

A History of the Kennebec Land Trust's Gott Pasture Preserve



Written by Constance Kent
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Cover Image: Cellar hole of the Stevens family farmhouse.

The property which is known today as Gott Pasture was first settled as a subsistence farm in the late eighteenth century. The farm then had a rich history of almost one hundred years, during which four generations of the Stevens family worked the land before they were forced to move on by flood and fire in 1881. The property was then sold and used as a cattle pasture, while the old farm fields began to revert to their natural, forested state. In the 1940s, all agricultural use was halted on the property, and it is now completely forested. However, walking the trails on the land, one can still see the remains of the original farmstead and fields.¹

The earliest record of anyone occupying the property is found in the 1790 census for the town of New Sandwich, Maine (now Wayne, Maine). Before 1790 it is simply marked on maps as a proprietor's lot: Lot Number 177. The 1790 census does not record physical addresses of where people lived. Names are written down in the order of where people resided, as if the census taker had walked up and down each street and recorded information as he went. On this census is the first evidence of settlement on Lot 177: a Christopher Stevens is recorded as living between Nathaniel Billington and Samuel Frost. Billington and Frost are known to be later neighbors of the Stevens' family on Lot 177. Although most entries in the 1790 census record the number of people living with each head-of-house, there is no information for Christopher Stevens other than his name. Thus, it is not clear whether he was actually living on the property or just happened to own it at that time.²

Reportedly, a Christopher Stevens from New Meadows in Brunswick, Maine moved to Monmouth about 1781. It is likely that this is the same Christopher Stevens, although it is not known for sure.³

By 1800, Christopher had moved his family to Wayne, as can be seen on the census for that year. The six people residing with him correspond in age to his wife and five of their seven children. By 1810, Christopher's son, John, had taken over as the head-of-household, and by 1820 John had a growing family of his own and was "engaged in agriculture." In 1860, John's son, Cyrus, took over the farm and raised his family there until 1881. A record of census data from 1790 to 1880 and a Stevens' family tree can be found in the appendix.⁴

Based on accounts from other early settlers to the area, one can assume that Christopher chose this location because of the abundant wild meadow grass which grew along the shores of Wilson Pond and possibly Androscoggin Lake. Although the Kennebec Land Trust only owns property from Hardscrabble Road down to Wilson Pond, Lot 177 extended most of the way (if not all the way) to Androscoggin Lake. There is no record in the Registry of Deeds of when the Stevens family acquired the

¹ The earliest record of use on this land is the 1790 U.S. census for the town of New Sandwich, ME. Information on land ownership for this parcel came from the Kennebec County Registry of Deeds. A complete list of records used for this paper can be found in the bibliography.

² Maps which show Lot 177 prior to 1790 include: Chas. C. Whittier, *Pond Town Plantation, Maine*, 1908 (copied from original by Jedediah Prescott, Jr., 1790, with additions); and John Jones, *Plan of Pond Town*, 1771. Information on Christopher Stevens from the United States Bureau of the Census, New Sandwich, Maine Population Census, 1790.

³ Henry D. Kingsbury and Simeon L. Deyo, *Illustrated History of Kennebec County* (New York: H.W. Blake and Company, 1892), 767.

⁴ All census data from the United States Bureau of the Census, Wayne, Maine Population Censuses, 1800, 1810, 1820, 1830, 1840, 1850, 1860, 1880, 1900, 1910, 1920, 1930.

property, but later records, beginning in 1821, show John Stevens selling and buying back various portions of Lot 177. These deeds record the property that John Stevens owned (at its largest extent) running from Androscoggin Pond to Wilson Pond.⁵

The earliest record of what was being produced on the farm can be found in the 1850 agricultural census. Based on what they were producing, and the quantities they produced, it appears that the Stevens family were subsistence farmers. Their production in 1860 was slightly above the state average for that year, showing that although they were subsistence farmers, they were fairly successful at working their hard and rocky land.⁶

The farm certainly was built on hardscrabble land, as the name of the road leading to it would suggest. Walking through the woods, one can see that the Stevenses had no trouble finding rocks to build their stone walls, which are still visible on the landscape. Not only are there large stones dotted all over the old farm, but there are also huge glacial erratics. One can see the use of large fieldstones not only in the stone walls, but also in the foundations of the house and barn. It is unknown when the house was built, but it was probably between 1790 and 1800, after Christopher Stevens acquired the land, but before he moved his family there. The barn was undoubtedly built very shortly after that. The large enclosure that can be seen to the east of the barn was the barnyard. Animals that were not put out to pasture, such as chickens and pigs, would have been allowed out of the barn here.

