

Mary (Wilson) Duncan's Half-Sister Janet Immigrates to America

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The genealogical/historical book Great-Great-Grandfather Duncan Married...a Sister of Alexander Wilson the Ornithologist of Philadelphia had been printed for little more than a week when the Internet discovery was made that Mary, Margaret, Alexander, and Jean's half sister Janet Wilson had also immigrated to this country, following her husband Duncan Wright and bringing their children Peter, Alexander, and John. Had her family's story been discovered prior to book printing, the entire project would have been delayed at least a month and more pages added to the book's overall size. The addition would have been worth the time and effort, however, filled as it were with family history, splashes of adventure, diversion of fate, and significant contributions to the early American textile industry.

Charles W. Paige
October 28, 2007

[Frankensteinian color coding is unraveled at the end of this document](#). (P 10)

Duncan Wright's Timeline and Imprint on America

1776	Peter Wright, the progenitor of his family, was of an ancient Scotch Highland clan. He resided at Dellanny, Argyleshire, Scotland. He married Agnes Ferguson and among their children was Duncan, born in 1776, mentioned below. (II) Duncan Wright, son of Peter Wright (I), was born in [Dellanny Delleny Delanny Delmarkly], Argyleshire, in [1776 1770]... He was educated in his native town and learned the trade of chemical bleaching there. He lived in [Arklestone Arkelstine], near Paisley, Scotland.
February 25, 1777	Janet Wilson was born February 25, 1777, at Paisley, Renfrewshire, Scotland. She was a daughter of Alexander (2) Wilson, of Paisley, Scotland, and a sister of Alexander Wilson, the famed American ornithologist.
September 17, 1796	Duncan Wright married, in Scotland, Janet Wilson September 17, 1796, at Paisley, Renfrewshire. They had three sons, Peter, Alexander, and John.

March 30,
1798

Peter Wright was born March 30, 1798, and christened April 1, 1798, in Abbey Parish, Paisley, Renfrewshire, Scotland. Peter married Maribah Chace May 30, 1826, at Fall River, Bristol County, Massachusetts. At least some of Peter and Maribah Wright's children were: Margaret M., born about 1830 in Massachusetts; Lucy Reed, born October 26, 1845; Jeannette Wilson, born about 1847; Ellen M., born about 1850.

Peter was employed in the Lowell Carpet Company factory until 1857, and then removed to Westminster, Worcester County, Mass., where he was still residing in 1882 at the age of eighty-four years.

From 1880 Federal census of Westminster, Worcester, Massachusetts:

Name	Relation	Marital Status	Gender	Race	Age	Birthplace	Occupation	Father's Birthplace	Mother's Birthplace
Peter WRIGHT	Self	M	Male	W	82	SCOT	Dyer	SCOT	SCOT
Meribah WRIGHT	Wife	M	Female	W	73	MA	Keeping House	MA	MA
Margarett M. WRIGHT	Dau	S	Female	W	50	MA	At Home	SCOT	MA
Ellen M. WRIGHT	Dau	S	Female	W	30	ME	At Home	SCOT	MA
Lucy R. WRIGHT	Dau	S	Female	W	40	ME	At Home	SCOT	MA
Maud W. BROOKS	GDau	S	Female	W	11	IL	At School	MA	ME
Robert W. BROOKS	GSon	S	Male	W	7	IL	At School	MA	ME
Henry W. BROOKS	GSon	S	Male	W	2	IL		MA	ME

Jeannette Wilson Wright, daughter of Peter and Maribah (Chace) Wright, married Henry Winslow Brooks June 11, 1868. Henry was born May 17, 1845, at Ashby, Middlesex County, Massachusetts. They settled in Chicago, Cook County, Illinois, where Jeannette died December 20, 1877, apparently as a result of childbirth. Their children were: Maude Wright Brooks, born April 10, 1869, and died February 1896; Robert Montgomery Brooks, November 6, 1872, and died January 27, 1897; Henry Winslow Brooks, Jr., born December 20, 1877. All were born in Chicago. The children were living with their Wright grandparents in Massachusetts at the time of the 1880 Federal census.

