



SPRING 2020 NEWSLETTER

**THE NICKERSON FAMILY ASSOCIATION, INC.**

*William Nickerson*  
Signature of  
William<sup>1</sup> Nickerson

## Join us for Chatham History Weekend, June 13!

**10AM to 2PM:** Visit our Hands-On-History presentation on the Vikings. Learn how Viking traders would start fires, bake bread and preserve food. Learn how the Vikings went to market and common foods that they ate. Explore Viking trade routes, clothing, daily life and raids versus trades.

**1PM:** Learn to plant a Native American “three sisters garden” with Colonial gardening expert Sonny Gada. The Caleb Nickerson Homestead will be open from 10AM to 4PM.

### More Hands-on-History Throughout the Summer and Fall!

We have planned many fun events through the summer and fall. See page 3 for a schedule.



Colonial gardening expert  
Sonny Gada creates an herb garden

**Due to the covid-19 pandemic, all scheduled events are subject to change.**

## Reconnect with Cousins and Commemorate the Mayflower’s 400th Anniversary!



Our 123rd  
Annual Reunion  
will be held in  
Chatham and Eastham  
September 11 to 14.  
See page 5 for details.

← *The Mayflower passed  
Chatham twice in 1620*

## Nickerson Kin

See page 7

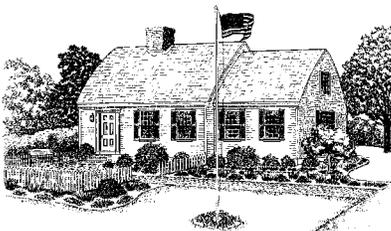


Olympia Warren



## Calling All Samuel Line Descendants!

*If you are descended from the Samuel line, we want to hear from you. Do you have genealogical information, photographs, Bible inscriptions? Please let us know at [wmnick1107@gmail.com](mailto:wmnick1107@gmail.com)*



“Nickerson House.”

*...being, in a sense, the printed voice of the Nickerson Family Association*



## Nickerson Church Celebrates 300th Anniversary

### Did you know?

The church that William Nickerson founded with services in his own home in about 1664 is celebrating its 300th anniversary this year. The First Congregational Church of Chatham was officially founded in 1720. This Sept. 13, Nickerson Sunday, will be especially significant as Nickersons are invited to return to the church during reunion weekend for a special commemoration of the 300th anniversary.

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## Genealogy Corner

By Nancy Nickerson Corey  
Board Member and Past President

This is an exciting time in the NFA's genealogy community. Here are some of the things I am most excited about and want to share with you:

First, and foremost, we are in the final steps in the republishing of Volume IV of our published genealogical books! This book has been out of print for some time and **Executive Director Debra Lawless** has been working diligently on preparing this volume for publication. Stay tuned for an announcement shortly on the availability of this book!

Also, we will be publishing a brand new, never-before-published "additions and corrections" book. This book was written by **Burt Derick**, as his last publication, for the NFA and we are thrilled to offer this to our membership. As this book nears publication we will be pre-selling it to offset publishing costs. I assure you that I will be first in line to receive this publication. Anyone who already owns, or purchases, Volumes I – IV will want to own their copy of this! So, again, stay tuned for more information on this volume as it nears publication.

NFA genealogist **Gail Blankenau** continues to work on our next project, the volume on the descendants of Samuel, the second son of William and Anne. She is still seeking photographs and documents of descendants. If you are a Samuel descendant and have genealogical materials, photographs and/or documents, please contact Gail at [gblankenau@msn.com](mailto:gblankenau@msn.com) to discuss with her how to document your family in this project.

The online database is, as always, a work in progress. Currently it includes 52,707 individuals, 23 families, 15,684 places, 65,281 notes, 4,563 sources and I have recently added 1,720 media. There are 202 registered users, with approximately 10-to-15 active users. The genealogy committee is working on how to make this database more useful to the membership, updating and adding to it as time allows. This database is a member benefit of the NFA and if you do not have access and would like access please contact me at [nancyroots@msn.com](mailto:nancyroots@msn.com).

Debra Lawless and her band of faithful volunteers continue to receive, digitize and file the abundance of genealogical information as it arrives at the Nick House repository in Chatham. Research is also done by volunteers for NFA members. Materials can be mailed to the Nickerson Family Association or contact Debra Lawless at [DebraNFA@outlook.com](mailto:DebraNFA@outlook.com) to discuss.

Lastly, I am excited to say that I hope to be in Chatham, at the Nick House, working on-site with the genealogical records, assisting Debra and the volunteers there as needed. I hope to be on-site from the end of May to mid-July. If you're on the Cape during that time please stop by the Nick House. I look forward to seeing everyone!

As always, if you have genealogy-related questions or comments feel free to contact me at [nancyroots@msn.com](mailto:nancyroots@msn.com).

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## Caleb Nickerson Homestead Schedule 2020

**Saturday, May 23, 1 PM:** Plant a dooryard herb garden with Colonial gardening expert **Sonny Gada**. Herbs will be for sale. Caleb Nickerson Homestead open for tours. \$5 non-members; members free.

