

1760 Sampler Pillow Case by Mehetable Spaulding

By Joseph A Jackson, 1/5/2025

During our January 2025 Open House, there were no guests at the Museum around 3:30pm (when I arrived), so I suggested to Bonny Smith and Matt Beres that we go look through the archives for interesting things. I was immediately attracted to the Sabra Carter Collection. We took one box off the racks, and began looking through the interesting items in that collection, that appears to have been accepted at the museum in 2022. Sabra Carter had been a seed grower/supplier. She was a never-married daughter of her mother of the same name, Sabra Carter who donated, as part of her estate, money to purchase the town common.

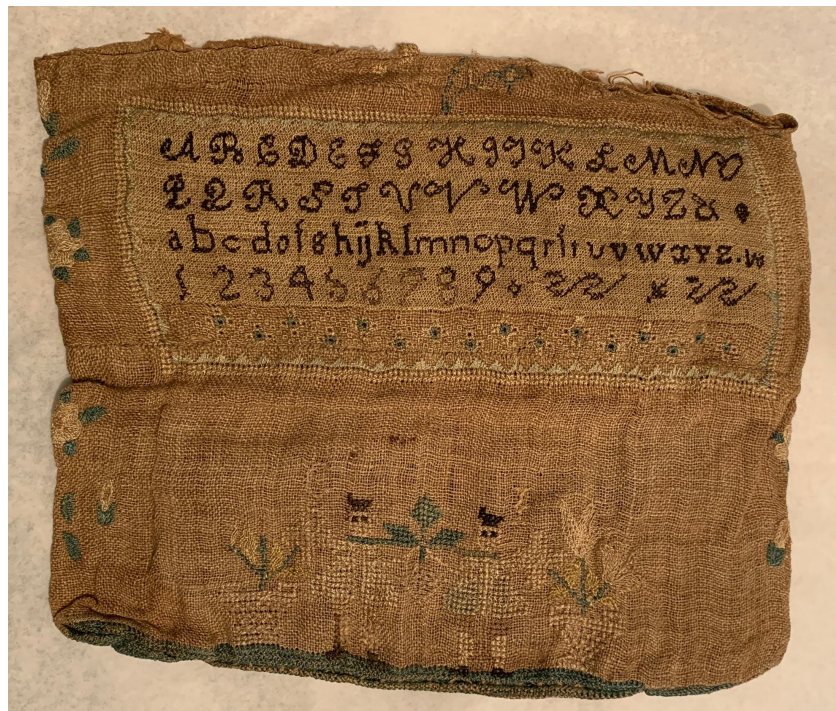
The artifacts in the Sabra Carter collection were interesting. Among them:

- A sausage toaster
- A birch-bark-berry-basket (two) for picking berries in the 1830s-1840s
- A powder horn, supposed to have been used by Timothy Carter during the 1780s
- An adze head
- Two wooden plates
- Three small cutting boards

There were two envelopes as well– first a collection of research on Sabra Carter (printed around 2005 or so). The second contained this needlework sampler. It was very difficult to identify it at first– we could not perceive anything about the item at first.

As we studied, we first found the cursive upper-case alphabet, as expected, and a script lower-case alphabet. Those rows are followed by the digits 1-9. The upper block is ornamented with flowers and partially husked corn.

The bottom half of the “front” appears to have a girl and boy holding hands between two potted plants, standing on a grass lawn. Though the colors are faded, they may be together holding a sapling or other three-leaved plant together between them.



We noted that the rear panel looked especially worn, with many of the letters no longer present. The top half appears to have significant fiber wear along the first row of upper-case block letters, as the letters before G are almost entirely worn off. Some of the green and brown fibers held their color, but much of the other colored letters appear to have lost their color altogether. See the second row (M, O, Q R W) where some letters appear white.



We also note that the center panel appears to be stitched between two columns, which upon further inspection appear to be the origin of the flowers on the front side. These edges appear to have been folded backward by a few inches on each side to allow for this center panel to provide for a conversion between a framed sampler and a small pillow case, with the signature portion preserved as the back panel. Under the zig-zag stitching near the center, we see three rows giving attribution to the girl who did the work: a row of green, then brown, then green lettering.

