

Letter to My Sons

By

Richard Ira Hofferbert

The American Revolution And Its Impact on Our Family

Corrections, amendments, additions and comments would be greatly appreciated. Please send them by email to: rhofferb@binghamton.edu. Or by post to:

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Preface:**A Note to Mark and Sam****(And other interested family members)**

Dear Boys,

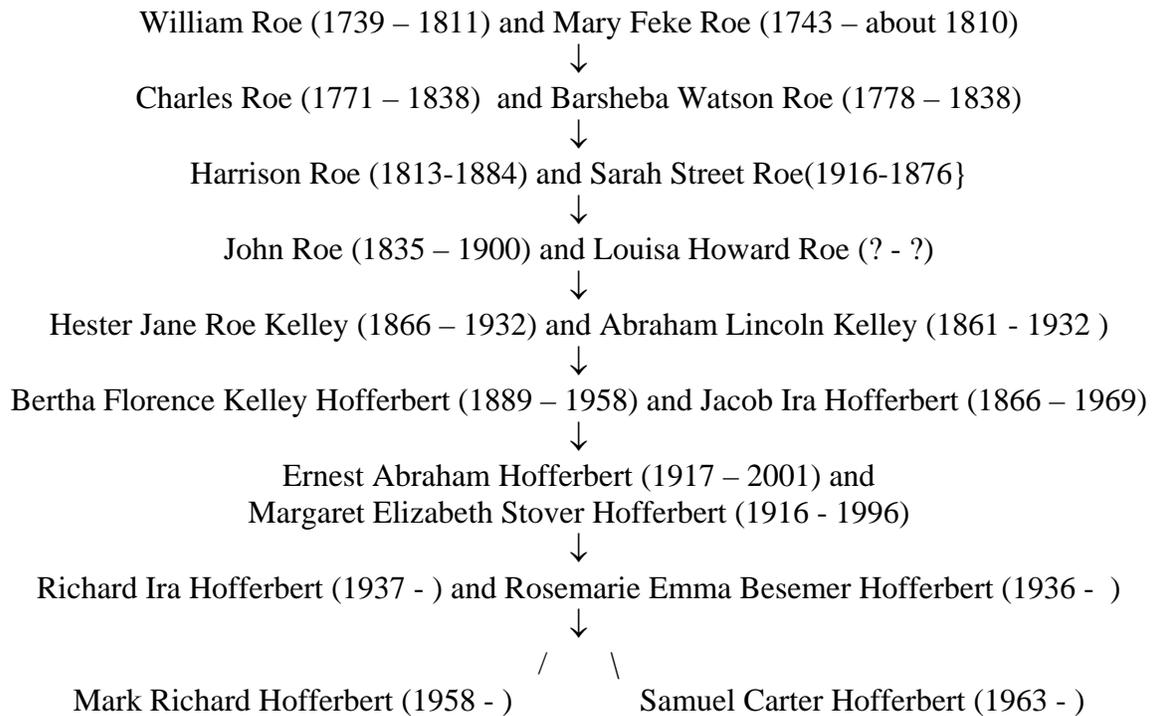
For the past several years, as you know, I have been gathering information about your ancestors. But I want to do more than simple genealogy. My hope is to offer you and other interested family members more than mere citation of birth, marriage, and death dates, and places of residence for our ancestors. I hope some human content and common identification can come from a narrative regarding our preceding family members and the conditions of their lives. I also want to fit them into the history of our country. Who were they? What did they experience? How did they accommodate and contribute to that piece of our nation's history of which they were a part? These were real people, with hopes, pains, goals, and -- perhaps often most important -- a sense of their personal place in God's grand but somewhat opaque plan for America.

This is addressed to you, Mark and Sam, because I want to personalize the narrative. I want to be able to envision to whom I am writing. And you two are foremost in my mind as I do this. But I hope you won't mind if I share these observations with others who might find such musings interesting.

This letter deals with the role of some of our ancestors in the American Revolution and how that experience may have shaped our family in the generations to follow. In order to show where you fit in, genealogically, I start with by listing some of your ancestors.

From William and Mary Feke Roe to

Mark Richard and Samuel Carter Hofferbert



The American Revolution
And Its Impact on Our Family

Dear Boys,

Let's open by distinguishing two streams of our ancestry¹

- The 17th century Puritans of Massachusetts Bay Colony and dissenters from them who were some of the ancestry of my great grandmother, Hester Jane (Roe) Kelley, the mother of my grandmother Bertha Florence (Kelley) Hofferbert.
- The Anabaptists (Amish, Mennonite, Brethern, Evangelical, etc.) who were the ancestors of my grandfather, Jacob Ira Hofferbert, most of whom arrived in Pennsylvania the first third of the 18th century and then, over successive generations, migrated through Ohio to Indiana.

It is the first group that will get the bulk of attention in this letter.

**From Massachusetts Bay Colony to
Long Island in the Time of the Revolution:**

On Christmas day in 1907, 21 year-old Jacob Ira Hofferbert and 18 year-old Bertha Florence Kelley were married, bringing together the Massachusetts (Puritan, etc.) and the Pennsylvania (Amish, Mennonite) streams of our ancestry.

