**When We Were English**,

Additional Family English Research in 2011

As I have written in earlier posts, in the spring of 2010, my wife and I did considerable research on the Holyman family in the Tring, Herfortshire and Cuddington, Buckinghamshire areas of England. The two villages are approximately a dozen miles or so apart, and in the 15, 16 and 17th Centuries contained families named Holliman (Holyman, etc.).

As described several of these Holymans became prominent; one The Rt. Rev. John Holyman (1495 – 1558) was the Roman Catholic Bishop of Bristol, England and was caught up in the English Counter Reformation. Another Holyman, Ezekiel, a great nephew of Bishop Holyman, ironically helped found the Baptist Church in Rhode Island.

Additional research by cousins in the States in 2010 revealed parish records of St. Mary’s in Bedford, Bedfordshire, England that registered a Holliman family that in the early 1600s gave birth to children named, among others, Christopher (b 1618) and Judith ( b 1621)). Two persons with these names migrated to Jamestown, Virginia in 1650.

Judith disappears to history (probably married to one of the surplus males in the colony) and Christopher to marry, have six children and prosper financially. He left a plantation of 1,020 acres at his death in 1691, and is credited with being the founder of all the Hollimans and various spellings in the now United States.

**Return to England**

So in the spring of 2011, my wife and I sailed to England to research further the Holliman family (with its various spellings).

In addition to American cousins doing considerable research, we have been assisted by a family researcher in Bedfordshire, one Peter Smith, seen above in the photo with the author in May 2011. We are reviewing materials over lunch at the Swan Hotel in Bedford.

He had not found (nor did I) Holymans in Bedford before the 1609 marriage of Thomas Holyman, and the subsequent birth of his children.

Peter, in his research, however, had found a John Holman born 1560 in Woburn, Bedfordshire, approximately 15 miles south of Bedford and 15 miles north of Tring, Hertfordshire. This John married early – 1575, but no wife is named.

While young, it may have been a required marriage as one Thomas Holiman was born in Woburn in 1576. Two other children are recorded of that marriage – Robert, b 1581 and Joan, 1586, both born in Woburn. Hmmm…..interesting. Could this Thomas be Christopher Holyman, Sr.’s father?

**Are We Bedfordshire Holymans?**

According to parish records, Thomas Holiman of Bedford, who may or may not have been born fifteen or so miles south in Woburn, my generation’s probable 8th great grandfather, married at St. Peter’s Church in Bedford in 1609 to Helenara Poynard. Roger Smith suggests the name Helena might be Eleanor, and Poynard, which is not yet found in other Bedford records, may be P’nard or Peynard. Spellings were not yet ‘settled’ nor is the handwriting of parish administrators always litigable.

Again according to parish records, this couple had the following children, all baptized at St. Mary’s Church in south Bedford, two blocks from the River Great Ouse (a wonderful name!).

John, b 1610 (was he named after a grandfather?)

Eleanor, b and d 1612 (may have been named after her mother)

Joan, b 1613

Thomas, b 1616 (named after his father)

Christopher, b 1618 (the believed to be emigrant to Jamestown, Virginia in 1650)

Judith, b 1621 (the believed to be emigrant to Jamestown, Virginia in 1650)

Eleanor, b 1625 (named after her mother and deceased sister)

Stephen, b 1625

Mary, b 1628

As discussed in earlier articles, a John Holiman died in Virginia in 1650, and a Thomas Holiman took possession of land at Martin’s Hundred, Virginia in 1636. Are John and Thomas from this same family, and is this the encouragement that led to Christopher and Judith to leave for Jamestown, Virginia?

Encouragement Christopher and Judith undoubtedly had, but the 1636 Thomas in Virginia is most probably not the off spring of Thomas who married in 1609. Parish records indicate a Thomas Holiman married in 1639 at St. Paul’s, Bedford, and my guess this is the second son of the 1609 marriage.

***Next posting….a visit to Woburn and the Heritage Center there***.

**ARE WE WOBURN, BEDFORDSHIRE HOLLIMANS?**

Woburn is the home of the Dukes of Bedford, whose families have occupied the Abby there since the 1500s when Henry VIII dissolved the monasteries. For centuries the village was a staging station for travelers moving north and south from and to London, approximately 40 miles to the south.

The name Holman concerns me. In other shires, Holyman is plainly written, as it is in Bedford St. Mary’s parish records. One grants handwriting is often a guess as many of the parish clerks were near illiterate in the late 1500s and letter formation had not yet finalized as it is in today’s English script.

