My Bray and Haskell Ancestors

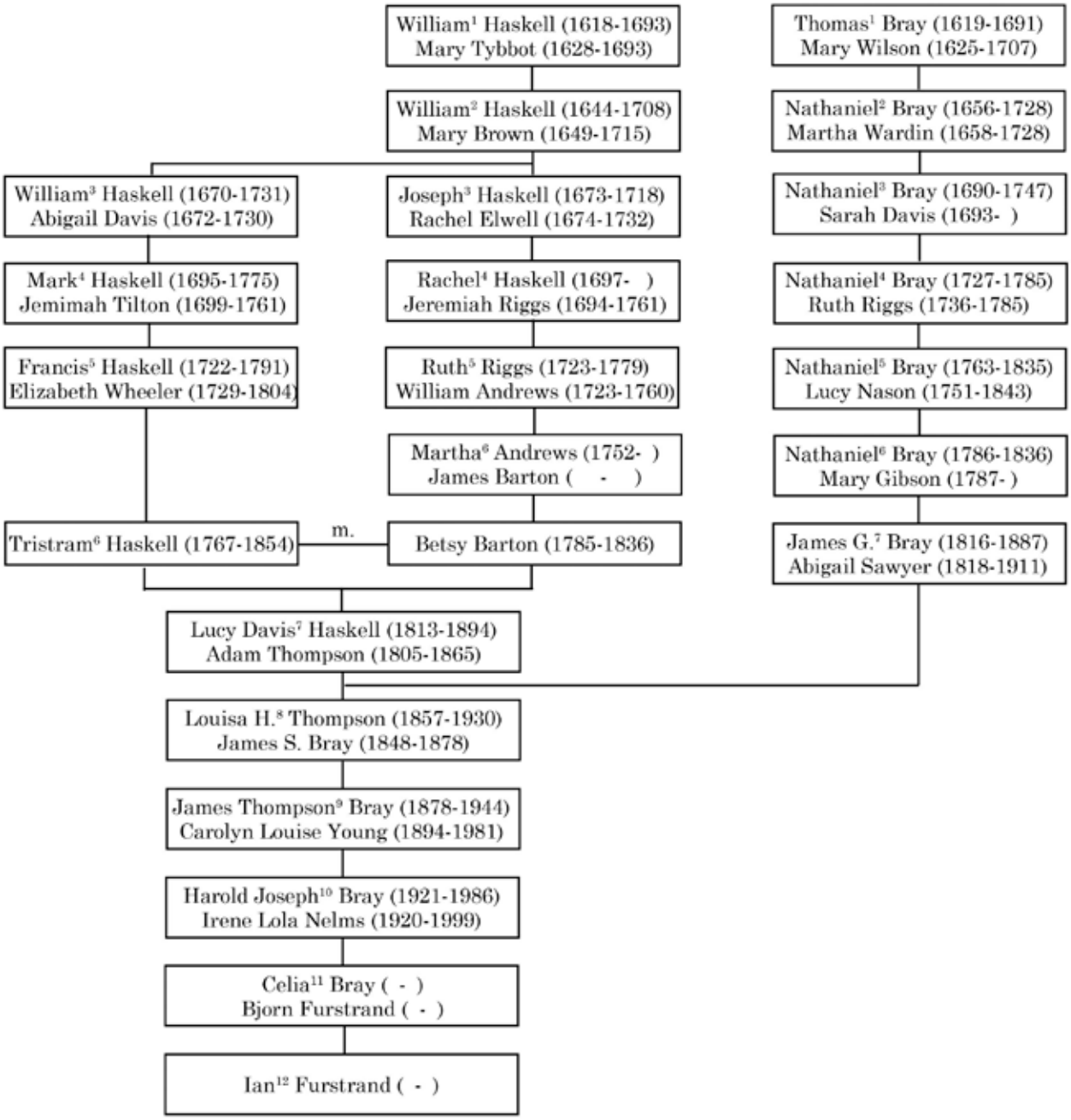
Ian Furstrand

The Bray and Haskell families were intertwined from the founding of Gloucester, Massachusetts. As shown in the accompanying family tree, I am descended from William1 Haskell and Thomas1 Bray, both early settlers of the town.