Some of Grandmother's ancestors were folks who early on dissented from the Puritans. By the time of the Revolution, they had evolved into what we think of today as a conventional "Baptist" line, rooted in New England. If one looks up *Baptist* a bewildering array of branches, sects, and confessions is uncovered..

Grandfather Ira (he preferred his middle name) was descended from a mix of Amish, Mennonite, and other Anabaptist roots. The Anabaptists (derived from Greek for "adult-Baptist") can be found in diverse branches, but all stemming from a rebellion within the Protestant ranks shortly after the Reformation in the early 1500s. That which distinguished this breakaway was an objection to infant baptism, claiming that Christ was

¹ These are my *paternal* ancestors. My maternal ancestry, a subject for consideration later, is equally fascinating, but it is dominated by Scotch-Irish settlers --- who embody and experience a different set of cultural considerations. Some attention must be given to the Scotch-Irish in William and Mary Roe's history, but it is not the core of their story.

baptized as an adult and all who dedicate their lives to him should do so thoughtfully and reverently after the age of accountability.²

Grandfather Ira's ancestors – Amish, Mennonite – also adhered to another core principle, namely refusal of military service and personal nonviolence.³ By the time of his adulthood, and marriage, however, that doctrinal peculiarity had been heavily diluted. I hope one day to write something clear on the religious orientations and complications of our ancestors. No factor other than the frontier itself is more important in explaining from where we came and what we have become than our ancestral religious orientations. However, I am still in the process of sorting out those roots and must postpone a fuller exploration of this core aspect of our family history.

The first of the two ancestral strains is the one of interest here, That is the one that I have documented furthest back, in some instances to early 15th century England, and rather easily to those who helped settle the Massachusetts Bay Colony, beginning in 1630. But, although this early lineage is interesting, it is the descendants of those Puritans and dissenters⁴ from them that are of current interest to me, and particularly the impact of the American Revolution on them, as reflected in the lives of William and Mary (Feke) Roe.

Most histories will tell you that the first settlers of the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1630,⁵ under the Puritan Governor Jonathan Winthrop (your 10th great grand uncle), were by no means uniformly ardent Puritans. Yet Governor Winthrop and his council attempted to enforce a rigid uniformity in matters theological. The most famous dissenter was Roger Williams, who after being exiled from Massachusetts, proceeded to found the

² My Grandmother Bertha reminded me on my 12th birthday that I had reached the “age of accountability,” which I interpreted as a notice that I was now eligible for hell. I had not been baptized as a baby; at 14, I was baptized when my parents and I joined the Grace Methodist Church in South Bend, Indiana I have a sneaking feeling that in Grandmother Bertha's eyes my becoming a Methodist – rather than rescuing my eternal hide -- was a brick on the road to perdition.

³ See Harvey Hostetler, *The Descendants of Jacob Hochstetler*, 1911 (Brethern Press, Cedar Rapids, Iowa). I obtained a first edition that somehow found its way from my Great Aunt Aletha's attic to my Father, and then to me. It is in rather fragile condition, but recently I discovered that it is available in inexpensive (\$27 – 2003) reprint from the Gospel Bookstore, Berlin, Ohio. The introductory essays contain a very readable and useful review of Amish history and doctrine, as well as substantial detail on the history of our ancestors, the Hochstetlers of Berks County, PA.

⁴ For a dramatic example of that dissent, see the fictionalized, but historically grounded, novel about your 10th great grandmother, Elizabeth Fones Winthrop Feke, *The Winthrop Woman*, by Anya Seton, 1958.

⁵ Not to be confused with the Puritans of the Plymouth Colony, a few miles south, founded in 1620 by the Mayflower party.

Rhode Island Colony, based on a remarkably modern concept of freedom of conscience. In later years, he was to befriend Baptists, Quakers, and others who simply did not fit the Puritan mold. Whether any of our direct ancestors took advantage of Rhode Island's tolerance in their exodus out of the Puritan Commonwealth is not yet known to me.

Other dissenters, wandered into the wilderness down the Connecticut coast, some then seeking refuge on Long Island. In the mid-17th century, Long Island was divided between the English in the east and the Dutch under Governor Styvesant in the west. In 1664, the English displaced the Dutch, unifying all of New York, including Long Island (after some dispute with Connecticut). Even following the English takeover, however, there never was any effort at spiritual and theological uniformity such as had been the goal of the Massachusetts Puritans. New York, after all, was the nominal fiefdom of the Roman Catholic Duke of York, later to be King James II, whose father, Charles I, was beheaded in the mid-17th century by Oliver Cromwell's Puritans, probably much to the delight of the Massachusetts Puritan contingent. Many English⁶, however, found more or less comfortable lives even under a few decades of Dutch rule.⁷ Some of our ancestors were among them.

A Century of Peace and Prosperity on Long Island.

