

Parentage of Samantha Rose St. John and Caroline Azuba St. John

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Introduction

In the course of looking through my "DNA Matches" on ancestry.com for people related to me via the St. John family, I came across one match in the 4th-cousin range (45 cM in one segment) whose great-grandmother in the associated tree was a Samantha Rose St. John (born 1840 in Michigan, wife of Francis Marion "Frank" Sammons). My St. Johns were also in Michigan in this time period, and since I knew three of our common matches as other St. John descendants I felt fairly certain that Samantha Rose was a close relative of "my" contemporaneous St. Johns.¹ The tree in question did not have Samantha's parents, so I checked the 1850 census to see if she could be found in her parents' household. As it turned out, though, by 1850 she was apparently no longer living with her birth parents.

The Adoptive Parents

In the 1850 census, Samantha R. St. John (age 10, born in Michigan) and Zuba O. St. John (age 9, born in Michigan) were living in the household of Lorenzo and Caroline O. Backus:²

559	579	Lorenzo Backus	41	M	Carpenter & Joiner	N.Y.
		Caroline O. "	36	F		Mass.
		Samantha R. St. John	10	F		Mich.
		Zuba O. "	9	F		"

The most obvious interpretation of the fact that there were two St. John children living in the Backus household would be that they were Caroline Backus's children by a prior marriage, Lorenzo Backus being their stepfather. However, Lorenzo's marriage to Caroline occurred in 1835, before either of the St. John girls were born:³

Marriage Records

Marriage Records, copied from Buffalo Newspapers, are published through the courtesy of the Buffalo Historical Society.

(Continued)

¹All of the known St. John matches are descendants of Jacob St. John (b. 4 Nov 1774 in Lenox, Mass.) by his first wife Eunice ____ (24 Jan 1773-13 Apr 1817). My line is Robert Battle → Tamera G. St. John (1947-2015) → Robert D. St. John (1918-2008) → Claude St. John (1879-1954) → Charles R. St. John (1843-1922) → Horace St. John (b. c1797) → Jacob & Eunice. The other three matches are all descendants of Ivan F. St. John (1885-1939) → Ashley J. St. John (1851-1913) → Reuben S. St. John (1809-1884) → Jacob & Eunice.

² 1850 U.S. census, Michilimackinac Co., Michigan, p. 86 (482).

³ Janet Wethy Foley, *Early Settlers of New York State: Their Ancestors and Descendants*, vol. 2 no. 12 (June 1936), pp. 189-190.

Baccus, Lorenzo and Caroline O.
Pease, Apr. 12, 1835.

By the time the 1860 census was taken, Samantha had married Frank Sammons and moved out of the Backus household (though not far, just a few houses away); her apparent sister, now called Caroline St. John, was still living there:⁴

591	594	Lorenzo Backus	51	M	✓	Carpenter	✓1000	1397	New York
		Caroline O	46	F	✓				Massachusetts
		Caroline St John	19	F	✓	House Maid	✓		Michigan
591		Unoccupied			✓				
592	595	William McJelote	60	M	✓	Sawborman	✓1000	750	New York
		Eliza "	65	F	✓				Massachusetts
593	598	Mrs W Howe	43	M	✓	Cooper	✓1580	500	New Hampshire
		Sarah S "	35	M	✓				Do
		Mary S "	10	F	✓				Michigan
		Sarah B "	8	F	✓				Do
		Clara A "	5	F	✓				Do
		Abigail E "	4	M	✓				Do
		Mannah R "	4	F	✓				Do
594	599	Frank Sammons	25	M	✓	Merchant	✓1650	3985	New York
		Samantha R	20	F	✓				Michigan
		Fortitude	3	F	✓				Do
		Clarice	3	M	✓				Do
		William Cate	15	M	✓	Sailor	✓		New York

Both of the girls had moved out by the 1870 census:⁵

33	Backus Lorenzo	60	M	✓	Post Master	5000	5000	New York
	Caroline O	56	F	✓	housewife			Massachusetts

When Caroline O. (Pease) Backus wrote her will in 1878, she named both of the St. John girls among her legatees, without indicating any particular relationship:

I Caroline O. Backus of the Village of Cheboygan in the State of Michigan wife of Lorenzo Backus....^{3d} I give...to Mrs. Samantha R. Sammons my large Bureau....^{9th} I give...to Mrs. Azuba Marsh my goose and Cress Board...⁶

⁴ 1860 U.S. census, Mackinac P.O., Inverness Twp., Cheboygan Co., Michigan, p. 48.

