22 November 2012

Stapletons and Posts: By Michael L. Stapleton

Most of what I’ve learned about our family over the last 30 years is based on facts and documents, ancestral and historical, with a little family lore included. 30 years ago, my father, Leo Joseph Stapleton Jr., hired a genealogist in Newfoundland, Dave Owens, who made many of the original connections. My father’s brother Tom researched our name in history and found an aristocratic family crest that looks like this one. To make this document interactive, I’ve tried to install hyperlinks that appear in blue type. Some illustrations are linked to web materials, as well. I linked street addresses to Google maps, and if you open them, you can even look around the neighborhoods where our ancestors grew up in Boston. If you have any old documents or photographs that you think would improve this little history, please pass them on to me.

We have a large family that can be traced through eight generations through the Stapleton line to Newfoundland and seven on the Post side to Newburyport. Our branches of the Stapletons and Posts, represented by Leo J. Stapleton Sr. (1900-68) and Edna Gertrude Post (1905-66), united to produce ten children. In order of birth they are: Virginia Marie (1924-90), Leo Joseph Jr. (1926-90), Richard Dexter Sr. (1927-88), James Edward Sr. (1929-86), Ronald Patrick Sr. (b. 1933), Gerald Thomas Sr. (b.1935), Thomas Dennis (1938-95), Edna Patricia (b. 1940), Nancy Ellen (b. 1941), and Dianne Bernadette (b. 1946). They generated 51 grandchildren for Leo Sr. and Edna, the first Marjorie Jean Stapleton (b.1946), the fifty-first Julie Anne Tarris (b.1983). (See Appendix F.) And I haven’t even begun to count the number of great-grandchildren. Almost every family member has a
namesake of some kind, or at least shares the same name with some ancestor.

**First Stapletons (Harbour Grace, Newfoundland).** The ultimate ethnic origin of the family is unknown, but the surname is as English as shepherd’s pie and Bass ale. Some early English Stapletons in Ireland took the Gaelic name Mac an Ghaill, “son of the stranger.” The family coat of arms has the Latin motto Fide sed cui vide, literally “Trust, but in whom take care.” Genealogists classify Stapleton or Stapledon as a “habitation name,” since it was derived from the name of a previously existing place, such as a town, its etymology “farm by a pillar or post.” In North America, our Stapletons were from Harbour Grace, Newfoundland. The furthest-back person from whom we are most likely descended is James Stapleton I (c. 1770-1832). He could be the son of one or both of two Stapletons (each age 30, no gender assigned) who are listed as ship’s passengers on a schooner bound for Nova Scotia from the British Isles in 1774. One of these two could be the William Stapleton who describes himself as a fisherman for twenty years in St. John’s, the largest city in the province, in 1794. Our ancestor James may be related to a John living in Harbour Grace in 1808 or may be the James listed as a resident of the town in 1813. One branch of Stapletons settled on the eastern side of Conception Bay at Horse Cove, now St. Thomas, Nfld., the other, ours, on the western side, at Harbour Grace. Many, many more of that name chose St. John’s, the largest city. Our James had two sons, Bartholomew and James II, who both died prior to 19 April 1831. It is alleged that they perished in a wreck involving the schooner Hibernia off the Labrador coast in 1822, but I have not been able to find evidence of this specific disaster. There was indeed a shipwreck in 1822 of a Hibernia, but it was in Lake Ontario. And there are literally dozens of schooners with this name, many of which
brought Irish and Scottish immigrants to North America, so “Hibernia” identified the origin of the passengers, since it’s the Latin name for Ireland. Newfoundland was the first English colony in North America (1497) and remained British until its consolidation into Canada (1959). At the time our ancestors were on the seas—they were mariners—the Atlantic provinces were still under British control, and Labrador and Newfoundland were considered to be a single entity. We are fortunate to have James I’s final will and testament. (I include it in its entirety in Appendix A. I add the warning that it can be a little difficult to read, at least for the likes of me. It’s also available at the web address in this link.) In the document, James I describes himself as a “Planter,” which in Newfoundland lore meant that he was a farmer and a fisherman in the short summer. Some planters also hunted seals on the ice in the long, dark winter months. James I was a person of means, obviously cared for his family, and wanted to provide for his six grandchildren and his widowed daughters-in-law Anne and Elizabeth. For these two mothers, he is careful to distinguish what portion of “bedding” they would inherit from his estate so as to prevent any disputes that might arise between them. He expected that his heirs would keep up the “plantation” or farm, of which he must have been very proud, and hoped they would profit from his store of molasses for the making of rum, as well as his stock of rum itself. Leo Sr.’s grandfather makes his first appearance in the line: “Item I give and bequeath unto Michl son of my late son James Stapleton my silver watch and a fowling piece.” This is Michael Stapleton (1816-95), his name an old one in our family, like James, Joseph, and John. His grandfather must have thought a lot of him to leave him an expensive weapon and a watch to boot, since these items could have gone to someone less deserving or could have been sold to pay debts. We could say the same of his cousin Margaret, to whom her grandfather left bedding of her own that would probably form part of her own household when she married.
Michael Stapleton (1816-95). He was the son of James II and Anne Murphy Stapleton, the fifteen-year-old inheritor of a fowling piece and a silver watch. His family structure is somewhat uncertain. At the time of his grandfather’s will he was one of two children of James II and Anne, since it states “their heirs and assigns being two in number,” so his Uncle Bartholomew and Aunt Elizabeth must have accounted for the other four offspring. Later records suggest that our Michael’s other sibling was a sister, Mary. A baptism for a Michael Stapleton of Harbour Grace is recorded as 14 October 1818, a Thomas Lambert and Maria Ennott as godparents. If the date is slightly off, or if this was a late baptism and this is our ancestor, it suggests that the family could have been Anglican as well as Roman Catholic, since the Church of England had decreed since the Reformation that babies should be christened, ideally within two weeks of birth, and maintained that Catholic sacrament. A Michael Stapleton is listed in the Harbour Grace voting list in 1832, though this would have made him a bit young to vote. He is mentioned as a witness for a marriage.
in 1843. He is one of several petitioners for the building of a new lighthouse on 14 January 1857, his profession denoted as mariner. The *Hutchinson’s Newfoundland Directory* of 1865 lists him as a mariner also, and then a Joseph and a John Stapleton as a cooper and a fisherman, respectively, all in Harbour Grace. It is likely that they were either brothers or cousins. Michael appears in the Newfoundland Census of 1889 as a resident of Lamarchant Street, his occupation now listed as planter, like his grandfather James I. His date of death is 16 September 1895, at age 79, and he is buried in the Roman Catholic Cemetery on Cathedral Street in Harbour Grace. We know much more about Michael than about his father and grandfather. He married Catherine Cody (or Coady) sometime prior to 1844. A John Coady was witness to James I’s will. He could have been Catherine’s father or grandfather. A grave near Michael’s belongs to an Anastasia Stapleton (1844-87), who could have been the first child of Michael and Catherine or of another relative. The couple had at least seven children: James III and Mary, both born in 1851, possibly twins, John (1853-1931), Michael Thomas (1856-1919), Joseph (b. 1862), Margaret (b. 1869), and Leo Sr.’s father, William Patrick Stapleton (1862 or 1864-1936), our direct ancestor.

