

30 Generations of Wells'

An American Family's Story

by Richard B. Wells

2nd Edition

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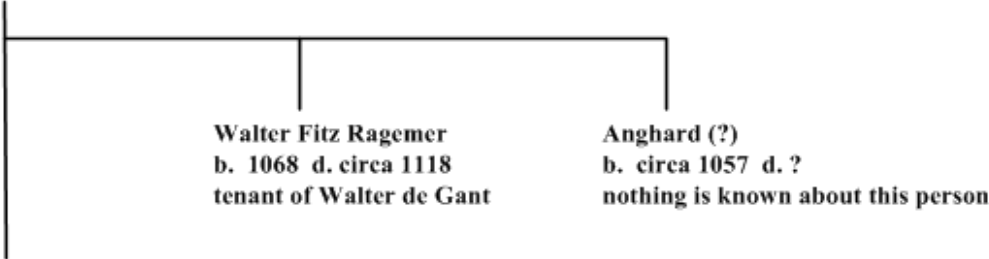
Dedicated to our younger generations

updated Nov. 30, 2018, Feb. 7, 2022

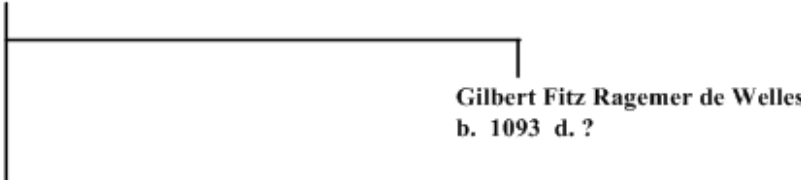


Bradfield, Berkshire, England

Ragemer of Normandy, Knight _____ **Meredith de Myrddin**
 b. 1037-1039 d. 1093 b. 1038 d. 1088
 tenant of Gilbert de Gant, Earl of Lincolnshire
 Lord of Well, Claxby, & Withern
 a.k.a. Rademer, Ravemere, Ragemer Anghard



Ragemer Fitz Ragemer _____ wife unknown
 b. circa 1064 d. circa 1115
 tenant of Walter de Gant, Earl of Lincolnshire
 a.k.a. Ravemer



Walter Fitz Ragemer de Welles _____ **Amaranth of Lindsey**
 b. 1087 d. circa 1118 b. c. 1083 d. ?



William Fitz Walter de Welles _____ **Isabel (Elizabeth) de Gant**
 b. 1116 d. 1198 b. c. 1114 d. ?



Robert Fitz William de Welles _____ **Maud de Lincolnshire**
 b. c. 1144 d. 1206 b. 1165 d. 1218



William de Welles _____ **Emma de Grainsby**
 b. c. 1187 d. 1241 b. 1196 d. 1226

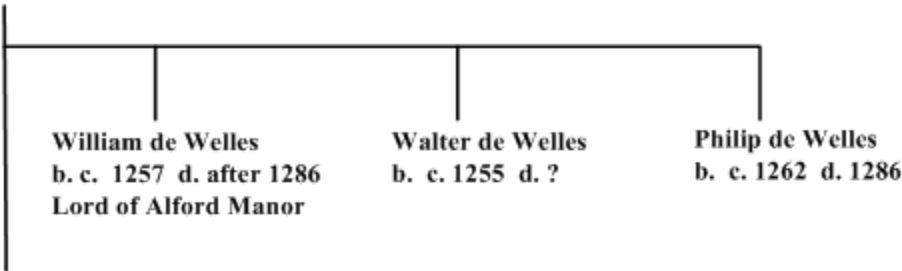


Robert de Welles _____ **Isabel de Periton**
 Escheater of Lindsey married circa 1254 b. c. 1236 d. 1315
 b. c. 1226 d. 1265

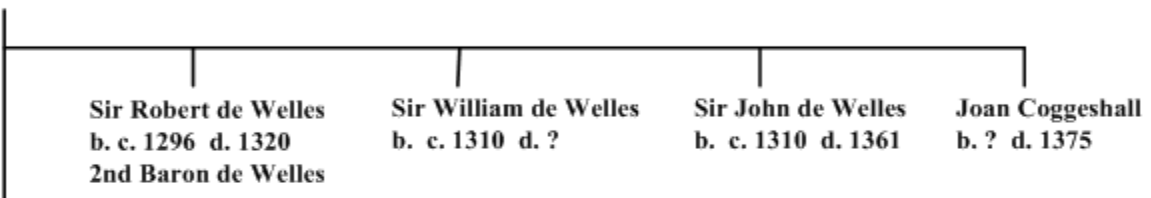


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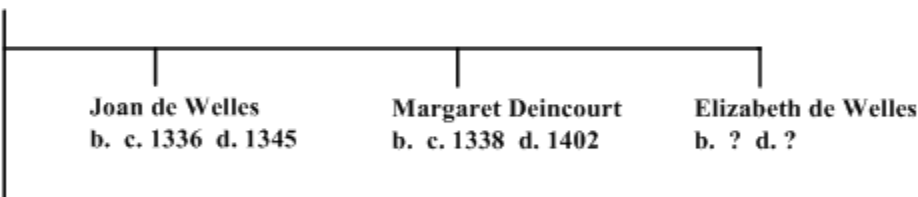
Robert de Welles
Escheater of Lindsey



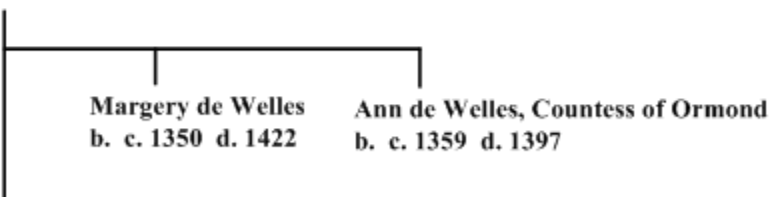
Adam de Welles ————— **Joan d'Engayne**
b. c. 1260 d. circa 1311 b. c. 1265 d. 1315
1st Lord of Welles



Sir Adam de Welles ————— **Margaret Eleanor Baroness de Welles**
b. 1304 d. circa 1345 b. c. 1314 d. 1363
3rd Lord of Welles

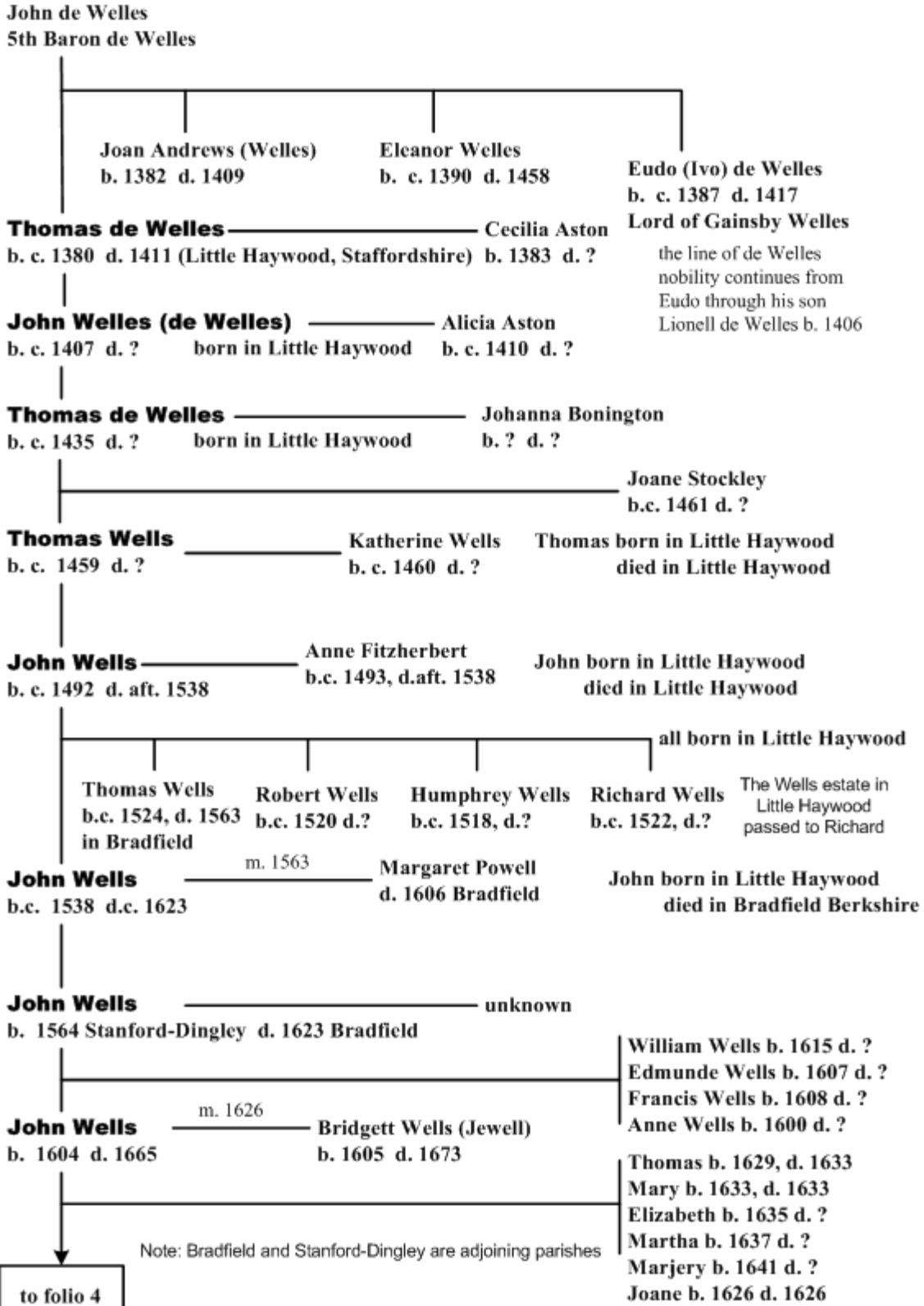


John de Welles ————— **Maud de Ross, Lady Welles**
b. c. 1334 d. 1361 b. 1328 d. 1388
4th Baron de Welles



John de Welles ————— **Eleanor Margaret de Mowbry**
b. 1352 d. 1421 Baroness Welles
5th Baron de Welles b. bef. 1364 d. 1426





John Wells
b. 1604 d. 1660-65

Edmund Wells ————— Mary Wells
b. 1640 d. 1703 b. c. 1642 d. ?

John Wells Edward Wells Joseph Wells Ann Wells James Wells Peter Wells
b. 1676 d. 1760 b. 1678 d. 1711 b. 1684 d. ? b. 1670 d. ? b. 1684 d. ? b. 1682 d. ?

Henry Wells ————— Elizabeth Wells
b. 1672 d. 1714 b. ? d. after 1714

James Wells Peter Wells Edward Wells John Wells Joseph Wells Samuel Wells
b. c. 1695-1706 b.c. 1691-1699 b. 1710 b. c. 1695 b. c. 1693 b.c. 1693 d. ?
d. 1772 d. 1778 d. 1747 d. 1749 d. bef. 1757 Mary Wells
b. 1697 d. ?
Henry Wells Jr.
b. 1704-6 d. 1760
Abraham Wells
b. 1714 d. < 1760

William Wells ————— Hester Wells
b. 1698 d. 1748 b. 1700 d. 1750

Christopher Wells Edward Wells Jonathan Wells William Wells
b. 1736 d. 1813 b. 1736 d. 1801 b. 1724 d. ? b. c. 1721-30 d. 1798

Peter Wells ————— m. Nov. 1746 ————— Susanna Wells (Brock)
b. c. 1725 d. 1787 b. c. 1725 d. ?

Abner Wells b. 1763 d. 1833
Moses Wells b.c. 1747 d. ?
Richard Wells b. 1754 d. 1832
Benjamin Wells b. ? d. ?
John Wells b.c 1759 d. 1826
Susannah Wells b. ? d. ?

Peter Wells ————— Eliza Wells (Garfield)
b. 1759 d. c. 1836-1845 b. ? d. ?

Isaac Wells William Wells Sarah Wells
b. c. 1785 d. 1847 b.c. 1787 d. 1840 b. c. 1792 d. ?

Matthew Wells ————— Sarah T. Wells
b. c. 1789 d. 1854 b. c. 1792 d. 1850

to folio 5

folio 5

Matthew Wells b. 1789 d. 1854 m. 1815 Sarah T. Wells b. c. 1792 d. 1850

Sarah Marie Wells b. 1812 d. 1904 Peter Garfield Wells b. 1814 d. 1904 Margaret Wells b. c. 1821 d. 1880 Joshua Wells b. c. 1825 d. 1907

David Wells b. 1828 d. 1876 Thomas Wells b. 1830 d. after 1856

William Wells b. 1811 d. 1877 m. 1832 Eliza Wells (Abbott) b. c. 1812 d. 1885

Matthew Wells b. c. 1835 d. 1889 Moses Wells b. 1837 d. 1886 Isaac Wells b. c. 1838 d. 1870 Hamilton Wells b. c. 1840 d. 1877

Sarah Wells b. 1842 d. ? Martha Wells b. 1846 d. after 1885 William Wells b. 1849 d. after 1885 Samuel Wells b. 1851 d. after 1877 David Wells b. 1854 d. 1861 Aaron Wells b. 1855 d. ? Frank Wells b. 1857 d. after 1885

Joseph T. Wells b. 1833 d. 1863 Rebecca Wells b. 1834 d. 1870

Eliza Wells b. 1854 d. 1896 Emily Melvina Wells b. 1859 d. 1912

William Remembrance Wells b. 1857 d. 1925 Henrietta Wescott b. 1861 d. 1915

Edward George Wells b. 1882 d. 1966

Harry Earle Wells b. 1888 d. 1964 Mabel Wells (Davis) b. 1885 d. 1970

Foryst Wells b. 1908 d. 1979 Edith Wells b. 1909 d. 1986 Wayne Wells b. 1911 d. 2004 Hazel Wells b. 1917 d. 1993 Marie Wells b. 1909 d. 1998 Marian Wells b. 1923 d. 2011

H. Wayne Wells b. 1936 Diane Wells b. 1948 Phyllis Wells b. 1949

Bonnie Wells b. 1942 Brent Wells b. 1945

William Earle Wells b. 1913 d. 1995 Luella Wells b. 1917 d. 2002

Sherri Jo Wells b. 1941 William Earle Wells b. 1942 d. 1996 Richard Boyd Wells b. 1953 Melody Ann Wells b. 1955

Forward to the Second Edition

The popularity with which the Wells Family story has been greeted has been most gratifying and also somewhat surprising to me. I have been delighted to have received a number of emails from my distant kinsmen about it and, in some cases, to have been invited to work with them in filling in a few details in tracing their own direct family lines.

I undertook the preparation of this second edition of *30 Generations of Wells* in part to add additional details of the story that I have learned about since researching the first edition and in part to fill in a few more geographical details concerning the locations of the various important places in England that are important parts of the story. This second edition adds an appendix at the end providing nine additional maps so readers can more easily locate places in England and Pennsylvania that are important in telling the story of the family. It also adds historical annotations relevant to various aspects of the family's story including more information about the Wells migration from Little Haywood, Staffordshire, to Bradfield, Berkshire, England.

Finally, the appendix includes additional information on the children and grandchildren of Henry Wells of Bucks Co. PA. These additions change none of the essence of the Wells Family story from the first edition. They merely add a bit more color to it by providing contexts of our relationships with our English homeland. The new appendix begins on page 73 of the manuscript.

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§ 1. Welcoming Remarks

It is with pleasure that I present this compilation of the first 30 generations of the Wells Family along with other points of interest I have come across during the research. I contend that this compilation is the most accurate one presently in existence for our family. Having said this, though, I think it is prudent to make a few remarks touching on how this research was conducted. Conducting this research soon convinced me there is no such thing as 100% certainty in any genealogical research when that research outruns the living memories of a family. I am convinced that if a person sets for himself a goal of 100% certainty he sets a goal that he cannot achieve. The only proper standard for research of this sort must be the standard scientists always employ in scientific research, namely, the standard of conclusion beyond *reasonable* doubt. That is the standard I have used in compiling this family history.

I believe that the work presented here is as accurate a compilation as can be made from presently available records and documentation. There is a certain sense of accomplishment in tracing our family's history all the way back to the first Wells in Dark Age England that I find difficult to describe. It is my belief that this record is accurate and, insofar as the direct line from Ragemer to my siblings, cousins and myself is concerned, that it is a complete record. Naturally, no family history is ever complete so long as the family itself continues, but I leave it to my cousins, siblings, and their children to carry on the tale from the point where it leaves off in this monogram. I wish also to acknowledge the vital contributions made by our kinsmen, Mr. and Mrs. Doscher of West Union, without whose genealogical record this work would not have been possible for me at all, and by my nephew, Nick Wells, who uncovered the key documentation making it possible to extend the family record backwards in time from where the Doscher genealogy left off.

A recently published statistic reports that as of 2014 there were nearly 283,000 people named Wells, of which over 195,000 are in the United States and over 33,00 are in England. When other families who are kin to us are included, the number of people who have some genealogical interest in the overall Wells family is rather staggering. This is, however, quite a fortunate thing because a great deal of what I have pieced together here was originally uncovered by other family-genealogy researchers. This turns out to be something of a mixed blessing because along with all that information comes a great deal of misinformation and confusion. The documentary evidences each contain gaps, it is often difficult to separate the great number of individuals who bear the same given name within the same intervals of years. On top of this, genealogists themselves make mistakes – some rather evident and others not so. As I see it, the only way to deal with these uncertainties is to never rely upon any single genealogy report but, instead, to seek confirmation about individuals, dates, and ancestors from multiple sources, and to cross-check assertions made in them against other factors to determine consistencies and inconsistencies.

For example, one of the most significant difficulties in making a genealogy trace is the fact that the same names tend to be repeated from one generation to the next. Especially in the case of medieval and early modern Europe, where documentation on people who were not members of royalty or the nobility is sparse, this introduces all kinds of uncertainties. To have any hope of resolving these, it is necessary to conduct numerous reality checks. For example, almost all genealogy projects I have examined make the assumption that all references to “Ragemer” refer to the *same* person. Making that assumption leads to conclusions that become obvious absurdities as soon as other relevant facts are considered.

For example, in order for Ragemer to have been given the fief of Well, Claxby, and Withern, he would have had to be old enough in 1066 to participate *as a knight* in the Norman invasion. Fiefs were *only* given to William's bishops, generals and their knights. The speculation I found in one genealogy that Ragemer received his fief “for supplying flour to William's army” is utter hogwash that can be traced directly to an 1876 book by Albert Welles that is packed with all kinds of preposterous nonsense people have been naively taking as facts for many years. In many ways, Albert's book reminds me of Pliny the Elder's *Historia Naturalis*, a “natural history” book interspersing facts with superstition and nonsense so egregious that some historians have called Pliny's book “a lasting monument to Roman ignorance.”

To serve as a knight, Ragemer could have been born no later than the year 1050. On the other hand, Walter Fitz Ragemer de Welles was born in 1087. If there was only one Ragemer, that means that Ragemer's wife, Meredith, would have had to have been a woman of amazing fecundity. The year of her birth, 1038, is recorded in several genealogies and there is no evidence to suggest this year is incorrect. Therefore, she would have had to give birth to Walter Fitz Ragemer de Welles when she was 49 years old – a biological miracle in the Dark Ages to rival the Virgin Mary.

At the same time, huge disparity in birth years reported for Ragemer – the earliest being 1037, another reporting it as 1057, a third as 1064, and the latest being 1086 – provides convincing evidence that there had to be more than one “Ragemer” in the family line. In an age where parent-arranged marriages were common, the date range 1037-1039 is perfect for Ragemer the elder and Meredith to be man and wife, and for them to have had at least one child by 1057 to 1064. From this, I conclude that there had to have been a Ragemer Fitz Ragemer (“Fitz” means “son of”) in the family line, as shown in folio 1 in the front of this monogram. This is an example of the sort of cross-checking that is vital in any genealogy project.

Such is the method I used in conducting this research. Every name in the direct line from Ragemer to Harry Wells was vetted against as many different sources as I could find. Inconsistencies were examined, biological plausibilities were taken into account, obvious errors were eliminated. The most difficult challenge I encountered was in making the linkage running from John de Welles (circa 1487-1497) to John Wells (circa 1538) to John Wells (born 1564) to John Wells (born 1604). Here I was able to find a convergence between parish records, genealogies published by the Hazelett, Baker *et al.*, Ballard-Willis, and Rigg-Taylor projects, several projects documenting the ancestors of Edmund Wells, the LDS family search database, and old official documents preserved in book form. None of these is sufficient by itself to establish this key linkage in the record. But by cross-comparing all of these, eliminating obvious errors, and reconciling ages and accounts of the individuals reported therein, I was able to establish what I believe is the most likely factual account possible from existing data. The account here is, in my opinion, the best one that can presently be given in accord with the standard of reasonable doubt.

In the course of this project I have been able to clear up a certain bit of long-standing speculation about the origin of the Wells family, namely, the speculation that the name Wells derives from a French ancestry stemming from the names “de Vallibus” or “de Vaux.” This speculation was mentioned in the Doscher genealogy but it is contradicted by other more modern authorities.

I have been able to trace the origin of the de Vaux/ de Vallibus speculation to the 1876 book published by Albert Welles. He was president of a mid-19th century society interested in genealogy and heraldry. It was this Albert who first claimed the Wells family descended from a Dark Age noble named Harald de Vaux who lived in Brittany in the early 11th century. Unfortunately, Albert's work proves to be careless, sloppy, and is contradicted by well documented facts. This Albert was something of a prolific writer and much of what he wrote is hogwash. For example, he claims to have traced the ancestry of George Washington all the way back to the year 70 B.C. and a fictitious character he called “Odin, King of Scandinavia.” There is no such person and Scandinavian historians tell us quite clearly that there is *no* factual basis for tracing Scandinavian history to before about the 8th century A.D. I came across a very recent article published in *Norwegian American Weekly*, dated July 4 of 2014, that openly made fun of Albert's claim, and another unsigned comment in George Washington's genealogical record that called Albert a “Nordo-maniac” because of his apparent obsession with “proving” that America's Founding Fathers were all of Norwegian descent. It turns out that Albert's book is still in print and is available both on-line and from book publishers (cost about \$24). It is 300-plus pages of unsupported assertions, ridiculous claims, and vanity unworthy of a professional scholar.

In place of Albert's fantasies, it can now be concluded beyond reasonable doubt that the Wells family originated with a Norman knight named Ragemer who lived at the time of the Norman Conquest of England. He was the first to acquire the name Welles, and the reason he acquired it is documented beyond reasonable doubt in the *Domesday Book*, published in 1086 by order of William the Conqueror. This

It is important to understand that “Viking” denotes an *occupation* rather than a nationality. To “go Viking” meant to engage in international trade, piracy, and forcibly taking other people’s land away from them. People in modern day Sweden do not like to be called descendants of Vikings because in most cases they are not. Those who “went Viking” were typically poor people who faced a difficult life in their homelands and were seeking to make a better life for themselves in which they could acquire the land and wealth they could never have in their homelands. In this, they were somewhat like the British colonists who emigrated to America in the 17th century, albeit considerably more fierce. When Vikings took over a territory, they might or might not maintain fidelity to their king back in the mother country. In the case of the Normans, they did not and by the time our story begins they had become a distinctive people and culture that differed from both their Scandinavian homelands and from the culture of the rest of France.

Like everywhere else in Dark Age Europe, the ruling class in Normandy was its warrior class. This was comprised of the feudal Norman nobility, the princes of the Church (at the time there was only one church in Europe, namely, the Roman Catholic Church), and the Norman knights. The Norman knights were renowned in Dark Age Europe for their fierceness and fighting ability. Their warrior class was new and different from that of the French aristocracy and the Holy Roman Empire. The knight class was not a hereditary class in Normandy. Any professional warrior who could afford to buy and maintain a warhorse could become a Norman knight by kneeling before a noble and pledging to serve him with liege-fidelity. If his service was accepted, he became his lord’s “man” (our Ragemer was known as “Gilbert’s man”), served him as a bodyguard, and made up the core of his employer’s private army. This followed a very old tradition of the Scandinavian kings, who called their warrior followers *hirdmen*. Any sufficiently rich man who could afford one could hire his own private army. Most Norman knights fought for pay and for booty if his lord hired his private army out as mercenaries. By the time our story begins, Norman knights had been hired out as mercenaries for many years, much like the Hessians would be centuries later. Most Norman knights were poor and had very little land of their own, much like the samurai of feudal Japan.

It appears that Ragemer was one of these impoverished knights just prior to the Norman invasion. This is suggested by the utter lack of evidence that he held any estates and by his obscurity prior to the Conquest. He was born sometime between 1037 and 1039, which makes him a young man in his late twenties at the time Duke William was marshalling his army to invade England. What we know for certain is that he became the vassal of a Flemish adventurer named Gilbert de Gant, a young man born in Alost, Flanders, who was a younger son of Ralph de Gant, Lord of Alost. As a younger son, Gilbert did not stand to inherit his father’s title and estate. He was one of the many sons of European nobility who was faced with the problem of finding land of his own if he was going to continue to lead the sort of life he had grown up knowing. ‘Finding land of your own’ usually meant *taking* someone else’s land.

It is widely thought that this Gilbert was a distant kinsman of Duke William, although some historians dispute this. What is known is that Gilbert became a close friend of William’s and was apparently one of the many young adventurers who flocked to Normandy in answer to William’s call and the promise of wealth and land in England after it was conquered. However, in order to get in on this promised bounty, a nobleman had to provide William not only with his own services but with soldiers as well. Presumably Ragemer was one of Gilbert’s recruits, which suggests he was not bound to the service of some other lord at the time. If William and Gilbert were as close friends as historians suggest, it is possible William might have “given” Ragemer to Gilbert, but this is unlikely. William needed soldiers for his invasion and the best way to get them was to make his vassals go recruit them from the “labor pool” of available knights. When the armies finally met at Hastings, William’s army numbered somewhere between 7,000 to 12,000 soldiers versus somewhere between 5,000 to 13,000 soldiers for King Harold. Against William’s heavy cavalry of mounted knights Harold threw his ax-wielding infantry who were, by all accounts, every bit as fierce as William’s knights.

What we do know with certainty is that Gilbert was one of William’s generals at the Battle of Hastings in 1066 and that for that service the *Domesday Book* tells us he was lavishly rewarded after the Conquest with 172 estates in England, mostly in Lincolnshire and Nottingham but elsewhere as well. Land was

wealth in agrarian Europe, and it appears his service to William made Gilbert wealthier than his own father. We also know Gilbert had at least ten knights in his personal service who survived the battle. The *Domesday Book* records their fiefs. Among them were: (i) Ragemer; (ii) Robert; (iii) Ecgbeorht; (iv) William; (v) Ivo; (vi) Geoffrey; (vii) Roger; (viii) Fulbert; and (ix) Azelin. Ragemer received about 1,750 acres of land in Well, Claxby, and Withern in Lincolnshire, of which 1,350 acres were arable farmland. He also received two mills and 31 villans (villagers and their families who became his serfs). Another 24 sokemen (free peasants) rented land from him which they farmed as tenant farmers. This was not the most lavish reward Gilbert handed out to his vassals; Geoffrey and Roger both received more land. But it was enough to make Ragemer a wealthy landlord so long as he continued to serve Gilbert with fidelity. He was now not merely Ragemer but “Ragemer Lord of Well, Claxby, and Withern.” By the time of his grandsons, the family was known as de Welles, and that is how our family name came to be.

To be a landlord in feudal England didn’t mean the same thing as being a landlord in America today. By law and “divine right,” *all* lands belonged to the king – William the First. The king’s vassals (Gilbert and the other nobles) held their lands “for the king,” which means they were the king’s chief tenants. In turn, Ragemer and the others were Gilbert’s tenants and held their lands “for Gilbert.” They could legally bequeath these lands to their sons, provided those sons pledged fealty to Gilbert or his heirs, and so their lordships were always contingent upon their continuing loyalty and service all the way up the line to the king. As conscription methods go, it was a quite effective system. Unlike Gilbert, knights like Ragemer were not part of the nobility; they were part of the “gentry,” which is where “gentleman” comes from.

For the commoners in England, the Norman Conquest probably did not change their lives very much. In addition to their reputation for ruthlessness and sometimes-foolhardy courage, the Normans were famous for their keen and strict regard for law and legality. The legal pretext might be flimsy – as was William’s claim to the throne of England – but given that pretext they were meticulous about the laws and precedents that followed from it. In William’s case, his claim to legitimacy as king bound him to respect and, more or less, maintain the existing system of land rights as they already were in Saxon England. The former Saxon landlords, of course, had to go – which they did either through death in battle or from exile – so that William’s own men could take their places. This was “legal” because their fidelity to the Saxon king, Harold Godwinson, meant they had been disloyal to their “legitimate” king, William. The “legality” of the whole thing was decided at the Battle of Hastings. Our modern notions of law courts and independent judges hadn’t been invented yet and disputes like that between William and Harold were resolved, as they had been for centuries, by a recipe Carl Sandburg laid out 900 years later in *The People*,
Yes :

“Get off this estate.”

“What for?”

“Because it is mine.”

“Where did you get it?”

“From my father.”

“And where did he get it?”

“From his father.”

“And where did he get it?”

“He fought for it.”

“Well, I’ll fight you for it.” [Sandburg (1936), pg. 75]

In the part of Lincolnshire where Ragemer held his fief, the old landlord was a Saxon the *Domesday Book* calls Tonni. It is not known what became of him. But for the peasants, it was just a matter of a new landlord replacing an old one. They simply carried on with providing their labor and, when called upon, their military service to their new lord much as they had with the old one. Ragemer’s villager serfs were serfs before he came and remained serfs after he came. The alternative for them was to be forcibly thrown off the land and faced with starvation and ruin – as it always had been under their Saxon lords.

§ 3. The Sons of Ragemer

There is perhaps no more confusion encountered anywhere in the genealogy than is found in regard to the sons of Ragemer. We know he had at least two, and possibly had a third child, from the Lindsey survey – another mass property tax assessment conducted circa 1114-1116. However, the fact that the existing genealogies presume there was only one Ragemer, despite the evidence to the contrary I mentioned earlier, results in as big a tangle of speculations as one might ever encounter.

The Lindsey survey is at least clear in its mention of “the sons of Ragemer” and even names one of them, Walter Fitz Ragemer. ‘Fitz’ means ‘son of’. Most genealogies take this Walter to be the Walter Fitz Ragemer born circa 1087 and married to Amaranth of Lindsey. However, other genealogical recordings are just as clear that Meredith de Myrddin, Ragemer’s wife, was born in 1038. Baring a biological miracle, the Walter of 1087 could have been no one but her grandson. The obvious conclusion is that there was an earlier Walter Fitz Ragemer, and mention of one born in 1068 is found in still other genealogical recordings. My conclusion is that *this* one is the one named in the Lindsey survey. Furthermore, there is another de Welles ancestor named Gilbert born in 1093 (five years after Meredith died) and also called a son of Ragemer. He, too, would have to be a biological *Wunderkind* unless the *second “son of Ragemer” mentioned in the Lindsey survey is named Ragemer*. That is my conclusion and it is illustrated in folio 1.

The third child of Ragemer in folio 1, Anghard, presents a much more problematic case. I have not been able to find sufficiently convincing evidence to conclude that this person even existed. Whatever the case may be, this Anghard has been a source of some fairly radical speculations concerning a Welsh family connection. The basis of this appears to be lodged in the fact that Anghard was the medieval form of the feminine Welsh name Angharad (“greatly loved”). There are two reasons this speculation can be ruled out. First, Ragemer himself is sometimes referred to as Rademer Anghard, Rademer being equivalent in the Swedish dialect of the East Old Norse language to the Danish/Viking name Ragemer. The Siglin Family Tree, for example, calls him by this name. This makes it clear that, at least in this case, Anghard is being taken as a masculine name. Second, Welsh/Celtic was not a language being spoken in Normandy or anywhere else in continental Europe by the 11th century. These facts taken jointly rule out Welsh connections but leave “Anghard” as something of a cipher.

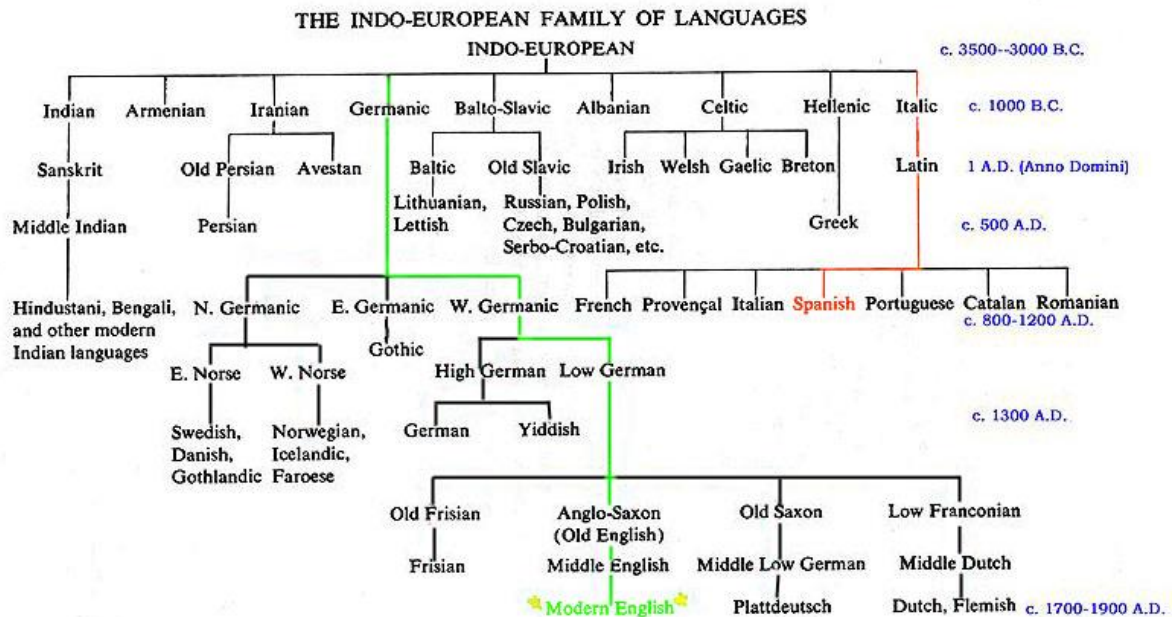


Figure 2: The Indo-European family of languages.

The most likely explanation for this puzzle is found by examining the languages in use in the 10th and 11th centuries. Figure 2 provides an illustration of the family tree of Indo-European languages. In the 10th and 11th centuries the languages of northern Europe had just begun to evolve away from their Germanic roots and contained many more very similar words in common with each other than do today's modern languages. It is also important to keep in mind that in Ragemer's day almost everyone in Europe, kings and nobles included, were illiterate. Literacy was almost completely confined to the churchmen, whose writings were most often in Latin and employed Latinized versions of names and places. A third thing to keep in mind is that surnames were not used in Dark Age Europe. It was, then as it is now, often necessary to be able to distinguish between many individuals who had the same given names. The most common means of doing so was to refer the person to his father (e.g., Leif, son of Eric – the person we learned about in school as the discoverer of Greenland, Leif Ericson), to his place of origin (e.g., Gilbert of Gant), or by some nickname (e.g., Ivar the Boneless or, my personal favorite among Viking names, Ragnar Hairy Breeches – the famous Ragnar Lothbrok featured in a recent popular television series). When Ragemer was given his fief, he became known as Ragemer de Welles (Ragemer of Well).

While there is apparently no way to be certain at present, I conclude that the most likely way to understand the name "Anghard" is as follows. In modern day Frisian the name Angé is a still common name for boys. The name is almost certainly descended from an older name in the Germanic dialects in use in Ragemer's time. In particular, Frisia – which lay along the Baltic coast between the Weser and Rhine rivers – was at that time under the rule of the Danes. Now, the modern Swedish word *hård* means hard, tough, stern, or grim. It is entirely reasonable to hypothesize that "Anghard" is a corruption of a nickname, specifically, Angéhård or "Tough Angé." Thus, Ragemer would have also been known as Tough Angé Rademer. This is a practice not different from what we see in gangster movies, e.g., Bugsy Siegel, Jimmy the Weasel or Lucky Luciano, and among athletes, e.g. Babe Ruth or Broadway Joe Namath.

