

to find and use old maps as much as possible. With them, I could time-travel right back into the scene with my ancestors.

It was decades after that, that I discovered that neither one of these little churches, over which I'd agonised for years, was theirs. The Norwegian pastor told me of the Registry of Decommissioned Churches, and I found that the actual 'Parish', or 'Christ Church' in which they were married had been renamed 'Christ Church Rotherhithe', and had been thoroughly demolished before 1980, when Janet and I first arrived.

The decommissioning report said:

'Rotherhithe, Christ Church, built 1848, ... was known as Bermondsey, Christ Church in later years until it was demolished in 1979.' An imposing edifice, it provides us a whole new image for their marriage! Thirty years and three churches to find my grandparents' marriage.

More to come

During my research, I was able to trace the Mitchell family back to early 17th century Whitchurch in Oxfordshire – long before my grandfather from Bicester, but that follows in a different article.

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Connecting the Wiggins Brothers in America

by Gary Wiggins

In 1986 I attended a conference in Cranfield, England, then made my way to Oxford in search of the original WIGGINS in my lineage who came to the United States. I promptly went to the Records Office to look for an early 19th century Thomas WIGGINS who was from Oxfordshire, the place of birth on the American Civil War service records of my Kentucky ancestor, Thomas Donaldson WIGGINS. I found there a promising family that lived in Blackthorn, a hamlet in the Ambrosden parish. The Wigginses seem to have come to this area in the second half of the 18th century, but I have never discovered where they lived before that time. The younger Wigginses appear to

have left the Blackthorn area by 1825.

A Kentucky relative, the first cousin of my grandfather Orban Vance WIGGINS, thought that there may have been as many as 11 children in the English Wiggins family, and the family I found while in Oxford had 10 children. She told me that there were three or four brothers who decided to come to America. Some think they were stowaways, so when the ship reached here, they jumped overboard to swim to shore, and one of them drowned. I have never been able to confirm this story, but it is plausible since I have found no record of a Thomas WIGGINS in the lists of early 19th century arriving ship passengers. Supporting the story is the

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discovery that Thomas's brother, Josiah T WIGGINS, also came to the US in the early 19th century, settling in Randolph, Cattaraugus County, New York. I was never sure that I had the right Wiggins family until I found Josiah. His obituary from 1888 (reproduced at the end) says that he came to the America in 1831 when he was about 23 years old. Assuming they came together, that would have made Thomas about 18 years old when they arrived.

Both Thomas and Josiah WIGGINS were shoemakers, as was their father in Oxfordshire. Thomas went through the Civil War without a scratch, but he was killed a few years later in a dispute that took place at Antioch Church near Livia, Kentucky. A local history article in *The Owensboro Messenger* from 14 February 1943 includes these paragraphs:

Two young men who resided in what is known as the old Mitt Tanner home, several miles beyond where the old Antioch church was located and which house is now on

the H. R. Johnson farm, killed the sexton at Antioch, and they themselves left for parts unknown. The story varies, one version being that the two men accompanied two girls to Antioch church, horseback. In those days women wore riding skirts, a long flowing black or blue calico skirt that was buttoned over the wearing apparel of the woman rider. When she dismounted the skirt was unbuttoned and removed, leaving her dress fresh and clean. The two girls, according to the story, had placed their riding skirts behind a door at Antioch church, and, after services, some dispute arose between the men and the church sexton, a Mr. Wiggins, over the skirts. A fight ensued, and the sexton was killed. The two men left the country and were not heard from again.

Many years later, a resident of that community is supposed to

N ^o 9	{	Thomas Wiggins	Minor of this Parish	&	Elizabeth Austin	Minor of the same	were
Married in this Church by Licence with consent of parents							
this	second	Day	of	June	in the Year	One Thousand	seven Hundred
and	ninety	five			By me	Edw. Turner	Curate.
This Marriage was solemnized between Us {							
In the Prefence of {							
Thomas Stanton							
Henry King							

Marriage of Thomas Wiggins and Elizabeth Austin, both minors in 1795. They were the parents of emigrants Thomas and Josiah

have met one of the men in Texas, where he was then a prominent and successful rancher. The other version of the story is that Mr. Wiggins was killed accidentally, by the two men, who had a feud with another family and mistook Mr. Wiggins for a member of that family. When they found out the next day they had killed the wrong man, they left for parts unknown, never again returning to Daviess county, and supposedly were never heard from.

