

Stainers Transatlantic
by Jack Stainer
part of a Letter to David F Pennant

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... Most of the Canadian Stayners are descended from Roger Stayner, nephew of Admiral Sir Richard Stayner of Tarrant Gunville, Dorset. Roger moved to Boston in the early 1630's, and family lore has it that he was accompanied by his brother Richard. I have found no evidence of Richard's existence. Roger had at least two sons, Roger and Richard, and there were then several generations of Rogers and Richards who seem to have been first sons of the two branches.

At the time of the American Revolution, Abigail Stayner, widow of Richard Stayner, travelled with Lord Howe in the evacuation of Boston (1776), bringing most of her huge family. These Stayners were members of a small puritan sect, followers of a Robert Sandeman, who was in turn a follower of John Glas, the Scottish fundamentalist. A number of prominent Nova Scotians, including the Howes, belonged to this tiny, closely intermarried sect, which has made it easy to trace the Stayners. The family had plenty of money, and accumulated a large amount of property in Nova Scotia. I have found about a thousand acres in downtown Halifax and another thousand in the sister community of Dartmouth. Among other things, the Stayners operated a large tannery, leather goods store and export wharf. John Stayner, Abigail's son, was the superintendent of the Halifax-Dartmouth ferry, in the days when they were running treadmill-powered team boats, run by either horses or oxen. Later, the Stayners were pioneers in the canning of lobsters, owning a number of canneries in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. One of John Stayner's sons, Thomas Allen Stayner, moved to the Canadas, and eventually became Deputy Postmaster General of British North America. His son, Thomas Sutherland Stayner, succeeded him in the position. Sutherland's sons moved to England, where they became C of E clergymen, but their sons moved back to Canada and settled in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

The late Charles St Clair Stayner, great-grandson of Abigail, died in Halifax in about 1979. He did genealogical research on a number of families, and microfilm copies of his notes and many originals are in the Public Archives of Nova Scotia. The Nova Scotia archives are excellent, and contain a lot of information on the Stayners.

There are other lots of Stainers and Stayners out here. James Stainer married Sarah Dowman, Dowling or more likely Downing in Boston, May 29, 1793. I suspect this is the James who was baptised in Henstridge, Dorset, in July of 1760, and is probably a second marriage. Thomas Stainer entered the service of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1787, working at Manchester House, Saskatchewan, Churchill House, Manitoba, and then becoming Chief Factor, first at Fort Churchill and then at York Factory. He seems eventually to have returned to England and is known to have had two half-breed daughters who at one point were in England with him.

James Stainer, of Lyndlinch or Henstridge, emigrated to Canada late in the last century, taking up a homestead in what is now western Manitoba. His descendants live along the highway from Portage La Prairie to Saskatoon. Orville Stainer, who lives in Saltcoats, Saskatchewan, is a great-grandson. He is a long-distance truck

driver, and has been contacting Stayners throughout western Canada. There are Stayners in Revelstoke, British Columbia, and also Vancouver who come from Czechoslovakia.

I have started by looking at the general patterns of the Stayner family in North America. They seem to have bred like rabbits, so that took a while. Now I am working on property ownerships in the early years and also gathering photographs of the early homes, most of which survived into this century. I have rediscovered the abandoned Sandemanian graveyard in Preston, Nova Scotia, where Abigail was probably buried, and I am trying to have it protected under the heritage act. There is a considerable amount of material in the national archives in Ottawa, and also in the postal archives. I have a research permit, but have not spent much time on those two archives. I am told that there is a lot of material in the Boston Archives. The Church of Latter Day Saints in Salt Lake City, Utah, has many records of the Stayners. Some of the descendants of the Roger Stayner line were/are Mormons and have done extensive research. I am working on a book, but it will probably be a few years yet in the making. In the interim I will probably write a couple of papers for historical journals.

I would be very interested in establishing the link between the Stayners of Tarrant Gunnville and those of Lydlinch/Henstridge. The connection is probably no more than two generations before Admiral Sir Richard, and it is quite possible that we are descended from one of his first cousins. Some of his property came down the family to our grandfather...