**William Patrick Stapleton (1862/4-1936).** Our ancestor William Patrick’s birthdate is slightly at issue. Although his grave in Malden, Mass. gives the birth year as 1862, several documents suggest 1864
instead. It was not unheard of for there to be some disagreement among heirs about the lifespan information of a patriarch at such a difficult time as his death. Also, stonecutters have been known to inscribe the wrong date on gravestones, so it is possible that these factors have contributed to the confusion. And it is confusing. The gravestone in the illustration below says 1862. But the Harbour Grace Census of 1889 lists his age as 25, surely information he provided himself, which would square with the birth year of 1864. The Census of 1900 lists his birth date as May 1864. Yet the 1920 census says he is 58, the 1930 census 68, which would be 1862. William’s own daughter, Madelaine, calculated 1865 from the age he states on her birth certificate in 1907. So: how old was he when he died, and what was his birth year? Some of his grandchildren recalled his wake at their Chelsea residence in 1936, 16 Suffolk Street, his body in the parlor, with lighted candles at the foot of the coffin.

**William Patrick’s Immigration to the U.S. and Marriage to Mary Ellen Kennedy (1890-96).** The date of immigration is also ambiguous. Though William Patrick appears in the Harbour Grace Census of 1889, he gives the date of arrival in our country as 1890 and 1888 in the 1900 and 1920 censuses. In 1930, the year moves back to 1882. He never became a U.S. citizen. (Mary Ellen had applied by 1940.) In the 1930 census, their naturalization category is marked “Al.” for “Alien,” as opposed to “Na.,” or naturalized. They technically remained British subjects
with their Newfoundland citizenship. In 1889, 1900, and 1920, William lists his profession as cooper or barrel-maker. Since virtually all perishable goods were stored and shipped in barrels, everything from pickles to beer to cognac to every imaginable variety of fish, cooperage was an extremely important and vital profession and a trade much in demand anywhere, especially near the Atlantic. In the early 20th century, there was no trucking or reliable freight, no air transport, no refrigeration, no cardboard or plastic packaging. Most cartage was by horse and wagon, or by barge or ship. And almost everything traveled in a barrel. Coopers were at the center of the economy: there could not be one without the other. This could explain the reason why William and his brothers immigrated to a place like Boston. Newfoundland and Labrador have always been the least economically viable part of the Canadian territories. Their fishing industry was in dire straits at the end of the nineteenth century, with stocks of cod severely depleted. Boston was quite prosperous at the time, of course, and so immigration may have been the most sensible decision for William Patrick. Another reason was probably the Protestant persecution of Roman Catholics throughout the maritime provinces during this period. There was a nasty series of incidents in William’s hometown itself, the worst of these the so-called Harbour Grace Affray on 26 December 1883, the day after Christmas known as St. Stephen’s Day or Boxing Day in Canada and Britain. Protestants majority populations in Northern Ireland and in British provinces with Irish or Roman Catholic minorities had a history of observing 12 July as a day of celebration of the victory of the Protestant King William III of England over the forces of the deposed English Catholic King James II at the Battle of the Boyne in Ireland in 1689. An ancient custom for Protestants was to parade through a Catholic neighborhood to commemorate the occasion. Needless to say, Catholics took great exception to this deadly insult and often expressed themselves through demonstrations of their own that sometimes included violence. This was what happened in Harbour Grace on Boxing Day, 1883. (Protestants were too busy with their seasonal fishing to harass their Catholic neighbors on 12 July, so they delayed their fun for six months.) There is no doubt that the Stapletons were Roman Catholic then, and at the time of William