Over a century later, by the 1770s, at the time of the first rumblings of rebellion, our ancestors on Long Island lived as did most of the rest of the 3 million American colonists along the Atlantic seaboard. From Salem, Massachusetts to Charleston, South Carolina these people enjoyed a level of comfort and civility attained by the better-off English villages and towns. Philadelphia was the jewel with 30,000 people⁸. As best as can be determined by competent statistical historians, Americans enjoyed the highest per capita income in the world. By the standards of the day most of the colonists lived very well.⁹

⁶ Even including members of Jonathan Winthrop's family such as your 10th great grandmother, Elizabeth Fones Winthrop Feke. She had married Governor Winthrop's son (and her first cousin) just prior to their departure for Massachusetts. He drowned drunk in Salem. She went on to marry a couple of other fellows, one of whom was your 10th great grandfather, Lt. Robert Feke, who died at an early age after having gone stark, raving mad. Successive wacko marriages are not an invention of the modern age.

⁷ In a later letter, I will tell you about the "Flushing Remonstrance" of the mid 17th century, in which our ancestors played a part, seeking and obtaining religious tolerance from the Dutch Governor Styvesant.

⁸ See David McCullough's wonderful description of John Adams' infatuation with Philadelphia when he served as a delegate to the first Continental Congress.

⁹ Something that could not be said for those unnumbered wild settlers who lived, in effect, beyond the pale of civilization. In distinct violation of English decree, the settlers west of the Appalachians included most of the Scotch-Irish flood that arrived between 1730 and 1750. See David Hackett Fischer's *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1989). Many of our other ancestors were part of that wild bunch.

When John Adams traveled from Braintree or Boston to Philadelphia for the convening of the Continental Congress, he rode his horse over well-marked thoroughfares, sharing space with regularly scheduled stages. He was never more than a half day's ride from a reasonably comfortable inn, with warm meals and a passable bed. The inns were well attended by regular travelers. Highwaymen and bandits appear not to have been a serious problem for the colonial traveler (unlike the situation in some parts of Mother England).

The towns were clean by the standards of the day. Log cabins were built by the frontier people, across the mountains, but our eastern ancestors lived in comfortable clapboard sided houses, with wooden floors and glass windows. Tradesmen and artisans in the towns and villages made a good income and offered reliable services for their neighbors. Nearly everyone farmed a bit. And the soil of Long Island was like nothing available in England. (although it would look somewhat pathetic to those who subsequently made their way to Kentucky, western Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois).

Most people were literate. It is fairly certain that William Roe, your 6th great grandfather, could read and write, as with almost as much certainty we may assume that his wife, Grandmother Mary (Feke) Roe, could as well. Her uncle was a famous portrait artist.¹⁰ As a shoemaker, Will Roe would have kept written accounts and probably read to keep abreast of current affairs. But four generations later, their great-great granddaughter (my great grandmother Hester Jane [Roe] Kelley) was illiterate. She was born in a log cabin and lived there until after some time after she married Abraham Lincoln Kelley, my grandmother's father.

The colonies generally shared in the 18th century European intellectual and scientific movement known as the *Enlightenment*, typified by the international renown of Benjamin Franklin's work. But, because of the Revolution, much of our family was exempt from the influence of this broad intellectual movement. In sum: Between the American Revolution and the Civil War, our ancestors were set back about a century.

Why did Will and Mary Roe leave the comforts of 18th century Long Island? The push of war's misfortunes and the pull of free land.

¹⁰ Robert Feke, whose work hangs in the National Gallery in Washington, The Museum of Fine Arts in San Francisco, as well as in numerous other collections around the country. See <http://www.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/auth/feke/>; http://www.artcyclopedia.com/artists/feke_robert.html

The Misfortunes of War

Grandfather Will Roe was a patriot. He, like other craftsmen, merchants, and traders, had suffered under the ill-advised policies of King George III. The English government and its officers busied themselves with colonial affairs in the years after the French and Indian War of the 1750s in a way that they had not during the previous hundred and thirty years. They sought to enhance commercial advantage from the colonies, ostensibly to cover the costs incurred defending the Americans from the Indians and the French in the mid-1750s. Certain items were forbidden to local manufacturers. If the homeland laws were obeyed, the colonists would have to ship raw materials to England, where they would be transformed into manufactured items to be re-imported by the colonists at prices controlled by authorities in England. The local manufacture of tools was forbidden. For people who thought themselves just as much Englishmen as anyone in the mother country, these regulations weighed heavily – politically as well as economically. In all likelihood, Grandfather Will was as irritated as any other similarly situated entrepreneur.

