

The Copley-Lyman Shaker Family of Enfield, Connecticut: An Annotated Genealogy

By M. Stephen Miller

The relationship between Shaker communal families and the natural families who joined the sect is a most interesting one; yet, to date, it has received little attention in print. As a celibate sect, the Shakers depended upon converts for membership. From the time of the founding of their relatively self-contained communities in the 1780s, it was common for Believers to accept, and ultimately convert, whole families. At the entry or novitiate level of membership, these family units usually remained together, sharing with the rest of the community only work, worship, and the necessities for living. This organizational unit was called the Gathering Order. If their commitment grew and if they then chose to take on the “full gospel life,” all their property was turned over to the community and husbands and wives lived apart forever after. Their children, separated by gender, grew up in children’s houses with adult caretakers. By the 1820s, all communities were accepting large numbers of children, many of whom were orphans. This sometimes led to the establishment of a separate Children’s Order.

The major political division for all Shaker communities was the communal “family.” The families were named for their directional relationship to the central or Church Family. At Enfield, Connecticut for example, there was a South, North, East, and West Family in addition to the Church Family. My interest in the interaction of two consanguineous and communal families at the former Shaker community in my home state led me to write this essay.

The specific subject here is the story of two of the most dynamic and best-documented families in all Shakerdom: the Lyman and the Copley families at the Shaker community of Enfield, Connecticut (1790-1917). (This should not be confused with a Shaker community that existed in Enfield, New Hampshire, 1793-1923.) I will explore the interplay between these two families—their natural and communal ties—and present information not generally known about many of the individuals involved. The structure that I have chosen includes a genealogy of the two families and their non-Shaker descendants, along with historical notes, anecdotes, and observations about certain individuals. These two

families are uniquely worth studying because of their numbers and their influence on their community—both good and bad. There were no fewer than sixteen members of the Lyman family (including two by marriages to other Shakers) and twelve of the Copley family who, for some period of their lives, lived as Shakers at Enfield. Many of them also held leadership positions. It is no exaggeration to say that with the loss of members from both families—mainly by apostasy before 1890 and by death after that date—the community floundered. In 1917 it closed completely.¹

In fits and starts, over a period of many years, I have been able to document seven full generations of these families, right up to a sizeable number of living descendants, many of them still located within about ten miles of the historic Shaker settlement in Enfield. In this quest I have received help from many quarters. All of these will be acknowledged either in endnotes or in a separate section at the essay's conclusion.

In her excellent *Shaker Cities of Peace, Love, and Union*, author Deborah Burns speaks about the last will and testament made out in 1910 by one of the last Shakers living at Enfield, Sister Maria Lyman.² It is worthwhile quoting this in its entirety.

Climaxing the decades-long drama of the Copley/Lyman families' relationship with the Enfield Shaker community, this will shows that, along with the [traditional] vertical hierarchy of the Society, there existed a hidden horizontal structure, where natural family ties remained strong. Natural family ran counter to the Shaker structure and ideals, yet it played a vital part in cementing the community together. And when the Shaker ideals seemed to be eroding [as they certainly were at Enfield at this late date], the members of this particular blended family remembered, and gave preference to, their ties of blood.

The Copley Family

The patriarch of the Copley family was John W. [John William] Copley, not to be confused with his one son, John W. R. [John William Richmond] Copley. John W. was born in England in 1821 and was said to be a wealthy man.³ He was a Methodist minister as well as a printer and architect. In 1839, he married Elizabeth Richmond, who was five years his senior, in York, England. In 1852, John W. and Elizabeth Copley came



John W. Copley



Elizabeth Richmond Copley

to America, arriving at Enfield on the evening of May 4. They brought five children with them, and Elizabeth was six months pregnant with a sixth, Averill Ann. Elizabeth's mother (Hannah), two brothers (Thomas and Harry), possibly a third brother (David), and two sisters (Eliza and Hannah) also came. All but John W. joined the Shakers. He returned to England, dying in Southport in 1875. Elizabeth's siblings Hannah and Harry left after spending a little less than two years in the community. This younger Hannah then married James Tate who had emigrated from Scotland. Their third child was Caroline to whom we will return later.

Elizabeth's other sister Eliza left the community in 1864 and married Nathan Damon. Nathan's natural brother, Thomas, was a prominent member of the Enfield community, rising to the position of first elder in the ministry for the Hancock bishopric, which included Hancock and Tyringham in Massachusetts, and Enfield, Connecticut.

