A Further Clue to the English Origin of William\(^1\) Godfrey of Watertown, Massachusetts, and Hampton, New Hampshire, and the Name of His First Wife

Gregory J. Weinig

William\(^1\) Godfrey of Watertown, Massachusetts, and later of Hampton, New Hampshire, has long been known to have had at least two wives. The first had died by not long after William's arrival in Watertown and was the mother of his son John. The published version of the colonial record naming this earlier wife as “Sarah” is now known to have erred — albeit understandably — in its transcription of her very uncommon first name. That mistake, in turn, apparently led a later writer to disbelieve an English record also identifying her by her correct first name. Both errors have no doubt obscured further information about the couple in other English records.

Among the entries found in the notarial records of William Aspinwall is a power of attorney that William Godfrey gave to Anthony Lawrence of London on 22 June 1648, relating to an inheritance of William's son John Godfrey from William's deceased wife “Sarah.” The published version of Aspinwall's records gives this entry as follows:\(^1\)

\[\text{22 (4) 1648 Wm Godfrey of Watertowne in N: England Guardian unto John his sonne & Sarah his late wife. did make &c: M' Antonie Lawrence of London linnen Drap. at the boares head in gracious streete his true & lawfull att: &c: to aske &c: of the Executo's of the last will & testament of M's Key of Wooborne in Bedfordshire deceased a certaine legacie of ten pounds bequeathed unto John his sonne, & of the receipt to give acquittance &c: also to compound &c: to appeare in any Court &c: there to require law aide &c: to doe say pursue implead &c: wth power to substitute one Atturney or more &c: Ratifyeing &c.}\]

Genealogical Dictionary of Maine and New Hampshire says that the will referred to was that of a “Mrs. Betteris Key” of Woburn, Bedfordshire, a “kinswoman” of William's wife.\(^2\) An Internet search of this information revealed various March 2009 postings regarding the family of this “Mrs. Betteris Key.”\(^3\) The author of these postings, Ian Massey-Crosse of Wincanton, England, provided evidence that the testatrix was Mrs. Beatrice (Barnes) Kay/

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\(^1\) A Volume Relating to the Early History of Boston Containing the Aspinwall Notarial Records from 1644 to 1651 (Boston: Municipal Printing Office, 1903), 132, which notes that the entry in question is on page 112 of the original.


Kaye/Key, widow of Peter Kay. Beatrice’s will was dated 19 March 1641[4] and proved 20 April 1642.[4] Mr. Massey-Crosse very kindly forwarded a scanned copy of the will. He also reported that although Beatrice and Peter married in Woburn in 1582, Beatrice’s origins could not be further traced in that locale, while Peter seems to have been from the area of Huddersfield, Yorkshire.[5]

The will, however, does not name Beatrice’s relative as “Sarah” Godfrey. Instead, it quite clearly identifies her as “Luke” Godfrey. The specific wording of the bequest reads, “Item I give unto my kinsewoman Luke Godfrey and to her Children the Sume of Tenn poundes to be devided amongst them and to be paid within One yeare after my decease, yf itt bee demanded.”[6] The will also named “Barbara Lawrence my grandchild the wife of Anthony Lawrence,”[7] which explains why William Godfrey gave power of attorney to Anthony Lawrence to collect the inheritance.

A “parent search” was then done on FamilySearch.org for a couple named William and Luke Godfrey. A John Godfrey, son of William and “Lucas,” was baptized in the parish of St. Augustine Watling Street, London, on 31 January 1629/[30]. Three years later, an “Isaack” Godfrey, also son of William and “Lucas,” was baptized in the same parish on 5 March 1632/[3], and was buried in that parish on 11 February 1635/[6]. These entries seemed promising not only because of the chronology, but also because William Godfrey’s oldest child by his later marriage to Margery (_____ Webster was a son named Isaac.

