

HISTORY OF THE EFFORTS TO PROVIDE AN INVENTORY FOR THE *CHAMBERLAIN COLLECTION*

**by
George Richard Chamberlin**

In 1970, David Conrad Chamberlain, viewed, examined and photographed parts of the *Chamberlain Collection*. An astute and renowned genealogist, David Conrad provided those interested in the Chamberlain surname a short topical Index, but failed to provide a detailed Inventory. In his Inventory he referred to a few items that appear to be presently missing from the Collection.

In 1971, Louise Alston Chamberlain, on behalf of herself and the *Palm Beach (FL.) Genealogical Society*, provide posterity a short published topical index, similar to that provided by David Conrad Chamberlin, but once again, failed to provide a detailed Inventory. (Her Inventory is listed below and marked Exhibit “B”.)

In 1973, Prentice Glazier, (to this date, the only genealogist to provide a comprehensive book on the Chamberlain surname), reviewed and examined the contents of *The Chamberlain Collection*, but did not attempt to improve either the David Conrad or the Louise Alston topical indexes.

From 1979 to 1983, Allison Chamberlain Ogilvie was paid from the original *Chamberlain Association of America* funds more than \$20,000.00 for the purpose of organizing and inventorying the *Chamberlain Collection*. Although Ms. Ogilvie received compensation for more then 2800 hour of work on the *Collection* and although she in fact was the only individual, (besides NYGBS staff), to have sole access of the *Collection* for approximately 18 years, the only known inventory she ever published was found in a letter to her attorney forwarded to the NEHGS in 1982. (A copy of pertinent parts of that letter are attached and marked Exhibit “C.”)

In 1998, at the NYGBS, Geraldine R. Burden, a former librarian, in conjunction with the *World Chamberlain Genealogical Society*, produced the first detailed inventory for *the Chamberlin Collection* is somewhat amazing in that it was developed while the

Collection existed in a most disorganized state. Photographs of this *Collection* were taken by Ted Chamberlain, and are expected to be published in a forthcoming issue of the *Chamberlain Key*. Geraldine Burden and others continued for nearly 10 years organizing the *Collection* until the *Collection* was reformed and reorganized into forty nine accessible manuscript boxes. (Details concerning this effort are described and referenced in Exhibit “D.”)

In 2009, Donald F. Chamberlin and George Richard Chamberlin visited the *Chamberlain Collection* for the first time since its transfer from the NYGBS to the NEHGS. As a result of that visit the hope of a more perfected inventory names index, was born and a hope for a more organized collection was envisioned. A project is now underway at the NEHGS entitled the *Chamberlain Collection* reclamation and restoration project. Details of that project are attached as Exhibit “E.” Anyone interested in participating in this project is welcome to contact WCGS Trustee, George Richard Chamberlin at gRichardchamberlin@gmail.com.

EXHIBIT “A”

DAVID CONRAD CHAMBERLAIN, INVENTORY, @1970

David Conrad Chamberlain is the first to provide any Inventory for *The Chamberlain Collection*. At the time David examined *The Collection* at the New England Historic Genealogical Society in Boston, there existed forty large boxes of materials. The boxes were numbered 1-40. Below is David’s general description for the contents of the 40 boxes.

Box Description

- | | |
|------|---|
| 1-3 | Annual Meetings 1897-1932 |
| 4 | Officers Letters |
| 5 | General records, contents of several unmarked file cases – 1 carton |
| 6-7 | Miscellaneous records of the Association |
| 8 | Pedigrees of Association Members (Large Ledger Book) |
| 9-10 | Descendants of Jacob and Abigail Chamberlain – 2 file cases |
| 11 | Miscellaneous Material 1 file case |
| 12 | Photographs, Scrapbooks 1 bundle |
| 13 | Miscellaneous letters, diaries, accounts, 1 carton |
| 14 | Chamberlin Genealogy (most complete of all) 1 suitcase |
| 15 | Lowell, Oliver notes |

