

LANGFORD ORIGINS REDUX

By Patricia Law Hatcher, FASG

The English origins of Anna/Hannah¹ (Langford) (Potter) Beecher of New Haven and her husbands, William Potter and Isaac¹ Beecher, were identified in this journal in 2004 as St. Thomas in the Cliffe, Lewes, Sussex.¹ A possibility was presented that Anna/Hannah might be the daughter of a John Lankeford, based on the 1598 will of Richard Lankeford of Wilmington, which named “John Lankeford three children of his in the Cliffe of Lewes,” his brother Robert Lankeford, and his wife Agnes, to whom probate was given.² No relationship was stated between Richard and John, but the children jointly received 6s. 8d.—twice the amount given to the church and poor, and much more than the 6d. given to each of his two godchildren. It seems most likely that John was Richard’s brother, but we cannot exclude the possibility that he was the son of Richard. The registers for the several parishes in Lewes and for Wilmington have no entries for John or his children.

Various analyses of the *Potter* and *Langford* surnames showed them to be distributed throughout Sussex. There were, for example, almost three dozen wills for the surnames in half as many parishes, none especially close to Lewes. Lewes is a market town slightly south and east of the geographical center of Sussex and as such might have attracted persons from a broad section of the county.

It is always difficult to determine how deeply and how broadly to research, even more difficult when the work is for someone else. I presented the information that we had reached the point of diminishing returns, but was instructed to do what I would do for my own ancestry. Reading all Langford and Potter wills (but not administrations) from 1607 (Hannah’s first marriage) to 1640 (an arbitrary endpoint for years in which her children might be mentioned in an English will) for the eastern two-thirds of Sussex (i.e., proved in the Archdeaconry of Lewes) cut the number in half and seemed a reasonable compromise. Three wills proved the effort worthwhile.

Memorandum that William Langford of heathfield being of perfecte remembrance did the six and twentyth day of Aprill or thereabouts Anno Dm 1618 make and declare his will nuncupative in manner following viz he comended his soule to Almighty God And willed his body to be buried Item he did give and bequeath to Stephen Langford twenty pounds of money Item to *William Potter and Agnes* his wife twenty pounds in money Item to the wife of Obey Langford Five pounds in money Item to Joane Langford tenn shillings Item to John Muncke three shillings four pence Item to Richard Melse three shillings and four pence Item to Roda Langford thirty shillings

¹ Patricia Law Hatcher, “English Origin of the Potter and Beecher Families of New Haven, Connecticut,” TAG 79(2004):28–33.

² Registered Wills, Consistory Court for the Archdeaconry of Lewes, Diocese of Chichester, A10:123 [Family History Library (FHL), Salt Lake City, film #97,238].

And he did make and appoynte Obey Langford his executer Witnessed at the making and declaring hereof Thomas Taylor Margaret Langford and others. [*emphasis added*]
Proved 16 May 1618³

Heathfield is about fifteen miles northeast of Lewes, slightly less distant from Wilmington. This provided specific names to research and focused the efforts geographically. There is one Potter will in adjoining Burwash,⁴ but the helpful wills were for Langford, both for individuals named in William's will.

The second will found was that of Stephen Langford of Waldron, yeoman, written on 24 January 1638 and proved on 14 March 1639. It names daughters Agnes, Elizabeth, Mary, and Sarah under 21; younger son William, elder sonne Stephen under 21; wife Judith.⁵ Waldron adjoins Heathfield. With six children under 21, Stephen would seem to have been born in the 1590s or early 1600s.

The third will was the most frustrating. The original 1641 will of Obey Langford is in awful condition. There are three pages, two pages for the will and one page of the inventory. The sheets are very large (tall); it took two photocopies to cover a sheet. They were folded vertically and had rotted away along the fold, completely separating the two parts, so at best you can read the left and right sides independently and try to match them up. A full transcript [*emphasis added*] is presented here so that it is clearer just how much of the center of each line is gone (it varies). Note "the mouse ate my ancestor" problem in the interlined section.

In the name of god Amen the fifteent
of the raigne of o[u]r Sovraigne Charles
defender of the faythe &Cet I Obey
(beinge of health in body, and of good a
this my last will and testamt in m
by mee heretofore made and
bequeath my soule into the hand
Holy gost my sanctifyer; three p
goodness I onely trust to bee saved
buried accordinge to the discretion
p[ar]ish of Burwash, the summe of t
next after my decease: Item I g
deceased the summe of five pds of
daughters of the sayd *Stephen Langef*
Item I give to *Rode Green* the now wif
the like summe of five pds of like lawfull

Anno Dni, 1641: and in the seventeenth year of
England Scotland France and Ireland Kinge
of Burwash in the County of Sussex yeoman
ee God y[e]rfore;) doe make, ordayn and declare,
nge and disanullinge all other and former wills
following : First and principally I give and
and Creator, Jesus Christ my redeemer, the
hose mercyes, by whose meritts, and of whose
ground from whence it came, to bee decently
ed Item I give to the poor of the
of England to bee payd wthin one month
second sonne of *my Cosen Stephen Langeford*
d : Item I give to *Anna Langeford* one of the
five pounds of like lawfull money of England:
f *Cranbrook* in Kent broadweaver
Item I give to *Thomas Hasleman* of *Robersbridge*⁶

³ Diocese of Chichester, Consistory Court for the Archdeaconry of Lewes, Register Copy Wills A16:159 [FHL film #97,241].

