

THE PITTS FAMILY OF LANCE COVE, BELLE ISLAND  
AND THEIR DESCENDENTS

The first recorded member of this family was James Pitts. It is thought he came from near Exeter, Devonshire. According to a letter published in the St. John's Evening Telegram, February 13, 1963, from Mrs. Sarah Jane Pretty of Dildo, T. Bay, James Pitts was a naval man, who met and married a Mary Hiscock (nee Mary Peyton), widow of a George Hiscock of Portugal Cove who, she says, is buried there. Mrs. Hiscock is said to have had eight children by the Hiscock marriage and three sons by the Pitts marriage. Her letter says a Hiscock daughter married a Hanlon and another married a Codner. There was also a Hiscock son, George, named after his father. According to Mrs. Pretty, the three Pitts sons were born at Portugal Cove, and on leaving there to move to Lance Cove, the Pitts gave the property to the Church of England, who still own it. They bought the land on Belle Isle from one Greasley. The four pieces of land in Lance Cove (three Pitts sons and their step-brother, George Hiscock) all adjoined, being the west part of the land that extended from Hiscock's Hill, as it is called, to Lance Cove Road. George Hiscock owned the most westerly piece of land, then John Pitts, then James Pitts and then William Pitts. According to Mrs. Pretty's letter, son James Pitts married a Fanny Picot of Portugal Cove. Son William Pitts married a Miss Stevenson of Harbour Grace. John's wife name was Elizabeth. Following publication of her letter, Mrs. Pretty, who was then 82 year old, was interviewed by Gordon Duff of St. John's on three separate occasions. She gave much verbal information, but did not have any written records. She had learned the foregoing by listening and conversation with relatives from childhood on.

The known facts which can be substantiated by actual records are as follows -

(1) From the 1841 Census of 1794/95 (Gosling Library) for Belle Isle Conception Bay is registered,

JAMES Pitts, with wife, three sons, one daughter - years resident in country - forty-three.

This establishes the fact that James Pitts came to Nfld. first in approximately, 1751/52.

(2) Headstone of JAMES PITTS, in old cemetery at Lance Cove - (Died April 30, 1805, aged 70. There is a long poetic epitaph on the headstone, which included the sentence "Leaving wife and children thr and also the statement "He was born at Kenford, Devonshire."

This establishes the fact that he was born at Kenford, which is near Exeter, Devonshire in approximately the year 1735. He could only have been 16/17 year of age when he first came to settle Newfoundland.

(3) Entry from the Anglican Cathedral Marriage Register, St. John's for the year 1780 - married November 29, 1780 - James Pitts and Ann Eastcock (from P. Cove).

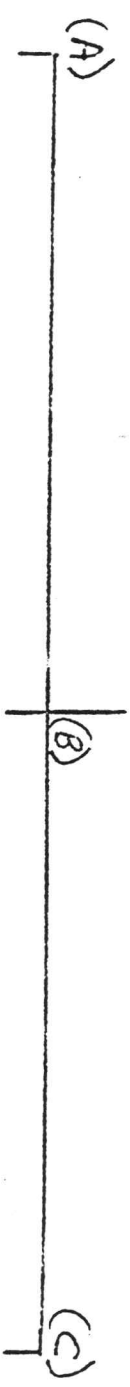
This established the fact that he did, indeed, marry in Nfld. The P. Cove is undoubtedly Portugal Cove, and that the surname Hiscock was probably at one time Eastcock.

To establish the dates of birth, marriage and death for the Portugal Cove, Belle Island area for the period 1780 onwards is most difficult. The ministers of the church in those days had to travel from settlement to settlement mostly by boat, leaving Portugal Cove, calling at Topsail, Belle Island, and finally arriving in Harbour Grace. It was evidently the practice to register all births, marriages and deaths at the last place visited, (or the most convenient place), and thus the researcher finds Portugal Cove entries registered in the Topsail, C. of E. records and St. Paul's Church, Harbour Grace. It cannot be checked if Hr. Grace and Topsail entries were recorded at Portugal Cove, because all these old records were destroyed by fire in 1937 at Portugal Cove when the Rectory burnt.

