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THE BLAKE FAMILY
IN ENGLAND.

BY
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OF BOSTON.

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THE BLAKE FAMILY IN ENGLAND.

In a "Genealogical History of William Blake of Dorchester," published in 1857, appears the statement that the emigrant to New England was the son of Giles Blake of Little Baddow, Essex, and the record of several generations of the family is given. The substance of this record is trustworthy as being a copy from "Morant's History of Essex," but the statement that the Dorchester settler was of this family was unwarranted by any evidence. Subsequently the late H. G. Somerby, Esq., by request of Stanton Blake, Esq., made extended researches in England to determine the origin of the American family. He finally located it at Over Stowey, Somerset, and the results of his investigations were published in 1881, by W. H. Whitmore, Esq., in "A Record of the Blakes of Somersetshire."

The evidences upon which Mr. Somerby based his conclusions were, first, the record of a baptism in 1594, at Over Stowey, of a William Blake (son of Robert and grandson of John), the date corresponding to the age of the emigrant at death; and second, the fact that a sister of this William, in her will of date 1647, mentioned a "brother in New England," no name however being given. While this evidence was not all that could be desired, it was generally accepted as correct, and the pedigree has been copied in several other genealogical publications.

In 1881, Rev. Charles M. Blake, U. S. A., while visiting in England, was shown by William Blake, Esq., of South Petherton, a genealogical chart of the "Blakes of Somersetshire," prepared by William Arthur Jones, Esq., A.M.

An examination of this chart led Mr. Blake to visit Pitminster, four miles from Taunton, where he found upon the parish registers sufficient evidence to convince him that this was the early home of his ancestor William Blake, but he was unable at that time to give the matter further attention.

Recently, investigations have been made by the writer, through correspondence with the vicar of the parish, and with Edward J. Blake, Esq., of Crewkerne. The latter himself examined the registers of Pitminster, and Over Stowey, and he has had a careful examination made of wills and other original sources of information, for the purpose of determining his own line of descent and verifying the chart referred to. The result of these researches, so far as relates to the American family, has been very courteously copied for the writer and forms the basis of this article.

Mr. Somerby's record of the baptism of a William at Over Stowey, June 5, 1594, was found to be correct, but unfortunately he overlooked this subsequent entry :

"1617. William Blake the sonne of Robert Blake was buried the — of Aprill."

As this record effectually disposes of *this* William, we are forced to look elsewhere for the emigrant.

On page 14 of Mr. Somerby's notes the statement is made that William the son of John⁹ and brother of Robert above named died at Bishops Lydiard, leaving a widow Joan, but no children.

A close examination of the records discloses the following facts. By the will of John,⁹ his son William received lands at Bishops Lydiard, at Plainfield in Over Stowey, and at Padnoller in the parish of Spaxton. Now in the will of William of Bishops Lydiard, referred to by Mr. Somerby, date 13th June, 1618, and proved in September following by Joan his widow, he is described as a *yeoman*, and bequeaths three acres at Hillfarence which he bought, and his land at *Risun*, with sundry small gifts to friends. He mentions "Philipp Sully, my boye," but no children.

It will be noticed that this William held an entirely different social position from the Blakes of Over Stowey, and in the disposition of his property made *no mention of the lands* which John Blake⁹ gave to *his* son William.

Furthermore, we have an abstract of a will of a William Blake of *Riston*, proved at Taunton, May, 1572, in which is a bequest to "my sonne Willyam." Riston is near Taunton, and not more than seven or eight miles from Bishops Lydiard and is undoubtedly the same place described as *Risun* in the will of 1618.

From these facts it is quite reasonable to think that the William who died in 1618 at Bishops Lydiard without children was the son of William of Riston, but *certainly not* the son of John⁹ of Over Stowey.

The records of Over Stowey furnish no evidence whatever in regard to John's son, but the Taunton Manor Rolls show that a William Blake bought property at Pitminster, in 1586. The parish registers of Pitminster, which begin in the year 1544, are in a very good state of preservation, but there is not a single Blake entry (with the exception of a Mary Blake, daughter of Richard, who was buried in 1574) until the year 1588, when Grace a daughter of William was baptized. It is supposed that this William was the son of John,⁹ that he went to Pitminster to reside about the time of the purchase of the estate there in 1586, and there had the children named below. This theory was adopted by Mr. Jones in preparing his chart, and also by Mr. Blake whose investigations have been made independently of all previous labor in this direction, and it is hoped that this may soon be verified by record evidence.

The following records relating to this branch of the family appear upon the parish register at Pitminster :

Anno Domio.

- 1588. Grace Blake, daughter of Willm Blake was baptized the 9th day of February.
- 1592. Eme Blake, daughter of William Blake was baptized the third day of December.
- 1594. William Blake, son of William Blake was baptized the 10th day of July.
- 1597. John Blake son of William Blake was baptized the fifteenth day of June.
- 1600. Añe Blaak, daughter of William Blaak was baptized the sixteenth day of October.
- 1603. Richard Blaak, son of William Blaak was baptized the seventeenth day of Aprill.

- 1617. William Blake was married to Agnis Bond widow the 27th day of September.

- 1618. John Blake, sonne of William Blake, and Ann Blake daughter of William Blake were baptised the day of August.
- 1620. William Blake sonne of William Blake was baptised the 6th of September.
- 1624. James Blake sonne of William Blake was baptised 27th April.

With this record from Pitminster before us, there cannot be a shadow of doubt that we have here the family of William of Dorchester. We know that he had a wife Agnes, and children John, Ann, William and James, and to make the case still stronger, the age of the father at death, and also of *three* of the children, Ann, William and James, corresponds with the date of the baptism at Pitminster.

