

1/28/89

Dear Robert -

This is a rough draft of a letter I am thinking of sending to Mr. Todd. I would sincerely appreciate some "guidance" and suggestions from you in this regard. I have sent a copy to Tommy, but have not yet heard from him.

So, my friend, and cousin - what are your thoughts?

As ever -
Paul

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Dear Dr. Dodd:

As you no doubt have heard by now, my cousin Marion Lawton is very ill, and has for some time been unable to conduct any research or engage in any correspondence. I therefore sincerely hope that you will not consider it presumptuous of me to contact you in this manner--"out of the blue," so to speak--to ask you about a research matter which, under more fortunate circumstances, I would pass on to you with more discretion--that is, indirectly, through Marion, as I have done for the past several years.

In the sincere hope, therefore, that you will not deem it impertinent of me momentarily to assume Marion's role as "director" of the research that you conducted for him, I should like to ask you a few questions pertaining to your findings on William Lawton of Snape, born in 1703, first child of Thomas and Mary Reeve Lawton, said William Lawton having been (according to your investigations) one and the same as our American ancestor, Capt. William Lawton, of Edisto Island, S. C.

Naturally, I fully expect you to bill me, at your regular rate, for whatever time, trouble, and expense might be involved in your efforts to assist me. If you will be so kind as to let me know what your policy is, with regard to deposits, payments, etc., I shall be happy to forward a postal order to you immediately upon receipt of your instructions.

The questions I would like to ask you presented themselves as a result of my recent efforts to reorganize my files (some several hundred pages of material) on Capt. William Lawton. Among this material was a folder of miscellaneous material that I had not looked at in years--the reports and correspondence of a lady in Salt Lake City, Utah, who attempted without success to research Capt. William Lawton for me in 1981 and 1982. This researcher of course had access to IGI typescripts of all parts of England, and as I re-examined her notations, questions, and suggestions, my eyes suddenly focused on a certain series of information which seemed startlingly familiar.

In her summary of the numerous William Lawtons who lived in and around Cheshire in the early 1700's, my Salt Lake City researcher provided the following biodata

(typed below exactly as she presented it to me) on one William Lawton in particular:

1. 90100--Not Here: William Lawton, late of Lawton, Admon. 1735 and 1736.

[Note: This is my researcher's verbatim notation after checking on the Lawton Wills from 1721-1740 in England. She did not provide the precise geographical area in which the above-mentioned Will was recorded.]

2. We have the probate of John Lawton of Lawton, proved in 1737, but he does not name a William. Extract enclosed. There is an administration (no Will) listed for William Lawton of Lawton in 1735/6, but it is in the infra Wills--i.e., estates under £100.

[I am certain that the William Lawtons referred to in numbers 1 and 2 above are one and the same, particularly since in one of your letters to Marion you made reference to William's having had an uncle named John Lawton, a copy of whose Will you sent us, with the notation that "unfortunately, William Lawton is not mentioned in his Uncle John's Will." Do you recall this piece of correspondence?]

3. Chester, England--Infra Wills and Probates: Administration Bond 31 March 1736:
Mary Lawton of Snape, Parish of Lawton, Co. Chester, widow
John Lawton of Newcastle, Co. Stafford, carpenter
Charles Lawton of Snape, wheelright
Mary Lawton, widow, is the mother of William Lawton, late of Snape, aforesaid, joyner, bachelor, deceased; she is granted administration of the effects of William Lawton.
Mary, John, and Charles each signed the document.
Estate £40

[Whatever they might mean, the code number GS 165294 appears in the left margin beside the information in item number 3 immediately above. And again, I am certain that the William Lawton referred to in all three items above is one and the same--hence my purpose in writing to you.]

You will notice that all of the details seem to "fit" perfectly:

1. The mother of the William Lawton that you researched was named Mary, as was ~~the mother of the William Lawton referred to above.~~
2. You reported that ^{account perfectly for} Thomas Lawton, the father of William, died in 1724, so this date would ^{account perfectly for} the above reference to Mary as a "widow" in 1735/6.
3. The Mary Lawton referred to above was from Snape, as were the Thomas, Mary, and William Lawton, whom you researched.
4. The William Lawton referred to above did have an uncle named John Lawton, as did the William Lawton you researched.
5. In the Will of the John Lawton you researched, there was no mention of a nephew named William Lawton, as I am confident there would not be in the case of the John Lawton referred to above, since his nephew William Lawton died in 1735/6, at least a year before his uncle died.
6. The William Lawton referred to above had a brother named Charles Lawton, as did the William Lawton you researched.
7. Charles Lawton, brother of the William Lawton referred to above, signed the probate documents in 1735/6, and therefore must have been at least twenty-one years of age at the time, thus born no later than 1714 or 1715, dates which are well in agreement with the 1712 year of birth for the Charles Lawton whom you researched.
8. In brief, can all of the above synchronicities be attributed merely to pure coincidence?

9. More specifically, is it at all possible that Capt. William Lawton has once again escaped us--that he was not, after all, one and the same as William Lawton of Snape, who at least appears to have been born there in 1703, and died there in 1735/6, and neither married nor came to America?

Please understand, Dr. Dodd, that my last desire or intention on this earth would be to seem impudent or impertinent to you, or to dispute without any reason whatsoever your research skills, wisdom, and experience. Quite, quite to the contrary, my sole purpose in writing to you is one of sincere concern, and a desire to know the truth--at least to the best of my human ability to comprehend it, and yours to present it. I have thoroughly enjoyed and appreciated your research reports and correspondence, copies of which Marion has always faithfully forwarded to me over the past several years, and, being the amateur genealogist that I am, I would never pose these "quibble questions" to a professional researcher such as yourself, except in a spirit of sincere concern and wholesome curiosity. I therefore truly hope that you will receive and respond to my questions and concerns in this spirit.

Again, Dr. Dodd, I apologize for contacting you in this somewhat irregular manner, instead of indirectly, through Marion, as I have always done before. As I mentioned earlier in this letter, however, Marion is unable to respond to any correspondence, and furthermore, as I am not personally acquainted with his children (or even know to what degree they are aware of and involved in his research), I felt that I had no alternative but to turn to you for assistance. I trust that you will be able to understand my predicament, and not be offended by my method of resolving it.

I shall eagerly anticipate hearing from you soon, and in the meantime I shall be wishing you well.

Most respectfully yours,

Paul Lawton