"Thomas Bray of Gloucester" (Shipwright/Carpenter and Farmer) arrived on Cape Ann around the same time as the Richard Blinman Party from Yarmouth, MA, in Plymouth Colony. He is recorded in the history books and archives as the next-door neighbor and friend of Reverend Richard Blinman.

The Blinman Canal

In the mid-1600s, a mostly "Puritan" group known as the "Blinman (or Blynman) Party," led by Richard Blinman, established one of the earliest known congregations at "Cape Ann." He directed the construction of a canal that bisected the Cape and built a wooden drawbridge, which, once completed, turned "Cape Ann" into an island. This canal and bridge became known as the "Blinman Canal" and "Blinman Bridge" and are still called that today after



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Reverend Richard Blinman.

The area now known as "Gloucester," MA, is actually an island, formerly known as "Cape Ann."

Because "Thomas Bray of Gloucester" was Richard Blinman's friend, I've deduced that he likely helped build the "Blinman Canal," a community-wide effort. Thomas Bray was a shipwright and carpenter by trade, so building the canal and the wooden drawbridge would have used his skills.

"Thomas Bray of Gloucester" and his family benefited greatly from the Blinman Canal's construction, as they are recorded as owning land on both sides of the harbor, north of the canal, in "West Gloucester" and "East Gloucester."

The "Blinman Canal" created a much-used shortcut between East and West Gloucester. It allowed Sailors and Fishermen to travel from the North of "Cape Ann" to Massachusetts Bay, saving valuable time and enabling Sailors to avoid leaving the more sheltered waters of the harbors to venture into the open Atlantic Ocean when bringing trade and people up and down the Coast.

Sailors and pilgrims traveled from places such as Jamestown, Plymouth, Boston, Gloucester, and Annisquam to Newbury and up to the old Maine towns of Kittery/York, Norwich/Muscongus (now Thomaston), Vinalhaven Isle, Metinicus Isle, Fort Castine, Deer Isle, and Fort Annapolis Royal/Port Royal New France (now Nova Scotia) and beyond.

I sailed around Cape Ann while traveling from Boston to Halifax, Nova Scotia, on a foggy, stormy day aboard the 180-ft Bark "Europa" in the "Sail 2000" Tall Ships 2000 Race from Boston-Halifax-Amsterdam. I remember the wind and waves pounding us for those first four days, and many of the passengers and crew were seasick. Even I, a seasoned sailor by then, felt a little queasy! The pounding we took was hard on the bow as we headed north for days.

Twenty-five years later, in June 2025, I visited the Blinman Canal and Drawbridge while exploring the area. I marveled at the giant granite blocks lining the canal, wondered how they had placed them so neatly, enjoyed watching the drawbridge open and close, and observed the strong currents as several boats traveled north and south through the canal.

Blinman is a very active canal, and I can tell you, from personal experience, that the "Blinman Canal" shortcut for Small Craft at "Cape Ann" (or the island of Gloucester, if you wish) has been greatly appreciated by thousands of sailors, fishermen, and weary travelers, and hopefully will be for many more years to come. The "Blinman Canal" is something the families who built it, including my family, the Brays, should be proud of.

From Cape Ann to Deer Isle, Maine

The Bray family later formed the "Second Parish" in West Gloucester, along with other members of the Congregation. Richard Blinman left the area to minister elsewhere.

There is an old, unmarked "Second Parish" Cemetery in West Gloucester, where members of the Bray family are believed to be buried. However, the public has difficulty accessing it because, as of today, there are no signs leading to the cemetery.

West Gloucester has three Bray Streets. Two are named "Bray Street," and one is named "Old Bray Street." There is also a "Bray Hill."

A house, formerly known as "Bray House," sits directly across the street from the "William Haskell House" on Lincoln Street in West Gloucester. William Haskell is my 9th great-grandfather.

Descendants of Thomas Bray and William Haskell of Gloucester, Nathaniel Bray and Captain Mark Haskell (6th-great-grandfathers), migrated from Newbury, MA (just above "Cape Ann") to Deer Isle, Maine, about 100 years later, in the mid-1700s. They jointly owned their first property there, near what is now Mariners Memorial Park. The property, called the Haskell, Bray, Nason Lot, was named after Robert Nason, another 6th-great-grandfather.

