Marriage and the Chauncey Name

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"Le preuve de l'analyse est dans la synthèse."

- Lévi-Strauss (1960:140)
The relationship of the family to other social systems and changes such as the industrialization of America. As the focus narrows the concern falls on New England life, or perhaps a finer gradient should be used to find the origin of the commonalities which were true of the family in the years surrounding the turn of the nineteenth century. The "Natural" guidelines created by the definition of the Colonies still are not sufficient to limit patterns of family behavior for observation because of major social influences.

For the purpose of starting to delineate the scope of this study, the work of others set up reference points. P.D. Hall's paper on "Marital Selection and Business in Massachusetts Merchant Families 1700-1900" indicates that familial marital and business activity relationships were of a particular type. In order to discover the possibility that these findings have impact elsewhere, the search for the trend may be taken up in Connecticut, more specifically, Middletown. Extensive searches into records of several families reveal other widespread trends which make the clarification of the desired hypothesis more involved. Research must go several steps beyond the records pertaining to the topic itself. Time and changing values concerning that which is worthy of being recorded present a problem: is a supposed idea not true because the signs of it are insufficient to make conclusions, or are other factors preventing the discovery of legitimate evidence?

Some research into the Chauncey family suggests that they may be typical of a pattern which, with their entry into the Middletown community, promotes a familial mobility and ease in business endeavors
not inherent in the predominant cross-cousin marriages of resident families. To participate in commercial activities, capital was necessary, but wealth was generally tied up in terms of family estate. The amount of risk often involved presented hindrance in investment; the family may not have jumped at an opportunity to lose a fortune with the hopes of making one. Also, increasingly limited resources with increasing numbers in the extended family necessitate the encouragement of the children to "find their fortune". With capital at risk, competence played a new role in choosing one's business associates along with family alliances.

One way to form alliances appearing in marriage is cross-cousin marriage, but this was lessened in prominence with the appearance of marriage between several "good" families. Over the generations, repeated alliances of this type introduce new wealth without the true division of any one family's estate and allows the relative security of familial associations in business, however distant, without the limitations of blood-relative family unit, allowing for some flexibility in expectations if needed.

But to return to the puzzle of the Chauncey family, it becomes apparent that to realize that they may have such involvements with the Hamlins, the Alsops, and in even less obvious ways, the Whittleseys, sets up guidelines for research which, to find supportive evidence of this, requires examination of too cumbersome a survey of information for this study. Attempts to reduce the issue to those members who seem important cut out those members who lend significance to the
others' status of importance.

So the task is further reduced to that of an overview of one family's interactions, and more specifically, with careful attention to the avenues through which they seem to appear and the factors which determine the data's displaying itself in certain ways. What were the Chaunceys and what changes have they undergone, if any. Starting with the Middletown 1820 census manuscripts, a sole Chauncey, Henry, husband of Lucy Whittlesey Alsop can be found. Alone. Yet in the Indian Hill Cemetery, there is a huge memorial for the Chauncey name, notably next to the Alsops'. Nothing appears in the census for 1810. Where they all come from, and where does one find them at all is a perplexing question. They have to have their history from somewhere in order for an affluent Alsop and a Chauncey to be married.

It is only through accidental sifting through material that a history is presented piecemeal in Durham history as recounted by William Chauncey Fowler, over whose name the search would have passed since the last name did not coincide apparently, with present interests. The significance of his middle name, with some searching, does prove to be valid, and so Chauncey, as a common enough first or middle name, becomes an unexpected avenue to pursue, or as the case may be, another consideration that must be dealt with. In many instances such as this, a dearth of apparently trivial coincidences can be retained for later use in the hopes that it will be matched with information that affirms its meaning.

