

**Doane Family Association of America 52<sup>nd</sup> International Family  
Reunion meeting at Plymouth, Massachusetts in July 2012**

***REPORT OF THE DEACON JOHN DONE  
RESEARCH COMMITTEE TO THE BOARD OF  
DIRECTORS***

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**DD July 2012**

# **DOANE FAMILY ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA**

## **REPORT OF THE DEACON JOHN DONE RESEARCH COMMITTEE**

(Progress report covering the two years since the last meeting of the Committee at Crete, Nebraska in 2010)

### ***Transcriptions (See Appendix A)***

One task that has taken longer than expected is the transcription of a number of early 17th century documents dealing with lawsuits in the English Court of Chancery involving individuals or families bearing the name Done (or variants). The reason for looking at these documents is that the litigants involved in these proceeding normally provided a lot of detailed information about their family relationships in support of their claims to property or other assets – what the lawsuits were usually about – hopefully providing us with information to help us in our search for the family of Deacon John Done.

I attach a report that summarises this work. Unfortunately, there is not much that adds to what we already know. No new leads were found, although several of the lawsuits did involve members of the family of John Done, ‘whitebaker’, the family that was also involved in other lawsuits that pointed us in the direction of John Done, ‘cordwainer’, who so far is the only person not to have been eliminated in our search for the Deacon. At least, none of the lawsuits analysed in this most recent round of transcriptions would cause us to abandon the hypothesis that ‘the cordwainer’ did indeed become ‘the Deacon’.

### **Suggestions for future research**

***- No further research leads suggested at present.***

### ***Y-DNA project***

Although this project is potentially of crucial importance in the work of this committee, Dick Doane (TX), as the project’s chief administrator, will be reporting on it separately, and in detail. Just to summarize, so far, no match has been found between the Y-DNA profile of the test group of 3 DFA members (whose Y-DNA bears the Deacon’s ancestral signature ) and other men (who bear the name Done, or its variants) who are descended from men resident in England at the time of the Deacon’s journey to Plymouth Colony. This is despite the sending of many letters inviting participation (at no cost) to men bearing the name who are resident outside North America. Earlier letters sent had also produced a poor response and it was hoped that the new format adopted for the second tranche of letter to be sent, setting out the ability of the participant to discover his own genetic ancestry would have produced a better response. Unfortunately the responses to the new letter were little better.

Dick reports that apart from those whose Y-DNA matches the ancestral signature the results have identified six distinct genetic family groups plus 9 singletons (those not immediately related to any other individual tested) and 3 others not yet grouped. He also reports that there are close matches with about 100 other surnames, indicating a close genetic connection with other individuals, but one which probably dates back to the time before surnames were adopted in England.

## **Suggestions for future research**

***- Based on the incidence of matching surnames in particular areas of England, Dick suggests a further analysis of court records in London and elsewhere, concentrating on the counties of Lancashire, Cheshire and Middlesex.***

## ***Guild of One-Name Studies***

As part of an effort to encourage participation in our Y-DNA project I have registered the Done name (and variants) with the UK-based Guild of One-Name Studies. This provides a forum for Dones in the UK and elsewhere to join, identifying potential participants in our testing program, but response has so far been disappointing.

## **Suggestions for future activity**

***- Consider other ways to encourage participation in the Y-DNA project.***

## ***Attendance at Shows***

I recently attended the family history event: 'Who do you think you are?' for the second time. As usual the show included a number of workshops and seminars covering a wide range of genealogy related subjects and an exhibition. On this occasion, I spent most of the time at the FamilyTreeDNA stand where many interesting presentations were given including several by Bennett Greenspan the founder of the organization that supports the DFA Y-DNA project.

## ***Steven Morrison's Report (See Appendix B)***

This Report has already been circulated to members of this Committee and the general response has been that it represents a very thorough and systematic review of all the relevant Colonial records, identifying and analysing all references to John Done, and seeking further pointers to future research, similar to the five 'Clues to the Identity of Mr John Done' put before the DFA in 1976. In much the same way as the work of this Committee since then (with some interruptions) has been based on pursuit of these clues, so it is to be hoped that the suggestions for future research contained in this Report will also take us forward in our search for the Deacon's identity.

What may we hope to discover? So far our research has enabled us to eliminate all but one of the men identified by Gilbert Doane as being the one who went on to become the Deacon and to construct a hypothesis which suggests that that man was known as John Done 'cordwainer' when he lived in England. Steven Morrison's suggestions for future research may enable us to confirm that hypothesis, or refute it (and produce another).

