

MARY SCUDAMORE (ca. 1598-1681), WIFE OF THOMAS FRENCH OF IPSWICH, MASSACHUSETTS. AN OLD DEBATE NEWLY RESOLVED.

by Warren Skidmore

Mary French is precisely the sort of ancestor that most Americans look for. She was born at Tedgewood, a hamlet in Upton Bishop, Herefordshire descended from one of the oldest and most important political families in that county. Her father was the third in a continuous series of seven generations of men all named William Scudamore, and (a further bit of icing on the cake) both of her parents had cousins who were created baronets during her lifetime.¹ These are attributes not frequently found in colonial Massachusetts, and I took a particular interest in Mary French since my own Scudamore family was also at Boston as early as 1636.²

Her father was William (III) Scudamore, born about 1540, the second son of William (II) Scudamore of Ballingham, Herefordshire by his wife Mary Burghill.³ On 3 March 1561/2, called “late of Ballingham,” he conveyed to elder brother John Scudamore his part of their father’s lands in Wormelow Hundred, and on 6 December 1566 he gave a further release for the whole of his interest. William had already settled at Upton Bishop where he purchased Tedgewood Farm, a property which was sold soon after his death for the benefit of his minor children. Tedgewood

¹Sir John Scudamore, Bt. (1600-1658) of Ballingham, and Sir Nicholas Lechmere, Bt., (1613-1701) of Hanley Castle, Worcestershire. Sir Nicholas left distinguished Lechmere cousins later at Boston. (*New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, vol. XIII, no. 4 (October, 1849), 302-3. There is nothing to suggest that Mary French ever enjoyed any kind of social or economic privilege from these relationships.

²*Thomas Skidmore (Scudamore), 1605-1684, of Westerleigh, Gloucestershire and Fairfield, Connecticut* (Akron, Ohio, 2005), 2-4.

³William (II) Scudamore, *Senior*, of Ballingham had married Mary the eldest daughter of John Burghill of Thinghill Parva in Withington, Herefordshire. She survived him and married secondly John Guillim of Fawley in Fownhope. William had succeeded his father William (I) Scudamore by 1538 and was “an able man fit to make an archer” who had also contributed a horse and harness [body armour] for the defense of his county in 1542. He died by 4 November 1548 when Christopher Scudamore of London renounced his interest in the lands of his brother William, the elder, in favor of the widow Mary Scudamore (widow of his nephew William) to William Burghill, and John Guillim for the use and benefit of John Scudamore, a minor, his nephew’s son and heir, or in default of heirs then to William, the younger son, also a minor. For a better account of the Scudamores of Ballingham, subsequently baronets, see my *Thirty Generations of the Scudamore/Skidmore Family in England and America*, 2nd edition (Akron, Ohio, 2006), 103-123. It is currently available on a CR-ROM noticed on the Scudamore/Skidmore website.

House (which still survives) is a fine timber-framed building from the early 16th century standing about 3/4 mile east of the local church dedicated to St. John the Baptist.⁴ William (III) married Margery, a daughter of Roger Lechmere of Fownhope Herefordshire (out of Hanley Castle in Worcestershire) about 1581.⁵ She survived him and had married secondly (by 1600) Anthony Caple of How Caple in Herefordshire.

Mary French may have been a posthumous child (but if not, certainly an infant) at the death of her father. He was buried at Upton Bishop on 2 December 1598 and the administration on his estate was granted to Thomas Lechmere of Fownhope Court and Thomas Guillim of Fawley who were two of the uncles of his minor children. While we do not have the advantage of an informative will for this William we do have the next best thing: an even more useful suit in chancery brought later against his son⁶. Many of the details about the father's estate found there have been repeated here. William's stepfather, Anthony Caple, was dead in 1622 and his widow Margery (formerly Lechmere and Scudamore) was living at Gloucester in 1636 when the will of her son William (IV) Scudamore gave his mother an annuity of £10 and "enough very good black cloth to make a mourning gown." Walter Scudamore, his eldest brother had died unmarried, presumably before his father.⁷ However five younger children of William (III) seem to have survived at his death, four sons and his daughter Mary, but only a part of these are found in the baptisms of the Upton Bishop register which begins in 1571.

Gilbert, the eldest surviving son, was baptized 12 September 1588. He did homage for his father's land at a court held for Upton Bishop on 20 April 1599. He traveled "beyond the seas" where he died about 1609. Robert was baptized 26 July 1590, but died young. William (IV), the fourth son, was seems to have been born in 1591 (christening not found) and succeeded his brother Gilbert as his father's heir in 1609. He settled at Gloucester city where he will be noticed further.