⁴ Will of James Potter of Burwash, written 5 Aug. 1612, proved 28 Sept. 1612, names son Thomas Potter, daughter Tryphena Potter, and wife Joane Potter (Diocese of Chichester, Consistory Court for the Archdeaconry of Lewes, Register Copy Wills A14:15 [FHL film #97,240]).

⁵ Diocese of Chichester, Consistory Court for the Archdeaconry of Lewes, Register Copy Wills A26:112 [FHL film #97,244].

⁶ Robertsbridge is in the parish of Dallington, which is south of Burwash.

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in said County of Sussex husbandma of Forty shillings of like lawfull money of England
Bridget Hasleman sister to the sayd asleman, the like summe of Forty shillings : Item
Elizabeth Tuxesonne wife of xesonne my cosen Forty shillings. To *my cosens William*
Bright, Mary Bright, and Dorothy Bri orty shillings : Item I give to *Mary Foxe* of Waldron
sister to my now wife the somme of lawfull money. to *John Foxe sonne of Ananias Fox*
 late of the p[ar]ish of Watlinge in the sd Co deceased the somme of Five pounds of lawfull

[interlined, written very small]

I give to Stephen Potter sonne of my Cosen Anne Potter, daughter to my *geford the summe of five pounds:/*

money: ^ to *Cornelius Foxe, John Foxe, and* *Foxe* children of *Cornelius Foxe the elder* of Lewes
 in the County of Sussex Miller to each pds a peice: All wch sayd sevall summes and summes
 of money before specified my mind bee payd to all and only the sayd p[er]sons before
 specified, wthin one whole year next my Executrix hereafter named, if the sayd
 p[er]son or p[er]sonns shall be livege at m shall happen tht any of them shall dep[ar]t this mortall
 life before mee the sd *Obey Langefor* [evry?] such legacy devised to [evry?] such legatee
 as shall dye before mee, shall bee d by this my will to *Margarett my now wife*
 whome I now make and ordayne my last will and testamt : And overseers of
 the same & constitute and assign of Burwash yeoman, and *Cornelius Foxe*
 of Lewes aforesd Miller des c to the sd *Margarett my Executrix,*
 for the executon of this my and meaninge yrof : And as for and
 concerninge a cottage wth fower whereof I purchased of John Weston of
 Burwash late deceased, in lease and occupation of John Weston
 or his assignes, my will is ife and executrix, shall have and enjoy the
 sd cottage wth the Fower acres of e, and after her decease my will is, that
John Foxe, sonne of Cornelius Foxe with mede, shall have and enjoy the residue
 and remainder of the years tht shal the sd lease of the aforesayd Cottage and
 ffower acres of land : And as for message or tement called Quarrham alias
 Quarrewood, wth all edifices and build purtennces to the same belonging
 [next sheet]

together wth seven peires or rolls of ure, meadow and wood wth the appurtennces contayning
 in the whole of estimacon seven and twen or losses, scituate, lyinge & beinge in the
 sd p[ar]ish of Burwash, in the sd Count tomary tenemt : holden of the Manr of Rober
 sbridge in the sd County of Sussex f Edward Polhill of Burwash in the sd County
 of Sussex Clerke, as by an Indent te being dated the 22 day of December in
 the tenth year of the raign of f more is, between mee the sd *Obey Lagnford* [sic]
 Edward Polhill Clerke, and Le more playnly and at large appear, and
 whereas in law the absolute ch l in Edward Polhill sonne of Edward
 Polhill aforesd Clerke, who is in nnot till he attyn the age of 21
 years, accordinge to the custome nney the same, messuages or tenement
 called Quarreham, alias Quar of mee the sd *Obey Langford*, and the
 sd Richard Johnsonne or his assign bey Langeford: And whereas the sd Ed
 ward Polhill the father, hath as ants in the sd indenture tripartite [cov(en)anted?]
 and granted to and wth mee the sd my heires and assignes, th[a]t the sd Edward
 Polhill his sonne, shall wthin three shall attayn his age of 21 yeers, surrender
 the sd customary mesuage or tenemt my last will and testamt : now my mind and will
 is yt immediately after the sayd surrender the sayd Edward the sonne to the use of my last will

The American Genealogist. New Haven, CT: D. L. Jacobus, 1937-. (Online database.
AmericanAncestors.org. New England Historic Genealogical Society, 2009 - .)

and testam: as aforesd; that then my
 have and enjoy the sd message and the
 assignes duringe her naturall life,
 use and behoofe of the sd *Stephen
 Waldron* aforesd, and the heire male
 and for default of such Issue, thn
 sd *Stephen*, and the heires males of the
 of such Issue to the use of the *third*
 body of the sd third sonne lawfully be
 and behoofe of all and [evry?] other
 successively one after another
 of their severall bodyes, lawfull
 in seniority and ages, as is afo
 of the right heires of the sd
 purpose whatsoever,
 my funeralls discharged,
 wife and executrix shall have
 wisse whereof I the sayd
 contayning two sheets of paper
 sheet my seale the day and year fix
 [witnesses Ed. Polhill, Edw: Polhill junr, John Bunce]

