

From the Governor

I do hope that all of you are doing well as we hunker down in our homes. During these times of self-exclusion from society (and our Society in particular), it's always good to reflect on our ancestors and the trials they experienced in their times. In a time of scientific knowledge, we have (at least) the benefit of knowing what we are fighting! No vapors, no guesswork, and no leeches to try to solve the problem. The fact that you are here to read this shows the tenacity of your ancestors, come flood, famine, pestilence, and warfare.

However, it is my duty to say that we will have to cancel our Spring meeting. Hopes to move it out a month to the end of April are not realistic. However, if you have any business to come before the Branch, please let your officers know.

Our pot-luck Fall Meeting will be held on Saturday, August 29, at the barn of Mila Cunningham. (It is far nicer than you imagine a “barn” might be.) Details will come out at the beginning of August with hopefully all of “this” behind us.

1st Deputy Governor Joyce Knight's obituary follows. This is a good time to note that Debbie Fain, our Branch's Elder, is at your beck and call for any members that might need a word of cheer during times of sickness.



Tartan Day 2020.

— Sumner G. Hunnewell, Governor, Missouri Branch

Obituary: 1st Deputy Governor, Joyce Knight



Joyce Alene Williams Knight, 80, of Sweet Springs, Mo., passed away on Saturday, March 21, 2020, at Centerpoint Medical Center in Independence, Mo.

Born Sept. 29, 1939, at the home of her grandparents in Sweet Springs, Missouri, she was the daughter of Charles L. and Elsie Wheeland Williams. On April 14, 1957, she married Kenneth Dean Knight her high school sweetheart who preceded her in death on Sept. 26, 2013. She was also preceded in death by her parents.

Survivors include three sons, Tony Knight of Blue Springs, Mo., Paul Knight and wife Barbara of Oak Grove, Mo. and Steve Knight and wife Michelle of Concordia, Mo; one daughter, Linda Knight Bray and husband Neal of Sweet Springs, Mo; nine grandchildren, and 14 great-grandchildren.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Disciples of Christ Christian Church, 400 Bridge St., Sweet Springs, MO 65351 or the Sweet Springs Restoration Foundation in care of Jared Brewer at Equity Bank, 300 S. Miller St., Sweet Springs, MO 65351. Friends may sign the online register book at www.campbell-lewis.com

Lightning Is Striking again, and again, and again!

For safety's sake, we are told today, "When thunder roars, go indoors!" In colonial times the causes of thunder were still conjectured,¹ but the results of lightning to the settlers of New England were not theoretical but dangerous indeed. Where nowadays we are used to the common parlance of an "act of God," in the days of our ancestors the more personal "immediate hand of God" was used in the cases when houses, forts, ships, or people were stuck by lightening, causing death and destruction. It was often a case for coroner's juries to be assembled to examine the body and determine the cause of death.

Marshfield in New Plymouth colony had an extraordinary occurrence of two lightning strikes affecting a common family, one in 1658 and the other in 1666. This made such an impression of the contemporary chroniclers that it appeared in multiple accounts of the time.

On 31 July 1658 while haying, John Phillips, Nathaniel Thomas and another man espied a storm and made for (and reached) Phillips' house. Years later Thomas wrote

The Clouds flying exceeding Low & thick soe that the heauens were much darkened Then in a moment came down (as it were) a great ball of fire with a Terrible crack of Thunder & fell Just before where the s^d Phillips sat, my eye then happening to be on him saw him once start on the stole [stool] he sat on & fell from thence dead on the hearth backward without any motion of life...I doe not remember there was any outward appearance of hurt vpon the body of the s^d Phillips, a young child being at that moment about three foot from s^d Phillips had noe harm.²

Morton, in his *Memoriall*, speaks of this more curtly and piously as "...it pleased God that by Thunder and Lightning on *John Philips of Marshfield*, in the jurisdiction of *New-Plimouth*, was suddenly flain."³

A coroner's inquest was convened. The members were Josias Winslow, Sr., John Bradford, Samuell Arnold, Thomas Doghead, John Russell, John Adams, Timothy Williamson, Abraham Jackson, Samuell Baker, Anthony Snow, Joseph Rose, and John Caruer [Carver]. They provided the results of their investigation on 4 August.

