

## **How The Websters Came To America**

**My Family's History**  
by Eugene M. Webster Jr.

(14<sup>th</sup> Generation in America,  
21<sup>st</sup> Generation Webster)

12 July 2008

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## The Websters Of Western New York

July 2008

After my father's death in 1989, I inherited a manuscript written by my grandfather's uncle that portrayed the Webster family tree as he knew it and was, naturally, centered on his branch of the family. At some point the following winter, I scanned the document into my computer and filed the original away. There it has remained until this spring.

When I was growing up, my family was very tight-knit and had always had a great oral tradition with many family stories told at home and much family history discussed at family gatherings (gatherings could be quite large; I have over forty first-cousins between my mother's and my father's families). After the death of my grandfather in 1964, this tight-knit clannish attitude seemed to disintegrate and my immediate family, as well as my extended family, has grown and spread out and now encompasses members in at least a dozen states. Because we lived in a very rural area, with the next nearest family members sixty miles away and a seeming loss of interest in family gatherings, my children heard the stories I knew but were not exposed to the larger family history. With the imminent birth of my sixth grandchild, the decision was made to try to leave to my children a sense of where their family fits into the history of this great nation. I therefore dusted off the manuscript and this project began.

As I began to transcribe the contents of great-uncle Bob's manuscript, I found some minor, and a few major, inaccuracies. One of these stated that Governor John Webster, the first Webster to emigrate from England to America, was a Puritan when, in fact, he was a Congregationalist (about 34% {35 of 102} of the Pilgrims aboard the Mayflower were either from the underground churches in England or were exiles from Holland). There was barely any mention of John's father and absolutely no direct lineage beyond that; just vague references to persons named Webster that had existed in Tudor England.

This is not meant to impugn the massive amount of labor and time Robert Webster invested in this project. In the 1940s and '50s, when this project was originally being researched, a person had to either travel to locales where suspected ancestors had lived and then gain access to documents and histories that might mention family members or correspond with persons knowledgeable about these same documents and locales; a daunting task. He was also a product of the way in which American schools taught European history at the time, which was condescending at best, and completely uncomplimentary in general. Great-uncle Bob started with next to nothing and built an extremely strong family history.

I had a couple of advantages when I started my research; I had both the manuscript as a basis from which to start my work and I had the massive resources available on the internet (no, I did not use ancestry.com). With these resources I was able to research further back into the past for ancestors as well as flesh out ancestors already discovered. As a result, I have traced my family line, unbroken, back to 1404 and I have found mention of Websters in England back to 1273.

This work was meant to trace my direct family line, but now I hope to expand it to include all descendants of my grandfather, George Webster, and then, with luck, it will continue to grow as the family grows.

This is my gift to both my children and my grandchildren

## In The Beginning

Before recorded history, the ancestors of the families who would come to be known as Webster, like other families of pre-Anglo-Saxon origin, lived in huts and caves on the shores of the North Sea in Continental Europe.

As the Angles and the Saxons became stronger and more warlike, they imposed their culture on, and reigned over, neighboring tribes. Eventually they, like the earlier Celts, the Pictish alliance (including the people called by the Romans the Caledonii), and later the Danes, invaded the British Isles. The Picts conquered the eastern part of the country we call Scotland (Caledonia) while the Gaels continued to control Ireland and western Scotland. The Anglo-Saxon alliance drove the Celts to Wales and western England and conquered what was left from the native Britons and called it England (the place of the Angles or "Angle-land"). The Britons offered land to the Jutes (a Germanic people loosely related to the Angles and Saxons) if they would assist in driving out the invaders, but the Jutes seized southeastern coastal areas and joined the Anglo-Saxon alliance.

At this time, individual tribes and clans were small enough that most people were called by a single given or assumed name. Some had a title appended to their names (e.g.: "the king", "the smith", "the woodwright", etc.). There were no family names.

As the population increased, identifying individuals became more and more confusing. There were just too many "Johns", "Williams", "Harrys" etc. It was also becoming increasingly tedious to communicate in that one might possibly need to designate between "Ethelred, King of Wessex" and "Ethelred, Smith of the Hart Clan in Sussex". About 1100 A.D., it became popular to append an added or surname to a person's common name as a means of identification. Some just added -son after their father's name (Johnson, Williamson, Harrison, etc.) while others took family names from the places in which they lived (Kent, Stafford, Wood, etc.), but the most popular source of a family name was from a trade or profession in which the family was engaged (Mason, Miller, Smith, Taylor, etc.).

The family name of Webster is a variant of the occupational name Webb, which originally described the weaver of cloth. Common English usage was gender-specific in this period and the Old English word webbestre denoted a female weaver whereas a male weaver was a webber (just as a baxter is a female baker and a brewster is a female brewer).

There exists some evidence that suggests that the Webster family originated in Flanders, the northern, Dutch-speaking, area of Belgium that was held by the Saxons and Celts during the waning years of the Roman Empire. English surnames of Flemish origin are characterized by a large number of spelling variations. Due to the lack of rules of usage and spelling in medieval English, coupled with the fact that the official court languages were French and Latin (William the Bastard, Duke of Normandy, conquered England in 1066 A.D. and made French the official language), names were rarely spelled consistently. Court officials and church scribes recorded names as they sounded, rather than adhering to specific spelling rules, and people often had their names recorded in several different forms throughout their lives. This is why the spelling of the family name has been Webstre, Webestere, Webbster, Webestere, Webstar and Webster at different times and places.

The Webster family is found chiefly in Yorkshire, Lancashire and the Midlands of northern England as well as the counties of Angus, Aberdeenshire, and Banffshire in Scotland.

## Websters in England

The very earliest mention that can be found of any member of the Webster family is in 1273 in Norfolk, England. Here lived, during the reign of King Edward I (1272 - 1307), John le Webestere. He is recorded in a document called the "Hundred Rolls of Norfolk".

From 1377 to 1399, during the reign of Richard II (1389-1399), there lived in Yorkshire, England, Robertus and Willemus Webester. They were of Scottish descent and held the manor of Lockington.

No proof has been found that these early Websters were ancestors of the Websters of western New York, but there is a chance that some might well be, as they lived in the same area from which the Websters migrated to America.

**John Webster** (born about 1404) is the first person that is known to be the direct ancestor of the Webster family in America. John Webster was a feudal baron who lived in Bolsover, England. He is recorded as:

"in the 12th year of Henry VI (1434) was returned into Chancery among the gentlemen of that County who made oath, in behalf of themselves and their retainers, for the observance of the king's laws ."

Dated 1434

**John II** (born about 1434 in Syston, Lincolnshire England) is his only known son. He married circa 1459, but his wife is unknown.

**William** (1460 – 1538) is his only known child.

**William Webster** of Syston, butcher, became a freeman of Leicester in 1502/3; this enabled him to sell his meat in Leicester without paying a heavy toll. It also laid upon him responsibilities, notably those of fair trading and of contributing a reasonable amount of the borough expenses. His eldest son, John, took up his freedom in 1509/10. He paid the Lay Subsidy in Syston in 1524 and his name appears on the Musters there in 1540.

William Webster married circa 1484, in Cossington, but wife is unknown.

**John** (1485 - before 1558) is William Webster's only known child.

**John Webster** became tenant, under the priory of Ulverscroft, County of Leicester, of a farm in Cossington in 1535, and in 1544 went to court over it. His opponents, Thomas and William Chamberlain (probably his friends - they later were witnesses to the will of Emmett Webster, John's widow), joined him in a collusive suit to secure his title. In 1554 John bought the house and farm. His name appears twice in the churchwardens' accounts: in 1545 he paid rent for a piece of land and in 1549 he held the office of churchwarden.

John married Emmett Welle (circa 1486 - 20 Mar 1557/8) and they had five children.

After his death, sometime before 1558, Emmett married John Smith and had one other son (John Smith).

Children of John and Emmett (Welle) Webster;

William; 1509

**John II**; 1510

Agnes; 1516

Ellen; 1514

Alice; 1512

**John Webster II** appears in the Cossington churchwardens' accounts and is shown paying his mother's legacy, collecting a levy and doing business for the village at Stamford. Stamford is about thirty miles from Cossington and, with a laden wagon on the roads of that time, took three days. Also, Isabell, the "goodwyfe Webster," was responsible for the church's washing.

In 1572 John Webster was taxed 6s/8d for the lay subsidy; his brother William, at Thrussington,

paid twice as much, which suggests that he had received an eldest son's portion from John I. William Webster became a freeman of Leicester, possibly for the second time, in 1576, and he was still living in 1585.

John married Isabell Kythin (born about 1513) and in 1535 they had a son, **John III**.  
John II died 24 June 1575.