Photographed below is an index of Woburn parish records located in the Heritage Center. In 1538, Henry VIII’s chancellor, Thomas Cromwell, required all church’s to record all baptisms, marriages and burials. This Cromwell helped convict Anne Boleyn of treason that led to her beheading. Later Chancellor Cromwell lost his head to Henry’s bad temper!

In these Woburn records, one will find a host of Holmans and Hollmans but that middle vowel is always missing, no ‘i’, ‘e’ , ‘o’ or ‘y’. Hmmm….There are numerous families whose head of households were named Robert, John, William and Thomas. There is even one Judith Holman, baptized February 16, 1609, daughter of Kath Holman and Henry Dally….hmmmm….born evidently out of wedlock.

Yes, there is a Thomas Holman, son of Jn Holman, baptized March 4, 1576, but nary a Christopher born, married or died in Woburn between 1567 and 1670. But if Thomas moved to Bedford, married and had his children, one would not expect to discover such in Woburn. So Woburn cannot be ruled out totally even though the name does not quite match.

***Let’s go back to Bedford and search some more.***

**A LOOK DEEP INTO THE BEDFORDSHIRE ARCHIVES**

With the help of Peter Smith, we explored the Bedfordshire, England Archives. In addition to reading microfilm of 17th Century parish records, the archivists open the files of the almost 400 year old Bishop’s Transcripts (copies held by the dioceses of parish records). I held the transcripts and viewed the names of Christopher and Judith Holyman, born in 1618 and 1621. The father’s name is given as Thomas.

If there be any question about the authenticity of these two persons, that is put to rest. This Christopher was born in Bedford, not Tring, Hertfordshire nor St. Kitt’s in the Caribbean as some earlier Holliman researchers have suggested. Sorry, I have never found a Christopher born in Tring nor seen evidence of a St. Kitt’s birth. Bedford records, I have held in my own hands.

Is this then truly the Christopher who sailed to Jamestown and inhabited the Isle of Wight County? Were there other Christopher’s in England at this time? Can we find more evidence to support the Bedford thesis?

Can we find the father of Thomas Holyman who married in 1609 and sired Christopher Holyman, born 1618?

***Let’s keep looking….***

**ARE WE WORCESTERSHIRE HOLLIMANS?**

Cousin Jeanette Holiman Stewart pointed out in 2010 that there were numerous Hollymans living in Worcestershire, England in the 1500 and 1600s, according to the International Genealogical Index.

Could one of these Holymans be the origin of our Christopher Holyman, Sr, founder of the American family?

Could one be Thomas or John Holiman who lived in Virginia in 1636 and 1650 respectively? Or other Hollymans who appeared in the 1650s and 1660s?

Worcester is located 40 miles or so east by northeast from our cottage near Stow in the Wold, so we took a day and motored over to the Family Heritage Center there. Oh, yes, many Hollimans lived in Worcestershire in previous centuries! Was our Christopher amongst them? Would we find evidence that this area, 80 or so miles west of Buckingham and Bedford Shires, could be the origin of the American Hollimans.

First I looked in *Wills and Administrations* , *Volume 1, 1451 – 1600* by the Worcestershire Historical Society, 1904. These names are indexed for wills as follows:

1541 – Richard Holyman, Sturbridge.

1553 – Thomas Holyman, the elder, Lye. (Leigh).

1558 – Elizabeth Holyman, Lyghe (Leigh).

1575 – Hufrey Holyma(n), Blakesall, Wolverley.

1582 – Thomas Holyman(n), Woluley (Wolverley), a M. bond to Alice Stower.

1593 – Thomas Holliman, husbandman, Lyghe (Leigh).

1596, Nov. 23 –William Holliman, victualer, St. Peter’s, Worcester.

1597, Feb. 13 – Thomas Holliman, husbandman, Leigh.

Then from *Wills and Administrations, Probate Registry of Worcester, 1601 – 1652,* one finds:

1607 – Roger Hollyman, labourer, Kidderminister.

1608 – Thomas Holliman, husbandman, Leigh.

1610 – John Holliman, Purshullgreene.

1611 – Humfrey Holleymon, yeoman, Wolverley.

1614 – Ann Hollyman, widow, Leigh.

1627 – Samuel Hollyman, Wolverly.

1629 – Francis Holliman, Chadisley (Chaddesley) Corbertt, a scythesmith left a total of 82 pounds (A sizeable sum in the 17th Century. A scythesmith was a metalworker.)

1642 – Richard Hollyman, yeoman, Leigh.

And finally from the *Calendar of Wills and Administrations of the Consistory Court of the Bishop of Worchester, 1661 – 1699*, we have more names:

1672, Aug. 21, John Hollyman, Bromsgrove.