Patrick’s immigration to Boston. His brothers Michael, Joseph, and James (III) also came to the U.S., with his brother John remaining in Harbour Grace with their father Michael. Their mother, Catherine, died in 1889. William Patrick married Mary Ellen Kennedy (1870-1950) in Sommerville, Mass. on 30 January 1896 at the old St. Catherine’s Church, the new building having been erected in 1908. Their eldest child, Michael William Francis, was born on 23 October of that year. There is ambiguity about Mary Ellen’s birth time as well because the Malden gravestone reads 1871 and the 1930 Census gives her age as 58, which would make this date 1872. She was a native of Newfoundland as well, from Carbonear, a town also on Conception Bay about four miles north of Harbour Grace. Her parents were William (b. 1850) and Elizabeth Bailey Kennedy. Mary Ellen had three brothers: William, Nicholas, and Thomas. All came to the U.S., with one, Nicholas, returning to Canada. She gives her date of immigration as 1892 in the Census of 1910, 1891 in the Censuses of 1900 and 1920. William Patrick and Mary Ellen had eight
children. Seven survived infancy: Michael William Francis, “Bill” (1896-1969), John Walter, “Jack” (1898-1969), Leo Joseph Sr. (1900-68), James (IV) (1902-12), Franklin (1904, infant), Edward Milton, “Eddie” (b. 1905), Madelaine E. (1907-89), and Harold T. J. (1909-71). In the Census of 1900, their residence is listed as 40 Sheafe St. in the North End of Boston, a building that is still standing. Living in the same structure with William, Mary, Bill (age 4), Jack (age 2), and Leo (age 4 mos.) were William’s brother Joseph (b. 1862), his sister-in-law Annie Cleary Stapleton (b. 1868), and their three children, Michael (b. 1892, age 8), Roland (or Ronald) J. (1894-1939, age 6), and Alice M. (1898, age 2). Our direct ancestor, Leo Sr., was born in this house. The 1910 Census lists the family residence as 199 Putnam St., East Boston. All seven children are accounted for in that document. By 1920, the Stapletons had moved to 218 E. Eagle St. in East Boston. Leo Sr. was employed with the gas company as a pipe fitter, and Bill also lived in the house with his wife and baby daughter (9 mos.), both named Alice. The two brothers registered for the draft and were ready to serve their country in the First World War. The last address at which William and Mary Ellen lived, at least according to the Censuses of 1930 and 1940, was 594 South St. in Roslinendale. (As of this writing, that residence was valued at almost $400,000.) James (IV), the child in the rocking chair with the alphabet block under the leg to keep it straight, was handicapped, perhaps from injury, and died at 10. He is buried with his parents in Malden, as the gravestone indicates. Eddie is attired in a way that seems unusual to us because before 1920, children of both sexes were dressed as girls, with their hair long. (Both he and his brother Harold married women named Dorothy.) The five surviving sons were all gainfully employed in various capacities: Bill as a machinist, Jack as a longshoreman and postal clerk, Leo Jr. as a pipe fitter with the city gas company, Eddie
as a tennis instructor for the Boston Athletic Association, and Harold as a police stenographer. Four of them had children: Eddie fathered 1, Bill 5, Jack 9, and Leo Sr. 10. I have not been able to determine a date of death for Eddie or whether Harold and Dorothy (G.) had a family. Madelaine was at home with her parents in 1930, and had married Jeremiah McAuliffe by 1942. She had three sons. The two amazingly detailed letters that she wrote to my father about her parents, brothers, uncles and aunts (see Appendix B) provided an invaluable starting point for my research into records and archives about her family. (How wonderful it would have been to have interviewed her.). The pictures of her parents and her older brothers reproduced here were originally hers. (Perhaps there are more somewhere.) She also was able to date the children’s portrait at about 1909, since that was the birth year of the youngest, Harold, and she remembered that everyone in the family had arrived by the time it was taken. Leo Sr., born in 1900, indeed looks to be about 9. Her birthplace was New York, according to three censuses. Her father was still in the workforce in April 1930, the nadir of the Depression, employed as a butcher at age 66.

