alan McGillivray, archivist at the Uxbridge Museum.)]*

The Birchards, like other Quakers, were strong on the matter of education and one of their first acts was to give a deed for a school site and the community was to have it "as long as the grass grew and the water ran down hill." The first school building was of logs but later a new school-house was needed and a new location was chosen. *[EML: Israel Birchard bought from his brother, Rufus, 50 acres of land that consisted of the west one-half of the south one-half of lot number 11 in the 8th Concession of the Township of East Gwillimbury in 1835. On April 8, 1850, Israel Birchard sold one-fourth of an acre to George Stokes, William P. Mainprize and Alexander Fletcher on the southeast corner of the east half of Israel's lot. The deed indicates it was intended to be for a "Burying Ground and House for School and Public Business". (See pages 273-274 of The Pioneering Quakers for the exact wording on the deed.) If a school were erected in the early 1830's on this lot, the land was "borrowed" from Israel at least 15 years before he deeded the lot. The term "as long as the grass grew and the water ran down hill" did not appear in the deed. (I have a copy of the deed itself. Edna Laughter.) This is an old Indian treaty term and the sale of the lot did not contain this wording. Rufus did make another sale of 5 acres to George Rear in February of 1850. On deed #54070, showing the sale of 5 acres of the southwest quarter of Lot 11, Concession 8, the following wording is used: "The said Israel Birchard has granted to the public for a School House and burying ground so long as the sun shines and water runs that is to say forever". (See page 275 of The Pioneering Quakers, which includes the endnote references.) Israel sold both pieces of land rather than giving the land to the community as the early lore states.]*

When the emigrants arrived in Upper Canada they made their way from York to Hope, the place now known as Sharon. *[EML: Since both Samuel and Rufus were in Upper Canada by 1814 and 1812, respectively, and bought their land in East Gwillimbury in 1821, it was at least 9 years before they undertook the clearing process. Allan McGillivray described the choices available between two trails to reach their land on page 194 of The Pioneering Quakers.]* From there they cut out a road by hand to their new home, now Mount Albert, and carried their chattels on their backs. They were greatly bothered by wolves and bears and the livestock suffered on the wilderness homesteads. To keep the animals away from the flocks the wife would blow a long tin dinner horn. They were only able to raise one lamb a year for the first two years.

Such is the scant history gathered here and there, on one of the oldest and finest families to settle in this part of Upper Canada. We trust others may be able to add to the history of this fine family who are well worthy of a place in the York Pioneer History.

Photographs of the pioneer Birchards have been donated to the temple historical collection at Sharon. *[EML: The pictures of Samuel Birchard and Ruth Pearson Birchard; and Eli and Nathan Birchard were both stored in the archives of the Sharon Temple of the Children of Peace. While doing research in 2000, I was able to request that the pictures be located so I could see and hopefully duplicate them. The museum at that time did not exist. After several days, the pictures were located. I was able to copy them by laying them in bright light and taking a picture of them with my own camera. The pictures seen on pages 106 and 211 of The Pioneering Quakers are the result.]*

W. H. Birchard, who owned and operated the Aurora electric light plant for many years before Hydro came, was one of the descendants and he raised three sons and a daughter, who are highly respected. *[EML: W. H. Birchard was William Henry Birchard, (#1082), the son of Nathan Birchard (#886) and Ellen Morrison.]*