(Records of animals kept by the Stevens family can be seen in the tax valuations and agricultural censuses in the appendix. Although they are not listed as keeping poultry until the 1880 census, it is likely that they did have poultry prior to that. It was not a category on the census form until 1880.)



Figure 1: Barn foundation and stone support column, looking through the ground floor entry way from the barnyard.

⁵ Meadow grass is discussed in George Walton, *History of Wayne, Maine* (Augusta: Maine Farmer Publishing Company, 1898) 13; and in Kingsbury and Deyo, *Illustrated History of Kennebec County*, 765. Reference to the extent of the Stevens family land can be found at the Kennebec County Registry of Deeds in Book 258, page 268: Deed from John Stevens to Cyrus Stevens, upon his death.

⁶ State averages from 1860 found in Clarence Day, *A History of Maine Agriculture 1604-1860* (Orono, Maine: University Press, 1954), 277.

The barn would have been a traditional English or Yankee style barn and was built on the side of a hill to allow entry access on two levels. The piles of stones seen in the middle of the foundation were supports for the floor of the upper story (see Figure 1). This upper story probably housed a few stalls for horses and cows on one side, a haymow, and a wooden threshing floor onto which a wagon could drive to be unloaded. The lower story provided shelter for other animals and a place to store manure and farming equipment.⁷

Apart from the foundations of the house and barn, there is one other foundation, which is slightly mysterious (see Figure 2). This building, located just east of the farmhouse and set well into the hillside, was built after the farm had become somewhat prosperous and the family could afford to use cut stone for the foundation. It is possible that the stone was cut on site from one of the glacial erratics on the property. The cut marks on the stone indicate that the building was erected after 1830. Despite this obvious foundation, tax valuations for the Stevenses only ever recorded them as having one dwelling house and one outbuilding (presumably the barn). Thus, there is no record of what this building could have been, or that it ever existed. Possible explanations might be a root cellar or icehouse, either of which could have been set into the hillside as this one is, with no second story, possibly explaining why it doesn't appear in the tax records.⁸

A stone wall runs west from an area to the northwest of the farmhouse to the main road. A gap in another wall, running parallel to the main road, indicates that a driveway or farm road once ran along this wall, past the north side of the farmhouse and along the south side of the barn.

To the south of the house, the land is fairly level and smooth.

This levelness of ground is not consistent with a natural forest, so it can be assumed that



Figure 2: Mysterious foundation of cut granite. Possibly a root cellar or ice house.

⁷ For more on the history of barns, see Thomas Visser, *Field Guide to New England Barns and Farm Buildings* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1997).

⁸ Information on stone cutting available from Dave Anderson, "Rust in Peace," *Northern Woodlands* (Summer 2008): last accessed 9/29/2011 at http://northernwoodlands.org/articles/article/rust_in_peace. Tax information from Town of Wayne Tax Valuations, 1874-1898.

the land was plowed and planted. Most likely, this is where the family grew their crops. There is a similarly level area northeast of the barnyard, which was also probably planted with crops. This area can be seen as one walks counter-clockwise around the Shore Loop Trail. Coming uphill before one reaches the turn to go back to the parking lot, there is a stone wall running south from the path, with a right-angle corner turning west to go along the path for a very short distance. On the west side of the wall the land is much smoother than elsewhere, and there appears to be a plow turn. This area on the west side of the wall was likely used to grow crops.⁹

Closer to Wilson Pond are several areas that were also probably cultivated. A plow turn crosses the path where it approaches the shore by the cove, and another one runs along the west side of the stone wall in the northeast corner of the property. Both of these plow turns indicate edges of fields that were regularly plowed and planted. There are also areas along the shore (and others throughout the property) that are level and smooth, but where plow turns are not present. These would have been mowing fields, where hay was grown.

The previously mentioned wall in the northeast corner of the property is one side of a rectangular enclosure, which would have been used to pasture cattle and sheep. Another, smaller, enclosure can be seen on the north side of the Shore Loop Trail, across from the first plow turn mentioned. Undoubtedly, there were other pasturelands, which are no longer visible today.