Wee find, that this psent day, John Phillips, Juni^r, came into his dwelling, lately knowne or called M^r Buckleyes house, in good health, as Goodwife Williamson afeirmeth, and sat vpon a stoole by the chimney, and by an immediate hand of God, manifested in thunder and lightening, the said John Phillipes came by his death.⁴

It is through inquest that another possible eyewitness (and wife of one of the jurors) was identified, Mary (Howland) Williamson.⁵

A scant eight years later on 23 June 1666, the "immediate hand of God" intervened again, this time at the house of John Phillips, Sr. A drought had stricken the New Plymouth colony, which held a Day of Humiliation

to beseech God for relief. The day after, fourteen people were in the elder John Phillips’s house when “about the middle of the said day there arose in the north the most dismal black cloud, I [Samuel Arnold] think, that ever I saw.” The house was struck and Grace (–) (Holloway) Phillips [wife], Jeremiah Phillips [son], and William Shurtleff lay dead. With the tempest came a tornado, which uprooted trees but caused no other damage. Perhaps due to the number of eyewitness accounts, no coroner’s jury was required.⁶

As noted above in the case of John Phillips, Jr., there seemed to be nothing unusual to note on the body and nothing was reported. However, the third and last event to be covered exemplifies the requirements of the coroner’s jury to thoroughly strip, examine, and document anything unusual about the corpse.

On 15 June 1660, three sailors (Phillip Sliver, William Johnson, and James Pierce) making their way for Plymouth harbor to escape the weather were lost due to the low tide and fog. They found themselves north of town as a storm came up. Their shallop was hit by lightning, ending the life of Boston sailor Pierce. As soon as the body was recovered that day, a “corrowners enquest” was summoned. Members of the inquest were Gyles Rickard, James Cole, Samuell Hickes, Joseph Bradford, John Rickard, Samuell Sturtivant, John Morton, Thomas Lettice, John Moses, Job Almy, Arther Vernam, and Thomas Lucas. Their description of the corpse was that Pierce was:

...burnt on the right side downe to the calfe of his legg, as alsoe his shirt burnt on his stomach and other ptes of it, his wastcoate being lased close with a fishing line, and not burnt, saue only scorched in the inside next to his shirt...James Peirse, being on the fore cuddy of the said boate, was stroke ouerboard, and wee conceiue that, possibly falling suddenly into the water, it might hasten his end...⁷



Rev. Samuel Arnold, Sr., of Marshfield and member of the John Phillips, Jr., inquest, passed to Rev. Increase Mather, the 1658 account (written years later by eye-witness Nathaniel Thomas) as well as an another firsthand account of the 1666 event. These were published along with other stories of lightning strikes in his *Remarkable Providences*. Reports from members of coroner juries, who documented what they saw, were used by Mather to “entertain” and inform. Entry and exit points of lightning, effects on clothing of the victims and household goods, sights and smells are described in exacting detail.

Unlike some ministers of the Gospel of today, the colonial divines, seeing that many of those struck by lightning were good and reverent Christians, avoided a *quid pro quo* stance at the death of the colonists by

thunder and lightning. However, the Providence of God was always at the forefront. For example, after the 1666 events, Morton writes, “...foon after a day of Humiliation was obferred by fome Congregations , for the bleffing of Rain in the Drought...that fad froke by the Thunder and Lightning at *Marshfield* fell out : fo that we may fay with the Pfalmift unto the Lord, *By terrible things in Righteousnefs thou haft answered us, O God of our Salvation.*”⁸

Coroners’ juries continue to provide valuable historical as well as genealogical information. They are gruesome reading, however, as you read through a list of people frozen to death, children falling down wells, and out-and-out cruelty and murder.

— Sumner Gary Hunnewell

NOTES:

¹ See especially Increase Mather, *Remarkable Providences* (London: John Russell Smith, 1856), chapt. III, and Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana* (Hartford, CT: Silas Andrus & Son, 1853), vol. II, bk. 6, chapt. III.

² Nathaniel Bradstreet Shurtleff, *Thunder & Lightning; and Deaths at Marshfield in 1658 & 1666* (Boston: privately printed, 1850), 18. Damage to the house included “many bricks of the chiney were beaten downe the principle Rafters split the battens & lining next the chiney in the camber broken, one of the maine posts of the house into which the sumer was framed torn in to shiuers & great part of it caried seuerall rod from the house, the dore where the ball of fire came downe...out of the gert or sumer afores^d being a dry oake was peices wonderfully taken...”

³ Nathaniel Morton, *New=Englands Memoriall* (Boston: Club of Odd Volumes, 1903), 155.

⁴ Nathaniel Bradstreet Shurtleff, ed., *Records of the Colony of New Plymouth in New England*, vol. 3 (Boston: Press of William White, 1855), 148.

⁵ *New England Historical & Genealogical Register*, 6 (1852): 347. Frank Farnsworth Stare, *Williamson and Cobb Families* (Hartford: n. p., 1896), 7.

⁶ *Memoriall, supra*, 178. *Thunder & Lightning, supra*, 14. This thin volume provides genealogical information about those victims of the storms of 1658 and 1666. William Shurtleff was the progenitor of the family in the United States and ancestor of Nathaniel B. Shurtleff, who also was the editor of the oversized, heavy, and indispensable *Plymouth Colony Records* and *Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay*.

