

The Importance of Proofs when Documenting your Sheldon Family Line by Michael Yoemans.

(Michael Yoemans is a member of the SFA, past President of the Thomas Rogers Society, and the author of several articles published in the *Mayflower Quarterly*.) For over 20 years, I have been researching my Youmans/Yoemans, Sheldon, and French family lines for purposes of recording their genealogy and as a basis for my admittance into hereditary and lineage organizations, such as the Sheldon Family Association (SFA), the French Family Association (FFA), the Doane Family Association of America (DFA), the General Society of Mayflower Descendants (GSMD), the Sons of the American Revolution (SAR), and the Thomas Rogers Society (TRS), which is a society created in memory of my Mayflower ancestor Thomas Rogers. Applications for admission into these organizations can be complicated because they often require every name, date, and place to be substantiated with a citation or proof for each generation. For example, a birth record proves who the parents of an individual are, while marriage record proves only the legitimacy of the birth. A death record in the long form can sometimes substitute for a marriage record if it states that the man and woman were husband and wife.

My most recent endeavor involved preparing an application to the TRS relating to my great-great grandmother Cynthia Sheldon to prove her direct line relationship with proofs supporting the birth, death, and marriage dates and locations for each generation back to her Mayflower passenger Thomas Rogers. This article explains the process I went through to locate the sources to substantiate each application entry. I will also briefly discuss my genealogy experience in documenting 28 direct line families and how DNA analysis played a role in this process.

For many years, I had been aware that both my mother and father were related to Thomas Rogers via two of his sons, namely Joseph and John. On my mother's side, entry into the GSMD and the TRS proved very straight forward because her direct line relationship to Joseph Rogers were recorded in the Thomas Rogers' Silver **Book 19** published by the GSMD and in the two-book Doane Family volume published by DFA. My father's side, however, proved more elusive largely because Cynthia Sheldon's mother, Sally French, died young and seemed to disappear without a trace. The process for

| | | |
|-----------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| 13. MICHAEL STEPHEN YOEMANS | = | |
| 12. WALTER ROBERT YOEMANS | = | Beatrice Iona Fidle |
| 11. STEPHEN HARRY YOEMANS | = | Nettie Porter |
| 10. LAFAYETTE JAMES YOUMANS | = | Jessie Oberdier |
| 9. CYNTHIA FRENCH SHELDON | = | Stephen Vincent Youmans |
| 8. SALLY FRENCH | = | Hezekiah H. Sheldon |
| 7. JOSEPH FRENCH SR. | = | Sally Smith |
| 6. WEALTHY RICHMOND | = | Jacob French |
| 5. JOSEPH RICHMOND | = | Abigail Phillips |
| 4. JOSEPH RICHMOND | = | Mary (Wadsworth) Andrews |
| 3. ABIGAIL ROGERS | = | John Richmond |
| 2. John Rogers | = | Anchurchman |
| 1. Thomas Rogers | = | Alice Cosford |

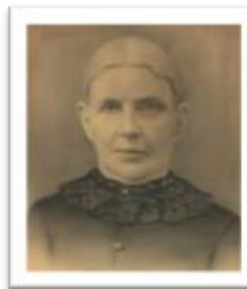
Figure 1. Cynthia Sheldon Linage to Thomas Rogers

my father's side began in a manner similar to my mother's--determining what was already documented. **Figure 1** shows Cynthia French Sheldon's (Generation (G) 9) proven lineage back to Thomas Rogers. It also shows the lineage going forward to me at the 13 generation. There was some good news in that the first six generations of Cynthia's lineage was already recorded in Book 19 back to Wealthy's birth and to her parents, Joseph Richmond and Abigail Phillips.

Before talking further about my proofs, it is useful to mention that they can be found in unpublished records, such as certificates of birth, baptism, marriage or death, records in family Bibles, wills, deeds, census, sworn statements of parents, grandparents, etc. They can also be found in published sources such as books, magazine and journal articles, and newspaper articles that were written at the time about a particular event. While these are sometimes accounts by participants, in most cases they are written by journalists or observers. The important thing is to distinguish between material written at the time of an event and material written much later as historical analysis.