W. C. Fowler's data goes back to the esteemed President of Harvard,
Charles Chancy also spelled Chauncey. The President was the son of George Chancy of Hertfordshire, who died in 1627. The eminent President Chauncey seems to have been of the breed which is buried at Indian Hill in such gradour; W. D. Fowler quotes him as having come "to this country to escape the domination of the 'Lords' Bishops" and he was not willing to place himself under the domination of the 'Lord's brethren.' His sons Issac and Ichabod returned to England, but the other offspring stayed to start a long line of involvements in the ministry, greatly respected but hardly affluent. His son, Reverend Israel Chauncey, remained a bachelor in Stratford, and Israel's brother, Reverend Nathaniel Chauncey of Hatfield married and had a daughter Sarah who was to marry Reverend Samuel Whittlesey. This is not the last time the Whittlesey name appears. N. Chauncey of Hatfield's son, Nathaniel of Durham, married Sarah Judson. Nathaniel of Durham's sister, Katharine, also marries into the ministry, Rev. Brewer of Springfield.

Reverend Nathaniel Chauncey was allotted along with thirty-four other heads of families a patent for township of Durham. They granted him five tracts of land as the first minister as Fowler recounts on the condition that he serve as such, adn would carry over to his offspring should one continue in the position. This limitation within the family provided for security, but severely curtailed any other endeavors.

His sons include Elihu, Elnathan, and Nathaniel, the last an ancestor of Henry Chauncey of Middletown. His granddaughter married Elizier Goodrich which kept the Durham Church of Christ's ministry in
the family. Later Goodrich's daughter Catharine's husband, Reverend David Smith, continued in the role, keeping the position in the family for one hundred and twenty-six years. Other males were free to pursue their own futures, as did merchant Charles in Boston, or Chauncey Goodrich as the 1812 Mayor of Hartford.

This overview of the Durham Chaunceys does not present much in the way of entrepreneurial trends, but later generations through the female side of marital liaisons one can trace some of the names which helped involve the Chaunceys in economic life. The church records of Durham's First Church of Christ, surprisingly enough, provide instrumental leads in this pursuit which eventually yields such names as Clara Alsop Chauncy, Richard Alsop Chauncy, and Hannah Burrit Fowler (these names come from female Chauncey spouses). This information unfortunately remains somewhat incomplete without an overview of female lineage involving entire separate families.

Historically speaking, with the sketchy nature of existing records with regard to women, it is empirically challenging to appreciate the full extent of their impact upon the patterning of inter-family relations. Their marriage liaisons unite two family names in the "giving" of the bride to the man and his family. Consistently, whether for the purpose of expediency or an existing manners of thinking, genealogical accounts which understandably list the male members of a family as principal entries, often fail to list any family background of the wife, or even her last name in some. Again, one is reminded to examine the artifacts of history leaving contemporary thought processes behind.
One could hardly take this negligence of female data as an affront or an effort of the time to oppress women; at the time what was recorded naturally is what was useful, to someone, to know. A man wanted to keep track of his male ancestors because it was useful for him to know in view of the fact that others considered it relevant.

It is only in retrospect, where one wants to look back with different perspectives of the time, that often neglected areas offer significance. So, if information of any type is desired, it must be found by working within the channels which are unavoidable, however inefficient it may be for one's own purposes. The gathering of names from the Middletown 1810 and 1820 census for example, presents the problem that heads of families are named. No matter what a woman's financial background, a matter which for the historian could have great impact in the liaison patterns, she disappears under these criterion with the exception of some widowed or independent women. To determine the members in a woman's own family, the backwards route (in the contemporary mind) stubbornly presents itself; pertinent information to be found in Connecticut histories are to be found under the references in her male relatives.

Wallowing through the proliferation of facts, once the woman under question is found, although she may be mentioned in passing, her existence creates relationships whose significance may remain dormant until certain dimensions of interaction as determined by the period. For example, more than several times it can be observed that her father leaves a certain amount of wealth whose recipients include her children who carry the name of another family, and who, as recipients, continue
to amass wealth for that family in concept and practice. They also establish marriage connections which at times may have impact on the woman's family members recognizable at will readings and times of changing financial status.