Elizabeth and her four daughters remained in the faith for the remainder of their lives, while her two sons were another story entirely. Matthew Thomas left the community at about the time he would have been expected to sign the Shaker covenant. He drifted west, dying in Minnesota at the age of twenty-two or twenty-three. John W. R., on the other hand, was destined to become a pivotal figure in our narrative. He was a Shaker from the time his family emigrated from England until one



Elizabeth Susannah Copley



Sarah Emily Copley



Sophia Copley



Averill Ann Copley

fateful day in 1866. I will return to John later, after looking at the four Copley daughters.

Elizabeth Susannah, the oldest daughter of Elizabeth and John W., became an eldress but died at fifty-one, an unusually young age for a Shaker adult. Her death may have been due to a self-administered morphine overdose, the result of unrequited affections for Elder George Wilcox whom she had recently nursed back to health.⁴ The next daughter, Sarah Emily, served Enfield as a trustee, acting as a liaison between the Shaker community and the outside world, especially in business matters. Their younger sister Sophia also rose to the position of eldress after many years spent caring for the younger girls in the community.⁵

The youngest child, Averill Ann, was three months from being born when her parents arrived at Enfield in 1852. In the letter cited earlier, Brother Ricardo Belden went on to say, “This youngest [Averill Ann] was always careful to let no one know that she was born among the Shakers lest someone misunderstand.” Averill Ann was sickly as a child and lame as an adult. Existing photographs of her always show her with a walking stick. She never reached a position of authority and died at the age of thirty-nine.

This summarizes the “Shaker” Copley family. Blood ties notwithstanding, the various Copley family members were distributed among the North, Church, and South Families.

The Lyman Family

The Lyman family’s roots can be traced back many generations in Massachusetts. We will concern ourselves only with those family members who have a connection with the Shaker community at Enfield. The patriarch of this group was Israel Lyman who was born near Holyoke, Massachusetts. His father was also named Israel; both worked as ferrymen and farmers and lived in South Hadley, Massachusetts. The younger Lyman’s service as a ferryman on the Connecticut River undoubtedly brought him into contact with Believers from the Enfield community who sold their goods—mainly garden seeds—up and down the river valley. He married Sarah “Sally” Moody in 1802 and she gave birth to eleven or twelve children. We know that four of those children joined the Shakers between 1835 and 1838, soon after their parents’ conversion (which was probably in 1835), and a fifth, while not a Shaker himself, had children who were Shakers. Israel’s death in 1836 may have been the precipitating

factor for some of the family to move south about twenty miles to the Enfield community.

We will look at these five children in birth order. Alonzo and his wife Amelia Moody (no known relation to Alonzo's mother) never became members, but their three sons and one of their daughters did. Amelia placed the children with the Shakers in 1842, two years after Alonzo died. The oldest child, Eli Dyer, left the Shakers in 1850, about the time that he would have signed the covenant at the age of twenty-one, and died in Kansas seven years later. Harriet Amelia and Seth Alonzo both died in the faith—she after many years of service as a trustee and office deaconess at the age of sixty-one, and he, a printer, at the age of only thirty-four. The youngest, Edward Israel, known as Samuel, also left at the age of majority in 1860. He later married Estelle McIntyre and they had a son Frank, born in 1866, and a daughter Mary, born in 1870. There is no record of Amelia and Alonzo's other daughter, Sarah Rachel, living as a Shaker, although we do not know why. She eventually married Franklin Hubbard. After placing her children at the Enfield community, Amelia herself dropped out of sight.

The pattern of young members, especially males, leaving around the time they reached majority is evident in the Copley and Lyman families, as it was in all of Shakerdom. Of all the reasons for the progressive decline of the sect in the second half of the nineteenth century, this may be the most important. The Shakers invested a great deal of time and effort in their young people in the hope that they would grow up to be long term, productive members. Unfortunately, far too often this did not happen. As historian Stephen Paterwic has made clear, this pattern of disruption and decline was set in motion in the early part of the century and only played out in the later years.⁶

Almon Lyman, five years younger than his brother Alonzo, came to Enfield after his marriage to the former Clarissa Burnett. Little is known of his time there, but he and Clarissa evidently divorced because he was out of the community by 1850 and living in Hartford. He then married a woman named Angeline (last name unknown) and lived with her and their one-year-old son in South Hadley, according to the 1860 census. Clarissa, on the other hand, died in the faith and was a key figure in the later years of the community. She was an eldress for twenty-three years, up to the time of her death—much respected, and a powerful, positive influence at a time when the community was literally falling apart. We will return to

the three children of Almon and Clarissa later.

Harvey, born six years after Almon, rapidly rose to become a South Family elder. In 1854, however, he suddenly left the community and married an eldress of the South Family, Ann White, with whom he had served in a leadership role. He and his younger brother Edward Mason, who left at the same time, set up a grocery business in Springfield, Massachusetts where there is still a busy downtown thoroughfare, Lyman Street, named after them.

