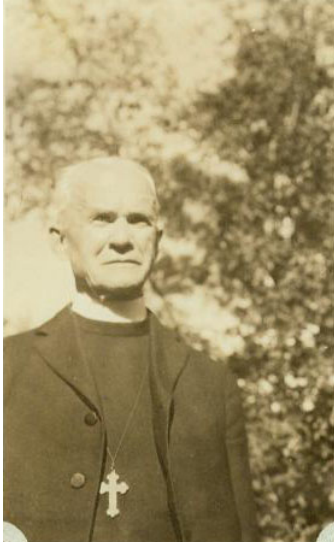


My Grandfather: The Genealogist

By William Chesley Worthington, Jr



My grandfather, Reverend William Worthington was born in Brooklyn, Kings, New York in 1860. He was the seventh of thirteen children. His parents were both Irish immigrants. His mother Mary Stoker was born in Drunlish, Longford in 1796. His father John was born in Dunleckney, Carlow, Ireland in 1791. They came to Québec, Québec, Canada in 1822. My great, great grandfather John was born in 1825 in Québec. Before 1846, he began working at Musson's Drug store as a pharmacist's assistant. Shortly after 1846, he left Canada, moved to Brooklyn and worked as a druggist clerk for William Bailey who owned an apothecary shop. I'm not sure if it was the cold northern winters or a disagreement that caused John to move to Camden, Kershaw, South Carolina where he worked for a druggist, Mr. James R. McKain. At the same time, John was writing letters back and forth to his cousin Mary Stoker. She had come to New York since the Irish potato famine forced her family to send her away.

She was working as a servant of some fashion. However, John was living a lonely life. From the letters between John and Mary, you could see love developing and the two were married on October 2, 1850. Mr. McKain died in a steamboat accident and, rather than stay in South Carolina, John went back to his former job in Brooklyn. He saved enough money that he was able to purchase the pharmacy and ran a successful business. The pharmacy became a meeting place for many Brooklyn notable people.

My grandfather William was educated in the Brooklyn school system – attending Public Schools #8 and later PS#1. When an influenza virus swept through the New York area in the 1870s, William was sent north to Sherbrooke, Québec to live with his Uncle Edward Dagge Worthington. While in Québec, he earned a BFA at Bishop's College and an MFA at Lennoxville University (also known as the University of Bishop's College.) This led to his becoming a candidate for Episcopal Priests' Orders. In 1885, he married Ethel Gertrude Robinson of Montréal just before heading overland to Denver, Colorado. Ethel was sick with tuberculosis prior to the marriage and William's father John made him pledge that the marriage would not be consummated. She died in 1886, shortly after they crossed into Colorado from Nebraska. William proceeded to Denver which had no paved roads at the time. He was assigned to ride circuit serving the mining communities of the San Luis Valley. A few years later, Rev. Worthington met Susie Beulah Crosbie of Pomeroy, Meigs, Ohio who was visiting family in Longmont, Boulder, Colorado. They were married in Ashland, Boyd, Kentucky in 1892. Shortly after, Rev. Worthington was assigned to Trinity Church in Middletown, Middlesex, Connecticut and began his career as an itinerant priest serving parishes around the northeastern United States for a few years before being assigned to another parish. In the fall of 1899, He was appointed Rector of St. Luke's Church in East Greenwich, Kent, Rhode Island. In 1894, Susie and he had their first child, named Dorothy, who was followed in 1903 by my father, William Chesley Worthington.

In the 1930s, Reverend Worthington retired as Assistant Rector of Grace Church in Providence and looked to genealogy as a wonderful way to keep busy. Maybe he was intrigued by the research involved after his doing research for Sunday sermons.

After canvassing his immediate family, he began seriously chasing his family ancestry. In most cases, I am not aware of what his sources were when he started. But he was a fastidious letter writer. In my records are letters to the College of Arms in England as he successfully searched to find noble families, a Will from the Public Records Office in Ireland – before the fire at the General Post Office of 1916!! – asking for the copy of a will, etc. I have been in awe of all the data he accumulated. It has filled over twenty two-ring binders – Remember them? Additionally, with a manual typewriter, he typed his findings in two columns and balanced it with pedigree information with the senior generation being on the left side and the subsequent generation on the right. To make matters more interesting, he made at least three copies of the research using carbon paper. Remember that too? If he had a correction to



make, all three copies were corrected. There were three copies – one for himself and one each for his son and daughter. My father kept his copy in his bedroom closet. Later, my father moved into a retirement complex. The binders were packed into six book boxes¹ and then stored in his locker in the basement. When he died, the boxes were opened by me and my sister. What a find for me! But wait! Two of the boxes were completely infested with bookworms and had to be decontaminated and discarded. I'm not sure if they contained letters, sermons, travelogues, or genealogical information that had accumulated along the way – but are now

gone.²

There is one Worthington from whom I would like to descend and he is Bruen Worthington. He was born 21 February 1670/1 in Tarwin, Lancashire, and died in Dublin, Ireland 23 Dec 1736. My grandfather was intrigued by the family lore regarding Bruen. It is certainly interesting. In 1931, Arthur F. Worthington of Wayside, Charlton Marshall, Blandford, Dorset wrote to my grandfather with the following: “The family tradition about the departure of Bruen Worthington from England and his going to Dublin is that he attended a ball at Knowsley wearing a yellow waistcoat. Knowsley was then the principal seat of the Earl of Derby who was successor of the feudal overlords of that part of the country. Blue and yellow were the colors of the political factions. Blue was Derby and Tory. Buff or yellow was Whig. So Bruen's action was equivalent to flaunting his political views in opposition to his host at a purely social function. I have no doubt it annoyed the Earl; but it annoyed the Worthington family also and Bruen was sent away to learn manners. “

Bruen went on to become the Clerk to the Irish House of Commons. There are lots of records of his doing clerical function. My “unproven” information says he is my seventh great uncle. I think you

¹ I don't recall my father showing the binders to me. There was also no attempt to encourage me to take an interest in genealogy.

A book box is the smallest of the standard-sized boxes and good for packing heavy items.

² The contents of the binders have been removed and are now stored in sheet protectors.

should always have a wild duck in your family tree like him. I hope I can prove we share a branch. I hope we see more of him in Volume 2. Every tree should have at least one stand-out member.

One of my retirement goals was to look into the genealogy of my paternal and maternal ancestors. I suddenly had an interest in my family roots. The problem I had was that there were no living relatives that I could go to for references. A genealogy teacher once told her class that "Every time a relative dies, a resource library closes. This was more than true for me since all of my parent's generation and beyond are now gone. I would love to be able to find the link to my Irish Worthington-Eyre families. Then I could confirm my link to the Worthingtons of Lancashire.

I wonder what life would have been like if my grandfather had had a computer and online resources like Ancestry.com or FamilySearch or Findnypast I wonder what it would have been if some of my libraries were still open.

If anyone has information on any of the above Worthingtons, please contact me.