Executrix Margaret, or her assignes, shall
 ll and[—] [evry?] of the appurtennces, unto her and her
 nen[] of wast: And after her decease, then to the
 nne of the sd *Stephen Langeford* deceased late of
 the sd *Stephen* the sonne lawfully to bee begotten
 behoof of *William Langeford*, second sone of the
 nne lawfully to bee begotten, and for default
 phen the father, and to the heires males of the
 for want of such Issue, then to the use
 sd *Stephen Langeford the Father*, begotten
 oritye and age, and to the sev[er]all heires males
 timely one after another as they shall bee
 ch Issues thn to the use and behoofe
 ener : And to no other use intent or
 ny goods and Chattells after my debts payd
 ll and mind is that the sd *Margarett my lovinge*
 ler owne prop[er] use and behoof for ever. In
 ands unto this my last will and testament
 subscribed my marke and put to this last
 Obey Langeford
 [signed by mark]⁷

This is an original will that was unregistered, so no recorded copy is available to fill in the missing segments. There is another microfilming of the will,⁸ but it does not reveal the key information.

The mention of Stephen Potter, son of Anna and William Potter, four years after Anna had departed for New England, suggests that Stephen, born in 1614, had not emigrated with his mother, stepfather, brothers, and half-brother in 1637, but had remained in England. Note that Anna is referred to by the surname of her first husband, possibly because the bequest was to a Potter son, or possibly because Obey could not remember her second married name. She was also, at times, referred to as Hannah Potter in New England, so there may be a custom or preference here with which we are not familiar.

⁷ Diocese of Chichester, Consistory Court for the Archdeaconry of Lewes, Unregistered Wills, No. 160 [FHL film #97,289]. There is part of an inventory for the hall chamber (primarily bedding), the buttery, and the cheese house.

⁸ Diocese of Chichester, Consistory Court for the Archdeaconry of Lewes, Unregistered Wills [FHL film #1,885,591, item 3]. On this version, the halves are not shoved together, and more text is readable.

There are several versions of the registers for Burwash (beginning 1558),⁹ Heathfield (beginning 1581),¹⁰ Mayfield (beginning 1570),¹¹ Waldron (beginning 1564),¹² and Warbleton (beginning 1559).¹³ These parishes are contiguous and cover an area of about ten miles by five miles. There are very few Langford entries in those registers, which are incorporated into the family construction, below.

We learn how the given name of the testator, Obey Langford, was pronounced from its spelling in the parish register for Warbleton, a parish adjoining Heathfield:

Obay Lankfoord, son of Rychard Lankford, baptized 6 August 1587¹⁴

⁹ Burwash Parish Registers at the East Sussex Record Office in Lewes [FHL film #1,067,139]; Bishops' Transcripts at the West Sussex Record Office in Chichester [FHL film #1,468,824, items 2-3]; partial abstracts by William Harold Challen [FHL film #416,751] and H. K. Percy-Smith [FHL film #1,364,151 item 24]; International Genealogical Index [IGI] extractions for christenings and marriages (batches C148001 and E042841). For all parishes, Challen's typescript includes a detailed analysis of the contents and condition of the register, followed by entries from Bishops' Transcripts of the deficits, where possible.

¹⁰ Early parts of the register are fragments; portions of many of the pages are too dark to read well into the 17th century. Christenings, marriages, and burials were recorded in one chronological list until 1612. (Heathfield Parish Registers at the East Sussex Record Office in Lewes [FHL film #1,894,267, items 5-10]; partial abstracts by William Harold Challen [FHL film #416,752, beginning in 1600] and in the Michael J. Burchall collection [FHL film #1,364,157, items 3-4; marriages only]).

¹¹ Mayfield Parish Registers [FHL film #352,100].

¹² Waldron registers on microfilm are incomplete and include abstracts by William Harold Challen [FHL film #416,753; marriages only] and in the Michael J. Burchall collection [FHL film #1,364,159, item 1; marriages only], and an unattributed typescript of marriages [FHL film #990,099, item 8], but no original registers. A transcription by P. Yeats in 1988, which includes christenings, marriages, and burials, was read at the Society of Genealogists, London, by Paul Blake.

¹³ Warbleton Parish Registers at the East Sussex Record Office in Lewes [FHL film #1,067,123, items 4-13]; Bishops' Transcripts at the West Sussex Record Office in Chichester [FHL film #1,468,992, item 3]; partial abstracts by William Harold Challen [FHL film #416,753], in the Michael J. Burchall collection [FHL film #1,364,169, item 2], and an unattributed transcript at the Sussex Record Society, Barbican House [FHL film #504,418]; and IGI extractions for christenings [batch C042841] and marriages [batch E042841].