Edward Mason had been a trustee at the South Family, serving alongside a female trustee, Caroline Blodgett. Most positions of authority were shared in pairs: elders and eldresses, male and female trustees, deacons and deaconesses, as long as there were enough qualified individuals available. In 1854, both Edward and Caroline apostatized, married each other, and settled in Springfield. Israel and Sally's other son, Elijah Austin, also left the community in the 1850s. Thus we have two blood brothers, Harvey and Edward, in important positions in the same Shaker family who marry two (unrelated) women in important positions in the same Shaker family. One can only imagine the turmoil that this created—and the worst was still to come!

We now return to Almon and Clarissa Burnett Lyman. When they entered the Enfield community at the West Family in 1840 they had three children: Sarah Maria (pronounced Marjah), Alden Burnett, and Clarissa Kezia (pronounced Keziah and sometimes spelled this way). Maria was born in Granby, Massachusetts, and was a girl's caretaker and trustee at the North Family for many years. When that family was closed in 1913, Maria's choices were to relocate to the Church Family (with whom she had a long-standing dispute), or to Mount Lebanon (which had transferred their closed Canaan Family sisters to Enfield a few years earlier, sparking intense feuds and rivalries), or to the Watervliet, New York Shaker community. She chose this last and she died and was buried there.

One sign of the conflicts that existed at Enfield in the early years of the twentieth century between the members who had lived there for many years and the "upstarts" from Canaan can be seen in Maria's last will and testament of 1910, referred to earlier. In this document she left her "... property of whatever kind and wherever situated to S. Emily Copley, *sole survivor with me of the covenant members* of the North Family ..." [emphasis added].⁷ She refused here to acknowledge the "Shakerness" of the more recent arrivals by trying to deprive them of a share in her estate. In reality,

this was nothing more than a formalized snub since the community held all property in common. Nevertheless, in this same document, she goes on to say that when S. Emily passes on, her property should go, in equal shares, to her five *non-Shaker* nieces and nephews—all of them Copleys! Thus a Lyman honored the Copleys, with whom she had no actual blood ties, to the exclusion of her Shaker family.

The second child of Almon and Clarissa was Alden Burnett. He was made lame by a bout with scarlet fever at the age of two and spent his adult life with the Shakers caring for farm animals, especially the horses.

Clarissa Kezia Lyman Copley

The Copley and Lyman families joined in 1866 when Clarissa Kezia



John W. R. Copley

Lyman, the third child of Almon and Clarissa, found herself six months pregnant with John W. R. Copley's child. They both left Enfield in October of 1866 and married in Springfield on November 8. While earlier defections from Enfield certainly caused shock and probably a great deal of pain, this was a full-blown scandal. In fact, later family accounts try to "cleanse" the record by noting that the wedding took place in 1865!⁸ However, the last chapter of our story begins with the birth of Sophia Amelia Copley on January 23, 1867—less than three months after her parents wed.

She was the first of five children born to the Copley's during the first eleven years of their marriage. Sophia married Joseph Watson and they had no children. To the younger generations she was always known with great affection as "Auntie Fi."

John W. R. and Clarissa Kezia's next child was William E. He married Mabel (last name unknown, possibly French) of Springfield and they had three daughters—Bernice, Averill, and Doris. Bernice had no sons and her sisters never married.



Sophia Amelia Copley
Watson, "Auntie Fi," 1896

Arthur B. was born two years after William E. He was a bookkeeper for a lumber company on Long Island and eventually its owner. He married M. Dora Styles in 1929 and they had no children.

Clarissa Emily, also known as Clara, was born four years after Arthur. She married Enfield area tobacco grower Robert James Hawthorne (also known as R. J.) in 1898. We will consider their four children shortly.

Finally, there was John M., born when Clarissa Kezia was forty-one. He became a dairy inspector, first in Connecticut, then in Vermont. He was married to Ida Church of Chaplin, Connecticut and they had one daughter, Priscilla Alden. Priscilla lived in Ithaca, New York and worked as a microbiologist at Cornell University. After Ida's death, John moved to Ithaca and remained there until he died. He was then buried with his wife back in Chaplin. His great niece, Nancy, remembers "Uncle John" as a very pleasant man who conducted his life with almost scientific precision. He used to test the milk of dairy herds and always carried his test tubes and chemicals in wooden cases that he carefully constructed himself.

It will be noted upon careful examination of the genealogy that this generation of the Copley family saw the last of the Copley males, ending the Copley name although the Copley descendants continue apace. I want to look at one more generation of this family tree—the three children of Clarissa and Robert James—for the last of them died as recently as 1980 and several of them relate to the artifacts illustrated with this essay.

