

THE OVIATT FAMILY OF AMERICA

(by Charles H. Oviatt)

The Oviatt family of America is a very old English family of Norman (French) origin entering England with William the Conqueror in the year 1066 A.D. It has not been definitely settled what the name was at that period, but the family settled in Central Southern England and every century or generation has brought many changes in the name until there are dozens and dozens of families in England who have different names all origination from the Parent family of Normandy.

Buckinghamshire, England appears to have been the home of many Oviatt families about the year 1550, and there are many records of births, marriages and deaths in the numerous parishes of that county.

Wendover, Buckinghamshire was the early seat of residence of many and it was from this locality that the first Oviatt to America hailed from; Thomas Oviatt, 1630.

Some of the many changes of the name in England are the following: Oviatt, Uthiatt, Uthiat, Uthwatt, Uthworth, Outhwatt, Outhwait, de Utteworth, de Ottewurth, Uthitt, Uthkitt, Uskitt, Uffiatt, Uffutt and others. Whole families are often found in nearby localities with the names changed in spelling and pronunciation a little differently.

The emigrant ancestor, Thomas Oviatt the first one to America, in 1630, was like many people of his time unable to write his name, so, on the ship "Lion's" register, a X (cross) was made for him, by the captain of the vessel who put it down as Uffitt, instead of Oviatt, and from this much confusion began in old Connecticut over our family name, and a great deal of speculation has aroused from it over the families of Uffit, Uffoote and Ufford and Oviatt.

Pond the historian of Milford, Conn. tried to solve the problem,

of the difference between these two families and sometimes had it one way and sometimes had it another, but since his death of a few years ago new records have come to light in the Bryan and Baldwin families of Wendover County, Bucks, England, showing that Thomas Oviatt's wife was Elizabeth or Iasbell Bryan of Milford, Conn., sister of Alexander Bryan of Milford, Conn., 1639-1673, who was the wealthiest citizen of his day in all Connecitut, owning and operating many merchant ships between the colonies and old England. The record of the will of Alex Bryan of Milford, Conn. also shows a bequest he makes to his nephew, Thomas Oviatt, 1673, Thomas Oviatt, Sr., died in 1661, leaving a widow, two sons and one daughter.

The records show Mr. Oviatt to have been a soap manufacturer and he left some property in the towns of Milford and Stratford, Conn. His widow related to the Baldwin family returned to England after the death of her husband in 1661, and lived and died in Wendover, County Bucks. She is referred to, in records, as the widow Ovyott, late of America. Of their children John and Thomas the records refer to them as John Uffitt and Thomas Oviatt, of Thomas Oviatt Sr., mention must be made of his sailing from London, England on June 30, 1632, with his family and of their arrival in Boston and subsequent residence for four years in Newtown, (now Cambridge) where he appears, as a member of the church flock of the Rev. Thomas Hooker. This Rev. Mr. Hooker, had been excommunicated from England for his pronounced religious views, and for awhile lived with the Leyden people in Holland, who came over to America in the Mayflower. Hooker's career in Newtown for the four years 1632-1636 was a stormy one as he didn't seem to get along with Mass governing and so he and his church friends decided to found a new colony somewhere over in the Connecticut River country, and in the fall of 1635 they sent a party of seven men, including Pynchon, Holyoke

and Thomas Oviatt, to go round by water and on up the Connecticut River and explore the country, where they laid out the city of Springfield, Mass. This was in 1635, and the following spring 1636, the Rev. Thomas Hooker and the head of 44 families, cut their way through the wilderness, and came out on the Connecticut River at the point where Hartford now stands, and decided to remain there and were joined a little later by Pynchon's little colony of seven who came down the river from Springfield, and thus it was that Thomas Oviatt Sr. was one of the 44 heads of families who participated in the founding of Hartford, Conn. Here is a great picture for the stretch of imagination. The picture of the great and redoubtable Hooker, leading his chosen ones through a veritable wilderness and all with a purpose of just desiring to live as they would wish, and worship as they choose, without molestation from anyone, and a picture also of Thomas Oviatt, explorer, together with Clark, Pynchon and Holyoke, all sturdy puritans, finding a home miles and miles up from Long Island Sound among the many curves of the beautiful Connecticut River alone and yet surrounded by many American Indian warriors, with whom they had to make a treaty of peace with. Both of these pictures are instances of the very earliest white man's times with the Indians, that all people by the name of Oviatt should be really proud of.

With the opening of the Conn. River country in 1636 and the incoming emigrants from England, dissension soon arose again, and Hartford was split in two and Thomas Oviatt, three years later, in 1639 with his family joined the newly organized town of Milford, Conn., where his relatives lived, the Bryans and the Baldwins. Here he died in 1661. His son Thomas Oviatt, Jr. married but died childless, so all the Oviatts in America are descended from the son John who seemed to

have had quite a large family, some spelled their name Uffit and other Oviatt-- and since then either have kept changing until we find many Uffords from Uffitt,-- and all should be Oviatt.

So it is that Milford, Conn., is considered the early seat of the Oviatts in America, and many of the family are still living there today (1916). With the opening up of more towns and settlements in Conn. a few of the Oviatts in Milford removed about 1723, to New Milford including Giles Oviatt, Samuel Oviatt and Thomas Oviatt, and thus we speak of the Oviatts of Milford and New Milford.

The New Milford Oviatts also scattered to tributary towns, and the ones at Goshue, Conn., were progenitors of the Ohio Oviatts, Benjamin and Isaac from Woodbury, Conn.,-- settled in New York State, and their descendants still live in Cambridge, N.Y., also up in the Adirondack Country, some in Rochester and vicinity and others in Pennsylvania, and from here some have removed to Illinois, Iowa and on to Utah. It was from New Fairfield, Conn., close to New Milford that John Oviatt (son Samuel) of New Milford (a soldier of the Revolution) was removed with his wife and 10 children in 1800 to Fairfield, Vermont, (the writers branch) and the descendants of John are very numerous and widely scattered, some in Ohio, Mich., Ill., Iowa, Mont., Wash., Ore., Calif., N.Y., Conn., and still large numbers left in good old Vermont, away back on the farms. There is hardly a state in the Union which does not contain some members of the Oviatt family, and all are glad to be Americans and citizens of our United States of America.

(Signed)

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