**Wednesday, June 10, 10 AM to 1 PM:** Caleb Nickerson Homestead open for tours each Wednesday through September 30.

**Saturday, June 13, 10 AM to 4 PM:** Chatham History Weekend. CNH open for tours. 10 AM to 2 PM: Viking experts **Gregory Lott** and **Casey Duckett** will demonstrate Viking cooking techniques and speak on Viking life. 1 PM: **Sonny Gada** will plant a Native American “three sisters garden.”

**Friday, September 11 through Monday, September 14:** CNH open to Nickersons during 123rd Annual Togethering reunion.

**Saturday, September 19, 1 PM:** The Endicott Pear tree, planted in Danvers, Mass., between 1632 and 1649, is believed to be the oldest living cultivated fruit tree in North America. **Sonny Gada** will give a talk on the meaning of pears in Colonial history.

**Saturday, October 24, 1 PM:** “Once upon a midnight dreary/ while I pondered, weak and weary...” Join us for a spooky reading of Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Raven” and make your own Halloween flower arrangement. Cider and cookies will be served. Pre-registration required.

**Saturday, November 21, 1 PM:** Make your own Thanksgiving centerpiece with **Sonny Gada**. All materials will be provided. Pre-registration required.

**Saturday, December 5, 1 to 4 PM:** Caleb Nickerson Homestead 17th Annual Hearthside Open House. Join us for this wonderful start to the holiday season. Bring mittens for our third annual Mitten Tree. All proceeds go to the **Chatham Children’s Fund**.

**Saturday, December 12, 1 PM:** Make your own holiday centerpiece with **Sonny Gada** in the beautifully-decorated Caleb Nickerson Homestead. All materials will be provided. Pre-registration required.

**Sunday, January 24, 2021, 1 to 4 PM:** Colonial Cooking Club, Beehive Oven Event. Pre-registration required.

**Email [DebraNFA@outlook.com](mailto:DebraNFA@outlook.com) for details on club membership.**



*Sonny plants a “three sisters” garden: bean, corn, squash*



*The 2nd Annual Mitten Tree*



*Sonny creates a floral centerpiece*

# 2019 Membership Report

by Ron Nickerson, membership chairman

Hello cousins! We are pleased to report that the NFA continues to attract many new members each year. In addition, long-standing members who faithfully renew their memberships often include generous monetary gifts which are gratefully received. Life Memberships and our new Sustaining Memberships remain an attractive option for those who have chosen to make a long-term commitment to our family. Finally, gift memberships for Young Nicks (under 18) ensure that our Nickerson legacy is carried forward into the future. Thanks to all of you who continue to make the NFA healthy and strong by your loyal and steadfast support. As we go forward together, our future looks especially bright. If you haven't already paid your 2020 dues, now would be a great time to do so. Go to [www.nickersonassoc.com](http://www.nickersonassoc.com). Under "Membership" print and mail the form with a check to the NFA. Easier still, go into the store and renew through PayPal.

## *We Welcome Nick Cousins!*

Bruce Baker, North Easton, Mass.  
John Blackie, Naples, Fla.  
Marie Brewer, Truro, N.S.  
Cynthia Burdsall, Glastonbury, Conn.  
Tami Burton, Newport, R.I.  
Mark & Tina Chase, Rocklin, Calif.  
June Conroy, Yarmouth, Mass.  
Phil Corey, McCook, Neb.  
Tom Corey, McCook, Neb.  
Daphna Cox, Sudbury, Mass.  
Dennis Delnan Jr., Pittsburgh, Penn.  
Laurie Deoss, Southbury, Conn.  
Phyllis Dillinger, Rockford, Ill.  
Betsey Dreves, Lebanon, Maine  
Ann Egley, Williamsburg, Iowa  
Betsy Eyre, Portsmouth, R.I.  
James Fairfield-Sonn, Old Lyme, Conn.  
John Fitzgerald, The Villages, Fla.  
Amanda Gaze, New Orleans, La.  
Gwendolyn Gaze, New Orleans, La.  
Joellen Greenlee, Colorado Springs, Col.  
Kathy Jo Greenlee, Lenexa, Kan.  
Frank Haddleton, Burlington, Vt.  
Kurt Hakansson, Jamaica Plain, Mass.  
Amy Huston, Dartmouth, Mass.  
Alex Kennedy, Dennisport, Mass.  
Althea Lane, Chatham, Mass.  
Laura Anne Lechner, Aldie, Va.