¹⁴ Warbleton Parish Register, controlled extraction batch C042841 [FHL film #504,418]. Lest there be any doubt that this was intended as a quality name, the register between 1580 and 1620 contains the following names for infants (an oral reading is suggested): A Buesnot (2), Amytie, Bethankfull (12), Confydence (2), Constance (2), Constante (2), Depend (2), Eschewevel, Fayntnot (2), Faythfull, Feargod (2), Fernot (4), Fregyft (5), Gevethankes (2), Godhurd (2), Goodgift (3), Grace, Humillitie, Incessed (2), Indued, Lament (4), Learnewysdom, Mackmarcye, Mangnyfye (2), Mercy, Morefrute (3), Morehope, Muchemercye (2), Nomeryt, Obay, Obedyence (4), Pacience (2), Preserved (2), Refrayne (5), Renued (2), Repent (7), Repentance (2), Retorne (2), Sillence, Sindinye (10), Soryforsine, Unfayned, and Zelus. Clearly this was a parish with strong Protestant leanings. The rector from 1571 to 1604 was William Hopkinson, but he was often absent, the parish being run by the curate Thomas Hely from 1583 to 1596. Both men shared Puritan leanings and got in trouble for them more than once (Jeremy Goring, *Church and Dissent in Warbleton, c.1500-1900*, Warbleton and District History Group, Publication No. 5 [Warbleton, 1980], 6).

The American Genealogist. New Haven, CT: D. L. Jacobus, 1937-. (Online database. *AmericanAncestors.org*. New England Historic Genealogical Society, 2009 - .)

There are three Langford burial records in Heathfield; the one for William Langford helps clarify our suspicions that he was childless.

1617[/8] March 22	Richard Langford Householder
1618 May 10	William Langford an old Bachelor
1625 Nov. 28	Widdow Langforde

An additional record was found for Stephen Langford, father and son:

On 6 May 1626, with final concord on 20 Jan. 1627, John Taylor of Nutfield, Surrey, yeoman, leased to Stephen Langforde of Heathfield, miller, a house called Merryfields, barn, and land at Street End near Scotsford in Heathfield. On 2 April 1660, Stephen Langford of Cranbrook, Kent, broadweaver, son of Stephen Langford of Waldron yeoman deceased, transferred the lease to John Houghton of Mayfield gent and Robert Foster of Mayfield yeoman in trust for John Baker of Mayfield Esq.¹⁵

GENEALOGICAL SUMMARIES

The family groups below are based on the wills of William Langford of Heathfield (1618) and Obey Langford of Burwash (1641) and the few parish records.

Obey refers to "Stephen Potter sonne of my Cosen Anne Potter, daughter to my [missing relationship] [Lan]geford." Anna/Hannah/Agnes (Langford) (Potter) Beecher was born around 1582 (married in 1607, two children born after second marriage in 1620), hence she was about five years older than Obey. The missing term is almost surely not *brother*, since Anna was five years older and Obey was born three years after his parents' marriage.

The not-insignificant amounts (£20 and £5) given to several of the individuals in the wills suggest a close relationship. Thus, *cosen* (which can refer to almost any relationship beyond direct line or sibling) in Obey's will most likely means either first cousin, niece, or nephew, and the missing term is most likely *uncle* or *cousin*. Step relationships are also a possible (although technically not accurate) meaning of *cousin*, but this does not help with Obey's relationship to Anna.

If the missing term is *uncle* (or *cousin*, but meaning uncle), then *Cosen Anne* was his cousin and the ages are compatible. If the missing term is *cousin* and means cousin, then Anna is Obey's first cousin once removed. Although this is a generational difference, it isn't unexpected in an extended family.

The question then becomes: "Can Anna be a daughter of John of Lewes named by Richard of Wilmington?" There are several scenarios that would permit this, but because of chronology, they depend on disparate generational ages (see date estimates below) and other uncommon circumstances. It would seem ideal to make of Richard of Warbleton and Burwash equivalent to Richard of Wilmington, but the will of Richard of Wilmington (1598) suggests that he had no children, while the Richard of Warbleton and Burwash had at least three children, includ-

¹⁵ Calendar items in the Archive of the Baker and Kirby families of Battle, Withyham, and of Lower and Middle House, Mayfield Place and the Vicarage, Mayfield, at the East Sussex Record Office, Access-to-Archives database, <www.a2a.org.uk>.

ing Obey. So it is best, lacking further findings, to assume that Anna/Hannah/Agnes is not the daughter of John of Lewes. However, it should be remembered that she married in Lewes and that she probably did not go there on her own.

The estimated birth years for Richard of Burwash, William, the father of Anna/Hannah/Agnes, and the father of Stephen suggest that they could be siblings:

Possible siblings:

- 1 i -- LANGFORD, father of Anna/Hannah/Agnes (Langford) (Potter) Beecher, b. by say 1556.
- 2 ii WILLIAM LANGFORD, b. by say 1558, bur. Heathfield, 10 May 1618.
- 3 iii RICHARD LANGFORD, b. by say 1559; m. Burwash, 29 June 1584, JOHA[NE?] STARTUPP.
- 4 iv — LANGFORD, father of Stephen, b. by say 1565.

1 — LANGFORD, father of Anna/Hannah/Agnes (Langford) (Potter) Beecher, was born by say 1556 and married by say 1581.

Child of — Langford:

- i ANNA/HANNAH/AGNES¹ LANGFORD, b. say 1582, cousin of Obey, received £20 from William; m. (1) St. Thomas in the Cliffe, Lewes, 6 Oct. 1607, WILLIAM POTTER, m. (2) St. Thomas in the Cliffe, Lewes, Jan. 1619[/20], JOHN¹ BEECHER. For a list of Anna's known children, see TAG 79(2004):28–33.

