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The Denbow Diaspora
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Twin tales — or how an Ohio Denbow may have ended up “Down under”

By Mark Fletcher, Sidney, Australia

My Great Grandfather, Thomas SPRING, would have probably been described in polite circles as “a bit of a rogue.” Seemingly always on the move, he played fast and loose in business, with relationships and I believe with the truth in general. When he died in Durban South Africa in 1922, he claimed to be Anglo-Canadian (b. abt. 1851 in Toronto). However, two generations of my family have tried and failed to uncover any real evidence that this was true.

When I took up the challenge in 2000 I tried a different approach, choosing to look more closely into the backgrounds of the women in his life. This research has turned up some bizarre coincidences suggesting that Thomas may actually have been born in Ohio in 1844, a descendent of the DENBOW clan and possibly even a Civil War deserter. By



Thomas John (Beverly) SPRING. This photograph was taken in Durban, South Africa, in about 1905

DENBO DNA TEST RESULTS SUMMARY

sharing this story I hope, firstly, to pass on new information about one of the lesser known maternal branches of the Ohio DENBOWs. Secondly, I would like to solicit from more experienced researchers some suggestions on how I may go about solving the riddles that I have uncovered. Most of the following is 90 percent solid, but I would love to hear from anyone who may have updates, corrections or questions.

The first tale begins with Martha DENBOW (b. 1790, d. 1855), eldest daughter of Thomas DENBOW (b. 1765, d. 1826). In Maryland in 1810, Martha married Benjamin TOLAND (b. 1790, d. 1885), a man so trusted by Martha's father he was named in 1826 as sole executor of Thomas' will. After her father's death in about 1827, Martha and Benjamin moved from Maryland to Perry Township in Carroll County, Ohio. They brought with them two known children, daughter Elizabeth TOLAND (b. 1818, d. btw 1880 & 1900) and son Thomas Denbow TOLAND (b. 1823, d. 1907), who was given his mother's maiden name as his middle name. Two more children were subsequently born in Ohio, Gabriel TOLAND (b. abt. 1827, d. 1852) and Nicholas St. Clair TOLAND (b. 1832, d. 1917). These four children then went on to produce Martha's 20 known grandchildren and it this generation which has been at the centre of my research in Ohio.

The second tale begins with my Gran, Henrietta Agnes SPRING (b. 1890, d. 1976). My teenage memories of her are of a sweet little old lady who was both gentle and kind. For most of her life Gran had remained tight lipped about our family history so when she died we were left with not much more than a handful of old photos. My memories, though, are also full of rainy days spent sitting and listening to her many stories of adventures in far off lands. Gran claimed to have been born in Vancouver, B.C., along with her older brother and a younger sister; the family then went on the road before she was barely five. Subsequently a younger brother was born in Hawaii and a younger sister was born in San Francisco, before the family finally settled in Durban, South Africa, in about 1900. By all accounts Henrietta hated her father (Thomas), and her stories spoke of a man who was domineering, bombastic and often cruel. Our accepted oral history stated he was from Toronto but curiously when Gran muttered disparaging thoughts of him she used to refer to him as a "Yank." Gran also spoke of her mother being Mary J. Turner, a seamstress born in England; however, Gran confessed just before she died that Mary was her stepmother—but refused to give any further details. It is this information which began our family history research, and after nearly 40 years the conclusion we have come to is that Henrietta's true birth mother was Agnes Martin (b. Ohio 1847, d. Vancouver 1918), and probably also her Aunt!

The screenshot shows a window titled "DENBO DNA TEST RESULTS SUMMARY" with four tables of genetic data. Each table has a "Distance" column and a vertical scrollbar on the right.

Distance
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NORTH AMERICAN J2F DENBOW/DE

Genetic Distance (Denbow)

Select Kit:

Max Distance:

▼ 12 Marker Analysis

Kit Number	Name
34381	Carl J. Denbow (Y67)
34383	Frank X. Denbow (Y67)
34384	Robert B. Denbo (Y67)
39471	Robert 'Tom' Thomas Denbo (Y67)

▼ 25 Marker Analysis

Kit Number	Name
34381	Carl J. Denbow (Y67)
34383	Frank X. Denbow (Y67)
34384	Robert B. Denbo (Y67)
39471	Robert 'Tom' Thomas Denbo (Y67)

▼ 37 Marker Analysis

Kit Number	Name
34381	Carl J. Denbow (Y67)
39471	Robert 'Tom' Thomas Denbo (Y67)
34383	Frank X. Denbow (Y67)
34384	Robert B. Denbo (Y67)

