

# Gale – Stranger

In the search for one's ancestry, surnames of progenitors multiply rapidly. Each of an individual's eight great-grandparents also has eight great-grandparents. At this seventh generation there are sixty-four direct ancestors. In this book each great-grandparent is considered a separate family. My New England ancestors, the progenitors of Wilmer Burgess, consist of the Fairchild, Brown, Dutton, Pulsipher, Newland, Stockwell and Gale families in addition to the confusing John Watterman, and the original Christian Burgess. While the pedigrees are numerous, stories about each of these ancestors are unfortunately not to be found. However, there is information about some of them.

In 1866 George Gale published a book on the Gale family and remarked that he hoped that it might be the inspiration "to arouse some enterprising one, at some future time, to revise the work and make it more complete."<sup>1</sup> While I have not attempted to complete his work, that portion that I claim to be a part of is quoted liberally in this chapter.

It is thought that this family is of Welch origin in Anglo-Norman times when that country was known as Galles or Gales. Today one would be called Welch who in former times would be called a Gale. Since the introduction of surnames, starting in 1066 with the conquest and "settled among the common people fully, in 1307" the name has increased rapidly until the present time, and has become numerous in both England and America.<sup>2</sup>

The name has been variously written Gall, Galle, Gail, Gael and Gale as well as De Galles. All sounding nearly alike, during the last century nearly all of the families in England and America have settled down on the simple English orthography, Gale.<sup>3</sup>

Gaoll in the Gaelic language means a stranger, Gaoill means strangers and Gaolldoch, the country of the Scotts who speak English. The name is thought to be generally derived from some Scotch Highlander who settled in England and was called by his neighbors, Gael. Or perhaps the Gale family descends from some other stranger, possibly Roman, Phoenician or Greek, as they were accustomed to trade with Britains long before the invasion by Julius Caesar.<sup>4</sup>

When Julius Caesar entered France, he found the nations in this area, including England, calling themselves Celtae or Celts, but the Romans called them Galli, the word the Celts first used on meeting the Roman strangers. As barbarians are generally known by some nickname given them, it has been supposed that the early Romans named them with the word the Celts first used on meeting the Roman strangers.<sup>5</sup>

England itself is thought to be Roman in origin. Geoffrey ap Arthur, the Bishop of St. Asaph, in the twelfth century, proved to the satisfaction of Edward the First, that Britain was first settled by a Trojan colony under Brutus, a grandson of Aeneas, from whose name the Greeks and Romans derived Britannia.<sup>6</sup>

But whatever might have been his origin, the head of the Gale family was evidently a stranger living in England, and, as the name was not numerous in 1273 there may have been originally only one family who kept up the ancestral name. Whether Scotch, Roman, Phoenician or Greek, the strangers known as Gale

became prominent. They were of the landed gentry of England prior to the conquest by William, and probably lost their estates by confiscation for their loyalty to Harold, the defeated and slain sovereign at the battle of Hastings.<sup>7</sup>

From the Gale Family Records book, beginning at page 19, the following story unfolds.

In the early emigration to America shipping records were kept, at the different ports in England, in which were entered the name, age and destination of emigrants and the fact that some priest giving his name and residence, had certified that the persons "conformed to the order and discipline of the Church of England."

This information enables the posterity to look up the ancestors in England of those emigrants, but after about 1635 all these entries were not made but only the facts that such a vessel sailed at such a day with so many emigrants for such a place.

The only Gale mentioned on the shipping records was Richard Gale certified to by the minister of St. Katharine's near the tower of London. He was only sixteen years of age and sailed April 24, 1635 for Barbadoes and St. Christophers and embarked in the Ann and Elizabeth with Captain Brookehaven. There is no evidence that he ever came to Massachusetts although it was not uncommon for emigrants to other colonies to change to Massachusetts and vice versa.

Therefore, in examining for the ancestry of the Gales in America, as yet, we have no evidence except what may have been preserved in England by the relatives of the emigrants.

Nearly all the Gale families in New England have traditions that their ancestors were brothers who came from England and landed at Boston, Massachusetts, in

early times, from whence they scattered to different localities, and these traditions are corroborated by the strong family likenesses which exist among the present generations, but if these traditions are not strictly true, still the family likeness indicates a common family origin.

Richard Gale first appears as the purchaser of a "homestall" of six acres in Watertown, Massachusetts in 1640, it being a part of a lot of nine acres, in the town plot granted to Elder Richard Browne. The balance of the lot of three acres, was purchased by Samuel Freeman, one of the first proprietors, who was said to be of England, and it became a part of his "homestall."

