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I am seeking all genealogical and biographical details for the family documented below including their ancestors, children, and grandchildren and the spouses thereof, including the full names of those spouses' parents. All additions and corrections within this scope, however speculative, will be greatly appreciated.

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### Joshua Porter of Ridgefield, Connecticut

Over the years, I have acquired several different accounts of Joshua Porter's life. It would appear that some were derived from each other or that all of them were ultimately derived from the same source. Eva Alice<sup>9</sup> Thomas (*Abner*<sup>8</sup>, *Hiram*<sup>7</sup>, *Elias*<sup>6</sup>, *Recompense*<sup>5-4</sup>, *John*<sup>3</sup>, *Daniel*<sup>2</sup>, *John*<sup>1</sup>) was probably the first person to research and document this Porter family. In addition to Eva Thomas, I would like to thank Barbara (Porter) Ogg, William W. Porter, and others for their contributions to the following. Unfortunately, Joshua remains one of my few male ancestors whose line of descent from an immigrant ancestor remains unknown.

1. \_\_ PORTER.

Children, birth order unknown:

2.
  - ii. JOSHUA, m. "BETTY" \_\_.
  - iii. JOHN, reportedly the brother of Joshua.

2. JOSHUA PORTER was born probably about 1730; killed by the British at Daniel Starr's residence, Danbury, Fairfield County, Connecticut on Saturday, 26 April 1776; probably married before 1759 to "BETTY" \_\_, born about 1732 or 1733; died 23 February 1818, buried Upper Cemetery, Danbury, Connecticut: "Betty Porter, widow of Joshua, died February 23, 1818, age 85 years" (*tombstone*).

... The usual traditions, handed down from father to son, about the origin of the family are somewhat conflicting. One states that the family is English, coming to this country in the 17th century, and that Joshua Porter was killed in an Indian uprising and his body burned by savages. Another has the family of Scotch descent, perhaps from the vicinity of Glasgow, and reports the death of Joshua at the hands of the Tories or British during the Revolution... (*Joshua Porter, Connecticut Pioneer*, hereinafter *Pioneer*, Eva A. Thomas Collection, DeWitt Historical Society, Ithaca, New York)

It seems probable that Joshua's immigrant Porter ancestor was English origin and immigrated during the seventeenth century. As will be shown below, Joshua was in fact killed by the British during the American Revolution. However, we should not completely discard the other information contained in these legends. In researching other lines, I have often found that such legends are based on some kernel of truth which has become blurred over time. For example, perhaps Joshua's father or an earlier ancestor was killed by Indians. Perhaps Joshua's maternal grandfather was a Scotsman. These legends can provide clues to further research.

Joshua Porter... was born not later than 1740 and married not later than 1759. The first record of his presence in America is May 18, 1772 when he bought for the sum of fifteen pounds a parcel of land 13½ acres in size "east of the Round Mountain" near Ridgefield, a village about ten miles from Danbury, Connecticut. A year and half later, Dec. 20 1773, he bought for six pounds "six acres and one rood of land" lying west of his first purchase. From this humble farm he endeavored to make a living for his family during the troublous years preceding the revolution. Recent discovery of the gravestone of Betty (maiden name unknown), his widow, in the upper cemetery at Danbury, indicates that she was born 1732 or 1733.

In April 1775, resentment against the oppression of England crystallized in the battles of Lexington and Concord. When the news reached Danbury there was great excitement. A company of soldiers was raised and among the ninety-eight names on the company roster we find Joshua Porter, - the sixth company of the fifth regiment, commanded by Col. Waterbury. By request of the New York provincial regiment and the Continental Congress they marched to New York in June 1775 and encamped at Harlem. In September, under orders from Congress, the Company marched to the northern department and took part in operations along Lakes George and Champlain, assisting in the reduction of St. Johns in October.