James Pitts  
of Kenford,  
Devonshire  
1735 - 1805 (Apr.30)

Married  
St. John's  
Nfld.  
1780 (Nov.29)

Ann Eastcock (Hiscock?)  
of Portagal Cove, Nfld.



John Pitts  
1783 - 1825 (Apr.99)

James Pitts  
1784 - 1870 (Apr.12)

William Pitts  
1787 - 1869 (July 2)

THE THREE SONS OF JAMES PITTS  
(JOHN, JAMES and WILLIAM PITTS)

Relying on records, we now come to the three sons of the pioneer James Pitts - John, James and William Pitts.

(1) The headstone of John Pitts is in the old cemetery at Lance Cove - it records "Sacred to the memory of John Pitts, who departed this life 9 April, 1825, aged 42. Respected and beloved by all who knew him."

It establishes his date of birth as 1783. Family tradition says he was drowned on a "foreign" voyage. Bowring Brothers Limited of St. John's have in their records an invoice of Bill of Sale to John Pitts dated 1817.

Also in the Lance Cove cemetery is another headstone - "Sacred to the Memory of Elizabeth, wife of John Pitts, who departed this life 15 October, 1820. No age is given. Thus John Pitts was a widower for the last five years of his life.

(2) James Pitts - from his headstone in the General Protestant Cemetery, St. John's is the inscription - "James Pitts died 12 April, 1870, aged 86." This establishes his year of birth as 1784.

Also on the same headstone, and immediately following the above inscription, is a further one "who married Frances Bartlett, died January 15, 1869, aged 78." This would establish her year of birth as 1791.

(3) William Pitts - the Harbour Grace Anglican Record of Births give the entry - "Baptized 20 August, 1788, William Pitts, son of James and Ann Pitts, born Portugal Cove."

The Topsail C. of E. Records give the entry of death "William Pitts of Lance Cove, aged 82, buried at Lance Cove July 4, 1869 by me Geo Hutchenson."

This would establish his year of birth as 1787.

The Topsail records also give the death entry of the wife of William Pitts - "Ann Pitts, aged 75, Buried at Lance Cove, January 28 1869 by me Geo Hutchenson". Her year of birth would be 1794.

The eldest son, John Pitts and his wife Elizabeth, had seven daughters, which will be enumerated elsewhere. One, Selina died in infancy. His second daughter, Frances died September 28, 1826, aged 14. Her Headstone is in the old Lance Cove Cemetery. Family tradition says that after John Pitts died, the remaining five daughters were brought up by their father's brother, James Pitts.

The second son James Pitts, and his wife Frances had seven daughters and one son William. James Pitts moved to St. John's with his eight children and the five children of his deceased brother John, making thirteen children in all. He founded, with his son, William the very successful business house known as J. & W. Pitts.

The third and youngest son William Pitts, known as Captain lived on Bell Island all his life. He was the one who started the brickyard at Lance Cove in 1848. He had three children - John Pitts, who never married - a farmer at Lance Cove who died in the period 1880/90. A daughter Frances Louisa, known as Aunt Fanny, born 6 November, 1832 and died at Lance Cove January 21, 1913, aged 81, never married. His other daughter Elizabeth Pitts, married John Stone.

(A) John Pitts  
1783-1825

Married

Elizabeth

17 - 1820 (Oct.20)

