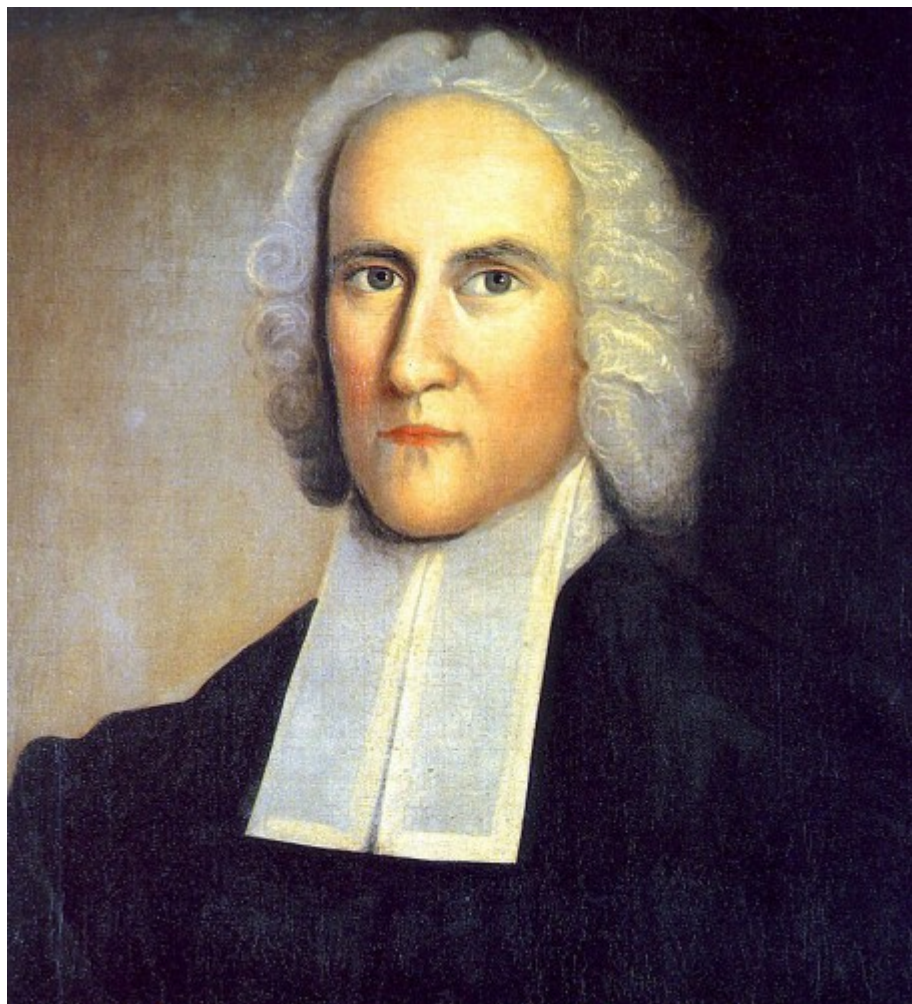


# Mystery Monday: A Relationship to Jonathan Edwards, Theologian?



Jonathan Edwards, Theologian (1703-1758), via Wikimedia Commons, public domain. (Click to enlarge.)

[McMurray Family](#) *(Click for Family Tree)*

Deep into records and books of the mid- to late-1600s and the “Great Migration” of the English to America, the name ‘Jonathan Edwards’ kept surfacing. The name was already somewhat familiar from readings about later family members, as Jonathan was a British colonial theologian who influenced so many ministers and missionaries who came after him- and we have quite a few of those in the McMurray-Payne-Burnell lines.

Additionally, many of our family members lived in the same area at the same time as Jonathan Edwards, and most listened to his sermons every Sunday during the 23 years of his church service in Northampton, Massachusetts. Since October 5 is the anniversary of Rev. Edwards' birth (312 years ago!), it seemed a good time to learn more about this man.