After his service as a soldier, Joshua returned home. Nationally the times were momentous. In July came the Declaration of Independence and the die was cast for complete separation from the mother country. Slowly the war progressed. There were no major engagements in Connecticut, but depots were established for the storage of arms, ammunition and supplies, one being located at Danbury. It became of increasing importance for the British to discover and destroy the sources of supplies for the Continental Army. General Wm. Tryon, Governor of the colony of New York, was given the task of destroying the depot of supplies at Danbury. Tryon approached Danbury from the southeast and reached his objective on Saturday, April 26, 1777. No one knew what direction his march would take from that point on, and it was important for the farmers in his path to find out. One of them was Joshua Porter. Perhaps mindful of his former army service and needing supplies (it is said that he came to town for a jug of molasses), he set out to gain first hand information and was in Danbury when the enemy came. In town he met Captain Eleazar Starr and they took refuge in the house of Captain Starr's cousin, Major Daniel Starr (one of the most valuable dwellings in Danbury) to observe the action of the enemy. Joshua and Captain Starr were

standing in the doorway, the fell under enemy fire, a torch was applied to the house and their bodies consumed in the flames.

How Joshua's family managed we do not know, [nor what deprivations] they suffered as the war dragged on, sometimes seemingly hopeless as to [the] outcome. But carry on they did, and finally the war was over. Peace came and recognition of the United States of America. Civil authority was restored and it now became advisable for the widow to proceed with the legal formality of probating her husband's estate. This she did on November 11, 1784, being appointed administratrix. The total value of the estate was twenty-one pound, two shillings and one penny. Claims against the estate were filed by six persons, totaling fourteen pounds, four shillings and two pence. The court decreed the personal "movables" to the widow and her dower third of the real estate, upon which it became evident that the remainder might not be sufficient for the payment of the claims. Thereupon the court ordered the two-thirds interest in the real estate sold and Nathan Stevens was the purchaser for the sum of thirty shillings, which being less than the costs of the sale, extinguished the claims of the creditors. As to the justice of the claims, we do not know; at any rate these liabilities were eliminated, and five days later Betty bought back the farm from Stevens, which she continued to own until 1815 when she deeded it to her daughter, Betty Gregory, for the sum of \$280.00. Her gravestone inscription "Betty Porter, widow of Joshua, died February 23, 1818, aged 85 years." On March 21, 1818, administration of her estate was granted to her son-in-law, Nathaniel Gregory. Her estate inventories \$45.17½. (*Family Records conveyed in correspondence with Douglas R. Tripp, hereinafter Tripp FRs*).

Additional details are provided from another account of Joshua's life:

[Joshua] enlisted May 9, 1775 as [a] Private in 6th Company, 5th Regiment Connecticut troops under Captain Noble Benedict... Discharged Dec. 13, 1775 and returned to his home farm at Ridgefield. When the British under Gen. Tyron executed the "Danbury Raid" in late April, 1777, Joshua Porter went to Danbury to get first hand information. He became involved in action between snipers and the British troops and took refuge with three other persons, one a negro, in Major Daniel Starr's house; all four were killed and the house burned in the afternoon of April 26, 1777. (*Synopsis of Genealogy of Joshua Porter (1730?-1777) of Ridgefield, Connecticut*)

When Joshua enlisted, a William Porter, also enlisted at the same time. At least one researcher thought William may have been an older son of Joshua's. The black man killed with Joshua Porter was named Adams; he was a slave who belonged to Samuel Smith of Redding (*Pioneer*). One account, *Joshua Porter, Connecticut Pioneer*, includes a story of what happened following the killing:

Back in the farm home near Ridgefield, in what was called the Westville district, was Joshua's wife, Betty, waiting with her family of children for her

husband's return. There was the sixteen year old daughter, Betty, eleven year old John, James, eight, Rebeckah, five, Mary, three, and the baby, Czar, not quite a year old. One can picture the mother's anxiety mounting with the passing of the afternoon when her husband failed to come home and word filtered in of the British advance and perhaps the smoke and flames of burning Danbury were visible. It is related that brother of Joshua Porter, John, besought by his sister-in-law, went to the village to see what the British were doing and came upon three members of a picket stationed on Park Avenue. They commanded him to halt. "What for?" he inquired, still continuing toward them. "You are our prisoner" said they. "Guess not" he laconically replied, moving steadily upon them. "We'll stick you through and through if you don't stop" one of them threatened, advancing close to him. John Porter was a man of powerful build, strong and quick. They were close upon him and there as a gulch in back of them. In a flash he grasped the foremost trooper and hurled him against the other two, and the three went into the gulch in a demoralized heap. One might wish that the story would end with John Porter escaping from the troopers; unfortunately this was not the result, for the rest of the squad, seeing the disaster, surrounded John and subdued him, and he was one of the seven prisoners who were taken by the British from Danbury. All that is impetuous action got for him was confinement in the infamous "Sugar House" prison on New York City, but he was eventually released and returned home. The incident gave the name "Squabble Hill" to this particularly locality in Danbury for a great many years.