Children of William and Agnes/Anne (Langford) Potter included: *Stephen Potter*, bp. St. Thomas in the Cliffe, Lewes, 1 Aug. 1614, apparently living in England in 1641 when he received £5 from Obey. He cannot be the Steevne Potter who m. St. John the Baptist, Lewes, 9 Jan. 1627, Jane Lane.¹⁶

2 WILLIAM LANGFORD was born by say 1558 (estimating age 60 at death) and was called “an old Bachelor” when he was buried on 10 May 1618 in Heathfield.

3 RICHARD LANGFORD was born say 1559 and married in Burwash (as “Richardus Laynckford”) on 29 June 1584, JOHA[NE?] STARTUPP. He is probably the Richard Langford, householder, buried at Heathfield on 22 March 1617[/8]; she is probably the Widdow Langforde buried there on 28 November 1625, and she may also be the Joane Langford who received 10s. from the will of William Langford in April 1618.

Children of Richard and Joh[ne?] (Startupp) Langford:

- i OBEY LANKFORD, son of “Rychard Lankford and his wyf,” bp. Warbleton, 6 Aug. 1587, bur. Burwash, 18 Aug. 1646; Obey Lankfoord m. Warbleton, 29 Jan. 1609, MARGARET FOXE, who swore to William's will and received £5 from him.¹⁷ William Langford appointed Obey [no relationship stated] his executor.
- ii CATHERINA LANCKFORD, *filia Rich[ard]i*, bp. Burwash, 1 Feb. 1589[/90].
- iii MARIA LANCKFORDE, *filia Rich[ard]i Lanckforde*, bp. Burwash, 8 Oct. 1592; Maria Lanckford, *filia Rich[ard]i Lanckforde*, bur. Burwash, 12 Oct. 1592.
- iv “The sonn of Richard Lanckforde unbaptized,” bur. Burwash, 1 April 1596.

¹⁶ St. John the Baptist, Lewes, parish register [FHL film #1,067,235].

¹⁷ There was no residual heir; probably Obey as executor got the remainder.

ENGLISH ORIGIN OF THE POTTER AND BEECHER FAMILIES OF NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT

By Patricia Law Hatcher, CG, FASG

In her novel *Oldtown Folks* (1869), Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote that “Family feeling, family pride, family hope and fear and desire, were, in my early day, strongly-marked traits. Genealogy was a thing at the tip of every person’s tongue, and in every person’s mind. . . .”¹ The genealogical heritage of Harriet and her brother, the popular minister Henry Ward Beecher, was well known and accepted in New Haven. Their father, the Rev. Lyman Beecher, was a highly influential Congregational minister. The details of the family’s European origins are, however, a bit cloudier.

The American ancestry is usually given as Lyman⁶ Beecher (*David*⁵, *Nathaniel*⁴, *Joseph*³, *Isaac*², *John*¹). Isaac² Beecher was the son of the immigrant midwife Hannah¹ (—) (Potter) Beecher. Hannah is said to have been the widow of a John Beecher, who, in turn, is said to have been one of the party of six who left Boston with Theophilus Eaton for Long Island Sound to locate the best settlement for the group headed by Eaton and John Davenport and who perished on the explorations. No contemporary document, however, has been found that records either Beecher’s given name or his demise. The 1657 New Haven will of Hannah Beecher names her eldest son, William Potter, and her son Isaac Beecher. She had been preceded in death by another son, John Potter, who left three children, named in the will.² Donald Lines Jacobus argued that the various references in New Haven records to widow Beecher and to widow Potter referred to the same woman,³ a conclusion confirmed in the recent analysis by Robert Charles Anderson of the New Haven Book of Alienations.⁴

¹ Harriet Beecher Stowe, “Chapter XIX: Miss Mehitable’s Letter, and the Reply, Giving Further Hints of the Story,” *Oldtown Folks* (Boston, 1869), 227.

² Treatments of the early generations are found in James Shepard, “The New Haven (Conn.) Potters, 1639,” *The New England Historical and Genealogical Register* 54(1900):20–26; Donald Lines Jacobus, *Families of Ancient New Haven*, 9 vols. (Rome, N.Y., and New Haven, 1922–32), 1(1922):162–63, 6(1926):1459–61 (hereafter cited as Jacobus, *New Haven Families*); and Mary Walton Ferris, *Dawes–Gates Ancestral Lines*, 2 vols. (n.p., 1931–43), 2:671–73. John Beecher’s death is mentioned in Edward E. Atwater, *History of the City of New Haven to the Present Time, With Biographies, Portraits, and Illustrations* (New York, 1887), 83.

³ Donald Lines Jacobus, “The Widow Potter–Beecher of New Haven,” *TAG* 34(1958):218–20.

⁴ Robert Charles Anderson, “New Haven Proprietors,” *Great Migration Newsletter* 13 (2004):9.