Leland Robert Hawthorne was the first-born child. Like many people in the Enfield area then, and some today, he was a farmer who grew mainly potatoes and tobacco. This area is still called "The Tobacco Valley" for the leaf or "shade" tobacco grown there, a variety used as wrappers for cigars. On June 26, 1930, Leland Robert married Mildred Bell, who was born in Wisconsin and was a grade school teacher in the Enfield system. They had two children, Robert and Nancy, both of whom were consulted in the preparation of this essay.

Clarissa Sophia Hawthorne, also known as Crissy, was the second child of Robert James and Clara. She was a school principal in the town of Enfield. On December 29, 1927, she married Dr. Reginald H. Stow, a local dentist who received



Clarissa Stow, ca. 1920

his degree from the University of Pennsylvania and practiced dentistry in Hartford and Enfield. “Uncle Doc” to his relatives, Stow was eighteen years her senior. They had one adopted daughter named Elspeth.

The third child was Alma Hawthorne. She married Charles Rockwell Bridge (known as Rocky or Rock) on January 2, 1926. He was the son of a local manufacturer—part of a family who made an array of woodenwares for local markets. Packing crates for the produce of area orchards was one of their specialty items. Rocky eventually took over the company that, in later years, made the enormous wooden spools used to hold telephone wire. Alma and Charles also had one adopted daughter—Paula, also known as Polly.

Caroline Tate

There is one last Enfield member to be discussed here—Caroline Tate. Her mother Hannah Richmond (Elizabeth Copley’s sister) had come to the United States in 1852 as part of the Copley “migration” but left the



Caroline Tate, 1890s

Shakers in 1854 to marry. Caroline, born in Brooklyn, New York, was therefore the niece of the Copley matriarch Elizabeth Richmond Copley. For unknown reasons, she was left with the Shakers in 1861 at the age of two, and remained in the faith for life, eventually becoming first eldress of the Church Family at Enfield when her cousin Sophia Copley died in 1898. Caroline was a powerful presence in the final years there, but when the Enfield community finally closed in 1917, she moved to Watervliet and lived there until she died in 1937. Like Sarah Maria Lyman and her own uncle Harry, she is buried in the Watervliet cemetery.

Enfield Artifacts

Over the past thirty or so years a number of artifacts made by the Enfield Shakers and passed down through the Copley branch of the family have found their way into the marketplace. As a collector, and as the owner of a number of these “family” pieces, I have tried to follow their trail from private family holdings to public sales. Although the exact path they traveled will perhaps never be known, at least one connection is clear. This is the connection that existed from the late 1970s to early 1980s between Rocky Bridge and an antiques dealer named Hazel Hayes who was located in Somers, Connecticut (contiguous with the town of Enfield).

Some family members believe that Rocky’s wife, Alma, was entrusted with her sister Clarissa’s Shaker artifacts after the latter’s death. It is not clear, however, why Clarissa ended up with them in the first place. In any event, these aforesaid family members believe that after Alma’s death, Rocky sold a number of family effects to Hazel Hayes without their knowledge or consent. From information that Hazel passed on to me about fifteen years ago, I believe this to be the case.

In 1986, there was a public sale held at Stanton Auction Galleries in Hampden, Massachusetts, featuring many of the choicest pieces from the family. Rocky was already dead six years at that point so it is not certain who consigned these items for sale; however there is some suspicion that his four granddaughters may have done so in order to settle the estate “equitably.” (Their own mother, Rocky’s daughter Paula, had died in 1979.) With so many remnants of the proud Copley and Lyman families’ Shaker heritage now dispersed, one can only hope that these Shaker artifacts are being well cared for and shown the respect that they deserve. It is my hope that this essay will serve to encourage the present owners of these pieces to contemplate their history. Considering the size of the Enfield community, with approximately 150 to 200 members living there at any given time between 1810 and 1870, and the fact that it existed for 127 years, relatively few artifacts have survived at all. It is my dream that someday many of the objects that were once owned and used by Copleys and Lymans can be brought together in an exhibition that honors these families and their Shaker heritage.