Tracy Lopez, Escondido, Calif.  
John MacDonald, Old Lyme, Conn.  
Christin Manning, Burlington, Mass.  
Lorraine McConnell, Pittsburgh, Penn.  
Thelma McMahan, Vero Beach, Fla.  
Robert Montgomery, Westerville, Ohio  
Brian Moore, Greenville, Del.  
Michael Moore, Cranston, R.I.  
Brooke Nickerson, Colorado Springs, Col.  
James Nickerson, Nashua, N.H.  
Kim Nickerson, Concord, N.C.  
Leyla Nickerson, West Barnstable, Mass.  
Michael Nickerson, Sayreville, N.J.  
Ralph Nickerson, Chichester, N.H.  
Noreen Nickerson-Cruz, Sun City, Ariz.  
Deirdre Noble, Edwards, Col.  
William Ralston Jr., Los Altos Hills, Calif.  
Claire Sheehan, Norwell, Mass.  
Mary Shipley, Williamsburg, Iowa  
Linda Silverstein, Lincolnshire, Ill.  
Edward Stalling, Missoula, Mont.  
David Walters, Western Springs, Ill.  
Taylor Worthington-Gilchrist, Winter Haven, Fla.



Visitors Laurie and Ed Stalling from Montana



Visitors Christina and Julia Evola from New York

# Reunion September 11 to 14 in Eastham and Chatham

Exciting plans are underway for the NFA's 123rd Reunion Sept. 11 to 14!

We have lots to celebrate!

*Due to the covid-19 pandemic, on May 16 the NFA board will consider whether it should cancel the 123rd annual fall reunion.*

**Friday, September 11** we will begin our explorations of the Mayflower 400th anniversary with a visit to the Chatham Historical Society. There we will see interactive exhibits on the Mayflower and on life on shore as the Wampanoags knew it in 1620.

That evening, we will kick off the weekend in style with a wine and hors d'oeuvre party at the NFA campus in Chatham. The Caleb Nickerson Homestead will be open and the party will also be held under a tent.

**Saturday, September 12**, in the Pilgrim town of Eastham, we will commemorate the 400th anniversary of the Mayflower during our annual meeting with a Mayflower presentation.

And on **Sunday, September 13** we will be back in Chatham where we will join in with the 300th anniversary of the church that William Nickerson founded in his home. At noon we'll enjoy a cookout at the campus and hear about the 2019 findings at the Nickerson dig from archaeologist Craig Chartier.

Invitations will be mailed in June.

As a special incentive, you might like to know that the Mayflower II is scheduled to be docked in Provincetown during our reunion. You might take a tour during free time on Saturday afternoon.

We encourage you to book your hotel now. We have reserved blocks of rooms at the Four Points by Sheraton Eastham and at its sister hotel next door, the Ocean Park Inn. You can book the Sheraton here: <https://www.marriott.com/events/start.mi?id=1571075467474&key=GRP> or Ocean Park Inn here: <http://www.capecodopi.com>, using the access word "Nickerson."



*Welcome to Eastham*



*Cove Burying Ground*



*Captain Penniman House*



*Nauset Lighthouse*



*Fort Hill, Coast Guard Station in the distance*

## Beehive Bake



Colonial cook Anne Firth and Bob Nickerson working the beehive oven

## Around Campus



## Holiday Party



Phyllis Nickerson Power serves the punch; Leonard, Pat and Jeffrey Bassett from Falmouth; Holiday food catered by the Chatham Filling Station diner; John Nickerson converses with board member Bob Nickerson

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# NICKERSON KIN

By Nancy Nickerson Corey

With this newsletter I introduce the membership to a new, ongoing column, titled “Nickerson Kin.” In each newsletter I will introduce you to a Nickerson “cousin” and a Nickerson “ancestor,” selected randomly, or through nomination by a member. This should serve to bring us closer as a family and help us to unite as “kin.” Today we will begin with my granddaughter, Olympia, and my third great-aunt, Anna Maria. I hope you enjoy these, and if you wish to nominate an ancestor please contact me at [nancyroots@msn.com](mailto:nancyroots@msn.com). Also feedback on this column would be appreciated.

## MEET YOUR NICKERSON COUSIN:

**Olympia Joan Marie Warren** recently celebrated her third birthday. The daughter of Alyssa and Brett Warren, her Nickerson line (William, William, Thomas, Nathaniel, Issacher, Bassett, Bassett C., Horace, Jesse, Roy, David, Nancy, Alyssa) makes her a 14th generation Nickerson. She has four older siblings: Bryanna, Payton, Natalya and Everleigh. She loves to run and play, talks incessantly, loves to eat, play outside, swim, eat donuts and play with her grandma’s dog Bella, not necessarily in that order. She is full of vim and vinegar and is looking forward to pre-school. She was referred to recently as “having spunk,” which is an apt description! Recent reunion attendees will recognize Olympia, as she has already attended two NFA “togethings.” Olympia is one of our younger, if not youngest, NFA Life Members. I hope you enjoyed meeting Olympia!



*Olympia Warren*

## MEET A NICKERSON ANCESTOR:

**Anna Maria (Nickerson) Snow** is the subject of this profile.

Anna Marie is my third great-aunt and she fascinates me, which is why I chose her for this first profile. Anna Marie was born 13 Sep 1829 in Canadice, Ontario, N.Y., the daughter of Bassett C. and Geertje (Gertrude) (Rechtmeyer) Nickerson. She moved with her family to Dodge County, Wisc. between 1846 and 1849 and married William Snow 18 Oct 1849 at Elba, Dodge, Wisc.