At first, we could only perceive the bottom line: "AGED 11 YRS 1760"

The first line was ambiguous: did it start with M? W? H? Were the letters led by initials? After consulting the Wilmington Residents project for girls born in the 1748-1749 time period, we recognized the name of Mehitabel Spaulding, which can be traced out through the letters as follows:





7022.1023.011

Introduction to Mehitabel Spaulding

Mehitable/Mehitabel/Hitty is an Old Testament name meaning “God benefits”. Many New England Protestants took their children’s names from the Bible.

Mehitable Spaulding was born 13 March 1748 in Tewksbury. She was the sixth of 12 children to be born to Reverend Sampson Spaulding Sr (1711-1796) and Mehitabel Hunt (1716-1807).

The Rev. Sampson Spaulding Family

“Tewksbury Congregational Church was established in 1734 by some 34 resident families who signed The Covenant and Articles of Faith, after leaving the church in Billerica, in order *“that there might be preaching in ye town”*. The Reverend Sampson Spaulding was called as the first minister at the opening of the first meeting house in 1736.”

<https://www.tewksburycc.org/who-we-are>

The Rev. Sampson Spaulding House was constructed in 1737 at what is now 60 East Street, and was used for a period of time as the Tewksbury Centre Post Office.

MACRIS TEW.13.

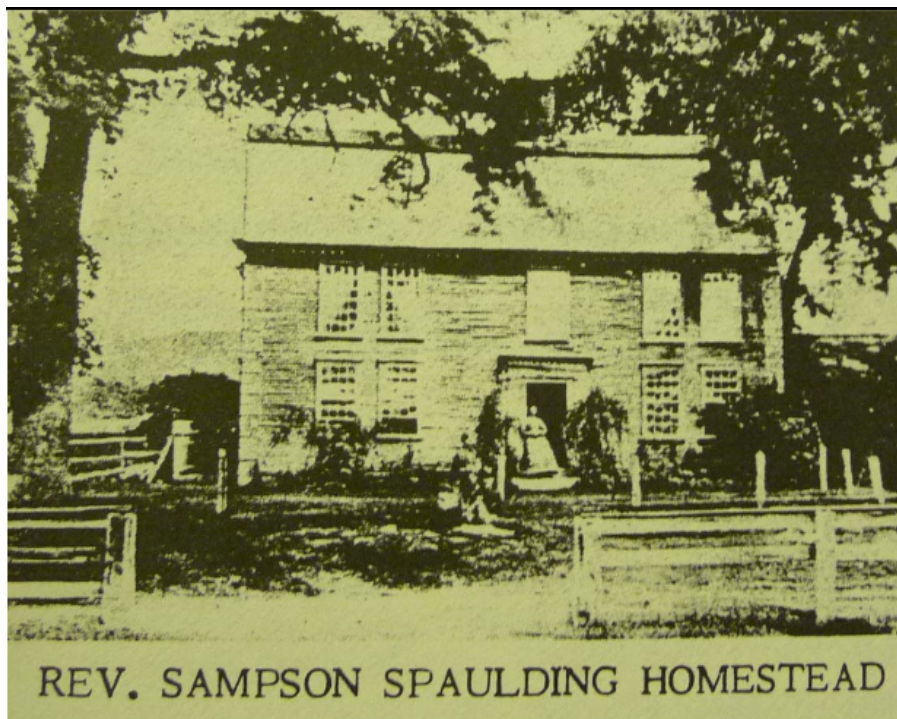


From the MACRIS Historical Narrative:

“Sampson Spaulding (1711-1796) was the second son of John and Mary (Barrett) Spaulding [Spaulding] of Chelmsford. He studied at Harvard University, graduating in 1732, and ministered for a short period in Tyng Township in southern NH. According to church records and local history, In 1734 Tewksbury was separated from Billerica. Sampson Spaulding was called to be the first minister at the new First Congregational Church in 1736-7 and his house was constructed, probably with help from his congregation, 1737-1738. According to Patton the original plan was a kitchen at the rear of the house with a borning room at the east end. In the front of the house, the east room was the occasional dining room and the west room was the parlor, used for mid weekly worship and weddings. Upstairs bedrooms at the rear were occupied by summer help on the farm.

