

GENEALOGICAL AND
PERSONAL HISTORY

OF

FAYETTE COUNTY

PENNSYLVANIA

UNDER THE EDITORIAL SUPERVISION OF

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The name Bliss is not of frequent occurrence in English history. It is supposed the family was of Norman origin and that the name was originally Blois gradually modified to Bloys, Blyze, Blysse, Blisse and in this country to Bliss. Sir John Burke's "Dictionary of Peerages" (page 74) states that the ancient house of Blois was founded in England at the coming of the Conqueror and that the founder was called Blois after the city of that name in France. Several English works on heraldry describe the coat-of-arms of one branch of the family thus: "Blisse or Blyse—Argent one a bend cottised, azure, three garbs or. Crest: A garb or guillinis. "A Display of Heraldry" (1724), p. 127, says: "He beareth, Sable a bend Vaire, between two fleur de lis or, by name of Bloys. This coat was granted or confirmed to _____ Bloys of Ipswich in the county of Suffolk by Sir William Segar." This is identical (except in color) with that now claimed and used by the American family.

The American history of the family begins with Thomas Bliss, of Belstone parish, in the county of Devon, England. Very little is known of him except that he was a wealthy land owner, that he belonged to the class called Puritans, on account of the purity and simplicity of their forms of worship, that he was persecuted by the civil and religious authorities under the direction of Archbishop Laud and that he was maltreated, impoverished, imprisoned and finally ruined in health and purse. He is believed to have been born in the decade, 1550-60, and that he died about the time his sons Jonathan and Thomas emigrated to America, 1635-40.

(II) Thomas (2), son of Thomas (1) Bliss, was born in Belstone parish, Devonshire, England, about 1580-85. He married in England, 1612-15, Margaret _____ to whom were born six children before coming to America. He endured the persecutions meted to his father and brother George and

finally was compelled to leave England. He sailed from Plymouth in 1635 with his younger brother George and their families and in due season arrived in Boston. He settled at Braintree, Massachusetts, later at Hartford, Connecticut, where he died in 1640. His widow Margaret (thought to have been Margaret Lawrence) was a woman of great force of character and after his death managed the affairs of the family with great prudence and judgment. She sold the Hartford property in 1643 and moved to Springfield, Massachusetts, thirty miles or more up the Connecticut river, a journey of seventy-five days through the forest. She purchased a large tract of land there, part of which is now Main street, Springfield, Massachusetts. She lived to see all her children grown up, married and settled in homes of their own except Hannah, who died aged twenty-three years. She died in Springfield, August 28, 1684, after a residence in America of nearly fifty years, forty of which she was a widow. Children: Ann, Mary, Thomas, Nathaniel, Samuel, of whom further; Sarah Elizabeth, Hannah and John.

(III) Samuel, son of Thomas (2) Bliss, was born in England in 1624, died March 23, 1720, aged ninety-six years. He married, November 10, 1664-65, Mary Leonard, born September 14, 1647, died 1724, daughter of John and Sarah (Heath) Leonard. Children: Hannah, born December 20, 1666; Thomas, of whom further; Mary, born August 4, 1670; Jonathan, January 5, 1672; Martha, June 1, 1674; Sarah, September 10, 1677; Experience, April 1, 1679; Mercy, July 18, 1680; Ebenezer, July 29, 1683; Margaret, September 11, 1684; Esther, April 2, 1688.

(IV) Thomas (3), son of Samuel and Mary (Leonard) Bliss, was born in 1668, died November 10, 1733. He was born, lived and died in Springfield, Massachusetts. He married Helen Caldwell. Children: Hannah, born August 12, 1699; Samuel, March 5, 1701; Martha, January, 1703; Thomas, April 20, 1704; Icabod, December 19, 1705; Rachel, September 8, 1707; Abel, February 18, 1708-09; May, October 21, 1710; Timothy, March 2, 1713; Daniel, of whom further; Aaron, 1717; Edward, June 24, 1719; Elizabeth, November, 1722.