⁵ 1870 U.S. census, Cheboygan P.O., Inverness Twp., Cheboygan Co., Michigan, p. 7 (319a).

⁶ Will of Caroline O. Backus, dated [no day] April 1878; images in ancestry.com database Michigan, Wills and Probate Records, 1784-1980.

By the 1880 census, Caroline Azuba (St. John) Marsh had moved back into the household of the recently-widowed Lorenzo Backus and was referred to as his niece:⁷

226 265	Backus Lorenzo	N 31 71	Real Estate dealer	1.	Michigan	NY	Mass	Conn.
	Marsh Caroline	N 31 39	Housekeeper	1.	Michigan	NY	Mass.	
	Jordan Ella	N 31 15	at School	1.	Michigan	Ireland	Mich	
	Marsh Lizzie	N 31 10	at School	1.	Michigan	Wisconsin	Mich	

Detail:

Backus Lorenzo	N 31 71	Real Estate dealer	1.	Michigan	NY	Mass	Conn.
Marsh Caroline	N 31 39	Housekeeper	1.	Michigan	NY	Mass.	
Jordan Ella	N 31 15	at School	1.	Michigan	Ireland	Mich	
Marsh Lizzie	N 31 10	at School	1.	Michigan	Wisconsin	Mich	

Finally, when Lorenzo Backus wrote his will in 1887, he referred to both of the St. John girls as his adopted daughters:

*I Lorenzo Backus of the Village of Cheboygan County of Cheboygan and State of Michigan... give...to my adopted daughter Samantha R. Sammons wife of Francis M. Sammons of Cheboygan Michigan any and all liens, securities, debts, dues, demands...which I may have and hold at the time of my decease against her husband Francis M. Sammons....All the...residue...to my adopted daughter Caroline A. Marsh formerly and whose Maiden name was Caroline A. St. John...and her children Clarisa Erratt (nee Jordan) wife of William Erratt and Ella Brooks (nee Jordan) wife of E. D. Brooks and Lizzie Marsh...*⁸

Combining all of these records, it appears that either Lorenzo Backus or Caroline O. Pease had a sister who married a St. John and had at least two daughters, which two daughters were taken in by Lorenzo and Caroline by the time of the 1850 census. Moreover, given the DNA connections alluded to in the introduction above, it is probable that the St. John in question was one of “my” branch of the family. This being the case, we can rule out the possibility that the St. John spouse was a Backus: none of the St. John males in this immediate family married a Backus, and the parents and siblings of Lorenzo Backus are known, with no St. John marriages.⁹ The mother of Samantha Rose and Caroline Azuba St. John must therefore have been a sister of Caroline O. Pease.

⁷ 1880 U.S. census, Cheboygan, Cheboygan Co., Michigan, e.d. 32, sheet 31 (p. 82c).

⁸ Will of Lorenzo Backus, dated 26 August 1887; images in ancestry.com database Michigan, Wills and Probate Records, 1784-1980.

⁹ See, e.g., the family group of Lorenzo’s parents Simeon Backus and Polly Patchen at <https://backushistory.info/getperson.php?personID=115738&tree=backus1>.

Identifying Caroline O. Pease

From the above census records, we know that Caroline O. Pease was born about 1813/14 in Massachusetts. We can narrow down her probable birth year to 1814 by her age of 63 at her death in 1878 in Benton, Cheboygan Co., Michigan:¹⁰

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TO THE HON. SECRETARY OF STATE OF MICHIGAN:

Return of Deaths in the County of Cheboygan

for the year ending December 31st, A.D. 1878

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INDEX NUMBER	DATE OF DEATH			FULL NAME OF THE DECEASED	MARRIAGE RECORD Name of Spouse Date of Marriage	AGE Years Months Days	PLACE OF DEATH	DISEASE OR CAUSE OF DEATH	BIRTHPLACE	OCCUPATION	PARENTS		DATE OF RECORD			
	Month	Day	Year								NAME	RESIDENCE				
1	May	21	1878	Parah J. J. J.	Not Reported	17	5	19	Benton	Infancy	New York	Not Reported	John J. J.	Orlando J. J.	Sept 1	1877
2	June	23	1878	Elizabeth J. J. J.	Not Reported	3			Benton	Not Reported	Cheboygan		Mar J. J. J.	New York	"	"
3	Aug	23	1878	Jerome J. J. J.	Not Reported	5			Benton	Not Reported	West Point		John J. J.	Cheboygan	"	"
4	Not Given		1878	Caroline O. Backus	Not Reported	63			Benton	General Debility	Massachusetts	Nurse	Not Reported			"

Detail:

Not Given	1878	Caroline O. Backus	Not Given	63		Benton
General Debility	Massachusetts	Nurse	Not Reported			

Several online trees (perhaps due to ancestry.com's linked hints) identify Caroline O. Pease with Caroline Pease, daughter of Asher and Elizabeth, who was born 1 March 1816 in Conway, Massachusetts:¹¹

PEASE, Caroline, ch. Asher and Elizabeth, Mar. 1, 1816.

However, this Caroline Pease died in Conway in 1831:¹²

**PEASE, Caroline [ch. Asher and Elizabeth Chaffee, G.R.3.],
canker, Jan. 29, 1831, a. 15.**

This is clearly not the Caroline O. Pease who married Lorenzo Backus four years later.

Another possible clue to Caroline O. Pease's identity is an apparent association of the Backus household with one Horatio N. Pease. The following passage appears in a "History of the Early Settlement of Cheboygan County and Village":¹³

Lorenzo Backus and family settled on the west side of the river and built a house on the present site of Dr. Gerow's residence. Horatio N. Pease also built a dwelling house on the present site of the water mill of McArthur, Smith & Co., where he settled with his family.

¹⁰ Image from ancestry.com database Michigan, Death Records, 1867-1950.

¹¹ *Vital Records of Conway, Massachusetts, to the Year 1850* (Boston, 1943), p. 81.

¹² *Vital Records of Conway, Massachusetts, to the Year 1850* (Boston, 1943), p. 255.

¹³ *History of Cheboygan and Mackinac Counties...* (Detroit, 1873), p. 18.

In the 1850 census, Horatio N. Pease was enumerated on the same page as the Lorenzo Backus household:¹⁴

573	Horatio N. Pease	39 M	Clerk		Conn.
	Eliza "	26 F			Mich.
574	Isaiah H. Wanger	32 M	Carpenter		N.Y.
	Almira "	30 F			"
	Laura "	9 F			Ohio
	Melissa "	7 F			"
	George "	5 M			"
	Jasper "	3 M			"
575	Nelson Ball	26 M	Lumber		Vt.
	Nancy "	23 F			Mass.
	Nelson H. "	2 M			Ohio
576	John Vincent	38 M	Boat builder	60	Mich.
	Sophia "	26 F			Canada
	Delia "	6 F			Mich.
	Benjamin "	5 M			"
	John "	2 M			"
577	Alexander McLeod	48 M			Canada
	Catherine "	23 F			"
	Mary d. "	1 F			Mich.
578	James Jerkit	44 M	Farmer		N.Y.
	Martha A. "	34 F			Vt.
	William H. "	16 M	Farmer		N.Y.
	Martha J. "	14 F			"
	Harriet E. "	1 F			Mich.
	M. Lewis	52 M	Farmer		Not known
→	Lorenzo Backus	41 M	Carpenter/Joiner		N.Y.
	Caroline O. "	36 F			Mass.
	Samantha R. St. John	10 F			Mich.
	Luba O. "	9 F			"

Horatio Pease was about three years older than Caroline, of the right age to be her brother (though he was born in Connecticut and she in Massachusetts). However, according to an 1869 genealogy of the Pease family, this Horatio N. Pease was the youngest child in his family, with no sister named Caroline:¹⁵

¹⁴ 1850 U.S. census, Michilimackinac Co., Michigan, p. 86 (482).

¹⁵ David Pease and Austin S. Pease, *A Genealogical and Historical Record of the Descendants of John Pease, Sen., Last of Enfield, Conn.* (Springfield, Mass., 1869), pp. 84-85 and 224.

