

Rathbun, Rathbone, Rathburn

FAMILY HISTORIAN



The Rev. John Rathbone
1729-1826

Devoted to

the perpetuity of

our common-heritage

an honorable

Name.

The Rathbun-Rathbone-Rathburn Family Historian

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Letter From the Editor

We are proud and pleased to present the first issue of the *Rathbun-Rathbone-Rathburn Family Historian*. It has been made possible by the charter subscribers whose names are listed on pages 14 and 15.

In this issue are stories on the origin of our name, on our first American ancestor, and his ancestry in England. The next issue will cover his children and succeeding issues will continue with the following generations.

We will also publish stories on family members, both past and present. We will be covering Rathbuns, Rathbones and Rathburns from all walks of life—from merchants, sea captains and military heroes to frontier preachers, doctors and lawyers; from farmers, pioneers and cowboys to inventors, educators and politicians. We will even throw in a scoundrel or two (yes, even our family has had some).

This First Edition of The Rathbun-Rathbone-Rathburn Family Historian Magazine Is Dedicated to the Memory of
Charles Frederick Rathbun
(1955-1975)
Our Son and Brother

Much of this material has already been collected, but we need your help to gather more. Please send us anything relating to Rathbuns, Rathbones or Rathburns—past or present. We would like to locate old letters, Bible records, journals, diaries and stories told by early members of the family.

Early pictures are especially sought. Rather than send originals, make xerox copies of papers, and photographic copies of pictures.

Send us current newspaper clippings about today's "cousins"—obituaries, marriages, graduations, promotions, new jobs, awards—anything that relates to our family.

Please send, too, any suggestions for our magazine—*your* magazine. Tell us how it can be improved; tell us what you want to see in it.

A final word: Unless otherwise noted, all the articles in this issue and in future issues will be written by the editor, who takes full responsibility for their contents. We will do our best to avoid errors, but if you find any, let us know.

Your comments, suggestions, praise or criticism will be welcome.

The Front Cover

The front cover of the *Historian* was designed by Carol Verby Brill of Annapolis, Md., to retain some of the Victorian "flavor" of the original *Rathbone Family Historian* of the 1890s. The "Family Historian" portion of the title was duplicated, but we have added "Rathbun-Rathbone-Rathburn." From the 1890s editions we have also borrowed the banner carrying the motto "Devoted to the perpetuity of our common heritage—an honorable name." We plan to keep the general design of the front cover for future issues, but will be using a different picture each time.

The Rev. John Rathbone: Patriarch, Preacher, Patriot

The silhouette of the Rev. John Rathbone was chosen for the front cover of our first issue for a specific reason—he is the earliest member of our family whose likeness is known to exist.

It was first published in John C. Cooley's *Rathbone Genealogy* of 1898, when it was in the possession of Mrs. Margaret Busse of Brooklyn, N.Y., a great-great-granddaughter of Rev. Rathbone. It was made in 1807 when he was 78 years old. Its present-day whereabouts is not known.

The Rev. John Rathbone was born in 1729, served as a Baptist minister for 75 years, and died in 1826 at the age of 97.

His life span covered the French and Indian War, the American Revolution and the War of 1812. He was



This silhouette of the Rev. John Rathbone, which also appears on the front cover, was made in 1807 when he was 78 years old. It bears a remarkable likeness to George Washington. The silhouette was owned by a descendant in the 1890s but its present-day whereabouts is not known.

Rev. John Rathbone . . . the earliest member of our family whose likeness is known to exist . . . born in 1729, served as a Baptist minister for 75 years, and died in 1826 at the age of 97.

born three years before George Washington, and nearly half a century before the Declaration of Independence. He lived through the development of America from a British colony stretched along the Atlantic Coast to an independent nation already spanning the Allegheny Mountains and reaching toward the Mississippi River on its way to the Pacific Coast.

Rev. Rathbone was born at Stonington, Conn., a son of Joshua³ Rathbun (John²) and Mary Wightman. His maternal grandfather was the Rev. Valentine Wightman, founder of the first Baptist Church in Connecticut and one of the most prominent clergymen in New England. It was his influence which led John Rathbone to study for the ministry.

He began his religious career in his native Stonington, becoming one of the town's leaders. He served during the early years of the Revolution on the Stonington Committee of Correspondence.

Rev. Rathbone's home during the Revolution is still standing in Stonington, bearing a plaque with his name and the year 1775.

In 1779, he moved to Ashford, Conn., where he formed that city's first Baptist Church and was ordained its first pastor on March 15, 1781. He remained at Ashford for many years. Family tradition tells that, even in old age and crippled by rheumatism, he walked with a cane

six miles to church on Sunday morning to preach.

As a very old man, he went to live for a short time with his eldest son in New York City, but decided to return to Ashford to live out his remaining years. His death was caused by a fall down a few steps from one room to another.

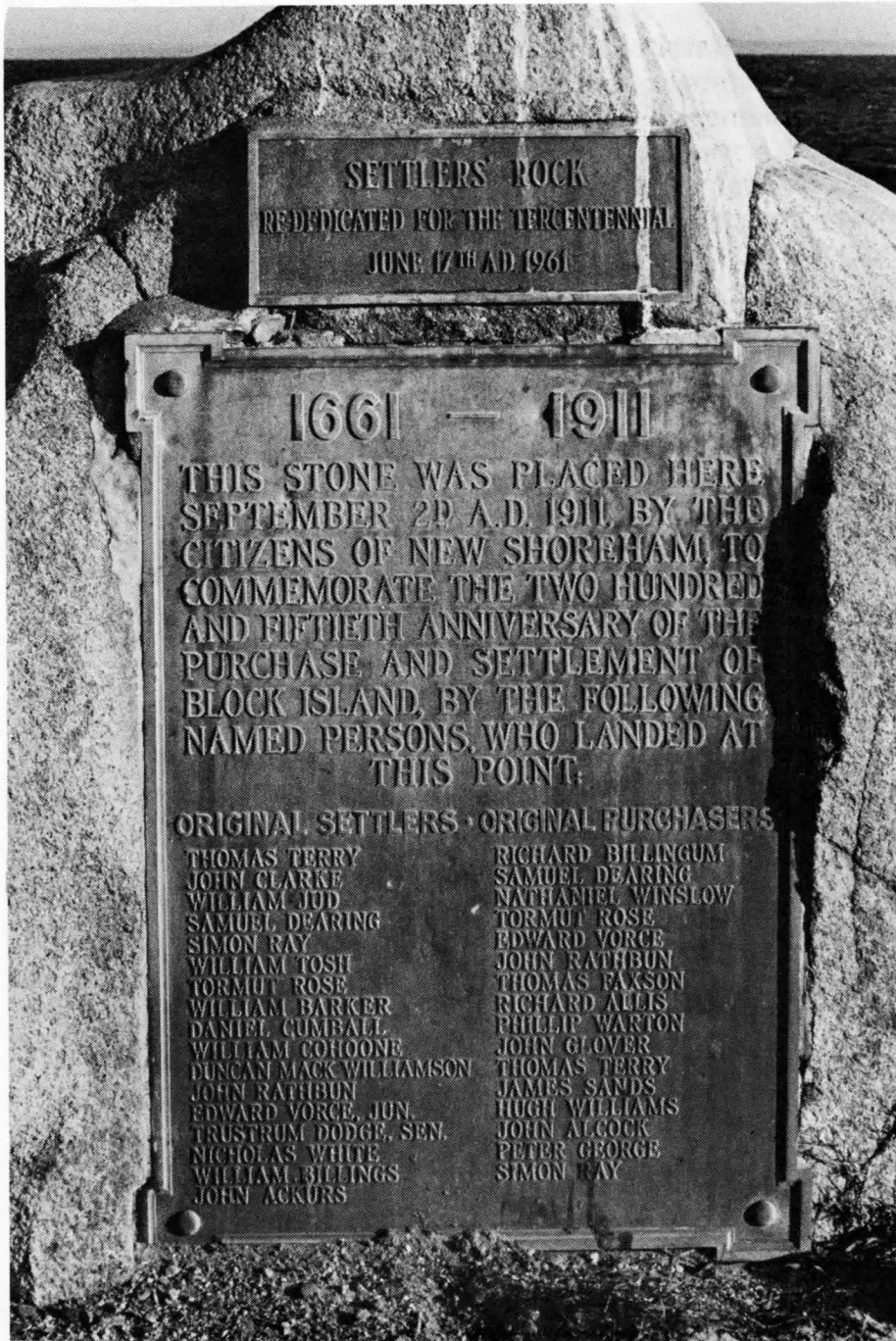
He and his wife, Content Brown, had 13 children, 10 of whom survived to adulthood. Two of his sons became ministers, several became wealthy, and many of his children were in the vanguard of the pioneers of western New York, Pennsylvania and Ohio. His descendants have since spread throughout America.