I also found some Edwards surnames in our family around the same time and place- related? Possibly. People back then came in groups to America, and were often closely related, or else 'cousins' in a much looser meaning of the word than we now use. Research has not yet shown a definite connection, but there may still be one- possibly. As an example of the families to sort out, family members and other researchers have listed Mehitebel EDWARDS (?-1716) as the spouse of John BURNELL (1696-1744). The Lynn, Essex, Massachusetts marriage records list them as "John BURNELL" and "Mehitabel EDMONS" married 15 Jan 1716/7 with intention (to marry) filed previously. (Seeing Mehitebel's possible birthdate, she would likely be a cousin of some degree to Jonathan if actually related.) No other records could be found for a Mehitebel Edwards, but there are records for the Edmons family, although she is not included. We also have a Rachel EDWARDS in the family who married William POMEROY; she was born in 1785 in Chesterfield, Massachusetts, and died in the same county, Hampshire, in Williamsburg, in 1860, so geographically it is possible. We do not yet know her parents, who may be descendants of the great theologian. So more research is definitely needed on the 'are we related to Jonathan Edwards?' question.

There is, of course, also a possibility that there is no family relation at all.

Jonathan Edwards was still important to our family, whether or not genetically related, as he was preaching in places they lived. (Genealogy is not just about being related to 'famous' people but it is important to learn about them as they often

influenced the non-famous folks and impacted their lives even on a daily basis.) Since religion was a part of the government pre- Revolution/Constitution, what Rev. Edwards said and wrote mattered. He is still considered to be one of the greatest thinkers of all time, definitely one of the greatest theologians, and his books and sermons continue to be published and read.

Jonathan Edwards was born in East Windsor, Connecticut, to Timothy Edwards (1668-1759) and Esther Stoddard , daughter of Rev. Solomon Stoddard; she was said to have 'unusual mental gifts and independence of character.' Jonathan was their only son, a middle child of 11 children, and education was important in the family- even the daughters were educated. Jonathan enrolled in Yale College just before he attained 13, graduated at 17, and in addition to spiritual matters, he was very interested in the natural world. Throughout his life he prayed and worshiped in the beauty of nature, rather than only inside a church. He also wrote papers on science topics, and felt that the wonders of science and nature were evidence of what was then called the 'masterful design' of God, (today called 'intelligent design'); he felt science and nature therefore proved God's wisdom and care for humans. Jonathan's thinking was shaped by the 'Age of Enlightenment' (AKA 'Age of Reason') and he emphasized the aesthetic beauty of God, scripture, and the world in his writings and sermons.

Although Jonathan Edwards grew up in a Puritan household with strong Calvinist roots, he came to believe that personal religious experience was more important than doctrine and ritual. He served at a Presbyterian Church in New York City for eight months in 1722-3, became a tutor at Yale, and then was ordained as a minister on 15 February 1727 in Northampton, Massachusetts. His maternal grandfather, Rev. Solomon Stoddard, was pastor, and Jonathan became his assistant. Jonathan worked part-time as a pastor, but also studied 13 hours a day. He became a working pastor after the death of his

grandfather about 2 years later, and served the Northampton Church for 23 years. Our Parsons, Strong, Edwards, Warner, Phelps, Pomeroy/Pomroy, Kingsley, Allis, Lyman, and other families who lived in Northampton during his tenure would have attended the church and listened to the sermons of Pastor Edwards.

The second and third generation of Puritans whose parents had migrated to the American British colonies as part of "The Great Migration" were not as pious as their elders. Secular influences such as politics and economics, plus the logic and reason espoused by Enlightenment writers, distracted some younger Puritans from religious obligations and a deep commitment to the church. There was also a decline in morals as a belief took hold that it was easier to get into Heaven than originally thought.

To counter this decline, in July of 1732 Edwards preached a sermon in Boston that declared how absolute was the sovereignty of God in deciding who would be saved by grace, and who would not; his sermon was published as, *"God Glorified in the Work of Redemption, by the Greatness of Man's Dependence upon Him, in the Whole of It."* Shortly thereafter, a revival of religion began in Northampton, a town with only about 200 families about this time. By the winter of 1734 and spring of 1735, the intensity and popularity of the revival actually hampered business in the town- in just 6 months over 300 persons had become new church members. (Some scholars estimate the rate of church attendance as 75-80% between 1700 and 1740.)

The revival spread throughout the Connecticut River Valley and as far as New Jersey. The camp meetings were emotional since Edwards spoke to the heart, and emphasized a personal experience with God and religion. Instead of the usual stern Congregational church decorum, at times listeners would moan, groan, and move about in the rapture of the moment in these great outdoor meetings. Some began to wonder, however, if

followers were becoming fanatics. To add fuel to this turn of attitude, some members became convinced of their unavoidable damnation, and, it was believed, urged by Satan, they committed suicide, including Rev. Edward's uncle, Joseph Hawley II. This dark side of the revivals effectively cooled the religious fervor, although, at the same time, the movement's premises began to be known and appreciated in England and Scotland.