From here forward, I will make reference to the proofs (<https://www.thomasrogerssociety.com/631s-trs-proofs.pdf>) I assembled for my TRS application starting with G6 Wealthy Richmond. An electronic copy of the 40 pages of proofs has also been given to the SFA for updating their records.

The relationships between Wealthy Richmond and her husband and their child Joseph French Sr. (G7) were not difficult to prove because of the preservation of the "Massachusetts, Vital Records, Brekley 1670-1900" (**Source (S) 1, 2, and 4**). It was also fairly simple to prove the marriage of Joseph French Sr. to Sally Smith again because of the quality of the "Massachusetts Marriages Town Records 1767-1817" (**S5**). The DAR Cemetery Books published in 1999 by the Berne Library documented people buried in the French ~ Reynolds Cemetery (**S6**) located in Adams Co., IN. This source provided both the birth and death dates for Sally Smith and Joseph French Sr. It also showed that there are 11 Sheldons buried in this cemetery, including Hezekiah



Charcoal Picture of Cynthia French Sheldon

Sheldon's brother Joseph Sheldon and his wife Hannah French, who was Sally French's sister. Three extracts (S7) taken from the 1979 History of Adams Co. helped further support Joseph French Sr. and Sally Smith's birth and death dates. In addition, they mentioned Joseph French's two marriages: (1) Eunice Mills and (2) Sally Smith, and the French family migration from Massachusetts to Madison Co. NY, and then, onto Adams Co. IN.

S8, the will of Joseph French Sr., was a crucial find since it listed his daughter Sally (French) Sheldon by her married name and said she was deceased. This will document, written in April 1843, was the key to establishing the relationship between Sally and her father. The will cites Sally's sister, Hannah, who married Hezekiah H. Sheldon's brother, Joseph Sheldon. Both daughters were listed in their father's will by their married name Sheldon.

S9 came from the FFA's Chart #18. It listed all of Joseph French Sr.'s children, including Sally, but without sources. S10 likely came from a LDS (Latter-day Saints) website. It gives the birth and death date for Sally and the date of her marriage to Hezekiah H. Sheldon. I am usually skeptical about LDS sources, but in this case the dates were very specific making me think that they came from an actual source yet to be found. S11, Hezekiah H. Sheldon's will, was used to establish his birth as it gave his age as 53 years, eight months, and 13 days on the date the will was written, resulting in a birth date as 30 Aug 1796.

So far, we have established that Sally French married a Sheldon, but without a marriage record, we cannot prove it is Hezekiah. This is where the SFA database and three articles published by them in the "The Sheldon Family Association Quarterly" came to bear. The first article (S12), perhaps the most significant, was published by the Rev. Henry Olcott Sheldon in "The Sheldon Magazine, A Genealogical List of the Sheldons in America" Vol 2-5, 1857. An excerpt taken from page 67 (Figure 2) of this publication shows that Hezekiah Sheldon (2727) married Susan (Sally) French and that they were the

In another article (S13), Vol. 25 No. 1 p. 900, S2727, entitled "Hezekiah Sheldon Tombstone found by intrepid Cousin" identified Hezekiah's death as 1850. Then there was the article (S14) that appeared in Vol. 30 No. 1, Family of Cynthia Sheldon of Iowa S6640(I), contributed by Joseph Uphoff, again naming Hezekiah and Sally as Cynthia's parents and tracing her children through the various censuses.

S15, an 1889 Biographical History of Cherokee County, Iowa, provided a sketch of Joseph F. Sheldon, who is the brother of Cynthia Sheldon. Joseph lists his parents as Hezekiah H. and Sallie (French) Sheldon. While he does not mention his sister by name, Joseph indicates that he is the second in a family of five children, three of whom are living in Iowa. According to the bio, Joseph married Miss Mary Youmans, who is the daughter of William and Lydia (Shaw) Youmans. His sister, Cynthia Sheldon, who is first born, married Stephen Vincent Youmans, the brother of his wife Mary Youmans. At the time that this was written Cynthia and her husband Stephen were residing in Horton, IA.

