

A Sketch of the Life of Elizabeth Welling
Wife of Gen. John Hathorn
By Caroline Welling Edsall for Hathorn Celebration

[1923]

Read by W. Randolph Welling, Nephew

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From a copy provided by Anne Marie Demetroules

In presenting this paper on Elizabeth Welling Hathorn, the wife of Gen. John Hathorn, I am reminded that their lives were but typical of thousands of lives of other loyal and brave settlers of our Colonial days, whose bones have long since mingled with the dust of our land, and whose mounds and fieldstone markers adorn our Valley from the upper Hudson River and Long Island to the southern hills of our neighboring state of New Jersey.

Nor can we perform a more agreeable and grateful act than by meeting here today to honor the memory of those who built this home in those trying days of a period of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when in common with other settlers, they joined hands in founding the richest domain in the temperate zone, the land where nature built the throne of western civilization.

The subject of my sketch, Elizabeth Welling, was born June 14th 1750, on the adjoining Welling homestead just north of this home which her father purchased from Daniel Burt in 1747-48. She was married Thursday, January 9th 1772 to Gen. (the John) Hathorn and came to live in this home upon its completion in 1773. At her death she was buried in the family plot near here, and afterward removed to the Warwick Cemetery to the Belden Burt plot where her husband is also buried. The brown fieldstone marker almost in plain view of where we are now assembled reads "Elizabeth Hathorn, wife of John Hathorn, died Aug. 29th 1810, aged 60 years, 2 mo. and 15 days. Also an added epitaph, "The Righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance."

The Wellings were of Welsh descent, and among the first settlers of Long Island, owning lands at Jamaica as early as 1704. A copy of an old will recorded in the N.Y. Historical Society Publ. Vol. 7-1766-1771 serves to establish briefly the genealogy or line of ancestry called for at this time. It reads:

"In the name of God Amen". I Thomas Welling of Jamaica in Queen's County, Yeoman, being much indisposed and in declining condition of body: All debts to be paid by my Executor, I leave all my personal estate, negroes and chattels, to my brother William Welling, on condition that he pay to his five daughters Jane, Martha, wife of Joseph Furman, Elizabeth, Bridget and Sara, each 10 lbs.

I leave to my three nephews, Nicholas Jones, son of my sister Sara, widow lately deceased, and Thomas Welling Jr. and Wm. Welling Jr. two sons of my brother Wm. Welling, all my 300 acres of land in the Patent of the nine partners in Dutchess Co, with all rights and privileges. I leave to my brother Wm.

Welling all my right, title and interest in the messuage¹ dwelling house and lands and meadows of my father, Thomas Welling deceased, of which he died seized (?) in Jamaica and he is to pay his two sons Thomas and Wm. Something considerable in my name as a token of my love and good will, but how much is left to his discretion, they being his children, " and I make him Executor, Dated July 30th 1747. Proved Feb. 2, 1770."

The maker of the above named Will in disposing of his entire estate partly inherited from his father Thomas—makes it clear to us that he had no children of his own, as he leaves everything to his nephews and nieces, children of his brother William, one of which sons (Thomas Jr.) is Thomas the 3rd, or first in Warwick, who located here as previously stated in 1747. He had the following children: Thomas second, Rich and John, and three daughters, who became respectively, Mrs. Gen/ John Hathorn, Mrs. John Wheeler, and Mrs. Bronson. The Welling Bible published in 1812, which I (Carrie Welling Edsall) have in my possession, contains statistics of succeeding generations of Thomas Welling's to Thomas 6th the present occupant of the old homestead.

The Hathorn children were six sons & three daughters. Thomas, who married a Rickey and lived in Paterson NJ. Andrew, a lawyer, unmarried buried on the old homestead farm, without a headstone. George married Sally Bell, born in Connecticut, a sister of James Bell. Townsend, unmarried buried on old homestead—no headstone. Morris probably died in youth. John Jr. married Hannah (called Dorche) Post, daughter of Col. James Post, who lived at Horseheads NY. One of his sons lived for a time in Brooklyn NY and his children, it is said, reside in New York City. Sarah, born Dec. 9th 1773, died Sept. 23 1839, married Belden Burt, buried in the Burt burying ground upon the old farm. The house of Benjamin Burt now standing (James Fuller place) was during the Revolution surrounded with a stockade and a guard kept there for a considerable time. The children of Belden & Sara Hathorn Burt were Thomas H., Elizabeth married a Dolson, John, Anna, Benjamin, Mary, Catherine, Samuel, Coleman, Lucy, Belden Jr. and Cordelia, who married Edward Davis some of whose descendants (children and grandchildren of James H. and Nancy Davis Nanny) are still living. Polly married John Simpson. They lived in Western New York until the breaking out of the Indian hostilities, when they fled for their lives and abandoned all their property. They lived at Hamburg for a time and among their children were John Hathorn, Morris and Thomas their youngest child who died several years ago and is buried at the North Church (Hamburg). Some of the grandchildren are living in the vicinity of Hamburg, at Deckertown (Sussex) and Port Jervis. Catherine married a Post; Hannah was the wife of Major John Wheeler of Warwick, NY.

The old stone house where we are today was erected in 1773 (now owned & occupied by Wilfred Raynor, son of Fred Raynor) by Gen. then Colonel Hathorn. The south gable has an insert of brick with these initials standing for John and Elizabeth Hathorn viz H J + E 1773. Tradition says that Col. Hathorn and his worthy wife Elizabeth at one time entertained Gen. Washington and his wife while he was on his way from his Morristown headquarters. At one time when he and his army were on the march to New Jersey, it passed through Warwick NY and it is said that they encamped in the meadow on the Hathorn farm. The Colonel and his wife were hospitable to a fault, and entertained the encamped soldiers most bountifully. The generally accepted opinion regarding the wives of our early settlers would seem to be

¹ Legal term referring to a house and its associated outbuildings.

that of brave, courageous, and obedient women who under the guidance of their husbands, they together possessed remarkable tact and foresight in handling the problems of their day and generation. "For it was their duty of all the learned... to espouse the cause by which we eat and drink." Like most of us they loved private life and left with regret, only to compel the enemies of the country to abandon their schemes of warfare and acknowledge the colonies as terrible in arms – as they had been meek in remonstrances. Their return to private life was doubtless courted with tears of gratitude and smiles of admiration for the riches their heroism had preserved.

"It is the virtues of such souls man owes his portion of the good that heaven bestows." All honor to the memory of Gen. & Elizabeth Welling Hathorn, who were it possible for them to appear in the flesh would extend to us a most royal welcome as they were wont to do in their time, and I can imagine their exclaiming "Behold the change time hat wrought. Here my dear it would have been possible to live the full, the free, the festal life, to taste the joys that this fertile Valley is capable of yielding. Truly the spirit of the age has changed. You my descendants have kept the trust. Thou has carried on well."

[to this address is appended a page of family names and dates, omitted here]