These FamilySearch.org entries cite batch numbers that in turn refer to the actual parish registers of St. Augustine Watling Street. The registers were then reviewed.[8] They confirm John’s baptism on the “laste day of Januarie” 1629/[30], Isaac’s baptism on 5 March 1632/[3], and the latter’s burial on 11

4 Will of Betteris Kay, Widow of Woburn, Bedfordshire, Prerogative Court of Canterbury Wills, 43 Cambell PROB 11/189/47; Archeaconry Court of Bedford, original wills, Box 27–28, 1640–1644 [FHL 1,066,809].
5 Emails from Ian Massey-Crosse to the author dated 10 and 12 December 2011.
6 Will of Betteris Kay [note 4]. “If it be demanded” was a stock phrase that at the time suggested the legatee was not living in England.
7 Ibid. Incidentally, Luke Godfrey was the only relative in the will designated as a “kinswoman.” All other relatives appear to have been Beatrice’s children, children-in-law, or grandchildren; various godchildren and even a servant of Beatrice’s daughter were also designated to receive bequests. As a guess, Luke Godfrey was a niece or grandniece of Beatrice (Barnes) Kay, who married Peter Kay in Woburn on 25 June 1582 (Parish Registers for Woburn, Bedfordshire, 1558–1963 [FHL 0,952,420]), and had several married grandchildren when she signed the will. A list of the Kay children, baptized between 1583 and 1601, is given in Walter Lee Sheppard, Jr., “William Godfrey and Robert Keyes of Watertown, Mass., and Elsewhere,” The American Genealogist 46 (1970:150–154 (the proposed connection to Robert Keyes is shown to be incorrect at 65 [1989]:12).
8 Searching via FamilySearch.org for sixteenth century Barnes baptisms in Woburn, a John Barnes had seven children baptized there from 1562 to 1572, while a Richard Barnes had three children baptized there from 1592 to 1597. Searching the same source for sixteenth century Barnes marriages in Woburn, aside from Beatrice’s 1582 marriage to Peter Kay, there is the marriage of a Joan Barnes to a “Jn Dogget” on 8 May 1581, and then the marriage of a Richard Barnes to Margery Wrey on 24 November 1591, who is probably the same Richard who had children baptized at Woburn from 1592 to 1597. Possibly Joan, Beatrice, and Richard were older children of the John Barnes who had children baptized from 1562 to 1572. If so, presumably either their baptisms pre-dated the Woburn parish registers (which begin in 1558) or they were baptized in another parish.
8 St. Augustine Watling Street Parish Registers 1559–1663 [FHL 0,374,420].
February 1635 — each of the three records referring to the child as the “Sonne of William Godfrey” and “Lucas his wife.” Additionally, records of burials of two stillborn sons of William and “Lucas his wife” were also found, dated 26 December 1631 and 20 April 1635. Finally, the burial of “Embrio of William Godfrey & Lucas his wife” was dated 12 November 1636.[9] No burial record was found for Lucas/Luke herself, and no marriage record was found for William and Lucas/Luke.

When combined with Beatrice Kay’s will’s clear reference to “Luke Godfrey,” these parish register entries match up very well with what is known about the family of William Godfrey of Watertown and Hampton. The two baptisms, and the death of the younger son Isaac and his mother Lucas, would leave John Godfrey as the sole heir of the legacy from Beatrice Kay. John was about 48 years old in July 1680,[10] yielding an approximate birthdate of 1632. A baptism (and presumably, birth) in early 1629/30 would put him at age 50 in July 1680, only two years off. The St. Augustine Watling Street records concerning the son Isaac, meanwhile, provide more circumstantial evidence that the family from this parish was the same as the Watertown/Hampton family. As noted previously, the oldest child of William Godfrey by his second wife, Margery (_____) Webster, was also named Isaac, born 15 April 1639 in Watertown.[11] Either he was named for his deceased older half-brother, or both were named for some other common relative. Beatrice’s leaving a legacy to her kinswoman Luke Godfrey and children in her 1641[2] will — even though William Godfrey was married to his later wife Margery by the time of the younger Isaac’s birth on 15 April 1639 — suggests that Lucas/Luke must have survived at least to the time of departure from England. Had she died before then, in England, Beatrice surely would have known of her death.

In 1909 an article by Elizabeth French in the Register addressed the problem of Beatrice (Barnes) Kay’s will.[12] The will was transcribed in that article. Although the name of Beatrice’s kinswoman was correctly transcribed as “Luke” (with [sic] added within the transcription), either the transcriber or the writer/editor of the piece included a footnote after the bequest’s appearance in the transcription, which reads “This clause should probably read: To my kinswoman late Godfrey, her children, etc.”[13]

Despite the [sic] designation in the transcription, the person who added the footnote to the 1909 Register article was understandably skeptical that Beatrice’s kinswoman was really named Luke. This skepticism may well have been at least partly attributable to the knowledge that the published version of

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[9] The entry seems quite clearly to read “Embrio,” and in addition, unlike all other baptismal records from this era within the St. Augustine Watling Street parish registers, it does not identify the child as either a son or a daughter of the parents. This was probably a miscarriage that occurred too early to determine the child’s gender.