In 1850 she is found with her husband in the census records living next door to her parents. By 1860 she is widow, living in Lowell, Dodge, Wisc. with two children: William, age nine, and daughter B.M., age six. By 1870 her son is married, and she is still in Lowell, with her daughter Betsy, age 16.

In 1871 Anna Marie, her daughter, her son and his family, along with her brother Horace and his family all migrated to Nebraska. This appears to have been a family group comprised of between 15 and 20 people. From research it appears they initially were headed to California but stopped in York, Neb., where Horace’s youngest son, Jesse (my great grandfather) was born on 16 Sep 1871.

At this time Anna Marie, her daughter (listed now as Rita), son William and brother Horace all homesteaded in York County, Neb. near the town of Lushton. These homesteads were all adjoining and it is stated that the homes built on Anna Maria’s and Rita’s sites were also adjoining. Rita later married and her husband became the owner of her homestead.

Homesteading was not an easy proposition, especially for a single widowed woman who was past the prime of her life. The majority of homesteaders in general lost their claims, with less than 40 percent of them “proving up,” with the percentages for women being far less. Neither William nor Rita were able to keep their homesteads, both of them forfeiting them and moving on, Rita to Montana and William first to Montana, then Canada, and finally settling in northwestern Nebraska. Her brother, Horace, proved up his claim and lived there, until selling and moving to the town of Grafton, Nebraska in the 1890s.

But what of Anna Maria? Research shows that she filed her homestead in September 1871, residing there, building a log home, out-buildings, planting trees and farming the land. She filed her final papers in May 1880, which is past the seven-year deadline for “proving up” and was granted her land by the court. Interesting in her final papers are affidavits by her brother Horace, her son-in-law Albert Holmes, and her own sworn statements. In her statements she pled ignorance of knowledge of the seven-year time requirement, citing her infirmities and age as excuses. Evidently the court agreed with her when granting her a deed to her property, making her one of very few women to actually receive deed to the property they homesteaded. It appears Anna Maria continued to live on her farm for years, but the 1900 census finds her living in Henderson, York, Neb. with a granddaughter as “caregiver.” It is stated that she died 10 Feb 1902 in Henderson and was laid to rest in the Henderson Cemetery, but I have found no records to confirm. Anna Maria’s Nickerson line is: William, William, Thomas, Nathaniel, Issacher, Bassett, Bassett C., to her, making her eighth generation Nickerson. I hope you enjoyed meeting Anna Maria!



*Anna Maria Nickerson Snow*



## 2019-20 OFFICERS

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*Brewster, MA*



## *A word from President David Dillman...*

Dear Nick Cousins:

I pray first that these words find you and all you love well and safe during this pandemic.

We at the NFA send our best wishes and gratitude to you for your support and for your membership renewals. You especially, among our family's descendants, bring purpose and support to our mission, "the increase and diffusion of knowledge associated with the Nickerson family." What does that mean exactly? Well, at its core it is our commitment to trace a single family, our Nickerson ancestors, as they made their way from England to America in the earliest years of the Massachusetts Colony. They were not wayfarers so much as explorers.

Perhaps they fled the fledgling industrial tedium in England for the chance to create a new opportunity, a new discovery to industrialize America, or simply to find a quiet place overlooking the water to smoke a bowl, enjoy their family and live out their lives in solitude.

Our Nickersons, while private, were not loners, however. Their children loved and married their neighbors, many of whom were Separatists, the Pilgrims, and their families. The names in the database of our association capture many of the families with whom they hobnobbed, worshipped and married.

They were farmers, travelers, whalers and businessmen. In my own family, far across America and into the Midwest, they were still intermarrying with fellow Cape Cod descendants, a full five generations from their arrival on these shores. They did not forget their experiences arriving on that amazing piece of ground. A walk among the beautiful cemeteries on the Cape will provide even a casual observer the names of dozens of families, and hundreds of Nickersons, all of them our cousins. A walk across cemeteries in New England, New York, Michigan, Indiana, Iowa, Wisconsin and Kansas reads like a trail of Nickersons and their relatives. That trail also leads across every province of Canada. Coast to coast you find Nickersons and the relatives they took with them in their travels.





Our genealogical search might be different this year for a number of reasons. It might, however, be more meaningful. This is, as you may know, the 400th anniversary of the arrival of the Pilgrims at Provincetown and Plymouth. As mentioned above, many Nickerson descendants have Mayflower survivors in their families as well, as do I.