May 3, 1800

Alexander Wright, son of Duncan and Janet (Wilson) Wright, was born at [Arklestone | Arkelstine], near Paisley, Scotland, May 3, 1800, and christened May 4, 1800, in Abbey Parish, Paisley, Renfrewshire, Scotland.

(The life of Alexander Wright is discussed in a separate timeline.)

March 7,
1802

John Wright, son of Duncan and Janet (Wilson) Wright, was born March 7, 1802, and christened March 14, 1802, in Abbey Parish, Paisley, Renfrewshire, Scotland. He married Janet Wilson December 25, 1831, at Lowell, Middlesex County, Massachusetts. The following was said of their son John Gordon Wright.

John G. Wright, merchant and philanthropist... was born in Lowell, Mass., July 29, 1842, the son of John and Janet (Wilson) Wright. For over one hundred years Mr. Wright's ancestors were prominent in New England affairs, his grandfather, Duncan Wright, together with his elder brother, Daniel, having introduced chemical bleaching in this country early in the nineteenth century. John Gordon Wright entered the employ of the Bigelow Carpet Co. at the age of twelve and remained with that company for three years. He then attended the Lancaster Academy, and upon finishing his studies was in the employ of Patterson, Eager & Co., Boston, for one year, resigning his position to become paymaster of the Clinton Carpet Co. Receiving an advantageous offer from the Lowell Machine Shops, of Lowell, he spent four years with that concern in making up machinery costs, and then entered the wool business in New York City as the associate of Samuel Lawrence. He came to Boston in 1866 as a member of the firm of Lawrence, Wright & Co.

He soon became known as the largest individual importer of wool and was about the first merchant in the trade to specialize in and import the Australian fleece. He was also a large and early importer of South American wool. During his entire business career Mr. Wright was known and respected for his many philanthropies and his consideration for his less fortunate fellow man. He was a member of the Boston Chamber of Commerce, of which he was a director, and the Exchange, Commercial and Boston Art Clubs. He was a trustee of the Episcopal Theological School of Cambridge, to which he gave a new library building, and a member of the Board of Directors of the Home Savings Bank. Mr. Wright had been ill for some time previous to his death and, realizing his approaching end, carefully arranged for the continuance of the business, naming his nephew, John G. Wright, 2nd, and Howard Atwood, who had been associated with him for many years, as his successors.

John G. Wright, merchant and philanthropist... died at his home in Brookline, January 31, 1912. In pursuance of Mr. Wright's final instructions, the business was incorporated November 1, 1912, Mr. Atwood, who has a most comprehensive knowledge of every phase of the trade, becoming president and treasurer of the company, which is known as John G. Wright & Co., Inc., and John G. Wright, 2nd, who had just completed a collegiate course, its vice-president. The old offices of Mr. Wright, at 620 Atlantic Avenue, were retained and the business is conducted along precisely the same lines that brought the founder success.

October 20,
1811

On October 20, 1811, Alexander Wilson, Jr. wrote from Philadelphia a letter to his brother-in-law Duncan Wright, the husband of Wilson's half sister Janet. Wilson commiserated with Duncan on the political oppression and deplorable economic conditions then afflicting Scotland and told of the almost limitless opportunities to be had in American. He was careful to assure Duncan that he was not trying to "convince" Duncan to make the journey; just that he wanted Duncan to know of potential opportunity where little seemed to be available in Scotland. Wilson mistakenly states: "There is little chance of following the employment of bleaching here; but there is an infinite number of employments besides to which your own judgement & activity may direct you." [From "The Life and Letters of Alexander Wilson," p. 390.]

1812

Duncan Wright learned the trade of textile chemical bleaching, and learning of the need of skilled bleachers in Philadelphia, then, as now, a manufacturing city, he left Scotland in 1812 to seek his fortune in America. Without his family he sailed for the United States with the intention of making his home in Philadelphia. But the United States and Great Britain were involved in war and the ship on which he was a passenger was captured by an American privateer, the "Yankee," Captain James DeWolfe, commanding, and he was taken to Bristol, Bristol County, Rhode Island. In conversation with his prisoner Captain DeWolfe learned of his occupation and of his intended destination. He at once advised Duncan of the Arkwright Mill cotton factory at Dighton, Bristol County, Massachusetts, in which DeWolfe was part owner, and sent him there with a letter to the manager, who at once engaged the Scotch bleacher as superintendent of the bleaching at the Arkwright Mill bleachery. It is claimed that Duncan Wright was the first chemical bleacher of cotton cloth in America.