Rev. John used the Rathbun spelling until mid-life, when he adopted Rathbone.



This picture of the Rev. John Rathbone is a copy from a painting made probably in the 1770s, when he was in his fifties. The copy is owned by Mrs. Maxine Bray of East Norwalk, Conn., a descendant of Rev. Rathbone. Nothing is known of the original painting or whether it still exists.

John Rathbone of Block Island: Founder of Our Family in America



A plaque embedded in Settlers' Rock on Block Island lists the names of the first purchasers and settlers, including that of John Rathbun, as the name came to be spelled. Also on both lists is Edward Vose (Vorse), Rathbun's partner in the purchase. John Acres (Ackurs), Rathbun's brother-in-law, is listed as an original settler.

Virtually all the Rathbuns, Rathbones and Rathburns in America today are descended from John Rathbone who migrated to the New World from England about 1654. He is undoubtedly the same John Rathbone who was baptized **March 28, 1629**, at Farnworth Chapel, Parish of Prescott, County of Lancashire, England. His father was Thomas Rathbone, a shoemaker in the town of Ditton, 11 miles east of Liverpool on the Mersey River (see article on p. 8).

The family was poor, and young John was probably put to work as a small boy either in his father's shoe shop or as an apprentice to a neighboring tradesman. He received little, if any, schooling, and remained illiterate until his death.

In the early 1650s, he married Margaret Acres, the daughter of Thomas Acres, a neighbor in Ditton.

This was a period of great unrest in England. Years of civil war ended in 1653 with the beheading of Charles II and the installation of Cromwell as Lord Protector.

In 1654, Thomas Rathbone, the shoemaker, died. He left a small sum of money to his youngest son, John, who apparently used the money to take his bride to America, which was already developing a reputation as a land of opportunity. They first settled in Dorchester, Mass., where a number of Lancashire immigrants were already living. Unfortunately, the Dorchester town records for this period were destroyed by fire, and we have no records of his early days there.

John Rathbone's name first appears in American records on August 17, 1660, when he was listed among 12 Massachusetts men who met at the Roxbury home of Dr. John Alcock to consider the purchase of Block Island, 12 miles off the coast of what is now Rhode Island. Alcock proposed that 16

families could share in the purchase and establish a "plantation" on the island.

The 12 men at the meeting agreed to the purchase, and to send a surveyor to the island. The group, expanded to 16, later re-assembled and made plans to divide the 6,720-acre island. Drawings were held to assign each of the proprietors a "great lot" in both the northern and southern sections of the island.

Most of the proprietors agreed to purchase a full one-sixteenth share, two took double shares, and several, less affluent, pooled their funds and bought half-shares. Among the latter were John Rathbone and Edward Vose. Their land in the southern section lay along the southeastern coast, encompassing what is now known as Mohican Bluff. That, together with their lot in the northern tract, gave them, they thought, a total of 420 acres of land.

Within a few years, Rathbone realized that the original survey had been inaccurate. He obtained a second survey, which established that he and Vose had been shorted by 130 acres in their "great lot" in the southeastern corner. He appealed to the attorneys for the Alcock estate—John Alcock having died—and they agreed in 1671 to give him "what land shall be found wanting . . . in some convenient place in the commonland."

To make up for the shortage, Rathbone was given 60 acres near the center of the island, stretching from near what is now the town center to the ocean on the east side. That surveying error proved to be a bonanza, for the correction gave him a strategically located piece of land in what became the most valuable part of the island.

Rathbone must have been a man of foresight. For the next few years he steadily increased his holdings on the island. In 1674, he purchased

42 acres and in 1680, he bought 12½ adjoining acres.

On Oct. 10, 1680, he made the final payment for his share of the original purchase, as shown in this early land record:

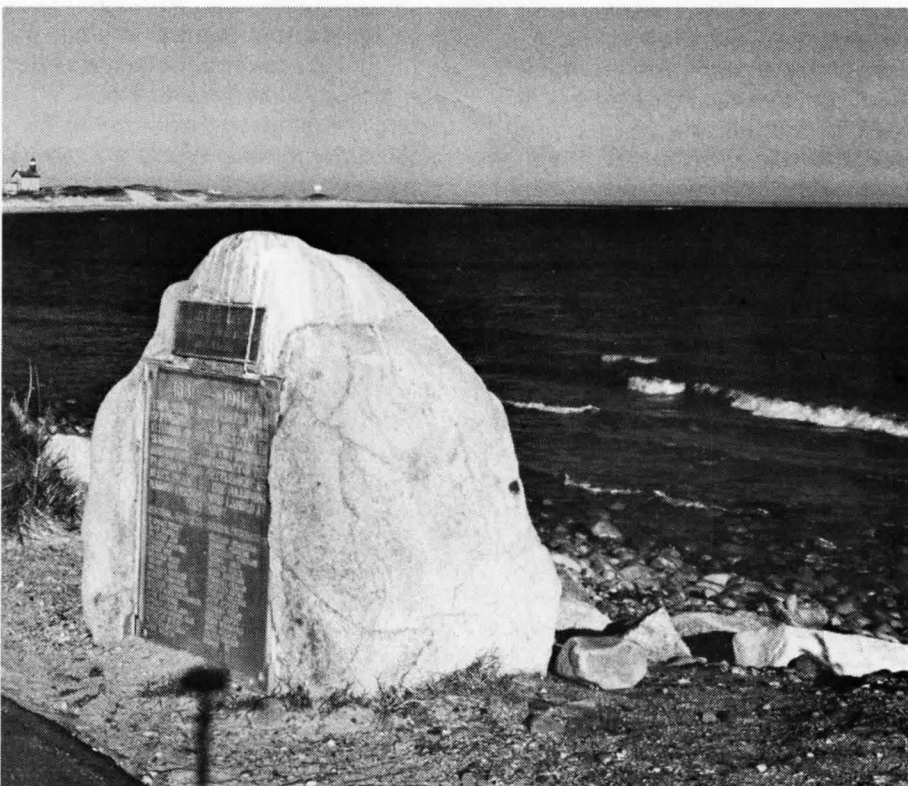
"I, John Williams . . . executor of the estate of John Alcock . . . doe acquit John Rathbon from the payment of 30 pounds which hath been received . . . 11 pounds five shillings (by) said Alcock . . . and the rest by Thomas Terry and myself . . . in full payment of a two and thirtieth part of Block Island . . . which said Rathbon bought of Mr. Alcock as by an account upon the Block Island Book of Accounts . . ."