(A1)  
Selina Pitts  
died in  
infancy

(A2)  
Frances Pitts  
1812-1826(Sept.28)  
died young

(A3)  
Jane Sophia Pitts

married Henry John Duder

(A4)  
Mary Pitts

married Thomas Ebsary

(A5)  
Anne Pitts

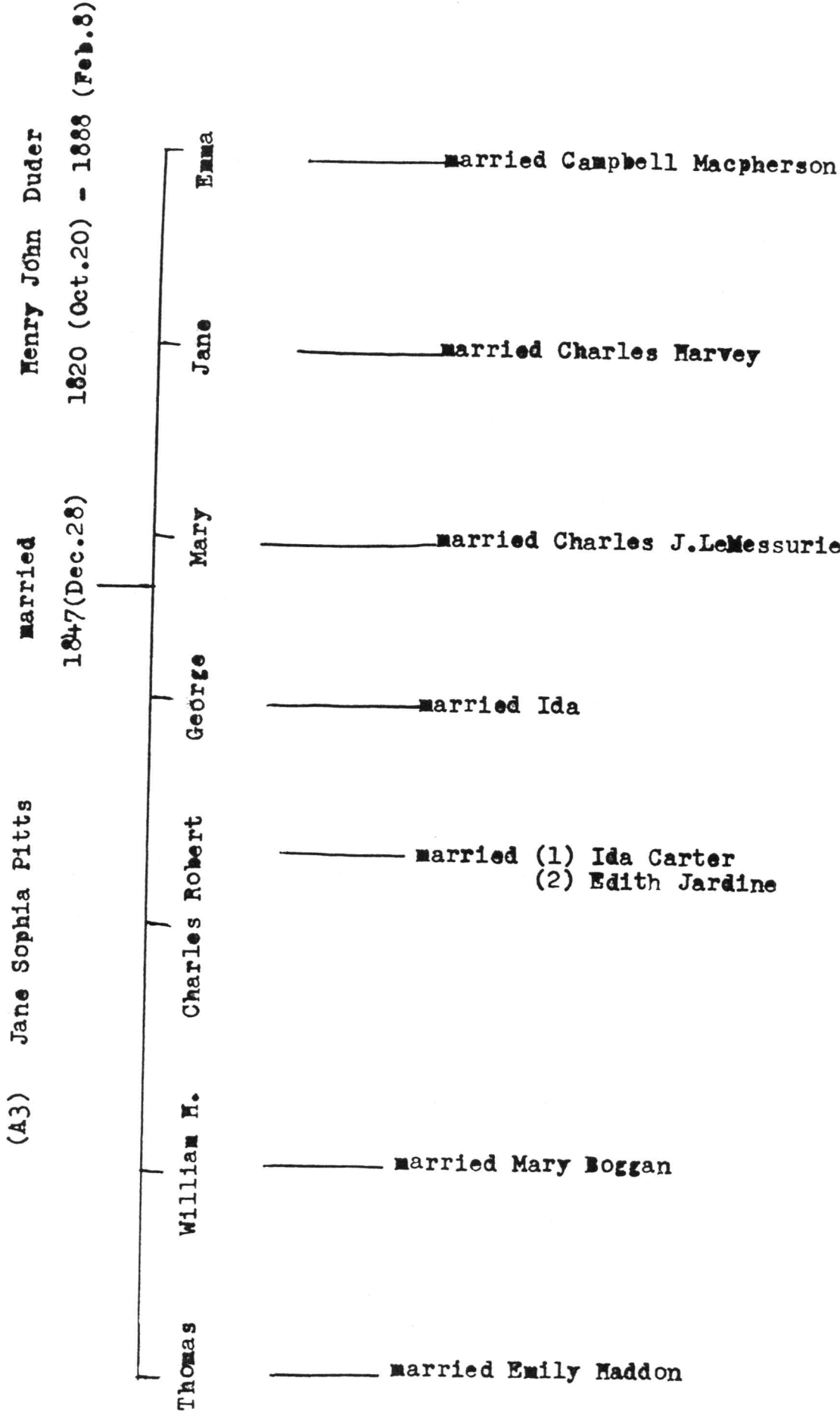
married William Coyell

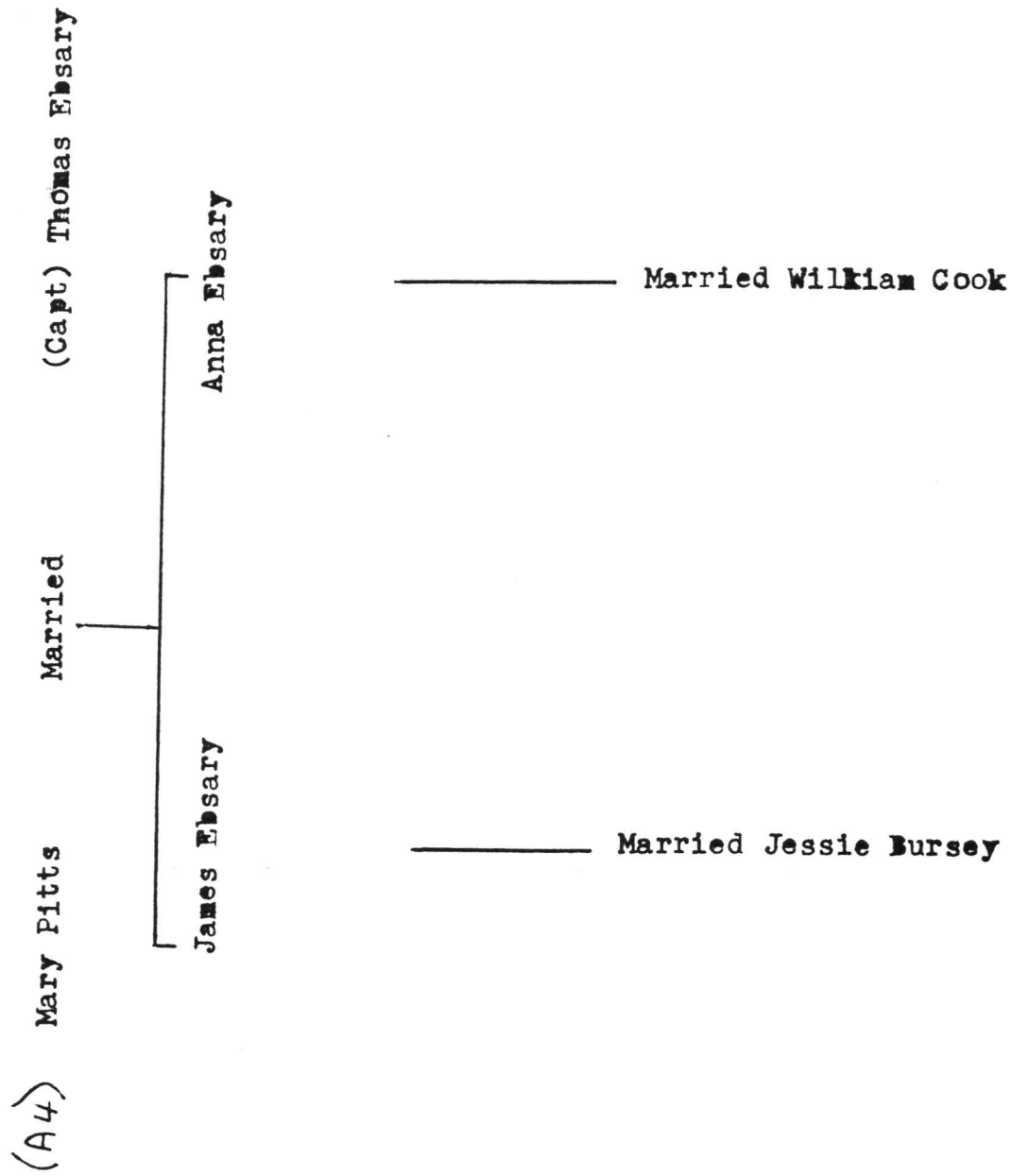
(A6)  
Charlotte Pitts  
B.1820 (Mar.11)

