



## Chapter 4

# From Whence They Came

Sol Roach and his descendants come from a long line of Americans that go back to before colonial days. Roach women have been proud to be eligible for membership in the Daughters of the American Revolution and many have joined. The first Roach of this line for which there is record on this continent was **John Roach** who was born in **1762 or 63**, probably at Little Windsor, New Hampshire. He married Abigail Jones in 1784 and produced 15 children. His importance as the first recorded in the family is that he is the ancestor used to make the connection to the Revolutionary War. He enlisted in 1781 and served as a private in Captain Abner Wode's (Wade's) Company, Colonel Michael Jackson's Eighth Massachusetts Regiment until the last of October 1782, when he was discharged at New Windsor, New York. (reference-Bureau of Pensions, War Pension Claim W 22096) John died August 22, 1828 and is buried at Wilton, Maine.

There were Roaches on this continent prior to John, as he was born in New Hampshire, but they are not recorded. My father, John S. Roach (1908-1985), thought that the original Roach came over from the British Isles shortly after the Pilgrims and that he might have been a convict or prisoner. This is unsubstantiated.

In June of 2008 I accompanied an elderly man from town to Nashville, Tennessee for a gathering of the Chapman Family Association. This man had reached the point where he didn't feel able to handle the trip on his own, but felt compelled to go because he and his deceased wife had made the trip annually for years. The Chapman family Association is deep into genealogy and has members from all over the country. One of the members, who is married to a Chapman, is from a family line that came over on the Mayflower and is a member of the Mayflower Society. She reported that documents and ship's manifests that had been in private hands had recently been turned over to a public institution so that they are available for research. I struck up a conversation with this lady and she agreed to check these records for me. She reported that she could find no evidence of anybody named Roach coming over on the original group of ships at the time of the Mayflower (1620) or within a reasonable number of years following. She did, however, ask if I had ever considered the possibility of a name change. She said that she had found a man named Carlton that had changed his name to John D. Roach after arriving here. New country, new beginning, and new name. It makes sense. If he had been a convict or prisoner it would make it easier to disappear in his new country and also avoid any stigma. We still don't have any information that would connect us to this man or anyone else from the 1600s.

**Selman Roach** was the 7<sup>th</sup> child of 15 by John and Abigail and was born **July 11, 1797** in Wilton, Maine. In 1819 he married Rebecca Jones in Waterford, Maine and died November 22, 1872 at Wilton, Maine where he is buried.

Selman and Rebecca had a son named **Robert Henry Roach** who was born **September 29, 1827** in Wilton, Maine. He married Sarah Ann Singer on August 7 of 1850 and produced 11 children. He died October 23, 1911 and is buried at Brisbin, Pennsylvania along with his sons Robert and William. Robert Henry and Sarah were the parents of Selman, the subject our study.

**Selman E. (Sol) Roach** was born **May 30, 1856**, the third child of 11 children in the Robert H. and Sarah Singer Roach family. Sol was born in the area of Pennsylvania just southeast of Wilkes-Barre. A family document prepared by William F. Roach (1866-1942), brother of Sol and 9<sup>th</sup> child in the family, states that Sol was born on the banks of the Lehigh River, Browntown, Luzerne County. Inside one of Sol's violins, in his own hand, Sol states that he was born in Monroe County. Research indicates that Monroe County and Luzerne County are adjacent and that their borders are common to a length of about 10 miles with the Lehigh River being the border. That 10 mile stretch is on the southeast corner of Luzerne County and northwest corner of Monroe County. The only community shown in that border area on today's maps is Stoddardsville. The Stoddardsville area is divided by the Lehigh River. Browntown does exist in Luzerne County but is located on the northwest side of the county on the Susquehanna River. This could be explained by the fact that early Pennsylvania towns often changed names several times and then even went out of existence when mining or timber interests failed, or they were incorporated into larger expanding communities. Modern county boundaries are not necessarily the same as in pioneer days. Original counties were geographically larger, and as populations developed they were carved up into smaller areas to create new counties.