**Leo Joseph Sr. and Edna Gertrude Post Stapleton.** They were married on 19 August 1923. Their first child, Virginia Marie, was born almost exactly nine months later on 25 May 1924. Their family grew, as we know, and the records list several different residences. The birth certificate of 25 January 1926 for Leo Jr.
provides the address 13 Beacon St., Chelsea. The Census of 1930 names nearby 25 Beacon Place as the family home, also in Chelsea. As it happens, ten years earlier, according to the 1920 Census, Edna’s parents, Samuel Dexter Jr. and Mary E. Post, were living in this same house. Leo Sr., Edna, and their five children lived here through 1933. In 1934, there was a new address: 16 Suffolk St., Chelsea. However, according to the Boston city guide for that year and for several thereafter, Leo Sr. lists an additional address of 144 McBride St., Jamaica Plain. He was a gas pipe fitter for the city gas company. By 1937, the family had moved to its house in East Boston, 54 Falcon St., where they lived until 1946. Then they moved to the property at 3846 Washington St. in Roslindale. Additional pictures can be found in Appendix C.
Early Posts (Newburyport, Massachusetts).
The first Posts appeared in North America as early as 1634, from England. Many of that name immigrated to New Amsterdam, later New York, according to a history of people with that surname from 1905. Our family may be descended from these early settlers, but the first Post to whom we’re definitely related is John Post Sr. (?1802-42). He lived in Newburyport, and was married to Elizabeth Goldsmith Smith (1805-64), whose parents, John and Sarah Smith, were residents. Newburyport is on the North Shore of Massachusetts, approximately 10 miles above Cape Ann. It was first settled in 1635, attached to Newbury, then chartered as a separate town in 1764, the smallest in the state at the time. The maritime economy—trade, shipbuilding, fishing, and their associated industries—helped make the place grow, and it became a city in 1851. In 1800, at the time of John Sr.’s birth, the population was 6000. By 1830, just before his son Samuel Dexter Post Sr. arrived, it had grown slightly to 6300. Yet by 1860, the year before John’s grandson Samuel Dexter Jr. was born, the population had more than doubled to 15,500. This was the approximate number of inhabitants in 1905, the birth year of John’s great-granddaughter, Edna Gertrude Post.

Newburyport is a traditional New England town, even a little “preppie.” Its yearly “Yankee Homecoming” is
the second oldest such festival in the U.S., when the natives are supposed to return and reaffirm their North Shore roots. John Quincy Adams, our sixth president, lived there for two years (1787-88). In the seventeenth century, when the Newburyport community was established, it was like many other places in the Massachusetts Bay Colony dominated by the usual Protestant sects: Presbyterian, Congregational, Episcopal-Anglican. By the nineteenth century, these churches all over the Northeast were prominent in the anti-slavery movement. William Lloyd Garrison (1805-79), the noted abolitionist, was born in Newburyport. Catholicism was not present in the town until 1841, and even then the rites of the Church were administered by a visiting priest. Its scarcity is not surprising, because American anti-Catholic prejudice was virulent at the time, the dominant ideology of nativist movements that associated Catholicism with undesirable immigration, vice, and disease. Yet the Church of the Immaculate Conception was erected in 1853 after the establishment of the town’s parish, a building that still stands today. (The steeple was not finished until 1873.)

John Sr.’s oldest son was Samuel Dexter Sr. (1833-1909). He appears in the censuses of 1840, 1850, 1860, 1870, 1880, and 1900, a permanent resident of Newburyport. He married into the Ellsworth family, itself traceable to Cambridgeshire, U.K. in the sixteenth century, and to Rowley, Massachusetts in 1660. (A quick note: I am sorry to report that we are absolutely NOT related to Colonel Elmer Ephraim Ellsworth, the first commissioned Union officer to be killed in the Civil War. See Appendix E.) The bride was Harriet Noyes Ellsworth (1834-1910), and her mother’s family, the Noyses, were also deeply rooted in Essex.
County like the Ellsworths, several in the first U.S. census of 1790. The marriage date was 20 April 1854, and the Congregational clergyman who performed the ceremony was one Daniel Pike (1815-87), who is buried in Oak Hill Cemetery. Samuel and Harriet had 8 children: Mariah (b.1856), Harriett Elizabeth, “Hattie” (b.1857), John William (b.1859), Samuel Dexter Jr. (1861-1923?), Albert E., (b.1863), Fannie (b.1869), Edward E. (b.1871), and Sadie Estelle (b.1873). In the Census of 1860, Samuel Sr. identified himself as a shoemaker, named his two oldest daughters, his baby son John (2 mos.), his widowed mother Elizabeth, and a Lydia Felch as members of the household. He registered for the draft on 1 July 1863, and professed himself a seaman, but claimed to be 26 rather than his real age, 29, though again, this could have been a copyist’s mistake. By 1870, he was promoted to Master Mariner or captain, and he and Harriet at this time had 7 children. The two eldest daughters do not appear in the Census of 1880, probably married. Their Newburyport address was 34 Franklin St., a structure built in 1800 and that is, remarkably, still inhabitable and on the real estate market. By 1900, he and Harriet moved to Ipswich to live with their son Albert, their daughter-in-law Minnie, and their grandson Charles E., as well as two servants. Samuel Sr. died on 12 November 1909 of peritonitis as the result of a perforated gallbladder, perhaps a surgical complication, and was buried in Newburyport’s Highland Cemetery, Harriet passed the next year. His granddaughter, Edna Gertrude, died on the same day in 1966.

