

Our Ancestor Named Ebenezer Perry was not a Descendant of Mayflower Passenger Degory Priest

by Perry Hogan Young

For several decades, many in our Perry family have believed that they were descendants of Degory Priest, the Mayflower passenger who died in the winter after he arrived but had children who came to Massachusetts later and thus had an American posterity. Based on research from the General Society of Mayflower Descendants, hereafter referred to as the Mayflower Society, our Perry family is likely not among that posterity.

The key person to consider is our ancestor Ebenezer Perry (a physician who married Abigail Russell on 19 December 1741). There is also a person named Ebenezer Perry (a cordwainer, meaning a leather worker), accepted as a descendant of Degory Priest by the Mayflower Society. It is important to realize they are very likely not the same person, which is claimed in an often cited book published in 1955 called *An Incomplete History of the Descendants of John Perry of London 1604-1954* by Bertram Adams. An entry from the Mayflower Society's book about the descendants of Degory Priest states:

69 EBENEZER PERRY⁵ (Mercy Swan⁴, Mary Pratt³, Mary² Priest, Degory¹) was born at Cambridge 10 January 1707/8, baptized there 15 April 1709, and was living 25 March 1736 (deed).

On 25 March 1736 Ebenezer Perry of Cambridge, cordwainer, and James Perry of Cambridge, chairmaker, conveyed to James Dix all their right to two pieces of land in Watertown.

NOTE: It is unlikely that Ebenezer Perry, a cordwainer at age 28, was Ebenezer Perry, the physician who married at Cambridge 19 Dec. 1741 Abigail Russell as claimed in Bertram Adams, *The Descendants of John Perry of London 1604-1954* [Salt Lake City, 1955], pp. 14-16. Bond's *History of Watertown* lists Ebenezer, the son of John Perry, as being bp. 15 April 1709 and simply says "cordwainer of Newton." There is no evidence of Ebenezer in the Newton VRs or History. Paige's *History of Cambridge* in the Supplement says that Abigail Russell married Dr. Ebenezer Perry of Groton. The Groton VRs has no evidence of them in town. There is no record in *Harvard Grads* that the doctor attended.

The physician seems to be a younger man. No proof has been found that they were the same person. A 17 May 1749 deed proves that it was the physician who married Abigail Russell (Middlesex Co. LR 49:94). Note that Abigail Russell's brothers were cordwainers.

References: Middlesex Co. LR 37:737 (Ebenezer Perry).
(Townsend, Edna and Robert S. Wakefield and Margaret Harris Stover, *Mayflower Families through Five Generations, Volume 8: Degory Priest, Second Edition*. (2008) Plymouth, MA: General Society of Mayflower Descendants, p. 69)

To sum up, we have two persons named Ebenezer Perry discussed here, Degory Priest's descendant, a cordwainer with no known offspring; and our ancestor, a physician with as yet unknown parents and whose dates of birth and death remain unknown. Efforts to find this information have not yet been successful, but should continue so we'll know more about our real ancestors.