

THOMAS SKINNER SR. (1617-1703)  
 MARY GOULD (GODDE OR GOODWIN) ( -1671)

No known ancestral line of Thomas Skinner has been established though the Skinner name is common in areas of England. Thomas and his wife resided in Chichester, Sussex England (map 1, #39) The surname is like a large class of English trade and business names adopted about the twelfth century when a man's occupation became the family name like Butcher, Baker, Chandler, etc. Skinner simply means a dealer in furs and hides. The Skinner Company of London received a charter of incorporation as early as the reign of Edward III., and has a coat-of-arms of ancient date. They are said to have descended from Stephen Skinner (1557) of the county of Hereford (map 1 #14).

"Sergeant Thomas Skinner, immigrant ancestor, was born in 1617, in England, and died March 2, 1703/4, in Malden, Massachusetts. He came from Chichester, county Sussex, England, bringing with him his wife and three sons. He lived at one time at Subdeanery and parish Chichester. . ." <sup>1</sup> From someone who has visited the shire of Sussex you might hear that the English countryside is really a garden - and nowhere is it lovelier than on the South Coastland of England especially in Sussex (map 1 #39). In this vicinity are many enchanting medieval structures. Battle Abbey - a school today - was built on the very spot where Harold, King of England in the eleventh century, fell when he marched against William the conquerer, at the Battle of Hastings. Bodiam Castle is a bold fourteenth-century fortress complete with parapets, a portcullis and a moat where water lilies float.

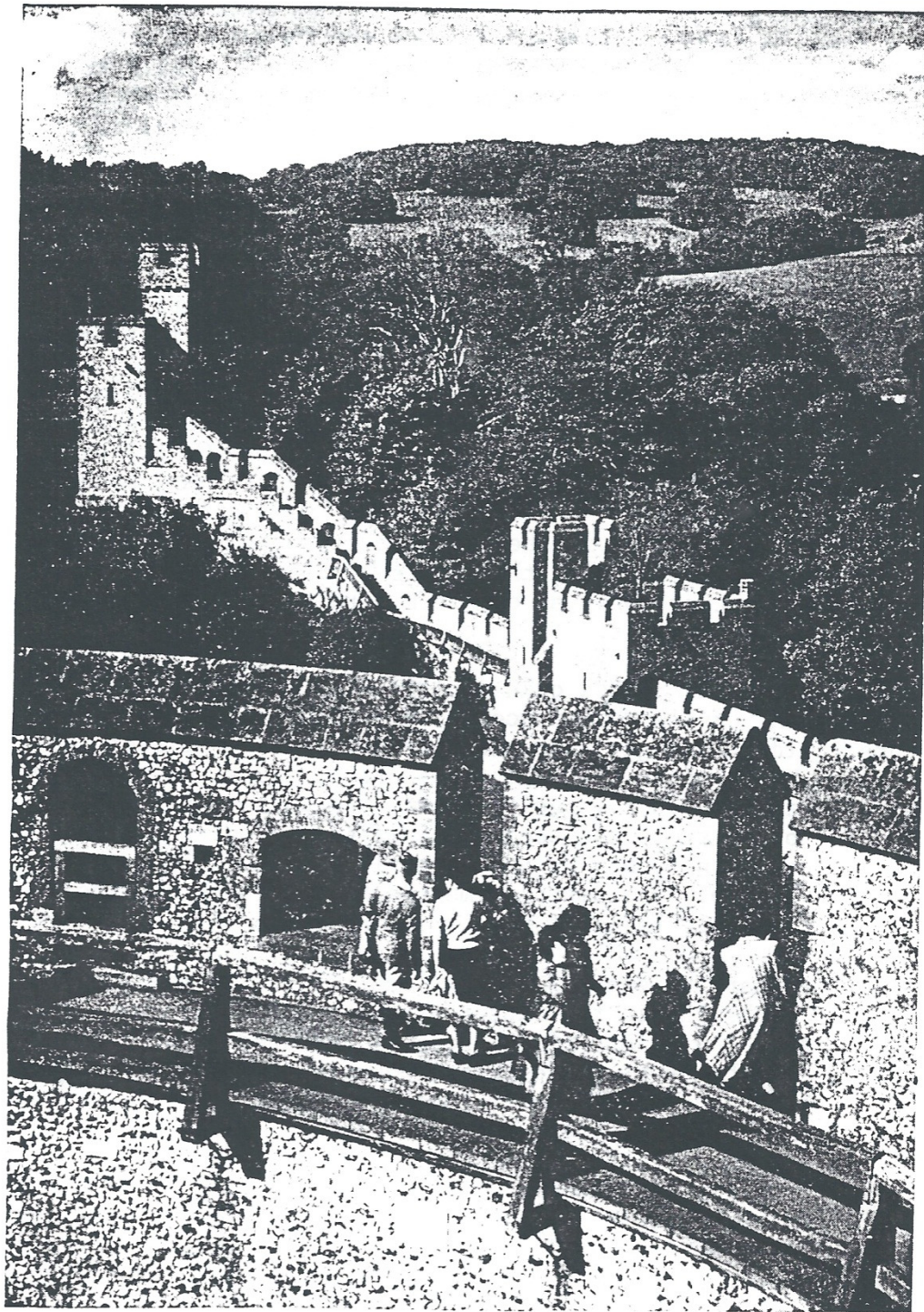
Standing among the Sussex oaks and bracken, in spring almost moated with wild hyacinths, the castle Herstmonceaux is a thrilling example of old English architecture. Old buildings in the English countryside reflect the kind of soil they stand on. Where it is clay, cottages are of brick and roofed with thatch. In localities that were once largely forest, the houses are timbered. Wherever stone could be found, stone was used, even if it was only a tiny quarry. The South Downs, largely in county Sussex, comprise gentle slopes that graze the famous Southdown sheep. At lambing time the hills are an entrancing sight, with thousands of little balls of wool frisking about on the springy turf.