My point is that there are more plausible explanations for the name Anghard than to resort to a language that was not used in continental Europe at that time. At the same time, it seems implausible to use this as a given name, and that is one reason I doubt that Ragemer had a son named Anghard (although it is possible Ragemer the younger might have eventually earned such a nickname).

A similar linguistic puzzle is presented in the case of Ragemer's wife, Meredith. In some genealogical records (e.g., the Beardslee Family Tree) she is called Meredith de Myrddin. In many others she is called by the clearly Welsh name Meredith verch Myrddin ("daughter of Merlin"). Quite apart from the fact that Welsh was not spoken in continental Europe and "Merlin" (Myrddin) was just a character in Welsh mythology who would not become the familiar Merlin of Arthurian legend for several more centuries, it is as implausible to think Meredith would be called "daughter of Merlin" as it is to suppose a Norman knight would be called "Rademer the greatly loved." Ragemer likely had a lot more in common with Tony Soprano than he did with the Sir Galahad of Arthurian legend. For all the romanticism associated with medieval knights today, the simple fact is that most of them were highly skilled hired thugs, much like the samurai of feudal Japan, the Pretorian Guard of the Roman Empire, or "the Immortals" of ancient Persia. The occupation existed to protect the person of the liege lord and enforce his will on the peasants.

I have been able to find no record of any town or region named "Myrddin" and so, again, it is highly likely that "de Myrddin" is a nickname. "Myrddin" is not uniquely Welsh. In Britain it also came from the Breton word *moridunon*, which meant "sea fortress." Again, though, it is not very plausible that this word would be in use in continental Dark Age Europe. However, the ancient epic poem *Beowulf*, written in the West Saxon language sometime between 700 and 1000 A.D., provides us with a clue. In it is found many references to the *mere-faran* (sea-farer), *mere-stræta* (sea-roads), and other like terms. The language pattern itself suggests the likely answer. I conclude it is most likely that Myrddin is a corruption of *mere-Dena* or "sea-Danes." If so, Meredith's name would be "Meredith of the sea-Danes," a name that implies Vikings from the Jutland peninsula of Denmark. This hypothesis cannot presently be proved but at least remains attached to the Danish/Germanic roots of Norman names. It does not appear possible to do better than this at the present time.

The name “Meredith” poses as great a puzzle as does Myrddin. The modern name is certainly of Welsh origin, where it meant “protector of the sea.” Its first uses were in place of a surname. This is undoubtedly the strongest argument in favor of a Welsh etymology for the name. On the other hand, in Ragemer’s time it was extremely uncommon among the Welsh for Meredith to be used as a given name and even less common to use it as a girl’s name. Neither does it appear to be a given name in Danish or Swedish, and it is not found among common Viking names (although almost no female names are found among Viking names; to “go Viking” was something men did). It seems very plausible that “Meredith” is a corruption made by a church scribe who was unfamiliar with Nordic and Germanic names in an age when male chauvinism was far more extreme than it is today. I hypothesize that “Meredith” was a corruption of the Danish female name Merete (old Danish for Margaret), one of its variants (Mareta, Meretha, Merethe), or perhaps even its Swedish variant, Märeta. Human error in this case seems far more plausible than to suppose that a name not yet in use as a given name for a girl in a language not used on the continent is correct. If that is so, Ragemer’s wife would have been Margaret of the sea-Danes.

One thing that the Lindsey survey leaves us in no doubt about is that the sons of Ragemer had done very well for the family between the death of their father in 1093 and the survey in 1114-16. Gilbert de Gant had also died, around 1094, and had been succeeded by his son, Walter de Gant (born circa 1080). This date of birth means that Walter became liege lord to Ragemer’s sons when he was only around 14 years old. Both our ancestors were in their twenties by that time and, judging by their prosperity, one can reasonably suppose they were proactive in pledging their fidelity to young de Gant and proving it to him in every way they could. The Lindsey survey tells us that the Wells fief had grown from 1,750 acres in 1086 to 2,480 acres in the Lindsey survey.

This prosperity was by no means the case throughout the Lindsey district of Lincolnshire. There had been 45 great Barons in Lindsey in 1086 and 38 of them had died by 1114-16. Of these, only 19 were succeeded by their heirs. The estates of the other 19 had all lapsed into the hands of the king, who either kept them for himself, granted them to other Barons, or broke them up into smaller fiefs. Young Walter de Gant was one of the fortunate ones who held on to his land – which, of course, meant the Wells family was able to hold on to and increase theirs. It is not difficult to guess what had been happening. All one needs to do is look south at what had been going on in London.

In 1087 William the Conqueror died in battle in France. His oldest son, Robert, succeeded him as Duke of Normandy and his second-oldest, William II known as William Rufus, succeeded him as King of England. Rufus had no children of his own and so his younger brother, Henry, was next in the line of succession. Henry, born in 1068, was, as they say, “born in the purple” and trained to be a king. When he became King of England in 1100, he had the distinction of being the first English monarch in three centuries who was able to read fluently.

British chroniclers have not looked especially kindly on William II. They describe him as avaricious, personally immoral, and an oppressor of the church. Rufus believed his father had been too generous in handing out fiefs after the Conquest and had not reserved enough revenue for the throne to carry out the extensive military operations he found necessary to defend and define the borders of England. He was, as a result, inclined to take back fiefs when their Barons died provided he had a good enough excuse to disinherit (“attainder”) their heirs. Rufus found himself forced to engage in a series of costly campaigns against the Welsh and the Scots, which included having to build a costly chain of forts along the frontier with Wales. He kept his vassals busy in the saddle. He also had to worry about his older brother, Robert.

Robert had mounted a rebellion against their father and tried to seize Normandy for himself. The attempt failed and father and son had a reconciliation. Nonetheless, as punishment for his disloyalty, William I had barred Robert from ever succeeding to the throne of England, although he allowed him to inherit as Duke of Normandy. After William died, Robert began efforts to obtain England as well, and Rufus was forced to defend himself against constant threats from his older brother. Eventually he decided to conspire with Robert in a plan for Robert to follow him in the English succession despite William’s

ban. As it happened, their younger brother Henry was fully aware of this plot and made no secret of it that he thought he had a better claim to immediate succession than either of his older brothers.

On August 2nd in the year 1100, while Robert was away on crusade, Rufus died suddenly of an arrow wound in New Forest under very mysterious circumstances. There was never any proof Henry was behind it, but three days after Rufus' death, Henry had himself crowned Henry I, King of England, before Robert could return. He also immediately negotiated to marry the daughter of the King of Scotland, which secured his northern border. Robert, of course, remained a constant threat and in 1106 Henry settled the matter once and for all by defeating him on the battlefield at Tinchebrai. Robert was captured alive, Henry imprisoned him for the rest of his life, and took Normandy.

As unkind as the chroniclers were to Rufus, they were even more unflattering in their descriptions of Henry I. His most flattering chronicler credited him with the vices of avarice, cruelty, and lust. As king, Henry I was ruthless in extorting money from the church and the Barons, and savage in his treatment of conspirators, criminals, and tax-dodgers. Young Walter de Gant and the sons of Ragemer would have had to be very careful, and conspicuously loyal to Henry I, to keep what they had. Robert's many supporters in England did not fare so well. Many of them kept neither land nor life.

§ 4. The Family Steps Into the Spotlight

The next five generations see the Wells family rise from being tenants of the noble class to becoming members of the nobility themselves. In contrast to the dysfunction that characterized the royal family and many of the Barons, they seem to have accomplished this through family strength and unity.

This part of the story seems to begin with a disaster. Both sons of Ragemer as well as Ragemer Fitz Ragemer's son, Walter Fitz Ragemer de Welles, disappear from genealogical records at or around the same year, 1118. There are almost no details given by cited historical sources and those that are given are inconsistent. For example, "Walter Fitz Ragemer" is variously said to have died "in" Worcestershire, "in" Well, or simply "in" England. Given that there were two of them, some disagreement over the place of death is understandable, but there is a difference between place of death and place of burial, so even these reports leave considerable uncertainties. Nonetheless, all three of them vanishing from history at the same or nearly the same time cannot be dismissed as coincidence or simply as bad record-keeping when one considers it in the light of known historical events. Ragemer Fitz Ragemer and his brother Walter Fitz Ragemer were in their early fifties in 1118, which was an old age in Dark Age Europe, but Walter Fitz Ragemer de Welles was only in his early thirties in 1118. Barring some deadly local epidemic (of which there appears to be no record), and given events unfolding at that time in Normandy, the most likely explanation for the disappearance of all three at or around the same time is war.

And there was a war going on in Normandy in 1118. After defeating his brother Robert in 1106, Henry had installed his own son, William Adelin, as Duke of Normandy. Not surprisingly, this was opposed by Robert's own son, William Clito. Clito enlisted the support of Louis VI (who was the king of France and, nominally, still king over Normandy), Baldwin of Flanders, and Fulk of Anjou to back his claim, and he also stirred up a rebellion against Henry I by the barons of Normandy. Numerous skirmishes and negotiations failed to resolve the conflict, and in 1116 Henry brought his army to Normandy to deal with the situation. Henry and his knights fought numerous skirmishes and indecisive battles from 1116 until 1119 when at last he won a decisive battle at Brémule fought on August 20.

The only surviving accounts of the campaign are found in Oderic Vitalis' *Ecclesiastical History*. Like almost all such accounts – from those of Rameses' Egyptian scribes at the Battle of Kadesh in 1274 B.C. to Caesar's Commentaries and on into fairly recent times – Oderic's account only focuses on kings and nobles. Rank-and-file knights, like our ancestors, go unmentioned in these accounts unless one of them does something especially heroic. For instance, Oderic reports that only three of Henry's knights were killed at Brémule (without naming them). Apparently it was an almost bloodless battle because Henry's

knights were more interested in capturing and ransoming enemy knights than in killing them. Other skirmishes and battles from 1116 to 1119 were not so bloodless. The greatest single loss of life appears to have happened after Henry's victory. In 1120 a vessel called the *White Ship* sank in the English Channel while returning a contingent of Henry's army to England. Only two people out of three hundred aboard survived the shipwreck. One of the casualties was Henry's son, which left Henry without an heir and touched off numerous petty revolts and a war with Wales in the years from 1120 to 1123.

None of this proves any of our ancestors were casualties in these conflicts or, for that matter, even participated in them. What we do know is that Walter Fitz Ragermer de Welles left behind a young son, William Fitz Walter, who was born in 1116. We also know the family held on to their estate and William eventually grew to manhood and became its lord, living to what at that time was the exceptionally ripe old age of 82.¹ Given King Henry's penchant for seizing estates when their owners died, this would not have been possible unless the boy had received the help and protection of an older male relative. The most likely candidate for this is Gilbert Fitz Ragermer, the younger brother of Walter.

If the feudal law of primogeniture – inheritance of an estate by the oldest living son – was followed, then upon Walter's death the estate would have passed to his son William and not to Gilbert. However, Walter de Gant, who survived Henry's adventures in France and elsewhere and outlived Henry I, would have had everything to say about this because our family was tenant to de Gant. A little boy like William could not possibly have assumed knightly duties at his age. Only Gilbert, assuming he was still alive, could do that. Walter might have felt charitable enough to overlook William's age, but King Henry would not. After all, de Gant's knight tenants were Henry's knight under-tenants. Given Henry's ill reputation, no other conclusion is plausible except that guardianship of the estate would have been passed to Gilbert by Walter de Gant.

We have very, very little information about Gilbert and the genealogy reports mentioning William and Walter are a mass of contradictions. Some genealogy researchers are likely to contest that Gilbert Fitz Ragermer ever existed at all. If he did, we do not know if or how many children he had, who his wife was or if he had one, or even if he ever grew to adulthood. Nonetheless, it is beyond reasonable doubt that little William had *some* adult male relative because otherwise the Wells estate would have been escheated (taken away). If this was not Gilbert then it was some other son of the sons of Ragermer. Here in America, where we are used to enjoying property rights, the rule of law, and courts for resolving disputes, it can be difficult to grasp the essential fact of the English feudal system of landholding – namely that it was at its roots a system of conscription by which the king maintained his army.

Herein lies the basis for my earlier statement about family strength and unity. In medieval Europe it was the fate of orphans to be placed in church-run orphanages. If a child lost its father, its mother became the only source of support and women in medieval England could not own property and faced economic ruin unless the mother's family took in her and her child. In this latter case, there never would have been a de Welles line of English nobility or, at least, not the one there was historically. If an orphan, or a fatherless boy, had property claims, an executor-guardian would have been appointed on the theory that when the boy became of age his property would be returned to him preserved. That English custom was one of the common law folkways the colonists brought with them to America and is well documented in American colonial history. However, what *ought* to have happened and what *did* happen were quite often very different. It was not at all uncommon for a guardian to either squander his ward's estate or cheat him out of it altogether. Indeed, events like these were the basis for the Robert Louis Stevenson novel *Kidnapped*. We can understand to a limited degree what conditions were like in feudal England by examining what happened in 18th century America. Leroy Ashby tells us,

¹ The average life expectancy in medieval England was 30 years, although if a person did reach his 21st birthday his life expectancy jumped to 64 years. Two-thirds of all children in Dark Age Europe died before the age of 4 and even in the 17th century one-third of children lost at least one of their parents during childhood.

For colonial children, the legal and informal systems of care and protection had decidedly mixed consequences. Officials, neighbors, and kinship networks in many cases responded to orphan and needy children with sympathy and concern, and they did so despite often severe financial constraints. Still, the natural tendency was to watch out for their own families and affairs first. . . . In the Chesapeake and southern areas², orphans' courts protected children more in theory than in practice. In Maryland the judges seldom placed orphans unless someone petitioned in the children's behalf. . . . In North Carolina, an absence of close supervision allowed legal guardians to pay little attention to orphans and even embezzle their estates. In 1735 Governor Gabriel Johnston complained about "unjust Guardians who rob their Wards, a practice too common in this country." Twenty years later, the colonial assembly attempted to make the orphans' courts more responsive to such mismanagement, but little changed. Between 1757 and 1775, for example, the Edgecomb County orphans' court met only seven times. [Ashby (1997), pp. 10-11]

And this was after an additional six hundred years of civilizing from what prevailed in the Dark Ages.

But none of this happened to little William. Indeed, the fact that it did not happen is quite likely one of the primary reasons for the utter obscurity of Gilbert Fitz Ragemer as well as for the sons (if any) of William's great-uncle, Walter Fitz Ragemer. The English historians of the peerage system pay little to no attention to family members who do not inherit unless, like William Clito, they cause historically notable trouble or succeed to the estate when an older brother dies childless.

The only plausible conclusion that can be drawn from all this is that the early Wells kinsmen were tightly bound to one another and acted jointly for the good of the entire family. We already see this in the cooperative nature of the sons of Ragemer. The brothers ruled the estate jointly. In their single largest holding at Claxby and Well, which made up 1,680 acres or about two-thirds of the entire estate, the Lindsey survey does not even distinguish between them. It reports the fief was held by "the sons of Ragemer." When we compare this to the households of the kings of England, there could not be a more strikingly visible difference in family morals and family bonds. Indeed, as will be seen later in the family story, this closeness of kinship and family bonding has marked the entire history of the Wells family line in America down to the present day. We who are alive today are the heirs of a 900 year old commitment to family. Perhaps there is no more important a lesson taught by the family's story.

With William Fitz Walter we see the first signs of the family's rise from historical obscurity. Walter de Gant died in 1138 and was succeeded by his son, Gilbert de Gant, who had been born circa 1118. In 1142 William married Gilbert's sister, Isabel de Gant, uniting the de Welles and de Gant families by marriage as well as by service. Socially, this was a considerable rise in the standing of the family in the eyes of the English peerage system.

William's son, Robert Fitz William de Welles, was born in 1144. Records report that Robert was born in Warwick Castle, which is located in Warwick in central England northwest of London and lies about halfway between Nottingham and Oxford. This is well outside Lincolnshire and the fiefs of both William and Gilbert de Gant. The castle itself was part of the fief of the Earl of Warwick, Henry de Beaumont, which raises the interesting question of what William and Isabel were doing there in the first place. We are again required to speculate about this, and, again, the most likely explanation is found by looking south to London and the dysfunctional royal family.

In 1135 Henry I died without a male heir and was succeeded by King Stephen, who was the nephew of a daughter of William I. The chroniclers tell us Stephen was a likeable but incompetent king. The problem with his succession, however, was that Henry I had made an arrangement that his daughter, Matilda, would succeed him. "Arrangement" is probably a little misleading because his arrangement consisted of browbeating his reluctant barons into accepting the succession. Obviously the barons secretly did not agree because Stephen was coronated almost at once after Henry's death.

² The southern colonies were the most like England in their laws, customs, and government.

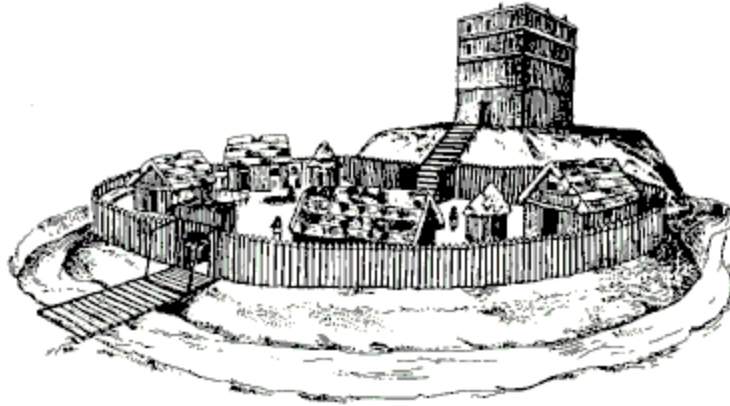


Figure 3: Artist's illustration of a motte-and-bailey castle typical of 11th and 12th century England.

Walter de Gant and his son Gilbert were among the barons who supported King Stephen. If Matilda had been an ordinary English princess this might have settled things, but she was not. Matilda was the Empress of the Holy Roman Empire. Her reaction to Stephen's coronation was to invade, first, Normandy, and then England itself. From around 1139 until 1148 the armies of Stephen and Matilda clashed in skirmishes all over England. In February of 1141 she even defeated Stephen's army in a battle near Lincoln and captured both King Stephen and Gilbert de Gant. Things might have gone very badly for both of them, but Gilbert was spared after he agreed to Matilda's demand that he marry Rohese de Clare, the daughter of one of Matilda's supporters. Stephen was later freed in a prisoner exchange after his wife and one of his commanders, William of Ypres, captured Matilda's half-brother, Robert of Gloucester. It would seem that the habit of family intermarriages practiced by European monarchs at least reduced the amount of royal and noble bloodshed even if it does not seem to have reduced the amount of warfare. The more I study European history, the more convinced I become that Europe was a land of continual warfare occasionally interrupted by brief outbreaks of peace.

After Stephen's capture, many of his barons deserted his cause and things were looking pretty good for Matilda. However, she was apparently just as disagreeable a person as her father had been. Her army suffered a defeat in September of 1141 and the fighting dragged on until 1148 when she withdrew her army from England. However, Empress Matilda remained a potent threat until Stephen agreed to make her son, Henry of Anjou, heir to the English throne. History knows him as King Henry II, the first of the Plantagenet kings of England.

This brings us to the reason why William and Isabel were most likely to be in Warwick Castle in 1144: Garrison duty. As one of Gilbert's knights, William would have been fighting on the side of Stephen. The entire period from Matilda's invasion to the accession of Henry II was basically a civil war known in English history as the Anarchy. The lord of Warwick Castle was one of Stephen's supporters and the castle itself was an important fortress strategically located in the middle of England. Warwick was not at that time the impressive stone castle found there today. It had been built in 1068 by William the Conqueror as a power base from which to exert control over central England. Warwick at that time was a wooden fortress of the type known as a motte-and-bailey castle (figure 3). Inside the outer fence were small buildings for quartering the soldiers who manned the castle's defenses. Considering the fact that there was no castle in Well, it was a much safer place for William's wife and their baby.

The advantages of the family connection to Gilbert cannot be understated. One of Stephen's generals, Alan the 1st Earl of Richmond, was Gilbert's uncle. Another uncle, Robert de Gant, was Stephen's Lord Chancellor. William's marriage put the family very close to the inner circles of royal power in England. By the time Robert Fitz William's son, William de Welles, was born in 1187 in Stow, Suffolk, Henry II was king of England and the Anarchy was over. This, however, did not mean things were peaceful in

England. King Henry's family life was perhaps the most dysfunctional of all the Norman kings of England so far. Henry's wife, Eleanor of Aquitaine, and France's King Philip seem to have been constantly agitating Henry's sons – Henry, Richard, Geoffrey, and John – into rebellions against their father. Henry's son Henry (called "the Young King") instigated what was known as the Great Revolt of 1173-74, which Henry ruthlessly crushed, in large part because he had on his side a band of "new men" appointed from the gentry (rather than the nobility) for their loyalty and ability as commanders and administrators. During this revolt the lord of Suffolk, Hugh Bigod, made the mistake of siding with "the Young King" and, consequently, Henry II crushed the Bigods and took back Suffolk. Henry had built a royal castle at Orford that had been finished just in the nick of time to deal with Bigod's revolt. He kept 20 knights based in it to control Suffolk. It is not known if Robert Fitz William was there, but Orford would fit with William's birth in Stow later. Henry tried to reconcile with his son after putting down the revolt, but in 1183 "the Young King" rebelled again and this time he was killed in battle.

The fact that the de Welles family still held on to their fief during this period strongly implies that they had remained loyal to Henry II up to at least this time. Gilbert de Gant had died in 1156, two years after Henry became king, without leaving a male heir and it is unclear what happened to his estate afterwards. We do know that the de Welles family estate still existed because William's place of death in 1241 is reported as being Well or Spilsby, Lincolnshire. We also know that Henry II granted Lincoln a charter in 1157 that placed the town under the rule of a council of 24 men elected by the wealthy local citizens. This implies the gentry – comprised of Henry's "new men" – was likely becoming a political power in its own right in Henry's England. This is quite a significant change from the earlier king-and-barons dominated society. To the extent this is so, Robert Fitz William de Welles is likely to have become a more powerful person by this time. In 1187, Robert's son was born in Stow.

There are no other hard clues as to what Robert was doing in Stow in 1187 or why William de Welles was born there. What we do know is that in 1187 Henry's son Richard (Richard the Lionhearted) made an alliance with Philip of France and that King Henry immediately took defensive measures against another rebellion. Stow is in a strategic location so perhaps Robert was on duty there. Henry's caution was well merited. In 1189 Richard and Philip launched another revolt against Henry and this time Henry was decisively defeated. He withdrew from England to Anjou and his son, Richard the Lionheart, became king of England.

It is hard to say whether the absentee nature of Richard's reign was a good thing or a bad thing for the family. During his reign England fell under the stewardship, at least in principle, of his younger brother John. In fact, the country was being administered by the Archbishop of Canterbury. Richard's reign corresponds in time with the period legends and stories associate with Robin Hood. Richard – or, more accurately, the Archbishop – seems to have left estates pretty much as they were in England when he came to the throne, although John seems to have had a habit of extorting "fines" from landholders as a means of "proving" their loyalty. The Phillips *et al.* genealogy contains a report that in 1215 or '16 our William paid such a fine to King John. However, I have not been able to find independent documentation to either confirm or refute this. Such behavior would at least be consistent with John's other widely documented character flaws. The historical chandelier of English kings certainly does contain many dim and burned out bulbs, and John is one of them. It is enough to make one wonder why the English put up with their absolute monarchy for as long as they did. However, some of the sources cited by the Phillips genealogy contain factual errors about the de Welles family, so one must exercise restraint from accepting too uncritically what we find in it.

In 1199 Richard the Lionheart was killed in a somewhat frivolous battle in France, leaving no heirs, and John became King of England. His reign is generally regarded as extremely incompetent. It resulted in the loss of Normandy and in the barons uniting to force him to sign the Magna Carta. While all this was going on, William de Welles married Emma of Grainsby sometime before or in 1207. Emma was the sole heir of William de Grainsby, the lord of Grainsby in Lincolnshire south of Grimsby near North Thoresby. When he died in 1207 his lands came to the de Welles family as a result of their marriage.

King John seems to have carried on with the precedent set by Henry II of using members of the gentry, rather than the nobility, to fill most of the offices that ran the country. In October of 1216, King John died “of dysentery aggravated by overindulgence in peaches and new cider,” and John’s son, nine-year-old Henry III, became titular King of England. During his minority England was ruled by a regent, William Marshall, Earl of Pembroke. When John died, eastern England was in the hands of the French pretender Louis, who afterward became Louis VIII of France. Pembroke’s challenge at the time was expelling the French. Naturally, the loyalty of all members of the nobility and the gentry in eastern England was in question as a result. The Phillips genealogy reports that “in May 1217 (Williams’) lands were granted to Fulk d’Oyri,” a knight from Gedney in Lincolnshire, but that “He was again accepted as loyal in the autumn of 1217.” I have found no documentation confirming or refuting that Sir d’Oyri ever actually took possession of the family estate, nor any documentation confirming or refuting that William got it back after being “accepted as loyal.” It appears the fief was lost for a time. We know the family eventually did get it back because William’s grandson, Adam de Welles, was made the first Baron Welles and Lord of Welles. He couldn’t have been Lord of Welles if d’Oyri was holding the fief.

The Phillips genealogy goes on to report that “between 1220 and 1232 (William) was active in judicial work for the king” and “in January 1229/30 he was ordered to aid the sheriff of Lincolnshire in arresting ships to be sent to Portsmouth for the King’s use.” Another obscure reference suggests William was also one of the king’s tax collectors, although the archaic language makes it hard to be sure this is what he was doing. He also was reported to have “aided the Crown against William de Forz, count of Aumale,” in Normandy, in 1221. Since knight service is the only plausible way he could have aided the Crown against a Norman noble, it seems likely William had his land, or at least some part of it, back again by then.

Even if only some of these things are true, they illustrate how uncertain and insecure life was for the nobility and the upper middle class gentry of medieval England, and how much could depend on the whims or petulance of the king or his closest councilors. Much of the character of the king’s court tends to make me think of the myth of Icarus, who fell to his death after his wax wings melted because he flew too close to the sun. The closer one got to the king, the hotter and more dangerous things became.

In 1226 William’s son, Robert de Welles, was born in Well. Robert came to be appointed Escheator of Lindsey by Henry III. The office of Escheator was a royal appointment whose appointee managed escheats – common law documents that transferred estates of deceased lords back to the crown or, in some cases, seized them and gave them to the immediately superior feudal lord. It was likely not an appointment that endeared Robert to either the nobility or the knights of the gentry, but it was a powerful office which, if used carefully enough, could be used to recover any lost Welles estates or pick up new ones in the district of Lindsey. I have been able to find no evidence Robert misused the trust of his office. Around 1254 he married a well-connected noble heiress, Lady Isabel de Periton. Robert died in Grimsby, Lincolnshire, in 1265, which implies that by then Grimsby was also included in the family holdings. Robert, and especially Isabel, set the stage for their son Adam to be created the first Baron Welles. Isabel might have even engineered it through influence with Henry’s successor, King Edward I.

§ 5. Four Generations of Nobility

With what we have seen so far of the character of the medieval English kings and their families, one might well wonder why any rational person would aspire to step into the spotlight of the English nobility. Does the allure of wealth and the illusions of power and control of one’s destiny really make up for the angst, insecurity, and dangers those nobles had to face constantly? Certainly so far there has been nothing to suggest that the moral of Voltaire’s classic satire, *Candide*, was off the mark:

“You must have a vast and magnificent estate,” said Candide to the Turk.

“I have only twenty acres,” replied the old man; “I and my children cultivate them; our labor preserves us from three great evils – weariness, vice, and want.”

Candide, on his way home, made profound reflections on the old man’s conversation.

“This honest Turk,” said he to Pangloss and Martin, “seems to be in a situation far preferable to that of the six kings with whom we had the honor of supping.” [Voltaire (1759), pg. 86]

Nonetheless, our next ancestor stood in the full glare of the spotlight, and the next four generations of the family lived in that world of façade, treachery, and sycophancy.

Adam de Welles was one of Robert’s four sons. After Robert died in 1265 the estate was divided among the brothers. Alford town history records that Robert’s son William became Lord of the Manor in Alford and established a market there. He was never Lord of Cottness Manor (as some have claimed). Adam and his brothers were still little boys at the time Robert died and it appears that their mother, Isabel de Periton, was likely the person who determined how the estate was parceled up. She was born into the peerage, was remarried to a knight from a noble family named William de Vesci shortly after Robert’s death, and was in a position to be the guardian of her sons’ estates during their minority. She seems to have been a formidable woman and William de Vesci was apparently a friend of King Edward I.

King Henry III died in 1272, and with his passing the cloud of suspicion that lingered over the family during his reign seems to have passed as well. He was succeeded by Edward I, known as Longshanks. We know the following from Charlotte Frisbie’s research and from Nicolas’ 1828 translation of *The Roll of Calaverock*: From 1294 on, Adam was regularly summoned into Edward’s service. The earliest of these included Edward’s diplomatic missions as well as other missions as the king’s representative. Edward Longshanks had Scotland in his sights, and proclaimed himself King of Scotland in 1296. This led to a series of revolts, beginning in 1297, led by William Wallace. This involved Adam in warfare in Scotland from 1298 until 1310. On July 22nd, 1298, Adam was in the King’s division at the Battle of Falkirk, where King Edward defeated Wallace and his forces. Wallace had 6,000 men, of which 1,000 were cavalry, while Edward had 15,000 men made up of 2,500 cavalry and 12,500 infantry. Edward’s cavalry drove off the Scottish cavalry but were unable to break Wallace’s line of pikemen. However, his infantry and cavalry pinned and immobilized the Scots, after which they were slaughtered by the English archers. The story that Wallace’s cavalry treacherously conspired with Edward and withdrew from the battle without a fight, which was depicted in the movie *Braveheart*, is a Hollywood fabrication (as is almost everything else in that movie).

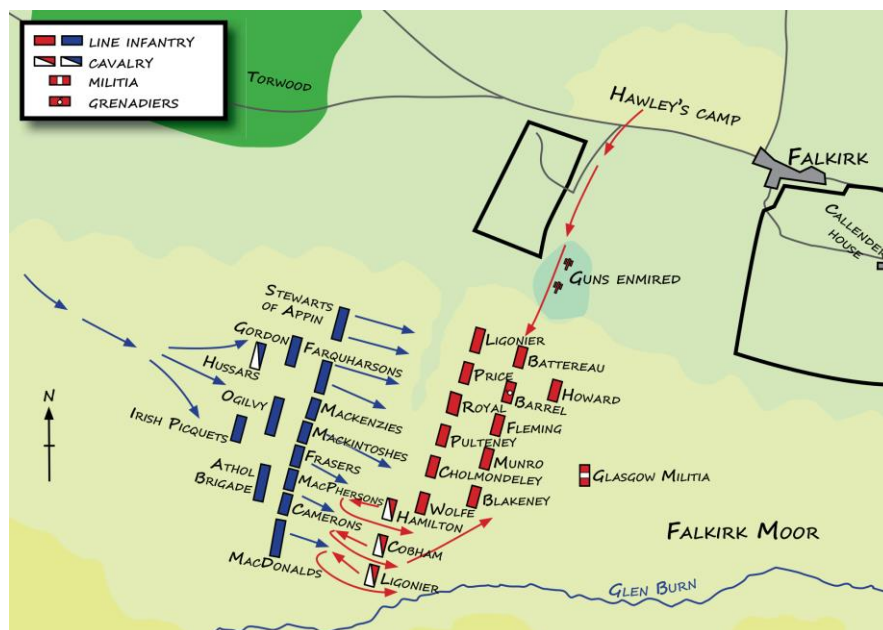


Figure 4: The order of battle at Falkirk. Edward’s forces are shown in red, Wallace’s in blue.



Figure 5: The royal castle of Rockingham in Northamptonshire near Corby, England.



Figure 6: Calaverock Castle in Scotland.

We know no details of Adam's deeds in the Battle of Falkirk. Whatever they were, they and his other services to Edward I were apparently distinguished enough that in 1299 he was summoned to Parliament and created Baron de Welles. This was four years after his stepfather was created Baron de Vesci. The family was now part of the English nobility. Edward I appointed Adam constable in command of the garrison of Rockingham castle, Edward's royal castle near Corby, England in Northamptonshire (figure 5). However, the family was still able to reside, at least occasionally, at the original family estate at Well. Adam himself was born in Well and his grandson died there. Throughout the period of nobility Adam's descendants were born at one place or another inside Lincolnshire.

In 1300 the garrison of the castle at Calaverock on the southern coast of Scotland, under command of Sir Eustace Maxwell, attacked nearby English forces and Longshanks responded by marching an army of 3000 men, including 87 English Barons as well as knights from Brittany and Lorraine, to lay siege to Calaverock (figure 6). The siege was supported by bombardment from the Royal Navy. Details of it were

recorded for posterity in a poem, *The Roll of Calaverock*. We know Adam was part of this army because he is named on page 33 of Nicolas' translation of it. The castle garrison consisted of only 60 men, but they successfully repulsed several assaults. The poem describes at least four assaults before the garrison finally surrendered after the castle wall was successfully mined. Longshanks' army took many casualties before the garrison finally gave up. The siege at Calaverock illustrates how difficult it was to conquer a medieval stone castle.

Longshanks died in 1307 and Adam was one of the nobles summoned to attend the coronation of his heir, Edward II. In England today, Edward II is called "the playboy king." He almost immediately antagonized England's most powerful Barons by appointing his boyhood playmate, Piers Gaveston, to one position after another, each of which the Barons insisted he retract on the grounds that Gaveston was unsuited and unqualified to hold them. In just four years, around the time of Adam's death from natural causes, acts of violence began to flair between the new King and his Barons. More on that in a moment.

When Adam died in 1311 he was survived by at least three and possibly four sons and one daughter. Very little is known about any of them. The oldest son, Sir Robert de Welles, inherited the title and estate, becoming the second Baron de Welles at about age fifteen. The children were orphaned when their mother died in 1315, leaving Sir Robert to take care of his younger siblings. Our ancestor, Adam's second son Adam, became the third Baron de Welles at age 16 when Sir Robert died childless in 1320. Adam's siblings were still children when he became head of the family. We know little about the younger Adam. Sometime after becoming the 3rd Baron he was appointed Constable at Rockingham. During the first seven years of his Barony, as his brothers were growing to manhood, the country was in turmoil because of the frivolous non-rulership of Edward II. Things must have been difficult for the family.

The growing discontent of the earls devolved into armed combat in the fourth year of Edward's reign. The earls had had enough of Piers Gaveston and the king's mismanagement of the government. Thomas of Lancaster, who was a cousin to both the king and queen and had a reputation as a rather savage person, captured Gaveston and promptly murdered him. Despite the innuendo depicted in the movie *Braveheart*, there is no evidence that Edward II was homosexual or that he had such a relationship with Gaveston. He was nonetheless very depressed by the murder of his boyhood friend and fellow playboy. The antagonism of England's most powerful nobles meant there wasn't much he could do in retribution. In 1314 the Scots resumed their rebellion at the Battle of Bannockburn, where they inflicted a decisive defeat on the English and liberated Scotland for the next three centuries.

That was the last straw for the Barons, and in 1327 Edward II was forced to abdicate in favor of his son, 17-year-old Edward III. He was imprisoned by his enemies and then hideously murdered in the most savagely barbaric way imaginable by order of the Bishop of Hereford on September 22nd, 1327. No Viking ever killed an enemy more brutally than the way the Bishop had Edward II killed.

It can hardly be doubted that the Barons set Edward III up as king to protect the legality of their own positions and holdings. After all, the legality of their status and their estates was based on their being granted by the Crown. If any other course other than to coronate the king's heir had been followed, it probably would have plunged the entire country into civil war. This would have delighted France and Scotland and could have led to England being conquered by the French. The almost obsessive concern over royal succession that characterized medieval England has its roots in the self interests of the nobility. There also seems to be little doubt that the new king's young age made him seem to not be a threat to the people who overthrew his father. But there was much more to Edward III than they realized.

Edward reigned for the next fifty years and is counted as one of England's best kings. Because of his youth at the time of his coronation, many nobles, both English and French, tried to manipulate him as a puppet ruler. Edward, however, managed to outwit and outmaneuver all of them and reestablish the power and authority of the monarchy by cunning as well as by a judicious ruthlessness. He renewed the war against the Scots and for all practical purposes defeated them by placing a pretender, Edward Balliol, on the throne of Scotland. Philip VI of France had backed Scotland and began preparing to invade England.

