

# Warrens, Barbers and Indians

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**Research into the Barber family legend that Samuel Barber's mother was a sister to Joseph Warren and was abducted by Indians as a child.**

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Stories abound among descendents of Samuel Barber (c.1790-1864) suggesting that his mother was Elizabeth Warren, a sister of Gen. Joseph Warren, the Boston physician and hero of Bunker Hill. The stories are not often given credence since biographies of Joseph Warren indicate he had no sister. In addition, the only known record of Samuel's parentage, his marriage record in the courthouse at Opelousas, LA, indicates that his mother's name was Elizabeth Burroughs. Other stories feature Samuel's or his wife's (Elizabeth Barrow 1790-1863) mother stolen by Indians as a child. And Kathleen Stewartson, a great-granddaughter of Samuel, relates that a child was recovered from Indians by the Burroughs family, was later discovered to have been a member of Joseph Warren's family, and married Samuel Barber's father. Each of these stories suffers further in credibility when one considers that Boston and Roxbury, Massachusetts, had long passed their era of Indian trouble by the time Joseph Warren was born there in 1741.

I have discovered a potential source for these stories which is incomplete and differs in many details from family legend, but is strikingly close in its overall theme. The particulars are each taken from well documented sources including local histories, contemporary accounts, biographies, and published genealogies. There is no connection yet shown to our Samuel Barber, or to the Burroughs family. But there is enough evidence here to keep me, at least, digging for that missing link.

## 1.0 The Connecticut River Valley

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Thomas Barber was born in England in 1614 and came to America in 1635, settling in Hartford, in the lower Connecticut River Valley [1]. This river flows south from New Hampshire, draining western Massachusetts and central Connecticut into Long Island Sound [2]. Its broad, fertile valley proved an irresistible lure to seventeenth century farmers. Its woods were equally attractive to native Indians. The century following Thomas Barber's arrival saw countless Indian wars, but concluded with Barber descendents occupying the valley as far north as the New Hampshire border.

Among Thomas' children by his wife Jane Coggin were Josiah, born 1653, and Mary, born 1651 [1] who settled up the river in Windsor, Connecticut. Mary had married John Gillett in 1669. Gillett's family were among the earliest settlers of Windsor and nearby Simsbury, and his older brother Joseph had pushed even further north by 1671 into the newly formed town of Deerfield, Massachusetts [3].

Deerfield was founded that year by residents of Dedham, near Boston, who were granted 8000 acres of land by the General Court of Massachusetts Bay in 1651 to compensate for some Dedham land granted to Indians. In an abundance of caution, the fathers of Dedham also bargained with the Pocumtuck Indians, securing a deed to the Deerfield land in exchange for ninety-four pounds, ten shillings [2, 3]. Their title was doubly secure. But this was truly frontier territory for both Connecticut and Massachusetts. The nearest settlements to the north were in French Canada, to the west, Albany, New York. Almost immediately trouble arose as Philip, a Wampanoag Indian chief, led a series of attacks on European settlements that came to be known as King Philip's War [4].

## 2.0 Indian Wars

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In the fall of 1675 bands of Indians attacked Deerfield, burning houses, and killing one. Then, in late September, a party of 700-800 Indians under King Philip attacked a company of English soldiers and local residents under Captain Lathrop, killing ninety just outside Deerfield [3]. Among the dead was Joseph Gillett [5].

The town of Deerfield was immediately abandoned by the settlers and soon after was completely burned by Indians. The following spring an army unit from Boston, commanded by Captain Turner, joined a militia assembled of Connecticut Valley settlers. The force, numbering some one hundred sixty men included Samuel Gillett, brother to Joseph killed the previous fall, who had settled in Hatfield, barely ten miles down the valley from Deerfield. Also marching was his brother in law John Barber, oldest son of Thomas Barber, who lived in Springfield, about thirty miles down-valley. Also from Springfield were Bar-

ber's neighbors, the Stebbins, represented by Samuel and Thomas, and from Hadley was Joseph Kellogg, a near neighbor to the Gilletts. Two boys, a Gillett and a Stebbins had been kidnapped by Indians and escaped; they related the location and situation of Indian camps in the valley.

The night of May 18 the whole force moved up the valley and crept undetected within sight of the Indian encampment at the falls of the Connecticut River about five miles above Deerfield. At dawn they attacked the surprised and sleeping Indians. The result was some three hundred Indians killed, including one hundred forty who fled in canoes only to perish in the falls below. One can easily imagine the emotions of Samuel Gillett swooping into the village and revenging the death of his brother the previous fall. Could cries of "Remember Deerfield!" be heard over the sounds of gunfire like those of Texans one hundred sixty years later?

