

A Case For Linking John Townsend Of Oyster Bay To Eber Townsend Using The Line {John-Daniel-Daniel-Elihu-Charles-Eber}

By

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Introduction: Proving the line from John Townsend, one of the 3 Oyster Bay, New York brothers, to Eber Townsend of Dutchess County, New York, Sussex County, New Jersey, and Steuben County, New York has eluded all researchers. The old wooden Dutchess County Courthouse was destroyed by fire in 1883 and again in 1888 whereby most of the old records were lost. The remaining records have never been indexed and seemingly are unavailable for research and observation. In 1776 the British sacked other vital records that may have been found in nearby Danbury, Connecticut.

It is a challenge to fit bits and pieces together and make good judgement about evidence. The Townsend Society of America, Reverend T. S. Slaght, Robert Pulfrey, and others have admirably accepted this challenge. Their work has allowed a plausible set of inferences that yield a high probability to the correctness to this line.

There are two schools of thought emanating from the work of these researchers. The most accepted line, espoused by the Townsend Society of America (and likely the reason for its acceptance; their reasoning is solid) depicts the line from John of Oyster Bay, forward, as:

John, Daniel, Daniel, Charles Sr., Eber

There may be a person missing in this line. This paper intends to describe the reasons for this assertion, propose an alternate lineage, and show the evidence in support of that lineage.

Proposal: There could be a missing person in the {John, Daniel, Daniel, Charles Sr., Eber} line. Consider that John was born about 1620¹. Also consider that Eber was born about 1760². Assume that each one of the generations waited the same amount of time to have our descendent. This is a possible but unlikely scenario; this is merely for pattern analysis. The birth dates would fall along the lines of

1620, 1655, 1690, 1725, 1760

Each generation was 35 years old, average, when they had our descendents. We could assume one generation birthed a descendent at a younger age but would have to increase that age for another descendent. The analysis makes a case in support of a missing generation in the line.

Adding another generation to the line would bring the generation average to age 28. An inter-generation average of 28 years is still high, but plausible, considering the large family sizes of that period.

Pulfrey and others have proposed that there is another descendent in the line, Elihu, and present evidence in support of it. I agreed, based on the above generational analysis, and set out on my own research. The proposed line

John, Daniel, Daniel, Elihu, Charles Sr., Eber

requires the stitching together of assumptions, reasoning, and inferences. By other researcher's admission, so must other possible lines connecting John to Eber. What follows is this author's research in support of this proposal.

The Appendix shows another analysis, performed by myself, that looks at possible birth dates based on the historical record. Its results support the findings above.

John-Daniel: Mentioned in a settlement letter written by John's widow, Elizabeth, and with the aid of John's brothers, Richard and Henry. This letter^[ELIZ1671], entered on July 10, 1671 protected John's children in case

¹ Some have considered John's birth as early as 1578. We think 1620 is conservative for the purpose of this discussion.

² Estimated by subtracting his age from his death date. Both were inscribed on his tombstone.

Elizabeth should remarry or die. Elizabeth called Daniel her youngest son in the settlement. Daniel was born circa 1663 and died July 7, 1702.

Daniel-Daniel: Daniel, above, and his sons Daniel and Robert are recorded in the Oyster Bay Town Record^{[OBTR418][OBTR4389]}. This second Daniel was the original owner of lot number 6 of an area of New York known as The Oblong. The Oblong, long in dispute with Connecticut, was settled in 1732.

Daniel-Elihu: In 1738 Daniel and his wife Mary sold one-half of Oblong lot number 6 to Joshua Townsend. In the bill of sale Daniel mentions his son, Elihu, as the owner of the other half of lot number 6^{[SALE1738][OBTR5486]}. Apparently there was a transaction that put one-half of lot number 6 into Elihu's hands. "Why did Daniel Townsend give half of his Lot 6 to his son Elihu and later, sell the other half to Joshua Townsend? Was it because he had no son Charles and that Charles Sr. was the son of Elihu?"^[PULF2000] From^[LUD1907] "The Townsends had come to Dutchess County many years before from Long Island, and Polly Townsend's great grandfather, Elihu Townsend³, settled on a farm in South East Precinct, close to the Westchester County Line. He died about 1804 at the age of 102 years, and was able to walk about the yard six weeks before his death."⁴

Elihu-Charles Sr.: On page 710 of Pelletreau's History of Putnam County^[PELL1886], we have the brief passage; "Charles Townsend is supposed to have been a brother of Uriah and son of Elihu." It should be emphasized that this author has never found any other indication that Charles Sr. is a son of Elihu. Further, this author has never seen any evidence whatsoever that Charles Sr. was a son of Daniel, as proposed in the alternative line.

Charles Sr-Eber: Again on Pelletreau's page 710 Charles is mentioned as having sons James, Elijah, and Eber. On Hasbrouck's^[HASB1909] page 169 the names Charles, (and Charles Jr.), James, and Eber are found together in the May 28, 1778 commission of Colonel Ludington's Seventh Regiment of the Dutchess County Militia. There are many other instances of these children in the same family unit⁵ but, again, we rely on Pelletreau's credibility to place Charles Sr. as the father of Eber and the son of Elihu.

Conclusions: We have shown that there is a probability of another generation between John Townsend of Oyster Bay and Eber Townsend. This position is based on a thorough analysis of all sources available at this time and subject to revision if contradictory reliable sources are found in the future. The author is satisfied with the results yet uncomfortable that he could not yet prove the line (see concerns, below.) Efforts continue, seeking proof for this line.

