

Family's No. 1 ancestor shrouded in mystery

Woodworth clan finds controversy, even over spelling of their last name

The Woodworth clan knows that Walter Woodworth was their first ancestor in the United States. But the rest of the story is less clear. Walter Woodworth was born in England in 1612 and died in Scituate in 1686.

One legend has it that he came to America on the "Mary and John" in 1630, one of eleven ships bringing supplies to the Puritans in Plymouth.

Another story says that he arrived in Boston with the Rev. John Lathrop, Scituate's first pastor, in September 1634. But that's six months after his name was first recorded in Plymouth, according to the 1988 book "The Woodworth Family of America."

Regardless, there's no record of Woodworth's name on any of the ships that sailed from England to the colonies in the 17th century, the book says.

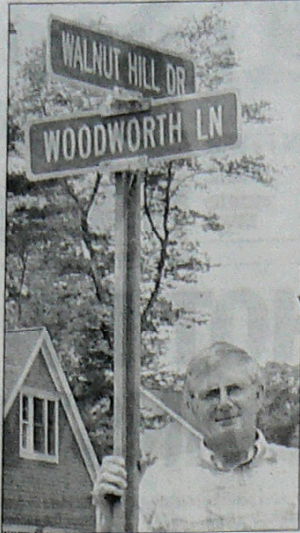
He may have come to the country as an indentured servant to pay for his travel expenses — some records refer to him as "a servant," and others say that in 1640 he became a freeman. In 1645 he was appointed surveyor of highways in Scituate, which means he helped lay out the town's roads.

Woodworth owned property on Kent Street across from Meeting House Lane and on First Herring Brook near Stockbridge Mill. The Old Oaken Bucket homestead, which his great-great-grandson Samuel made famous, is on property he owned as well.

Woodworth was married and had 10 children at the time of his death. He is believed to be buried in the Men of Kent cemetery near the harbor in Scituate. Even the last name Woodworth is uncertain. Woodworth himself couldn't write and signed his name by mark, according to the 1988 book by Jeanette Woodworth Behan. His will and some records list his name as Woodward, Woodart or Woodworth.

Story has it that Walter Woodworth's support of a controversial Puritan pastor may have caused family members who disagreed to change the name to Woodworth, according to information from the Public Archives of Nova Scotia on file at the Scituate Historical Society. One son, who was the executor of the will, signed his name Woodworth.

— DIANA SCHOBERG



Marvin Woodworth next to a street sign in Scituate on property once owned by Walter Woodworth in the 1600s. It was known as Walter Woodworth Hill, and later as Walnut Tree Hill.



Paul Woodworth, right, and his father, Victor John Woodworth Jr.



Sherrye Woodworth is spearheading the Woodworth family DNA project.



Donald Woodworth's wife, Sherrye, got him interested in genealogy.



Marvin Woodworth hosts a Woodworth family Web site.



Larry Phelps' great-grandmother was a Woodworth.

DNA testing reveals their roots

■ FAMILY TREE
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forefront, adding a new twist to people's insatiable search for roots, say genealogy experts.

In December the National Genealogical Society in Arlington, Va., published a special edition of its quarterly magazine dedicated to Genealogy and Genetics, said Diane O'Connor, executive director of the group. And for the past three years, national conferences have all featured speakers on genetics, O'Connor said. "It has great value for helping you identify groups," she said. "But it's never going to be a standalone genetic tool. It's always going to have to be combined with traditional genealogical testing methods."

Researchers have announced in recent months startling discoveries they've made using similar genetic techniques. One found that 40 percent of all Ashkenazi Jews are descended from just four women. Another suggested that up to 3 million men alive today could be descended from one Irish king. And Harvard professor Henry Louis Gates hosted a public television special that aired this month tracing the roots of several prominent African Americans using DNA analysis.

Sherrye Woodworth became interested in genealogy when, as a college student in the 1970s, she looked at an early census for a history class.

"There on the very first page were my great grandparents!" she wrote in an e-mail. "I was hooked."

She traced her own pedigree — her maiden name is Luther, and she is a Woodworth by marriage — and started in on her husband's.

