

Colonial *and* Revolutionary Families *of* Pennsylvania

Genealogical and Personal Memoirs

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(V) SETH (2) WILDER, son of Seth (1) and Miriam (Beale) Wilder, born at Hingham, Massachusetts, April 3, 1763. At the age of sixteen he served in the place of his disabled father and participated in the Revolutionary War battles of Saratoga, Monmouth and Stony Point, and during the latter was wounded by a bayonet thrust.

Seth (2) Wilder married Dorcas Briggs.

Children:

1. Reuben, of whom further.
2. William.
3. Townsend.

(Rev. Moses H. Wilder: "The Book of the Wilders," pp. 329, 336. George Lincoln: "History of the Town of Hingham, Massachusetts," Vol. III, p. 316. "Indiana Magazine of History," Vol. XXXI, No. 3, p. 169.)

(VI) REUBEN WILDER, son of Seth (2) and Dorcas (Briggs) Wilder, was born about 1793 and died after 1865. During the War of 1812 he raised a company of light horse and fought at Plattsburg and Sackett's Harbor. He survived the Civil War and when his son was at Murfreesboro preparing for the approaching campaign, Reuben Wilder wrote to his son from home at Kingston, New York, asking that he be allowed to serve on the staff of the unit to which his son was attached.

Reuben Wilder married Mary Merritt. (Merritt VI.)

Children:

1. John Thomas, of whom further.
2. Horace.
3. Elizabeth.
4. Clarissa.
5. Mary Ann.

(Rev. Moses H. Wilder: "The Book of the Wilders," pp. 336, 348. "Indiana Magazine of History," Vol. XXXI, No. 3, p. 169.)

(VII) BRIGADIER-GENERAL JOHN THOMAS WILDER, son of Reuben and Mary (Merritt) Wilder, was born at Hunter Village, Greene County, New York, January 31, 1830, and died at Jacksonville, Florida, October 20, 1917. Interment was in Forest Hills Cemetery, Chattanooga, Tennessee.

As a boy he served as an apprentice draftsman in a millwright plant at Columbus, Ohio, later establishing his own foundry and mill at Greensburg, Indiana. By the time of the outbreak of the Civil War his business was a success and his products were being sold in Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee. He was a member of the Democratic party when the war commenced, but decided that he would support the Union cause and had two six-pound cannon cast in his foundry. In May, 1861, he organized a light artillery company for the first three-year regiment recruited in Indiana, which was mus-

tered into service as Company K of the 17th Indiana Infantry, with Wilder as captain. June 12, 1861, he was appointed by Governor Oliver P. Morton lieutenant-colonel of the 17th Indiana Volunteer Infantry and was advanced to the colonelcy the following year. His command first saw service in West Virginia and was with Buell's army in the second day's battle at Shiloh. It was after this that he was given command, as senior colonel, of a brigade which served at Munfordsville, Kentucky, and in the Tullahoma campaign in Middle Tennessee. In June, 1863, when Hoover's Gap in the Cumberland Mountains was held by a strong Confederate force to give Bragg's main army time to fall back toward Chattanooga, Wilder's brigade forced the gap open and pursued its defenders when they retreated. As a result of the engagement the command came to be called "Wilder's Lightning Brigade." It was composed of the Indiana and Illinois infantry regiments, but it differed from other infantry commands in that his men were equipped, at the insistence of Wilder, with the then new model Spencer repeating rifles, and its troopers were mounted. Cist, the historian of the Army of the Cumberland, wrote, in 1897, to President McKinley: "General Sheridan told me just after the battle of Chickamauga that he would rather have Wilder's military reputation than that of any other man in the service." On August 6, 1864, Wilder was brevetted brigadier-general in recognition of his services.

Resigning from the army in October, 1864, he removed to Chattanooga, Tennessee, and took a leading part in the development of the natural resources around that city. He founded the Roane Iron Works and built one of the first blast furnaces in the South. In 1870 he established a rail mill at Chattanooga, and was also active in the promotion and construction of the Charleston, Cincinnati & Chicago Railroad. For himself and his associates he acquired about half a million acres of iron and coal lands in Kentucky, Virginia, North Carolina and Tennessee, and built the Carnegie furnace at Johnson City. He was mayor and postmaster at Chattanooga, pension agent at Knoxville, and commissioner of Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Park. He was a member of the American Institute of Mining Engineers, and an honorary member of the Iron and Steel Institute of Great Britain. President Benjamin Harrison asked General Wilder to serve as his Secretary of War, but he refused.

