

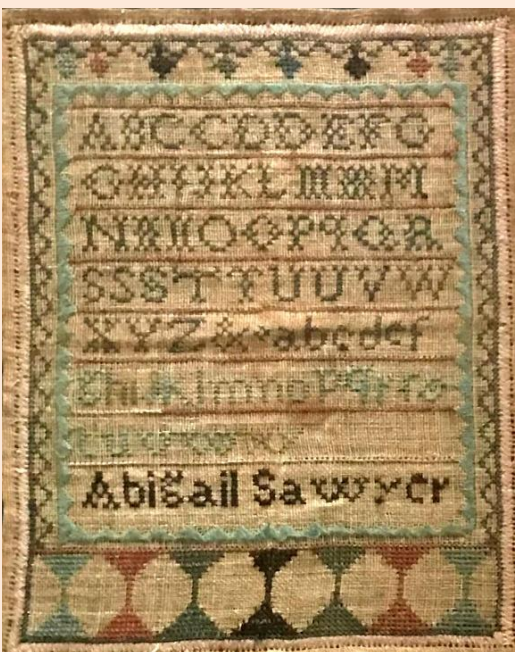
Needlework Samplers

By Inga Milbauer

A noteworthy illustration in the publication Early Families of Boylston, Massachusetts by Nancy Ann Filgate et al. is a photograph of a needlework sampler by Abigail Sawyer. Abigail Sawyer was born on 5 December 1791 in Boylston, the daughter of Oliver Sawyer Sr. and Martha “Patty” Hinds. She was the youngest of three children; her siblings were Patty Sawyer and Oliver Sawyer Jr. The family resided in Boylston at the time of the 1800 federal census.¹ The sampler was made around this time, and has remained in the family to this day.

Founding Family Sampler

Abigail Sawyer of Boylston married Pitt Moore of Sterling, Worcester County, Massachusetts on 21 September 1815 in Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts. Pitt Moore was born on 5 December 1787 in Sterling, Worcester County, Massachusetts. He was the son of Jonathan Moor and Elizabeth Richardson.² The spelling of the surname Moor was changed by many of Jonathan’s children to Moore, including Pitt. Pitt was a farmer and after their marriage in 1815, Pitt and Abigail resided in Boylston. Their son, Asher Moore, was born in Boylston on 21 November 1815. Their second son, Elliot Moore, was born on 25 April 1819.³ Pitt Moore was active in town affairs and served as Town Clerk of Boylston and as a Selectman in 1819.⁴ Abigail had become ill by 1821. Green & Heywood, Dr. of Worcester, Worcester County, Massachusetts provided medicine and medical attendance for Abigail for which they charged \$4.00.⁵ At age 30, Abigail died in Boylston on 11 January 1822. She was buried in the Old Burial Ground in Boylston.



**Sampler Made by Abigail Sawyer
c. 1800**

Photograph courtesy of Pamela Sherman

“Her published death notice read as follows:

‘In Boylston, on the 22th ult., Mrs. Abigail Moore, wife of Mr. Pitt Moore, aged 30. Having early professed the Christian religion, imbibed much of its excellent spirit, and possessing naturally an amiable disposition – she became endeared to her relatives and acquaintance (sic), who much lament her loss.’

As she left two very young boys, ages 6 years and 2½ years, who needed a mother, it is not surprising that Pitt Moore remarried some eight months later, to Esther Hastings, on 5 September 1822 in Boylston.”⁶

History of Samplers

Needlework samplers were made by young women to learn basic needlework skills. The American Heritage Dictionary describes a needlework sampler as “*A decorative piece of cloth embroidered with various designs or mottoes in a variety of stitches, serving as an example of skill at needlework.*” The word sampler has its roots in “partly Middle English, model (from Anglo-Norman *essamplur*) and partly short for Middle English *ensampler* (from Anglo-Norman *ensamplour*), both from Late Latin *exemplarium*, model, copy.”⁷ According to the National Museum of American History, the earliest known American sampler was made by Loara Standish of the Plymouth Colony about 1645. “By the 1700s, samplers depicting alphabets and numerals were worked by young women to learn the basic needlework skills needed to operate the family household. By the late 1700s and early 1800s, schools or academies for well-to-do young women flourished, and more elaborate pieces with decorative motifs such as verses, flowers, houses, religious, pastoral, and/or mourning scenes were being stitched.”⁸



**Sampler Made by Lydia Bigelow
1833**

BHSM Collection

Exhibit in Museum Display

An example of an intricate sampler with genealogical information is on view at the Boylston Historical Society Museum. This sampler was donated in 1979 by Mrs. Ruth C. Peinze. The sampler was made by thirteen-year-old Lydia Lucretia Bigelow in 1833. Born in Boylston on 26 September 1820, she was the daughter of Andrew Bigelow of Boylston and his second wife, Lydia Sawyer Whitney Bigelow of Harvard, Worcester County, Massachusetts.