Another version of the story was published in the book *Life of Mike Moore, The Jolly Irishman*. (Owensboro, KY: Stone Printing Co., 1908):

During this winter and while a big revival of religion was in progress at the Antioch Christian Church which was conducted by a Campbellite preacher named Franklin, from Cincinnati, old Mr. Wiggins was killed by Albert Tanner, in the church after the services was over. It seems that some of the young people had been disturbing public worship by talking and laughing during the service. Mr. Wiggins who was sexton, threatened to present the names of offenders to the grand jury. This threat only added fuel to the flame and caused the fire of indignation to burn more furious. On this night they cut up more than usual. However, after meeting broke, young Albert Tanner stepped behind the door to get his sweetheart's riding skirt and in

doing so partly shut the door which stopped the congregation from going out. Mr. Wiggins slammed the door back in his face, reproofing him for his conduct. Tanner drew a dirk knife and stabbed him three times. He fell dead on the floor of the church before the congregation knew of the awful tragedy enacted. Esq. Jas. A. Small was there at church that night, but before he could make the arrest of the Tanner boys, they escaped, during the confusion of the congregation. They left that night and went to Calhoun where Logan Fields their kinsman was engaged to pilot them through to Texas. In a few years their father Uncle "Mit" Tanner who was one of the best farmers and citizens of the county, sold out his farm goods and chattels and went to his boys. They are all dead now, and no doubt but this sad event, which caused the trouble and sorrows of two happy families, has long since been forgotten.

There are enough similarities in the two versions to lend much credence to the story that Thomas WIGGINS met an untimely death at the age of 57.

The WIGGINS men were generally quite tall, as seen in this picture of the Wiggins clan at a family reunion in the early 1900s. My father, Dorman Elmo WIGGINS, was 6' 4", and the man with the large mustache second from the left on the top row is his grandfather, John Thomas WIGGINS. Seated on the front row with the beard is Robert Bruce

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WIGGINS, Sr., the son of Thomas D WIGGINS.

The 1888 obituary of Josiah T WIGGINS reads as follows:

Our community was startled on Sunday evening by the death of Captain Wiggins. He had been seriously ill for a number of days, but had insisted upon being taken to the polls where he deposited a Republican vote on Tuesday and had not been so well for the next few days. Sunday he seemed to be rapidly mending and to all appearance was on the road to recovery when suddenly about dark he died almost without warning. He had some form of heart disease and suffered intensely from the frost. Josiah Wiggins was born in Blackthorn, England in 1805 [actually, 1808 – GW]. He early learned his trade as a shoemaker and enjoyed the rough and tumble of an English journeyman's life with the keenest relish. On one occasion he walked 150 miles to see the first steam locomotive start on its trip, where a man rode ahead on horseback to warn the people off the track. When a mere boy he enlisted in the English army, but served only a few months. He was married to Hannah Stanton at Blackthorn, who from that time until his death was his constant companion, and although now in her 80th year was his nurse and attendant to the last. [actually, her 85th year at the time of Josiah's death –GW]

Captain Wiggins came to the United States in 1831, making his home in Jersey City and New York for several years, in which last place he was for some time on the police force, or as it was then termed, a watchman. In 1838 he moved to Randolph, which has ever since been his home. He was at one time captain of a company in the states militia, his active service was confined to the anti-rent difficulties [landlord and tenant conflict—GW] which culminated at Dutch Hill.

Captain Wiggins, as he was always afterward known, was in every respect a model citizen, active in every good work, an enthusiastic Mason and Odd Fellow, as he had been in their day of the Sons of Temperance, and many other organizations. At his death he was post master of the town, a position he had filled admirably for nearly of quite thirty years.

He leaves a widow and three daughters, Mrs. Chas. F. Hedman of Jamestown, Mrs. Thos. Smith and Mrs. J. M. Prince of this place. He had but one son, Lieut. David T. Wiggins, who lost his life in the bloody charge at Spottsylvania Court House, May 13, 1864.

The funeral was held on Tuesday from the Episcopal church, of which the deceased had been a life-long member. The exercises were in charge of Randolph Lodge No. 359 F. and A. M., who were in full

attendance. The order of Odd Fellows and the fire department paid homage to the old Captain by attending in uniforms. At the church Rev. Palmer preached a short sermon warning all of the inevitable and exhorting them to prepare for eternity. Prof. Edwards followed with remarks on the life of the deceased, and spoke soothingly of his kindness to the poor, his genial, jolly manner in the street and his willingness to forward the interests of the country of his adoption. The men who bore the casket from the church were his companions for many years. They, too, had made their home in pleasant Randolph when there was nothing but the natural sacrifices of the country to attract their attention. At the grave the Masons took charge and

carried out the impressive service of their grand order.

Over three hundred people stood with bowed heads and glistening eyes as those gray headed men carefully lowered the remains of their old comrade into the grave. The sun seemed to sink, and the wind grew colder as the words "dust to dust and ashes to ashes" were pronounced and another landmark was effaced, another of history's noblemen had sought his long rest.

Since Thomas D Wiggins was stabbed to death in 1869, he was not mentioned in Josiah's obituary. Perhaps the brothers lost contact with each other after they reached America and never learned where they eventually settled.

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Wiggins Family Reunion in McLean County, Kentucky about 1905. From family collection