In 1740 Rev. Spaulding married Mehitabel Hunt. Their son John (1756-1843) would inherit the house. Rev Spaulding was stricken with paralysis in 1791 during a church service. He died in 1796 and was the first burial in the new cemetery on the southwest side of East Street, now known as the old cemetery, near his home at 60 East Street. His widow died in 1807. Originally the Spaulding farm extended as far west as the Foster School on Main Street (TEW.XX) and north along North Street. Farm building were located to the west of the house and included a barn, pig house, hen house, well house, smoke house, and a covered manure pit.”

(Additional information about the inheritors and subsequent uses of the property can be found at the MACRIS link)



Late 19th Century (before 1875?)



Mid 20th Century



American Pilgrim Century, from Reverend
Sampson Spaulding home, Tewksbury, MA

From a 2015 Auction Posting, [here](#)



COUNTRY CHIPPENDALE TALL CASE CLOCK.
 Refinished maple with some areas of curl and pine secondary wood. Scalloped bracket feet with molded waist. Reeded quarter columns have brass tops and bottoms. Overlapping door is slightly warped. Original painted face with a bird in the arch and floral designs in the spandrels. Second hand with pierced window for the cleared dial. Brass works. Arched crest on the hood with pierced fretwork. Small areas of touch up to face and the calendar dial is repainted. Restorations to the fretwork and to finial posts. Glued splits in base molding. No weights, key or finials. Pendulum replaced. 90"h.
 From 2005 Auction [Here](#), price estimate \$2,000-4,000



LiveAuctioneers

<https://bidder-react-stage-pr-7409.liveauctioneers.com> › ...

Country Chippendale Tall Case Clock. Refinished Ma

This clock descended in the Reverend Sampson Spaulding. See Sold Price.

similarSoldItemCarousel.badge. James Cole Chippendale Tall Case (1 of 4) · James Cole ...



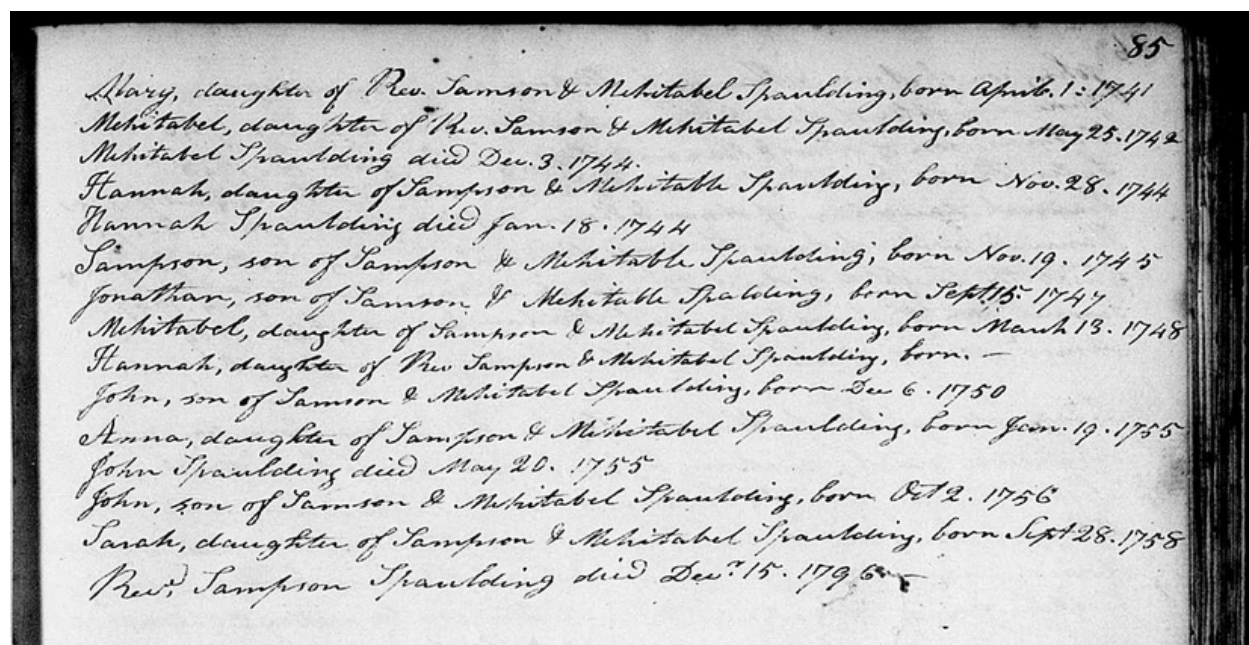
Items donated to the American History Museum (Smithsonian) in memory of Rev. Sampson Spaulding of Tewksbury. His cane, and a rushed chair.