Edward III retaliated by claiming the throne of France. This started the Hundred Years' War, which raged in an on-and-off fashion from 1337 until 1453.

Burke's *Peerages* reports Sir Adam was involved in the war with the Scots in 1334 and again in 1336. He was called into service in 1343 in the preparations for war with the French, commanding ten men-at-arms and ten archers. However, Edward's first major invasion of France did not come until 1346, by which time Sir Adam was dead and his son, John de Welles, 4th Baron de Welles, had inherited his title and estates.

When Sir Adam died in 1345 his eldest son John was only eleven years old. Documents uncovered by the Frisbie genealogy tell us that during his minority he was made the ward of the widow of Lord Ros of Hamlake, whose daughter he later married. He was summoned to Parliament as the 4th Baron de Welles at the end of 1357 when he would have been about 23 years old. It is known that he fought in Edward's army in Gascony during Edward's war with the French. Burke's *Peerages* confirms this.

When John died in 1361 his title and estate passed to his son, John de Welles 5th Baron Welles, who was nine years old. I have found no record of him becoming a ward during his minority so it is likely that his mother was his guardian. According to Burke's *Peerages* (1866), Sir John led an adventurous life in tumultuous times. One genealogy reports that in 1371, at age 19, John was "retained to stay with the Duke of Lancaster for life." It isn't at all clear what that is supposed to mean, but it is known there was a long and close association between the Lancaster and Wells houses dating from John's youth. It spanned five generations of the de Welles nobility, embroiled them in what history calls the War of the Roses, and brought the line of the de Welles nobility to a bloody, abrupt, and permanent end in 1470.

The Hundred Years' War was entering its second phase. In 1373 Sir John was with Lancaster on a march from Calais to Bordeaux which seems not to have had much permanent effect on the war. He began serving on various royal commissions in Lincolnshire from 1374 onwards and was summoned to Parliament in 1375 at age 23. Parliament in those days was appointed by the king, not by election.

In 1377 Edward III died and was succeeded by his ten year old grandson, Richard II. Since Richard was only a child, England was ruled by a series of councils because no one could agree to trust any of the boy's uncles with the power of being Regent of England during Richard's minority. Richard's three powerful uncles, the Dukes of Lancaster, York, and Gloucester, were maneuvering for the throne, and this set off the on-going series of intrigues that became the War of the Roses. John's alliance with Lancaster put the family right in the thick of all this.

Meanwhile, warfare with France and with Scotland was still going on. John served in campaigns in France in 1377, again from 1379 to 1383, and still again from 1387 to 1388. From 1378 to 1379 he was stationed with the garrison at Berwick-on-Tweed, a strategically important castle in Northumberland along the border with Scotland. Today Berwick Castle is a ruin (figure 7), but in its heyday it was a key point from where the king (or, in this case, the king's council) could project its military power into Scotland and check the Scots from doing the same to England. John was not in command of the castle or its garrison and was merely one of the knights. In 1385 he was sent on a military expedition into Scotland.

In 1390 he was made ambassador to Scotland, and this led to one of the more colorful stories for which he is remembered. At a somewhat drunken social event with Scottish nobles and knights, John bragged about the strength and skill of English knights compared to Scottish ones and issued a boastful challenge for any who dared to meet him in a joust. The challenge was immediately accepted by a Scottish noble, Sir David Lindsay. It was agreed to hold this joust on London Bridge. On the first pass, John hit Lindsay in the helmet and visor with such force that John's spear shattered. Lindsay, however, remained in the saddle, which prompted the crowd to cry out that he had tied himself to his saddle, which was against the rules. Lindsay merely hopped off his horse to show this wasn't so, then resumed the joust. On the third pass, he hit John and knocked him from his horse. Lindsay hopped off his horse and embraced our injured ancestor to show the crowd this was all just good, clean fun.



Figure 7: The ruins of Berwick Castle in Northumberland.

In the meantime, Richard II was having to contend with many conspiracies and attempts by various nobles to take over the government. In 1399 the Duke of Lancaster died and Richard ordered that the Duke's son, Henry of Bolingbroke, be disinherited. Henry was in exile at the time and didn't take this well. He raised an army and invaded England in that same year, forcing Richard II to abdicate, and became King Henry IV. Richard II died early the next year, some say by self starvation and some say by murder. John was one of the nobles summoned to perform homage and swear fealty to Henry IV in May of 1400. For the time being, at least, the Lancasters had succeeded in gaining the throne. Richard had favored ending the war with the French whereas Henry wanted to continue it. However, he was forced to forebear doing so because he was kept busy putting down numerous revolts in England and beating back the Scots, who had seized upon England's royal infighting as an opportunity to invade.

In 1413, Henry IV died of heart disease and was succeeded by his son, Henry V. The new king promptly resumed the war with France, culminating in a decisive upset victory at Agincourt on the 25th of October (St. Crispin's Day) in 1415. By then John was 63 years old so it is unlikely he was present at Agincourt. His eldest son, our ancestor Thomas, was dead and his grandsons were still little boys in 1415, so it is certain they were not there either.

John had two sons: our ancestor Thomas de Welles (born in 1380) and Eudo (called Ivo, born in 1387). Thomas died in 1411 and Eudo died in 1417. I have found no documentation that suggests Eudo was present at Agincourt. Their sons, our ancestor John Welles (born 1407) and Eudo's son Lionel de Welles (born 1406) were cared for by their grandfather until his death in 1421. Upon his death, his oldest grandson, Lionel, became the 6th Baron Welles and our lineal family ceased to be part of the English nobility. John was only 14 years old when his grandfather died and he had to take over his father's estate.

Some sense of the family dividing along two lines can be discerned from the provisions John seems to have made for his adult sons. Judging from the reported birthplace of Thomas' son, John Welles, it appears Thomas had been set up with property in Little Haywood, Staffordshire, located in the West Midlands of England. Lionel, on the other hand, was reportedly born in Lincolnshire. The two places are not close to each other, a situation that might indicate the old family unity of the days of the sons of Ragermer had deteriorated. The descendants of Eudo settled in the old family lands to the east, while the descendants of Thomas settled in the Midlands around Little Haywood. Such a wide geographic separation is conducive to a family drifting apart in an age where transportation is primitive and long

distance communication impossible except by mail. It is clearly incompatible with the sort of tight unity that had been exhibited by the sons of Ragemer. Thomas' family line avoided being caught up in the War of the Roses and flourished; Lionel and the noble line were caught up in it and perished.

Before continuing with the story of our lineal family, it is worth taking a moment to briefly describe the fate of the de Welles line of nobility. Henry V died unexpectedly of dysentery in 1422, leaving his eight month old infant son to become Henry VI, King of England. Having an infant king reignited the conflict between the houses of Lancaster and York. Henry VI, of course, was descended from the house of Lancaster but had gained the throne by the overthrow of Richard II. The house of York had their own claims to the throne and contested the succession. The situation finally broke into open civil war in 1455.

In March of 1461 the forces of York under Edward Earl of March decisively defeated the forces of the house of Lancaster (and, of course, Henry VI) at the battle of Towton. Lionel de Welles was killed in this battle and his son, Sir Richard de Welles, became the 7th Baron Welles. The Earl of March became King Edward IV. Although Edward reigned from 1461 until 1470, this hardly settled the matter. Indeed, in 1469 Edward's army suffered a major defeat at the Battle of Edgecoat Moor by the forces of the Earl of Warwick. Edward managed to escape and regain power. In 1470 Sir Richard's only son, Sir Robert de Welles, organized an army in Lincolnshire, intending to hook up with Warwick and other allies to depose Edward. In England this is known as the Welles Uprising. Sir Richard was at court with the King when he did it, so Robert's act must be called rash and foolish. Edward arrested Richard and ordered Robert to disband his army or his father would be beheaded. Robert turned back from his march but did not disband his army. Edward IV promptly beheaded Sir Richard (technically making Robert the 8th Baron Welles) and marched on Lincolnshire. There he defeated Robert's army and Robert himself was beheaded. The family was officially attainted (forfeiture of all titles and lands) and Lincolnshire was lost to it forever. There would never be a 9th Baron Welles. The War of the Roses lasted another seventeen years.

The allurements of emulation tends to make people dwell on the romanticism of kings and nobles and knights. It becomes easy to get so caught up in this that we overlook an important fact, namely that royal succession had undergone a fundamental change. In the early generations after the Norman Conquest the feudal system set up by William I had actually worked quite well from the point of view that rebellions and disorders had originated only within the dysfunctional royal families themselves. Now, however, the old system by which kings had controlled their barons had clearly broken down. What had happened?

The answer is that the Feudal Age was drawing to a close and England itself was undergoing major social and economic changes. The system of wealth based on land was giving way to a system of wealth based on money. Historian Will Durant tells us that at the start of the 14th century three-quarters of the population of England were peasants and half of these were serfs. During the 15th century England's population of serfs shrank until it made up only about 1% of the population. A new class of merchants, artisans, and free landholders was rising. The class of yeomen (free Englishmen) had started on its way to slowly coming to dominate future English society and its economy. Historian Will Durant wrote,

A class of yeomen grew, tilling their own land and gradually giving the English commoner the sturdy, independent character that would later forge the Commonwealth and build an unwritten constitution of unprecedented liberty. Feudalism became unprofitable as industry and commerce spread into a national and money economy bound up with foreign trade. When the serf produced for his lord he had scant motive for expansion or enterprise; when the free peasant and the merchant could sell their product in the open market the lust for gain quickened the economic pulse of the nation; the villagers sent more food into towns, the towns produced more goods to pay for it, and the exchange of surpluses overflowed the old municipal limits and guild restrictions to cover England and reach out beyond the sea. [Durant (1957), pg. 109]

All this happened gradually. Indeed, it seems to have escaped the attention of kings and nobles until it was too late for them to stop it. When they finally did notice it, they called it "communism" and tried unsuccessfully to control it. The Wells family entered this new socio-economic class, who before another

four centuries passed came to be known as *the capitalists*.

§6. The Family Steps Out of the Spotlight

The next seven generations of the family nearly vanish into the twilight of the end of the late medieval period. Piecing them together is by far the biggest challenge that confronted this genealogy. It doesn't help that 29% of Englishmen were named "John" from 1530 to 1700, that the spelling of surnames is grossly inconsistent, or that the ten generations that had passed since the sons of Ragemer sprinkled the name Wells/Welles all over England. Adding to this is the fact that record keeping was much less attended to for the gentry than it was for nobles and royalty. Dates of birth and dates of death, if they were kept at all, exhibit wide ranges of assignment. The same is true for marriage dates. The chauvinism that assigned lower status to the women often makes tracing family connections through the wives next to impossible. Genealogical reports compiled by different families who have connections with the Wells/Welles family disagree with one another and many of them contain the most glaring errors – such as a man fathering a son after he had died or a woman giving birth to her child when she was only four years old. It is about as big and as challenging a mess as one could have.

The period now being covered is the one where the cross-checking and correlations with other facts and factors I mentioned in the beginning were absolutely crucial. There are several reported genealogies postulating connections on both sides of this lineal period that do merge with known facts on both sides but do not come up with the same connections because they are based on the unreliable and broken birth, death, or marriage records. To these must be added factors of geographic place, economic necessities, and other considerations in order to obtain a self-consistent picture of things from which conclusions can be drawn. For example, it is utterly implausible for the birthplaces of multiple successive descendants of gentry and commoners to leap back and forth over distances of more than a hundred miles in a time when travel was by foot, boat, or horse. It is implausible for the occupations engaged in by descendants to radically switch from father to son to grandson because there was no education system in place that would make this feasible and the craft guilds that existed at the time did not permit it. The Industrial Revolution and the specialized divisions of labor it made possible were still more than a century away. All these factors had to be considered in coming up with the conclusions I present here.

The next five generations following Thomas de Welles lived in and around Little Haywood, a small rural settlement a few miles east of the market town of Stafford in Staffordshire in the West Midlands. The town had been an important center for the delivery of grain tributes in the early middle ages (5th to 15th centuries). In the days of the Norman Conquest it had been at the center of stubborn resistance and rebellion to Norman subjugation. As a result, William the Conqueror had plunked down castles to control the population and secure his rule over the country. Stafford Castle (figure 8) was built two miles west of the town. Garrison duty likely brought the family to this region time after time over the years. Clearly Baron John knew the region because he sent his son, Thomas de Welles, there somewhere around 1400. His grandson, John born in 1407, and great-grandson, Thomas born in 1435, were also born there.



Figure 8: Stafford Castle west of Stafford town.



Figure 9: Present day Stafford town seen from the air.

According to the Stafford town history page, between the 11th and 17th centuries “Stafford bloomed as a small town for awhile then blended into the dark-ages as did much of Britain.” The Stafford market dealt mainly in cloth and wool from the 13th century on. Trades and crafts also flourished there until the mid-14th century when the town was devastated by the Black Plague that swept through England during the reign of Edward III. Wool trade was England’s most important industry during that period and the nobles were the first to begin switching over from crop growing to sheep herding and wool work.

It is something of a puzzle how Baron John had come by any land near Stafford since the area is far away from the Welles estates in Lincolnshire. The most likely explanation is that John knew both Hugh de Stafford (circa 1334-1386), the second earl of Stafford, and his son, Ralph. Hugh, like John, had accompanied the Duke of Lancaster on his expedition to France in 1373. Hugh’s oldest son, Ralph de Stafford, was about the same age as Sir John and they campaigned together in Scotland in 1385. The explanation might well be as simple as the friendship between two young men who were comrades-in-arms. Why Sir John would be interested in acquiring land near Stafford and putting it in the charge of his son is not mysterious: Wool. Staffordshire wool was very lucrative. Historian Will Durant tells us,

The woolen industry began in [the 14th] century to make England rich. The lords withdrew more and more lands from the common uses formerly allowed to their serfs and tenants, and turned large tracts into sheep enclosures; more money could be made by selling wool than by tilling the land. The wool merchants were for a time the wealthiest traders in England [Durant (1957), pg. 38].

No small part in the opportunity at Stafford would have been played by the Black Plague:

Upon this scene the Black Death burst as not only a catastrophic visitation but almost as an economic revolution. The English people lived in a climate more favorable to vegetation than to health; the fields were green the year round, but the population suffered from gout, rheumatism, asthma, sciatica, tuberculosis, dropsy, and diseases of the eyes and skin. All classes ate a heavy diet and kept warm with alcoholic drinks. “Few men now reach the age of forty,” said Richard Rolle about 1340, “and fewer still the age of fifty.” . . . The lower classes offered ready victims for the pestilences that periodically decimated the population. . . . The plague collaborated with war to quicken the decline of the manorial system. Many peasants, having lost their children or other aides, deserted their tenancies for the towns; landowners were obliged to hire free workers at twice the former wage to attract new tenants with easier terms than before, and to commute feudal services into money payments. [*ibid.*, pg. 39]

The depopulation of the Stafford area by the Plague would have presented Sir John with a golden opportunity to invest in the wool economy. Perhaps this explains why Thomas de Welles established his residence there. It would have been a way for Baron Welles' son and grandson to make a comfortable living outside the long Welles tradition of soldiering. John Welles (de Welles), born in 1407, was, as the speech of the day might have put it, "no longer a great man and could not keep a great house." That "great house" had passed to Lionel. Given such a martial grandfather as John Baron de Welles, it would not have been surprising if the younger John had received some training in skill-at-arms, but I have found no evidence hinting that he ever served an apprenticeship as a squire or that he was ever knighted. When his grandfather died in 1421 he was not yet old enough to begin training for this and his young cousin, living in distant Lincolnshire, would not have been in a position to sponsor it.

Instead, the circumstances favor him having to build for himself a comfortable country existence as part of an upper-middle class of gentry that the younger sons of nobility seeded when family estates passed to their older brothers. Such a development is no more than basic human nature because what father or grandfather wishes to see any of his sons or grandsons made destitute because of the Law of Primogeniture? The story of how he did so would probably be a very interesting one but, unfortunately, we have no records or tales of it, nor even of whether or not his mother, Cecilia Aston, was alive when he came to inherit Thomas' property. Indeed, we actually know very little about John or his wife. It seems to be reasonably well established that her name was Alicia Aston but much about her is conjecture. Her family belonged to the Staffordshire gentry descended from the noble line of the Aston family. There was a strong social connection between the Wells and Aston families. The marriage "befitted the honor of the family." But there are also inconsistencies and for now, Alicia remains something of a mystery woman. Even the year of her birth is shrouded in uncertainty. Most of the genealogies place it at "about 1410," a phrase that usually implies a decade or more of uncertainty. Among other genealogies I have seen, some set it as much as 40 years later, but that is an implausible extreme.

Wool was the lucrative economic equivalent of "high tech industry" in medieval England at that time. Indeed, the wool trade was the principal reason for the development of the Royal Navy, the motivation for which was originally to protect England's international wool and cloth trade from French piracy. With the opportunity to get in on this lying right in front of him – remembering that wool and cloth were primary industries in Stafford – John would have had to have been thickheaded not to seize it. Thick-headedness of this degree would hardly have been compatible with an ability to assume the role of head of the household at around age 14 or 15. This is a conjecture, but it is the most plausible one consistent with the fact that the family survived the death of John's grandfather in 1421 and apparently prospered well enough.

John's son Thomas was born around 1435. Rural living actually changed very slowly prior to the industrial revolution, and it is likely that American colonists two centuries later would have easily recognized life on Thomas' farm. Even with sheep and wool occupying a major part of operations, it still would have been necessary to raise food crops and engage in cottage industry. There could have been no great division-of-labor specialization like we know today in mid-15th century Staffordshire. This is a simple consequence of the laws of economic markets. Adam Smith wrote,

As it is the power of exchanging that gives occasion to the division of labor, so the extent of this division must always be limited by the extent of that power, or, in other words, by the extent of the market. When the market is very small, no person can have any encouragement to devote himself entirely to one employment for want of that power to exchange all that surplus part of the produce of his own labor, which is over and above his own consumption, for such parts of the produce of other men's labor as he has occasion for.

There are some sorts of industry, even of the lowest kind, which can be carried on nowhere but in a great town. . . . In the lone houses and very small villages which are scattered about in so desert a country as the Highlands of Scotland, every farmer must be butcher, baker and brewer for his own family. In such situations we can scarce expect to find even a smith, a carpenter, or a mason within less than twenty miles of another of the same trade. The scattered families that live at eight or ten

miles distant from the nearest of them must learn to perform themselves a great number of little pieces of work for which, in more prosperous countries, they would call upon the assistance of these workmen. Country workmen are almost everywhere obliged to apply themselves to all the different branches of industry that have so much affinity to one another as to be employed about the same sort of materials. [Smith (1776), pp. 15-16]

The sort of economic environment Smith describes here fits very closely with Stafford at that time. Children learned these crafts from their parents and, in their turn, passed them down to their own children. This is one of the subtle wonders to behold of Thomas' father, John, who had to acquire the sorts of craft skills that on Baron Welles' estates would likely have been practiced by household staff. It leaves hanging the question of how John learned them and from whom. But it is obvious he did.

We know almost nothing about Thomas' son Thomas and little about his grandson John other than that they existed and were born in Little Haywood just outside Stafford. We do know Grandson John was born circa 1492 and we know who his sons and wife were. Great-grandson John was born circa 1538 in Little Haywood. The Hazelett and Ballard-Willis genealogy projects and the LDS database contributed the most to making these familial connections and the next links in the chain (folio 3). Great-grandson John and his brother Thomas represent the last links with Little Haywood. The next member of the family, John's son John born in 1564, takes us roughly 100 miles to the southeast into the vicinity of Reading and, in particular, to Bradfield in Berkshire. Here was the family's last home in England.

If not for the establishment of the direct family link between John of 1538 and John of 1564, such a major change of residence would cast great doubt on the lineage. John of 1538 died in Bradfield, and John of 1564 was born in the adjoining parish of Stanford Dingley. We also know the *next* John in the family line was christened in Bradfield in 1604. This definitively places John of 1564 in Bradfield by 1604.

In terms of economic and business opportunity, this migration makes a great deal of sense and implies an enlargement of the family's business enterprises in the wool industry. Reading in the mid-16th century was a major urban area, a magnet for wool producers, and it lies only about 7½ miles to the east of Bradfield. Reading sits near two rivers, one of which is the Thames, which makes it ideally situated as a marketplace and as a transportation hub for transporting goods by water to and from the Thames valley and London. Cloth making was the mainstay of Reading's economy, and the town supported fullers, weavers, dyers, and tailors. It also supported goldsmiths, carpenters, blacksmiths, stone masons, butchers, bakers, and millers. There was a leather industry established there. Leather was tanned and used to make shoes, hats, and saddles. In short, Reading was already one of Adam Smith's "great towns."



Figure 10: Present day Bradfield in Berkshire.

Bradfield sits on River Pang and is connected to the Thames by water. It is a village and civil parish. It was mainly a farming village and there is not very much detailed historical information about it. It is intriguing to note that at the time John Wells was born in Bradfield in 1604 an obscure gentleman named Edward Stafford was the esquire of Bradfield. His genealogy is challenging but the parish history and records of Bradfield provide the clues necessary to do so. Edward was a descendant of the large Stafford gentry centered around the town of Stafford and spread across Staffordshire as well as Cheshire adjoining it immediately to the west. His great-grandfather was Sir Humphrey Stafford; his grandfather was Thomas Stafford, Sr. and father was Thomas Stafford, Esq., the previous esquire of Bradfield. It is culturally implausible for a Wells-Aston-Stafford social network to have *not* existed in Staffordshire.

John married a Bridgett Jewell. Parish documents prove that on the 4th of October in 1640 their son, Edmund Wells, was christened in Bradfield at St. Andrews Church (Church of England). And this brings us to the next chapter in the family story.

§7. The Family Comes to America

On October 31st of 1517 (Halloween), an obscure German priest in Wittenberg nailed a proclamation to the door of Castle Church. His hammer launched a tidal wave that swept over England two decades later. The priest's name was Martin Luther. The tidal wave was the Protestant Reformation.

The gates to the Reformation in England were opened by none other than King Henry VIII. Henry had no particular discontent with Roman Catholicism over doctrinal matters. Rather, his problems with the Pope arose because of his decision to annul his marriage to Queen Catherine and marry Ann Boleyn, which the Pope refused to sanction. The annulment and the Acts of Supremacy he had his Parliament pass in 1534, declaring him to be head of the church in England, brought about his excommunication. The Church of England, also known as the Anglican Church, was more or less Catholicism without the Pope. It is known that Ann Boleyn was keenly absorbed and engaged with the ideas of the Protestant Reformation, but how far her influence extended is a matter of dispute among scholars. Opposition arose to Henry's English Reformation, mainly among Catholics, and Henry took steps to suppress this. These included executing many dissenters. Followers of Luther appeared in England during his reign, and Henry tolerated many of them and appointed some to high positions in his court so long as their Lutheranism did not openly challenge his Church of England.

Meanwhile, on the continent, a new form of Protestantism took shape led by John Calvin. Calvin broke from the Catholic Church around 1530. His publication, in Switzerland, of his seminal *Institutes of the Christian Religion* in 1536 set off a second wave of reformation. The doctrines of Calvinism actually depart very little from those of Lutheranism and, like Lutheranism, incorporate many Catholic doctrines. But their differences were enough to spawn diverse Protestant sects derived from Calvinism. One factor of great importance in this was publication of the Bible in the native languages of the European countries. The Vatican had always opposed this because the church hierarchy feared that laypeople could not understand the complexity of the Bible nor be able to properly interpret its many doctrinal inconsistencies. They had not opposed the printing of the Gutenberg Bible in the 1450s because this Bible was printed in Latin. The Reformation, on the other hand, taught that people must read and interpret scripture for themselves – although not without fundamental doctrinal guidance from church ministers.

When Henry VIII died in 1547 and was succeeded by his nine year old son Edward VI, Calvinist ideas of Protestantism began making inroads in England. Edward died while he was still a teenager and this touched off a struggle for succession that led to Henry's devoutly Catholic daughter Mary becoming Queen of England. Mary attempted to undo her father's reforms, as well as those that had come to pass during Edward's brief reign. She executed many protestants for heresy, earning the name Bloody Mary Tudor in the process. When she died in 1558 her half-sister, Ann Boleyn's daughter Elizabeth, succeeded to the throne as Queen Elizabeth I. Elizabeth knew that Catholics considered her an illegitimate daughter of Henry VIII, and so her policies towards religion were pragmatically tempered. She embraced

Protestantism in its less radical forms, although she opposed more radical variations like the Puritans.

When Elizabeth died in 1603 she was succeeded by James VI, King of Scotland, according to a treaty Elizabeth had made to establish peace with the Scots. He became King James I, King of England and Ireland (as well as Scotland). With King James the Kingdom of Great Britain was established. James died in 1625 and was succeeded by Charles I, a king who favored Catholicism and became embroiled with his primarily Protestant Parliament over issues of religion and limitations to the power of the monarch. This came to a head in a civil war pitting Charles against the primarily Puritan forces of Oliver Cromwell. The conflict ended with rule of the country passing to Cromwell, the “Lord Protector,” in 1649 and Charles being beheaded. Cromwell, who was a religiously tolerant Puritan, died in 1658. This led to the restoration of the monarchy under Charles II, son of Charles I, in 1660. Charles’ accession eventually led to a renewal of antagonisms between Parliament and the Crown, mainly because of Charles’ favoring of Catholicism and refusal to be rigid in cracking down on nonconformists to the Anglican Church. Charles II reigned until 1685 and was succeeded by his son, James II, whose open Catholicism provoked a revolt by diehard Protestants. They begged William of Orange to invade England and “rescue (Protestant) Christianity.” William forced Charles II to abdicate and became King William III in 1689.

Amidst this religious turmoil occurred the events that led to the Wells family’s emigration to America. In 1647 a religious dissenter named George Fox, who had been raised as a Puritan, began to preach a new religious doctrine. Fox’s doctrine attracted scorn from many but was respected by Cromwell and attracted the favor of a wealthy man named William Penn. In 1650 his preaching drew charges of heresy, for which he was brought to trial. At his trial, one of the judges contemptuously called Fox’s converts “Quakers,” and the Society of Friends came to adopt this name. By the year 1680 the movement had attracted many converts and an estimated 60,000 Quakers were living in England and Wales. The Baker genealogy reports that one of them was Edmund Wells, son of John Wells, born in Bradfield in 1640.

The restoration of the monarchy under Charles II in 1660 was perceived as a threat and danger to the Society of Friends, although the conservative and orthodox Parliament was almost certainly the greater actual threat. William Penn had converted in 1667. In 1681 Penn received a land grant from the king in consideration of “the debts due to him and his father from the Crown.” The land he was granted was Pennsylvania. It was Penn’s vision to establish in Pennsylvania a land where the understanding of the Bible was “to be applied to the affairs of daily life, and in part to government, laws, and institutions” [Jernegan (1929), pg. 209]. Jernegan tells us,

The grant of Pennsylvania to William Penn by Charles II was in the nature of a fief, a feudal principality such as still existed in England at that time. Penn and his heirs were absolute proprietors who might dispose of their land as they saw fit. Penn’s early plans for distribution provided for the sale and rental of land. To every master of a family he promised 200 acres at a rental of one penny per acre. He also offered 50 acres per head for every man and maid servant at the same rental. Poor servants paid one penny to one half penny per acre rental after they became free. Thus land was not granted on the basis of free tenure; the estate was perpetually subject to a quit rent; and also to forfeiture under certain conditions. [Jernegan (1929), pg. 221]

The phrase “when they became free” refers to completion of a term of indentured servitude under a contract of indenture. The “man and maid” servants were not slaves, nor were they serfs. Passage to the American colonies by ship was not free; indeed, it was quite expensive and for many poor people the standard way to pay for passage to the New World was by making an indentured servitude contract that bound them for a fixed number of years (typically four to seven) in exchange for their passage.

Penn was not offering people charity. In the 1680s a British penny was 1/240th of a pound sterling. A penny per acre amounted to a rent of just under £1 per year for 200 acres, which was a lot of money in the 1680s. Nonetheless, this was a great opportunity for many people of modest means, especially for young people who were just starting out and had no significant wealth of their own yet. Penn did not necessarily

intend that only Quakers would benefit, but throughout the 1680s Quakers were being persecuted in Britain – especially by the Parliament – and this obviously added a great deal of additional incentive to emigrate to America. And it is beyond reasonable doubt that Penn primarily had Quakers in mind for his land in Pennsylvania. We do not know when Edmund Wells converted to Quakerism, but the opportunity Penn was presenting could very well have been a principal factor in his conversion. Indeed, subsequently to his emigration Edmund's actions very strongly imply this.

Penn was not the traditional English landlord. Jernegan wrote,

Penn was a firm believer in the old English ideas of freedom and representative institutions, guarantees of property and jury trials. Unlike all other great colonial proprietors, he urged the people “not to give away anything of Liberty and Property that at present they do . . . enjoy . . . and understand that it is easy to part with or give great privileges, but hard to be gained if once lost.” Penn also wrote (1681), “For the matters of liberty and privilege I propose that which is extraordinary, and to leave myself and successors no power of doing mischief; so that the will of one man may not hinder the poor of the whole country.” Because of his birth and social position he associated with people of rank. Though rich, talented, and educated, he was at home among the middle and poorer classes, from whom he won the bulk of the converts to Quakerism. [*ibid.*, pp. 208-209]

The first great wave of Quaker emigrants to the New World happened over the period from 1682-1685. Edmund Wells and most of his family emigrated in the late stages of this first great wave.

Edmund's father, John, died circa 1660-65 and his mother, Bridgett, died in 1673. The Baker genealogy speculates that Edmund was “one of several Wells brothers who migrated to Pennsylvania from Berkshire in the 1680s” but this is false. Parish records show John had a son Thomas b. 1628 but he died in 1633. John also had five daughters (folio 3). It is plausible Edmund might have had cousins who emigrated rather than brothers. It is known that Edmund himself had a large family. His oldest daughter, Ann, was born in 1670 and apparently did not emigrate to America; she is reported to have died in England. Edmund's oldest son, Henry, was born in Bradfield in 1672 and it is known that he did emigrate. His story is coming up. Edmund also had five other children (see folio 4), the second oldest of whom, John, was ten or eleven years old when the family emigrated and the youngest, the twins Joseph and James, were infants. Some genealogies report that Edmund had one other son, William, but parish records refute this. The Baker genealogy reports that “the whole family” emigrated “after March 1684” following the birth of the two youngest children. This is beyond reasonable doubt because there are records in Pennsylvania and New Jersey that establish their presence, but with the exception of Henry there are no records of their passage to America. This is because Edmund and his wife Mary paid their own way over, which meant no official record of their emigration was kept. It is beyond reasonable doubt that they took their young children with them. Again, Henry is the exception here, as I discuss below. That they could afford to do so is almost certain evidence that the family was prosperous in Bradfield; that they did not pay the passage for Henry means the family was not rich.

We do not know if Edmund, Mary, and the children emigrated in 1684 or 1685. The latter date is more plausible because Joseph and James were born in 1684. It also seems reasonable that the family would have traveled together and it is known Henry emigrated in 1685. But the passenger manifest on the ship Henry took mentions him alone. If they traveled with Henry, the family landed in Philadelphia in 1685; if they did not then they would have landed either in Philadelphia or in the Chesapeake, which were the two ports of arrival for emigrants to the Philadelphia area in the 1680s. It is uncertain where Edmund and his family settled initially, but he came to live on the New Jersey side of the Delaware River near Burlington.

Edmund's commitment to the Quaker religion is questionable. The Baker genealogy reports that in the 1690s he became a member of a sub-sect of the Quakers known as the Keithian sect. Then he left the Quakers altogether and became one of the people who worked to establish the English Baptist church in the Middle Colonies. He apparently embarked on a lot of missionary travel up the east coast and by doing so he disappears from our known history.

Now we come to Edmund's oldest son, Henry. He is the only member of the family for whom there are official records documenting both his departure from Great Britain and his arrival in America. This is because Henry, alone among the family, paid for his own passage to America by contracting to become an indentured servant. Official records were kept on emigrating indentured servants, while they were not for people who paid their own passage. We know Henry arrived on the ship *Bristol Merchant* in 1685 and disembarked in Philadelphia. He was thirteen years old at the time. The typical ages of indentured servant emigrants ranged from 12 to 24 years [Tomlins (2001)] although fewer than 5% of emigrant indentured servants were as young as Henry was. Most were over age 15 and below age 24.

In every colony in its early period, servitude posed risks to a boy Henry's age. Less so in Pennsylvania perhaps than others, but – to share a personal opinion – Henry Wells must be accounted a very brave lad. The indentured servitude system existed in England, too, and he and his father would have known what they were doing could be dangerous. For example, between 1619 and 1622, at the request of the Virginia Company and with permission of the King's Privy Council, 300 vagrant street children were rounded up in London and shipped to Virginia as forcibly indentured servants; in 1624 only twelve of them were still alive [Jordan & Walsh (2007), pp. 75-85]. I think "Tough Angé" Ragemer would have been proud of Henry. We tend to forget there is a real reason America was called the Home of the Brave.

Under the usual conditions of passage secured by indenture, upon arrival Henry's contract would have been purchased from the ship's captain by a local "master" with whom he would serve out the term of his indenture. He would have gone to live with this man as a member of his household. However, Henry's circumstance was unusual. There is compelling evidence that his indenture contract was purchased while he was still at sea by either the widow of a British army officer or her eldest son, a man named Jasper Farmer, Jr. The evidence of this is as follows.

It is reported Henry settled on land in what is now Whitmarsh township in Montgomery County, PA, and that this land was owned by a Major Jasper Farmer. Major Farmer was an army officer living in County Cork, Ireland, and purchased a 5,000 acre tract from William Penn. Because he lived in Ireland, it is very unlikely he ever knew the Wells family, and he died before his widow and family emigrated to Pennsylvania.

The Widow Farmer and her children emigrated in 1685 and they naturally would have embarked from Ireland. The *Bristol Merchant* sailed from Ireland and docked in Philadelphia on November 10, 1685 – *which is the same day reported as when the Widow Farmer arrived in Philadelphia*. It is beyond doubt that the Widow Farmer and at least Henry shared passage on the same ship. It is likely Henry's indenture contract was bought by the widow (or her son) during that passage through an arrangement Henry himself made since his parents do not appear on the only known passenger manifest of the *Bristol Merchant*. The Farmer family and Henry do. The final piece of evidence, placing all this beyond conjecture, is a log note recorded by the captain of the *Bristol Merchant*:

The *Bristol Merchant* John Stephens commander: Arrived here the 10th of [November] 1685. The Passengers are as followed viz: Jasper Farmer, Senior his family . . . Jasper Farmer Junior's family . . . Their Servants are as followed viz: . . . Henry Wells . . .

This was a stroke of very good luck for young Henry because he would have at least had a chance to get to know his new mistress and master as fellow passengers before they all arrived in America.

We do not know how much they paid for Henry. We do know Henry completed the term of his contract by the early 1690s because his oldest child was born before 1695. Indentured servants were not allowed to marry during the term of the contract. Major Farmer's son is known to have begun selling 100 to 200 acre plots to Quaker and German immigrants after his mother died some time in the 1690s, so it is likely Henry was obliged to leave Whitmarsh when his indenture was up. This is because his contract term completed before Farmer began selling off tracts of his land. Land records suggest he lived in New Jersey first before moving to Bucks County, just north of Whitmarsh (figure 11A).