⁴Francis T. Haverfal, *Records historical and antiquarian of the Parish of Upton Bishop*, (Walsall, Staffordshire, 1883), 7. The house was described in 1883 as "a good example of Medieval timber frame work, capable of restoration. Many of the windows are modernized, but the eastern side has not undergone much change. A massive stone chimney occupies the southern end of the house, and the roof is strong and well covered with stone tiles." John Baldwin, a churchwarden at St. John the Baptist in Upton Bishop, owned and occupied the house in 1883.

⁵I am greatly indebted to Paul M. Hokanson of Chesterfield, Missouri, a descendant of Thomas French, for his extensive notes on the Lechmere and Redferne families. See Evelyn Philip Shirley, *Hanley and the House of Lechmere*, (London, 1883), 13, and the visitation of Gloucestershire taken in 1682-3.

⁶*Chancery Proceedings*, C.2 H29/67. Edward Hall brought an undated suit (but about 1622) against William Scudamore of Gloucester concerning the estate of William Scudamore, the elder. He had died in 1598 at Upton Bishop leaving the defendant, then aged about seven, and other children. The son was apprenticed to a woollen draper in Gloucester. Margery Scudamore, formerly Lechmere, married a second husband who then also died. I made a complete copy of the long and somewhat tedious proceedings in this suit at the Public Record Office many years ago, and it is included with my papers filmed on roll 1162460 (pages 3271-81) available from the Family History Library at Salt Lake City.

⁷This according to Mayes' *Visitation of Gloucestershire* taken in 1682/3. Nothing more has been learned about the young Walter Scudamore.

Thomas, the youngest son, was baptized 1 August 1593 at Upton Bishop, but nothing more is known of him. Mary, presumably the youngest child, may well have been born and christened elsewhere if her widowed mother imposed on the hospitality of her brother Thomas Lechmere at Fownhope, Herefordshire or some other kinsperson.

Mary was the only known daughter of William (III) and she married “_____ French of Boston in New England” according to Mayes *Visitation* set down a good many years later in 1683 (two years after Mary’s death) about the family of her nephew William (IV) at Gloucester. She and her children had also been remembered in the will of her brother, William (III) Scudamore, in 1636. I wrote about these complexities in 1989 in the first edition of my book *Thirty Generations*:

She [Mary Scudamore] is frequently said to have married Thomas French (baptized 1608, died 1680) of Ipswich, Essex County, Massachusetts, and to have died his widow on 8 May 1681 at Ipswich. If this should be so she would have been several years older than her husband and approaching 90 years of age at her death. This identification, for which no proof has yet been found, is to be received with considerable caution.⁸

Now some 18 years later, I concede that my reasoning was sound enough. However the proponents of the Thomas French marriage, and my arguments questioning it, were both argued from an insufficient base of facts.⁹ The “smoking gun” kind of proof I asked for has finally been found in an unexpected place, by casting out a very wide net that looked back to the descent of the title to Tedgewood Farm in Upton Bishop. For this, new histories of the Bower, Pengry and Redfern families on both sides of the Atlantic had to be put together.

William (IV) Scudamore, the brother of Mary French, of Gloucester, was born about 1591 from his testimony that he was aged seven at his father’s death in the chancery suit. He succeeded his brother Gilbert as his father’s heir at Upton Bishop and was apprenticed to a woollen draper in Gloucester. He had settled there in the North Ward about 1614 and married Elizabeth, daughter of a Clarvo of Leigh, Gloucestershire. His will was dated 4 November 1636 and proved promptly on 22 December.¹⁰ It remembered his children, his mother, and “to all the now children of Mary French” of Boston in New England (to whom he left £5 each). His only son William (V) was his heir, and he also left two daughters. Sarah married firstly William Clively of Gloucester, and then secondly

⁸I added in a letter to one of the innumerable descendants who wrote me that Mary would have been at least 38 in 1636, that this couple who were reared at opposite ends of England (in Suffolk and Herefordshire) could not have possibly come married to one another to Massachusetts, that she was called “of Boston” not Ipswich in 1682, that her children were not proven to be named *French*, and that (contrary to their belief) there was still another Mary (wife of Stephen French) who was the proper age to have been Mary Scudamore.

