

The Chaplins of Long Melford, Suffolk.

There have been Chaplins in Suffolk for many centuries. The first of whom we have a record was Robert Chaplin who was born around 1504. Many of the earlier generations lived and presumably worked around Tarnes Farm, Long Melford, where they were local land owners and farmers. Robert's wife was named Elizabeth (born around 1508) and they were supposedly married around 1522, at which stage, if the dates are correct, she would have been fourteen. Their documented children were Clement (born 1528), William (1530), Joan (1532) and Thomas (1534).

Little is known of these four - other than William. His descendants are well documented as his daughter Alice is the ancestor of many American families, who have traced their ancestry in considerable detail. The three recorded children of William, by his first wife Alice Thompson, were Alice (1551), William (1552 or 1555) and Edmund (1554). William re-married after the death of Alice - to Joan Froste, but there were no children of this latter marriage, so far as is known.

His son Edmund married Martha King (or Kings) in 1578 and had at least four children. Alice (1551) married Robert Parke of Acton in Suffolk in 1579 and started the line of Parke descendants who have been comprehensively documented in the USA. Their first son was another Robert (born 1580) who married his cousin Martha Chaplin (born about 1582) in February 1600, daughter of William Chaplin (1552 or 1555 - see above). He was created a baronet. On March 29 1630, when he was aged about 50, Robert and his family sailed from Cowes, Isle of Wight, for America, on board the "Arabella", with seventy-six passengers, and landed in Boston MA, June 17, 1630, making the voyage in seventy-eight days. It is believed that he acted as secretary to John Winthrop, the first governor of Massachusetts. He lived for a time at Roxbury MA. He did not travel to the new world of necessity, but rather as a Puritan through a desire to have more religious freedom.

In 1639 he, with his son Thomas, went to Wethersfield CT. He resided with the first settlers there. Martha died in or around 1640 at Wethersfield, Hartford, Connecticut. Robert married Alice Freeman, who was a wealthy widow, in 1644 and was made Deputy to the General Court in 1641 and 1642. In 1649 he moved to New London, where he lived for six years, and his new barn, was used as the first house of worship in the new town and the call to service was by the beat of drum. He finally settled at Mystic River in Stonington and was one of the first men to be appointed by the General Court of MA to an official position, in the organization of the town of Southertown (Stonington) in 1658. He lived on for another six years, dying aged 84 years in 1664. His grave is in the White Hall graveyard, at White Hall, Mystic CT.

His widow, Alice (Freeman) outlived him by a mere two months. She had previously been married to John Thompson and left a number of Thompson children who had travelled with her to New England. A daughter, Dorothy

Thompson, married her stepson, Thomas Parke (born 1614), son of Robert Parke and Martha Chaplin. A daughter of this couple, Dorothy Parke, married Joseph Morgan and they had three daughters who were the ancestors of prominent individuals. One of these, Dorothy Morgan, was a 5g grandmother of the actress and film star Katharine Hepburn and 7 g grandmother of Vice President Nelson Rockefeller. Her sister Martha was a 5g grandmother of Humphrey Bogart. Another sister Margaret was a 6g grandmother of Lady Diana Spencer (later "Princess of Wales").

Another son of Robert Parke and Martha Chaplin, William (born 1607), was a 5g grandfather of Ellen Axson - the wife of President Woodrow Wilson and an 8 g grandfather of Elizabeth Virginia Wallace, wife of President Harry S Truman. The Parke / Morgan family were linked by marriage to the Brewster family - descendants of Elder William Brewster, who arrived on the Mayflower in 1620 (Dorothy Witter, a 2g granddaughter of Robert Parke and Martha Chaplin married Joseph Brewster, a 2g Grandson of William Brewster).

Many thousands of Americans of the current era can trace their ancestry to these families.

