

William Thacker & Anne Tisselle Family - Breakthrough Information

Bell Island, Blackhead and Western Bay, Newfoundland

This research article is the work product of Susan Snelgrove, and is subject to copyright protection. It is not to be reproduced without her prior consent, and is to be used for personal research purposes only.

Since I wrote my previous research article on William Thacker of Wimborne Minster and Western Bay, I have found some new information about him and his wife Anne. It is an exciting breakthrough, because it is the first actual appearance of his name in Newfoundland records. Until now his presence in Newfoundland has been by inference. More importantly, through the help of researcher Pete Noel, we have conclusively confirmed the identity of Anne, and more about the Thacker family.

As a recap, through my earlier research, I had concluded that William Thacker was the son of Robert and Elizabeth of Wimborne Minster, Dorset, baptized 29 February 1680¹. But, I had wondered if Anne Thacker Mullens came later, perhaps married to a hypothetical son named William Thacker Junior.

In perusing the Colonial Records in the MUN digital archives, I found records of William not in Western Bay as I imagined, but rather on Great Bell and Little Bell Islands. This got me really intrigued, because I have numerous DNA connections to people who are descendants of early families of Bell Island.

The first reference to William Thacker is from the Colonial Office records, “An Abstract of the Fishery by ye Inhabitants in Newfoundland in the Year 1708”². On Great Bell Island there are 7 names recorded. The third is William “Thaker”, who has a wife, no children and 4 servants recorded with him. The name before him is also of interest to me: “Henery Thisle”, who has a wife and 5 children recorded. This is likely Henry Thistle, the presumed founder of this old family in Conception Bay. The suggestion from Seary is that he was from Guernsey, but I have heard other researchers suggest a Dorset connection. The surname “Touzel” appears in Jersey, making me wonder if that is the original family name. The other names on Great Bell Island are: John Fancy, Thomas Weedler (Wheeler?), Samuel Hammon, William Reaves, Thomas Burt and Robert Cock. It is interesting to note that the family name “Fancy” also appears in Wimborne Minster, where I concluded that William Thacker was born.

On Little Bell Isle we find the names James Buttler, John Garland and Anthony Varder. Only James has a wife and one child. It seems likely he is a Butler from Port de Grave, having retreated to Little Bell Isle after the attacks by the French. John Garland is likely the man from Bristol’s Hope, and has retreated for safety as well. From others’ research, I believe Anthony Varder was a merchant from Bristol.

I dove headfirst into the Colonial records, and was thrilled to find another reference to William. On a list of inhabitants that had been appointed into the militia as a result of the attacks by the French, I found the following:

James Buttler	Governour	Little Bell Isle	Oct. 22, 1709
George Garland	2 nd Captain	“	Oct. 22, 1709
John Snow	3 rd Captain	“	“
John Buttler Junior	1 st Lieutenant	“	“
John Fancy	2 nd Lieutenant	“	“
William Thacker	3 rd Lieutenant	“	“

¹ Latter Day Saints, www.familysearch.org, Parish registers for Wimborne-Minster, 1635-1998, Film #004508653, p. 161 of 659.

² CO 194, Volume 4 (1706-1710), p. 416 of 972.

So there he is! My ancestor William Thacker, first on Great Bell Island in 1708 and then on Little Bell Island in October 1709. I am also interested in the name George Garland, given the connection of that name and the Snelgroves to Lower Island Cove, as well as John Snow, another name that comes up in my DNA research as a match.

It is very exciting to find the first ever Newfoundland reference to William Thacker. But this now presents me with a new challenge and research question to be analyzed in this paper:

Is William Thacker of Bell Island in 1708 and 1709 the Husband of Anne Mullens?

In my previous article about William Thacker, I had hypothesized that William was the son of William Thacker Senior, the one born about February 1680 in Wimborne Minster. I estimated this theoretical William Junior was born about 1700, making his wife Anne born around 1705-1710, with their children born between 1723-1740. William had presumably died about 1740-1743 based on the administration of his estate back in Dorset in January 1744/5. The guess for William's birth year was based on a general notion he would be about 5 years older than his wife, plus given the calculated ages for his children. Anne's birth date range was compared to the more precise dating for her later husband Richard Mullens, as outlined in my research article about him.

The William Thacker on Bell Island(s) in 1708 and 1709 would already be an adult, so now it appears likely that he is in fact the first husband of Anne Mullens. This would mean that Anne too was born earlier than I originally supposed. As William was made third lieutenant behind the other men, the pecking order suggests that he might be the youngest of them. It's possible he is in his late teens. Given he had a wife (with no children yet), normal convention would suggest he was in his twenties.

This fits in perfectly with the man on Bell Island being William Thacker born early 1680 in Wimborne Minster. Since I had found no burial, marriage or baptism records for him or potential children in Dorset, I had concluded William had come to Newfoundland around 1700. This indeed would support his appearance on Bell Island in 1708. There was a census also taken in 1706, and the numbers of inhabitants at Great Bell and Little Bell Islands was even higher than in 1708. So, it's very possible that William was already there. We can't know, however, because unfortunately no names were given, just the headcounts.³

William Thacker of Wimborne Minster would be age 28 in 1708. I am now convinced he is the man on Great Bell Island. But, we may never know for sure.

