

Transcribing and Abstracting Documents

In our quest for more knowledge about our ancestors, we all listen to family tales and read a variety of material including published sources. As genealogists or family historians we must search for and use the official documents which we find in the records produced by a city, county, state, and federal government department or an organization such as a church.

The material which we find must be relegated to paper (or our desktop publisher) by some method of note taking. For genealogical purposes there are three basic forms of note taking which we use regularly in order to record what we find: Transcribing, extracting, and abstracting.

Whether transcribing, extracting, or abstracting a document, two vital skills are necessary: we must be familiar with the handwriting of those documents and we must be familiar with the type and the purpose of the documents with which we are working. Both of these skills require practice, practice, and more practice.

When using a document we need to ask ourselves several questions including: "Why was this document created?" and "Who created the document?" Only after understanding the answers to those question can we recognize the potential that the record has.

To assist us in becoming familiar with a specific series of documents, it is helpful to study several records in a volume and not just the single one in which we have the most interest. This practice will improve our skills in recognizing common statements which are often included in the record (such as: "...his heirs and assigns shall and may from time to time and at all times forever hereafter by force and virtue of these presents lawful, peaceably and quietly have whole use occupy possess and enjoy ..." in a deed; or "...to them and each of them and each of their heirs and assigns forever..." in a will). At the same time we will become more at ease with the handwriting of the period and style of a particular clerk of the court, and assist us in making an assessment of that clerk - Was the clerk precise or careless? Did the clerk use the common penmanship of

the period and geographic area?, etc. This technique of studying several records in a volume is additionally helpful when we find it difficult to decipher a particular letter or word as the same may be written more clearly on another document.

There are, also, several texts available to assist us in becoming more familiar with penmanship of particular time periods. Two of these are Kay Kirkham's *The Handwriting of American Records for a Period of 300 Years* (Logan, Utah: The Everton Publisher, Inc., 1973) and Harriet Stryker-Rodda's *Understanding Colonial Handwriting* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc., 1986).

Transcription—an account that has been copied **completely** and **accurately** from the document, preserving spelling, capitalization, punctuation, etc.

When transcribing any document we must be very careful and faithful to insure a complete and exact copy. An exact copy contains the original wording, dating, spelling, grammar (including punctuation and capitalization), etc. If we makes changes, even ever so slight, we must identify those changes by placing brief editorial comments within brackets and lengthy editorial comments should be placed in a footnote or endnote.

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Extract—a quotation or part of a written document (a partial transcription). We generally extract data from a tax digest or census schedule (to transcribe would mean that we would have to copy, completely, every

line the entire document). It is often appropriate to use the extract of a land description found in a deed within the abstract of that deed.

Abstract—a summary of a source which gives the main points: *who, what, where, when, and sometimes why*.

Since there is a great deal of legal language in probate, deed, and other court documents, the more common procedure is to prepare an abstract of an original document rather than to transcribe it. We should read the entire document, then read it again as we prepare our abstract. There may be an important piece of information tucked away in the legal language of the deed that we should not miss. Ultimately, the abstract saves us from wading through the legal wordiness, time after time, and provides us with precise and orderly access to the most important features of the record. Not only does abstracting save us a great deal of valuable time, if we do it well, it reduces the bulk of our files as well.

WOODWARDs WeSearch

Linda Woodward Geiger, C.G.R.S., Editor
Mark Andrew Davis, Contributing Editor

WOODWARDs WeSearch is published quarterly in the months of January, April, July, and October by Linda A. Woodward Geiger, 2300 Yanoo Trace, 718 Big Canoe, Jasper, GA 30143.

We encourage submission to *WOODWARDs WeSearch* relating to all WOODWARD families (including spelling variations) and/or genealogical research. Articles should be addressed to Linda Geiger, 718 Big Canoe, Jasper, GA 30143 or Mark Andrew Davis, 53275 Placid Drive, South Bend, IN 46637.

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Published Abstracts:

Although we find published abstracts and/or transcriptions valuable finding aids, it is imperative that we make every effort to find the original document whenever possible. As genealogists, or family historians, we would be remiss if we considered the published work as a substitute for the original record. Too often, I've found that published abstracts (and I'm not dismissing their value) have been inaccurate and/or have left out valuable material such as relationships and property descriptions.

