

James Wyman
A Brief Biography
By Bill Poole

James Wyman was just two months shy of his thirty-fourth birthday when he took his place in the ranks of Captain Parker's company on April 19, 1775. There he joined his second cousin Nathaniel Wyman as the only two members of the family to take part in the engagement that morning. The Wymans trace their family heritage back to the two towns of Barkway and Westmill, Hertfordshire, England located between London and Cambridge. There, one could trace Wymans, Whymans or Wymants as their name sometime appears, back to the early part of the sixteenth century.¹

The first Wyman ancestor to come to America was Francis, James's great grandfather who was born in Barkway on February 24, 1619. The Wyman family maintains a website that provides genealogical and historical information on the Wymans. According to an article by Ginny Mucciaccio featured on the site, as well as other sources, Francis and his brother John, came to America in 1636, landing at Charlestown, Massachusetts. The two were seventeen and fourteen respectively and it is believed they came in the company of their uncles Samuel and Thomas Richardson who were among the founders of Woburn, MA. The will of their father Francis Wyman, Sr. dated Westmill in the County of Hertford, September 15, 1658 mentioned the two brothers. "Item I do give and bequeath unto my two sons Francis Wyman and John Wyman which are beyond sea ten pounds apiece of lawful English money to be paid unto them by mine executor if they be in want and come over to demand the same."²

Francis and John became very successful businessmen and significant landowners in Woburn. Francis also served as a Selectman in 1674-75. The brothers established a tanning business and built homes in the area of today's Wyman and Main Streets in central Woburn. Their business prospered sufficiently to allow them purchase well over one thousand acres of land that is now part of the towns of Burlington and Billerica. They each established homesteads upon that land which they farmed themselves or leased. During King Phillip's War there were incidents in Billerica and Francis fearing that his home would be attacked requested that a garrison be stationed there. Perhaps his request was denied, for he moved back to his house in Woburn center.³

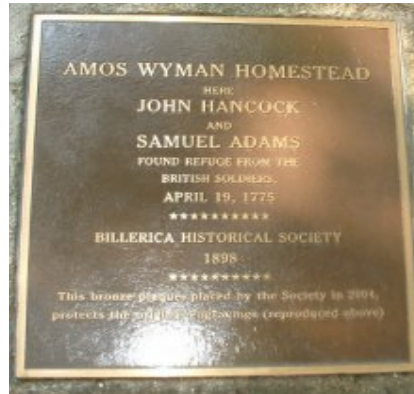


Francis Wyman House about 1900



Francis Wyman House Current Photo

On the site where Francis built his “country home,” there still exists a structure known as the Francis Wyman house that reputedly dates back to 1666. However, little remains of the original building and the present house dates to the period 1710 to 1730. The home is on the National Register of Historic Buildings and is maintained by the Francis Wyman Association. Just beyond the Francis Wyman home and over the Billerica line is the cellar hole of what is known as the Amos Wyman House which was originally John Wyman’s farm. Here, Amos Wyman, the great grandson of Francis, along with his wife Elizabeth, welcomed and fed John Hancock and Samuel Adams, who had been joined by John’s fiancée Dorothy Quincy and his aunt Lydia Hancock, on the morning of April 19, 17



Plaque that formerly marked the site of the Amos Wyman Homestead stolen in 2012

Francis married Judith Pierce on January 30, 1644 in Woburn. Judith died sometime before October 2, 1650. Francis then took as his second wife in Woburn Abigail Justus Reed. Francis and Abigail had twelve children all born in Woburn.⁵ He died in Woburn and is buried in the First Parish Burial Ground.

Their children were:

1. Judith, Born 29 September, 1652; Died December 22, 1652 in Woburn;
2. Francis, Jr., Born 1654; Died April 26, 1676 in Woburn from the “hardship and exposure he had endured” during King Phillip’s War;⁶
3. William, Born February 22, 1655/6; Died 1705 in Woburn;
4. Abigail, Born 1659; Married Stephen Richardson Jan 2, 1675 at Billerica; Died September 17, 1720;
5. Timothy, Born September 15, 1661; Died 1709 in Woburn;
6. Joseph, Born November 9, 1663, Died July 24, 1714 in Woburn;
7. Nathaniel aka Sgt. Nathaniel Born November 25, 1665; Married Mary Winn June 28, 1692 at Woburn; Died December 8, 1717 in Woburn;
8. Samuel, Born November 29, 1667; Married Rebecca Thompson 1692 at Woburn; Died May 17, 1725 in Woburn
9. Thomas, Born April 1, 1671; Married Mary Richardson May 5, 1696 at Woburn; Died September 4, 1731 in Woburn
10. Benjamin, Born August 25, 1674; Married Elizabeth Hancock of Cambridge January 20, 1692 at Cambridge; Died December 19, 1735 in Woburn
11. Stephen, Born June 2, 1676, Died August 19, 1676;
12. Judith, January 15, 1679, Died November 1, 1744 in Woburn.



