

A Bit of a Gamble

*Information gathered about the Gamble Family of Sutton Coldfield
ancestors of Sarah Holbeche (1803-1882)*

by Janet Jordan

I first came across the Gamble Family whilst looking through the papers of the Holbeche Family of Sutton Coldfield during a visit to a now deceased family member, Mrs Springall, who lived in Stoke on Trent. My interest at that time was in Sarah Holbeche, a descendant of the Gambles. She was born in Sutton Coldfield early in the 19th century and a copy of her diary can now be found in the Local Studies Library⁽¹⁾.

Sarah Gamble, mother of Sarah Holbeche, was born on 21st July 1779, in Sutton Coldfield. Her portrait and that of **her** parents, Francis and Sarah Gamble (née Chadburn) adorned the wall of Mrs Springall's living room. I was told that they were known to be Quakers and this was supported by a similar reference in the family papers. Since then, I have found nothing to confirm this belief, although I have discovered that, in the 1700s, there were many Quakers with the surname of "Gamble".

In 1802, Sarah Gamble married Thomas Holbeche. She bore him 15 children, only one of whom married, several died in childhood and the remainder, all girls known as 'The Holbeche Aunts', lived together as spinsters at 58 High Street. More details of Sarah Gamble's life appear in her daughter's diary.



Portrait of Sarah Gamble as an infant

Her parents' lives, however, remain somewhat of a mystery. The International Genealogical Index gives the following information about them. This can be confusing because, unfortunately, as with the Sarahs of the family, there were also several Francis's.

Francis Gamble Born about 1733, at Saxelby

Francis Gamble Married 3.1.1758 to
Alice Houghton (Born about 1737, at Saxelby, Leics. Her date of death unknown)

Their Child:

1. Francis Gamble (Born 5.8.1759 at Saxelby, Leics. Died 14.3.1762)

Francis Gamble Married 14.1.1777 at Wollaton, Notts to
Sarah Chadburn (Born 6.7.1755 at Wollaton, Notts. Her Will dated 16.8.1801 and Probate 30.9.1801⁽²⁾)

Their Children:

1. Sarah Gamble (Born 21.7.1779 at Sutton Coldfield Died 21.1.1841 – see Holbeche Memorial in Holy Trinity Church)
2. Francis Chadburn Gamble (Born 13.1.1781 at Sutton Coldfield. Date of death unknown)
3. William Gamble (Born 22.3.1782. Date of death unknown.)
4. Frances Gamble (Born 8.9.1783 at Sutton Coldfield Died 11.3.1785)

The following extra information comes from the *Warden & Society Minutes*⁽³⁾

Francis Gamble Elected Member of the Warden & Society of Sutton Coldfield 2.11.1777.

Elected Warden 2.11.1778

Re-Elected Warden 2.11.1779

Died 28.3.1795

From this, it would appear that Francis Gamble, born in 1733, married twice, once to Alice Houghton, who may have died prior to 1777, being the year of his second marriage to Sarah Chadburn. This also was the year he was elected Member of the Warden & Society of Sutton Coldfield. One year later, in 1778, he was elected Warden, which post he held for 2 years. After that, he spent the rest of his life as Member of the Society, making very little impact in the record books.

During the years that the Gambles lived in Sutton, they resided in the property now known as "The Royal Hotel" in High Street, Sutton Coldfield. Even in their day, it was no longer known by its former name, "The Bear".

This is borne out by entries in the *'Chief Rentals'* for the Great Sutton Quarter⁽⁴⁾. They state that between 1781 and 1790, Mr Gamble paid a Chief Rent of £1-0-0 for "house and land late Mr Homer". Records prior to then have been lost, apart from the year 1742, when Mr Edward Homer was paying £1-0-0 for "a messuage called 'The Bear' and part of that land".



Portrait of Francis Gamble

Following Mr Gamble's death in 1795, according to the *Chief Rentals*, his wife continued to pay the rent until her death in 1801. Her Will, dated 16th August 1801⁽²⁾, was drawn in favour of her 3 surviving children, Sarah Francis and William, referring to her husband's intestacy.

The estate did not include property, although the Will intimated that her eldest son, Francis, would inherit the house from his father, as she directed her Executors to "abate and deduct from the bequest hereinbefore made by me to my said son Francis Gamble such a sum of money as will amount to two thirds parts of the clear value of the messuage buildings lands and hereditaments he hath or shall have or be entitled to as the

heir at Law of my late Husband Francis Gamble who died intestateand that the said sum of money so to be abated and deducted shall be paid and divided by my said Executors unto and between my said children the said Sarah Gamble and William Gamble in equal shares."



Portrait of Sarah Gamble (née Chadburn)

We know that Sarah Gamble was married shortly after her mother's death, but neither of her brothers, Francis or William, would have reached 21 years of age by that time and one would imagine that they had been living with their widowed mother. Yet, there is no evidence that either continued to live in Sutton Coldfield from then onwards.

From the portraits, we do, at least, have a

record of the family's appearance. The likeness between daughter and parents is striking. They are obviously affluent; the gentleman with his paunch, lace cuffs and collar, his wife with her well coiffeured hair and a low cut dress that wouldn't be out of place even these days! The little girl is adorned with roses to match her rosebud lips. What stories these beautifully dressed people could tell us! But their lips remain silent and perhaps we should not be surprised – a reluctance to impart personal information being an old Quaker trait.

Sources:

- (1) JORDAN, J., *Diary of Sarah Holbeche*, Sutton Coldfield Reference Library, (BCOL Q942496081 HOL)
- (2) *Will of Sarah Gamble (née Chadburn) dated 16.8.1801 with Probate attached dated 13 September 1801*, Lichfield Record Office (Ref:B/C/11)
- (3) *Warden & Society Minutes*, Sutton Coldfield Reference Library
- (4) *Chief Rentals*, Sutton Coldfield Reference Library

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