

# Finding the family of Reuben Jepherson of Worcester County, Massachusetts

by Doug Sinclair, © 2019

This article was instigated by a search for the origins of Hiram Jefferson of Concord, New York. The results revealed a New England family about which little has been published. The progenitors are Thomas Jepherson and Susannah Bullard of Douglas, Massachusetts, most of whose descendants into the 19<sup>th</sup> century are relatively easy to trace and will be the subject of a larger project. One exception is Reuben Jepherson of Douglas, who evidently was Hiram's father. His immediate family will be the focus of this article.

Reuben Jepherson and his family lived in the South Gore of Oxford, an unincorporated piece of land now a part of the town of Webster, Massachusetts. The US Federal censuses of 1790 and 1800, include them in the enumerations for Douglas, their home farm being on the border between that town and the South Gore.<sup>2</sup>

Reuben and Mary have ten children who appear in the published Douglas birth records, starting with Anna in 1781 and continuing with Polly, Phila, Reuben, Willis, Thankful, Jephthan, James, Duty and ending with Absalem in 1805.<sup>3</sup> To them can be added Welcome Jepherson, whose death record names Reuben and Mary as his parents.<sup>4</sup>

There are two manuscript versions of the Douglas vital records that predate publication, the first being a transcription and rearrangement of the first (and from appearance, likely original).<sup>5</sup> The latter shows that, as was typical of many New England towns in the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, recorded births tended to appear somewhat randomly or in family groups rather than systematically as the births took place. The first transcription, concurs with the original in saying that Absalem was the son of Reuben's first cousin Aaron Jepherson and his wife Deborah. Apparently an error was made in the second transcription when the records were prepared for publication, saying Abalem was Reuben and Mary's son.

Reuben died on 3 October 1808,<sup>6</sup> leaving his widow to administer his estate.<sup>7</sup> She continued to live in Oxford (South) Gore and eventually married Samuel Kimball of Thompson, Connecticut.<sup>8</sup> The Jepherson property was also bounded by that town. By process of elimination, the female "M. Jepherson" enumerated in Oxford in 1810, must have been

Mary (Joslin) Jepherson. With "M. Jepherson" in 1810 were a girl and a boy under 10. They weren't necessarily Jepherson children, but it's very unlikely Mary would keep two children of that age in her household that weren't her own. Aside from Welcome, she had other children who were alive and, although older than Welcome, were still under-age in 1810. If these two younger children were Mary's, a choice had been made about who would continue to live with her after Reuben's death. It would most logically have been her youngest.

The Thompson, Connecticut, vital records include the marriage of Lydia Jepherson and Amasa Kimball in 1821, both residents of Thompson.<sup>10</sup> Lydia died in 1826 at the age of 24.<sup>11</sup> Amasa was the son of Samuel Kimball by his first wife.<sup>12</sup> No collateral Jepherson family group has been found into which Lydia could be placed as an alternative to Reuben and Mary's, nor were there any other Jephersons found in Thompson or adjacent areas of Oxford and Douglas when Lydia and Amasa married. Although Lydia isn't enumerated with the Kimballs in 1820 (she may have been working out of the house at age 18), it's reasonable to think she was Mary's daughter and was the second youngest child she had with Reuben. With this assumed and being about eight years old in 1810, she could have helped with the younger boy's care and household chores.

Hiram Jefferson of Concord, New York, is said to have been born on 18 June 1807 in Douglas.<sup>13</sup> His birth doesn't appear in any vital records either in published form or in images of the original and transcribed town records. There were clusters of Jephersons/Jeffersons elsewhere in the United States, but the Concord history places his birth in Douglas where most of the Worcester County Jephersons were centered. Again, no collateral Jepherson families could be found as an alternative to Reuben and Mary's in Douglas or elsewhere. Hiram named two of his sons Willis and Welcome, the somewhat unusual names (for the time) of two of Reuben and Mary's children.<sup>14</sup> The 1820 census household of Samuel and Mary (Joslin) Jepherson Kimball includes a male child age 10-14.<sup>15</sup> Samuel had children by a previous wife, but she was too old to be that child's mother. It's possible he was a grandchild. If he was Hiram, being three years old in 1810 and 13 in 1820 fits well as being the boy in Mary's and then Samuel Kimball's households. Mary (Joslin) Jepherson Kimball was born about 1762-1763.<sup>16</sup> If she was Hiram's mother, she was about 45 years old, a normal age for women to have their last child. It was also normal, barring reasons other than fertility, to have a 4 to 5-year gap between the last child and the next younger sibling.