⁹Some of the claims made by descendants were ludicrous. The Frenchs were said to have married in 1630/1 at the Boston in *Lincolnshire*, England. See also *The Shapley Connection*, volume 5, pages 75-97, which (using a part of my notes on the Ewyas family) gave Mary French a royal descent from Alfred the Great!

¹⁰William Scudamore, a “Woollen Draper of Gloucester,” was proved at the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, PROB 11/172.

Nicholas Haines who was an ironmonger who was living at Gloucester in 1695. Anne Scudamore, the second daughter, died unmarried.

William (V) Scudamore, his only son, was born in 1616. He was like his father a woollen draper and Alderman of Trinity parish in Gloucester. He married (licence 20 December 1640), Joan (buried 29 February 1689/90 at St. Nicholas, Gloucester), the daughter of William Caple who was an Alderman and still later Mayor of Gloucester. This William Scudamore greatly improved the lot of his family. He was High Sheriff of Gloucester in 1659, and in 1672 had the means to purchase the ancestral manor of Upton Bishop.¹¹ His pedigree was set down at the Visitation of Gloucestershire by the heralds, with that of other gentlemen, on 23 August 1683. He died on 17 July 1698 and was buried at St. Nicholas, Gloucester, but called “of Trinity parish” in register.¹²

When we turn to Thomas French (1608-1680) of Ipswich we are on very firm ground for he is included in the fine new history of all of the immigrants to New England from 1620 to 1633.¹³ French had come, unmarried, to Boston together with his sister Alice by 1632 from Assington, Suffolk, and his father and two more younger sisters followed them in 1633. Thomas French was dismissed by the Boston Church to the church at Ipswich in 1639.¹⁴ He was a tailor and remained an exemplary resident of Ipswich until his death in 1680. His will was signed on 3 August and it provided generously for “Mary my beloved wife.” In addition to the usual bed and furniture his sons were to see to “their mother’s comfortable maintenance, and if she is not satisfied, then to allow her £9 paid by Thomas and 20s. paid by Samuel annually, and if she suffers sickness and the aforesaid £10 does not suffice” then they were to supply her still further with the necessities. Mary French and her son Samuel proved the will on 28 September 1680. The inventory of his estate totaled £217 15s. 6d. The only novelty was “11 yards of homemade cloth” which suggests that he had continued to do tailoring for his neighbors at Ipswich.

There remains, however, the mystery of where Mary was before the birth of her first known child in 1632 when she would have been, at very least, 34 years old. Some possible kin (certainly friends) were the posterity of John Pengry (*alias* Pingree, Pingrey) who was born about 1570 at Mitcheldean, Gloucestershire.¹⁵ He married about 1600 Catherine (who died in 1624), a daughter of

¹¹It remained with his descendants until it was sold at auction on 14 July 1871 by William Rowles Fitzroy Scudamore (1833-1886) of Gloucester.

¹²His eldest son, who died before his father on 21 May 1695, was still *another* William (VI) Scudamore. His will, where he is called “a Gentleman and Alderman of Gloucester,” was proved on 3 September 1695 at the P.C.C., PROB 11/429. His son William (VII) Scudamore, also a wollen draper, died at St. Werburgh’s, Bristol on 15 March 1721/2, the last of the long series of William Scudamores. His son and heir was named Rowles (1712-1802) for his grandmother’s family.

¹³Robert Charles Anderson, *The Great Migration Begins* (New England Historic Genealogical Society, 1995), I, 703-6. It also includes a Stephen French, who also had a wife Mary, overlooked by the more numerous descendants of the Thomas French of Ipswich.

¹⁴At the First Church, Boston: “The 27 January 1638. Our brother Thomas French wth ye Consent of ye Congregation Dismissed to ye Church of Ipswich.” Curiously no wife is mentioned, although this seems to have been usually done.

¹⁵The curious name *Pingree* is said to have been of Huguenot origin. Upton Bishop and Lea in Herefordshire, and Mitcheldean in Gloucestershire are all border parishes only about five miles apart.

John Bower of Mitcheldean, and died on 23 January 1624 at Lea, Herefordshire leaving at least four children.¹⁶ Thomas Pengry was his eldest son and heir, and there was a daughter Bridget and two younger sons Aaron and Moses Pengry, who were both at Ipswich by 1641.

Thomas Pengry (1602-1664) and his wife Ann lived at Gloucester where they must have been known to both of the William Scudamores, father and son, living there. He and his family remained at Gloucester, but his two younger brothers went off to Ipswich in America.