In 1877 Cyrus Stevens filed a lawsuit against several mill owners in North Monmouth who also owned a dam at the south end of Wilson Pond. Beginning in 1863 the water in the pond was raised more than it had been in previous years and began to flood the Stevens' land. The court case provides a record of Cyrus Stevens' memories of the landscape before it was flooded. Originally there were about three acres of wild meadow grass growing along the shore of the pond, and another five or six acres of woodland, which are now underwater. The land beneath the cove that now forms part of the southern boundary of the property was all above water prior to 1863. Stevens stated, "On my southerly shore my land did not touch the pond at any point at the time before they raised the water to flow it."¹⁰

The case was not tried until 1880, when the courts ruled in favor of the dam owners. This loss presumably accounts for the drop in value of the Stevens' property in the tax valuations—the land was valued at \$725 in 1879 but only at \$580 in 1880.

In 1881 a fire destroyed the farmhouse and barn, and the family moved to what is now the Ross house on the Mt. Pisgah Road. Shortly after the fire, Cyrus sold the land that he owned on the west side of Hardscrabble Road. He held onto the eastern portion of his land (what is Gott Pasture today) until 1888 when he sold it to Samuel W. Bishop.¹¹

⁹ For more on crop locations and interpreting the landscape see Thomas C. Hubka, *Big House, Little House, Back House, Barn* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1984), 81-84 and Tom Wessels, *Reading the Forested Landscape* (Woodstock, VT: The Countryman Press, 1997), 41-61.

¹⁰ All court case information is from The State of Maine, Kennebec Co., Sup. Jud. Court, October Term 1880, *Cyrus Stevens v. Joseph R. King, et.als.* The quote is from p. 6 of the case.

¹¹ Deeds are found in the Kennebec County Registry of Deeds. The reference to the fire and sale of property on west side of the road to Parker C. Tribou is in book 332, p. 249 (5/2/1881). Cyrus's purchase of land on the Pisgah Road from Julia N. and Priscilla Dexter is in book 331, p. 395 and book 332, p. 284 (5/12/1881). The sale of Gott Pasture to Samuel Bishop is in book 379, p. 502 (6/29/1888).

Although Cyrus lost several of his livestock in the fire, he was able to replace them within a year. He continued to keep a team of working oxen, but it is not known whether he carried on working the land on Wilson Pond until he sold it, or if he moved his farming activities to his new homestead.¹²

After Samuel Bishop bought the property, it became known as Bishop's Pasture because he used it to pasture his cows. After he died, his heirs sold it to Clara Gott, who later sold it to her son, Charles Gott, and again it was used as a wooded pasture for cattle and became known as Gott Pasture.¹³

After the Stevens family left, none of the owners of Gott pasture ever resided on the property, and no permanent structures were ever erected. In 2003 the land was given to the Kennebec Land Trust as a gift from the Ladd family. By that time, the pastures had been abandoned for over 50 years and the whole property had reverted to woodland.

¹² Livestock data from Town of Wayne Tax Valuations, 1881-1882.

¹³ Deed from Samuel Bishop's heirs to Clara Gott: Book 570, p. 122 (5/18/1918). Clara Gott to Samuel Gott: Book 638, p. 329 (12/16/1926).

