

Who Was Betsey, Consort of Martin Brockway of Washington, New Hampshire?

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In the Glendale cemetery in Cardington, Ohio, there is a gravestone reading "Betsey Brockway died July 31, 1847 in the 83rd year of her age, Consort of Martin Brockway". In the same cemetery is the stone for Martin Brockway, who had died three years before her.¹ Although the outline of Martin's background is reasonably clear, his wife Betsey has remained in the shadows, as wives so often do with the records we find.

Martin Brockway served as a soldier in the Revolution, and decades later applied for a pension for that service; from that pension record we get a good overview of his life. In 1777 he was sent by his town, Washington, N.H., to serve a year in the N.H. militia. For the next thirty years or more Martin lived in Washington and Bradford, an adjacent town. He then spent nine years in Mountain, a township now part of Dundas County, Ontario. Following that he moved across the river to St. Lawrence Co., N.Y., and finally removed to Delaware Co., Ohio to be with his children.²

The town records of Washington give the birthdates of his first six children, ranging from 1785 to 1795. All of the entries follow the same form: "Sally Brockway Daughter to Martin Brockway and Betsey his Wife was born June 23 1785."³ It's quite probable, though not completely definite from this, that Betsey, the mother of the children, was the same as Martin's consort of late life, who was born about 1764 or 1765 according to her gravestone as quoted above.

Unfortunately, but unsurprisingly, the birth records do not give Betsey's maiden surname. A marriage record, which would usually give the surname, has not been located. Several authors have given her maiden name as Hildreth, although this

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¹ Morrow County, Ohio, Tombstone Inscriptions (Morrow Co. Gen. Soc.: 1987) [hereafter cited as Morrow Inscriptions], 2:135 [Family History Library (FHL), Salt Lake City, film #1698104].

² Selected Records From Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files, National Archives and Records Administration publication M805 [hereafter cited as Revolutionary Pension Applications], roll 123, file S15348 (Martin Brockway).

³ Washington, New Hampshire, Town Records [hereafter cited as Washington Town Records], 1:381-2, state transcript, Concord, N.H. [FHL film #0015338].

seems never to have been accompanied by any source indication.⁴ From these assertions the name Hildreth can only be considered a possibility; it gives a direction worth pursuing, but not to the exclusion of other alternatives.

Hildreth family resources don't give any immediate help, but a check of New Hampshire town histories does uncover one prospect: Ephraim Hildreth and Elizabeth (Ellenwood) of Amherst, N.H., had a daughter Elizabeth born 15 Sep 1762.⁵ (The names Betsey, Betty, Beth, Eliza, etc. are, of course, often nicknames for Elizabeth.) The birth date seems about two years too early, but it is still close enough to consider her a reasonable candidate.

For no apparent reason, some have concluded that Ephraim Hildreth's daughter Elizabeth was in fact Martin Brockway's wife, and she is so listed in a number of places.⁶ However a bit of research makes such a conclusion implausible. The published marriage records of Rev. Barnard of Amherst show that Elisabeth Hildreth and Ebenezer Weston, both of Amherst, were married 17 Nov 1784.⁷ Further, the transcript of an Amherst cemetery shows a stone reading "Ebenezer Weston / 1761-1846 / His Wives / Eliza Hildreth / 1762-1799 / Sarah Herrick / 1778-1857".⁸ The correspondence of location and birth year is strong evidence that it was Ephraim's daughter who married Ebenezer Weston, and thus Ephraim's daughter was not the woman who married Martin Brockway.

The 1790 census for Bradford, N.H., shows one Hildreth family, suggesting that examining the town records for both Bradford and Washington might be profitable.⁹ In 1786 we find that four households, those of Asa Brockway, Martin Brockway, Simeon Hildreth, and Samuel Crane, were given leave by the town of Washington to make their own arrangements as a group for schooling.¹⁰ This shows they were living near each other but some distance from others in the town. The following year, an eastern portion of Washington was redesignated to be part of the adjoining town of Bradford.¹¹ From this point on, Simeon Hildreth and Asa Brockway appear

⁴ The earliest instance found is: Sarah Hall Johnston, *Lineage Book National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution*, vol. XLV (1917), 372.