Brigadier-General John Thomas Wilder married (first), May 18, 1858, Martha Jane Stewart. (Stewart III.) He married (second), in 1904, Dora E. Lee, of North Carolina, whose father was a captain in the Confederate Army.

Children, all of the first marriage:

1. Mary, born February 18, 1859, died May 29, 1938.
2. Annie, born May 6, 1861, died February 10, 1931; married Frank A. Stratton.
3. Rachel, born January 1, 1865, died May 22, 1941; married James A. Maher.
4. Martha Rees, born June 9, 1868.
5. Stewart, born October 17, 1872.

6. Edith, of whom further.

7. Ruby, born March 30, 1880, died May 26, 1880.

(Rev. Moses H. Wilder: "The Book of the Wilders," pp. 348-59. F. B. Heitman: "Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army," Vol. I, p. 1035. Family records.)

(VIII) EDITH WILDER, daughter of Brigadier-General John Thomas and Martha Jane (Stewart) Wilder, was born at Chattanooga, Tennessee, November 8, 1875. Her early education was received at home through the employment of a tutor, after which she studied at Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania. She is much interested in horticultural work, and among the clubs in which she is a member are: The Acorn; Cosmopolitan Club of Philadelphia and New York; vice-president and director of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society; a director of the American Horticultural Society, Washington, District of Columbia; and is chairman of the Horticultural Committee of the Garden Club of America.

Edith Wilder married Arthur Hoyt Scott. (Scott V.)

(Family records.)

(The Stewart Line).

(I) JACOB STEWART, the first of his line to be of record, was of New Jersey and later of Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania. While a resident of New Jersey he served with the Continental Army in the Revolutionary War and, according to records in possession of his descendants, was taken prisoner.

Jacob Stewart married (first) Elizabeth Dunn. He married (second) Rachel Fisher. (Fisher I, Child 6.)

Children:

1. Benjamin, born January 17, 1780.
2. Charles, born December 2, 1781.
3. Edith, born June 23, 1783; married Mr. Riley.
4. Mary, born September 16, 1785.
5. Elizabeth, born February 28, 1788.
6. David, born April 15, 1790.
7. Hannah, born May 31, 1792; married Abel Fisher. (Fisher II, Child 2.)
8. Jacob, born October 14, 1794.
9. Silas, of whom further.
10. Barachiah, born January 11, 1799; married Polly Fisher. (Fisher II, Child 4.)
11. John, born November 6, 1801.

(Family records.)

(II) SILAS STEWART, son of Jacob and Elizabeth (Dunn) Stewart, was born in Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania, October 25, 1796, and died at Rockwood, Tennessee, February 17, 1890. For some time prior to his residence in Tennessee he was of Greensburg, Decatur County, Indiana, as indicated in his will, a copy of which follows:

I, Silas Stewart, of the County of Decatur and the State of Indiana, being in perfect health and sound mind and memory, do hereby make and publish this my last Will and Testament.

1st. I bequeath to my son, Daniel Stewart, if he survives me, Two Thousand Dollars to be paid him as soon after my death as possible.

2d. I bequeath to my son, John H. Stewart, all my real estate in Wilders addition to the city of Greensburg, containing about seven acres.

3d. To my daughter, Elizabeth Hogue, I bequeath Two Thousand five hundred dollars to be paid her as soon after my death as possible.

4th. To my daughter, Martha J. Wilder, I give one promissory note I hold on John T. Wilder for Six Thousand dollars to be given to her as soon after my death as possible.

5th. I give and bequeath to the Methodist Episcopal Church, first charge of the City of Greensburg, One Thousand dollars to be paid as soon after my death as possible to the board of stewards of said first charge, and by them to put at interest, which interest is to go for all future time to the support of the preacher, and I hereby require that the principal shall remain at interest, and the interest to be used only in the way above indicated.

6th. I bequeath to Ann Nevitt the sum of Two Thousand five hundred dollars to be paid to her as soon after my death as possible.

7th. It is my will that after all special bequests are paid that the remainder of my personal property and real estate shall be equally divided between my two daughters Elizabeth Hogue and Ann Nevitt.

8th. In all cases where special bequests are made to my children above, I will that if any of them should not survive me, then I desire that their children shall in that case have the same share the parent would have had if he or she had lived.

In Testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and seal this 22nd day of June, 1868, and again declare this to be my last Will and Testament.