Every abstracter must be careful to make notations concerning relevant material which does not appear in the document but normally does, (e.g. To my beloved wife [not named] or date recorded [not stated]).

BE CAUTIOUS: It is better to have too much information in an abstract rather than too little.

Lets look at what should appear in an abstract.

Essential data to abstract from wills

- The name and residence of the testator.
- Other personal information concerning the testator such as any term denoting social status, physical health, desired burial place, etc.
- The names of executors including their relationship to the testator when stated.
The date the will was signed, and the date it was admitted for probate.
- The signature or mark of the testator [in original document copy signature marks as accurately as possible.
- The names of witnesses.
- The names of each person mentioned in the will in the order in which they were named making sure to include any personal information concerning the individual (such as, place of residence, any indication of age, the relationship to testator, martial status, name of spouse, etc.) followed by a description of the property bequeathed to the individual (including land descriptions, names of plantations and slaves, etc.), and any condition that is attached to the bequests.

- Make a note on what is not recorded that probably should have been.

Essential data to abstract from deeds

- The names of the grantor(s) and grantee(s) and their place of residence.
- The date on which the deed was executed and the date on which the deed was recorded.
- The consideration received by the grantor(s).
- The signature or mark of the grantor(s).
- The names of witnesses.
- The description of the property being conveyed (including location, acreage, if applicable, boundaries, names of adjoining landowners, and any mention of the process by which the grantor came into possession of the land).
- Other pertinent information (including the use of terms denoting the occupation, social status, military rank, relationships, etc. of the individuals mentioned).
- Information contained in a release of dower rights by the wife of the grantor.

Many genealogists find it helpful to use pre-printed abstract forms to assist them in obtaining the important facts. The forms can be somewhat restrictive, however. If you have a personal computer, you may find it more helpful, as I have, to prepare various abstract templates to use with your favorite word processing program which highlight all the appropriate information that you must retrieve, yet allows for significant versatility.

EXAMPLE: Herein I have included an abstract and transcript of the deed of gift from Bashabee Woodward to Ezekiel Davis which you will find on page 13.

Abstract

Deed of Gift from Bashabee Woodward to Ezekiel S. Davis, 30 November 1846 [Merrimack County, New Hampshire, Deed Book 83: 190]

Bashabee Woodward, widow, of Lowell, Middlesex County, Commonwealth of Massachusetts to Ezekiel S. Davis, manufacturer, of Lowell...for one dollar and in consideration for the kind attention and ample support for her the said

Bashabee sold...one acre of land in Boscawen, Merrimack County, New Hampshire "...beginning at the north East corner of a piece of land conveyed to Kimball Woodward by Samuel D. Couch, it being a part of the Enoch Gilbert? farm, so called, lying on the west side of the road leading from the fourth New Hampshire Turnpike Road in Salisbury to Pleasant street in Boscawen, thence on said road southerly twenty rods, thence westerly eight rods, thence northerly twenty rods on a line parallel with said road, thence Easterly eight rods to the point of beginning containing one hundred sixty square rods ... being the same land conveyed to said Bashabee by Kimball Woodward of said Boscawen by his deed dated July 31, 1837 and recorded in Merrimack Records Lib, 52 Fol 26...in fee simple."

[signed] Bashabee (her mark) Woodward

Witnesses: James Hopkins and Wm. F. Smith

The affidavit of Bashabee Woodward in Middlesex, Commonwealth of Massachusetts on 30 Nov 1846 acknowledges the conveyance was her free act and deed. [signed] Wm. F. Smith Justice of the Peace and Recorded 1 December 1846

Transcript

Deed from Bashabee Woodward to Ezekiel Davis, 31 July 1837 [Merrimack County, New Hampshire Deed Book 83: 190, County Clerk's Office, Concord, New Hampshire].