This would indicate that Rath-

bone had made a down payment of somewhat less than 50 percent, and had repaid the balance over a period of nearly 20 years—a system similar to today's 20-year mortgage plans.

From surviving records of his land transactions, it is apparent that Rathbone's major holdings, and his home, were in the central part of the island, which very early emerged as the town center. He also retained his original tract in the south end, for in April 1680 the town officers gave him permission to erect a fence "across ye highway in ye south end of ye island and to hang and maintain a gate for ye liberty of

(continued on page 6)



Settlers' Rock on the desolate northeastern coast of Block Island marks the landing place of the first settlers in 1661. The site is known as Cow Cove because one of the settlers' cows was the first to reach shore. There is a tradition that the cow belonged to John Rathbone.

(continued from page 5)

ye inhabitants to pass to the sea when they see occasion." For this privilege, Rathbone gave the town an acre of land.

John Rathbone apparently maintained a second home in Newport for a number of years. The birth of his youngest son, Samuel, on Aug. 3, 1672, is recorded in early Quaker records at Newport. In 1674, he was living in Hammersmith, in southwest Newport. In 1681, he was elected to represent Block Island as deputy to the Rhode Island General Assembly, a position he held for the next five years. He apparently remained in Newport during this time and his name appears on a Freemen's List there in 1683.

Sir Edmond Andros, appointed by King James as Royal Governor for the United Colonies, did "take notice" of the signers in the new government. All were rewarded for their loyalty by appointments. Rathbone was named in 1688 as a Grand Juryman on the General Quarter Sessions Court, which replaced the General Assembly as the governing body of the colony.

That same year, however, saw the overthrow of King James in the Glorious Revolution. The Crown Party was out of favor, and Rathbone returned to Block Island, his political career cut short. Less than a century later, his descendants would be fighting a later King in the American Revolution.

In July 1689, Block Island was in-

From the standpoint of land value, Rathbone's Block Island investment had been a profitable one. In 1684, 210 acres were sold for as much as the entire island had cost just 23 years earlier. Our ancestors also lived through inflationary times.

In his will, dated Feb. 12, 1702, at Block Island, John Rathbone described himself as "yeoman, being sick in body but of perfect memory." He was not too sick, however, to attend the April 8 town meeting with all five of his sons. Presumably he died early that fall, for the will was formally proved before the town clerk on October 6.

Although he listed himself as of "Block Island," the inventory of his estate indicates that he considered Newport his principal home. The contents of his "Newport House" included beds, pewter, wearing apparel, a bible and a gun. His Block Island inventory consisted entirely of livestock—11 cattle and 70 sheep.

He apparently conducted some sort of business in Newport, since his will refers to a "shop" there. A 1702 record lists him as one of the proprietors of the Newport Town Wharf.

The date of Margaret Rathbone's death is not known. She survived her husband for at least 14 years. In July 1707, she was listed as the owner of a lot in Newport—presumably the property left her in John's will. In March 1716, as the "widow and relict of John Rathbun, deceased," she made a deposition on Block Island regarding property she and her husband had deeded to their son, John Rathbun, Jr.

Of their five sons, three lived and died on the island—John Jr., Thomas and Samuel. The other two, William and Joseph, moved to the mainland. During the first quarter of the 18th Century, Rathbun (as it came to be spelled) must have been the island's most common name. The census of 1708 listed 208 residents, of whom at least 58 were Rathbuns. Of the 38 freemen in 1708, seven were Rathbuns. There was a wave of migration to the mainland between 1725 and 1740, and the 1744 list of "tax ratables"

Virtually all the Rathbuns, Rathbones and Rathbuns in America today are descended from John Rathbone, who migrated to the New World from England about 1654.

In 1685, John Rathbone was a member of the Crown Party, which supported King James' order vacating the Rhode Island colonial charter, and uniting the colony with Massachusetts Bay, New Plymouth, New Hampshire and Maine. A majority of the General Assembly voted to defy the King and continue operations under the old charter. Rathbone and 12 other delegates sent a petition to King James pledging their allegiance to the crown:

"With all dutiful respect and submission as becometh loyal subjects, and in obedience thereto, we . . . doe hereby present our full and free submission and entire resignation of the powers given us in said charter, unto your Majestie's pleasure, humbly desiring . . . that your Majestie will take such notice of us in the succeeding government as may best consist with your Majestie's honour and our good . . ."

Rathbone was the only one of the 13 who signed with "his mark"—carefully printing "JR" for his signature. This is one of two documents (the other is his will) which show that he was illiterate, not uncommon in that day.

vaded by a French privateer, looking for plunder. The invaders asked some of the islanders who was most likely to have money, and were directed to John Rathbone.

The Frenchmen went to the Rathbone home, and seized John Rathbone Jr., not realizing there were two men with the same name. The younger John, then about 35 years old, was tied, stripped to the waist, and whipped by the French in an effort to make him "confess" where he had hidden his money.

By posing as his father, young John enabled his parents to escape capture and possible harm at the hands of the invaders.

It is a matter of conjecture whether the elder Rathbone was really one of the richest men on the island, or whether his neighbors resented his recent association with the discredited Crown Party. He had, however, accumulated a considerable amount of property on the island; between 1679 and 1693, he gave 255 acres of land to his children. Family tradition relates that he did this in the hope that his descendants would remain on the island forever.

showed only four Rathbun families remaining on the island.

There are no Rathbuns living on the island today (the last one died in 1911), but many Block Islanders trace their ancestry to John and Margaret Rathbone.

The children of John and Margaret (Acres) Rathbone/Rathbun:

1. John Rathbun Jr., born about 1655, possibly at Dorchester, Mass.; married, first, at Block Island Jan. 16, 1679, to a wife whose name has been lost, and secondly, "at Rochester in the King's Province" (now North Kingston, R.I.), on Nov. 11, 1686, to Ann Dodge, possibly the widow of Thomas Dodge, son of Tristram; died 1723 at Block Island.

2. Thomas Rathbun, born about 1657, probably at Dorchester; married Aug. 21, 1685, at Block Island, Mary Dickens, daughter of Nathaniel and Joan Dickens; died Dec. 26, 1733, at Block Island.