With the help of Pete Noel, who meticulously browsed page by painstaking page through Jersey court documents, he discovered information that conclusively identified more about William Thacker and his wife Anne and their children. These new documents completely destroy my original theory of when Anne and their children were born, as you shall see below.

Anne had 3 husbands, not 2!

Pete made an amazing discovery of a series of Jersey court documents that clarified everything about Anne Mullens. She was married three times, not twice as previously supposed! Is it any wonder it was so hard to figure her out? The documents were of course all written in French, but here is a loose translation of their essence. They are as follows:

³ CO194, Volume 3, p. 935 of 941.

1. Jersey Samedi Court 1740-1742, 2 August 1742, Image 344 of 385

Josué de Ste Croix registers a procuration made before a Justice of the Peace in Western Bay, Newfoundland dated May 1742 by Anne Nicolle, **widow of Noé Nicolle**, making de Ste Croix her representative.

I had long ago found the will of “Noah” Nicolle of Blackhead in the Jersey archives⁴. The will was written 10 April 1734 when Noé was leaving on a trip from Jersey. He does indeed name his wife as Ann(e) who is in Newfoundland, and his brother-in-law “Joshua” de Ste Croix of St. Helier as his executor. It was probated 8 years later on 29 July 1742 in the Jersey courts.

Further evidence of when Noé actually died is a posthumous baptism that occurred on 9 April 1742 in the parish of St. Martin in Jersey⁵. It records that Noé Nicolle, son of Barthelemy Nicolle and his wife Marthe Aubin of the parish of St. Martin was baptized by the rector Francois Le Coteur 39 years ago, but he doesn't remember the exact day or the month. Furthermore, Noé's sister Marthe Nicolle, presently aged 55 years old declares to the same effect.

This calculation would make Noé born about 1703. It is interesting to note that he was born in St. Martin parish, yet in his will he identifies himself as being a Mariner from St. Helier.

2. Jersey Samedi Court 1746-1747, 31 May 1746, Image 54 of 309

Jean Renouf, legal representative of Richard Mullens, the present husband of Anne, the widow of Noé Nicolle; dispute with Bartholomey Nicolle, inheritor of the property of Noé Nicolle; an order dated 24 January 1745. He would be Noé's brother Bartelemy, who was baptized 19 March 1692⁶.

So, even though Anne Mullens doesn't administer her first husband William Thacker's estate in the Dorset courts until 5 January 1744/5⁷, he was obviously long dead. Anne had already remarried both Noé Nicolle AND Richard Mullens by this time. Noé Nicolle's will was written in April 1734, so William Thacker had died at least a decade before the administration of his estate. Clearly Anne had not bothered to settle William's estate until she was forced to do because of the several lawsuits made.

Even if Noé and Anne were only married one year when he wrote his 1734 will, her former husband **William Thacker was dead at the absolute latest by 1733**. And, it was likely earlier.

And then, Pete found the pièce de resistance:

3. Jersey Samedi Court Record 1744-1745, Jan 28 1744/5, Image 148 of 373

Richard Mullens and **Anne Tisselle** his wife, widow of her first husband **William Tucker** in the instance of **Mr. Amice Roissier**, in the cause of **Catherine Tucker** his wife, she being the **second daughter** of the said Tucker and the said Tisselle [William and Anne]; he is suing for Anne Tisselle to deliver his wife Catherine's part of the property of succession of her first marriage [to Tucker/Thacker].

Although his name is given as William Tucker, we know he is William Thacker. Several of the Jersey parish records for marriages of their sons show the surname as both Tucker and Thacker. The timing of this court filing

⁴ Jersey Heritage, Testament of Noah Nicolle of St. Helier, Mariner, now of Blackhead, Conception Bay, Newfoundland, written 10/04/1734, Reference D/Y/A/7/61, Date 29 July 1742.

⁵ Ancestry, Jersey BMD, St Martin > 1738-1798, p. 33 of 280.

⁶ Ibid, 1683-1698, p. 73 of 170.

⁷ Ancestry, Dorset, England, Wills and Probates, 1565-1858, Canford and Poole Peculiar Court, p. 17 of 490.

for Catherine Thacker Roissier is interesting, made about 3 weeks after her mother Anne Mullens filed in Dorset for the administration of her first husband William's estate.

When women are identified in Jersey records, it is almost always by their maiden names, even if they are married. Thanks to that practice, we now have this groundbreaking discovery!

In this one document for 1745, we learn that **Anne's maiden name is Tisselle**, and beyond a shadow of a doubt she was married to William Thacker. And, that she and her first husband William Thacker had a daughter named Catherine, who was previously unknown. Furthermore, she is their second daughter!

While her surname is identified as "Tisselle" or "Thiselle", it is easy to make the leap that in Newfoundland she was known as "**Thistle**", a very early name that appears in Conception Bay. And the earliest name identified in the area is Henry Thistle, who appears on Great Bell Island in 1708 with a wife and 5 children, at the very same time as William Thacker, and his wife. There is now so much to analyze about Anne Tisselle and her possible connections to Henry Thistle, that I have written a separate research paper on her and their identity!

Researchers of William and Anne's descendants (Snelgrove, Perry, Curtis and more), owe a major debt of gratitude to Pete Noel for his dogged research into Jersey records, and his willingness to share and collaborate with other researchers. Without him, this information may have remained hidden forever. Thank you Pete!