The Revolutionary War

As it is the 250th Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, I also wanted to share a story about Gloucester and the Revolutionary War. In June, while in Gloucester, MA, I watched the "Battle of Bunker Hill" reenactment at "Stage Fort Park," where American militiamen had built fortifications to fight off the British during the war.

(The Battle of Bunker Hill took place in Boston, but this park was selected for the Reenactment.)

On August 8, 1775, Capt. John Lindzee of the British ship "Falcon" entered Gloucester harbor while pursuing a vessel. Gloucester townspeople opened fire on the British ships. Capt. Lindzee returned fire on the town with his ship's six-pound guns while another previously captured schooner attempted to rescue men sent to capture another ship.

The rescue attempt failed, and half of Capt. Lindzee's crew was captured, along with the prize schooner "Falcon," three boats, and a substantial quantity of arms.

Because the attack at Gloucester was not part of a planned British strategy, the British were ill-prepared to confront local militiamen, farmers, and fishermen.

The Falcon was taken out of commission due to the loss of crew and senior officers, and the Americans retained their ships and supplies while freeing impressed American sailors. ("Impressed" Sailors were in "Press Gangs" or forced to work for the British as slaves.)

After the action involving Captain Lindzee and the Falcon, the local population built fortifications to protect the harbor at Stage Fort Hill and at other sites.

The skirmish at Gloucester was among the reasons cited for the later formation of the U.S. Navy.

Genealogy Corner



Richard Keith[11] Hascall
(Lawrence[10], Herman[9], Herbert[8], Lucian[7], Augustus[6], Jeremiah[5], Squire[4], John Jr.[3], John[2], Roger[1])
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Genealogy is like a jigsaw puzzle. Sometimes a piece is missing, and you can't find it until you finally spot it on the floor. Other times, you think you have the right piece, even if it's a little tight, only to find that the correct piece was forced into a different spot. If you can't find a missing piece, genealogy calls it a brick wall. We have recent examples of discovering genealogy mistakes and bumping into a brick wall.

