

## MUSICAL FAMILIES (F)

n.d.: "More than any other, musical ability is a gift of inheritance. In every community can be found families of musicians. This faculty may present different phases in succeeding generations but the musical ability of the parents is ever renewed in their children. This town has counted among its residents many excellent musicians and many natives of the place have been famous, while others, more remotely associated, can trace their musical inheritance to an Ashburnham parentage. In the following paragraph it will be discovered that many of the prominent members of the choir through all these years were descendants from some of the earliest singers in this town. Catherine, wife of John Kiblinger the emigrant [see Jacob Kiblinger, S n.d. (late 1700s?)], is distinguished in tradition for qualities of voice and skill in music, and the choir has been indebted to her descendants through several generations. The musical talent of the Adams, Rice, Barrett and the Charles Stearns families has been conspicuous through succeeding generations. As the voice of the parents grew feeble in age or was silent in death, the unbroken song has been sustained in the tuneful notes of their children. Many of these have been prominent in the choir where their services have been appreciated." [MA/Ashburnham; Stearns 1887, p. 328]

n.d. (probably 1740s-at least 1820s): "As the gift of music seems to have been hereditary in the Shepard family, we may suppose that Col. John Shepard [ca. 1706-1785] and his son, Col. John, jr. [1732-1802], each in their time took a leading part in these services. ... [p. 316] Jonathan Hildreth [b. 1767], a grandson of the first Col. Shepard, was a noted musician in his day, and leader of the choir until his death, 5 July, 1816. He made two or three bass-voles, which were used in the singing seats to aid the vocal performers. ... Benjamin Kendrick [b. 1779], another grandson of Col. Shepard, was chorister some years. His daughters, also those of his cousin [probably Jonathan] Hildreth,...were connected with the choir, and most of them were excellent vocalists." [NH/Amherst; Secomb 1883, pp. 315, 316]

n.d. (probably late 18<sup>th</sup> c., early 19<sup>th</sup> c.): "Among the families in which the musical faculty has seemed to be indigenous and easy of manifestation, rising to reputable prominence under different forms of expression, may be mentioned those of Winship, Wood, Bigelow, Miller, Barnes, Kendall, Merriam, Cutting, and Minott...." [MA/Westminster; Heywood 1893, p. 465]

n.d. (probably late 18<sup>th</sup> c., early 19<sup>th</sup> c.): "The early singers [in church], as appears in the records, were found among the families of the Stanleys, Baileys, and Priests, afterwards the Spoffords, Baldwins, and Dakins." [NH/Jaffrey; Cutter 1881, p. 155]

n.d. (probably late 18<sup>th</sup> c., early 19<sup>th</sup> c.): "The Townes, the Sherwins, the Carltons, whose mother was Elizabeth Sherwin, the Cutlers, her grandchildren, and several other families, were early and prominently connected with the choir." [NH/Rindge; Stearns 1875, p. 266]

n.d. (late 18<sup>th</sup> c. and/or early 19<sup>th</sup> c.) + 1805-1809: "At times the singing tended to be something of a family affair. Many of the Towers were musical and active in the choir over many years. When Laban Tower [1751-1824] was chorister, as the choir leader was called,

his daughters Grace and Lucy sang. And Bela Tower [probably the Bela Tower, 1760-1836, who played fife in a Revolutionary War regiment] and Isaiah Tower [Laban's brother; 1731-1811] both served as choristers. From 1805 to 1809 Charles Gardner, a set-work cooper who lived on Gardner Street, was chorister; and during that time the singers included Stephen, Reuben, Warren, and Josiah Gardner, his brothers, and their sister Hannah. Another well-represented family was that of the Revolutionary Captain Zachariah Whiton, whose daughter Polly was for a while the 'principal treble,' with her sisters Sybil and Priscilla in the choir." [MA/South Hingham; Robinson 1980, p. 76]

n.d. (probably late 1780s)-late 1880s: "...The Town shone by its Musick! If, however, old Samuel Partridge and his son Sylvester had not come early to The Town [no evidence that Samuel (1741-1776), Sylvester's dad, ever came to Alstead; he died fighting in the Revolutionary War; Sylvester came to Alstead, apparently from Londonderry, NH, in 1783, aged 17], the earthy-celestial practicing might have passed away like the varmint and the b'ars and left little influence behind it; but the Pa'tri[d]ges did wing their way in, to start a line of singsongers who could not be quenched for more than a century. Sylvester [1766-1850] had three sons, Willard, Alfred [1817-1901] and James [1819-?] [*recte* grandsons; at least, Alfred and James were sons of Sylvester's son Theron; I haven't located Willard], and all of them led The Town's religious choirs and 'kept' singing- [p. 258] school, the two younger ones each for more than fifty years, beginning around the 1830s." [NH/Alstead; Rawson 1942, pp. 257-258]

