

Posted by Dan M. Linn, Linn Family Tree, 2/27/2019

This letter, along with several others, was written by William Hallows Blackman, 1796-1895, my 4th great uncle, to his niece, Jennie Ruffle Durant, 1845-1941, my great, great grandmother. This letter appears to be a copy of the letter he sent to his niece, a file copy so to speak. The letters were found by F. W. Johnson, son of Emily Ruffle Johnson, in the cellar of the old Halstead, England home in 1932. The letters, along with a photo of William Hallows Blackman, were mailed to my great, great grandmother, Jennie Ruffle Durant, at her home in St. Petersburg, Florida with a cover letter on 12/1/1932. This letter is a description of the Blackman family tree as written by William Hallows Blackman while he was in Santa Cruz, California on 2/28/1879. He would live another 16 years in California and is buried in Healdsburg, Sonoma County, California.

Copy
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Santa Cruz Cal. Feb 28th 1879.
My address will be until 1st of June
300 - 5th St. Oakland
California.
Having been requested by some of my family to write some-
thing of an account of my ancestors, and a little history of my
own experience, I have been induced to take a retrospective view
of my past life, and as there may have been some things transpired
that may be interesting to them in after times after I have left
this transitory and eventful life, I have concluded to commit
them to writing so that they may be reviewed after I have and will
commence by giving some account of my ancestors as far back
as I can. My father whose given name was Robert was the youngest
of a family of 4 children, one brother whose name was John and 2
sisters Elizabeth and Martha. My father was born in Snowfields in the
City of London consequently was eligible to all the advantages and
privileges to which a citizen of that city is entitled. He lived there
but was quite young at the time of the Lord George Gordon riots, when
the Roman Catholic chapel was burned, and well remembered the
tremendous shout the mob gave when the roof of that building fell

no. His father died in early life, leaving the family in easy
 circumstances, who soon after removed to Saffron Walden in
 Essex where they remained some years, during which time my
 father was apprenticed to Mr Black of the Rose Farm to learn the
 farming business. The family afterwards removed to Linton Cambs.
 where his mother died in a good old age, her remains being placed
 in the cemetery near the Independent chapel in that town. My
 uncle John was in business in that place, and accumulated a
 handsome fortune and died ^{there} leaving one son (John) and 2 daughters
 Martha and Mary who both married and lived near Blaxborough
 John married a Miss Pyle of Dunford Cambs (and lived at Blax and
 Linton dying at the latter place) leaving no family. My aunt father's
 oldest sister married Mr Derrmer and lived in Gerard St. Soho
 London but after a time they retired from business and removed to
 a place near Walden where Mr Derrmer died. My aunt then removed
 to Linton and married Mr Hopkins minister to the Independent church
 at that place, where she died of heart disease leaving no family and
 was buried there. The youngest sister Martha was married to Mr
 Bowers the Baptist minister at Haverhill and died early in life
 leaving a son James and a daughter Sally who married Do

Marshall who lived at Dunsford Cambs, where she died of consumption
 James was drowned when bathing in the river at Linton during his
 apprenticeship with my uncle Blackman. The family name in that
 branch of the family has become extinct. My father the youngest
 married Ann Wakefield of Chesterford Essex and died of heart
 disease at the age of _____ while living at Pottes St
 Harlow Essex. He in early life became a member of the Baptist
 church at Walden, and I believe continued in membership
 with that church until his death. He left a family of 4 children
 myself being the oldest and now in my 83rd year. My brother
 Robert was married and occupied a farm near Harlow
 and died there aged _____ leaving no family. My sister
 Elizabeth married Mr Pyne and died March 3rd 1853 aged 52
 years at Wilding Tree North Weald leaving a family of 4 children
 My sister Ann married a Mr Ruffe and lived some years at
 Haverhill but afterwards removed to Halstead Essex where she died
 leaving a family of _____

That is all I can say of that branch of the family having left
 England for America, and leaving the family scattered around

in different parts. My mother whose name was Wakefield was
 the oldest of a family of 11 children 7 boys and 4 girls Robert,
 Harry, Thomas, Richard, Joseph, Samuel, William, Ann, Elizabeth,
 Martha, and Mary Ann. Robt. lived at Chesterton to be an old
 man at Chesterton all his life, and at middle age married
 his brother's Thomas widow, he having died in early life leaving
 one daughter Martha. Robt. lived to be an old man and at
 his death left one son Robt. Harry was apprenticed to Mr Catlin at
 Walden to learn the carrying business, but ran away before his
 time was expired and enlisted in the army, and was killed
 at the battle of Waterloo. A notice of his death and a few shillings
 found in his pockets were sent to the family from the War Office.
 Richard married a Miss Haylock of Ashden and went in
 business at Linton where I believe both died leaving one
 daughter. He learned the business with uncle Blackman.
 Joseph was left on the farm (Chesterton Park) grandfather
 having returned to his own farm, he married a Miss Hottage
 and after some years left the farm and went to London after
 that I know but little about them. Samuel lived some years
 with my great uncle at Chesterton but after getting married.