PETER PEASE,⁶ (EBENEZER,⁵ EBENEZER,⁴ ROBERT,³ JOHN,² ROBERT,¹) brother of the preceding, was born at Enfield, October 14, 1763; married Huldah Stebbins of Springfield, Mass., November 25, 1785; and settled at Enfield, where he died June 25, 1822, aged 60 years.

His children were:

904. 1. FRANCIS, b. at Enfield, July 8, 1787.
 905. 2. WILLIAM, b. at Enfield, April 21, 1790.
 906. 3. MARGARET, b. at Enfield, July 16, 1792. m. Horace Hawkins.
 907. 4. PETER P., b. at Enfield, May 3, 1797. d. in South Carolina.

DESCENT OF JONATHAN³—FAMILY OF JOSIAH⁴ 85

908. 5. HULDAH, b. at Enfield, July 18, 1799. m. Solomon Silsbee of Reading, Steuben County, N. Y.
 909. 6. MARY, b. at Enfield, February 7, 1804. m. C. Allen of Enfield.
 910. 7. HORATIO N., b. at Enfield, April 29, 1806.
 [Enfield Town Records, and New England Historical and Genealogical Register.]

910.

HORATIO N. PEASE,⁷ (PETER,⁶ EBENEZER,⁵ EBENEZER,⁴ ROBERT,³ JOHN,² ROBERT,¹) youngest son of PETER and HULDAH (STEBBINS) PEASE of Enfield, Ct., was born at Enfield, April 29, 1806; married Chapin of Mackinaw. He died in Michigan, and it is supposed he left no children.

It is worth noting that this Horatio N. Pease appears to have been about four years older than the man of that name who was a neighbor of Lorenzo and Caroline Backus, making this connection a bit tentative.

So, it seems that looking for Caroline O. (Pease) Backus's family starting from what we know of her draws a blank. She was not the daughter of Asher and Elizabeth Pease who was born in 1816, and she does not appear to have been a daughter of Peter and Huldah Pease, Horatio's parents. However, when we start from the St. John side we can make a strong circumstantial case for her identity.

While none of the St. John males among the immediate descendants of Jacob St. John married a Backus, one of them did marry a Pease. My greatx3 grandfather, Horace St. John, eldest son of Jacob, married (as his second wife) Clarissa G. Pease 18 November 1832 in Wayne Co., Michigan:¹⁶

Marriage Record		P.-7
Taken from Wayne County		
Name in full	St. John, Horace	
Surname, given and middle names, age, place of residence		
To whom married	Pease, Clarissa	
Name in full, age, place of residence		
Date and place of marriage	Nov. 18, 1832 at	
By whom married	Grc. W. Ferrington, Justice of Peace	
Source of record	Marriage Files County Bldg. Detroit	
Name of source (abbreviated). Volume and page, if a book		
Certificate recorded March 6, 1833. License		

Horace St. John's household was enumerated in 1840 in Redford Township, Wayne Co., Michigan:¹⁷

NAMES OF HEADS OF FAMILIES	FREE WHITE PERSONS, INCLUDING HEADS OF FAMILIES																											
	MALES														FEMALES													
	Under 5	5 under 10	10 under 15	15 under 20	20 under 25	25 under 30	30 under 35	35 under 40	40 under 45	45 under 50	50 under 55	55 under 60	60 under 65	65 under 70	Under 5	5 under 10	10 under 15	15 under 20	20 under 25	25 under 30	30 under 35	35 under 40	40 under 45	45 under 50	50 under 55	55 under 60	60 under 65	65 under 70
George Jackson					1										1				1									
Timothy Barnes		2	2				1								1		1			1								
William Sprague		1		2	3			1									1	1										
Levie Cook		1					1										2	2			1							
Calib Croft	2					1										1			1									
Herb Stockwell		2	2			1									2		1											
Horris St Johns			1				1								2						1							

Clarissa G. (Pease) St. John was born in early February 1813 in Chilmark, Massachusetts, daughter of Nathaniel Pease and Elizabeth Gifford. She had several children with Horace St. John (including my great-great grandfather Charles R. St. John) and died 22 October 1849 in Redford Township. Horace survived her and was living in Redford with his children Mary, Charles, and James when the 1850 census was taken:¹⁸