Samuel Dexter Post Jr. (1861-c.1923). Samuel Sr.’s second son and fourth child was born on 5 September 1861, the weekend that the
Confederate Army seized Columbus, Kentucky from Federal troops, led by Gideon Pillow, arguably the worst general on either side of the conflict, doubtless enjoying his best moment as a commander. By the time Samuel Jr. died, a few months after his youngest daughter, Edna Gertrude, had married Leo Stapleton Sr., the United States had fought a transatlantic war, and its citizens enjoyed regular telephone service, drove affordable automobiles over thousands of miles of paved roads, and were enduring the administration of President Harding. He appears in two censuses with his family in Newburyport in 1870 and 1880, in the second one listed as a farm laborer and a seaman along with his older brother John William. By 1885, he had moved to Boston and was working as a waiter in a restaurant.

On 11 October of that year he married an Irish immigrant named Catherine G. Donohue, daughter of Mary and Timothy Donohue, also residents of the city. From all appearances, it was a Roman Catholic ceremony, since the celebrant was a priest named Father Joseph E. Keyes who lists himself as such in the 1880 city directory. Since Samuel Jr.’s roots were in Protestant Yankee Newburyport, and since his parents had been married by a Congregational minister 40 years earlier, this may have been a
somewhat controversial move. There was apparently no expediency involved, since their first child, May (or Mary) Ella, was born two years later (February 1887). The couple had five more children: Harriet E. (b. 1888), Frances E. “Fannie” (b. 1891), Albert Brydon (1892-1974), Ellsworth E. (1895), and finally, Kathleen E. (1898), the last when the mother, Catherine, like their father, was 38. By 1891, Samuel Jr. was employed as a captain mariner, perhaps a ferryman for the service between Newburyport and Boston as he was later in life. They lived at 37 Lime St. in the North Shore town. By 7 June 1900, the date of the next census, the couple and their 6 children have moved to Boston, specifically 33 Suffolk St. in Chelsea, where Samuel lists his profession as a meat-cutter, or butcher.

The 1910 Census of 16 April suggests that some major change in the Post family structure had occurred, but its cause or nature cannot be ascertained from the document itself. Samuel Jr.’s profession is registered as a deckhand on the ferry, perhaps the Newburyport-Boston line, and his 5 children with Catherine from the previous census, ranging in age from 21 to 12, live in the house, May (Mary) Ella presumably having married Mr. McCluskey by this time. But Catherine is no longer the spouse. Instead, a Mary E. is the wife, age
31, with “M1” noted as her marital status and “M2” for Samuel, 48. Clearly it was her first marriage and her husband’s second. And there are two little girls who are definitely not Catherine’s: Alice E., age 8 as of 19 February, and Edna Gertrude, age 4, who would not turn 5 for another month or so, 12 May. Since Alice’s birthdate according to the records was 19 February 1902 and Mary E. was definitely her mother as well as Edna’s, the seismic family change had to have occurred before the day of Alice’s birth. If Mary E. is 31 in 1910, then she had to have been born around 1879, which would have made her 23 when Alice was born and her husband 39, at least according to the census. Two of Edna’s children remembered that Mary’s unmarried name was Davidson, but thus far, I have not been able to verify this or to find any definite record of her aside from the censuses of 1910 and 1920. In the first, she names her father’s birthplace as New York and her mother’s as Ireland, and says she is able to read and write. In the second, her mother’s birthplace is still Ireland, but her father’s has been changed to Massachusetts. The 1920 Census of 10 January presents another discrepancy. The family has moved to the 25 Beacon Place address in Chelsea that Edna, her husband, and their first four children will inhabit by 1930. Most everyone seems to have aged 10 years: Samuel is 58, Alice 17, Edna 14, Ellsworth 24, Harriet 30, and May Ella McCluskey was back home, age 32. All of this is consistent with earlier information and birth dates. But Mrs. Mary E. Post, has only aged 4 years from 1910. In that census, she was 31. In 1920, she is 35. It is obviously the same woman. Which of her ages was the real one? According to 1910, she
was born in 1879, which would have made her 23 in the year of Alice’s birth. But in the 1920 data, if she was 35, her birth year would have been 1885, which would have made her 17 in 1902 when her first daughter arrived. In 1920, Mary and Alice are employed as packers in a candy factory, perhaps the New England Confectionary in Boston, where Necco wafers were made. After this date, I can find no trace of Mary E. or Samuel Dexter Post, Jr. I conjectured his death date based on a line in my father’s notes about him: “Died at 62.” If this is true, and his daughter Edna was married on 19 August 1923, he at least lived to see her wedding, since his birthday was 5 September 1861. I can vaguely remember an old photograph of him with a beard, standing on his ferryboat, looking at the camera, a picture that I hope to see again.

