Call Family History

So far as we can trace them in history, the Call family is shown to be English in origin. Thomas Call, the first ancestor of whom we have any definite record, was born about 1597 and first appeared in Hernhill, Kent County, England where he was married in April of 1619. He had children born in Hernhill and nearby Faversham where he followed the profession of tile maker and husbandman (farmer). In 1629-30 there were four individuals of the Call or Caule surname, Thomas, Paul, John and Ann who were buried in Hernhill. Any or all of them may have been children of Thomas. Two of them, John and Ann, have been thought by some to be his parents. Thomas left Faversham and came to America with his family in 1636-37.

There are some interesting traditions concerning the origin of the Call Family. Rufus Call, a son of our ancestor Joseph Call, related the following tradition in 1866 at age 97. “Near 1575 there was a Scotch boy by the name of William McCall who was a footman to Lord Sprague of Scotland. The Lord’s daughter fell in love with young McCall and they ran away together and came to America where they were married.” James Bigelow, grandson of James Call (brother of the above Joseph) gave this account. “The name McCall was changed to Call just prior to the American Revolution. The Mc was thought to be too strong a suggestion of a foreign country, especially Ireland and the name was changed to prove loyalty of the family to the American cause. They came from Scotland by way of Ireland.”

Another claim is attributed to Betsy Call Pelton, (granddaughter of the above James). The Calls were originally from Wales. Two brothers came to America (probably three) before the old French War. There were political divisions in Wales, which caused one of the brothers to change his name from McCall to Call. This change was made probably before they emigrated.” Historian’s Cutter and Adams claim that the Calls were originally from Wales before they “flocked into England at some remote period of history and there grew to be quite influential.” The family is said to have gained a coat of armor with a crest, a very high honor reserved only for military officers.

A final version is given by Honorable Wilkinson Call, a U.S. senator from Florida. “The family was originally French and became intermingled with the Scotch-Irish. The name was originally spelled Calle, the Scotch form is Coll.” The name Calle appears in English records of the fifteenth century.

As mentioned earlier, Thomas Call came to America with his family in 1636-37. The history of Sandwich, England gives the passenger list of the ship in which the family sailed. Thomas is mentioned along with his wife Bennett and three children. There may have been a fourth child Mary who came as a servant on the same ship. Two more children were born in America. There are only two Calls in the records of early New England who have not been identified as descendants of Thomas. The assertion that all Calls in America are descended from Thomas may very well be correct. In a book about Massachusetts’s families, we find the following under the name Call, ‘This family has been content to dwell in the land of its birth where it has maintained its supremacy for mercantile honor and probity. The Calls were ever militant and in those war-wrung years of the country’s grim birth, the Calls were on the firing line. They are a people who have ever been sacredly mindful of their obligations and the word of a Call was ‘as good as a bond. They were Sabbath-revering, who walked humbly with their God.”
A BRIEF HISTORY AND LINE OF DESCENT FROM
THOMAS CALL TO JOSEPH CALL

Thomas Call (Caule)
After arriving in America, Thomas settled in Charlestown, Massachusetts. His
descendants on our branch of the family remained in Charlestown for about a hundred years.
Thomas was a baker by profession. He lived near the Ferry of the Mystic, which is less than two
miles from where the Bunker Hill Monument stands. Most of this area was set off in 1649 and
given the name of Malden. Thomas Call’s estate in 1638 consisted of six tracts with a house in the
“South Field”, a garden in Middle Row, four acres in the form of a triangle in the Line Field,
five acres of woodland in Mystic Field and 15 acres in “above the ponds” in Waterfield. Thomas
Call joined the church in Charlestown and became a freeman in 1640, giving him the right to vote
and hold public offices. In the strong Puritan culture, the church dominated every aspect of
society including civil government. Thomas was one of ten men who signed an agreement
about the bounds of the new town Malden and later became one of the town’s five selectmen.
Thomas signed a number of petitions involving religious disputes and on at least one occasion
he and a few others were required to pay a fine for exercising too much independence in
religious matters. We can conclude that Thomas, like many of his contemporaries, had strong
religious convictions and a willingness to testify and even suffer for those convictions.