[13] Ibid., emphasis added.
Aspinwall’s notarial records had called William’s wife “Sarah.” To determine whether the designation “Sarah” might be a mistranscription of Aspinwall’s original record, a scanned image of the original page from his notary book was obtained. Viewing the original makes it easy to see how the name was read as “Sarah.” However, it is clear that Aspinwall actually wrote the name in his notarial record as “Lucas.”

Certain features of the record explain why the transcriber of the published volume of Aspinwall’s records read “Lucas” as “Sarah.” First, the name appears in smaller writing than most of the rest of the record, because it was written in an interlineation (which is not indicated in the published version). Second, that interlineation is squeezed near the top right corner of the leaf, next to the binding (because it is the left-hand leaf), and it would therefore be difficult to read the name in a straight line without flattening the leaf near the binding. Third, misreading capital “L” as capital “S” is a common error when reviewing handwritten records. Fourth, the next three letters “uca” can certainly be read as “ara” easily enough, particularly in light of the previous point and the next point. Finally, as also seen in other words in the original record, Aspinwall wrote his lower case “s” in a manner by which it could easily be mistaken for a lower case “h.” Putting all these elements together makes it understandable why the transcriber read “Lucas” as “Sarah.”

To determine the frequency of this woman’s correct name, baptisms of both “Lucas” and “Luke” were searched on FamilySearch.org during the period 1580–1620 in England. After filtering the results for females, the same 43 hits resulted from both searches. Only three of these hits were females baptized with the specific name “Lucas.” Among these three was the baptism of a Lucas Warren, daughter of “Richarde” and “Katheren,” baptized 10 October 1606 in the parish of St. Helen Bishopsgate, London. A 1606 birth and baptism would put this woman at age 23 when John Godfrey was baptized in 1629[30], and St. Helen Bishopsgate is less than a mile from St. Augustine Watling Street. Both factors make further investigation of this family worthwhile.

Another potentially interesting baptism from this search is that of “Lucike” Kaye, baptized 10 October 1593 in Kirk Merrington, County Durham. However, no parents are listed in the FamilySearch.org results. Kirk Merrington is about 70 miles from Huddersfield, Yorkshire (Peter Kay’s apparent place of origin) and about 230 miles from London. This woman would have been between 36 and 41 during the five known pregnancies of Lucas Godfrey, while the London records concerning Lucas and William seem to suggest that they were a younger couple.

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14 See note 1.
16 Searching for a possible analog marriage on FamilySearch.org revealed the marriage of Richard Warren and Catherine Richardson in the same parish of St. Helen Bishopsgate on 30 September 1604. A “parent search” on FamilySearch.org for a Richard Warren as the father, and a Katherine as the mother, for the years 1580–1640 revealed not only the 10 October 1606 baptism of their daughter Lucas Warren, but also baptisms on 8 January 1609 for a daughter Elizabeth Warren and on 9 October 1611 for a son Richard Warren.
In addition to the three “Lucas” hits and “Lucike” Kaye, the FamilySearch.org search also revealed (apparently) 39 other similarly-named females such as “Luc,” “Luke,” “Lucwes,” “Luces,” and “Luceus.” Some of these may be mistranscriptions, or Latinizations of, or simply odd ways of rendering the name “Lucy.”

Marriages for persons named “Lucas,” for the period 1590–1635, were also searched on FamilySearch.org, again filtering the results for females. This time only two distinct results for a female specifically named “Lucas” appeared, neither being the same as any of the three who had been found in the baptismal search. Neither did those two results, nor the 40 others representing apparently similar variants, match up well with Lucas Godfrey as to chronology or location. In other words, none of these women married men surnamed “Godfrey,” nor did any of them marry, in or near London or Woburn, far enough in advance of John Godfrey’s 1629[/30] baptism to leave time for a hypothetical later-widowed bride to marry William Godfrey in the interim.