According to at least one researcher, Betty's maiden name was Elwell. However, I have not found any primary source(s) to substantiate the following claim:

"Porter, Joshua, Pvt., CT, b c. 1763 [*sic*, 1733?], prob CT d 4-26-1777, Danbury, CT, m c. 1759, Elizabeth Elwell (1763---2-23-1818). Desc. Reineman, Patricia Arnold." ("Historical and Genealogical Record of the Michigan Daughters of the American Revolution, 1976-1988. Volume VII. [1990], p. 212)

On page 288 of the same source, information about the DAR member is found: "Reineman, Patricia Arnold (Martin E.) No. 714038 a 1988 L.B.W." indicating that 714038 is her DAR number and she was admitted in 1988 to the Lucy Wolcott Barnum Chapter in Adrian, Michigan.

Children, probably all born in Ridgefield, Fairfield, Connecticut:

3.
  - i. BETTY, b. 1 Feb 1760; m. NATHANIEL GREGORY.
  - ii. JOHN, b. 23 April 1766; m. (1) DINAH THOMAS.
  - iii. JAMES, b. 2 Dec 1769; d. probably before 30 Oct 1796; m. OLIVE STARR, she was probably identical with the Olive Starr b. 11 July 1769; d. 2 Dec 1833, m. (1) \_\_\_ Porter, m. (2) 30 Oct 1796 Caleb Rockwell, the Rockwells moved from Ridgefield, CT to Western New York, dau. of Samuel and

- Ann (\_\_\_) Starr of Ridgefield, CT (B.P. Starr, *History of the Starr Family*, [1879], electronic mail correspondence with Connie (Starr) Bishop).
- iv. REBECKAH, b. 25 March 1772.
  - v. MARY, b. 14 June 1774; m. CALEB ABBOTT.
  - vi. CZAR, b. 17 May 1776; also named as *Ezar* or *Ezra*.

3. JOHN PORTER (*Joshua*, ...) born in Connecticut on 23 April 1766; died at an inn in Trumansburg, Tompkins County, New York on 4 July 1837; married first about 1785 DINAH<sup>7</sup> THOMAS (*Recompense*<sup>6-5</sup>, *John*<sup>4</sup>, *Daniel*<sup>3</sup>, *John*<sup>2</sup>, *William*<sup>1</sup>), born Ridgefield, Fairfield County, Connecticut on 12 March 1764 (*Birth Records of Ridgefield, Connecticut*) or 12 May 1765 (*James Porter's Bible*), died 30 July 1817, daughter of *Recompense*<sup>6</sup> Jr. and Sarah (Larrance/Lawrence) Thomas; married second before 19 November 1818 (*Land Deed*) JEIVLALA \_\_\_; married third \_\_\_ SEELEY; married fourth \_\_\_ WAKEMAN; and married fifth JANE (FORRESTER) THOMAS, daughter of Arthur and Jemima (Keeler) Forrester, married first \_\_\_ \_\_\_, married second Elias<sup>7</sup> Thomas (*Recompense*<sup>6-5</sup>, *John*<sup>4</sup>, *Daniel*<sup>3</sup>, *John*<sup>2</sup>, *William*<sup>1</sup>).

[John and Dinah] lived near Danbury, Connecticut until after their twelfth and last child was born in 1807, when John caught the spirit of westward migration which was opening up the rich lands of western New York and the Ohio regions. Traveling westward by the slow means of locomotion of the early days of the nineteenth century, the family finally took up their permanent residence in the beautiful Finger Lake country on a farm in Ulysses Township, [now Tompkins, then] Seneca County, N.Y. John was a farmer all his life although family tradition says that he served for a short time in the War of 1812. He died July 4, 1837 in Ulysses, N.Y. and his will was probated there. It is said that he died while at dinner at an inn at Trumansburg... (*Tripp FRs*).