**Alice and Edna.** Edna was my grandmother, or as they say in the Northeast, my Nana. We were fortunate to have her and to know her as a person. Not a day goes by when I don’t think about her. I am getting to know her older sister a little better because her life is fairly well documented in various censuses. I was able to trace Alice because of another note of my father’s, probably based on my Aunt Virginia’s extensive family knowledge: “Married a Thompson.” I have hope that someday I will make a connection with one of her grandchildren who knows her family history, just as I hope I can meet one of our cousins who is a descendant of Grandpa Leo’s brothers Bill, Jack, Eddie, and Harold, or perhaps of his sister Madelaine. Alice E. Post Thompson (1902-
86) outlived her little sister by two decades. In one picture, perhaps taken on their front porch at 25 Beacon Place in Chelsea, they seem to be about 19 and 16, respectively, which would make the year 1921. Their facial expressions and postures are fascinating. They seem to have a close relationship and are all dressed up for some autumn or spring occasion. In those days, of course, ladies did not leave the house without their hats. Alice and Edna appear as though they are posing for the photographer with feigned, bemused reluctance. It would be interesting to know more about them at this age, or what relationship they had with their half-siblings, Catherine’s children.

Alice was married by 1921 or so to a Clifford Henry Thompson (b.1899), whose family had immigrated to Chelsea from Nova Scotia. Like his future brother-in-law Leo J. Stapleton Sr. and his brother Bill Stapleton, Thompson registered for the draft for World War I. His mother was a widow by 1920 and he defined his profession as chauffeur of a grocery truck. The family lists its native tongue as French, which is an intriguing detail. In 1930, Clifford was unemployed like millions of Americans. By 1940, he was a stevedore who moved ground cargo on the docks of the Boston waterfront. He and Alice had 7 children according to that year’s census, all still at home at 26 ½ Spencer St. in Chelsea, the eldest at that time Doris, 18, the youngest Lawrence, 4. One daughter was named Mary E., probably for Alice’s and Edna’s mother of the same name. In a slightly later picture of them, taken about 1925, they still seem affectionately close. Their hair is short, or “bobbed,” as was the fashion of the decade. In the part of the 1940 census dated 4 April, Edna and Leo, who have moved to 54 Falcon St. in East Boston, listed 7 children themselves, from Virginia (15) to Thomas (2), with another on the way. Edna, who would share a birthday with her grandfather Samuel and brother Ronald Patrick. Sr., 5 September.

Just as the men in their lives worked at their professions, Edna, Alice, Mary Ellen, Mary E. were engaged in theirs for every day of their
adult lives, with no time off. They ran their households: children, food, cooking, baths, cleaning, marriage. It is unlikely that any of their kitchens resembled the early 20th century example in the picture in this paragraph, though they may have had some of the same features. It looks as if it’s never had anybody in it. And surely the profession of housewife was no less exhausting then than it is now. What’s more, Nana and her sisters enjoyed few or none of the conveniences that we take for granted, or only experienced them in the beginnings of their technology. Fresh fruit and vegetables were hard to find out of season, needless to say, so people were forced to be locavores. There were no microwave ovens or frozen food. There were no disposable paper products such as diapers, Kleenex, or paper towels. There was little prepackaged baby food or premeasured medicine for children. There were no pediatricians or professional child care centers. There was not always reliable hot running water for convenient bathing and for keeping messy children clean. For that matter, not everyone had indoor plumbing for baths or toilets. There was no refrigeration besides that provided by the iceman, no supermarkets, washing machines, dryers. Central heating was uncommon, and many stoves were still wood-burning into the early 20th century. Lighting was frequently gas rather than electric. Irons with easily adjustable settings, synthetic clothing that resisted wrinkling, convenient hair care and skin products, inexpensive new clothing and corner drugstores would have been an almost unimaginable luxury. Frankly, I don’t know how they did it or how they stood it. But they did. I appreciate it more than I can say. However, I will say it anyway. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.
Appendix A: Will of James Stapleton I, 1831

Will of James Stapleton
from Newfoundland will books volume 1 pages 146 to 148 probate year 1832

In re
James Stapleton deceased.

In the name of God Amen. I James Stapleton of Harbour Grace in the Island of Newfoundland Planter being now weak in body but of sound mind and memory (blessed be God for it) do this the nineteenth day of April in the year of our Lord God one thousand eight hundred and thirty one make and publish this my last will and testament in manner and form following that is to say Imprimis I give and resign my immortal soul into the hands of my creator, and my body to be decently buried and after my just debts are fully paid
Item I give and bequeath unto the children of my late son Bartholomew Stapleton (their heirs and assigns) being four in number the two thirds of the Farm or plantation cleared cultivated and occupied by me together with the house erected thereon as well as all other out houses and erections on said plantation or farm and the remaining one third of said farm and house I give and bequeath unto the children of my late son James Stapleton their heirs and assigns being two in number and it is my particular wish desire and order, and it is hereby particularly understood and stipulated, that they the said children being six in all shall manure till and cultivate the said plantation and farm of their mutual use and benefit without quarreling or dispute.
Item. I bequeath that the mothers of said six children Elizabeth wife
of my late son Barthw Stapleton and Anne wife of my late son James Stapleton that they shall and may remain on enjoy and occupy the said plantation and house as long as they remain unmarried and no longer.