From whence came Richard Gale we find no positive record, but as the name and Colony were purely English, we infer, as beyond a reasonable doubt, that he was an emigrant from England, but the fact cannot at this day be proven by any evidence yet obtained.

Why he never united with the Watertown Church can only be answered by the inference that he might have been a "High Churchman" and unwilling to become a "Nonconformist." But in referring to those records, we neither find his name, or the baptism of his children. Besides this, he was never admitted a freeman, never voted, or held office; the prerequisite of all of which was membership in the Watertown Church.

The second of December in 1661, Richard Gale purchased from Richard Dummer the north-east half of the "Oldham Farm," containing 250 acres, on which a part of the village of Waltham now stands. This was one of the most level and fine tracts of land in old Watertown, and was occupied by Richard until his death, and his posterity after him, until about 1854,

when it was sold by minor heirs and passed into the hands of Governor Banks.

However modest Richard might have been in everything else, we observe that he was not particularly so in the size of his farm, which he evidently loved, or he would not have been so careful in his will to preserve it for his posterity.

Whether Richard could read and write cannot be determined at this late day, but the fact that he signed his will with a mark might lead one to believe that he could not write. If we conclude that he could not, it was not at that day considered any particular discredit, for the majority of our New England ancestors were suffering under the same misfortune.

So little did the people of Watertown regard education as necessary to the farmers, that they never erected the first school house until twenty years after the first settlement of the town, although Harvard College was founded for the education of ministers and others, the sons of the aristocracy, in the adjoining town as early as 1638, twelve years before the school house. This school house, the only one for fifty years, was but twenty-two feet long and fourteen feet wide, and as it was robbed by an Indian of seventeen Greek and Latin books in 1664, it was probably monopolized by those only preparing for college.

Richard was probably married in England before he emigrated, and that his wife's name was "Mary" we only learn from the following record of Boston. "Sarah, daughter of Richard and Mary Gale, born 8/7/1641 (either the eighth of July or the seventh of August, depending on which dating convention is used) of Watertown." They were probably stopping with relatives at Boston, at this critical period of married life, to receive the first born, the consummation of human

happiness.

We have no record of the physical size or shape of Richard, but if we are allowed to judge of him by the average of his posterity, we may safely make him five feet and eleven inches in stature, strong and muscular, black eyes, black hair, rather long favored, and dark complexion, modest in his demeanor, of few words among strangers, social, domestic and temperate in his habits, fond of a good joke, liberal in his benevolence, firm in his will, and as a Christian, never bigoted.

As a race, the Gales have been more distinguished for their athletic powers than for the culture of their minds, but the late generations are fast changing in this particular, and the learned professions have a fair proportion of the present generation.

They have ever been reasonably jealous of their rights, but strong friends to a well-ordered government; and in our Revolutionary struggle, they were a unit in taking up arms and marching to the fields of strife, from which several of them never returned alive. They were nearly as unanimous in the support of the war of 1812.

In the war of the Great Rebellion, prosecuted to restore the Union as established by our Fathers of the Revolution, we can only point to the long list of those named in nearly every family, who have both periled and sacrificed their lives for their flag and the Constitution.

It is a very common remark that the whole race never produced a criminal, but the author can only say the he has never yet found one, unless Abraham and Henry, who took part as captains in the Shay's rebellion are to be considered as such.

Richard Gale was a yeoman farmer having farmland consisting of 250 acres. His will grants to his wife, "My

whole estate, both houses and lands and cattle of all sorts, and all my households good for her comfort and maintenance during her natural life." Following the death of his wife, the will then grants to his two sons, Abraham and John, equal portions. At the death of John the whole of Richard Gale's estate was to return to Abraham.

Ebenezer Gale, the eighth child and third son of the sixteen children born to Abraham and Sarah Fiske Gale, married Elizabeth Green. He lived for some time in Watertown and then moved to Oxford where he raised a family of ten children. The Gale's had large families and were now spreading throughout New England.

1. George Gale, *The Gale Family Records*, (Galesville, Wisconsin: Leath and Gale, 1866), p. preface.
2. Ibid., p. 7, 12.
3. Ibid., p. 8.
4. Ibid., p. 6.
5. Ibid., p. 6.
6. Ibid., p. 6.
7. Ibid., p. 7.