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This John Beecher has been thought by many to be the John Beecher baptized on 28 March 1594 at St. Lawrence Jewry, London, son of William and Judith (Quarles) Beecher, and grandson of Henry Beecher, alderman of London.⁵

On 1 July 1635, William Potter, husbandman, 27, Francis Potter, wife, 26, and Joseph Potter, 20 weeks, brought certificates to travel from London on the *Abigail*.⁶ The William Potter in New Haven, son of Hannah (—) (Potter) Beecher, had a wife Frances and a son Joseph. His age suggests that Hannah married the first time by about 1607. Through life events, Isaac Beecher's birth was estimated as occurring between 1619 and 1623. Although men have certainly been known to marry widows a decade older than themselves, this casts doubt that the John Beecher born in 1594 was Isaac's father.

Jacobus suggested that Hannah's son John Potter might be the man who married Elizabeth Wood in Chesham, Buckinghamshire, in 1630.⁷ This possibility and others were investigated, but all proved to be dead ends.

Beecher is a relatively uncommon surname in England, so an extracted entry in the International Genealogical Index [IGI] for a chronologically reasonable marriage in January 1619 between Ann Potter and John Beecher at St. Thomas, Lewes, Sussex, begged to be explored.⁸ The register for St. Thomas in the Cliffe begins in May 1606.⁹ Cliffe Hill is in South Malling (so called to distinguish it from East and West Malling in Kent), which later became the parish to the east of Lewes.

Marriage. 1607.	William Potter married to Ann. Langford the 6. October
Baptism. 1608.	Rob: ^William^ sonn of William Potter 28 August
Baptism. 1608[/9].	John Pollard the sonn of willia[m] pottir the 10. Januaere ¹⁰
Baptism. 1609[/10].	John the sonne of william potter and {were baptised the 18th of Margaret ye daughter of Tho James {februarye ¹¹
Baptism. 1611[/2].	Mary the daughter of William Potter of Malling ¹² baptized March 21th.
Burial. 1613.	John sonne of Willeam Potter buryd the 5th day of June
Baptism. 1614.	Steven sonne of William poter was bapt August. 1
Burial. 1616.	The wiffe of Richard Beecher. October 16.
Burial. 1619.	William Potter houskeeper. ¹³ August 14

⁵ This is probably presented most thoroughly in Patricia Roberts Roney, *Ancestors and Descendants of John Lyman Beecher and H. Maria Alling, California Pioneers* (Mountain View, Calif., 1983), 1–8.

⁶ John Camden Hotten, ed., *The Original Lists of Persons of Quality . . .* (London, 1874), 97–98.

⁷ Jacobus, *New Haven Families*, 6(1926):1459.

⁸ IGI, controlled extraction M148121.

⁹ St. Thomas in the Cliffe parish registers [Family History Library (FHL), Salt Lake City, film #1,067,241].

¹⁰ This is only 4 months after the baptism of William. There was a Pollard family, but it did not have a William.

¹¹ This is 16 months after the baptism of William.

¹² Malling is South Malling. Its registers begin in 1629.

¹³ *Housekeeper* means *householder* (*Oxford English Dictionary*).

The American Genealogist. New Haven, CT: D. L. Jacobus, 1937-. (Online database. *AmericanAncestors.org*. New England Historic Genealogical Society, 2009 - .)

Marriage. 1619[20]. John Beecher and Ann Potter by licence January [*day hidden in gutter*]

Burial. 1627. Richard Beecher was buried the 29th Novembris.

Marriage. 1628. John Martin & Elizabeth Beecher married 19th August

Clearly there are problems. The records don't match with the New Haven family, but they don't match internally, either. The records suggest that this clerk was careless. The style is irregular, the ink not well mixed, and there are corrections made throughout, some in an apparently different hand. It isn't good genealogical practice to say blithely "the clerk made a mistake" (particularly not more than once), but given the uncommon surname and the items that do fit well, it is tempting to speculate that both the baptism of the first John and the burial of John are errors.¹⁴ Unfortunately, the lack of a baptism for Isaac Beecher casts some doubt on this theory.

Because of the checkerboarding of parishes under the jurisdictions of Lewes and Chichester, records were examined for both. The marriage licenses for the Consistory Court of the Archdeaconry of Lewes do not contain a license for *Potter* and *Beecher*.¹⁵ Those for the Consistory Court of the Bishop of Chichester and the Peculiar Court of the Archbishop of Canterbury for the Deanery of South Malling are deficient for the period 1616–44, having only a few fragments beginning in 1623.¹⁶

There are only a handful of Sussex wills in either jurisdiction for *Beecher* in the latter half of the sixteenth and first half of the seventeenth century. Fortunately, one of these confirmed the hypothesized identification:¹⁷

[*faint, in clerk's hand*]

The last will and testament [nuncupative?]¹⁸
of Richard Beecher made

¹⁴ Although these records leave room for a possible birth of John Potter in 1616, the daughter of the New Haven John Potter married in 1650, so such a birth would be too late.

¹⁵ Marriage license registers 1586–1900, Archdeaconry of Lewes, Consistory Court [FHL film #1,469,405, item 2]. Entries are in Latin, but indexed marginally by surname.

¹⁶ Edwin H. W. Dunkin, *Calendar of Sussex Marriage Licenses*, Suffolk Record Society, 6(1907).