**John Webster III** was prosperous businessman; the accounts show that he ranked extra land and that the parish taxed him quite highly. He became an important man in the village and his name appears next after the squire and the parson in the articles of agreement made in 1585.

John III married Isabel Rynzza (born about 1539) about 1558. Isabel died in childbed within a year and he remarried to Alice Olven in 1560.

John III died 11 October 1594.

Children of John III and Alice (Olven) Webster;  
Eme; 8 Aug 1560 - Aug 1560 (Died as Infant)  
Eleanor  
Elizabeth  
**Matthew**; circa 1564  
John  
Margaret  
Humphrey  
Emett; 1573 - 1574/5 (Died as Infant)

**Matthew Webster** married Elizabeth Ashton (born about 1566) in 1587. His father gave one third of his farm to the couple, with the remainder to come to them and their children after his death. Matthew and his father were probably partners before the marriage, for in 1586 they both paid 1s/4d for the tax called "the fifteene."

Matthew Webster died 13 September 1592. His will appears to have been made hurriedly and was witnessed by his father-in-law (John Ashton), the squire and the parson. John III, Matthew's father, died two years later.

Children of Mathew and Elizabeth (Ashton) Webster;  
**John**; 9 Aug 1590  
Faith  
Annis

## The Websters Come To America

### (1st generation in America)

**John Webster**, son of Matthew and Elizabeth (Ashton) Webster, was born 9 August 1590 in Cossington, Leicestershire, England. He grew up a farmer and worked several different properties inherited from his father. On 7 November 1609 he married Agnes Smith (born 29 August 1585) and she brought additional lands inherited from her father to the marriage. She was the only child of Robert and Agnes Julocke (Wraske) Smith and was 5 years older than her husband. John Webster (a Congregationalist) was an active member of All Saints Church in Cossington where he held the office of Churchwarden in 1618 and 1630.

John sold all of their holdings in Cossington (three houses one cottage, various small closes, about one hundred acres of arable land, and considerable grazing rights) for £1200 and, on 11 June 1634, sailed to America. The cost of passage for the entire family was £200 and the remaining £1000 made them one of the wealthiest of the migrating families.

The family entered the Massachusetts Bay Colony and settled in the area of Newtowne (now Cambridge), Massachusetts. They left for Suckiaug (now Hartford), Connecticut in 1636 in all probability with his friend Thomas Hooker and his adherents.

John's first public office was as a member of a committee that joined with the Court of Magistrates in determining the course of war with the Pequot Indians. He was a magistrate from 1639 to 1655, Deputy Governor of Connecticut in 1655, Governor of Connecticut in 1656, and first magistrate from 1657 to 1659.

Samuel Stone, leader of the the First Church in Hartford, caused a split among the church members when he declared that the requirement that stated only parents that had both taken communion should be allowed to have a child baptized would be removed, and non-communicants would be allowed to vote. John Webster was a member of a council that found this ruling unacceptable, but Reverend Stone chose to ignore this sentiment, and the issue was taken up with the General Court in Massachusetts. The court ruled that although Reverend Stone had been too strict in ignoring the majority of his parishioners, he was right in liberalizing the baptism ritual and that those who disagreed with the ruling could remove themselves to another location to worship in the way that they saw fit.

In 1659, in response to the court's ruling, John Webster helped build the new community of Hadley, Massachusetts. Two years later, on 5 April 1661, he died from a fever and was buried in Hadley. Agnes (Smith) Webster died in 1667.

Children of Governor John and Agnes (Smith) Webster;

Elizabeth;

m. William Markham, 1658

Matthew; b. before 1616 - July 16, 1675

William; about 1617 - 1688;

m. Mary Reeve, 1617 - 1692

**Robert**; 17 Nov 1619 - 31 May 1676

Mary; b. about 1620 – d. before 1659

Anne; 29 Jul 1621 - 09 Jun 1662

Thomas; b. about 1643 – d. about Oct 1686

## Websters Eventually Migrate To Western NY

### (2nd generation in America)

**Robert Webster**, son of Governor John Webster, was born 17 November 1619 in England and came to America with his parents. He grew up in Hartford, Connecticut, and in 1652 married Susannah Treat (b. 8 October 1629), daughter of Richard and Alice (Gaylord) Treat. A brother of Susannah (Treat) Webster was the Honorable Robert Treat who was the eighth Governor of Connecticut.

Robert was given a commission in the militia and was sent out to wage war on the Indians. As a military title was not taken lightly in those days, and anyone holding one was looked upon with much respect, he was known as Lieutenant Robert Webster for the rest of his life. He also served in the General Court of Connecticut, as did his father. Robert was very active in government and in the church, owned several hundred acres of land, some of it in what is now the heart of the city of Hartford, and was considered a very wealthy man.

Lieutenant Robert Webster died 31 May 1676; Susannah died in 1705.

Children of Lieutenant Robert and Susannah (Treat) Webster;

John; 10 Nov 1653 - 06 Dec 1695

Sarah; June 30 1655 - Feb 1744

**Jonathan**; 09 Jan 1657

Susannah; 26 Oct 1658 - 1688

Samuel; about 1660 - 1 Feb 1743/44

Robert; about 1662 - Feb 1744

Joseph; about 1665 - May 1750

Benjamin; April 1670

William; June 1671 - Jun 1722

Mary; about 1672 - 27 Sep 1706

Elizabeth; Feb 1673/74 - 15 May 1754

### (3rd generation in America)

**Jonathan Webster**, son of Lieutenant Robert and Susannah (Treat) Webster, was born 9 January 1657 at Middletown, Connecticut. He married in 1681, Dorcas Hopkins (1660 - 1695), a daughter of Stephen and Dorcas (Bronson) Hopkins. Both Jonathan (a deacon) and his wife were very active in the church. On 2 January 1696, Deacon Jonathon married his second wife, Mary Judd, and they had one child, Benjamin, born 9 August 1698.

Deacon Jonathan Webster was a merchant in Hartford where he died in 1735, aged seventy eight years. Mary lived beyond that date but the date of her death is not known.

Children of Deacon Jonathan and Dorcas (Hopkins) Webster;

**Jonathan**; 18 Mar 1682

Samuel; 17 Feb 1683/84

Susannah; 25 Apr 1686 - 27 Nov 1757;

m. Thomas Steele Captain 10 May 1709

Mary; 29 Sep 1688

Mehitabel; 8 Mar 1691 - after 1751

Stephen; 1 Jan 1692/93 - 1724



#### (4th generation in America)

**Jonathan Webster**, son of Deacon Jonathan and Dorcas (Hopkins) Webster, was born 18 March 1682. He married in 1704 Esther Judd (b. 1685), daughter of Benjamin and Mary (Lewis) Judd.

Jonathan Webster moved from Hartford to Glastonbury about 1713 and in 1730 was a resident of Wright's Island. He was very active in the buying and selling of real estate and the early records show many transactions connected with him.

Jonathan died 18 September 1758 at the age of 76 years and 6 months. Esther died 22 December 1782 at the age of 97.

Children of Jonathan and Esther (Judd) Webster;

**Jonathan**; 5 Oct 1705 - 14 Nov 1781

Esther; 25 Feb 1708 - 9 Mar 1793

Jemima; 25 Dec 1709 - 1774

Ezekiel; 7 Jun 1712 - 3 Jul 1756;

m. Rebecca Gaines 21 Jan 173

Mehitabel; 20 Oct 1714

Dorcas; 13 Feb 1716;

m. Eliphalet Ensign 12 Feb 1740

Sarah; 13 Jan 1718/19

David; 29 Jan 1720/21

Mary; 8 Nov 1723

Susannah; 28 May 1726

Stephen; 11 Jun 1728

#### (5th generation in America)

**Jonathan Webster**, son of Jonathan and Esther (Judd) Webster was born 5 October, 1705 at Hartford, Connecticut. He married Mabel Risley (b. 1710), daughter of John and Mary (Arnold) Risley of Hartford on 18 February 1730,

He was a miller, owning a grist mill with dam and other buildings on the east side of the Connecticut River between Hartford and Glastonbury, Connecticut (Exact location unknown). He also owned considerable other property as records of land transactions show.

Jonathan served in the French and Indian War in Major Nathan Payson's company, 1st regiment, in 1757. He was also a distant cousin of Noah Webster, the author of our American Dictionary. (Noah was a great, great grandson of Lieutenant Robert Webster of Hartford).

Both Jonathan and his wife died in Glastonbury, Connecticut; she on 2 January 1781 and he on 14 November 1781 age 76 years and one month.