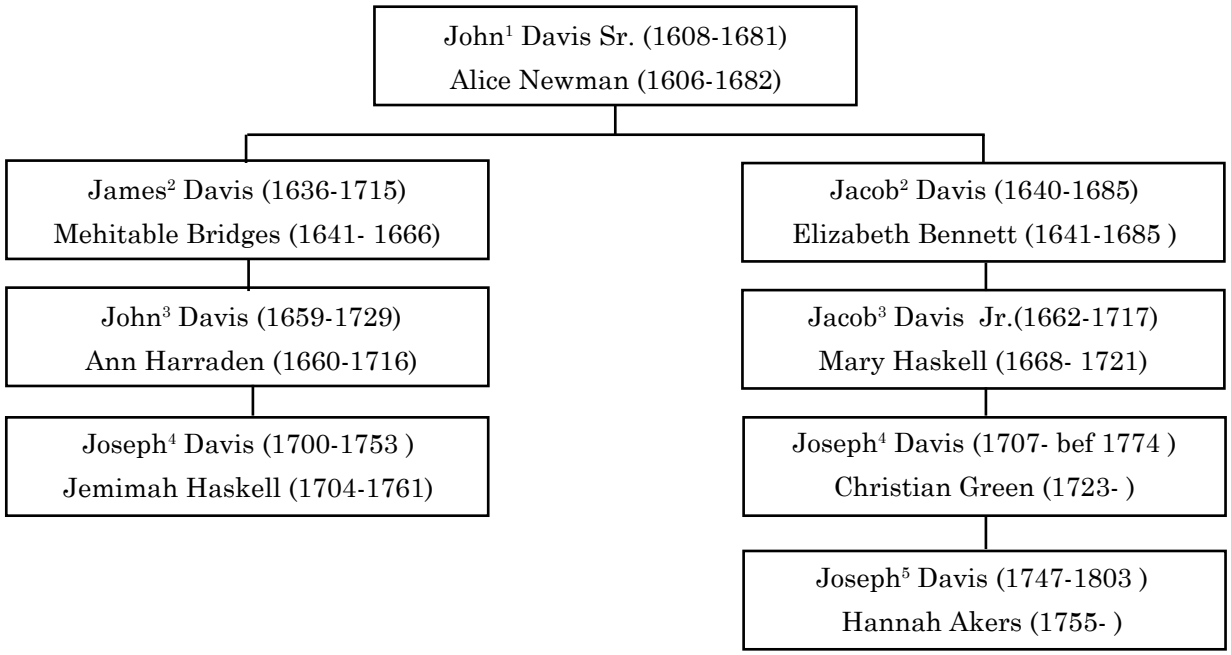
Joseph Davis and Jemimah Haskell

While researching the cover story of the Mary Haskell sampler in Issue 128 of the Haskell Journal, we discovered that the entire Internet had attributed the husband of Jemimah Haskell (1704-1761) to the wrong Joseph Davis. Jemimah Haskell, daughter of William[3] Haskell and Abigail Davis, married Joseph Davis on 21 September 1732. As shown in the family tree below, reproduced from page 13 of Issue 128, the correct husband of Jemimah Haskell is Joseph Davis (1700-1753), the son of John Davis (1659-1729) and Ann Harraden (1660-1716). We confirmed this by finding the probate packet for Joseph Davis (1700-1753), which repeatedly referred to his widow as Jemimah Davis, now Allen, after she married Thomas Allen in 1758.

Joseph Davis (1707-bef 1774), son of Jacob Davis Jr. (1662-1717), was mistakenly identified as the husband of Jemimah Haskell. The error originated in *Dawes-Gates Ancestral Lines*, by Mary Walton Ferris, published in 1943, where she wrote, "Joseph[4] Davis, b. 19 June 1707; prob. he who m. at Gloucester Sept. 21, 1732, Jemima Haskell (William[3], William[2], William[1]). Said to have been in Portsmouth N.H. about 1753." Mary Walton Ferris was a careful genealogist and wrote that this Joseph Davis "probably" married Jemimah Haskell, but she did not have access to the probate packet we found. Later compilers dropped the "prob." and her cautious suggestion hardened into a false "fact." As we discovered in Issue 128, Joseph Davis (1707-bef 1774), the son of Jacob Davis Jr. (1662-1717) and Mary Haskell (1668-1721), married Christian Green (1723-) as his second wife. Through his son, Joseph Davis (1747-1803), the Mary Haskell sampler was passed down to the present day.

