

OCCGS REFERENCE ONLY

- d. Malone 7 April 1864, dau. of Francis and Eunice (Holden) Harris. Children of Daniel and Mary (Harris), the first b. Shirley, others b. Malone, N.Y.: *John M. Sherwin*, b. ca. 1809, d. 16 June 1837; *Francis H. Sherwin*, b. 30 Dec. 1814, d. 6 March 1895, m. 2 Nov. 1840 *Mary Ann Wilson*; *Polly Sherwin*, b. ca. 1824; *Lerona K. Sherwin*, b. 25 Jan. 1827, d. 18 Nov. 1918, m. *William S. Helms*; *Stillman Sherwin*, b. ca. 1829; *Rhoda Sherwin*, b. ca. 1833, m. *D.E. Hastings* (Cram Papers).
- ii. **John Sherwin**, b. prob. Townsend ca. 1783, d. Chester, Vt. 8 Jan. 1808, ae. 24 (in VT VRs called son of "Capt. Daniel and Abigail" Sherwin).
- iii. **Bildad Sherwin**, b. prob. Andover, Vt. 29 Oct. 1792, d. Orland, Steuben Co., Indiana 21 Dec. 1841 (*Gray*, 36); m. prob. Chester or Dorset, Vt. ca. 1811 **Philinda Rider**, b. Dorset 20 March 1794, d. Jackson or Orland 15 Sept. 1837, dau. of Stephen<sup>7</sup> Rider (*Ebenezer*<sup>6</sup>, *John*<sup>5-4-3</sup>, *Zachary*<sup>2</sup>, *Samuel*<sup>1</sup>) and his wife Lorena<sup>6</sup> Gray (*John*<sup>5</sup>, *Edward*<sup>4-3-2</sup>, *John*<sup>1</sup>) (Fremont Rider, *Preliminary Materials for a Genealogy of the Rider (Ryder) Families in the United States*, v. 2 (1959), unpg.; *Gray*, 25, 35). Bildad and Philinda are bur. in Jackson Prairie Cem., Jackson Twp., Steuben Co., Indiana. Bildad Sherwin served as a private in Capt. John Weed's Co. of Volunteer Riflemen, Col. Clark's Volunteer Corps, War of 1812, from 20 Sept.-17 Nov. 1813 (Military Service Recs., War of 1812, #254, National Archives). Bildad and his wife res. Chester, Vt., until ca. 1820. A farmer, he bought land in Bergen, Genesee Co., N.Y. 18 April 1820 (Genesee Co., N.Y. Deeds, 18:276), and moved to Indiana ca. 1836 (H.W. Morley, *History of Steuben Co., Indiana* [1955], 49, 376).
- iv. **Abigail "Nabby" Sherwin**, b. perhaps 1793; m. Chester 24 April 1814 **John Morris** (VT VRs). They had at least three daughters; the third, *Sarah Morris*, d. ca. 1841 (Harriet Sherwin letter).
- v. **Ira Sherwin**, b. prob. Chester, Vt. ca. 1796 (based on age in 1850 census, Erie Co., Penn., p. 95), d. Harborcreek 25 Oct. 1859; m. prob. Penn. 10 Aug. 1826 **Sarah Wilson**, b. Erie Co., Penn. 10 Aug. 1800, d. Harborcreek 8 March 1888. Their children, all b. Penn. (birth-dates calc. from 1850 census): *Harriet E. Sherwin*, b. ca. 1827, m. *A.H. Tracy*, res. Monmouth, Illinois; *John O. Sherwin*, b. ca. 1829, m. *Elizabeth Anderson*, res. in Nebraska; *George W.F. Sherwin*, b. ca. 1831, d. Erie, Penn. 24 Sept. 1887, m. prob. in Penn. 3 Jan. 1861 *Sarah Jennie Moorhead*, b. Harborcreek 1 Jan. 1830, d. Erie 29 March 1892; *Sarah Abbie Sherwin*, b. ca. 1835, m. prob. Harborcreek 28 Jan. 1862 *Newell S. West*, res. Traer, Iowa; *Nancy Sherwin*, b. ca. 1838, living 1850; *Josephine Barr Sherwin*, b. Harborcreek 1838, d. there 1917, unm.; *Mary Fatima Sherwin*, b. Harborcreek 1841, d. there 1917, unm. (According to Phillip A. Laird, Josephine Barr Sherwin, not listed in the census, was named in family records as a dau. of Ira, and is bur. in the family lot in Erie Cem.)
- vi. (prob.) **Patty Sherwin**, b. ca. 1800, d. Chester 27 May 1803, ae. 3 yrs. (*Manning*, 210).
- vii. **Harriet Sherwin**, b. prob. Chester ca. 1804, liv. Harborcreek, Penn. in May 1841. She was prob. the female ae. under 10 in the household of Daniel Sherwin in the

1810 Chester, Vt. census; 10-16 in the 1820 census, and 20-30 in 1830. Harriet stated in her 1841 letter to her niece that she had been a schoolteacher "for many years."