Our subject has been known by several names over the course of his life. The most frequently used name was Sol, short for Solomon. Because of the nickname some have assumed his given name to be Solomon and this shows up in print. His real name is Selman. The name Selman is unusual for a first name. The fact that our subject was named Selman is in line with the Roach family's tendency to repeat names through the generations. Our Selman's grandfather was also named Selman. Selman has been used by them as a first name and as a middle name. But where did it come from?

The John Roach from 1762 obviously had a father, and since he was born in New Hampshire it can be assumed that the father was present. My cousin, Nancy Davis of Ann Arbor, Michigan, has made an effort to trace the Roaches back further in time. She found that in one census there was another John Roach living right next door to the 1762 John Roach. She assumed this to be his father. This John Roach was earlier found to be in Beverly, Massachusetts, and he married a Lovell Selman from Marblehead, Massachusetts. The 1762 John Roach and his wife Abigail Jones then named their first born daughter Lovell and their first born son Selman. So a family name became a first name for the Roaches.

While on the subject of names, one of the mysteries of this research has been what the "E" stands for in Selman E. Roach. Sol lived during the period where it was fashionable for men to use initials for their first and middle names, even on legal documents, such as S. E. Roach. Anyone who has attempted to research people from this period knows the

frustration, for no matter where you go, church, census, court house, newspapers, those first and middle names never appear. It has to be assumed that they were written down in full at least once somewhere, but where? None of the relatives who might have known or heard it are still living. All we can do is connect dots again. The tendency to repeat names within the family gives us a path to follow.

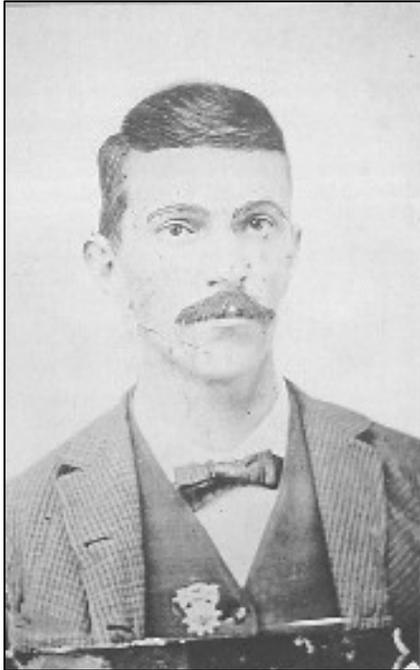
Looking at parents and known children of Roaches prior to Robert Henry, Sol's father, there are no male names that begin with the letter "E". However, there are children of Sol's siblings that do begin with "E", notably the name Edward. The introduction of the name Edward may have come from the Singer family. We find that Sol's daughter Mary (Mayse) named her first child, a daughter, Georgiana after her sister Georgiana. She named her son Edward. Sol's sister Sarah Abbie named her third son Edward. Another of Sol's sisters, Arminda, named her third son Edward. Sol's youngest brother Charles did name his seventh child Earl, but this is a one-time occurrence. According to this way of thinking the "E" stands for Edward.

The 1860 Census shows the Robert Henry Roach family in Luzerne County, Buck Township, which is that southeast corner of the county. Father Robert is 32 and lists his occupation as a "Sawyer", or a person who saws wood in a saw mill. His wife Sarah is 28. The children listed are Rosebell 7, Selman 4, Sarah 3, and Martha 6months.

The 1870 Census shows them living in Snow Shoe, Centre County where Robert is 43, Sarah 37, Rose 17, Selman 14, Sarah 12, Amanda 8, Herminta 6, Robert 5, and William 4. Sol is listed as working in the shingle mill.

It should be noted that first born child Rebecca died in 1853 at 2 years and 1 month. She was born in 1851 at the mouth of the Tobyhanna River in Carbon County, which is just south of Luzerne and west of Monroe and is the next county encountered at the west end of that 10 mile adjacency on the Lehigh. She died at Whitehaven, Luzerne County on the Lehigh River. Since Robert was listed as a sawyer and Sol as working in a shingle mill it would make sense that they would live on the river where the power would come for the mills.