After Duty Jepherson was born in 1798, Welcome, Lydia and Hiram came after, and the town clerk didn't follow up with the Jephersons to include

them in a later batch of birth records. This kind of lapse in vital records was common in Massachusetts before state-wide records were mandated.

Reuben's birth is also unaccounted for in records, but he can assuredly be placed as a child of John and Mary (Hodkins) Jepherson of Douglas. Two records show this. In 1761, probably early in the year, widow Mary Jepherson requested reimbursement from John's estate for expenses "to bring up" two children, one aged two years, three months, and the other six months, to the age of seven.<sup>17</sup> Reuben, the sixteen-year-old son of John ("late of Douglas"), requested a guardian (who resided in Douglas) on 2 June 1774.<sup>18</sup> This Reuben and the oldest child of widow Mary were the same age as Reuben who died in 1808, give or take months, and there are no other John and Reuben Jephersons of their respective generations in records of that area.

John Jepherson was the son of Thomas and Susannah (Bullard) Jeperson/Jepherson. Thomas is the earliest known ancestor of the Worcester County Jephersons. The name "Jeperson" was used in earlier records before appearing as "Jepherson," but the spellings Jeperson, Jepperson, Jepeson, etc., can be found in various records among his descendants into the 19th century, even after they migrated to other parts of the United States. This form is often used among the Danish, but nothing yet has been found to even suggest the origins of Thomas before his marriage in 1714.

### **Genealogical summary**

1. Thomas Jeperson/Jepherson, b. abt. 1690; m. Susannah Bullard, 23 November 1714, Medfield, Suffolk Co., Province of MA Bay,<sup>19</sup> and d. aft. 12 April 1766, prob. Douglas, Worcester Co., Province of MA Bay.<sup>20</sup> Susannah b. 4 January 1692/1693, Medfield to Joseph and Margaret Bullard.<sup>21</sup>
2. John Jepherson, b. 12 August 1733,<sup>22</sup> Uxbridge, Worcester Co., Province of MA Bay; m. Mary Hodkins, intentions recorded 7 October 1757, Uxbridge, d. late 1760, Douglas. Mary m. 2. Nathaniel Emerson, 15 April 1762, Uxbridge.<sup>23</sup>
3. Reuben Jepherson, b. prob. Fall 1758, prob. Uxbridge; m. Mary Joslin, intentions recorded 15 April 1781, Uxbridge;<sup>24</sup> d. 3 October 1808, Oxford Gore, Worcester Co., MA. Mary b. abt. 1762-1763; m. 2. Samuel Kimball, prob. 1816,<sup>25</sup> d. 9 June 1837, Thompson, Windham Co., CT., first wife Phebe d. 9 July 1815, in her 61<sup>st</sup> year.<sup>26</sup>

Children not recorded in Douglas town record births:

4. 10<sup>th</sup> child, Welcome Jepherson, b. March 1800, prob. Oxford Gore;<sup>27</sup> d. 27 September 1867, Uxbridge.<sup>28</sup>

4. (speculative) 11<sup>th</sup> child, Lydia Jepherson, b. abt. 1801-1802, Oxford Gore; married Amasa Kimball, 21 December 1821, Thompson;<sup>29</sup> d. 30 November 1826, Thompson.<sup>30</sup> Amasa was the son of Samuel and Phebe (Burrill) Kimball, b. 14 March 1788, Thompson.<sup>31</sup>

4. (speculative) 12<sup>th</sup> child, Hiram Jepherson/Jefferson, prob. b. 18 June 1807, Oxford Gore;<sup>32</sup> m. (supp.) 1. Matilda Hinman, 2. Deborah Grover, 3. Clarinda Seward, 4. Sarah Ann Bishop. He lived, and likely d. Concord, Erie Co., NY, after moving from MA.