A new Child is Discovered - Catherine Thacker

Based on Pete's tips and the discovery of a new daughter, I then dove into the Jersey court records and found this exciting document:

4. Jersey Ecclesiastical Court Roll Book, Volume 3, Page 162

March 25 1735/6 – **Amice Roissier** of Grouville and **Catherine Clark** of **Blackhead** in Newfoundland provide a certificate of their marriage at Blackhead, given before George Garland Esq., his Majesty's Justice of the Peace. Certificate dated 9 November 1734 states **Amice and Catherine were married 10 November 1732** (8th month in the old calendar format which starts March 26). Certificate witnessed by **Thomas Thistell, Nickless Juer and Henery Thistell**.

Further attestation to the certificate – witnesses **Jean Luce, age 24** and **Thomas Poindestre, age 36**, saw the JP sign the certificate. Also, **Charles Canivet age 36** and **Thomas Nicolle age 34** state that they personally know the said Amice Roissier and Catherine Clark, reputed husband and wife, and Jean Luce says he was near Blackhead that very day it is reported they were married.

Luce/Lewis and Garland are names of Lower Island Cove. The JP George Garland may also be related to John Garland, the man who appears on the 1708 census for Little Bell Island. From others' research, I learned that Nicholas Juer was born 1673 and died 1779 in Harbour Grace. Some say that his french surname was Journeaux/Journeaulx. It seems likely he is the witness of the 1734 document, but he could also have a son of the same name. Of course the names Thomas and Henry "Thistell" are also of interest. I note the similarity of the spelling of Anne's maiden name, which appears in the court records as both Tisselle and Thisselle. This may demonstrate the progression towards the surname spelling as "Thistle".

So, Catherine Thacker, William and Anne's second daughter had already been married to a man named **Clark**, and then remarried in 1732 in Blackhead, Newfoundland. I have of course tried to find who this man might be, but have had no luck so far.

On the 1708 census for Great Bell Island, William Thacker had no children yet. One might guess then that **Catherine was born about 1710-1712**, to have had 2 husbands before 1732, and a sister born before her. This is much earlier than my original theory as to when William and Anne's children had been born, so the discovery of "second daughter" Catherine changes everything!

At this point I turned to the Jersey records to see what more I could learn about Catherine and Amice. He is likely the man who was baptized in Grouville, Jersey on 27 November 1698, the son of Jean Roissier and Rachel Roissier⁸. As such, he would be about 13 years older than his wife. Catherine and Amice did in fact move to Jersey around 1736/7, because baptisms for their children appear there. And most interesting is the first, Jean Roissier, aged 3 years and 7 months, **born in Newfoundland**, who was baptized on 31 March 1737 in Grouville⁹. Working back from this date, baby Jean was born around August/September 1733, likely in Blackhead. This works out perfectly with his parents being married there in November 1732.

Catherine and Amice never returned to Newfoundland, as they had 6 more children baptized in Grouville from 1737 to 1752. It is interesting to note their only daughter was named Anne¹⁰, one baptized in 1740 (who died), and a second baptized in 1746¹¹. This is further corroborative evidence of Catherine being the daughter of Anne. There is a burial record in Grouville, Jersey for Catherine Tucker on 27 February 1755¹². It does not mention her being the wife of Amice Roissier, but we can be sure it is she from the following court case also discovered by Pete Noel:

5. Samedi Court 1753-1756, 31 May 1755, Image 221 of 187

Amice Roissier is in default towards the parish of Grouville for the burial of his wife.

Since this court case is only 2 months after the parish record, Catherine Tucker's identity is proven. She is Catherine Thacker. This also confirms that she predeceased her mother Anne Mullens, perhaps explaining why she is not mentioned in Anne's 1763 will.

Who is William and Anne Thacker's first Daughter?

We now know of the existence of their "second daughter", Catherine Clark Roissier, who was born about 1711 and married Amice Roissier in 1732 Blackhead. So the next logical question becomes, who was the first daughter?

Recall that three of William and Anne Thacker's sons were married in Jersey. Daughter Catherine and her husband Amice Roissier also relocated to Jersey. So I again turned to the Jersey records, finding a Priscille Tucker (Thacker?) married to Richard Le Cras Junior at latest in early 1737. Her name was alternatively spelled Prescille, Presille, etc. in her children's baptisms. There is no marriage record in Jersey for this couple, so it seems likely that she and Richard married in Newfoundland.

Their first child Jean Le Cras was baptized 21 May 1738 in St Lawrence parish¹³. Their second child François was baptized in 1740¹⁴. Priscille Tucker wife of Richard Le Cras Junior was buried 26 April 1741¹⁵. This early death could also explain why Priscille was not mentioned in her presumed mother Anne Mullens' 1763 will.

⁸ Ancestry, Jersey BMD, Grouville > 1584-183, p. 260 of 547.

⁹ Ibid, p. 318 of 547.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 322 of 547.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 335 of 547.

¹² Ibid, 1704-1755, p. 113 of 119.

¹³ Ancestry, Jersey BMD > St Lawrence > 1692-1739, p. 168 of 190.

¹⁴ Ibid, 1740-1782, p. 7 of 192.