Because of these unexpected points of importance, the middle of each family history thickens. Farber reminds us in Kinship and Family Organization of G. L. Simpson's lament: "Clearly it is impossible to write in a single coherent volume of all those people who, whether they bore the Coker name or not, are members of the family." Therefore, Coker chooses to concentrate on family members whose "achievement" make family history. In this endeavor, however, the achievers may appear to be springing up, but are their advantages in their associations what they seem to be on the surface? Where families whose remains would indicate "achievement", their interaction proves to go well beyond the economics in low-key but conceptually powerful ways.

This is true because these more significant members have been often positively associated in terms of other family members which embody the relation but in themselves are insignificant in collecting wealth. Farber also discusses Bernard Bailyn's suggestion that one cut out those members who don't "determine the family life style, that contribute to comprehension of its permanent identity." Farber goes on to point out that a family may exist in its own right for a good deal of time in perhaps intellectual but not commercial importance until some changes occur to make the latter possible.6

In the case of the Chaunceys, it is not until apparent marital and
entrepreneurial interaction with other families, such as the Alsops or the Hamlins, that they may come into view in the manner that was typical of a family that would leave behind one of the three largest memorials in the Indian Hill Cemetery. Whatever the attitudes of the time, they couldn't be so different as to support the idea that a family once known for its prominence in the ministry could elicit such a manifestation of affluence solely as a result of its charitable works in the congregation.

The changes which appear to affect the family's entrepreneurial character, (or in part to instill it) while not evident in a sampling of Durham records, become more apparent in comparably more recent years in Middletown material. In the Middlesex Gazette, numerous hints of this are presented, such as various joint advertisements by one Alsop and one Chauncey, first names unknown, for the sale of rum. The April 8, 1819 issue very simply states their desire to sell some St. Croix rum, but the May 13, 1819 issue reveals that they intend to sell the quantity of 300 puncheons of their rum from the brig Condor. There is business going on behind that one inch advertisement. A check of the Middletown liquor licences at the time reveals none for Chauncey. If this is not the result of faulty records, which it very well may be, Chauncey's association with Alsop is certainly to his own advantage. Attempts to discover whether for such a sale a licence is required for both parties involved or a joint issuance under one man's name was a legal practice unfortunately go unresolved at this time.

As for the Chauncey's involvement with the Hamlins over time in
Middletown, consistent appearance of the two names in proximity would indicate that, not only are they legally intertwined in marriage, but they are also cohorts in other aspects of life. The most obvious pair is that of Colonel Elihu Chauncey and Jabez Hamlin. Their associations as Justices of the Peace, as auditors for the Assembly, and as sub-holders of sole rights to the manufacture of potash, appear in the Colonial Records of Connecticut for the eighteenth century. It is true that marriage into money made sense, but this idea served to channel not determine matches.7

As opportunistic as they seem, the patterns of marriage need not be entirely foreign. True, the suitability of a match was largely determined by the wealth that would or would not be coming into one's own family, but this alone could not act as an unavoidable immutable rule. Individually and in terms of the family, matches between these families were further encouraged by the fact that these two men in their choice of social associations are apparently indicative of similarities of family type that would at least not act as deterrents to marriage. They indicate their family's lifestyle as the families see themselves in a certain perspective, whether or not everyone falls into the image of the family as a single whole. When a mate is being considered, he is certainly going to be viewed partly in terms of that image in addition to what he has projected in his own life so far.

Therefore, a marriage with existing community circles can aid in repeated occurrences of marriage between members who in some way belong to the certain families. It should be noted that in this
train of reasoning regarding interaction of factors in mate selection no unidirectional causality is intended. When no instrumental marriage liaisons have occurred between the two families for some time, it may seem that a marriage between two members, say, of the Chaunceys and the Whittlesey name may appear haphazard. Yet the manner in which a name pops back into view in relation with another may result from kinship distance or the closeness of relations being concealed under the names of spouses who may be relatively insignificant to the family in question in their own right.

