

The Thompson Family

Thompson is a common surname throughout the United Kingdom but during the second half of the 18th century and first half of the 19th century our Thompson ancestors – a talented group of individuals – lived in and around London. Some of these Thompson ancestors were interested in family history and so documenting their lives and the lives of their immediate ancestors is not as difficult as it might otherwise be. A pedigree of the family was submitted by Frederick Elijah Thompson (1797-1849) to the College of Heralds in 1847 and a biography of Thomas Thompson (1785-1865) with references to other family members was published by his daughter Jemima Luke (née Thompson) (1813-1906) in 1868. Later, in 1964, a history of the Thompson family was compiled by Edward Augustine Thompson (1879-1970), likely a descendent of Benjamin Thompson (1780-).^{1,2} I will focus on what is known about our ancestor, Edward Thompson (1804-1868), as Jemima Luke and Edward Augustine Thompson (1879-1970) have little to say about him.

Edward Thompson (1804-1868) was the 12th of the 17 children of Nathaniel Thompson (1761-1825). Edward's father began his life as the son of a weaver from the East End of London – another Nathaniel – but ended his life as a wealthy stockbroker living in Colebrooke Terrace, Islington. Like his father, Edward worked as a stockbroker, first with his father and then on his own and, like his father, he accumulated a small fortune. While Edward was blessed financially, however, his was a life of adversity – largely caused by the deaths of many of those around him. This adversity began when Edward was young. As Jemima Luke (née Thompson) (1813-1906) records, Edward's mother, Margaret Maw (1764-1811) – with whom Edward's father had the first 14 of his 17 children – passed away, surrounded by her 10 surviving children – Edward among them – when Edward was just six years old. Edward's father, Nathaniel, went on, two years later, to marry Susan Clarke (1791-1855), 30 years his junior, with whom he had the last three of his 17 children.

12 of the 16 siblings of Edward Thompson (1804-1868) reached adulthood and I will give a brief outline of each of their lives before turning my attention to him.

Edward's eldest brother, Thomas Thompson (1785-1865), worked with his father as a stockbroker and, like his father, amassed considerable wealth. By 1818 he had accumulated around £60,000 – a large sum in those days – and, though he devoted much of his later life to philanthropy, his estate at his death still amounted to around £25,000. Thomas married twice. His first wife, Elizabeth Pinckney (1782-1837), bore him a number of children – Jemima Luke (née Thompson) (1813-1906) among them. Jemima married the Reverend Samuel Luke (1809-1868), a Congregationalist minister, in 1843, and, while she wrote several books, she is best known as the author of the hymn 'I think when I read that sweet story of old' – a biography of her appears in the Oxford National Dictionary of Biography. His second wife, the Honourable Charlotte Margareta Welman (1792-1869), bore him no children but shared his religious beliefs – he was, along with most of the rest of the Thompson family, a nonconformist – and love of philanthropy. Thomas Thompson lived at one time or another in several large country mansions: Piercefield Park – now a ruin – Poundisford Park and Prior Park among them. A portrait of Thomas Thompson taken from his daughter's biography appears below these notes.

Edward's eldest sister, Ann Thompson (1787-1863), married John Vickery Broughton (1786-1850), a wealthy woollen draper of Oxford Street who also owned property in Yorkshire, and together they had offspring.

Nathaniel Thompson (1791-1848), worked with his father on the London Stock Exchange but did not appear to have the full trust of his father when it came to financial affairs. His father's will states:

whereas my son Nathaniel Thompson has in consequence of his unwarrantable speculations become indebted to me for various advances to a much greater amount than would have been reasonably required for me due reference being had to the claims of the younger members of my family now I do by this my will

¹ Edward Augustine Thompson (1879-1970), mistakenly, I believe, merged the identities of two individuals – Nathaniel Thompson (1791-1848) and Nathaniel Benjamin Thompson (1805-1850) – into a single composite individual. I describe where, I think, he went wrong in an appendix to this note.