This year may also be the year when, more than usual, we continue our genealogical research remotely. With restrictions on travel, gathering and going to public places such as courthouses, libraries and historical societies, we will turn to online sources. Without in-person access to primary sources of information, we should exercise caution in accepting document descriptions, second-hand accounts and the like. Our ancestors are patient. The records of their lives will be there when we can at last visit the places where they are stored. One way to assure the sources are highly-reliable is to use sources like TNG, the Nickerson Family database, available to members at our website, [nickersonassoc.com](http://nickersonassoc.com). Another source is the New England Historic Genealogical Society (AmericanAncestors.org) based in Boston, Mass. It offers members access to a vast curated online database of resources.

Wherever you do your research, enjoy the journey to finding your ancestors, Nickersons and all. Perhaps our Nickerson Family is given the opportunity by the covid-19 pandemic, to expand our search for our wandering roots. Bear in mind our staff is unable to work in the office at the time of this printing. With patience, our work will resume in earnest in the foreseeable future.

In the meanwhile, keep virtual contact with your friends and family. Know that I, and the Nickerson Family Association Board of Directors, staff and volunteers have each of you and those you love in our thoughts and in our prayers.

Please visit our websites at:

<https://nickersonassoc.com> or [cnh.nickersonassoc.com](http://cnh.nickersonassoc.com)

Let us know what you think by leaving comments when visiting Facebook, watch videos on our YouTube channel (accessed from the website) and contact us via email at [wmnick1107@gmail.com](mailto:wmnick1107@gmail.com), by phone at 508-945-6086 or by U.S. mail at P.O. Box 296, North Chatham, MA 02650.



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# FALLEN BRANCHES

**Philip E. Nickerson**, 86, of Wilmington, N.C., died on Nov. 27. Philip was born in Boston on 6 May 1933, a son of the late Albert and Eleanor Gundersen Nickerson. He graduated with a degree in electrical engineering from Tufts University and a business degree from Johns Hopkins University. A believer in continual learning, Philip took many business courses from Ohio State University, Columbus. He had a successful career working for numerous corporations as an engineer, quality control expert and executive. He designed underwater missile guidance systems for submarines and later designed the guidance system for the Surveyor 1 moon explorer, the first unmanned NASA lunar soft lander. Surveyor 1 landed within one meter of the target in June 1966. He retired from G.D. Searle & Co. as a vice-president. Phil is survived by his wife of 62 years, Ann Marie (Bergdoll) Nickerson, his son Philip E. Nickerson Jr., daughter Katherine Ann Bond, and four grandchildren. Philip's line: Philip<sup>11</sup>, Albert<sup>10</sup>, Frederick<sup>9</sup>, Samuel<sup>8</sup>, Stillman<sup>7</sup>, Samuel<sup>6</sup>, Abner<sup>5</sup>, John<sup>4</sup>, William<sup>3</sup>, Joseph<sup>2</sup>, William<sup>1</sup>.

**The Rev. Canon Donald A. Nickerson Jr., D.D.**, died on Dec. 9 in Brunswick, Me., after a 33-year struggle with Parkinson's Disease. Don was born in Boston on 19 May 1939 to Dr. Donald and Mildred Nickerson of Melrose, Mass. After graduating from Melrose High School, Don attended Springfield College and Berkeley Divinity School at Yale before starting his ministry in Newton Center, where he remained from 1964 to 1966. Don then served as parish priest for Christ Church in North Conway, N.H. until 1974 and St. Paul's in Brunswick, Me. until 1988. In recognition of his leadership in the church, Don was invited to move to N.Y.C. to become the executive officer of the General Convention of the Episcopal Church, one of the largest legislative gatherings in the country. He remained there until 1998, and also received an honorary Doctor of Divinity from Yale University for his life's work. Don is survived by his wife of 57 years, Susan Martin, and his children Thomas, Mark and Andrea and his grandchildren Benjamin, Andrew, Caroline, Emma, David and Christopher. Don's line: Donald<sup>12</sup>, Donald<sup>11</sup>, Benjamin<sup>10</sup>, Albertus<sup>9</sup>, Benjamin<sup>8,7</sup>, Thomas<sup>6,5,4,3,2</sup>, William<sup>1</sup>.

**Neal C. Nickerson Jr.**, 91, died on Dec. 31. Born in Duluth, Minn. on 9 March 1928 to Neal Clinton Nickerson Sr. and Juanita Havana Manila Baumann Nickerson, Neil grew up in Carlton, Minn., with his younger brother Jul. He graduated from Macalester College, where he met his wife Donna Rae Hyatt, his wife of over 50 years, and went on to earn an Ed.D. from Columbia University. A nationally-respected educator, Neal was professor emeritus at the University of Minnesota in the College of Education and Human Development. He taught for over 50 years in the Department of Educational Administration. He joined the faculty of the University of Minnesota in 1964 and advised or co-advised over 242 students and mentored many more professionals in the field. He taught as adjunct faculty through 2018 and through the years earned many awards. He is survived by children Jay Nickerson, Kate Nickerson and Diane Nickerson Stang, brother Jul and six grandchildren. Neal's line: Neal<sup>12,11</sup>, Fred<sup>10</sup>, Henry<sup>9</sup>, Ephraim<sup>8</sup>, Thomas<sup>7,6,5,4,3</sup>, William<sup>2,1</sup>.