Children of Jonathan and Mabel (Risley) Webster;

Susannah; 1 Jul 1730 - 1 Nov 1736

Ashbel; 2 Mar 1733 - 1 Aug 1801;

m. Rachel Price 1753

Mabel; 29 Jul 1735

Susannah; 21 Sep 1737 - 27 Sep 1755

**Jonathan**; 24 Jan 1739 - 1770

Asiel; 28 Oct 1740 - 1799

Elizur; 30 Sep 1743 - 26 Mar 1791;

m. Ruth Densmore

Mary; 8 May 1745 - 7 Dec 1784

John; 12 May 1747 - 1 Oct 1781

Joshua; 16 Apr 1750;

m. Elleanor Squires 20 Feb 1812;

m. Prudence Smith 14 Jul 1790;  
m. Beriah Risley 19 Nov 1772

### (6th generation in America)

**Jonathan Webster**, son of Jonathan and Mabel (Risley) Webster was born at Glastonbury, Connecticut in January, 1733. He married Agnes Densmore (b. 1735). Like his father, Jonathan Jr., he served in the French and Indian War in the same regiment as his father in 1757. He was then a lad of eighteen years. He died in 1770 at the age of 31.

Children of Jonathan and Agnes (Densmore) Webster;

Abigail; 1759

Anna; 1761 - 29 Jul 1849;

m. Gurdon Woodruff 18 Sep 1778

Mabel; 3 Jun 1763 - 1 Jan 1844;

m. Samuel Fox

Mary; 27 Jan 1765

**Jonathan**; 1767 - 1795

Dorinda; 1769 - 25 Jul 1853;

m. Benjamin Brown

### (7th generation in America)

**Jonathan Webster**, the only son of Jonathan and Agnes (Densmore) Webster, was born 1767 at East Hartford, Connecticut. He married Thankful Keeney (b. February 1770) daughter of Simon and Margaret (Keeney) Keeney.

Jonathan Webster was one of a party of five men who came into the wilderness of Onondaga County, New York, in 1795. They helped found the village of Fabius. He died in the fall of 1795 at the age of 29.

Children of Jonathan and Thankful (Keeney) Webster;

**Jared**; 24 Aug 1788 - 18 Jun 1866

Jemima; 16 Jan 1790 - 01 Mar 1854;

m. Ephriam Bennett (b. 1 Oct 1785)

On 1 May 1806, Thankful remarried to Nathaniel Bacon (1774 - 1836) and they had five children; Candis (1807), Albert G. (1809), Ann (1810), Julia (1812) and, Polly (1815). Thankful died 11 August 1835, at the age of 65 years 6 months. Interestingly her tombstone reads "Thankful Keeney...w/o Nathaniel".

### (8th generation in America)

**Jared Webster**, son of Jonathan and Thankful (Keeney) Webster was born 24 Aug 1788. He married his second cousin, Lydia Webster (b. 29 Dec 1791), daughter of Abijah and Sarah (Warren) Webster. Jared Webster served in the War of 1812 and was called into service from Manlius, New York, into Captain Asel St. Johns' Company, New York Militia.

He was in the New York State Militia and held the rank of sergeant in 1814, but was at Oswego at the time of the "Embargo" in 1809. In 1852 he was a resident of Hornsby, Steuben County, New York. Some time later he moved back to Fabius, where he died 18 Jun 1866. There is no record of Lydia's death.

As an early resident of Fabius, NY, all of his children are believed to have been born there.

Children of Jared and Lydia (Webster) Webster;

Jonathan; 9 Apr 1811;

m. Betsy Ann Searles (b. about 1815)

Clorinda; 7 Nov 1812;

m. Leonard Nichols

**Jared**; 18 Feb 1815

Sophronia; 23 Oct 1819;

m. Halsey Mack

Mary Ann; 16 June 1825;

m. Henry Fero 04 Jul 1843

Ammon Abijah; 15 Nov 1829;

m. Amanda Hendrick 08 Apr 1856

Leonard; 28 Feb 1831;

m. Otelia Lydia Dodge 28 Aug 1870

## Websters Settle In Addison, NY

### (9th generation in America)

**Jared Webster**, son of Jared and Lydia Webster, was born 15 February 1815, He was a farmer, and married Amy Ann Dorrity, daughter of Joseph and Rachel (Kelley) Dorrity, 17 April 1841, in the town of Dryden, Tompkins County, New York. She was born in Dutchess County, New York 19 March 1822. At different times Jared Webster lived in Lansing, NY., Addison, NY, and Hornsby, NY. Jared died 4 November 1887; Amy died in 20 Feb 1909.

Children of Jared and Amy Ann (Dorrity) Webster;

Leonard Nichols; 10 May 1842 - 10 Nov 1862; (served in the Civil War)

Harriet Martha; 17 Aug 1845;

m. George Parsels; m. Van Buren Jones

Julia Ann; 9 Oct 1848 - 1 Jul 1848;

m. Charles A. Butler

Irene Louisa; 30 Mar 1850;

m. Melvin John Lynch 04 Jul 1868

Roseltha Sophronia; 13 Oct 1853 - 13 Jan 1861;

m. George Wickham Congdon 3 Dec 1870

Celinda Bennett; 19 Feb 1855 - 23 Mar 1883;

m. Uriah Burdick

George Bonham; 9 Aug 1858 - 13 Jan 1861

Rachel Jane; 14 Sep 1860 - 8 May 1889;

m. George Blades

**Judson Jared**; 20 Oct 1862 - 1943

Lillie May; 28 May 1865 - 28 May 1865;

m. George Vandarwarka 30 Sep 1883

### (10th generation in America)

**Judson Jared Webster**, son of Jared and Amy Ann (Dorrity) Webster, was born 20 October 1862. He married Effie Eliza Kent (b. 17 August 1865), daughter of Thomas and Harriet C. (Hamilton) Kent, 1 October 1884, at Watkins, Schuyler County, New York. Judson was a farmer in Addison, New York. Effie died 26 February 1924 in Addison, New York and Judson remarried 18 August 1925 to Emma A. (Miller) Jaynes, born about 1866 in Wayne, NY.

Judson Jared Webster died in 1943; there is no record of Emma's death.

Children of Judson Jared and Effie Eliza (Kent) Webster;

Albert Joseph; 19 Sep 1885 - 28 Apr 1899 (drowned)

**Lewis Mortimer**; 17 Jul 1887 - 3 Mar 1937

Anna May; 1 May 1889 - 24 May 1955;

m. Charlie Clinton Houghtaling (10 Nov 1879 - 9 Nov 1971) 30 Jul 1910

Thomas Francis; 26 Mar 1892 - 11 Jan 1926;

m. Nellie Barker

John Henry; 18 Jun 1893 - Jul 1967;

m. Alice Jane Finch 3 Mar 1912; m. Maud Church 4 Jul 1912

Kate Julia; 30 Dec 1896 - 23 Nov 1965 (Kate's twin sister was stillborn);

m. Rush McKinley Lunger 5 Jul 1917

Robert; 20 May 1904 - 7 Mar 1989;

m. Sally Ann Skillman

### **(11th generation in America)**

**Lewis Mortimer Webster**, born 17 July 1887 on the old Webster Homestead on Goodhue Hill, north of Addison, was the second son of Jared and Effie Eliza (Kent) Webster. In early life he was employed at the Park Winton and True Sash and Blind factory in Addison, and the Imperial Engine Works in Painted Post.

In 1908 he engaged in farming and on 28 October 1908 married Ida Mae Sullivan (b. 05 May 1891) at Victor, New York. Lewis farmed until about 1921 when he moved to Shortsville, New York and became an employee of the Lehigh Railroad. He worked there until his death 3 March 1937. Ida Mae (Sullivan) Webster died 1 July 1974.

Children of Lewis Mortimer and Ida Mae (Sullivan) Webster:

**George Judson**; 24 Aug 1910 - 18 Oct 1964

Helen Elaine; 8 Sep 1916 - Feb 1982;

m. Ralph Frank Whittaker (21 Sep 1915 - 8 Sep 1994)

Elizabeth Ann; 25 Aug 1925;

m. Willis Kenneth Penner (16 Nov 1920 - 11 February 2010)

### **(12th generation in America)**

**George Judson Webster**, the first child and only son of Lewis Mortimer and Ida Mae (Sullivan) Webster, was born on the Webster Homestead on Goodhue Hill, Addison, NY on 24 August 1910. He married Concetta Marie Russell (born 12 April 1913) of Palmyra, NY.

George worked at a number of occupations and was a farmer in Palmyra, NY; worked at a paper mill in Shortsville, NY; was a master core maker at Ritter Company, Rochester, NY; and was a brakeman on the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad. He later operated his own roofing and siding business from his home on Names Rd, Chili, NY until his death on 18 October 1964.

Concetta remarried to Gaston Phillip Davias; he died 24 March 1984 and she died 26 March 1990.

