

Looking for Hollows in Colorado

“You’ll never find anyone related to me.” he said.

“Everyone has cousins, even if they don’t know them yet.” I told him.

After several conversations over coffee I found his mother’s family was part of a group of miners that came from Cornwall to the United States in the late 1870’s. They eventually settled in Colorado to mine gold in Gilpin County – the Gregory Lode. How hard must it have been living in the Rocky Mountains; the adjustment from a seaside home, green fields and well established communities, to an arid land of hard granite, scrub bushes and snowfall measured in feet.

Husbands, sons and single men came to Nevadaville, or Nevada City as it was once called, then married men’s families often followed.

Having found his grandparents and great-grandparents names; I went about reviewing the Federal Census from the later 1800’s in Gilpin County. And in the midst of all these Richards, Maddern’s, Harvey’s and Grenfell’s was an Elizabeth Wallow? There were no Wallows in his family line – as far as I knew. Elizabeth was living in the home of Thomas Oats Harvey in 1900. Her occupation is listed as housekeeper. Where was Lucy Richards Harvey, Thomas’ wife? Turns out Lucy Harvey died at only 38 years in 1886 leaving Thomas Harvey alone to raise their youngest son.

Wallow? Wollow? Why couldn’t these census takers have been chosen for their penmanship!?! Searching on-line brought up many possibilities for Elizabeth’s last name. But none of them a sure thing. This, I determined, needed further investigation; especially since Nevadaville was only two hours away by car. And the Gilpin County Courthouse is in Central City, Colorado, a few miles from Nevadaville, it turns out.

I started making phone calls and found the marriage and land records for the county are held in the Clerk of Recorders Office at the courthouse. I called this office and asked about visiting to look at the records. The woman in charge was confused as to why we’d want to examine them, but she invited us along anyway. (I secretly wondered why she didn’t get it, obviously she wasn’t a genealogist.)

We arrived too early on the appointed fall morning to call in the courthouse, so it was decided to visit Nevadaville first. Few buildings remained but the dirt streets were still visible up the hillside from Main Street. And the rusting hulks of mine shafts and head-frames could be seen looking downhill from the dusty main street.

All was quiet as an autumn wind rattled the fall leaves on the few trees. In contrast to the current atmosphere of the town are records and old timer’s tales. They talk about a, once robust, population that divided the town in half, one side Irish and one side Cornish – both working in the hard-rock gold mines. The stamp mills could be heard all the way from Central City. Today the town is as quiet as nearby Bald Mountain Cemetery; our next stop.

We walked among the graveyard’s silent sentinels. The names and dates inscribed on them told tales of short lives, and the often hard deaths, of these Bald Mountain area pioneers. The dappled light and shadow, from the many Quaking Aspens planted many years ago, fell across the grave-markers of his great-grandparents. He studied these in quiet contemplation, then marveled as I pointed out great-uncles and aunts, older cousins of his mother and her father. But in all the cemetery we surveyed, I did not find the grave of Elizabeth - either Wallow, or any name similar. Was that really how her last name was spelled?

Finally it was decided that we should go to the courthouse. We arrived at the beautiful old brick building and found the Clerk & Recorder Office. I asked about the marriage records. She told us they were not digitized and she would have her clerks bring out which ever ledger we wished, but we could only look at one of the large old books at a time. The first dust covered tome was brought out

to the table and I photographed each of the written treasures. Hours passed and the sun was moved toward the horizon. Finally it was time for dinner and the trip back over the mountain to home.

Later, reviewing the photographs, I discovered a marriage record for Thomas Oats Harvey and Elizabeth Ann Hollow! They were married on the 20th of April 1901 in Nevadaville, Gilpin County, Colorado. Her last name was "Hollow!" In 1901 Thomas O. Harvey was sixty-six years old and Elizabeth was in her late 50's. So she must have been married before. Had she come to the US by herself and married here or was she married back in England? Were there any children in her life? Or maybe she was a "spinster" and finally decided to marry Thomas in her later years? And what happened to her after Thomas died in June 1902? An effort to find the answer to the last question brought me to the 1910 Federal Census for Gilpin County, Colorado.

Elizabeth A. Harvey was living as "head of house" on Main Street in Nevadaville. She was sixty-one years old with no occupation listed. But what of Elizabeth's early years? Was her family left back in England? Was she originally from Cornwall?

Searching the Colorado State census of 1885 found "Eliz Hollon, thirty-eight years, wife." She was in the enumeration at the top of page 17, Gilpin County, District 2, dated 1 June 1885. Going back to the bottom of page 16 I found "Jno. Hollon, boarder in dwelling number 155." Jonathan, Elizabeth's husband, was a forty-four year old miner. No children live in the household. Time to look through overseas records for John and Elizabeth.

At the urging of Colin Hollow, I scanned images of Cornwall's marriage records on familysearch.org and found their marriage on the bottom of page 166. "1869...St. John's Church...Parish of Pendeen...County of Cornwall...May 15...John Hollow, his X mark, age 27. Condition: bachelor, Rank or profession: miner, Residence: Trewellard, Father's name and surname: William Hollow, Profession of father: miner. Elizabeth Ann Williams, her X mark, age 25, spinster, Pendeen, John Williams, miner." They were married in the parish church...after Banns. Now I was really involved. What happened to John?

In 1880 he and Elizabeth were living on Nevada Street in Central City, Colorado. He was mining and she, keeping house. They are both in their thirties and the census says that neither can read nor write. No children are living with them. So something happened to John Hollow between 1885 and 1900. Mining accidents were a constant danger during those years and several Cousin Jacks came to an early demise while plying their trade in the depths of the earth.

This mystery bothered me and prompted my search of death and cemetery records where John and Elizabeth lived. Still nothing was revealed. And then a random act of genealogical kindness brought me the answer to John's fate. Previously, I'd made friends with Liz, a volunteer for the Foothills Genealogical Society. The geological foothills are the base of the Rocky Mountains along the "mineral belt" in Colorado. Because I shared the location of the old marriage books with Liz and the FGS, she offered to "keep an eye out" for families of interest to me.

She sent me a copy of a newspaper clipping dated 11 December 1894 from The Colorado Transcript stating, "Died, at Thomas Pearce's ranch on Belcher Hill, of miner's complaint, John Hollow, aged 54 years. He leaves a wife at Nevada, and many friends who considered him an honest and industrious man..." Jonathan Samuel Hollow died 8 December 1894 and is buried in Bald Mountain Cemetery. No gravestone exists.

I am still searching for information on the fate of Elizabeth Williams Hollow Harvey.