Concerns: In the hopes that others will join in the effort to prove this line the author has the following concerns:

- The forename Charles seems unusual for this family. No prior Townsend generation in this line has that name. Perhaps the name came from Elihu's wife's side of the family. Charles Townshend was a prominent English politician at about the time of Charles Sr. The forename is noticeably present in the lines of the New England Townsends^[NEGHS] yet either referring to Lord Townshend himself, or those with the forename in the 1800s and later. Failing proof that Charles Sr. is the son of Elihu⁶ we must leave open the possibility that Charles may not have come from the Oyster Bay line.
- Elihu lived to the age of 102 yet there is virtually nothing on record about him. Apparently born on Long Island, we do not find any record of that birth. We do see his name as a witness to a transaction in 1726.^{OBTR542} He seems to have been associated with North Salem, New York in Westchester County at the time of his death yet we cannot seem to locate any records or other accounts of his death. Also, he was located in the same geographical area, Oblong lot number 6, for a very large part of his life. Should he not have been a more noticeable part of the community?
- Charles Sr. could have been born on Long Island. The Oblong wasn't settled until 1731 or so and Elihu would have certainly been of an age to have married and had children by then. We have found no record of these transactions in the Oyster Bay Town Records. This author is still researching the Baptismal Records.

³ Elihu had son Uriah who had son Samuel, who had daughter Polly.

⁴ Uriah, being a convicted Loyalist, forfeited his 75 acres of Oblong lot 6. It was sold to Joseph Crane in 1783. Crane allowed Elihu to live on this property for his "Natural Life."

⁵ Other siblings include Elijah and Absalom.

⁶ Or the son of Daniel

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Appendix: Alternative Analysis Using Ages And Birth Dates

Assume John was born no later than 1620.

His youngest son, Daniel(1) was born about 1663. That would put John at age 43, not unrealistic considering there were 8 other children born before Daniel(1).

Daniel (1) died 7-2-1702. His sons, Daniel(2) and Robert, then, must have been born before 1702. OBTR Volume 4, page 18 refers to a transaction on 28 September, 1714 Robert Townsend deeded to "my loving brother, Daniel Townsend of Oyster Bay..." Assuming Daniel would have to be of age 21, at least, this puts his birth date at before 1694.

From Colonel Henry Ludington, A Memoir. By Willis Fletcher Johnson, A.M., L.H.D., "Elihu Townsend, settled on a farm in South East Precinct, close to the Westchester County Line. He died about 1804 at the age of 102 years, and was able to walk about the yard six weeks before his death." There are other accounts of Elihu's longevity. This places Elihu's birth at 1702. In OBTR Volume 5, Page 42 we also see Elihu as a witness to Henry and Phebe Dickinson's land transaction. That date was 1726. Elihu would have to have been 21.

If Daniel(2) was really the father of Elihu, born 1702, we should assume that Daniel(2) was at least 18 years old at the time. That would put the Daniel (2) birth date at 1784.

Charles first shows up on the Dutchess County tax lists in 1747. Assuming he had to be 21 to have such a privilege his birth would have to have been before 1727.

As proposed, the birth dates for the line appear as follows:

John, By 1620
Daniel(1) Abt 1663, John's age 43
Daniel (2) Abt 1684, Daniel(1)'s 21
Elihu 1702, Daniel(2)'s age 18
Charles 1727, Elihu's age 25
Eber 1760, Charles' age, 33

None of the ages of the fathers above are unrealistic, except perhaps John's. If we pull Elihu's name out of the equation we find that Charles' may be unrealistically old when his son, Eber, was born.

References:

[ELIZ1671] Oyster Bay Town Record Volume 1:Page 63

[OBTR418] Oyster Bay Town Record Volume 4: Page 18

[OBTR4389] Oyster Bay Town Record Volume 4: Page 389

[SALE1738] 1, Daniel Townsend of the oblong in Dutchess County, Province of New York, Carpenter, do fully acquit and fully discharge the said Joshua Townsend, his heir and assigns etc etc. I ye said Daniel Townsend do fully freely and clearly and absolutely grant -bargain, sell etc etc to Joshua Townsend his heirs and assigns forever a tract of land in the Colony of NY aforesaid it being the moiety or equal half of lot #6 and is bounded easterly by the county line (Westchester), Northerly by lot #8 and westwardly by the middle line so called and southwardly by Elihu Townsend, my son's land being the other half of the same lot and containing 250 acres of land lying within the above mentioned bounds the house, fences, timber, trees, grass, water and whatever else is standing.

Furthermore, I, Mary Townsend, wife of the said Daniel Townsend do hereby quit claim unto Joshua Townsend his heirs and assigns forever my right of dowry or any other claim whatsoever. Signed 8 April, 1738 by Daniel and Mary Townsend in the presence of Robert Townsend and Elihu Townsend.

[OBTR5486] Oyster Bay Town Record Volume 5: Page 486

[PULF2000] Follow-up private correspondence referencing research in Pulfrey Ancestry by Robert Earl Pulfrey. 2000.

[LUD1907] Colonel Henry Ludington, A Memoir. By Willis Fletcher Johnson, A.M., L.H.D. with portraits, views, facsimiles, etc. Published by his grandchildren – Lavinia Elizabeth Ludington and Charles Henry Ludington, New York, 1907.

[PELL1886] History Of Putnam County, New York With Biographical Sketches Of Its Prominent Men by William S. Pelletreau. W. W. Preston & Co., Philadelphia. 1886.

[HASB1909] The History of Dutchess County New York by Frank Hasbrouck. 1909.

[NEGHS] The New England Genealogical and Historical Register. Volumes 1 to 140.

[OBTR542] Oyster Bay Town Record Volume 5 Page:42.