n.d. (probably ca. 1789-1814; Amos Kendall, the quoted author, born 1789, left New England for Kentucky 1814): "Mr. Kendall thus vividly describes the discipline of his father's [Deacon Zebedee Kendall's] family:-- [p. 223; new paragraph, smaller type:] 'Grace before and thanks after meat, and morning and evening prayers, with the reading of a chapter in the Bible and the singing of a hymn of [*recte* on?] Sunday, accompanied by the bass-viol, played by their eldest son while he was at home, constituted the regular religious exercises of the family. ... The evening [on Sundays] was spent in learning and reciting the Westminster Catechism, in reading religious books, and in practising sacred music. The whole family [10 children] could sing, and when all were present, could carry all the four parts of ordinary tunes.'" [MA/Dunstable; Nason 1877, pp. 222-223]

early 19<sup>th</sup> c.: "At the beginning of this [19<sup>th</sup>] century the hall in Carroll's tavern, Canton, resounded to the sounds of the old Continental music, and the following ladies and gentlemen were then members of the Old Stoughton Musical Society:-- ... [24 names: 18 males (including Samuel Capen and Thomas Dunbar [see "n.d. (early 19<sup>th</sup> c.)" below]; 2 pairs, a trio, + a quartet of brothers) + 6 females]" [MA/Canton; Huntoon 1893, pp. 309-310]

n.d. (early 19<sup>th</sup> c.): "Deacon Thomas Dunbar was a famous singer, and often led the concerts of the Stoughton Musical Society. He upheld the fame of his father [Elijah Dunbar] and his grandfather [Rev. Samuel Dunbar], and on his sons fell the duty of maintaining the singing in the old parish. Thomas Dunbar was born July 25, 1775, and died Dec. 8, 1855." [MA/Canton; Huntoon 1893, p. 313]

n.d. (probably early 19<sup>th</sup> c.): “Wonders of melody were achieved when the four families of Belcher, Tucker, Tilden, and Crane, each a choir in itself, met, with all their combined strength and diversity of musical gifts, to sustain their several parts in one grand tune.” [MA/Canton; Brown 1865, p. 72]

n.d. (probably early and mid-19<sup>th</sup> c.): “The Hall family through three generations was famous for its musical powers, as had been that of Deacon Josiah Folsom [1765-1846], until all his handsome and agreeable daughters were married off, a process complete about the time of the alteration [of the First Church, in 1838].” [NH/Exeter; Perry 1898, p. 108]

n.d. (probably ca. 1800-1850): “Samuel Leonard [born ca. 1775], commonly known as ‘Major Sam,’ is described to me by one who knew him well as ‘a heavenly singer.’ He was the son of Enoch and Mary (Wentworth) Leonard; married Avis, daughter of Thomas and Salome (Babcock) French, Feb. 11, 1813, and died Oct. 19, 1854, aged seventy-nine years. His wife, Avis French, belonged to a musical family. Her mother was a Babcock, sister to old Master Lemuel,--a famous singer in old times; and her grandmother was Abigail Pitcher, a name also famous in musical annals. Her brothers, Lemuel, Jason, Thomas, Alexander, and Nathaniel, were all good singers, and were second cousins to the famous composers, Jacob and Edward. [new paragraph] Friend Crane and Nathan Kenney were also noted for their fine voices.” [MA/Canton; Huntoon 1893, p. 313]

1805-1809 – see n.d. (late 18<sup>th</sup> c. and/or early 19<sup>th</sup> c.)