Lewes, the charming seat of Sussex County, lies in the very heart of South Downs. On a height in the center of the town is a Norman Castle. Nearby are the ruins of the Priory of St. Pancras, founded by William the Conqueror's step-daughter. On the downs above Lewes, Henry III was defeated by Simon de Montfort in 1264. Henry was taken prisoner, and Simon called a meeting of Parliament. From this meeting the House of Commons developed.

Brighton, the largest and best known seaside resort in England is sometimes called "London by the Lea". Just outside Brighton is the Devil's Dyke, a natural amphitheater, above which is the remains of a camp of the early Britons. Once upon a time there were iron-ore mines, as many of the lovely old iron gateways and lampposts still found in Sussex, attest.

In this part of Sussex in the spring, there are fields of wild daffadils, primroses, cowslips and orchis. In the woods bloom bluebells, windflowers and lords-and-ladies. Gardens display a wealth of wistaria, magnolia and even camel-

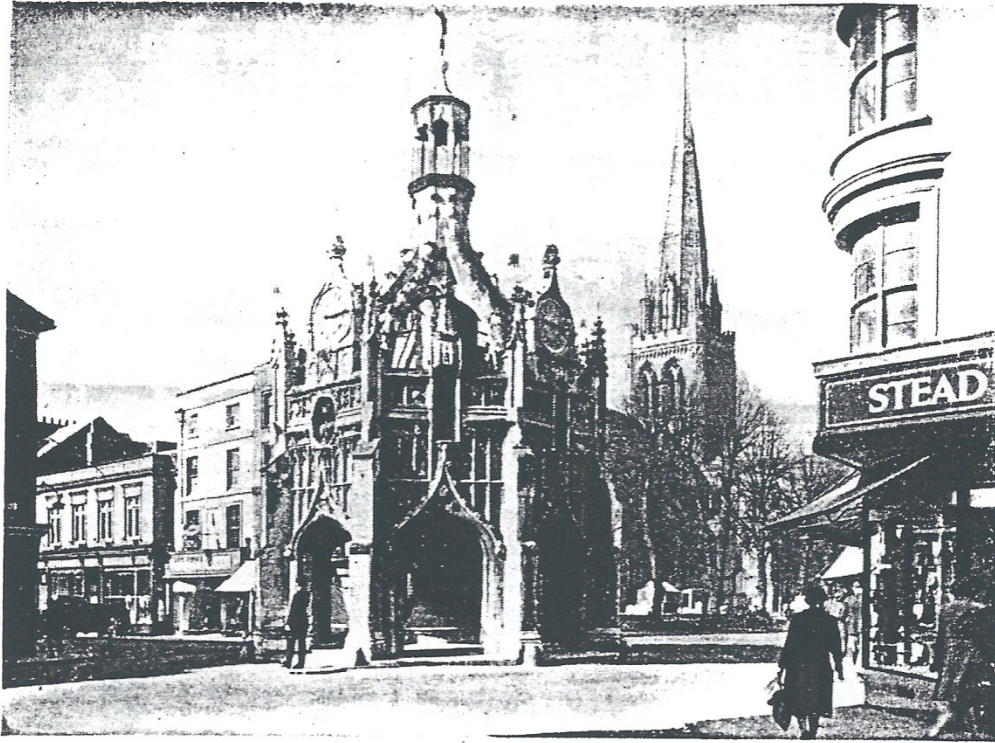
lias, in every village. Around Arundel, a town that grew up in the shelter of Arundel Castle, the beechwoods are breath-taking.



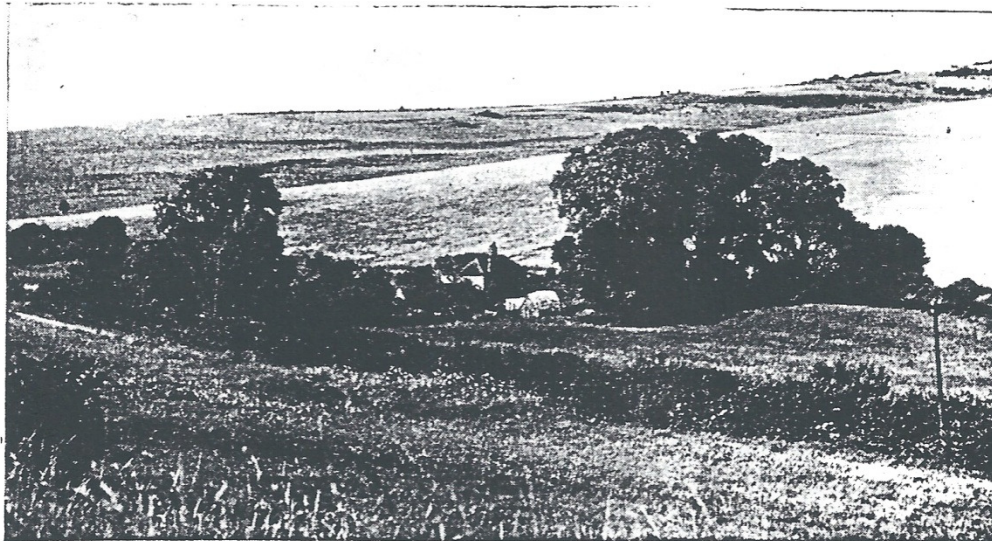
BLACK STAR

ARUNDEL CASTLE BATTLEMENTS, OVERLOOKING THE CASTLE PARK

Chichester, the home of Thomas Skinner and his wife Mary, about ten miles from Arundel, is one of the oldest and most attractive of English cathedral towns. It was called Regnum by the Romans and the ancient town walls can still be traced. When the Saxons came, they bestowed the name Cissa Ceaster on the village. In Chichester Cathedral are two well-preserved Saxon sculptures: the Rising of Lazarus, and Christ at the Gate of Bethany. They have influenced many modern sculptors.



