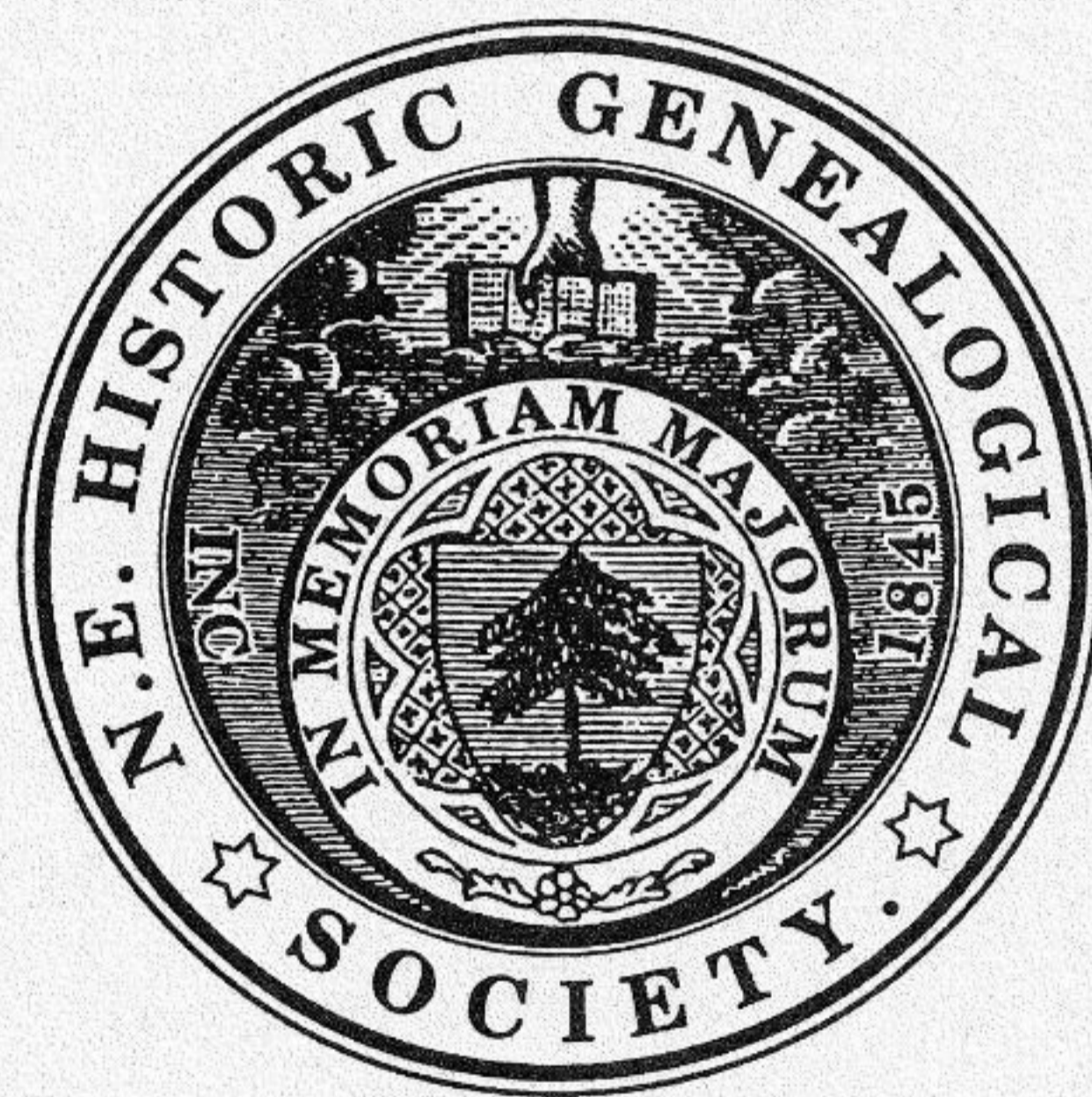


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THE EARLIEST SHERMANS OF DEDHAM, ESSEX, AND THEIR WIVES

PART I: HENRY SHERMAN THE ELDER AND HIS WIVES

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Henry Sherman, a prominent clothier in Dedham, who died in 1590, had several children. His two eldest sons, Henry the younger and Edmund, had between them fifteen grandchildren who settled in New England, either as young adults or with their parents. They did not all leave issue, but most did, which is why so many descendants of Great Migration colonists have a Sherman line.^[1]