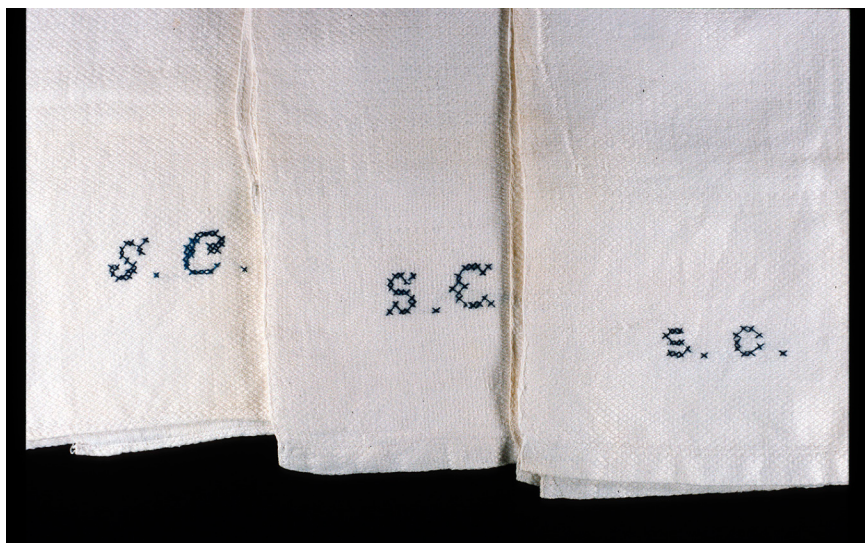
**All objects in the following illustrations are from the collection of
Miriam R. and M. Stephen Miller**



Three "bureau trays," handed down in the family, all made by Enfield, Connecticut Shakers. The largest is 8" long. They were made from butternut, cherry, walnut, and chestnut (lower left).



Spool stand, 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ " overall height, made of cherry wood. A paper label on the bottom reads "Clarissa Stow." Enfield, Connecticut Shakers made this object.



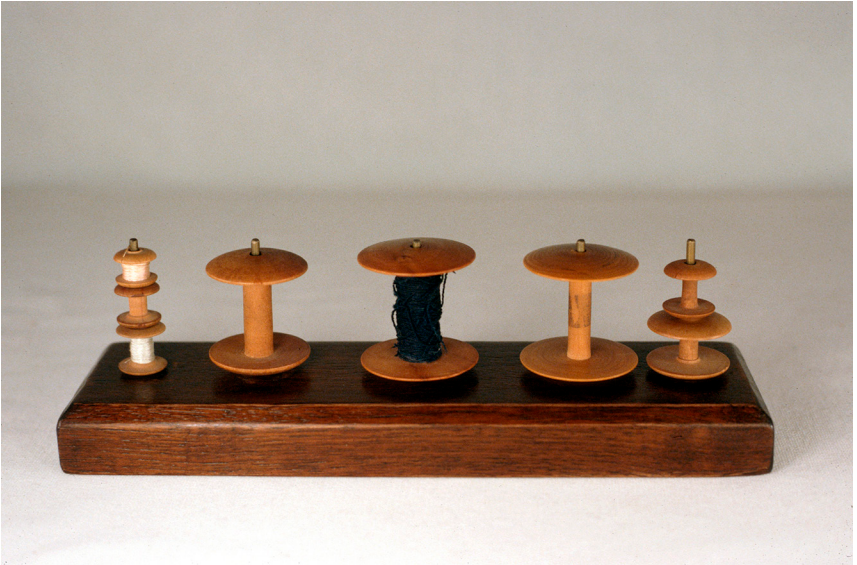
Three linen towels, initialed "S.C." for Sophia Copley



Turned box, unknown wood, 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ " diameter. Signed "Caroline Tate."



Basket, 12 ½" overall height. A tag that came with it reads, "Shaker basket from the collection of the late Clarissa Stow of Hazardville, Conn." It is not certain which Shaker community actually made this basket.



Spool stand, 10" long, walnut.



Detail of spool stand with "S. Maria L." (Sarah Maria Lyman) stamped in the base.

Endnotes

¹ The South Family had already been sold to the Cybulski family in about 1911 and the North and Church Families to the Phillips Tobacco Company in 1914. While the tobacco company began to clear the land of orchards and remove the dairy cattle, the few remaining Shakers lingered at the Church Family for three years before they moved on to the Shaker villages of Mount Lebanon and Watervliet, New York.

² Deborah E. Burns, *Shaker Cities of Peace, Love, and Union: A History of the Hancock Bishopric* (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1993), 180. So much of the information in this essay is to be found in this defining study of the Enfield community that further specific references will be omitted.

³ “The Copley Story as told by [Brother] Ricardo Belden [1874-1958] in June, 1938.” The writer of this four-page manuscript was not recorded. A photocopy of the original (whose location is unknown) is in the Steinert Folder at the library of Hancock Shaker Village, Inc., Pittsfield, Massachusetts.