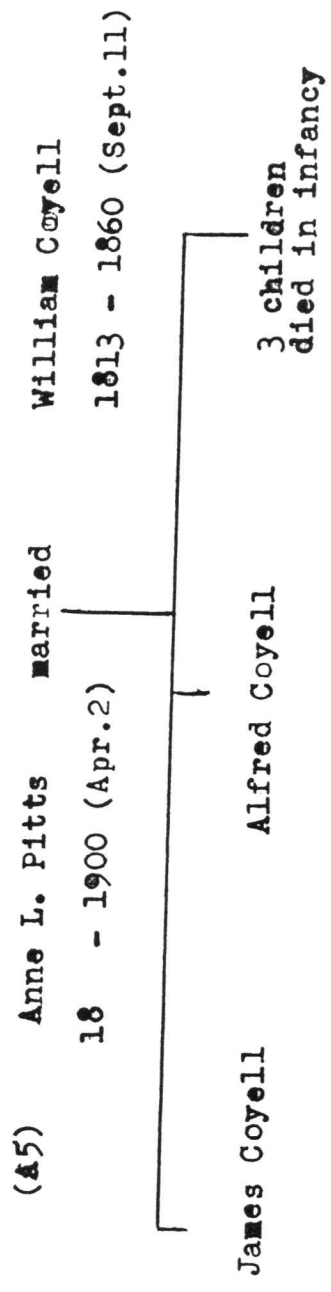
married William Knight

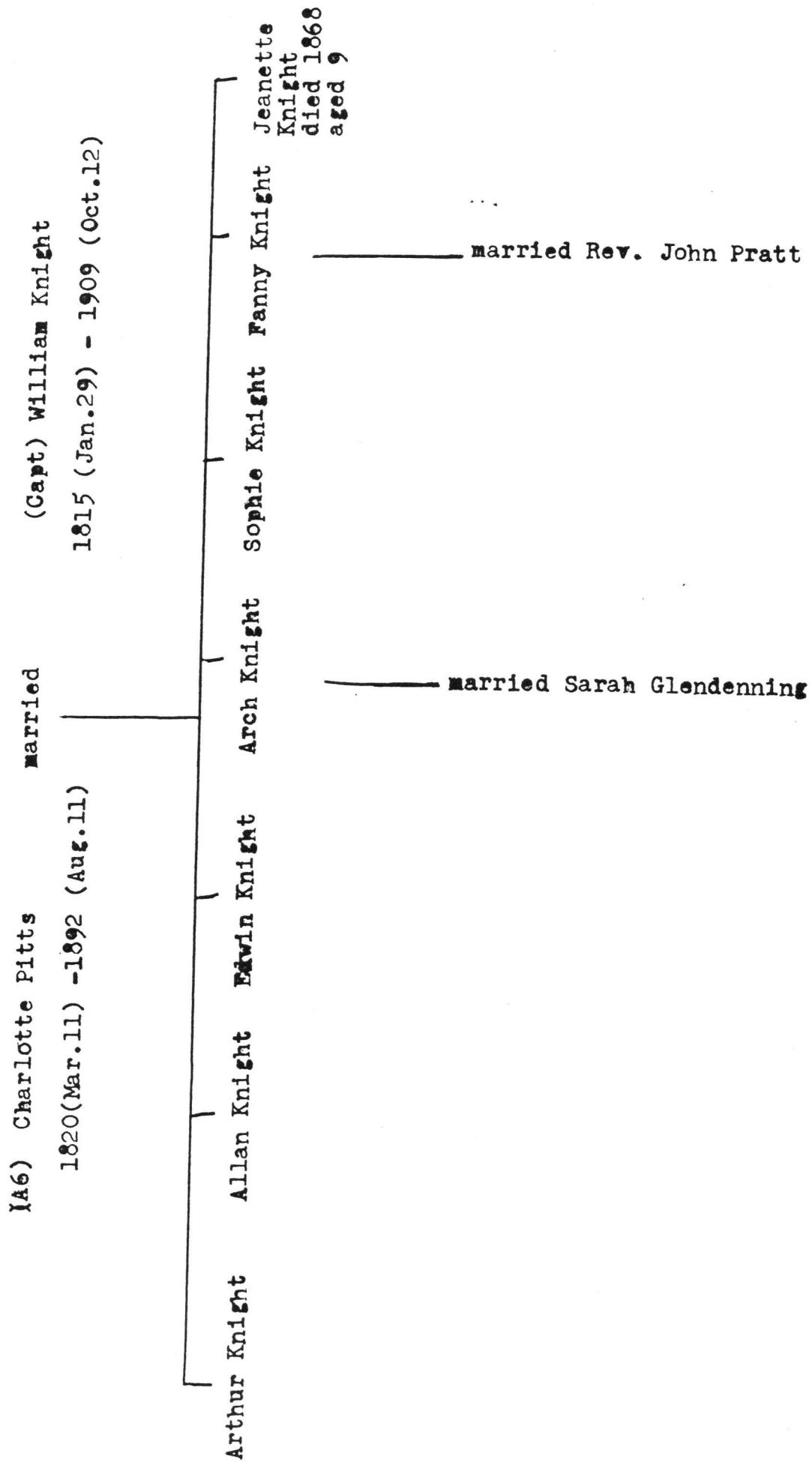