(Signed) SILAS STEWART.

Witnesses :

WILL CUMBERCK

R. M. BARNES.

Silas Stewart married (first) a lady whose surname was Hendricks. He married (second) Rachel Fisher. (Fisher III.)

Children of the first marriage:

1. Daniel.
2. John H., married (first) Lucinda Nevitt; married (second) Mary Ridenow.
3. Elizabeth, married Samuel Hogue, and removed to Iowa.
4. Ann Mariah, married George Nevitt.

Child of the second marriage:

5. Martha Jane, of whom further.

(*Ibid.*)

(III) MARTHA JANE STEWART, daughter of Silas and Rachel (Fisher) Stewart, was born at Greensburg, Indiana, September 22, 1837, died at Johnson City, Tennessee, February 29, 1892, and was buried at Chattanooga, Tennessee.

She married Brigadier-General John Thomas Wilder. (Wilder—American Line—VII.)

(*Ibid.*)

(The Fisher Line).

The name Fisher indicates German origin, and it is highly probable that the remote ancestors of the family came over to England in the Saxon conquest of that country, and subsequently emigrated to Ireland, perhaps in Cromwell's colonization scheme. Family tradition states that they came from England.

(Records in possession of descendants of the family, citing: "A Historical Sketch of one of the Fisher Families by One of Them.")

(I) ABEL FISHER, son of Abel Fisher, was born at Mt. Mellick, Ireland, about 1730, and died at Fort Ligonier, Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania. He served some time in the British Army as a dragoon and, following his discharge, married Rachel Whoowee or Howee, a Quakeress, who was born at Eddenderry (Edenderry). They immediately sailed for America, the voyage lasting three months, and landed at Philadelphia. Mr. Fisher left one brother, Henry, and one half-sister, Nancy Lake, while his wife left brothers William and Mathias, and three sisters, Mollie, Nancy, and Hannah. Of these relatives none were ever known to come to America except Henry Fisher. The family kept track of him for some time, but for many years now all trace of him and his family has been lost. After his arrival in this country, Abel Fisher and his wife settled at Cape May, New Jersey, where the family resided for about twenty years and where their children were born. While there he owned a small boat in which he carried oysters to Philadelphia and brought back domestic goods.

In 1773 he concluded to emigrate to what was then the West. Procuring a wagon and a team of horses, he started for the redstone country, near the line between Westmoreland and Fayette counties, Pennsylvania. After a terrible journey over bad roads and mountains, late in the fall they reached a point one mile west of Fort Ligonier, now Ligonier Borough, where their team gave out and refused to go any further. Here they remained throughout the winter and finally concluded to make the neighborhood their permanent home. Subsequently Mr. Fisher purchased a tract of three hundred acres of land, two miles west of Ligonier, on the Two Mile Run. This land remained in the possession of the family for more than one hundred years.

Just as they commenced to make an improvement on their land the Revolutionary War broke out, and as they were on the frontier, and exposed to Indian raids, the family removed to York, Pennsylvania, where the women remained until the close of the war. Mr. Fisher and the two oldest boys returned to Ligonier, and lived amidst constant alarms and dangers, the Indians killing some of the settlers every year. Sometime during the war Mr. Fisher died at the fort, it was said, of pleurisy. As was common with the early settlers he requested that he be buried on his own farm. A squad of soldiers accompanied the funeral procession, and while they committed dust to dust, armed men stood around in the

bushes to guard against surprise by Indians. He was an industrious and thrifty man, and under more favorable circumstances would have succeeded well.

After the close of the war, the family, consisting of the widow and seven children, returned to the farm and commenced in earnest to make a home.

Abel Fisher married, in Ireland, February 27, 1750, Rachel Whoowee or Howee.

Children:

1. Henry, born March 25, 1751.
 2. Elizabeth, born December 3, 1752, died unmarried.
 3. Abel, born April 19, 1756; married Rachel Forbes.
 4. Mathias, of whom further.
 5. Elizabeth (again), born April 20, 1760.
 6. Rachel, born August 12, 1762; married, as his second wife, Jacob Stewart. (Stewart I.)
 7. Thomas, born October 29, 1764; married Prudence Shaw. In 1802 he removed to Mercer (now Lawrence) County, about four miles north of New Castle, where he spent his life. He died suddenly in 1848.
 8. Hannah, born February 11, 1767; married Samuel McDowell, and settled near Ligonier. They raised a large family, most of whom removed and settled in Mercer (now Lawrence) County.
 9. John, born September 22, 1769, was bitten by a rattlesnake and died within a few hours.
- (*Ibid.* Photostat of old family Bible in possession of descendants of the family.)