The result of the capture of Duncan Wright by the "Yankee," which diverted him from Philadelphia, gave to New England two men, Duncan Wright, the father, and Alexander Wright, the son, whose mechanical genius and ability appreciably affected the fortunes of the localities in which they settled. Both continued active in manufacturing until death ended all and they rested from their labors.

September,
1815

After the war was over, and after becoming settled in his new home and position, he sent for his family. In September, 1815, his wife and three sons sailed on the ship, "General Knox," arriving in Boston in due season and joining the husband and father in Dighton. One of the sons, Alexander Wright, became one of the pioneers in establishing textile mills at the falls of the Merrimack, now Lowell, Massachusetts, one of the great workshops of the world.

On the arrival of his family in Boston Mr. Wright took passage to Smithfield, Providence County, Rhode Island, where he was employed as a chemical bleacher in the local cotton mill, and where he remained two years.

1817

From there he went to Waltham, Middlesex County, Massachusetts, and established a bleachery of his own on the Charles River near the Waltham cotton factory.

- 1820 After he had been there about three years, the Boston Manufacturing Company bought the site upon which his works were located. In 1820 he established another bleachery at Medway, Norfolk County, Massachusetts, living in the Amos Fisher house upon Paul's Hill. He resided here with his family five years.
- 1825 He afterwards had a bleachery in Milk Row, Boston, Suffolk County. He then went to Fall River, Bristol County, Massachusetts, and with his brother Daniel and two others did the first calico printing in that city.
- January 26,
1836 He retired to a farm in Tewksbury, Middlesex County, Massachusetts, near Lowell, and died January 26, 1836.

Alexander Wright's Timeline and Imprint on America

- 1800 In a published pamphlet by the “Old Residents Historical Association” of Lowell, Mass.,
“In 1800 a Frenchman named Jacquard invented a machine attached to looms at first for weaving silks and muslins and was found of great value in the fabrication of figured goods. Soon after a Mr. Morton, a Scotchman, applied it to a carpet loom and found it a great success. In the course of a few years small mills were started for the manufacture of carpets in the United States.”
- May 3, 1800 Alexander Wright, son of Duncan and Janet (Wilson) Wright, was born at [Arklestone | Arkelstine], near Paisley, Scotland, May 3, 1800, and christened May 4, 1800, in Abbey Parish, Paisley, Renfrewshire, Scotland.
- July 16, 1807 Sabra Wiswall Claflin (Alexander's future wife)...was born in Holliston, Massachusetts, July 16, 1807, daughter of William and Anna (Underwood) Claflin.
- 1815 Alexander Wright left his native land in 1815 and became one of the pioneers in establishing textile mills at the falls of the Merrimack, now Lowell, Massachusetts, one of the great workshops of the world. Alexander Wright was the grandson of Peter and Agnes (Ferguson) Wright, and son of Duncan and Janet (Wilson) Wright.
- 1820 He worked with his father in Waltham and in Medway at bleaching until 1820, when he began an independent career. Alexander had learned the business of manufacturing textiles, and for six years, 1820-26, he engaged in manufacturing coach lace at Medway, Norfolk County, Massachusetts, until he began with Burdett the manufacture of carpets in West Medway, on Winthrop Street near the Cutler place, on Chicken Brook.
- 1825 In 1825 Alexander...became interested in the subject of carpet weaving with the intention of establishing a carpet mill in New England. Thus he journeyed to Philadelphia to visit a carpet factory recently started in that city of “Brotherly Love.” He was refused the privilege of witnessing the operation of carpet weaving as carried on in the mill, and disappointed and somewhat chagrined he returned to Medway and soon after sailed for Scotland with the intention of gaining the knowledge he needed in the home of his birth.
- 1826 He purchased three carpet looms in Scotland, and accompanied by his relatives, Claude and William Wilson, skilled operatives of the carpet loom, he sailed for America in the ship “The Rival.”