George Whitefield, a Calvinist British evangelist, came to the American colonies in 1740 and preached ideas similar to Edwards'; this time period and religious movement became known as "The Great Awakening." Whitefield worked with Edwards and preached in Northampton, with Edwards weeping at the emotion of Whitefield's discourse. Whitefield also travelled around the colonies, including the Middle Colonies and Southern Colonies. He drew great crowds- 30,000 persons came to hear him in Boston alone, significantly increasing the number of persons influenced by "The Great Awakening."

Jonathan Edwards preached his most famous sermon, "*Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*" first to his own Northampton congregation. (Our ancestors probably heard it on a Sabbath in June, 1741.) He was then invited by a pastor to repeat the sermon on 08 July 1741 in Enfield, Connecticut. The Connecticut congregation had not been much affected by "The Great Awakening"- at least, not until this sermon.

S I N N E R S

In the Hands of an

Angry GOD.

A S E R M O N

Preached at *Enfield*, July 8th 1741.

At a Time of great Awakenings; and attended with remarkable Impressions on many of the Hearers.

By *Jonathan Edwards*, A.M.

Pastor of the Church of CHRIST in *Northampton*.

*Amos ix. 2, 3. Though they dig into Hell, thence shall mine Hand take them; though they climb up to Heaven, thence will I bring them down. And though they hid themselves in the Top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my Sight in the Bottom of the Sea, thence I will command the Serpent, and he shall bite them.*

B O S T O N: Printed and Sold by S. KNEELAND and T. GREEN, in Queen-Street over against the Prison. 1741.

08 July 1741 sermon of Jonathan Edwards: "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." via Wikipedia, public domain.

This most famous of Edwards' sermons is still studied today. In it, he described in vivid detail the horrors of a very real Hell, and explained that humanity has a chance to rectify their sins and return to Christ, in order to avoid the torment of Satan through eternity. People in the audience interrupted his sermon many times, crying out, "What shall I do to be saved?"

Although seemingly a 'fire and brimstone' sermon, Jonathan Edwards did not need to sermonize in such a way- his parishioners were already quite familiar with that aspect of the Bible. Instead, he talked quietly to his audience, but with much emotion although he did not shout. He calmly laid out a series of logical points from which they could easily draw the conclusion he desired- in this case, that humanity

was lost without the grace of God.

As might be obvious, the different thinking of Edwards caused a division in the Congregational Church. The actions of followers at revivals that included fainting, crying out, moaning, even convulsive fits led him to defend his evangelical preaching, and he even had to write a second apology. Edwards developed a test for membership in his church, and members old and new balked at taking it. His sermons became unpopular- attended by visitors, but not local church members. (Wonder which of our ancestors followed him?) He then published a list of young people who, he suspected, had been reading 'improper books,' (definitely need to check this list for our ancestors) and this incident further distanced him from his congregation. The church council and town meeting voted Jonathan Edwards out of the pulpit, and he preached his last sermon at Northampton Church in October, 1751.

Edwards was still popular in other places, however, and became pastor in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, and a Indian missionary and advocate. Although in ill health, he next accepted the presidency of the College of New Jersey (now known as Princeton University) and was installed on 16 Feb 1758.

With his interest in science, Jonathan Edwards was a supporter of the new smallpox vaccine. It was still experimental, but Edwards became inoculated so that others would be encouraged to get the vaccine and help eliminate one of the great killers of the era. (Mortality rate for smallpox was up to 35%.) Sadly, the health of Jonathan Edwards was not robust enough to recover from the mild fever that most got after the vaccine, or the vaccine may have been contaminated, and he died on 22 March 1758.

In addition to the great changes brought to many versions of Protestantism, Jonathan Edwards influenced society in many other ways, and our family, as well. Our McMurray ancestor

Rev. Edward B. Payne (1847-1923) most likely read the works of Edwards, and although schooled in the modified Congregational church inspired by Edwards, he too parted ways with the old tradition. He also embraced Edwards' conception of the beauty and aesthetic aspects of religious thought. E.B. Payne preached outdoors as well, and many of his sermons also focused on inward discipline to control one's morals in order to gain Heaven, rather than predestination. A collateral ancestor, Thomas Scott Burnell (1823-1899) was a missionary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, which was heavily influenced by Jonathan Edwards. His brother and our ancestor, Kingsley Abner Burnell (1824-1905), became a lay preacher- a condition made more acceptable by the emphasis Jonathan Edwards gave to personal experience over formal education for preachers. K.A. Burnell also travelled as a foreign missionary. Deacon Moses Kingsley (1743-1829) became the 21st Deacon at Northampton Church, most likely growing up in the church while Edwards was still pastor; Moses Kingsley served there for 9 years.