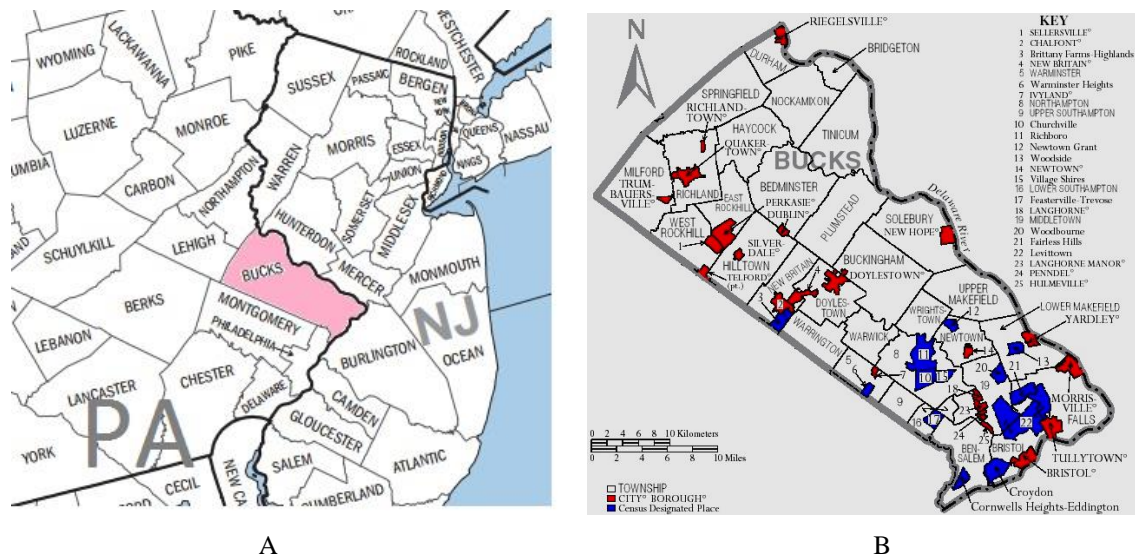


Figure 11: A. Relative locations of Montgomery and Bucks counties. B. Locations of New Britain and Buckingham townships in Bucks County, PA. New Britain lies approximately 10 miles due north of Whitemarsh.

We do know that in 1709 Henry was able to buy a “plantation” in Bucks County, PA, because there is a record of this. It is likely this was in Buckingham township. Henry had a very large family – ten children are reported in his will – and died there in 1714 at around age 42. However, when and from where he and the family moved there is something I have not been able to ascertain.

Henry is especially notable in the history of Wells families in America. He is one of the “baseline ancestors” in the Special Wells Family DNA Project and there are at last report 32 different family lines participating in the project that have been identified through DNA as having him as a direct ancestor.

§8. The Colonial Family Up To the American Revolution

The next ancestor in the family line is Henry’s son, William. There is some confusion among the accounts given of Henry’s children, one of which concerns whether or not William was Henry’s oldest son or if Peter was. Several genealogy accounts are consistent at placing his year of birth as 1698, which would make him one of Henry’s younger sons. Some of them explicitly identify his oldest son as Peter. The basis for saying William was the oldest son seems to be a provision in Henry’s will that gave him “the old house when he became 24 years old.” If William had been born in 1691 this would have been an odd provision because he would have been only a year or so away from that age and already come to his full majority in 1714 when Henry died. Inheriting so soon after Henry’s death also seems very inconsistent with reports stating William died in New Britain township (see figure 11B). If, on the other hand, he was born in 1698 he would have been only sixteen years old in 1714, and this is more congruent with such a clause in Henry’s will. It also increases the likelihood of events transpiring before he turned 24 that could motivate him to move to New Britain. Therefore, while the matter of his birth year remains uncertain, I conclude that the later date is the more likely.

The birthplace of William is reported by several genealogies as being in what was in 1723 named New Britain township (see figure 11B). However, this is inconsistent with the history of New Britain reported by its local historians. The land prior to this was owned by a consortium of landowners called the “Free Society of Traders.” These were men who had purchased the land here from William Penn but did not begin to develop it “for a few decades” according to David Hanauer. Local New Britain historians are more or less silent about settlement in the area before 1715, when Welsh, Scot-Irish and German immigrants began settling the area.

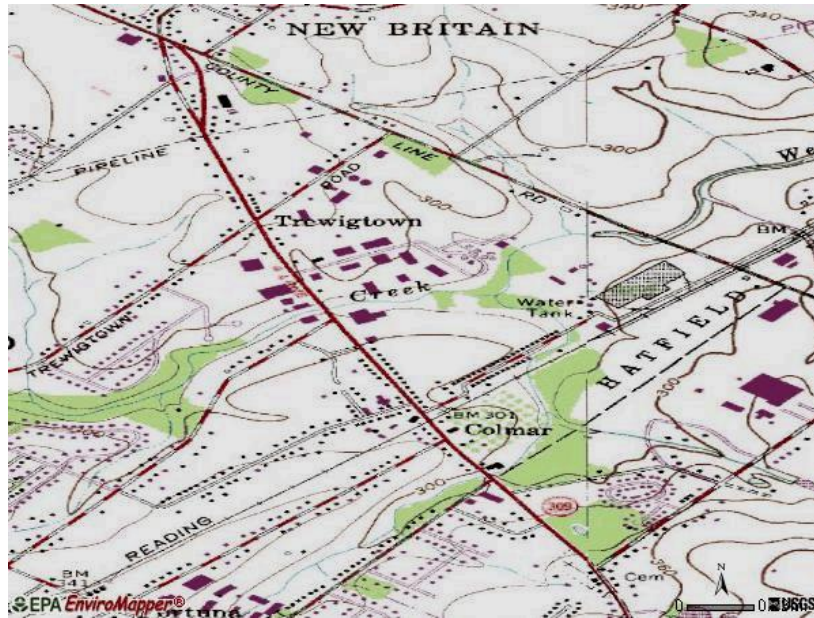


Figure 12: Relative locations of Colmar, PA, in Montgomery County and New Britain in Bucks County.

What they do say on township’s official history site is that before 1715 the area was “a Bucks County Outpost of the civilization spreading from Philadelphia. Inhabitants at that time were solely ‘Indians and wild animals’.” None of this is consistent with William being born there, but not inconsistent with his death occurring there. I conclude that reports he was born there have a high likelihood of being erroneous and perhaps his alleged birth there was merely presumed on the basis of that being where he died.

Another interesting puzzle in reports about William arises from a church record in the Montgomery Baptist Church in Colmar, PA, that on “July ye 12th [1740] Baptized and Received William Wells & Hester his wife.” What is puzzling about this is that New Britain Baptist Church was founded in 1740 “by the first settler families in the area” according to the New Britain historical page. This clearly raises the question of why William and Hester would be baptized at a Baptist church in nearby Colmar (figure 12) when there was a Baptist church being founded in New Britain at the same time. Perhaps the New Britain church was not ready yet to receive parishioners; the answer might be just as simple as that. In any case, I find no gravesite record for either William or Hester in Colmar. I do conclude with high likelihood, however, that this little church mystery dates William’s move to New Britain to between 1715 and 1740.

It is reported that he and Hester had perhaps five children, one of whom is the next link in our family lineage. In the late 1740s a measles epidemic swept through the Pennsylvania colony. William contracted the disease and died of it in 1748. He apparently left no will so it is reasonable to suppose the epidemic hit suddenly, unexpectedly, and virulently. There was, of course, no measles vaccine at this time.

William’s son, Peter Wells Sr., and grandson, Peter Wells Jr., are two more people for whom available genealogy reports engage in erroneous supposition. The anonymous manager of one genealogy reports Peter Wells Sr.’s place of birth as East Nottingham in Chester County, PA, but this is almost certainly erroneous. I deem it likely this genealogist is merely projecting this as a supposition from the knowledge that Peter married Susannah Brock in Chester County in 1746 – a fact I have verified in the Pennsylvania Archives of marriages before 1790. Because Peter’s father, William, settled and died in New Britain, that is where Peter would have been born sometime between 1720 and 1725.

The evidence points to Peter moving to East Nottingham in Chester County some time before 1746. This is consistent with the general westward movement of settlements in Pennsylvania between 1720 and 1740 (see figure 13). Nottingham sits near the border between Pennsylvania and Maryland just off present

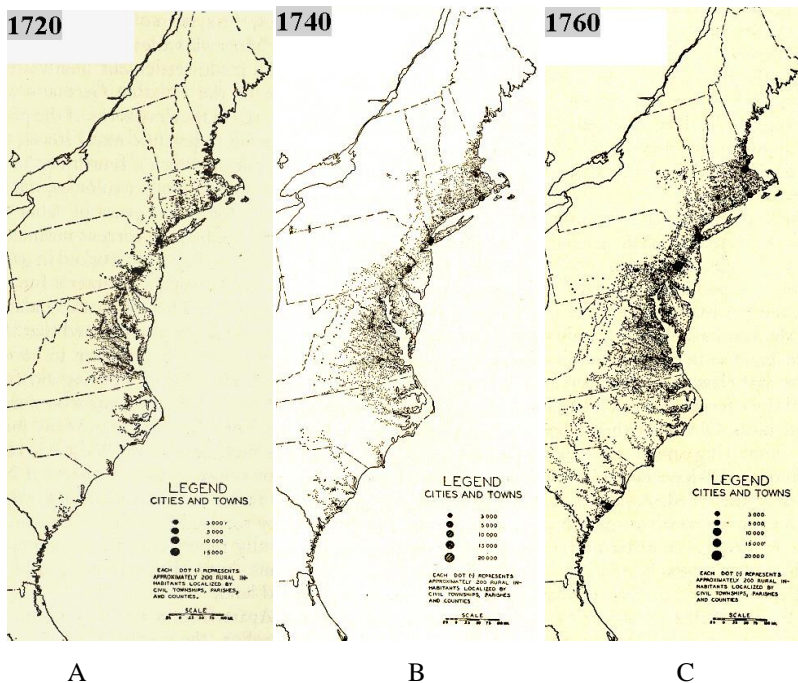


Figure 13: Westward expansion of colonial population in the 18th century. Each small dot represents approximately 200 people. A: population distribution in 1720; B: distribution in 1740; C: distribution in 1760.

day U.S. Highway 1.

Peter’s westward move into the still sparsely populated regions of Pennsylvania is characteristic of the general trend of westward expansion characteristic of America until the western frontier of the continent closed in the late 19th century with the settlement of all the 48 contiguous states. As sons came of age and needed lands of their own, and as indentured servants completed the terms of their contracts, people preferred to be their own masters and acquire property of their own rather than work as wage employees in the growing cities and larger towns. Philadelphia, which grew during the colonial era to be the largest city in the American colonies, faced a chronic shortage of workers until the 1750s and 60s. This drove continuing immigration, primarily from northern Europe, throughout the period. Settlers moving west were invariably farmers who also engaged in cottage industries to manufacture items for their own use.

Land was not free – or, at least, it wasn’t supposed to be. Settlers were expected to purchase their land, usually from land speculators, who had bought unsettled lands with the intent of re-selling them rather than settling them, or from the colonial governments. Not all settlers did so; in the Piedmont region abutting the Appalachian Mountains in what was then the western frontier, a number of pioneering settlers simply set up on vacant land they had come to or wrested from local Native Americans. These were the famous “squatters.” The colonial governments tried, often without success, to extract payment for land from them; legal confrontations between them (and, occasionally, violent ones) were the source of “squatters’ rights” laws today. They also led to the sometimes rancorous split between Quaker eastern and German-Lutheran western Pennsylvania that is still found in Pennsylvania today.

I have not been able to either confirm or refute whether or not Peter was a squatter. There simply seems to be no documentary evidence. The location of Nottingham is in the Piedmont region of the colonies where squatting is known to have been frequent. This raises very interesting but unanswered questions about the means by which he was able to acquire his land. He might have been a tenant farmer. A 1772 Chester County tax list shows him as a renter in West Nottingham, so if he did own land at one time, he lost it later. What is beyond reasonable doubt is that, like all colonials, he had to face the financial problem of shortage of species (coin money).

The British government did not permit the colonies to coin money. Quentin Skrabec tells us,

Currency problems had plagued the colonies from the start. Great Britain promoted a barter system for goods from its American colonies because it gave an advantage to British manufacturing and the goods were carried in British ships. Colonial exports of skins, ginseng, and tobacco were paid for in English goods such as clothing, pewter, and glass windows. The colonists preferred to receive species (gold and silver coins) as payment, but coins were in short supply. Unlike Spain, Britain did not have colonial gold and silver mines as a source of the precious metals needed to make additional species. . . .

The king of England had refused to allow the colonists to mint their own coins. During King Williams's War (1689-1697), when British colonists first began to pay for their own defense forces, the king had allowed the colonies to pay soldiers in paper money known as "bills of credit." Slowly the creation of these bills of credit by fiat outpaced the silver in circulation, which was needed to lend the bills legitimacy. This resulted in inflation throughout the colonial economies from 1710 to 1750. . . . Like our paper money of today, the bills of credit were not backed by silver or gold. Inflation increased as spending on King George's War (1744-1748) and on the French and Indian War (1754-1763) put more of this paper money into circulation and created demand for more goods. [Skrabec (2015), pp. 12-13]

Initially the worst of these inflationary effects were felt in the New England colonies where the inflation rate ran above 19% all during the decade of the 1740s. This, rather than any innate quarrelsome character of Yankees, had the most to do with the American revolutionary movement first beginning there. It seems to me historians do not pay adequate attention to economics when they compile their histories. Factors of economics moved Norsemen to go Viking. Almost certainly factors of economics moved Ragamer to enter the service of Gilbert de Gant; can you think of a more important reason why a person would choose to serve a foreign aristocrat and invade a foreign land where he knew he would face deadly combat with large, hairy, bad-tempered, ax-wielding berserkers? In a way, one can say economics created the Wells family. Kings may be driven by lust for power, but historically their armies are driven by the need for bread and homes. No one, not even a king, can be a leader if he has no followers.

This is what makes the unknown and untold story of Peter's settlement in Nottingham an intriguing mystery. He and Susannah had four children by 1772. We know this because the 1772 tax assessor wrote in his report that Peter "has four silly children." The timing of his move to Nottingham coincided with the growing inflation crisis in the colonies. His "four silly children" were born into the time when that crisis came to a head after the French and Indian War:

The recession of 1762 was the first truly American recession affecting all the colonies. It was a classic type of recession, created by war and inflation, and one that would be repeated throughout the centuries. . . .

By the middle of the 18th century, Great Britain was in control of the coastal colonies of America, and France controlled Canada and the western territories of the Mississippi Valley; the Ohio territory was claimed by both countries. The real crisis was over who would control the fur trade and rich bottomland of the Ohio Valley. The governor of Virginia formed the Ohio Company, headed by a young colonel, George Washington, to explore and lay claim to land in the Ohio Valley. A small, deadly encounter between Washington and his troops and a French force in the Ohio territory would launch a world war in 1753. The resulting Seven Years' War was fought in America [where it was called the French and Indian War] and Europe. The war debt acquired by the colonies and Britain was staggering. Massachusetts alone ended up owing over £500,000, which represented five times the annual revenues of the colony.

This war drained colonial and British treasuries. To continue to pay for the war, colonial governments created an excess of paper money that was not backed by gold or silver. This fiat currency . . . ended up creating a war inflation as too much paper money drove up the price of the goods available for purchase. . . . The war would be one of the world's most costly for a century.

The war initially created an economic boom in the colonies. The colonies generally profited from the war by selling their wares for higher and higher prices, while the colonial governments sunk into deep debt. But the colonial governments' use of unbacked paper money and deficit spending created an inflationary spiral while the war spending continued. The end of the war in 1762 brought a contraction in the colonial economy. War spending stopped, and the paper money in circulation began to depreciate. In addition, Great Britain wanted the colonies to pay more for the costs of the war. To accomplish this, Britain imposed more taxes and enforced the earlier Navigation Acts, such as the Molasses Act, more severely. Great Britain's quest to pay off its war debt by taxing the colonies would become the economic background for the Revolutionary War. [Skrabec (2015), pp. 17-18]

Peter Wells Jr. was born in 1759 and grew up during the crushing post-war recession and the hard times it produced. Some genealogies report his birthplace as "Bucks, PA" but this is inconsistent with his father's residence in East Nottingham. One reports he served in Maryland's Taneytown, Frederick County (Carroll County after 1837) militia in the Revolutionary War, but this is erroneous. The Pennsylvania Archives prove he was in the Pennsylvania militia, specifically, the militia from Chester County where Nottingham is. I have found him appearing in the archived muster rolls as early as 1781 and as late as 1782 but because the archives are incomplete these cannot be used to frame when Peter was a militiaman.

Peter was sixteen years old when, in Emerson's famous words,

By the rude bridge that arched the flood,
Their flag to April's breeze unfurled,
Here once the embattled farmers stood
And fired the shot heard round the world. [Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1837]

I have not uncovered any records reporting precisely when Peter joined the militia. The original records were lost in a fire after the war and only partial archives exist. The fact he appears on a muster roll in any given year does not mean that is the year he enlisted. A muster roll is just that: a roll of "who's here now."

We do not know what his personal reasons for enlisting were. Perhaps it was a case of a farm boy craving the imaginary glory of being a warrior. Or perhaps it had to do with a spirit Emerson captured in verse:

In an age of fops and toys,
Wanting wisdom, void of right,
Who shall nerve heroic boys
To hazard all in Freedom's fight, –

Break sharply off their jolly games,
Forsake their comrades gay
And quit proud homes and youthful dames
For famine, toil, and fray?

Yet on the nimble air benign
Speed nimbler messages
That waft the breath of grace divine
To hearts in sloth and ease.

So nigh is grandeur to our dust,
So near is God to man,
When Duty whispers low, *Thou must*,
The youth replies, *I can*. [Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Voluntaries*, 1863]

It appears the Wells family heard the call of Duty quite clearly. Also appearing in the muster rolls for the Chester County militia are Moses Wells, Richard Wells, and John Wells. It cannot be ascertained from

the muster rolls, but it is possible and even likely these are Peter's brothers. Other Wells names also appear in the Chester County rolls who might be Peter's cousins: George Wells, Alexander Wells, Henry Wells, Ensign Thomas Wells, Edmund Wells, and Samuel Wells. A Jonathan Wells appears in the muster for the year 1780, and it is possible he is Peter's uncle. The Revolutionary War seems to have been something of a family affair. However, one should keep in mind that the militias were the forerunners of today's National Guard, not regular Continental Army units. Pennsylvania, with its predominantly Quaker population, used its militia units as auxiliary units supporting Pennsylvania Continental Army regiments and in other local roles not unlike how National Guard units are used today. Pennsylvania militiamen did not see a lot of combat action against the British regulars, although they did see some. It is known that the Pennsylvania militia did not see action at Monmouth or Yorktown, or encamp at Valley Forge.

While we do not know the details of Peter's military service, we do know he lost a leg to amputation after breaking it during the war. He married Eliza Garfield in 1780 and the likelihood is high this was before Peter lost his leg. Because of the way militia from Pennsylvania were employed during the war (e.g. garrison duty, scouting, occasional skirmishes, and augmenting operations of the Continental line regiments), it is most likely Peter broke his leg in a noncombat accident.

We do not know by what occupation Peter supported himself and his family after the war. By acts in 1818 and again in 1835, disabled veterans of the Revolutionary War were granted pensions in the form of salaries, but this would not, of course, be of any help to Peter from the end of his service until then. However he did it, he and Eliza had at least four children, three boys and one girl. His youngest son, Matthew, was born in 1789; his oldest, Isaac, in 1785. From these dates it is likely Peter's service to his country was concluded between 1782 and 1784, and likely as well that he lost his leg sometime during this period. After the Battle of Yorktown ended on October 19, 1781, there were no more major battles on American soil but the army was not disbanded until 1783 [Hart (1907), pp. 105-106].

Some genealogies report Peter Jr. lived to an incredibly old age, setting the year of his death as 1863. I stress the word "incredible" here: the report claiming he lived to be 104 years old is just not credible. If it were, his vanishing from the known later family history would be inexplicable and he would have outlived all his children. A genealogy report by an anonymous reporter claims he died in Warren County, Indiana, and that place of death would not be inconsistent with what is known of the family's westward migration to Iowa. It suggests he died around 1835-6. I suspect the "1863" figure accidentally transposes the last two digits and should read 1836. It is a common enough and simple enough error to make.

But it is also possible he might have died in Illinois, and this brings us to the next chapter of the story.

§9. The Pioneering Enterprise

Data on the birthplaces of Peter's children are problematic. Multiple genealogies report that his older boys, Isaac (born *circa* 1785) and William (born *circa* 1787), were born in Bucks County, PA. His youngest son, Matthew (born *circa* 1789-1790), is reported by several genealogies as being born "in Maryland." These reports are all plausible but none of them come provided with strong enough evidence to put the matter beyond reasonable doubt. For example, because Peter was disabled by the loss of his leg, then at least during his medical convalescence he would have needed the help and care of other family members. If his injury took place in or near Bucks County, this would have come from relatives – perhaps his uncles – who were still living in Bucks County. Thus the reported birthplaces of Isaac and William are plausible. His father, Peter Sr., died in 1787 and it would be natural for Peter Jr. to return to Nottingham before this happened. Because of his disability, it would have been extremely difficult for him to operate the farm, but it would also have been natural for his brothers living in or around East Nottingham – especially Abner, Richard, and John, who are known to still be living in 1787 – to take him and Eliza in. Because Nottingham is so close to the Maryland border, it is plausible at least one of his brothers might have farmed in Maryland, and so reports of Matthew's birthplace as Maryland are also plausible. One genealogy claims Matthew was born in Baltimore, but this is less plausible because there is no evidence

of any connection between Peter Sr.'s family with anyone or anything in Baltimore, nor do we have any evidence of Peter Jr. and Eliza living in or near Baltimore.

Because Peter was a young man – only 21 years old in the earliest known record of his militia service – and because muster records place him in the Charlestown Company of militia in 1782, it is unlikely he would have had land holdings of his own during the war years. The Charlestown Company was the militia unit for Charlestown township, which lies north of the present day Pennsylvania Turnpike near Valley Forge. Even militia duty required a soldier to leave hearth and home for extended periods of time. That he and his wife might have had to lead a somewhat wandering existence is reasonable in light of the situation. Thus, for now, the birthplaces of Matthew and his brothers remain uncertain. What is much less uncertain (although not beyond reasonable doubt) is that in order for a landless disabled farmer with a wife and young children to survive in the difficult and turbulent years immediately after the war, help from other family members would have been needed. That he, Eliza, and the children did survive as a family is ample evidence that they did receive it.

The thirteen United States of America were united only by their common enemy, Great Britain. As soon as the war ended and independence was achieved, the states fell into hostile bickering with one another over numerous issues. The economy had been wrecked during the war and recovery was slow. In part, this was due to the fact that America's principal foreign trade partner, Great Britain, was now an unfriendly nation and exports to Britain immediately after the war were an unprofitable trickle compared to before the Revolution. This is illustrated in figure 14. The gap between import values and export values proves there was a large trade deficit with import costs far exceeding export revenue. When an economy is expanding, a trade deficit is good for the country. But when inflation is high, a trade deficit exacerbates inflation and brings on or worsens an economic recession. Skrabec tells us,

Even before the Revolutionary War ended, the value of American paper money was declining rapidly. France and Holland grew nervous about whether they would receive repayment of their loans but more pressing was the large amount of money owed to the soldiers of America's army. The risky floating of paper money during the war could no longer be continued. Parts of the army were in open rebellion. . . . The nation had piled up too many loans while winning the war against the British and was nearing default on its debt to France.

Individual states had their own war debt and were imposing high taxes on land to secure money to

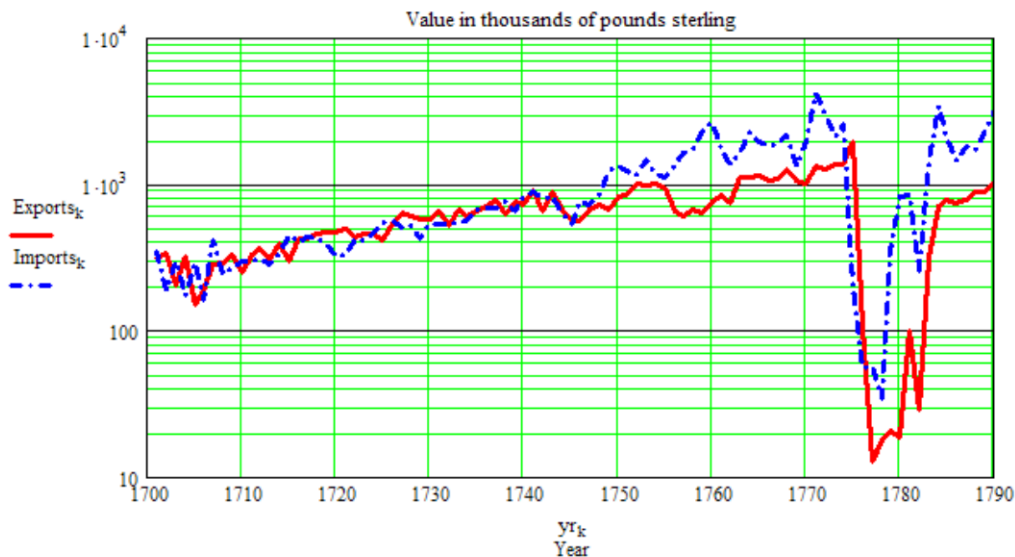


Figure 14: Value of American import and export trade in thousands of pounds sterling from 1701 to 1790.

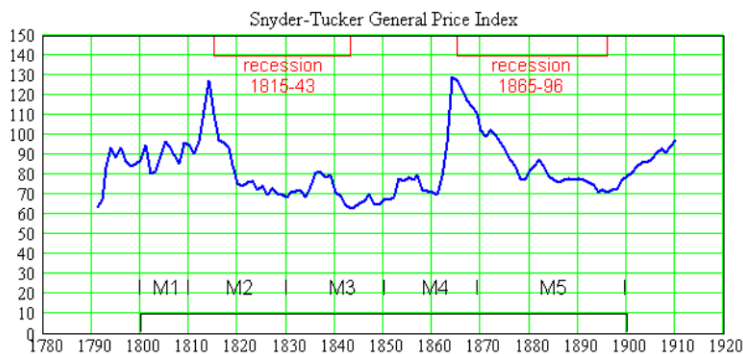


Figure 15: The Snyder-Tucker General Price Index describing economic conditions in the U.S. from 1791 to 1910.

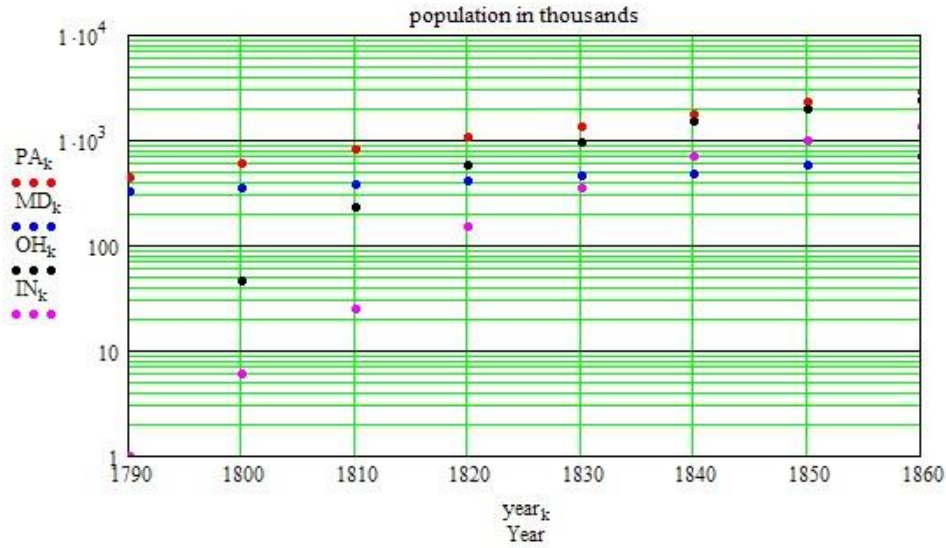
pay their debts. The lack of new credit and high taxes forced many citizens into bankruptcy and even jail. In the midst of this financial crisis, the states were wrestling with the politics of creating a union. . . . America was also in a postwar recession. Merchants and traders on both sides of the Atlantic were trying to collect on debts. In addition, merchants often refused to accept Continental dollars as payment for their goods or inflated the prices of goods to cover potential losses. British import restrictions and a lack of credit caused massive unemployment in major port cities. In addition, there were many counterfeit gold and silver coins of diluted base metal being circulated in the new American economy. Merchants again raised prices to cover their risk. Commerce was at a standstill, and many buyers and sellers returned to the barter system. [Skrabec (2015), pp. 28-29]

Economic conditions were so harsh nationwide that the states were actually on the brink of civil war with one another. Congress under the Articles of Confederation had proven to be too weak and impotent to do anything to stem the crisis. It was to try to avert civil war and hold together the union that delegates from twelve of the thirteen states (Rhode Island declined to participate) met in Philadelphia, beginning on May 14th, 1787, to try to solve the problem of the dangerously weak Confederal government. Their labor produced the Constitution of the United States of America, which was ratified by the states after a long and contentious political process on September 13th, 1788, and went into effect on the first Wednesday in March of 1789.

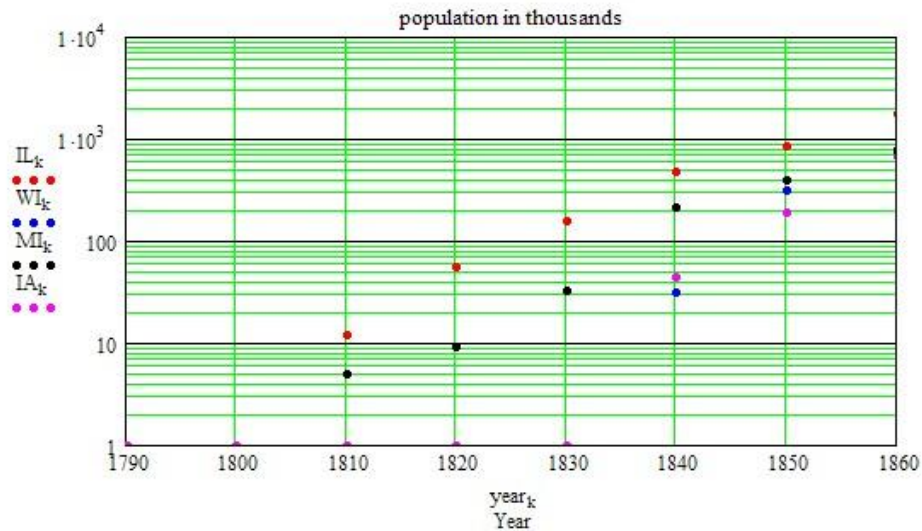
Ratifying the Constitution did not, of course, immediately fix all the country’s economic ills. Figure 15 graphs the Snyder-Tucker General Price Index, which was the forerunner of today’s consumer price index. The index illustrates that it took until the middle of the 1790s for the new government to stabilize the economy. Even then everything was not wholly tranquil. For example, in 1794 taxes on rye whiskey, an important manufactured product in western Pennsylvania, sparked the famous Whiskey Tax Rebellion. The Snyder-Tucker index illustrates that the country settled into boom and bust cycles that characterized the American economy all through the 19th century. More detail about these general economic conditions is provided in Wells (2013). Economically, the end of the 18th and all of the 19th centuries were very different economic times from anything Americans living today have ever experienced. What they had in common with our experiences today is that hard times are hard times and deeply affect people’s lives.

We do not know the detailed economic and financial situation the family faced in the postwar period. What we do know is that before 1811 the family began a westward migration that carried them through Ohio, Indiana, and Wisconsin until they finally settled in West Union, IA – the town Matthew’s son William founded. This chapter of the family story is about this migration.

It aids in understanding the backdrop of this migration to examine the population growth of states in and adjacent to the Old Northwest: Pennsylvania, Maryland, Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Iowa. Figure 16 details the census data on these populations from 1790 to 1860. When people were migrating to these states helps us to understand the nature of the family’s pioneer enterprise.



A



B

Figure 16: Census data on population (in thousands) for: (A) Pennsylvania, Maryland, Ohio, and Indiana; and (B) Illinois, Wisconsin, Michigan, and Iowa from 1790 to 1860. [U.S. Bureau of the Census (1976)]

It is known beyond reasonable doubt that some of the family set out for the Old Northwest before the year 1811. It is certain that Matthew Wells, his brother Isaac, and their father, Peter Jr. undertook this migration. Brother William apparently did not go, and there is no evidence that sister Sarah went. We do not presently have any data for where William and Sarah died. In contrast, we know that Isaac Wells died in Coles County, IL in 1847 and we know Isaac and Peter Wells Jr. lived in Ross County, OH prior to 1831. Peter Jr. applied for a veteran's pension in 1835 while living in Vermillion or Warren County, IN (which county is uncertain). The family undertook five distinct migrations which are summarized as:

1. from either Pennsylvania or Maryland to Muskingum County, Ohio, by 1811;
2. from Muskingum County to Ross County, Ohio, before 1820;

3. from Ross County to Vermillion County, Indiana, in 1828;
4. from Vermillion County to Monroe County, Wisconsin, in 1834;
5. from Monroe County to Fayette County, Iowa, in 1849.

It is also known that in some of these legs the family moved in stages with some members going on ahead to establish the new homestead and the rest coming afterwards. In others, particularly the first one, we do not know if the entire family traveled together or came on in stages. The key evidence is provided by the birthplace records reported for the children of Matthew Wells and of his son, William Wells.

By 1800 the population growth rates for both Pennsylvania and Maryland had slowed considerably from what they had been in early colonial times. This does not reflect overcrowding in either state; both were still sparsely populated compared with what their population densities would become after the American industrial revolution began after 1812. Rather, the easing of the growth rates reflects conditions of unfavorable employment and lack of economic opportunity, rising prices for land, and constriction of credit. In great contrast, population growth rates in Ohio and Indiana were the highest either state has ever seen, and this reflects the general westward migration of settlers that characterized the United States until the continental frontier closed near the end of the 19th century.

The Doscher genealogy [Doscher (1973)] provides much human interest detail as well as speculations concerning the family migration. I do not try to improve on this in the present work, but I believe I can add to these details and provide more insight into why these migrations happened. I do think the Doscher genealogy is a very fine work and that those interested in the Wells family story, especially in regard to the wider kinship network in Iowa, should consult it. As excellent as this work is, however, it does not tell us all we would wish to know about the family's trek to Iowa. That is what I try to provide in this work.

The Doscher genealogy conjectures that one cause of the family migration might have been exhaustion of the soil in Maryland. If one or more of Peter's sons owned homesteads or were tenant farmers in Maryland this might have been a contributing factor. It is known that Maryland's economic dependence on cotton growing and poor farming practices on its large plantations did in fact wear out the soil. It is not known if any of the Wells family members had homesteads or were tenant farmers in Maryland. Further, the family already had at least three generations of farming practice in Pennsylvania prior to the westward migration, and wearing out the soil was nowhere near as significant a factor there as it was in the southern states. For that reason, I deem the soil exhaustion conjecture as being not very likely.

There is, on the other hand, a very significant economic factor that would have impacted the three sons of Peter Wells regardless of whether they lived in Pennsylvania or Maryland. Mention has already been made of the postwar recession and the tremendous financial strain it placed on all Americans. Because the family migration appears to have not occurred earlier than 1800, the best likelihood is that the family did weather that recession as well as another known as the Panic of 1796-1797 [Skrabec (2015), pp. 40-42], although we do not know the extent of the financial hardships they imposed. But a new and even more severe economic crisis came in 1807, and this one produced what is regarded as the first great economic depression in the history of the United States: the Embargo of 1807 [Skrabec (2015), pp. 45-48].

This financial crisis was the result of Congress passing the Nonimportation Act of 1806. This act forbade the import of British goods and was a measure taken in response to the British Navy boarding American merchant ships at sea and pressing American sailors into service in the British Navy on the flimsy pretext that the men who were kidnapped at sea were deserters from the British Navy. Britain and France were at war again, and France also occasionally stopped and boarded American ships, stealing cargo and impressing sailors into their Navy. Congress and President Jefferson rather naively thought an embargo could be slapped on British goods without Great Britain retaliating. The British did retaliate, and this immediately produced a crushing recession and widespread unemployment in America. Its first and most immediate effects were felt in New England and the southern states (including Maryland), but it quickly spread to all states and deepened into an ever worse depression with steep unemployment by

1808. It produced widespread bankruptcies and foreclosures throughout the country.

The timing of this depression with the time period when the family undertook its migration is too close to be dismissed as a coincidence. Under these severe conditions, the highest likelihood appears to be that the family's migration was in response to untenable or increasingly untenable financial circumstances. Note that between 1800 and 1810 the population of Ohio increased more than fourfold, while the population of Indiana more than doubled. Ohio during this period was popularly known as "a land of opportunity" and "the gateway to the west"; but a "land of opportunity" implies a lack of opportunity in the land being left behind. This point is especially pertinent considering that Peter Wells Sr. established his family in East Nottingham by 1759 at the latest. An entire family – or, at the least, two out of three sons and their father – generally does not abruptly abandon the old homestead in a mass movement to a faraway untamed land except when pressed to do so by extremely adverse circumstances.

