

## **THE ORIGIN OF JOAN SKIDMORE (1612?-1667) OF FAIRFIELD & HER SISTER ANN SANFORD OF MILFORD, CONNECTICUT.**

by Warren Skidmore

The parentage of Thomas Skidmore's second wife Joanna has long been a mystery. She was the widow of a Nathaniel Baldwin who had died in 1658 at Fairfield, Connecticut and had seven children by her two previous husbands, four by Richard Westcott and three by Baldwin.<sup>1</sup> On 19 June 1667 Joanna Skidmore made a will at Fairfield in which she describes the covenant made between herself and Thomas Skidmore at the time of their marriage. They had agreed that she would keep £20 of her former husband's estate "at her dispose" and to this was to be added another £20 if she should die before her Skidmore husband. Before her death she had spent £2 and she now left the remaining £38 to be divided equally among her seven children. Her sons John and Daniel Westcott were named executors of her will and they were to have the improvement of these legacies until her other children came of age or married. William Ward and John Burr were named overseers, and Ward and Josiah Harvey were the witnesses. Joanna was able to write, at least in a small way, for her will is signed "Joa. Sk."

Their marriage seems to have been harmonious. Thomas Skidmore was given (or assumed) the administration of the estates of both of her former husbands. As early as 14 February 1664/5 John Weed of Stamford (who had married Joanna Westcott, a daughter named for her mother) gave a receipt to his "father-in-law [stepfather] Thomas Skidmore" for his wife's share of her father's estate. This was the first in a long series of documents at Fairfield settling the Westcott and Baldwin affairs as Skidmore's stepchildren came of age.

Joanna Skidmore's will was not recorded until February 1677/8, but she seems to have died a few days after it was signed in June 1667. She was attended in her last illness by Governor John Winthrop, Junior who was (in addition to his administrative talents) the most sought after physician in New England. Still preserved is his case book in which he made brief notes on his patients and prescriptions. From it we find that at the time of her last illness Joanna was aged 55 and had a younger sister Ann (1624?-1682) who had married Robert Sanford (1615-1676) of Milford by 1643.<sup>2</sup> Winthrop did not mention their parentage which has been recently discovered. It was believed for a time that the sisters were the daughters of Jeremy Adams (1604-1683) but a close

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<sup>1</sup>She is called *Joan* in the inventory taken of Baldwin's estate on 19 October 1658. The best account of her seven children can be found in Donald Lines Jacobus' *History and Genealogy of the Families of Old Fairfield* (Rutland, Vt., 1930), III, 660-2.

<sup>2</sup>See Grover Merle Sanford's *The Sandford/Sanford Families of Long Island, Their Ancestors and Descendants* (Gateway Press, 1975), 11. This account of Robert Sanford of Milford, Connecticut is exemplary, but the author also had failed to identify the father of Robert's wife at Milford.

attention to the records shows that Ann Sanford was not his daughter.<sup>3</sup>

The marriage in 1639 of *Richard Westacot & Johan Pain* (Johanna's first husband) was found in the register of the church at Braunton, Devon.<sup>4</sup> From this entry it was easy to identify Thomas Paine, of Milford, Connecticut as the father of the sisters. He is said elsewhere to have come from Devon, and the discovery can be confirmed as certain since Thomas Sanford, Junior (1644-1695) later married his cousin Elizabeth Paine.

Thomas Skidmore married for a third time after Joanna's death. His new wife Sarah was the widow of Ralph Keeler who had died at Fairfield in the fall of 1672. Sarah Keeler was the daughter of Robert Howes, of the parish of St. Martin Orgar, a member of the Fishmongers Company and a freeman of London. Sarah Howes was previously the widow of Edward Treadwell of Huntington, Long Island (by whom she had six children) and of Edward Whelpley and Ralph Keeler of Fairfield.<sup>5</sup> On 8 May 1651 Edward Treadwell (her first husband) had sent a letter of attorney addressed to his wife's brother John Howes, identified as the "Minister of the Word of God" at [Earls?] Barton, Northamptonshire" concerning the estate of their deceased brother Jonathan Howes, one of the sons and orphans of the late Robert Howes.<sup>6</sup>

After his third marriage Thomas Skidmore still continued to take an interest in the welfare of his Westcott and Baldwin stepchildren, and he and Cornelius Hull of Fairfield gave several deeds jointly as the administrators of Nathaniel Baldwin. On 20 June 1677 he gave an important deed to his stepson Daniel Westcott, not for Daniel's inheritance, but instead a life interest in all of Thomas Skidmore's own land. It included his home lot of 2 1/2 acres in Fairfield with his dwelling, barn and orchard (excepting that part previously deeded to his stepson-in-law William Read), seven acres in the "new field," and tracts at the "great meadow" and at Sascoe Neck. Thomas Skidmore was now about 73 and this seems to have been all of his real properties at Fairfield. They were conveyed to Westcott with the stipulation that he was not "to enter upon the said parcels until the expiration of the natural life of Thomas Skidmore, Senior." On 3 January 1681 Westcott resold a part of this land to his half-sister Deborah Baldwin and her husband William Reed, and this deed again notes that it was not to be recorded until after the death of Thomas Skidmore, Senior.

Joanna Skidmore died at Fairfield and it may be taken as certain that she was buried there in Burial Hill on the south side of Concord Street. The town abounded with native stone, but the early gravestones have either all crumbled away or been covered with the deposits of time.

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<sup>3</sup>Jeremy Adams died on 11 August 1683 at Hartford. His will mentions a grandson Zachary Sanford, but he was a grandson only by his marriage to Sarah Willett (a daughter of Sarah Adams by her husband Nathaniel Willett). See Robert Charles Anderson, *The Great Migration Begins, Immigrants to New England, 1620-1633* (Boston, 1995) I, 11.

<sup>4</sup>The Braunton register begins in 1538. The marriages are extracted in *Boyd's Marriage Index, 1538-1840*, now available (for a fee) from OriginsNetwork.com. The christenings and burials of Braunton have not been seen. Richard Westcott is said to have been born in 1612, a son of John Westcott of Bishop Tawton, Devon.

<sup>5</sup>Thomas Skidmore was her fourth (and last) husband.

<sup>6</sup>London Record Office, *Orphans' Court of the City of London, Deeds 9/214*. The Treadwells were living in 1651 at Easthold near Southold on Long Island "within the jurisdiction of Newhaven." The will of Robert Howes of St. Martin Orgar was proved on 30 January 1636 at P.C.C., PROB 11/170.