- viii. (prob.) **Fanny Sherwin**, b. ca. June 1805, d. Chester 6 Dec. 1805, ae. 5 mos. (VT VRs). (vi.) and (viii.) are listed as daus. of Daniel only because they are bur. in Brookside Cem., Chester, where Daniel<sup>5</sup> and John<sup>6</sup> were bur. also.
- ix. **One other male**, since Harriet referred to not hearing from "either of my other brothers." (Mrs. Fisher suggests that the other bro. may be *Samuel Sherwin*, head of a household in Chester, Vt. in 1810 and 1820, and in Grafton, Vt. in 1830. He died in Grafton "age 53 years" 2 June 1840 (VT VRs); news of his death might not have reached his sister Harriet by May 1841. Samuel's wife was *Roxana* —, named on the death rec. of their son Daniel. The will of Ira Sherwin, another son of Samuel who d. Grafton, Vt. "age 23 years" 23 May 1849, mentions siblings James; Juliette; Minerva, wife of Jonas H. Amsden; John M.; Sherman; and Abigail, wife of Hose Lamphear. Samuel's approx. birthdate of 1787 "fits" into the family of Daniel<sup>5</sup> Sherwin, but Samuel has not yet been certainly identified.

This partial report on one family during the "century of lost ancestors" identifies Bildad Sherwin's origin and provides a framework for further research. I am indebted to Mrs. Jean Fisher of Farmington, Conn., and to Phillip A. Laird of Erie, Penn., both cited earlier, for their contributions. Queries and correspondence do help

*Mary B. Sherwood's* previous contributions to NEXUS were "The Barbour Connection" (4[1987]:29) and "The Elusive Benjamin Porter (1760-1841)" (7[1990]:58-59). She has written for the Mayflower Quarterly, and is the author of *Pilgrim: A Biography of William Brewster* (1982) and *Nicholas Burke (1838-1878), Margaret Shannon (1838-1916): Their Descendants and a Few Ancestors* (1985). Before her retirement she was a writer for the U.S. Information Agency. Interested readers may write her at 7402 Latham Rd., Falls Church, VA 22043.

## Judith S. Carman

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the first time, you will have the added benefits of your cousin's familiarity with the language, area, and local customs. Perhaps you can even persuade them to explore some of the local record repositories before your arrival.

In the fall of 1982 I made just such a research trip. Although not of Italian ancestry myself, I have long been interested in a certain family named Del Vecchio that lived in New York City in the early 1800s. In the course of researching a branch of my mother's family, I found that the wedding of my great-grandparents, Mark and Harriet Ann (Irish) Wray, at Flushing, N.Y. 16 October 1850, was actually a double ceremony. Harriet's sister Emma married Joseph John Paul Del Vecchio the same day (*New York Genealogical and Biographical Record*, 110 [1979]: 72). Additionally, I found that an Irish family Bible owned by a cousin showed that Joseph Del Vecchio died in 1866 (see David Curtis Dearborn, "The Irish Family of England and New York City," *The Genealogist*, 3 [1982]: 5, 12-13, 21). The more I researched the Del Vecchios, the more fascinated I became. Joseph's father, Charles Del Vecchio (ca. 1787-1854), along with several of Joseph's uncles, came to New York City in the first decade of the 1800s and these brothers quickly established themselves as makers and sellers of looking-glasses and dealers in prints, frames and artists' supplies (see Betty Ring, "Check List of Looking-Glass and Frame Makers and Merchants Known by Their Labels," *Antiques*, 119 [1981]: 1182; Desmond Fitz-Gerald, "The Dublin Del Vecchios," *Antiques*, 120 [1981]: 910-14). Happily for me, two of the uncles, Joseph and John, died unmarried in New York City in 1815, leaving wills with nearly identical provisions and naming their mother, Giovanna Del Vecchio, of the parish of Moltrasio on Lake Como in Italy. Now I knew where to look in Italy to find their ancestors.