² Mike Clark has collected together much of this information and placed it on his web site at <http://www.mikesclark.com/genealogy/thompson.html>

give to my said son Nathaniel Thompson a legacy or sum of fifty pounds for mourning and I do hereby authorize and empower the executors and trustees for the time being of this my will in case my said son Nathaniel Thompson shall be in necessitous circumstances and shall apply for the same out of the yearly income of my residuary estate to pay into the proper hands of my said son Nathaniel any sum not exceeding one pound per week for his personal support and maintenance ... and I expressly direct in case my said son Nathaniel Thompson shall attempt to sell change or otherwise dispose of any of the said weekly payments hereby authorized to be made such weekly payments shall thenceforth be discontinued in the same manner as if my said son Nathaniel Thompson were actually dead.

His father clearly had his head screwed on and knew how to deal with a son who, it appears, was less than financially responsible. Nathaniel Thompson married Mary Wilkinson (1794-), the daughter of William Wilkinson (1763-1833), a wealthy cabinet maker of Ludgate Hill – some of whose work exists today – and they had offspring.³

Margaret Thompson (1793-1871) never married and census returns suggest that she spent much of her life living with her younger sister Sophia Crackelt (née Thompson) (1799-1891).

The Reverend William Thompson (1794-1843) worked with his father on the London Stock Exchange for a while before training to be a clergyman – gaining a BA and an MA from Trinity College, Cambridge. He married Elizabeth Norton (1799-1838), daughter of Edward Norton Thornton (1776-1848), an undertaker, in 1823 and they had offspring.

Frederick Elijah Thompson (1797-1849) also worked for a while with his father on the London Stock Exchange. In 1819, however, he married Mary Ann Springall (1799-1881), daughter of John Springall (1777-1845), a solicitor, and in 1823 he signed articles of clerkship with his father-in-law. Frederick eventually went into partnership with Springall and later with George Powell (1810-1884), the brother-in-law of Fredericks' brother and our ancestor Edward Thompson (1804-1868). The three partners had offices in Gray's Inn. Frederick fell from a horse in 1849 and died a few days later. He and his wife had offspring.⁴

Sophia Thompson (1799-1891) married the Reverend Thomas Jones Crackelt (1797-1833), a clergyman educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1831 and had twin daughters but, sadly, he died when their daughters were only a few months old.

Henry Thompson (1805-1883), like his father, worked as a stockbroker, first with his father and then on his own and accumulated, while not a small fortune, a respectable sum of money. He married twice and with his first wife, Charlotte Jones (1806-1876), had offspring.

Theophilus Thompson (1807-1860) was a doctor of some renown and a fellow of the Royal Society. The Oxford National Dictionary of Biography states that he is credited with being the first person to introduce cod-liver oil into England. He studied medicine at St Bartholomew's Hospital, at the University of Edinburgh – where he received an M.D. – and in Dublin and Paris. He was the author of a number of books and articles and an authority on consumption or phthisis, as it was then known, or tuberculosis, as it is now known. A series of 13 lectures that he presented on tuberculosis in 1851 at what is now the Royal Brompton Hospital, where he worked from 1847 until shortly before his death, were later published in their entirety first in the *Lancet* and then as a book. There is a photograph of him at the National Portrait Gallery and a watercolour portrait of him by Alfred Essex appears below these notes. He married Elizabeth Anna Maria Wathen (1807-1867) and together they had

³ A son, William, a doctor who migrated to the US in 1847, a son, Alfred Robert, a professor of English at the University of Odessa who was appointed interpreter to Lord Raglan at the outbreak of the Crimean War and a daughter, Jane, who married a clergyman, the Reverend Edward Arthur Bagshawe, in 1855 with Theophilus Thompson (1807-1860), among others, attending the wedding. Nathaniel is listed in the 1841 census as living in Bexley, Kent with his two sons and two servants. Nathaniel died at Greenwich, Kent at the end of 1848 and his death is recorded in the *Standard*.