Item. That in case and should it so happen that any of the said children should be bound apprentices to any particular trade or be employed in any particular business or calling as may be most conducive to their interest, that then and in that case they or any one of them are and may be at full liberty to rent out for a term not exceeding five years their proportion of the said house or plantation as may be settled on by appraisement or valuation of any two honest and well meaning inhabitants of Harbour Grace who may be considered competent judges of the value thereof.

Item. That any sum or sums of money which may be due or owing to me out of the insolvent estate of Hugh Wm. Danson of Bristol or any dividend arising therefrom shall be appropriated to the use of and support of the said Elizabeth and Anne Stapleton and their children.

Item I give and bequeath my bed and bedding to Margaret daughter of my late son Barthw Stapleton.

Item I give and bequeath unto Michl son of my late son James Stapleton my silver watch and a fowling piece

Item I give and bequeath the whole of the furniture which originally belonged to or remained in the house unto Elizabeth wife of my late son Barthw Stapleton but however it is not to be understood that the furniture bed or bedding or any other articles which belong to Anne wife of my late son James Stapleton is not included in this bequest but shall remain for her own use and benefit.

Item I give and bequeath unto Elizabeth Stapleton wife of my late son Barthw Stapleton and to Anne Stapleton wife of my late son James Stapleton whatever quantity of rum and molasses which may be remaining on hand in my possession which shall be peaceably disposed of to the best advantage for the support of themselves and their children.

Item And as for the horse which I now own or have I hereby empower the executors to this will to dispose of the same to the best advantage. And I hereby appoint Mr. William Innott Merchant Harbour Grace and Mr. Roger Hanrahan Planter of Mosquito to be my executors to
this will hereby revoking and annulling any other will or wills by me heretofore made and that this remain as my last will and testament.

James his X mark Stapleton (LS)

Signed and sealed in the presence of us as witnesses thereto wherein the words divided in equal proportions among the said six children were marked out and the words "appropriated to the use of and support of the said Elizabeth and Anne Stapleton and their children inserted. Thos. Martin. John Coady

Certified Correct,

D. M. Browning
Registrar

Detail
Will of James Stapleton I

Date
19 April 1831

(I) 24 October 1978

Dear Leo:

As I promised, here are the pictures I had done for you. Nana was born in 1871 and Grandpa was born in 1865 according to their ages as shown on my Birth Certificate. Both were born in Newfoundland. Nana in Carbonear and Grandpa in Harbour Grace, in case you want to try to trace your roots. Uncle Bill was born in 1896—Jack in 98—your Dad in 1900—James (rocking chair) in 1902 and passed away in 1912. He had an injury to his back. Another brother was born in 1904 (Franki) but lived only a short time. Uncle Milton was born in 1905—I in 1907 (can't believe it) and Harold in 1909. Harold and I were born at the time of the picture taking. I think the picture of the boys is nice to have so had it done for you.

It was so nice to see you—but it was a sad occasion. Do hope you'll be on for a reunion this next summer. I had better be invited!

Do hope Tommy is getting adjusted. It is quite lonesome without your mate especially when you haven't children. Have the same pictures for him and will write him tonight. I miss Jerry more and more but am fortunate to have three wonderful sons, 3 beautiful granddaughters and two lovely daughters-in-law.

Haven't heard from your sisters or brothers since we were together. Caryl and Madeline call me frequently. They have news from Virginia so I keep abreast of what's going on.

Do hope you and your family are well & you looked very well and I was very happy to see you.

Give my love to Marian and the children. I don't recall every seeing any one of them. Sure would love to. I'll bet they are all lovely, boys
and girls included.

Aunt Madelaine [that's how she spells it]

P. S. My mother and Dad were married in St. Catherine's Church in Somerville in January of 1896. Uncle Bill was born in October.

(II) March 12, 1980

Dear Leo:

Many thanks for your letter and correspondence on the Stapleton and Kennedy families. I'm looking forward to receiving future information. I'll have all the information you send me photostatted as Jerry, Kevin, and David are very interested in it. I think I told you Kevin made a try at it—sent $10.00 some place in Nfld. but got no information whatsoever. The next time I talk with him I'll see if he has any further information—almost sure he hasn’t. I still will get in touch with Bill Kennedy who lives in Dedham [Mass.] as his wife told me he had checked and received quite a lot of information on the Kennedy family although my mother claimed his Dad was no relation of hers! Cecile, Bill's wife, told me my mother was Bernard Kennedy's cousin according to their information. I've decided to go up to visit them and ask to read what he has. May have a copy made!

