

JONATHAN CHARLES BILLING POCKRICH SEAVER - BORN IN KINGSTON, NR DUBLIN , IRELAND 7 JUNE, 1853 DIED IN PACHUCA, HGO, MEXICO IN 1928, OF CANCER.

The story of Jonathan Charles Billing Pockrich Seaver, known when young as Alphabet Seaver, is so closely linked to the history of Ireland and that of his ancestors that following is a short summary of some of his ancestors. The name is probably of Danish origin (synonymous with Norse or Viking). The family historian, George Seaver, mentions that the story of this family is mentioned by Ireland's historian Duffy, and most of the information that follows is taken from George Seaver's book.

There is a great deal of information in the National Library of Dublin and in Newry, Co. Armagh, where the Seaver's settled for many centuries. It may have been one of the first towns built by the Scots-Irish who were encouraged to emigrate to Ireland by the English Government beginning in the 1600 and when this area became a "pocket" of Protestants. This history is a dark stain in English history. The site, however, had been inhabited for centuries before that. There is an elevation in the ground near Lusk known as Sever's Hill but it is not known if there is a connection to the Seaver's of Newry. The Seaver's claimed to be of "Anglo-Irish" descent and therefore not Celtic.

Because of the law of primogeniture, land was always left to the eldest son in order to protect the accumulation of land. During the transition from Roman Catholicism to the faith of the Reformed Church of Ireland, the Seavers took a vague stand but they were always actively engaged in Irish politics.

Heath Hall, the 200 acre family estate in Co. Armagh, plays an important part in this family history. The home was built by Thomas Seaver in 1769 in the townland of Ballymacdermott on the Newry side of the Killeavy estate, which lies between Dundalk and Newry. The house was considered modern for its day as it had two storeys. The original roof was thatched and it remained so for 70 years.

JONATHAN SEAVAR OF HEATH HALL (1760-1841)

Jonathan Seaver, eldest son and heir of Thomas Seaver who built Heath Hall, was known as Seaver of the Bog. He is described as a fine

featured man, of great physical strength, shrewd wide set blue eyes and a tight-lipped mouth. His hair was fair. He was individualistic, despotic, high spirited with great personal courage, reckless and had an immense zest for life. Seaver of the Bog was educated in Dublin for the law but spent most of his life protecting the peasantry, Catholic and Protestant alike. He lived through the gradual impoverishment of the country. He was a Freemason and joined the newly formed Orange Society.

His eccentric unmarried sister Mary Jane lived with him at Heath Hall all of her life. She was reputed to be so large that she could enter a door only sideways and she kept pet pigs with green ribbons on a lead!

Seaver of the Bog's latter years were saddened by domestic sorrows. His favourite son died leaving him with three orphaned grandchildren. There had been a growing estrangement between himself and his children especially his eldest son Thomas who emigrated to France.

Like many country gentlemen of his day, he illegally kept his private still of whisky and guests at his house were expected to drink until they had to be carried to bed. He lived up to the family motto "assume the state your rank deserves." He disliked bill collectors because in his mind to be in debt was a trifling matter. Living beyond his means caused the first mortgage on the estate. He died and was buried in the church yard near Meigh village. Years later his grandson told his own grandchildren that this Seaver had seen the banshee.

THOMAS SEAVER OF HEATH HALL (1789-1849)

Eldest son and heir of above, Thomas Seaver was educated at Trinity College in Dublin. He had the face of an idealist with auburn hair and large eyes. He did not have his father's forceful personality but was kind, generous and affectionate. He inherited from his father independence of character and newly married at 37 and at odds with his father he emigrated to France where he remained for 17 years. Father and son never bridged the gap between them even though he sent his son back to Newry to live with his grandfather.

Thomas Seaver of Heath Hall inherited Heath Hall in 1848. Having lived in France he had adopted new ideas, believing in a free Ireland.

He gave a portion of his land to the Catholic Archbishop of Armagh for the erection of a chapel in the village of Meigh which was still standing in 1939. He is buried in the family burial ground in Dundalk.

THOMAS SEAVER OF HEATH HALL (II) (1825-1900)

THOMAS SEAVER OF HEATH HALL (II) was born at Fontainebleau, France and was sent home to be educated at Newry where he lived in Heath Hall with his grandfather. Three years later his grandfather died which brought his father back to Ireland. When he was 23 he inherited Heath Hall, which was heavily mortgaged and the tenantry impoverished by the Potatoe Famine. In 1852 he married Maria Nicholina Seaver, his third cousin and in 1853 the property was sold to Dr. Kelly, a medical practitioner in Newry. Thomas and his young wife went to live in Dublin where their three children were born.

I Jonathan C.B.P. Seaver (1853-1928 died in Pachuca, Hgo, Mexico)

II Thomas Pelly Pockrich Seaver (1855-1915- died in Auckland, New Zealand)

III Catherine Seaver (1856-1928- died in Mexico City)

Thomas Seaver left his wife and three children in Dublin while he worked his passage out to Australia as a deck hand. He was lured by newly discovered gold mines but was soon disenchanted. He settled in St. Arnaud after sending for his wife, three children and blind mother-in-law. He lived happily there for 40 years. The Seaver book says he was a "mail contractor".