Turner suffered only one killed in this encounter. However, his retreat back to Hatfield was poorly organized and ended disastrously. Some Indians regrouped, were joined by a neighboring band, and harrassed the Turner force, splitting it. By the time they mustered in Hatfield the English numbered their dead at forty two, including Turner himself. John Barber survived this fight, which came to be known as the "Falls Fight", or "Turner's Falls". Unfortunately, Samuel Gillett was among the dead [3, 5].

The Falls Fight did not end warfare in the valley. The next five years saw continual harrassment of the nearby settlers and no serious attempt to resettle Deerfield. Samuel Gillett's widow, Hannah Dickinson, married another Hatfield man, Stephen Jennings, the following year. Five months later Hannah and two of her three children were kidnapped by Indians and taken to Canada, where they were later ransomed by Jennings.

A few years of relative peace following 1682 saw the town of Deerfield reestablished. In 1686 it was prosperous enough to build a church and to hire a pastor. Here the story grows more interesting, for the pastor they hired was one John Williams, whose sister was married to Joseph Warren, of Roxbury. And the tale includes yet more Indian wars and, yes, child abduction.

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### **3.0 Roxbury**

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Peter Warren, father of a long line of Massachusetts Warrens, was born in England in 1631 and by 1654 was working as a fisherman in Maine. By 1660 he had moved to Boston and married Sarah Tucker. Joseph Warren I, their second son was born in 1663 [6].

Joseph felt more attracted to farming than the sea so at age twenty-three in 1686 he bought eight acres with house and barn in neighboring Roxbury and moved

in. He made his living as a housebuilder, and farmed part time. The church was immediately adjacent to the Warren farm and, whether driven by religious conviction or by an attraction to Deacon Williams' twenty-two year old daughter, Joseph joined, purchasing a "seate" in 1690. Three years later he married the daughter, Deborah [7, 8].

Deborah Williams came from one of the oldest families in Roxbury; her grandfather had settled there in 1638 [3]. Her brother, John, four years older, graduated from Harvard College in 1683, studied divinity a couple of years, and in 1686, the same year Joseph Warren moved next to the church, he obtained a post as the first minister to a young frontier town in the Connecticut River valley, trying to re-establish itself after a decade of Indian trouble, Deerfield. During these closing years of the seventeenth and opening years of the eighteenth century Deborah and Joseph Warren were building a prosperous farm and raising a happy family with five children. At the same time, her brother John in Deerfield was founding a family soon to face bloodshed and tragedy beyond what we can imagine today.

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#### **4.0 The Deerfield Massacre**

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John Williams showed up for work in 1686 and within a year had married Eunice Mather, niece of Increase Mather and daughter of Eleazer Mather of nearby Northampton. These early years were prosperous, the local Indians seldom gave trouble, and by 1702 Eunice had borne ten children, seven of whom survived.

Events in North America often mirrored those in Europe. When England and France squabbled, so did their colonies. And both sides used Indian allies in their wars against the other, the Iroquois in the case of the English and the Hurons and local tribes around Montreal and Quebec in the case of the French. The Indian problems that plagued Deerfield in these years were not the result of local conflicts but of Canadian Indians travelling the three hundred miles from Canada, often with French soldiers, striking and returning [4]. The motivation for the soldiers was military, for the Indians it was booty, both human and material.

The years of the 1690's saw a succession of such raids as a result of King William's War in Europe. Most years saw at least one serious incident, and Deerfield coped by building a stockade, keeping themselves armed, and posting a constant guard. One such raid occurred in 1696, resulting in the capture of John Gillett, the son of the Joseph Gillett killed with Lathrop at Deerfield twenty-one years earlier and the nephew of Mary Barber [3]. Since the raid was particularly savage with the wife and three children of Daniel Belding also killed, Gillett's wife expected never to see him again and probated his estate. Much to her sur-

prise, Gillett showed up two years later, having been taken to Canada, then France and England [5].

Tensions increased after 1702 when yet another war broke out between France and England (Queen Anne's War). Deerfield repaired its stockade, and twenty soldiers from down the valley were garrisoned in the town. Families who had built homes outside the stockade moved inside. Nevertheless, during the night of February 29, 1704, the attack came. The guards were asleep; snow had piled against the stockade and it could easily be scaled. French and Indians poured in. Only one house was strong enough to repel the invaders. Every other house was entered and the inhabitants killed or marched away.

The Williams home was typical. Of their eight children still living (three, including twins, died young) the oldest, Eliezer, was away at school. Two, a six year old boy and a one month old girl were killed outright. The remaining five, plus John and Eunice were marched out of town as the town was set ablaze behind them. Just outside town in the morning they were overtaken by men from neighboring towns who attempted a rescue, but were driven back with nine killed [3]. Samuel Gillett, another nephew of Mary Barber and John Gillett, was among those attempting the rescue. The captives, numbering a little over a hundred at this point, were driven north. Those who were slowed by the cold or snow were killed, fifteen in all, among them Eunice Williams.

