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MARK TWAIN and his Connection to the Clemens and Emersons of Haverhill
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In researching my family history I learned that Mark Twain was descended from the Clements in Haverhill. When I moved to Haverhill, I was hoping to find my Emerson ancestors, but instead found a new Clements line. I felt like an outsider in Haverhill, having lived in 10 of the 50 states, mostly in the South. But in light of this discovery, it seems I have deeper roots here than most. I am an engineer for Mason & Hamlin Piano Co. in Haverhill, and have an MA from Ball State University in Muncie, IN. My relationship to Mark Twain is as follows:

- Samuel B. Clemens (1770-1805) M. Parmelia Goggins (1775-1844)
2. John Marshall Clemens (1798-1847) M. Jane Lampton (1803-1890)
 3. Samuel Langhorne Clemens (1835-1910)
 2. Elizabeth Moore Clemens (1801-1887) m. John Nichols Pollard (1792-1875)
 3. Sarah Pleasant Pollard (1843-1881) m. Henry Clay Ballard (1840-c.1900)
 4. Ella Mortimer Ballard (1865-1926) m. Thomas Reade Corr (1863-1950)
 5. Helen Pleasant Corr (1905-1995) m. Franklin Demetrius Peters (1899-1930)
 6. Helen Elizabeth Peters (1924-) m. George Brandon Emerson (1918-)
 7. George Franklin (Frank) Emerson

MARK TWAIN OF HAVERHILL, MASSACHUSETTS

Speaking through one of his many literary characters, Mark Twain once wrote, "I did not know before that my great-grandfather was hanged, but it is of no consequence. He has probably ceased to bother about it by this time - and I have not commenced yet."¹ Just as we would expect of the great humorist, Sam Clemens did not take his ancestry particularly seriously. In later reference to his heritage, Sam said, "So much for the earlier days, and the New England branch of the Clemenses. The other brother settled in the South and is remotely responsible for me."² Clearly, Mr. Clemens intended to precede this statement with some information about his New England ancestry, but he did not. Although he had a distinct talent for finding the humor in everything, he was rarely far from the truth of the matter.

For the better part of a century, researchers of the Clemens' line have erroneously linked Sam Clemens to the Virginia Clements. Recent information has come to light which clearly indicates that he descended from the Clements of Haverhill and not the Virginia Clements. There is ample, accurate information about the Haverhill Clements. This is also true of the Virginia Clements and the descendants of Sam Clemens' grandfather. The weak link in each effort to establish the ancestry of Sam Clemens has been the identity of his great grandfather. Clearly, the grandfather of Mark Twain was Samuel B. Clemens; he died rather young, being crushed by a log in a cabin raising. To avoid confusion with his grandfather, who had the same first and last names, Mark Twain will be called by his pen name henceforth.

An early effort to identify the great grandfather of Mark Twain was published as a series of articles in 1922 by William H. Clemens, "The Genesis of Mark Twain."³ While Adam Clements is descended from a very distinctive line of Virginia Clements, he is not the great grandfather of Twain. The disparaging characterization of the venerable lineage of Clemens raises question to the credibility of the series. A large part of the series focuses on the maternal ancestors of Twain. Unfortunately, there is little more than assertions, unsupported by facts or documentation. The assumption of this article is that Clements in the south

central counties of Virginia must be descended from the Clements who originally settled in Jamestown early in the seventeenth century. What little supporting argument the "Genesis" series offers is focused on justifying the absence of Samuel B. Clemens from the will of Adam Clements. It is true that Samuel B. Clemens died before his supposed father, Adam, and his absence from the will can be thus explained. The more obvious and accurate conclusion is that Samuel is absent from Adam's will simply because he is not even remotely related.

In the 1930's, Thomas Reade Corr submitted information that was published in the Compendium of American Genealogy,⁴ which further disseminated the erroneous information. While the bulk of his contribution was accurate, the identity of the great grandfather of Mark Twain was not. The "Genesis" article was probably the primary source of his misinformation.