Know all men by these presents That I Bashabee Woodward of Lowell in the County of Middlesex and Commonwealth of Massachusetts widow In consideration of one dollar to me paid by Ezekiel S. Davis of said Lowell manufac= turer, and also for and in consideration of the kind attention and ample support of me by the said Ezekiel S. Davis since his intermarriage with my daughter, Diana A. Woodward, the receipt whereof I do hereby acknowledge, do hereby give, grant, sell and convey unto the said Ezekiel S. Davis his Heirs and assigns all my right and title in and to a certain piece or parcel of land with the buildings, thereon, situated in Boscawen in the County of Merrimack and State of New Hampshire, containing one acre be the same more or less bounded and described as follow: Beginning at the north East corner of a piece of land conveyed to Kimball Woodward by Samuel D. Couch, it being a part of the Enoch Gilbert? farm, so called, lying on the west side of the road leading from the fourth New Hampshire Turnpike Road in Salisbury to Pleasant street in Boscawen, thence on said road southerly twenty rods, thence westerly eight rods, thence northerly twenty rods on a line parallel with said road, thence Easterly eight rods to the point of beginning containing one hundred sixty square rods more or less being the same land conveyed to my [sic] by Kimball Woodward of said Boscawen by his deed dated July 31, 1837 and recorded in Merrimack Records Lib, 52 Fol 26 to which said deed and record thereof, reference may be had, To have and to hold the above granted premises to the said Ezekiel S. Davis his heirs and assigns to his and their, use and behoof forever. And I for myself my heirs executors and administrators do covenant with the said Ezekiel S. Davis his heirs and assigns. That I am lawfully seized in fee of the afore granted premises. That they are free from all encumbrances. That I have good right to sell and convey the same to the said Ezekiel S. Davis. And that I will and my heirs executors and administrators, shall warrant and defend the same to the said Ezekiel S Davis his heirs and assigns forever, as against the lawful claims and demands of all persons

In witness whereof I the said Bashabee Woodward have hereunto set my hand and seal this thirtieth day of November, in the year, our Lord one thousand eighth hundred and forty six

Signed sealed and delivered in presence of	Her
James Hopkins	Bashabee Woodward (LS)
W ^m F. Smith	mark

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Middlesex ss Nov 30, 1846 Then personally appeared the above named Bashabee Woodward and acknowledged the above instrument to be her free act and deed Before me

W^m F Smith Justice of the Peace

Received & Recorded December 1, 1846

Examined R T Leavitt
Register

Family of John Woodward of Dublin

Contributed by Mr. James O. Schuyler*

John¹ Woodward was born on 18 November and baptized at St. Mary's Dublin, Ireland, on 19 November 1784.¹ The sponsors at his baptism were: Lord Carleton, Edward Grant, his uncle, and his great aunt, Hon. Mistress Lucy Wait.² He died at Hector, Schuyler County, New York, on 15 January 1848³ and is buried at Trinity Chapel in Hector with his wife.²

He married at Payhembury, Devonshire, on 6 August 1812 **Sarah Venn**.² She died at Hector, New York, 5 September 1862.²

John was brought up at Arch Hall, County Meath⁴ and Dublin.⁵ He was carefully educated and studied at Oxford. After marriage he and his wife lived first on a farm at Westleigh, Bideford, Devonshire. Here their first four children were born. In 1817, John and his family moved to County Somerset, England.² John was listed on the assessment rolls for the parish of Charlton Mackrell from 1817 to 1822. He leased lands from William Dickenson. Listed with him was **Henry Woodward**, probably his brother. From 1820 to 1822, John was the assessor and collector of taxes. In 1821, he occupied parish lands with H. Penny.⁶ John was a farmer at Charlton Mackrell and his next four children were born and baptized there.⁷ About 1823, he and his family moved to London where their son, George, was born.² They went to the States with John's mother in 1825 and settled on a farm he had purchased at Peach Orchard, Hector, Schuyler Co., New York.³ John farmed at Peach Orchard and was for many years the Justice of the Peace in Hector.⁸ His last child was born at Hector.³

Children of John **Woodward** and Sarah **Venn**.³

- i. **John² Woodward** born in Westleigh, Bideford, Devonshire, England, 19 May 1813; died in Hector, Schuyler County, New York, 15 August 1865.
- ii. **Elizabeth Judith Woodward** born in Westleigh, Bideford, Devonshire 18 April 1814; died 25 April 1850. She married 23 September 1835 **William Clark Blackwood**.
- iii. **Benjamin Woodward** born in Westleigh, Bideford, Devonshire 9 November 1815; died in Hector, New York, 1 September 1836 from an accident while coasting on a hand-sled.
- iv. **William Woodward** born in Westleigh, Bideford, Devonshire 28 January 1817; died 30 June