1687, May 9 – Hugh Hollyman, Leigh.

1691, Aug. 7, Thomas Holliman, Bromsgrove.

As my research time was limited, I cannot say that a Judith and Christopher Holyman or other Virginia Holymans did not come from Worcester. Additional hours must be dedicated to reading the microfilm of each will (looking for names) and parish records, as no parish index exists for Worcestershire (sigh…). Only then will be able to rule out or welcome Worcestershire as the ancestral home of some of the Hollimans. So much more work to be done.

BUT no name of Christopher or Judith leaped out as such as surfaced in Bedford, England. So for now, I still favor the Bedford Holymans as the origin of our Virginia family.

A closing thought – the Severn River runs south from Worcester into the Bristol Channel. Bristol, we are told by historians, was the chief port for English relocating to the American colonies. So if one wanted to immigrate to America, Worcestershire would be a convenient location from which to begin an odyssey to the New World.

Therefore as a note of interest, as Christopher and Judith Holyman were transported to Virginia in 1650 sponsored by a man named Cox, I found this recording in “*The Complete Book of Emigrants, 1607-1660”* by Peter Wilson Coldham, Baltimore, Genealogical Publishing, 1987:

“April 9, 1650 – Sir Henry Chicheley to be released and allowed to pass to Virginia on the usual security . Pass also for Thomas Cox and Robert Pigge to go to Virginia.”

**ARE WE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE HOLLIMANS ALSO?**

As one recalls in 2010, I began my research in Hertfordshire before discovering the Holyman 15th Century farm in Cuddington, Buckinghamshire. So in June 2011, after exploring the Shire Archives in Bedford and Worcester, with the help of Peter Smith, delved into the Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire Archives. And there, I found a treasure!

A look at the Buckinghamshire Probate Records wills index revealed a plethora of Holliman names. Unfortunately, the wills are not printed out but must be viewed in the original one at a time. Here are their names. Note the ones from Cuddington, the home of the former Holyman Farm and manor house.

1521 – John Holyman, Cuddington.

1525 – Joan Holyman, Chesham, Leicester.

1525 – John Holyman, Chesham.

1525 – William Holyman, Chesham.

1533 – John Holyman, husbandman, Cuddington.

1545 – William Holyman, husbandman, Cuddington.

1547 – Elizabeth Holyman, Cuddington.

1557 – William Holliman, husbandman, Cuddington (estate valued at 18 pounds).

1558 – John Holyma(n), husbandman, Cuddington.

1573 – Leonard Holyman, weaver, Cholesbury.

**1589 – Christopher Hollyman, Sherington, testator**. *(Yes, my eyes doubled in size when I spotted this one!)*

1598 – John Holyman, weaver, Cholesbury.

1600 – John Holyman, husbandman, Cuddington

1603 – Francis Holliman, yeoman, Cuddington.

1607 – Richard Holyman, labourer, Haddenham.

1618 – John Holeman, shoemaker, Newport Pagnell.

1623 – Thomas Holliman, the elder, yeoman, Cuddington.

1624 – Joseph Hollyman, Haddenham.

1638 – Roberet Hollyman, yeoman, Cuddington.

1648 – Richard Holyman, yeoman, Haddenham.

I could not look at all of them, but three that seemed to match time, place and name, I explored closely. Now I am not talking about microfilm.

The actual wills were hand carried to me, placed on a pillow so bindings would not break, and then (gasp) with my uncovered but clean fingers, I turned the pages and held in my 21st Century hands a will signed in 1589 by **Christopher Holyman**!!!

Was I holding a document signed by my 9th great grandfather???? Could this be the grandfather of Christopher Holyman, Sr. (1618 – 1691) of Isle of Wight, Virginia? Let me tell you what I found and what it may, repeat, may mean.

1. This Christopher Hollyman lived in Sherington, Buckinghamshire.
2. He had children, whose names I make out to be:
3. John
4. **Thomas, a minor in 1589**
5. Dorothy (?), a minor
6. Ellin, a minor
7. (?) lloy, a minor
8. Ami, a minor

The wife’s name was Margaret. He appointed his brother, Thomas Hollyman, as executor.

Yes, for 4 pounds, 20 pence (about $7) I asked for a copy of the will. It did not reproduce well nor does it fit well on my scanner, so I provide below the closing signature. There you are a signature by an English Christopher Hollyman – chills down my back at this point.

So I race to the parish records to ascertain the baptism records, marriage and burial records of this Hollyman family. Tragedy!! No parish records from Sherington UNTIL 1603. Curses, no way to find out the birth dates of the children.

