

Smead and Deerfield Families

- Dan mentioned that our William Knight traveled to Michigan with the Smead family, and later married one of the daughters.
- [use Deerfield chart] The Smeads have deep roots in Deerfield. About 20 years ago Cindy & I attended an event there organized by a group called "Deerfield Descendants." I was asked which Deerfield family I descended from so they could put it on my name tag. I chose Smead, but could have used any/all of these: Hawks, etc.
- [use Deerfield map] Deerfield is perhaps unique in having so much of the old town still as it was in the 1700s. If you go today you can see houses that our ancestors lived in back them. All of this is largely due to one man: George Sheldon, who in the early 1800s began collecting and saving old items and encouraging people to preserve the old buildings. He started a local museum and published a 2 vol. History of Deerfield, of which 400 p. are genealogies of local families.
- [use Northampton map] A few miles south is Northampton, a slightly older town (that has none of its history preserved) where many of our families lived before moving up the river to Deerfield. How many of you have heard of Jonathan Edwards, a pastor known for his role in the Great Awakening, or his sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God"? His grandfather Solomon Stoddard was a long-time pastor in Northampton and rather liberal-minded. When Stoddard died, Edwards succeeded him and attempted to implement his more conservative theology. Instead, the congregation ousted him with the help of many of our ancestors, especially the Wrights.
- Back to the Smeads: Our immigrant Smead was named William. (We have too many relatives with that name, don't you think?)
- There is no known record of his birth, but many people have estimated it as 1635 but it might have been as early as 1625. When his mother died in March 1639 William was "put under the care of" John Pope. Then Pope died in April 1646, and in his will gave "unto William Smead my little boy my loomes and such tacklings as do belong unto them which is to value of 3 Pounds, provided he be willing to dwell with my wife after his time is out. Also provided he be willing to learn my trade, and that there be a comfortable agreement made between them afterwards."
- So presumably William learned to be a weaver, and we know for certain that his son Ebenezer was a weaver in Deerfield. Cindy has a photocopy of his account book. And the museum in Deerfield has the Smead loom on display.
- But Ebenezer is not our direct ancestor, even though three of his siblings are.
- William's mother was part of an interesting family. She had two brothers (Thomas & Israel) who were both very involved in the establishment of (and the politics of) the town of Dorchester, Mass. Their father was a pastor in the Church of England and kept moving around, apparently because he was a non-conformist and kept getting crosswise with the religious authorities.
- I think one take-away from all this about Grandmother's ancestors is this: while religion, education, and honesty are incredibly important, we also have a history of being independent thinkers who don't take well to having other people tell us what to think.