(V) Rev. Daniel Bliss, son of Thomas (3) and Hannah (Caldwell) Bliss, was born in

Springfield, Massachusetts, June 21, 1715, died in Concord, Massachusetts, May 11, 1764. He was graduated at Yale College in 1732, ordained to the ministry, March 7, 1739, and was pastor of the Congregational church of Concord from 1738 to 1764. He was a personal friend of the great Whitefield and like him was bold, zealous, impassioned and enthusiastic in his preaching. He was one of the most distinguished of the clergy, who in his day were denominated "New lights" by their opponents, and was several times before a council on account of difficulties in doctrinal points. His last and most powerful sermon was delivered, March 11, 1764, in the presence of Rev. Whitefield, and so impressed him that he remarked "If I had studied my whole life I could not have produced such a sermon." A few days later Rev. Bliss sickened and died.

He married, July 22, 1738, Phoebe Walker, of Stratford, Connecticut, born 1713, died in Concord, July 2, 1797. Children: 1. Daniel, born March 18, 1740. 2. Phoebe, October 21, 1741; married Rev. William Emerson, pastor of the church of Christ, successor of her father as pastor of the Concord church. 3. John, July 11, 1743. 4. Thomas Theodore, of whom further. 5. Hannah, March 22, 1747. 6. John, died in infancy. 7. Samuel, born November 19, 1750. 8. Martha, November 5, 1752. 9. Joseph, July 23, 1757.

Shattuck's "History of Concord" says: "Mr. Ebenezer Hartshorn made Mr. Bliss coffin—five hundred broad headed coffin nails and five hundred small white tacks were put on the cover and gloves and jewelry were given (to the bearers) at the funeral."

(VI) Captain Thomas Theodore Bliss, son of Rev. Daniel and Phoebe (Walker) Bliss, was born at Concord, Massachusetts, May 21, 1745. He learned the trade of shipwrights, which he followed in his earlier years. He held two commissions as captain in the American army during the revolutionary war. One from the congress of Massachusetts bay, the other from the continental congress. The latter was signed by John Hancock and gave him command of a company of artillery. He was a brave but unfortunate officer. On the first campaign into Canada he was taken prisoner by the English at Three Rivers, with all his company, and was held a prisoner during the war. He

married a Miss Bartlett in Concord and died in Cambridge, Massachusetts, September 1, 1802. The Boston records show the marriage there, June 25, 1789, of a Thomas Theodore Bliss to Huldah Delano. This is believed to have been a second marriage of Captain Thomas Theodore Bliss. Children: 1. Theodore, of whom further. 2. Thomas, born February 3, 1767, died 1839; he moved to Charlestown, New Hampshire, Auburn, New York, and in 1836 to Allegan, Michigan, being shipwrecked on his way at Thunder Bay, Lake Huron; married Priscilla Howe, of Boston. 3. Eliza, married a Mr. Goff, of Maine. 4. Phoebe, married, January 1, 1797, Captain William Cunningham, of Boston. 5. Ann (or Hannah), married a Mr. McIntosh from Maine.

(VII) Captain Theodore Bliss, son of Captain Thomas Theodore Bliss, was born March 17, 1766, died March 17, 1831. He served three years as a private with Massachusetts troops during the revolution and was present at the surrender of Burgoyne at Saratoga. He was for many years captain of a vessel engaged in the merchant service, sailing from the port of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He married, July 18, 1793, Sarah Jones, of Bristol, who died in New York in the autumn of 1834. Children: 1. Theodore Edward, born at Bristol, April 26, 1794, died in New York city, January 16, 1851; married, May 19, 1823, Elizabeth Whitney, of Derby, Connecticut; no issue. 2. Sarah, died young. 3. Sarah Ann, born January 7, 1802, died September 10, 1872; married, April 26, 1827, Thomas Dean, of Boston; three daughters in 1881 were living at No. 35 West Thirty-ninth street, New York city. 4. Robert Lewis, of whom further. 5. Rosa Elizabeth, born 1806, died September 3, 1832; married in New York, December 30, 1825, Samuel Butcher, of Sheffield, England. 6. Samuel Potter, born 1808, last heard from at Evansville, Indiana, in 1836.