

W. of Sam. White

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1961] Rebecca Lapham 83

REBECCA LAPHAM, WIFE OF SAMUEL<sup>3</sup> WHITE OR JOHN<sup>3</sup> WASHBURN?

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A paper originally in October 1960 at the annual meeting of the American Society of Genealogists, Concord, N.H., and revised somewhat for publication.

In the original records of the Town of Rochester, Mass., volume 1, page 4, there appears the following:

"Samuel White, Senior and his wife were born in March about ye 13 in ye year 1646 taken from his own record with ye births of his children."

Then follows a list of their eight children and their birth records, all on the same page. This shows they were all recorded on the same day and not at the time of birth.

By comparison the vital records as printed alphabetically do not give an accurate picture of the records as they are, a fact which is especially true in regard to those of this particular family. As they are printed the impression is given that all the children were born in Rochester, yet such was not the case and the most significant facts escape notice. Since all the data appears together on the same page in the original records the basis from which to work is provided and a challenge to solve the problem is created.

The most interesting and significant thing about this record is the fact that Samuel White and his wife were both born the same day, the same month and the same year and that it was "taken from his own records." This is the only record of its kind that the writer has ever found. Yet, we are baffled by the fact that there is no marriage record and he does not tell us her name. There is no record of his wife's death as such. However, it is believed that she was the Rebecca White who died at Rochester 25 June 1711 in her 65th year, hence born about 1646. This at least agrees with the year of birth of Samuel's wife.

We know quite a little about Samuel White. According to the Scituate vital records he was born 13 March 1646, the son of Resolved White, who, with his parents, came in the *Mayflower*. This verified his own statement about the date of his birth. Judging from the date of the birth of his first child, 24 Aug. 1669, he was married about 1668, when he and his wife were twenty-two. In 1671 he sold some land in Middleboro to Benjamin Church (Plymouth Colony Deeds, 4:229) and is called "of Sandwich." This indicates that he removed to that town about the time he was married or soon after and that their first five children probably were born there, although their births were not recorded on the town books. There is evidence that he was in Sippican as one of the proprietors 10 March 1679 and that the rest of the children were born in this new plantation, later called Rochester, which was established as a town in 1686, only about four years before he had all his children recorded, as we have noted above.

For many years descendants have tried to determine the parentage of Rebecca, his wife, by searching for a Rebecca born about 1646.

84 Rebecca Lapham [April 961]

To my knowledge no one has ever identified her. Many names have been suggested; and most frequently it has been thought that she was the grand-daughter of James Greene who died in Barnstable in 1731, naming in his will his grand-daughter Rebecca White. This will was dated 12 July 1727 (Barnstable Probate, 5:114). If a thorough search of the family had been made, it would have been found that James Greene had a son James born 15 Dec. 1665, who married about 1687 Anna Greenwood, and that their daughter Rebecca, born 19 May 1688, married 24 June 1711 Isaac White of the Brookline White family.

Searching Scituate Church records there appeared (on the first page) the following:

"Baptisms, March 15, 1646: Samuel White, ye son of Resolved Rebecca Lapham, ye daughter of Thomas."

Here in the same town, these two were baptized the same day, month and year; it did not seem possible that this could be merely coincidence. Rebecca Lapham must have become the wife of Samuel White. However, from previous knowledge of the Washburn family of Duxbury and Bridgewater, Mass., the writer knew that John Washburn, Jr., was supposed to have married Rebecca Lapham, daughter of Thomas, and that such was implied in the Bridgewater printed records. These Scituate baptisms seemed too fantastic, when taken in conjunction with the Rochester records given by Samuel White, himself, to be disregarded and indicated that further research should be undertaken. From experience with the Bridgewater vital records, as printed, it was known that some of the items in brackets were misleading and sometimes incorrect, especially the so-called "Private Records." Note, however, that this does not apply to Mr. Bowman's records of Bridgewater as published in the *Mayflower Descendant*; his transcription was *verbatim* and is excellent.

In the printed records of Bridgewater, 2:392, we find:

"John Washburne, Jr. and ——— m. April 16, 1679 (John Washburn and Rebecca Lapham GR 7; John Washburn Jr. & Rebecca Lapham P.R. 103)"

GR 7 refers to an Old Cemetery gravestone and PR 103 to *The Register*, 21:225, "Marriages in the town of Bridgewater previous to its division," communicated by Bradford Kingman, Esq., of Brookline. In this version the marriage record is complete. Since Mr. Kingman gave no reference to the source of his information, a comparison with the original records was made, and it was found that in every blank spot he had supplied the names of the wives. It is strongly suspected that he gleaned these names from Nahum Mitchell's *History of the Early Settlement of Bridgewater* (1840), some of which are now known to be incorrect.

John Cary, the first town clerk, never gave the name of the bride in the marriage record and he also omitted her name when the children are recorded. This seems to have been the custom in several of the town records, including the earliest records. The blank spaces do not mean that the name is worn off, faded or illegible, as one would be inclined

to believe; it was never in the original record. The following is the way the record in question reads in the original:

"The marriage of John Washburn Junior hear in the town of Bridgewater the sixteenth of April 1679."

There is no authentic record that John Washburn married Rebecca Lapham. The children are recorded to him alone; there is no death record for either him or his wife, but their gravestone gives the year of his death as 1719, ae. 73, and wife Rebecca as 1717 without her age at death.

Did John Washburn really marry Rebecca Lapham? A thorough search of the probate records, deeds, etc., and study of the Lapham and Washburn families gives not the slightest evidence that such was the case. There is only one minor circumstance. Rebecca Lapham's mother married secondly, William Bassett, Sr., of Duxbury and early removed to Bridgewater, probably taking her six little Lapham children with her. The youngest son died there unmarried in 1676; the daughter Mary may have married her stepbrother, Joseph Bassett, but the other three children married in Scituate and lived there. There seems to be no association between the two families as far as the records show. John Washburn, Jr., and his wife were married 16 April 1679, when Rebecca Lapham would have been thirty-three; their last child was born in 1688, when she would have been forty-two. There is nothing else by which to judge the age of Rebecca, wife of John Washburn. Thirty-three does seem unusually old for a first marriage in those days. John Washburn had six children: Josiah, John, Joseph, William, Rebecca and Abigail. With the exception of Joseph these are not Lapham names.

On the other hand Samuel White and his wife Rebecca were married about 1668 when they were twenty-two. Their last child was born 6 June 1690 when she was forty-four. They had eight children living when the record in Rochester was entered: John, Samuel, Elizabeth, Judith, Hezekiah, Susanna, Penelope and William. All of these names, but Hezekiah, are found in earlier generations of the White family; and Elizabeth and Judith are found also in Rebecca Lapham's mother's family, the Tildens. Rebecca Lapham's birth is not on record; only her baptism which, as given above, is the same as Samuel White's, in the same town, and directly below his in the church records. This is the only evidence which can be offered, that she married Samuel White. However, the implication is very strong, and no authentic statement has been found which contradicts it. Certainly it is obvious that, if the Bridgewater records as printed had not been tampered with, Rebecca Lapham would have been considered as the wife of Samuel White. This is a very difficult and misinterpretations can occur when records are not printed *verbatim*.

If we are unwilling to accept their baptismal records as proof that Rebecca Lapham married Samuel, then we should at least concede that the parentage of Rebecca, wife of John<sup>3</sup> Washburn, as well as the parentage of Rebecca, wife of Samuel<sup>3</sup> White, is unknown.