

In Defense of Isaac W.

Possible Scenario

Isaac W. Dunham, compiler of the 1907 DUNHAM GENEALOGY, has taken a lot of heat, both from his relatives & from genealogists in general. It has been said that his publication has caused more controversy than has any other genealogy ever printed. And he worked so hard & so long, poor Isaac! It is true that his book is confusing & not very well or very logically arranged; true that a single individual is given one birthdate in one place & another somewhere else. All of the descendants he ascribed to Deacon John's son Thomas may be wandering in space because, some claim, Thomas had no progeny. Yet probably the worst fault laid at Isaac's door is that he records Deacon John (1588/9-1668/9) as the son of Thomas Dunham, who was born at Scrooby, England in 1556 & had a lengthy & illustrious ancestry, going all the way back to the beginning of time. This Thomas Dunham & his wife, Janet Bromley (whom he married in 1588) had 2 sons, one of whom was named John. (The other was named Robert.) Young John, however, died young, according to some English records. Ergo, he could not have traveled to Holland & later to America, could not have married twice, could not have fathered 13 children. So much seems clear, if the early death of this little boy is accepted, & all modern-day Dunham descendants would have to give up their claims of royal (& notorious) ancestry, of direct descent (to p. 2)



JUDITH ANN DUNHAM HUDSON (1830-1909)

JUDITH ANN DUNHAM, shown here, was the daughter of Cornelius Dunham & Barbara Wilcox Dunham, both of whom are buried in the Wheeler Cemetery in Ionia, MI. Cornelius (born ca. 1806) may have been the son of Hezekiah Dunham. Born Nov. 19, 1830, Judith Ann was united in marriage to Charles A. Hudson at Arcadia, Wayne Co., NY on Oct. 14, 1849. Their 1st child, Cornelia, died in infancy. In 1863 the family moved to Michigan, where they settled in Ionia Co. with their 4 daughters. These were: Sylvia A. (b. 1852); Becca M. (b. 1857); Phebe L. (b. (to p. 2)

JUDITH ANN DUNHAM HUDSON (from page 1) (b. 1859); & Ada H. (b. 1861). After a period of 12 years they moved further north to Montcalm Co. About 1882 Mrs. Hudson joined the Disciple Church, & her obituary praises her as "a thorough Christian woman who was charitable to a fault." When she died on May 15, 1909, she was survived by her husband, 3 daughters, 15 grandchildren, & a brother, Salem Dunham, of Iowa. One of the daughters was Mrs. Fred Thayer, with whom the parents had been living, but the married names of the others are not known. Their daughter Phebe L. eventually became the great-grandmother of Phyllis Heiss, of Cedar Springs, MI, who kindly shared the photograph & this information.

IN DEFENSE OF ISAAC (from page 1) from Adam & all those other great men of history. Gosh, darn!! But before we trash them all, however reluctantly, let's try to take a closer look at Thomas Dunham. He was born at Scrooby, the family seat for at least 4 generations; his grandfather was Sir John Dunham; & his ancestry on both sides of the family reads like a "Who's Who" of the middle ages. He was it, & he knew it. The old order, upon which Thomas' livelihood & his self image both depended, was not accustomed to any challenges, & yet -- it was being challenged, & by an upstart group called the Puritans, who had the temerity to set up shop right in Scrooby, a place Thomas thought of as his own backyard, his own domain. They congregated there, talking of freedom of religion & all sorts of heretical ideas. As Scrooby became a hot-bed of Puritanism, was this a subject of dinner-table conversation in the Dunham home? Likely they discussed it somewhere, over & over. And if the son of the house viewed these goings-on with less indignation than his father did, if he supported -- even JOINED these growing numbers of Puritans, even left the country as a member of their group, what would be the father's likely reaction? Can't you hear him saying "My son is dead" ? True, this is conjecture. This is trying to tap in to the personality of a man long, long dead. But it is a logical conjecture of a scenario that has played over & over again in the theatre of history. Maybe Thomas wasn't against the dissenters, but everything in his life & times would seem to place him in that position. Isaac W. Dunham, compiling his work some 300 years later, didn't believe in the early death of that youthful John Dunham, if he had ever heard of that pronouncement. He accepted Thomas as his ancestor, along with the other big names. And yes, Isaac, while you're driving me nuts as I attempt to rearrange your genealogy, still I won't desert your contentions entirely. I see Thomas Dunham's son John as growing up, dead only in his father's mind & heart. PSK

THE LOST CONDOLENCES Samuel E. Dunham (1850-1915) (9) (Deacon John 1, John 2, John 3, Ebenezer 4, Ebenezer 5, Jonathan 6, Ralph 7, Francis S. 8) died in Chicago at the age of 65, & when he died, the letters started pouring in to his family from people all over the country who had read of his death. They offered condolences, of course, but they also told of their personal recollections about Samuel Dunham, ways in which he had touched their lives. To many, he had lent money (although he wasn't a wealthy man). For others he had performed small acts of kindness that were long remembered. Some would just miss his cheerful, bracing personality. Except for one letter, the jist of those outpourings has been lost, & that one was an understandably memorable letter. The writer was from far away (out in California, perhaps), & he recalled the dark days of the 1893 Panic. Though they had never met previously, this man & Dunham worked in the same Chicago (to p. 3)