https://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/object/nmah_319099

https://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/object/nmah_311290

Spaulding Family Context

The Spauldings had lost one of their older children in 1744 who was also named Mehitabel. In those days, it was not unusual to name a subsequent child in honor of the older child who was deceased. On this excerpt of town records for Tewksbury, we see the entry for the earlier Mehitabel born May 25, 1742, who then died Dec 3, 1744. Interestingly, mother and father had a daughter 5 days prior, November 28, 1744 named Hannah, who only lived to be 6 weeks old. We might wonder if there was illness during that cold portion of the year that led to the death of toddler Mehitabel and infant Hannah.



"Sacred to the memory of Rev. Samson Spaulding, who died Dec 15, 1796 AEt 86.

Lord I commit my soul to thee

Accept the sacred trust.

Receive this nobler part of me

And watch my sleeping dust.



SPAULDING, John, of Wilton, N. H., and Hannah Marshall of L., Feb. 14, 1837.
 Jonas, and Mary F. Hoit, both of Dunstable, June 12, 1843.*
 Jonathan, b. Tewksbury, s. Rev. S[ampson], and Mary Marshall of Tewksbury, Feb. 11, 1771. P. R. 1.*
 Laura Ann [of L. int.], and Edwin B. Merrill, both of Manchester, N. H., Oct. 6, 1842.
 Lucinda, and John Smith of Milford, Sept. 14, 1826. P. R. 1.*
 Lucinda, of Merrimack, N. H., and John Read, jr. of L., int. Oct. 16, 1831.
 Lucinda J. (Spalding), and Micajah Bowns [Bowers of L. int.], both of Chelmsford, Dec. 3, 1835.
 Maria, and Simeon S. Stewart, both of L., bef. Apr. 30, 1830. [Mar. 14, 1830. int.]
 Mary, d. Rev. Sampson, and ———, Oct. 21, 1762. P. R. 1.*
 Mary, of L., and Benjamin Brown of Tewksbury, int. Nov. 14, 1830.
 Mary A. (Spalding), of Chelmsford, and Milo Pierce of L., at Chelmsford, Nov. 3, 1842.
 Mehetabel, 2d, d. Rev. Sampson, and ———, Aug. 22, 1771. P. R. 1.*
 Olive C. (Spalding), unm., of L., a. 24 y., and Josiah Norcross, unm., of Fitchburg, a. 25 y., physician, May 16, 1848.
 Orpah, and John Mack, both of L., Feb. 24, 1839.
 Rebecca, and Frederick Crosby of Milford, Nov. —, 1825. P. R. 1.*
 Sampson, Rev., "the first minister of Tewksbury," and ———, Feb. 12, 1740. P. R. 1.*
 Samuel, and Mary Wright of Westford, Sept. —, 1833. P. R. 1.*
 Sarah, and Jacob Carlton [both of L. int.], Sept. 14, 1832.
 Sarah J. (Spalding), unm., of L., a. 23 y., b. Ashby, d. Asa and Prudence, and Cyrus S. Farrar, unm., of L., a. 20

Parents and Siblings

 Rev Sampson Spaulding Sr
1711-1796 • LCDW-WJP

 Mehitabel Hunt
1716-1807 • L45Y-LZQ

Marriage

12 February 1740
Lowell, Middlesex County, MA, United States

Children (12)