For example, early in eighteenth century Chauncey history, the daughter of Nathaniel Chauncey of Hatfield married a Reverend Samuel Whittlesey. Much later, in 1820, Henry Chauncey married Lucy Whittlesey Alsop. One can only imagine the complexity of possible intermarriage between the Chauncey, Alsop and Whittlesey names which might be revealed, time and history's recording systems allowing, if a thorough search of every marrying family member's relations. The problem remains that some very important conceptual ties between these families are often buried because they were maintained in historically insignificant individuals or in women who factually lost to the relative anonymity of their husband's family records. Yet because there is no record of any sort of inter-familial liaisons, that does not mean that those members did not maintain a sense of connection with each other.

A man can at one point feel individual in his social and economic activity alongside a man from another family. Yet when he marries that man's daughter or sister, they view each other somewhat differently,
to an extent which they may not realize until an opportunistic endeavor defines their relationship. In Connecticut's changing economic focus, as previously mentioned, this interfamilial loyalty can remain comfortably low-key until the occasion arrives that there is a need to use it. In the interim, the entrepreneurial activity of the first man does not instrumentally affect the father of his wife (or brother, as the case may be) very much except in the second man's concern for the well-being of the woman. But because of the marriage, the man's relationship becomes manifest in financial understandings which may go unsaid or may make them business partners.

This arrangement differs from the constant positions created in cross-cousin marriage. Marital partners remain within the general of their birth, and their actions reflect upon the whole more than in the interfamily marriage. The indiscretions of a family member in the cross-cousin limited family remain within the family, but a husband who was an "outsider" can mar the woman's family's image as the family's own judgmental error in accepting him.

Because of this distance which can be maintained, in a time of growing business entrepreneurship, inter-family marriage proves to be much more workable. The change of patterns toward this opportunistic tendency is reflected in the apparent static holding of land by a family during previous times of cross-cousin marriage's dominance; much exchange was occurring but was poorly and informally recorded because it was a family matter. Later records indicate more movement of holdings, but they are still often between families which have marital connections.
To put further obstructions into the issue, one must realize that the associations are rendered less traceable historically in that much social and economic worth was held outside of any material transaction. Again, Farber discusses Levi-Strauss thoughts on belonging to a "decent group."

He says that the person's ancestors give him "an identity in terms of his historical roots and status in the world around him. The symbolic family estate, in providing content for geneological relationships, thereby serves to define (his) place in a scheme of existence" and to "legitimate their social status." He goes on to discuss the frequent absence of "expenditure of kin-group assets in exchange" and the use of wealth determined by holding this status in the form of mates until a suitable and worthy match presents itself.

These concepts would help to qualify the idea of opportunistic mate choices. To go out and marry the presently richest man in town was not the idea at that time. How well established he was in his holdings was of importance for obvious reasons, and without the existence of stocks and bonds the proof of his establishment was to be found in his family. With the push for expansion in commercial efforts of a family with limited resources and therefore mobility, sense in terms of inter-family marriage can be made in terms of Lévi-Strauss' theories on anthropological concepts of familial "reciprocity" in the exchange of members. He mentions the "parallel perspective" where uni-generational marriage occurs, in a manner which makes for systematic stability, and also the "oblique perspective" when marriage crosses generational lines, caused by "an individualist and greedy attitude;
as far as possible the link between what is (exchanged) is kept as concrete as possible. To take his ideas one step further and to evaluate his use of terms which sound judgemental, the marriages of the Chaunceys as they become more "affluent" create links between generations of separate families to the extent where they are not bound to each other. But related in ways which only become apparent in the concrete, such as financial aid or allocation of an estate.