**Mary Huntington Nickerson**, 94, died on Jan. 7 in Brunswick, Me. She was born in Litchfield on 20 April 1925, a daughter of Earl F. and Frances J. (Small) Huntington. She grew up in Litchfield and attended the one-room schoolhouse across the street. She received her associate's degree from Auburn Maine School of Commerce. Mary moved to Washington, D.C. and was employed as a stenographer at the Pentagon in the mid-1940s. She lived on a corner of Pennsylvania Avenue and was there to witness Pres. Roosevelt's funeral procession. Later on, Mary was a Sarah Coventry Jewelry sales representative for 18 years. She was predeceased by her husband, Emery E. Nickerson Sr. and she is survived by sons, Emery E. Jr. and Albion E. Nickerson and daughters Sharon N. Snell, Cynthia N. Doyle and Lori G. Blackwell; 15 grandchildren and 31 great-grandchildren. Emery Nickerson Sr.'s line: Emery<sup>11</sup>, Jasper<sup>10</sup>, Albertus<sup>9</sup>, Benjamin<sup>8</sup>, Thomas<sup>7,6,5,4,3</sup>, William<sup>1,2</sup>.

**Edward Michael Grotkowski**, 65, died on January 18 in Gulfport, Miss. Born in Erie, Penn. to Ed and Dorothy Nickerson Grotkowski, Ed was a long-time member of the NFA and visited the campus regularly. A musician who held advanced degrees in music, Ed taught in public and private schools for over 30 years. He also oversaw the construction, rebuilding and enlargement of several pipe organs while maintaining an active performance career giving organ recitals all over the country. For 20 years he directed music at Our Lady of the Gulf Church in Bay Saint Louis, Miss., where he conducted major works for choir and orchestra. "Ed was a terrific organist as well as everything else," Board Member Scott Nickerson recalls. "I remember him well playing some wonderful music at services at the 'Captains Church' in Dennis where many Nickerson ship captains are recognized and buried." Several years ago, Ed worked with Board Member Edmond R. Nickerson to create a memorial to his late mother, Dot. That's how "Dot's Garden" was created behind the Nick House with the help of a period gardener. Each June, red Knockout roses send up a beautiful cascade of red petals. "For those fortunate enough to know him, he will be missed," Ed Nickerson says. He is survived by his brother Jim. Ed's line: Dorothy<sup>10</sup>, Howard<sup>9</sup>, Abner<sup>8,7</sup>, Isiah<sup>6</sup>, Abner<sup>5</sup>, John<sup>4</sup>, William<sup>3</sup>, Joseph<sup>2</sup>, William<sup>1</sup>.



# Chatham's Historic Diseases

The coronavirus pandemic that we are now experiencing would be only too familiar to our Nickerson ancestors in Chatham where epidemics such as smallpox, scarlet fever, diphtheria, Spanish Influenza and polio ravaged the town.

In 1765 an epidemic of smallpox decimated the fledgling Town of Chatham.

Since the first settlers arrived in the New World smallpox, which was highly infectious, had broken out periodically. Soldiers and sailors brought isolated cases of the disease to Chatham. Yet the two-month epidemic that began in November 1765 was something new. In the 101 years since William and Anne Nickerson built their homestead, the settlers had never coped with such widespread sickness, or one that seemed to target in particular two families—the Ryders and the Smiths.

Of the 61 persons infected, 37 died plus one other later, on a whaleship. Many are buried in the smallpox cemetery hidden in the woods off Old Comers Road. Dr. Samuel Lord, the town's first doctor, may be buried in a solitary grave by the side of Training Field Road—that marker was erected in 1941 to replace a deteriorating stone.



*Chatham's smallpox cemetery*

Let's fast forward to the late 19th century. While the training of doctors had been formalized, pharmaceuticals were not yet advanced.

Dr. Benjamin Gifford was practicing in Chatham in the winter of 1888 when scarlet fever broke out among 21 of the town's children, one of whom would die. In the West Chatham family of Capt. John Kendrick nine children fell ill at once, and Gifford rode out from his Cross Street home and office to visit them. Before visiting a contagious household, according to his daughter Minnie Buck, Gifford donned a suit of

clothes and overcoat that he stored in an old valise in the barn of the patient's home. Afterwards he would swab the clothing with carbolic acid to kill the germs and prevent himself from spreading the disease on his next call.

Gifford had no sooner quarantined those with scarlet fever when diphtheria broke out in South Chatham. Another child would die. When that disease had run its course, Gifford ordered the houses of the infected fumigated with a sulfurous acid vapor. In some cases, the houses were repaired and repainted.

Just after the Great War, in the fall of 1918, the fringes of a worldwide pandemic reached Chatham. They called it Spanish Influenza, or the grip, and its spread was aided by soldiers returning from the war.