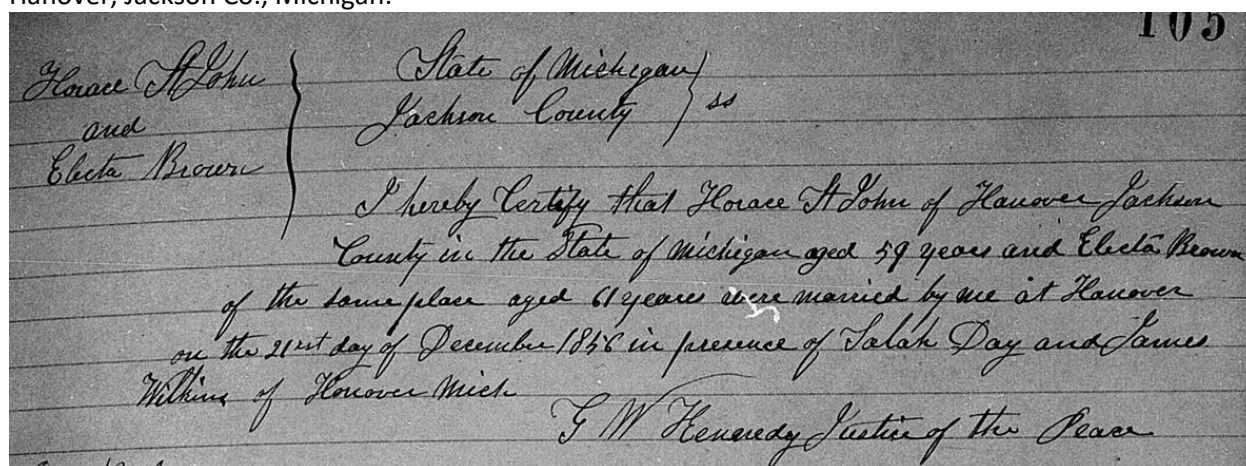
¹⁶ A Copy of the Marriage Records of Wayne County, Michigan, from 1818-1838 (FHL #927,472). The name of his first wife is unknown; her existence is indicated by the fact that in the 1840 census he apparently had a son who was born between 1824 and 1830 (in the 10-15 year-old age range).

¹⁷ 1840 U.S. census, Redford Twp., Wayne Co., Michigan, p. 306.

¹⁸ 1850 U.S. census, Redford, Wayne Co., Michigan, p. 257b.

88	Horace St John	53	M	Farmer	400	8/4
	Mary St John	12	F			Milk
	Charles "	7	M			Do
	James H. "	4	M			Do

Horace St. John married (as his third wife) the widow Electa (Nichols) Brown 21 December 1856 in Hanover, Jackson Co., Michigan:¹⁹



In 1860 they were living in Moscow Township, Hillsdale Co., Michigan:²⁰

943	Horace St John	63	M	Farmer	1	200	110	1	NY
	Electa "	65	F					1	Mass

The 1870 census is the last record I have been able to find of Horace St. John. In it he was living with Robert and Mary Burroughs, who do not appear to be related to him; however, a few houses away, Caroline Azuba (St. John) Marsh was living with her second husband and children:²¹

¹⁹ Image from ancestry.com database Michigan, County Marriage Records, 1822-1940.

²⁰ 1860 U.S. census, Moscow Twp., Hillsdale Co., Michigan, p. 127 (747).

²¹ 1870 U.S. census, Van Buren, Wayne Co., Michigan, pp. 30-31 (465b-466a).

266	Marsh Henry L	26	M	H	Cooper			Chie				
	— Caroline	29	F	H	Keeping House	600	150	Michigan				
	— Effie	3	F	H				"				
	— Lizzie	4 1/2	F	H				"				Feb
	Jordan Clarissa	9	F	H				"				
	— Ella	5	F	H				"				
267	Smith Andrew L	26	M	H	Carpenter	800	200	"				
	— Sarah L	22	F	H	Keeping House			"				1
	— Frank	19 1/2	M	H				"				Aug
268	Holt William J	25	M	H	Barber	600	200	Hamburg Ger	1	1		
	— Barbara	22	F	H	Keeping House			Hamburg Ger	1	1		
	— Charlotte M	4	F	H				Conn	1	1		
	— Amelia	2	F	H				Conn	1	1		
	— Cora	1	F	H				Michigan	1	1		
269	Bourroughs Robert	47	M	H	Shave Painter	600	200	Ireland	1	1		
	— Mary	40	F	H	Keeping House			Canada	1	1		
	St John Horace	22	M	H	Farmer Laborer			New York				