 Mary Spaulding
1741-1808 • M2RL-6RR

 Mehetabel Spaulding
1742-1744 • LCSB-7TP

 Hannah Spaulding
1744-1745 • 2H2Q-8B8

 Sampson Spaulding Jr
1745-1832 • LHTY-T19

 Jonathan Spaulding
1747-1832 • LCSJ-QYF

 Mehitabel Spaulding
1748-1821 • LTF5-N2V

 John Spaulding
1750-1755 • KLVZ-3RS

 Hannah Spaulding
1752-Deceased • 2H2Q-DQH

 Anna Spaulding
1755-1796 • LBHZ-JC8

 John Spaulding
1756-1843 • LCSJ-QXN

 Sarah Spaulding
1758-1803 • 2H2Q-8TM

 Spaulding
1761-1761 • 2H2Q-DHD

+ ADD CHILD

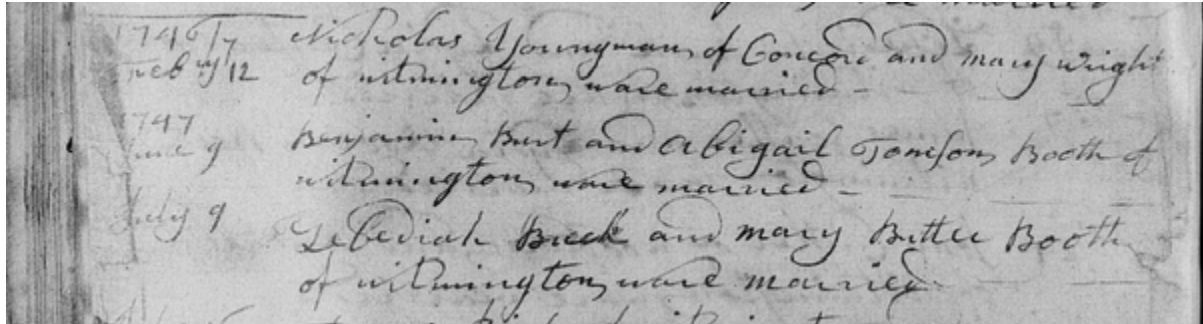
From the Spalding Memorial (archive.org)

"Rev. Sampson4 [186], (John3, Andrew2, Edward1), b. June 7, 1711, in Chelmsford, Mass.; d. Dec. 15, 1796, in Tewksbury, Mass.; grad. at Harvard College, 1732; received an unanimous call from the town of Tewksbury, Mass., to settle among them, Jan. 17, 1736-7; was ordained Nov. 23, 1737.

He was a preacher at Tewksbury for sixty years, and its settled pastor more than fifty-nine years. His ministry was not only remarkable for its length, but it was peaceful, happy, and successful. [Coggin's Dedication Sermon.] He m. Mehetable Hunt, Feb. 12, 1740; she d. March 2, 1807, se. 91. She was b. July 9, 1716."

First Marriage: Benjamin Burt Jr

Benjamin Burt Jr was a Wilmington-born first husband, who lived from 1748-1778 (FSID: KLD6-8PT). His parents, Benjamin Burt Sr (1715-1793, LCTS-N1X) and Abigail Thompson of Woburn (1720-1795, LCV5-Z33) had been married in Wilmington in 1747 by Rev. Isaac Morrill.



✓ Preferred

 Benjamin Burt Jr
1748-1778 • KLD6-8PT

 Mehitabel Spaulding
1748-1821 • LTFS-N2V

Marriage

22 August 1771
Tewksbury, Middlesex, Massachusetts Bay Colony, British Colonial America



Children (3)

 Mehitable Burt
1772-1849 • K4BQ-YHD

 Sally Burt
1774-Deceased • L78P-LGB

 Benjamin Burt III
1776-1779 • KZJ8-4FT

+ ADD CHILD

A photograph of a handwritten death record on aged paper. The text is written in cursive and includes the date 'October 8, 1778' and the name 'Benjamin Burt Jr'.

Mehitable (oldest daughter) was born 1772 in Wilmington.

Sally was born 27 April 1774 in Wilmington.

Their young son Ben III was born in 1776 in Tewksbury, probably at her parents house, as was customary in those days.

Benjamin died young (October 1778, age 30, "in his 31st year"), leaving Mehitable a young widow with 3 children to care for. He was buried in the South Burying Ground in Tewksbury. Six months later, she would lose her two year old son Benjamin III (April 1779).

In 1816, Mehetabel Burt and Jacob Frost Jun (Blacksmith) and Sarah Frost (records the transfer to Samuel Manning for fifty-two dollars), they sell the estate of "Honored Father Benjamin Burt Junr, Late of Tewksbury, yeoman." bounds— southeast corner by the highway by Mrs William Simonds land, then northerly on the highway leading to the meeting house by Samuel Thompson till it comes to Thompsons's land, then southwesterly on Thompson's land,

till it comes to Simonds land, then easterly by his land to the highway at the first place. Signed 1796, recorded 1816.