⁴ Their youngest child, William Henry Thompson (1840-1934), who studied Mathematics at Caius College, Cambridge, graduating in 1863, had an interest in bell ringing – but purely mathematical, not musical. He proved that grandsire triples could not be produced by common bobs alone. For this contribution he was elected a member of the Ancient Society of College Youths, a change ringing society founded in 1637 and based in London. See: <https://www.whittingsociety.org.uk/old-ringing-books/thompson-notes-on-grandsire.html>.

offspring – among them Edward Symes-Thompson (1837-1906) who like his father worked as a physician at the Royal Brompton Hospital.⁵

Caroline Thompson (1814-1885) and Emily Thompson (1816-1882) spent their entire lives living in Colebrooke Terrace – until 1855, with their mother – and Mary Thompson (1818-1903) spent all but the last years of her life there and all three sisters remained spinsters. It is likely that they lived relatively frugal lives because Mary Thompson left behind a considerable sum of money – over £50,000 – on her death.

I now turn to our ancestor Edward Thompson (1804-1868). Edward began to work with his father on the London Stock Exchange in 1819, at the age of 15, and in 1826, at the age of 22, became a member of the exchange. Recommending him in 1826 were his eldest brother, Thomas Thompson (1785-1865), and his future father-in-law, George Powell (1770-1848). As a member, Edward worked first in partnership with William Todd and then with his younger brother Henry Thompson (1805-1883) and George Gray. His membership lapsed, however, in 1840 when he was still only 36. His eldest brother, Thomas, and his younger brother Henry, in contrast, retained their memberships right up until their deaths in 1865 and 1883.

Edward Thompson (1804-1868) lived with his father in Colebrooke Terrace until he married, in 1827, Mary Powell (1804-1852), whereupon he and his wife moved to Barnsbury Terrace, also in Islington. There his wife gave birth to six children of which four survived beyond infancy. The 1841 census shows Edward and Mary living in Barnsbury Terrace together with two servants and three of their children: Mary, Ann and Martha – their son George being away at the time. Stewart Thompson (1841-1860), the last of Edward's children with his wife Mary, was born on the Isle of Wight. Edward had been unwell and had gone there for his health. Out of gratitude for a complete recovery he bought and donated land to the Congregational Church in Ventnor and an organ that survived until damaged by enemy action in 1942. As a token of their thanks the church gave Edward the trowel used to lay the foundation stone for the church and this remained in the family until returned to the church by Richard Ottaway (1921-2001) in 1976.

The 1851 census shows Edward Thompson (1804-1868) and his wife Mary Thompson (née Powell) (1804-1852) living in Barnsbury Terrace together with their daughter Mary – by that time 21 – and two servants, their daughters Ann and Martha being educated at the Ladies' College, Lower Clapton, and their sons, George and Stewart, being educated in Brighton and Chichester. At the end of the following year, the first in a series of tragedies struck Edward. At some time in either 1851 or 1852, his wife and eldest daughter, Mary, had relocated to Hastings – doubtless in the hope that the sea air would improve their health. By the end of 1852, however, Edward's wife was dead of tuberculosis. Less than two months later, at the start of 1853, Edward's daughter Mary, in her early twenties, was also dead – also of tuberculosis. In the first half of the following year, Edward's son George and daughter Ann died at the ages of 19 and 17 of tuberculosis. By that stage Edward had moved with his family and at least one of his servants from Barnsbury Terrace to Park Street, Islington.

In 1854, Edward turned 50 and at the end of the year he married Charlotte Firth (1822-1903), daughter of Richard Anson Firth (1791-1877), an organist and music teacher. Within a year, Charlotte gave birth – but sadly to a still born son. It would be almost another six years before Charlotte would give birth again. By now, Edward had lost his first wife and six of his eight children. Tragedy would strike again, however. In 1858 he lost his remaining daughter, Martha, to tuberculosis at the age of 19 and after moving to Rydal House, Highbury, he lost, in 1860, his last remaining son, Stewart, to tuberculosis at the age of 18. The 1861 census, taken in April of that year, shows a 56-year old Edward living with his 37-year old wife, his wife's younger sister, Elizabeth Mary Firth (1831-1895), two servants and by now, no offspring.