S16 presents excerpts taken from the 1850, 1860, and 1870 censuses that illustrate what was well known within the Youmans and Sheldon family circles. That is that our families migrated together along the same path from Madison Co., NY to Lake Co. IL, and finally to Bremer Co. IA. The censuses, obituaries, and biographies clearly demonstrate this fact. Collectively, when combined with the 1870 Polk Co. IA census, these records show that Joseph F. Sheldon and his brother-in-law, Stephen Youmans, are living in the same towns, and that they migrated together to Bremer Co., IA. This fact also supports the statement in Joseph Sheldon's biographical sketch (S15) that he was the second in a family of five, three of whom survive and are residing in Iowa. It is quite apparent one of those siblings still alive is his sister Cynthia F. Sheldon Youmans as she is so identified in her obituary (S18).

From here, establishing the child and marriage relationships and entering birth and death dates into the application became a lot easier. Both Cynthia and Stephen had an obituary (S18 & S19) along with a marriage record all of which were used to substantiate date entries needed for G9. Beginning with G10, completing my application moved rapidly using the S20-35, many of which were gathered for my successful SAR and GSMD applications.

The story of Cynthia F. Sheldon Youmans is well told in her obituary. Born 15 May 1820 in Morrisville, Madison Co., NY, she died at her home in Horton, IA on 23 Jul 1990 at the age of 70. She married Stephen V. Youmans in 1940 and spent 19 years at her birthplace before moving to Lake Co. IL in the fall of 1866. After nine years, she and her

| 67 THE SHELTON | | | | | | |
|----------------|-------------------|------|------|----------|------|---------------------------------|
| 2726 | Joseph | 1857 | 6637 | Sabra | 1822 | Eaton, Ind. |
| | Hannah FRENCH | | 8 | Elihu | 20 | Eaton, Ind. |
| | | 1852 | 9 | Angeline | 25 | Eaton, Ind. |
| | Wabash, Ind. | | | | | |
| 2727 | Hezekiah | 1850 | 0 | Cynthia | 1823 | |
| | Susan FRENCH | | 1 | Joseph | 25 | Morris Flatts, P.O. Eaton, Ind. |
| | Seriba and Granby | | 2 | Dorothy | 27 | |
| | N.Y. | | 3 | Sally | 30 | |
| | Eliza YOUNG | | 4 | Bicknell | | |
| | | | 5 | Tacy | | HOLDEN, Lewis, Palermo, |

Figure 2. Sheldon Magazine 1857, Vol 2-5 Excerpt

parents of Cynthia Sheldon (6640) and her brother Joseph Sheldon (6641), who will play a role in a subsequent proof. It appears that Joseph Sheldon (2726) may have been the one to report the information to the SFA prior to his death in 1857.

husband moved to Bremer Co. IA where they bought a home and where she lived until her death. Mrs. Youmans was the mother of 10 children 8 of whom were living at the time of her death. According to the obituary: "Mrs. Youmans had many good qualities of which there is no need to mention here for friends know without describing them, and those who did not know her cannot share in the grief we bear".

Sources for my application were obtained from a variety of places, such as ancestry, family genealogy books, google books, courthouses, libraries, graveyards, family societies like the SFA, and family archives. As I mentioned in the opening of this article, I have worked to document 28 family histories, covering about 350 pages. **Figure 3** is a Family Relationship Mapping of the 28 families organized by chapter, starting with Chapter 1, the Youmans/Yoemans. Stars with lines attached to another star guide you from one family to another.

For example, the Rogers (Mayflower), Chapter 21 shows that it was Joseph's daughter Elizabeth who married Elisha Higgins that paved the way to the direct line relationship to my mother Beatrice I. Yoemans. Likewise, it was John's daughter Abigail who married John Richmond that lead to the direct line relationship to Cynthia Sheldon and eventually to me. It is fortunate for me that many of these families already had well documented genealogies leaving me the task of only linking my family to the appropriate direct line. In other instances proving the direct line relationship was more difficult, especially with respect to the Youmans/Yoemans line that was

believed to be descended from Christopher Youmans ca 1638. My cousin Thomas Yoemans completed an extensive genealogy on the Youmans/Youmans family, but was stalled and could not go beyond our great-great-great grandfather William Youmans. This is where Y-DNA filled in the missing link. By testing a number of distant cousins who had proven their direct line to Christopher and comparing their Y-DNA to my father's Y-DNA as well as mine and one of my cousins, we were able to prove that our Yoemans line descended from Christopher Youmans.