3. Sarah Rathbun, born June 10, 1659, probably at Dorchester; married first, Dec. 20, 1678, at Block Island, Samuel George, son of Peter and Mary George; married second (possibly) John Mitchell; died in 1718 at Newport.

4. William Rathbun, born about 1661, probably at Dorchester; married **first**, Dec. 18, 1680, Sarah _____, **and second, Rachel _____, who survived him; died at Westerly, R.I., in 1727.**

5. Margaret Rathbun, born about 1663, at Block Island; married (possibly) about 1681, Thomas Mitchell; date of death unknown.

6. Joseph Rathbun, born about 1667 at Block Island; married May 19, 1691, Mary Mosher, daughter of Hugh and Rebecca Mosher; died in 1749 at Exeter, R.I.

7. Elizabeth Rathbun, born about 1670; no record of marriage.

8. Samuel Rathbun, born Aug 3, 1672, at Newport; married Nov. 3, 1692, at Block Island, Patience Coggeshall, daughter of John and Patience (Throckmorton) Coggeshall; died Jan. 24, 1757, at Block Island.

John Rathbone's Will: Freed 'Neager' Slave

"In the name of God, Amen. I, John Rathbone, Senior, of Block Island, also New Shoram, in the colony of Rhode Island and Providence plantation in New England, yeoman, being sick in body but of perfect memory, thanks be to Almighty God, and calling to remembrance the uncertain estate of this transitory life and that all flesh must yield unto death when it shall please God to call, do make, constitute, ordain, and declare this my last will and testament in manner and form following, revoking and annulling by these presents, all and every testament and testaments, will or wills heretofore by me made and declared, either by word or by writing, and this is to be taken only, for my last will and testament and none other. . . .

"First, I give and bequeath to my son, Samuel Rathbone, the table and cubbard which stand now in his house as for are lomes (heirlooms?) to the house, and I leave my wife, Margaret Rathbone, my executrix of all my moveable and household goods, houses and chattles, cattle, sheep and horsekind, and I leave the income of my house at Newport for her lifetime, and at her decease the westward of my house at Newport, and the leanto of that end so far as the post that the door hangs on, and the shop to be left to my son John Rathbone's son John and his heirs forever; and the eastward end of said house and the rest of the lean-to to be left for my son William Rathbone's son John and his heirs forever, and the yard to be equally for their use.

"And I leave to my wife for her lifetime the twenty acres of land which I bought of Henry Hall, and the running of two cows and a horse, and the end of the house which I now live in.

"And I leave that my four sons shall pay to my wife during her lifetime, forty shillings a year, that is to say, John Rathbone, William Rathbone and Joseph Rathbone and Samuel Rathbone.

"And I leave to my wife during her lifetime, my neager man, and at her disposing and at her decease to my son Thomas Rathbone for three years, and at the end of the three years to give him as good clothes as his mistress leaves him and then to set him free.

"And at my wife's decease, what household goods are left are to be equally divided among my three daughters, Sarah, and Margaret and Elizabeth, and what cattle and sheep and horsekind are left are to be equally divided between my five sons.

"And I leave that my wife shall take up all bonds and debts due to me.

"And I leave that my executrix shall see this my will performed.

"In witness whereof I have hereinto set my hand and affixed my seal in Block Island aforesaid, the twelfth day of February, in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and two."

His
John JR Rathbone
Mark

Searching for Our Roots:

Research Disproves Long-Accepted Account

I received my introduction to genealogy as a teen-ager, when my oldest Rathbun uncle dusted off the old Family Bible and showed me our family records dating back to the 1760s. That introduction planted the seed from which has sprung a life-long fascination. Anyone who has delved into genealogy knows this deep obsession to go back further into the family roots.

Like anyone else who has studied the Rathbun/Rathbone line, my investigations led inevitably to *The Rathbone Genealogy*, published in 1898 by John C. Cooley. For many years, historians had accepted Cooley's statement that the American Rathbuns and Rathbones were all descended from Richard Rathbone, born in 1574 in England, who came to America in the early 1600s.

By the 1940s, as genealogy became more of an exact science,

many professional researchers began to question Cooley's account, and I decided to conduct my own study of the early American Rathbones. I soon realized that Cooley's work was full of errors, and that his Richard Rathbone was not our common ancestor. The founder of the family in America, I found, was actually John Rathbone or Rathbun of Block Island, Rhode Island.

Cooley's account begins as follows:

"Richard Rathbone, the first of the name in America of whom we have any record, was born about 1574. He married Marion Whipple, sister of Captain John Whipple, who mentions her in his will, made at Ipswich, Essex County, Massachusetts, December 19, 1616, and probated January 28, 1618. They had four children, all sons. So far as we have been able to discover, none of them left issue except John, the youngest. The eldest, Rev. William Rathbone, resided in Vermont in 1630; he is spoken of in a work published in 1637 and reprinted in The Historical Collections of Massachusetts."

Cooley then related that Richard and Marion had four children — William, Joseph, Thomas and John. The youngest, John, born about 1610, married about 1633, Cooley said, and had a son, John Jr., born about 1634, who married Margaret, the daughter of Tristram Dodge.

Cooley obviously based his conclusions on two "facts" — that Richard Rathbone was mentioned in Captain John Whipple's will in Ipswich, Mass., in 1616, and that Rev. William Rathbone was living in Vermont in 1630.

Neither is indeed a fact!

Captain Matthew (not John) Whipple's will in 1616 was made

and probated in Ipswich, England (not Massachusetts). Whipple did mention a brother-in-law, Richard Rathbone, but there is no indication that this Richard Rathbone ever came to America or had a son named John.

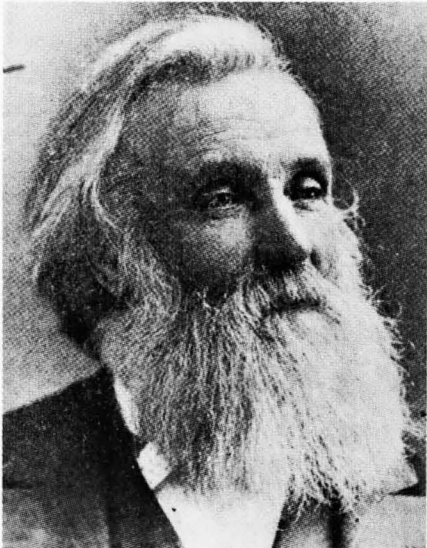
There was a Rev. William Rathbone (spelled Rathband by him) who was a prominent English clergyman and author in the mid-1600s. His religious works were known and read in the American colonies, but there is no evidence that he ever visited America, let alone lived here. And Vermont did not even exist in 1630.

Cooley did perform an outstanding service for later genealogists by locating and printing records contained in family bibles and other sources that have since been lost or destroyed. He did not have access to all the records and indices which are available to us today. He was not a trained scholar, and he was too willing to accept information provided him without research or documentation.

Some of his "facts" are wrong, and some of his conclusions are erroneous, but his 827-page book — today rare and valuable — is a tremendous accomplishment. In a later issue, we will take a closer look at John C. Cooley and *The Rathbone Genealogy*.

At any rate, having found such basic flaws in Cooley's account of the early family in America, I decided that our "roots" needed to be further explored.