▼ 67 Marker Analysis

Kit Number	Name
34381	Carl J. Denbow
39471	Robert 'Tom' Thomas Denbo
34384	Robert B. Denbo
34383	Frank X. Denbow

Back in Ohio in 1840, Martha and Benjamin were living in Perry Township of Carroll County with their three boys, just doors away from what appears to be Martha's brother, Bazeleel DENBOW (b. 1795, d. 1857) and his family. Meanwhile daughter Elizabeth had settled in Moorefield, Harrison County, with husband Peter SPRING (b. 1815, d. 1901), who she had wed in Carroll that same year. Peter belonged to a large Virginia family who began arriving in Ohio about 1830. Peter's Great Grandfather, Johann Casper SPRING (b. 1724, d. 1755), had immigrated to America from Germany in 1751 and had reportedly been killed by Indians in the French & Indian War. Peter was also one of 10 children and his father, Johann Adam SPRING (b. 1785, d. 1849) was one of seven. So by 1850, with the arrival of brothers, uncles and cousins, many of the SPRINGs of the Ohio hill country belonged to this one very large family. In 1841, while living on a farm adjacent to Peter's father, Elizabeth and Peter celebrated the birth of the first of six children to be born in Harrison or Carroll Counties all of which were namesakes of the TOLAND/DENBOW side of the family. [Editor's note: Part of Harrison County became part of Carroll County, when the latter was formed in 1832] These children were: Benjamin F. (b. 1841, d. 1915, m. 1862 Hannah HARBAUGH); Martha Elizabeth (b. 1842, d. 1868, m. 1862 Thomas H. BUCY); Twin boys, Thomas (b. 1844 d. ?) & John T. (b. 1844, d. 1883, m. 1867 Agnes MARTIN); Gabriel E. (b. 1846, d. 1920, m. 1869 Catherine Matilda VAN LEHAN, defacto [common law] 1878 Jennie S. Poland, m. 1880 Margaret Worthington); and Sarah (b. 1849, d. 1894, m. 1874 David LINT). Of these six children it is the twin boys, Thomas and John who interest me intensely, I have a theory that their full names were Thomas John and John Thomas, the importance of which I will discuss in detail later.

In the 70s my Mum first started looking for clues into Gran's family in South Africa and one of the first documents she recovered was Thomas' 1928 death certificate stating he was born in Toronto in 1851. The informant appeared to have been Henrietta's older brother, Thomas Jr., but puzzlingly



Agnes Martin's house, 2463 Hastings Street East, Vancouver, circa 1915.

it made no mention of either her supposed stepmother, Mary J. TURNER or the other three of Gran's four brothers and sisters. What it did detail was that Thomas had once been married to an "Agnes" and that this relationship had ended in 1891 in Vancouver. Subsequent digging in South Africa did eventually reveal what became of Gran's other siblings but only after Mum changed tact and found that all three went by the name of TURNER. Recently via Ancestry Trees, I made contact with the descendants of one of these siblings, now living in Canada. At first it was quite a strange conversation as they knew nothing of the SPRING connection or the existence of my Gran and her brother, Thomas Jr. They had been trying to track down Mary J TURNER's husband who they assumed had been a "Mr. TURNER," and I had no evidence or documentation to prove otherwise. Astonishingly, what we soon discovered was that both our families shared copies of some of the same old photographs left behind by my Gran!

Returning once again to Ohio, in about 1850 both Elizabeth and Peter SPRING, and Martha and Benjamin TOLAND relocated to adjacent farms in Jefferson Township in Tuscarawas County. By now Martha and Benjamin's son, Thomas Denbow TOLAND, had married Susanna A. SHARP and become a farmer in Perry Township of Carroll County. He had also fathered two children, son John Watkins (b. 1847, d. 1906, m. 1872 Susan Matilda FRIBLEY) and daughter Martha A. (b. 1849, d.?, m. abt 1870 James M. HUMMELL). Martha and Benjamin's son Gabriel had become a stone mason and was living in Warren Township of Tuscarawas County; their youngest, Nicholas St. Clair, was still living at home. Also residing in Jefferson at the time were the family of William MARTIN (b. 1815, d. 1885) & Catherine WYANT (b. 1824, d. 1880). William was originally from Pennsylvania and Catherine was the daughter of one of Ohio's first settlers, Jacob WYANT (b. 1797, d. 1880). William and Catherine had five children of their own, which coincidentally also included a set of twins, daughters Esther and Agnes (b. abt 1847), just a few years younger than the twin boys of Peter & Elizabeth SPRING. I believe that it would not be too far fetched to assume that in a sparsely populated rural area two sets of twins around the same age may have mixed in the same circles.