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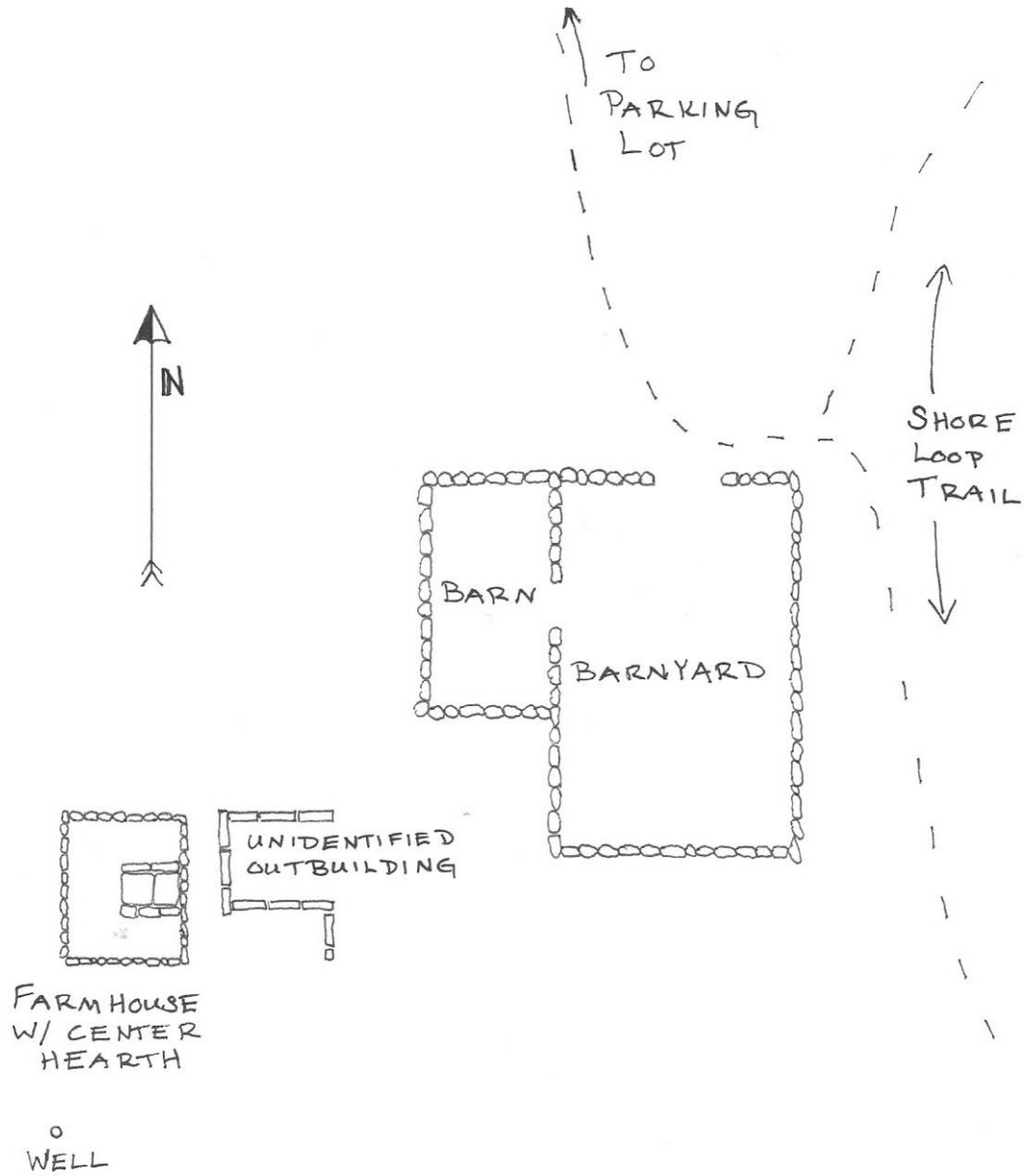
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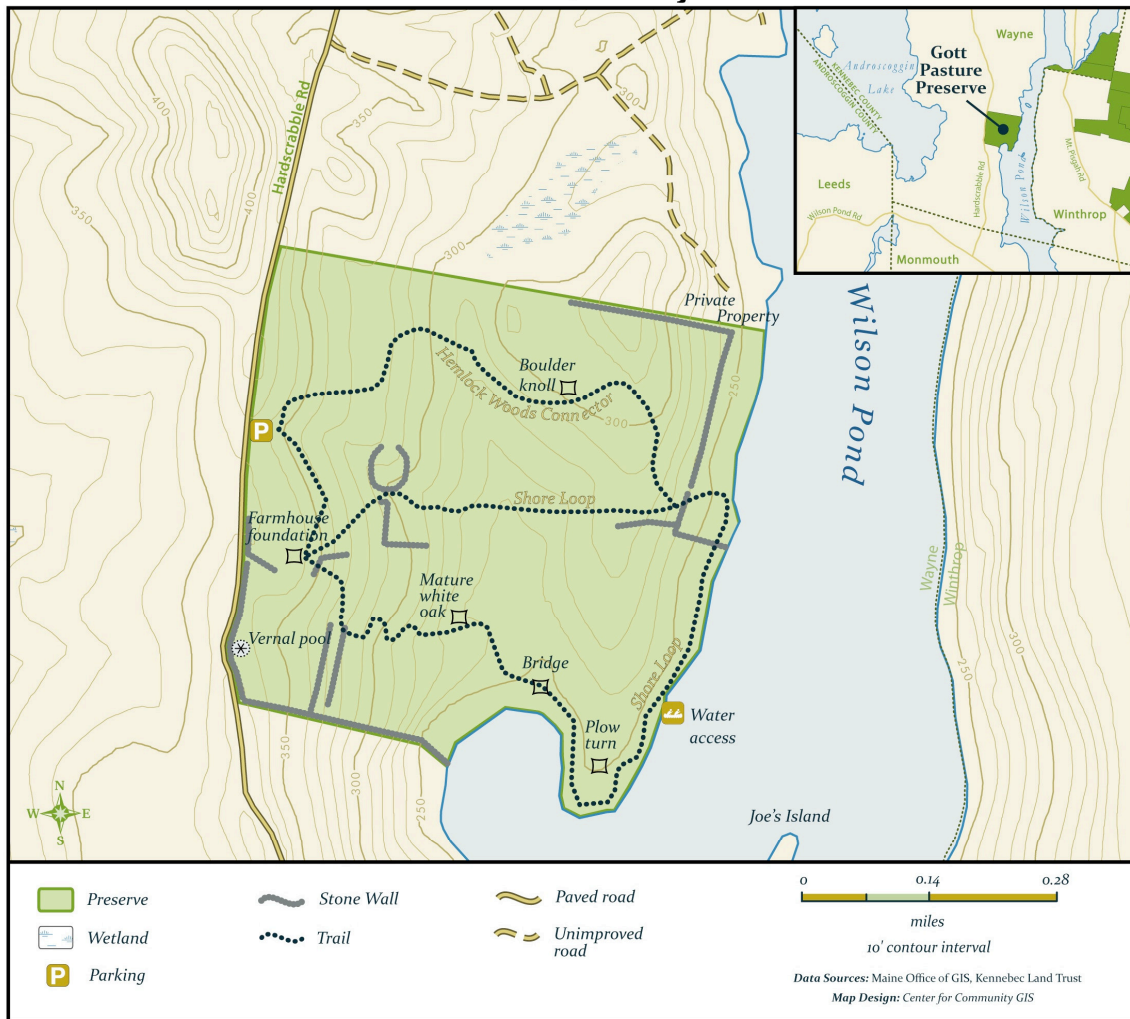
Evergreen Cemetery, Northwest corner. Wayne, Maine. Stevens family plot.