⁴ This was according to her natural brother John W. R. who, later in life, was very embittered towards the Enfield community in general and Elder Wilcox in particular. Thus his account should be accepted with a measure of caution. In 1893, many years after leaving the Shakers, John W. R. (and his wife Clarissa Kezia) was actually welcomed back by some of his *blood relatives*—to the dismay of other members, including Elder Wilcox—as a farm manager. A house was built for the two across the street from the community’s property. Soon after Clarissa Kezia died, in 1897, John W. R. left the area. A cash settlement was made for his four years of service to the Shakers. See Burns for more details.

⁵ Jessie Miriam Brainard, “Mother Ann’s Children in Connecticut: The Enfield Shakers,” *The Connecticut Quarterly* 3 (1897). “[S]ister Emily Copley, one of the cheeriest little women that ever was ... also Eldress Sophia ... of both of them I would say that if you ever want to see and feel true friendliness and hospitality, just give them a visit.” (p. 472) The author goes on to remember Amelia Lyman with great fondness and then recounts all three women’s importance as excellent caretakers of young Shaker girls.

⁶ M. Stephen Miller, *From Shaker Lands and Shaker Hands* (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 2007). Stephen Paterwic wrote a long introductory essay, “Who Were the Shakers?” which explores this matter in some detail. (Paterwic was a prime source of information—some of it rather arcane—about the Copleys and the Lymans. He served as the critical “reader” of this essay, and was a diligent copy editor as well.)

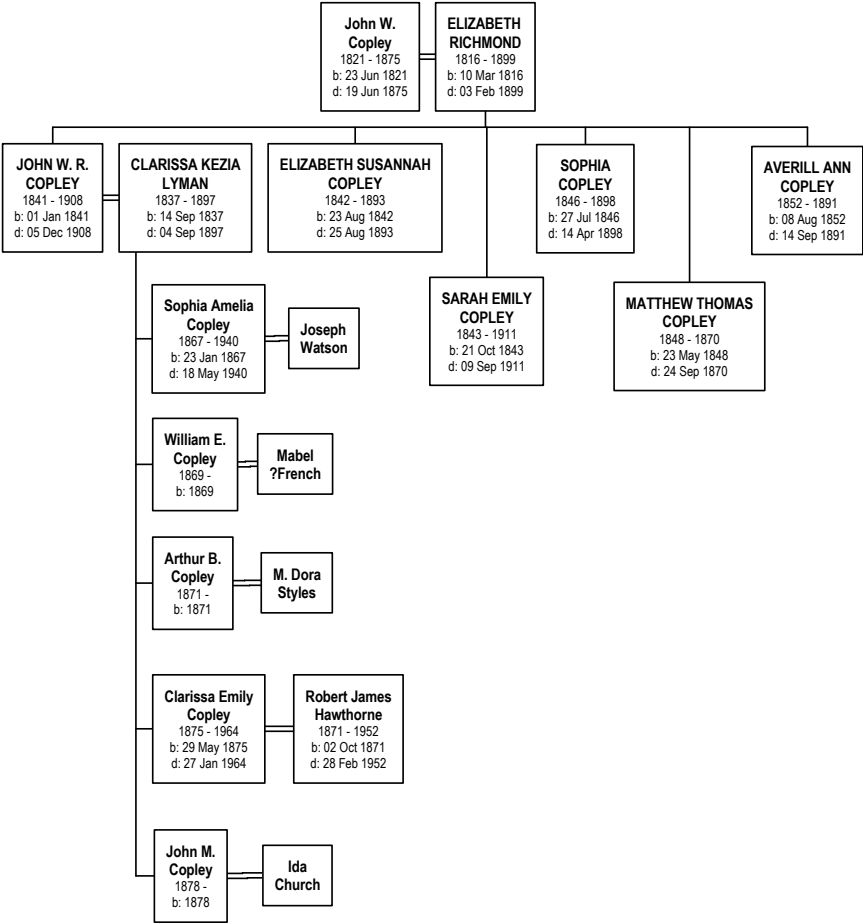
⁷ A photocopy of this document may be found in the library at Hancock Shaker Village, Inc., Pittsfield, Massachusetts.

⁸ A family Bible, presently in the possession of a Hawthorne family descendant, records this date as 1865, but official marriage records in the Springfield town hall confirm the true date as 1866.

Genealogical Charts

The following three genealogical charts are schematic representations of the Copley and Lyman families. The first displays three generations of Copleys; and the second, three generations of Lymans. Both of these charts end at the time John W. R. Copley marries Clarissa Kezia Lyman. The third chart begins with this marriage and displays their non-Shaker descendants.