The earliest American record I could find was the name of John Rathbone among a group of Massachusetts men who met in 1660 in Roxbury, Mass., to consider the purchase of Block Island, off the coast of Rhode Island. This was the John, born "about 1634," listed by Cooley



John C. Cooley, author of the Rathbone Genealogy. He was a grandson of Amos⁵ Rathbun (Amos⁴ Joshua³ John²1)

as a grandson of the supposed immigrant Richard.

Since this ancestry apparently was not accurate, my task was to identify John, the Block Island proprietor, and find his origin in England.

The best clue, I thought, might be his early associates.

When the Block Island purchase was made, John Rathbone took a one-sixteenth share in partnership with Edward Vose. Later, the Vose share passed into the hands of John Acres, who in an early Block Island deed referred to John Rathbone as "my loving brother."

Research on these two men — Edward Vose and John Acres — led to fruitful results.

The Vose genealogy, published in 1932, showed that Edward and his father, Robert, came from Lancashire County, England, to Dorchester, Mass., about 1654. Their home in Lancashire had been in Ditton and later Garston, small towns near the city of Widnes.

Armed with this information, I set about to learn what I could about John Acres. There is no published Acres genealogy, but I did find a clue in early land records of Providence, Rhode Island. On June 12, 1660, Roger Mowrey of Providence sold "to John Ackrs of Dorchester" 90 acres on the east side of the West River, just outside Providence. Eighteen months later, "John Ackrs, late of Dorchester, now of Newport" sold the same 90 acres to William Reape, merchant, of Newport.

Now knowing that both Vose and Acres had first settled in Dorchester, Mass., it appeared the answer might be found there.

I discovered, however, that the early Dorchester records had been destroyed by fire many years ago. The few surviving records contained no references to Rathbone or Acres, although there were many to the Vose family, which had remained in the town for several decades.

Knowing that the Vose family had come from the Ditton-Garston area of Lancashire, I turned my research in that direction.

Early residents of these two little

towns attended church services at the nearby Farnworth Chapel, which still survives, along with its baptismal, burial and marriage records. I found the Chapel register literally loaded with the names of Rathbone, Acres and Vose and I quickly spotted a candidate for our John of Block Island:

"Baptism, March 8, 1629, John Rathbone, son of Thomas Rathbone of Ditton."

The name was right, the year was right, and the similarity of family names was nothing short of remarkable:

- John of Block Island named his first three sons John, Thomas and William.
- John of Ditton was the son of Thomas, had an uncle and brother named William.

Everything indicated I had found the right man, but more substantiating evidence was needed.

I checked through the Farnworth records for the rest of the century, and found no record of either marriage or death for the John Rathbone born in 1629. That would in-

dicate that he had left the area — either to America, or elsewhere in England.

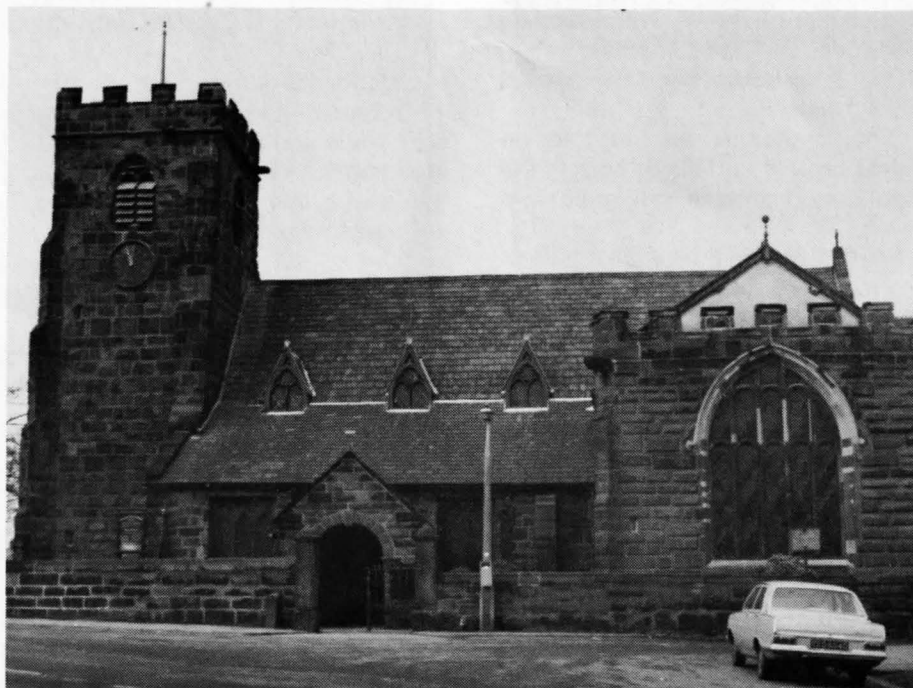
I checked the Lancashire County probate records and found the will of Thomas Raithbone or Rathbone, shoemaker, of Ditton, dated Feb. 7, 1654. He apparently died the same day, for the Farnworth Chapel register recorded his burial on February 9. The year was significant, for it was just the time that the Vose family migrated to America, presumably in company with John Rathbone and John Acres.

The will (reproduced elsewhere) mentioned his son John among the children, proving that John had lived to maturity.

By this time, I was convinced I had found our family's "roots" in England. The next question was the identity of Margaret, the wife of John Rathbone of Block Island.

Cooley had identified her as the daughter of Tristram Dodge, another early settler of Block Island, though not one of the original purchasers.

(continued on page 10)



Recent picture of Farnworth Chapel near Ditton, England, where our ancestors were baptized, married and buried in the late Middle Ages. The ancient chapel has remained virtually unchanged during the centuries, but is still in use today. Its records date back to the 1530s.

(continued from page 9)

Since John and Margaret Rathbone had children between 1655 and 1672, Margaret was probably born between 1630 and 1635.

Tristram Dodge, a fisherman in Newfoundland, was invited to settle on Block Island by the early settlers to teach them "the art of fishing." It was unlikely that John Rathbone could have met Dodge's daughter either in England or in Dorchester as early as 1654. Another indication that Margaret was not Tristram's daughter was found in a 1683 agreement disposing of his estate. It was signed by several sons but no daughters.

If Margaret was not a Dodge, what was her maiden name?

The obvious clue appeared to be the earlier-mentioned Block Island deed in which John Acres calls John Rathbone "my loving brother." This was common 17th century language to describe brothers-in-law, and would indicate that Rathbone had married Acres' sister, or that Acres had married Rathbone's sister.

John Acres' wife was Margery, a name which does not appear among the sisters of the John Rathbone I had found in Ditton. It would seem, then, that Rathbone had married Acres' sister.

The challenge was to find an Acres brother and sister born in the right period, and the right geographic area.

Back I went to the Lancashire parish registers, and in the registers of Prescott Parish, only a few miles from Ditton, I found the following baptisms:

- "September 15, 1633, Margaret Acres, daughter of Thomas of Whiston"
- "February 20, 1635, John Acres, son of Thomas of Prescott"

Ditton, Prescott and Whiston are neighboring towns in Lancashire.

Neither the Prescott Parish records, nor those of other parishes in the area, showed a marriage or death for John or Margaret Acres. They had obviously left the area, and I was satisfied I had solved the

mystery of John Rathbone's wife. She was Margaret Acres.