In *New Light on Henry Sherman*, Mrs. B. L. Stratton conclusively proved that Henry Sherman the elder was not the son of that name of Thomas Sherman of Yaxley, Suffolk.^[2] That Henry, who was under age 21 in 1551, had a son Thomas who in 1587 was living in Diss, Norfolk, where his children were living in the early 1600s. In contrast, Henry Sherman the Dedham clothier was born about 1512, settled in Dedham about 1534, was fathering children in the 1540s, and was not survived by a son named Thomas. Exhaustive research, by myself and others before me, has yielded no clue to the true origin of the Dedham clothier.

The Shermans of Yaxley were armigerous, whereas the Shermans of Dedham were *not*; otherwise, they should have been recorded in at least one of the Visitations of Essex. Yet they were not recorded there, and they did not even put in a claim that had to be respited for further evidence. They had no such pretensions until a little before 1660, when one of Henry's great-grandsons, Edmund Sherman, a London merchant, was using the arms of Sherman of Yaxley, according to Guillim, but without authority.^[3] A thorough search of the records of the College of Arms, reported by Mrs. Stratton, did not produce any arms registered to a male-line descendant of the Dedham family.^[4]

¹ Among his many descendants, living and deceased, are several first-rate genealogists and editors of genealogical publications.

² Bertha L. Stratton, *New Light on Henry Sherman of Dedham, Essex, England, and Some Notes on His Descendants* (Staten Island, N.Y.: the author, 1954), 1–10. Nevertheless, the Internet is riddled with this false ancestry, which has also been perpetuated in two relatively recent books: Sherrie A. Styx, *The Mumford Families in America, 1600–1992* (Eugene, Ore.: Styx Enterprises, 1992), chart III on p. 17, and Margaret Sherman Lutzvick, *Going to Palmyra: Sherman Deeds* (Baltimore: Gateway Press, 1997), 21–22.

³ John Guillim, *Display of Heraldrie*, 4th ed. (London, 1660), 189, quoted in Bertha L. Stratton, *Transatlantic Shermans* (Staten Island, N.Y.: the author, 1969), 22, and Stratton, *New Light* [note 2], 21.

⁴ Stratton, *New Light* [note 2], 19–20; Stratton, *Transatlantic Shermans* [note 3], 25–26.

KEY DOCUMENT FOR HENRY SHERMAN

On 11 October 1574, depositions were taken in Dedham in respect of a suit in the Duchy of Lancaster between Thomas Seckford, lord of the Manor of Dedham Hall, and Robert Forthe concerning the entering and intruding upon certain lands and tenements in Dedham. One of the deponents for the plaintiff was Henry Sherman, who gave his age as “62 years or thereabouts.” He said he had lived in Dedham “for the space of 40 years,” and that he had been a copyholder of Dedham Hall for 20 years. He did not depose that he knew either party, only as to the nature of the land tenure in Dedham; he may have met each of the parties seldom, if at all. He and the other deponents were interviewed in Dedham by Matthew Smith and Edmond Bocking, Esquires, who were not local men but outsiders appointed for that purpose by a commission dated 30 June 1574.^[5]