Appendix A: Site Plan of Building Foundations



Appendix A: Trail Map, Showing Stone Walls

Gott Pasture Preserve, Wayne



75 acres ~ Owned by Kennebec Land Trust

Appendix B: Stevens Family Census Data

Names in italics are provided by the author

1790

Christopher Stevens—on census, but no data

1800

Christopher Stevens

1 male under 10 –*Jacob*

1 male 10-16 –*James*

1 male 16-26 –*John*

1 male over 45 –*Christopher*

2 females 10-16 –*Ann, Polly*

1 female over 45 –*Hannah*

1810

John Stevens

1 male 10-16 –*Jacob*

1 male 16-26 –*James*

1820

John Stevens

1 male under 10 –*Christopher G.*

1 male 26-45 –*John*

4 females under 10 –*Sally J., Fanny, Fairvadney, Julia A.*

1 female 26-45 –*Abigail*

1 person engaged in agriculture –*John*

1830

John Stevens

3 males under 5 –*Enoch, Elijah, Cyrus*

1 male 5-15 –*Christopher G.*

1 male 50-60 –*John*

2 females 5-10 –*Celia, Julia A.*

1 female 10-15 –*Fairvadney.*

2 females 15-20 –*Fanny, Sally J.*

1 female 30-40 –*Abigail*

1840

John Stevens

3 males 10-15 –*Enoch, Elijah, Cyrus*

1 male 50-60 –*John*

2 females 15-20 –*Celia, Julia A.*

1 female 20-30 –*Fanny, Sally J., or Fairvadney*

1 female 40-50 –*Abigail*

1850

John Stevens-70, farmer
Celia Stevens-26
Enoch Stevens-21, farmer
Fanny Butler-36
Cordelia A. Butler-10, goes to school
Julia A. Kent-28
Abby Anna Kent-5, goes to school
Laura Ann Kent-4
John Lafayette Kent-1

1860

Cyrus Stevens-33, farmer
Elizabeth Stevens-29
George Stevens-2
John Stevens-79, farm laborer
Lea Fayette-11

1870

Cyrus Stevens-33, farmer
Elizabeth Stevens-40, keeping home
George M. Stevens-12, at school
Flora E. Stevens-6, at school
Ella M. Stevens-1
John L. Kent-21