Children of George Judson and Concetta Marie (Russell) Webster:

**Eugene Maurice**; 6 Jun 1930 - 18 October 1989

Shirley Mae; 26 Sep 1931 - 19 Jun 1993

m. David Hollins; m. Earl June; m. James Reese

Joyce Ann; 7 Sep 1933

m. Joel Grafley; m. Lee Perry

Dolores Marie; 9 Sep 1938

m. John Torpey

Lewis Mortimer II; 20 June 1939

m. Maryann (Unknown); m. Doris (Unknown);

m. Judy Vonita (Cornett) Hayes (8 Nov 1946 - 3 Apr 2009)

## Descendants of Eugene Webster

### (13th Generation in America)

**Eugene Maurice Webster**, older son of George and Concetta (Russell) Webster, was born 6 June 1930. At 17 He joined the United States Army and, while serving at Fort Dix, he took a furlough to marry Norma Jean Morse (7 Jul 1929 - 20 Jun 1981) on 10 September 1948. Norma was the second child of Ralph A. Morse (24 Jan 1901 - 12 Dec 1971) and Beatrice G. (Lynch) Morse (24 Oct 1906 - 10 Mar 1971).

Apart from working for his father installing roofing and siding for a couple of short periods, he was a machinist for most of his life and specialized in Davenport Multiple Spindle Machine Tools. Eugene was an accomplished musician (guitar and trombone) and also a competent auto-mechanic.

After Norma's death, Eugene remarried to Lisa Cenzi in August 1989; he died 18 October 1989.

Children of Eugene Maurice and Norma Jean (Morse) Webster;

**Eugene Maurice Jr**; 23 Aug 1949

Donna Lee; 31 Jul 1950;

m. Samuel Payne

Daniel Allen; 1 Jul 1951 - 12 Apr 2003;

m. Patricia (Unknown); m. Kelly (Unknown); m. Joan (Unknown)

George Mortimer II; 3 Jul 1952;

m. Rebecca Brink 1976

Lynn Rae; 18 Mar 1954

Edwin Vearl; 7 Jul 1958;

m. Sherry Ruger

Whitney Beth; 31 Jan 1970;

m. Dewitt Collins

### (14th generation in America)

**Eugene Maurice Webster Jr.**, son of Eugene M. and Norma J. (Morse) Webster, was born 23 August 1949.

Gene started work on construction sites at an early age, worked in a print shop (he was trained as a printer in high school) and, before and after the Vietnam War (he served as a Sergeant in the United States Marine Corps), worked as a machinist and as an ironworker and welder. After his marriage on 1 November 1975 to Karen Marie Kellerhouse (b. 28 April 1952 in Peekskill, NY), younger daughter of Stanley Holmes Kellerhouse (16 May 1915 - 8 Jun 1995) and Anna Marie (Keenen) Kellerhouse (19 Aug 1919 - 24 Oct 2004), he returned to the construction trades.

Gene and Karen moved from Rochester, NY, to Prattsburgh, NY, 1 May 1976 where they built a house and eventually began raising a family.

Starting in 1980, and continuing for 19 years (until Jul 1999), Gene operated his general contracting business from their homes in Prattsburgh and, after the blizzard of March 1993, Cohocton, NY. During that time, he also did a brief stint as a tree surgeon and logger. Gene is now employed as a Receiver and Maintenance Supervisor by a Rochester, NY grocery chain.

Karen worked in a photographic studio and then in a department store until 1978 when the mutual decision was made for her to stay at home and begin raising a family. In 1984 she returned to the workforce and worked on a Christmas tree farm, an onion farm, in a grocery store, and as a home health aid engaged in private care. In 1999, after an intensive two month 40 hours per week training course, Karen became a New York State Certified Nursing Assistant. She has since worked for Livingston County at their government operated nursing home, and is currently employed by the Sisters of Mercy at their facility in Hornell, NY.

On 29 December 2005, Gene and Karen bought a small home in Springwater, NY, where they

reside today.

Children of Eugene and Karen (Kellerhouse) Webster;  
**Seth Michael**; 14 Mar 1979  
**Travis Charles**; 28 Dec 1983

**(15th generation in America)**

**Seth Michael Webster**, older son of Eugene and Karen (Kellerhouse) Webster, was born 14 March 1979. He was always a precocious child and seemed to be in a hurry to grow up. Seth learned to walk at eight months of age, learned to talk at eight months, started playing guitar at seven years of age, started playing tenor saxophone at nine years, and, at the age of seventeen, graduated from high school one year early. He then continued this breakneck pace in college where he was elected to Phi Theta Kappa in his first semester and at the end of his second semester was only seven credits short of earning an Associate's Degree.

Seth has worked primarily in the retail trades while pursuing his musical interests in his off hours. At present he is an IT professional for a large Rochester, NY grocery store chain.

Talent and training have led Seth into the Rochester, NY music community. He has played lead guitar for Bad Karma, The Deborah Magone Band, and Heatseeker. He is now the guitarist, songwriter, and arranger for The Dirty Bourbon Blues Band, a popular local blues band.

On 21 August 1999 Seth married Chelsea Kay Cook (born 1 Nov 1979), only daughter of Ronald and Kim (Keenan) Cook; they have one child.

On 18 August 2007 he remarried to Jillian Mary LaFex (born 29 March 1982), older daughter of Steven and Karen (Clements) LaFex. Seth and Jill have two children.

Children of Seth Michael and Chelsea Kay (Cook) Webster;  
**Owen Max**; 1 Jun 2005

Children of Seth Michael and Jillian Mary (LaFex) Webster;  
**Abigail Rose**; 15 Feb 2002  
**Claire Elizabeth**; 7 Jul 2008

**Travis Charles Webster**, younger son of Eugene and Karen (Kellerhouse) Webster, was born 28 December 1983. Although very intelligent, he was an indifferent student; he was however a member of his high school swim team and specialized in the 500 meter freestyle. Travis also trained to be a Nursing Aide at BOCES and received certification from New York State upon graduation from high school.

On 4 August 2002, like his father before him, Travis enlisted in the United States Marine Corps. He served a little more than three years, drove M1A1 Abrams tanks, and reached the rank of Lance Corporal before being discharged with a 50% medical disability.

Travis presently lives in North Cohocton, NY, and has worked as a Home Health Aide, an ARC Aide, and a security professional at the Steuben County Courthouse in Bath, NY. He is now employed in residential construction in the Rochester, NY area.

On 3 August 2005, Travis married Amber Rose Thompson in Jacksonville, NC; they have no children.

On 2 October 2009, Travis remarried to Tiffany Marie Learn of Wayland, NY.

Children of Travis Charles and Tiffany Marie (Learn) Webster;  
**Maige Aurora Learn**; 22 Oct 2004; (father - Anthony Hayward)  
**Caiden Michael**; 3 Nov 2007  
**Alorah Jazelle**; 15 Feb 2009 – 15 Feb 2009  
**Kenzie Mariah**; 22 Feb 2014  
**Garrett Riley**; 16 Jan 2015

Travis also has a son with Sarah Anne Thomas of Rochester, NY;  
**Thomas Caleb Webster**; 5 Dec 2004

With Cynthia Marie Shanks of Livonia, NY, Travis had one other son;  
**Adrian Michael Shanks-Webster**; 5 Nov 2006 - 5 Nov 2006



## **Governor John Webster's Will**

In the Northampton, Mass., Probate Records, pages 20 and 21 is recorded the following instrument, attested as a true copy of the last Will and Testament of Mr. John Webster, late of Hadley, deceased.

"I John Webster late of Hartford in the jurisdiction of Connecticut being weak of body yett sound of mind and having my perfect understanding doe ordayne this to be my last will and testament in manner following—

"Imprimis. I comitt my soule into the hands of the Almighty and most mercifull hoping to be saved by the alone meritts of the Lord Jesus Christ being washed with his blood and clothed with his righteousness and sanctified by the Holy Ghost. Amen.

"My body also I bequeath to ye earth to be interred with comely bureall (if at this time I be taken out of this world) in some part of the New Plantation on ye east side of the river agt Northampton. Moreover my worldly goods wch the Lord hath blessed me with and left me as a father's portion, I bestow as followeth.

"To my Deare and beloved wife Agnes Webster I give one bed and comely furniture for ye same. As also my house and lands in Hartford all the profitts of the same during her natural life. And upon her decease all shall come into the hands and be at ye disposal of my executor.

"Item, to my son Matthew Webster I give the summ of ten pounds.

"Item, to my son William Webster I give the summ of seventy pounds.

"Item, to my son Thomas Webster I give ye summ of fifty pounds.

"Item, to my daughter Marsh I give ye summ of twenty pounds.

"Item, to my daughter Markham I give ye summ of forty pounds.