In this way, the family's migration to Muskingum County in Ohio is reminiscent of Ragermer, who participated in the Norman invasion seeking better circumstances for himself and his family. There are, of course, two great principal differences. First, it was not necessary for the family to "go Viking" for the move to Ohio. There were no hostile Native Americans to overcome and no warfare involved. The Battle of Fallen Timbers in 1794 had pacified Ohio for settlement, and land in Muskingum County (as well as in Ross County) was being sold by the Ohio Company of Associates, a group of land speculators who had purchased large tracts of land in Ohio from the U.S. government. Second, there was no class of nobility to whom service had to be pledged in order to obtain land in Ohio. Absence of any class of nobles appealed to and partially shaped the American character of that era. Historian Curtis Nettels noted:

Numerically the largest group in the colonies consisted of the less affluent farmers – men who owned a hundred and fifty or fewer acres, who worked their own land with the assistance of their families and the occasional aid of a hired hand, who possessed little capital in the form of tools and livestock, and who commonly were entitled to vote. This class was sprung largely from immigrants who came to the colonies as employees or indentured servants. Lack of capital compelled such farmers to borrow money in order to purchase land or to equip their farms, and since their debts often became a permanent possession they developed a pronounced debtor psychology. Equally conspicuous was a spirit of independence – a dislike of being "bossed" – which induced them to prefer a free life in the wilderness to a dependent status in older settlements. Although they toiled at heavy, laborious work, they were generally found to be easygoing, easily contented, not unusually gifted with foresight, inclined to live from day to day . . . Living largely in isolation they relished the companionship of strangers and neighbors, displayed a sociable, familiar, and inquisitive manner, had few if any intellectual interests beyond the Bible and the church . . . and concerned themselves with immediate, practical tasks . . .

Even though these less wealthy farmers and their families were essentially working people, they too shared an attribute of the upper class – the ownership of land. They too coveted more acres, more advantages, more of the good things in life. Their economic independence bred a sense of self-importance and self-respect. When a farmer's son went forth "to make his way in the world," his father might advise him: "Remember that you are as good as any man – and also that you are no better." Despite their property ownership, the farmers remained primarily workers, drawing their income from their labor rather than from investments . . ." [Nettels (1938), pp. 314-315]

Capital is that part of one's stock of owned goods, including owned land and money, in excess of what one uses for purposes of one's own immediate consumption, and which a person puts to use ("invests") with the goal of producing additional revenue income [Smith (1776), pg. 243]. A person who acquires and uses capital is called a capitalist. Largely because of the 19th century communist propaganda of Marx and Engels, many people today do not understand who a capitalist is and tend to associate capitalism only with the superrich capitalists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries – men such as Andrew Carnegie. In actual fact, a twelve-year-old paperboy who deposits 25¢ a week in his savings account is just as much a capitalist as Andrew Carnegie; only the relative amounts of their capitals differ.



Figure 17: Counties in Ohio. The family migrated first to Muskingum County then later to Ross County.

Debt is the opposite of capital. Those farmers Nettels described as making indebtedness a permanent possession and developing a debtor psychology were those who used all the produce of their labor only to meet their family consumption habits; they are not capitalists. The Wells family, on the other hand, was embarking upon a capitalist enterprise that was often exhibited by the westward moving pioneers in the days of the expansion of the nation. French political theorist and author Alexis de Tocqueville noted and commented on this peculiarly American character in his classic early 19th century book about America:

But what most astonishes me in the United States is not so much the marvelous grandeur of some undertakings as the innumerable multitude of small ones. Almost all the farmers of the United States combine some trade with agriculture; most of them make agriculture itself a trade. It seldom happens that an American farmer settles down for good upon the land which he occupies; especially in the districts of the Far West³, he brings land into tillage in order to sell it again, and not to farm it; he builds a farmhouse on the speculation that, as the state of the country will soon be changed by the increase of population, a good price may be obtained for it. [Tocqueville (1835, 1840), vol. II, pg. 157]

We do not know if the family first moved to Ohio in one move or if, instead, one of the brothers went ahead to find the new homestead and procure the land before the rest of the family set out west. We also do not know under what sort of financial circumstances that first new homestead was procured. Given the economic conditions of the time, it is not unlikely the purchase involved taking on a mortgage. What we do know is that by 1811 the family was living in Muskingum County. We know this because the first children of Matthew and his then-common-law wife Sarah – William, Sarah Maria, and Peter Garfield – were born in Muskingum County in 1811, 1812, and 1814, respectively. (Their church wedding in 1815 had to wait for a church to catch up with them). Ohio became a state in 1803; as figure 16A shows, its population growth that would take it from 231,000 in 1810 to 581,000 by 1820 had just gotten started.

³ Tocqueville wrote this in 1840. By “Far West” he means the Old Northwest, which is the region the family was moving into.

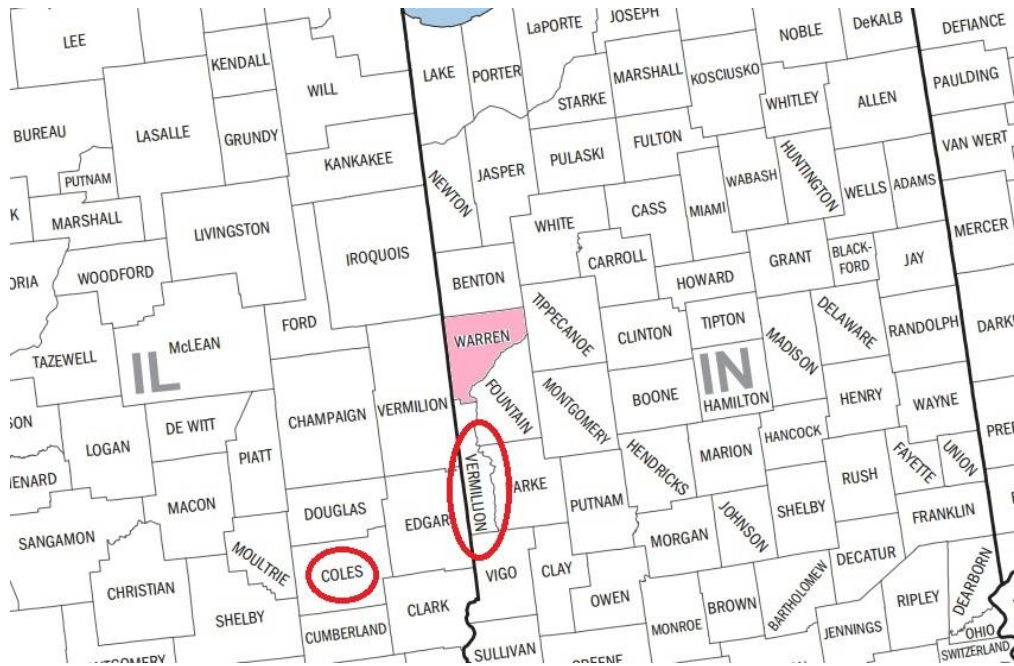


Figure 18: Location of Vermillion County, on the Illinois border, in Indiana and Coles County, IL.

If the brothers followed the same tactics as the family is known to have used later, then the highest likelihood is that they purchased undeveloped land and set about at once to build homesteads. Then as today, the price of undeveloped land was less than the price of an already developed farm so their homesteading constituted value-added labor that increased their capital through improvements that increased the value of their holdings. We can infer from the family’s later behavior that the brothers never intended this first Ohio homestead to be their permanent home. Evidence suggests that by 1815 brother Isaac had already moved further west to Pickaway County, OH, which borders Ross County (figure 17).

By 1821 the rest of the family was living in Ross County in Jefferson township. We know this because Ross County is the birthplace of Matthew’s next three children – Margaret, Joshua, and David. Even today Jefferson township is sparsely populated with no municipalities in it. The sale of the developed homestead property in Muskingum County and purchase of undeveloped farmland in Ross County which they then developed would have increased the wealth of the family and provided additional capital for their next move. 1830 saw the family living in northern Vermillion County in Highland township, close to Perrysville, Warren County, and the Indiana-Illinois border. We know this because that is the reported birthplace of Matthew’s last child, Thomas.

The Doscher genealogy tells us the family’s move was accompanied by or at least met up with other families. This is true and seems to indicate an ambitious joint venture. The list of the first land owners in Vermillion County includes: Matthew Wells; Isaac Wells; William Wells; Cornelius Miller; Abraham Burgett; and Daniel Mosberger. Also by this time, Matthew’s oldest children were grown and began to marry. William married Eliza Abbott in 1832 and their first son, Joseph, was born in 1833 in Vermillion County. Their second son, Matthew, was born there in 1835.

The move to Indiana, like that of Ohio before, was a move into a land that posed no threat of hostilities with Native Americans. Indiana was pacified by the defeat of Tecumseh at the Battle of Tippecanoe in 1811 and had become a state in December of 1816. There was no need to “go Viking” because the government had already done that. The state’s population by 1830 was already 343,000 and would double by 1840 (figure 16A). Illinois and Michigan were also states by 1830 but their settlement was still quite sparse (figure 16B). Illinois had 157,000 people in the 1830 census, while Michigan had only 32,000.

Both states, but especially Michigan, would experience explosive population growth over the next ten years. In contrast, neither Wisconsin nor Iowa were states yet. It seems likely this factor had a great deal to do with the family's choice of their next pioneering adventure.

By 1830 the family patriarch, Peter Wells Jr., was in his seventies. We know he was still alive and had accompanied his family to Vermillion County because there is a record of his making a pension application on July 22, 1835, in nearby Warren County. We also know that his name did not appear in the 1840 census of Vermillion County, nor did he move with the family to Wisconsin.

Some genealogists naturally conjecture from this that Peter died in Vermillion County, but no death record or gravesite has been found there. The family did not stay very long in Vermillion County and in the next move evidence proves there was a parting of the ways. Most of the family moved to Wisconsin. Matthew's older brother Isaac moved to nearby Coles County, IL, possibly from Warren Co. (see figure 18). He died there in 1847 at around age 62. It is possible Peter Jr. went with him. Isaac had a son, also named Peter, who died there in 1845, but we do not know if Peter Jr. died there. I think it likely that he did, but we do not know and this remains the last of the many mysteries in the life of Peter Wells Jr.

By 1834-35, Matthew's eldest son William was in Greene County, WI, along with members of several other families, working on establishing a settlement near what became the town of Clarno, a few miles south of the future county seat, Monroe (figure 19). This is the evidence that the family would send a "scout" ahead because William's son Matthew was born in 1835 in Vermillion County. That implies the rest of the family moved to the Clarno area late in 1835 or in any case before 1837. We know this because William's next son, Moses, was born in Clarno in 1837. It is possible that William's younger brother, Peter Garfield Wells, was also part of this scouting move, leaving Matthew and perhaps also Isaac to hold the fort in Indiana while the new homesteads in Clarno were being established. The pioneering torch seems at last to have been passed from the father to the sons.

The Doscher genealogy contains a wonderful description of the settling of Clarno. For Peter Garfield Wells and his family, this would be the last of the pioneering adventure. Peter became a prominent farmer and large landowner in Greene County. The beginning of the settlement near Clarno tells us that the time the family invested in Indiana was even briefer than it had been in either Ohio settlement.

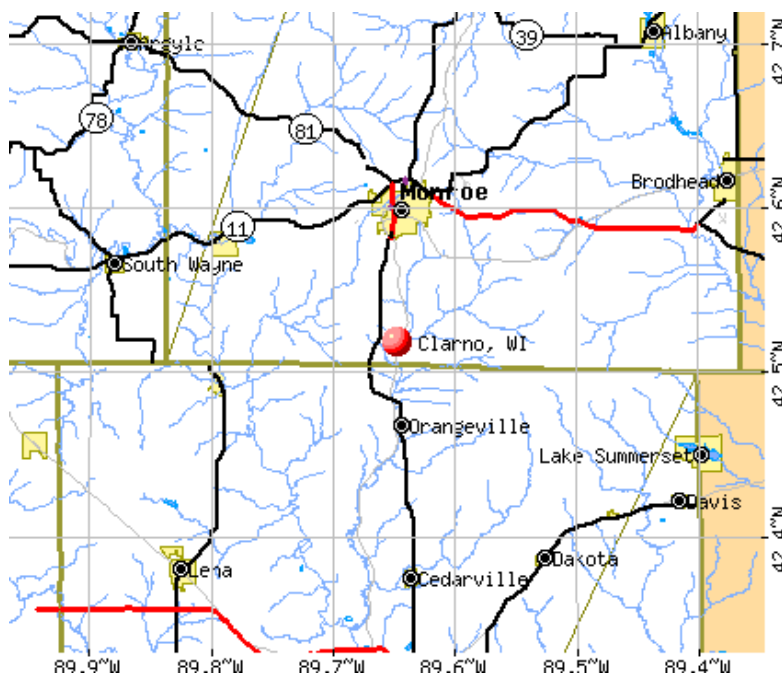


Figure 19: Greene County, Wisconsin and the towns of Monroe and Clarno.

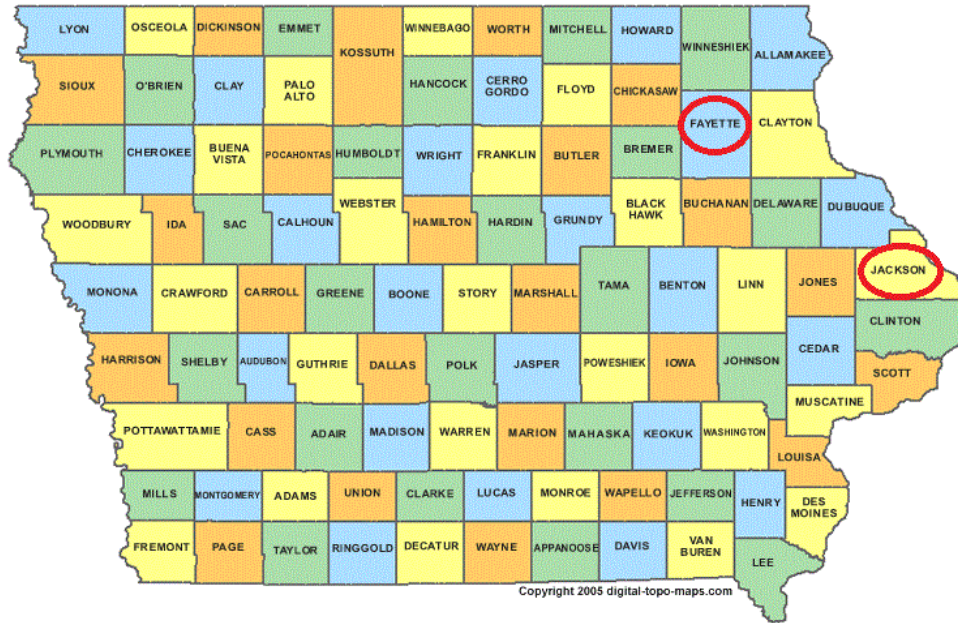


Figure 20: Counties in Iowa. Iowa was established as a territory in 1838 and became a state in 1846.

§10. West Union

Peter Garfield Wells' rise to local prominence in Clarno illustrates a key fact, namely, that the family's series of capitalist enterprises carrying them through Ohio and Indiana was finally bearing fruit in terms of a more prosperous quality of life come within the grasp of Matthew's sons. Competent management of capital begets more capital, and more capital not only opens up more opportunities but also allows for some diversion of capital into the consumption revenue that produces a better living standard. The error many Americans make is that they divert their income revenue immediately into consumption revenue to support such a lifestyle without first taking care to build that nest egg of capital which is the only true path to solid prosperity and financial security for a family.

The establishment of the homesteads in Clarno coincided with a short-lived economic recovery during the Long Recession of 1815 to 1843 (see figure 15). However, that recession wasn't over with quite yet. It had one last hurrah left in it: the Panic of 1837 and six years of severe economic depression that followed. Skrabec tells us,

President Andrew Jackson's war on the national bank – the Bank of the United States – set the environment for the panic of 1837. Without a central bank, the nation had no bank to act as a lender of last resort, a bank borrowers could go to when all commercial banks refuse to lend. The panic itself was the result of western land speculation, state debt, and international trade issues; but as the speculative bubble burst, local and regional banks were unable to meet demands on funds. The panic of 1837 . . . was . . . similar to, though shorter than, the Great Depression of the 1930s. . . .

The bank failures in 1837 started in the financial center of New York but spread until about 30 percent of America's 850 banks failed or partially failed. Prices of goods fell more than 40 percent. . . 90 percent of all factories would close for some period of time.

City and state governments were significant contributors to unemployment when government-funded projects were shut down. Construction companies on major state canal-building programs were unable to meet payrolls. Wages dropped from one dollar a day to a few cents a day. . . . The economy on the frontier froze up as settlers lived off the land instead of sending their excess produce to market. Farmers saw crop prices bottom out as crop failures occurred. . . .

The buildup to the panic of 1837 started in 1836 with land speculation in the West. . . . As more settlers moved west, the state banks that loaned them money became overextended and started issuing paper money based on land speculators' promises to pay. The speculation further inflated land prices. In five years, land prices increased 50 to 75 percent, creating a boom and bubble. Small western farmers joined in the speculation as land sales rose from 1830 to 1836. . . .

Banks began the process of calling in loans, which resulted in a panic. The outflow of money was made worse by President Jackson's efforts to close the national bank. As with any panic, depositors started to withdraw money, and banks were not able to meet the withdrawal demands. State banks in the West were laden with debt and overextended from land speculation; and in the East banks were in debt from canal and railroad building. With no central bank strong enough to act as a lender of last resort to the banks, the banking system collapsed. [Skrabec (2015), pp. 66-68]

If this sounds a bit like the Panic of 2008 – well, it should. Root causes were similar. I think most Americans are not aware of how close the U.S. banking system came to collapsing in 2008-09 like it did in the Panic of 1837. That it did not was due in part to the 2009 American Recovery & Reinvestment Act.

Wisconsin was still a territory when the settlement at Clarno was established. It would not be admitted to the Union until May 29, 1848. It is difficult, therefore, to obtain reliable data on how badly the Panic of 1837 affected Wisconsin settlers, but it remains a fact that the land speculators selling land in Wisconsin Territory were U.S. speculators. In any case, the Panic did not slow down immigration into Wisconsin. Between 1840 and 1850 the population exploded from 31,000 people to 305,000 people. It seems likely this probably had something to do with falling prices for land as the speculators were squeezed and prices in general declined (see figure 15). Incomes, however, declined even further, which would have put buyers and sellers both in difficult circumstances that the banking crisis made worse. Even after the depression caused by the Panic ended, the recovery was slow.

It was most likely the economic circumstances – and not the soil depletion conjecture the Doscher genealogy makes – that delayed the family's next and last pioneering move until the summer of 1848. By then, Iowa had been a state for a year and a half. Its population between 1840 and 1850 grew from 43,000 in 1840 to 192,000 in 1850. Compared to Wisconsin, therefore, the situation in Iowa was more favorable for pioneering land enterprise because of the lower level of demand in Iowa. Increasing demand for land by new settlers moving into Wisconsin would have combined with the more favorable supply and demand situation in Iowa to produce more lucrative opportunities in Iowa. In the summer of 1848, William Wells and others acted to seize this opportunity.

The Doscher genealogy reports that between August 15 and August 20 of that year, William was in Union Township in Fayette County (see figure 20) helping to build the first log cabin in the township. This cabin became the home of one Thomas J. Smith. It is unclear how long he remained in Iowa, but it is known William returned to Wisconsin for the winter and then returned to Iowa with his family and his parents. They arrived on April 23, 1849, and purchased a small cabin from a hunter named David Smith. They enlarged this cabin, which was too small for the entire family. They later used it for a general store and as a hotel of sorts for newcomers to the area [Doscher (1973), pg. 18].

William is most remembered for founding West Union [Doscher (1973), pp. 21-26]. A brief account of the early days of the town is provided on the IAGenWeb/Fayette web site. His four youngest children were born in West Union, and with the establishment of the town the family's pioneering enterprise came to its last chapter. Matthew Wells died in West Union in 1854, preceded by his wife in 1850.

William's West Union enterprise seems to have been quite extensive. He was apparently its wealthiest citizen, a large donor of land for the founding of the town, and an active participant in numerous community organizations. The Doscher genealogy presents these in considerable detail, and rather than repeat here what is said there I refer you to that source. The younger members of the family set themselves up as farmers, continuing a family tradition of capitalist entrepreneurship that has lasted all the way into the 30th generation and on into the 31st with enterprises in Iowa, Michigan, and Minnesota.

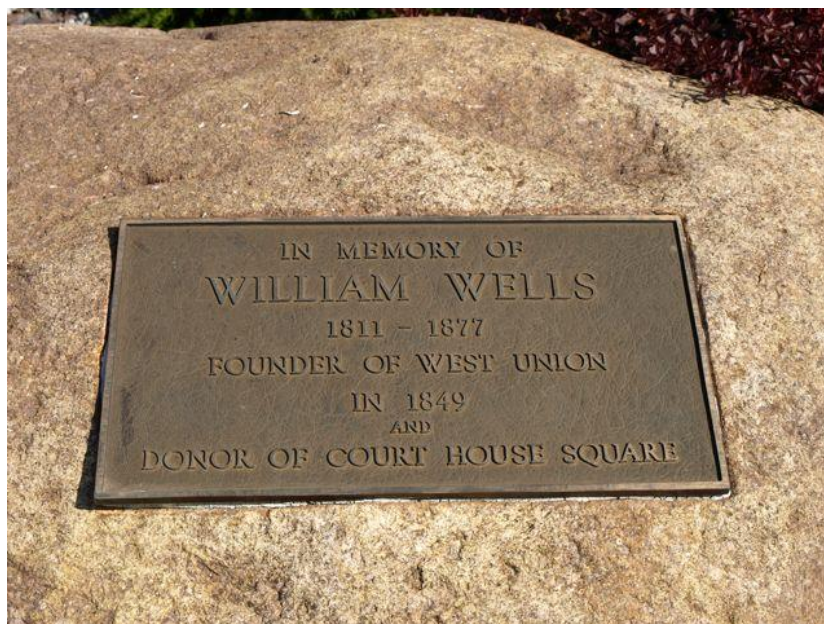


Figure 21: Plaque in West Union dedicated to the memory of William Wells

§11. The Interlude Between West Union and Maquoketa

William's oldest child, Joseph T. Wells, was born in 1833 in Vermillion County. He was sixteen when the family moved to Fayette County and founded West Union. In 1852 he married Rebecca Lippincott, daughter of another of West Union's earliest settlers. They had three children, a son and two daughters. Joseph became a farmer owning his own land.

When the Civil War began in 1861, Joseph was 29 years old and the oldest of his children, Eliza, was only about 7 years old. Nonetheless, he enlisted in the Union Army on August 12th, 1862. His younger brother, Isaac, had previously enlisted in Company F of the 3rd Volunteer Regiment in May of 1861 and had been wounded at the Battle of Liberty (also known as the Battle of Blue Mills Landing) on September 17th, 1861. Slightly over a month after that battle, Isaac was discharged from the army for his medical disability. Joseph served in Company F of the 38th Infantry in Grant's campaign at Vicksburg. During the Civil War disease killed five soldiers for every three killed in combat, and Joseph was one of those casualties. He succumbed to some disease – it is not known what disease specifically – on September 11th, 1863 and was buried at Carrolton, Louisiana. His body is believed to have been reinterred by the army at some later date, but records of where he was finally laid to rest have never been found and it is not known where his gravesite is.

When Joseph's wife, Rebecca, died in 1870 their three children were orphaned. Daughter Eliza (also called Ella also known as Ellen) was sixteen years old, daughter Emily (also called Emma) was ten, and son William Remembrance Wells was thirteen. Rebecca's father, Remembrance Lippincott, was made their legal guardian but the children lived with both their maternal and paternal grandparents at various times. This part of the story – that is, both the paternal and maternal sides of the family exhibiting deep bonds with each other – is another of the legacies of the Wells family. This is implicit in the Doscher genealogy, in which considerable space is devoted to members of the extended family whose names are not 'Wells.' In this monogram, I have not emphasized this aspect of the story in the interests of keeping the monogram as short as possible.

However, by doing this I in no way intend to depreciate by implication this important aspect of the family's character. It is merely that the story of Joseph's and Rebecca's children illustrates this point very

neatly. At the 31st generation of the family line this story is following, the extended family includes family members bearing the names Hicks, Reid, Witt, Mitchell, Hovey, Heartsill as well as others such as Teters and Said. Every family at every generation is a complex network of merging and diverging families. Attempting to follow all the lines and do justice to their stories would fill a library and stymie a supercomputer. In *The William Wells Family and Story*, the Doschers referred often to “our family” and it is entirely correct every time they did so. Family integrity is one of the fundamental things distinguishing our family from those murderously dysfunctional royal families of Norman England.

Having made this point, let us now return to the next generation in our story. William Remembrance Wells was born on June 20th, 1857, in West Union. He was Joseph’s only son. He was a farmer and another of those Wells’ who was generous in land donations, giving lifelong leases to some churches in West Union as well as donating the cemetery grounds in West Union where he is buried. He had two sons, Harry Earl and Edward George, born in 1888 and 1882, respectively, in West Union. At around age 50 he gave up farming to run the Fisk and Wells grocery store in West Union, where he died in 1925.

§12. Maquoketa

The next chapter in our story begins in West Union and ends up in Maquoketa, IA. Adding “Iowa” to suffix Maquoketa is redundant from a certain point of view; as far as I have been able to ascertain, there is only one place on earth named Maquoketa, and this one is it. A few pioneers had settled into the area that became Jackson County at least as early as 1836. In 1838 John Goodenow and Lyman Bates arrived in this new territory and built cabins between the forks of a river the Native Americans called the Maquow-
eutaw. Goodenow’s was built near what is now the southeast corner of Main and Platt Streets. A post office was established there in 1840, even before the town was formed, and Goodenow became its first postmaster. The site’s original name was Springfield, but this was changed to Maquoketa in 1841. In 1853 the town was formally incorporated. By then Iowa had been a state for seven years. Goodenow is generally credited with being Maquoketa’s founder [Babcock (1976), pp. 3-5]. Since the late 1950s the city has had a population of around 6,000 people. The 2010 census put its population at 6,141. It is the seat of Jackson County but, interestingly enough, part of it lies in Clinton County.



Figure 22: Main Street in Maquoketa.



Figure 23: Harry and Mabel Wells.

What we do know is that Harry's and Mabel's four children were all born in West Union between 1908 and 1913. As a young man, it would not have been unusual for Harry to work for wages at one or more occupations. The vast majority of young people just starting out have no capital. It is not especially difficult to be a capitalist entrepreneur, but it does require capital in order to be one. Wage labor is by far the most common way young people first raise capital to start their own capitalist enterprises. But the fact remains that we have no documented evidence of the ways Harry earned a living during this time.

From 1914 to 1919 he worked alongside his father running the Fisk and Wells grocery store in West Union. Early in the 1910's, Harry's mother had become an invalid; this perhaps explains why William Remembrance gave up farming and moved into town. She died in 1915.

In 1919 Harry started a restaurant in the nearby town of Wadena. To the restaurant operations he added a bakery, made and sold ice cream and soda pop, and added a little outdoor movie theater. At some point in time, he moved to the town of Fayette where he devoted his business exclusively to the bakery. It was reported by his son William that between 1919 and 1932 Harry moved his bakery business from town to town, setting up the operations in Dow City (Crawford Co. in western Iowa) and Des Moines. The dates of when these various moves were made is not known, but the younger children went with him. William describes this period by saying "we ran bakeries" in these places. The entire family took part in these moves except for Harry's oldest son, Foryst, who continued to run the bakery in Fayette.

One factor certainly would have had a dominating influence on Harry from at least 1930 to 1932: the Great Depression. According to U.S. census data, fewer than 6% of Americans living today experienced the Great Depression at first hand. Figure 24 graphs the percent unemployment in the U.S. civilian labor force from 1916 to 1945. At the deepest trough of the Depression in 1933, 25% of all civilian workers in the United States were unemployed. The impact this catastrophe would have had on small businessmen is, I think, so obvious it needs no discussion here.

Fayette and Dow City are, even today, very small communities. Des Moines, of course, is the largest city in Iowa, but precisely because of this the Depression hit the state the hardest there. Speculatively, the most likely explanation for why Harry would have moved his business from place to place is that he was seeking some location where his family could make an adequate living. This hypothesis is consistent with the later behavior of his son William and with the known fact that in 1932 Harry came to Maquoketa.

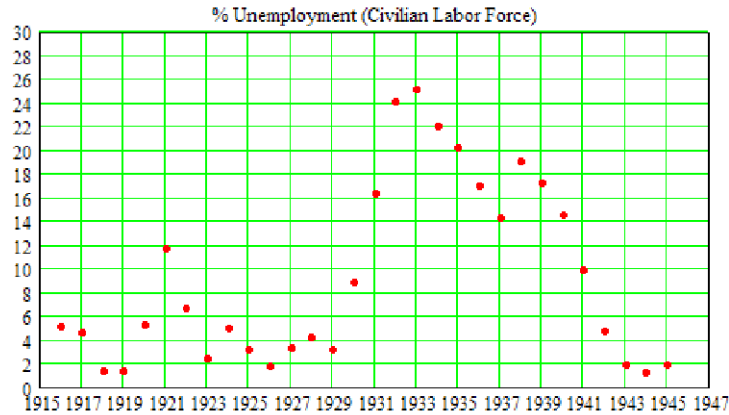


Figure 24: Percent unemployment in the U.S. civilian labor force from 1916 to 1945. Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

Harry’s granddaughter, Bonnie Mitchell, tells us, “By 1932 . . . Harry Wells had visited Maquoketa, in Jackson County, Iowa. He saw the streets full and a bakery for rent for \$30.00 per month. The entire family rallied round once more and they ran the Morning Glory Bakery until 1946 when it was sold.” By 1946 all Harry’s children, except Marie, were married and raising their own families. During World War II, Harry’s son William enlisted in the U.S. Navy (1944) and some time during the war his son Wayne left the bakery to help build tanks for the war effort. Also somewhere during this time his daughter Marie bought the general store in nearby Emeline, and in 1946 Harry and Mabel took over the running of this store [Friends of Emeline (2010), pp. 19-38]. The photograph in figure 23 was taken in the Emeline general store.

Harry turned 65 years old in 1953, and sometime around this year he retired to Maquoketa. His oldest son, Foryst, took over the general store. In 1958 he and Foryst’s family went to Garner, IA, located in Hancock Co. in north central Iowa, to start another bakery. He remained there until 1962 before returning one last time to Maquoketa, where he died of cancer in 1964.

Within the Wells family, Harry’s capacity for hard work is legendary. He passed this legacy down to his sons through the example he set for them. One of the important lessons he taught them is summed up in a saying of his: “Don’t stop looking for work when you find a job.” Another lesson he taught them was how important and sometimes essential it is for a person to acquire more than one skill that can be used to earn a living. All of his sons developed multiple professional skills that served them well over the years.

It is often assumed by most people that it is best to specialize in some one relatively narrow field. People who do this can be described as professionally “an inch wide and a mile deep.” It is a tactic that makes them vulnerable to shifts in lucrative skill demands that happen continuously in an economy. The historical source for this unwise tactic can be traced back to the ancient Greeks, who subscribed to the philosophy that if a little of something is good, then more of it is always better. Plato, for example, preached this message throughout his philosophy. However, this idea is provably false. For proof of this one need only look at those men whom history designates by the title “Renaissance Man.” There are many people who subscribe to a myth that the Renaissance men of 14th and 15th century Europe were a uniquely gifted population not seen in such large numbers before or since. But this myth is hogwash. The famous Renaissance men were working men living in times and circumstances that motivated them to acquire breadth *with* depth of professional knowledge. Harry Wells was in this sense a Renaissance man.

Occupational overspecialization proved to be disastrous for many Americans during the 2008 recession, and many of them are still paying the price today. Some people, on the other hand, adopt the equally unwise tactic of overgeneralizing without developing any depth of skill in a particular profession. Such people might be said to be “an acre wide and an eighth of an inch deep.” Fungible skill opens the

doors of economic opportunity and lack of it usually condemns an unskilled or lowly skilled laborer, or one whose skill goes out of demand, to a mean existence. Harry taught his sons that there is an optimum between the two extremes: reasonable breadth of skills with reasonable depth in them. It is a lesson more potent than any taught by any business school today and one colleges have not yet learned.

Harry's life also exemplifies a lesson we have already seen earlier in this family history, namely, the importance of deep bonds of family unity. Although Harry was unquestionably the head of the family, it took the combined efforts of all of them to see the whole family through what were the most difficult challenges of the twentieth century. His granddaughter Phyllis, speaking about the Emeline and Garner years, once said to me, "No one ever claimed that the [Garner] bakery or [Emeline] store was theirs. We just all worked together as a family. That was one good thing about those years. You don't see many families who really work together anymore." These living words testify to a legacy that has passed down to us through the centuries from the sons of Ragemer into the present day.

From Harry we pass to the 30th generation of this story. The first of Harry's four children, Foryst Wells, was born in 1908 in West Union. Of the three very independent-minded Wells brothers, he appears to have been the most independent-minded. Like Harry's other children, he worked with his father as a boy in the family enterprises in Wadena and Fayette. When his father and siblings embarked upon the family's exploratory sojourns to Dow City and Des Moines in the late 1920s or early 1930s, Foryst remained behind and continued to operate the bakery in Fayette. It appears likely that one reason he did not move with the rest of the family is that he met and married Edith Carlson, who was studying to be a teacher at Upper Iowa College in Fayette. She graduated from Upper Iowa in 1929 and taught public school until her retirement in 1973. Foryst and Edith were married in 1930.

In 1932 Foryst and Edith joined the rest of the family in Maquoketa. Foryst was a baker in the family's Morning Glory Bakery and Edith taught school in the nearby town of Andrew. Their son, H. Wayne Wells, was born in Maquoketa in 1936. They divorced at the end of 1942. Foryst married a second time, to Marian Inez Beagle, in 1943. Their two children, Diane and Phyllis, were born in 1948 and 1949, respectively, in Maquoketa. At some point in time, Foryst worked as Secretary of the Iowa Baker's Association but the date when this happened is uncertain.

After the family sold the Morning Glory Bakery in 1946, Foryst became an agent for the Northwest Mutual Insurance Company, at which he worked until 1953. From 1953 until 1958 he operated the family's general store in Emeline. In 1958 he sold the store and he and his father moved to Garner to start the bakery there. In 1959 Foryst and his family moved briefly to Milwaukee, where he was secretary of the Wisconsin Baker's Association. While he was in Wisconsin, his father operated the Garner bakery. He and his family stayed in Milwaukee for less than a year, returning to Garner in 1960.

In 1962 the bakery in Garner was closed. Harry and Foryst returned to Maquoketa where Foryst lived for a short time before taking a job as a baker in a supermarket in Dyersville, IA, which lies just west of the city of Dubuque. The family did not stay there for long. Sometime in 1963 they rented a house in Baldwin, a small community west of Maquoketa, where they stayed until 1964. Times were hard in Baldwin. In 1964 Foryst took a job as Secretary for the Maquoketa Chamber of Commerce and they returned to Maquoketa, where he lived until his death in 1979.

Harry's daughter Marie was born in 1909. She never married and lived with her parents until their deaths. She died in Maquoketa in 1998.

Harry's second son, Wayne, was born in West Union in 1911. He took part in the family moves to Dow City, Des Moines, and finally Maquoketa and helped work the bakeries. Like his brothers, Wayne worked in the Wadena and Fayette enterprises as a boy. He and his brothers would rise at 3:00 in the morning to work in the bakery or run the enterprise's bakery delivery route before going to school. In 1939 he married Hazel Gibson in Maquoketa, who was the daughter of Ed and Edith Gibson. Their daughter Bonnie was born in 1942 and their son Brent was born in 1945, both in Maquoketa.