1880

Cyrus Stevens-53, farmer
Elizabeth Stevens-50, keeping house
George W. Stevens-23, teamster
Flora E. Stevens-16, at home
Ella M. Stevens-11, at school

Appendix B: Stevens Farm Agricultural Census

Year	Improved Acres	Unimproved Acres	Cash Value of Farm	Value of Farming Implements and Machinery	Horses	Milch Cows	Working Oxen	Other Cattle	Sheep
1850	40	0	\$200	\$28	0	2	2	2	15
1860	90	50	\$1,400	\$25	0	2	2	9	13
1870	100	60	\$2,700	\$75	1	3	2	5	6
1880	36	130	\$1,600	\$15	2	3	2	3	10

Year	Swine	Barnyard Poultry	Eggs Produced	Value of Livestock	Bushels of Wheat	Bushels of Indian Corn	Bushels of Oats	Pounds of Wool	Bushels of Peas and Beans
1850	1			\$113	8	25	0	45	
1860	1			\$374	12	50	48	40	2
1870	0			\$747	14	40	105	75	0
1880	2	6	50	\$200	20	50	30	40	5

Year	Bushels of Irish Potatoes	Value of Orchard Produce	Pounds of Butter	Tons of Hay	Gallons of Maple Molasses	Value of Home Manufacture	Value of Animals Slaughtered	Estimated Value of all Farm Production	Cords of Wood
1850	25	\$0	104	8	0				
1860	100	\$20	248	20	3		\$25		
1870	30	\$75	150	18		\$10	\$40	\$510	
1880	25	\$100	300	25	5				30

Appendix B: Stevens Farm Tax Valuations

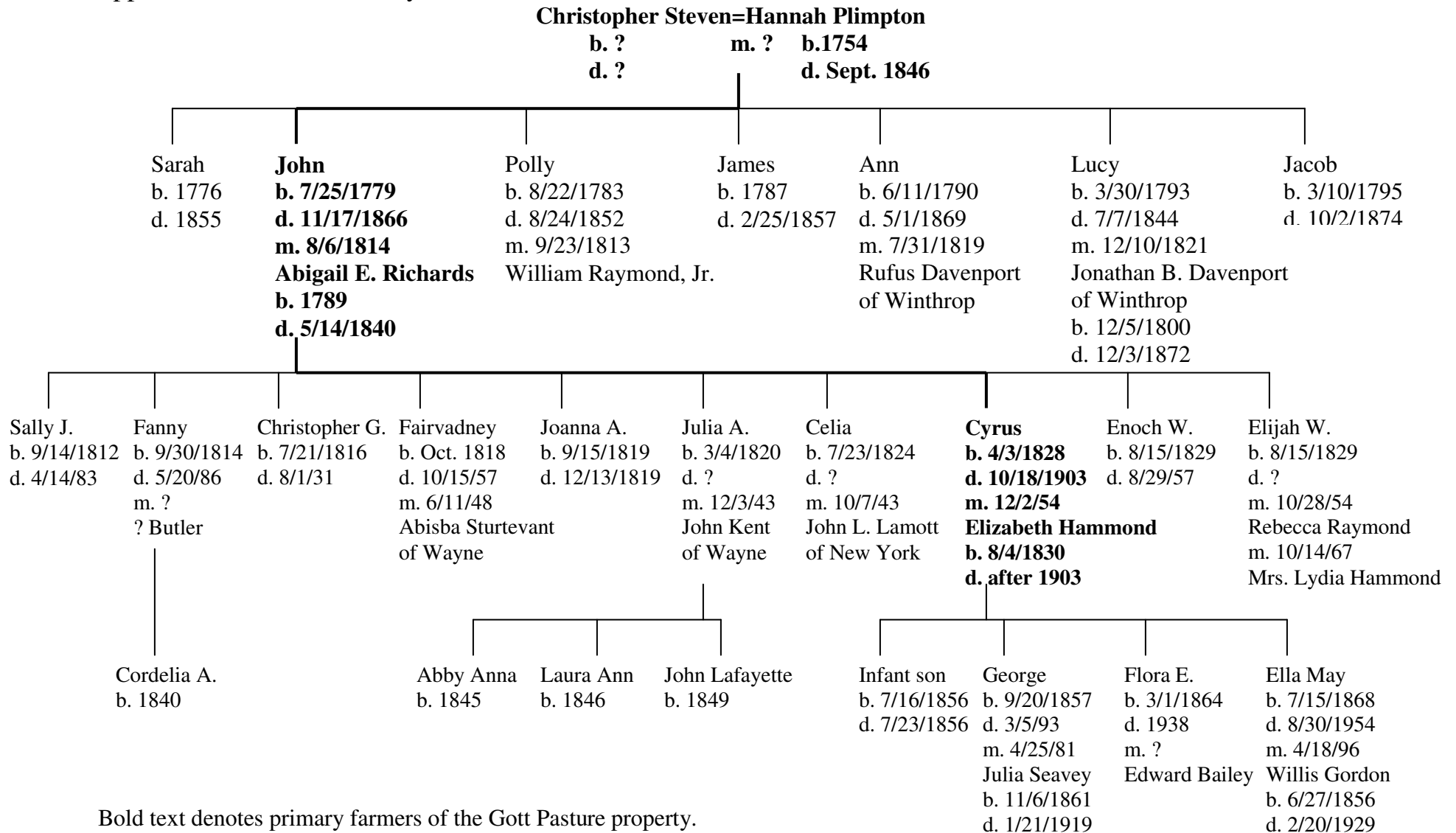
Year	Acres	Number of Dwelling Houses	Number of Outbuildings	Total Value of Real Estate	Number of Horses	Number of Three Year Olds	Number of Two Year Olds	Number of Yearling Colts	Number of Oxen
1874	100; \$800	1; \$100	1; \$100	\$1,000	1; \$25			1; \$30	2; \$125
1875	100; \$725	1; \$100	1; \$75	\$900	1; \$25				2; \$120
1876	100; \$725	1; \$100	1; \$75	\$900	1; \$25	1; \$80			2; \$135
1877	100; \$725	1; \$100	1; \$75	\$900	1; \$80			1; \$30	2; \$100
1878	100; \$725	1; \$100	1; \$75	\$900	1; \$60		1; \$40		2; \$100
1879	100; \$725	1; \$100	1; \$75	\$900	1; \$60	1; \$35			2; \$90
1880	100; \$580	1; \$80	1; \$60	\$720	1; \$40	1; \$45			2; \$55
1881	100; \$580			\$580	1; \$60				