LOST CONDOLENCES (from p. 2) loop office building where Dunham was a commodities broker. One Saturday they happened to share an elevator as they ascended to their offices, & the bleak expression on the man's face caused Dunham to speak to him, to ask him if he was all right. This man was NOT all right. He was on his way up to his empty office, where he planned to blow his brains out. He had lost everything he had in the economic crisis, & he saw no way of recouping those losses. A stranger's concern triggered a valve in the letter writer's control, & the story began to come pouring out, his financial situation, his despair -- just as they reached Dunham's floor. Dunham didn't want to leave the man at that point, so he invited him to come with him to his office, to finish the story. The man, with nothing to lose, agreed. Well, they talked. For how long isn't known, but the man who was bent on suicide had decided to give life one more try by the time that he left. Whether or not Dunham provided financial assistance we don't know. (He himself was in the process of going bankrupt, though he later repaid his creditors 100 cents on the dollar.) But he did provide that man with the courage to go on, & some suggestions as to how that might be done. He counseled, he supported, & he managed to talk him out of his desolation. So he picked up the pieces of his life & was able to put them together. His letter was a moving tribute to the stranger who had saved that life years before. Samuel Dunham's family treasured the trove of letters they received, maybe 25 or 30, all written in a similar vein. His widow gave them to his son to have typed copies made. The son gave them to his niece (Samuel's granddaughter) to type. She did, but she neglected to make copies. (Don't know why not!) Then the son took back the originals with the typed copies. Everybody wanted them, but only Samuel's son had them, & he wouldn't share. 27 years later, Samuel's son died. The letters must have been among his things at the time, but they didn't surface. Perhaps they went to Florida with his widow, when she moved there in an attempt to make a new life for herself. Ten years later Samuel's daughter-in-law died, & there were no children of theirs to inherit, only a rather unscrupulous friend of hers who sold what he could of her possessions & undoubtedly destroyed the rest. So if those letters weren't burned up in Chicago in 1942, they probably met that fate in St. Petersburg in 1952. They are gone -- as gone as can be. This story has a simple moral, which is: **MAKE MULTIPLE COPIES** of any valuable family mementoes. Share with your relatives. That is much easier to do today than it was in 1915, but it could have been arranged then, too. Still alive today are descendants of Samuel E. Dunham who would treasure those letters, but they have never seen them.

VERY SPECIAL THANKS go to ELIZABETH BROWN & PAT DUNHAM, both of whom sent in copies of our missing pages of THE DUNHAM GENEALOGY. Now we have the entire book transcribed onto family group sheets, which have been arranged in a logical order & have begun the process of transcribing the family group sheets onto the computer. About 253 pages have been done. Putting it all on family group sheets first seemed like a needless extra step, but the "secretary" is ever so glad of it. The book hops around so wildly that trying to work directly from it to the computer would have been the road to madness!

DR. NELSON DUNHAM Thanks to Karen Hill, San Carlos, CA., we have this obituary for Dr. Nelson Dunham (1803-1866) (7) (Deacon John 1, Joseph 2, Eleazer 3, Israel 4, Ebenezer 5, Sylvanus 6), which appeared in the MONROE (MI) MONITOR on May 2, 1866: "DEATH OF DR. NELSON DUNHAM. We regret to --- (announce?) the death of Dr. Dunham, which occurred at Petersburg on the 30th ult., in the 63rd year of his age. He came to Monroe County about 30 years ago & settled in Dundee, where he obtained a successful practice as a Physician. For several years past he has resided at Petersburg, but has been much impaired in health. Dr. D. has been a prominent & leading democrat, has represented the county in both branches of the Legislature, & occupied other positions of honor & trust, discharging all his duties as became a faithful & public officer. He has been for many years a consistent member of the Methodist Episcopal Church, & died in the Christian's faith, leaving a wife & one son & many relatives & friends to mourn his death."

EDITORIAL Beginning way back in 1977, we have had hopes of circulating this newsletter to a group of interested descendants of Deacon John Dunham. We made several starts, but they were false starts, because the individuals we were able to locate apparently had no interest in the Dunham family history. Now, this time (thanks in large part to William Wood's fantastic mailing list), we seem to have found the type of group we were looking for. This is a delightful development! We're very happy about it. But you know what? Success can bring its own problems, it seems. We just can't afford to run enough copies off the Xerox "press." In 16 years of publishing family newsletters, we've never charged for them. If people liked them & would share materials with us, we considered we were well paid. We've NEVER charged, & we're not going to charge now -- but help is needed to run off a large enough number of copies for the mailing list, so if you can help with financial contributions, it would be great. PSK