Back in Suffolk William Chaplin (father of the previously mentioned Martha - b 1582) and his wife Elizabeth Ansty (born 1560) had a large family of twelve children. Amongst the younger sons were Thomas (born 1591) and Robert (born 1601). Thomas, who lived in Bury St Edmunds, became a linen draper and was the MP for the town in 1658/59, during the last parliament of the "Commonwealth", under the rule of Oliver Cromwell - himself the MP for an adjacent constituency. Thomas's 5g grandson was Walter Dean Chaplin, a butcher in Colchester, who emigrated with his wife and several of his younger children to Australia in 1888 (see below).

Thomas's brother, Robert (1601 - often referred to in genealogical sources as "Captain Robert Chaplin") was the ancestor of a significant line of Chaplins who left Suffolk to live mainly in Lincolnshire over the next three centuries. A son of Robert and his wife Elizabeth was Francis Chaplin who became the Lord Mayor of London in 1677 and was knighted. A son of Sir Francis, John Chaplin (born 1658) was the 'founder' of the Lincolnshire line. His descendants were wealthy and significant enough for their sons to marry daughters of the aristocracy, with Thomas Chaplin (born around 1680) marrying Diana Archer, daughter of Lord Andrew Archer of Umberslade, Warwickshire. His son, John Thomas Chaplin (born around 1720) married Lady Elizabeth Cecil, daughter of Brownlow Cecil, the 8th Earl of Exeter. The Chaplin family were "upper gentry". At various times they had four bases of power and influence in Lincolnshire: Ryhall Hall (Rutland), Blankney Hall (near Lincoln), Tathwell Hall (near Louth), & Thorpe Hall, South Elkington, Louth. The directories of the period record them as owning many thousands of acres of land. Economically and socially they are on a par with landowners like the Earls of Scarborough and Yarborough, and the Heneages, who all invested in the canals and railways as well as the development of seaside resorts, and the industrial expansion of Grimsby; but who because of their huge landholdings had a vested interest in the agrarian revolution.

In 1719 Thomas Chaplin, grandson of Sir Francis, bought Blankney Hall, which had previously been in the Thorold family. The following is abstracted from one source about this: "Thomas Chaplin bought Blankney Hall from the Commissioners of Confiscated Property. The estate passed to his son, John and remained in the family until 1897 until mounting debts forced Henry Chaplin to sell it to Lord Londesborough. The Blankney estates had been the property of the Deincourts since the Norman Conquest. In the fifteenth century, it passed through the marriage of an heiress to the Lovels of



Blankney Hall

Titchmarsh. All the estates of the Lovels were confiscated for the crown by Henry VII after the battle of Stoke-on-Trent. Blankney was bought by the Thorolds, who did much to embellish the house with the fine carved panelling of the period. But in the reign of Charles I, through a marriage with the Thorold heiress, it passed into the hands of Sir William Widdrington who was created Baron Widdrington of Blankney in 1643. Lord Widdrington's great grandson had the indiscretion to take part in the rebellion of 1715. He was captured at Preston, convicted of high treason and his lands were confiscated in the following year".

Interestingly, and probably no coincidence, Thomas Chaplin's brother Porter Chaplin was married to Ann Thorold and it may have been this association which led to the purchase of Blankney Hall?

The branch of the Chaplin family based at Tathwell were a major influence on the development and running of the local canal. They were the main landowning family in the district, who contributed a commissioner (Charles b:1730) who was also a shareholder in the sum of £1,000, 10 shares, and who subsequently became the manager of the tolls. Stuart Sizer points out, in his history of the Louth Navigation, the commissioners were "... granted powers under the Act to lease or let the tolls for the best sum they could obtain The Act required that the lease period should not exceed seven years." It appears that the Shareholders would have expected that their interests were rigorously protected and who better placed to oversee their interests but the Chaplin family who seem to have exercised considerable influence from the inception of the canal. Notwithstanding the seven year limit on leases, Charles Chaplin managed to obtain a lease for 99 years, demonstrating the enormous powers that the landed classes had to control local affairs at the time, leading eventually to conflict with the users of the canal in the 1820s. This resulted in a further Act of Parliament in 1828 and the Padley survey of that year. Control of the management & tolls became virtually hereditary within the Tathwell branch of the Chaplin family. When Charles died, he was succeeded by his son Thomas, who in turn was succeeded by a George Chaplin, a legatee of Thomas. It is interesting that despite the feelings of the commercial classes of Louth that the Chaplins were not interpreting their role to the best advantage of all