What the 1861 census does not show, though, is that by the time that the census was taken, Edward's wife, Charlotte, was around five months pregnant. Later in the year, Charlotte gave birth to a baby girl, Charlotte Miriam Thompson (1861-1880), who would go on to marry and have eight children of her own. Just over a year later, Edward's wife, Charlotte, gave birth to a second daughter, Jessie Elizabeth Thompson (1862-1940), who would also go on to marry and would have five children of her own. A photo – likely taken in 1863 – shows

⁵ The Oxford National Dictionary of Biography entry for Edmund Symes-Thompson states that partly through his influence St. Moritz and Davos in Switzerland became popular as health resorts.

Edward sitting happily with Charlotte Miriam on his lap and his wife, with Jessie Elizabeth on her lap, beside him. In 1864, Charlotte gave birth to a third daughter, Grace Bertha Thompson (1864-1956), who, like her two sisters, would marry – she would later have one child of her own. Edward, though, was unable to spend much time with his three young daughters. He died in early 1868 from a carbuncle – a problem that today, like tuberculosis, can generally be treated successfully – leaving behind a wife with three children under the age of seven.

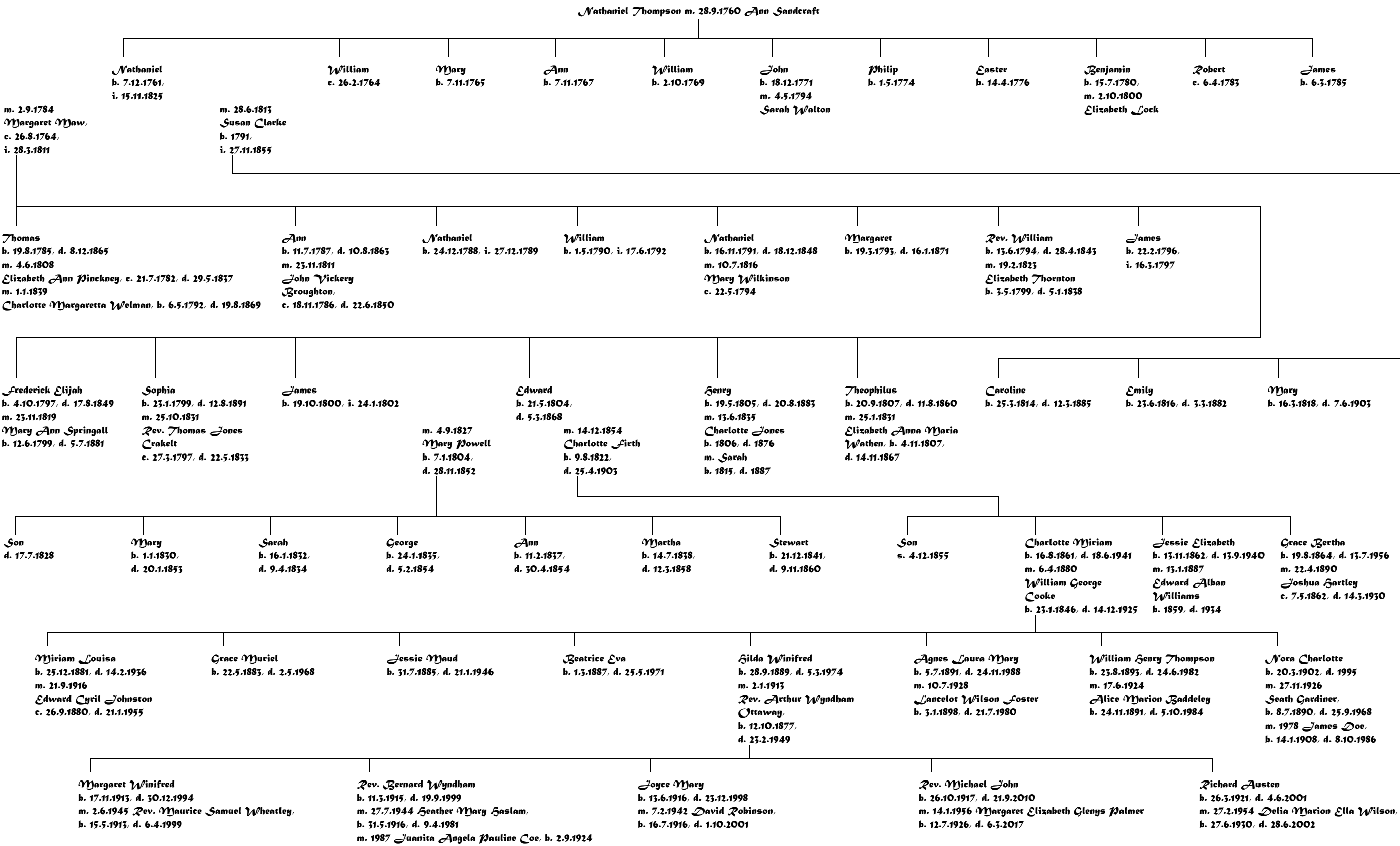
Edward Thompson (1804-1868) was clearly a resilient man – he carried on with life even though he lost his first wife and their seven children. Aside from this evidence that he was resilient, however, we have little direct evidence to guide us as to what sort of man Edward Thompson (1804-1868) was other than the contents of his will. The will shows that he still mourned the loss of his son Stewart – he gave £1,000 to James Searle, a close friend of his son – and that he was grateful for the service of his servant Mary Ann Doggett who had been present at the deaths of his children, Ann, George and Martha – he gave her £100, even though she had left his service some years before he passed away. The will also contains provisions for the return to the Powell family of funds that his father-in-law left to him on his death in 1848 and legacies to members of the Powell, Thompson and Firth families that would together be triggered were his three daughters to pass away before marrying or reaching the age of twenty-one.