(II) MATHIAS FISHER, son of Abel and Rachel (Whoowee or Howee) Fisher, was born at or near Cape May, New Jersey, February 12, 1758, and died at Ligonier, Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania, February 17, 1834.

In 1780 he volunteered to go with General Clark on an expedition against the Indians in Illinois. The place of rendezvous was Wheeling, West Virginia. When his regiment arrived there, they found that General Clark had gone down the Ohio, leaving orders for them to follow, which they proceeded to do in flatboats. The season had now advanced to July. The river, as usual in midsummer, was falling rapidly. Colonel Laughrey, who commanded the regiment, thought it proper to send a dispatch to Clark, informing him that he was coming. Mathias Fisher, with four others, was selected to proceed with the dispatch in a canoe. After proceeding some distance they landed, and three of them went out to hunt, the other two remaining with the canoe. The Indians discovered these and fired on them, they pushed out into the river, and left those on the shore behind, who, of course, ran in the opposite direction. In the excitement the large knife carried by one of them fell to the ground and was stepped on. The knife came up through his foot, wounding him so that he was unable to travel with his companions, who carried him to a body of water and bound up the wound as best they could. He then told them to leave him there and to try and save themselves. He was never heard of afterwards. The other two concealed themselves till the main body came down, who were very cautious about landing for them, lest they might be a decoy.

The expedition then proceeded to a point a short distance below Cincinnati, in the northeast corner of the State of Indiana, where the current carried their boats near the shore and they were ambushed by a large body of Indians. Owing to the unwieldy character of their boats and the low stage of the water, they could neither land nor escape. Of the one hundred men, forty were killed in a few minutes and the others taken prisoner—not a man escaped. The colonel was not even wounded, but as he was an officer, he was taken to one side and tomahawked. A small river in that part of Indiana still bears his name, Laughrey. All the prisoners who were too severely wounded to travel were dispatched with the tomahawk. After the spoils were secured, the march began for the Shawnee towns in central Ohio, where they were initiated into Indian life by running the gauntlet and being adopted into Indian families. At that time there was not a white man in what is now the State of Ohio, except prisoners. After a captivity of three months, Mr. Fisher accompanied the family that had adopted him to Detroit, then held by the British, on a trading expedition. While there he persuaded them to buy him from the Indians, paying for him a blanket and a few trinkets. As it would have been madness to attempt to escape to the settlements in Virginia and Pennsylvania in the winter (the English proposed to give him his liberty on condition that he furnish security for his appearance in the spring), he succeeded in finding a Frenchman who went on his bond, and who sent him up to a farm he had on the border of Lake St. Clair, where he spent the winter threshing wheat.

In the spring the English gathered up their prisoners and proceeded to take them down over the lakes to a prison island they had in the St. Lawrence River. During the trip they passed near enough to Niagara Falls to hear it roar, but the guard refused to let them see it. Arriving at their destination they found it to be a small island in the middle of a deep and rapid river, on which hundreds of prisoners were closely guarded. No boat was allowed on the island, and as usual in prison camps, provisions were scarce, and the prisoners were continually laying plans to escape, which generally proved abortive. At length a company of twelve devised a plan which was partially successful. The cabins for the prisoners were enclosed with pickets, and between the pickets and the cabins was a space several feet wide. Lights were kept up all night and a sentry walked two sides of the square all night. During the day the prisoners had the liberty of the island. Gathering together on the outside of the fort, under the pretense of playing cards, they succeeded in cutting a picket at the ground sufficiently for a man to pass out. At nine o'clock the prisoners had to be in their cabins to answer roll call. On the appointed night, after the roll had been called, those who intended to escape had to come out of their huts, cross the walk and slip out through the pickets, running the chance, of course, of being seen by the sentry. Five of them succeeded in reaching the outside, but the sixth one was discovered and a bayonet charge sent