It should be emphasized that there are very few instances of the name Tucker or Thacker in the Jersey records, and absolutely all of them tie back to this very same Thacker family. So, I think the case is very strong that Priscille does too.

Priscille's husband Richard le Cras Junior was very likely the man in the Jersey records who was baptized 4 April 1697¹⁶ in St. Lawrence parish, the son of Richard Senior. I have assumed this parish for his birth, because that is where their children were baptized. However, there were 3 other men named Richard Le Cras baptized in St. Brelade in 1701, 1702 and 1706, and it is possible one of them might be Priscille's husband. But, her husband was clearly called "Junior" in the records, and the boy baptized in 1697 is the only one who was the son of a Richard (Senior). So, the parish and father's name both fit perfectly.

If son Jean Le Cras was their first child in 1738, it would suggest that Priscille was born around 1715-1720. But, that would make her about 20 years' younger than her husband. I therefore speculate that like her presumed sister Catherine, the couple may have married in Newfoundland and had several children there, before relocating to Jersey at latest May 1738. Perhaps it is no coincidence that Catherine Thacker Roissier relocated to Jersey around this same time, with their 3 year old Newfoundland born son being baptized in Grouville in March 1737.

If Priscille was born about 1709-1710 on Bell Island, she would fit in nicely before Catherine. She would, however, still be 13 years younger than her husband Richard le Cras. I note a similar age difference between her presumed sister Catherine and her husband as well. While large age differences between husband and wife might be a little unusual, it certainly was not unheard of at the time.

We should also consider that Priscille came after Catherine in the family, and is just another previously unidentified child of William and Anne. If so, that would mean the identity of the "first daughter" is still unknown.

As Thacker and Tucker were used interchangeably on many occasions in the Jersey records, it does seem highly likely to me that Priscille was indeed the daughter of William and Anne. As I noted earlier, 100% of the Jersey instances of the name Tucker, Tacker and Thacker tie back to this very same family. So why not Priscille too? Her presumed brothers William, John and Thomas had been married in Jersey in 1740, 1745 and 1748, respectively, and presumed sister Catherine moved there by 1738.

With all of the above evidence laid out, I feel very certain that Priscille is indeed a daughter of William and Anne Thacker, and quite likely the first daughter before sister Catherine. I was intrigued by the unusual name Priscille, and wondered if one might learn a clue from conventional naming patterns as to her mother's family. I have written a separate research article on that as well, but so far I have made no conclusions.

A New Timeline for William and Anne Thacker

To sum up, the new information includes a previously unknown "second" daughter Catherine and therefore a "first" daughter, the fact Anne was married 3 times, not twice, and that William Thacker died much earlier than originally assumed. Given these revelations, my previous timeline for Anne and her children must be thrown out entirely and totally reconsidered!

William Thacker died at the very latest by 1733, and perhaps even years earlier. Anne likely quickly remarried Noé Nicolle in Blackhead, since she had a large brood of young orphaned children. Noé Nicolle himself died in early 1742, and Anne remarried Richard Mullens sometime between then and late 1744. In the estate

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 12 of 192.

¹⁶ Ibid, 1692-1739, p. 21 of 190.

administration for her former husband William Thacker filed in Dorset on 2 January 1745, she filed as Anne Mullens, wife of Richard.

Given that there were no children recorded for William Thacker in the 1708 Great Bell Island census, and Anne remarried Noé Nicolle by 1734 at the very latest, we now know the children were born between 1709 and 1733.

I should note that I also considered the possibility that one or more of Anne's later children may in fact be children of Noé Nicolle and not William Thacker! With all my previous theories negated, I was reminded to take my blinders off! While this is certainly possible, I noted that in his will Noé only named his wife Anne and that he had siblings in Jersey. He didn't mention any children or heirs. But, his will was written in 1734 and not probated until 1742. They may have had children during that time. However, Noé's brother Bartelemey was suing as the inheritor of his property, which he couldn't likely do if there were children. Besides, they would likely fall outside of Anne's biological capabilities, as I discuss in my other research article on her. I have concluded, therefore, that it is unlikely that Noé and Anne had children of their own. Still, this possibility can't be entirely discounted.

A Revised Timeline for the Children of William and Anne Thacker

Now that we know that William Thacker Senior died earlier than 1733, and there are two more daughters, previous assumptions must be revised. I had based my guestimates on what is known about the individuals, like their marriage dates and when their children may have been born. I have now placed them in the revised following order and with these new estimated birth years. **This list is a guideline only**, and remains open for revision as new facts arise:

Priscille (1709), Catherine (1711), William (1714), John (1720), Thomas (1723), Phillis Perry (1724), Mary Curtis (1726), Ann Snelgrove (1728).

Note also that there is a Martha "Taker", daughter of William Taker baptized in Wimborne Minster on 12 March 1721¹⁷. The page is quite illegible, and Ancestry has the entry indexed as "Tuker". So, this is a tenuous identification at best. This could have happened if William and Anne returned home for a visit to Dorset, bringing their child to be baptized there. I have noted several instances of this practice in other early Newfoundland families. When it does, however, the record often notes that they were born "away". Admittedly, this record does not. And, it's hard to imagine they would have left their other young children at home. Often, one would see several children baptized at once. Still, they might have thought the journey by the whole family too arduous, so they brought only their infant Martha. This theory must be taken with a large grain of salt. Still, I note that Martha would easily slip in between John and Thomas Thacker using my estimated birth years.