An application for the Daughters of the American Revolution by Dorothy Roach Daley, one of Sol's granddaughters, states that he married Margaret Trumble of Morrisdale Mines on January 1, 1876. Sol would have been 19 years old. The age of his bride is difficult to determine, except that she was younger. The available sources for Margaret's date of birth differ by a couple of years. One family source says she was born September 12, 1858 in Wiltshire, Scotland. Her obituary from the newspaper lists her age as 73 in 1931 making her birth date 1858. The 1880 census lists her as 21 years old or "about 1859". Her death certificate shows 1861. The application for the DAR says 1860.



**Sol Roach in the late 1870's**



**Margaret Trumble Roach in the late 1870's**

In a 1979 interview my father, John Selman Roach, talked with his nephew Jeff Davis about where Margaret came from and told him “...*Grammy Roach, his wife, came from Scotland and she came from an area called Ayr, A-Y-R, and when you asked her where she was from she would say, ‘I’m from Ayrdre’.* Now Ayrdre would be the same as the county, the county of Ayr, and they called it a ‘dre’ for county. Ayrdre, county Ayr. And she came to this country when she was 5 years old. And she remembers crossing the Atlantic in a boat, a sailboat. And it took them over 2 months to come from Scotland to New York. And (I remember) her telling me that...coming across they were with a group of people who were very similar to gypsies. And they were fearful all the time that they were on the ocean. They were afraid of these people. And they hit storms, they had very bad storms, that’s why it took them so long to get here.

Now, Grammy Roach...I think was born in 1856 or 58, somewhere in there and she was 5 years old when she came to this country. During that time after she got here they came to a place called Morrisdale. It was called Morrisdale Mines in those days because there was nothing but coal mines. Today it’s called Morrisdale. It’s near a town called Philipsburg, Pennsylvania.

And she remembers the time when Lincoln was assassinated. She told us about that... if she was born in ‘58 she’d only be 5 or 6 years old. They put Lincoln’s body in a train and they took him all over the country so everybody could see him and she remembers the train coming to where they were. I don’t recall her saying that she went to see Lincoln but I do know that she said she remembered the train in which Lincoln was carted around and they had black drapes all over the outside the cars. She remembered that. And then she, she met Grandpap Roach, she was married quite young, I think either 14 or 15 somewhere in there....”

The 1880 census shows that Sol and Margaret are living in Morrisdale Mines, Pennsylvania. Sol's occupation is listed as "coal miner". By this point in time they have had two children, Gertrude age two (by census 1878?) and George age five months (1879). Gertrude's obituary however, states that she was born on November 5, 1876 and died January 4, 1954 at age 77. George died in 1884.

It is also a guess that they moved around a lot during the 1870s. Their first daughter, Gertrude, was born at Natrona Heights, Pennsylvania in 1876 and is located just north of Pittsburgh. According to a special edition of the Windber Era newspaper of 1900, by 1881 Sol's family is living at Morrisdale Mines where Sol is owning and operating a hotel. However, their son Wilbur (according to his obituary) was born on November 29, 1882 at Anita, which is about 4 miles north of Punxsutawney in Jefferson County. Other family information says that Wilbur was born in Clearfield County (Morrisdale) or, according to my father, John S. Roach, at a place called Blue Ball. According to family information, their daughter Georgiana was born September 9, 1888 at Morrisdale, Clearfield County.

According to the 1900 Windber Era article, Sol moved to Punxsutawney, Jefferson County in 1889 where he worked for the Berwind White Coal Company. Research at the Coal Heritage Museum in Windber shows that all employee records prior to 1922 had been destroyed, either by miners or by the company, during a period of labor strife in that year. Sol's obituary states that he killed nearly 300 deer and over 40 bear in the Pennsylvania woods in his lifetime and that he had made part of his living hunting and trapping while wild animal furs brought good prices. The Windber Era article claims nearly 400 deer by 1900. This large number, whichever is accurate, could indicate that he could have been working for the coal company as a professional hunter. This notion was agreeable to Russel Harriger, author of **Long Rifles of Pennsylvania, a history of rifle manufacture in Jefferson and Clarion Counties**. The assertion that professional hunting may have been a good part of his livelihood is strengthened by the many newspaper accounts of his exploits. However, due to the fact that the 1880 census lists him as a miner at Morrisdale Mines, it's not unreasonable to assume that he could be a miner at Punxsutawney too. The Punxsutawney Spirit newspaper has him listed as a resident of Horatio, Adrian, and Anita, all communities surrounding Punxsutawney.