After the United States' entry into World War II, he left the bakery for a time, taking a job building tanks for the war effort. Sometime between then and when the Morning Glory Bakery was sold in 1946, Wayne went into the plumbing and heating business with his father in law. They called the business Gibson & Wells Plumbing and Heating. Around 1950 Wayne became the sole proprietor. It was later renamed Wells Plumbing and Heating and his son Brent went into the family business with him. They added air conditioning to their products and today the business is known as Wells Heating & Air Conditioning. For many years they operated it out of a shop behind Wayne's house on Walnut St. in Maquoketa, but in the 1980s they acquired a new and much larger building to house the business. Wayne never actually "officially" retired, but as the '70s passed into the '80s Brent took on more and more of the actual running of the business, which he still owns today. Wayne died in Maquoketa in 2004, still living in his same house on Walnut St., where his daughter and her husband cared for him during his final years. His wife Hazel preceded him in death in 1993. All during their married life, she was as much his steadfast partner in the family business as in their home. She was a strong and remarkable woman.

Harry's youngest son, William Earle Wells Sr., was born in West Union in 1913. He was known as Bill all during his adult life. He, too, worked in the family enterprise from the time he was a small boy until World War II called him away from the bakery in Maquoketa to serve his country in the Pacific. In 1940 he married Luella Teters, a native of the tiny nearby village of Fulton, and they had four children: Sherri, William (Bill Jr.), Richard, and Melody.

Their first two children, Sherri and Bill Jr., were born in Maquoketa in 1941 and 1942, respectively. In 1944 Bill enlisted in the U.S. Navy and served as a gunners mate on the U.S.S. Waller, a Fletcher class destroyer. He saw combat action in the South Pacific at Ormoc Bay in the Leyte Gulf, Mindoro, the Lingayan Gulf, Basilan, the Sulu Archipelago, and Borneo. The Waller was on her way to join the fleet for the invasion of Japan when the Japanese surrendered. After the surrender she was involved in mop up operations in Shanghai and the Yangtze River. While in the Yangtze on October 9th, 1945, the ship was struck by a mine. Three officers and twenty-two men were wounded (figure 25). After dry dock repairs, the ship participated in mine sweeping operations before finally coming home in 1946.

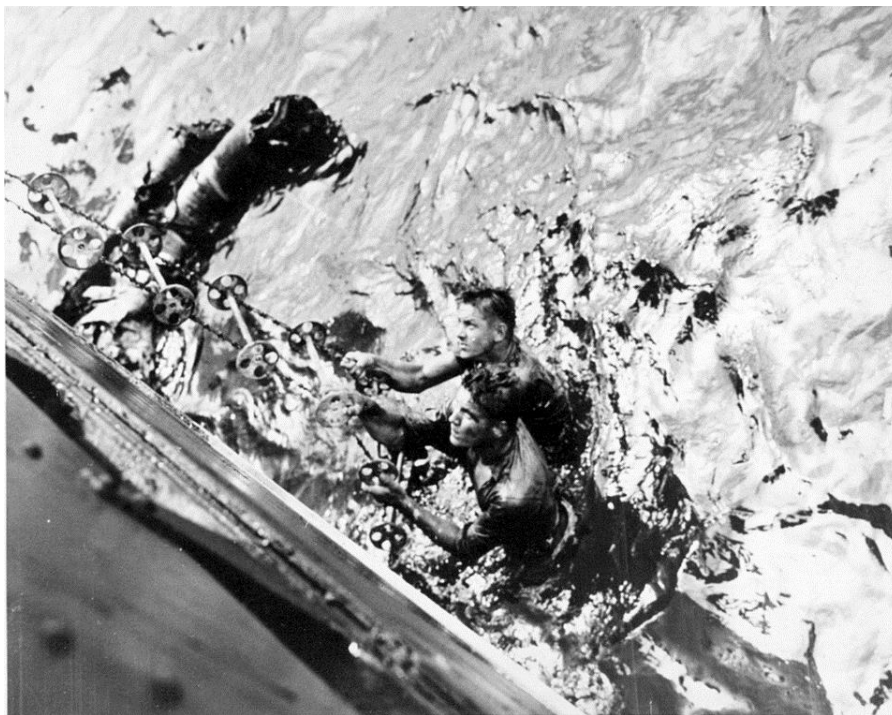


Figure 25: USS Waller rescue operations after being struck by mine in 1945. Official US Navy photo.

Bill was the most occupationally restless of the three brothers. Like his brothers, he had little patience with working for someone else for wages, but he would do whatever he decided was necessary to support his family. In his life he worked as a mechanic, a hydraulic specialist, a cook, and a welder when he was not running his own small business. From 1949 to 1954 he and his family lived in Emeline where he operated a farm implement business selling Massey-Ferguson products. His two youngest children, Richard and Melody, were born in the Jackson County Public Hospital in Maquoketa in 1953 and 1955, respectively. In 1954 he sold the Emeline business and the family moved back to Maquoketa. From 1954 until 1969 he occupied himself in various ways including wage-earner jobs, briefly restarting his implement business, and lastly working as a salesman for U.S. Homes. The family purchased their first home in 1962; prior to this they had always been renters.

When the worsening economy in 1969 caused a downturn in housing sales, he, Luella, and their two youngest children moved to Bellevue where the family started a bakery. It was named the Morning Glory Bakery in remembrance of the old Maquoketa bakery. They lived in an apartment above it. In 1974 declining health made him decide to retire permanently. He and Luella moved back to Maquoketa, where they lived on a ten acre settlement owned by daughter Sherri located at the south end of town in an area known locally as Reynerville. Bill passed away in 1995. Luella passed away in 2002.

When one looks at the number of moves and number of different business ventures engaged in by the brothers after the second world war, one might be inclined to blame this on simple restlessness, becoming bored with some particular line of work, or some other equally plausible speculation. In fact, the brothers were responding to new and rapidly evolving necessities. Of the three brothers, only Wayne established a permanent business that has continued to be viable and successful for more than sixty years. In the case of the other two brothers, nothing today remains of their business enterprises. Why is this? And what caused this apparent instability and restlessness?

The answer is that at the end of World War II America underwent another episode of socio-economic change, another of those tidal shifts that pepper the pages of history from time to time for as far back as history goes. We have seen one of these already: the changeover from feudalism based on land wealth to capitalism based on money wealth. The bounty of early capitalism grew out of the fact that most of the circulation of money – and therefore capital – in early capitalism was primarily local. Some capital always “leaks away” from local economies, but by and large most locally generated capital remained in a relatively small region generating it and it benefitted the local residents. After World War II there was a change in the flow of money through commerce in the United States, and this change caused capital to flow out of localities into fewer urban-centered areas dominated by large manufacturers and distributors. This caused smaller communities to become increasingly dependent on what economists call “service based economies,” and service based economies are always economically weaker and more vulnerable.

Here is not the place to go off on a tangent and deliver a science lesson, but I think a couple remarks are in order. First, the postwar period was characterized by a boom in consumer products. The war had put large manufacturing companies back on their feet to meet the demands of the war, and when the war ended these large corporations turned their manufacturing capacities from war goods to a legion of new consumer goods. I think I’d not be wrong to guess that our younger generations today take items like automatic clothes washing machines for granted. They might therefore be shocked to learn that Luella Wells washed clothes with an old fashioned hand scrubber and tub and dried them on a clothes line until well into the 1950s. Television came along in the ‘50s and replaced radio as the primary source of news and entertainment. The new system of interstate highways begun in the 1950s changed the way goods were transported over long distances from their place of manufacture to where people bought them. There was an explosion of new technologies, begun during the war and accelerated by the demands of the Cold War. These changes fundamentally altered the quality of life for Americans, mainly for the better in terms of making more leisure available; but they also fundamentally altered business and economics with disadvantages that were largely hidden by something that had quietly begun in 1910: continuous inflation. Figure 26 graphs the consumer price index in terms of constant 1967 dollars from 1880 to 2010.

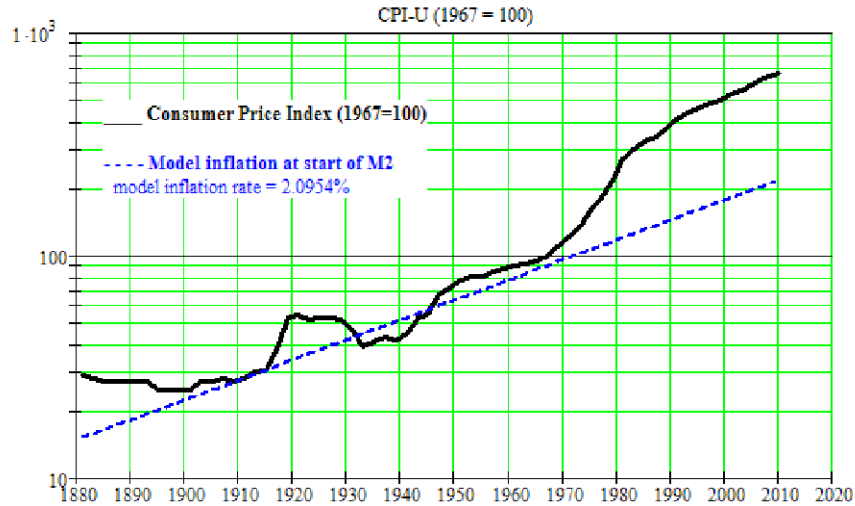


Figure 26: The Consumer Price Index from 1880 to 2010 using 1967 as the reference year for prices.

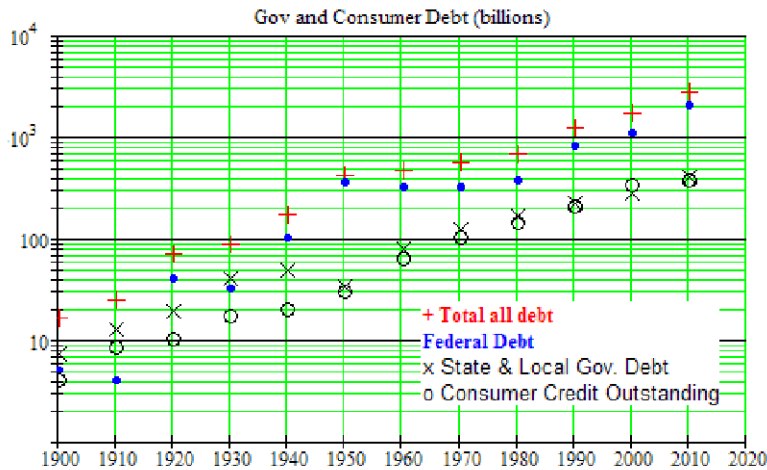


Figure 27: Government and consumer credit debt in constant 1967 dollars from 1900 to 2010. Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Mortgage debt increases tracked consumer credit debt increases at between 2 to 4 times higher debt levels.

The phenomenon of constantly rising prices was something that was unknown in the 19th century. Periodic bouts of inflation existed then, of course, but never in a way that was perpetuated year after year after year. Wages also rise with inflation and if they rise at an equal rate then a person is no better off and no worse off because his income keeps pace with rising prices. However, most people “feel wealthier” because they look at their dollar incomes and see them going up – leaving them to wonder why, if they are getting wealthier, they don’t seem to be able to get ahead. In fact, they are not wealthier; it is just a mathematical illusion. But this illusion also hides the fact that real wealth in the locality of where a person lives is decreasing as capital flows away to other places and into other hands never to return.

Another factor was an explosion in debt – federal debt, state and local government debt, mortgage debt, and consumer credit debt – that began in the late 1940s and kept climbing throughout the rest of the 20th century. Figure 27 graphs various types of debt in constant 1967 dollars from 1900 to 2010. Mortgage debt increase more or less tracked consumer credit debt during this period. Debt is the opposite of capital and when debt is used to finance consumption – as consumer credit debt is – the effect is to drain away the debtor’s capital. Your home is *not* an investment unless you sell it and go live in a tent.

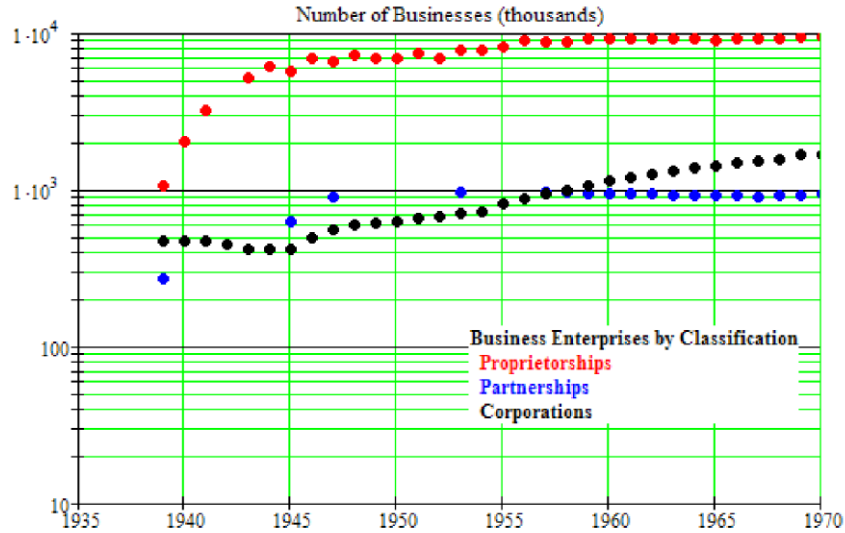


Figure 28: Number of proprietorship, partnership, and corporation businesses from 1939 to 1970. Public stock corporations are the principal source of the draining away of local capital. Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

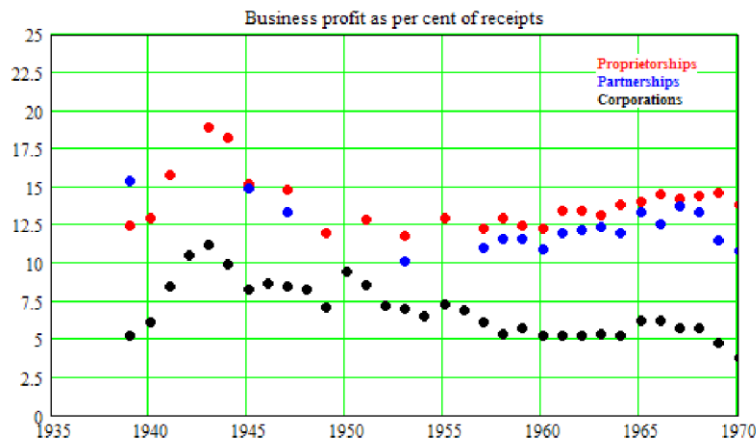


Figure 29: Profit as a percent of business revenue receipts from 1939 to 1970 for proprietorships, partnerships, and stock corporations. Calculated from U.S. Census Bureau data.

One of the effects the draining off of local capital had was to cap the number of independent small businesses, which showed no growth from 1955 through 1970 (figure 28). At the same time, the U.S. population was growing and this means *relatively* fewer Americans were operating their own capitalist enterprises and more were working as wage-earning laborers. Wayne Wells was one entrepreneur whose enterprise was more immune to the draining away of local capital. Bakeries, restaurants and implement dealerships, on the other hand, are extremely vulnerable to it for several reasons.

A greater fraction of Americans were becoming non-capitalist wage earners employed in the growing number of public stock corporations. Revenue was flowing lopsidedly into these corporations – exceeding the total business revenues of capitalist proprietors by nearly a factor of ten. However, to the eye of a true capitalist this is a flow of revenue into business organizations that use it inefficiently and waste capital. Figure 29 graphs the percentage of profits to revenues for proprietorships, partnerships, and corporations. The small business capitalist consistently makes far superior use of his revenue than a large corporation with its semi-feudal structure of hired-help managers and other laborers. These managers are mostly men who are *not* capitalists; they are wage laborers. I wouldn't hire most of them to run a lemonade stand.

This tidal change was a growing devolution from capitalist entrepreneurship backwards towards an economic system that in a number of ways resembles feudalism. It had been the emergence of capitalism in England in the 14th century that changed that nation from a weak, relatively irrelevant kingdom into the superpower it eventually became. Capitalism had brought liberty to millions of people. In the post war period in America, the new economic trend was an anti-capitalism trend, despite a great deal of corporate propaganda painting the corporation, and specifically its managers, as models of capitalism.

In fact they are not. They are new feudalists. The model for this new feudalism had in fact been put in motion in the late 19th century by a few wealthy capitalists – men like Andrew Carnegie. But by the middle of the 1920s these wealthy proprietor-capitalists were gone, replaced by an anonymous gypsy capitalism of trust and banking companies and anonymous traders in the stock and bond markets. Somewhat ironically, Andrew Carnegie had opposed laws establishing public stock corporations:

In the great large corporations the shares [of stock] are generally bought and sold upon the stock exchange, and the real owners are unknown. All depends upon salaried officials, who may or may not have a dollar in the enterprises. In the limited partnership, on the contrary, only shareholders can be members, and thus is insured the eye of the master over all. . . . By this plan it is possible to provide for the rise of the poor but able employee, thus neutralizing, to some extent, the acknowledged difficulty of men rising to ownership in our day because of the enormous amount of capital required for successful operations under the present, and probably enduring, conditions. [Carnegie (1900)]

One great source of the trouble between employers and employed arises from the fact that the immense establishments of today . . . are not managed by their owners but by salaried officers, who cannot possibly have any permanent interest in the welfare of the working-men. These officials are chiefly anxious to present a satisfactory balance sheet at the end of the year, that their hundreds of shareholders may receive the usual dividends, and that they may therefore be secure in their positions and be allowed to manage the business without unpleasant interference either by directors or shareholders. It is notable that bitter strikes seldom occur in small establishments where the owner comes into direct contact with his men, and knows their qualities, their struggles, and their aspirations. [Carnegie (1886)]

Carnegie had a rather low opinion of hired-help managers, who are wage laborers rather than capitalists.

The drain of capital away from local small entrepreneurs produced very tough challenges for the sorts of traditional family enterprises that had built America. It reduced the great majority of Americans to wage-earner laborers. To put it bluntly, this combined with their spiraling debt to reduce them to the 20th century economic equivalent of feudal serfs. A serf was bound to the land; a great many American wage earners are bound to their jobs. The nature of the economic environment was changing in a drastic way even as the Wells family was striving to cope with it. In some ways this was a challenge not altogether unlike trying to shoot birds on the wing at night in a country where there are few birds. Understood in this light, the degree of success the brothers had was actually quite remarkable. The fundamental challenge that faced the next generation of the family was to find better ways to deal with this new economy.

§13. The 31st Generation

The children of the sons of Harry Earle each found their own ways. Cultural expectations differed for boys and girls in those days much more than they do now in the new century, and children were raised differently according to those expectations. No one in the 1940s and '50s foresaw the cultural changes that occurred in the 1970s and so expectations of the fathers for their sons differed from expectations of mothers for their daughters. To some degree this is still true today but much less so now than then. These differences posed different challenges for the sons from those posed for the daughters. Accordingly, the two genders found their own solutions for dealing with them and it could hardly have been otherwise.



Figure 30: Five of the eight living Wells' in the 31st generation. Standing left to right: Bonnie Mitchell (Wells); Melody Witt (Wells), Don Witt (Melody's son); Sherri Reid (Wells), H. Wayne Wells. On the Skype computer monitor: Richard Wells. This photograph was taken in September, 2014.

H. Wayne Wells is the first born in the 31st generation. He is the son of Foryst and Edith Wells, born in Maquoketa in 1936. One of the things that became apparent during the 1950s was the importance of a college education in the new post war economy. In earlier times, a high school education provided those who had one with a significant advantage, but as the 1950s progressed having a high school education was something that became just a necessity instead of an advantage. Wayne was not the first in the family to get some college education – Harry Wells did that – but he was the first in the family to get a four-year university education and the first to get an advanced degree. He was an important role model for his cousins, the sons of Bill Wells. So far as I know, Wayne hasn't shared with his cousins what advice and encouragements he received from his father and grandfather, but I have no doubt that Harry Wells was a very important role model for him.

Wayne graduated from the Maquoketa High School in 1954 and went on to attend the University of Iowa in Iowa City. In 1958 he graduated from there with a Bachelor of Arts degree and was accepted into the University of Iowa's law school. He also married Shirley Baker in Maquoketa that year. He graduated from law school in 1960 with his Juris Doctor (JD) degree and was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant in the U.S. Air Force. He served from 1960 to 1964 as a Judge Advocate, achieving the rank of Captain. He was on active duty when the Cuban Missile Crisis happened in 1962. Years later he told me that enough military force had been mobilized during the Crisis to, as he put it, "sink that island." The Cuban Missile Crisis was the single most dangerous event to happen during the entire Cold War.

He had already been admitted to the Iowa Bar in 1960. In 1964 he was admitted to practice before the U.S. Supreme Court and over the next few years was admitted in Minnesota, New York, and Michigan. After his tour of service with the Air Force he became an attorney with Northwestern Bell (a wholly owned subsidiary of AT&T) until 1969. In that year he was transferred into AT&T, where he worked from 1969 to 1981. By then his oldest son was in college and his youngest son was about to enter college. Both boys followed their father into the legal profession. From 1982 to 1991 he was Vice President and General Counsel at Michigan Bell. From 1991 to 1994 he was VP and General Counsel at Ameritech. He then joined the private law firm of Cross Wrock, where his two sons were partners in the firm. In October

of 1999 he, his sons, and two other attorneys left to form the law firm of Schnelz, Wells, Monaghan and Wells (today known as Schnelz Wells, located in Birmingham, MI). Both his sons are still principal shareholders in the firm today. In 2014 *U.S. News & World Report* ranked the firm as one of the best in the U.S. It had taken a long time, but Wayne and his family succeeded in achieving the Wells family legacy of establishing their own business enterprise as capitalist entrepreneurs. Today Wayne and Shirley are retired. Over the years he has served professionally as Chair of the Michigan General Counsels Association, Chair and Director of the American Corporate Counsel Association in Michigan, and Trustee and Director of the Oakland University Foundation.

Brent Wells, son of Wayne and Hazel Wells, was born in Maquoketa in 1945. He married Sherryl Lee (Sherry) Munson in 1965 and they have one son. As I mentioned earlier, he followed his father into the family business and is today its owner. He is an unpretentious and quietly friendly man who is dedicated to his craft. He is also a very successful businessman. His business was rated in the top 30% in Iowa as of 2014 (out of 39,764 contractors). I will mention, because it fascinated me when I was a little boy, that as a kid he was a ham radio operator and also kept marvelous aquariums of fish in the family basement. Even then I looked up to him with great admiration and still do today.

William Earle Wells Jr., known by everyone as Bill Jr., was the oldest son of Bill and Luella Wells. He was born in late 1942 in Maquoketa and was not quite two years old when Bill Sr. joined the Navy. As a result of the three year separation imposed by the war, both he and his older sister, Sherri, grew extremely close to their father after he returned from the war.

Bill Sr. passed on to both his sons a desire to be his own boss, to work hard, and to develop more than one vocational skill to guard against the winds of misfortune in business. As a boy, Bill Jr. was often around his father at work. He was also influenced to a great degree by his older cousin, Wayne. He graduated from Maquoketa High School in 1961 and, like his cousin, went off later that same year to the University of Iowa where he worked his way through school as an orderly at the University Hospital. He graduated with his Bachelor's degree in political science in 1965. Upon graduation he was commissioned into the U.S. Army as a 2nd Lieutenant and served from 1965 to 1967 as executive officer at the Army's helicopter training school in Ft. Rucker, AL. As the end of his tour was drawing near, he was considering reenlisting but this was strenuously opposed by Bill Sr., who was opposed to U.S. involvement in the developing war in Vietnam and didn't want his son risking his life there. Bill Jr. always deeply respected his father's advice, and so he left the army at the end of his tour and took a job as a salesman in the Office Products Division of IBM working out of Coralville, Iowa, near the university. While he was there he met and, in 1969, married Mary Ann Deniger of Chippewa Falls, WI. Their children are Nick and Marnie.

One of the skills Bill developed from his father's example was the skill of salesmanship. To say he was "silver tongued" barely does justice to his ability as a salesman. He was one of those rare salesman who, as the saying goes, "could sell ice cubes to Eskimos." His career with IBM was meteoric and he was rapidly advanced to ever larger territories. In 1973 he was promoted to Branch Manager at IBM's sales branch in Austin, TX. In 1977 he left IBM to take a position as Vice President of Sales at the Norand Corporation in Cedar Rapids, IA. He remained with Norand only a short time before starting his own business. In 1994 Mary Ann died tragically in an automobile accident in Cedar Rapids. Two years later it was discovered Bill had contracted inoperable cancer and he died of it in 1996. His son Nick was a young man in 1996 and he became the guardian of his younger sister during the remaining years of her minority.

Bill's younger brother, Richard, was born in 1953 at Jackson County Public Hospital in Maquoketa when the family was living in Emeline. He was born at a time when the flood of new scientific discovery and technological marvels of innovation were awe inspiring to adults and children alike: the space program; television; the invention of the laser; "electronic brains" (computers). He vividly remembers one night in 1957 when he, his parents, and his grandparents stood in his grandfather's front yard and watched a tiny pinprick of light named Sputnik cross the clear night sky overhead. His father told him it was "a manmade moon." This was also the era when the Cold War prompted an emphasis on technology and

science in school, and when book publishers churned out a flood of science books written for children. It also saw an emphasis given in school to the Revolutionary War, the Founding Fathers, and the American ideal. He was always a voracious reader, soaking all these things up in mesmerized fascination, and he decided at a very young age that he was going to be a scientist of some kind when he grew up. He also grew up at the dawn of the civil rights movement and was horrified by the newscasts he saw on television. While still in grade school, he developed a deep and abiding hatred of all forms of racism and bigotry.

His father, following family tradition, ordered him to “get a job” when he was ten years old. Because of his age, this order really meant “start a business.” After an initial bit of fumbling around, he began selling newspapers. Later, when he was thirteen, he talked his sister into hiring him as a janitor and delivery helper in her TV and Appliance business. They dickered over his wage, settling at 75¢ an hour. In 1969 the family moved to Bellevue to start their bakery and he learned how to be a baker, working side by side with his father. After he got his driver’s license, he started a door to door bakery delivery service – kind of like an ice cream truck for bakery goods – and sold his wares to housewives in the neighboring small towns near Bellevue. His training for entrepreneurial capitalism had started at quite a young age.

All of this was aimed at paying for college. Inspired by his cousin and his older brother, Richard had decided by the time he started junior high school that he was going to go to college. After listening to his brother’s advice, when he was fifteen he decided he was going to attend Iowa State University in Ames, IA, to study electrical engineering. He was admitted to that school and began studying there in 1971 after graduating from Bellevue High School. He graduated in May of 1975 and set out for California with \$70 in his pocket to start work with the Hewlett Packard Company in California’s Silicon Valley as a Research and Development engineer. He arrived in Silicon Valley when the microelectronics revolution was just starting and found himself working at ground zero in this technological revolution.

Richard always saw his career in engineering and science as a kind of avocation – it was fun – that companies and people, strangely enough, paid him to do. Here he was following advice his grandfather had taught him: “Find something you like to do more than anything else, then learn how to do it better than anyone else, and people will come to you and pay you to do it.” He always saw his wage-earning occupations in this light and not as his “business.” From his very first day at Hewlett Packard, he used his wage income as a source of capital for what he saw as his “real business.” Within a few months of his arrival in California, he had started a private investment business, which he has operated now for forty years. For this purpose he has always set aside a minimum of 10% of his wage income revenue as investment capital for his real business.

He also continued to invest in himself, broadening and deepening his knowledge of the sciences and engineering. While working at Hewlett Packard (HP), he enrolled in graduate school at Stanford. He obtained his Master’s degree in electrical engineering in 1978. Later he brokered a deal between HP and the University of Idaho that let him earn his PhD degree, which he received in 1985. Because of the fascination of the times he grew up in, he was never content to master just one specialty in science; he wanted to know as much as he could in as much depth as he could master about *all* of them.

Richard had arrived in California just as the state began a wild binge of real estate speculation that drove housing prices out of the reach of young people unless they were willing to place themselves under crushing debt loads. As a result of his upbringing, he always had an abhorrence of being in debt. For that reason, primarily, in 1979 he accepted a transfer to the company’s new division in Boise, ID, where they manufactured disk drives for computers. This move made it possible for him to buy his first house, a little 1100 square foot starter home near the HP campus. He lived in Boise for the next seventeen years.

In 1980 he was made the project leader of one of the company’s new disk drive products. In 1988 he was promoted to Production Engineering Manager. He and the Production Operations Manager jointly managed the company’s disk drive factory, a \$300 million a year manufacturing business. In 1991 he was made a Project Manager in the division’s Research and Development Laboratory, where he managed the co-development of a new disk drive and the factory that was to manufacture this product.



Figure 31: The Wells Laboratory in 2004. Richard is seated in the center of the first row.

By the conclusion of that project in 1993, Richard was experiencing a feeling of restless discontent. His duties as a manager had taken him too far away from the practice and study of science that he loved. By then his investment business was self-financing, he was free of debt, and the business was sufficiently prosperous that he decided it was time to make a change. He left HP that year to embark on a twenty year career of public service as a professor at the University of Idaho. It was a higher calling at a lower salary.

For the next three years he worked at the University's Boise campus, where he founded the Wells Laboratory within the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering (figure 31). The University operation in Boise was rather small, and in 1996 he accepted an appointment at the University's main campus in Moscow, ID, located 300 miles north of Boise. His principal appointment always was with the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering in the College of Engineering, but within a few years of his arrival on the Moscow campus he had been offered, and accepted, adjunct professor appointments with the Neuroscience Program (which an interdisciplinary team of professors he belonged to from all the colleges in the University had founded in 2002), the Department of Materials Science and Engineering, and the Department of Philosophy. In 2004 he accepted an Affiliate appointment with the Department of Physiology and Biophysics at the University of Washington's School of Medicine. In addition to his teaching, research, and advising duties, he served on numerous committees at the department, college, and university levels. Almost at once upon his arrival on the Moscow campus he had been offered an appointment as Associate Director of the Microelectronics Research Center (later the MRC Institute), which he accepted only after making sure it would not interfere with the time he wanted to be able to devote to research and study. In January 2010, by invitation, he served on a National Science Foundation panel in Washington, DC, that evaluated and made recommendations on proposals to be funded under the 2009 American Recovery & Reinvestment Act.

Richard had foreseen the coming stock market crash of 2008 that ushered in the great recession. He moved all of his investments to cash at what turned out to be near the peak of the market. When the crash came a few weeks later, he was watching from the sidelines as all the major market indices plunged. After the markets had reached the trough of their lows, he moved back in, investing heavily and exclusively in high grade municipal bonds, which were then selling at 75¢ to 80¢ on the dollar. It was a kind of replay of when he had profited from the bottoming of the AAA-rated corporate bond market in 1980-81, when the bonds of America's largest and financially strongest companies were selling for 55¢ to 65¢ on the dollar. The salaried so-called sages of Wall Street had been giving away free money then, and they did it again in 2008-9. The crash of 2008 left him with an investment portfolio sufficient to supply him with an adequate

income for the rest of his life. In 2013 he retired from the University and was honored with an unsalaried lifetime appointment as Emeritus Professor. Upon retirement he moved back to Boise, where he lives in a quiet and friendly subdivision at the far outskirts of the city. He continues to occupy himself with his research, and with writing books and articles he publishes free to the public via his Internet website. At the end of 2014, his site was servicing slightly more than 400,000 hits a year that come in from over 75 countries all around the world. In 2014 he was elected to serve on the Board of his Homeowners' Association, where he and his board member neighbors administer the day to day business of maintaining a safe, clean, and pleasant neighborhood community. He continues to operate and manage his investment business, which now actually requires very little of his time. From time to time his former students drop by to pay him a visit, and these are occasions he always enjoys very much.

The training and upbringing of the daughters of the 31st generation was very different from that of the sons. The boys were trained and prepared to make their way in the business world. The girls were steered towards traditional wife-and-mother roles. There is, of course, nothing in the world wrong with those roles *per se*, and three of the daughters fully accepted them. Two, while not rejecting these roles, refused to accept them as *limitations* on what they could do with their lives.

Diane Wells, eldest daughter of Foryst and Marian, was born in Maquoketa in 1948. As recounted earlier, her family moved around quite extensively until her father and mother finally resettled in the Maquoketa area in the mid 1960s. She graduated from Maquoketa High School in 1966 and worked as a legal secretary in Maquoketa. There she met a telephone company employee named Clifford "Johnny" Heartsill, who had served in the U.S. Air Force from 1962 to 1966. In 1967 he moved to Alabama, and soon after she joined him there. They were married in November 1967 in Sandy Ridge, AL. Johnny and Diane had a daughter, Cheryl, and the family moved around for several years in Alabama. In the early '70s they moved back to the Maquoketa area and bought five acres of land near Hurstville, where they grew a variety of vegetables they sold at various farmers' markets. He eventually had to give up this business for health reasons. They then moved to Davenport, where Johnny worked for the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad, International Paper, and Family Dollar Corporate. He passed away in 2014. Diane still lives in Davenport.

Phyllis Wells, Foryst and Marian's youngest daughter, was born in Maquoketa in 1949. She, too, moved around extensively as a child with Foryst and the rest of their family. She graduated from Maquoketa High School in 1967 and went to work at the hospital processing microfilms of patient charts. A friend there arranged to introduce Phyllis to her step brother, Richard Hovey, who was in the Air Force and stationed in Minot, North Dakota, at that time. They met as pen pals and in February of 1968 they were married in Maquoketa. Shortly after their marriage Richard was sent on a tour of duty in Vietnam where he was stationed at Cam Ranh Bay from 1968 through 1969. Phyllis lived with her parents in Maquoketa while he was stationed in Vietnam. In 1969 he rotated back to the U.S. and they lived in Big Springs, TX, where Richard was stationed. There they had two children, Lisa and David.

While in Big Springs Phyllis was accepted to nursing school but the pregnancies prevented her from attending. After Richard completed his military service in 1971 they moved back to Iowa. He got a job with the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad and the family lived in Clinton, IA. In 1994 a railroad merger transferred Richard's job to Little Rock, AR, and they were forced to manage a sort of commuting marriage with Phyllis alternately living in Maquoketa and Little Rock month by month. Richard left the railroad in 1998 and they settled in Maquoketa. In 2004 they moved to Baldwin. Today he is a truck driver for Hoffman Farms and Phyllis ministers to people.

Bonnie Wells is the firstborn child of Wayne and Hazel. She was born in 1942 in Maquoketa. After graduating from Maquoketa High School as an honor student in 1959, she began attending college at the University of Iowa. There she met a dashing young soon-to-be-commissioned career Marine Corps officer named Charles Mitchell (known to one and all as Mitch). They were married in 1961 and have five children and sixteen grandchildren. Mitch graduated with his Bachelor's degree in 1961 and received his

commission in 1962. He graduated from the University of Iowa law school in 1964 and served as a Judge Advocate and a warfighter in the U.S. Marine Corps for 35 years, retiring with the rank of Brigadier General. After Mitch's retirement they moved back to Maquoketa, where they cared for Bonnie's elderly father and became active in the Jackson County Historical Society. Mitch passed away in 2013 at age 75. Bonnie still lives in Maquoketa and is still active in her volunteer work with the Historical Society.

Sherri Wells is the firstborn child of Bill and Luella, born in 1941 on the day Hitler invaded Russia. She graduated from Maquoketa High School in 1958 and shortly afterwards married Gary Hicks, the only child of Darrell and Bonnie Hicks of Maquoketa. They have two children, Bryon and Scott.

For the first two years of their marriage Gary worked at the Clinton Engines plant in Maquoketa. Gary had an Associate's degree in electronics from the DeVry Institute in Chicago and in 1960 they rented a small building from Gary's father and started Hicks TV and Appliance in Maquoketa. At the time, this was one of the new types of retail businesses that was generated by the flood of new consumer products in the 1950s. Outlets were needed to sell these products, and repair shops were needed to repair them. With his training in TV repair, Gary operated the repair shop in the back of the store while Sherri put her talent for salesmanship to work operating the sales room in the front.

They operated this business until 1972. With capital generated by it, they began buying and renovating old houses in Maquoketa as rental property. Gary was a skilled carpenter and Sherri taught herself how to do electrical wiring. This happened at the very beginning of a real estate boom in eastern Iowa, and they had gotten in on it before most people even knew one was happening. Profits earned from rentals allowed them to retire from the TV and appliance business in 1972. They bought ten acres of land on the southern outskirts of Maquoketa in an area known locally as Reynerville. There they built a new house for themselves and planned to build a second one. Tragically, Gary died in an accident while razing an old house on the property to make room for the new one in 1973.