They met with a series of storms and were virtually shipwrecked off the coast of Scituate, Plymouth County, Massachusetts, though the badly damaged vessel succeeded in reaching port. The preceding account of the mishap is constructed from various sources, including the following:

Mr. Baron and family were shipwrecked on the vessel in which they came to America, off Scituate, Massachusetts. In the same ship was Alexander Wright of Lowell, who had been to England to get men and machinery to start his carpet mill.

-and-

The ship in which they came met with a series of storms and reached port badly damaged.

Soon the three looms were set up in Medway, and successfully operated as a mechanical venture, but as a business venture were not considered profitable. He disposed of his little plant to a Mr. Burdett, who in turn sold to Frederick Cabot and Patrick T. Jackson. This was the first carpet factory in Massachusetts and the second in America, the first being in Philadelphia.

February
22, 1828

Frederick Cabot and Patrick T. Jackson secured a charter for the Lowell Manufacturing Company from the Massachusetts Legislature, and on February 22, 1828, at the home of Mr. Jackson on Winter street, Boston, the organization of the company was perfected and arrangements for erecting mill buildings at Lowell were soon made. Mr. Wright remained in charge of the works at Medway until the Lowell plant was ready to begin operations, and then moved to Lowell, being superintendent of the Lowell Manufacturing Company. Under his superintendency the first carpet was manufactured in Lowell...

March,
1828

In March the company began to build in Lowell. Mr. Wright remained in charge of the plant at Medway, until the buildings at Lowell were completed when he removed to Lowell and became superintendent of the Lowell Manufacturing Company. Under his direction the first carpet was woven in Lowell. His mechanical skill and business foresight had much to do with the upbuilding and growth of the corporation with which he was identified.



Aly. Wright

October 13, 1828 On removing from Medway to Lowell, he married Sabra Wiswall Claflin October 13, 1828, daughter of William and Anna (Underwood) Claflin of Holliston, Middlesex County, Massachusetts. Mr. and Mrs. Wright were the parents of six daughters and three sons as follows.

1. Sabra, born March 7, 1830, who resided with sisters in the old homestead on Pawtucket Street, Lowell.
2. Catherine Janet, born October 28, 1831, became the wife of James R. Darracott April 22, 1851, and later resided with sisters in the old homestead on Pawtucket Street, Lowell, where she died in 1906.
3. Lois Ripley, born December 4, 1833, became the wife of the Rev. Frederick Frothingham September 4, 1872. He was a Unitarian minister from Ile De Montreal, Quebec, whom she survived, a resident of West Roxbury, Massachusetts.
4. Emeline, born October 13, 1836, died November 29, 1837
5. Mary Montgomery, born June 19, 1838, became the wife of David Henry Bradt. David was born in Lowell, Massachusetts, February 18, 1841, and was a son of David and Sarah F. (Merrill) Bradt. He received his education in that place and learned the trade of baker. David and Mary had no children. Later, Mary resided with sisters in the old homestead on Pawtucket Street, Lowell.

6. Helen Waugh, born August 20, 1840, resided with sisters in the old homestead on Pawtucket Street, Lowell.

7. Duncan, born February 16, 1843, died March 7, 1843.

8. Alexander, Jr., born July 22, 1846, an orange grower of Southern California; married Katherine Margaret Bremerman July 3, 1889; their children were: Alexander G., Donald, and Henry B.

9. William Spenser, born February 12, 1850, who became an orange grower of Southern California, and died there August 22, 1880; he married Anna L. Bremerman January 6, 1870; their children were: Lois F., deceased, and Anna B., who married George F. Granshaw and resided in Glencoe, Illinois.