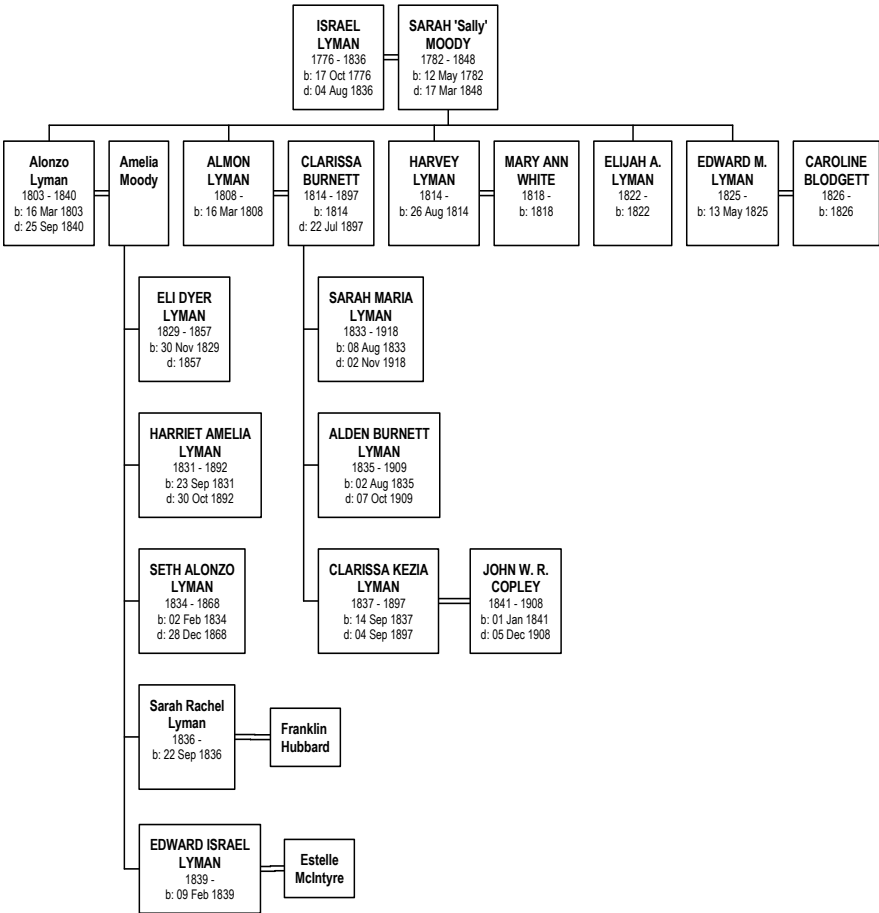
Descendants of John W. Copley and ELIZABETH RICHMOND



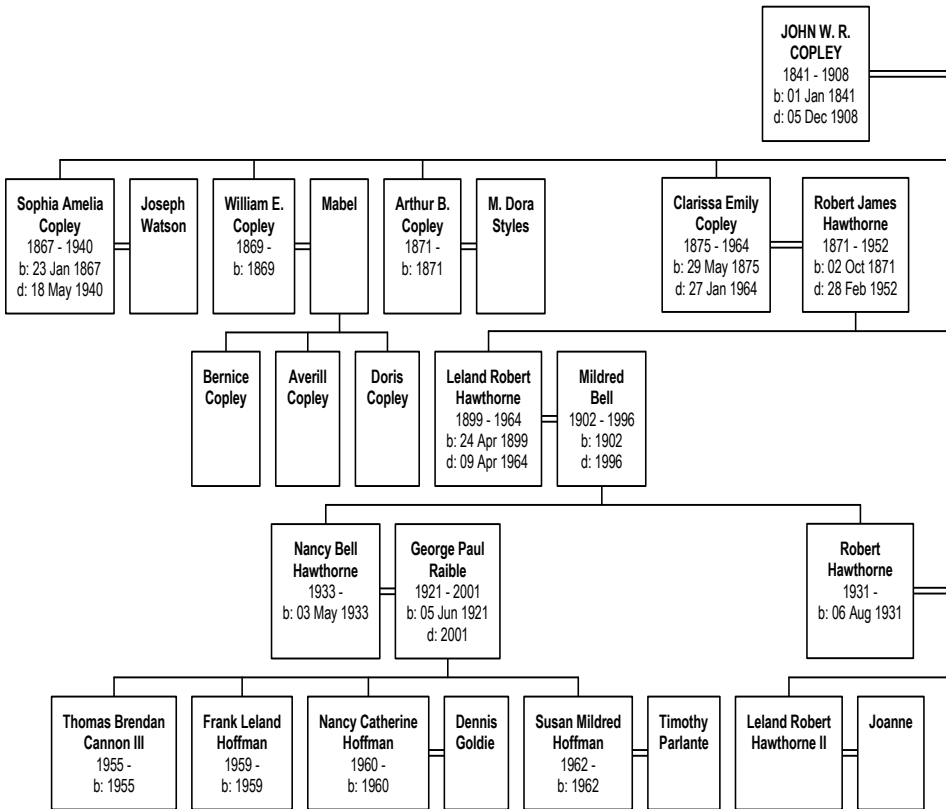
In these charts, names in uppercase letters indicate persons who spent at least a portion of their lives as Shakers. All of these Shakers began communal life in Enfield, Connecticut, although several eventually ended up at the Watervliet, New York community.