Francis Wyman Gravestone First Parish Burial Ground, Woburn

Benjamin Wyman, the 10th child and eighth son born to Francis and Abigail was described as a “maltster,” that is one who selected cereals, mainly barley, which would then converted to malt used in brewing. He married Elizabeth Prentiss Hancock at Cambridge on January 3, 1703. She died in 1733. They had fifteen children all born in Woburn.⁷

1. Elizabeth, Born May 1, 1705; Married Jacob Richardson June 11, 1724 at Woburn; died in Woburn October 20, 1749.
2. Benjamin, aka Captain Benjamin, Born December 13, 1706; Married Esther Richardson June 17, 1733 at Woburn; He died May 26, 1774 in Woburn age 68.
3. Lucy, Born April 17, 1708; Married Nathaniel Davenport December 22, 1729 Died October 25, 1730 in Woburn.
4. Zebadiah, Born June 26, 1709; Married Abigail Pierce January 7, 1733 at Woburn; Died January 6, 1770 in Woburn.
5. Eunice, Born November 16, 1710; Married Robert Pierce October 28, 1736 at Woburn; Died March 5, 1774 in Woburn.
6. Jerusha, Born July 23, 1712; Married Edward Richardson April 14, 1730 at Woburn; Died April 10, 1782 in Woburn.
7. Tabitha, Born April 14, 1714; Married Josiah Kendall March 17, 1736 at Woburn; Died April 24, 1800 in Woburn.
8. Abijah, Born September 20, 1715; Married Abigail Smith August 8, 1744 at Newbury; Died July 7, 1784 in Lancaster, MA.
9. Katharine Born May 6, 1717; Married William Tufts February 28, 1733 at Woburn; Died February 20, 1749 in Medford.
10. Nathaniel, Born January 26, 1718; Married Mary Sawyer June 29, 1743 at Woburn; Died June 5, 1776 in Lancaster, MA.
11. Abigail, Born August 26, 1720; Married Jacob Snow April 8, 1740 at Woburn; Died August 31, 1772; Oct 6, 1743 in Woburn.
12. Martha, Born May 17, 1722; Married Samuel Dean September 6, 1739 at Woburn; Died February 14, 1784 in Woburn.
13. Noah, Born July 20, 1724; died December 10, 1726 in Woburn.
14. Jonas, born July 26, 1725; Died Louisburg, Nova scotia, January 20, 1746.
15. Reuben, born November 9, 1726; Married Catherine? September 5, 1753 at Boston; Died March 2, 1787 in Concord, Merrimack, NH.

It was certainly unusual for all children of a couple in the early part of the 18th century to survive to adulthood. But, this was almost the case with the fifteen children of Benjamin and Abigail with only Noah dying at age two. All of the rest survived until their twenties and all married except Jonas who died at Louisburg, Nova Scotia at age twenty, probably of disease from which the garrison suffered terribly in the winter of 1746. Out of a garrison of 2,500 men over 500 had died and “those fit for duty were less than 1,000.”⁸

Benjamin’s namesake and eldest son, also known as Captain Benjamin, married Esther Richardson on, June 17, 1733 in Woburn. She died September 16, 1751 age 44. He died May 26, 1774 at age 68. They are both buried in The First Burial Ground of Woburn. He was Treasurer 1748, 1749, 1752 to 1758 and again in 1774. Benjamin and Esther had eleven children.⁹

1. Lucy, Born June 9, 1735; Married Jabez Dimon of Reading April 3, 1755 at Woburn. Died October 30, 1799 at Stoneham, MA.
2. Esther, Born August 19, 1736; Married Nathaniel Brooks, Jr. January 16, 1756 at Woburn; Died March 4, 1815 age 78 in Woburn.
3. Sarah, Born July 31, 1738; Married Nathaniel Cutter October 24, 1758 at Woburn; Died May 6, 1777 in Princeton, MA.
4. Benjamin Jr., Born January 1, 1740; Married Elizabeth Swain October 31, 1765 or January 23, 1765 at Woburn; She died July 6, 1773 age 30. He died July 6, 1774.
5. James, Born June 18, 1741; Married Anna Porter January 14, 1766 at Lexington;
6. Ruth, Born December 6, 1742; Married Jonathan Wright June 8, 1765 at Woburn;
7. Patience, Born April 13, 1744. Married John Gardner of Charlestown January 18, 1770 at Woburn; Died October 18, 1824 in Woburn age 80.
8. Phoebe, Born June 9, 1745; Married Ebenezer Wade November 8, 1764 at Woburn; Died September 13, 1768 in Woburn.
9. Jonas, Born December 15, 1746; Married Elizabeth Gleason December 19, 1771 at Woburn; Died in the army at New York in 1776.
10. Martha, Born February 21, 1748; Married Stephen Richardson, Jr. July 9, 1770 at Woburn; Died “very suddenly” September 25, 1793 age 46 in Woburn.
11. Elizabeth, Born August 22, 1751; Died August 26, 1751.