¹⁷ Peculiar Court (South Malling), probate records, 1588–1858, microfilm of original records at the Lewes Probate Registry and the East Sussex Record Office, Lewes, "Original wills, v. C–E 1605–1636" [FHL film #97,295]. The *Index Library*, vol. 24, identifies this will as Bundle E, 14. The bundles are not identified on the microfilm, the wills are filmed from back to front within bundles, and this will is marked as 76.

¹⁸ The word—which may belong instead at the end of the second line—is faint, but it is totally consistent with this reading, the letters appear to be the same as in the word *nuncupative* in the prior will on the film (in the same clerk's hand), and no likely alternative word presents itself. The will is in the first person—not the third person, as would be expected of a nuncupative will—and has apparent signatures of witnesses, but has no testator signature. This suggests that Pamer scribed the will (the handwriting clearly matches), but that Beecher died before it could be signed, and rather than reword and rewrite it himself, the clerk simply had the about-to-be witnesses sign it. The probate is the standard format used by the clerk.

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[in the hand of Robert Pamer]

In the name of God Amen the 17th of December Anno dom 1627 in the third year of the Raigne of our sovereign lord Charles by the grace of god of England, Scotland, France & Ireland kinge defender of the faith &c I Richard Becher of the parish of St. Thomas in the Cliffe neere Lewes in the County of Sussex miller beinge in perfect minde and memory I thank god And first I comend my soule into the hands of almighty god who gave it me And my body to be buried in the [ehure?] church yard at Maulinge &c

Impr. I give & bequeathe unto Richard Becher sonn of my brother John Becher beinge my godsonn the som of tenn shillinges if he be livinge, but if he be not livinge [*words scratched out*] then I give & bequeath the said some of ten shillinges to John Becher his brother.

It. I give & bequeath to Isaacke Becher & to Thomas Becher sonn of my said brother John Becher to eache of them two shillinges & six pence.

It. I give & bequeath to Abraham Bernard sonn of Abraham Bernard of the Cliffe beinge my god sonn the some of three shillinges fower pence/the rest of my goods I give & bequeath to Elizabeth my wiffe whome I make & appoynt sole Executrix of this my last will & testament paying my debtes and [bequestes?] [*last two words faint, in clerk's hand*]

[no signature]

Robarte Pamer [*this surname likely is equivalent to Palmer*][*these lines faint*] the marke of

Henry Chatham

[*Latin statement of probate is faint; it gives the date as xxix die monat Januaryij Anno dom 1627.*]

Although the name *Beecher* is uncommon, almost every Beecher family had a son named John, so attempts to place him prior to finding Richard's will would have been speculative. Now, however, we are seeking a Beecher family with brothers John and Richard. The IGI contains no likely pair. One probate was identified with a promising location, that of William Beecher of Lewes, 17 August 1598, but it simply gave the probate to Thomas Holford, taylor, creditor of the estate, and Edward Newsom.¹⁹

By chance, a pertinent Langford will was found. Although several parishes lie between, Wilmington is only eight miles to the east of Cliffe [*emphasis added*]:

In the name of God Amen In the year of our Lord god one thousand five hundred ninety eight the three and twentieth daye of January I Richard Lankeford of the parishe of Wilmington and diocease of Chichester being sicke in Body and whole in mynde thancks bee to Almighty god doe ^make^ and ordeyne this my last Will and Testament in manner and forme as followeth First I bequeath my soule to Almighty god my Creator and redeemer by whome I trust to bee saved and my body to be buried in the church yard of the parishe of Wilmington or else where Item I bequeath to the church and poore of the parishe of three shillings foure pence Item I give and bequeath to *John Lankeford three children of his in the Cliffe of Lewes* six shillings eight pence and if any of them do happen to dye the one to bee the others heyre [i.e., heir] Item to Robert Lankeford my Brother my sackloth doublet and A letherne doublet one frize jerkin Item I will give and bequeath Edward Embery and Elizabeth Fuller my godchildren six pence a peece Item I bequeath to Alice Bysell my servannt one chest one hechell [i.e., hetchel] The rest of all my goods unbequeathed my Debts payd and my Legacyes performed and fulfilled I give and bequeath to Agnes my wyfe whome I make my holl Executor of this my last will and testament John Parker and John

¹⁹ Archdeaconry of Lewes, Act Book B2:258 [FHL film #97,304, item 2].

The American Genealogist. New Haven, CT: D. L. Jacobus, 1937-. (Online database. *AmericanAncestors.org*. New England Historic Genealogical Society, 2009 - .)

Marshall to bee my [ov]erseers and to have for their labor two shillings six pence A peece Richard Lankeford his marke Bartholemew Stroke John Embry witnesses
[Probate in Latin, 30 May 1598, given to Agnes Lankford relict.]²⁰

There are no Langford baptisms in Wilmington. The burial of Richard *Langford* on 4 February 1597 was recorded by the churchwarden. The parish was without a vicar from 1595 until 1598, so only burials were recorded during this period.