him back into his cabin. Those who had succeeded in getting out proceeded to the upper end of the island, where they had noticed some driftwood. Of this they made a rude raft. The one who could not swim they placed on top of it, the rest lay in the water, held to the raft and shoved off into the current which carried them to the Canadian shore, where they landed about five miles below. It was now morning, so they concealed themselves in the woods. Owing to the swift current of the river it was impossible for them to cross at that point to the American side. The next night they proceeded up the river past the fort to a point five miles above, where the river was comparatively calm. Here they hid themselves the second day. As it was necessary to procure some provisions before entering the wilderness, the next night they found a calf in a farm yard, but it did not propose to be killed without being heard. When the owner came out, of course, they fled. After all became quiet again they returned and found a bullock tied head and foot, which they dispatched at once. They took off the rounds and shoulder blades without skinning, took the farmer's boat and crossed to the American side. They then started through what is now the State of Vermont, then a dense wilderness, and on through the State of New York, till they reached the headquarters of General Washington, on the Hudson. On this journey they suffered terribly from hunger. Game and fish were abundant, but they had no way of taking them. If they had not been expert woodsmen they would certainly have perished in the wilderness.

When Mr. Fisher arrived at his home in York, Pennsylvania, after an absence of thirteen months, he was so changed by the hardships he had gone through that his mother and sisters failed to recognize him. They had never heard a word from him while he was gone and had given him up for dead.

His official statement as to his service, made by him when he applied for pension, reads: "Was engaged with the Indians below the mouth of the big Miami, Ohio; was captured, given up to the British at Detroit in Dec. 1781, and finally escaped July 13th 1782 from prison on an island near Montreal reaching home Sept 13th 1782." The date of this application was November 20, 1832, at which time he was of Ligonier, Pennsylvania.

Mathias Fisher married Martha Thompson, who died in August, 1828. Her father was a staunch Presbyterian and objected to the marriage on the grounds that Mathias Fisher had never been baptized. However, she had no such scruples and left her father's house, never to enter it again. Following the marriage they settled on a part of the old Fisher farm.

Children:

1. John, married Sarah Roberts and settled near New Castle, Pennsylvania.
2. Abel, married Hannah Stewart. (Stewart I, Child 7.)
3. Thomas, married Polly Kells. ✓
4. Polly, married Barachiah Stewart. (Stewart II, Child 10.)

5. Thompson.

6. Rachel, of whom further.

(*Ibid.* Letter in possession of descendants of the family, dated Blairsville, Pennsylvania, June 12, 1919, from Thompson F. Pershing to Miss Martha Wilder. Photostat of old family Bible in possession of descendants of the family.)

(III) RACHEL FISHER, daughter of Mathias and Martha (Thompson) Fisher, was born in Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania, February 11, 1806, and died at Greensburg, Indiana, June 13, 1864. She married Silas Stewart. (Stewart II.)

(Old family Bible records in possession of descendants of the family.)

(The Merritt Line).