Henry Sherman the elder married his first wife about five years after moving to Dedham, and she appears to have been the mother of most, if not all, of his children. In any event, she was the mother of his sons Henry and Edmund, from whom all New England Shermans are descended. If she was a local girl, there seems to be no proof of the family into which she had been born. Nevertheless, there is circumstantial evidence that she was a daughter of Robert Perpoynt of Dedham, as will be explained below. The essential records are those of the three manors from which all land in Dedham was held: *Dedham Hall*; *Dedham Campesse*, so named until the dissolution of the monasteries, being the property of Campsey Abbey, after which it was renamed *Overhall & Netherhall*; and the very small *Faites & Wades*.^[6] The records of the first two are among the records of the Duchy of Lancaster at The National Archives, and those of *Faites & Wades* are at the Essex County Record Office in Chelmsford.^[7] The wives of Henry Sherman the elder are never mentioned in any manorial records, but there are interesting clues.

PERPOYNT FAMILY

One of the families that had lived in Dedham for several generations before the reign of Elizabeth I was Perpoynt, often abbreviated to P’poynt. A full account of this family would be too long for this article, and in any case, the

⁵ All the documents in this file are at The National Archives, DL4/16/18. A photostatic copy of only one of them, Henry Sherman’s deposition, was published in Stratton, *Transatlantic Shermans* [note 3], facing 58, and a transcription of his deposition is in Stratton, *New Light* [note 2], 3.

⁶ *The Victoria History of the County of Essex*, vol. 10 (London: University of London Institute of Historical Research, 2001), 165–69.

⁷ Court rolls of the Manor of *Faites & Wades*, Essex Record Office, Chelmsford, D/DC14/14–28, of which only piece 14/14 has been needed for this article. Years 1360–1422, on membranes 2–12, are not entered consecutively, and the proceedings of 31 July 1559 are on an unnumbered membrane stitched at the end of the roll.

Sherman in 1559, she was already the young wife of John Wood, who, considering his many properties at his death, was probably already the holder of lands in more than one parish, and wealthier than Henry Sherman then was. Therefore, John Wood and his wife Mary “needed” Whitloves less than Henry Sherman did.

A simpler solution would be that Mary was a niece of Henry Sherman the elder, whose place of origin is still unknown. Unfortunately, this possibility is not supported by any evidence yet discovered. Mary predeceased him by about two years, but if she were his niece, would he not have mentioned her children in his long will? Not necessarily, since both of Mary’s husbands were well-to-do, and Henry could have chosen not to benefit wider kin.^[62]

None of the siblings of Henry Sherman the younger is mentioned as a cousin of John Wood or Pierce Butter or their wife Mary. This could be because the mother of Henry Sherman the younger was not the mother of the other children of Henry Sherman the elder, but such a deduction is unsound, based on the analysis above, summarized in the Genealogical Summary below. Henry Sherman the younger was obviously appointed an executor by both testators because of his competence. His relationship to their wife Mary (which may have been somewhat distant) was probably merely secondary.

Incidentally, neither Henry Sherman the elder nor any of his family lived in the sixteenth century at Southfields in Dedham. Not only is there no documentary evidence to support Mrs. Stratton’s belief (which she admitted late in life), but the continuous ownership and occupancy of Southfields is known.^[63] Richard Wood (died 1559), who was left Southfields by John Soffham in 1552, to whom he seems to have been unrelated, has no known kinship with the John Wood discussed above. Richard Wood’s son John was living in 1584, whereas the John Wood discussed above died in 1577. However, the eldest son of the latter was named Richard, so John Wood (died 1577) could have been a nephew of the tenant of Southfields, whose parents, and siblings (if any), are unknown.

GENEALOGICAL SUMMARY

HENRY SHERMAN^[64] was born about 1512,^[65] perhaps in Essex. He settled in Dedham, Essex about 1534, and late in life in Colchester, Essex, about 1584. He died between 26 February 1589/90 and 25 July 1590 (dates of codicil and probate), probably in Colchester. His first wife, whom he married about 1539, was perhaps **A DAUGHTER OF ROBERT PERPOYNT** of Dedham. She was probably

⁶² Henry’s 1589/90 will (see below) mentioned the children of his three sons and his daughter Judith, but did not mention any children of deceased daughter Alice Fince, who may have had two daughters alive when the will was made (see note 68 below).