- 16 Vital Records and index of place names and surnames – 1 carton
- 17-19 Chamberlin notes, arrange according to states and Canada - 3 cartons
- 20 Folders, records of Edmund, Thomas, misc folders – 1 carton
- 21 Plates used in Chamberlain Reports
- 22 Folders in the lines of Henry, Richard, William, & Samuel
- 23-25 State Records (3 bundles)
- 23 New Jersey
- 24 Connecticut and New York
- 25 Vermont
- 26 Massachusetts and others
- 27 Massachusetts
- 28 Miscellaneous States
- 29 Records of William, Henry, Thomas & Edmund – 1 bundle
- 30 Line of Jacob & Miscellaneous records – 1 bundle
- 31 Ezra Mays notes – 1 bundle
- 32 Biographical Material – 1 Bundle
- 33-36 Henry Line – 4 bundles
- 37-39 General Correspondence and Family Blanks – 3 bundles
- 40 William Line – 1 bundle

In 1998, in a document entitled “A Brief Summary of Major Chamberlain Projects, 1960-1998, David Conrad Chamberlin wrote the following:

Finally in late December, 1970, when I was able to take about 2 or 3 vacation days and was able to visit the Society. At first, Pauline King, the librarian, said that she would not allow me to microfilm anything but after a persuasive argument, relented. I only had a 35 mm camera and a cheap copy stand and lights, but set up in a room and was able to film some material. Most of what I got was in a group of records known as the “suitcase” contained someone’s attempt to create genealogies of the five major Chamberlain families. Presumably, these compiled records represented the sum total of what the association had in their possession at the time.

Only having two days in which to work, I had no time to make test strips of my “klugey” set up and as a result many film images were very poor, mostly being over exposed. I was able to film the complete set of records for Henry and Thomas, but only got Edmund and Richard up through the fifth generation and no time left to film any William records which was the largest of the five bundles. I also filed the file folders relating to New Jersey, which was of prime interest to me.

It took me a number of years to transcribe all of these microfilms mostly because they were such poor copies. Being too dark, an ordinary microfilm reader was useless. Finally I was able to secure a special hand-held viewer with high magnification which I modified to use a very high intensity light source. Some of the better images could be printed out of Xerox projection copier and then transcribed. This was one of the most time consuming and difficult tasks I have ever undertaken.

In his microfilm files were the following:

Henry of Hingham (250 page of microfilm)
Thomas (95 pages of microfilm)
Edmund (25 pages of microfilm)
Richard (25 pages of microfilm)
New Jersey Folder (122 pages of microfilm))
Miscellaneous Chamberlain notes (15 pages microfilm)

Attached as Exhibit "C," is a further description of *The Collection* as seen by David Conrad Chamberlin..

PRENTICE GLAZIER

Prentice Glazier visited *The Collection* in the early 1970's, but sadly did not provide us with an inventory. He did however, refer to an Inventory prepared by Louise Alston Chamberlain, of the *Palm Beach (Florida) Genealogical Society*, published in the April, 1972 issue of *Ancestry*. Once again, Prentice Glazier referred to *The Collection* consisting of forty containers or boxes.

EXHIBIT "B"

LOUISE AISTON CHAMBERLAIN, 1971 WEST PALM BEACH, (FL), GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

In the April, 1972 issue of *Ancestry*, Louise Alston Chamberlain, gives us the following inventory of *The Chamberlain Collection*. This inventory is in some ways more general than that offered by David Conrad Chamberlin.

The *Chamberlain Collection* marked SG-CHA-49, #1-40, is stored in 40 containers at the NEHGS in Boston, MA.

- 1-7 Containers 1-7 are cardboard, old style box letter files, about 12" x 31'2", and filled with meeting announcements, membership lists, financial reports, etc.
- 8. Container "8 is a bound genealogical register, 20" x 15", given members ancestry
- 9-40 The remainder of the collection (32 Containers) consists of heavy cardboard storage boxes approximately 15" x 23" x 12" and 13" x 10" x 15".