The family endured incredible hardships but as the Seaver book says "they always rose to the occasion with courage and brought their children up to respect the principles and traditions in which they had been bred." Always, the family pride. He was highly respected for his strict integrity and very much loved by his family. He had excellent manners, was intellectually curious, generous and loving to all. His eldest son Jonathan once wrote "I loved him more than any other human being I've ever known." His granddaughter Minnie Seaver Stockdale attributed her thirst for knowledge to his early teachings. He was very unhappy when his son Jonathan took out a 99 years lease on Heath Hall in Ireland and uprooted the entire family where they were now well settled and happy. The only one left behind was Jonathan's brother Thomas. (More about him later).

The Seaver history states that Thomas died of a broken heart.

I JONATHAN C.P.B.SEAVER (Alphabet Seaver later known as Papa Jack)

Born in Dublin in 1853 where he lived until he went to Australia in 1857 when his father sent for him, his mother, his blind grandmother, a younger brother, Thomas and sister Catherine. He was tutored in Victoria until he was sixteen and then he tried studying for the church but his restless nature was more compatible with civil engineering. His brother Thomas seems to have followed in his footsteps. Jonathan was a first rate mathematician. He was a Fellow of the Geological Society of London and an official surveyor for New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. He acquired a practical knowledge of mining. He was tall and handsome, fair haired and fresh complexioned, with a broad high forehead. His speech and gestures were quick and emphatic, his whole manner direct and forcible. His most conspicuous feature was a pair of flashing eyes above a prominent nose. In 1880 he married Mary Abbott whose family was Scots-Irish and had settled in Adelaide. Mary Abbott was the widow of a Rev. William Robinson and by whom she had one daughter, Lillian. By a strange coincidence Lillian married Claude Hojel who was distantly related to Jonathan Seaver and who had emigrated to Australia with them. (Separate story for Mary Abbott known to her grandchildren in Mexico City as Granicita)

Jonathan's restlessness and eager enthusiasm, both mental and physical, found an outlet in travel. But always at the back of his mind was the hope that he could one day buy back the family estate in Ireland, Heath Hall. In 1894 he went to New Zealand where he was successful in prospecting for gold. Returning after a long day at his solitary camp, he was overtaken by a storm. He found shelter under a large over-hanging rock, where he lay down and slept. He dreamed he was in Ireland, walking up the drive towards a house which he had never seen but which he recognised as Heath Hall. Based on this dream he returned to Auckland and promoted a large mining company, then to England to finance it and back again to New Zealand to move the entire family back to the old country. He was willing to pay any price for the house and Dr. Kelly took full advantage of Jonathan's state of mind and asked for 5 times the going price, for a now dilapidated home. Jonathan secured the services of a cousin,

Henry Seaver, an architect, and proceeded to renovate Heath Hall with reckless extravagance and intense family pride including a stained glass window designed with the family arms and a tower was built on Heath Hall to celebrate the return of the Seavers. While the work was being done on Heath Hall his family lived in Goring-on-Thames.

Three years later, in 1900, his investments in New Zealand failed and the family became bankrupt. His beloved father was on his death-bed while the bailiffs were in the house repossessing the furniture. One month later his 17 year old daughter died of tuberculosis.

Dr. Kelly walked back into a bare but completely renovated home while Jonathan and his family waited for a boat to take them to Canada to seek new fortunes.

After a few months of working in Toronto, Canada where the family lived in a suburb called Rosedale and the younger children were confirmed at St. Paul's on Bloor St., they moved on to St. Louis, Oklahoma, and Paris, Texas. Jonathan then heard of work in Mexico with Weetman Pearson (later Lord Cowdray) and this is what brought him to Mexico in 1904.

Weetman Pearson was one of the greatest pioneers ever sent out from England. He made great friends with the President of Mexico, Don Porfirio Diaz, who had opened up Mexico for the first time to foreign investment and the country was booming. Jonathan first worked on the railway line from Perote to Jalapa, Ver. and after that there were jobs galore, always with Weetman Pearson. Jonathan worked on the gran canal system in Mexico City, the port of Veracruz, the water works in Monterrey, The Light and power Company in Necaxa, and petroleum works in Minatitlan. It seems however that his temperamental, independent character prevented him from ever assuming an important position in Mexico.

During the Mexican Revolution which broke out in 1910, Jonathan was commissioned by the British Consulate in Veracruz to carry official despatches for the Legation in Mexico City. This appealed to him. He travelled on horseback through rebel country-side, a couple of revolvers and a sheath-knife at his belt.

While Jonathan worked in all the above remote places, his family lived in Colonia Juarez, not far from Christ Church on Calle Articulo 123, where they met and mixed with other ex-patriates.