⁷ *Records, supra*, vol. 3:195-96.

⁸ *Memoriall, supra*, 180. Other attempts at ascertaining God’s displeasure through thunder and lightning can be found in *Magnalia, supra*, 2:372, 395, and *Memoriall, supra*, 178-79.

(Reprinted from *Newsletter of Descendants of Fossors, 1609-1860*, Issue 1, August 2016.)

St. Aspinquid

I will provide you with a vignette about Maine and there will be a QUIZ at the end, but not what you'll be expecting. So, let's start with something that is just out and out wrong. Let's talk about St. Aspinquid. Evidently a decade back, there was a great brouhaha about moving a pile of rocks, which supposedly marked the grave of St. Aspinquid upon Mt. Agamenticus in York. The legend has it that this Christian Indian traveled from the East to the West Coast ("the California sea") and back spreading the Good News. At his death in 1682, he was so loved that natives sacrificed animals in his honor to the tune of 6,711 animals, thus:

25 Bucks, 67 Does, 99 Bears, 36 Moose, 240 Wolves, 82 Wild Cats, 3 Catamounts, 900 Muskquashes, 3 Ermines, 50 Weasels, 59 Woodchucks, 482 Foxes, 32 Buffalos, 400 Otters, 620 Beavers, 1,500 Minks, 110 Ferrets, 520 Raccoons, 500 Fishers, 38 Porcupines, 832 Martens, and 112 Rattle Snakes.

Why would anyone find this credible? Wouldn't at least one of the Mathers written about this? How easy was it to drag 99 bears around? Was there an ermine blight that year (after all, only three were sacrificed)? Did the natives have rattlesnakes in baskets for just such occasions? Where did they find a buffalo? And with 1,500 minks, why wasn't Zsa Zsa Gabor invited to this party?

Although much can be found on the Internet about the good saint, who seems to have been a Christian native of Nova Scotia, no one seems to bother quoting Charles E. Banks, the noted historian of York, who points out that all of this sea-to-shining-sea native information is taken from the book *Genealogical Sketch of the First Three Generations of Prebles in America* (1868). When one looks there, we find that all of these animals add up to 6,710 (one short!). But, even that source came from "...a pamphlet account of 'the Preble families in Portland,' printed for private circulation, in 1850, by the late Hon. Judge Wm. Pitt Preble..." The pamphlet, which was "printed, but not published," was titled *A Genealogical Sketch of the Preble Family Resident in Portland, Me., A. D. 1850*. And buried on the last page is the history of St. Aspinquid. There we find the missing animal! Here we find that not 500 fishers were sacrificed but 501 fishers.

The quiz is - assuming an average weight for these animals how much meat (in tons) would all of these animals weigh?

Bibliography

Charles Edward Banks, *History of York Maine*, Vol. 1, 3rd printing (Portsmouth, NH: Peter E. Randall, 1990), 28-29.

Geo. Henry Preble, *Genealogical Sketch of the First Three Generations of Prebles in America* (Boston: David Clapp & Son, 1868), 12n-13n. (Also found in *New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, vol. 22, no. 3 (July 1868), 316n.)

Wm. P. Preble, *A Genealogical Sketch of the Preble Family Resident in Portland, Me., A. D. 1850* (Portland, ME: Harmon and Williams, 1850), 28.

Another Pilgrim Group

No, not THAT one.

This was called the United Order of Pilgrim Fathers. What was it? It was a New England only, fraternal—insurance society. Founded in Lawrence, Massachusetts, in February 1879, it evidently had rituals like many fraternal societies at that time and had chapters in various towns (Cambridge, Massachusetts, had four in 1887), by 1899 there were 193. Also by that date, they had paid \$2,500,000 in death benefits.



Bibliography

Albert C. Stevens *The Cyclopædia of Fraternities* (New York: Hamilton Print and Publishing Company, 1899), 193-94.

Cambridge Tribune, 10:33 (22 October 1887), 6.



Your Officers

Governor, Mr. Sumner G. Hunnewell

2nd Deputy Governor, Mrs. Danny Cherry (Nelta)

Recording Secretary, Mrs. Mark E. Braton (Marie)

Registrar, Mrs. James K. Cunningham (Mila)

Advisor to Branch Governor, Mr. Blair Pickard

Historian, Mrs. Herbert E. Boyd (Marie Ellen)

1st Deputy Governor, *vacant*

Elder, Mrs. William Fain (Debra)

Corresponding Secretary, Mrs. Edward Dati (Amy)

Captain, Mr. Gene Boyd

Parliamentarian, *vacant*

Contact information is in our directory.

Check out our website:

<https://missourisocietyofthepilgrims.org/>

About 108 tons.

Quiz answer: