THE WYMAN FAMILIES

IN

GREAT AND LITTLE HORMEAD,

HERTS COUNTY, ENG.

BY

HORACE WYMAN, WORCESTER, MASS.

1895.

In the April number of the *New England Historical and Genealogical Magazine* for 1889, there was published by Henry M. Waters, A. M., of London, the discovery by him of the record of a will made in the year 1658, by Francis Wyman of the Parish of West Mill, County of Herts, England, wherein he mentioned his two sons, Francis and John, as being beyond the seas; and among the other bequests in the will he devises to his son Thomas all of his lands, buildings, etc.

The John and Francis Wyman therein mentioned are the ones by that name who were among the first settlers of Woburn, Mass., and signed the town orders in 1640. A house is still standing, built by Francis about 1666,

in a part of the town which was afterwards set off as the town of Burlington.

The house of John Wyman was near by, but has been destroyed for many years; its site is still shown.

These houses were their country or farm houses, and were on the border of the town limits of Woburn; they were exposed to the attacks of the Indians during the war of King Philip's time, and the house now standing was used as a garrison, and the port-holes for muskets are still to be seen.

The two brothers also had houses in the town nearly opposite the small park recently laid out at the junction of Main and Wyman streets, named "Wyman Green."

Their tannery was also located near this place, and the vats are said to still exist, buried two or three feet beneath the soil.

Being in London in the summer of 1889, in company with Leonard

Thompson, Esq., of Woburn, and H. Winfield Wyman of Worcester, we made a visit to West Mill, situated about thirty miles north of London, to learn something further regarding the antecedents of the Wyman family; but during the limited time we were there we were unable to obtain further information, except that we obtained the address of a family of that name in an adjoining parish.

An investigation of the records of the Parish of West Mill soon afterwards by the rector did not reveal any person by the name of Wyman, although one volume of the Records of about that time was missing.

An account of this visit was published in the October number of the *American Amateur Photographer* for 1889.

Having occasion to visit England during the summer of 1894, in company with my daughters, M. Louise and Adelaide R. Wyman, we

took the opportunity, when in London, to make further investigations about West Mill and vicinity.

Upon our arrival at Buntingford, the post town for West Mill, Hormead and some other parishes in that vicinity, and the end of a branch line of the Great Eastern railway, we took rooms at the George & Dragon. This inn is a type of the inn common in England in earlier times, but which is now rarely seen except in districts which are away from the principal lines of travel. The buildings surround a court-yard having an arched entrance from the front, the kitchen and commercial rooms being on one side of the court, and the sitting rooms, stairs and tap rooms on the other side, with the entrance to the rooms under the archway at either side, the stable being at the lower end of the court-yard. After getting settled at the inn, we took a carriage and commenced our investigations. We first visited Hormead Hall,

the residence of Mrs. W. W. Wyman, about three miles from Buntingford, and afterwards we visited Mutford and Stonebury and Little Hormead Bury.

Each of these estates contains over 600 acres of tillage land, with mansions and barns and other buildings, covering two or three acres in each place.

Mutford is the residence of John Wyman, brother-in-law of Mrs. Wyman of Hormead Hall, and Stonebury was formerly the residence of Francis Wyman, who was born in 1731 and lived there until his death in 1794. He was succeeded by his son Francis, who lived there during his lifetime. It is not occupied by anyone of the name at the present time.

Little Hormead Bury was the residence of Richard Wyman, who purchased it in 1806. He was the son of Francis Wyman of Stonebury, and lived at Mutford before purchasing Little Hormead Bury. His son Francis

was born at Mutford and lived there during his lifetime, and his son John is now living there. Another son, Walter Wescott, was the husband of Mrs. Wyman of Hormead Hall; he died in *1887*.

Both Stonebury and Mutford are in the Parish of Little Hormead, Mutford being about one mile from Stonebury, and Little Hormead Bury about one mile from Mutford.

The mansions of both Stonebury and Mutford are about half a mile from the traveled road, with private roads leading to the houses through the cultivated fields, Mutford being nearest the church of Little Hormead.

The main traveled road from London, running north through this part of the country, is here divided, one to Huntington passing through West Mill and Buntingford, and the other to Cambridge passing between Stonebury and Mutford. The country is intersected by numerous smaller cross-roads

leading to the villages and mansions scattered through the country.

The mansion of Little Hormead Bury is just opposite the church, and is, with the church, situated upon rising ground and overlooks a considerable extent of country, Mutford being seen to the left, while Stonebury is in the extreme distance, more nearly in front.

Hormead Hall is in Great Hormead, about one mile distant from Stonebury and also about the same distance from Mutford, and is a very interesting place. The mansion was formerly entirely surrounded by a moat, with a drawbridge for access to the place. About sixty years ago the portion of the moat by the drawbridge was filled up, but about two-thirds of the moat with the water still remains. Advantage has been taken of this moat to form a picturesque sheet of water for the grounds, it being about fifty feet distant from the buildings in front, with the lawn sloping to the water's edge,

while on the outer side the grounds are extended to form flower beds, shrubbery, etc., with a rustic bridge connecting the two sides.

The moat at one side and the rear of the buildings remain unchanged, and the moat is bordered on both sides to the water's edge with forest trees and vines.

At Hormead Hall we were cordially received and entertained by Mrs. Wyman and her interesting family. She has six daughters and one son named Francis. We passed a few hours very pleasantly about the house and grounds. The mansion was probably built in the 16th century, and is a good specimen of the hall or mansion house of that period: the chimney shafts clustered together and ornamented, the bay windows and porches are all features in mansion houses which were first introduced in the 16th century—the Tudor period.

A portion of the walls is covered with jasmine, fragrant with a profusion of small white blossoms; a large bay tree with its dark glossy leaves shades the house at one side and is considered as a protection against lightning, and shrubbery and flower beds ornament different parts of the grounds.

I used my camera here, taking views of the mansion and grounds, and also secured a view of Mrs. Wyman and three of her daughters and my two daughters, in a group. The view shows Mrs. Wyman seated and two of her daughters, twins, the outside figures, with a third daughter in the middle between my two daughters.

Of the views taken of the mansion, the front view shows the lawn and the edge of the moat—the view being taken from the opposite side of the moat—the mansion facing to the south. The east end view is also taken

from beyond the moat through the shrubbery. The west view was taken from the direction of the barns.

Great and Little Hormead and West Mill are mentioned in the Domesday book of England made by William the Conqueror in 1086, as manors, and they were later instituted into parishes. The two churches of Great and Little Hormead are about one-quarter of a mile apart, and the two parishes are now united and occupy the church at Great Hormead, the rector being the Rev. J. Smith.

The church at Great Hormead is surrounded with large shade trees, and makes a very pleasing view from the roadway. The churchyard contains the remains of Walter Wescott Wyman of Hormead Hall, and members of his family.

The church at Little Hormead is a comparatively small structure, the

parish consisting of but few families, and is situated on elevated ground without shade trees near to relieve the barrenness of the situation. The churchyard contains the remains of Richard Wyman of Little Hormead Bury, and members of his family. The stones are to the left of the church, as seen in the view.

The Parish of Branghing adjoins Little Hormead, and its church is about two miles from Stonebury. In its churchyard are the remains of Francis Wyman of Stonebury, and members of his family.

The volume of records of West Mill, before referred to as missing, embraces, as near as ascertained, the year when the Francis Wyman will was recorded. The registers of Great and Little Hormead down to 1656 have been badly mutilated and many pages lost, and what remains contains no mention of the Wyman family, consequently the earliest record yet obtained

is that of Francis Wyman in the Branghing churchyard, born in 1731, and who lived in Stonebury during his lifetime. Stonebury was probably the residence of Wymans about seventy years after the date of the will of Francis Wyman of West Mill.

The mansion and other buildings of Stonebury are in the Parish of Little Hormead, but a considerable portion of the land is in the Parish of West Mill, the West Mill church being about one mile from the mansion of Stonebury. The records show Stonebury as occupied by Thomas Bonest in 1620.