James Wyman, the subject of this biography, was the fifth child and second son of Captain Benjamin and Esther. He married Anna (Anne) Porter January 14, 1766 at Lexington, daughter of William Porter and Lydia Batchelder, and perhaps the sister of Asahel Porter. Anna was born in Beverly, MA January 13, 1745/6. The children of James and Anna were all born in Lexington.¹⁰

1. Anna, Born March 8, 1768; Married Sweethern Reed November 19, 1795 at Lexington;
2. James, Born September 26, 1769; Married Betsy Locke November 19, 1795 at Lexington; Died November 13, 1822.
3. William, Born December 11, 1771; moved to Westminster, VT.
4. Benjamin, Born March 20, 1774; Married Lucy Gardner; Died February 2, 1866 age 91.
5. Phebe, Born February 9, 1776; Died April 8, 1805.
6. Sally, Born October 18, 1778; Died April 7, 1782.
7. Lydia, Born February 9, 1781; Died unmarried December 1, 1861.
8. Sally, Born June 20, 1783; Married John Crapo of Lynne March 13, 1840.
9. Lucy, Baptized November 27, 1785, died young.
10. Francis, Born April 11, 1789; Married 1st Mrs. Margaret (Center) Wyman who died March 23, 1873, age 72 years 9 months. She had been the wife of his nephew James Wyman. At the age of 86 he married 2nd Anna T. Howe November 1, 1875, born at Boston, died December 1898, aged 70, daughter of Isaac and Anna (Reed) of Lexington. He was selectman in 1828-29.

According to the 1774 Tax Assessment of Lexington, James ranked in the 6th percentile of taxable property and 105th of the 169 taxpayers. He also held the office of assessor in 1781.¹¹ Volume XVII of *Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors of the Revolutionary War* has the following entry for James.

WYMAN, JAMES, Lexington. Corporal, in a detachment from Lexington militia co, commanded by Capt. Edmund Munroe; service, 5 days; detachment reported on command at Cambridge from May 16 to May 20, 1775, by order of Committee of Safety; *also, Private*, Capt. John Bridge's co., Col. Eleazer Book's regt.; service from March 4 to March 8, 1776, 5 days; company stationed at Roxbury; *also*, return dated Lexington, Aug. 14, 1777, made to Col. Brooks, of men raised from Capt. Francis Brown's co., being every sixth man from "Each list" [probably train and alarm lists].

Charles Hudson has James serving in the Seventh Campaign September, 1776 to White Plains. However, the entry in *Soldiers and Sailors* refers to an "Account of money paid by persons to hire men who went to New York in Sept. 1776 [as] examined and allowed by a committee at Medford Jan. 13, 1777." There was a James Wyman, sometimes referred to as Jr., from Medford and this could refer to him, or James had paid for the hiring of a man to serve in the Army.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Horace Wyman, *Some Account of the Wyman Genealogy and Wyman families in Herts County, England*, Worcester, F. S. Blanchard & Co. 1897; Christine E. Jackson, *The Wymans/Whymans of Hertfordshire*, Hertfordshire, England, Self-Published, 1985; John Brooks Threlfall, *Fifty Great Migration Colonists to New England and Their Origins*, Madison, WI, Self-Published, 1990.

² Ginny Mucciaccio, "Francis and John Wyman and Their Beginnings" at: http://www.treesinthewoods.com/featured_story.htm

³ Vinton, John Adams, *The Richardson Memorial Comprising a Full History and Genealogy of the Posterity of the Three Brothers, Ezekiel, Samuel and Thomas Richardson, Who Came from England and United with Others In the Foundation of Woburn, Massachusetts, . . .*, Portland, ME, Brown Thurston & Co., 1876, p. 189; Mucciaccio, "Francis and John Wyman."

⁴ David Hackett Fischer, *Paul Revere's Ride*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1994, p. 183; Abram English Brown, *John Hancock: His Book*, Lee and Shephard, Boston, 1898, p. 194.

⁵ Edward Francis Johnson, *Woburn Records of Births, Deaths, Marriages, and Marriage Intentions, from 1640 to 1900*, Andrews, Cutler & Company, Woburn, 1890; Samuel Sewell, M.A., *The History of Woburn, Middlesex County, Mass., From the Grant of Its Territory to Charlestown, in 1640, to the Year 1860*, Boston, Wiggin and Lunt Publishers, 1868, p. 653.

⁶ W. R. Cutter, *Woburn Historic Sites and Old Houses Woburn*, 1892, p. 18;

⁷ Johnson, *Woburn Records*; Sewall, p. 655.

⁸ George Arthur Wood, *William Shirley, Governor of Massachusetts, 1741 – 1756, A History, Volume I*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1920, pp. 307 and 323.

⁹ Johnson, *Woburn Records*.

¹⁰ Charles Hudson, *History of the Town of Lexington, Middlesex County, Massachusetts from Its First Settlement to 1868, Revised and Continued to 1812*, Two Volumes, Lexington Historical Society, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston and New York, 1913. Volume II, *Genealogy*, pp. 782-83.

¹¹ *Assessments and Tax lists, Town of Lexington 1784-1789*, CD at Assessors Office, Lexington, MA; Hudson, Volume II, *Genealogy*, p. 782.

¹² Massachusetts Office of the Secretary of State, *Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors of the Revolutionary War, A Compilation from the Archives*, Seventeen volumes, Wright and Potter Printing Company, Boston, 1896, Volume 10, pp. 881-82, volume 11, p. 212.