There is much more to come on these family members, and many more ancestors. Their lives will be put in context by knowing more about Jonathan Edwards- theologian, philosopher, educator, evangelist.

### **Notes, Sources, and References:**

1. Note in 1741 sermon that an 'f' often stands for an 's' in early Colonial writing. Thus "Impreffions" is actually 'Impressions.' Also note use of phrase, "...a Time of great Awakenings..."
2. "Antiquities, Historiais and Graduates of Northampton" by Rev. Solomon Clark, 1882. via Archive.org.
3. Jonathan



Edwards- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jonathan\\_Edwards\\_\(theologian\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jonathan_Edwards_(theologian))

4. *“Edwards on Revivals: Containing a Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God ... in Northampton, Massachusetts, A.D. 1735. Also, Thoughts on the Revival of Religion in New England, 1742, and the Way in which it Ought to be Acknowledged and Promoted”* by Jonathan Edwards, Dunning & Spalding 1832, via GoogleBooks.com.

5. The author is far from a scholar of theology, but there is quite a lot of information online about Jonathan Edwards. Here are some links that were useful:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sinners\\_in\\_the\\_Hands\\_of\\_an\\_Angry\\_God](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sinners_in_the_Hands_of_an_Angry_God)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First\\_Great\\_Awakening](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Great_Awakening)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jonathan\\_Edwards\\_\(theologian\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jonathan_Edwards_(theologian))

<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/religion/rel02.html>

[http://colonialwarsct.org/1740\\_s.htm](http://colonialwarsct.org/1740_s.htm)

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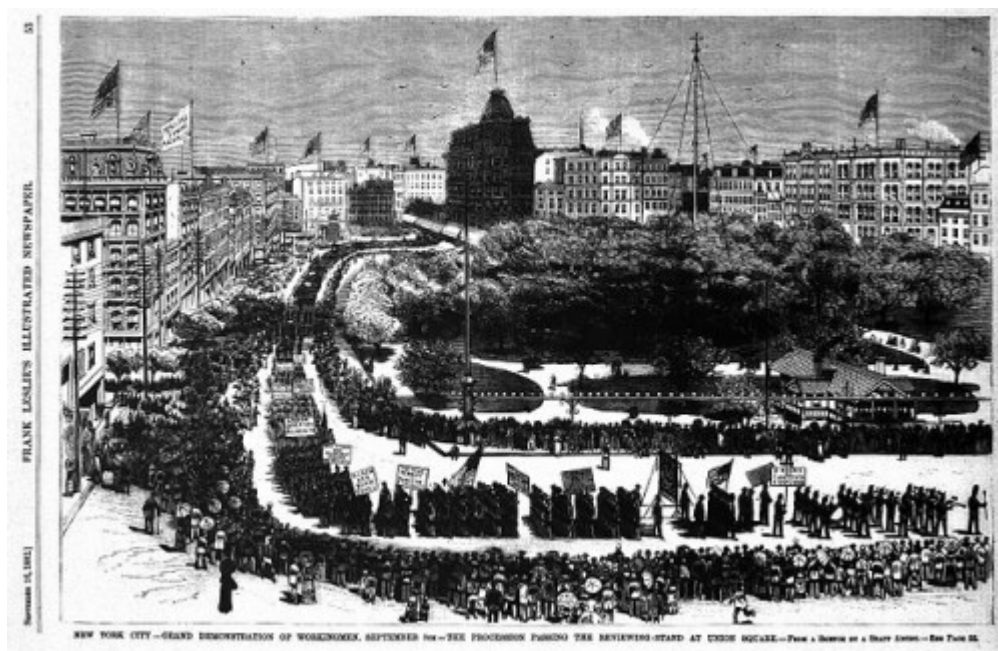
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## Labor Day: Celebrating the Labors of Our Ancestors



*First Labor Day Parade in the US, 5 Sep 1882 in New York City. Via Wikimedia. (Click to enlarge.)*

Labor Day officially became a federal holiday in the United States in 1894. "The Gilded Age" included the rise of big

business, like the railroads and oil companies, but laborers fought- sometimes literally- for their rights in the workplace. Grover Cleveland signed the law to honor the work and contributions, both economic and for society, of the American laborer. Celebrated on the first Monday in September, ironically the holiday was a concession to appease the American worker after the government tried to break up a railroad strike but failed.