If Stonebury was the place mentioned in Francis Wyman's will in 1658, it passed out of their possession soon afterwards, as, so far as any record shows, the Wymans who occupied Stonebury were only tenants there.

It seems probable that if there had been records showing that the families now living at Great and Little Hormead were direct descendants

of Francis Wyman of West Mill, they are now lost or destroyed, and it may not ever be possible to definitely connect them with the West Mill family.

As previously stated, Francis Wyman of Stonebury, who was born in 1731, had a son Richard, who lived at Mutford, and a son Francis, who lived at Stonebury. Richard, who lived at Mutford, had a son Francis and a son Thomas besides other children. Francis, who lived at Stonebury, had a son Francis and other children. Richard's son Francis, who succeeded his father at Mutford, had a son John and a son Francis.

It is thus seen that the names of the West Mill family, Francis, John and Thomas, have been favorite names with these families of Great and Little Hormead, and would seem to indicate that they had been handed down directly from the West Mill family.

It would be interesting to know the origin of the name of Wyman. Different authorities have ascribed different sources for the name.

As is well known it was not until about the year 1,000 that in England the custom commenced to give surnames to individuals; before that time they were known only by their given names, as John, Francis, etc., and the surnames from that time were derived in many instances from their occupation, or from the locality in which they lived. As a recent author says regarding this subject: "To be named after one's landed possessions seems to have been an inevitable result of the feudal system; every town, village or hamlet in England hath afforded names to families."

In connection with the information recently obtained regarding the Wyman families in West Mill and Great and Little Hormead, the following account of the derivation of the name seems to be entitled to the most

credence. The Patronymica Britannica, A Directory of family names of Great Britain, published in London in 1860, by M. A. Lower, F. R. S., gives the name as derived from the Anglo-Saxon personal name of Wimond.

Quoting from the same author: "Wymondham (that is, the home or habitation of Wimond, a Saxon proprietor) is in the County of Norfolk. The Earles of Egremont were descended from Ailwarden, a noble Saxon who possessed Wymondham soon after the conquest, but whether he was a descendant of Wimond does not appear. Fellbridge in the same county was for many ages the seat of this ancient race (see Shirley's "Noble and Gentle Men").

The "Book of Family Crests" by Henry Washbourne, published London in 1882, describes two crests of the Wimond family. The commencement of the use of crests in heraldry is ascribed to the

13th century, it being a personal or hereditary device affixed to the shield.

Wymondham is about sixty miles from West Mill, and about ten miles from West Mill are the manors of Great and Little Wymondley. The signification of *ley*, the termination of Wymondley, is a pasture or field, and probably these manors were, before the conquest, owned by Wimond of Wymondham, or of a descendant, and took the name of Wymondley, that is, their lands or pastures. If the derivation of the name was from the source above named, it can readily be surmised that the nearness of these places to West Mill and Great and Little Hormead would account for the presence of the Wimonds or Wymans in these places in later years.

There are records of individuals in the thirteenth century who bore this name. In the Parish of Caldecote, about five miles from Great Wymondley, in about the year 1300, there was a rector by the name of Thomas de Wymondeham, or literally, Thomas from Wimonds home. In the year 1290, in Little Wymondley, there was also a rector of the name of John de Wymundele; that is, John of Wymonds lands. There are others also, but the names as spelled are not quite as apparent of being derived from that of Wimond.

Later, probably, as the population increased and rules of spelling began to be formed, the variations in the spelling of the name were gradually altered to the way that it is now spelled, in common with other names of similar derivations.

A familiar instance of such changes of spelling is seen in the name of

Woburn, which, in the colony records of the first fifty years after its incorporation, was spelled in nine different ways, as seen in Sewall's "History of Woburn." It would not seem more improbable that this name should finally be settled upon as to its spelling to Wyman, than that the name of Woburn should be finally settled as it is now spelled.

Acknowledgment is due to William R. Cutter, Esq., librarian of the Woburn Public Library, who has devoted much research to the genealogies of the early Woburn families, for the matter relating to the location of the Wymans in Woburn and Burlington.