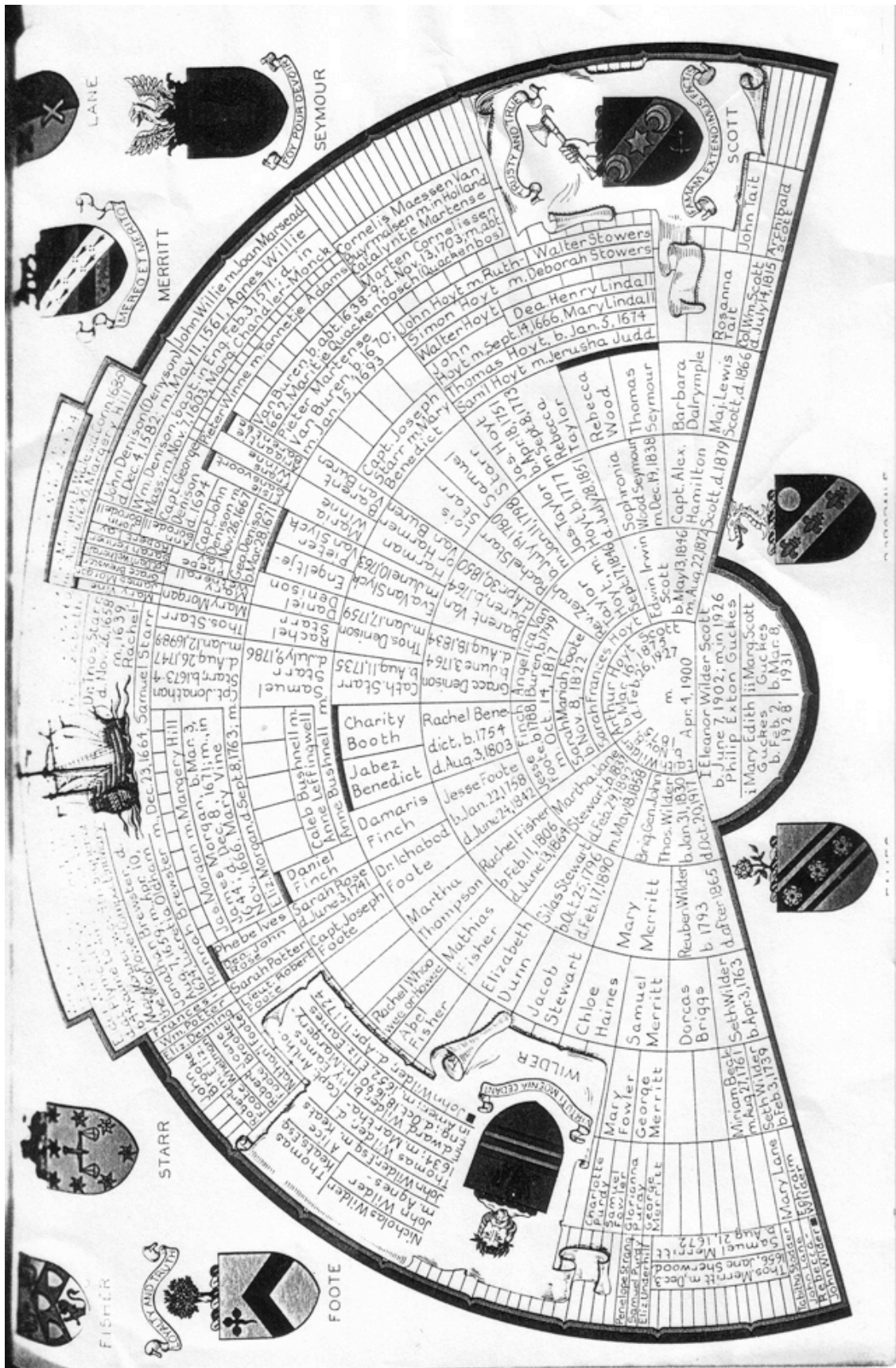
(I) THOMAS MERRITT, emigrant ancestor of the line, was born probably in England, in May, 1634, and died at Rye, New York, it is believed, in 1725. It is known that he was living as late as 1721.

As a child he came to Massachusetts with his parents and is first of record when he married Jane Sherwood, in 1656. In 1662 he was at Wethersfield, Connecticut, where he purchased a home lot of Thomas Standish. This lot adjoined lands of Thomas Standish, Robert Francis and the highway.

In 1673 he settled at Rye, New York, where he was a witness to a deed to Thomas Statham, January 24, 1676, and was one of the purchasers of Hog-pen Ridge on September 4, 1680. November 22, 1682, he bought of Jonathan Vowles land adjoining John Merritt's property, and in 1683 his name is found on a list of the proprietors of Rye. He was the owner of various other properties, and on February 14, 1690, the Rye proprietors acknowledged a grant to Thomas Merritt of a parcel of land called Pine Island, adjoining said Merritt's meadows. January 22, 1696, the Patent of Rye was granted to Joseph Theale, Thomas Merritt, Deliverance Brown and others at Hartford, and on January 19, 1697, Thomas Merritt and Deliverance Brown appeared before the General Court of Connecticut to obtain a charter for Rye. January 20, 1703, he gave a house and lot to his son Thomas; the house then being occupied by Thomas.

That Thomas Merritt was a man of prominence in his community is seen from the following list of offices held by him: constable, July 12, 1684; vestryman, February 28, 1694, and again in 1695 and 1697; one of a committee to select a minister, July 22, 1697; one of a committee to build a meetinghouse, September 25, 1697; collector of the minister's salary, 1667-98; deputy to the General Court, October, 1699; trustee, 1697-99; a proprietor of Peningo Neck, December 11, 1699; one of a committee to run a line between White Plains and Colonel Heathcote's patent, February 24, 1702; supervisor, 1705; one of a committee to settle the line between Greenwich and Rye, November 1, 1707; member of the Grand Jury, June 2, 1713-14-15-16; and a proprietor of Peningo Neck in 1715.

On October 20, 1688, Thomas Merritt signed an indenture, recorded May 15, 1690, in the records of Rye, making disposition of his property in case of death



FINNER



STARR



FOOTE



MERRITT



SEYMOUR



WILDER



SCOTT