## Notes

1. Reuben Jepherson household, 1790 US Census, Douglas, Worcester, Massachusetts, NARA series M637, roll 4, page 174, image 203; 1800 US Census, same location, NARA series M32, roll 16, page 482, image 488.
2. Worcester Co., MA, deeds 176:387, 183:189.
3. *Vital Records of Douglas, Massachusetts, to the end of the year 1849* (hereafter VRD) (Franklin P. Rice: Worcester, 1906), 40-41.
4. MA State Health Dept., deaths, 204:279, b. Webster, which was incorporated in 1832 from part of Dudley, Oxford and Oxford Gore.
5. "Massachusetts, Town Clerk, Vital and Town Records, 1626-2001," (database online: familysearch.org)
6. Gravestone, Douglas Center Cemetery, age 50, from the photographic database at findagrave.com, site accessed 2 Jan 2016.
7. Worcester Co., MA, probate case 32928. Mary of the "South Gore of Oxford."
8. Oxford, MA, town records, intentions published 30 Nov 1816 between Mrs. Mary Jepherson of South Gore and Saml. Kimball of Thompson, "Massachusetts, Town Clerk Vital and Town Records, 1626-2001," database online, familysearch.org, Worcester, Oxford, "Births, marriage intentions, marriages, deaths 1714-1874," image 236 of original mss page 480. The published Oxford records call her a widow, apparently an inference based on the original. See *Vital Records of Oxford, Massachusetts, to the end of the year 1849* (hereafter VRO) (Franklin P. Rice: Worcester, 1905), 187.
9. M. Jefferson household, 1810 US census, Oxford, Worcester, Massachusetts, NARA roll 22, page 554, image 57.
10. *Connecticut Vital Records to 1870* (hereafter CVR), database online, AmericanAncestors.org (New England Historic Genealogical Society: 2011), images of original typescripts of the Lucius Barnes Barbour Collection, Thompson volume, 46:154.
11. Gravestone, East Thompson Cemetery, from the photographic database at findagrave.com, site accessed 2 Jan 2016.
12. CVR, 46:154.
13. Erasmus Briggs, *History of the original town of Concord*, etc. (Rochester, NY, 1883), 388. The information in this book is specific enough to suppose it was provided

by the family.

14. 1850 US census, Concord, Erie, New York, NARA series M432, roll 500, page 25A.

15. Samuel Kimball household, US Federal Census, 1820, Thompson, Windham, Connecticut, NARA series M33, roll 3, image 326.

16. Gravestone, age 74, East Thompson Cemetery, from the photographic database at findagrave.com, site accessed 2 Jan 2016.

17. Worcester Co., MA, probate case 32928. This document only bears the year it was made. Mary was appointed administrator on 7 Nov 1760, and the next fully dated document in the estate papers is 20 Jan 1761, followed by the inventory on 26 Jan.

18. Ibid, guardianship case #32942.

19. *Vital Records of Medfield, Massachusetts, to the end of the year 1849* (hereafter VRM) (New England Historical and Genealogical Society: Boston, 1903), 150.

20. The earliest dated papers in his estate file are from late 1760. His youngest child was 6 months old in 1761.

21. VRM, 27.

22. *Vital Records of Uxbridge, Massachusetts, to the year 1850* (Boston, 1916), 94.

23. Ibid, 265.

24. Ibid.

25. Intentions published at Oxford 30 Nov 1816, Samuel of Thompson, widow Mary of Douglas (VRO, 1:187).

26. Gravestones, East Thompson Cemetery, from the photographic database at findagrave.com, site accessed 2 Jan 2016.

27. VRD, 39, based on a gravestone in Douglas Center Cemetery that apparently says, or said, he died at age 67 years, 6 months. His municipal death record says age 66 (see note 4).

28. See note 4.

29. CVR, 46:154.

30. Gravestone, East Thompson Cemetery, age 24, from the photographic database at findagrave.com, site accessed 2 Jan 2016. Transcription of this stone in the Hale Collection of newspaper notices and gravestone inscriptions incorrectly gives the year 1823.

31. CVR, 46:154.

32. See note 1, source for full birth date and wives' full names.