At the death of Benjamin Burt, Jr, Jacob Frost and Sally Burt Frost (son-in-law and daughter), a yeoman, helped Mehitable settle the estate for \$1000, by selling the farm to Elbridge Kidder of Tewksbury. The 27 acre farm of late Benjamin Burt occupied by Capt. Samuel Manning, except Wido Burt's right of improvement of thirds of the said farm (transferred in 14 February, 1816). Signed before William Blanchard Jr., Just of Peace.

Second Marriage: Samuel Manning

After her period of mourning, two years later Mehitable married again to Samuel Manning (1752-1822, LCSB-7PJ). Samuel was also a Tewksbury-born young man, born to Eliphalet Manning (1713-1806, LC73-4DW) and Hannah Aborn (1719-1815, LCN2-MSL). The Manning family were local to the area of Tewksbury prior to the town's incorporation in 1734, back when it was a part of Billerica, and previously Cambridge.

From History of Billerica, page 221 ([link](#))

appointment of a committee to examine and report. The latter was done, with the result that Tewksbury was incorporated, 1734, December 23. The new town was taken wholly from Billerica, receiving in round numbers nine thousand acres of the twenty-five thousand which remained after the separation of Bedford, which had taken nearly or quite four thousand. The following list of families included in Tewksbury is imperfect, but will have interest :—

Brown, Joseph	Hunt, Peter	Manning, Eliphalet
Brown, William	Hunt, Samuel	Manning, Thomas
Farmer, Richard	Kidder, Ephraim	Marshall, Thomas
Farmer, Thomas	Kittredge, Daniel	Needham, John
French, John	Kittredge, Daniel, Jr.	Osgood, Stephen
French, Thomas	Kittredge, Francis	Patten, John
Frost, Daniel	Kittredge, James	Patten, Kendall
Frost, Edmund	Kittredge, James, Jr.	Patten, Nathaniel
Frost, Joseph	Kittredge, James, ters.	Peacock, Samuel
Hall, Richard	Kittredge, Dr. John	Richardson, Andrew
Hall, Samuel	Kittredge, John, Jr.	Rogers, Nathaniel
Haseltine, Samuel	Kittredge, Joseph	Shed, Nathan
Haseltine, Stephen	Kittredge, Thomas	Stickney, Abraham
Hunt, Jeremiah	Kittredge, William	Trull, Samuel
Hunt, John	Levestone, John	Whiting, John
Hunt, Joseph	Levestone, Seth	

To these forty-seven names enough should probably be added to make the number sixty. They include all then on our list of the names Hall, Haseltine, Hunt, and Kittredge, a loss too serious not to be felt. The latter family had become so numerous in that part

**Samuel Manning**
1752-1822 • LCSB-7PJ

**Mehitabel Spaulding**
1748-1821 • LTFS-NZV

Marriage
2 November 1780
Tewksbury, Middlesex, Massachusetts, United States

Children (7)

- **Benjamin Manning**
1781-1861 • KLYG-BC9
- **Abial Manning**
1782-Deceased • K8PS-JRJ
- **Samuel Manning**
1784-1823 • K6MK-6Y4
- **Nancy Manning**
1786-1826 • KN4J-8V7
- **Hannah Manning**
1788-1873 • KN4N-PRC
- **Pamelia Manning**
1790-1867 • LC73-WX9
- **Polly Spaulding Manning**
1792-1868 • G3DV-Y5N

[+ ADD CHILD](#)