The St. Augustine Watling Street parish registers did reveal other potential leads regarding William. They contain seven other Godfrey baptisms and three Godfrey burials, although all of these records date from 35–50 years before John Godfrey’s 1629[/30] baptism.[17] Interestingly, the father’s name for all seven baptisms was Isaac, a name now known to belong to sons of William by both of his marriages. None of the seven baptized children of this older Isaac Godfrey, however, was named “William.” Moreover, the baptisms date between 1579 and 1588. Assuming that John was William’s first child, that William married Lucas/Luke as his first wife not long before John’s baptism in 1629[/30], and that William was of typical age for such a first marriage, we might expect William to have been born more likely in the period 1595–1605, and probably toward the later end of that range. Lacking at this time any record of William before 1629[/30] and any record of the older Isaac’s family after 1595, it is unclear at present whether the residence of the older Isaac’s family in the St. Augustine Watling Street parish was simply a coincidence, or instead they were actually close relatives of William.[18]

There was also one possibly relevant Godfrey entry several years after the births and burials of the children of William and Lucas/Luke Godfrey. A “Mrs” [blank space] Godfrey” was recorded as dying on 6 July 1647 and being buried on 7 July “at Mercers Chappell.” Could this be the mother — possibly the

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[17] The seven baptisms, each identified as a son or daughter of “Isack” or “Isaack” Godfrey, and none listing the mother’s name, were “Ruben” and “Beniamyn,” each given a separate baptismal entry on 8 October 1579; “Michaell,” 30 September 1583; “Isabell,” 6 December 1584; Mary, 14 February 1585[/6]; Elizabeth, 24 September 1587; and Anne, 17 November 1588. The three burials are for a Mary Godfrey, 16 August 1589; Elizabeth Godfrey, 7 September 1591; and Benjamin Godfrey, 15 September 1595. For the burials of Mary and Elizabeth, while there was of course a child of each of those names in the family of this Isaac Godfrey, no age or parentage is listed for either burial, so it is possible that one of them (or, though very improbable, both) was or were for a wife or wives of this Isaac Godfrey, rather than a daughter or daughters.

[18] Searching on FamilySearch.org for children of anyone named Isaac Godfrey in England, during the period 1570–1610, revealed only the aforementioned seven children baptized at St. Augustine Watling Street. Searching the other way, for individuals named William Godfrey born between 1585 and 1615, revealed dozens of candidates in England and several in London, but none with a father named Isaac.
widowed mother — of William Godfrey? Lacking a first name for this woman, and lacking any other Godfrey entries in the registers for this parish, makes it impossible to conclude anything at this point; rather, this entry is mentioned in case it might be a clue for further research.

In any event, assumptions really cannot be made one way or the other about the frequency of Lucas/Luke Godfrey’s first name, except to say that it was uncommon for females. Care should be taken not to err in the other direction, however, by applying “name's the same” logic to, for example, the Lucas Warren baptism in London in 1606 (despite the age and location being quite suitable) or the Lucike Kaye baptism in County Durham in 1593 (despite the last name seeming promising). At the same time, Lucas/Luke’s name is rare enough for females that it may provide leads for further research not only about her own family origin, but also that of her husband William.

Genealogical Summary

**William**¹ **Godfrey**, whose earliest known record was the 31 January 1629/30 baptism of his son John in the parish of St. Augustine Watling Street, London, may have been related to the earlier Isaac Godfrey of that parish, who had seven children baptized there (though none named William) — and either two children and a wife, or three children, buried there — during the years 1579–1595. William may also have been related to the “Mrs [blank] Godfrey” who died on 6 July 1647 and was buried “at Mercers Chappell” on 7 July 1647.

William married at least twice. His first known wife was **Lucas/Luke _____**, named as a “kinswoman” in the 1641/2 will of Mrs. Beatrice/Betteris (Barnes) Kay/Key of Woburn, Bedfordshire. At present, the last known record in England of either William or Lucas/Luke was the burial of their “Embrio” on 12 November 1636 at St. Augustine Watling Street. Given that William’s oldest child by his next marriage was born in Watertown in April 1639, almost two years before the bequest in Beatrice Kay’s will, Lucas/Luke surely survived to the time of departure, and died either on the crossing or in New England.

William married [second?], probably in Watertown, Massachusetts, **Margery**² (_____), probably in Watertown, Massachusetts, **Margery**² (_____) **Webster**, widow of Thomas³ Webster, who was buried in Ormesby St. Michael’s, Norfolk, 30 April 1634.¹⁹ She had immigrated to Massachusetts with her son Thomas² Webster, who was baptized in Ormesby St. Michael’s 20 November 1631.²⁰ Though no record of William’s marriage