Genealogy can be a very rewarding experience. Through the research process, I have met many cousins who have shared their stories and most importantly their family pictures. However to do genealogy right, it requires due diligence to gather the proofs necessary to support the family relationship claims. Without such proofs, it is all just pure speculation. The internet is full of family trees with making claims with little if any evidence. It is for this reason that I wrote this article to share my approach to gathering proofs with the SFA and the TRS and to demonstrate that these proofs are out there if you are willing to search for them. I encourage everyone who reads this article to share your sources with the SFA and with others who could benefit from them. My Thomas Rogers application (#631L) is available on the TRS website at url: <https://www.thomasrogerssociety.com/631s.pdf>. Descendants of Cynthia Sheldon can apply for entry into the TRS by emailing the TRS Genealogist at Genealogist@tracycrocker.com.

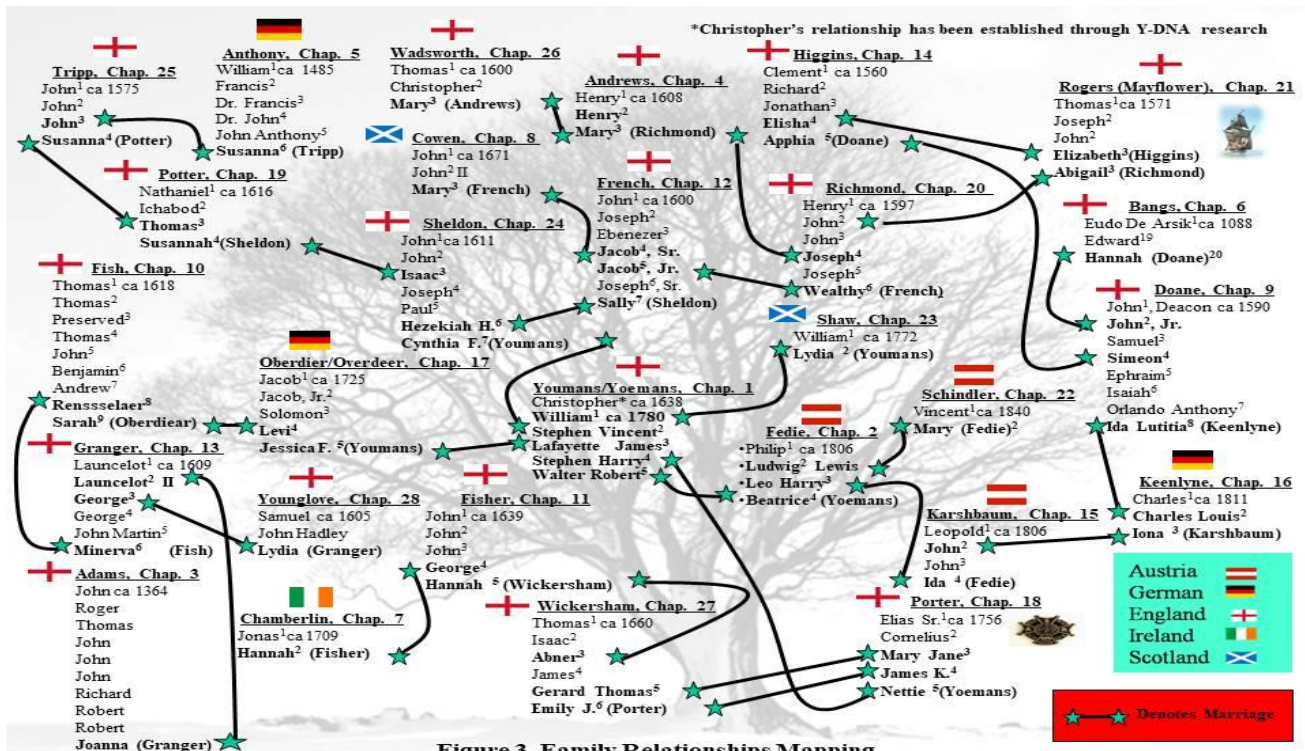


Figure 3. Family Relationships Mapping