It is not necessary to tell the whole story of the Revolution in order to locate our grandparents Will and Mary (Feke) Roe in the context of their time. Suffice it to say, they were in the thick of it.¹¹

The Torrey volume (see fn #10) lists the following information about the fate of our patriot ancestor and his family during the Revolution:

¹¹ The story of our Roe and Feke ancestors was opened for me by the efforts and luck of John Key, my first cousin once removed and fellow devotee of family history. John is a Quaker pastor in Swayzee, Indiana. The initial information on the Roe family was given to him by a member of his church, Ralph Small. Ralph's grandfather on his mother's side was Anderson Roe, Hester Jane Roe's brother. Ralph Small brought to John's attention a document by Claude Pierce Dickson, *The Story of Our Roe Family* -- mimeo, 1971, containing extractions from a volume discovered in the Los Angeles Public Library: *DAVID ROE OF FLUSHING, LONG ISLAND AND SOME OF HIS DESCENDANTS --- A RECORD OF SIX GENERATIONS*, compiled by Mr. Clarence Almon Torrey, 1926, and revised in 1958 by Charles Harvey Roe. I obtained the entire microfiche volume from the New York State Library in Albany (I copied it and retain the copy). An appendix on the David Roe volume has the ancestry of the Feke side of the family back into the early 1400s in Wighton, (Essex) England. Data in this appendix concur with the part of the lineage found in Seton's *The Winthrop Woman*. The Dickson mimeographed document brings some of the Roe lineage down a couple more generations, to my great grandmother, Hester Jane (Roe) Kelley (b. 1866; d. 1932), mother of my paternal grandmother Bertha Florence (Kelley) Hofferbert (b. 1889; d. 1958). John Key not only provided the link to this documentation, but he has been a pleasant companion and fellow data-digger in various local libraries and cemeteries. I have especially enjoyed his company during my forays into Indiana to dig up dead relatives. And I look forward to many more such joint ventures.

(Entry #20, p. 23 in *David Roe of Flushing New York....*)

William(4) [# indicates generation from David Roe] Roe (John [3] John [2] David [1], born about 1739 at Hempstead or Oyster Bay, Long Island, N.Y.; married Mary Feke (see Appendix C), daughter of Charles and Catherine (Tillear or Tilley) Feke, of Oyster Bay (mar. lic. March 24, 1764). She was born Oct. 20, 1743. Her father, Charles Feke, was a brother of the noted American painter, Robert Feke.[see various websites]. Hanna Feke, sister of Mary's great-grandfather, had married John Bowne [sic. Browne] of Flushing, a pioneer in the cause of religious freedom (see No. 1). William and Mary Roe lived in Lattingtown, Oyster Bay Township, on a piece of land which was purchased in 1771 for 12 pounds from his wife's brother-in-law, Prior Townsend. William Roe was a "cordwainer" (shoemaker).

In the early part of the Revolution he was a sergeant in Captain Richard Manee's company of Colonel Josiah Smith's regiment of Queens County militia. He remained at home, however after the British defeated Washington's forces on Long Island [August 27, 1776], furnishing secret intelligence to the American cause in the fall of 1777 and after, until he was informed against and then he had to flee to the Main (mainland) to escape British vengeance. [Onderdonk's "Revolutionary Incidents in Queens County, N.Y." and Diary of Robert Mitchell Baxter] He returned in May, 1782, under a flag of truce, to remove his family to the vicinity of Stamford, Conn. He was captured Dec. 11, 1782, with others, by Hessians and probably remained a prisoner until the close of the war.

In 1786 he was living near Maysville, KY., as appears from a petition signed by him and others in that year, asking that Mason County be set off from Bourbon County. The county seat of Bourbon County was at Paris, making it necessary for the petitioners to "pass through a dangerous Indian Country". Mason County was established in 1788. William Roe's name is found in the land records of Mason County in subsequent years. He was appointed a constable of Mason County May 27, 1789. During this period he became a "vendue master" or auctioneer, licensed to act as such in Mason, Brackton, and Fleming Counties. There is no record of settlement of his estate. The census of 1810 indicates that his wife was also living at that time and records him as a shoemaker and the owner of five slaves.

William Roe and family were members or adherents of the Baptist Church. Some of the meetings of the local congregation were held at his home in Lattington [Oyster Bay twp.], Long Island. He was baptized June 13, 1773. His wife's ancestors had been members of the Society of Friends but her grandfather had been converted to the Baptist faith and had served afterward as a lay preacher at Oyster Bay. She was probably a member of the Baptist Church when she was married.

Children probably all born at Oyster Bay, L.I.: [NB: one born later, either enroute to or in KY]

What a wealth of human triumph and suffering is contained in this brief account. Without much elaboration by my own imagination, there is material here for informed reflection. Since discovering that Grandfather Will was in the Revolution, I have read a good deal about that founding event of our nation. And, I must say that the policies pursued by King George III and his ministers, most notably but certainly not exclusively Lord North, in the lead-up to the Revolution are about as thoroughly marinated in human stupidity as could be imagined. One must not engage in a lot of futile counter-historical reasoning to conclude that a modicum of good sense could have avoided the war, avoided its 1812 aftermath, and ensured the Americans a peaceful route to independence not unlike that

granted a century later to Canada. (And wouldn't it be nice if we still had a figurehead queen? What a load off the First Lady.)