“The public schools, Orpheum theatre, churches and all public places in town have been closed by order of the Board of Health on account of the grip,” the Chatham Monitor reported on October 1. Some summer people returned to Chatham late in the 1918 season, believing they were safer away from the congestion and contagion in Boston. Unlike

the death curve of a classic influenza, half of all those who died were in the prime of life, in their twenties and thirties.

One-hundred two years later, we are in the grip of the coronavirus pandemic with schools, restaurants and all but essential businesses closed here in Chatham. Just as in 1918, some summer residents are returning to Chatham off-season, believing they are safer here than in the city. The first documented case of covid-19 appeared on Cape Cod on March 14; as of April 28 there were 798 cases in Barnstable County.

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## Wildlife Around Campus



*“Nicky” the fox visits the campus*



*A deer at the archaeological site*

# *Thank you!* The NFA's Fall 2019 Sustainers and Contributors

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*Sustaining memberships offer Life Members and others a unique opportunity to help support the organization by pledging to give on an annual basis. For more information on how you can become a Sustaining Member, email Debra at [DebraNFA@outlook.com](mailto:DebraNFA@outlook.com).*

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## The Ghost of Dibble Hollow

### **For the Young and Young at Heart: *The Ghost of Dibble Hollow***

We had a recent query from a newcomer to Chatham, Thomas Dorward, about a favorite author of his youth, May Elden Nickerson Wallace. Was she known to us?

It just so happened that we had recently reread a battered paperback copy of *The Ghost of Dibble Hollow*, which May published in 1965. *The Ghost of Dibble Hollow* is a favorite book of readers in several generations. It tells the story of the Allen family who inherited an old family home haunted by the ghost of a 10-year-old boy. Young Pug Allen befriends the ghost and the two go on a treasure hunt in the small town of Smithville.

Here is a little bit about May gleaned from our records and a little footwork in public records:

May was born in Willimantic, Connecticut, on 11 June 1902, a 10th generation descendant of William and Anne (Busby) Nickerson. Here is her line: Robert<sup>9</sup>, Wellington<sup>8</sup>, Freeman<sup>7</sup>, Eleazer<sup>6</sup>, Freeman<sup>5</sup>, Eleazer<sup>4</sup>, John<sup>3</sup>, Nicholas<sup>2</sup>, William<sup>1</sup>. Her parents were Robert Wellington Nickerson (c. 1873 -1941) and Kate Mary (Ellis) Nickerson (c. 1871- ?). Both were born in English-speaking Canada.

In 1910 the family was living in Outagamie, Wisconsin. where Robert, 37, worked as a teacher. May, seven, had siblings Ellis M., nine, Graham E., five, and Jennie Ruth, four.

By 1920 the family had moved to Okeechobee Road in West Palm Beach, Florida. Robert was now working as a real estate agent. May, 17, worked as a "saleslady" for a bakery. Her brother Ellis, 19, drove the bakery wagon. As well as Graham, 15, and Jennie, 14, there was an additional younger sibling named Frances L., age six.

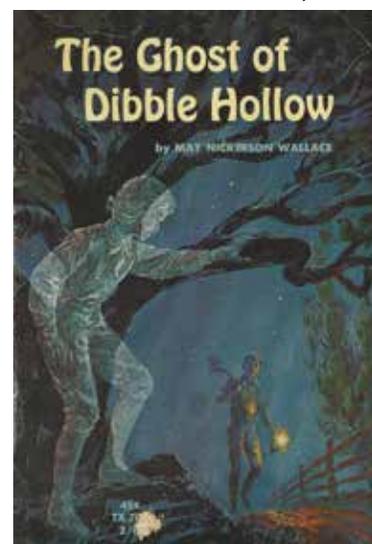
May graduated from Palm Beach High School and completed one year of college. In 1937 May, age 34, traveled on the S.S. *Carracas* to San Juan, P.R. Her home was 535 W. 135th St., N.Y., N.Y.

On 4 September 1938, in Bridgewater, Connecticut, May married a Palm Beach native named Richard Roy Wallace (1903-1947), a son of William O. Wallace. They had a son, Richard William Wallace, known as "Bill," on 8 August 1941, in Washington, D.C., where Richard was employed as an auditor.

After Richard died in 1947 in Palm City, Fla., May moved with her son to Scarsdale, N.Y., where she worked as a church secretary at the Scarsdale Community Baptist Church.

May began her writing career by publishing short stories. "A *Race for Bill*" was her first published book for children, about a boy who enters a soapbox derby. She published five books: *A Race for Bill*, 1951 ("modern, timely, literate"); *The Mystery of the Old House*, 1953 (includes realistic "modern day slang"); *Hunter's Hill*, 1955; *The Plume Hunters Mystery*, 1956 (setting: the Everglades, 1916); and *The Ghost of Dibble Hollow*, 1965.

May died at the age of 96 on 30 August 1998.



## Slowly unravelling our family mysteries

What is the search for our missing ancestors but a mystery that we slowly unravel?