The life of Edward Thompson (1804-1868) was heavily impacted by the scourge tuberculosis – known, appropriately, at the time as *the robber of youth*, because the disease struck down adolescents and young adults more frequently than others. The majority of those exposed to tuberculosis, though – and Edward and his second wife Charlotte Thompson (née Firth) (1822-1903) would have been exposed to it – do not go on to develop active disease. So, for example, the majority of those working with patients with active tuberculosis in the mid-19th century at what is now the Royal Brompton would have been exposed to the disease but would not have gone on to develop symptoms. As a result, to many of those working in medicine in the mid-19th century it appeared that tuberculosis was not contagious. It was instead thought by many to be – and Theophilus Thompson (1807-1860) makes clear in his lectures that he thought it to be – largely hereditary. There was not uniform agreement, however, in the mid-19th century that it was largely hereditary. Barberis, Bragazzi, Galluzzo and Martini conclude in their 2017 overview of the history of tuberculosis that while tuberculosis was generally considered a hereditary disease in Northern Europe, it was, in contrast, considered to be an infectious disease in Southern Europe.⁶ We now know, of course, that tuberculosis is contagious – that is, one cannot develop the disease without being infected. Once infected, it may be that hereditary factors play a role in who is likely to develop active disease, but one cannot develop active disease without being infected.

There was, as noted, a gap of almost six years between the still birth of a son in 1855 to Charlotte Thompson (née Firth) (1822-1903) and the birth of the first of her three daughters, Charlotte Miriam, in 1861. There are a number of explanations for this gap – but one is that Edward Thompson (1804-1868) and his wife Charlotte wanted to protect any children that they might have together from being infected with tuberculosis by Edward's two remaining children from his first marriage, Martha and Stewart. Charlotte Miriam was conceived almost precisely one month after the death of Edward's son Stewart and this fact is consistent with the explanation that a desire to protect prompted Edward and Charlotte to wait before having children. If a desire to protect any children that they might have together from being infected explains the gap, then Edward and Charlotte would have been ignoring – correctly, as it turns out – advice that Edward's brother Theophilus Thompson (1807-1860) might have given them. We cannot tell, of course, whether the gap between the still birth of their son and the birth of their first daughter, Charlotte Miriam, occurred by accident or by design, but the gap may well have protected their three daughters from the scourge of tuberculosis.