Some of the blame for strange policy decisions in London can be laid on the sorry state of communication, given a 3-6 month turnaround. That was normal for the time, but the information gap was widened by the bone-headedness and isolation of the King's governors in America, who seemed to take pride in their lack of contact with the ordinary colonists. None of that, however, disguises the arrogance and incompetence of the King and his lot. The Americans could have been governed another century much as they had the previous one – with a loose tether, whereby the treasury of the English government and economy in general would have sought to be partners with rather than exploiters of the remarkably productive and savvy Americans. In sum, the lust for independence of even the hottest-headed Americans could have been bought off by a judicious and mutually beneficial policy of economic and political cooperation rather than exploitation.

Such matters of grand policy, however, were distant from the everyday experience of Will and Mary Roe. I have already suggested that it is likely that the business of Will and his neighbors was, no doubt, fairly immediately affected by the regulations recently imposed by the Crown. Further, while no doubt considering themselves loyal subjects, these folks and the preceding four generations on Long Island had enjoyed the fruits of their own independence and courage. They were religious dissenters without having had to pay a particularly high price for their convictions. Quakers had been tortured and executed in England. They suffered torment and banishment from Grand Uncle Jonathan Winthrop's Massachusetts. Baptists were part of the stream of Anabaptists flowing from Switzerland and Germany who, already in the early 1500s, had dissented from the center of Luther's Reformation. They had been tortured, executed, and banished from their Swiss and German homes. Massachusetts was a bit but not much more comfortable. But the specter of tolerance in Rhode Island spilled across the Sound to Long Island.

And these people at the time of the Revolution had the perhaps romanticized heritage of being the children of pioneers – conquerors of wilderness and founders of civil societies. Being distant and different from England, therefore, probably made folks such as Will and Mary Roe open to the enthusiastic arguments of the rebellion's publicists. As we can see today, it is but a short leap for the patriotic and pious to link their politics to their religion. Mary had no lingering connection to the pacifism of her Quaker ancestry. And the brand of Baptism followed by the Roes had little of the noncombatant commitment of the Quakers or the newly arrived Amish and Mennonite adherents in relatively nearby Pennsylvania.

General George Washington came from Boston to New York in the summer of 1776 and set up camp at Brooklyn Heights. That was a bit to the west of our family on Long Island. It is likely that those so inclined would be eager to contribute in the most useful way. Washington had come to New York following a successful siege that drove the British

out of Boston. However, the British fleet that had withdrawn from there on March 17, 1776, temporarily to drop anchor in Halifax, Nova Scotia, was to be joined for the battle of New York by a larger fleet with thousands of fresh reinforcements and supplies from England. The outcome for the Americans was never in doubt.

Having landed an overwhelming army on Staten Island, and given that the rebel forces lacked a navy of any consequence, the transport of Lord Howe's forces to Long Island, west of our grandparents but east of and behind Washington's lines, was relatively straightforward. Once the battle was engaged, in effect from the rear, the coming triumph of the English was obvious, the key remaining question was simply whether or not Washington could escape with a sufficient force to make future execution of the rebellion credible. The story is often told of a beneficial fog plus British negligence that allowed the patriot army to escape across the East River in the dark of night, moving successively up Manhattan and then later to encamp in White Plains. The heart of the war would be fought in and around the Hudson Valley, New Jersey, and – most consequentially – at Saratoga, the most decisive of all American victories in the war.

During those movements, however, Washington needed reliable intelligence about the strength, fortification, and movements of the British in and around New York. Agents of various stripes, reliability, and background were enlisted through cajolery, bribery, and patriotism. Much is made in the school books of the bravery of Nathan Hale, the young graduate of Yale who gained no military intelligence of worth nor transmitted any messages back, but did face the gallows with guts, and did indeed utter the memorable words, recorded by a British officer: "I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country." Given his inexpertise and unsuccess, it is not clear what a few more such lives would have done for the country.¹² But his example may have raised the spirits of otherwise forlorn adherents to the rebellion's cause.

The problem for the Americans as well as the British was that Long Island and the Hudson Valley were rife with both patriot and Tory spies, a fact that reflected the division of loyalty among the population at large. Some spies on both sides managed to conduct their daring work throughout the war, in spite of constant threat of betrayal and apprehension. As the brief narrative about Grandfather Will above notes, his spying activities led ultimately to his betrayal and the need to escape on short notice.

Will Roe was almost certainly a part of the *Culper* ring of Long Island spies, operating along the coast somewhat east of the main British concentrations. There was no Mr. *Culper*, but the title was used as a pseudonym. Their job was to gather information on British circumstances by whatever means were convenient, and to collect it together at various meeting places. From there notes would be shipped across the Sound into

¹² The full story is elegantly related, in all its tragic detail, in John Bakeless, *Turncoats, Traitors & Heroes*, 1959 (Reprinted by De Capo Press, New York, 1998), Chapter VIII.

Connecticut, around the British and onward to General Washington and his officers, first on Manhattan, later in White Plains, and still later on down through New Jersey.