## **Suggestions for future research arising from this Report**

***- Review the records of the London Undertakers who financed several of the voyages between England and Plymouth Colony in the early 1600s;***

***- Consider English university records to discover the possible attendance of the Deacon; and***

*- Consider links with William Atwood and William Paddy, individuals with whom the Deacon may have had relations in England.*

## ***The Hannah Leycroft Connection***

Although the probability of a connection between John Done and Hannah Leycroft has been referred to earlier research, I recently revisited the sources consulted earlier to see whether more up to date information was now available. I found nothing new, but it is worthwhile restating the case, since it is the only instance so far where we have found evidence to support the possibility that someone who the Deacon knew in Plymouth also had a connection with him before he left England. The logic behind this approach is that if we can find someone who was a member of Plymouth Colony at the same time as the Deacon, and if that same individual was associated with someone going by the name of John Done in England, and the dates and other circumstantial evidence fit, then we are likely to have identified the person who went on to become the Deacon.

The available evidence points to just such a link in the case of Hannah Leycroft.

- Leycroft (and its various spellings) is a very unusual surname, reducing any possibility of identifying the wrong individuals.
- Agnes Done's Bill of Complaint against John Done 'cordwainer' and others identifies William Leycroft as her son by her first marriage to Samson Leycroft.
- Parish records of St Stephen Walbrook in the city of London record Hannah Leycroft as being baptised on January 1 1628 (Julian calendar), her father being Willam Leycroft.
- Plymouth Colonial records show a marriage between John Mayo and Hannah Lecraft at Eastham in February 1659 (Julian calendar)
- This would make Hannah aged 31 at the time of her marriage, and if she came to Plymouth on the Handmaid when it arrived in Plymouth in October 1630 she would only have been aged two and a half years old, but passenger lists of crossings made at the time frequently show children as young as 18 months old making the crossing.

## **CONCLUSION**

**We know that John Done (the cordwainer) was very well acquainted with the Leycroft family in England, through the complaint against him made by Agnes Done (formerly Leycroft) and that John Done (the Deacon) must have known Hannah Lecraft when she lived in the small community of Eastham. This is one of the strongest pieces of evidence we have that 'the cordwainer' went on to become 'the Deacon'.**

## **Suggestions for future research**

*- Carry out further research into the background of Hannah Lecraft (Leycroft) in Plymouth and Eastham.*

## ***Continuing research***

Other suggestions for research have been made in the past and it may be that the committee will want to continue or return to these lines of inquiry. For instance, it may be worthwhile returning to the previously unsuccessful attempts, previously carried out by Marshall Doane and others, to consider the possibility of such links with the families of Steven Bryant and Joseph Harding as more information becomes available on the internet.

## **Suggestions for future research**

- Consider other ways to encourage participation in the Y-DNA project;**
- Carry out further analysis of the geographical distribution of the Done name across Britain (including Donne, Dwnn and Dunne);**
- Examine further the history of the Dwnns of South Wales; and**
- Consider links with other individuals (in addition to William Atwood, William Paddy and Hannah Leycroft) with whom the Deacon may have had relations in England.**

## **Concluding remarks**

As I will be handing over as Chair of this committee after this meeting, I would like to summarise where I think the research project currently stands.

At present, we only have a single hypothesis that potentially answers the question posed by Gilbert Doane in 1972: “Mr John Done – Who Was He?” To my mind, we have come as close as we are ever likely to get identifying who he was before leaving England, but even if this is true, we would still like to trace the story back as far as we can and flesh out the picture of the man before he landed in Plymouth.

This means that the Y-DNA project run by Dick (TX) remains crucially important, as are the suggestions for further research set out in this report, particularly those identified in Steven Morrison’s paper.

Of course it is always possible that future research will throw up evidence that leads to a rejection of the ‘cordwainer’ hypothesis, without necessarily pointing to an alternative candidate for the eventual role of Deacon; in which case the search would continue.

The life of William Shakespeare, who did not die until 1616 and so was still alive when John Done was a young man, is still the subject of controversy, and this is despite the fact that many university research programs have been devoted to the subject. So the good news (or bad news according to your point of view) is that the work of the Deacon John Research Committee is never likely to be fully completed!

I would like end by expressing my sincere thanks to members of this committee for their support over the past few years.

Derek Done  
*Chair - Deacon John Doane Research Committee*