In compiling this genealogy I have found several instances of discrepancies in birth dates and the spelling of names. What I present here are the most logical and/or consistent examples of these.

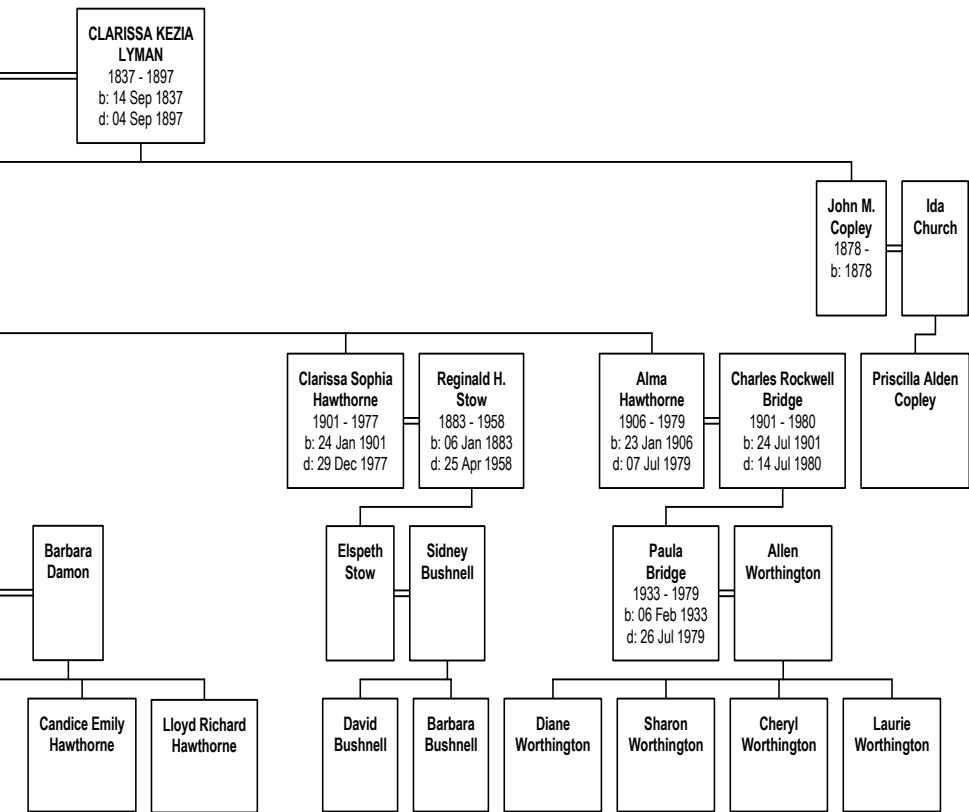
Descendants of ISRAEL LYMAN and SARAH MOODY



Descendants of JOHN W. R. COPLEY



and **CLARISSA KEZIA LYMAN**



Acknowledgements

In addition to the sources cited above, I want to acknowledge two present-day descendants for their enthusiastic support of this project, Nancy Bell Hawthorne Raible and Joanne Hawthorne. In addition to answering numerous questions about their family, they granted me permission to make my own copies of their original family photographs and to reproduce them here. I am extremely grateful to them both.

Long-time Enfield resident Ed Allen added valuable information, as he knew many of the people named in this essay. Over the years my friend Ruth Von Euw of Rockville, Connecticut sent me useful information about the Enfield Shakers. Christian Goodwillie, curator of collections at Hancock Shaker Village, was his usual helpful self in pointing me towards their library material related to this subject. Finally, my wife Miriam was invaluable, both for her unwavering support of my many Shaker interests and for her outstanding computer skills.

Images of the Shaker Lymans are difficult to come by. There is one of Amelia reproduced in the catalog *The Shakers: An Exhibition Concerning Their Furniture, Artifacts and Religion with emphasis on Enfield, Connecticut, Hartford, Connecticut, November 7-11, 1975* ([Hartford]: Women's Auxiliary of the United Cerebral Palsy Association of Greater Hartford, 1975). Regrettably, there are no known portraits of Clarissa Kezia Lyman Copley.

— M. Stephen Miller