The Lewes parishes of All Saints (begins 1561), St. Anne's (1608), St. John sub Castro (1602), St. John the Baptist (1558), St. Mary Westout (1608), St. Michael's (1606), and South Malling (1629) were checked for any *Beecher*, *Langford*, or *Potter* entries, but there are many gaps and no entries were found other than for children of an Anthony Beecher at St. Michael's in 1620, 1622, 1629, 1632, 1634, and 1636, and a 1621[2] marriage at All Saints between Thomas Vigor and Joane Potter, both of Dallington.²¹

GENEALOGICAL SUMMARY: POTTER

WILLIAM POTTER was born say 1582 and married on 6 October 1607 at St. Thomas in the Cliffe, Lewes, Sussex, England, ANN/HANNAH¹ LANGFORD. He was buried there on 14 August 1619.

Children of William and Ann/Hannah¹ (Langford) Potter, all events St. Thomas, Lewes:

- i WILLIAM² POTTER, bp. 28 Aug. 1608; m. say 1633, in England, FRANCES —; emigrated to New England.²²
- ii JOHN POTTER, bp. 18 Feb. 1609[10] (not 10 Jan. 1608[9]), probably not the one bur. Lewes, 5 June 1613; m. say 1635, probably in England, ELIZABETH —; emigrated to New England.
- iii MARY POTTER, bp. 21 March 1611[2]. No further record found.
- iv STEVEN POTTER, bp. 1 Aug. 1614. No further record found.

GENEALOGICAL SUMMARY: BEECHER

1 —^A BEECHER.

Children of —^A Beecher:

- i RICHARD BEECHER, b. by say 1590 (estimating age 25 at marriage), bur. St. Thomas, Lewes, 29 Nov. 1627; m. (1) an unknown wife who was bur. there, 16 Oct. 1616; m. (2) ELIZABETH —; likely ELIZABETH (—) SHEPHEARD, as a marriage to widow

²⁰ Registered Wills, Consistory Court for the Archdeaconry of Lewes, Diocese of Chichester, A10:123 [FHL film #97,238].

²¹ William Harold Challen, typescript abstract of Bishops' Transcript [incorrectly identified as Parish Register Transcript, 1606–1812, in the catalog, this concentrates on Bishops' Transcripts for periods deficit in the parish registers] for St. Michael's, Lewes, vol. 79, #21 [FHL film #416,754]. His wife is named as Elizabeth in the last entry. He was a churchwarden in 1629.

²² For further information on all the American immigrants, see the previously mentioned treatments by Shepard, Jacobus, and Ferris.

The American Genealogist. New Haven, CT: D. L. Jacobus, 1937-. (Online database. *AmericanAncestors.org*. New England Historic Genealogical Society, 2009 - .)

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Shepherd is recorded 14 April 1618 in Ringmer,²³ which is just on the other side of South Malling from Lewes. His widow is likely the Elizabeth Beecher who m. St. Thomas, Lewes, 19 Aug. 1628, John Martin.

- 2 ii JOHN¹ BEECHER, b. by say 1590 (4 children in 1627); m. possibly (1) an unknown wife; m. (2) Lewes, Jan. 1619[20], ANN/HANNAH¹ (LANGFORD) POTTER.

2 JOHN¹ BEECHER married possibly first an unknown wife; he married secondly, at St. Thomas, Lewes, in January 1619[20], ANN/HANNAH¹ (LANGFORD) POTTER. He is said to have died in New England in 1637/8.

Children of John¹ Beecher and possibly a first wife (order from 1627 will):

- i RICHARD² BEECHER, b. by 1627. No further record found.
ii JOHN BEECHER, b. by 1627. No further record found.

Child of John and Ann/Hannah¹ (Langford) (Potter) Beecher (order from will):²⁴

- iii ISAAC BEECHER, b. between 1620 and 1627, probably by 1623; m. New Haven, Conn., about 1644-47, MARY —; emigrated to New England.
iv THOMAS BEECHER, b. by 1627. No further records found.

The Potter-Langford work was done for John Baxter Black of Mansfield, Ohio. My appreciation to Robert Charles Anderson, FASG, who examined the St. Thomas, Lewes, register, and agreed with my evaluation that the clerk's entries showed a pattern of sloppiness and, in addition, found the burial record for widow Beecher that I had overlooked, and to Lloyd DeWitt Bockstruck and Joseph Crook Anderson II, CG, FASG, who helped me puzzle over the illegible portions of the Richard Beecher will, and to Myrtle Stevens Hyde, FASG, who helped with the problematic words in the Richard Lankeford will.

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²³ Ringmer Parish Register [FHL film #1,067,274, item 12].

²⁴ Shepard states: "She has been considered to be the mother of Isaac Beecher, for she calls him her son in her will and gave him one-third of her property; but recent investigations, it is claimed, show conclusively that Isaac was only a step-son, the son of her second husband by a former wife." Chronologically, this could be true, but neither these "investigations" nor the basis for this conclusion has come to light.

USELESS AND TEDIOUS

Respect for the elderly apparently was not automatic among the early Roxbury, Massachusetts, church members:

1674 Month 12 day 14. Old Mother Roote who was Tho. Ruggles widow afore. She lived not only till past use, but till more tedious than a child. She was in her 89 yeare.¹

¹ Death record, *Roxbury Land and Church Records*, Boston Record Commissioners' Report, 6(2nd ed.; Boston, 1884):181.

The American Genealogist. New Haven, CT: D. L. Jacobus, 1937-. (Online database. *AmericanAncestors.org*. New England Historic Genealogical Society, 2009 - .)