She discovered Donald's lineage the old-fashioned way — through birth, death and property records — and began corresponding with the Woodworth clan online. She launched the Woodworth surname DNA project in December. Seven people so far have asked for kits to be tested. Their results are due back later this month.

Participants use a soft brush to remove loose cheek cells and then send a swab to a DNA testing company (the one the Woodworths are using is called Family Tree DNA). The company compares the DNA on the Y-chromosomes of one male Woodworth to another.

Some parts of the Y-chromosome — sex chromosomes



Samuel Woodworth, born in 1784 in Scituate, was an author and playwright known for the poem "The Old Oaken Bucket." He was the great-great-grandson of Walter Woodworth.

that are passed from father to son — move relatively unchanged from generation to generation. By comparing how similar these parts are between two individuals, experts are able to estimate how likely it is that they're related within a certain number of generations. Only men are used in the DNA testing because both their Y-chromosomes and their surnames are passed from generation to generation.

The process costs from \$99 to \$289, depending on the specificity of the test and one's affiliation with a surname project like the Woodworths have.

The Woodworth family is using participants who have already traced their roots on paper, and their DNA will provide standards for others whose lineage is more muddled to compare themselves to.

"It's like opening Pandora's box — you find out more and more," said Larry Phelps, a Washington, D.C., treasury department worker whose great-grandmother was a Woodworth. "I thought the DNA thing is cool because you can actually check."

In the end, though, it is really a big deal being related to Walter Woodworth? History has it that he was a surveyor who immigrated from England to Scituate in the 1630s and laid out the town's early roads.

Marvin Woodworth, a 68-year-old retired Air Force engineer from Oklahoma, theorizes that the reason so many people seem interested in Walter is that he's where the treasure hunt stops.

While they know Walter came from England, they don't know where in England he was from. So they can't figure out who his parents were to continue the family tree.

"There's nothing special about being tied to him specifically," said Marvin Woodworth, who hosts a Woodworth family Web site and has made three trips to Scituate to see his ancestral home. "It's just that you're trying to trace your ancestry back to Adam."

Paul Woodworth, a poet from Florida who has requested a genetic testing kit, said that for him, the excitement about the DNA project is the new documentation it will bring, the knowledge for the sake of knowing.

"It fascinates me that there is a genetics project that is looking at everything," he said. "It just fascinates the heck out of me."

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How Y-DNA testing works

■ Participating males use a small brush to gather loose cells in the cheek and mail the sample to a DNA testing lab.

■ Cells contain 23 pairs of chromosomes; each pair has one chromosome from the father and one from the mother. One chromosome, the Y chromosome, is found only in males. It is passed from father to son.

■ The lab isolates the DNA on the Y chromosomes from the sample that is sent in.

■ Some parts of the Y chromosome are passed relatively unchanged from generation to generation. These portions are called markers. They are made of what are called short tandem repeats — portions of DNA that repeat themselves.

■ The results of the DNA test are a count of how many repeats are at each marker. The numbers can be compared to the results of another person's test to give

an estimate of how recently they had a common ancestor.

■ Occasionally, one of the markers changes slightly in what is called a mutation. Some of the markers change more quickly than others, and are helpful for determining different branches of the family tree.

■ Y-DNA testing can be used to confirm the paper genealogical trail or to find out if similar surnames are related.

8 mysteries solved by DNA:

- Where is Columbus buried?
- Was Albert DeSalvo the Boston Strangler?
- Did Sam Sheppard kill his wife?
- Did Thomas Jefferson father children with his slave, Sally Hemings?
- Did Jesse James die in 1882, or did he fake his death?
- Could the Romanovs have survived the Russian Revolution?
- Was Anna Anderson really Anastasia?
- Did the last Dauphin escape?

LOTTERY

Friday's results
Daily Number — 0915
Payoff on a \$1 bet

Exact order
All 4 digits \$4,985
First or last 3 \$698
Any 2 digits \$60
Any digit \$6

Any order
All 4 digits \$208
First 3 digits \$116
Last 3 digits \$116

Tri-State 3 (evening) — 837
Tri-State 4 (evening) — 6682
Tri-State 3 (day) — 676
Tri-State 4 (day) — 4585

Rhode Island — 1609