According to Jefferson County birth records of the 1890's it is known that there were three Roach families in the Punxsutawney area, one being his brother Robert McClellan Roach. It is not known if they were there in 1882 when Sol's son Wilbur was born. However, family lore says that Sol was often gone for long periods of time. It is not known if this applies just to his Windber years or was a pattern throughout his married life. If Sol was gone, for the purpose of hunting, work on the railroad, or selling guns that he made, then it would be reasonable to assume that his wife might lodge with a relative prior to and during birth, giving that location as the child's birth place but not the family's real residence.

The Roach families living in Jefferson County, as shown by the record of births at the Jefferson County Courthouse in Brookville, include Robert M. and Ella Roach of Perry Township (west of Punxsutawney), listed variously as miner, laborer and fireman; Frank and Zula Roach of Valier, Perry Township listed as a miner; and John and Mattee Roach of Race St. Ramey. Robert M. could well be his brother (8<sup>th</sup> child) who was born Robert McClellan Roach on January 25, 1865.

Sol and his family moved to Windber in 1898 and was one of the first businesses to locate on the main street at 1101 Graham Ave. where he ran a gun and bicycle store. According to John S. Roach, Sol's was the 2<sup>nd</sup> house constructed so he was one of the original settlers. The actual reason for this move is not known but can be assumed from the following statements from Paul Alcamo's book **The Windber Story**. Windber was a totally planned company town of the Berwind White Coal Company.

pg 94 *"Berwind White also convinced many of its employees from Houtzdale, and other earlier operations to relocate in Windber"*

pg 89 *"More buildings were erected in Windber during 1898-99 than in any other town in Pennsylvania."*

pg 124 *"Berwind White, through its land holding Wilmore Coal Co., offered choice lots for sale and welcomed merchants to build and establish all types of business houses."*

pg 88 par 5 *"S.S.Crissman, Joe Harding, M.C. Murphy, Sol Roach, Clark Duncan, Bill Barefoot, G.M. Reeser and Eureka Supply Company had already opened for business and within six months about 50 other establishments were bidding for patronage in every line of business." (pg 4 refers to businesses being established in 1898)*



**The Roach home and shop featuring guns and bicycles was the second building on Windber's main street, Graham Ave. Photo from 1900 Era Industrial Edition.**



**S. E. Roach from 1900  
Industrial Edition**

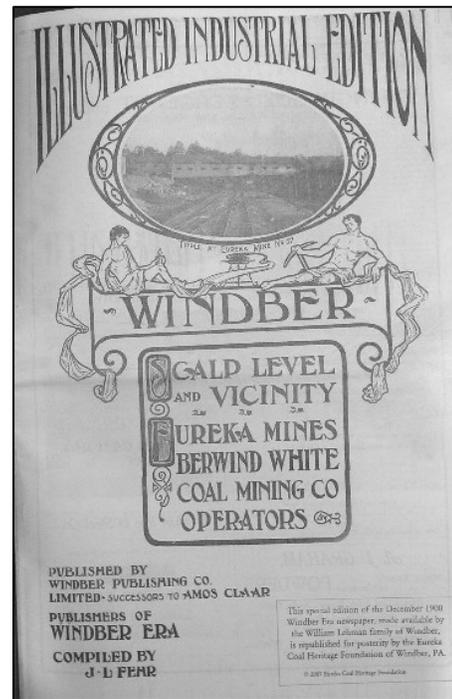
The following article appeared with the accompanying picture in the 1900 special edition of the Windber Era newspaper.