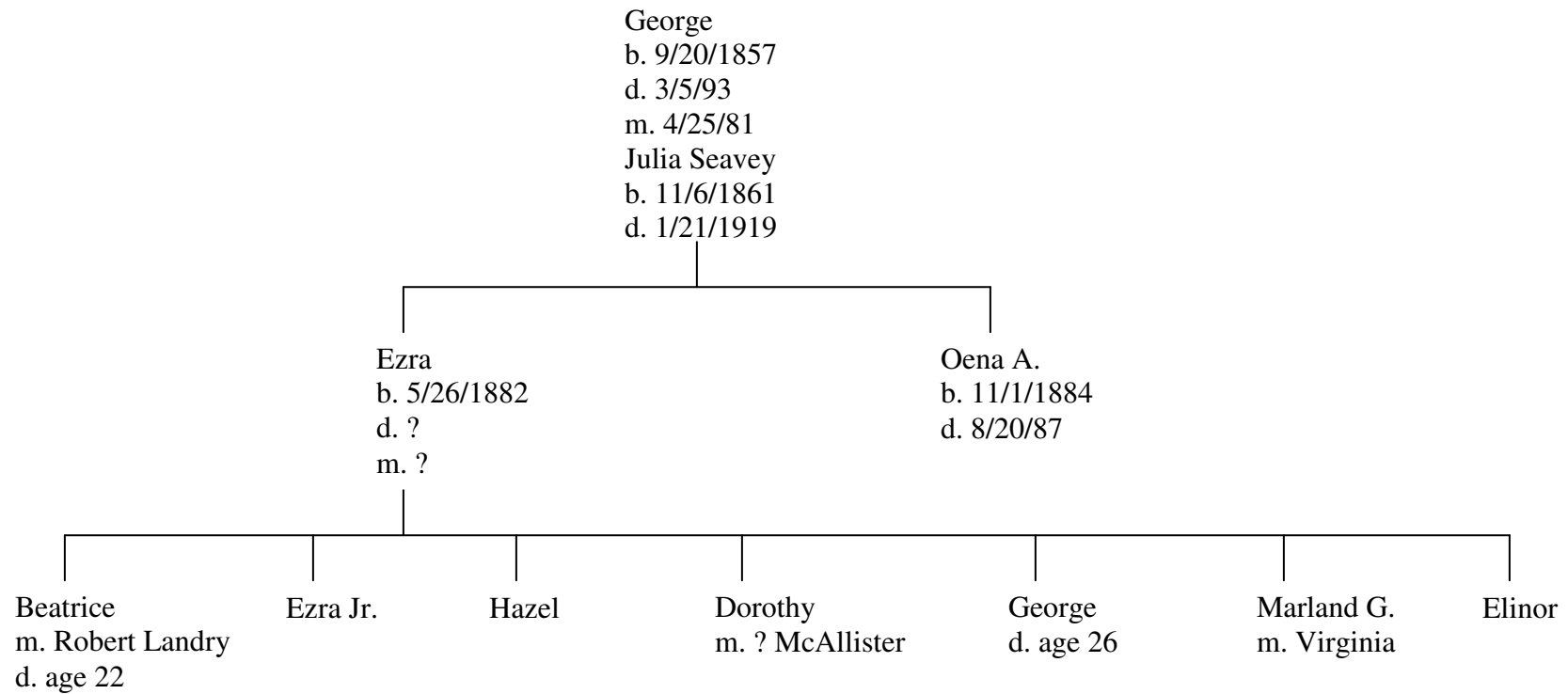
Year	Number of Cows	Number of Three Year Old Calves	Number of Two Year Old Calves	Number of Yearling Calves	Number of Swine	Number of Sheep	Number of Dogs	Total Value of Personal Property
1874	3; \$135					8; \$35		\$350
1875	2; \$80					15; \$55	1	\$275
1876	2; \$50		2; \$20	1; \$10	2; \$15	15; \$40		\$405
1877	2; \$30	2; \$35	1; \$20	2; \$15		4; \$10		\$340
1878	4; \$85	1; \$20	2; \$30			10; \$25		\$360
1879	4; \$80	2; \$55		2; \$10		18; \$36		\$376
1880	3; \$35		2; \$20	1; \$5		10; \$30		\$230
1881	2; \$35			2; \$15		20; \$50		\$160