After the accident Sherri decided to go into the tax preparation business. She taught herself tax law through self-study and passed the examination to become Enrolled Agent, licensed to practice tax law before the IRS and represent clients in Tax Court. She opened her tax office in 1975, operating out of the downstairs of her house. Several years later she bought a larger building to house her expanding business, which was then named the Colonial Square Tax Service. I sometimes think that the enterprise is almost as much a holy war waged against the IRS as it is a business. In their early days in the TV and appliance store, Sherri and Gary had, like many Americans, overpaid their income taxes because of the Byzantine nature of the tax code, the technical jargon used on tax forms, and the opaqueness of the instructions for preparing income tax forms. I think the tax business venture was as much due to this as to anything else. But whatever her reasons, I am happy she decided to go into this business; she's been my tax preparer for decades and is much better at it than I am.

Sherri was not inclined to remarry but she hadn't counted on meeting a widower named Ronnie Reid who farmed 900 acres near Onslow, IA, roughly 15 miles west of Maquoketa. They married in 1977 and Sherri and her boys moved in with Ronnie and his three boys on the farm. By then there were two houses on the Reynerville settlement and Sherri's parents lived in one of them. Sherri and Ronnie lived happily together until Ronnie passed away in 2010. Today one of their sons owns the farm. Sherri still operates her tax office.

Bill and Luella's youngest child, Melody, was born in Maquoketa in 1955 and moved with the family to Bellevue in 1969. She graduated from Bellevue High School in 1974 and continued to live for the next two years in Bellevue. In 1974 and for the next several years afterwards, economic conditions in eastern Iowa were hard. The area and much of the country was in a recession with double digit inflation, higher than at any period since colonial times (see figure 26). Entry level jobs that paid wages adequate to live on were scarce, especially for a young single woman. Even with help from the family, it was tough to make ends meet. Somehow Melody managed it while also commuting to Dubuque – located 30 miles north of Maquoketa – to attend college and study for a degree in accounting. It required effort and per-

severance her grandfather would have admired. Armed with her degree, she was able to sit for and pass the examinations required by Iowa law to become eligible for certification. After acquiring the necessary practical work experience also required by Iowa law, she became a Certified Public Accountant.

In 1986 she married Dan Witt, who worked for the Alcoa company in Davenport. By coincidence, the day they were married Dan's union went out on strike against Alcoa. This cast a bit of apprehension over the celebration, but not enough to mar the happiness of the event. Dan and Melody have three children, Aaron, Danielle, and Don. Dan and Melody live on five acres just outside the town of Delmar, IA, a few miles from Maquoketa. Today Melody does accounting and tax preparation with her office in the Colonial Square building in Maquoketa, working for Sherri's LLC corporation. The business has been renamed Colonial Square Tax and Accounting LLC. It is thriving thanks to two strong-willed women who did not accept the limitations that the culture they grew up in tried to impose on their gender before these norms changed in the early 1970s (and continue to evolve to this day).

§14. The Legacy

This brings to a close the story of the first 31 generations of the Wells family. Today there are three more younger generations of the family, but I must leave their parts of the story to others who know them much better than I. Before I close, however, I think it best to add a few final remarks.

The word "legacy" means "anything that is passed down from a predecessor or ancestor." The Wells family has such a legacy, handed down for almost a thousand years with an endurance that can be called remarkable. My closing remarks briefly summarize the Wells family legacy. Without a summary of this kind, a genealogy is little more than a list of names, places, and dates. The meaning and significance of any genealogy lies in the lessons the family story teaches.

It is the nature of the world that every generation is confronted with some of the challenges that were faced by their forebears and new ones these ancestors never knew. The world offers no guarantees that these challenges will be overcome or even that there will be a next generation. There are always stretches of years that pass without great events or great perils; and there are also always tipping points, crises for those who have to face them so dreadful as to provoke enough despair one might see the world through eyes like those of the poet Matthew Arnold when he wrote,

Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

[Matthew Arnold (1867), *Dover Beach*]

The world changes in the slow march of years and each new generation must change with it or perish. Where now is the House of Charlemagne, once the mightiest in Europe? To be sure, there are still today descendants of Charlemagne; but of them many do not know they are so, the House is long gone, and it is slowly being forgotten that it ever even existed. Once upon a time on the island of Crete there was a mighty civilization known as the Minoans; today barely a trace remains to hint that they ever lived.

Several times in the story of our family the line came close to its end. Yet for almost a thousand years we have endured and even prospered, and the world is different from what it would be if we had never lived and walked the earth. Three principles have seen us through times of prosperity and times of peril, and these principles are the Wells family legacy passed from each generation to the next – not as a mere catechism but as a *way* of living and acting on principles.

The first principle is: Deep family bonds. From the times of the sons of Ragerer, this has seen the family through the hardest of times, the harshest of challenges, and the most tragic of events. History teaches that only the family steadfastly looks after the family.

The second principle is: Pursuit of opportunity. This principle has been followed in every generation since Ragerer. Old trades and old ways become obsolete in the world but as they do new opportunities always open up. To grasp them requires innovation and boldness. For almost a thousand years, the family has gone where it needed to go and done what it had to do: for our preservation, in pursuit of happiness, and to cope with political and economic upheavals. It is a pursuit that constantly requires breadth of skills as well as depth of skill. But innovation, boldness, and skill are all personal qualities taught by experience beginning in tender childhood, continuing through the years to maturity, and taught by example.

No celestial herald writes new opportunities in blazing letters across the sky. They come quietly and slyly, and must be sought and recognized. At that same time, pursuit of opportunity can be at odds with family bonds. Geographic separation can make strangers of relatives, and even the generation of the great-grandparents can be strangers to the youngest because as children we all take the world we are born into to be the world as it always has been; and when we think the world was always as it appears to us now, what incentive is there to learn about the past and its lessons? Acting on the second principle always requires equal attentiveness to the first because nothing that happens to the one of us fails to affect the others of us. As John Donne wrote long ago,

No Man is an *island* entire of itself; every man is a piece of the *Continent*, a part of the *main*; if a *Clod* be washed away by the *Sea*, *Europe* is the less as well as if a *Promontory* were, as well as if a *Manor* of thy *friends* or of *thine own* were; . . . And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; It tolls for *thee*. [John Donne (1624), *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions*, Meditation XVII].

The linchpin holding these principles together has always been Duty matched by Courage. Courage is not something innate – this one was born with it, this one without it – but is instead always learned. Courage is not the absence of fear; if you are never afraid, you never have anything to be brave about. Courage is doing your Duty in full awareness of peril if you do. Courage, like cowardice, is a *habit*. Our family has never lacked Courage and never failed to cultivate it in the next generation.

The third principle was born with the social and economic revolution that swept away feudalism. This is the principle of entrepreneurial capitalism. In our story this is suggested by Stafford, Bradfield, and Pennsylvania. It is demonstrated by our pioneering enterprise that brought the family from Pennsylvania to Iowa and to Maquoketa. It is exemplified by the life of Harry Earle Wells and the lessons he passed on to his sons. Wider events – historical, political, and economic – strike home and register their effects in the family. The slow and steady emergence of capitalism in England liberated the great majority of the people, made it possible for them to assert their rights to life and pursuit of happiness unfettered by tyranny, and kept our family line alive when our cousins in Baron John's other line were extinguished.

These three principles are the Legacy of the Wells family. To each generation falls the Duty to teach and pass them on to the next.

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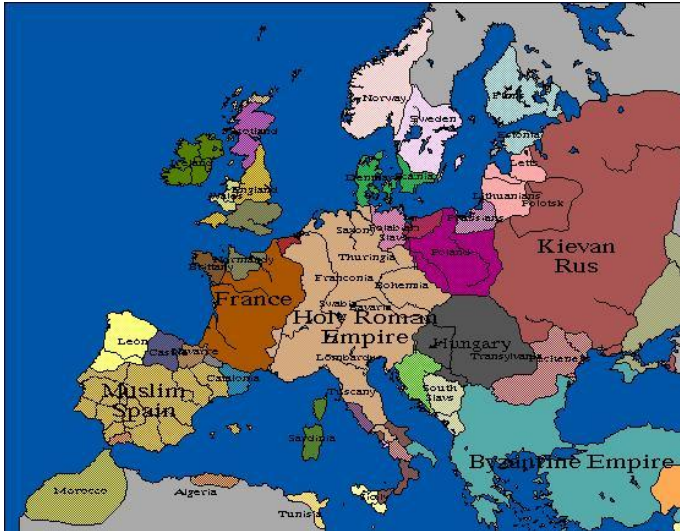
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Appendix

Maps



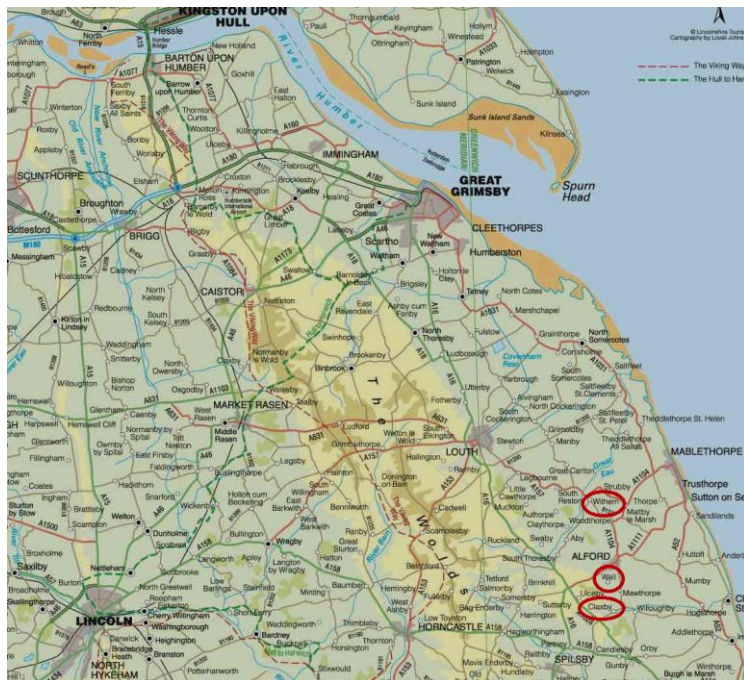
Map 1: Europe in 1066 A.D. The kingdom of France and the Holy Roman Empire were the two principal superpowers of the day. In Normandy Duke William (William the Conqueror) mustered his army for the Norman invasion of England. The British isles were divided into Anglo-Saxon England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland. All of these countries enter in to the Wells family story. In Scandinavia the Viking Age drew to its close with the defeat and death of Norwegian King Harald Hardrada at the Battle of Stamford Bridge by England's Anglo-Saxon King Harold Godwinson on Sept. 25. On Sept. 28 the forces of William landed in England. William defeated Harold at the Battle of Hastings on Oct. 14.



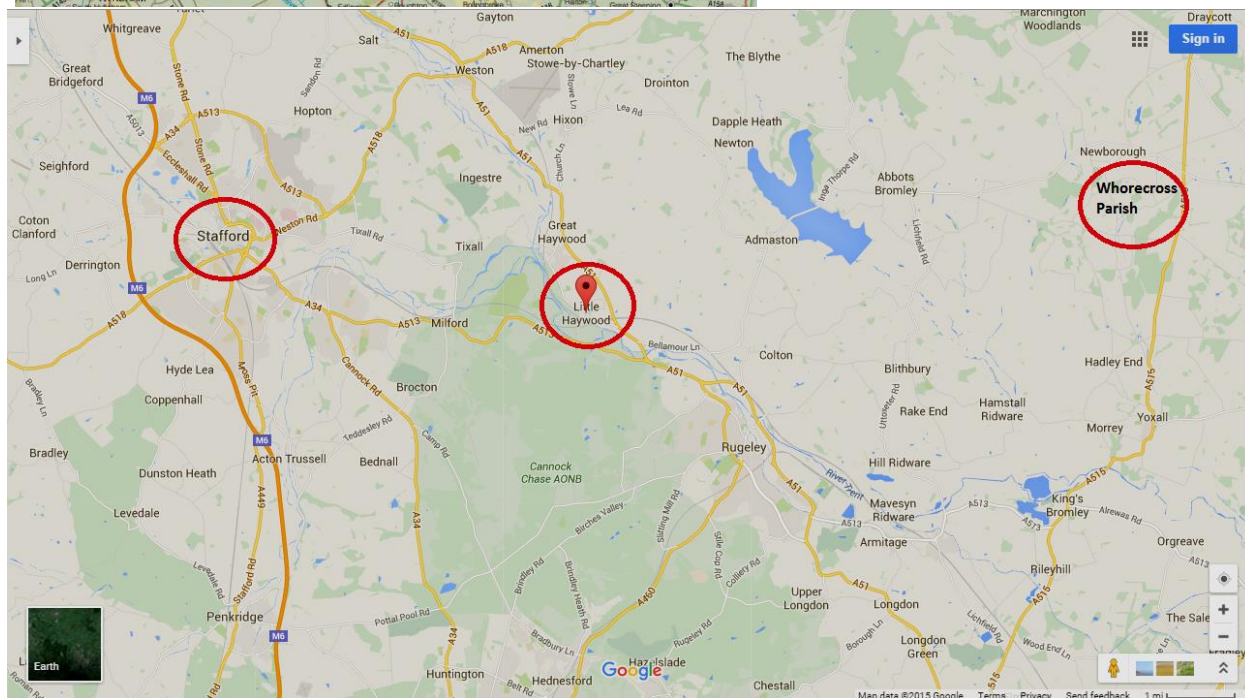
Map 2: England. Ragermer was given a fief in the county of Lincolnshire. The Welles family estate was located in Lincolnshire until the end of the Welles line of nobility after the Battle of Losecoat Field on March 12, 1470 near Empingham in the county of Rutland (halfway between Cambridge and Nottingham). See Map 3 for the locations of the fiefs given to Ragermer for his service in William's army.

Around 1400 A.D. the family acquired property in Staffordshire at Little Haywood located a few miles from Stafford in the West Midlands. Little Haywood lies on the old direct route northwest from London to Chester near the northeast border with Wales. Our ancestors lived there until about the middle of the 16th century when the family migrated to Bradfield in Berkshire county seven miles west of Reading in southern England. The family remained there for the next century until Edmund, Henry, and the rest of the family emigrated to Pennsylvania in 1685.

Our ancestors' military and political service took them across Britain to various temporary posts from the 11th to the end of the 14th century. Among these places are Suffolk, Northumberland, Northampton, and Warwick. They also saw service in Scotland and France. During these years the family resided in Lincolnshire.

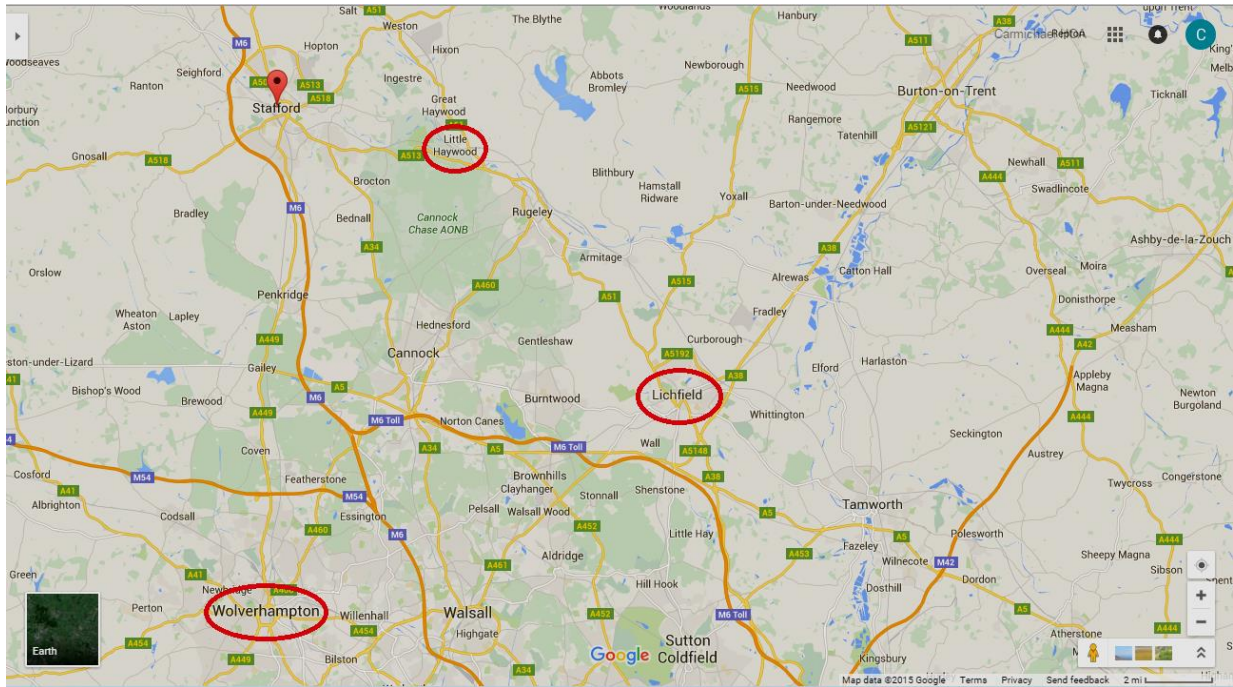


Map 3: Ragermer's original fief of Well, Claxby, and Withern in the East Lindsey district of Lincolnshire. Their locations are circled in red in this map. In 1086 Well, Claxby, and Withern were rural lands sparsely inhabited. There were tiny villages in Claxby (6 villans), in Well (12 villans) and in Withern (13 villans) according to the *Domesday Book*. There was a mill and a church with a priest in Withern and another mill in Well. Grimsby was already a large village (as villages go at that time) and was parceled up between several other landlords. Over the years the family would come to own additional properties including some in Grimsby and the market town of Spilsby a little south of Well. From the 13th to the early 15th century Grimsby became a notable seaport and the Welles family was involved in the trade flowing into and out of it. In the *Lindsey Survey* (1114-1116) Well was called Wells and that name stuck.

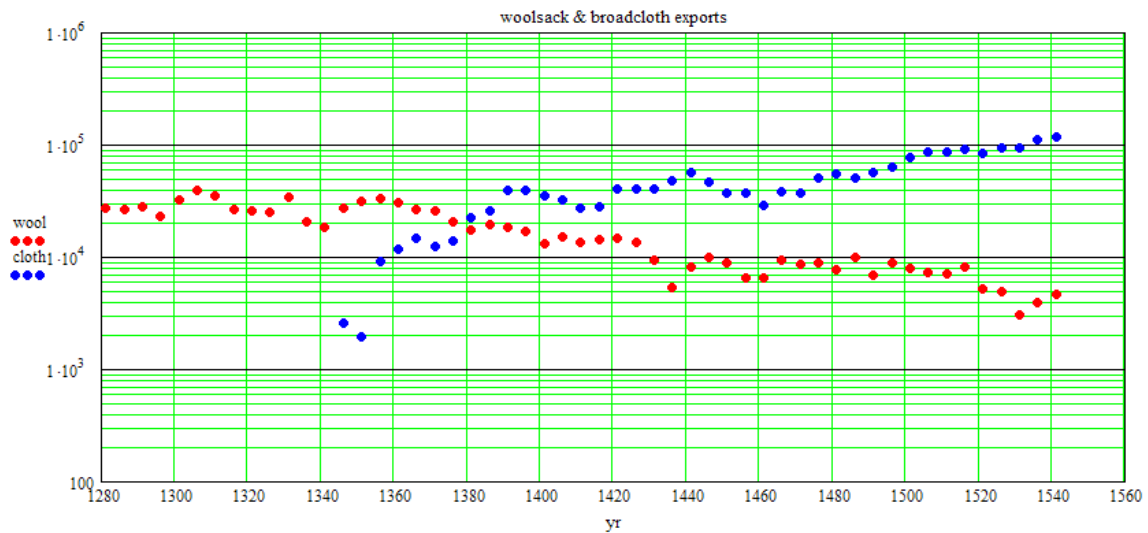


Map 4: Little Haywood near Stafford and its surroundings. Thomas, son of Sir John (5th Baron Welles) established his home here *circa* 1400. Staffordshire was wool country and as the 15th century began it was on the road to recovery after being depopulated by the Black Plague in the mid-1300s. Little Haywood appears to be well placed for someone establishing a business in the wool and/or cloth trades. It sits on the old direct route to London and is near important market towns such as Lichfield and Wolverhampton (see Map 5). It also sits on the River Trent, which flows to the River Humber and from there to the port of Grimsby in Lincolnshire.

Genealogical records tell us the Welles' of Little Haywood appear in the records of Whorecross parish. This name is one of several alternate spellings of Hoarcross, a parish a few miles north of Yoxall close to Newborough (located at the right-hand side of the map). There was a village named Horcros there as early as 1230 and the subsequent spellings appear to derive from this original name.

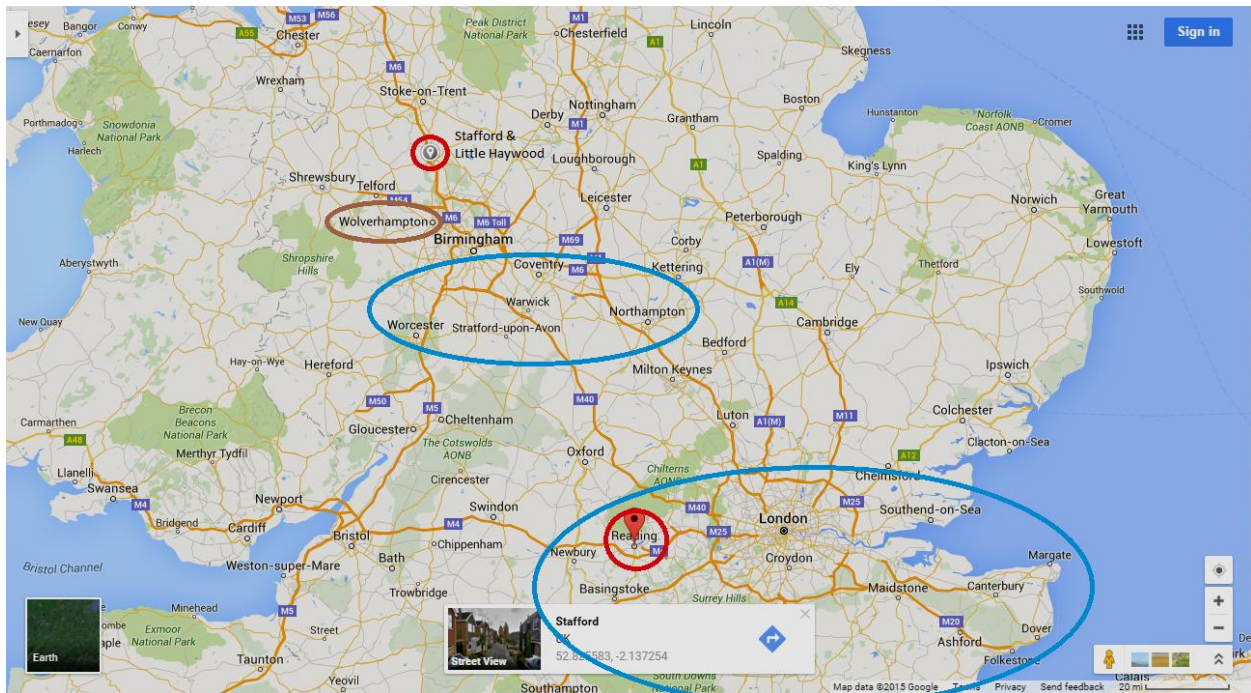


Map 5: Little Haywood and Staffordshire region. Wool fairs were held annually in Wolverhampton to the south and Lichfield to the southeast, and archeologists have evidence of wool and cloth markets in both places.



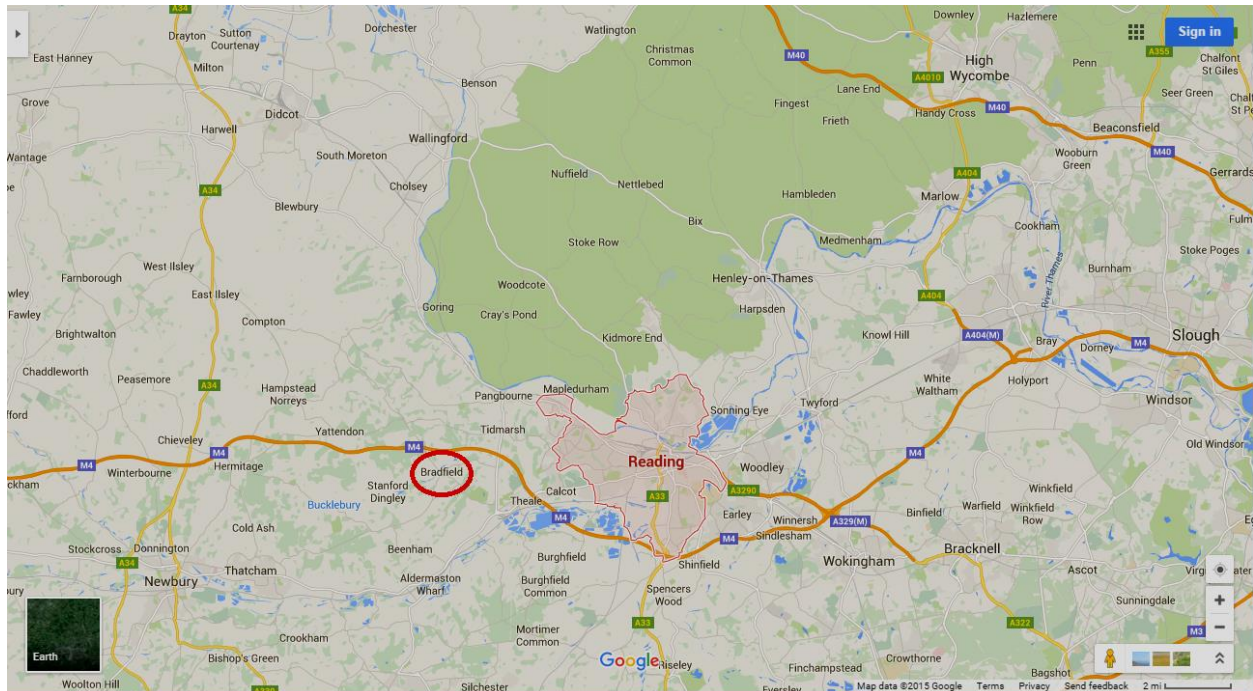
Graph 1: Woolsack and broadcloth exports from England, 1280 to 1540 AD. Wool was the driver of the English economy from the late 13th century and is probably primarily responsible for the rediscovery of capitalism in England. Almost every landowner in England who could get into this business did get into it. Lincolnshire wool was highly prized in continental Europe until well into the 14th century. Some wool was exported through Grimsby, but somewhat surprisingly was not really a major export item there. This suggests that the Welles family had for some reason not gotten in on the “wool rush” of the 14th century. It is, however, beyond doubt that the family did have commercial dealings with Grimsby exports. An old document in the British Museum records Sir John (5th Baron) recording the claims to various manors in and around Grimsby, as well as ones in Well, Alford, and Belleau (hamlet of Claythorpe 4 miles northwest of Alford and 7 miles southeast of Louth in Map 3), for one William de Welle. De Welle was a shipowner and wealthy merchant in Grimsby and there is little doubt he was a relative of Sir John. John’s military career left him little time before around 1400 to devote to establishing himself in the wool business.

By 1400 the English export trade in wool was entering a long decline from which it never recovered. But this would not yet have been apparent to Sir John in the year 1400. It would have been apparent that the new boom industry was cloth-making, and English cloth-making required English wool. Thus, as the wool export market was beginning to close for England, the domestic market was going strong. John's son Thomas was about 20 years old in 1400, and it makes sense that John, who was now 48 years old, would dispatch him to set up the family operation in Little Haywood. Thomas' death in 1411 was no doubt a great blow for the family. In addition the port of Grimsby was also suffering from obstruction of the harbor due to silting, and this led to a long, slow decline in the prosperity of Grimsby. Therefore, whatever plans John might have had for connecting Little Haywood and the main estates in Lincolnshire via the River Trent, there is little doubt that circumstances combined to thwart them. Little Haywood became a family colony disconnected from Lincolnshire.



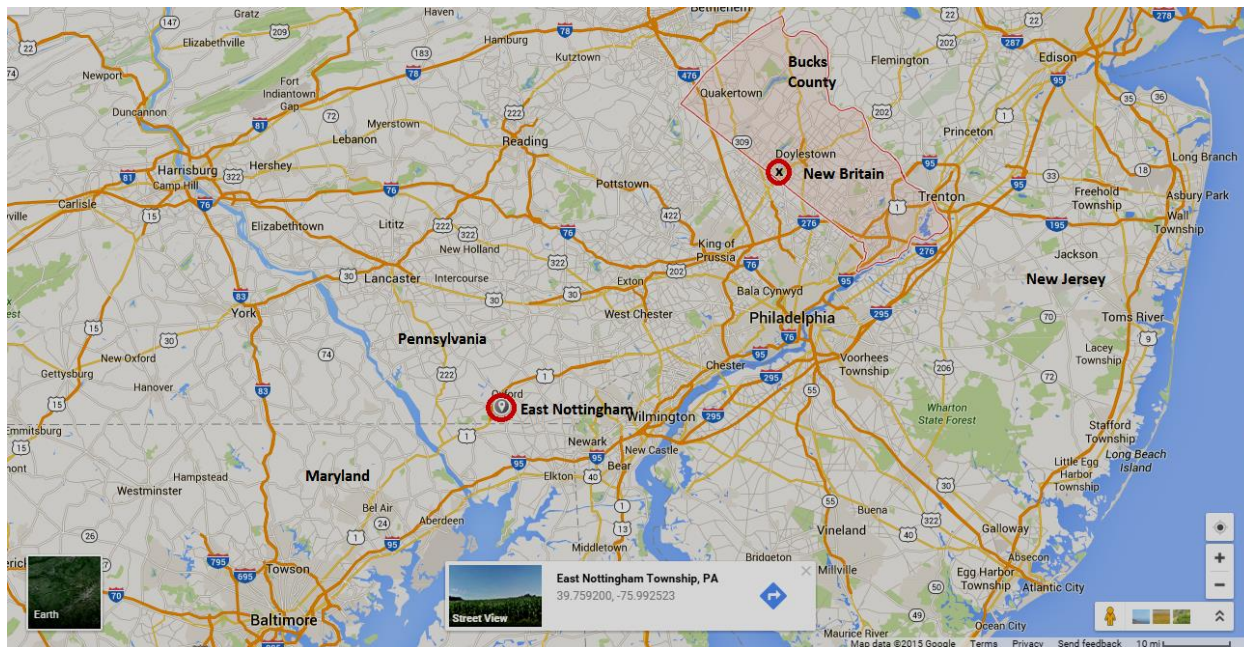
Map 6: Routes from Little Haywood to major centers of the wool-textile industry (blue). The first half of the 16th century was a period of prosperity for sheep farmers. From 1451-60 to 1541-50 wool prices doubled. After the mid-16th century conditions in the wool and cloth making businesses went into decline. Prices were depressed from 1550 until about 1575. This period was, however, the heyday for small, unspecialized wool dealers. Prices staged a recovery, peaking in 1603, before going into another decline. The 17th century brought hard times for wool farmers.

Sometime between 1530 and 1604 the family migrated from Little Haywood to Bradfield just west of Reading. This was obviously a move over quite a long distance but, as the map shows, between Little Haywood and the Reading-London area lay major centers for the wool-textile industry. It would be implausible to think the family would have been unaware of these centers over the years. A most notable small marketplace was Wolverhampton, and Coventry was a major location of wool- and cloth-making industries. By 1525 Reading was the largest city in Berkshire and the 10th wealthiest city in England as measured by taxable wealth. It was a major center for the cloth industry. Although the family migration was a long one, it would have been a commercially natural one towards the wool- and cloth-magnet that was Reading. Peter J. Bowden's *The Wool Trade in Tudor and Stuart England* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1962) provides an interesting description of life for small wool farmers in the 16th and 17th centuries as well as detailed discussions of the wool and cloth economics of these times.



Map 7: Bradfield and Reading. By the mid-16th century, around the time of the family’s move to Bradfield, Reading was a prosperous city of about 2,000 people (which was large by the standards of the day). It also had a large population of poor people. The clothing and leather industries were the city’s key industries but it supported a number of other industries as well. According to *A History of the County of Berkshire* (vol. 3), Bradfield contains 4,359 acres of land, of which there are 714 acres of woods and plantations. The River Pang flows through Bradfield and provides a water highway to Reading, which lies 7½ miles east of Bradfield. Parish baptism records record 35 Wells’ (including John Wells in 1604 and Edmund Wells in 1640) baptized in Bradfield between 1591 and 1641. There are also records of an Eliza Wells being baptized in 1622 in Reading and a George Wells baptized in 1621 in nearby Tilehurst parish between Reading and Bradfield. A wider search of Berkshire baptism records turns up an Annes Wells baptized in Bradfield in 1563 and a John Wells baptized there in 1560. This John is not our John Wells, born c. 1564.

Baptism records for so many individuals of clearly different branches of the Wells family suggests a high likelihood that the Wells migration from Little Haywood into the Reading area involved more than one family group from Little Haywood between about 1550 and 1612, a period which coincides with a major economic downturn in the wool industry in England. If so, this is a migration pattern that matches later migrations of various branches of the family out of Pennsylvania and into Ohio, Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee, and Kentucky. It seems to be a migration pattern particularly characteristic of agrarian nations such as pre-Industrial Revolution Britain and America. It seems to be less prevalent in industrialized nations with better developed transportation technologies, where job-seekers tend to migrate more individually to cities where employment opportunities are found.



Map 8: Map of Pennsylvania showing the locations of Bucks County, New Britain, and East Nottingham. Buckingham Township sits immediately northeast of Doylestown. The proximity of East Nottingham to the border with Maryland lends considerable uncertainty and confusion over the birthplaces of the Peter Wells Jr.'s children. Bucks County borders with New Jersey along the Delaware River, and evidence tells us Edmund Wells lived on the New Jersey side for a time. Henry Wells also lived for a time in New Jersey after completing his indentured servant contract before he acquired his 'plantation' in Buckingham Township. Montgomery County, where Henry served out his contract with the Jasper Farmer family of Whitemarsh, is immediately south-southwest of Bucks County. There is evidence indicating that numerous grandsons and great-grandsons of Henry Wells migrated from Pennsylvania into Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee, Kentucky, Texas, and Missouri. Other descendants migrated into western Pennsylvania. Our direct line migrated into Ohio and westward from there through Indiana, Wisconsin, and Iowa in the time of Peter Wells Jr., his sons Matthew and Isaac, and Peter's grandsons William and Peter Garfield Wells. Thus, in only a few generations the Wells family was spreading across the nation.

The Wells Migration from Little Haywood to Bradfield in the mid-16th Century

One of the most difficult things to do in genealogy is to trace a family that migrates from one place to another. Many of the most difficult challenges in tracing the descendants of Henry Wells (pp. 81+) are encountered when the family is on the move – and this situation was more the norm than the exception in the great westward movement across the American continent after the Revolutionary War. Tracing the Wells family's migration from Little Haywood in Staffordshire to Bradfield in Berkshire during the 16th century is no less challenging.

There are some patterns peculiar to a migration that provide necessary clues. One of them is this: When a person migrates from a place A to another place B he usually "disappears without a trace" from the records in place A and abruptly "appears from out of nowhere" in the records of place B. This is a pattern that must be looked for in parish records, land deeds, tax lists and other such sources in order to trace a family's migration.

A second pattern – and one that is historically constant in the Wells family up to the mid-20th century – is that a migrant tends not to migrate by himself. This pattern breaks down in the 20th century because of advances in transportation and communication technologies, but it was very characteristic of the pre-20th century.

A third characteristic that should be looked for is motive. This is often a matter of some speculation but motives can be sought in historical economic circumstances and cultural behavior patterns of the period.