"To my grandchild Jonathan Hunt I give the summ of forty shillings.

"To my grandchild Mary Hunt I give ye summ of ten pounds.

"To all my grandchildren else in N. England I give ten shillings apiece.

"To Mary the wife of William Holton of Northampton in part of recompence for her great love and paynes for me I give forty shillings.

"To my son Robert Webster I give all the remainder of my estate of one kind and another, whom also I doe appoynt and ordayn to be my sole and full executor of this my last will and testament.

"My will further is that the foresaid legacys should be paid within fifteen months after my decease soe farr as my personall estate (that is all my estate besides houses and lands) will reach and the rest within eighteen months after my wives decease.

"Which of the legacys shall be paid first or how much of them I leave to the discretion and faithfulness of my son Robert desiring yt if there appeare any difference he would in it take, and act by the advise of my loving friends Nathaneell Ward and Andrew Bacon who have beene acquainted with much of my mind herein. Only my just debts I would have first paid before ye legacys as also my funerall expences.

"My lot at the New Plantation with ye accomodations thereunto belonging and I give to my sons William and Thomas upon condition of their inhabiting there as I myself was ingaged to doe wch is also my desire they should -

"And soe doing to have it equally divides between them.

"In witness hereof I have sett to my hand this present 25 of June 1659.

John Webster  
In ye presence of  
John Russell,  
Eleazer Mather

Gov. John Webster's widow, Mrs. Agnes Webster died six years later, probably in Hartford, in the year 1667.

# History of the Congregational Church

(excerpted from the Wikipedia article)

Congregational churches are Protestant Christian churches practicing congregationalist church governance, in which each congregation independently and autonomously runs its own affairs.

Many Congregational churches claim their descent from the original Congregational churches, a family of Protestant denominations formed on a theory of union published by the theologian Robert Browne in 1592 and arising from the Nonconformist religious movement in England during the Puritan reformation. In Great Britain, the early congregationalists were called separatists or independents to distinguish themselves from the similarly Calvinistic Presbyterians, and some congregationalists there still call themselves "Independents".

According to the congregationalist theory of the history of the Christian Church, the early disciples of Jesus had little or no organization. Congregationalists believe that in the centuries after the spread of Christianity, attempts to gain influence over all the churches were made by leaders in centers like Rome, Antioch, Alexandria, Byzantium, and Jerusalem. Typically, congregationalists view this supposed accumulation of power to be complete by the year AD 1000, with the bishop of Rome claiming authority over all Christendom, and many churches throughout the western part of Europe submitted to his authority. The churches of eastern Europe, all of Asia, and Egypt likewise had been gathered under a hierarchy of bishops, but retained their independence from the pope, according to this view.

Congregationalists sympathetically interpret various dissident movements among the western churches, that were suppressed throughout the Middle Ages. By the sixteenth century, political and cultural changes had created a climate in which the Roman church could no longer suppress the protests of men such as John Wycliffe, John Hus, Martin Luther, and John Calvin against alleged church abuses. These reformers advocated a return to the simplicity and sincerity they saw described in the New Testament Church, which congregationalists believe is fulfilled in the congregationalist model of church governance.

There are difficulties in identifying a specific beginning because Congregationalism is more easily identified as a movement than a single denomination, given its distinguishing commitment to the complete autonomy of the local congregation. The idea that each distinct congregation fully constitutes the visible Church can, however, be traced to John Wyclif and the Lollard movement which followed after Wyclif was removed from teaching authority in the Roman Catholic Church.

The early Congregationalists shared with Anabaptist theology the ideal of a pure church, which made adult conversion experience important for full membership in the church, unlike other Reformed churches. As such, the Congregationalists were a reciprocal influence on the Baptists, differing from them in that they counted the children of believers in some sense members of the church unlike the Baptists, because of baptism.

In England, the Roman system of church government was taken over by the king, Henry VIII, who (because he wanted to legitimize his marriage to Anne Boleyn in 1533 after divorcing his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, without the blessing of the Pope in Rome) influenced Parliament to enact the 1st Act of Supremacy in 1534, which declared the reigning sovereign of England to be 'the only supreme head on earth of the Church in England', an act which is in effect to this day. Robert Browne, Henry Barrow, John Greenwood, John Penry, William Brewster, and John Robinson were notable people who, in defiance of royal

command, established churches separate from the Church of England.

With the demise of the monarchy, the Westminster Confession of Faith (1646) was officially declared the statement of faith for both the Church of England (Anglican) and Church of Scotland (Presbyterian). The Congregationalists created their own version of the Westminster Confession called the Savoy Declaration in 1658. The underground churches in England and exiles from Holland provided about 35 out of the 102 passengers on the Mayflower, which sailed from London in July 1620. They became known in history as the Pilgrim Fathers. The early Congregationalists sought to separate themselves from the Anglican church in every possible way and even forwent having church buildings. They met in one another's homes for many years.

The Pilgrims sought to establish at Plymouth Colony a Christian fellowship like that which gathered around Jesus Himself. Congregationalists include the Pilgrims of Plymouth, and the Puritans of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, which were organized in union by The Cambridge Platform in 1648. These settlers had John Cotton as their most influential leader, beginning in 1633. Cotton's writings persuaded the Calvinist theologian John Owen to separate from the Presbyterian church, after which he, among others, became very influential in the development of Congregationalist theology and ideas of church government. Jonathan Edwards, considered by some to be the most important theologian ever produced in America, was also a Congregationalist.

The history of Congregational churches in the United States is closely intertwined with that of American Presbyterianism, especially in New England where Congregationalist influence spilled over into the Presbyterian churches farther west. Some of the first colleges and universities in America, including Harvard, Yale, Dartmouth, Williams, Bowdoin, Middlebury, and Amherst, all were founded by the Congregationalists, as were later Carleton, Grinnell, Oberlin, Beloit, and Pomona.

Without higher courts to ensure doctrinal uniformity among the congregations, Congregationalists have been more diverse than other Reformed churches. Despite the efforts of Calvinists to maintain the dominance of their system, some Congregational churches, especially in the older settlements of New England, gradually developed sentiments toward Arminianism, Unitarianism, Deism, and transcendentalism. By the 1750s, several Congregational preachers were teaching the possibility of universal salvation, an issue that caused considerable conflict among its adherents on the one side and hard-line Calvinists and sympathizers of the First Great Awakening on the other. The first church in America with an openly Unitarian theology was established in Boston, Massachusetts in 1785 (although in a former Anglican parish) and by 1800, all but one Congregational church in Boston had Unitarian preachers teaching the strict unity of God, the subordinate nature of Christ, and salvation by character. Harvard University, founded by Congregationalists, itself became a source of Unitarian training. Eventually, the Unitarian churches, prompted by a controversy over a theological appointment to Harvard, separated from Congregationalism in 1825; most of its descendants now hold membership in the Unitarian Universalist Association, founded in the 1960s by a merger with the theologically-similar Universalists, another group dissenting from Calvinist orthodoxy.

Thus, the Congregational churches were at the same time the first example of the American theocratic ideal and also the seed-bed from which American liberal religion and society arose. Even still, many Congregationalists in the several successor denominations to the original tradition consider themselves to be Reformed first, whether of traditional or neo-orthodox persuasion.

In 1931 the Congregational Churches and the General Convention of the Christian Church, a body from the Restoration Movement tradition of the early 19th century, merged to

form the Congregational Christian Churches. The Congregationalists were used to a more formal, less evangelistic form of worship than the Christian Church members, who mostly came from rural areas of the South and the Midwest. Both groups, however, held to local autonomy and eschewed binding creedal authority.

In the early 20th century, some Congregational (later Congregational Christian) churches took exception to the beginnings of a growth of authority in bodies outside the local church, such as mission societies, national committees, and state conferences. Also, some congregations opposed liberalizing influences that appeared to mitigate traditional views of sin and subsequent corollary doctrines such as the substitutionary atonement of Jesus. In 1948, some adherents of these two streams of thought (primarily the latter one) started a new fellowship, the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference, the first major fellowship to organize outside of the mainstream Congregational body since 1825, when the Unitarians formally founded their own body.

In 1957, the General Council of Congregational Christian Churches in the U.S. merged with the Evangelical and Reformed Church to form the United Church of Christ.

About 90% of the CC congregations affiliated with the General Council joined the United Church of Christ. However, some local churches abstained from the merger. Most of these congregations became members of either the CCCC (mentioned above) or the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches, which came into being as a result of failed protest efforts against the UCC merger, the arguments for which revolved around governance concerns rather than theology; Congregational Christian-heritage churches of all theological persuasions belong to this group, much like the UCC. Still other congregations, not many in number, chose not to affiliate with any particular association of churches, or only with regional or local ones.