Lake Como is nestled among the Italian Alps on the Swiss border, less than an hour's train ride north of Milan. It is one of the most scenic and charming spots imaginable, and has been a popular vacation retreat since ancient Roman times. The small city of Como, located at the southernmost tip of the fjord-like lake, is also the capital of the province of Como, and a modest *pensione* near the waterfront became my base of operations. Not knowing anyone in the area and not being able to speak the language were handicaps, but pocket dictionaries and phrasebooks allowed me to communicate my needs, and at last I had found a place where my somewhat rusty high school Latin could be used! At local bookstalls I purchased detailed maps of the area and English-language guidebooks with illustrations.

It was helpful for me to be in a popular tourist area, but I found that nearly every small village in Italy is accessible by bus or some form of public transportation. The small village of Moltrasio lies about six or seven miles up the lake, and is accessible from Como via a very picturesque ferry ride. Because this area of Italy did not begin keeping civil vital records until after unification in 1860, my main objective was to examine the parish



The comune of Moltrasio, as seen from Lake Como. Photo by D.C. Dearborn.

registers kept by the Roman Catholic Church for baptisms, marriages and burials. Although I had not made a prior appointment to see the local *parrocco* (priest), I was armed with letters of introduction. The late genealogist John Insley Coddington, who in 1960 had planned (but never undertook) a similar research expedition to the neighboring parish of Rovenna, supplied me with letters to the local bishop and parish priest written by a personal friend, a *monsignore* attached to the Vatican Secretary of State. I presented these, along with a cover letter written in Italian by John, to the *parrocco*. Impressed, he generously allowed me full access to the registers, which were arranged in a series of small books in fine condition, kept in a cupboard in his office.

The priest spoke no English and he had no photocopier, so it was up to me to make what sense I could of the registers. There were separate books for baptisms, marriages and deaths, and all were written in a clear, Italic hand. Later entries were in Italian, but before about 1800 they were kept in Latin. Because the words and phrases used for each entry were repetitious, I had little difficulty in understanding the text.

The registers showed the baptisms of twelve children of Giovanni Del Vecchio, son of Pietro (in Latin, Joannes, son of Petrus), and his wife Giovanna Donegana, daughter of Francesco, between 1765 and 1787. After the name of each child, the names of godparents were listed. Giovanni Del Vecchio and Giovanna Donegana had been married at Moltrasio 26 April 1764. Further research showed that Giovanni was baptized there 17 May 1739, son of Pietro (son of Alterio) and Domenica Peduza (daughter of Bernardo), while Giovanna was baptized at Moltrasio 17 May 1744, daughter of Francesco Donegani (son of Giovanni) and Cattarina Durini (daughter of Francesco).

The registers of deaths were equally informative. I learned that Giovanni had died at Moltrasio on 14 April 1809 "aged about 72 years" and that his wife Giovanna died *posidente* (wealthy) on 5 February 1822, aged 76, of pneumonia. What was most fascinating was that the

Sherwin  
Family

deaths of several of their children who had emigrated to other parts of Italy, as well as England and America, were carefully recorded in the Moltrasio registers.

While in Moltrasio I also visited the local cemetery. I was disappointed to find almost no old stones. Like the rest of the town, the cemetery was terraced into the side of the mountain, and there was no room for expansion. The cemetery, having filled all available space long ago, now made room for new burials by disintering older plots, generally those more than thirty years old. It was rather shocking to see this performed matter-of-factly by laborers armed with pickaxes the day of my visit! The high stucco walls surrounding the cemetery, however, were covered with many old plaques commemorating dead from both world wars, past parish priests, and members of many of the town's families, including Del Vecchios. Some of these plaques dated from the eighteenth century.

Back in Como, I next visited the local *Archivio di Stato*, or provincial archives. Each of Italy's 95 provinces has an *archivio* located in its capital city, where many civil records useful to the genealogist can be found. Among these are vital records before 1865 (in those provinces where they were kept), military and draft records (useful for finding the town of origin of late nineteenth century ancestors when only the province is known), tax rolls and censuses. The staff at the *Archivio di Stato* in Como was very friendly and helpful. Except for one young lady whose English was only a little better than my Italian, none spoke English. It took only a little broken conversation on my part for the staff to produce several manuscript censuses of Moltrasio for the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries listing every householder with a description and valuation of his land, and even a giant map of the town, circa 1750, handpainted in ink and watercolor on a dozen silk sheets, depicting every dwelling and its occupant.