(A7)  
Elizabeth  
Pitts

married William Cowan

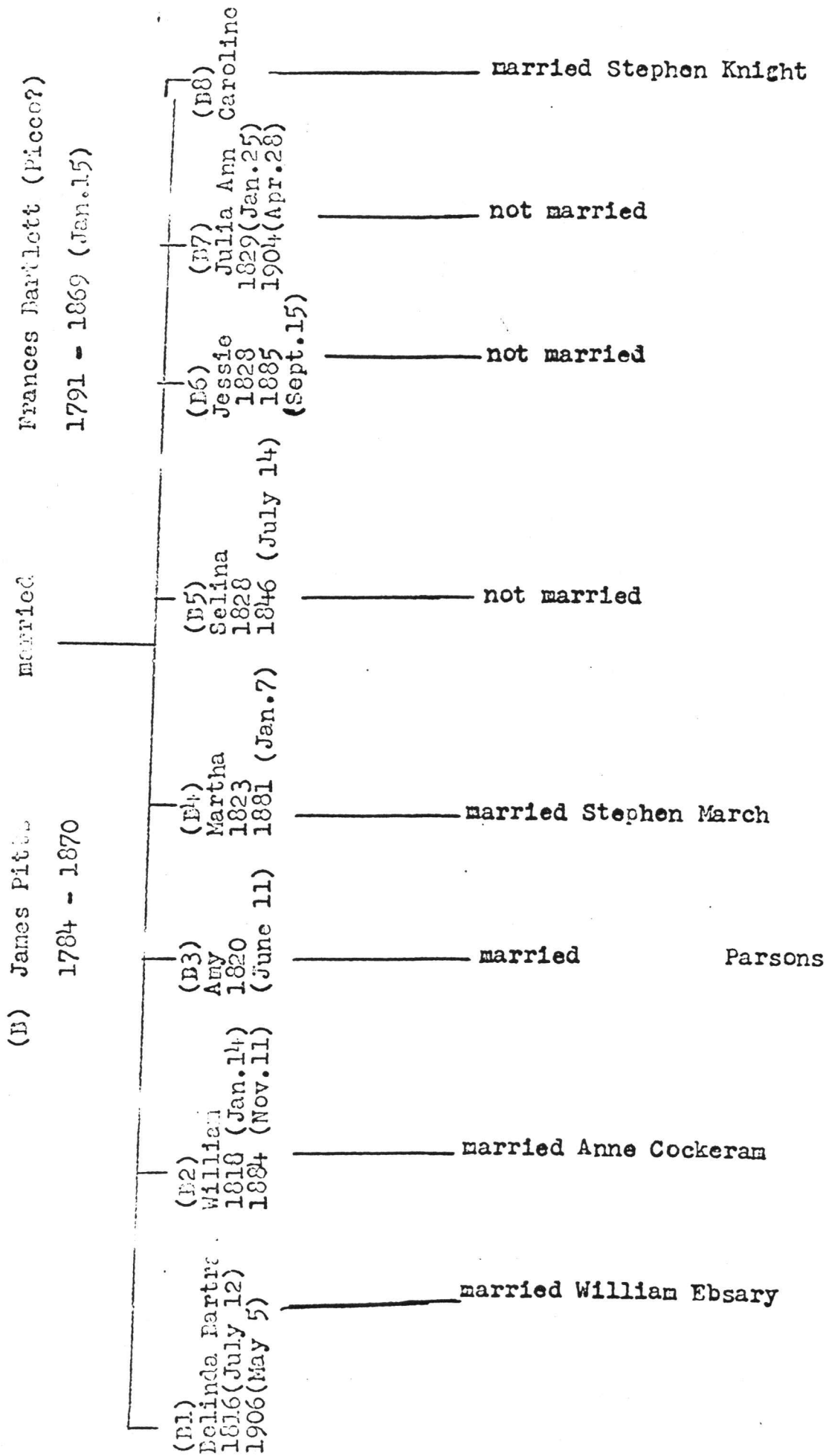