#### Notable Independents and Congregationalists

Lady Mary Abney - benefactor to Isaac Watts

Abigail Adams - raised Congregationalist but became Unitarian

John Adams - raised Congregationalist but became Unitarian, second president of the United States

John Quincy Adams - sixth president of the United States

Samuel Adams - early American statesman

James Burrill Angell - longest-serving president of the University of Michigan

Benjamin E. Bates - philanthropist, founder of Bates College

Henry Ward Beecher - clergyman and social reformer

Margaret Wedgwood Benn - first President of the Congregational Federation

Thomas Binney - the Archbishop of Nonconformity

Jonathan Blanchard - pastor, educator, social reformer, abolitionist and the first president of Wheaton College.

Margaret Bondfield - first female Cabinet Minister in the UK

William Bradford - Pilgrim father and Governor of Plymouth Colony

David Brainerd - missionary to the Indians in Massachusetts and in Delaware

William Brewster - clergyman and Pilgrim father

Aaron Burr, Sr. - second president of the College of New Jersey, now Princeton University

Aaron Buzacott - missionary and translator in the South Seas

S. Parkes Cadman - prominent Congregational Christian Churches clergyman and President of the Federal Council of Churches (1924-1928)

George Caird - theologian  
Rev George Collison - theologian and educationalist, active in London  
Missionary Society  
George Collison - son of the above, same name, principal founder of the  
Congregationalists' non-denominational Abney Park Cemetery  
Constance Coltman - first woman ordained by the Congregational Union of  
England and Wales (1917)  
John Campbell - London pastor  
Josiah Conder - London editor and author  
Calvin Coolidge - 30th President of the United States and first honorary  
moderator of the Congregational Christian Churches  
John Cotton - clergyman  
John Curwen - clergyman and music pedagogue  
Francis Crick - Biologist  
Oliver Cromwell - English military leader, politician, and dictator  
Timothy Dewight - president of Yale University  
Walt Disney - animator & entertainment media mogul  
Philip Doddridge - hymn-writer  
Jonathan Edwards - theologian and president of the College of New Jersey, now  
Princeton University and missionary to the Housatonic Indians  
John Eliot - missionary to the Massachusetts Indians  
William Ellis - early missionary to South Sea Islands and notable ethnographic  
author  
Rev. Alexander Fletcher - pioneer of children's services and religious events  
Thomas Hooker - clergyman and founder of Connecticut  
Hubert Humphrey - Vice-President of the United States, 1963-69  
Amy Klobuchar - U.S. Senator from Minnesota  
Eric Liddell - Olympic runner, missionary, focus of film 'Chariots of Fire'  
David Livingstone - missionary and explorer  
Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones - expository preacher and leader in the British  
evangelical movement  
John Lothrop - clergyman  
John Marsh - theologian  
Cotton Mather - clergyman  
Increase Mather - clergyman  
Richard Mather - clergyman  
Rev Dr Medhurst - Translator of the Bible into its first Chinese edition  
John Milton - poet  
Nathaniel Micklem - theologian  
Dwight Lyman Moody - 19th century evangelist, founder of the Northfield  
Schools and the Moody Bible Institute of Chicago, President of the Young  
Men's Christian Association, President of Christian Endeavor  
Paul Moon - History professor and author  
John Morison - London pastor, and editor of 'The Evangelical Magazine and  
Missionary Chronicle'  
Samuel Morley - manufacturer, philanthropist, abolitionist, educationalist and  
English MP  
Barack Obama - U. S. Senator from Illinois and President of the United States  
John Owen - clergyman

James Pierpont - founder of Yale  
Henry Richard - Secretary of the Peace Society and Welsh MP  
Sir Charles Reed - educationalist, politician, open space campaigner, reformer  
and typesetter  
Erik Routley - organist and hymn-writer  
Samuel Ryder - originator of golf's Ryder Cup and garden-seed entrepreneur  
James Sherman (minister) - popular 19th century preacher and abolitionist in  
London  
Roger Sherman - Founding Father of the United States and Deacon in  
Congregational Church New Milford, CT  
Solomon Stoddard - clergyman  
Harriet Beecher Stowe - abolitionist, author of Uncle Tom's Cabin  
Reuben Archer Torrey - evangelist and educator  
Samuel Ringgold Ward - African-American theologian and abolitionist  
Isaac Watts - hymn-writer, theologian and educationalist  
Nathan Webb - pastor, first new Massachusetts Congregational Church in Great  
Awakening period, 1731-1740  
John Webster - fifth governor of Connecticut  
John Williams - early missionary for the London Missionary Society  
John Winthrop - governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony

## **The story of "Half-Hanged Mary"**

Mary (Reeve) Webster was the wife of Ensign William Webster, seventh son of Lieutenant Robert Webster (my ancestor was Deacon Jonathon Webster, Robert's second son). I learned about Mary from Frank Webster, a descendant of William Webster.

Frank Webster is a librarian at Columbia University and assisted me in obtaining a copy of my wife's father's Doctoral Thesis. Also Frank and I are the same age (his birthday is 22 days after mine).

The interesting thing is that Frank Webster was born in the town of Conesus and was raised in Corning, but his grandfather, Mahlon Gray Webster, lived in Conesus and then bought a farm and built a house at the corner of Carney Hollow Rd. and Route 15 in what is now the hamlet of Webster's Crossing. A line that split in the 3rd generation after coming to America settled within 50 miles of each other (my family in Addison and his in the Springwater area) and some of their descendants grew up living 12 miles apart (Frank Webster and my grandfather's cousin, Ladd Webster) and eventually both worked in Corning. In a final act of serendipity, I end up living three miles from Frank Webster's grandfather's house and within four miles of a number of his relatives.

### **Mary (Reeve) Webster, the "Witch" of Hadley**

(from a talk by Bridget M. Marshall, May 2003)

Mary (Reeve) Webster's unfortunate encounters with witchcraft accusations came after those of her Northampton neighbor, Mary (Bliss) Parsons – 1656 (slander), 1674 (accused), 1678/9 (inquest), but before the large-scale events of the Salem Witch Trials of 1692. The series of events in Webster's case is unique. In 1683, she was accused of and tried for witchcraft, but was officially acquitted by the court. Like many acquitted witches, Webster's status as an accused witch was enough of a mark of her witchery, and the year after her acquittal, her neighbors tried to hang her anyway. In the most remarkable twist, the hanging was unsuccessful. And if there was anything that might make people think you were a witch or had a deal with the devil, it was probably not dying, particularly in such a public way. There aren't a lot of details about the case, but I've put together as much information as I could gather on the case, which I will present here for a slice of daily life in Hadley. Witchcraft accusations were actually fairly common during this period in the colonies; every town seems to have had at least one official accusation, and no doubt many more had local legends and suspicions. What was rare was actual convictions and executions, at least until the time of the Salem Trials, when everything changed.

Mary Reeve was the daughter of Thomas Reeve of Springfield; she married William Webster, in 1670 when he was 53 years old (she was probably younger). Available records do not indicate whether the two had any children. According to Sylvester Judd's 1905 History of Hadley, "they became poor and lived many years in a small house in the middle highway into the meadow, and were sometimes aided by the town" (Judd). Also according to Judd, Mary's "temper, which was not the most placid, was not improved by poverty and neglect, and she used harsh words when offended. Despised and sometimes ill-treated, she was soured with the world, and rendered spiteful towards some of her neighbors; they began to call her a witch, and to abuse her" (Judd). Of course, as a history written two hundred years after the events, Judd's information is based as much on local lore as anything else, which may very well have been tinged with prejudice resulting from the later accusations and events. It is very



difficult to know what really happened leading up to the trial and hanging. In any case, it seems clear that the Websters were of the lowest socio-economic class, which, in many readings of witchcraft trials, including those by Steve Nissenbaum and Paul Boyer (Salem Possessed) as well as Carol Karlesen, (Devil in the Shape of a Woman) is a possible factor among the accused throughout New England.

As with most witchcraft cases, there were various odd stories afoot about Mary's doings. A few traditions have remained, although the sources are not original documents, but local histories:

According to some, she bewitched some cattle and horses, so that the animals were unable to be driven past her house. As a result, the drivers would go into the house and beat her, and when they did this, apparently the animals were able to pass.

There is also a much-repeated story that she once entered a house and a hen came down chimney and fell into a boiling pot of water. While this is certainly odd, what led to real trouble was the fact that it was soon found that Mary had a scald on her body. While we might assume that she had been splashed by the boiling water, her contemporaries believed it was a sign that she was a witch.