¹ *Early Families of Boylston, Massachusetts* by Nancy Ann Filgate et al, 2022, p.112

² *Ibid*, p.112

³ *Ibid*, p.114

⁴ *Boylston Historical Series* by Bruce Filgate, 2012, p.477 & p.481

⁵ *Early Families of Boylston, Massachusetts* by Nancy Ann Filgate et al, 2022, p.114

⁶ *Ibid*, p.115

⁷ <https://www.ahdictionary.com/word/search.html?q=sampler>

⁸ <https://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/object-groups/american-samplers>

The sampler documents the family record of Andrew Bigelow, born 24 April 1764, his first wife Sarah Fassett, born 22 July 1766, and his second wife Lydia Whitney, born 9 September 1778. It lists the children born to Andrew and his first and second wives, with the birth dates, and where applicable the death dates. It mentions “Wrought by Lydia L. Bigelow under the tuition of Abigail Harlow – Boylston 1833.”



**Genealogical Detail of Sampler
Made by Lydia Bigelow
1833**
BHSM Collection

On the bottom of the sampler the following is embroidered:

*“Since Lord we must be parted here
Support us when the hour shall come
Wipe gently off each mourner’s tear
Rejoin us in our heavenly home”*



**Detail of Sampler Made by Lydia Bigelow
1833**
BHSM Collection

The sampler was framed in the past, with several typed notes glued to the back with the following text:

“Lydia L. Bigelow. Born Sept. 26, 1820, married George Warren. Was sister of Rev. Andrew Bigelow, pastor of the Boylston church for 7 years from 1866.”

A second note reads:

“The Bigelow homestead was on the west side of ‘Stiles Road’ beyond the Stiles house, in Boylston. On the east side of the road nearby was the school house. The Bigelow house was gone before the m.[map] of 1857 was made.”



**Daguerreotype Portrait of Lydia Bigelow Warren
and Charles Warren
Date unknown**
BHSM Collection

Lydia Bigelow of Boylston married George W. Warren of West Boylston on 28 September 1847.⁹ George Warren was born in January 1819 in Lunenburg, Worcester County, Massachusetts, the son of Ephraim Warren of Shirley, Worcester County, Massachusetts and Nancy Moore Warren of West Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts.¹⁰ The 1850 U.S. Census lists George, a physician, and Lydia as residing in West Boylston. The 1860 U.S. Census lists the couple and their four children: George H., 9 years, Hellen C., 8 years, Charles S., 4 years, and William F., 6 months.¹¹

⁹ <https://archive.org/details/vitalrecordsofto1850boyl/page/n1111/mode/2up>
¹⁰ https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/202361149/george_w-warren
¹¹ [Ancestrylibrary.com](https://www.ancestrylibrary.com)

Lydia died on 12 February 1861 of consumption in West Boylston at the age of 40 years.¹² She was buried in the Mount Vernon Cemetery in that town. Buried in the family grave are two sons, William Francis Warren, who was just ten months old, and George Henry Warren who died at age sixteen years. According to the *Genealogy of the Bigelow Family of America* by Gilman Bigelow Howe, published in 1890, “They had four children, but one of whom is now living: Charles Sumner Warren of Westborough.”¹³ Charles was born on 27 May 1856 in West Boylston.¹⁴ His sister Hellen Warren Bullard had passed away on 5 May 1884 in West Boylston at the age of 32 years.¹⁵ Lydia’s husband, George W. Warren died on 22 April 1900 at age 81 and is interred in the Mount Vernon Cemetery in West Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts.

A newspaper clipping taped to the back of the frame is an obituary from the Worcester Telegram from July 4, 1950 of Lydia and George’s son, Charles S. Warren:

“Charles S. Warren – Lancaster, Tuesday – The funeral of Charles Sumner Warren, 94, of Neck road, who died in Hudson yesterday morning, will be tomorrow afternoon from the Walter C. Stone Funeral Home in Clinton at 2 with Rev. Roger A. Barnett of the First Methodist Church officiating. Burial will be in Eastwood Cemetery in Lancaster. Native of West Boylston, he was the son of Dr. George and Lydia (Bigelow) Warren. He was a farmer in Lancaster for 60 years.”



Reverend Andrew Bigelow
Date unknown
BHSM Photograph Collection

One of Lydia’s brothers was Reverend Andrew Bigelow. He served as acting pastor of the First Congregational Church of Boylston from January 1866 to April 1873. “During his pastorate the interior of the church edifice was repaired and renovated and a fine pipe organ procured.”¹⁶ Stay tuned for a future Friday’s Fascinating Finds article which will focus on the choir of the First Congregational Church of Boylston.

Acknowledgements:

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Genealogy of the Bigelow Family of America, From the Marriage in 1642 of John Biglo and Mary Warren, to the Year 1890 by Gilman Bigelow Howe, 1890, Charles Hamilton, Worcester, Massachusetts

<https://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/object-groups/american-samplers>

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/8029419/lydia-bigelow>

<https://www.mpm.edu/research-collections/history/online-collections-research/schoolgirl-samplers>

Object Collection, Boylston Historical Society & Museum, Inc., 7 Central Street, Boylston, Massachusetts

Photograph Collection, Boylston Historical Society & Museum, Inc., 7 Central Street, Boylston, Massachusetts

¹² Ancestrylibrary.com

¹³ *Genealogy of the Bigelow Family of America, From the Marriage in 1642 of John Biglo and Mary Warren, to the Year 1890* by Gilman Bigelow Howe, 1890, p.167

¹⁴ Ancestrylibrary.com

¹⁵ <https://ancestors.familysearch.org/en/L553-WSF/hellen-cornelia-warren-1852-1884>

¹⁶ https://www.boylstonhistory.org/category/Church_History_Boylston/c87