The Farnworth Chapel Register dates back to 1538, the year that parish ministers were ordered to begin keeping records of marriages, baptisms and burials. Using these records, we can construct the following "family tree" for our English ancestor:

William¹ Rathbone, born probably prior to 1538, since his baptism is not recorded; married Ellen _____, probably about 1560, although the marriage does not appear in the records. Died in June

1587, and buried June 8 as "William Rathbone of Ditton." Ellen was buried November 30 that same year.

Children:

- (1) William, baptized Oct. 18, 1562. Died young.
- (2) Thomas, baptized Dec. 28, 1566. Married Grace Coppowe.
- (3) Ellen, baptized Jan. 15, 1569. Married (?) John Smith, Nov. 27, 1591.
- (4) Richard, baptized Nov. 26, 1570. No further record.

Will of Thomas Rathbone: The Shoemaker of Ditton

"In the Name of God amen, This Seventh day of Febr' 1654, I Thomas Rathbone of the Hough Green with in Ditton in the County of Lankaster shoemaker being sicke in bodie yett in good & p'fect memorie blessed be God doe institute, ordaine, make, nominate & appoint this my last will & testa^m in maner & form following. First & principally I give and bequeath my soule in to the hands of Almighty God hopinge to be saved by the Joious merrits & mediation of Christ Jesus my most glorious Savior and my bodie to Christian burial in the chapell yard at Farneworth, And for such worldly goods as it hath pleased God to endowe me with all my will and minde is, viz. I give to Tho: Rathbone my eldest sonne, the sume of fortie shillings to be raised out of my goods. I give more unto him the dishbord and Cupboard & frame bords standinge in the house and the standing beddstead in the Chamber. Item: I give to my daughter, Grace, one cove & a black fairke. Item: my will and minde is that after my funeral

expenses be taken out of the renartion or remainder of my goods, that the remainder thereof be equally divided amongst all my children, viz: Thomas Rathbone, John Rathbone, Grace Rathbone, Mary Rathbone and Ailes (Alice) Rathbone. It is my will and minde further that my said three daughters shall in habitt & possesse & enjoy the newe house, the garden and stocke yarde until they or any of them shall happen to marry and after the marriage of any of them my will is that those soe married shall forthwith a voyd from thence and those others unmarried to enjoy the same until they shall happen to marrie. Lastly I institute, ordaine, make nominate & appoint my Brother William Rathbone executor & Grace Rathbone executrix joyntly of this my last will and testa^m hoping they will P'form the trust imposed in them."

Tho: Rathbone

- (5) John, baptized Nov. 4, 1571. No further record.
- (6) Hugh, baptized Aug. 20, 1573. No further record.
- (7) William 2nd, baptized Feb. 1, 1577. Married (?) Isabella Bucks Aug. 27, 1605.

Thomas² Rathbone (William¹), baptized Dec. 28, 1566; married Oct. 13, 1588, Grace Coppowe, baptized April 4, 1570, the daughter of John Coppowe. Thomas died Nov. 7, 1623, at Ditton; Grace's death date is not recorded.

Children:

- (1) Margaret, baptized March 3, 1589. Died in infancy.
- (2) William, baptized Aug. 14, 1591. Married Margaret Johnson.
- (3) Margaret, baptized March 8, 1594. Married (?) Thomas Rose, Nov. 26, 1612.
- (4) Thomas, baptized Jan. 9, 1596. Married (?) Alice Childwall.
- (5) Ellen, baptized Nov. 14, 1600. Possibly the Ellen Rathbone, spinster, of Sutton, who died Aug. 11, 1652.

Thomas³ Rathbone (Thomas² William¹), baptized Jan. 9, 1596; possibly the Thomas Rathbone who married April 13, 1616, Alice Childwall, widow; he died Feb. 7, 1654, at Ditton, and is described in his will as "Shoemaker, of the Hough Green, Ditton." There is no record of his wife's death.

Children:

- (1) Thomas, baptized Jan. 10, 1622. Alive in 1654, no further record.
- (2) Grace, baptized Feb. 18, 1626. Possibly the Grace Rathbone who married John Heward, Nov. 27, 1673, at Ditton.
- (3) John, baptized March 8, 1629. Married Margaret Acres (our immigrant ancestors).
- (4) William, baptized Nov. 8, 1632. Died Feb. 1633.
- (5) Mary, baptized June 4, 1634. Alive in 1654, no further record.
- (6) Alice, born about 1636. Mentioned in will, no further record.

Coming Attractions

Some little-known facts about members of our family, which we will cover in more detail in future issues:

One of the oldest fraternal organizations in the United States — the Knights of Pythias — was founded in 1864 by Justus Henry Rathbone (1839-1889).

There is a strange association of Rathbones with Abraham Lincoln. The Kentucky midwife who brought him into the world later married a Rathbone; his early schoolmates in Illinois were Rathbones, and his companion the night of his assassination was a Rathbone.

Probably the real hero of the American Revolutionary Navy was Captain John Peck Rathbun, who began his career as John Paul Jones' first lieutenant, and then became the most successful captain in the Navy. Your editor is working on a full-length biography of this "forgotten hero," who has been virtually overlooked by history.

Two members of our family have served in the United States Congress — Henry Riggs Rathbone (1870-1928) and George Rathbun (1803-1870). George Rathbun's service was made notable when he engaged in the first fist fight on the floor of the House of Representatives. During a slavery debate, a southern Congressman called him a liar. Rathbun responded by knocking him to the floor.

The late Basil Rathbone, the great Shakesperian actor who is famous for his film portrayal of Sherlock Holmes, is not directly related to the American family, but is descended from the Rathbones of Liverpool, England.

At least four towns in the United States have been named for family members: Rathbun, Iowa; Rathbun, Pennsylvania; Rathbone, New York, and Rathbone, Michigan.

Rev. Hiram Rathbun of Lansing, Mich., was one of the organizers of the Republican Party when it was founded in 1856 "under the oaks" in Jackson, Mich.

The late Monroe Jackson Rathbone was Board Chairman and President for many years of Standard Oil of New Jersey, forerunner of today's Exxon Corporation.

First Subscriber

The first subscription check for our magazine was sent by Art and Marjorie Burris of Minneapolis, Minn., making them charter subscribers number one. They are also among the founders of the Rathbun Family Association. Art Burris first suggested the magazine idea to your editor five years ago. He is a great-grandson of Gideon⁷ Hoxie Rathbun (Gideon⁶ Tibbets⁵ John^{4,3} Thomas² John¹). Art has published two books on his ancestral lines, including the Rathbuns.

Twist of History

Eighty-eight years ago, the *Rathbone Family Historian* was founded in Oberlin, Kansas — the first family magazine published in the United States. The founder was Franklin⁸ P. Rathbone (John⁷ Gideon⁶ Edmund^{5,4} John^{3,2,1}). His first associate editor was George A. Rathbun. In a strange twist of history, Rathbun's nephew is editor of our magazine today, and Rathbone's nephew, John Q. Rathbone, of Manassas, Va., is among the charter subscribers.

Irish 'Rathboyne' Probable Origin of Our Family's Name

The origin of our surname has baffled students of genealogy for many years. The number of theories almost equals the number of ways the name has been, and still is, spelled.