Nathaniel Bray and Ruth Riggs

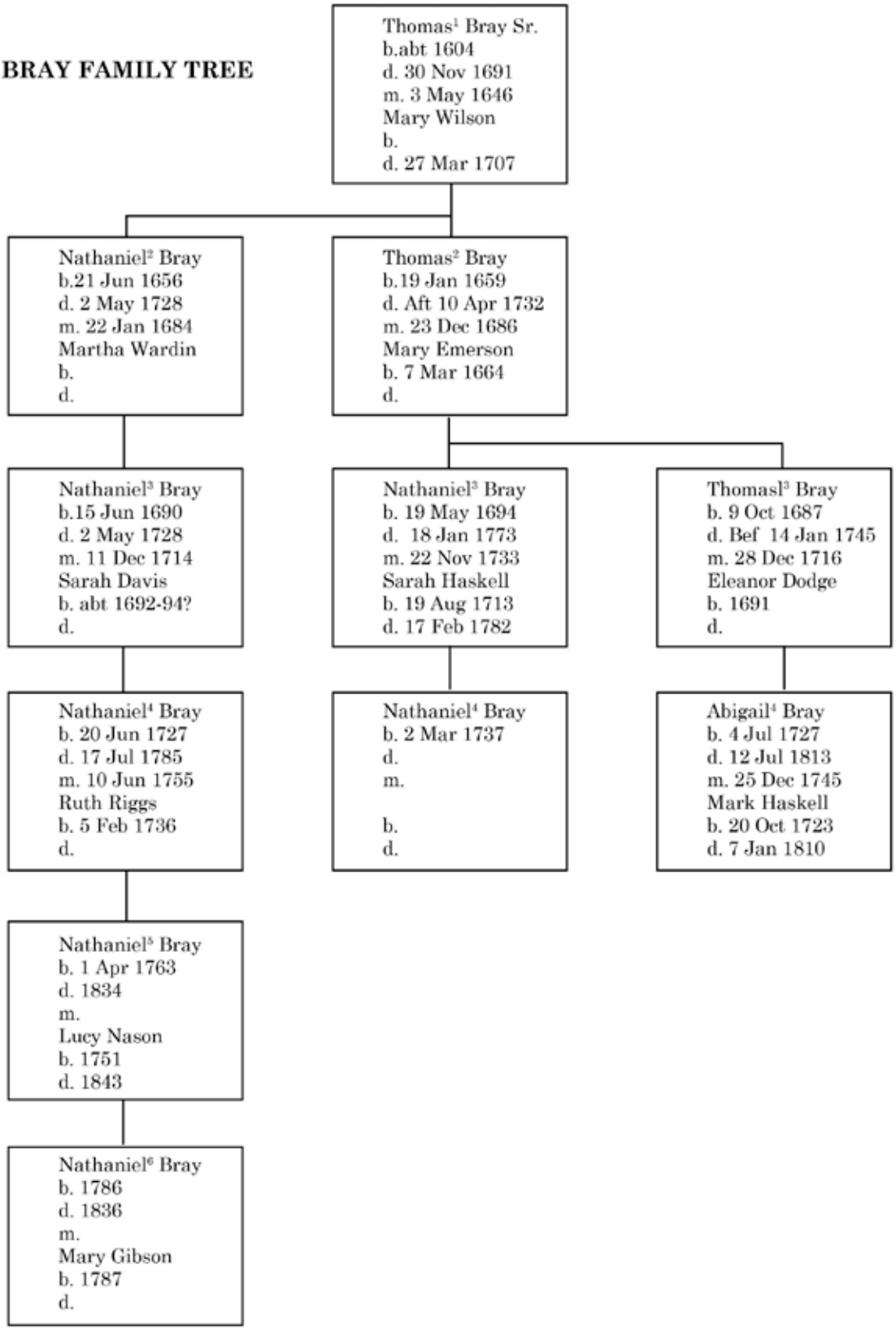
When Ian Furstrand submitted the article about his Bray and Haskell ancestors, published on page 8 of this issue, his descent from Thomas Bray was presented as shown in the right column of the family tree on that page. This corresponds to the right column of the Bray family tree shown on page 11. At first, we thought the tree was wrong because our Haskell genealogical database did not list Ruth Riggs as married to Nathaniel Bray (1727-1785), son of Nathaniel Bray and Sarah Davis. Rather, we had her married to Nathaniel Bray (1737-), son of Nathan-



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BRAY FAMILY TREE



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iel Bray and Sarah Haskell. The error is understandable, as the father of both Nathaniel Brays is Nathaniel Bray, with a wife named Sarah. Our mistaken tree would have given a third descent from William Haskell in addition to the two shown on his family tree on page 8.

Brick Wall

The early Davis family was extensive, as shown in the family tree on page 10. We thought it would be easy to find the father of Sarah Davis, the wife of Nathaniel Bray (1690-1728), in the Bray family tree on page 11. We were wrong. After an extensive search and discussions with Ian Furstrand and the HFA ChatGPT, we still have no answer. We developed some theories but could not find proof to support them. We hit a brick wall. It often takes a long time to knock down a brick wall. We will keep trying.

Haskells and Brays in Deer Isle, Maine

In Ian Furstrand's article on page 8, members of the Bray family who moved to Deer Isle, Maine, are mentioned. The Haskell migration to Deer Isle began with Mark4 Haskell and Jemimah Tilton, shown in the Haskell family tree below. They are also shown in the Bray family tree on page 11. The Haskell family tree below reveals something interesting. Elcy Wheeler6 Haskell and her husband, Joshua6 Haskell, are first cousins. Betsy6 Haskell and her husband, Nathan6 Haskell, are second cousins, once removed. Nathan's parents, Caleb4 Haskell and Elizabeth4 Haskell, are first cousins, as are Caleb's parents, Daniel3 Haskell and Sarah3 Haskell. This illustrates that spouse options in early Massachusetts and Maine were often limited.