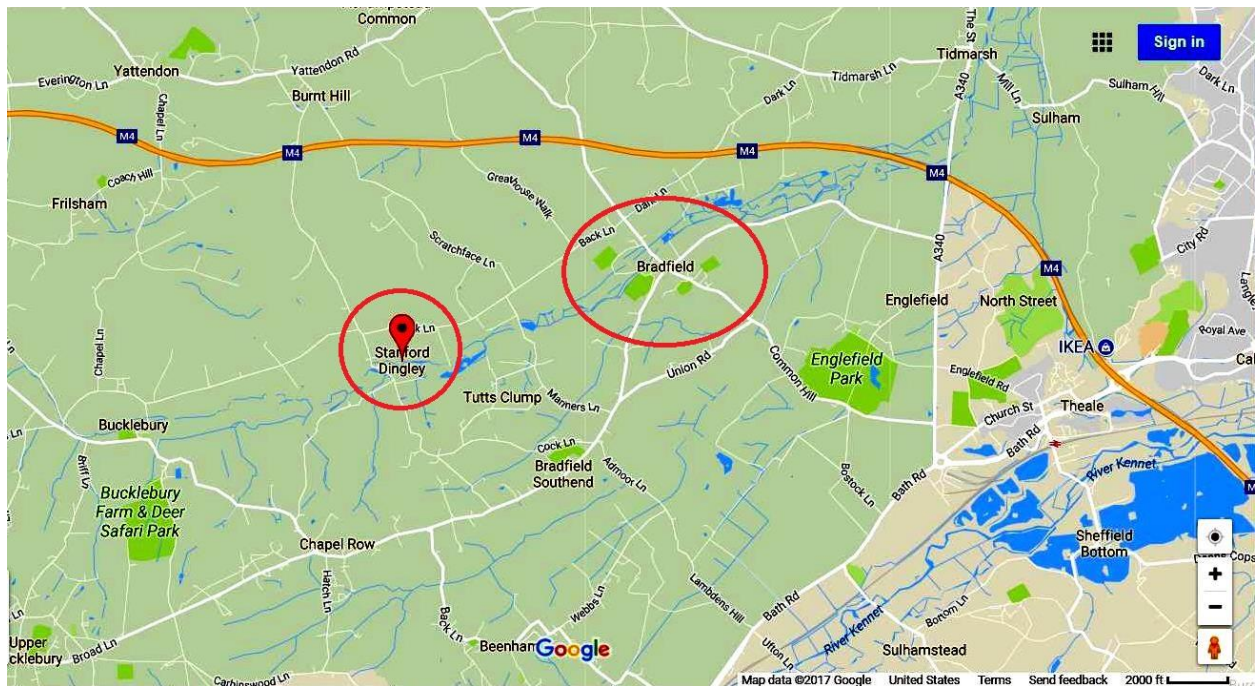
We find both patterns as well as economic and cultural motivating factors in the Wells migration from Little Haywood to Bradfield. Let us begin in Little Haywood. Genealogical research uncovers who the sons of John Wells

b.c. 1492 were; they are shown in folio 3 at the front of this work. There were five of them all born in Little Haywood: Humphrey, Robert, Richard, Thomas, and John. Of these five, only two – Thomas and John – disappear without a trace from Little Haywood. The others remained documented as being present there by a 1583 official document called "The Visitation of Staffordshire."

What is this document? It was the policy and practice of England's Crown Government to periodically send out "visitors" to the various places in England. Their mission was to document the pedigrees of individuals who claimed descent from the English nobility or the knighthood. A claimant had to present evidence to the visitor to prove that he really was the descendant of someone in the nobility or the knighthood. In 1583 Staffordshire received such a visitation and among the claimants examined was a Humphrey Welles who claimed descent from John Wells b.c. 1492 and his wife Anne Fitzherbert. (Among other things, this document settles the question of who John's wife was). Humphrey had to document his line of descent, revealing that he descended from Richard son of John. He also named two of Richard's brothers – Humphrey and Robert – and revealed Humphrey had died without issue and Robert's progeny remained in Staffordshire. Richard's other children were daughters. But something else leaps out from this document – it's failure to mention either Thomas or John, the other sons of John b.c. 1492. They disappear without a trace from Staffordshire.

Now we move south to Bradfield parish and the adjoining parish of Stanford-Dingley (see Map 9). Here we find appearing suddenly (and seemingly from out of nowhere) two Wells men: Thomas and John. Dates given in the parish records tell us they appeared together with Thomas' presence established by 1560 and John's established with certainty by 1563. Subsequent records reveal that both of them traveled at will rather casually back and forth between Bradfield and Stanford-Dingley. The implication that they could be the two brothers who disappeared from Little Haywood is immediate.

But this is not all. Of all the places in England, why choose tiny little Bradfield? I discussed the economic situation in play earlier in this monogram. But there also comes into it a cultural characteristic of "old boy network" English society at that time. It comes in the form of Thomas Stafford, Esq., the esquire of Bradfield in 1560 and father of the later lord of the manor, Edward Stafford.



Map 9: The adjoining parishes of Bradfield and Stanford-Dingley. These parishes border on each other with the village centers only slightly more than a mile from each other. They are directly connected by water. Stanford-Dingley was and is a tiny rural and agricultural parish. Records from the two parishes reveal that people there tended to move rather freely and easily back and forth between them. Although these parishes had different esquires, so far as the residents were concerned they seem to have been treated almost as if they were the same parish. The landlords were different, but that seems to be all that was different.

The Staffords of Staffordshire were a large family, most of them gentry descendants of more famous Staffords who pepper the pages of English history in ways that would do credit to the imagination of Hollywood. The history of Stafford and Staffordshire [<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1386-1421/constituencies/stafford>] tells us:

In practice, the most dominant influence in medieval Stafford was exercised not by the Crown but by the Stafford family. Their position as titular lords (and later earls) of a town which had been deliberately placed outside their control by the Conqueror was indeed anomalous, especially since one of their chief residences lay about a mile to the south and they owned or were chief lords of most of the countryside around. The royal castle of Stafford, which was rebuilt in 1102, served as little more than a county gaol . . . As the greatest and most powerful landowners in the north-east Midlands, the earls of Stafford were able to build up strong and lasting relations with local families, whose loyalty remained constant, despite the debilitating effect of three long minorities spread almost continuously over the years 1386 to 1423.

I remarked earlier that "social networking" among the gentry living around Stafford is a cultural characteristic that is typical of the stratification of English society in those days. Why choose Bradfield? Because the lord of the manor in Bradfield belonged to a family the Staffordshire Wells family had known for a very long time dating back to when Sir John de Welles first planted his oldest son there. When the time came for the two Wells brothers to strike out on their own and leave Little Haywood, it was completely natural they would be advised by the rest of the family to go to a place where the local lord of the manor belonged to a family who were long-time friends of the Wells family.

But why leave Little Haywood at all? Here the economics of the time come into play. I remarked above that 1550 to 1612 was an economic hard time for the wool industry. In point of fact, economic conditions throughout England in the early 16th century were not good. Large numbers of people were "on the road" during that time in such numbers that the Crown Government for a time enacted a very harsh anti-vagrancy law that was not withdrawn until 1550. Under this law, local inhabitants of a town could seize any "vagrant" passing through, tie him to a wagon, give him a severe whipping, and forcibly return him to his place of origin. Descriptions of that time bring to mind descriptions of the Great Depression in America when "hobos" and entire families were homeless and on the road seeking work and better living conditions. Probably the classic example is provided by the dust bowl in America's heartland and the exodus of families seeking better conditions in California. (This was the basis for John Steinbeck's 1939 novel, *The Grapes of Wrath*).

The coherent story that emerges from all this is one of two brothers, Thomas and his younger brother John, emigrating from the old family home in Little Haywood to seek better opportunities in a new, but not entirely unconnected, location. We do not know when the brothers set out from Little Haywood but it was probably some time in the middle to late 1550's. Taking the year 1555 as a plausible midpoint, Thomas would have been around 31 years old at the time. John, the youngest brother, would have been around 15 years old – an age at which it was a frequent practice for a younger brother to be apprenticed to an older brother. In America the classic example of this is Benjamin Franklin, who was apprenticed to his older brother James when he was 12 years old [the *Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*].

Some genealogy reports claim that by 1555 their father and mother were dead (although this is not established beyond reasonable doubt). One places his death as early as 1539. If so that would leave the family holdings in Little Haywood in the hands of their older brothers. Here, too, we find a motivating factor that recurs throughout history: whether to divide up the fortunes and wealth of a family among the surviving children, or to bequeath all or most of it to one child in hopes of retaining the family's wealth and position. The fact Thomas and John disappear from Little Haywood without a trace tells us how the survivors of John b.c. 1492 decided this question.

There is one last clue which pertains to this story. Recently a Y-DNA match was found between an Englishman named David Wells and two of Henry Wells' living descendants. My analysis of his genealogical link to Bradfield and the Bradfield Wells family establishes beyond reasonable doubt that he is the descendant of John Wells b. 1560, the son of Thomas Wells. The descendants of Henry Wells, on the other hand, descend from Thomas' brother John b.c. 1538. We therefore have *two* genetic lines of descent that converge at John Wells b.c. 1492 of Little Haywood. This recent finding provides an additional strong piece of circumstantial evidence in favor of the migration theory I present here.

Children, Grandchildren & Great-grandchildren of Henry Wells of Bucks Co. PA

William b. c. 1698, d. 1748 (New Britain Township, Bucks Co. PA) m. Hester Wells b. 1700 d. 1750
 | Peter Wells Sr. b.c. 1725 d. 1787 (East Nottingham, PA) m. 1746 Susannah Brock
 | | Peter Wells Jr. b. 1759 (East Nottingham, PA) d.c. 1836⁽¹⁾ m. Eliza Garfield
 | | | Matthew b.c. 1789 d. 1854 (West Union, IA) m. Sarah (see *30 Generations of Wells*)
 | | | William b.c. 1787 d. 1840
 | | | Isaac b.c. 1785 d. 1847 (Coles Co. IL) m. Margaret b.c. 1780-90 d.?
 | | | | m. (1815) Leonor Allison b.? d.?
 | | | | m. Mary Higgins b.? d.? (no children by this marriage)
 | | | | John M. Wells b. 1810 (OH) d. 1865 (Douglas Co. IL) m. Sally Ann D.
 | | | | | m. Sarah Jane Miller b. 1821 d.?
 | | | | | m. Susan McCartney b. 1816 d. 1846
 | | | | Joseph F. Wells b. 1838 d. 1891 m. Lydia Hopkins b. 1840 d. 1908
 | | | | Eliza J. Wells b. 1843 d.?
 | | | | William W. Wells b. 1840 d. 1905 m. Julia Ann Leatherman b. 1842 d. 1863
 | | | | | m. Phebe Almira Wheeler b. 1848 d. 1925
 | | | | | unknown Wells b.? d.?
 | | | | | unknown Wells b. 1870 d.?
 | | | | | Ruth (dau) b. 1872 d. 1893
 | | | | | Wheeler b. 1876 d. 1892
 | | | | | Henry Wilson Wells b. 1881 d. 1965 m. Evalin M. Ingram b. 1885 d. 1978
 | | | | | Ralph Wesley Wells b. 1883 d. 1968 m. Alice Addelle Leggett b. 1884 d. 1971
 | | | | | Rollo Richard Wells b. 1883 d. 1971 m. Edith May Gunter b. 1885 d.?
 | | | | | Margaret (dau) b. 1848 d.?
 | | | | | Peter Jones Wells b. 1850 d.?
 | | | | Elizabeth (dau) b. 1855 d.?
 | | | | | Susan (dau) b. 1857 d. 1919
 | | | | | John Wesley b. 1858 d. 1934 (Douglas Co. IL) m. Maggie May Burgett b. 1876 d. 1909
 | | | | | | Raymond b. 1905 (Douglas Co. IL) d. 1998 (Greene Co. MO)
 | | | | | | Thomas H. Wells b.? d.?
 | | | | Henry Wells b. 1809 (OH) d. 1863 (Douglas Co. IL) m. Louisa Wells b. 1817 (OH) d.?
 | | | | | Washington Wells b. 1839 (IL) d.?
 | | | | | Peter b. 1840 (IL) d.?
 | | | | | Sabitha A. Wells (dau) b. 1843 (IL) d.?
 | | | | Peter James Wells b.c. 1806 d. 1845 (Coles Co. IL) m. Amy Wells b.? d.?
 | | | | Isaac S. Wells b. 1815 (Pickaway Co. OH) d. 1853 (Coles Co. IL) m. Mary Daniels b. 1821 d. 1898
 | | | | | Edward T. b. 1846 (Coles Co. IL) d. 1905 (Douglas Co. IL)
 | | | | | James H. b. 1843 (Coles Co. IL) d. 1863 (Murfreesboro, TN)
 | | | | | George W. b. 1848 (Coles Co. IL) d. 1942 (Douglas Co. IL)
 | | | | | David A. b. 1840 (Coles Co. IL) d. 1919 (Douglas Co. IL)
 | | | | | Charles B. b. 1845 (Newman, Douglas Co. IL) d. 1918 (Rensselaar, IN)
 | | | | | Albert C. b. 1852 (Coles Co. IL) d. 1914 (Wright Co. MO)
 | | | | | Eliza (dau) b. 1805 d.?
 | | | | | Mary Ann (dau) b.c. 1816 (OH) d.?
 | | | | | Rebecca (dau) b. 1819 (OH) d. ?
 | | | | | Sarah (dau) b. 1822 (OH) d.?
 | | | John b.c. 1759 d. 1826
 | | | Abner b. 1763 d. 1833
 | | | | Eli b.c. 1786 (VA) d.c. 1850
 | | | | Hugh b.c. 1787 (VA) d. ?
 | | | | John b.c. 1790 (VA) d. ?
 | | | | Richard b.c. 1794 (VA) d.c. 1875
 | | | | Abner, Jr. b.c. 1796 (VA) d.c. 1876
 | | | | Job Sidwell b.c. 1798 (VA) d.c. 1860

| | | Anna b.c. 1791 (VA) d. ?
 | | | Deborah b.c. 1801 (VA) d.c. 1895
 | | Moses b.c. 1747 d.?
 | | Richard b. 1754 d. 1832 (Floyd Co VA) m. Jean (aka Jane)
 | | | Richard b. ? d. ?
 | | | Major b. ? d. ?
 | | Benjamin b.c. 1759 d. bef. 1832
 | | Susannah (dau) b.? d.?
 | Christopher b. 1737 d. 1813 ⁽ⁱ⁾ (Indiana Co. PA). m. (1) Elizabeth Williams (2) Ann Hoxsworth ^(k)
 | | Isaiah b.c. 1758-62 d. 1836 m. Rachel Winnard d. 1840
 | | | Christopher b. ? d. 1809
 | | | Sally b. ? d. 1807, m. Nathan Moore
 | | | Ann b. ? d. ?, m. (1) Jacob Francis, (2) John Righter
 | | Levi b. 1763 d. 1846 (Wirt Co. W. VA) m. Hannah Wells b. 1767 d. 1839
 | | | Nancy Agnes Maley (dau) b. 1789 d. 1865
 | | | Elizabeth (dau) b. 1794 d. 1865
 | | | William C. b. 1800 d. 1862
 | | | Levi b. 1802 d. 1858
 | | William b. 1766 d. 1851 (Ritchie Co. W.VA) m. Elizabeth Trump b. 1763 d. 1850
 | | | Hester Heaton (dau) b. 1789 d. 1859
 | | | Isaiah b. 1796 d. 1876
 | | | Mary McKown (dau) b. 1801 d. 1876
 | | | Jonas b. 1808 d. 1888
 | | Edward b. 1789 d. 1849 (Armstrong Co. PA) m. Mary Magdalena Rairigh b. 1788 d. 1855
 | | | Levi b. 1812 d. 1855
 | | | William b. 1814 d. 1904
 | | | Nancy b.c. 1824 d. ?
 | | | Catherine b.c. 1833, d. ?
 | | | Jacob b. ? d. ?
 | | | Mary b. ? d. ?
 | | | Moses b. ? d. ?
 | | | Elizabeth b. ? d. ?
 | | | Aaron b. ? d. ?
 | | Peter b. 1794 d. 1871 (Indiana Co. PA) m. Margaret Pounds b. 1799 d. 1892
 | | | John b. 1817 d. 1866
 | | | Ann Hays (dau) b. 1819 d. 1895
 | | | Peter b. 1829 d. 1878
 | | | James E. b. 1831 d. 1905
 | | | Samuel b. 1836 d. 1906
 | | James b. 1798 d. 1875 (Indiana Co. PA) m. Susan Elizabeth Pierce b. 1805 d. 1890
 | | | Highley C. b. 1825 d. 1910
 | | | Mariah Van Horn (dau) b. 1831 d. 1873
 | | | Aaron b. 1834 d. 1904
 | | Ann (dau) b. 1757 d.?
 | | Margaret (dau) b. 1759 d.?
 | | Esther (dau) b. 1760 d.?
 | | Sarah (dau) b. 1765 d.?
 | | Elizabeth (dau) b. 1768 d. aft. 1784
 | | Jesse b. 1770 d.?
 | | Thomas b. 1772 d.?
 | | Rachel (dau) b. 1777 d.?
 | | John b. 1777 (PA) d. 1852 (Walker, TX) m. Lydia Collier
 | | | Harrison Wells b. 1828 d. 1881
 | | | Joe Henry Wells b. 1832 d. ?
 | | | Emaline Wells (dau) b. ? d. ?
 | | Nathan b. 1780 d.?

| Mary "Polly" (dau) b. 1781 d.?
 | Ann Nancy (dau) b. 1783 d.?
 | Christopher b. 1785 d.?
 | Amy (dau) b. 1787 d.?
 | Sarah "Sally" (dau) b. 1792 d.?
 | Elizabeth (dau) b. 1796 d.?
 | Edward b. 1736 d. 1801 (Montgomery Co. PA) m. Mary Wells
 | Edward b. ? d. ?
 | Rachael b. ? d. ?
 | Levi b. 1772 d. ?
 | Elizabeth b. ? d. ?
 | William b. ? d. ?
 | Jonathan b. 1724 d. ?
 | William b.c. 1721 d. 1798 (Fayette Co. PA) m. Rebecca Oliver b. ? d. 1799
 | Thomas b. 1778 d. 1855 (Union Township, Clark Co. MO) m. (1) Hannah Smith b. ? d. 1808 (Nelson Co
 | KY); (2) m. 1809 Mary Hoskins b. 1785 d. 1873; the family moved to Clark Co MO in 1837
 | William b. ? (Nelson Co KY) d. ? mother Hannah; m. 1804 Ruth Martin (Nelson Co. KY)
 | Rebecca b. ? (Nelson Co KY) d. ? mother Hannah
 | Parthenia (dau) b. 1802 (Nelson Co KY) d. 1884 mother Hannah
 | David Smith Wells b. ? (Nelson Co KY) d. ? mother Hannah
 | Matilda (dau) b. ? (Nelson Co KY) d. ? mother Hannah
 | Vardeman Rucker Wells b. 1810 (Nelson Co KY) d. 1858 mother Mary
 | Alva Harrison Wells b. 1812 (Nelson Co KY) d. 1853 (Clark Co MO) mother Mary
 | Hannah Matilda Wells (dau) b. 1814 (Nelson Co KY) d. ? mother Mary
 | Joseph b. 1816 (Nelson Co KY) d. 1893 (Clark Co MO) mother Mary
 | Isaac B. b. 1818 (Nelson Co KY) d. 1852 (CA) mother Mary
 | Ann (dau) b. 1820 (Nelson Co KY) d. 1903 (Jasper Co MO) mother Mary
 | Rebecca Oliver Wells (dau) b. 1822 (Nelson Co KY) d. 1862 (Clark Co MO) mother Mary
 | Thomas Jefferson Wells b. 1826 (Nelson Co KY) d. 1898 (Clark Co MO) mother Mary
 | Alanson Oliver Wells b. 1829 (Nelson Co KY) d. 1915 (Clark Co MO) mother Mary
 | Abigail Brown (dau) b. ? d. ?
 | David b.c. 1760 d. 1833 m. Mary Ann [?] Wells
 | Ann (dau) b. ? d. ?
 | James b. ? d. ?
 | Levi b. ? d. ?
 | William b. ? d. ?
 | Elizabeth (dau) b. ? d. ?
 | Jane (dau) b. ? d. ?
 | Rebecca (dau) b. ? d. ?
 | Richard b. 1798 d. ?
 | Jesse b. 1771 d. 1838 (Nelson Co KY) m. (1) Catherine Cross b. 1775 (Fayette Co PA) d. 1808 (KY);
 | (2) Phoebe Evans b. 1791 (PA) d. 1875 (Spencer Co IN)
 | Sarah (dau) b. 1797 d. ? mother Catherine
 | Rebecca (dau) b. 1798 d. ? mother Catherine
 | John b. 1803 d. ? mother Catherine
 | Abigail (dau) b. 1804 d. ? mother Catherine
 | Mary Ann (dau) b. 1806 d. ? mother Catherine
 | Jesse b. 1808 d. 1862 mother Catherine
 | Sarah Frances Wells (dau) b. 1820 d. 1889 mother Phoebe
 | Catherine (dau) b. 1811 d. ? mother Phoebe
 | Hannah (dau) b. 1815 d. ? mother Phoebe
 | William Oliver Wells b. 1823 (Nelson Co KY) d. 1890 (Spencer Co IN) mother Phoebe
 | Thomas b. 1814 d. 1862 mother Phoebe
 | Daniel K. Wells b. 1817 d. 1904 (Warrick Co IN) mother Phoebe
 | William b. ? d. ? m. 1804 Ruth Martin in Nelson Co KY
 | Frances (dau) b. ? d. ?

| | Sarah (dau) b. ? d. ?
 | | Elizabeth (dau) b. ? d. ?
 James b.c. 1695-1706 d. 1772 (Robeson township, Berks Co. PA) m. Dorothy Wells
 | Abraham b. 1734 d. bef. 1797 (Mifflin Co. PA)
 | | James b.c. 1755-1765 d.c. 1816 (Whiteley Township, Greene Co. PA) m. Elizabeth
 | | | Dorothy (dau) b. ? d. ?
 | | | Elizabeth (dau) b. ? d. ?
 | | | Jane (dau) b. ? d. ? m. Abraham Shriver
 | | | Sarah (dau) b. ? d. ? m. Jesse Worley
 | | | Abraham b.c. 1793 d. aft. 1850 (Muskingum Co. OH?)
 | | | Nancy (dau) b.c. 1793 d. 1856 (Greene Co PA)
 | | | William b. 1797 (Greene Co. PA) d. 1877 (Monroe Co. OH)
 | | | John b. bef. 1804 d. ?
 | | | Priscilla (dau) b. bef. 1804 d. ?
 | | | James b. aft. 1804 d. ?
 | | | Dolly (dau) b. aft. 1804 d. ?
 | | | Rebecca (dau) b. aft. 1804 d. ?
 | | | Sally (dau) b. aft. 1804 d. ?
 | | Dorothy (dau) b. 1763 d. 1839 (Greene Co. PA)
 | | Abigail (dau) b. bef. 1779 d. ?
 | | Sedomia or Sedonia (dau) b. aft. 1780 d. ?
 Henry b. ? d. ? youngest son of James
 Benjamin b. ? d. 1793 (Mifflin Co. PA?) eldest son of James; m. to Jane
 | Benjamin b. ? d. ?
 | James b. ? d. ?
 | Elizabeth Forsyth b. ? d. ?
 Isaac b.c. 1736 d. ? m. 1757 Hannah Frey
 Dinah (dau) b.c. 1738 d. ? m. 1758 Samuel Frey
 Jemima b.c. 1740 d. ? m. 1758 Jacob Frey
 Peter b.c. 1691-1698 d. 1778 (Charlestown, Chester Co. PA) m. Elizabeth
 | Jonathan b. ? d.c. 1802 (Charlestown, Chester Co. PA) m. 1761 Ruth Roberts
 | | Enoch b. ? d. ?
 | | Peter b. ? d. ?
 | | John b. ? d. ?
 | | Lydia (dau) b. ? d. ?
 | | Sarah Griffins (dau) b. ? d. ?
 Edward b. ? d. ?
 Enoch (?) b.c. 1744 d. ? m. 1767 Catherine Umstead ^(h)
 Peter b. ? d. ?
 Edward b. 1710 d. 1747
 John b.c. 1695 d. 1749 ^{(c), (d)}
 | John II b. bef. 1719 d. ? m. 1743 ^{(e), (f)}
 | | John III b. 1741 d. 1819 (King's Mt. NC) m. Britter Wells ^(f)
 | | | James b. bef. 1770 d. 1838 (Randolph on the Mississippi)
 | | | | Joseph b. ? d. ?
 | | | | Robert H. b. ? d. ?
 | | | Robert H. b. 1773 d. 1853 m. Jemima Price
 | | | John Jr. b. 1775 d. 1841 m. Mary Gladden
 | | | Isaac b. 1782 d. 1857 m. Ann Gladden
 | | | Aaron b. ? d. ? was living in Lincoln Co. TX in 1837
 | | | Joseph b.c. 1771 (NC) d.c. 1823 (Warren KY) m.c. 1790 Sarah Hunter b.c. 1775 (NC)
 | | | | John b.c. 1792 (NC) d.c. 1870 (Edmonson KY) m. 1811 Lydia Johnson b.c. 1795 (KY) d. 1880 (KY)
 | | | | | Mary E. Wells (dau) b.c. 1815 (KY) d.c. 1880 (KY)
 | | | | | Joseph b. 1821 (Edmonson, KY) d. 1887 (Edmonson, KY) m. Elizabeth b. 1822 d. 1902
 | | | | | (Edmonson, KY)
 | | | | | Joseph J. b. 1862 (KY) d. ? m. Lizzie b. 1873 (KY) d. ?

William A. b.c. 1823 d. ? m. Mary A. b. 1827 (KY) d. ?
 Cassie E. (dau) b. 1850 (KY) d. ?
 Mary H. (dau) b. 1855 (KY) d. ?
 Martha (dau) b. 1857 (KY) d. ?
 Malissa (dau) b. 1861 (KY) d. ?
 Judy (dau) b. 1854 (KY) d. ?
 Solomon b. 1828 (KY) d. 1908 (Delta Co TX) m. 1849 Cassa Isaacs b. 1830 (IL) d. 1891 (KY)
 Judah Ann (dau) b.c. 1852 d. aft. 1882 m. 1882 Oattie S. Edwards b. 1839 (KY) d. ?
 Lydia Caroline "Carrie" (dau) b.c. 1855 (KY) d. ? m. 1882 Luther Henry Tibbs b. 1853 (KY)
 James Urrias b. 1857 (KY) d. 1928 (Jefferson Co KY) m. 1890 Lucy Woosley b. 1868 d. 1964
 Thomas M. b.c. 1859 d. ? possibly in infancy
 Elijah Lincoln b. 1861 (KY) d. 1928 (Chavez, NM) m. 1893 Lucy E. Furlong b. 1873 d. 1947
 Sarah E. (dau) b.c. 1864 (KY) d. 1889 (Edmonson, KY)
 Ruthy Adaline (dau) b. 1867 (KY) d. ?
 Cassandra Margaret (dau) b. 1870 (KY) d.c. 1905 (Edmonson, KY) m. 1892 Pinkney Furlong
 Isaac b.c. 1831 (KY) d. ? m. 1852 Rachel Ann Hail b.c. 1836 (KY) d. ?
 Sarah E. (dau) b.c. 1854 (KY) d. ?
 Eliza Jane (dau) b.c. 1856 (KY) d. ?
 John B. b.c. 1857 (KY) d. ?
 Olivia E. (dau) b.c. 1859 (KY) d. ?
 John b. 1833 (Butler, KY) d. aft. 1860 m. Phoebe E. b. 1839 d. ?
 Joseph b.c. 1856 (KY) d. ?
 Sarah F. (dau) b.c. 1857 (KY) d. ?
 Mary Jane (dau) b.c. 1859 (KY) d. ?
 Thomas H. b. 1836 (KY) d. aft. 1910 (Edmonton, KY) m. (1) 1856 Judah A. Isaacs b.c. 1833
 (2) 1889 Mary 1866 (KY)
 Thomas H. b. ? d. ?
 James b. ? d. ?
 Anna (dau) b. ? d. ?
 Betsy (dau) b. ? d. ?
 Joseph b. ? d. ?
 William b. ? d. ?
 Charles b. ? d. ?
 Sarah Amanda Wisenant (dau) b. 1770 d. 1841
 Rachel Hambright b. ? d. ?
 Priscilla Wissenhunt or Wisenant b. ? d. ?
 Mary Collins b. 1787 d. 1867
 Isaac II b.c. 1743-1764 (Lancaster Co PA) d. bet. 1810-1820 (Lincoln Co NC?) wife uncertain ^(f)
 Isaac III b.c. 1785 d. aft. 1820 wife uncertain ^(f)
 Isaac IV b. 1804 (Lincoln Co NC) d. 1866 (Blount Co TN) m. (1824) Martha McReynolds
 Mary (dau) b. 1803 (Lincoln Co NC) d. 1892 m. (1820) John Morton
 James b. bef. 1765 d.c. 1820-1826 (Lincoln Co NC) ^(f) m. Nancy Wells
 Peggy (dau) b. ? d. ? m. (1795) Elijah Jenkins?
 Samuel b. ? d. ? m. Agnes Jenkins?
 David b. ? d. ? m. Sally Mauney?
 census data plus remarks contained in his will suggest James had at least 5 sons and 4 daughters.
 One of his sons was b.c. 1785-1794, another b.c. 1795-1800, and three b.c. 1800-1810. Census
 data also implies he had a 6th son b. aft. 1774 and no longer living in Lincoln Co in 1810. James
 calls himself James Wells Sr. in his will, implying this 6th son may have been named James Wells Jr.
 Isaac I b. bef. 1717 ^(f) d. ?
 Edward ? b. bef. 1717 d. ? m. 1739 ^(g)
 Joseph b.c. 1693 d. bef. 1757 (Warrington, Bucks Co. PA) d. ? m. 1) Anne Pugh 1716; 2) Mary Sterling 1752
 Samuel b.c. 1720 d. ? m. 1747 to Elizabeth Roberts
 Joseph b.c. 1748 d. ?
 Henry b.c. 1750 d.c. 1793 (Effingham Co GA) m. Elizabeth Wells
 Zachariah b.c. 1771-1780 d. 1836 (Bryan Co. GA) m. Elizabeth Scott

| | | Henry Jr. b.c. 1774 d. ? (Jackson Co MS) m. Helen Stuart
 | | | Isaac b.c. 1775 d.c. 1831-40 (Alachua Co FL) m. Margaret Scott
 | | | John b. 1787 d. 1855 (Liberty Co GA) m. Rebecca Jones
 | | | William b.c. 1780 d. aft. 1850 (Bryan Co GA)
 | | | James b.c. 1775-80 d. ?
 | | Mary b. ? d. ?
 | | Rebecca ?
 | Jacob b. 1722 (Bucks Co.) d. 1780 (Loudoun VA) m. Lavinia Stevens
 | | Zachariah b.c. 1745 d.c. 1837/8 (Whitley, KY) ^(a)
 | | | Abraham b.c. 1800? d. 1842 ^(b) m. Mary Wells
 | | | | Jesse b. ? d. ?
 | | | | John b. ? d. ?
 | | | | Harrison b. ? d. ?
 | | | | Sally (dau) b. ? d. ?
 | | | William b.c. 1781- 1790 d. ?
 | | | Jacob Wells b.c. 1800-1810 d. ?
 | | | Caty Shipley (dau) b. ? d. ?
 | | | Polly Jones (dau) b. ? d. ?
 | | | Jeremiah b. 1791 d. 1848 (Sullivan Co TN)
 | | | Jesse b. ? d. bef. 1833
 | | Elizabeth (dau) b. ? d. ?
 | | Moses b.c. 1747 d. 1836 (Smyth Co VA) m. Margaret b.c. 1750 d.c. 1832
 | | | John b. 1773 (VA) d. 1845 (Grayson Co VA) m. Rhoda
 | | | | Allen b. 1821 (Grayson Co VA) d. 1877 (Grayson Co VA)
 | | | | Hazel M. (dau) b. 1817 (Grayson Co VA) d. 1863 (Grayson Co VA)
 | | David b.c. 1749 d. 1800 (Loudoun VA?) m. Rachel b. ? d.c. 1805 (Loudoun Co VA)
 | | | William b. bef. 1805 d. ? ⁽¹⁾ orphaned and placed under guardianship 1805
 | | | Sarah b. bef. 1805 d. ? ⁽¹⁾ orphaned and placed under guardianship 1805
 | | Jesse b.c. 1751 d. ?
 | | Ebenezer b.c. 1745 d. ?
 | Thaler Thomas (dau) b. ? d. ?
 | Susannah b. ? d. ?
 Samuel b.c. 1709/10 d. 1778 (Loudoun Co VA?)
 | Abraham b.c. 1744 (PA) d. 1820 Gibson Co IN ^(m) m. 1) Francis Goff; 2) Hannah Phillips, 1800 in KY
 | | Edward b. 1767 (PA) d. 1839 Gibson Co IN son of Francis
 | | Mary b. 1772 d. 1839 daughter of Francis
 | | David b.c. 1774 d. 1826 Posey Co IN son of Francis
 | | Abraham b. 1776 (PA) d. bef. 1821 Nelson Co KY son of Francis
 | | William M. b. 1779 d. 1848 Edwards Co IL son of Francis
 | | John b. 1783 (VA) d. 1851 Edwards Co IL son of Francis
 | | Joshua b. 1786 (KY) d. 1835 Edwards Co IL son of Francis
 | | Sarah b.c. 1798 d. ? daughter of Francis
 | | Jane b. 1801 Shelby Co KY d. ? daughter of Hannah
 | | Elizabeth b. 1818 (IN) d. 1893 Posey Co IN daughter of Hannah
 | Joseph b.c. 1740 d. ? ^(m)
 | Daniel b. bef. 1777 d. ? ^(m)
 Henry b. 1709 d. 1760 ⁽ⁿ⁾
 Abraham b. 1714 d. bef. 1760 (Bucks Co PA?)
 | Joshua b. ? d. ? ^(o)
 Mary b. 1697 d. ?
 Notes:

(a) lived in Loudoun Co. VA, Washington Co. TN, Whitley Co. KY and elsewhere

(b) lived in KY

(c) nicknamed "Black Sheep John" by Mary Belle Wells for his numerous debt problems

(d) died Warrington Township, Bucks Co. PA

(e) nicknamed "Indentured Servant John" because he was indentured at a young age to a Caleb Baker

- (f) it is uncertain if James, John III and Isaac II are John II's sons or if they are Isaac I's sons. The genealogy depicted here is based on analysis of 1790 and 1810 North Carolina census, wills, and letters. Census records suggest Isaac II could have had more sons and daughters but this is speculation. Folklore holds that a Margaret McGill was the wife of either Isaac II or Isaac III but this appears to be contradicted by census data.
- (g) the identification of Edward as John's son is only probable and is not confirmed
- (h) known to have lived in Providence Township, Philadelphia Co. PA; his relationship to Peter is not confirmed
- (i) according to an Orphan's Court petition of Mar. 12, 1755, Christopher is the youngest child of William
- (j) There has long been a dispute over whether Peter Jr. was born in PA or in MD. In point of fact, his birthplace in East Nottingham lies in a disputed border region claimed by both PA and MD from 1632 until 1767 when the Mason-Dixon line was established. Nottingham falls just north of the Mason-Dixon line. When Peter Jr. was born, the region was claimed by both PA and MD.
- (k) see also genealogy report at <http://www.genealogy.com/ftm/w/e/l/Theodore-F-Wells/GENE14-0001.html> .
- (l) see https://www.loudoun.gov/DocumentCenter/View/112535_pg_156_file_1805W-001
- (m) known to be living in Loudoun Co VA in 1777. Samuel is thought to have been in Loudoun Co by 1730.
- (n) believed to have settled in York Co PA and later moved to western VA.
- (o) upon the death of his father Abraham, Joshua became a minor "pauper" in Plumstead, Bucks Co PA.

KEY: ? denotes unknown or uncertain. b.c. denotes born around. d.c. denotes died around. m. denotes married. dau denotes daughter.

Indents under a name denote that person's children. The absence of children listed under a person does not mean that person had no children; it only indicates that I have not found any reliable information about that person's children. Dates of births, deaths, and marriages represent what I judge to be the most likely dates when different sources disagree as to those dates. In most (but not all) cases, when sources disagree about dates it is usually by no more than a year.

This compilation of family branches is based on documentation reported by PA Wells Family researcher Mary Belle Wells, DNA findings of the Wells Family Surname DNA project headed by Orin Wells, other documented wills, probates, and grave records, and vetted research by various other genealogists' projects. The descending branches are not established beyond reasonable doubt but they represent the most likely lines based on currently available records, documentation, and various genealogical reports I have investigated.

- Richard B. Wells Mar. 31, 2017