So far, I have not found other records detailing Grandfather Will's role as a spy. He was a shoemaker in the small village of Laddington, a bit west of Oyster Bay, near the coast, which provided ample coves and inlets for hiding small craft. He had the perfect setup.. The shoemaker worked in the front room of his shop, usually with living quarters behind or above. His workshop was a gathering place for people passing through the village, as well as locals who might stop to smoke a pipe and exchange neighborhood news and gossip. The aroma of pipes and leather and the tapping of the hammer would make for social ease and congenial conversation. Strangers would frequently stop by for a quick repair. Thus a shoemaker was well-situated for gathering information and passing it on. If nothing more, his shop was a good drop point.

Grandfather's career as a spy was relatively long as those things went, lasting over a year before he was forced to flee for his life and join his compatriots in Captain Josiah Smith's Queens Militia. Each side in the conflict hanged the other's captured spies, after a quick trial beneath the tree. The time between discovering that he had been betrayed and his departure, probably by boat across the Sound, would have been painfully short. What fear, love, and tears must have been shared between our grandparents during that hurried goodbye.

To date, I have yet to explore the sources that might tell us where the Queens unit fought or what service Grandfather Will performed. Most of the American forces were on the move enough and their provisions sufficiently limited that I would surmise there was a steady supply of shoes needing repair, probably in imaginative ways. But in times of battle, everyone fought. So must our grandfather have done.

It is probably a toss-up whether he was more anxious about his own survival or that of his young family back on Long Island. When he left in the fall of '77, Mary was in the early weeks of pregnancy with her 6th child, Daniel. The other children were Sarah (Sallie), 10; Elizabeth, 8; Charles (our ancestor), 6; John, 4; and Jacob, 1 ½. Mary was 34 when her husband was betrayed and had to flee. He was 38.

Life on the Island was harsh after the British occupation in '76. It became harsher with the passage of time, as crops and animals were confiscated to sustain the large British force. The normal economy ceased to function due to the fact that most of the potential breadwinners were off at war. Will was the youngest of ten children of John (b. about 1694; d. 1772) and Elizabeth (Siex) Roe (b. unknown; d. about 1760). As both his parents were dead, and most likely Mary's were as well, she and the children were aided, as was ever the case in such circumstances, by the extended family. Further, each family, even though they may have had a craft, maintained sufficient land to provide the family

with basic nutritional necessities. How rigorously the British were in extorting garden produce, chickens, and such is not known.

It is known that the Long Islanders suffered terribly. Throughout the war, many sought refuge in Connecticut, a short distance across the water (if one could evade British interception). However, there were also opportunities provided under the flag of truce, as was the case in 1782, well near the end of the war, when Grandfather Will was able to come across and retrieve his family, transplanting them to a refugee camp in Connecticut. Conditions there were harsh, with the local people resenting the disruption and economic drain created by the refugees.¹³ However, even the refugee camps and the short rations available there were better than the cumulative depredations of British occupation on Long Island. We will never know the hardships and humiliations that Grandmother Mary Roe and her children must have suffered in those times. In the case of Mary Roe and her (now) six children, it was blessedly a relatively short stay. Even so, she must have been worried sick, since all communication had stopped from her patriot husband. Only later would she learn that he had been captured by Hessian mercenaries, fighting alongside the British.¹⁴

Will was probably much better off in Hessian than in British captivity. Many of the New York area prisoners of war taken by the British were confined on disused, rotting wooden ship hulks anchored in various waters around the area. They were disease and vermin infested death traps. Many prisoners preferred death at the hands of the guards or by drowning to continued suffering under such conditions – conditions often made even worse by sadistic guards, who probably viewed such duty as itself a form of humiliation, only relieved by cruelty to their miserable charges.

Two factors were in Grandfather's favor. First, the Hessians were rather more civilized and relaxed about their prisoners. And second, by the time of his capture, all but the formalities of the war were over. Under pressure from the fortunate American army and the talented French navy, England's General Cornwallis had surrendered at Yorktown, Virginia the previous fall. But, contrary to popular impressions, that surrender was not the same as nationwide capitulation. There were further skirmishes in the Carolinas, as well as border clashes in the Ohio Valley. Otherwise, most action did cease after Yorktown, but units stayed in place while messages passed to England and back ordering that they move out or be disbanded, with the terms of complete withdrawal, prisoner exchange, boundary lines, and other details awaiting the word from Franklin and his

¹³ Frederic Gregory Mather, *The Refugees of 1776 from Long Island to Connecticut* (Albany, NY: J. B. Lyon Co., 1913)

¹⁴ From the German State of Hesse, capitol of which is Darmstadt. Interestingly, my grandfather Ira's grandfather, Georg Hofferbert, would migrate from Darmstadt, Hesse about 75 years after the American Revolution. His is a story that will be included in a later letter, dealing with Grandfather Ira's ancestors.

team of negotiators in Paris. The Treaty of Paris was negotiated finally in 1783, but not officially ratified by both sides until the following year.

Thus, to date, I have not been able to discover how long Will Roe was in captivity or when, specifically, he returned to his family. Further, I am not sure whether the family returned to Long Island before he came home, or if he came to Connecticut to escort his brood back to Laddington. We can be sure, however, that they returned to a bleak sight.