Of these some are filled with innumerable brown paper packages of varying sizes, some marked miscellaneous

INDEX CARDS

A wooden cardboard file with 4" x 5" ancestry cards alphabetically filed;

BOOKS

Books of varying subjects;

NOTEBOOKS

Notebooks of different sizes; and some boxes have material more specifically identified.

PHOTOGRAPHIC PLATES

One large box containing around 100 blocked photo "cuts", 3" by 2" or 2" by 2" used by a printer to print pictures for publications. They are of metal and fastened on 2" thick wood blocks, undoubtedly used in letterpress type printing

CORRESPONDENCES

Another box contained bulging file folders of correspondences.

BLACK BOOKS

Two of the big cartons contained a total of 100 7" x 9" black notebooks with anywhere from 25 to 100 pages, handwritten both sides, and pertaining to research reading done in varying states, including Maine and Mass., with the largest amount devoted to Vermont.

COLOR CODED INDEX CARDS

Another large box contained cards of varying color, alphabetically arranged for Chamberlain Families in Vermont vital records,

One package of a few hundred colored cards 2" x 1 1/2" with allied families by last names as though prepared for an index; each bore a number. There was a color key but no number key. I noted a Granger 251C and a Newhall 9.105 on white, which meant descent from William.

SUITCASE: CHAMBERLAIN GENEALOGIES

SG-CHA-#49-14:Chamberlin Genealogy, Suitcase – “Most Complete Collection”¹

VERMONT AND INDEX

SG-CHA-#49-16: VR & INDEX of place names and surnames – 1 Carton

CHAMBERLAIN NOTES (3 CATRONS)

SG-CHA-#19-17 & 19 Chamberlain Notes arranged according to States & Canada, 3 Cartons.

ORIGINAL MEMBERSHIP REGISTER

Chamberlain Association Register of 315 Member Names

SG-CHA-49-16: Chamberlain Association of America

CHAMBERLAIN INDEX ON INDEX CARDS

Chamberlain Index on small color coded cards of first Names:

Descendants of (Immigrant Chamberlains)

Edmond	-	Yellow
Henry	-	Green
Richard	-	Pink\
Thomas	-	Drab
William	-	White

Index on small cards – surnames other than Chamberlain

There is no master index to the collection and no key to the contents arrangement, relationship and a good part of the material is handwritten.

Louise Alston Chamberlain reported,

“To search every single paper would take an endless amount of time, since the set-up, while neat and in good condition, is definitely not modern in the business sense of the word.”

¹ On May 7, 1942, CAA member George D. Chamberlain wrote to William E Chamberlain the following, “It was a great shock to be informed of the passing of Miss Watts. I thought of her as being in her usual good health and perhaps nearing the completion of the Chamberlain Book. Miss Watts had with her a woman who was assisting in the compilation of the genealogy. I met her when Miss Watts invited me to dinner on a Sunday two years ago. Her name has gone from memory, and I am hoping you have her name and address. She should be able to assist the Association n its efforts to learn the status of the Chamberlain Genealogy at the time of Miss Watt’s death.”

EXHIBIT “C”

ALLISON CHAMBERLAIN OGILVIE, 1982

Allison Chamberlain Ogilvie, through her organization, presumptuously named the “Chamberlain Association of America,” (hereinafter referred to as CAAI), had exclusive control and possession of *The Collection* for a period of three years at her home and actual control for 13 additional years, while *The Collection* collected dust at the *New York Genealogical and Biographical Society* in New York. During this sixteen year period, Ms. Ogilvie provided one glimpse of an inventory for *The Collection* in a letter to her attorney:

FAMILY WORK SHEETS

I. There are three and in many instances, four drafts of each Chamberlain. Apparently my predecessors, the Reverend Charles Henry Pope, George W. Chamberlain and Miss Jennie C. Watts did not agree. It has been a matter of consolidating all the information into one sheet for each Chamberlain. Each sheet lists as

well the Chamberlain spouse(s) and children, numbering from 0 – 24 with an average of about a dozen. (Linear feet won't work here to begin to measure the man hours.)