involved, they managed to retain control through the serious conflict in the 1820s. James Pulteney Chaplin and the Rev. Henry Chaplin were major shareholders in 1840, and would still exert considerable influence.



1st Viscount Chaplin

Rev. Henry Chaplin's son (Sir Francis Chaplin's 4^g grandson), also named Henry Chaplin (born 1840), became Viscount Chaplin of Blankney and was an MP in the late nineteenth century and a friend of King Edward VII. He married Florence Leveson-Gower, daughter of the Duke of Sutherland. Through her aunt, Constance Gertrude Leveson-Gower, a sister of the Duke, who married a member of the Grosvenor family, there is a link with the Dukes of Westminster. Viscount Chaplin's son, Eric Chaplin, became the 2nd Viscount Chaplin and later Eric's son, Anthony Freskin Charles Hamby Chaplin (born 1906), was the 3rd (and last) Viscount.

Meanwhile the Suffolk branch of the family had continued through many generations from Thomas Chaplin MP, the linen draper in Bury St Edmunds. His son William Chaplin (born around 1620) was evidently also a local "worthy" having been a Mercer and Alderman for Bury St Edmunds, with a residence at "The College, Chevington". The next William was born about 1661 and was described as a "Gentleman Attorney" and Steward of the Manors of Knettishall and Hopton. His son (yet another William) was born in 1696 and was also an "Attorney", living at Bury St Edmunds. A son, Richard Chaplin (born 1722) was a Wine Merchant in Sudbury, Suffolk and in the next generation his youngest son, John lived in Braintree, Essex - no occupation known? John's son William was a farmer in Ridgwell, also in Essex, and was the father of Walter Dean Chaplin, who was born in Ridgwell and became a butcher in Clare, Suffolk (later in Colchester). Walter Dean married Mary Ann Arnold Playfair in 1854. She was the daughter of Thomas Playfair, born in St Andrews, Scotland, a Tailor (and publican) by trade, and Mary Ann Arnold from Earl's Colne in Essex. In 1859 Mary Ann Arnold Playfair's brother, John Thomas Playfair (born in 1832 and known as Thomas), settled in Sydney and went into business as a butcher - developing a very successful butchery and smallgoods business over the next twenty years. He went on to become a Sydney Alderman (1875) and was elected Mayor of Sydney in 1885. Later he entered politics more seriously, being elected on 2 February 1889 to the NSW Legislative Assembly as a member for West Sydney and as a free trade supporter of Sir Henry Parkes. Prior to going to Sydney he had been in the Royal Navy from the age of 12 and had travelled extensively being voluntarily discharged in Melbourne at the age of 27. No doubt his success in Sydney may have tempted Walter Chaplin into thinking about taking his family there also? At any rate Walter Dean Chaplin and his wife, Mary Ann, sailed to Australia with four of their children on the "Australasian", arriving on September 3rd 1888, leaving their older children (ranging in age from

23 to 33) in England. Walter was listed as a member of the crew of the ship - as "butcher". The eldest son, William, later went to Australia but the other four sons, along with one daughter stayed in England. The daughter who stayed behind, Florence Ellen Chaplin (1865 - 1949), later married Harry Coulson. Their son, Stuart Coulson, did much of the research on the Chaplin family which formed the basis for our current data on the earlier generations of the family. The four who came to Sydney with them were Mary Anne (Polly), Edith Adelina (aged 20), Herbert Sidney (19) and Septimus Dean (17). A grandchild (Ethel Chaplin) aged 4 travelled with them, the daughter of Polly. This grand daughter was born in 1884 and her birth certificate does not record the name of her father. It seems likely that it was the arrival of this child that may have precipitated the family into leaving Victorian England and seeking a new life in Sydney, where Mary Ann's brother, Thomas Playfair, had achieved such success for himself and his family.