MY DUNHAM PUZZLE by Miss Elizabeth E. Brown, 9875 W. Progress Place, Littleton, CO 80123. How were ALBERT SENECA DUNHAM (1837-1901) & his wife, AMELIA R. DUNHAM (b. 1848), parents of my grandmother, related? They were married Dec. 25, 1865 in Plainwell, Allegan Co., MI, & were said to be cousins, but I have not found the relationship. They are buried in the West Cooper Cemetery, Kalamazoo Co., MI. ALBERT was the son of SENECA DUNHAM (1807-1887) & Tirzah DANIELS (Dannals). They too are buried in the West Cooper Cemetery. SENECA'S father was EDWARD DUNHAM (1753-1844), a Revolutionary War pensioner. He was born in Great 9 Partners, Dutchess Co., NY, & died in Henrietta (Monroe Co.), NY. Seneca was a son by his 2nd wife, Mary Ridley. AMELIA was the daughter of HARTWELL B. DUNHAM (1822-1898) & JULIA ANN HURLBURT (1823-1897). I do not have the date or place of their marriage. They are buried in the E. Martin Cemetery, Allegan Co., MI. HARTWELL's death certificate says that his father was DAVID DUNHAM & his mother was --- PURSON. I believe, but do not have proof, that this was the DAVID DUNHAM (1774-1865) who is buried in the Woodside Cemetery, Gun Plains, Allegan Co., MI, beside his wife SARAH (1772-1865), possibly a 2nd wife. I expect to prove that he was the DAVID DUNHAM, with wife Sarah, in the 1850 census of Eaton Co., MI, who was living next door to his sons HARTWELL & CALVIN H. DUNHAM. Another son, BENJAMIN F. DUNHAM, is listed under DAVID in Eaton Co. in 1850, but as head of household in Cooper, Kalamazoo Co., in 1860 & in Trowbridge, Allegan Co., in 1870. This DAVID DUNHAM is too young to have been the father of EDWARD, but may have been a brother.

(to be continued)

ALBERT S. DUNHAM Found in the KALAMAZOO COUNTY (MI) HISTORY, this biography, while it doesn't serve to answer Elizabeth Brown's query on page 4, might be of interest. "ALBERT S. DUNHAM. One of the most finely improved estates of Cooper Township, Kalamazoo County, is the farm owned & occupied by this gentleman & comprising 110 acres on Section 17. Here careful attention is devoted both to general farming & to stock-raising, in which he has been successful. In connection with his farm duties, he has acted as agent for several leading agricultural agencies, having gained considerable experience in that line while in Kalamazoo in the agricultural implement business for 3 years. Among the officers who accompanied Gen. Wolfe in his expedition against Quebec was the great grandfather of our subject, whose family consisted of 8 sons, 4 of whom served as Patriots & 4 as Tories during the Revolutionary War. Grandfather Edward Dunham, who was born near Albany, was a Captain during the War of the Revolution & guarded the northern frontier against the hostile Tories. During the War of 1812 he was too infirm & aged to enlist, but his commodious house was always open to soldiers & refugees, & he gave his entire crop of wheat, amounting to 800 bushels, for the benefit of the Colonies. For some years he conducted an extensive lumber business, but after his marriage cleared a large farm in Monroe Co., NY, where he died at the great age of 98 years. The father of our subject, Seneca Dunham, was born in Ontario Co., NY, where he received a good education & graduated from the Monroe High School. He studied law for a time, but, owing to ill health, gave up his practice. In 1864 he emigrated to Michigan & settled in Cooper Twp., Kalamazoo Co., where he purchased a tract of land & operated a farm until his death in 1878, at the age of 71 years. He was captain of a company in Monroe County which was ordered out at the time of Patriot War by Gen. Scott. He took an active part in politics in New York, & was a strong anti-slavery man, as well as an adherent of the principles of the Republican party, which he aided in organizing. In a family of 2 children, our subject was the elder & was born in Monroe Co., NY, August 30, 1837. His mother, whose maiden name was Tirzah Daniels, was born in Ontario Co., NY, & died at the age of 80 years. She was a pious woman, a devoted member of the Methodist Episcopal Church, & endeavored to train her son & daughter for honorable positions in life. The daughter, Cornelia, is the wife of Alonzo Montgomery & lives in Kansas. After receiving his education in the common schools of the district & spending a few terms at Albion Academy, Mr. Dunham came to Michigan with his parents in 1864, & commenced to operate a farm. When ready to establish a home of his own, he was married, in 1865, to Amelia Dunham, who died 2 years later, leaving one child, Sophia, now with her father. In 1868 Mr. Dunham was again married, choosing as his wife Miss Sarah Montgomery, who died in 1884. She was the mother of 4 children: Kirk, Fay, Clinton, & Mary, deceased. The present wife of Mr. Dunham, to whom he was married in 1886, bore the maiden name of Jennie Wyner, & is a lady of superior culture. In his political sympathies, Mr. Dunham is a Republican & cast his first Presidential vote for Abraham Lincoln. He has served as highway commissioner one term & also filled other local positions of trust. He is identified with Cooper Lodge No. 419, F. & A. M., & is prominent in the order. His wife belongs to the Congregational Church, & both are earnest in their advocacy of measures which will uplift the community."

Apologies to those readers with no Michigan connections in their Dunham family history. We seem to have a preponderance of Michigan materials on hand, but will be glad to use materials from other states.