Year	Acres	Number of Dwelling Houses	Number of Outbuildings	Total Value of Real Estate	Number of Horses	Number of Three Year Olds	Number of Two Year Olds	Number of Yearling Colts	Number of Oxen
1882	110; \$580	1; \$350	1; \$100	\$1,250	1				4
1883	110; \$800	1; \$350	1; \$100	\$1,250	1				4
1884	110; \$800	1; \$350	1; \$100	\$1,250	1				2
1885	110; \$800	1; \$350	1; \$100	\$1,250	1				2
1886	110; \$800	1; \$350	1; \$100	\$1,250	1				2
1887	110; \$800	1; \$350	1; \$100	\$1,250	1				4
1888	110; \$800	1; \$300	1; \$100	\$1,200	1				2
1889	50; \$450	1; \$300	1; \$100	\$850	1				2
1890	50; \$450	1; \$300	1; \$100	\$850	2				2
1891	50; \$450	1; \$300	1; \$100	\$850	2		1		2
1892	50; \$450	1; \$300	1; \$100	\$850	1		1		2
1893	50; \$450		1; \$100	\$550	1	1			2
1894	50; \$450		1; \$75	\$450	3				2
1895	50; \$450		1; \$75	\$450	2				
1896	30; \$210			\$210	1				2
1897	30; \$210			\$210	1				2
1898	30; \$210			\$210	1				2

Year	Number of Cows	Number of Three Year Old Calves	Number of Two Year Old Calves	Number of Yearling Calves	Number of Swine	Number of Sheep	Number of Dogs	Total Value of Personal Property
1882	3			2		20		\$325
1883	2	1	2			10		\$360
1884	2	1	1	1		20		\$245
1885	3	1	1	1	1	13		\$245
1886	2	2	1	3		14		\$238
1887	1	1	1	2		14		\$256
1888	2	2		2	2	12		\$186
1889	3			2				\$140
1890	2		2					\$190
1891	2	2						\$300
1892	2	1		1			1	\$206
1893	3			1				\$206
1894	3		2		1		1	\$205
1895	2			2	1			\$89
1896	3	1	2		1		1	\$232
1897	3	1			3		1	\$205
1898	3		1	2			1	\$179

Appendix C: Stevens Family Tree





Family tree data was gathered from George W. Walton's *History of the town of Wayne, Kennebec County, Maine* and supplemented by Ella Gordon's scrapbook, the Evergreen Cemetery, and the Wayne town census.