

Francis Cooke Society Newsletter
Vol. 1, #3
October 2003

About the Francis Cooke Society (FCS)

The FCS was formed in 2003 when it came to the attention of several founding members that there was no existing group perpetuating his memory. In addition to honoring Francis Cooke's contributions to Plymouth Colony, we also plan to be a forum for members to exchange information and assist descendants of Francis Cooke in acquiring acceptable proofs of eligibility for membership in the General Society of Mayflower Descendants.

Contact Information

Members of the FCS are in communication through an e-mail group at:
Francis_Cooke_Society@yahoo.com.

The FCS Website address is: <http://www.familytrail.com/franciscooke/>.

Acting president J. Scott McKay may be contacted by e-mail at Scottsfamilytree@aol.com or by mail at P.O. Box 1048, Leland, Michigan 49654.

President's Corner

Welcome to the Francis Cooke Society! Things are moving along in our young organization. We are making progress on developing by-laws, bringing FCS closer to being an official organization.

Thank you to Judy Hughes for her excellent work as membership chair and to Richard Worthington, our new Historian, for bringing his multiple talents to our organization.

Please consider contributing whatever time you can give to help form our society. Some opportunities for members to help are: publicity, Yahoo discussion website moderator, investigate possibility of placing a memorial marker at Burial Hill in Plymouth, plan a FCS get-together to coincide with the General Congress Mayflower Society meeting at Plymouth in 2005, or search the Internet for Cooke lineages to recruit new members. Please contact me for more information.

I wish everyone a wonderful Thanksgiving holiday.
Scott McKay

Member Profile

Richard Worthington is making some wonderful contributions to the FCS, including his article in this newsletter on "What is a Woolcomber?" Rich works at the University of Wisconsin where he makes maps for the university as well as state and federal government. He is also conducting graduate research in paleo environments in North America, including Native American impacts on the landscape and is experienced in designing computer graphics and has already designed a FCS logo. His hobbies include genealogy and restoring and reproducing antique furniture. Welcome, and thank you for your important contributions, Richard!

Committee Updates

Membership: Judy Hughes, our membership chairman, reports we currently have 69 members. Judy is compiling membership information that includes e-mail and snail mail addresses. If you have not given this information to Judy, or are interested in joining, please contact her at judyh@dnet.net or 828-524-7740

Publicity: Member Gail Adams kindly ran an announcement about the Francis Cooke Society in a recent issue of "The Howland Quarterly." Thanks Gail! If you have publicity ideas, please contact Chris Chirokas at Chirokas@tiac.net or Judy Hughes at judyh@dnet.net.

What is a Woolcomber?

By Richard Worthington

Francis Cooke was living in Leiden by 1603, and the records there describe him as a woolcomber from England (MD 8:48). O.K, so what is a woolcomber, anyway? You might think the answer is obvious, but there is more to it.

There are many professions involved in the wool trade. We will concern ourselves only with those that prepare the wool for spinning. In order to make wool fabric, the sheep's fleece must be shorn or plucked or combed from the animal. The fleece must then be washed, sorted by fiber length, and aligned in one of two ways to prepare it for spinning and weaving. The shorter wool fibers are carded, by people called carders [*L. carduus* = a thistle] or scribblers. The fabric produced from these short fibers tends to be soft and fuzzy. Most of us are familiar with the tools of the carder, which are used in pairs.

Wool combs are also used in pairs. A woolcomber works with the longer fibers from the fleece. The comber aligns the long, fine fibers from the fleece, and sets the coarser fibers aside for use in blankets and overcoats. Yarns and fabric made from the long fine fibers are called worsted. Fabrics made of worsted are hard and smooth. Some are even shiny. Worsted fabrics tend to wear well and resist pilling. They are not usually as warm as soft wools, however. Of course, there is a lot more to this story, but if anyone asks you what a woolcomber is, just tell 'em!

Website Spotlight

Some Websites recommended by Richard Worthington:

<http://www.exlibris.org/nonconform/engdis/index.html>. This site offers a wealth of information about English religious dissenters, and the section on Barrowists would be of particular interest to Cooke descendants. Barrowists are better known as Separatists or Congregationalists in the Colonies. Many of the dissenting religions in England, such as Anabaptists and Quakers, were also practiced by our ancestors and are also described on the site. An extensive bibliography is also included for people who want to learn more about their ancestors' religious practices.

<http://www.quiknet.com/~moseley/>. A site that offers great Mayflower history lessons and activities for children, by Dr. Patricia Moseley, the junior membership chair of the GSMD. Print out some biographies of your Pilgrim ancestors and some nice Pilgrim paper dolls for the children in your life this Thanksgiving.

<http://www.nativetech.org/cornhusk/dollinst.html>. Another great idea to do with the kids—make Penobscot dolls from cornhusks, a craft the early New England settlers learned from Native Americans.

Newsletter editor: Christine Chirokas, Chirokas@tiac.net