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² Brown, “Webster Family” [note 19], states that a Thomas Webster was baptized in Ormesby St. Michael’s on 20 November 1631, while another Thomas Webster was baptized on 1 August 1634 and buried 3 August 1634, each apparently a son of Thomas. Jones, “Settlers from Ormesby St. Margaret” [note 19], suggests that the child buried on 3 August 1634 may not have actually been named Thomas, and that his baptismal record should have read “son of Thomas” rather than “Thomas.” While Jones’s supposition would make sense (because it would remove the difficulty of Thomas and Margery Webster having two sons named Thomas), his work on the Ormesby families should be used with caution. See Joy Wade Moulton, “Some Doubts About the English Background of the Moulton Family,” *Register* 144 (1990):245–263 (comments on pages 245 and
to Margery has been found, their son Isaac was born in Watertown 15 April 1639. They later moved to Hampton, New Hampshire, where William died on 25 March 1671, “one of the Deacons of ye Church.”[21] He left a will dated 2 October 1667, proved 11 April 1671, mentioning wife Margery; son Isaac Godfrey; son-in-law Webster; son John Godfrey; daughter Sarah Godfrey; and daughter Deborah Godfrey. His wife and son Isaac were to be executors.[22] Margery married [third?], in Hampton 14 September 1671, John1 Marion/Marrian, father of her son Isaac’s wife Hannah.[23] Margery died in Hampton 2 May 1687, aged between 80 and 90.[24]

Children of William1 and Lucas/Luke (_____ ) Godfrey:


  ii. STILLBORN son, bur. St. Augustine Watling Street 26 Dec. 1631.

  iii. ISAAC GODFREY, bp. St. Augustine Watling Street 5 March 1632[3]; bur. there 11 Feb. 1635[6].

  iv. STILLBORN son, bur. St. Augustine Watling Street 20 April 1635.

  v. “EMBRO,” presumably a miscarriage that occurred too early to determine the child’s gender; bur. St. Augustine Watling Street 12 Nov. 1636.

Children of William1 and Margery (_____ ) (Webster) Godfrey:


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[25] Noyes, Libby, and Davis, *Genealogical Dictionary of Maine and New Hampshire* [note 2], 268, says John was about 48 in July 1680, evidently based on List 397a cited on p. 56.


NOTE: At the end of the sketch of William Godfrey in Genealogical Dictionary of Maine and New Hampshire[39] are mentioned “Also adopted ch: Nathl. Smith and sister.”[40] These were apparently Nathaniel and Ann Smith, children of Nicholas Smith of Exeter, New Hampshire, whose mother (name unknown) died sometime in the mid-1660s.[41] The children were then placed with William Godfrey until his death in 1671; they are not mentioned in his will. Nathaniel then followed William’s widow Margery to the household of her new husband John Marion, while Ann apparently went to the household of John[1] Clifford.[42] Nathaniel was born 9 June 1660, and was dead by 31 July 1680 when an inquest was held, at which he was found to have drowned.[43] Ann was born 8 February 1663 and married Israel[2] Clifford.[44]

Gregory J. Weinig is an attorney in Wilmington, Delaware, concentrating his practice on trust and estate matters. He may be reached at gregoryweinig@gmail.com.


31 Noyes, Libby, and Davis, Genealogical Dictionary of Maine and New Hampshire [note 2], 269; Watertown Records [note 11], 10.
32 Sanborn and Sanborn, Vital Records of Hampton [note 21], 1:118.
34 Noyes, Libby, and Davis, Genealogical Dictionary of Maine and New Hampshire [note 2], 151, 269; Sanborn and Sanborn, Vital Records of Hampton [note 21], 1:20.
35 Noyes, Libby, and Davis, Genealogical Dictionary of Maine and New Hampshire [note 2], 269.
39 Noyes, Libby, and Davis, Genealogical Dictionary of Maine and New Hampshire [note 2], 269.
40 Noyes, Libby, and Davis, Genealogical Dictionary of Maine and New Hampshire [note 2], 269; John Demos, Entertaining Satan: Witchcraft and the Culture of Early New England (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 27–30. Ann Smith and others were involved in accusations that John Godfrey’s infant child was “murdered by witchcraft” in July 1680.
41 Noyes, Libby, and Davis, Genealogical Dictionary of Maine and New Hampshire [note 2], 269, 646.
42 Demos, Entertaining Satan [note 40], 27–30.
43 Noyes, Libby, and Davis, Genealogical Dictionary of Maine and New Hampshire [note 2], 75, 646.
44 Noyes, Libby, and Davis, Genealogical Dictionary of Maine and New Hampshire [note 2], 151, 646; Davis, Massachusetts and Maine Families [note 33], 1:287–288.