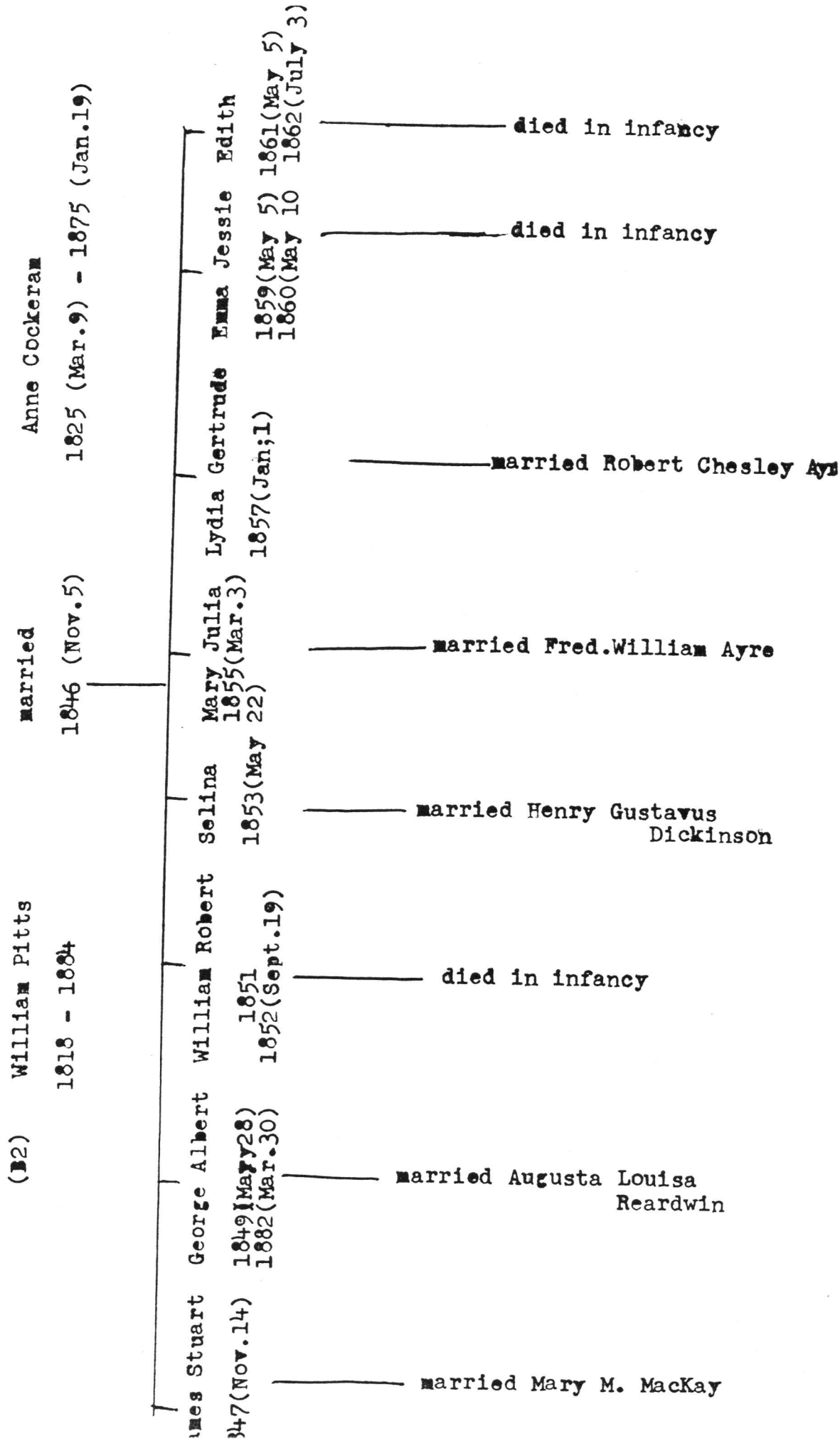












(C) William Pitts married Ann (Stevenson?) (Jewel?)

1787 - 1869