INDEX CARDS

II. Index cards for each Chamberlain, spouse, and child. Each Chamberlain and spouse(s) and children are indexed by first name and by birth date. Each female spouse is indexed by last name as well. Chamberlain descendants with other last names are indexed by last name. First names are indexed under proper first names and nicknames are cross referenced to them, i.e. Betsy, Betty, ref. Elizabeth; Patty ref. Martha, etc. Color coding: Chamberlain descendants are white, spouses are blue and questionably placed individuals are buff and are changed if and when proved out. There are a number of instances where an individual appears in two or more lines and requires research.

SMALL SLIPS OF PAPER

III. Next there are the small slips of paper and cards of vital church and cemetery records. These were in no order whatsoever. These have been sorted by first Chamberlain name then sub-sorted by birth and baptism date, then marriage and intention dates. These are in two groups - identified and unidentified. As these are identified, the record is posted on the individual sheet and then the record is posted on the individual sheet and then the record is noted with the Chamberlain's number and moved to the identified file. When the indexing of the descendants of the five New Englanders is complete, the identified records will be moved to the vertical files. While indexing it makes for faster reference to have them in this form, especially when an individual is (incorrect) credited to more than one line (18 linear feet to date).

LINEAGE FORMS

IV. Earlier CAA Lineage forms. These are filed in vertical folders under then name of the members who submitted them by name and birth date and keyed to the immigrant forebear, his generation and his own number. Every person on each form is checked with each individual sheet. These forms are the main source and guide for reconstructing missing individual Chamberlain sheets and then, of course, the information has to be verified. (2 linear feet)

MEMBER CORRESPONDENCES

V. Earlier CAA members correspondence files have been gone through and all pertinent information has been taken from these files. Unfortunately, a number of items mentioned in the correspondences are missing as are a number of Chamberlain individual sheets. The latter must and are reconstructed when possible (ref. IV). While the remaining correspondences has no genealogical or historic value, I dislike disposing of it, so when a descendant appears, he or she is offered the correspondence. There are those that who personally value these letters, especially as some are almost 100 years old." (Linear feet won't apply here to begin to measure the man hours)

PHOTOGRAPHIC PLATES

VI Picture Blocks – these were used in the earlier C.A.A. Annual Reports and now have no value so those that are identifiable are disposed of in the same manner as the correspondences in V.”

EARLY ANNUAL REPORTS

VII Every page of the earlier Annual Reports has been mounted(pasted up) so that information pertaining to each Chamberlain can be in his or her own vertical file. English ancestry research and other topics can be segregated and all pages are now easily Xeroxed.” (4 linear feet)

BLACK BOOKS

VIII There are 100 notebooks of handwritten records copied from vital, probate, land, church, cemetery, war, and bible records, local histories, family genealogies, etc.,² These are difficult to read and serve no purpose in this form. (Ogilvie) CAA members are voluntarily typing these notebooks and carding (3x5 cards) every person mentioned with the information pertaining to that person, the source and the notebooks and each page typed is numbered to correspond with the original notebook for easy reference to the original where legibility is in question. When the typed pages and cards are returned, they are proofed and checked to be sure each person mentioned has been properly circled. These cards are then added to the files described in III and are handled the same way. Upon identification the individual’s number is placed by his name and information on the notebook sheets. This is an ongoing project until all of the notebooks are done. (Linear feet included in III.)

² Louise Chamberlain li 1971, also makes mention an inventory of 100 black books. There are presently only 72 black books in the collection.

EXHIBIT “D”

**GERALDINE RICE BURDEN
NEW YORK GENALOGICAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY
INVENTORY, 1998**

For over ten years Geraldine R. Burden, dedicated her extra time and energy to *The Chamberlain Collection* while it temporarily was housed in the NYGBS.

According to Burden, in August 1998, *The Chamberlain Collection* consisted of 18 storage boxes plus a large bound genealogical ledger listing the names, addresses and lineages of its 315 members. This initial inventory, begun in April 1997 under the direction of Kathleen Cole and later, Geri Rice Burden, was completed in May, 1998. Under her leadership, a partially typed and partially handwritten 35 page Inventory was completed. Between 1998 and 2006, the 35 typewritten inventory was amended with additional information.