1887. He married, first, **Harriet King**, and, second, **Margaret Vaughn**.

- v. **Ann Hex Woodward** born in Charlton Mackrell, County Somerset 9 February 1818; baptised 8 March 1818; died in Macon, Lenawee County, Michigan, 24 December 1840.⁹ She married **William Osborn** and lived in Tecumseh, Michigan. They had one child: **Mary E. Osborn** who married **John F. Hicks**.
- vi. **Henry Woodward** born in Charlton Mackrell, County Somerset 18 March 1819; baptised 29 March 1819;⁷ died in Frankfort, Michigan, 26 March 1889. He married in 1842 **Frances Tracy**.
- vii. **Charles Woodward** born in Charlton Mackrell, County Somerset 3 July 1821; baptised 10 October 1821;⁷ died in 1892. He married **Charlotte Augusta Finch**.
- viii. **Lucy Jane Woodward** born in Charlton Mackrell, County Somerset 30 August 1823; baptised 29 September 1823; died in Hector, New York, 16 January 1830.
- ix. **George Woodward** born in London, England, 23 February 1824; died in Hector, New York, February 1847.
- x. **Clement Venn Woodward** born in Hector, New York, 16 November 1829; died in Plymouth, Michigan 20 January 1850.

Resource Notes

¹St. Mary's Church Dublin Parish Registers, P277/1/1 Vol. 1 Marriages; and P277/1/3 Vol. 3, Baptisms, Representative Church Body Library, Dublin.

²Clementine (Blackwood) Reynolds, "Genealogy, Letters from Elizabeth Grant Woodward to Her Grandson, Charles Woodward," December 1911, transcripts in possession of J.O. Schuyler.

³Theron Royal Woodward, "Major Benjamin Woodward and Some of his Descendants," *New York Genealogical and Biographical Record* 37 (April 1906): 136-141, and (July 1906): 218-219.

⁴Rev. William Woodward, *Woodward Genealogical History* (Wotton Vicarage, Bucks., 1884, with additions to 1912); Family History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah.

⁵John Watson, *The Gent. and City Almanacs*, 1780, 1784, 1789, 1790, 1792, 1795, 1796, 1797, & 1798. Public Record Office, Dublin.

⁶"Charlton Mackrell Land Tax Assessments," Q/Rel 3314, Somerset County Record Office.

⁷Charlton Mackrell Parish Registers, 1813=1874, Baptisms, 2/1/7; and Bishop Transcripts, 1815-18, Burials, 89a, Somerset County Record Office.

⁸*History of Schuyler County, New York* (n.p.: Everts and Ensign, 1879), 74.

⁹*Portrait and Biographical Album of Lenawee County, Michigan*

(Chicago: Chapman Brothers, 1888), 97.

* Contributed by James O. Schuyler, 898 Cordilleras Ave., San Carlos, CA 94070 in reponse to query No. 115 in the October 1996 issue of *WOODWARDs WeSearch*. Mr. Schuyler is compiling a book on the Woodward, Grant, Venn, and Hex families.

Queries

Policy:

Subscribers of *WOODWARDs WeSearch* may submit queries free of charge and may ask inclusion of their address or for all responses to be sent to *WOODWARDs WeSearch*. If the latter choice is made, the editors will forward all responses to the particular subscriber submitting the query.

Deadline for queries: December 18th, March 18th, June 18th, September 18th.

(116) **Mary M. Wood(w)ard** was b. 6 Mar 1836 in Conshohocken, Montgomery Co., PA, dau. of **John Woodward** and possibly **Eliza Ann** (-?-). She mar. 10 Oct 1854 in Champaign Co., OH, 10 Oct 1854, **James Johnson**, b. 1829 in OH. Seek info on these family. Will exchange family history. - *Richard L. Johnson, 11860 Carter Hill RD., Corry, PA 16407*.