One can see right away that there are large gaps in time in the list. Some children may have been born earlier than I predict. There could also be one or more other children of William and Anne that are as of yet unidentified, either living on or dying in infancy.

A Quick Word on Phillis Perry

As for the other daughters of William and Anne Thacker, I will raise one small doubt I have about Phillis Perry. I have always assumed she was Anne Mullens' eldest daughter, and therefore guessed a birth year of 1724. She was the first person mentioned in Anne's 1763 will. Phillis received a special bequest of £20 and her son Nicholas Perry received a gold ring. The other two daughters Mary Curtis and Ann Snelgrove only got a 1/3 share of their mother's "wearing apparel, both woolens and linens". In this part of the will, Anne named her daughters in this

¹⁷ Ancestry, Dorset BMD, Wimborne Minster, p. 512 of 742.

order: Mary, Ann and Phillis. Usually when children are named specifically, the testator tends to list them in the order of their birth. That would then suggest that Phillis was the youngest, not the eldest.

I also note that Anne calls her Phillis Perry, “the **now wife** of Nicholas Perry, now or late of Western Bay in Newfoundland”¹⁸. Usually when that language is used, it implies that this is a second marriage. And in second marriages, it is not unusual that the new wife is quite a bit younger than the husband. That might be the case for Nicholas and Phillis Perry. Heads up, Perry researchers!

Since Anne gave Phillis a special bequest of money, and her son Nicholas was the only grandchild mentioned (and therefore likely the first born), I still lean towards Phillis being the eldest daughter. But, I am keeping an open mind that she was born later in the pecking order than I assume.

Rethinking Ann Snelgrove, wife of James of Lower Island Cove

The most important revelation that comes out of this new dating will be important to the descendants of Ann Snelgrove, like me!

I had long assumed that daughter Ann (Thacker) Snelgrove mentioned in the will of Anne Mullens, must be the wife of James Snelgrove of Lower Island Cove. Indeed, his wife was named Ann. But now it appears that this is merely a coincidence. It seems highly unlikely that James’ wife could have been born as early as 1728-1730. Ann Snelgrove died about 1822 in Lower Island Cove, which would make her about 92-94 when she died. While that it is possible, it seems very unlikely. From what is known from wills and other records, James and Ann’s many children were born between about 1765 (John) and as late as 1788 (Jacob). There is no way that Ann Thacker, born about 1728 could have a child when she was 58-60 years old!

It is also important to note that Ann Snelgrove’s husband isn’t mentioned by name in her mother’s will. It had always just been assumed that he was James Snelgrove of Lower Island Cove. Bad assumption! I am now convinced that Ann Thacker was married to an earlier unknown male Snelgrove, and that James Snelgrove is their son. He in fact may be one of many other previously unknown sons and daughters.

From naming conventions of James’ children, and other clues, Ann’s husband may have been named John Snelgrove. This is admittedly a wild guess. But here I will call them “John(?) and Ann” Snelgrove for ease at this point. If Ann Thacker was born about 1728, one might guess her husband John(?) Snelgrove was born about 1725. One might also guess they were married about 1748-1750. Then one might assume their son James could have been born about 1750-1752. Note that he was not mentioned as a grandson in his grandmother Anne Mullens’ will of 1763. But, we know she had other grandchildren and she only mentioned Nicholas Perry. So, this doesn’t trouble me.

James Snelgrove then married Ann (maiden name unknown), and had their children starting with John through to Jacob. I had previously guessed that son John was born about 1765, but we could easily move his birth to 1770. We know last child Jacob was born about 1788, according to his burial record in Lower Island Cove. These birth years do indeed work out quite well using the above new timelines for their parents James Snelgrove, b. 1750-1752 & Ann (unknown) of Lower Island Cove and their grandparents John(?) Snelgrove and Ann Thacker, b. 1728-1730, perhaps of Western Bay or Blackhead.

This new revelation proves quite conclusively in my opinion that James Snelgrove’s wife Ann who died in 1822 is not maiden name Thacker, but another unknown surname! One more branch to be discovered.... And, we can

¹⁸ National Archives, Kew, Prerogative Court of Canterbury, PROB 11/906/304, Will of Anne Mullens, Widow of Sturminster Newton Castle, Dorset, Probated 28 February 1765.

now assume that James Snelgrove was actually born in Newfoundland, and we are now looking for the name and origins of his father “John(?)”.

More Information on the Sons of William and Anne Thacker

When I previously discovered the three male Thacker marriages in Jersey, I had always assumed that they were brothers. To recap:

- a) William “Tucker” of Terre Neuve married Jeanne de Ste Croix 3 Feb 1740 in St. Martin, Jersey¹⁹. They had 4 children baptized between 1741 and 1749.
- b) Jean Thacker of Terre Neuve married Esther Vibert 8 April 1745 in St. Martin, Jersey²⁰.
- c) Thomas Thacker of Terre Neuve but now of St. Helier married Anne Boudier on 5 January 1748 in St. Helier²¹. Their son Thomas Junior was baptized on 17 January 1753²². Philippe Hamon Senior and Anne Payn, grandmother were the godparents.