To continue a little bit more about my Mum's research journey, during the early '80s my family was fortunate to have the opportunity to visit Canada a number of times. I have lots of memories of spending what seemed like days sitting in dusty libraries and archives in Toronto and Vancouver while Mum went through endless card indexes and microfilms. Despite this effort she found not a trace of anything that could substantiate our Thomas SPRING ever being in Ontario. However, in Vancouver she found the 1891 cen-



A final reunion goodbye on the front porch of Larry and Kay Denbow's home, 567 Winton Ave., Zanesville.

Query from Sandy Denbow Jameyson (grajam3766@hotmail.com):

The family of Taylor and Denbows in Washington County, Ohio, has my interest. Sarah Denbow was married to a Taylor. I am also researching the Taylor line because my mother-in-law's family were Taylors as well. Her name was Naomi Taylor. They were from Ravenswood in Jackson County, W.VA. Owen Taylor (1883-1976) was her father. His father was John Taylor, born in Ohio. Research for **my** Taylors has lead me to the Ohio counties of Noble, Monroe and Washington. I have a picture saved on Ancestry.com, of Sarah Denbow Taylor. Her son looks so much like my brother-in-law, it's eerie. The grandson, resembles Owen Taylor. I have found that the Grandson, later moved to Jackson County, W.VA. Yes, the name Taylor is a common surname. However, I need to know more about this Taylor family. I need help from my Denbow relatives that descend from Bazeleel's side. It seems I am at a brick wall and could use some help on my John Taylor. It is possible, but I don't have absolute proof, that John's father may also have been John. Please write me at the above email address if you can be of any help! Thank you, Sandy

Group photo from 2009 Denbow Mini-Reunion in Zanesville, Ohio



Pictured (l to r) are: *First Row* — Bonnie Denbow Miller (Pana, Ill.) and her daughter Charyl Pingleton (Dayton, Ohio), and Gilda Haddox (Parkersburg, W.Va.); *Second Row* — Mary Denbow Wymer (Zanesville, Ohio), Carl and Jane Denbow (Athens, Ohio) and Jane Wessling (Mansfield, Ohio); *Third Row* — Kelly Denbow (Zanesville), Patricia Denbow (Ashland, Ohio), Jeanie Denbow-Slade (Tucson, Arizona); *Fourth Row* — Patrick Denbow (Zanesville), Joe Denbow (Ashland), Larry Denbow (Zanesville) and T.A. Slade (Tucson). Also attending the reunion but not pictured were Garren Snyder (Zanesville), Judy Potts (Zanesville) and photographer Kay Denbow (Zanesville).

sus records where my Gran and her brother Thomas Jr. were living with father, Thomas (b. abt 1851 Ontario) and mother Agnes (b. abt 1853, USA). Contained in the city directory records was also evidence that the membership of this household had changed in about 1892, with the departure of Agnes and the arrival of one Mary J. TURNER. Mum then followed this thread further and found documents stating that Agnes (listed as Mrs. T. Spring) resided in a local boarding house where she lived up until 1901. Then, according to these documents, Agnes re-married and became Mrs. Agnes Brown. The newlyweds went on to reside at 2463 Hastings Street East, where Agnes eventually died in 1918. This was my Mum's last major discovery because contained in my Gran's collection of old photos was a picture of a house (which Gran claimed to have been born in) with that same address — "2463 Hastings Street East" written on the back. Coincidentally, it was at this time that I also discovered my first major breakthrough. **To wit, Mrs. Agnes Brown, formerly Mrs. Thomas Spring (d.1918), was born in Ohio and the daughter of William MARTIN & Catherine WYANT of Jefferson Township, Tuscarawas County, Ohio!**

The Rest of the Story

How Mark's Family Ended up "down under" in Australia

My grandmother, Henrietta, left Vancouver, B.C., in about 1895 at the age of 5, after her father Thomas purchased land in Hawaii. Then she spent the next few years living in an outer suburb of Honolulu and after a short stint in San Francisco, the family set sail for South Africa in about 1900. Henrietta then grew up on a farm just outside Durban and, on meeting my grandfather, agreed to marriage in 1910 only if he promised to take her as far away from her father as possible. In 1915 my grandparents then travelled back to Vancouver, which my grandfather found too cold, so they continued on to San Francisco in 1916. This is about the time Agnes MARTIN, the woman who we believe was Henrietta's birth mother, died in 1918. The story goes that my grandfather saw a picture of an Australian beach, which he said reminded him of Durban. So they packed up everything once again and set sail for in Sydney in about 1920.