*“Solomon E. Roach was born in Monroe County, Pa. in 1856. He attended the public schools in his native region and when eight years old, in company with his parents moved to Snow Shoe, Centre County, Pa.*

*‘From here, in 1881, he removed to Morrisdale Mines and in 1889 to Punxsutawney, where he engaged with the Berwind - White Coal Company. From here he came to Windber in 1898, where he established himself in business as proprietor of the leading bicycle and gun store of the region.’*”

*‘Carrying the finest and most complete stock of goods for the sportsman and hunter, Mr. Roach has established a large and profitable trade in his line. Himself familiar with forest and stream he knows the needs of the hunter and always stands prepared to supply them. His own record as a hunter is perhaps not surpassed by any. Nearly 400 deer have been taken in the past 25 years. He is one of Windber’s appreciated citizens and has a large and rapidly increasing trade.’*”

Sol’s daughter Mary (generally known as Mayse) was born in 1889, and the family is complete with the birth of their youngest daughter Bernice in 1901. Here Sol and Margaret remain until their deaths in 1933 and 1931 respectively. Sol continues to operate the gun and bicycle business, adding locksmithing, fishing tackle and violins. They also take in and raise the children of their son Wilbur’s first wife following her death in 1909. The Roach ladies are active members of their community and church, Margaret and daughter Gertrude being charter members of the Presbyterian Church in Windber.



# Abbreviated Roach Family Tree: direct line of earliest known Roach through to the author.

**John Roach** (date unknown) marries Lovel Selman begets:

**John Roach b.1762** who marries Abigail Jones b.1767 begets:

**Selman Roach b.1797** who marries Rebecca Jones b.1795 begets:

**Robert Henry Roach b.1827/**

**Sarah Singer b.1832**

Rebecca J. 1851-1853

Rosebell 1852-1921

Selman E. 1856-1933...**Selman E. Roach b.1856-1933/**

Sarah A. 1857-1907 **Margaret Trumble b.1860-1931**

Martha 1860-1861 George H. ?- 1884

Amanda 1861-1935 Gertrude 1876-1954

Arminda 1863-1932 Wilbur 1882-1947.....**Wilbur C. Roach b.1882-1947/**

Robert M. 1865-1910 Georgiana 1886-1967 **Carrie Mae Edder b.1878-1909**

William F. 1866-1942 Mary 1889-1971 Margaret E. 1905-1995

Charles 1870-1956 Bernice 1901-1986 John S. 1908-1985.....**John S. Roach b.1908-1985/**

Jennie J. 1872-1934 **Mabel Larson b.1907-2004**

**Nellie Stewart 1887-1925** Lonnie C. 1946

Stewart W. 1912-1968 Nancy C. 1948

George T. 1913-2006

Dorothy A. 1915-1985

Agnes B. 1917-2010

Wilbur C. 1918

Robert L. 1920

**Elsa Ristow 1900-1987**

Betty J. 1928

James R. 1929-1966

Donald A. 1930-2008

Richard R. 1933

Anita 1936

Roxey G. 1940-1995

*At right: Peter and Sarah Hofner Singer, the parents of Sarah Ann Singer, mother of Sol Roach.*



*Below: Roach family gathering in 1900 for the 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary of Robert Henry and Sarah Ann Singer Roach. Robert Henry and Sarah are the older couple in the middle of the second row. Directly above them are the four Roach brothers: (L to R) William, Selman, Robert and Charles. To the right of Charles is his wife Leola. None of the women pictured have the features of Sol's wife Margaret. The women seated in the 2<sup>nd</sup> row are probably Sol's five surviving sisters. The picture came through the family of Sol's sister Amanda who is seated in the 2<sup>nd</sup> row two to the right of Sarah Ann, just below Leola. Several members of Amanda's family (Defibaugh) are identifiable but no other identification is certain.*