With some additional court records discovered by Pete Noel, it can finally be confirmed that these men are indeed all brothers. I had previously speculated that this William Junior and Thomas had died before their mother Anne Mullens, perhaps explaining why they were not mentioned in her will. Pete’s discoveries prove they did predecease her. One can only speculate, however, why Anne did not name any of their children, her grandchildren, in her will instead.

7. Samedi Court 1749-1751, 5 May 1750, Image 111 of 397

Josué de Ste Croix acting as legal representative for certain actions before the court for dates in the year **1748**. He is acting for Richard Mullens on the subject of the delivery of certain money and moveable properties and papers regarding Noé Nicolle and his widow Anne, she going under the name Anne Nicolle. An action dated 6 May 1749 in the instance of **Thomas Thacker in his name and agent for John Thacker his brother**.

This document ties both Thomas and John Thacker together as siblings. It also suggests that John Thacker is not resident in Jersey, since Thomas is acting as his agent.

I then found this record at the Latter Day Saints genealogy site:

8. Land Registry Volume 42, 7 September 1749, LDS Film #005259398, Image 188 of 710

Between Josué de Ste Croix and William Thacker (Junior) – Josué has purchased $\frac{3}{4}$ of the rent from the inheritance of Richard Mullens’ wife (“uxor”), and William Thacker is reimbursing him the arrears so he and his heirs can enjoy its possession.

This document therefore shows that the son William Thacker (Junior) was still alive in 1749. It proves that he is a son of William and Anne Thacker, since it certainly involves inheritance.

9. Samedi Court 1753-1756, 31 January 1756, Image 341 of 387

Thomas Thacker and Jeanne de Ste Croix, **widow** of William Thacker (Junior), and guardian of his children. (Translation: requesting him to pay him the amount of thirteen pounds sterling and two quintals of dried cod

¹⁹ Ancestry, Jersey BMD, St Martin > 1738-1803, p. 8 of 184.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 33 of 184.

²¹ Ibid, St Helier > 1719-1751, p. 255 of 456.

²² Ibid, 1724-1753, p. 334 of 450.

for the rental of a certain run, located at **Blackhead** in Conception Bay in Newfoundland and this for the year 1755 following their agreement under their hands dated 1749 on January 6th because of the Admiralty, are sent before the Registrar who can take the oath).

This document ties William Junior and Thomas Thacker together, likely as siblings. And we know from the court case above that Thomas and John are siblings. This further solidifies the fact that they are all the sons of William and Anne. This record also confirms that **Thomas Thacker was still alive in early 1756 and that William Thacker Jr is deceased by 1755**. The rental agreement suggests that perhaps William was running the plantation in Newfoundland. His death by 1755 explains why William Thacker Jr is not mentioned in the 1763 will of his mother Anne Mullens. There is no apparent burial record for William Thacker in Jersey, suggesting that he died in Newfoundland as I had previously speculated.

10. Samedi Court 1756-1759, 17 February 1759, Image 421 of 459

Anne Boudier, **widow** of Thomas Thacker and guardian of his child, is asking for the deposition of Augustin le Rossignol, Francois Le Gresley and Jean Helier Dumaresq and Jeanne de Ste Croix, **widow** of William Thacker Jr. and guardian of his child, regarding a “run” (plantation) situated at Blackhead in Conception Bay.

Note that Augustin Le Rossignol is mentioned in the Plantation Book with the date 1766. Since both widows are involved in the same court case, it confirms beyond a doubt that William and Thomas Thacker were siblings, making John their brother as well.

This document also confirms that **Thomas Thacker died sometime between January 1756 and February 1759**. In fact, in the will of Anne Boudier’s mother Anne Payn, which was written 12 January 1759²³, she says her daughter is the wife of Thomas Thacker. Wife, not widow. Note that the above court case calling Anne Boudier a widow was filed on 17 February 1759, just 5 weeks after her mother’s will was written. And mother Anne Payn died right afterward, being buried in St. Helier on 3 April 1759²⁴. Based on this additional information, it seems likely that Thomas Thacker died within the month of January/February 1759. Or at the very least, this date is when his wife Anne received the news that he had died, perhaps at the “run” in Blackhead, Newfoundland. I lean towards the second scenario, as there is no burial record for Thomas Thacker in the very clear St. Helier parish records for this period.

This last court document also certainly again ties Thomas and William Jr. together as siblings, since the nature of the court proceeding appears to be related to inheritance of the plantation in Blackhead. There are several possibilities as to who actually first possessed it. Noé Nicolle mentions his plantation in Blackhead, which his wife Anne acquired on his death in 1742. It is also possible, however, that the “run” may have been brought into the marriage by Anne as a possession of her first husband William Thacker’s.

To summarize, it appears from all of the above that both William Thacker Junior and his brother Thomas Thacker died in Newfoundland, likely in Blackhead. They both predeceased their mother Anne Mullens who died in 1763 in Sturminster Newton, Dorset. Their sister Catherine Roissier also predeceased her, dying in 1755. And while her identity is not proven conclusively, their other presumed sister Priscille Le Cras also died in Jersey in 1741.

²³ Jersey Heritage, Testament of Anne Payn, widow of Estienne [sic] Boudier of St. Helier, dated 12/01/1759, Reference D/Y/A/10/22, Date: 7 April 1759.