⁵ Daniel F. Secomb, *History of the town of Amherst, Hillsborough County, New Hampshire* (1883), 629.

⁶ For example, "Descendants of William Brockway" at <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~peppler/brockway.html> and Eric Henderson, *The Known Ascendants and Descendants of Isaac Henderson and Betsey Brockway* (privately printed, 1999).

⁷ Frederick Lewis Gay, "Marriages Solemnized by the Rev. Jeremiah Barnard, Amherst, N. H., 1780-1829," *New England Historical and Genealogical Register* (NEHGR) 61(1907):237.

⁸ Jackie Marshall, "Cricket Corner Cemetery, Amherst, Hillsborough Co., New Hampshire", a transcription at <http://ftp.rootsweb.com/pub/usgenweb/nh/hillsborough/cemeteries/amhrcrcem.txt>

⁹ *Heads of families at the first census of the United states, taken in the year 1790: New Hampshire* (Washington: Gov. Printing Office, 1907), 42.

¹⁰ Washington Town Records 1:79.

¹¹ Washington Town Records 1:88, 94.

almost exclusively in the Bradford records, while the occasional Martin Brockway entries appear mainly in the Washington records.¹²

One Bradford record of interest is that of a road running to the Washington town line. It ran across Simeon Hildreth's land, then Martin Brockway's land, and then Asa Brockway's land to Washington.¹³ Simeon Hildreth thus had land adjacent to Martin Brockway, and might be related to his wife.

Another town record of note is a marriage recorded in Washington: "Feb 13th 1788 Then was joined in Marriage Peter Shattuck and Hannah Hildreth both of Ipswich by Rev. George Lesslie".¹⁴ Betsey may have been a relative of this Hannah Hildreth, and so it may be productive to look at records for the town where Hannah resided. The Ipswich referred to is likely New Ipswich in Hillsborough Co., N.H., rather than Ipswich, Massachusetts, not just because it is closer, but also because the state name was not recorded. The absence of "New" in the record is not particularly worrisome since there is precedent for dropping it. For instance, Bradford, N.H. was known at times as New Bradford (presumably because of the Massachusetts town named Bradford).

A quick check of secondary sources based on this data gives encouragement, but no real help in identifying Betsey. Chandler's *History of New Ipswich* says a Simeon Hildreth was a resident of that town, and had a son Simeon (b. 1758) who served at Bunker Hill and moved to Bradford, N.H.¹⁵ The Hildreth Family Association publications show the same, adding that Peter Shattuck was a son (by a first marriage) of the wife of Simeon Hildreth (Jr.).¹⁶ Two additional sons, Ephraim and Able, of Simeon Hildreth (Sr.) are listed there, but no daughters.

Turning to the probate records for Hillsborough Co., we find that Hannah Hildreth, widow of Simeon Hildreth of New Ipswich, was given administration of his estate about April 1776.¹⁷ Since Simeon (Sr.) did not leave a will, we can't get a list of children from that source. We do learn from the estate accounting, however, that Simeon left two children under the age of seven, Mary and Sarah.¹⁸

¹² Starting about 1803, the name Martin Brockway begins to appear regularly in the Bradford records. Most or all of these entries probably belong to Asa Brockway's son Martin (b.1779), not Betsey's husband. (Bradford, New Hampshire, Town Records [hereafter cited as Bradford Town Records], 1:99, 239, state transcript, Concord, N.H. [FHL film #0015077].)

¹³ Bradford Town Records 1:13 (1789).

¹⁴ Washington Town Records 1:401.

¹⁵ Charles Henry Chandler, *The History of New Ipswich, New Hampshire 1735-1914* (Fitchburg, Mass.: Sentinel Printing Co., 1914) [hereafter cited as *History of New Ipswich*], 461.

¹⁶ Alice Hildreth Prichard, *Third Publication of the Hildreth Family Association* (Hildreth Family Association, 1925) [hereafter cited as *HFA Third Pub.*], 68.

¹⁷ This is undated, but the bracketing entries are dated 30 March and 24 April 1776. (Hillsborough County, New Hampshire, probate records, Nashua, N. H. [hereafter cited as *Hillsborough Probate*] 2:328 [FHL film #16070,16071].)