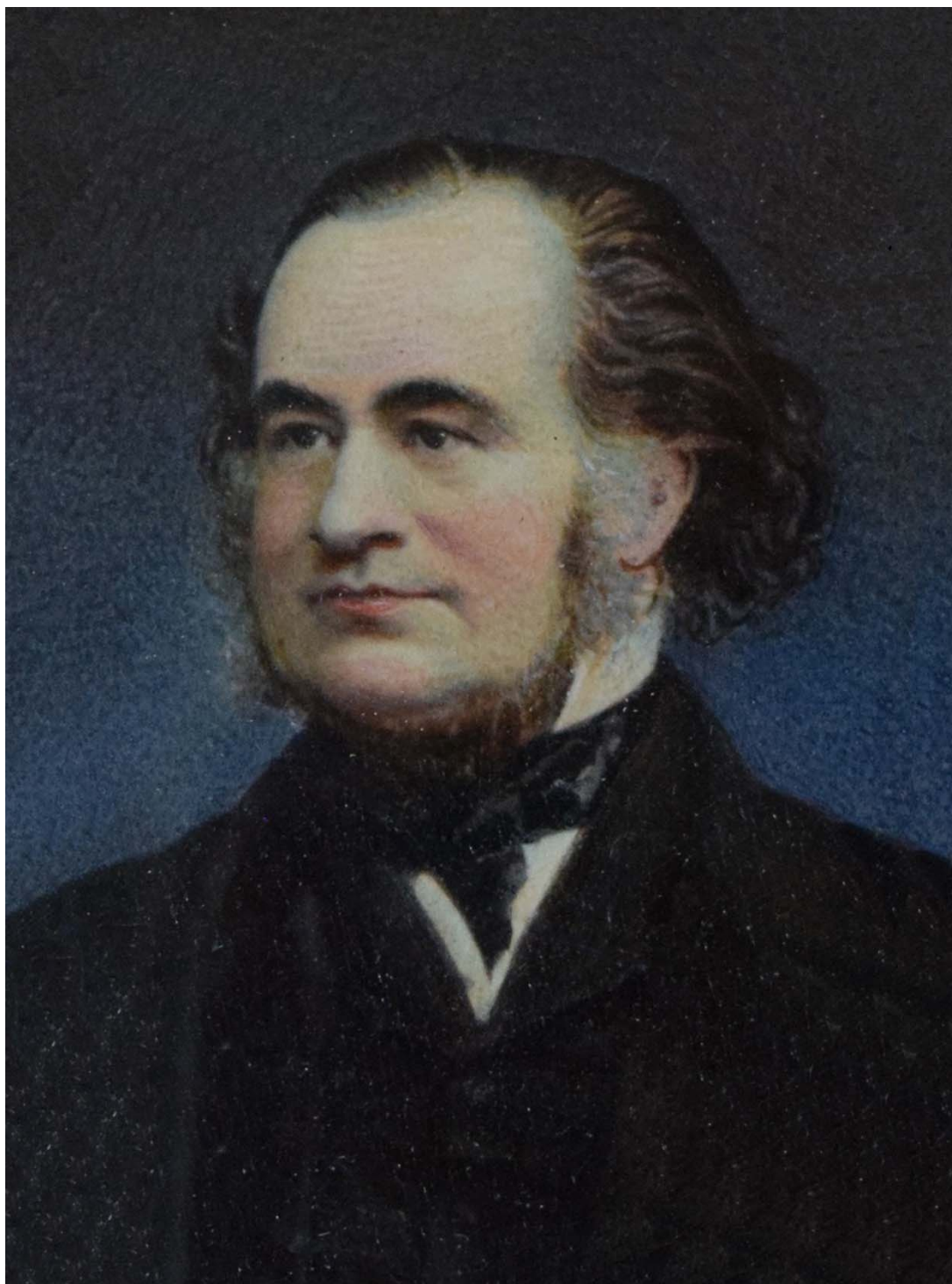
⁶ Barberis, I., Bragazzi, N.L., Galluzzo, L. and M. Martini, The history of tuberculosis: from the first historical records to the isolation of Koch's bacillus, J Prev Med Hyg, 2017, pages E9-E12.

