

THE SMYTH FAMILY PAPERS

The Smyth Manuscripts.---

Some three or four years ago, large bundles of manuscript, forming part of the collections of John Smyth, of Nibley, which had come to his descendants, the Cholmondeleys of Condover in Shropshire, were sold at public auction by Messrs. Puttick and Simpson. These would doubtless be of considerable value in illustrating the history of the Hundred of Berkeley, and it would be an advantage to put on record their present place of deposit. Possibly their present owner might be willing to give some particulars in these pages respecting them.

-----Gloucestershire Notes and
Queries, Vol. V, p.54
(1891)

The Smyths of Nibley.---

At the present time there are residing in Virginia, U. S. A., the representatives of a family named Smith, who claim to be descended from, or a close connection with Smyth of Nibley, Co. Gloucester. The precise link in this connexion is unfortunately wanting in proof, but that the claim is based upon a fairly substantial foundation will be evident from the following particulars.

The founder of the American line was one Richard Smith or Smythe, of whom the following has been ascertained. He was born in Gloucestershire, about the year 1596, emigrated to Plymouth Colony before 1638, was a freeman of Taunton, in that colony, in 1640, settled at Mespeth, afterwards Newtown, on Long Island, in 1642, signed Articles of Peace with the Indians, August 30, 1645, as one of the "Eightmen" or Council, bought a large tract of land, in Narragansett in 1641, and a lot on East River, Manhattan Island, July 4 1645, sold a house and lot in Manhattan, Aug. 15, 1651. In an Indian deed

dated Oct. 15, 1662, he calls himself then "about the age of 66 years," by which we arrive at the approximate year of his birth. His will is dated July 14, 1664, wherein he is styled "Richard Smith, of Wickford, in the Narragansett Country in New England, yeaman." It was proved Aug. 22, 1666, and mentions the following issue: sons --Richard Smith, jun, James Smith; daughters--Elizabeth, wife of John Viall, Joan, wife of Thomas Newton, and Catherine, wife of Gilbert Updike.

Richard Smith's connection with Gloucestershire thus appears:

1. In a petition of the inhabitants of Narragansett to the King, dated July 29, 1679, one of the petitioners being Richard Smith jun^r., it is stated, "About 42 years since, the father of one of your petitioners, namely, Richard Smith, deceased, sold his possessions in Gloucestershire, and came into New England, began the first settlement of the Narragansett Country (then living at Taunton, in the Colony of New Plumouth), and erected a trading house on the same tract of land where now his son, Richard Smith, inhabits." Much the same testimony, but of a somewhat earlier date is given by Roger Williams, the founder of the Colony of Rhode Island, who asserts that his friend, Richard Smith, "for conscience sake, left his possessions in Gloucestershire, and adventured with his relatives in New England."

2. Richard Smith, jrn., then Major and Chief Commander of His Majesties Militia, wrote on Oct. 22, 1669, from his home in Naragansett, to his "unkell, William Barton, Morton, Gloucestershire," in which he desires to be remembered to his aunt (name indistinct, but looks like Toland), and mentions the letter as being sent by John Sunderland. His "cousin, Ester Smith," sends her love to her uncle. He hopes to come to England in a year or two, when his business can safely be left.

3. Major Richard Smith in Dec., 1674, writes to "the Worshipfull John Smith," at Nibley, Gloucestershire, in which he alludes to the latter's

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kindness to him in all his troubles, and especially in some business transaction which Smith attended to for him.

Both the foregoing letters were found among the family papers of the Smiths of Nibley.

Turning now to the pedigree of Smith of Nibley, as given in the Visitation of Gloucestershire, 1623 (Harl. Soc. Vol.), we find that William Smith of Humberstone, co. Lincoln, had two sons, 1.--"Richard Smith, eldest sonne," who "had issue;" and 2.---Thomas Smith, of Hooby, cl. Leicester, the father of John Smith the first, of Nibley, the well known historian of the Berkeleys. The pedigree of the eldest son, Richard, is not carried out, and it is suggested that the elder Richard Smith, of Narragansett, was the son of this Richard, and thus, cousin of the second John Smith, of Nibley, who died in 1692.

There is evidence that John Smith, of Nibley, the historian, was interested in the Colony of Virginia. From Alex. Brown's Genesis of the United States, (Vol.II., 1005, et seq), we learn that as early as 1612, he invested fifty shillings in the lottery for Virginia, and some time after subscribed towards a college to be erected there. In 1618 he thought of making a plantation in Virginia, and for that purpose formed a partnership with Sir W. Throckmorton, Sir George Yardley, Richard Berkeley, and George Thorpe. The partners sent "the Margaret" of Bristol, loaded with emigrants and supplies to their plantation, "Berkeley Town and hundred," Sept. 16, 1619. John Smith was an active member and a regular attendant on the Courts of the Virginia Co. from 1621 to 1623, and on April 12, 1621, at a Virginia Court, he proposed "to have a fair and perspicuous history compiled of that Country from her first discovery to this day." He appears to have retained his interests in Virginia until his death in 1641.

Any further light upon the points here set forth will be acceptable. I may add that for many of the foregoing facts I am indebted to an American corres-

pondent.

There must be many Smiths who descend from this family, if we may judge from the pedigrees recorded in the visitations, though it would obviously be difficult, not to say impossible to trace them.

