

X6784

3 deaths in one family of Whitlocks of Fairfield County CT due to smallpox Dec. 1859?

From: Peter Whitlock (whitlock.peter@gmail.com)

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To: Peter M. Whitlock (whitlock@one-name.org)

Hi Peter M.,

I was searching google books today to see what treasures were there about the history of Fairfield County, Connecticut where a lot of my Whitlock ancestors were in the 19th and 18th centuries, and I decided to search individual books for the presence of the search term "Whitlock." I was surprised to find a hit within "The slaves of central Fairfield County: the journey from slave to freeman in Nineteenth-Century Connecticut" by Daniel Cruson (2007, The History Press). I am re-typing here the relevant text from page 103 because I can not print it out. You can confirm this text by viewing the screen at

<http://books.google.com/books?id=eR7wzFKjL3cC&lpg=PP1&dq=fairfield%20county%20connecticut&lr=&pg=PT103#v=onepage&q=whitlock&f=false>

"According to Henry Beer's bill of mortality and the town's vital records there were only three smallpox deaths in 1859, all in the same family, and all of whom died in December of that year. In addition, there was one other smallpox death which occurred on January 1, 1860. There were no other smallpox deaths in the decades preceding or following these deaths. It would appear the smallpox epidemic was small indeed.

Even though the outbreak was small, town officials were not oblivious to the danger posed by the outbreak of the disease. A special town meeting was called for December 29, 1859, after the three members of the Whitlock family died. The warning (sic) for that meeting claimed that it was to consider 'adopting such measures as may be deemed efficient to arrest the spread of contagious disease in said town, possibly involving, among other measures, the erection of a pest house, and the purchase of land for that object, and to indemnify the keeper of the town poor against extraordinary expenses arising out of the existing prevalence of smallpox in said town.' Apparently the threat was not considered very great, since the motion for a pest house was never even brought to a vote. In fact the only outcome of the special meeting was a vote to pay the 'doctors and nurses fees for treatment of smallpox contracted by the town poor.' These payments never had to be made.

Another feature of the Purdy legend that does not survive a little research is the location of the outbreak. The residences of the smallpox victims do not appear on any of the several maps of Newtown. Newtown's vital records give one of the victim's (sic) occupations as a rubber worker, which would indicate that he must have lived near the rubber factory in the Glen. A search of the index of headstone inscriptions for cemeteries places the burial of all the victims in the Sandy Hook cemetery. It would

appear, then, that our epidemic was confined to Sandy Hook, not Hattertown."

I will yield to anyone who objects to my placement of "sic" in two locations within my re-typing of the above passage. The first one I put there because usually town meetings here on Cape Cod are preceded by a "warrant" listing the various articles for the meeting to be moved and voted on. I have never before heard this referred to instead as a "warning." The second was simply an objection to the placement of the apostrophe. In both cases, I could easily be mistaken. I haven't checked yet to see whether the dates of the three deaths from smallpox match up with any of my Whitlock ancestors.

W09