MARKET CROSS AND CATHEDRAL SPIRE IN CHICHESTER



THE SOUTH DOWNS IN SUSSEX

The cottages are homes of shepherds who tend the famous Southdown sheep.

Such was the place where our Skinner immigrants had lived before coming to America in about 1650 or 51. Thomas and Mary (Gould) Skinner left England as a young married couple with, possibly, two small sons (a third had probably died earlier). They were first known to have lived at Charlestown, near Boston, where they had landed but were soon settled in Malden, Mass. (map #2).

William Richard Cutter goes on to state further that "He (Thomas Skinner) was a victualler, and May 31, 1652, was licesned to keep an inn at Malden, Mass. His house in Malden was situated at the southeast corner of Cross and Walnut streets. It was given to Skinner's son, Abraham, March 15, 1694/5. He was admitted a freeman May 18, 1663. He married (first) in England, Mary \_\_\_\_\_, (her last name has since been found to be Gould; sometimes the usage is found Goodwin or Godden) who died April 9, 1671, md. (second), Lydia (Shepardson) Call, widow of Thomas Call; she died Dec. 17, 1723, aged eighty seven years . . ." <sup>2</sup>

Mrs. Natalie R. Fernald in "The Skinner Kinsman" writes Thomas and Mary (Gould) Skinner's life history in the following brief account:

"Sergeant Thomas Skinner, born in England 1617, came to America from Chichester between 1649 and 1651. He married, first, in England, Mary, she died April 9, 1671; married, second, about 1680, Lydia, daughter of Daniel and Joanna Shepardson, of Malden, Mass., and widow of Thomas Call. Lydia was baptized July 24, 1637, married Thomas Call July 22, 1657, he died Nov. 1678. Thomas Skinner was admitted Freeman at Malden, May 18, 1653; he died March 2, 1703/4, Lydia died Dec. 17, 1723. (Gravestone at Malden)

"Children of Thomas and Mary:

1. Thomas Skinner, bp. Subdeanery Parish, Chichester, England, July 25, 1645; md. Mary, daughter of Richard and Mary Pratt, of Charlestown, Mass. She was born Sept. 9 or 30, 1643. They removed from Massachusetts to Colchester, Conn., where she died March 26, 1704. (7-50)
2. John Skinner, bp. North Mundham, England April 19, 1647.
3. Abraham Skinner, bp. Palant Parish, Chichester, England, Sept. 19, 1649; md. Hannah. He died between 1693 and 1698. She died later Jan. 14, 1725/6 " <sup>3</sup>

John is not mentioned in any of the contemporary records of Malden, Mass. The Will of Thomas Skinner, 1693/4, mentions only sons Thomas and Abraham. Since John is not mentioned as one of the sons who came to America and knowing that Thomas and Abraham were still young children when they emigrated from England, it would seem that John had probably died before the family left their homeland.

Fernald's extracts from the Malden town records convey further information regarding the Skinner family. They purchased a 15 acre lot with a house in Malden, Mass. the year of their arrival. (Malden is only about 2 miles north of Boston proper, and actually within the bounds of Boston, spoken of as in its vicinity (map #2). Thomas found occupation as a victualler (deals in groceries) and in 1652 he is listed as an inn keeper. He was the town's dispenser of strong waters and wines as was considered necessary for the town and passing travelers. Such a business was an important one as is indicated by the statement, "As also to draw wine for the better accomodating both the Church and Countrie . . ." By 1657 another person by Court order was assigned to this official voluntary office.

In 1678 Sergt. Thomas Skinner was elected constable of Malden which office he served through 1680. It was probably this office that gave him the title of Sergeant. He also served the church as tithingman. No children, other than the two who were born in England, are listed with the family of Thomas and Mary (Gould) Skinner. Son Thomas was 26 years of age when he married Mary Pratt of Malden and had two children by the time of his mother's death in 1671. Abraham was then 22 years of age and yet unmarried.

