

The Luc(k)raft Newsletter

September 1998

Edition 5

Richard Luckraft, the Weaver of Preston is found in Dean Prior!

After over 20 years of intermittent work, the combined research of several interested Luc(k)rafts has cracked the origins of Richard Luckraft, who arrived in Preston in about 1830. Jack Sanderson and Barry Frankland, descended from two of Richard's 10 known children, had each done work on their own branches of the Preston families, but together we had not managed to get back past Richard's earlier stay in Kidderminster. We knew he had to come from Devon; but where?

When June Harwood of Totnes contacted me, she was interested in a Christiana Luckraft, her ancestor. I only knew of one Christiana, having her marriage papers, and Jack Sanderson had a family bible where she appeared. June did some detective work in Warwick, with her sister, and I passed her the Dean Prior, Blackawton and Dartmouth work, because I felt the families were linked. June made the Dean Prior connections.

Luckraft or Lucraft

This family is a classic case of the erratic nature of the spelling. It was originally Luckraft, for the Kidderminster and Preston families. But one member of the family had a dispute with others, in the last century, and dropped the 'k'. So there are closely related families, in Devon, Preston, Croyden, Basildon, America, with either spelling.

Arthur and Louise in New Bedford, Mass. USA.

A welcome to Arthur and Louise Luckraft, now in their retirement, who have been early and enthusiastic supporters of this work. Over 15 years they have sent me occasional updates of their vast family in America - all descended from Richard the Weaver's grandson, William Lucraft, who married Julia Ann Thompson of Preston, one of 18 children. William and Julia were married in New Bedford Massachusetts, William served in the British Army in the Boer War, and the Canadian Expeditionary Force in World War 1. Arthur and Louise still live in the wooden frame house that William and Julia settled in on Thatcher Street in New Bedford.

June Harwood has now written up the story of Edmund Luckraft, and her article takes up the bulk of this extended edition; I'm grateful to her for permission to reproduce her article. Earlier work on this family can be read in Edition 2 of the newsletter.

Have you got any Certificates ?

Part of my work is collecting a definitive set of birth marriage and death certificates for the Luc(k)raft One Name Study. When it is more complete, it will be deposited, in about 20 years if I'm lucky, in the Society of Genealogists. It costs me a lot of money to order certificates, and I only order them when I'm on a chase about a particular piece of research.

It occurred to me that every family is sitting on their own collection of certificates, and if you were able to make photocopies of your own family collection, it would dramatically increase the One Name collection, which only has about 80 certificates.

Obviously it's the earlier ones which are more interesting, and I realise there are sometimes sensitive issues about certificates, which I would not want to arouse. But will you all please consider whether you would mind sending me copies? It would make a great contribution.

Lamacraft

Robin Lamacraft wrote recently, asking about links with his name. There are lots of variations, and it's sometimes difficult to decide if it's a variant or just a different name. Lucarift is one such. The spelling just changed during one man's life, and his descendants today live in Jersey, with the name Lucarift. The family were among the first to plant and grow Jersey Royals for export to London.

Who is Jeanett Lucraft?

Yes it is spelt correctly. She is the only Lucraft with that name. Bernard Hollingsworth, her grandson asked me for help in finding her marriage. I was able to help with a copy of her marriage certificate, but we've not got a lot further. She lived in Black Horse Lane in Walthamstow, aged 19, when she got married in 1885, and her father was William Lucraft a greengrocer. We can't find her birth, about 1865, nor can we determine who her father was. I've got a hunch about the family who were wine merchants in London, but no evidence.

Who's paid me \$20?

Apologies to the person who wrote in with \$20 asking for a copy of some of my work. I've done the copy, but don't know who it was. If it was you, and you're still waiting, please write again and I'll send it to you.

Edmund Luckcraft : Woolcomber of Devon

by June Harwood of Dean Prior

The South Hams of Devon seemed a far cry from our family's research in deepest Birmingham! Looking at the census for 1861, however, Christiana Aston, nee Luckcraft, describes herself as born in Devon. The enumerator, getting part of the village name right wrote down 'Ang Prior', which had us baffled. Dean Prior, however, just five miles or so away from where we now live in Totnes, was, in the nineteenth century, a small village community of woolcombers. Buckfast Abbey, along the road, had been a local centre for the wool-trade from the thirteenth century on, and where, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a large wool and serge mill gave employment.