Eventually, the various stories and Mary's apparently unpleasant behavior reached a critical mass: Mary was examined on suspicion of witchcraft by the county court magistrates at Northampton on March 27, 1683. The following is from the record:

*Mary, wife of William Webster of Hadley, being under strong suspicion of having familiarity with the devil, or using witchcraft, [had] many testimonies brought in against her, or that did seem to centre upon her, relating to such a thing;*

The courts at Northampton, as they had done in the previous case of Mary Parsons, decided that they were not equipped to handle such a case, so it should be sent to the Court of Assistants in Boston. She was sent to Boston in April of 1683, where she waited in jail until the her court date on May 22nd 1683; Gov. Bradstreet, Deputy Gov. Danforth and nine Assistants were present. The record of the court follows:

*The grand-jury being impannelled, they, on perusal of the evidences, returned that they did indict Mary Webster, [. . .] for that she, not having the fear of God before her eyes, and being instigated by the devil, hath entered into covenant and had familiarity with him in the shape of a warraneage, [fisher or wild black cat of the woods] and had his imps sucking her, and teats or marks found on her, as in and by several testimonies may appear, contrary to the peace of our sovereign lord, the king, his crown and dignity, the laws of God and of this jurisdiction -- The court on their serious consideration of the testimonies, did leave her to further trial.*

After the indictment, Mary was returned to jail again to await her trial on June 1st, 1683. The record of this court appearance reads:

*Mary Webster [. . .] was now called and brought to the bar, and was indicted [. . .] To which indictment she pleaded not guilty, making no exception against any of the jury, leaving herself to be tried by God and the country. The indictment and evidences in the case were read and committed to the jury, and the jury brought in their verdict that they found her -- not guilty.*

Thus Mary was decreed innocent, although her neighbors were perhaps less than overjoyed to have her return to Hadley. Perhaps in an early example of Western Massachusetts' discontent with decisions made by Boston, the residents of Hadley clearly disagreed with the Boston court's verdict.

On January 10th, 1685, Lieut. Philip Smith died under supposedly mysterious circumstances. Smith was a prominent member of the Hadley community, and had probably had encounters with Webster. Apparently Mary was suspected of having caused the death,

and some residents attempted to hang her for it. At this point, the explanations of what happened vary depending on the source. The most detailed information we have comes from Cotton Mather, although it is important to note his particular distance from the events and his own biases. Mather devotes a whole chapter of his 1702 *Magnalia Christi Americana* to the story of Smith, but from the opening, we know where he stands on the events:

*Mr. Philip Smith, aged about fifty years, a son of eminently virtuous parents, a deacon of a church in Hadley, a member of the General Court, a justice in the county Court, a select man for the affairs of the town, a lieutenant of the troop, and which crowns all, a man for devotion, sanctity, gravity, and all that was honest, exceeding exemplary. Such a man was in the winter of the year 1684, murdered with an hideous witchcraft, that filled all those parts of New England, with astonishment.*

Obviously Mather is using the case in his ongoing fight against the dark powers that he saw as very much alive and roaming New England. Furthermore, he stresses the high standing – socially and morally – of the victim, Phillip Smith. Mather claims that Webster had it out for Smith because:

*He was, by his office concerned about relieving the indigences of a wretched woman in the town; who being dissatisfied at some of his just cares about her, expressed herself unto him in such a manner, that he declared himself thenceforward apprehensive of receiving mischief at her hands.*

Thus the class difference between these two figures is stressed, and indeed may have been at issue at the time. Of course, Mather's disdain for the unnamed Mary Webster is apparent throughout his telling; his focus is on Smith's story, not Webster's.

Smith's illness is described at length, and perhaps most important are Smith's own suspicions about what has caused it. From Mather's telling, it is easy to imagine how distraught and suspicious Smith's family and friends would have been:

*About the beginning of January, 1684-5, he began to be very valetudinarious. He shewed such weakness from and weariness of the world, that he knew not (he said) whether he might pray for his continuance here: and such assurance he had of the Divine love unto him, that in raptures he would cry out, Lord, stay thy hand; it is enough, it is more than thy frail servant can bear. But in the midst of these things he still uttered a hard suspicion that the ill woman who had threatened him, had made impressions with inchantments upon him. While he remained yet of a sound mind, he solemnly charged his brother to look well after him. Be sure, (said he) to have a care of me; for you shall see strange things. There shall be a wonder in Hadley! I shall not be dead when it is thought I am! He pressed this charge over and over.*

From the description, it is obvious that Smith is suffering in the extreme, and the very visible struggle he endured with his illness no doubt appeared to the Puritan audience as a fight with the devil. Whatever the cause, he suffered fits and delirium, sure to frighten not only him but also his nurses and watchers:

*Being become delirious, he had a speech incessant and voluble beyond all imagination, and this in divers tones and sundry voices, and (as was thought) in various languages.*

*He cried out not only of sore pain, but also of sharp pins, pricking of him: sometimes in his tow, sometimes in his arm, as if there had been hundreds of them. But the people upon search never found any more than one.*

Mather explains that some of the witnesses to Smith's outcries tried to test the theory that Webster was involved in an interesting way:

*Some of the young men in the town being out of their wits at the strange calamities thus upon one of their most beloved neighbors, went three or four times to give disturbance*

*unto the woman thus complained of: and all the while they were disturbing of her, he was at ease, and slept as a weary man: yea, these were the only times that they perceived him to take any sleep in all his illness.*

I'll discuss this "disturbing" of the suspected witch in more detail later, but to continue with the events of Phillip Smith's illness: There were continuous strange occurrences in the man's sick room:

*Gally pots of medicines provided for the sick man, were unaccountably emptied. Audible scratchings were made about the bed, when his hands and feet lay wholly still, and were held by others.*

*They beheld fire sometimes on the bed; and when the beholders began to discourse of it, it vanished away.*

*Divers people actually felt something often stir in the bed, at a considerable distance from the man: it seemed as big as a cat, but they could never grasp it.*

All of these strange incidents, combined with the strange occurrences after his death:

*The jury that viewed his corpse, found a swelling on one breast, his back full of bruises, and several holes that seemed made with awls.*

*After the opinion of all had pronounced him dead, his countenance continued as lively as if he had been alive; his eyes closed as in a slumber, and his nether jaw not falling down.*

*Although he died on Saturday morning, on Sunday afternoon, "those who took him out of the bed, found him still warm, tho' the season was as cold as had almost been known in any age"*

*On Monday morning they found the face extremely tumified and discolored. It was black and blue, and fresh blood seemed running down his cheek upon the hairs.*

*Divers noises were also heard in the room where the corpse lay; as the clattering of chairs and stools, whereof no account could be given.*

These symptoms would have been very disturbing to anyone, especially the Puritans with their limited understanding of disease and death. In this culture, the only reason one got sick – especially in such a visible and painful way – was because of a punishment from God, or the involvement of the Devil. If bad things were happening to good people, then witchcraft was afoot. Mather ends his discussion of the case with the sentence: "Upon the whole, it appeared unquestionable that witchcraft had brought a period unto the life of so good a man."

So what exactly did the men do to "disturb" the suspected witch, supposedly giving Smith his only relief from his pain? The practice of beating or restraining a suspected witch to prevent her from further mischief was a popular practice. Similar activities are referred to in the Salem witch trials. In referring to the "disturbing" of Mary Webster, Thomas Hutchinson, in his History of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, describes the incident thus:

*While [Philip Smith] lay ill, a number of brisk lads tried an experiment upon the old woman. Having dragged her out of the house, they hung her up until she was near dead, let her down, rolled her sometime in the snow, and at last buried her in it, and there left her; but it happened that she survived, and the melancholy man died.*

Mary Webster did indeed survive whatever "disturbance" the men put her through. She lived for another eleven years, and was probably seventy or so when she died in peace in 1696. Thus she would have seen the far more calamitous effects of witchcraft accusation in Salem in 1692. Whether she feared of being accused again, we cannot know, but presumably, escaping the noose once would leave Hadley residents wondering if she could be killed at all.

An interesting footnote to the story seems worthwhile to note here. One of Mary Webster's descendants is the now well-known Canadian novelist and poet, Margaret Atwood, who wrote a poem, "Half-Hanged Mary," (1995) about her notorious ancestor, and one of her

most popular novels, *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), is dedicated to her. The poem has also been made into several stage productions and interpretations. Atwood's poem is in sections, each chronicling an hour of Mary's hanging from the tree, beginning at 7 at night and concluding at 8 the next morning. I'll quote from Atwood's stanza describing Mary's cutting down:

When they came to harvest my corpse  
(open your mouth, close your eyes)  
cut my body from the rope,  
surprise, surprise:  
I was still alive.

Tough luck, folks,  
I know the law:  
you can't execute me twice  
for the same thing. How nice.

I fell to the clover, breathed it in,  
and bared my teeth at them  
in a filthy grin.  
You can imagine how that went over.