ca. 1808-1810 + n.d. (probably late 1810s to at least 1830): “Following hard on the coming of the Pa’ttridges came William Slade [1790-1837] to [the world, and specifically to] the southwest corner of The Town, round about [6 August] 1790, and with him came his fiddle [one assumes he wasn’t playing the fiddle quite as early as 1790]. From this date until 1820 when William left town for greater heights he was the musical light in that quarter, and 1837 found him [dying from an encounter with a milk wagon,] a professional fiddler in an Albany theatre. ... Then, as in the Pa’tridge family, the gift was passed down through the generations [*recte* “the gift was shared within that generation”] and Samuel [1797-1857] and Allen [1796-1884] Slade, with their tenor and bass voices, respectively, became the singing-school marsters [*sic*] of the Slade District. When Samuel died, his brother [*recte* first cousin] Allen never sang again [see Thomas Bellows Peck, *William Slade of Windsor, Conn. and his Descendants* (1910), p. 63]. Cousin [*recte* Allen’s cousin, Samuel’s brother] Horace [Thompson] Slade [1809-1894] also had his hand at leading a singing-school [as did Samuel and Horace T.’s brother Enoch (1787-1866), ca. 1808-1810 in Brookfield, Vt.].” [NH/Alstead; Rawson 1942, p. 259; NH/Alstead + VT/Brookfield; Peck 1910, pp. 46, 61-63, [67], 72, 74, 80]

n.d. (1810s and later?): “The Nichols family [father: Josiah Nichols, b. 1755; mother, Abigail Long; married 1785] were all fond of music. Enoch [b. 1789] was a fine performer on the violin, and was the owner of an instrument noted, far and near, for its superior quality. Abigail [b. 1791] was skilled on the bass-viol. Dea. Josiah Nichols [Josiah Jr., b. 1786] taught many terms of singing-school, and always led the singing in meeting till extreme old age disqualified him.” [NH/Sutton; Worthen 1890, p. 844]

n.d. (probably late 1810s to at least 1830) – see ca. 1808-1810

1818-ca. 1856: "...Mr. Benjamin B. Davis was requested to take charge of the singing, as chorister, in the year 1818. Of the faithful devotion with which for thirty-eight years he led the choir, any attendant upon Dr. [John] Pierce's ministry [1797-1849] for that length of time will bear witness. [new paragraph] The choir consisted of thirty members....

Prominent among these at that time, or a little later, were...some years later, Susan, the eldest daughter of Mr. Benjamin B. Davis. This young lady was not only a sweet singer, but lovely in mind and person, deservedly a favorite with all who knew her. But her fair young life, only just unfolding its charms to a loving circle of friends, was like a spring flower, the joy of but a brief season; and the voice which had given such pleasure on earth, was called to join the choirs who praise in 'the house not made with hands.' Several years afterwards, the other daughter of Mr. Davis, who was also a member of the choir, died young, leaving a childless father to sing sorrowfully without them." [MA/Brookline; Woods 1874, p. 256]

n.d. (probably 1820s, 1830s, 1840s): "Mr. James Pierce, who also played the bass-viol, as well as sung, took his little daughters into 'the singers' seats,' when they were so small that they were obliged to stand on crickets to bring their heads above the balustrade. One of them, who was afterwards the wife of Charles Stearns, Jr. [son of "Capt. Charles Stearns," listed just previously as a member of the choir?], was for years the leader of the female voices." [MA/Brookline; Woods 1874, p. 256]

n.d. (probably 1830s; before 1837) + 1841, September + 1855 and later: "...before the church left the original house [in 1837], a violincello was procured, and committed to the skilful hands of Capt. Elisha Crane, the son of Friend. [footnote: "At first, this bass-viol was owned by Friend Crane; but in September, 1841, he presented it to the church."] ... [p. 76] ... [new paragraph] The twelve-stop organ now in the loft was built in 1855, by subscription, at a cost of about five hundred and fifty dollars. Miss Julia Crane, since Mrs. George Ames, a granddaughter of Friend Crane, who had played some time in the choir upon the old instrument, was the first organist." [MA/Canton; Brown 1865, pp. 74, 76]

n.d. (probably late 1830s, 1840s, 1850s): "Clara Crane and her sisters Sarah and Julia, Caroline and Roxy Blackman,...carried along the treble and counter-tenor like a chime; and the clear notes of Elisha Crane, and the leader's [i.e., Clifford Belcher's] two sons Daniel and Clifford Belcher [Jr.], most musically bore their part in the harmony. There too, Abner Tilden, and Samuel Tucker with his son Elias, and Ezra Tilden with his son Lemuel, came in in excellent time and tune..." [4 Cranes, 2 Blackmans, 3 Belchers, 3 Tildens, 2 Tuckers here] [MA/Canton; Brown 1865, p. 72]

1841, September – see n.d. (probably 1830s; before 1837)

1855 and later – see n.d. (probably 1830s; before 1837)