These varied spellings range from today's Rathbun, Rathbone, Rathburn and Rathborne to such forms as Rawsbone, Rawbone, Rabone, Rabun, Raburn, Rathebon, Raithbone, Rathbourne and many others.

Our magazine herewith presents a new theory, based on your editor's research, which indicates that the name was originally Irish and is derived from the ancient parish of Rathboyne.

Before outlining this idea, however, let us take a look at what earlier writers have said.

One called our name a derivation of Radborne or Redborn, but the early and continued use of "Rath" as the first syllable seems to rule this out.

was originally Welsh, and is derived from the town of Ruabon in northern Wales. Bardsley says: "The change to Rathbone is peculiar but perhaps the place name Ruabon has undergone a change." A check of early Welsh records shows that Ruabon, with emphasis on the "u" sound, has been unchanged since the early middle ages.

Harrison's *Surnames of the United Kingdom* offers two theories. One, also with a Welsh origin, suggests that the name comes from the old Welsh words "rath," meaning a clearing or plain, and "bon," meaning stump; hence, someone who lived in a stumpy clearing.

His other theory was that the name came from Ireland, and is derived from old Irish "rath," meaning fort or castle, and "bane" or "boun," meaning white; hence, someone who lived in or near a white castle.

border. Many of the early Chester records still survive, but they are written in Latin, making research difficult. Fortunately, a few early court records have been published, and in these volumes I found the first written record of our name.

In the year 1287, William de Rathebon, and others, were sued in the Chester court by Hugh deBestan. Three decades later, in 1318, Richard de Rathebane was listed as bondsman for a defendant before the court.

The prefix "de" before the last name is significant, for it indicates that Rathebon, or something very similar, was a place name where the family members had previously lived.

A brief account might be in order here on the development of surnames in early England. They were just becoming common in the 13th Century, and were derived either from a trade (such as tailor, carpenter or thatcher), from a physical

Polish Rathbuns

Most of us have surnames that we acquired by birth or adoption, without any choice on our part. Somewhere in the United States, however, there are Polish-American Rathbuns who took the name by choice. Their grandparents arrived in America some 60 years ago bearing a now-forgotten Polish name which their neighbors could neither spell nor pronounce properly. Deciding they wanted to become true Americans, and cast off all reminders of the past, they approached one of their most respected neighbors, whose name was Rathbun, and asked permission to take his surname as their own. He willingly gave permission, and the ranks of American Rathbuns were swelled by the addition of a hardy Polish immigrant family which today still proudly uses the name.

Our magazine herewith presents a new theory, based on your editor's research, which indicates that the name was originally Irish and is derived from the ancient parish of Rathboyne.

Another claimed that the name was Hebrew in origin, was originally spelled Raphen, and was changed to Rathbun in Holland and to Rathbone in England. There is absolutely no documentation for such a theory.

One imaginative writer traced the name to an early Englishman who was so cranky his neighbors called him "Old Wrathbybones."

Getting down to more serious studies, the respected Bardsley's *Dictionary of English and Welsh Surnames* theorizes that the name

Harrison, himself, did not place much stock in the Irish origin, and considered Wales the most likely starting point. The name, however, does not appear in Wales under any spelling, and a Welsh origin is most unlikely.

After considering all these theories, and rejecting them all, I conducted my own research into the origin of our name.

The earliest records of the name that I could find were in the city of Chester, on the western edge of England, not far north of the Welsh

description (such as small, stout or strong), or, most commonly, from the name of a city or village where the family originated.

In the case of a trade or physical description, the surname was preceded by the Latin "le," meaning "the." Hence, there was John le Taylor, or Peter le Stout. Surnames derived from a geographic location were preceded by "de," meaning "of" or "from."

Originally, these surnames were not passed on from father to son. William le Farmer might have sons called Joseph le Strong and Edward le Carpenter. By the 13th Century, however, surnames were being retained by families, and the prefixes "le" and "de" were being dropped.

William Slater's sons were known as Joseph Slater and John Slater even though they might be farmers or wheelwrights, or moved to another community.

At any rate, knowing that our family name came from a geographic location (because of the prefix "de"), I pored through old English maps and atlases, seeking a town, village or parish with a name that sounded like Rathebon. There were absolutely none, even though I went as far back as the Domesday Book.

I checked Welsh and Scottish maps, again without success. I then checked Irish geographies, and soon found a likely candidate.

In the 1837 *Topographical Dictionary of Ireland*, I found:

"Rathboyne, a parish mostly in the barony of Lower Navan, but chiefly in that of Upper Kells, County of Meath, and Province of Leinster, 2½ miles southeast from Kells on the road to Killock and (the road) from Longford to Drogheda."

An examination of the map of Ireland shows that Rathboyne is on the Boyne River, inland from Drogheda, not far from Dublin. The name obviously derives from a fort (rath) on the Boyne River. Drogheda and Dublin are directly across the Irish Sea from Chester, and a thriving trade was carried on between the three cities for many centuries, dating back to the middle ages.

It is not difficult to imagine an early resident of Rathboyne Parish, possibly a merchant seaman or trad-

er, visiting Chester in the middle 1200s, and later migrating there to live permanently. His name may have been William, who became known to his new neighbors as William from Rathboyne, or William de Rathboyne. The change from Rathboyne to Rathebon or Rathbone is easily explained by the differences in English and Irish pronunciation, which still exist to this day.

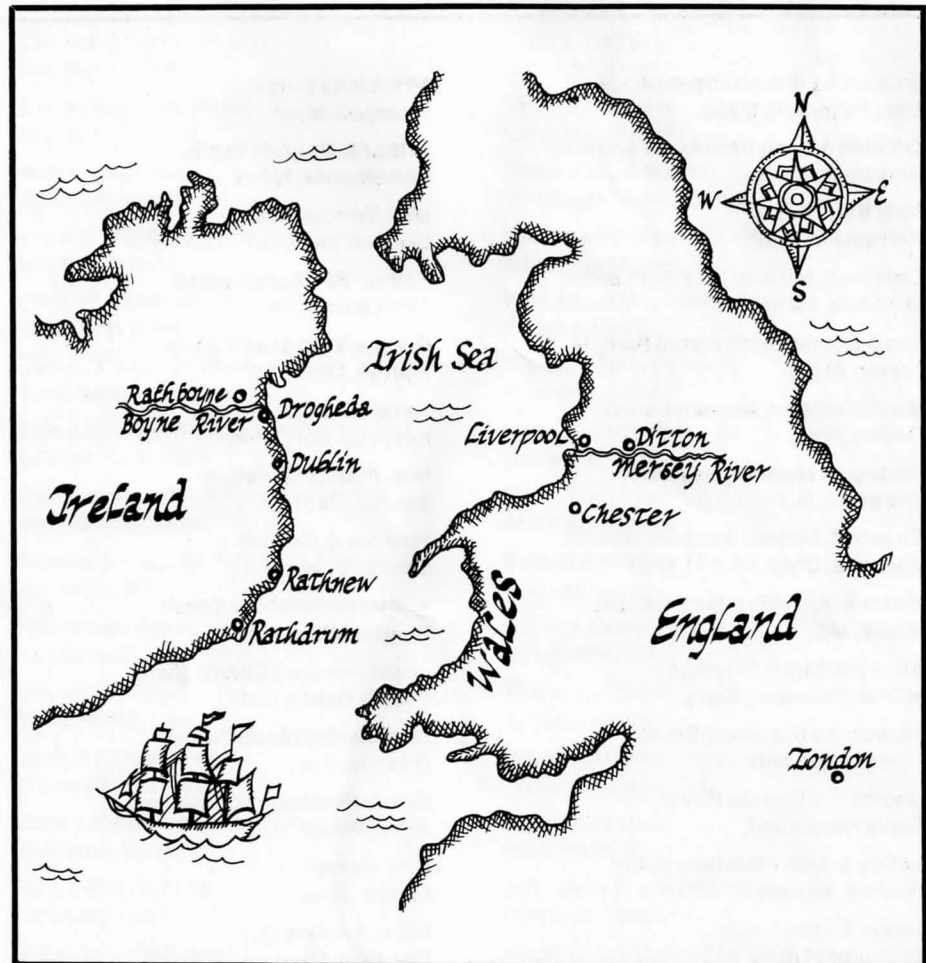
This theory of an Irish beginning is bolstered by the fact that the name—spelled Rathborne and Rathburne—has been common in the Dublin-Drogheda area for many centuries. The Rathbornes were prominent candle-makers in Dublin for generations.

