

# Family History

*By Homer Wickenden*

*Note: section headings have been added to this chapter for clarity and ease of reference by Thomas H. Wickenden II*

It is always interesting to speculate on who and what kind of people one's ancestors were. We feel a personal relationship with those we have met but those who were of more than two or three generations back usually are names only. Certain family features and characteristics can be seen in several generations, but the fact that if one goes back fifteen generations he has some 32,700 paternal and maternal ancestors indicates that an infinite number of genes and chromosomes have made each of us what we are.

This material relates primarily to the family of Thomas Rogers Wickenden and Ida Consaul Wickenden, their eight children and eighteen grandchildren. These eighteen and their thirty-six children should know who their cousins, uncles and aunts are.

Den Names in England and Germany - For generations the Wickenden family has lived in the County of Kent, England. Apparently, the name has the same antiquity as such other place names as Borden. Wolfden or Oakenden. Research by Alfred Wickenden points to such names in Germany as well as in Great Britain, as Euden, Verden and Linden. The name of a town called Borenden near Hanover has its namesake in Borden, Kent. These names were Anglo-Saxon in origin. Apparently, the Suffix "den" means a place near a wood or valley where goats or swine were herded. The work "wicken" means the Mountain Ash tree. His conclusion is that the bearers of this name moved into Kent with the first Anglo-Saxon expedition of Hengist and Horsa about 450 A.D. They landed on the Isle of Thanet at the mouth of the Thames, now no longer an Island.

Historical Records and Legends - There is a legend in the family which I believe was checked by Uncle Robert J. Wickenden and found to be true that the Wickendens owned the Isle of Thanet at one time. However, because they opposed the many marriages of Henry VIII and his establishment of the Church of England in place of the Roman Catholic Church, he took their lands away from them.

The earliest record I could locate of a Wickenden in Kent comes from a Parish register in the New York Public Library which shows that William Wickenden married Elizabeth Aier in April 1583 in Westerham (where Winston Churchill has his home.) Numerous others were at later dates married in Westerham. The interesting thing is that many of the first names are still in use. A few of them are Thomas, Ann, John and numerous Williams.

A search through two histories of Kent, namely Harris's and Hasted's Vol. III dated 1797, shows in the latter the following information:

Kentwater in Corden, Kent:

"Late in the tenure of William Wickenden whose ancestor Thomas Wickenden had given them the priory of Corden: to hold "in capite" by Knight's service. They seem to have joined In the sale of this estate to William Wickenden whose grandson in the reign of King Charles I died possessed of it leaving at his decease two sons who divided this estate between them."

Hasted's History, Volume X, shows "the manor of Appleton at Waldershire, Kent, was passed away to Wickenden. Robert Wickenden, gent. of Dover, died possessed of it in 1686 and by his will gave it to his son of the same name whose descendant W. Nicholas Wickenden of the same place devised it to his servants who sold it to W. Samuel Billingsly of London."

The fact that the "Wickenden Coat of Arms" is officially recorded indicated that the family had a responsible place in the fighting forces in the feudal times.

Branches of the Wickendens - I have been informed that there are a number of Wickendens buried in the church yard in Maidstone, Kent, as well as some in the graveyard of St. Nicholas Parish in Rochester. In 1923 I visited Canterbury and on the way from the railroad station to the Cathedral I stopped to read a poster on the telephone pole. It was a list of persons receiving public relief and the reason given therefore., 'The first name on the list was Mary Wickenden who was given shoes for her children so that they could attend school.

There are Wickendens in Oxfordshire also. William, born In 1614, who came to America from there in 1634, succeeded Roger Williams as pastor of the First Baptist Church in Providence, R. I. the oldest Baptist Church in America. Wickenden Street in Providence was named after him (that part of Providence formerly a slum has been rehabilitated). For several years (about 1950) a Wilfred D. Wickenden, a native of Oxfordshire, lived in Bronxville, N. Y. and represented the Midland Bank of London in New York. No direct relationship to the Wickendens in Kent on the part of these two is known. Some Wickendens settled in lower California about the time of the gold rush. One of these went to Peru, South America, and built a railroad. He came from Norwich.

There is a branch of the Wickenden family which centered around Tunbridge Wells in Kent. This branch descended from a Thomas Wickenden who lived in Frindsbury near Rochester, a nephew of our great great grandfather Thomas, father of Samuel. His son James set up a business of estate planning in 1830. His descendants include Charles R. F. Wickenden of Dallas, Texas, formerly of Chappaqua, N. Y. and Dan Wickenden, the writer. Charles R. F. Wickenden told me that the history of the town of Little Hampton on the English Channel tells of Wickendens who were hung as pirates.