The Labor Day weekend is a good time to think about our ancestors and the work they did to help move our country and their own family forward.

Jefferson Springsteen was a mail carrier through the wilds of early Indiana, traveling for miles on horseback through spring freshets (full or flooding streams from snow melt), forest, and Indian villages. Samuel T. Beerbower, who would be a some-number-great uncle depending on your generation, was the Postmaster in Marion, Ohio, for many years. "Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds."



*Edward B. Payne, Pastor, circa 1874. Image courtesy of Second Congregational Church, Wakeman, Ohio.*

Bad weather, gloom of night, ocean crossings in the mid 1800s, and the threat of disease or injury did not stay our minister, deacon, and missionary ancestors from their appointed rounds either- especially since they felt they were appointed by a higher power. We have quite a number of very spiritual men in the family. Henry Horn became a Methodist circuit rider after coming to America as a Hessian soldier, being captured by George Washington's troops in Trenton, NJ, then taking an Oath of Allegiance to the United States, and serving in the Revolutionary Army. The family migrated from Virginia to the wilds of western Pennsylvania sometime between 1782 and 1786. A story is told of how he was riding home from a church meeting in the snow. The drifts piled up to the body of the horse, and they could barely proceed on, but Henry did, and was able to preach another day. He founded a church

Pleasantville, Bedford Co., Pennsylvania that still stands, and has a congregation, even today. Edward B. Payne and his father, Joseph H. Payne, Kingsley A. Burnell and his brother Thomas Scott Burnell were all ministers, some with formal schooling, some without. Edward B. Payne gave up a lucrative pastorate because he thought the church members were wealthy and educated enough that they did not need him. He moved to a poor church in an industrial town, where he was needed much more, however, he may have acquired his tuberculosis there. He also risked his life, and that of his family, by sheltering a woman from the domestic violence of her husband, and he testified on her behalf.

Abraham Green was one of the best tailors in St. Louis, Missouri in the early 1900s, and many in the Broida family, such as John Broida and his son Phillip Broida, plus Phillip's daughter Gertrude Broida Cooper, worked in the fine clothing industry.

Edgar Springsteen worked for the railroad, and was often gone from the family. Eleazer John "E.J." Beerbower worked for the railroads making upholstered cars- he had been a buggy finisher previously, both highly skilled jobs.



*Sheet music cover for "Bless Your Ever Loving Little Heart," from "The Slim Princess." (Click to enlarge.)*

The theater called a number of our collateral kin (not direct lines, but siblings to one of our ancestors): Max Broida was in vaudeville, and known in films as "Buster Brodie." Elsie Janis, born Elsie Beerbower, was a comedienne, singer, child star in vaudeville, "Sweetheart of the A.E.F" as she entertained the troops overseas in World War I, and then she went on to write for films. Max Broida also did a stint in the circus, as did Jefferson Springsteen, who ran away from home as "a very small boy" to join the circus (per his obituary).

Collateral Lee family from Irthlingborough, England, included shoemakers, as that was the specialty of the town. They brought those skills to Illinois, and some of those tools have been handed down in the family- strange, unknown tools in an inherited tool chest turned out to be over 100 years old!

Will McMurray and his wife Lynette Payne McMurray owned a grocery store in Newton, Iowa. Ella V. Daniels Roberts sold eggs from her chickens, the butter she made from the cows she milked, and her delicious pies at the McMurray store. Franz Xavier Helbling and some of his brothers and sons were butchers in Lawrenceville, Pennsylvania, near Pittsburgh, and had their own stores.

Some of our ancestors kept hotels or taverns. Joseph Parsons (a Burnell ancestor) was issued a license to operate an 'ordinary' or "house of entertainment" in 1661 in Massachusetts, and Samuel Lenton Lee was listed as "Keeps hotel" and later as a saloon keeper in US Federal censuses. Jefferson Springsteen had a restaurant at the famous Fulton Market in Brooklyn, NY in the late 1840s.



*From left: Edgar B. Helbling, (Anna) "May" Helbling, Vi Helbling, and Gerard William Helbling, on Flag Day 1914. Note 'Undertaker' sign- yes, it was all done in his home. (Click to enlarge.)*

Many of our family had multiple jobs. William Gerard Helbling (AKA Gerard William Helbling or "G.W.") listed himself as working for a theater company, was an artist, then an undertaker, and finally a sign painter. George H. Alexander was artistic as well- he created paintings but also worked as a lighting designer to pay the bills.