The Search for Edmund

Dean Prior lies beside the Exeter to Plymouth road, just a mile or so south of Buckfastleigh and five miles from Totnes. There we found Edmund to have been born in 1779 to Richard Luckcraft and Elizabeth, nee Maddick. The Maddicks are a large local family who farmed at Velwell, on the hill outside Dean, from the sixteenth century until this. Richard, Edmund's father, however, was not born in the parish, so far as we could tell, but came, again as far as records show, from Blackawton, born there in 1745.

"Blackawton is a large village in the unknown country that lies in the hills west of Dartmouth. The parish was formerly more extensive, running down to the shore of start Bay, but the parish of Strete was carved out of it in 1881.

Richard's father, again as far as we can tell, came from the neighbouring parish of Dittisham, lying beside the River Dart, and married a Mary Edmund there in 1744, and hence the use of the name which came down so many generations. An Edmund Luckcraft still farms at Blackawton.

Edmund's Childhood : a changing world

Edmund was born into a world changing rapidly and his life reflected these social changes. The war with France was in its sixth year, food prices were rising steadily and rural life was increasingly difficult for the labouring poor. The little Luckcraft family at Dean Prior struggled along with the rest, their lot made worse by illness and mortality. Elizabeth, Edmund's mother died when he was two, six months after his brother Richard's birth. His father was left with three children, all under six.

We do not know how he managed or who helped him; his wife's family lived in the village and probably helped, but when Edmund was ten, his father, too, died.

My Father died when I was about ten years of age. I went to work for Messrs William and John Hoare when I was about 13 years old and when I was about 16 I was bound apprentice to Messrs William & John Hoare. I served until I was 21 years old.

Dear Wife
Wednesden Jan 13th
It is with a most painful sensation I regret you
with my situation here I have got work for
myself but only from seven in the morning
until Eight at Night Therefore I cannot receive
you any Assistance untill things take a more
favourable turn or at least very little but
I will do what I can
I will not help you for a time I must come
over and be taken home. Mr and Mrs Taylor
send their respects to you and tell you Richard
with goes on very well is well and Edmund's
behaviour very well we lodge at their house
I have not time to write any more particulars
But remain yours Affectionately
Edmund Luckcraft
of the Combins
Having the Measurement of Map^r Hoare's
where Luckcraft is employed I can boast for
truth of what is stated above and think it a
Pity such a Steady Industrious Man should
be obliged to take as Family to them Parish
and hope and Trust the Overseers of New
will bring to Dean Prior near Totnes Devon
that they be assisted with Law or all Person
J. Gibson

Edmund's letter to his wife in about 1821

(June and her sister have found a number of documents in the Warwick records, dealing with the settlement arrangements in 1821, which includes this letter. Ed.)

Apprenticeship and after

Edmund had learned his trade as a woolcomber. But the manufacturing industries which had sustained the rural economy for centuries was moving to the large, northern towns. Edmund obviously felt he needed to follow.

Since I left my master's service I have been at different places upon the tramp.

We can trace Edmund's movements from his settlement statement, written in 1821, as he, in dire need, applied for the iniquitous 'parish relief' despite the fact he was in full employment. There are also other documents, letters and census records, found in Devon, Warwick and Worcester Record Offices.

Marriage in the Midlands

He left Dean Prior on finishing his apprenticeship at twenty one in 1800 and went 'upon the tramp' in search of work. He must have reached Warwick in or before 1805, for he married Christiana Broadbent at St Mary's Church there on the fifteenth of January. The name Christiana is handed down from now on, to both his own daughter and also further grandchildren, in different parts of the country. In 1806, he tells us, (or the overseers of the poor, to whom the statement was directed), he took a house of Mr Clemens in Cocksparrow Hall and stayed there until 1809. Cocksparrow Street is marked, to the west of the city centre, in an area which would