Leigh, Lancashire

W. D. PINK

The origin of this family is not at present known beyond William Smith, the grandfather of John Smyth, the antiquary. It is stated that he was of Humberston, Lincolnshire, but when we remember that there is also a Humberstone in Leicestershire, it seems at least probable that "Linc." is a clerical error for "Leic." It is unknown how John Smyth obtained his introduction to the Berkeley family, which afterwards proved so advantageous to both, but we may suggest that it may have been due to his acquaintance with the Leicestershire baronets of that name. It is a matter for regret that no account of his family from Smyth's own pen is known to be extant, as such would certainly have been of no small interest.

John Smyth's fourth son was George Smith, of Twickenham, Middlesex, M.D., who bought Topcroft in Norfolk. His grandson, George, was Sheriff of Norfolk, in 1735, and the pedigree is continued to the latter's son, William, in Fenner and Metcalf's edition of the Visitation of Gloucestershire, 1682-3. In answer to my enquiry, a Norfolk antiquary tells me that the Smiths owned Topcroft Hall and considerable property in that parish and Cringleford, until about 30 years ago, when the last representative, the Rev. ----Smith, allowed much of the property to pass into the hands of persons surrounding him, and that after his death, his heir, a Mr. Bodkin, commenced litigation to recover the property thus alienated, which resulted in a compromise. Nothing is now left of the Smiths in Topcroft, except a communion cup, presented by one of the family, and the monuments and escutcheons in the church.

W.P.W.P.

The Bibliographers manual of Gloucestershire Literature being a classified catalogue of books, pamphlets, broadsides, and other printed matter relating to the county of Gloucester of of the city of Bristol, with descriptive and explanatory notes by FRANCIS ADAMS HYETT and THE REV. WILLIAM BAZELEY. Gloucester: Printed for the subscribers by John Bellows, 1846.

References pertinent to the Smyth family papers.

Volume II.

See section on Berkeley, pp. 18-29

1673. An Act to enable the Dean and Chapter of the Cathedral Church of Bristol to exchange their Vicarage of Berkeley, in the County of Gloucester, with George, Lord Berkeley, for his Rectory of St. Michael's in Sutton Bonnington, in the County of Nottingham

1821. Berkeley Manuscripts. Abstracts and Extracts of Smyth's Lives of the Berkeleys, illustrative of Ancient Manners and the Constitution; including all the Pedigrees in that Ancient Manuscript. To which are annexed A Copious History of the Castle and Parish of Berkeley, consisting of Matter never before published; and Biographical Anecdotes of Dr. Jenner, his interviews with the Emperor of Russia, etc. By Thomas Dudley Fosbroke. London: 1821.

1880-81. The Berkeley Manuscripts and their Author--John Smyth. By James Herbert Cooke. Brist. & Glos. A. S. Trans., vol. v. pp. 212-221.

1883-85. The Berkeley Manuscripts. The Lives of the Berkeleys Lords of the Honour, Castle and Manor of Berkeley in the County of Gloucestershire. From 1066 to 1618. With a description of the Hundred of Berkeley and of its Inhabitants. By John Smyth of Nibley. Edited by John Maclean for the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society. Gloucester: Printed by John Bellows for the Subscribers. 1883-(85) 3 vols. 4to.

1887. Restoration of Parish Registers. N.& Q. Ser. 7, vol. iii, pp 344-5

pp 252-53

North Nibley

1771. An Act for confirming a Deed of Trust, dated the 31st Dec., 1770, and for the more effectual enabling the Trustees to raise the sum of £9000, for purposes therein mentioned, by Mortgage or Sale of the Freehold Estate of George Smyth the Elder, and George Smyth the Younger, Esquires, situate in the County of Gloucester. (11 Geo III. c. 78.) The Estate referred to was situate in Nibley, Berkeley and Stinchcombe.

Manual of Gloucestershire Literature. Biographical Supplement. Part II

Berkeley pp.38-53

1816. Smythe's Memoir of Lady Katherine Berkeley. Gent. Mag., vol. 86, pt.2, pp. 209-12.

1852. Smyth's MSS relating to Gloucestershire. N. & Q., Ser 1, v., 616.

Berkeley, Henrietta, (5th daughter of George 1st Earl of Berkeley. She caused a considerable scandal in 1682 by eloping with the husband of her sister mary, Lord Grey of Werke. She died unmarried in 1710.

Berkeley, George, 1st Earl of Berkeley, (son of the 13 Baron Berkeley) b. 1628; M.P. for Glos, 1654-5 7 1656-8; created Earl of Berkeley and Viscount Dursley Sept. 11, 1679; elected a F.R.S. in 1663; appointed Custos Rotulorum for Gloucestershire in Feb., 1685; d. 1698. inc. in Wood's Athenae Oxoniensis, also in Glos. N.& Q., ii, 7-10, 95. and in Dict. Nat. Biog., iv, 347-8.----author of Historical Applications and Occasional Meditations upon Several Subjects,(1666)

....the parish register of Bourton-on-the-Hill, in which the earliest date is 1568, records that Sir Thomas Overbury, Knt., was poisoned in the Tower of London, September 15, 1613; and that Sir Nicholas Overbury, Knt., who lived in the reigns of Elizabeth, James, and Charles, was buried at Bourton in 1643, the last day of May, "Hee being then about an hundred yeares old."

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Bourton-on-the-Hill Parish Register 1656-65

Baptisms

1661, May 6. "Anne, dau: of William Whittlock, Esq^r, & of
Mis Mary (Overbury), his Wife."