Sometimes health problems forced a job change. Edward B. Payne was a Union soldier, librarian, and then a pastor until he was about 44 when his respiratory problems from tuberculosis forced him to resign the pulpit. For the rest of his life he did a little preaching, lecturing, and writing. He also became an editor for a number of publications including, "The Overland Monthly," where he handed money over from his own pocket (per family story) to pay the young writer Jack London for his first published story. Edward B. Payne even founded a Utopian colony called Altruria in California! He and his second wife, Ninetta Wiley Eames Payne, later owned and conducted adult 'summer camps' that were intellectual as well as healthy physically while camping in the wild and wonderful northern California outdoors.

Other times, health problems- those of other people- are what gave our ancestors jobs: Edward A. McMurray and his brother Herbert C. McMurray were both physicians, as was John H.

O'Brien (a Helbling ancestor), who graduated from medical school in Dublin, Ireland, and came to America in 1832. He settled in western Pennsylvania, still wild and in the midst of a cholera epidemic that was also sweeping the nation; he had his work cut out for him. (It appears he did not get the same respect as other doctors because he was Irish, and this was pre-potato famine.) Lloyd Eugene "Gene" Lee and his father Samuel J. Lee owned a drugstore in St. Louis, as did Gene's brother-in-law, Claude Aiken. Edith Roberts McMurray Luck worked as a nurse since she received a degree in biology in 1923.

We have had many soldiers who have helped protect our freedom, and we will honor some of those persons on Veterans Day.

We cannot forget the farmers, but they are too numerous to name them all! Even an urban family often had a large garden to supplement purchased groceries, but those who farmed on a larger scale included George Anthony Roberts, Robert Woodson Daniel, David Huston Hemphill, Amos Thomas, etc., etc. We even have a pecan farmer in the Lee family- William Hanford Aiken, in Waltham County, Mississippi, in the 1930s-40s.





*Lynette Payne, December 1909, wearing a purple and lavender silk dress. (Click to enlarge.)*

We must also, “Remember the ladies” as Abigail Adams entreated her husband John Adams as he helped form our new nation. He/they did not, so 51% of the population-women- were not considered citizens except through their fathers or husbands. Many of these women, such as Lynette Payne McMurray, labored to get women the right to vote, equal pay, etc. (Lynette ‘walked the talk’ too- she was the first woman to ride a bicycle in Newton, Iowa! Not so easy when one thinks about the clothing involved.) Some men, like her father, Edward B. Payne, put their energy into the women’s suffrage movement as well. Many of our ancestors worked for the abolition movement too, including the Payne and Burnell families.

A woman worked beside her husband in many families, although she would get little credit for it. Who cooked the meals and

cleaned the rooms for the Lee and Parsons innkeepers? Likely their wives, who also had to keep their own home clean, laundry washed, manage a garden and often livestock- many families kept chickens even if they didn't have a farm. They raised and educated their many children too, sometimes 13 or more. Oh yes, let's not forget that women truly 'labored' to bring all those children into the world that they had made from scratch. (Building a human from just two cells makes building a barn seem somewhat less impressive, doesn't it?) Some of them even died from that labor.



*June 1942- Claude Frank Aiken and his wife Mildred Paul Aiken in their drugstore in St. Louis, Missouri.*

Working alongside one's husband could be frightening due to the dangers of the job. A noise in the Aiken family drugstore in St. Louis, Missouri in 1936 awoke Claude and Mildred Aiken since they lived in the back of the store. Claude took a gun and went into the store while Mildred called the police. Claude fired the gun high to frighten the intruder- Mildred must have been very scared if she was in the back, wondering who had fired the shot and if her husband was still alive. Thankfully he was, and the police were able to arrest the thief, who wanted to steal money to pay a lawyer to defend him in his three previous arrests for armed burglary and assault.

We applaud all of our ancestors who worked hard to support their family. Their work helped to make the US the largest economic power in the world, and a place immigrants would come to achieve their 'American dream.' We hope our generation, and the next, can labor to keep our country prosperous and strong.

## **Notes, Sources, and References:**

1. There are too many folks listed here to add references, but using the search box on the blog page can get you to any of the stories that have been posted about many of these persons. Of course, there is always more to come, so stay tuned!

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