Moses Pengry (*ca.* 1611-1674) was at Ipswich by 1639 and married Abigail, a daughter of Robert Clements, on 20 April 1644 at Haverhill, Massachusetts. At Ipswich he was a constable, a surveyor, a selectman, a longtime deacon of the church, and represented the town at the General Court. He established a salt works in 1653 and in 1658 was granted a license to sell liquor and to keep an inn. In 1670 he owned and operated the White Horse, an inn on the High Street in Ipswich and died there on 2 January 1695/6.¹⁷

Aaron Pengry, probably the youngest son, also went to Ipswich where he worked with his brother Moses at the salt works in 1653. He left a will dated 4 May 1684 but it was not produced for probate until 17 November 1696. It remembered his wife Jennet, a daughter of John Roberts (who was previously the widow of Robert Starkweather of Roxbury), as well as “my cousins [by which *nephews* is meant] Moses, Aaron and John, the three sons of my brother Moses Pengry.”

Having put the Pengrys firmly in place at Ipswich we must now look at their maternal aunt Isabel, another daughter of John Bower, and a sister of Catherine Pengry both noticed earlier. Isabel married well. She went with her husband Henry Redvern (*Redven, Redfern*) to St. Michael’s in Gloucester city where he was a successful salt merchant. It seems likely that her three Pengry nephews had all become salters at Gloucester learning the trade from Redvern.

Henry Redferne had been named one of the overseers named in the will of John Bowers, his father-in-law, which was proved in 1620. He left a very long and detailed will of his own which was proved on 10 May 1637 at London. It mentions (with much more) his salt house and salt works near St. Bartholomew’s Hospital in Gloucester.¹⁸ He had as well another salt works and house at Swansea in Glamorgan, Wales, which he owned in partnership with Anthony Bower, gentleman, his brother-in law. Redfern also mentions among a long list of “all my lands, tenements and hereditaments at Bishoppes Upton” in which his wife Isabel was to have a life interest.¹⁹ He devised to Thomas and Moses Pengry “to each of them five pounds apeece,” and Thomas Pengry was a witness to his will on 26 December 1636.

Redfern’s widow Isabel, clearly left in comfortable circumstances, probably remained at St. Michael’s in Gloucester for a time. It is surprising to find that she was later at Ipswich where her will was proved by Robert Lord and Thomas Lovell on 26 June 1650.²⁰ It remembered all three of her Pengry nephews who wasted no time in trying to turn their bequest into money. On August 15th they went to Boston to the notarial office of William Aspinwall where they had the following

¹⁶John Bower married Bridget Bridgeman. He is called “a gentleman of Micheldean” in his will which was proved on 6 August 1620. (P.C.C., PROB 11/136).

¹⁷Mary Lovering Holman, *Ancestry of Charles Pillsbury and John Pillsbury* (Concord, N.H., 1935) II, 981-4.

¹⁸Will of Henry *Redven*, “a gentleman of Gloucester.” P.C.C., PROB 11/174.

¹⁹How he came by his lands at Upton Bishop is presently unknown.

²⁰*Probate Records of Essex County, Massachusetts; 1635-1681* (Salem, 1916) I, 117.

document drafted for them:

15(8) 1650. Moses & Aaron Pengry of Ipswich constituted Tho: Pengry senior of Gloucester their Att[o]r[ney] to receive all such money or rents as are or shall be due to them from time to time, & acquittances for the same to make, also to sell or let the fermes in Upton Bishop in County of Hereford called the thornes and Testwood now or late in the possession of Thomas Nurden, & granted by the will of Isabell Redverne late of Ipswich in N[ew] E[ngland] unto the said Moses Aaron and Thomas Pengry.²¹

What happened to the shares belonging to the brothers at Ipswich does not appear. However when their elder brother Thomas Pengry died in 1664 at Gloucester he left a will devising his 6/13th interest in a messuage called *Thorne* and *Tadswood* in Upton Bishop to his wife Ann during her natural life, and then after her death to his daughter Deborah Pengry.

Our evidence presently ends here. It is unlikely that Mary Scudamore came out to Boston as a spinster, and there are probably still new discoveries to be made.



Tedgewood, Upton Bishop, Herefordshire, England
Home of William Scudamore (1540-1598) and Mary Lechmere Scudamore

²¹*Aspinwall Notarial Records, 1644 to 1651* (Boston, Municipal Printing Office, 1903) 328.