LUCKCRAFT 1

Peter Luckraft
d. 12.2.1675 BlackawtonRichard Luckraft, husbandman m. Mary Edmund 4.11.1744, Dittisham
bd. 2.2.1778, Blackawton, Devon

see Maddick (Dean Prior) family tree

Richard Luccraft c. 28.1.1745, Blackawton, Devon m. Elizabeth Maddick (23.9.1741 Dean Prior) on 9.12.1774 Dean Prior, Devon:
witnesses Thomas Gidley, William Maddick.
Elizabeth d. 10.1781 (age 37): Richard bd. 20.6.1790 both at Dean PriorElizabeth b. 18. 6. 1776
Dean Prior, Devon

Edmund bd. 9. 2. 1779

Edmund b.18. 4. 1779 Dean Prior, Devon, woolcomber:
m.1 Christiana Broadbent 15.1.1805 St Mary's, Warwick
m2. Mary Sperring 7.5.1837, Cameley, Somerset
Edmund d. Temple Cloud, Cameley 27.1.1838, b. 4.2.1838

Richard b. 25. 3. 1781 Dean Prior ?m. Elizabeth

Jane c. 1.2.1824, Dean Prior

Robert John b.c. 1806
m Mary Cockram
10.2.1827 KidderminsterRichard c. 23.3.1808, Warwick, Brook St.
Congregational Chapel
weaver of Preston, m. Ellen Hoskinson 1831
Preston d. 21. 6. 1850, Prestonsee Jack Sanderson's tree
& Luc(k)craft newslettersEdmund b.c. 1810
1841 census
Kidderminster
workhouse 'labourer'Christiana Luckcroft m. 26. 3. 1838 William Aston
at St. Phillips, Birmingham :Gun maker & Locksmith,
New Town Row lived 97 Little Hampton St, St George
Christiana b. 1812 Exeter, Devonshire (census 1871)John
b. c. 1815-1820
given as 20 on 1841
census- Kidderminster
workhouseWilliam Aston b. 18.12.1838, 1 Court, Henrietta St: 1851 boarder at St John's School, Warwick.
Died 6.12.1889 at 82 Macdonald St. The will is dated 10.2.1890 for £603 At St Phillips on 3.9. 1868,
(woodcarver, Essex St, 29) married Ann Dora (Beard) nee Tysall widow (22) of Lower Essex St. She was
b. 9. 9. 1846, c. 26.11.1846 St Martins : m1 Job Beard 26.12.1864

Aston 1

See Luc(k)craft file for the story of Edmund and his son, Richard, 'the Preston weaver'. It is proving difficult to trace baptismal records for Edmund's children, apart from Richard. They were probably in non-conformist churches

then have been Saltisford. He then moved to Mr Brookhouse's house

I gave Mr Clemens notice at Michaelmas 1808 that I should leave at Christmas having the promise of a house of Mr Brookhouse's house when it was finished.

It is obvious that the Overseers gave Edmund a hard time over this period in 1809 when he was renting two properties one of which he sub-let for three weeks. All this is documented in the records at Warwick Record Office.

We have a letter written from Kidderminster to his wife Christiana to the address No. 4, New Building, Warwick. We can assume this was Mr Brookhouse's new house and that the family were still there when the 1811 census was taken. This records that Edmund Luckcraft lives in the district of Saltisford and that the family numbers five in all, three males and two females.

Edmund takes his wife back to Devon

What is clear from Edmund's statement is that sometime following this census in or around 1812 Edmund moved with his family back to his birth place in Dean Prior. He then tells us that

I was at work for Messrs Parkers at Warwick and about eight or nine years ago last September I went

with my family to Dean Prior. After being two or three days at Dean Prior my wife's mother sent for us to, and put us in a house at Totnes.

It isn't clear from this statement whether Mrs Broadbent, Christiana's mother, lived in Totnes or whether she paid for them to rent a house. Whilst at Dean Prior, it is likely that the family were staying with Edmund's brother, Richard, whom we know was still living in the village. We can find no evidence of Broadbent's in Totnes at this time although there are several in the area around Warwick, especially in Coventry. It is likely therefore that she gave them money for rent, 'and put us in a house in Totnes'.

The sort of indignity referred to in the accompanying notes about rural workers and parish relief is now Edmund's lot:

I worked there (Totnes) some time but not having full employ I sent my wife for relief to the Overseer at Dean Prior, Mr John Broadridge. He refused to give her relief but ordered her to send me to Dartington to Mr Trude, a magistrate and he would meet me there. I went to Dartington and was examined to my settlement.