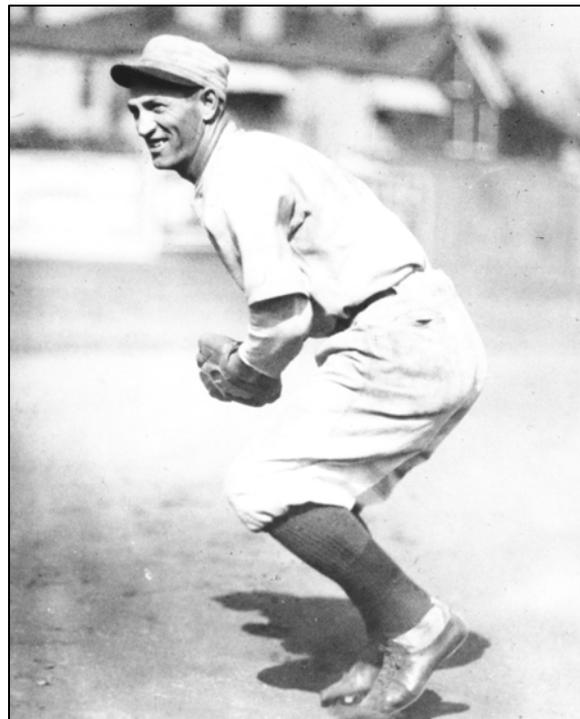
## Sol and Margaret's Children

### **Gertrude C. Roach Morgan 1876-1954**

Their first child Gertrude married Will Morgan who becomes a coal mine superintendent and oversaw mines in Dunlo, Pa, not far from Windber, and in Frostburg, Md. They ended up in Johnstown, their downtown home and contents being destroyed by the Johnstown flood in 1936.



**Gertrude Roach and her husband Will Morgan**



**Roxey Roach fielding a ball while he was Player/Manager of Louisville around 1918.**

### **Wilbur C. (Roxey) Roach 1882-1947**

Their son Wilbur started his life as a boxer but switched to baseball and began his professional career in 1907. In baseball he was known as Roxey Roach. Big league teams he played for include the New York Knickerbockers (now the Yankees) in 1910 and 11, the Washington Senators in 1912 and Buffalo of the Federal League in 1915. From 1907 to 1918 he was with a variety of professional teams, ending his career as player manager of the Kentucky Colonels in Louisville, Kentucky where he played with Joe McCarthy, later the famous manger of the Yankees, who was just starting his career. My father claimed that McCarthy learned his baseball from Roxey Roach. Roxey then operated a pool room and bowling alley in Windber and in 1924 moved to Tawas City, Michigan and owned a Ford Motor agency. He lost this during the depression and finished his life

working for a gypsum company. Roxey was married three times, losing the first two wives to illness. He fathered 14 children.

### **Georgiana Roach Ferrier 1888-1967**

Georgiana Roach eventually married an area farmer and spent her life on the farm raising a family. Her story though, is as interesting and unconventional as the other family members. My father told this story about his Aunt Georgiana in a 1979 interview.

*“Georgiana was a very beautiful singer and a piano player. And she had beautiful copper colored hair. It was very heavy and very long and she coiled it on top of her head, sort of like a crown, almost. And she belonged to a group known as the Chautauqua. And the Chautauqua was a traveling group of entertainers who put on a very high level form of entertainment like musicals or Shakespearean plays or operatic singers or things of that type. So Aunt Georgiana, being a very beautiful singer, traveled with this Chautauqua group. While traveling she met a man from Hungary who turned out to be a Duke and he became very fascinated with Aunt Georgiana and he wanted to marry her and take her back to Hungary. And we found out later that the Duke was a member of the Hapsburg line, the royal families. But Aunt Georgiana refused because she had met a farmer by the name of Harry Ferrier that she decided that she would rather spend her life with him than being the wife of a Duke. So she turned down the Duke’s offer and she married the farmer and as a result of the marriage she had three boys.”*



**Georgiana Roach and her husband Harry Ferrier.**

### **Mary (Mayse) Roach Lewis 1889-1970**



**Mary Roach Lewis**

Mary (Mayse) was also very musical and played the violin. She would take the train to Pittsburgh to study with professionals and played with a variety of orchestras throughout her life. She married James Lewis and had two children. She passed away in 1970 while living in Florida.

## **Bernice Roach Jarvie 1901-1986**

Bernice was also very musical and played the violin right up to her passing. In my search for Sol's violins I have found several where the makers tag indicates the violin was made for her. She was also an artist. It was written of Bernice as a youth that if it didn't move she would paint it. She married and spent part of her life in Michigan and ended up in Florida. She had one daughter.



**Bernice Roach and husband John Jarve**



**The Roach sisters in their later years: (L-R) Georgiana, Mary, Bernice and Gertrude.**



At left: Sol Roach Roach with members of the Trumble family. (back row) Mary Trumble, George Trumble, Annie, Miss Davis, Sol Roach. (front row) Willie, Grandpa George Trumble, Susan, Sam Trumble.