Their comfortable lives had been utterly disrupted. Farms and other productive enterprises had been exploited or ignored for several years. The pleasures of English village life enjoyed before the rebellion were lost. The new nation was to remain in a state of severe economic depression until after the Constitution replaced the Articles of Confederation, half a dozen years later. For some, the burden of rebuilding was more than they could bear, especially in the face of a tempting alternative.

What was that alternative? Free land in Kentucky!

Leaving Civilization Behind: From Long Island to Kentucky.

The Kentucky of the mid-1780s was not exactly a land of sweet bluegrass pastures, sleek horses, and smooth whiskey. But, as a veteran of the war, our Grandfather was entitled to a substantial parcel of land.¹⁵ Thus did Will and Mary Roe, after years of anguish and separation, leave the place where their families had lived comfortable, secure lives for the previous century. They set out by wagon for the small river town formerly known as Fort Duquesne, but more recently re-named Pittsburgh, honoring the founder of the Quaker State. From the confluence of the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers, they would either buy or build a flatboat to carry them, their six small children, and their meager goods for the few days float down the mighty Ohio to the wilderness of Kentucky.

In the years between the French and Indian War and the Revolution, Kentucky had been a killing field. Undaunted Scotch-Irish had defied the British ban on trans-Appalachian settlement and had challenged the native red men for the land. And one more chapter would be written in one of the great unavoidable tragedies of history. The iron age confronted the stone age, with inevitable results. But those results did not come without substantial loss of blood and life on both sides.

¹⁵ I have not yet been able to put together much detail about 18th century settlement in Kentucky, let alone specifics on our grandparents. I am not even sure how large a parcel was allocated to the veterans. I believe, but need to verify, that a sergeant would have been allocated 320 acres, that is, half a section. However, I do not know how far actual surveying had proceeded, or to what extent clear titles were assigned to the migrants. A trip to Maysville is on my agenda for the near future.

In the midst of the Revolution, and a quarter century before his brother William joined Meriwether Lewis on their journey to the great northwest, Colonel George Rogers Clark was dispatched from Virginia to “Kaintuck” with orders to pacify the Indians and to separate them from their erstwhile English allies. Somehow the Indians managed consistently to choose the losing side – first the French in the 1750s and then the English in the 1770s. Clark was stunningly successful, nearly eliminating any enduring threat to settlers from the indigenous population. The Shawnee, who made up the major part of the Ohio Valley Indian population, were successively shoved into and out of Ohio, and into and out of Indiana. Our family followed regularly in the wake of these removals.

So the Roe family arrived in the Ohio valley with despair for their past, little more than a gang of kids and some tentative hope for their present, and apprehension for their future. The people then there and coming later brought a very different cultural background. And eventually, by simple weight of numbers, the others would have a much stronger impact on Kentucky, and probably on our family, than did the Long Island tradition of the Roes.

Through the Cumberland Gap to the southeast came wave upon wave of disappointed Scotch-Irish near-nomads. In the mid-17th Century, these loosely Presbyterian Protestants from disputed domains of the Scottish-English borderlands had been persuaded (through varying combinations of carrots and sticks by Oliver Cromwell’s short-lived Puritan Commonwealth) to relocate in what is now Northern Ireland. They left behind in the borderlands centuries of dislocation and conflict between Scottish and English armies, roving bands, and petty tyrants.¹⁶

The so-called Scotch-Irish may have left behind those unfortunate conditions when they abandoned England and Scotland, but they found themselves disappointedly locked into a feudal system in the north part of Ireland that offered little hope for improvement. Thus, the North American option, clearly a reality in the early 18th Century, with cheap passage and the promise of free, fertile land, pulled them across the sea.

They settled in western Pennsylvania, and spread on down the Shenandoah Valley into the western Carolinas. Alas, the situation was still hardly sufficient to civilize and calm a people accustomed to incivility and violence. In particular, their efforts to grow cash crops on small farms through their own efforts were thwarted by the insurmountable economic competition from slave labor in the tidewater, just across the mountains to the east. Not an accident, therefore that these folks, once relocated in Kentucky, Ohio, and Indiana were hostile toward the extension of the “peculiar institution” of black slavery.

¹⁶ For a magnificent analysis and description of these unfortunate relics of history’s perfidy, see Fischer’s *Albion’s Seed* (note #5 above), especially the chapter “Borderlands to the Backcountry: The Flight From North Britain, 1717-1775.”

The fuller story of your Scotch-Irish ancestor (heavily represented on my Mother's side), however, must await more research. What matters here is that the loose cultural strain into which Will and Mary brought their children in the mid-1780s was alien to that which they had enjoyed in the pre-war years on Long Island. And the kids, now 18 down to 7 years old, would be far more influenced by the wild and woolly hillbillies from the Carolinas, Tennessee, and western Virginia than by their own Long Island heritage. (a seventh child, Catherine, would be born around the time of the Roe exodus.)

Each of the next three generations of your grandparents would successively take to the wilderness themselves, often many times in each generation.