Return to Warwick

It seems his stay in Totnes was only from September until the following April, when he returned to Warwick:

I stayed at Totnes 'till the beginning of April and then returned to Warwick and had relief at Warwick from

the parish of Dean Prior for two years or more at 4d a week. It was agreed between my wife and the officer of Dean Prior that they would pay the relief into my brother's hands and he should send it to me which he did at Warwick.

It is not clear whether Christiana (and presumably the children) stayed in Devon whilst Edmund returned to Warwick. What is clear is that, according to the Rent Books, the family were back living in Saltisford, Warwick, from 1814 and that Edmund moved to work in Kidderminster sometime around 1815. A letter dated 1832 relating to Edmund's son Richard states:

....he further states about 17 years ago his mother was living at the outskirts of the town and he has fetched weekly relief for his mother and family when Edmund was absent.

Working in Kidderminster

Edmund and his sons, Richard and Edmund were then working in Kidderminster at the time of the Settlement documents (1819 -1821) whilst Christiana his wife remained in Warwick with the other children.

"He afterwards went to work in Kidderminster and left his family at Warwick".

A letter from Edmund to his wife from around this time shows the conditions he was working under. It also shows he had two of the boys living with him in Kidderminster:

It is with the most painful sensation I acquaint you with my situation here. I have got work for myself only but only from seven in the morning until eight at night. Therefore I cannot render you any assistance until things take a more favourable turn or at best very little. Mr and Mrs Taylor send their respects to you and tell you Richard goes on very well, is well and Edmund behaves very well. We lodge at their house.

There is a further pitiful statement dated 1819:

I, Edmund Luckcraft will if possible send my wife and family 4 shillings per week after paying for a new pair shoes then I shall send 4s per week the first payment I shall send on the 10th April next which will be one pound for 5 weeks. After this I shall continue sending 1 for every 5 weeks and more if possible to do so.

Edmund Luckcraft, Warwick February 27, 1819.

That Edmund was the victim of the pernicious social conditions is borne out by the testimony of his boss:

Having the management of the combers at Messrs Hooman & Co. where Luckcraft is employed, I can vouch for the truth of what is stated above and think it a pity such a steady, industrious man should be obliged to take his family to their parish and hope and trust the overseers of Warwick will write to Dean Prior, near Ashburton, Devon, in order that they may be assisted either here or at Warwick. P. Gibson.

What prompted the renewed request for parish relief we do not know except that there is a possibility Christiana had another child at this time. The 1841 census for Kidderminster Workhouse shows an Edmund Luckcraft, 35, and a John Luckcraft, 20. If these are Edmund and Christiana's sons, (their parents now both being dead), John would have been born in 1820.

Edmund & Christiana's Children

Because the Luckcraft family appear to have been non-conformists, tracing their children's baptisms is proving difficult. The only one we have traced so far is Richard's on 23.3.1808 at Brook Street Congregational Chapel, Warwick, which still exists. Searches continue for Christiana's baptismal record in Devon.

Robert Luckcraft

Robert, about whom we know very little but we have assumed was the eldest, married Mary Cockram in Kidderminster in 1827.

Richard Luckcraft

Richard followed the path of many weavers and went north where he married Ellen Hoskinson in Preston in 1831, two months after the birth of their first son, Robert. The papers relating to his settlement in Denton, Manchester in 1832 are in Warwick Record Office. Despite the fact he was born in Warwick, it was still considered that he was the responsibility of his father's parish in Devon, such was the iniquity of the parish relief system. After two daughters, both names Christiana after Richard's mother, the first of whom died, Richard and his little family returned to Kidderminster where his fourth child, also Richard was born in 1837. Richard's widow and family returned to Preston after Richard's death in 1850.

His line prospers and his descendant, Jack Sanderson has the family Bible with its page of the births & deaths recording these descendants. Well-known family names, Edmund, Christiana, Richard continue to appear there, together with, showing their dissenting fervour, one son christened John Fergus O'Connor Luckcraft in 1842.