No record has been found of the baptism of Edward, another son of William and Agnes, but it is supposed that he was born in England, as there is no evidence of the father being in this country previous to the year 1636, the statement that he came in the "Mary and John" in 1630 being without foundation.

Following the notes of Mr. Somerby, with the substitution of William¹⁰ for Robert,¹⁰ the line of descent will stand as follows: Robert,¹ Henry,² William,³ Henry,⁴ Robert,⁵ William,⁶ William,⁷ Humphrey⁸ (great-grandfather of the Admiral), John,⁹ William,¹⁰ William¹¹ of Dorchester.

Or to state the matter more simply, the emigrant is now traced as being the grandson of John Blake of Over Stowey, through his son William, instead of being so deduced through his son Robert. But all the pedigree anterior to the grandfather John is not affected by this correction.

PEDIGREE OF THE BLAKES & SOME OF THEIR ALLIED FAMILIES

In the original MS. at Mills House 1860

1. Name of individuals refers to the British Register of Births, Deaths & Marriages

There is a line under the names of those of whom there are portraits.

The Minister's Estate purchased by the Blakes from the Executors of Jacobus Sperry A.D. 1586. Elizabeth Deane Court House

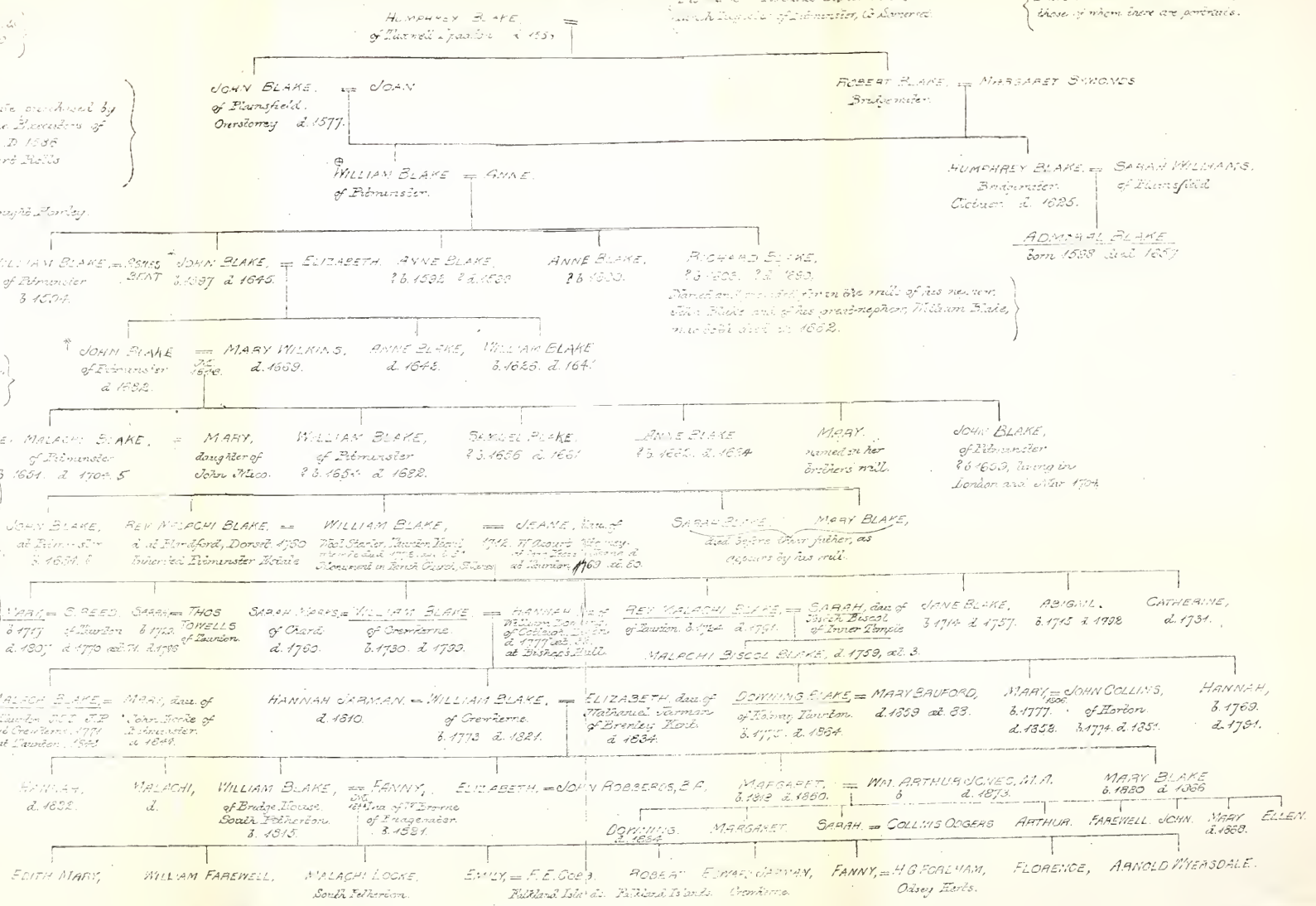
1625, John Blake bought Fenley.

Went to America in 1630 with five children

Wife owned at Lunden, Oct. 6, 1655.

Concerned in Monmouth's Rebellion in the year 1744, executed 1747, proved in 1755

The Mary and Elizabeth in her old office and children John, Elizabeth, William, and Mary named in 1710 John Blake described as of London





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