**What next?**

**ARE WE FROM SHERINGTON, NEAR MILTON KEYNES, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE?**

On a tip from family historian Peter Smith, I ventured to the local history section of the Milton Keynes library, about 15 miles north of Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire. Milton Keynes is a medieval market town that received a planning make over in the 1960s. Now a ‘planned community’ of round abouts and rectangular business plazas, several blocks in length, it does feature plenty of parking even if there be a dreary sameness to its governmental and commercial centre.

Alas, the parish records I sought were still ‘missing’ and after several hours of squinting at microfilm of 17th Century wills, baptisms and burials from 1603 to 1720, I came up with precious few clues on the Holyman family. However, sometimes it is not what one finds, but what one does not find. Evidently, the Holyman family, citizens of Sherington in the late 1500s, did not live there in the 1600s after this 1589 Christopher’s death.

So where did the children go? To Bedford, if they be a second son, such as Thomas Holyman?

Well, as I was about to leave (my parking was expiring), I glanced at the shelf of local parish publications. My eye caught a title – “*Fiefs and Fields* *of a Buckinghamshire Village*” by A.C. Chibnall. The work was published in 1965 by Cambridge University Press of Cambridge. I flipped to the index, not expecting to find anything, when, lo and behold, up popped the names **Christopher Holyman** and **Thomas Holyman**!

On page 178 of the work, I find this: “Two leading inhabitants (of Sherington) Edward Ardes and **Christopher Hollyman**, visited the bishop in 1575 in Buckden to lodge a complaint on rector Henry Barlow, a dissolute fellow.”

Another page over on 179, the author reports **Christopher Hollyman** serving in Queen Elizabeth’s guard and leasing the rectory for 50 pds annum. This Christopher Hollyman (p. 188) died in 1589 after securing more land from his ‘good friend Richard Ardes’ (probable son of Edward Ardes).

Remember in his 1589 will, Christopher Hollyman records a second son, a minor, named Thomas Hollyman. Well, on pages 193 and 194 of Chibnall’s tome, we are told of a grammar school, 6 or 7 miles from Sherington in Lathburg. One of the 14 boys listed as attending in 1695 was a **Thomas Hollyman**! This would make him the right age to be married in 1609 twelve miles away in Bedford!

So let’s play family history detective. Here are the facts and what can be deduced?

1. Christopher, according to family historian Peter Smith of Bedfordshire, was an uncommon first name in the 1500s and 1600s, so locating the name in 1589 is important. In all my research, I have not found it ANY WHERE ELSE.
2. First names are often repeated from one generation to another. Thomas of 1589 and 1595, is he the same Thomas Hollyman who marries in Bedford, Bedfordshire at St. Peter’s in 1609?
3. And the Christopher Holyman born in Bedford in 1618 to Thomas, is he a grandson and named after the 1589 Christopher of Sherington?
4. Sherington is upriver on the Great River Ouse which flows through Bedford, two blocks from St. Mary’s parish where Christopher Holyman, b. 1618, was baptized. Sherington is approximately 12 walking miles from Bedford.
5. We can find no records of Holymans in Sherington parish records (because no records exist prior to 1603, except 1576 and no Hollymans that year) after 1603.
6. No records exist in Bedford prior to 1609 on Hollymans.
7. No records exist in Bedford recording the death of Christopher Holyman, b. 1618, or his sister, Judith, b 1621, in Bedford.
8. In the 1580s, Richard Holyman of Cuddington had real estate dealings with Thomas Tyringham, whose family home was near Sherington. Could a Richard Holyman’s relative be our Christopher Hollyman of 1589 in Sherington? Could this be the tie to the Cuddington Holymans, approximately 30 miles south of Sherington?

Therefore, a scenario can be constructed that Christopher Holyman, Sr. who died Isle of Wight, Virginia in 1691, was the son of Thomas Hollyman, probably born in Sherington, who by 1609 was earning a living in Bedford and married that year at St. Peter’s parish.

And this Thomas, who inherited some property from Christopher Hollyman (will of 1589) is the same Thomas Hollyman who went to grammar school in Lathburg in 1595.

And while more research is needed, this 1589 Christopher Hollyman of Sherington may have moved to the area from the central part of Buckinghamshire, the Cuddington, Tring or Cholesbury area, perhaps being born sometime from 1530 to 1550. Perhaps!

Now who is the Christopher 1589’s father?!!!

**Notwithstanding the significant number of Holliman families in Worcestershire, is this Christopher Hollyman of Sherington, Buckinghamshire the grandfather of the Christopher Holyman who sailed to Virginia in 1650? Have we found my generation’s 9th great grandfather?**