²⁴ Ancestry, Jersey BMD, St Helier > 1751-1783, p. 68 of 352.

This would explain why son John Thacker is the main beneficiary of the Western Bay property in the wills of Richard Mullens²⁵ and Anne Mullens written 1761 and 1763, respectively.

I have yet to discover what exactly happened to John Thacker. It appears that after Esther Vibert he remarried a woman named Ann. There is a baptism in Sturminster Newton on 11 May 1762 for Thomas Thacker²⁶, son of John and Ann Thacker. I had previously speculated that John had gone to Dorset after the death of his stepfather Richard Mullens perhaps to care for his mother, or to settle financial matters. It would not be unusual for him to bring his wife and child, taking the opportunity for him to be baptized while there.

There are relatively few instances of the Thacker name in Western Bay. A Robert Thacker is named as one of the godsons of Richard Mullens in his 1761 will. Robert appears in the 1805 Plantation Records, he receiving land in Western Bay in 1797. An 1814 court case also mentions property that is bordered by Robert Thacker's. There is another land record dated 1788 where John Thacker sells property in Western Bay. It seems likely that he is the very same son of William and Anne Thacker. So, we can assume he lived at least until 1788. It would also make sense that Robert is the son of John Thacker, who received the original Western Bay plantation from Richard Mullens and his mother Anne.

From my previous research paper we are reminded of the will of Jacques Vibert (aka James Vibert or Webber) Newfoundland Boatkeeper of Saint Mary in the Island of Jersey²⁷. It was written 10 July 1760 and was witnessed by none other than Richard Mullens, as well as James Thomas (mentioned below) and George Davis. The will was probated 6 February 1762. He mentions many people, including Mary Perry, daughter of Nicholas Perry, as well as James Vibert Perry. Their mother was likely Phillis (Thacker) Perry. He also mentions Mary (Thacker) Curtis, the wife of William Curtis.

Furthermore, I have evidence of a land transaction dated 4 April 1769 Thomas Vautier of Jersey, acting for Phillipe Vibert (aka Peter Webber), selling property to James Thomas of Devonshire. Vibert's property is bounded on the west by John "Tacker's" plantation and on the east by John Curtis'.

Much more can be said about Jacques Vibert and how he ties in with the Thacker family. But these snippets suggest that any Thacker descendants in Newfoundland come from John alone. While his brothers William and Thomas apparently died in Newfoundland, their children were born and remained in Jersey.

While it seems clear that the Western Bay property came to John Thacker through his stepfather Richard Mullens, it is unknown what happened to the original Blackhead "run". It seemed to be operated by William Thacker Junior and his brother Thomas, with them both presumably dying there. It is possible that it was sold, or perhaps inherited by another unidentified member of the Thacker family, perhaps even another sister and her husband.

Some Doubts to be Acknowledged

One must consider how old Anne may have been when she married William Thacker. While William was born in 1680, that is not necessarily the case for Anne. The best clue for her age and birth year starts with the fact that William and Anne had no recorded children in the 1708 census. So, I have estimated Priscille as being born in

²⁵ National Archives, Prerogative Court of Canterbury, Will of Richard Mullens, Boatkeeper of Western Bay, Newfoundland, North America, PROB 11/79/529, Probated 30 September 1762.

²⁶ Ancestry, Dorset BMD, Sturminster Newton, p. 114, of 347.

²⁷ National Archives, Prerogative Court of Canterbury, Will of James Vibert, Newfoundland Boat-Keeper of Saint Mary, Jersey, PROB 11/873/96, Probated 6 February 1762,

1709. With a very rough guess of age 20 for Anne when she had her first child, I arrive at 1689 as her birth year. If so, based on my estimates for their children above, Anne would be about age 39 when she had her last child Ann Snelgrove (assumed as being born 1728). That's plausible.

This is a good time to mention Richard Mullens, and what we know about his age. In my research article on him, I concluded that he was the son of Renaltus Mullens and Elizabeth Tolervy who married 4 April 1705²⁸. I could not find his baptism, but through other siblings' records and clues in Richard's will, I believe I am right. As such, I estimate Richard Mullens' birth year about 1707. He married Anne about 1744, making him age 37 at the time. It would be fairly unusual for a man to be married so late in life, so it suggests that perhaps he too was previously married. But it is clear he had no children of his own, since none are mentioned in his will.

So, I believe that Anne's three husbands were born 1680 (William Thacker), 1703 (Noé Nicolle) and about 1707 (Richard Mullens). If born 1689, Anne would be 9 years younger than her first husband and 14 and about 18 years older than the next two husbands respectively. That is quite a range and difference, and I admit **it raises some doubts in my mind that my assumptions are off**.

One must remember, however, that at that time in Newfoundland the population of single women to choose from was very small. I feel that, out of necessity, large differences in ages would not have been so important. Besides, I'd like to believe that my ancestor Anne was a stunning beauty... I mean, she was married 3 times lol! Plus, she did inherit property from her husbands, perhaps adding to her desirability as a marriage partner. But still....