Thomas died in May of 1676. His first wife Bennett and second wife Joanna preceded
him in death. His will dated November 23, 1670 and proved October 3, 1676 gave real estate
and a pair of black oxen to his son John (our ancestor), made bequests to his three living
daughters, left ten shillings to each grandchild as they became of age and made his son Thomas
the executor and chief beneficiary of his estate which was appraised at about 150 pounds.
Today his tombstone can be found in Bell Rock Cemetery, Malden, Massachusetts.

John Call
John Call was born in Faversham, Kent, England on March 6, 1636 to Thomas and
Bennett Call. John was only a few months old when the family sailed for America. He lived in
Charlestown, Massachusetts where he was a baker like his father. He became a Freeman and
was a deacon in the church. He was a soldier in King Phillip’s War. He married Hannah Kettle
and had eight children, the oldest of whom was John Call.

John Call
John Call II was born in 1658. He lived and died in Charlestown where he was a
housewright (carpenter or builder). He married Martha Lowden and had seven children. His
sixth child Samuel was our ancestor.

Samuel Call
Samuel Call was born in Charlestown in 1698. In 1721 he married Abigail Sprague. They
lived in Charlestown and Maiden about ten years where Samuel followed the profession of heel
maker. In about 1731, Samuel left Charlestown and moved his family westward to Oxford. He
and his wife are believed to have had eleven children, although no birth records have been
found for the last three, probably because of the unsettled status of the family. Samuel died
about 1747. Many of his children and grandchildren moved to Vermont and then on to Ohio.
Joseph Call

Joseph Call, tenth child of Samuel, was born in 1742 according to his son Cyril. He was probably born at Oxford, Massachusetts. Sometime prior to the fall of 1766, he went to Vermont to work with some of his brothers. That fall he returned to Leicester, Massachusetts where he married Mary Sanderson on October 22, 1766. He then took his wife back to Vermont where they were among the first settlers of Woodstock. In 1773 Joseph was voted one of three surveyors and one of three constables for the town.

In 1787 he was still listed as a town officer. He served under General Washington in the Revolutionary War acting as a scout at Woodstock in 1777 and enlisting for other military duties in 1778 and 1781. In 1784 he bought 24 acres of land in Woodstock. Joseph and Mary had seven children all born in Woodstock. Our ancestor, Cyril born in 1785, was their youngest child.

Joseph Call became a Baptist minister and played an important role in the growth of the Baptists in Vermont. He served as pastor in Woodstock, Cambridge and Fairfield. From 1790 to 1816 he traveled extensively and helped to establish congregations in various parts of Vermont, Massachusetts and Canada. Rev. Henry Crocker in a history book of Baptists in Vermont gives the following account, “The first Baptist minister in this section (Georgia, Vermont) was Rev. Joseph Call, an itinerant preacher whose family resided in Woodstock, which was then the center of Baptist operations in that part of the state. In the fall of 1789 he is reported as the pastor of the Woodstock Church.

In one of his missionary journeys northward about 1790, he stopped at the house of Mr. Ezra Butler as he was in want for a night’s lodging and became instrumental in the conversion of Mr. Butler whom he subsequently baptized. Mr. Butler afterwards became a Baptist preacher and Governor of the state. About 1791 Mr. Call preached in Cambridge, Fairfax, Fairfield, Georgia and Milton.

In the early part of 1793, he removed his family from Woodstock to Cambridge and preached for a time. While pastor there, he still engaged in missionary tours and was the first to administer baptism in Bristol and gathered a Baptist church there, which still exists. In 1797 he was installed as pastor of the Baptist church in Fairfield. He was an able preacher, a pious and devoted man.”

Shortly after the War of 1812, many of the Calls moved west from Vermont to Ohio. Joseph and some of his children including our ancestor Cyril were among them. Joseph spent his last years in Perry, Ohio where he died at the age of eighty. Amherst Call, a grandson who lived in the same home as his grandfather during his latter years wrote of him, “Grandfather was a small man but all his brothers were big and strong. He was a Communion Baptist Elder and a pretty smart man, a great historian.” A few years after Joseph’s death, his youngest son Cyril who was living near Kirtland, Ohio was visited by Mormon missionaries. Thus began an important new era for a branch of the Call family in America.