Shortly after the "Genesis" series was published, a rebuttal was written by Mrs. N. E. Clement, "Clement, Clemens, Clemans."⁵ Unfortunately, this article drew little attention until it was later republished in 1981. This article masterfully contradicts the notion that Adam is the great grandfather of Mark Twain, carefully documenting each argument. Although it does not suggest who might be his true great grandfather, it proves that Adam is not.

As implied by the title of the previous article, much ado has been made about the spelling of the Clemen(t)(s) name. The spelling, with and without the ending "s," was almost interchangeable during colonial times. No distinction can be made on the basis of spelling with and without the "s" among the various branches of the family or geographic areas.

The absence of the "t" is more significant. Adam was descended from the earliest settlers at Jamestown, Virginia, arriving in the Colonies in 1611. Jeremiah Clements, newly relocated to that part of Virginia, was descended from the earliest settlers of Haverhill, Massachusetts and arrived as early as 1639. Clearly, there were two distinct lines of Clemens in south central Virginia around the time of the American Revolution. Being the newcomers, it may have been the intention of Jeremiah Clements and his descendants to distinguish themselves from the well established Virginia Clements, by omitting the "t" in the spelling of their surname. Regardless of how it came about or for what reason, it served to disguise their New England origins.

The definitive article to accurately identify the great grandfather of Mark Twain was one by Raymond M. Bell in 1985.⁶ It presents important information that substantiates the claim that Jeremiah is, in fact, the great grandfather of Mark Twain. One important item was a legal document in New Jersey with ownership of land at issue. A signature on that document is Sam Clemens'. Clearly in the context of this document, this is the son of Jeremiah Clemens. This signature matches the signature of Sam Clemens, Mark Twain's grandfather.

Another important document is a letter written in 1886 from John Marshall Clemens to his second cousin, James Newton Clemens. The John Marshall Clemens in this correspondence is not to be confused with Twain's father. Twain and the two correspondents are the three individuals in the fourth generation below. John Marshall Clemens' letter clearly identifies their common ancestor as Jeremiah:

- 1 Jeremiah Clemens
-2 Samuel Clemens
-3 John Marshall Clemens
-4 Mark Twain
-3 Hannibal Clemens

.....4 John Marshall Clemens
 2 Gershom Clemens
3 Jonathan R. Clemens
4 James Newton Clemens

An important argument that Jeremiah is the ancestor of Mark Twain is not to be found in any of these articles. Jeremiah's wife's maiden name was Elizabeth Moore. In this case, Moore is the maiden name of the grandmother. Another Elizabeth Moore Clemens was the daughter of Samuel B. Clemens and the aunt of Mark Twain. In the latter case, Moore, is a given middle name, not her maiden name. Clearly, Elizabeth Moore, spouse of a Haverhill Clements, is the grandmother of her namesake, Mark Twain's aunt.

Essex County Vital Records prove the line from Robert Clements, who died 29 Sept 1658, to Ezekiel Clements, who was born 1 Feb 1695. The Raymond Bell article sites the vital records in New Jersey, proving Jeremiah to be the son of Ezekiel. This leaves the link between Jeremiah and Samuel, which is supported by the forgoing arguments. Taken together, these sources yield the following tree:

1 Robert Clements b: 14 Dec 1595 in Cosby, Leicestershire, England d: 29 Sep 1658 in Haverhill, MA7
 . +Lydia b: c1595 m: 1615 in Leicestershire, England d: 12 Mar 1641/42 in Ansley, Warwickshire, Eng.
 . 2 Robert Clements b: 1634 in Ansley, Warwickshire, England d: 24 Feb 1713/14 in Haverhill, MA⁸
 .. +Elizabeth Fawne m: 8 Dec 1652 in Haverhill, MA d: 27 Mar 1715 in Haverhill, MA
 .. 3 John Clements b: 16 Sep 1653 in Haverhill, MA d: 16 May 1692⁹
(Ancestor of the governor of Vermont, Percival W. Clements)
 .. 3 Abraham Clements b: 14 July 1657 in Haverhill, MA d: Bef. 5 Mar 1715/16 in Bucks Co, PA¹⁰
 .. +Hannah Gove b: Mar 1663/64 in Hampton, NH m: 10 May 1683 in Newbury d: Bef. 1716
 ... 4 Ezekiel Clements b: 1 Feb 1695/96 in Salisbury, MA d: 1778 in Augusta Co., VA¹¹
 ... +Christina Castell b: Abt. 1695 m: 1725 in PA or NJ d: Abt. 1778
 5 Jeremiah Clemens b: Abt. 1732 in Hunterdon Co., NJ d: 17 Nov 1811 in Amherst Co. VA
 +Elizabeth Moore b: Abt. 1740 in Trenton, NJ m: Abt. 1763 in NJ d: Abt. 1811
 6 Samuel B. Clemens b: 1770 in Loudoun Co., VA d: 1805 in Mason Co., (W)VA
 +Parmelia Goggin b: 31 Oct 1775 in Bedford Co, VA m: 29 Oct 1797 VA d: 1844 in Adair Co., KY
 7 John Marshall Clemens b: 11 Aug 1798 in Campbell Co., VA d: 24 Mar 1847 in Hannibal, MO
 +Jane Lampton b:18 Jun 1803 in Adair Co., KY m: 6 May 1823 d: 27 Oct 1890 in Lee Co., IA
 8 Samuel Langhorne Clemens b: 30 Nov 1835 in MO d: 21 Apr 1910 in Redding, CT
 +Olivia Louise Langdon b: 27 Nov 1845 NY m: 2 Feb 1870d: 5 June 1904 in Florence, Italy
 7 Elizabeth Moore Clemens b: 1801 in KY d: 1887 KY (namesake of Elizabeth Moore, 5 above)
 +Capt John Nichols Pollard b: 1792 in VA m: 4 Oct 1820 d: 1875 in Bedford Co, VA
 .. 3 Fawne Clements b: 2 Mar 1661/62 in Haverhill, MA d: Mar 1739/40 in Newbury, MA
 .. +Sarah Hoyt m: 21 Nov 1688 in Amesbury, MA d: 1712
(Ancestor of Pillsbury and Greeley)

The consensus of present-day researchers of the Clemens ancestry is that Mark Twain is descended from the Haverhill Clements. Still one must be wary of erroneous data that has been in print for many decades. The Mark Twain House in Hartford, Connecticut directs inquiries about the ancestry of Mark Twain to the Mark Twain Encyclopedia¹² which identifies this as the correct lineage. A letter from Henry Sweets, director of the Mark Twain Home Foundation in Hannibal, Missouri identifies Jeremiah Clements as the great grandfather of Mark Twain.

1 Mark Twain, *Lionizing Murderers*, 1869.

2 Mark Twain's *Autobiography*, 1897.

3 William H. Clemens, "The Genesis of Mark Twain," *Genealogy Magazine*, Vol. X No. 9, Oct., 1922.

4 *The Compendium of American Genealogy-First Families of America*, Vol. 6, pg. 162.

5 Clement, Mrs. N. E., "Clement, Clements, Clemans" *Genealogy of Virginia Families: from the Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1981, vol. 2, edited by Clairborne-Fitzhughs.

6 Bell, Raymond, Martin, "Mark Twain's Clemens Ancestry," *Pennsylvania Genealogy Magazine*, vol. 34, 1985, pg. 1-25.

7 *The Probate Records of Essex County*, pg. 259-60, 272-4.

8 *Ibid.* pg. 272-4, 290-2.

9 *Vital Records Haverhill Birth Register*, Vol. 1, Page 68, *Topsfield Historical Society*, 1910.

10 *Vital Records Haverhill Birth Register*, Vol. 1, Page 66, *Topsfield Historical Society*, 1910.

11 *Vital Records of Salisbury, MA, Birth Register*, Page 48, *Topsfield Historical Society*, 1915.

12 LeMaster, J. R. & James D. Wilson, *The Mark Twain Encyclopedia*, Garland Publishing, Inc. New York, 1993, pg. 807.