Enduring Cultural Effects

Will and Mary's third child, Charles (your 5th great grandfather), is described as follows in the Torry volume:

CHARLES ROE, born Sept. 27, 1771. Probably in Oyster Bay Township, Long Island; married Feb. 10, 1794, Barsheba Watson, Daughter of Michael and Mary (_____) Watson, then of Mason County, Kentucky. She was born Mar. 23, 1778, in Maryland. They settled on a farm in Mason County, KY., which they bought of George Stockton.

About 1805 they removed to Montgomery County, Ohio, and settled in or near Dayton. In 1806 Charles Roe is mentioned as one of the leading men in the Baptist Society at Dayton. August 23, 1815, he sold his farm and removed to Wayne County, Indiana. He bought land north of South Bend, in St. Joseph County, Ind., Aug. 10, 1833, and resided there until his death, Aug. 18, 1838. His wife died Aug. 13, 1838. They were buried on their farm."

So Grandfather Charles Roe found a lass from Maryland who may or may not have been Scotch-Irish, although "Watson" would seem to qualify. Unfortunately, genealogical research often yields results that are *de facto* sexist, even though the intent is not there. Land was held in former times in the name of the man of the house. Deeds, wills, public registries, voting lists, military records which constitute much of the evidence in genealogical research, are nearly always recorded in the names of men. It is an unusual happenstance that the bit of family history I am writing here actually benefits from data concerning a female line – my grandmother and her mother (not to mention that our descent from the family of Governor Winthrop is matrilineal). Thus, at this point, I know nothing more about your 5th great grandmother Barsheba Watson than what is contained in the cryptic entry cited above. I will work on it, however.

We may presume from snippets of information in the record of Will and Mary Roe in Kentucky that they must have worked very hard and seem to have prospered. Although we do not have a probated will, we have evidence that Grandfather Will became a respected and responsible citizen. The note from Torry quoted earlier, indicates he may have become an auctioneer and a constable. He was a responsible citizen, active in founding Mason County. I found elsewhere a listing of him as a clerk in some minor judicial proceeding. Though he may have taken up again his former craft as a shoemaker,

it seems unlikely. More likely, given the ownership of five slaves, he probably was engaged in raising tobacco.¹⁷ Whatever prosperity he and Grandmother Mary may have enjoyed in the latter half of their lives, however, did not anchor their children to a new form of settled comfort. Only one of the seven children (Jacob, the fifth child) would finish out his days in Kentucky. Once pulled up, our roots seem never again to have taken permanent hold of the ground.

Grandfather Harrison Roe (1813-1884 – Charles and Barsheba’s son) was born in Mason County, Kentucky. He then established farms successively in:

Wayne County, Indiana (2 farms)
 Grant County, Indiana
 Delaware County, Indiana
 Howard County, Indiana
 (Back to) Delaware County, Indiana
 (Back to) Howard County, Indiana

Concluding Reflections

When I think back to 1962 when I finished my Ph.D. in Bloomington, Indiana and your Mother and I made the move to my first academic job at Williams College in Williamstown, Massachusetts, I remember our trepidation at entering “eastern” culture (remember, we were only 25). The feeling was justified. We were treated kindly, with a certain tad of paternalism, being rather interesting oddities. Never could we complain, however, about the hospitality we received in Williamstown. But there was a definite difference between *us* and *them*. Their sense of rootedness is a distinct cultural history was apparent in everyday life. The Political Science Department had four Harvard PhDs, two Yales, one Cambridge (England), and one Hoosier. Think about that.

The difference between the culture we brought with us and the one that welcomed us to Massachusetts was profound. Yet, in a way, we were finishing a circle started 300 years or so earlier, when our ancestors dissented from the constraints of the Puritan Commonwealth and sought refuge on the fertile soil of Long Island. We hastened the closure of the circle that had been most profoundly broken when the ravages of the

¹⁷ The ownership of slaves would not have been unfamiliar to the Roes of Kentucky. Eighteenth century Long Island had had the largest concentration of slaves outside the South. David Roe, the first entrant in the Torry volume, held two slaves. “Sam” and “Hannah”, who were part of his estate, as noted in his will, printed by Torry. Incidentally, David Roe’s farm in 1665 was on what was then called “Roe Cove,” subsequently named “Powell Cove.” The land is now occupied by the south entrance ramp of the Whitestone Bridge.

Revolution led Will and Mary Roe, your great great great great great great grandparents to set out for the wilderness of Kentucky. The break was further affirmed by the restlessness of their children and children's children as they leveled the woods of Ohio and Indiana, settling at last – now thoroughly adapted to the frontier -- in and around what would become Grant and Howard Counties. The cultural scales of the East and the legacy of the American Revolution were finally shed. The log cabin birth was the norm for the next three generation. Houses comparable to the Long Island settlements of a hundred years earlier were yet to come.

There was bravery and hardship in those generations of wanderers. What remained, and what you both still have within you, is a strange strain of restlessness. To bring the point home, count how many residences you have occupied over each of your lives – in how many states and countries. No moss gathered by us.

Love

Dad