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occupied the farm called St Aylett's near Walden after losing his wife he removed to a farm at Little Walden where he married again and died there leaving a family I believe all girls. My uncle W^m married a Miss ~~gott~~ ^{gott} and lived and died on his farm at Chesterford, leaving one son. Elizabeth for a time kept her uncle's house at Chesterford but afterwards married a Mr Kent a Baptist minister living at Wilbraham and died there leaving no family. Martha married a Mr Kent at Littlebury, and afterwards moved to Little Walden Park and after a number of years ^{they} died ~~there~~ leaving a family of 2 boys and 3 girls. The boys married but died young and I think left no family, but as I had left the country knew but little about them. Mary Ann married a Mr Smeethy and lived at Loppins Hall and afterwards at Weston and I think died there leaving a son and a daughter who married and lived at Linton, but as I have remarked after I left the country I lost all knowledge of them younger portion of the family. My mother's name as I have stated was Ann Wakefield, the family was an ancient one many generations having lived in the town of Chesterford and their remains lay

in the grounds of the old parish church in that place. It was
 formerly a Roman station and I remember when a boy, finding
 in a ploughed field an old Roman coin with the head of
 Constantine ^{stamped} upon it. The town was situated on the bank of a
 river a branch of the beam, near where was once the ford hence
 the name. My grandfather's own farm was near the town, but
 he occupied, and lived on the farm called Chesterford Park
 a number of years, but a few years before his death moved
 back to his own farms, leaving his son Joseph on the Park farm
 he died at the age of 82 his brother also died at about the same
 age and were laid in the grounds of the same church where
 rest the remains of most of the family and ~~was~~ the family I
 have stated was an ancient one and had some peculiar
 privileges or rights conferred on them in early times, and which
 still continue in force one of which was that the youngest son
 inherited the estate. This is said to have originated by some
 service being rendered to the Lord or Baron by the then youngest
 son, but I believe Blackstone gives another account of it.
 Another privilege was the right to travel free of toll. Many of
 the early families were quite wealthy, and I remember a

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letter being received from the unclaimed dividend office, which caused quite a sensation at the time. It stated that a large amount of money had been deposited by a member of the Wakefield family, a number of years since, and if they could establish the heirship, it could be had. My uncles Robt. and Wm. made every effort, by travelling and examining records wherever they could find a Wakefield had lived, but to no purpose. They recollected hearing that one of their ancestors went to the East Indies and accumulated a large fortune, and supposed he had deposited it in the funds, and died in some place unknown. Wm. the youngest son inherited his father's estate, who during his life time had made provision for the other children out of his personal property. He was a good old man and was deacon of the Baptist church at Walden over 50 years. My grandmother's name was Headland, but I remember little of this family but have a slight recollection of her father as being a very old man leaning on a long staff. He was a good man and was converted under the preaching of Geo. Whitfield on Walden Common. He formerly occupied a farm called St. Aylett's a short distance from Walden but returned to his own house at Walden.

a few years before his death. My mother kept his house, before she was married while living on the farm, and I have heard her remark that a butcher from Thaxted, supposed to be a respectable man, used to buy her grandfathers fat stock who afterwards proved to be the noted highwayman Dick Turpin, and who was at last hung for horsestealing. My grandmother died at Chesterford at the age of 90 and my mother died at Potters & Harlow near the same age, retaining her activity and faculties until a few days before her death. I believe that is about all I can recollect regarding my ancestors. My wifes family lived at Meldreth Cambs. and was named Holder. I knew but little of her forefathers, her father being dead before I was acquainted with the family. He owned a large farm the Manor Farm but sold it a short time before his death, but her mother lived a number of years after we were married. There was a family of 5 boys and 4 girls all of them dead, and most of them left families of which I know nothing about.

I have endeavoured to write all I could recollect about the family but it is getting to be rather a task for me to write so much, and I have done it quite poorly. I find it quite a different thing to

to write to what it is to give a little description of my seeings and doings in my travels and my health has been quite good all winter. I am now at Santa Cruz a town on the Pacific coast quite a resort for invalids on account of the salubrious climate. The main part of the town is situated in a kind of basin containing perhaps 1000 acres and surrounded by a circular hill perhaps about 100 feet high a small river running thro' one side of it into the Ocean. There are many buildings on the hill which you ascend by steps, and from the top we have a most beautiful view of the ocean which probably at some time in the past ages covered this basin. If my health permits I hope to return to Texas in the spring or early summer, to settle up some business, and then shall either go to Florida or return to California, and spend the few days that may be left me. If there are any errors that you know of please correct them and when you write which I hope will be soon let me know what they are and fill up where I have left unfinished.

Affectionately

W. Blackman.

I have had to write 4 of these a pretty good job, and 4 of my own history.