Wickendens of Rochester, England - Getting back to our immediate family, Thomas Wickenden lived in Rochester in the 1700's. His son Samuel was a sailor and also a shoemaker. A copy of Culpepper's Herbal published in 1775, which I received as a gift

from Thomas Wickenden in Deal in 1937, contains Samuel's signature. Samuel lived at one time in the Chertsy Gate House in Rochester over the entrance to Cathedral Close which Dickens wrote about in "The Mystery of Edwin Drood."

Samuel's son was born near Rochester on December 29, 1826. He was married in Bethel Chapel, Rochester, on October 31, 1849, to Charlotte Quaife. Her ancestors were Huguenot weavers who escaped from Angiers, France, at the time of the St. Bartholomew massacres. Charlotte came from the family of James Quaife who set sail for Canada in 1832 and settled near Prescott and Cornwall, Ontario. The settlement of Canada was then taking place and the family had a difficult struggle to survive. After four or five years they returned to England destitute on the last ship sailing before winter set in. They were shipwrecked on the Northern coast of Ireland and had to work their way back to Rochester as best they could. Charlotte Quaife was red-headed and was described by her mother in a letter from Canada as being "careless".

Thomas was apprenticed to his father Samuel to learn navigation and sailing. He apparently sailed in the North Sea and near some of the Scandinavian countries. At the age of 34, he was Captain of a three-masted schooner, the Mary Caroline, which had a crew of nine men. On January 1, 1861, his ship was wrecked at the mouth of the Humber River, East Anglia, and all hands were lost. He was buried in the church yard at Great Grimsby nearby. His picture shows him to have a fine face and no doubt a genial personality. In addition to his widow, he left three sons: James, Thomas Rogers, (born February 7, 1853) and Robert J. who was born posthumously.

This tragedy left Charlotte Wickenden and her two sons, James and Thomas, destitute. She was given work as a practical nurse at the Watts Charity, known as the Six Poor Travelers. Charles Dickens wrote about this institution in his story of "The Seven Poor Travelers." Our father was a pupil at the Sir Joseph Williamson's Mathematical School, but it was necessary for him to give up his schooling at the age of 12. He finished the equivalent of the first year of high school and his mother then arranged for him to be apprenticed to a grocer. In order to pay the fee she had to get an advance from the manager of the Watt's Charity. Our father worked for the grocer for five years with practically no pay.

Emigration to Ohio - Charlotte Wickenden's brother, Reverend Robert Quaife, a Congregational minister, was already in the United States, and was a resident of Toledo, Ohio, where he organized the Adams St. Mission which is still one of the prominent social agencies of that city. Arrangements were made for Father to emigrate in 1870 to Toledo.

At this time the middle west was expanding and there was need for pioneer workers. One of Father's first jobs was firing slabs of wood in the boiler of a saw mill in East Toledo. Later he worked on a construction crew of the Pennsylvania Railroad in Toledo and helped to build the railroad bridge over the Maumee River. This experience led him to decide to be a civil engineer. He could not afford to go to college and was largely self-taught. During the depression of 1872-73, he studied trigonometry and after going

through the text book three times he mastered the subject which was so important to anyone who did surveying. As a Civil engineer he did remarkably well for a person who had such limited opportunities for education. He was married to Ida Consaul on December 17, 1879. In the year previous to Father's coming to America his older brother James had crossed and located in Toledo. He owned a photography business for a number of years, then did farming. In his later years he was in the printing business. He had three sons, Roy, Ernest and Rollin. Rollin is the father of James and Richard Wickenden, headmaster and assistant headmaster, respectively, of Tabor Academy in Marion, Massachusetts.

The younger brother Robert came to this country with his mother about September 1873. He attended Franklin School in Toledo and later helped James in the photography shop where he became interested in art. As a young man he found a patron in a Mrs. Coyle of Detroit, who made it possible for him to go to France to study painting. He married Ada Ahier of the Isle of Jersey and seven children were born to this union, namely: Alfred, Alice (Fifille), Henry, Yvonne (now a nun in the Order of St. Francis in St. Elizabeth's Hospital N.Y.C.) John, Marguerite, and Robert. Uncle Robert lived in Auvers-sur-Oise for over 20 years. 'This early life of the family has been described in a book by Alfred entitled "Castle in Bohemia."

-----

Quaife Family Shipwreck - As Ida remembers Grandmother Wickenden's story of her family being shipwrecked, they were returning to England because her father was ill and he wanted to get his family back among friends and relatives before he died. After the disaster Robert Quaife then 12 years old, walked all the way to Rochester and arrived there before the letter telling of their plight. The family was taken from one parish to the next by someone going that way with a wagon, with a letter from the parish minister commending them to the care of the next parish. Shortly after they reached Rochester the father died but he got his family home.