(117) Seek info. on **William Woodward** who mar. in Shelby Co., IN, 18 Nov 1849 **Elizabeth Johnson** (1829-aft. 1867), dau. of **Charles Frederick Johnson** and **Elizabeth Trimble**. - [*Alberta Payton* *]

(118) Need verification of info concerning **Daniel³ Woodard**, **Samuel² Woodard**, and **Amos¹ Woodard** as family cited in Norma Slater Woodward's *Descendants of Richard Woodward: New England 1589-1982*, pp. 122-123. Family of Amos removed from Pittsford, VT, to Prov. of Quebec abt. 1798. Daniel Woodard (b. 1800, Richmond, Quebec, Canada) mar. **Caroline Elliot** (b. 1807). - *Fredrick J. Woodard* *

(119) Need info on the family of **Mary Woodward**, born in Braintree, Essex, England and mar. **Ozias Goodwin** in England in 1661. Mary was the daughter of **Robert Woodward** of Braintree who died 27 May 1640. - *Nancy E. Hoffman* *

(120) Need date and place of birth and death of **Joshua Woodward** (b. abt. 1815 in KY) and his par. **Joseph Woodward** and **Katie** [--?--] of KY. Joshua, his brother **Micheal Woodward** and cousin **Isaac Woodward** were in Grant Co., WI by 1840 and in Pike Co., IL prior to that. Joshua mar. **Elizabeth Wayne** dau. of **Lewis Wayne** in Grant Co., WI 18 Mar 1850 and lived in Crawford Co., WI until 1865 when they are found in Scotland Co., MO. By 1880 they were in Cloud Co., KS. Known ch. of Joshua & Elizabeth (Wayne) Woodward: **John Woodward**, **Joseph Woodward**, **Franklin Woodward**, **Micheal Woodward**, **Grant Woodward**, and **Robert Woodward**. - *Orval L. Woodard, 20281 Panorama Ln., Colfax, CA 95713*.

New Subscribers

Richard L. Johnson (see query No. 116).

Fredrick J. Woodard (see query No. 117).

Linda Barnickel, 555 Moorland Rd., #302, Madison, WI 53713: Searching William M. Woodard who was in TN (Bedord, Lincoln & Moore Counties) from 1850-1900. William mar. Minerva West in 1850.

Lucille G. Hastings, 197 Brookstone Dr., Princeton, NJ 08540: Searching Daniel Wood(w)ard, b. 1803 in Bradford Co., PA; also interested in Tioga Co. and Potter Co., PA.

Mary M. Tholking, 10064 Old Farm, Cincinnati, OH 45242: Earliest U.S.—Samuel Ezekiel Woodward in Roxbury, MA by 1640 (from Suffolk, England). Ms. Tholking is also interested in Woodward's of the Cincinnati area.

Dorothy Burns, 1215 So. 800 E, Salt Lake City, UT 84105: Researching James E. Woodward who was located in Hopkins Co., KY in 1850. Ms. Burns is also interested in Tennessee.

ANCESTORS is Coming to PBS

Check your Public Broadcasting System for the *Ancestors* series which will be airing in January 1997. *Ancestors* is a series of ten 30-minute programs on genealogy hosted by Jim and Terry Willard, amateur genealogists and former high school teachers.

Each episode will generally have two components, a "mini-documentary" and a "how-to" segment.

A Prayer for Genealogists

by Curtis Woods of the San Mateo
Genealogical Society

Lord, help me dig into the past
And sift the sands of time
That I might find the roots that made
This family tree of mine.

Lord, help me trace the ancient roads
On which my fathers trod
And led them through so many lands
To find their present sod.

Lord, help me find an ancient book
Or dusty manuscript
That's safely hidden now away
In some forgotten crypt;
Lord, let it bridge the gap that haunts
My soul when I can't find
The missing link between some name
That ends the same as mine.

**REMINDER!**

Above your name on your mailing label, you will find a code for the month and year which your subscription to *WOODWARDs WeSearch* expires. To renew your subscription (or to apply for a new subscription) please send your name and mailing address with a check for \$8 (\$11 U.S. Currency for a foreign address) to: Linda Geiger, 718 Big Canoe, Jasper, GA 30143.

ALL readers of this newsletter are encouraged to contribute articles such as: information extracted from Family Bibles, extractions from diaries, or local court houses; information on repositories in his/her geographic area; biographical essays on an individual; book reviews; obituaries; etc.

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FIRST CLASS