The next step is to see if we can show that Caroline O. (Pease) Backus was Clarissa's sister. From the church records of Chilmark, Massachusetts, we know that Nathaniel and Elizabeth Pease had a daughter born there 25 June 1814, the right age to be Caroline:²²

June 25 Nathl Pease & Elizabeth

dau

Before moving to Wayne Co., Michigan, a few years later, in the 1830 census Nathaniel Pease was enumerated in Evans, Erie Co., New York,²³ where Caroline O. Pease was to marry Lorenzo Backus five years later. The most compelling evidence, though, comes from the probate of Barney R. Pease, Clarissa's brother. Barney R. Pease died intestate in Arkansas 9 October 1840, but his estate was probated in Michigan where he had until recently resided. The administrators of his estate were his widow Alpha (Belding) Pease, Ransom R. Belding (Alpha's brother), and Alva Stockwell. Barney's father Nathaniel Pease, however, tried to gain administration of the estate, calling several witnesses in his favor. This generated paperwork which has survived, including lists of fees for those witnesses (presumably for their travel and other expenses). The first of these lists was written 2 February 1842.²⁴

²² *New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, 59(1905): 383.

²³ 1830 U.S. census, Evans, Erie Co., New York, p. 113.

²⁴ This and the subsequent images from ancestry.com database Michigan, Wills and Probate Records, 1784-1980.

Note that one of the witnesses called was “Clarisa St John”, daughter of Nathaniel Pease and sister of Barney R. Pease. Note further the name “Mrs Backus”, whose greater fee perhaps indicated that she had to travel farther to get to court than the others. A second page (undated) with payments made to witnesses has the same list of names, though this time with Mrs. Backus’s first name:

Fees of the Arbitrators charged at two dollars each

Wm to Just Hiram Willmorth's fees	paid 88
Sheldon Bumpworth	paid 88
Clarisa St John	paid 88
Asa Fuller	paid 1.06
Israel Little	paid 93
R. R. Pinner	paid 75
William Hendryx	paid 91
Thos Gelderd	paid 74
Caroline Backus	paid 1.69
Cornelius Hoscunburgh Const fees	paid 91
	<hr/>
	\$ 15.63
	15.66

J. O. Mothens }
 G. W. Ferrington } Arbitrators
 Morris Jenkins }

Each witness signed receipts indicating that they had received their fees. Clarissa G. (Pease) St. John signed her receipt in Redford 1 October 1842:

Received of A. Stockwell \$0.88
 it being in full for my witness
 fees in the suit of Est Pease
 vs B. M. Pease Estate
 Redford Oct 1st 1842
 Clarissa G. St John

And, Caroline O. Backus signed her receipt 12 January 1843:

Received of A. Stockwell one Dollar and
Sixty Nine Cents it being the amount of
My Witness fees in the Case between N. Pease
and M. M. Pease Estate
Josco January 12th 1843 Caroline O Backus

This is clearly the wife of Lorenzo Backus. She signed the receipt in Josco, Livingston Co., Michigan, where she and Lorenzo and her husband's family were living at this time. Her signature here is almost identical to the signature on her will 35 years later (see note 6 above):

Caroline O Backus

Conclusion

From the above evidence, it is fairly certain that Samantha Rose St. John²⁵ and Caroline Azuba St. John²⁶ were daughters of Horace St. John and Clarissa G. Pease. Upon Clarissa's death in 1849, these two youngest daughters were taken in by their aunt and uncle, Caroline O. Pease and Lorenzo Backus, while Horace kept his sons and his oldest daughter with him.

²⁵ She was quite probably the second girl aged 0-5 in Horace St. John's household in 1840.

²⁶ Her middle name probably came from Horace St. John's youngest full sister, "Ezuba" St. John, who died about a month shy of her fourth birthday when Horace was in his mid 20s. And, the name of Caroline's daughter Clarissa almost certainly came from her birth mother Clarissa Pease.