Now I only need to look  
out at them through my sky-blue eyes.  
They see their own ill will  
staring them in the forehead  
and turn tail.

Before, I was not a witch.  
But now I am one.

## The Webster Family Crest



## Family Tombstones and Documents

One of the toughest challenges that is associated with any genealogical research is in the area of names, both forenames and surnames, and associating them with the proper persons. We have already seen how the family name of 'Webster' has changed and evolved. I have witnessed these changes in my own life.

As an example, I am related to the Houghtalings, a large family that resides all over New York's Southern Tier. Today you can find the family name spelled 'Houghtailing', 'Houghtaling', or 'Hotaling', and pronounced 'Hufftāling', 'Hōtāling', and 'Hōtaling', depending on the branch of the family. My relatives in the family have always spelled it 'Houghtaling', but, when speaking to one another, dropped the 'ing' and referred to themselves as 'Houghtals' (pronounced 'Hufftails').

One other example that comes to mind is the family name of one of my childhood friends. His grandfather emigrated from Ireland and, because he did not want the stigma associated with Irish immigrants that was held in America at that time, dropped the apostrophe from his name and became Ostrom in place of O'Strom.

Given names have also evolved, quite casually it seems, to reflect personal preference, common pronunciation and/or usage, misconceptions, and even usage of 'nicknames', as can be seen in some of the following examples. It is only in the latter part of the twentieth century, with the onset of database usage and rigid government ID requirements, has this become much harder to do.

It is also important to note that the use of old census records can become confusing because names are not always recorded or spelled accurately, from decade to decade, and middle names or initials are almost never recorded.

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My great-grandfather was named Lewis Mortimer Webster but used his middle name, instead of his given name, most of his life. Because of this, his marriage license records him as Mortimer L. Webster. It is also interesting to note that it also records my great-grandmother's father's name as Scott Sullivan although his given name was Winfield and his middle name was Scott.

When I was young, it wasn't uncommon for Americans to use the names Louis and Lewis interchangeably and to also pronounce them the same ('lu:is/'); my parents and my grandparents did it. Therefore my great-grandfather's obituary records him as Louis, but as you can see from his tombstone, my great-grandmother had him buried as L. Mortimer Webster.

No. 221		FOR THE GROOM		FOR THE BRIDE			
NAME . . .	Mortimer R. Webster	COLOR	white	Ida M. Sullivan	COLOR	white	
RESIDENCE .	Addison N.Y.	AGE	21	Victor N.Y.	AGE	18	
OCCUPATION .	Farm Laborer	NO. OF MARRIAGE	First	None	NO. OF MARRIAGE	First	
BIRTHPLACE .	Addison	WIDOWER	—	East Bloomfield	WIDOW	—	
FATHER . . .	Judson Webster	DIVORCED	—	Scott Sullivan	DIVORCED	—	
BIRTHPLACE .	Addison N.Y.	" WHEN		New York	" WHEN		
MOTHER . . .	Effie Kent	" WHERE		Cynthia Hill	" WHERE		
BIRTHPLACE .	New York	RELATION		New York	RELATION		
CONSENT BY		DATE OF LICENSE	28 <sup>th</sup> Oct 1908	DATE OF MARRIAGE	28 <sup>th</sup> Oct 1908	PLACE OF MARRIAGE	Victor
PROFESSION	Minister	OFFICIAL		WITNESSES	Geo. S. Bement, Maria M. Stiles		



**LOUIS MORTIMER WEBSTER  
DIES OF PNEUMONIA ATTACK**

Louis Mortimer Webster died at his home in Park street, Shortsville, last week Wednesday, following a brief illness with pneumonia. He was aged 49 years.

Mr. Webster was a native of Addison, state, where he was born on July 17, 1887, a son of Judson and Effie Kent Webster. He removed to Victor about 28 years ago and on October 3, 1923, became a resident of Shortsville, where he had since continuously made his home. During his stay here he had been employed in various capacities in the Lehigh Valley Railroad yards at Manchester. He was married on October 28, 1908, to Miss Ida Mae Sullivan of Victor, the ceremony having been performed in that village by the late Rev. Loren M. Stiles, pastor of the Methodist church. He was a member of the Maintenance of Equipment Employees' Association of the Lehigh Valley Railroad and also of Wesleyan Methodist church.

He is survived by his wife; one son, George J.; two daughters, Misses Helen E. and Betty A., and three grandchildren, Eugene M., Shirley M., and Joyce A., all of Shortsville; his father, Judson Webster of Addison; two sisters and two brothers, J. Henry Webster of Sabinsville, Pa., Robert J. Webster of Addison, Mrs.

Anna Houghtaling of Potter Brook, Pa., and Mrs. Kate Lunger of Osceola, Pa.; also several nieces, nephews and cousins.

Funeral services were held from his late home at 2:00 o'clock Sunday afternoon, conducted by the Rev. L. L. Swarthout, pastor of Manchester Baptist church, assisted by Rev. E. L. Kinner, pastor of Shortsville and Manchester Methodist churches. The remains were taken to Victor for interment in Boughton Hill cemetery.

The bearers were Robert Leonard, Henry Kinsey, Fred Smith, Fred McGillary, Russell McGuire and Merton O'Neal.

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Another example concerns my grandfather, George Judson Webster.

Until the day he died, my father, a very stubborn man, insisted that my grandfather's name was George Mortimer and even named my brother George Mortimer, because of that belief. He had my grandfather recorded as George M. in his obituary (it is also interesting to note that his youngest daughter is recorded in the same document as Dorothy when in fact her name is Dolores).

In my research I find him recorded as George J. in his father's obituary and as George J. on his marriage license. This agrees with what I have learned in conversations with his daughter, his uncle, his sister, and his mother. I think I'll stay with George Judson Webster.

### **Webster, George M.**

George M. Webster of 47 Names Rd., Oct. 18, 1964. He is survived by his wife, Mrs. Concetta M. Webster; three daughters, Mrs. Earle (Shirley) June, Mrs. Joel W. (Joyce) Graffley of West Henrietta, Mrs. Dorothy M. Torpey; two sons, Eugene M. Webster and Louis M. Webster of USAF, Calif.; fourteen grandchildren; his mother, Mrs. Ida M. Webster of Canandaigua; two sisters, Mrs. Ralph Whittaker of Shortsville, Mrs. Willis Penner of Canandaigua; several nieces and nephews.

Friends may call at Holla-Leary Funeral Home, 1256 Mt. Hope Ave., 2-5, 7-9 p.m., where services will be held Wednesday afternoon at 2 o'clock. Interment Mt. Hope Cemetery. Friends wishing may contribute to the Monroe County Cancer Society and Leukemia Association in his memory.

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Friends may call at Holla-Leary Funeral Home, 1256 Mt. Hope Ave., 2-5, 7-9 p.m., where services will be held Wednesday afternoon at 2 o'clock. Interment; Mt. Hope Cemetery. Friends wishing may contribute to the Monroe County Cancer Society and Leukemia Association in his memory.

The original of each affidavit, statement, consent, license and certificate has been filed in the office of the State Department of Health as provided by Section 15, of Article 3 of the Domestic Relations Law.

## MARRIAGE CERTIFICATE

TO CITY AND TOWN CLERKS

Domestic relations law — Section 19 . . . On or before the fifteenth day of each month the said town and city clerk . . . shall file in the office of the county clerk of the county in which said town or city is situated, a copy . . . of each . . . license and certificate, which have been filed or made before him during the preceding month . . . He shall not be required to file any of said documents with the county clerk or the state department of health until the license is returned with the certificate showing that the marriage to which they refer has been actually performed.

I, J. Jay Johnston a clergyman,  
residing at Manchester in the town of Manchester in county of Ontario,  
(street address) (city) (village)  
and state of New York, do hereby certify that I did on this 18<sup>th</sup> day of July in the year  
A. D. 1929 at Manchester in the county of Ontario and state  
of New York, solemnize the rites of matrimony between George J. Webster,  
of Shortsville in the county of Ontario  
and state of New York, and Conetta M. Russell,  
of Manchester in the county of Ontario and state of New York  
in the presence of Lela S. Groot and Leland S. Groot  
as witness, and the license therefor is hereto annexed.

Witness my hand at Manchester in the county of Ontario  
this 18<sup>th</sup> day of July A. D. 1929

In presence of  
Lela S. Groot (Signature of Witness)  
Residence Manchester, N.Y.  
Leland S. Groot (Signature of Witness)  
Residence Manchester, N.Y.  
Rev. J. Jay Johnston (Signature of Person Performing Ceremony)  
Manchester, N.Y. (Address of Person Performing Ceremony)

ONTARIO  
MAY 8 1929