By 1860 back in Ohio, Elizabeth and Peter SPRING had produced another four children, Anna Jane (b. 1853, d. 1898, m. 1874 David KISLIG), Gary Adolphus (b. 1855, d. 1932, m. 1880 Rachael Ellen BAIR), Nicholas Chapman (b. 1857, d. 1946, m. 1882 Anna V. KINSEY), and Delilah Catherine (b. 1858, d. 1942, m. 1884 Willis Obed WALTON, m. 1920 James W. TAYLOR). Another child and their youngest is yet to be born, George Washington (b. 1861, d. 1947, m. 1888 Mary Elizabeth THOMPSON). Elizabeth's mother, Martha Denbow TOLAND, had sadly passed away in 1855 and father Benjamin had married again in 1857 to one Elizabeth MCCA VRAN (b. 1792, d. 1889). Elizabeth's brother, Gabriel, also had died in 1852 but not before marrying Rosanna OLLER and fathering a single son, Hiram F. (b. 1851, d. 1922, m. 1875 Mary Elizabeth SNYDER). Another brother, Thomas Denbow TOLAND, now had a total of four children with the addition of Mary (b. 1849, d. ?) and Mary Alice (b. 1857, d. 1938, m. 1878 Curtis Vance CRISS). And, at this Elizabeth's youngest brother, Nicholas St. Clair, had married Rosanna SIMMONS in 1858; they would go on to have five children, Pamela (b. 1858, d. ?, m. abt 1878, FRY), Clara M. (b. 1862, d. 1890, m. 1882, Robert W. LAFEVER), Armeda (b. 1864, d. 1900, m. 1884, William B. BOYD), Effie J. (b. 1868, d. 1920, m. 1889, Jay MITCHELL), and Allie B. (b. 1872, d. 1900, m. 1892, James HANCOCK). Also William and Catherine MARTIN (nee WYANT) seem to have lost one of their twins along the way as Agnes's sister, Esther, also vanishes from the records before this time.

From this point onward I only have a handful of records I can't reconcile and a bunch of theories I can't prove. After 1860 one of the SPRING twins, Thomas, just vanishes and though I have spent many hours chasing down leads and tracing his extended family, so far I have come up empty handed. From 1862 I have a Civil War Ser-

vice record for a John (No T.) SPRING (b. 1844 Harrison County), who is mustered in September into the 52nd regiment of Ohio Volunteer Infantry. However he remained continually absent since muster and was eventually declared a deserter. If this was Elizabeth and Peter's John T., then it would be one of the only times he did not use the middle initial "T" when signing his name. **My theory is that this could have been his twin brother Thomas, who in an effort to avoid the draft, signed his twin brother's name and then ran away to Ontario in disgrace.**

In 1867, I then have an Agnes MARTIN and John T. SPRING marrying in Tuscarawas but with no ages or parent details mentioned. If this is John SPRING the deserter, then why was he allowed to go back home, marry and live a normal life without prosecution? In 1870 I then have a Tuscarawas census for a John T. & Agnes SPRING; this John T. SPRING's age is right if he is Elizabeth's and Peter's John but this Agnes' age is unreadable. Over the next few years, this couple go on to have two children that subsequently die young and then in about 1878, Agnes MARTIN's brother, Luther Bryon MARTIN, moves his family and the WYANT Grandparents to Polk County, Oregon. To round this off in 1883, I have a death registration in Portland, Oregon, for a John T. SPRING (b. Ohio 1844). Did John and Agnes follow Agnes's brother to Oregon? Not long after this Agnes MARTIN (b. 1847, Ohio) turns up in Vancouver with my Great Grandfather, Thomas, saying she was born in 1853. **So, how did my great grandmother Agnes end up having relationships with two unrelated men named SPRING, the first having a twin brother with the same first name as the second?**

If you have stuck with me this far, many thanks and finally my twin tales end with my Gran, Henrietta, who used to say that after she was married in Durban in 1910, she and my grandfather returned to Vancouver to visit her "Aunt" in 1915. When I traced their immigration records however, my grandfather stated on arrival in Canada that he was in route to visit his "mother-in-law"! Also you can add to this one last little curly piece of information to the crazy mix. My great grandfather, Thomas, claimed his middle name was "Beverly," a name he passed on to his son, Thomas Beverly SPRING Jr., and was passed on to my father, William Beverly FLETCHER. If he was originally from Ohio and his birth name was Thomas John SPRING, does anybody have any theories as to why he may have changed it to Thomas "Beverly" SPRING?



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This newsletter is published two or three times a year by the co-editors, who are proud to claim that it is the only newsletter in the world "For Denbows by Denbows." Denbos welcome, too!