In 1916, at the age of 63, Jonathan returned to England to volunteer for the war. He became captain with the Royal Air Force and was posted in Paris in charge of British personnel proceeding through Paris to and from leave.

After the war he went to South Africa in search of new ventures but was soon hospitalized for appendicitis so he returned to England and back to Mexico. He lived with his youngest son, Joe Seaver and his family in Pachuca, Hgo. until his death of cancer in 1928. He became a fair landscape artist. He asked that he should be buried without a headstone in the Panteon de los Ingleses in Real del Monte, Hgo as he felt his life had been meaningless.

In 1996 some of his grandchildren pooled together to erect a headstone for his grave in Real del Monte. Grave No.560.

Lillian, his step-daughter, married Claude Hojel, and lived in Mexico City the rest of her life. Mother of Frances, Claude and Jim Hojel

II THOMAS PELLY POCKRICH SEAVER (1855-1915)

THOMAS P. P. SEAVER stayed behind in New Zealand when Jonathan returned to Ireland with all the family. Jonathan and Thomas had formed two mining companies in Auckland called Seaver Bros. One in Auckland and one in Paeroa (two hours away from Auckland). It is assumed that he stayed behind to take care of the family finances.

George Seaver mentions Thomas' birth in his history of the family but otherwise he was never brought up in conversation, nor writing in the family. The information given here was found through a Computer Geneology Forum. There must have been a rift between the brothers when it is known that Jonathan's daughter, Minnie Seaver Stockdale, visited New Zealand in the 60s and she made no attempt to find her uncle's relatives.

A certificate No. 3858 BDM in New Zealand states that Thomas married Caroline Hird in 1897 at St. Peter's Church in Wellington and another notation No. 19 that Thomas died in Auckland area in 1915 of cancer of the lip and jaw and is buried at Waikumete Cemetery. In the

Wise directory it notes that Thomas did all sorts of jobs to do with mining. Caroline was a widow when she married Thomas and apparently they had no children. They adopted two girls that might have been Maori, their names being Lillian Marie and Dorothy Tui. Caroline lived on until 1954 and is buried in Mangere Cemetery in Auckland (BDM #19). The geneology report from New Zealand mentioned that she and her first husband were great friends of Robert Louis Stevenson.

In the Public Library under bankruptcies the following was found:

Thomas Pelly Pockrich Seaver, Auckland, Mining Agent, 1 July 1898.

Notice is hereby given that Thomas Pelly Pockrich Seaver carrying on business as Seaver Bros. of Auckland, Mining Agents, was this day adjudged bankrupt on creditor's petition, and I hereby summon a meeting of creditors, to be holden at my office on Thursday, the 14th of July, 1898 at 2.30 o'clock.

Official assignee, Auckland, 1 July, 1898 J. Lawson.

III CATHERINE SEAVER - (1856-1928) Very little is known about her. She never married and therefore became the family housekeeper. She lived with her brother Jonathan's family always. She developed Parkinson's disease and died the same year her brother Jonathan died and is buried in the British Cemetery in Mexico City.

JONATHAN C. B. P. SEAVER'S DESCENDENTS

1. Thomas Henry Seaver - Born 1881 in Adelaide, Australia. He became a civil engineer. As soon as armistice was declared he was sent by the Anglo-Mexican Petroleum Co. to Persia on a surveying expedition. A year and a half later he died of typhoid fever and was buried in Baghdad.

2. Marie Josephine Seaver - Born in Australia in 1883 and died in Southport, England in 1900 of tuberculosis.

3. Jonathan G. Seaver - Born in Australia in 1885. Always known as Jack. He became a Metallurgical Chemist and was killed in a mining accident in El Oro, Mexico in 1905.

4. Minnie Myall Seaver - Born in Lavender Bay, Sydney, Australia in 1887. Died in Mexico City 3rd June, 1970. (a separate story)

5. Joseph Abbott Seaver - Born in Lavender Bay, Sydney, Australia, in 1889. He became a Metallurgical Chemist and was employed in Mexico for many years by the American Smelting and Refining Co. In 1914 he went to England to enlist and he saw active duty in France and East Africa. In 1919 he married Violet Seaver (his 3rd cousin) and settled in Pachuca, Hgo. Mexico. Later they lived many years in Chihuahua, in the northern part of Mexico. Their children were sent away to school in England and the United States. They severed their ties to Mexico and retired in El Paso, Texas, where they grew old together, dying within a short time of each other 1975/77.

I Rosemary Josephine, born 1920. Married 1944, Lloyd Randolph Pugh, Lieut. American Air Force. One son, one daughter.

II Jonathan William Whitchurch Seaver, Lieut. R.N.R., born 1923. Married 1945 Isabell Mabel, daughter of Thomas Glenn, Londonderry. One daughter and one son.

III Heather Irene, born 1925, married Thompson Reynolds. Two sons.

Under separate cover, a story about Minnie Myall Seaver Stockdale as well as two stories she wrote about her life.

Compiled by Beatrice Stockdale Barnett
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