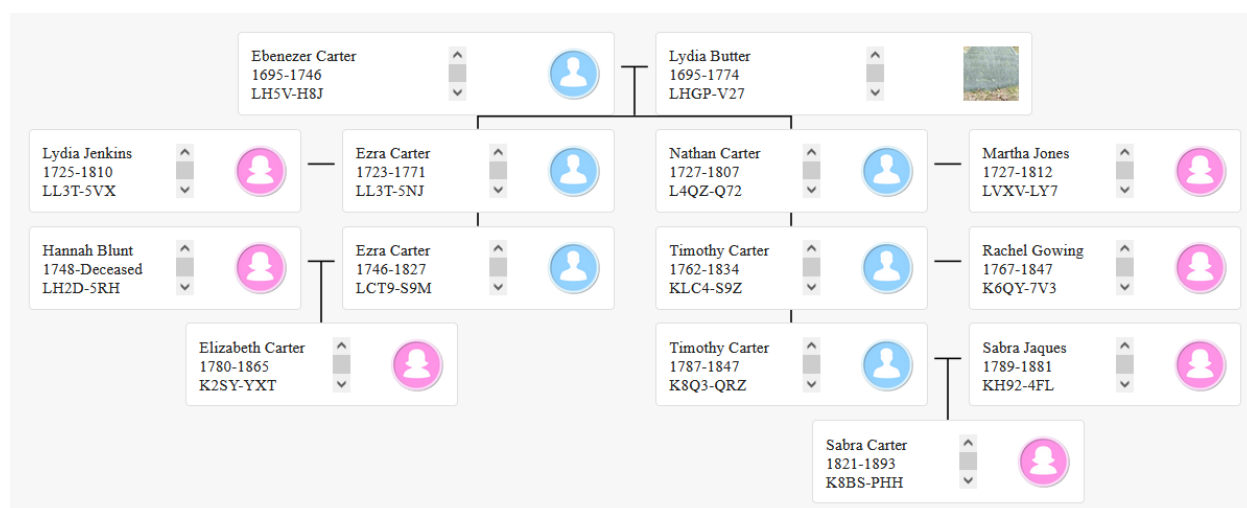
Samuel and Mehitable had 7 more children, all born in Tewksbury.
1796: (7,596), Tewksbury to **S. Manning**, Siminds, Road to Ch, Thompson

1816: (7,586) Tewksbury to **Kidder**, Bd, Simonds, S. Thompson Heirs, Rd)

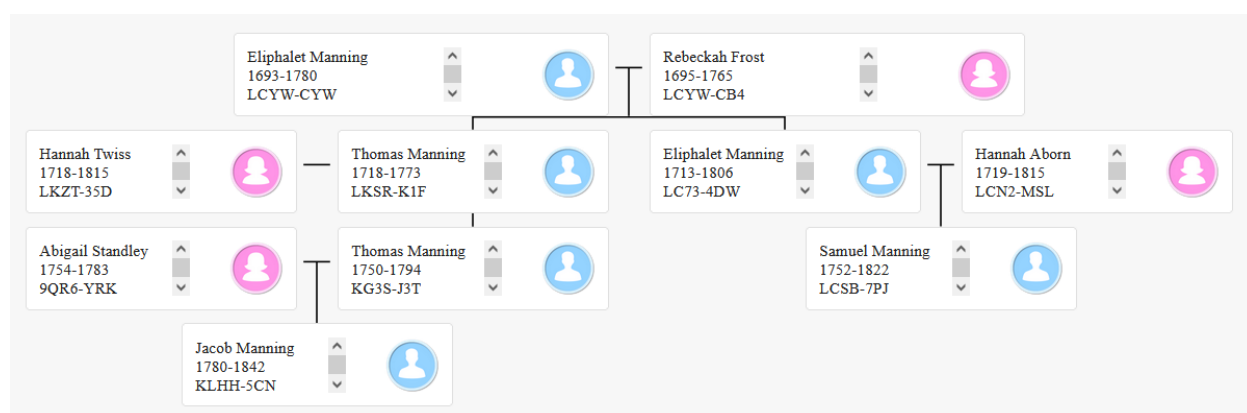
Sabra Carter (1821-1893, K8BS-PHH) is not the likely connection to Mehitabel Spaulding, as they were 7th cousins, 4 times removed. (RelativeFinder.org) We should review the accession records to find out how we actually came to the possession of the sampler.