John Porter, farmer, was listed on "A General Return of Persons Names Qualified to serve as Jurors in the Town of Ulysses and County of Seneca." (*Ulysses Town Book 1795-1856*); apparently he was a neighbor to Daniel Richey, another one of my direct ancestors.

According to another Porter descendant, William W. Porter of Minneapolis, Minnesota, John was a Baptist Deacon. Numerous records indicate that some of his children were also devout Baptists:

Lewis Porter was a staunch member of the Baptist Church. He was appointed clerk of the Seneca Baptist Association in 1811 and served with slight interruption until 1846. Deacon Porter was very punctual in attending the meetings of the church and painstaking in his report of the proceedings. From a contemporary he was reported to have been "very choice" of the church book, usually carrying it wrapped in large silk handkerchief. (*Pioneer*)

Children, all born in or near Danbury, Fairfield County, Connecticut:

- i. LEWIS, b. 24 May 1786; d. Covert, Seneca Co., NY 9 Dec 1862; m. (1) about 1808 SAMANTHA KING, b. 15 Aug 1791, d. 21 March 1817, dau. of Asaph

King of Covert, Seneca Co., NY; m. (2) THIRZA COLE, b. 23 Sep 1797, dau. of John and Mary (Washburn) Cole.

Children, by Samantha King, surname *Porter*: 1. *Cynthia*, b. 30 April 1809 Daniel Hall. 2. *Angeline*, b. 6 Oct 1810, m. Ezra Cole. 3. *Asaph K.*, b. 26 March 1812; m. Rachel Glazier. 4. *Louisa*, b. 30 Sep 1813; m. Hartwell Russell. 5. *Emma P.*, b. 7 July 1815; m. Edwin W. Cole.

Children, by Thirza Cole, surname *Porter*: 6. *Samantha K.*, b. 13 Aug 1818; m. Roswell c. Barto. 7. *Oliver C.*, b. 24 May 1820; d. 22 Aug 1821. 8. *John C.*, b. 24 June 1822; m. Louisa King. 9. *Mary C.*, b. 19 Jan 1824 Hartwell Russell. 10. *Obed W.*, b. 2 Dec 1825; m. Ursula A. Russell. 11. *Lewis Jr.*, b. 2 May 1829; m. Esther Burr. 12. *Phebe Harriett*, b. 22 June 1832; m. Harvey F. King.

- ii. JOSHUA, b. 4 May 1788.
- iii. THOMAS, b. 22 Sep 1789; m. POLLY WARING.
- iv. JOHN, b. 2 Sep 1791.
- v. SAMUEL, b. 9 Aug 1795; m. ZILPHA BAIRD.
- vi. JOEL, b. 30 March 1799; d. Fox Lake, WI; m. MARY ANN [BRADLEY]; left Howard, Steuben Co., NY for Fox Lake in the late 1840s.
- vii. RHODA, b. 17 Aug 1797; m. ROBERT ALLISON.
- viii. JAMES, b. 30 March 1799; m. MARGARET MURPHY, m. (2) Miner Porter (*John, Joshua*), her brother-in-law.
- ix. MARY, b. 10 Jan 1801; m. JOSEPH S. FINTON.
- x. ALANSON, b. 3 Jan 1803.
- \* xi. SARAH ANN, b. 15 April 1805; d. St. Joseph, MI 17 July 1868; m. (1) CALVIN CODDINGTON (*John, ...*) ; b. Ulysses, Tompkins Co., NY 1800, k. Howard, Steuben Co., NY by a falling tree in Dec 1836, son of John and Mary Ann (Robinson) Coddington; my direct ancestors; see *Stockdale Coddington of New Hampshire* for more information; m. (2) CYRUS ROBINSON.
- xii. MINER, b. 30 May 1807; m. (1) NANCY ACKLEY; m. (2) LAVINA G. \_\_; m. (3) MARGARET (MURPHY) PORTER, his widowed sister-in-law; m. (4) SUSAN S. HARVEY RAYMOND.

## **Index**

This is a complete every-name index for the entire document; each woman is indexed under her maiden name and her married name(s). A question mark, (?), indicates an unknown maiden name.