Thompson Family Tree





Thomas Thompson (1785-1865)



Edward Thompson (1804-1868)



Theophilus Thompson (1807-1860)

Appendix

Edward Augustine Thompson (1879-1970) was born to Benjamin Thompson (1845-1901) and Sarah Ann Hunt Lampard (1844-1904). The marriage record for Benjamin Thompson and Sarah Ann Hunt Lampard – they married in 1866 – lists Benjamin as a carpenter and his father, Nathaniel, as a grainer – a wood painter.

The baptismal record of Benjamin Thompson (1845-1901) lists his father and mother as Nathaniel Thompson and Mary Elizabeth. The 1851 census suggests that Nathaniel by then had died and that Mary Elizabeth, living in Stepney with her children Sarah, Margaret, Elizabeth Ann, Benjamin and Eliza, had been born in 1809. The 1841 census shows Nathaniel and his wife Mary living in Stepney with their children Mary, Sarah and Maria and suggests that Nathaniel was born in around 1806 while his wife Mary was born in around 1811.

The parish records of Saint Dunstan's Stepney show that a Nathaniel Thompson was buried on 16 June 1850 aged 44 years old. Edward Augustine Thompson (1879-1970) records that his grandfather Nathaniel died on 11 June 1850 by falling from a ladder, fracturing his skull, but speculates that his grandfather had been lying about his age for some time and that while his wife had recorded his age as being 44, she should have recorded it as being 59. Edward Augustine presumed that his grandfather was the Nathaniel Thompson who had been born in 1791 and was the son of Nathaniel Thompson (1761-1825) and Margaret Maw (1764-1811). While Edward did a magnificent job of trying to identify his ancestors, he did not have access to the tools that we now have. Using these tools reveals that he almost surely merged the identities of Nathaniel Thompson (1791-1848) and Nathaniel Benjamin Thompson (1805-1850) into a single composite individual.

Inserting the name Nathaniel Thompson into findmypast.co.uk, with name variants, a birth date of 1806 give or take five years (so from 1801 through to 1811) and a location of London with a search radius of 10 miles reveals three baptisms:

- William Nathanael Thompson, son of Ralph and Martha Thompson, born on 27 September 1802 and baptised on 20 October 1802 at Saint Anne and Saint Agnes in the City of London,
- George Nathaniel Thompson, son of William and Sarah Thompson, born on 23 June 1804 and baptised on 5 August 1804 at Saint Matthew's, Bethnal Green and
- Nathaniel Benjamin Thompson, son of Benjamin and Elizabeth Thompson, born on 8 September 1805 and baptised on 25 June 1810 at Saint Mary Aldermay in the City.

If Nathaniel Benjamin Thompson died on 11 June 1850, then he would have been precisely 44 years old at the time. For this reason and also because his second name was Benjamin – the name of Edward Augustine's father – he is the most likely of the three to have been the grandfather of Edward Augustine Thompson (1879-1970).

Inserting the name Benjamin Thompson into findmypast.co.uk, with name variants, a marriage date of 1800 give or take 10 years (so from 1790 through to 1810), a spouse named Elizabeth with name variants and a location of London with a search radius of 10 miles reveals one marriage:

- Benjamin Thompson and Elizabeth Lock on 2 October 1800 at Saint Dunstan's, Stepney.

Inserting the name Benjamin Thompson into findmypast.co.uk, with name variants, a birth date of 1780 give or take 10 years (so from 1770 through to 1790) and a location of London with a search radius of 10 miles reveals 12 baptisms of males but only one who would have been over 15 years old at the time of the marriage of Benjamin Thompson and Elizabeth Lock:

- Benjamin Thompson, son of Nathaniel Thompson, a weaver, and Ann baptised on 2 August 1780 aged 18 days – so born on 15 July 1780 – at Saint Dunstan's, Stepney.

Benjamin Thompson (1780-) was the brother of Nathaniel Thompson (1761-1825) and, it is reasonable to presume, was the great-grandfather of Edward Augustine Thompson (1879-1970).