¹⁸ Hillsborough Probate, 3:291 (1784).

Consulting the land records for Hillsborough Co., we find this 1785 deed:

We Martin Brockway and Betty Brockway wife of the said Martin Brockway of Washington, Cheshire Co., N.H., yeoman for 3 pounds 10 shillings sell to James Chandler of New Ipswich, N.H. Gentleman, all our right, title, interest in the real estate of Simeon Hildreth late of New Ipswich deceased (our right in the widows dower or thirds only excepted) it being an undivided tract of land in the southwesterly part of New Ipswich on which the said Simeon Hildreth formerly lived and which we claim by heirship to the said deceased.¹⁹

Recorded the same day were similar deeds from Abel Hildreth, Ephraim Hildreth, and Peter Shattuck and wife Hannah, and three deeds, also to James Chandler, by the widow and administratrix Hannah Hildreth.²⁰ One of the deeds by the widow is for an interest she had purchased from her “elder son Simeon Hildreth.” These seven deeds taken together form a firm basis for believing that Betsey Brockway and Hannah Shattuck were daughters of Hannah and Simeon Hildreth.

From the hints in the Hildreth family publications we can find vital records to identify Betsey's parents as the Simeon Hildreth and Hannah Spaulding who were married in Westford, Massachusetts, a town about 25 miles from New Ipswich.²¹ That this is the right couple is clear because their son Simeon's birth is also recorded in the Westford records, with an annotation that he was born at New Ipswich.²²

We can be fairly confident that Betsey's father Simeon Hildreth was the Simeon who was born 7 October 1736 to Mary and Ephraim Hildreth of Westford.²³ Besides being appropriate in age and place and the only such candidate apparent in the vital records,²⁴ we additionally find that our Simeon named a son Peter in the year following the death of Mary and Ephraim's son Peter,²⁵ and Ephraim's son John named a son Simeon, born 9 April 1776, which is just after the death of Simeon of New Ipswich.²⁶

Betsey's mother, Hannah Spaulding, is another matter. There are several possible families for her that can be found in the vital records, and of course her birth may be unrecorded. Resolving her background will need to wait for future research to uncover relevant records. Until then, we can only wonder: who was Hannah Spaulding, wife of Simeon Hildreth?

¹⁹ Hillsborough County, New Hampshire, deed records, Nashua, N. H. [hereafter cited as Hillsborough Deeds] 23:496 [FHL film #15942].

²⁰ Hillsborough Deeds, 23:491-498.

²¹ *Vital records of Westford, Massachusetts, to the end of the year 1849* (Salem: Essex Institute, 1915) [hereafter cited as Westford VR], 186.

²² Westford VR, 58.

²³ Westford VR, 58.

²⁴ The Simeon Hildreth born November 1736 in Dracut, MA, died the same month. (*Vital records of Dracut, Massachusetts, to the year 1850* (Boston: NEHGS, 1907))

²⁵ Peter, “son of Ephraim & Mary Hildreth” d. 19 July 1769 (Westford VR).

²⁶ Westford VR, 58; HFA Third Pub., 69.

In summary, the evidence gives this picture of Betsey's family:

SIMEON HILDRETH was born in Westford, Massachusetts 7 October 1736 to MARY and EPHRAIM HILDRETH. He married HANNAH SPAULDING 8 Feb 1758 at Westford, and the couple were soon settled at New Ipswich, N.H. Although his son Simeon served in the New Hampshire militia during the Revolution, the elder Simeon apparently also did, since his name is listed as one who "died of sickness in the army, or soon after they were brought home."²⁷ Simeon died in 1775 or early 1776, as shown by his probate noted above and by tax records.²⁸ Hannah continued living in New Ipswich, where she died in 1807 or 1808 as shown by the estate administration granted to her son Simeon Hildreth.²⁹