In England, the family became

wealthy and influential in Chester during the 14th Century, serving as mayors, sheriffs and aldermen. One branch spread south into Cheshire County, and were members of the landed gentry in the 14th and 15th Centuries in Malpas, Tushingham and Masafen.

Others moved north into the County of Lancashire. One branch ended up in Liverpool, where Rathbones have been listed among the city's leading citizens for more than four centuries.

Others settled in the little towns along the north side of the River Mersey, where in the tiny village of Ditton, in 1629, was born John Rathbone, son of a humble shoemaker, who was to become our first American ancestor.



Map of the Irish Sea and portions of England, Wales and Ireland, shows the location of Rathboyne. The Rathboyne parish is on the Boyne River, near Drogheda, directly across from the Liverpool-Chester area, where our name first appears. A short distance inland, on the Mersey River, is Ditton, birthplace of our immigrant ancestor. Note other Irish towns, further south along the coast, also beginning with "Rath."

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Query Column

As space permits, we will publish queries for subscribers seeking genealogical or historical data on our family. If you can provide an answer, or a lead, send it to the editor, who will either publish or forward it to the person placing the query.

Wanted — Information on Alfred T. Rathbun, born 1798 in Vermont, the son of Wait⁵ Rathbun, Jr. (Wait⁴ Joshua³ John²¹). Where did he live after 1833? Where and when did he die?

Wanted — Proof of ancestry of Mary Wardell, born April 30, 1785, probably in Connecticut; married Gideon⁶ H. Rathbun (Tibbets⁵ John⁴³ Thomas² John¹). They lived in the West Davenport area of Delaware County, N.Y. She may have been the daughter of William Wardwell or Wardell (1760-1848), a Revolutionary veteran, and his second wife, Mary Palmer.

Wanted — Any unpublished information on Major Henry⁷ Reed Rathbone (Jared⁶ Samuel⁵ Joshua⁴ Jonathan³ John²¹) who was in the Presidential Box at Ford's Theatre with President and Mrs. Abraham Lincoln on the night of the assassination. A biography is being prepared, and the author is seeking papers, letters and other source material on his life.

Who were the parents of the following Rathbuns?:

1. Raymond C. Rathbun, born ca. 1793 in N.Y. or R.I., married Susan____; lived in Italy, Yates County, N.Y.; had a son George and daughter Jane.

2. John S. Rathbun, born 1794 in Rensselaer County, N.Y.; married Abigail____ and later Susan

O'Lacy; died 1869 in Milan, Ohio; had children named Charles, Corydon, Eber, Judson, Emma Amanda, Catista Adelia, possibly William.

3. William Rathbun, born ca. 1800 in New York; married Mary Meyer by 1830 and Mrs. Mary Ann Wilcox in 1844; lived in Little Falls, N.Y.; had children named Alfred, Charles, David, Susanna, Wilma and Harriet.

4. William Rathbun, born ca. 1800, state unknown; married Margaret____; moved from Ohio to Iowa by 1850; had sons named Benjamin and Oliver P. (who was a member of the Oklahoma Legislature in 1893).

5. Ezra Rathbun, born ca. 1806 in N.Y.; married Rachel____; lived in Sheboygan, Wisc., in 1850; had children named Everett, Elizabeth and Napoleon.

6. Alvah Rathbun, born June 1813, in New York; married Bridget____; died December 1901, in Denver, Colo.; had children named Samuel, Susan and James.

7. Samuel Rathburn, born August 23, 1826, in New York; married Eliza Ann Curtis; died March 25, 1916, in Gloversville, N.Y.; had children named William, James, Charles, Phoebe, Elizabeth, Armina, and Cora Belle.

Lost Touch — Cousin seeking to locate descendants of George Rathbone who moved from Minneapolis area to California 60 to 70 years ago. Had sons William R. Rathbone born 1868 and Frank McKenzie Rathbone born 1875.

Wanted — Parentage of Hanna Rathbun, born in the 1790s, who married David Austin and lived in Delaware County, N.Y. They had a son, Jehial Austin (1814-1910).

We are compiling data on all the Rathbun-Rathbone-Rathburn descendants of John and Margaret Rathbone of Block Island, with the idea of some day publishing an updated family history. If you have family data not recorded in

Cooley's Rathbone Genealogy, or not already sent in, please mail it to us. If you have any specific questions on your Rathbun-Rathbone-Rathburn ancestry, send them in, along with a stamped envelope, and we will try to answer.

Special Mention

Mrs. Margaret Dale of Arcadia, Calif., is one of the Founders of the Rathbun Family Association who deserves special mention. Some 15 years ago, she tackled the tremendous job of indexing Cooley's *Rathbone Genealogy*, published in 1898 and mentioned elsewhere in this issue. Her 253-page index is now available in most major libraries, and is invaluable for those using the Genealogy. Mrs. Dale is a "cousin" by marriage — her husband, James, is a great-grandson of Sarah⁷ (Rathbun) Smith (Charles⁶ Amos⁵⁴ Joshua³ John²¹).

Oldest Rathbun

The record of being the longest-lived member of our family probably belongs to a "cousin" who is still living. Residing in a California rest home is Frank Rathbun, aged 104. He is a son of William⁷ Rathbun (Albert⁶ Alfred⁵ Job⁴ Benjamin³ Joseph² John¹). Does anyone know of a family member who has exceeded this record?

In Memoriam

Sarah Delilah (Rathbone) Miller died in June 1980 at the age of 96. A contribution to the Rathbun Family Association in her memory has been made by her nephew and niece, Lemuel and Bettye Rathbone of Austin, Texas, who are among the association's founders and our magazine's charter subscribers. Mrs. Miller was the oldest of nine children of Rufus⁶ Cogswell Rathbone (George⁷ Rufus⁶ Daniel⁵ Valentine⁴ Joshua³ John²¹).