

Untangling a quartet of Tassells

By the mid-1840s three brothers had settled and married in or around the parish of St George in the East, London. It's not clear when these three Tassell brothers from deepest darkest Essex arrived on the edges of the metropolis. They were certainly at home with their parents at King Street, Chelmsford in 1841 according to the census.

Three brides for three brothers

In the summer of 1845 the eldest of the three, Thomas Snow Tassell, married the widow Mrs Alice Lewis née Griffiths. Thomas himself is also recorded as a widower and it is possible that he had married a few years earlier in Chelmsford to Sarah Finch. Though the actual record of this marriage [Chelmsford 1843 3rd quarter Vol 12 pg 87] needs to be consulted in order to confirm whether or not this was Thomas' first marriage. In any event I have not yet found a burial record before 1845 for Thomas' first wife whoever she may have been¹.

Alice Lewis was the daughter of Richard Griffiths and Alice Bates. Her first marriage was in 1832 to Samuel Lewis with whom she had at least four children, the eldest of which, Richard Samuel Lewis b.1833 is the great grandfather of the husbands² of my mother's sister. Hence my interest in this family.

I presume Alice's father died sometime in the early 1830s though I have not been able to identify a burial record. Alice's mother, also named Alice, remarried in 1835 to widower James Joseph Pearce. Samuel Lewis was a witness to the wedding.

A month after Thomas Snow Tassell and Alice's 1845 marriage at St John, Bethnal Green, Thomas' brother Samuel Tassell married Alice's stepsister Jane Pearce in the same church. In each of the two marriage records all parties are recorded as living on Birdcage Walk (now called Columbia Road and not to be confused with the more famous Birdcage Walk which runs along the southern edge of St James's Park between Buckingham Palace and Parliament Square).

In the following year in 1846 the youngest of the Tassell brothers, James Davey Tassell, married Sarah Pearce at the parish church of St George in the East. In Jane's marriage the previous year her father is recorded as James Joseph Pearce, a waterman. Sarah's marriage record gives her father as simply James Pearce, also a waterman. Are these the same men making Sarah and Jane sisters?

Jane Tassell was a witness at Sarah and James' marriage strongly suggesting a sororal relationship however Jane was James' sister-in-law which could equally explain her role in the nuptials. I have yet to find a baptism record for Sarah Pearce.

James Joseph and his first wife Sarah baptised at least 5 Pear[c][s]e children; James b.1810 baptised at St John, Wapping in 1813, Anne Maria b.1816 and Samuel b.1818 baptised on the same day at St Paul, Shadwell in 1818, and Elizabeth b.1820 and Jane b.1823 baptised on the same day at St Andrew, Holborn in 1824.

¹ Of course it is possible TST lied and his bride was still alive and the two had amicably separated to pursue new partners since the complexity and cost of Divorce was prohibitive to all but the well off (and brave).

² My aunty having divorced her first husband would later go on to marry his brother.

Early years of marriage

Sarah's address when she married in 1846 was 33 Sidney Street, Stepney. In the 1851 census James Joseph Pearce was in the Mile End Poor House. His second wife (Alice's mother) had died in 1849. It is possible that her death certificate recorded her address and, if this was also Sidney Street, could help to confirm Sarah's lineage but for the moment, I am presuming she was the daughter of James Joseph and sister to Jane.

The census records of 1851 suggests that none of these couples had any children in the first half decade of their marriages. Thomas Snow Tassell died in 1849 while his younger brothers and their spouses went on to have successful families into the 1850s and 60s. However, there are four Tassell children whose births were registered in the district of St George in the East between the years 1846 and 1849. Were these in fact children of the Essex Tassells? All the children had died before 1851.

Tassell infants

All four births and deaths were registered at the St George in the East registry office. And all burials seem to have been in the parish's Wesleyan burial ground. I have not been able to find any baptism records for these children. The four children were -

Sarah Jane Tassell	1846-1848
Jane Tassell	1848-1850
Sarah Tassell	1849-1849
Ann Maria Tassell	1849-1850

Obviously, the full births and deaths records held by the General Registry Office should reveal their parents but in the absence of purchasing those records I put forward the following as an argument for who their parents might be from the evidence available online.

Sarah Jane

- Sarah Jane's birth was registered 3rd quarter 1846 so much more likely to be Thomas' or Samuel's daughter rather than James'.
- Sarah (Jane) burial in 1848 gave her address as 20 Stepney Causeway, parish of Ratcliffe.

Jane

- Jane's birth was registered 2nd quarter of 1848 more than a year after all 3 brothers had married.
- Jane's burial record in 1850 gives her address as 10 Cornwall Street, parish of St Georges in the East.

Sarah

- Sarah's birth was registered 2nd quarter 1849. Sarah Jane had died before Sarah was born so it is possible they were sisters.
- Sarah's death was registered in the same quarter as her birth. I have not been able to find a confirmed burial record however, in the same burial ground as the other Tassell children, there was a 'Sarah baby' buried on 25 March 1849 no age given, address Princes Street parish of St Georges in the East³ (1849)

³ If this is the same Sarah it would suggest she was born, died and buried on the Sunday but wasn't registered with the GRO till the following week either on the 2nd April or thereafter. Only the certificates will reveal this.

Ann Maria

- Ann Maria's birth was registered 4th quarter 1849.
- Ann Maria's burial record in 1850 gives her address as 10 Cornwall Street, parish of St Georges in the East.

Of the addresses recorded in the burial registers only one can be linked to what we know of the Tassell brothers. In the 1851 census Jane Tassell is recorded at 10 Lower Cornwall Street, in the parish of St Georges in the East. In the same census James was at Church Road⁴, Mile End while when Thomas was buried in 1849 at St Mary, Whitechapel his address was given as Lambeth Street. From this I am concluding that both Jane b.1848 and Ann Maria b.1849 were the daughters of Samuel Tassell and Jane Pearce. I am also noting that Jane had a sister named Anne Maria Pearce (1816-1909).

I have ruled out Sarah Jane b.1846 being the daughter of James and Sarah on the grounds her birth was registered in the same quarter that they married. I think it is more likely she is also a daughter of Samuel rather Thomas based on her given names – 'Sarah' the paternal grandmother and 'Jane' the mother.

I have determined that Sarah is not a sibling of Ann Maria given that their respective birth registrations are so close together, but I acknowledge that if one was born late March and the other at Christmas it is technically possible. Thomas died just 4-7 months before Sarah's birth, so still in the frame, but I am going for James and Sarah as her parents because of the name. I would expect her name to be Alice if she was Thomas' but I accept his mother was a Sarah so nothing beyond doubt here. Alice had a daughter with Samuel Lewis in 1840 named Alice who died after just 6 months.

So, in summary I am proposing the following

Thomas Snow Tassell b.1820 m.1845 to Alice Griffiths b.1815.

No issue

Samuel Tassell b.1824 m.1845 to Jane Pearce b.1823

Sarah Jane 1846-1848

Jane 1848-1850

Ann Maria 1849-1850

Eleanor b.1852

Charlotte Davey b.1853

Susannah Davey b.1853

Matilda b.1856

Robert b.1859

James Davey Tassell b.1826 m.1846 to Sarah Pearce b.circa 1827

Sarah 1849-1849

Eliza b.1852

Priscilla b.1855

Clara Elizabeth b.1858

John Thomas b.1865

Frederick b.1867

⁴ James' marriage in 1846 records his address as Church Row, St Georges in the East.

Thanks to all those whose research I have borrowed along the way and in particular *dalburey* a Tassell descendant who shared with me his extensive research on this family. I will be grateful for any confirmations or corrections regarding the above.

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