The children of Simeon Hildreth and Hannah Spaulding:

i. SIMEON HILDRETH, b. 24 Nov 1758 at New Ipswich. He served in the Revolution, and was at Bunker Hill (although not in the battle), Mount Independence, and Bennington.³⁰ Simeon married MARY, widow of New Ipswich neighbor³¹ WILLIAM SHATTUCK on 9 April 1779.³² He lived in Bradford, N.H., for about forty years, where his stepson William Shattuck also resided after reaching maturity.³³ He later lived with his step-grandson Simeon H. Shattuck in Windsor Co., Vt. and Plainfield, N.H.³⁴

ii. EPHRAIM HILDRETH, said to have been b. 1760, d. 27 Oct 1852, m. 6 Oct 1783 RHODA BARNES, and to have had seven children.³⁵ He was a yeoman of New Ipswich with wife Rhody when in 1785 he sold his interest in his father's estate.³⁶

iii. ABEL HILDRETH, said to have been born 1764 or 1766, had seven children, and removed to the area of Oldtown, Maine.³⁷ He was a cooper residing in Littleton, Mass. when he sold his interest in his father's estate in 1789.³⁸

iv. BETSEY HILDRETH, born 1764-5, m. by 1785 MARTIN BROCKWAY (b. 3 Dec 1761 in Lyme, Conn.³⁹). They lived in Washington, N.H. for twenty five years or

²⁷ History of New Ipswich, 98.

²⁸ The town's 1775 tax list (2:810) lists Simeon Hildreth; the 1776 tax list (2:435) (finalized in January 1777) lists widow Hannah Hildreth. (New Ipswich, New Hampshire, Town Records [hereafter cited as New Ipswich Town Records], state transcript, Concord, N.H. [FHL film #0015249].)

²⁹ Hillsborough Probate, 12:169 (dated 26 January 1808).

³⁰ Revolutionary Pension Applications, roll 425, file S10836 (Simeon Hildreth). This makes the Bunker Hill story on p. 461 of History of New Ipswich appear inaccurate.

³¹ In 1778, land for a burying ground was bought from William Shattuck and widow Hannah Hildreth. (New Ipswich Town Records, 2:293.)

³² HFA Third Pub., 68; History of New Ipswich 461, 597. The year given on p. 461 of the latter is 1799, apparently an error for 1779.

³³ Bradford Town Records, 1:4, 399.

³⁴ Revolutionary Pension Applications, roll 425, file S10836 (Simeon Hildreth).

³⁵ HFA Third Pub., 76.

³⁶ Hillsborough Probate, 23:498.

³⁷ HFA Third Pub., 76.

³⁸ Hillsborough Probate, 23:491.

more and had six children recorded in the town records: Sally b. 23 June 1785, Judith b. 3 February 1787, Phebe b. 10 January 1789, Betsey, b. 21 March 1791, Hannah b. 25 March 1793, and Lyndia b. 9 April 1795.⁴⁰ They later removed to Mountain, Upper Canada, St. Lawrence Co, N.Y., and Delaware Co., Ohio. He died 21 August 1844, she 31 July 1847, and they are buried in Glendale cemetery, Morrow Co., Ohio.⁴¹

v. HANNAH HILDRETH m. PETER SHATTUCK 13 February 1788 in Washington. This Peter is more likely the brother of William Shattuck, whose widow Simeon Hildreth married, rather than his son as is sometimes said.⁴² Peter was a carpenter of New Ipswich when in 1790 he and his wife Hannah sold their interest in her father's estate.⁴³ She died 25 September 1792.⁴⁴

vi. PETER HILDRETH, baptized in March 1770 in New Ipswich.⁴⁵ No further record known.

vii. SARAH HILDRETH, baptized 5 April 1773 in New Ipswich.⁴⁶ She is mentioned in her father's estate accounting noted above.

viii. MARY HILDRETH. She is mentioned in her father's estate accounting noted above.

³⁹ *Vital records of Lyme, Connecticut, to the end of the year 1850* (American Revolution Bicentennial Commission of Lyme, 1976, repr. 1990), 72.

⁴⁰ Washington Town Records, 381-2.

⁴¹ Morrow Inscriptions, 2:135.

⁴² History of New Ipswich, 598; Peter is asserted to be son of William in HFA Third Pub., 68.

⁴³ Hillsborough Deeds, 23:497.

⁴⁴ History of New Ipswich, 598.

⁴⁵ Sarah Fiske Lee, *Records of the Church at New Ipswich, N. H., 1764-1773.*, NEHGR 71(1917):358.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, 359.