Perhaps the most important class of records found at the provincial archives are notarial records. Notarial records include all types of land and property conveyances, probate documents, and other legal records. The Archives keeps a list of the notaries who served each *comune* for given periods of time. A single notary might have conducted all legal business in a small town for many years. Each notary kept a log of his recorded documents, arranged either chronologically, or by surname and then chronologically. To my knowledge none of these records have been micro-filmed. The Del Vecchio family notary was Giuseppe Antonio Caldara. There were many entries in Caldara's ledger under "Gio q<sup>m</sup> Pietro" (Giovanni son of the late Pietro). The one that caught my eye was document #5686, dated 1 December 1802 and identified as *testamento* (will). Typically for a genealogist, I found this record twenty minutes before the Archives was to close on the last day of my Italian visit! It was the joint will of Giovanni and Giovanna (Donegana) Del Vecchio, naming all their children. Finding this will was a fitting close to my Italian sojourn.

There are many important classes of Italian records that I did not have a chance to explore on my brief trip. Of special interest to Americans with recent immigrant ancestors are the civil vital records for each *comune*, which are found in the *Ufficio di Stato Civile*, discussed more fully in the how-to articles listed above.

Researching ancestors in Continental European countries may be too great a challenge for many genealogists. Certainly it is not for the beginner. However, if you *know* the town of your ancestor's origin and have read everything available on genealogical research and records in the native country, there is no reason why a personal research trip to Europe can't be the genealogical experience of a lifetime.

*David Curtis Dearborn is Head Reference Librarian at the Society and a Fellow of the American Society of Genealogists. Recent NEXUS articles include "Searching for the 'Mill English': The Meadowcrofts of Lancashire" (8:20-23) and "George and Rhoda (Dearborn) Dearborn of Biddleford, Maine" (6:199-200).*

## A Family for Bildad Sherwin

by Mary B. Sherwood

Among my most elusive ancestors, at least as regards origins, was a certain Bildad Sherwin, whose unusual first name appears in the book of Job (Bildad the Shuhite was one of Job's friends). Bildad's forename may be uncommon, but sparse late-eighteenth century Vermont records and his later migration to upstate New York made tracing his parentage difficult.

Bildad's own 1811 marriage to Philinda Rider and the births of their children are cited in Alanson Gray, *Edward Gray and His Wife Mary Paddock and Their Descendants* (1889, henceforth *Gray*), pp. 35-41. Many Sherwins from 1667 through the Revolutionary War are well documented in Oscar H. Leland, *Ancestors and Descendants of John Sherwin, Sr. late of Weathersfield, Vermont* (1922, henceforth *Sherwin*); but Bildad and his siblings left few records. My copy of *Gray* was originally owned by Bildad's daughter, my great-grandmother Elizabeth (Sherwin) (Wheeler) Porter, whose annotations indicate that she agreed with its account of her parents and siblings. Bildad's parents were not named.

The solution lay in an old letter, augmented by modern correspondence and standard research. In May 1841, Harriet Sherwin, a teacher in Harborcreek, Pennsylvania, wrote her niece Elizabeth (my great-grandmother above, then a teacher in Orland, Indiana) and referred to:

1. Harriet's "brother" Bildad (to whom the envelope was addressed): "I shall never forget him nor my other brothers & sister [sic] who are separated from us."
2. Harriet's mother, who is well, but waits for letters from all her children.
3. Brother Ira and family, who enjoy good health. Harriet is teaching about five miles from Ira.

4. "Either of my other brothers," from whom nothing has been heard recently.
5. "Sister Morris [who] wrote .... informing us of [the] death of her third daughter, Sarah."

I sent a copy of this letter to Mrs. Jean Fisher of Farmington, Conn., who had placed Sherwin queries in the National Genealogical Society newsletter, *NEXUS* and elsewhere. She replied that Ira and Harriet were children of Daniel Sherwin and Abigail Manning, who spent their married life in Massachusetts and Vermont. She had no information, however, about Bildad or "Sister" Morris. Subsequent research indicates that Bildad was indeed a brother of Ira, Harriet, and "Sister" Morris, as well as of (probably) five other children of Daniel<sup>5</sup> Sherwin (Daniel<sup>4</sup>, Ebenezer<sup>3-2</sup>, John<sup>1</sup>) and Abigail<sup>6</sup> Manning (Samuel<sup>5</sup>, John<sup>4</sup>, Samuel<sup>3</sup>, William<sup>2-1</sup>). "Sister" Morris can probably be identified as the Nabby [Abigail] Sherwin of Chester, Vt., who married John Morris there 24 April 1814. A standard Register-form treatment of this family follows.