That said, we do have a Manning/Carter family crossing in Wilmington:

Jacob Manning (1780-1842, KLHH-5CN) and Elizabeth Carter (1780-1865, K2SY-YXT)

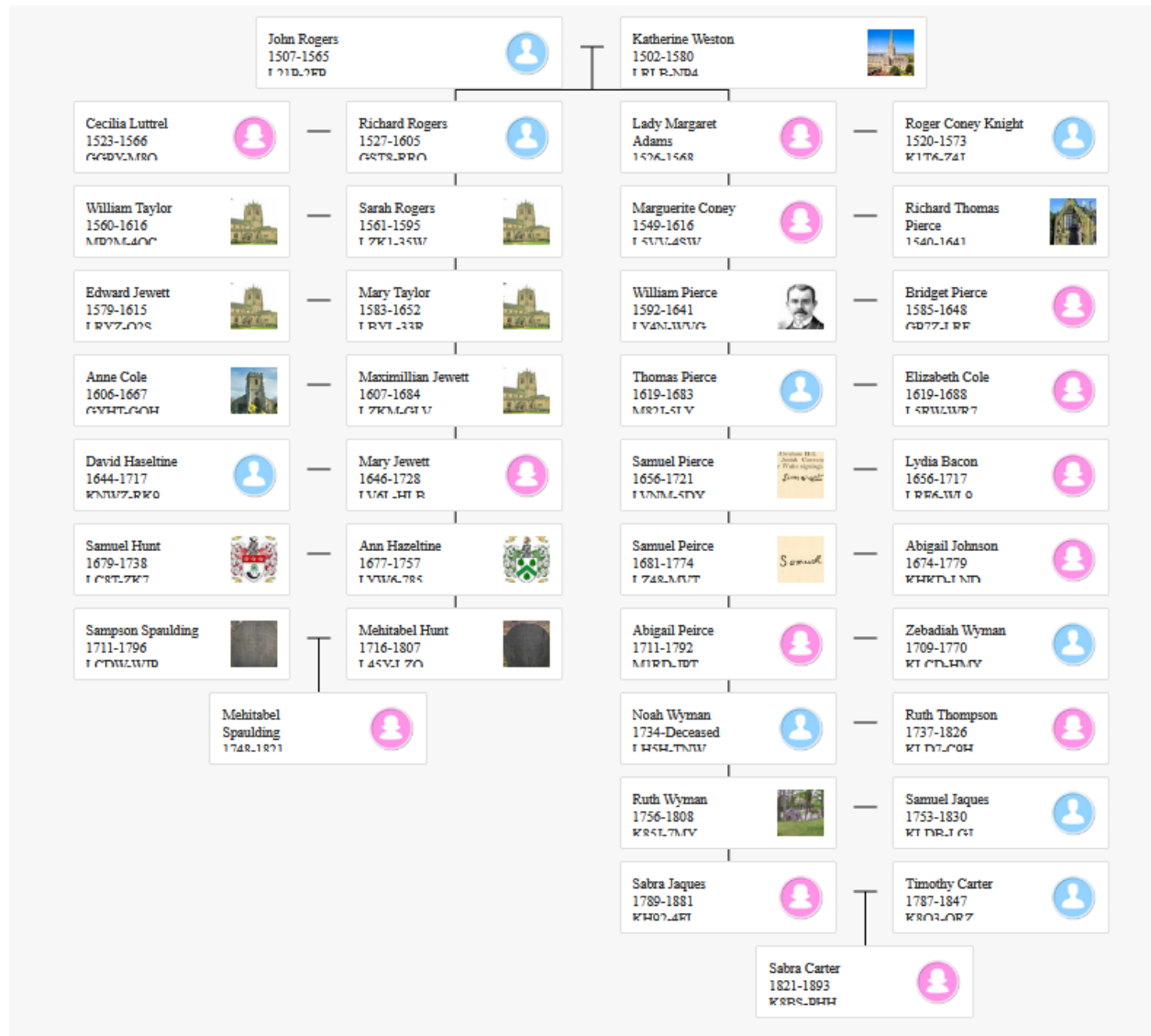


2nd cousin, once removed to Sabra Carter the younger



1st cousin, once removed to Mehitabel's second husband.

So is it possible that the pillow was given from Mehitabel to her cousin's daughter-in-law, who then gave it to her second-cousin in town? It's possible. There were lots of Carters in town, and my understanding is that Sabra was kind of a "collector" of things.



Note: Burt Road in Tewksbury is across the Railroad Tracks from Ballardvale Street

The 1775 map previously published by the Historical Commission places Benjamin Burt on Salem Street, west of the present day railroad crossing, across from Corum Meadows.