Christiana and the Aston's of Birmingham

Christiana married William Aston at St Phillips Church Birmingham on 26th March 1838. How they came to meet, and move to Birmingham, as yet remains a mystery. The Aston's are my Father's maternal line, and the name appears in the records of St Martin's in the Bull-ring, Birmingham's oldest and most central church, (along with the Hunt's, into whom Grandmother married in 1898), back to when records first begin.

My father's mother was baptised Lily Ada Aston at St Phillip's church (now the cathedral), Birmingham in 1874. Her father was William Aston, who gives his occupation at the time of his marriage in 1868 as a wood carver. His father, also a William Aston, married a Christiana Luckcraft in 1838. On their

marriage certificate her father, Edmund's occupation is given as 'woolcomber'.

That the Aston lines leads back to the Luckcraft's and thence to Devon has been unexpected and fascinating. My father and his brother and sister all spent a life-time of family holidays in or near the South Hams, all the time unaware that their mother's father's mother had been born there and preceding generations before her.

Edmund and other possible children

By 1841 it is obvious that both Edmund and Christiana are dead. Three of their children had married and two of them at least moved elsewhere. The 1841 census for Kidderminster Workhouse records an Edmund, 35, and a John, 20. These might both belong to the family and, being seen as not belonging to the parish, expected to live within the Poor House, following the Reform Act of 1834. Research continues on these two. There is a further area of mystery concerning an Elizabeth Luckcraft in Somerset.

Father Edmund re-marries in Somerset

Edmund's sons followed their father's ancient profession of woolcomber and turned it to related industry; the carpet weaving trade of Kidderminster. Richard followed the move from wool to cotton and moved to the cotton producing area of Lancashire. Edmund, however, from the earlier generation and perhaps conscious he represented the last of a thousand years of hand combing, (mechanisation having now largely taken over), was less likely to make the transition, preferring to continue his ancient trade.

The Earl of Warwick had extensive lands in the Clutton and Harptree area of Somerset. They opened coal mines in the Radstock area, and at Temple Cloud, Cameley, Clutton, there was a collection of wool combers and wool sorters. On 7th May 1837 at Cameley, an Edmund Luckcroft, with an identical signature to that of his wedding to Christiana, married a Mary Sperring, widow. He died the following year on 27th January 1838 at Temple Cloud, Cameley, of heart failure, 'the dropsy'. The age given is 57, which is a year or so short of what we know him to be. Ages, however in those days of few records were often approximate and if his wife was younger than him, could we blame him for a little vanity if she thought him two years younger than he truly was? We have yet to discover when Christiana died, which seems likely to have been in Warwick. For that we have to await the next chapter.

One mystery referred to above also remains. There is a document in Somerset Record Office which is a list of expenses in a settlement case dated 1844. It related to the removal of an Elizabeth Luckcraft from Kidderminster to Chew Magna, the same area as Edmund lived and died. It also referred to the removal of an Edward Luckcraft from Kidderminster, (which may, of course, be a clerk's error for

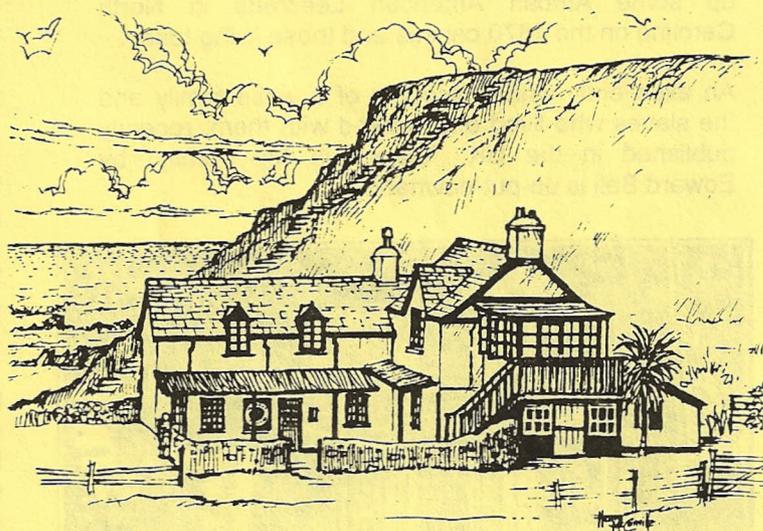
Edmund). Is Elizabeth a further daughter of Edmund and Christiana who was seeking to join her father and his second wife?