Whether Walter worked as a butcher in Sydney is not recorded. He died of a strangulated hernia in 1905 in St Vincent's Hospital, at the age of 77. His occupation as recorded on the marriage certificate of his youngest son, Septimus, in 1903 was "Civil Servant" - but his death certificate two years later records his trade as "butcher".

One of the sons (Ernest Alexander 1864 - 1929) who remained in England changed career from being a journeyman butcher (1881 census) to a master mariner (1901 census). He was later a ship's captain who sailed his ships around the world to many distant lands, including Australia. When his Australian cousin Jack Playfair was in London in 1907 he was looked after by "Captain Chaplin". Of Septimus himself limited information survives. His occupation was given as "clerk" at the time of his marriage and he died at the early age of 38 in 1909, apparently collapsing at Gosford station while running to catch a train. His grandson, Philip Chaplin, suggested that he may have died of a ruptured aortic aneurysm - as did both of his sons (Arnold and Edmund Chaplin) - though it is unclear whether this was anything more than just conjecture? He had married Margaret Elizabeth O'Loughlin, the daughter of William and Bridget O'Loughlin, on Feb 10th 1903. It may have been this marriage that brought the Chaplin family into the Roman Catholic church? There does not appear to be any evidence of a Catholic tradition in the family prior to this time?

Septimus and Margaret had three sons between 1903 and 1907, the first Walter William having died in early infancy. Arnold Noel was born in October 1904 and the youngest, Edmund Ernest in October 1907.

Arnold Chaplin became an engineer working for the New South Wales railways. In 1933 he married Mary Stanley, one of a large family of 12 children of Matthew Stanley and Mary Agnes Kelly. Mary was one of eight girls in the family of whom four became nuns in the "Order of Mercy". She was the only one of the girls to marry and only one of the four brothers (Patrick -



Arnold and Mary
Chaplin

the eldest) had children. The Stanley family were descended from an Irish immigrant (Patrick Stanley) who came to Sydney from Trim, County Meath, arriving in September 1849 on the Victoria. According to family legend Patrick arrived virtually penniless, having had his fare for the voyage paid by an uncle. He worked as a market gardener and sold his produce, buying property in the Redfern area and becoming a highly successful and relatively wealthy businessman, with quite substantial property interests around Sydney. It has been suggested that "Paddy's Market" in Sydney was named after him (?). He was elected Mayor of Redfern for four years between 1876 and 1881.

Arnold Chaplin was involved as an engineer, working for the NSW railways department, in the construction of Sydney Harbour Bridge. He remained an employee of the railways throughout his working life - dying of a ruptured aortic aneurysm in 1959, aged 55. His brother Edmund (Uncle Ed) died of the same problem a decade later aged 63. His wife, Lorraine Chaplin, survived him by nearly forty years, dying in 2010 at the age of 99.



Arnold and Mary Chaplin and family around 1955

Arnold's wife Mary (nee Stanley) was a librarian in her early adult life, but became a full time housewife and mother with her six children, born between 1934 and 1944. She died at age 61 of leukaemia, but several of her sisters lived on to an advanced age - into the 1980s (Marion was over ninety when she died), with Helen Stanley (Aunty Nell) the last of that family - dying in 1992. The eldest of the Stanley sons, Patrick, also lived to the age of 80. He married Clotilda (Cloe) Smith and had two daughters (Clotilda [Cloe] and Joyce) and a son William (who was unmarried and died of TB, in Ceylon, while serving in the Australian Navy during World War II).



Mary Chaplin with two of her sisters (Cecily and Nell) and daughter (Margie). Picture taken at Margie's "Profession" as a Nun in about 1960.