Thought my mother had five brothers—don't know why? I knew of three—Tom, Nicholas and I think a Will. Uncle Tom (no family) lived in Carmichael's, Pa. and visited us quite often and at one time he lived in Washington and Mother and I visited him there. Her brother Nick settled in Fernie, B.C.—had two daughters and two sons. Josephine, his youngest daughter lived with us for about a year in Roslindale but got lonesome and went home. I hear from her a couple of times a year.

My father had only one sister—Margaret. Really don't know how many brothers he had but I did know three of them. Mike, Joe and Jim. They all came to the States. Lived in E. Boston for awhile and
then settled in Medford. Uncle Mike's daughters are still living—
Catherine who is in a Nursing Home and Margaret who married and
had two daughters (who are both married) now lives in a lovely
Condominium in N. J. She is a widow. Uncle Joe's family are all
deceased but I know one of his granddaughters Mary Connors. She is
married to my closest girlfriend's husband's brother. I see her
occasionally. Have no ties with Uncle Jim's offsprings.
Appendix C: Some Stapleton Family Residences

16 Suffolk St., Chelsea, residence of Leo J. Stapleton Sr. and family, 1933-36
54 Falcon St., East Boston, Stapleton family residence 1937-46.

54 Falcon St: Boston Globe photo taken 8 April 1944 for feature story on Leo Sr. in the Navy, who wanted to come home for Father’s Day, to see his wife and 9 children. From left, top: Nancy, Richard, Virginia, Edna (m), Leo, Edna (d). Front row: Ronald, Thomas, James, Gerald
199 Putnam St., Stapleton family residence in 1910

218 E. Eagle St., E. Boston, Stapleton family residence in 1920
3846 Washington St. lot, backyard, July 1988

View of lot from street, July 1988
Western view of Washington St. from the lot. The Forest Hills train station with its clock tower is visible in the background. July 1988

40 Sheafe St., Boston, Stapleton family residence in 1900
Appendix D: Some Documents (you can zoom them larger)

Rev. Jos. E. Keyes, October 30 1885. 1883 directory lists him as a native of Boston, R. C., Roman Catholic.

1900 Census: Post Family (7 June)
1910 (16 April): Post Family

1920 (10 January): Post Family
1910 Census: Stapleton Family (17 May)
Appendix E: Colonel Elmer Ephraim Ellsworth (1837-61)

According to family tradition, we are related to Colonel Ellsworth, the first commissioned Union officer killed in the Civil War, on 24 May 1861 in Alexandria, Virginia. I have not been able to find any evidence to support this theory. The only possible connection we might have to him is through the mother of Samuel Dexter Post Jr., Harriet Noyes Ellsworth Post (1834-1910). However, her genealogy reveals no such relation. Her family, like the Posts, was native to Newburyport from the late eighteenth century. The Civil War hero hailed from Saratoga County, New York, son of Ephraim D. Ellsworth, a tailor. He worked in Abraham Lincoln’s law office in Springfield, Illinois in 1860 and became friends with the future president. He was the commander of the Eleventh New York Volunteer Regiment, otherwise known as the Fire Zouaves, a body of troops that he had raised himself. He and some of his men were trying to remove a secessionist flag from Marshall House, an inn, when one of the Virginians took exception and shot Ellsworth through the heart with a shotgun, killing him instantly. It is said that they covered his body with the very flag he had sought to remove. He was considered a great hero, and his death helped spark enthusiasm for the war in the northern states. Here is a Smithsonian article about him and about the incident.
Appendix F: The 51 Grandchildren, by Year of Birth. (For those born with the Stapleton surname, only the first and middle names, when known, are supplied.)

1946: Marjorie Jean (1)
1949: Harold Bates “Sonny” Goff Jr. (1)
1951: Richard Dexter Jr. (1)
1952: James Edward Jr., Steven Alan Goff (2)
1953: Patricia Marie, Dennis Alan (2)
1954: Michael Patrick, Barbara Anne (2)
1956: Daniel Leo, Matthew Brian, Karen (3)
1957: Timothy Francis, Gerald Thomas Jr. (2)
1958: Kathleen, Michael Lee (2)
1959: Virginia Marie, Julie Ann, Maryellen Elaine (3)
1960: Madelyn Rita, Jeanine Marie, Joan (3)
1961: Kenneth Leroy, Carol Lynn, Ronald Patrick Jr., Paul Kevin, Kathryn Anne Kaufman (5)
1962: Christopher Paul, Michelle Claire, Christine Marie Tarris, Richard Kaufman Jr. (4)
1963: John Fitzgerald (Gerald), John Fitzgerald (James), Joseph Edward, Jeanne Anne Tarris (4)
1964: Elizabeth Francine, Linda Kaufman (2)
1965: Matthew Scott, Leo Richard Tarris (2)
1966: Susan Patricia, Richard Roy Tarris Jr., Kevin A. Kaufman (3)
1967: Steven (1)
1968: Peter Prescott Holman (1)
1969: Michael Leo (1)
1970: Ann Kathryn Kaufman, Heather Ann Holman (2)
1971: Laura Elizabeth Tarris (1)
1973: Kimberly Ann Holman (1)
1976: Mark Anthony Joseph Holman (1)
1983: Julie Ann Tarris (1)