Thomas Sr. became interested in the acquisition of lands at Quansigamug which was the first attempt to settle the town of Worchester, Mass. Indian problems had diminished following King Philip's War and migrations further inland from Boston were gradually being ventured. The location of the plantation lands as far as Worchester is described as being upon the road to Springfield and about twelve miles to the west of Marlborough. Marlborough is about the same distance west of Boston. A petition, dated May 27, 1674, contains the names of 29 persons to whom lots had then been granted and laid out. Thomas Skinner's name was among those listed. Fifteen of the named were from Malden and Thomas Pratt, father of Mary Pratt, the wife of Thomas' son Thomas, was also among them. However, there is no evidence that either the Skinners or the Pratts took any personal part in the settlement. At least they did not remove from Malden to settle in Worchester permanently. (map #2)

As was stated earlier, Thomas Sr. married Lydia, the widow of Thomas Call. In 1695 there was a general re-division of land lots in and around Malden. The division did not concern Thomas Skinners land and home since the town had previously granted, by town vote, that he retain his property since, according to an old custom, he had made a deed of gift of his estate for future maintenance to his son, Abraham. When the conditions of Thomas' Will were attended to, Abraham, or his heirs, had full care and charge of the ageing parents, Thomas and Lydia, for the remainder of their lives. Abraham preceded his father in death but the stipulations made by the Will "with meat, drink, and clothes for my life and for Lydia, my wife." were carried out no doubt, by Abraham's wife, Hannah.

One might wonder what considerations the Will had given the son Thomas, in the bequeathing of lands and goods. A memorandu in the Will states that Thomas Skinner, the son and our ancestor, had formerly been given land, property, goods and cattle at the time of his marriage and as stated in the Will was to receive pay of 40 shillings from his brother, Abraham.<sup>4</sup> Further word concerning allotments of lands that the Skinners held in Malden included lands that Lydia's first husband farmed as Mr. Skinner's tenant:

"In the lower range was a lot number 12 of John Crow, 15 acres of this lot were sold by William Roberts to Rowland Lahorne in 1648. Six years later Lahorne transferred his purchase, with a house, to Thomas Skinner, "victualler" but it is soon found in the occupancy of Thomas Call and his wife Lydia, as a grantee or tenant of Skinner . . . Thomas Call died in Nov. 1678. His widow, Lydia, by her marriage to Thomas Skinner, relinquished the property and it was returned to the Skinner family. The process by which it came into the possession of Abraham Skinner and finally of his widow, Hannah, has been described. After the death of Hannah Jan. 14, 1725/6 it was in the occupancy of Abraham Skinner, son of Abraham and Hannah. Three acres of the land, with the house and barn lay on the north-

erly side of the road, and 12 acres lay on the southerly side of the road. The removal of the highway in 1729 left the three acres with home buildings on the southerly side of the new highway. The old house was not standing in 1798; it had been demolished, it is supposed, many years before. Its cellar remained until within 60 years past 1899 and a large rock, which stood in the field near the southeast corner of the present Cross and Walnut streets, bore the name of Skinners Rock, and preserved the name of its former owners long after they had passed away. The rock was removed in 1887." 5

Benjamin Apthorp Gould made a study of the Gould ancestry and his printing of "The Family of Zaccheus Gould" gives the link that establishes Mary Gould as the daughter of Thomas Gould; the Mary Gould that was Thomas Skinner's first wife and mother of our ancestor, Thomas Jr. 6

Thomas and Lydia were comfortably situated for their declining years and they had the security and caring provided by their two sons. He died March 2, 1703/4; Lydia died Dec. 17, 1723; both were 87 years old at time of death.

1. #21 pp. 1286-7
2. ibid
3. #57 p. 1
4. ibid pp. 3-7
5. ibid pp. 2, 4-5
6. #91 p. 341