The captives were pushed even harder, some days making forty five miles, until the Indians felt safely out of reach of the English. Most families were split up. Upon reaching Canada their fates differed. The Reverend Williams was taken to Montreal and turned over to the French. Stephen, age nine, was alternately kept in Indian encampments, French settlements, and with his father in Montreal. Some were forced into slave labor (John Gillett in his earlier capture had served as a servant to nuns on a Jesuit farm), some died. They encountered other English children, victims of earlier kidnappings, who had lost the use of English and were living as Indians. Ultimately most were ransomed by the Massachusetts government, Stephen after a year and a half and the Reverend Williams after two and a half. Their friend Martin Kellogg simply ran away [3].

The Williams' daughter Eunice, age seven when captured, was being held by Mohawks who refused to ransom her at any price. The Reverend Williams himself even returned to Canada to attempt her return, to no avail. She ended up remaining in Canada all her life, marrying an Indian and raising a son and two daughters as Catholics, to the horror of Williams, the Puritan.

After the Reverend John Williams' ransoming, or "redemption", in the fall of 1706 he was taken to Boston, where he spent some time reflecting on his experience and where his life should head. He had lost his home and wife and two children. One daughter was living with the Mohawks, never to return. A son, Samuel, was still in Canada, having converted to the "popish religion" (only

temporarily, to his later relief). He delivered a sermon in which, in true Puritan fashion, he blamed his suffering on God's intent to humble the souls "which have wandered from God's path" [4]. He no doubt spent time with his family in Roxbury, where his sister Deborah's marriage to Joseph Warren had produced five children, all around the age of his own. No doubt Joseph Warren II (father of the Bunker Hill Warren), now ten years old, was very attentive as his uncle and cousins told tales of Indian captivity.

The Reverend Williams' parishioners in Deerfield sent a delegation to Boston urging his return and promising to build him a new house. He complied, and within a year in 1707 had remarried, to Abigail Allen. Soon after, he published *The Redeemed Captive Returning to Zion*, detailing his experiences and their religious significance.

Life in Deerfield continued to be a struggle against Indians, with several killings every year. In August, 1708, a scouting party of six was working north of Deerfield. In the party were Martin Kellogg, who had run away from captivity in Canada two years earlier, and Robert Barber, a son of Josiah and nephew of the oft-mentioned Mary Barber. They were fell upon by Indians and Barber was shot. Before expiring, however, he raised to his knees and shot the Indian who had shot him. Both were found dead within feet of each other. As this story was later related by one of the Indians to Stephen Williams, it was the ghost of Barber who rose to slay his slayer: "No, he is not Barber, but his ghost" [3, 4, 5]. Kellogg was once again taken captive; the other four escaped.

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## 5.0 Theories and Opinions

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This story is far from complete. Nor is there a satisfactory connection to the Joseph Warren-Samuel Barber-Burroughs stories. But there are enough similarities to allow my speculative powers to generate the following possibilities:

1. One of the Barbers in the Connecticut River valley married one of the Williams captives, or a descendent. A male descendent of this union marries a Burroughs and produces our Samuel Barber of Virginia. Then instead of the tale being "Samuel Barber's mother was a sister to General Warren and was stolen by Indians", it becomes "Samuel Barber's great-grandmother was a cousin (once removed) to General Warren and was stolen by Indians". From the references cited here, this did not seem to happen in the first generation, at least. Of the two female Williams children captured, Eunice married an Indian (Indian name "Amrusus", French name De Rogers), and Esther married Joseph Meacham.
2. One of the Barbers married one of the other Deerfield captives and produced our Samuel Barber via a Burroughs. The story becomes: "Samuel Barber's great-grandmother was stolen by Indians, along with Joseph Warren's cousins".

3. One of the Barbers married a descendent of the Gillett captives and the story is : “Samuel Barber’s great-grandmother was stolen by Indians, along with Joseph Warren’s cousins”.

In any case, these Barbers of the Connecticut Valley, descendents of Thomas Barber are worth searching to find the ancestry of Virginia’s Samuel Barber. Samuel is a very common name in this family; I found ten in four generations following Thomas. With large families living in a limited area it would be surprising if some Barbers did *not* marry into the Williams, Gillett, Stebbins, or other captives’ family.

Furthermore, I am increasingly convinced that the Bunker Hill Joseph Warren had no sister. Warren’s life and pedigree is well documented [6, 7, 8], and all the sources are in agreement on this. Nor have I found any other mention of Indian captivity besides the Deerfield incident. The two sources which may be the best authorities on this, since they were both written by Warren descendents, I have not been able to find, however [9, 10].

I’ve not found a reference to a Burroughs in any of this research.

One more tantalizing hint: a Matthew Barber and a Stephen Kellogg fought side by side at Bunker Hill. Their hometowns were given as Shelburne, only five miles from Deerfield [5].

## References

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