Remember of course that I am using guesstimates, and ages could easily swing +/- several years. For instance, let's imagine Anne was aged only 16 when she married William, and had Priscille in 1709 at age 17. Anne's estimated year of birth becomes 1692, which would make her aged 36 if she had her last daughter Ann in 1728. This is even more plausible biologically, and also closes the gap a little in the age difference between her and her later husbands.

Yet, daughter Ann could have been born as late as 1732, if her father William had died around 1733. Or more likely, given the large gaps in years in my "children's list", Ann and her siblings may have been born earlier than I predicted. The endless tweaking of possibilities just underscores that no reliance should be placed on my list! BUT, we are within 5-10 years + or - in their known timelines, and all are within the realm of possibility.

In the end, I will go with a middle of the road scenario. **For now I will estimate Anne's birth year as 1791**, making her 18 when she (theoretically) had her first child in 1709. This would make her 11 years younger than (1) William Thacker, and still a whopping 12 years older than (2) Noé Nicolle and (3) 16 years older than Richard Mullens!

And now I must raise the pattern I have detected with the marriages of the Thacker women. Using my birth estimates, presumed daughter Priscille was 13 years younger than her husband Richard Le Cras and confirmed daughter Catherine was also 13 years younger than her husband Amice Roissier. And from the above, their mother Anne was widely different than all her husbands: one quite a bit older, and the other two way younger than she. This raises the idea that Priscille and Catherine were born much earlier than I had estimated by using the 1708 census as a guideline.

One logical explanation is that the 1708 census taker missed reporting existing children for William Thacker. Is it possible that daughters Priscille (presumed) and Catherine may have already been born? This could certainly place them closer in age to their husbands, and for Catherine, give some breathing room for two marriages before 1732. But one can assume a census taker would have taken care, so that idea, while convenient, seems farfetched.

²⁸ Ibid, Fifehead Neville, p. 58 of 75.

How else might my assumptions be off? Maybe the rector made an error when stating how long ago he baptized Noé, making him born somewhat earlier than 1703. And since there is no baptism for Richard Mullens, maybe I have incorrectly identified him as being born about 1707?

So let's do a reality check.... We know for sure that William Thacker's wife was Anne Tisselle, who went on to marry Noé Nicolle and Richard Mullens, leaving her will written 1763. And I am certain now that William Thacker born 1680 in Wimborne Minster is the man who ended up on Great Bell Island in 1708. Note that he had a wife, but her name is not revealed. Throughout this article, I have just assumed she is Anne Tisselle.

We do know for a fact that Catherine Thacker/Clark/Roissier was the second daughter of William Thacker and Anne Tisselle, and Anne remarried Nicolle (by 1734) and Mullens (about 1744). The several court documents prove it. And we also know from concrete evidence that Catherine married Amice Roissier in 1732 in Blackhead, and she had been previously married. So, she had to have been a grown woman, making her parents of a certain age. William Thacker, born 1680 would be 53 years old when he died, let's say in 1733. Perfectly plausible. We also know for a fact that Anne Mullens died in 1763 in Sturminster Newton. If she were born 1691 as I have estimated, she would be 72 years old. That too makes perfect sense. But her husband Richard Mullens died in 1761, and based on his estimated birth year of 1707, he would be only 54 years old.

Based on the above, it does seem that Anne's identification is solid. She had to have been born early enough to have had daughter Catherine by a certain date. It's only a guess that Catherine was very young when she had her two husbands by 1732. Could she have been born much earlier than that? If so, why wouldn't William and Anne have children listed on the 1708 census? I come back to a mistake possibly made by the census taker?

Another thought.... Is it possible that William Thacker born 1680 had a son William Junior born about 1700, who is the one who married Anne Tisselle? If so, he wasn't identified on the 1708 census. We might assume they would have children around 1720-1725. But that would make no sense, because their confirmed daughter Catherine was married twice by 1732. No, impossible.

Or perhaps I am wrong and William Thacker is not the man born 1680 in Wimborne Minster, but another man who was born later? If true, that would only take care of the decade age difference between Anne and him, and not explain the even larger differences for her other two husbands.

One can make oneself crazy thinking through all the seemingly endless possibilities. Perhaps it is a dangerous to assume that the William Thacker of 1708 Great Bell Island is the husband of Anne. But one thing is exceedingly clear. Based on the fact that Catherine Thacker was their second daughter and her second marriage occurred in 1732, she must have been born about 1711 or perhaps earlier. And that means her parents William Thacker and Anne Tisselle could only have been born by 1690 + or - a few years. So, it does stand to reason they are the man and wife in 1708.

At this point I will have to put the large age differences down to circumstance, with perhaps a misidentification of Richard Mullens' birth year. **But, it is important to point out these question marks, and keep an open mind for future timeline revisions if more evidence comes to light.**

In Conclusion

After a couple of decades of trying to figure out who my ancestor Anne Mullens was, something I had become resigned to being impossible, her identity is finally revealed! And it is all thanks to Pete Noel for searching page

by page through the Jersey court records, and being generous enough to share his discoveries with his fellow researchers. I would like to thank Pete again, along with Susan Squires and Susan Reid. The four of us formed an ad-hoc discussion group when Pete's documents were first revealed. Four heads are better than one, and it was a very exciting few weeks!

And with these new revelations on the Thacker family, I hope the key has been found to unlock even more future discoveries for researchers of these Conception Bay families!

Susan Snelgrove
March 30, 2024