A final note : a tribute to Edmund

It is unlikely, of course, that this is the final note and that research will continue to uncover the story of this family who lived in one of the most difficult economic periods of recent centuries. But in the meantime, the church of Dean Prior struggles to survive. A handful of dedicated folk continue to assure there is a weekly service and that the church continues in good repair. A flower festival there last month raised money towards repairing the east wall. As I sit in morning service there I think of Richard and Elizabeth and their little brood. Elizabeth died when Edmund was three; she didn't see her children grow up, but I'd like to think she knows that, nearly two hundred years later, her line continues to thrive and that we have returned to tend the place where she and so many of her family lie. This record, when complete, will be lodged in the church library with the rest of the parish records which have so far resisted transportation to Exeter Record Office.

June Harwood July 1998

(References available on request)



The White Cottage

In an area of outstanding natural beauty a rambling period cottage within one hundred yards of the beach and Cornish Coastal Path.

Lyn French, descended from the Kingsbridge Luckrafts, going back to the Blackawton Luckrafts, doesn't ask me to advertise her holiday cottage on the cliffs at Bude, and her bed and breakfast at the White Cottage, but it all looks so nice. Tel 01288 353859 if you're interested.

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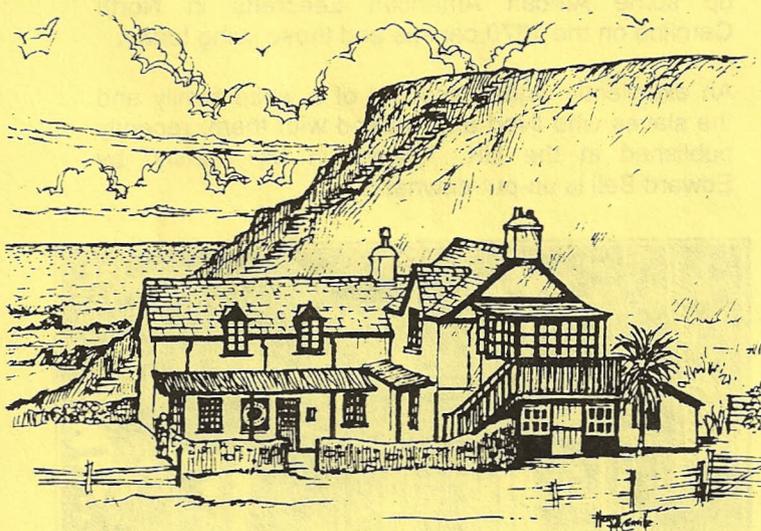
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Leecraft's in North Carolina

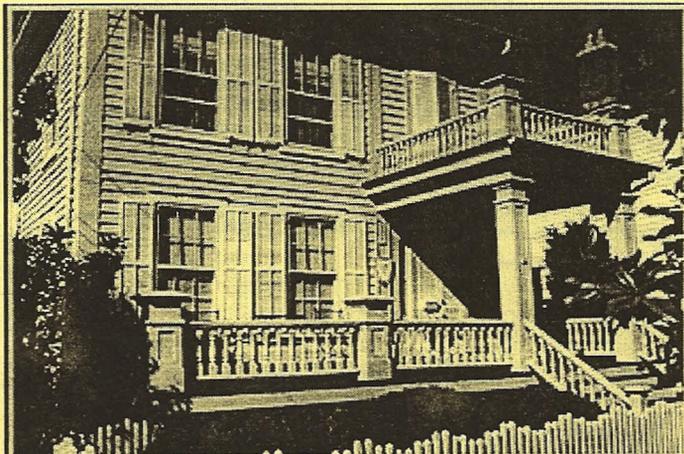
The picture below is of the house built by Benjamin Leecraft, in Beaufort, North Carolina. He was a manufacturer, and merchant there, and built two identical houses for two of his daughters, next door to each other. This one still survives, and is part of the Beaufort Historical Trail. Benjamin's father, also called Benjamin, was variously a sea-captain and ship-builder, and he may have come from Bermuda, where a Benjamin Leecraft left in the 18th century.