⁶³ *Victoria History of the County of Essex* [note 6], 10:158, 163–64.

⁶⁴ Henry Sherman has been given no superscript since he had both grandchildren and great-children who immigrated to New England.

⁶⁵ He was age 62 or thereabouts in 1574 (see note 5).

identical with AGNES, wife of Henry Sherman the elder, who was buried in Dedham 14 October 1580. He married next in Dedham 5 June 1581, MARION (____) (SMYTHE) WILSON, widow of Thomas Smythe of Dedham, then of Edmund Wilson of St. Leonard's, Colchester, whom she had married in Dedham 5 April 1563. She was perhaps "Mrs Sherman" buried at St. James, Colchester, 4 August 1584. Henry married last MARGERY _____, who was living when he made his will.

As Henry Shearman the elder, of Colchester, Essex, he left a will dated 20 January 1589/90, with a codicil dated 26 February 1589/90, proved in London 25 July 1590.^[66] The will named son Henry Shearman and his children Henry, Samuel, Daniel, John, Ezechiell, Phebe, Nathaniel, and Anne Shearman; son Edmonde Shearman and his children Edmonde, Richard, Bezaliell, Anne, and Sara Shearman (all under age; sons under 22, daughters under 21), son-in-law William Petfield and his children Richard, Susan, and Elizabeth Petfield (all under age); wife Margerye; son Robert; Jane and Anne Shearman, underage daughters of Robert [evidently the testator's son Robert]; daughter Judith Petfield; son-in-law Nicholas Fynce; the wives of sons Edmond, Henry, and Robert; the poor of All Hallows [i.e., All Saints, Colchester]; and the poor of Dedham and the free school of Dedham (the testator asked to be buried in Dedham). Executors were to be sons Henry and Edmond.

Children of Henry Sherman and his first wife (if Agnes was his second wife, she could have been the mother of at least one of the youngest children):

- i. ALICE SHERMAN, b. say 1540; bur. Dedham 20 Oct. 1580 as Alice, wife of Nicholas Fince; m. ca. 1562, as his first wife, NICHOLAS FINCE, b. after 25 Aug. 1532 (date of his father's will), bur. Dedham 28 Feb. 1593/4, son of John and Ellen (____) Fince of Ardleigh, Essex.^[67] Nicholas and Alice had seven children baptized in Dedham from 1562/3 to 1578. The burials of five in infancy or childhood are recorded there, and the other two children, Judith and Alice, may have died young also as they were not named in their grandfather's will.^[68]
- ii. JUDITH SHERMAN, b. say 1543, bur. Dedham 1 April 1601 as Judith, wife of William Petfield; m. Dedham 27 June 1566 WILLIAM PETFIELD, clothier, living in 1610,^[69] probably the elder son of John Petfield of Earls Colne, Essex, clerk, whose undated will proved 17 June 1572, names also a younger

⁶⁶ Prerogative Court of Canterbury Wills, 51 Drury, PROB 11/75/34, published in full in Thomas Townsend Sherman, *Sherman Genealogy* . . . (New York: Tobias A. Wright, 1920), 53–57; abstracted in Waters, *Genealogical Gleanings in England* [note 49], 2:1164–65.

⁶⁷ Essex Record Office, Chelmsford, D/ACR 2/253. Nicholas was named in the will of his brother John Fince dated 24 April 1559, no probate date (Emmison, *Essex Wills* [note 46], 250).

⁶⁸ However, it is possible that Judith and Alice were named in the 1625 will of their first cousin, Ann (Sherman) Angier (see Part 3) as Judith Cartwright and "Allse Mase," widow, amongst beneficiaries known to be Ann's relatives.

⁶⁹ "Anna Petfield, daughter to William Petfield," was mentioned in the will of [her uncle] Henry Sherman, dated 21 August 1610 (see Part 2 of this article).