From 1880 Federal census of Lowell, Middlesex, Massachusetts:

Name	Relation	Marital Status	Gender	Race	Age	Birthplace	Occupation	Father's Birthplace	Mother's Birthplace
Sabra WRIGHT	Self	W	Female	W	74	MA	Keeping House	MA	MA
Sabra WRIGHT	Dau	S	Female	W	50	MA	At Home	MA	MA
Catherine J. DARRICOTT	Dau	W	Female	W	48	MA	Teacher Of Dancing	MA	MA
Helen W. WRIGHT	Dau	S	Female	W	40	MA	Teacher Of Dancing	MA	MA
Rosa FARLEY	Other	S	Female	W	28	IRE	Servant	IRE	IRE

From 1880 Federal census of Milton, Norfolk, Massachusetts:

Name	Relation	Marital Status	Gender	Race	Age	Birthplace	Occupation	Father's Birthplace	Mother's Birthplace
Fredrick FROTHINGHAM	Self	M	Male	W	56	CAN	Unitarian Minister	ME	MA
Louis R. FROTHINGHAM	Wife	M	Female	W	52	MA	Keeps House	SCOT	MA
Maggie PEYDEN	Other	S	Female	W	23	IRE	Servant	IRE	IRE

From 1880 Federal census of Lowell, Middlesex, Massachusetts:

Name	Relation	Marital Status	Gender	Race	Age	Birthplace	Occupation	Father's Birthplace	Mother's Birthplace
Henry D. BRADT	Self	M	Male	W	38	MA	Baker	---	---
Mary BRADT	Wife	M	Female	W	36	MA	Keeps House	---	---
Sarah CAMERON	Other	S	Female	W	30	NOVA SCOTIA	Servant	SCOT	SCOT

From 1880 Federal census of Anaheim, Los Angeles, California:

NOTE: Anaheim is now part of Orange County, California.

Name	Relation	Marital Status	Gender	Race	Age	Birthplace	Occupation	Father's Birthplace	Mother's Birthplace
Alexander WRIGHT	Self	S	Male	W	34	MA	Stock Raiser	MA	SCO

From 1880 Federal census of Anaheim, Los Angeles, California:

Name	Relation	Marital Status	Gender	Race	Age	Birthplace	Occupation	Father's Birthplace	Mother's Birthplace
William S. WRIGHT	Self	M	Male	W	30	MA	Stock Raiser	SCO	MA
Anna L. WRIGHT	Wife	M	Female	W	25	CA	Keeping House	BREMEN	OLDENBERG
Lois M. WRIGHT	Dau	S	Female	W	2	CA		MA	CA
Anna WRIGHT	Dau	S	Female	W	5M	CA		MA	CA

1836-38

[Alexander Wright](#) took an interest in politics as a Whig. In the adoption of Lowell's city charter he was elected a member of the first board of aldermen, representing his district in the general court in 1836, and represented Lowell in the Massachusetts Legislature in 1838. Though often urged, he positively declined to accept the office of mayor of the city. He was a warm friend of the cause of education, and gave hearty support to all movements for improving education or industrial conditions. In religion he supported the Unitarian faith, his daughters in Lowell all being members of that church.

1839

Through a suggestion made by Mr. Wright in 1839 the inventor, [E. B. Bigelow](#), perfected a power loom for carpet manufacture. It was introduced by the Lowell Manufacturing Company in 1843 and revolutionized the methods of making carpets.

June 7, 1852

The Hon. Alexander Wright died in Lowell on June 7, 1852, suddenly, and was interred at Mount Auburn.

October 10, 1881

[Sabra Wiswall \(Claflin\) Wright](#)...died at Lowell, October 10, 1881.

Text color code explanation:

This material has been interjected from other sources; primarily the Mormon genealogical website except as otherwise stated, or simply for purposes of clarity.

[History of Lowell and Its People](#)

By Frederick William Coburn

Published 1920 in New York City by Lewis Historical Pub. Co. (pp. 131-3)

[The History of Medway, Mass., 1713-1885](#)

By Ephriam Orcutt Jameson, George James La Croix

Published 1886 by J. A. & R. A. Reid, printers, Providence, R.I. (pp. 440-1)

Historic Homes and Places and Genealogical and Personal Memoirs Relating to the Families of Middlesex County, Massachusetts

By William Richard Cutter

Published 1908 in New York by Lewis historical publishing company (pp 294-5 & 1603-4 & 1738)

The Book of Boston: Fifty Years' Recollections of the New England Metropolis

By Edwin Monroe Bacon

Published 1916 by Book of Boston Co., Boston (Mass.) (p. 324)

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