Linda McMahon, in Texas, who is a descendant of Benjamin, has found a book which says :

"... a Leecraft was Governor of Bermuda when George III of England, in his Teutonic stubbornness, destroyed the semblance of independence in Bermuda. The Leecrafts, who had long owned a fleet of boats used in commercial shipping, moved lock, stock and barrel to the south, living at various times in Barbados, Antigua, and Martinique and sending their cargoes to ports along the American mainland. The family finally came to the mainland of the Colonies to live ever after. Two brothers settled in New York City, one in Beaufort South Carolina, and one Capt. Benjamin Leecraft in Beaufort North Carolina. He arrived there on his own boat, and speedily became one of the largest land-owners of the province."

Benjamin Senior is listed as Lucraft, Lecraft, Leecraft and other variants, on early censuses, so we're doing what we can to follow up. This is the family that owned slaves on the census, and I am also following up some African American Leecrafts in North Carolina on the 1870 census and those living today.

An excellently written account of a white family and the slaves who lived and worked with them, recently published in the UK, "Slaves in My Family" by Edward Ball is un-put-downable.

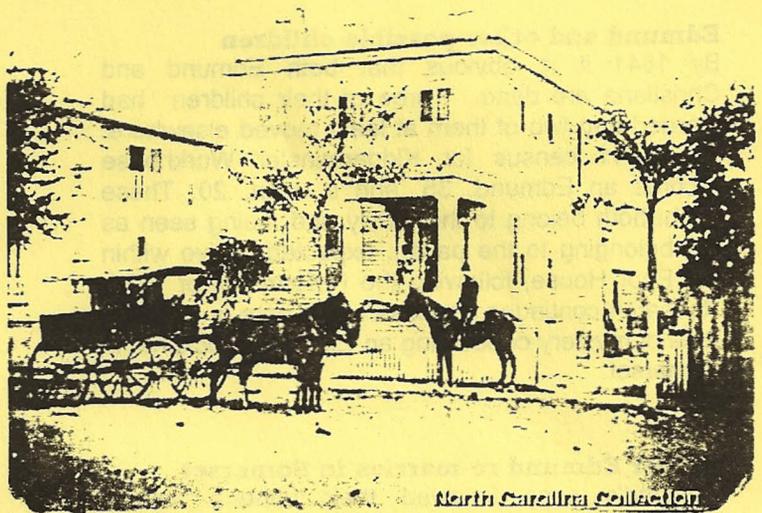


Beaufort History: Leecraft House 1856

The Internet website for this photo is:
<http://blackbeardthepirate.com/index.html>.

If anyone would like to do some research in London about Governors in Bermuda, please let me know.

The Internet also provided the photo printed below. It's a sepia print, so it won't come out too well on this photocopied newsletter, but you can find it on the website for Carteret County, in the web archives of the North Carolina Collection at the University of North Carolina.



North Carolina Collection

The Leecraft House

The records say that this photo of the house, which is one of the two built for the two daughters, perhaps the one in the photo on the left, is at 307 Ann Street, in Beaufort. The photo was taken in March 1862. A mounted orderly, Lt C.M. Dusher, is in front of the building on his horse. On the full size print, two women can be seen standing in the porch.

1862 is the early days of the Civil War, and the Leecrafts fought for the Southern States. One of Benjamin Senior's grandsons, also called Benjamin, was a Captain in the Confederate Army, and Linda McMahon has offered to send me more material on the family.

The times of the Leecrafts in North Carolina were limited. The earliest records we have are from 1784, when Benjamin Leecraft Senior is recorded as being the Master of a schooner called the Sea Flower, and was bringing goods into Turk's Island, for an importer called William Fisher. By 1880 no-one named Leecraft was living in Carteret County. We know that some of the family moved to Oklahoma, and Texas. But, as happened to many families whose prosperity had been based on the old economy of the South, when the Civil War was over, and the land was re-distributed, their fortunes disappeared.

I have made contact with Renee Ingram in Washington, who is President of the African American Heritage Preservation Foundation, who has kindly offered to do some research for me on the black Leecraft's of Beaufort in North Carolina.