- son Matthew.^[70] William and Judith had nine children baptized in Dedham from 1567 to 1588, the eldest being named Matthew.
- iii. HENRY SHERMAN, b. say 1545; m. SUSAN LAWRENCE. See Part 2.
- iv. EDMUND SHERMAN, b. say 1548; m. (1) ANN PELLETT; (2) ANN CLERE. See Parts 3 and 4.
- v. John Sherman, b. say 1551,^[71] bur. Dedham 16 Oct. 1576, unmarried. He left an undated nuncupative will, probably proved in 1576.^[72] The will mentioned brothers-in-law "William Pettfylld" and "Nycollas Fynce"; brother Robert Sharman; "my mother"; and "my father."
- vi. THOMAS SHERMAN, b. say 1555; bur. Dedham 16 March 1563/4. Probably he was the godson of Thomas Butter, as discussed above.
- vii. ROBERT SHERMAN,^[73] bp. Dedham 6 Feb. 1559/60; bur. St. Stephen Coleman Street, London, 14 Jan. 1602/3.^[74] He was educated at Cambridge University, and became a Fellow of the College of Physicians in 1599.^[75] He m. (1) Dedham 9 Dec. 1583 BARBARA BROWNE, bp. Dedham 1 April 1561, daughter of Martin and Katherine (Reynolds) (Warner) Browne;^[76] (2) shortly after 4 July 1597 BRIDGET JENNEY, daughter of Francis and Margaret (Peyton) Jenney.^[77] Robert's will, dated 10 Jan. 1602/3, proved 20 Jan. 1602/3,^[78] names wife Bridget; children Jane, Mary, Anne, and Robert; son Richard. Brother Henry Sherman was to be executor.

(to be continued)

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⁷⁰ Episcopal Consistory Court of London, 164 Bullocke, at the London Metropolitan Archives.

⁷¹ John Sherman attended the Dedham Hall View of Frankpledge on 9 April 1572, so he had probably attained his majority since the previous View of Frankpledge for that court was on 1 October 1571 (Dedham Hall [note 16], DL30/60/739).

⁷² Essex Record Office, Chelmsford, D/ABW 34/221, abstracted in Waters, *Genealogical Gleanings in England* [note 49], 2:1162, and F. G. Emmison, ed., *Essex Wills: The Bishop of London's Commissary Court, 1569–1578* (Chelmsford, Essex: Essex Record Office, 1994), 202.

⁷³ Perhaps Robert Sherman was named after Robert Perpoynnt, probably his grandfather.

⁷⁴ Parish registers of St. Stephen Coleman Street, London.

⁷⁵ John Venn and J. A. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses: A Biographical List of All Known Students, Graduates and Holders of Offices at the University of Cambridge, from the Earliest Times to 1900: Part 1 (From the Earliest Times to 1751)*, 4 vols. (Cambridge: University Press, 1922–27), 4:63.

⁷⁶ Joan Corder, ed., *The Visitations of Suffolk, 1561*, 2 parts, Publications of The Harleian Society, new series, vols. 2–3 (London, 1981–84), 2:183 (Reynolds). The will of Katherine's brother Henry "Reignoldes" of Little Belstead, Suffolk, dated 9 August 1585, proved 13 October 1587 (Prerogative Court of Canterbury Wills, 61 Spencer, PROB 11/71/166b, abstracted in Waters, *Genealogical Gleanings in England* [note 49], 2:1164), mentions "cousin Sherman of Colchester," evidently Robert Sherman, who witnessed the will.

⁷⁷ Sherman, *Sherman Genealogy* [note 66], 87–89; Corder, *Visitations of Suffolk, 1561* [note 76], 3:299 (Jenney).

⁷⁸ Commissary Court of London Wills, 19:318, abstracted in Waters, *Genealogical Gleanings in England* [note 49], 2:1167.