Furthermore, these functions of opportunistic patterns come out of hiding if the observer takes a sociological perspective. Because other patterns and exceptions exist, it does not mean that the supposed trend has no true basis. The cross-cousin marriages remained well in the picture for some time, but that doesn't mean that the inter-family patterns did not indeed have definite advantages in the changing interactions of family and commercial entrepreneurship. In order for the latter patterns to continue as an advantage group, the former had to exist in some form over which to have the advantage. It may only be in looking back on these families as members of a type or group that the advantages can be appreciated. Then one may ask if certain families were regarded as having had an affluent symbolic family estate.

Singling out single members is not sufficient because one lifetime of success may be found in nearly any family and are not indicative of a trend caused by widespread social changes. In Farber's *Kinship and Family Organization*, Sidney Greenfield puts this idea into perspective:

"No causal statements can be made about relations among the parts themselves; that is, one part
cannot be the cause of any other since all, taken cumulatively, are either the cause of, or are caused by the whole. The only relationship that can exist among the parts of a self-regulating, functionally integrated, equilibrium system is that of functional interdependence."11

Greenfield also discusses the application of these ideas to family in interaction with commerce and industry as it changes in the nineteenth century. Connecticut started to support lifestyles suited to families which were no longer limited to family farms; these families whose lifestyle were no longer on that scale needed avenues to a lifestyle which could support their activities.12 The family was becoming too extensive to survive within its own business, at the same time, the mechanisms and attitudes involving, for example, opportunistic risk of business were becoming a strain on maintaining family limitations of interaction.

Further investigation of historical data reveals that, quite suitably entrepreneurial associations are not fleeting moments of speculation, or even fleeting lifetimes of opportunism. Rather, they often involve contacts between families that go beyond exchange of goods. The names Jabez Hamlin and Elihu Chauncey are listed together again:

"Upon the memorial of Jabez Hamlin and Elihu Chauncey, showing to this Assembly that there is a new-invented water-machine for the dressing of flax... also representing that, upon proper encouragement to them given, they would set up and bring into use said machine... their heirs and assigns... sole liberty... making, erecting and setting up and using... term of fifteen years... all other persons hereby prohibited from making and setting up said machine... or imitation... upon penalty... of one hundred pounds... by the said Hamlin, Chauncey and their associates..."13
These rights were applicable to any area in the Colony, so in order to best utilize this opportunistic advantage, these families' lack of cross-cousin marriage would be conducive to the mobility required to expand. Woods explains in her American Family System concerning family productivity, the advantages of keeping "business within the strict form of the family versus less traditional patterns, such as inter-family marriage associations. She states that while competition, economic stress and "iron discipline required to keep it afloat" do not work as well in family relations, the family setting promotes the formation of a sense of alliance toward an end through common attitudes. The members who participate in the network of the inter-family marriage pattern can benefit from both."

In order to examine how this system works, if indeed it is the mechanism of certain familial industrial changes of the time at the very least in the Middletown area, the necessity of outlining the trends of other families in the area has already been made obvious. The search for facts which might support the pattern through its reconstruction elsewhere again presents the problem of deciding where to limit oneself. It is not, unfortunately, just a matter of deciding what information is valuable; not much is even dismissable as not pertinent, for it may only be in connection with later knowledge that it becomes significant.

If this pattern of familial associations can be reproduced elsewhere, these separate truths could be the key to something still more general, such as ideas about the institution of family such that
history can illustrate more than the idea that family was this; and it became that, and that meanwhile everything with which it interacted was also in a state of change. Lucky is the person who finally stands, removed from the facts that have been sifted for patterns, patterns pieced together into theories, and the theories broadened into overviews to say that is what it was like back then.
Footnotes

3. Fowler, p. 28.
4. Ibid.
6. Ibid., p. 260.
9. Ibid., p. 12.
12. Ibid., p. 410.

Also used:
The Middlesex Gazette
The Barbour Collection of Vital Statistics
Middletown Manuscripts
Statistical Account of Middlesex County by D. D. Field
Yale Annals and Biographies by F. B. Dexter
Clark's History of Connecticut
Burpee's Story of Connecticut
Middletown Business Directories
History of Middlesex County by Beers