According to Mrs. Burden, *The Collection* inventory was taken from 18 cartons housing the collection. Sometime around 2004, Ms Burden and library staff began to transfer the material in the 18 cartons to 49 smaller grey boxes. This transfer was completed sometime around 2006.

Ms Burden attempted to save the earlier catalogue numbering system by numbering the smaller boxes with number and letter combinations that coordinated with the first 18 cartons. This numbering system was somewhat confusing to anyone not familiar with the previous inventory efforts.

A large disappointment was the revelation that important parts of the collection were missing, using Louise Chamberlain's earlier partial inventory and David Conrad Chamberlain's earlier general outline and knowledge from visits to the NEHGS in 1970.

Ms Burden documented her efforts in the *World Chamberlain Genealogical Society* publication known as the *Chamberlain Key*. The interested reader should read her articles on this subject. See: August 1998 *Chamberlain Key*, Volume III, Number 4, Fall, 1998, pp.163-165; Spring 2000, *Chamberlain Key*, Volume V, Number 2, Spring, 2000, pp. 42-43. Summer 2005, *Chamberlain Key*, Volume X, Number 3, Summer, 2005, pp. 53, 55-57.

EXHIBIT "E"

GEORGE RICHARD CHAMBERLIN NEW ENGLAND HISTORIC GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY INVENTORY WITH NAMES INDEX, 2009

The "*Chamberlain Collection*" presently consists of 49 grey library manuscript storage boxes at the (NEHGS) for documents, records, membership lists, membership applications, correspondences, research materials, research papers, research notes, index cards, photographs, and photographic plates, once the property of the *Chamberlain Association of America*, a Chamberlain Genealogical Society, founded by General Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain and others, operated from 1897 to 1962. This *Collection* is now the property of the NEHGS, in Boston, MA.

This *Chamberlain Collection* reclamation and restoration project now appears to consist of four distinct phases.

The first phase for *The Collection* was the general organization and preliminary inventory for the Collection from 18 oversized cardboard boxes at the NYGBS, (According to Geraldine Rice Burden in a memorandum to WCGS members dated May, 1998), to the present 49 workable library boxes was completed sometime around 2006, (A history of *The Collection* is attached and marked Appendix “A.”), and the return of *The Collection* from the closed New York Genealogical and Biographical Society to the NEHGS, in January, 2008.

The second phase for *The Collection* is the development of a user friendly names index. This project is now in progress as evidenced by the first glimpse of an initial inventory with names list contained herein. This effort is expected to be updated on a semi-annual basis until the project is complete. It is anticipated this phase will be complete by June 30, 2010.

The third phase for *The Collection* will be the reorganization of the 49 Grey boxes into two components or parts: The organizational component and the genealogical component. The first component will result in a “crisp” organization of collection contents based on membership, office records, membership lists, membership applications, membership correspondences, membership articles, items of interest concerning members, index cards, photographs, and photographic plates. The second component will focus on organizing historic and genealogical information, including genealogies, state records, county records, town or municipal records, military records, as well as the Collection’s 72 black books. It is anticipated this phase will be completed by December, 2010.

The fourth phase for *The Collection* is the development of a detailed subject inventory and a more perfected organization of each item found in each one of the 49 grey boxes. It is anticipated this phase will be completed by December, 2011.

The completion date is presently set to match the 100 year anniversary of the last annual meeting attended by General Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain. That same meeting also marks the 100 year anniversary of the first public announcement of the commissioning of a “Chamberlain Genealogical Book.” The book was scheduled to be completed in one year. The book was never completed. Our project will not be finished in one year, however, it will be finished. When this project is completed, those of us interested in the Chamberlain Surname will be blessed with a most wonderful, long awaited, research tool, perhaps even more important to those interested in our surname than the original book contemplated nearly 100 years ago

Presently an 80 page preliminary inventory of this collection has been prepared. A copy of this inventory is on file at the New England Historic and Genealogical Society.