Daniel<sup>5</sup> Sherwin was born in Townsend, Mass. 3 May 1757, and died in Chester, Vt. 17 April 1834, son of Daniel and Susannah (Proctor) Sherwin (Sherwin, 1-12). He married at Townsend (int. 24 March 1781) Abigail Manning, born at Townsend 25 November 1760, daughter of Samuel and Abigail (Avery) Manning. Abigail (Manning) Sherwin was living at Harborcreek, Penn. 25 July 1848 when she appeared before a justice of the peace concerning her Revolutionary War veteran's widow's pension (W.H. Manning, *The Manning Families of New England* [1902, henceforth *Manning*], 208-10; forthcoming Townsend VRs, 11, 217, 221; Rev. War Pension File W4510, Daniel Sherwin, Mass., National Archives, Washington, D.C.).

Applying in 1838 for a Revolutionary War veteran's widow's pension, Abigail said that her marriage to Daniel Sherwin took place "the last Wednesday of May 1780" [1781]? Her brother Samuel Manning of Andover, Vt., said that he remembered "Daniel Sherwin's father coming to my parents and asking for consent to marry my sister Abigail, which they gave. They had several children [names not given]." Samuel said that he lived "a considerable time" in the family of Daniel and Abigail. Another brother, Joel Manning of Ludlow, Vt., said that he was present at the wedding and that he also lived with the family for some time. The widow's pension was granted.

Daniel<sup>5</sup> Sherwin, his father Daniel<sup>4</sup>, and his brother John all served in the Revolution. Daniel<sup>5</sup> served at the Battle of Bunker Hill, where he lost a gun for which he was later reimbursed, and at Ticonderoga and Long Island (*Mass. Soldiers and Sailors of the Revolutionary War* 14[1906]:151-52; Rev. War Pension File W4510).

Daniel and Abigail started married life in Townsend (Pension File W4510). By 6 September 1790 he was farmer and a freeman (name spelled "Sharwin") in Andover, Windsor Co., Vt., and in 1791 was serving the first of several terms as selectman. He last appears on the grand list (taxation) in 1799 (Andover Town Proceedings, micro-



The broken tombstone of Abigail (Manning) Sherwin (1760-1848), wife of Bildad, at Harborcreek, Pennsylvania. Note "September 31." Photograph by Phillip A. Laird.

film #2485, Vt. Recs.). At about this time he moved to nearby Chester, Vt., where he lived until his death, intestate, 17 April 1834 (1800-1830 censuses, Windsor Co., Vt.; Ludlow [Vt.] District Probate, 1441; Vermont VRs).

The widow Abigail and her daughter Harriet moved to Harborcreek, Penn., to be with Abigail's son Ira, a physician, who had resided there since 1825 (Pension file W4510; Benjamin Whitman et al., *History of Erie Co., Penn.* [1884], 444). Abigail was still living there 25 July 1848, aged 87, when she testified before a justice of the peace concerning her Revolutionary War pension "under the new law" (Pension file W4510). She died in Harborcreek in September 1848 (broken g.s., Erie Cem.: "Abigail [sic] Sherwin, Born in Townsend Mass. 25 Nov. 1760. Died in Harborcreek Pa. Sept. 31, 1848, Aged 88 years..."). The impossible date Sept. 31 is clearly carved.

Data on Dr. Ira Sherwin's family, including cemetery data, was supplied by Ira's descendant Phillip A. Laird of Erie, Penn., who was also researching the Sherwins and suggested that Abigail Sherwin's stone was worn, lying on the ground, and might have been brought there from another burial place.

Children of Daniel<sup>5</sup> and Abigail (Manning) Sherwin:

- i. Daniel<sup>6</sup> Sherwin, b. Townsend 22 Dec. 1781 (forthcoming Townsend VRs, 252); d. Malone, Franklin Co., N.Y. 23 May 1855 (LDS recs. submitted ca. 1956 by Mrs. Mark W. Cram of Sacramento, hereafter *Cram Papers*; m. Boston, Mass., 25 Sept. 1808 Mary Harris (E.W. McGlenen, ed., *Boston Marriages, 1752-1809* [1903, repr. 1977], p. 272), b. Shirley, Mass. 16 Dec. 1789,