And for genealogists who are also fans of murder mysteries, what could be more delectable than a murder mystery series where the sleuth is a practicing genealogist? The Forensic Genealogist Series by British author Nathan Dylan Goodwin fits the bill.

To date, Goodwin has written 10 installments in the series. And to make things even better, one of them takes place here on Cape Cod. Forensic genealogist Morton Farrier travels from his home in England to Cape Cod where his father disappeared six days after a fatal fire at his home on Christmas Eve, 1976. On Cape Cod, Morton unravels the mystery of his father's disappearance.

To research his book, Goodwin traveled to Cape Cod in 2017, and lunched with members of the Cape Cod Genealogical Society, including past president David Martin, at Scargo Café in Dennis. He traveled from Barnstable to Provincetown, stopping at many of the places so dear to genealogists on Cape Cod: the Sturgis Library, Barnstable Town Hall, Oak Neck Cemetery and even a repository where he read back issues of the Cape Cod Times from 1976.



At left David Martin, author Nathan Dylan Goodwin and members of the Cape Cod Genealogical Society at lunch in 2017

"I've visited America on many occasions, for both business and pleasure, and one of my all-time favourite places to go is undoubtedly Cape Cod. I absolutely love the history, the links back to the 'old country' and its unique geography," Goodwin said in an email interview in April.

If you'd like to take an armchair genealogical tour of Cape Cod, you couldn't do much better than this suspenseful novel.



## A Note from Executive Director Debra Lawless

First and foremost, I hope this newsletter finds you and your family safe as we sail through the uncharted waters of the coronavirus pandemic. The NFA is a family, and in times of crisis, such as the one we're now living through, families and friends support one another. Over the past eight years, since I came to work at the NFA, it has been my great fortune to meet so many of you. I thank you for welcoming me into your family.



As is the case in much of the country and the world, our activities here at the Nick House have been curtailed. Membership Chair Ron Nickerson and I observe social distancing at the Nick House while keeping the office humming along. We miss our usual spirited Wednesday morning volunteer crew—Rebecca Arnold, Paul Lapham, Karen Nickerson and Duane Reynolds—as well as spontaneous visits from our Nickerson cousins. Please email us at [DebraNFA@outlook.com](mailto:DebraNFA@outlook.com) if we can do anything for you.



We all need a break from the news headlines, so in this issue we look at books—a fun genealogical mystery series by Nathan Dylan Goodwin recommended by past president and current board member Nancy Nickerson Corey, and a book for the young and young at heart, *The Ghost of Dibble Hollow* by May Nickerson Wallace.

And now that most of us are confined to our homes, isn't this the perfect chance to indulge our passion for serious genealogical research? Without our usual distractions, perhaps we can make a big dent in our family research. Our Nickerson website, TNG, is up and running with more than 52,000 names. If you haven't already done so, please take a look. You can login through [www.nickersonassoc.com](http://www.nickersonassoc.com). Go under "Genealogy" and click on "The Next Generation database." Let me know if you're a first-time user, and we'll set you up with a password.

We hope that this summer you may join us here on campus for a program or just a quiet visit. And in the autumn we will celebrate our annual reunion on Sept. 11 to 14 and salute the 400th anniversary of the Mayflower's arrival. It's sure to be a special and memorable time for all.

### Family Memories

Many of us have grandparents or parents who were alive during the 1918 Spanish Flu pandemic. Do you have family stories you'd like to share from that time? If so, please email us your recollections at [wmnick1107@gmail.com](mailto:wmnick1107@gmail.com) or mail them to The Nickerson Family Association, Inc., PO Box 296, North Chatham, MA 02650.



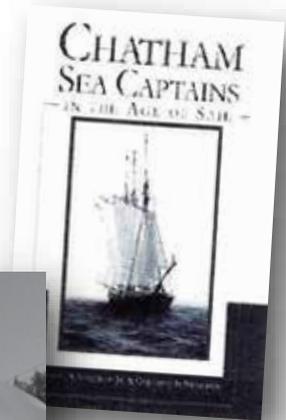
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<b>LIMITED EDITION PRINTS AND NOTECARDS</b>				**\$115.00	
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	Notecards			***\$20.00	
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<b>HISTORY OF WILLIAM NICKERSON</b> (Pamphlet)				\$10.00	
<b>THE BUSBY FAMILY</b> (Pamphlet)				\$5.00	
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By Joseph Nickerson and Geraldine Nickerson					
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<b>THE NICKERSON FAMILY, PARTS 1-3**</b>				\$50.00+	
<b>THE NICKERSON FAMILY, PART 5, Nicholas</b>				\$60.00 until 5/31/19 then \$80.00	
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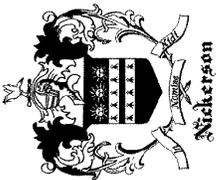
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To make it as convenient as possible to buy your loved ones gifts about the Nickersons, click on this hyperlink

[nickersonassoc.com/store](http://nickersonassoc.com/store)

to go directly to the NFA's web-based store and order directly from it!



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