

## **The Lineage of Abby Benson (1801/02 – 1866), of Sharon, Litchfield County, Connecticut.**

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Among the individuals I researched in compiling my “Charles H. Smith: A Direct-Line Ancestry, Since Colonial Times” (published online in 2020) was one Abby (*aka* Abi, Aby, Abbey, Abigail) Benson, of Sharon and Kent, Litchfield County, Connecticut. Abby, who married Chester Fowler (1800-1878) about 1823 (based on the date of birth of their first child William in 1824), is one of my third great-grandmothers. As of 2020 I was unable to identify Abby’s parents, though she has always been listed as a Benson. There were other Bensons in the immediate area, though historically the family had roots extending back to the early days of the Plymouth Plantation in Massachusetts (most recently at that point in Middleborough and Rochester). The Fowlers (including Chester’s father William (1773-1853), his father Luther (1739-abt. 1808), his father Jonathan (1685-1774), his father Samuel (1652-1739), and his father Ambrose (1626-1704)) had longstanding ties to Westfield, Massachusetts, but also had had connections with Litchfield County for at least two generations before Chester was born.

There appears to be no formal documentation for Abby’s birthdate, but we can probably narrow it down a bit on the basis of U.S. Census records. In 1830 the family was residing in Kent, and as wife of Chester she is listed as being ‘20 to 30’ years of age. The family is missing from the 1840 census, but in the 1850 census ‘Abi’ is listed as being 48 years of age, and in the 1860 census, as ‘Aby’, 58. As she is recorded as having died at age 64 on 24 July 1866 and the censuses for this period were conducted per the situations as of June 1 of each census year, she probably was born between 25 July 1801 and 31 May 1802. The 1850 and 1860 censuses identify her as having been born in Connecticut; the 1880 census reports that Abby’s son John cites his mother as having been born in Connecticut (relevant, as Westfield might also make sense, or even towns in nearby New York, since Chester’s father William seems to have lived right across the border for a period, in Amenia).

Both the place and date of the Abby/Chester marriage are also uncertain, though the year 1823 is probably close, and the location was likely Sharon. Two years later, on 28 November 1825, a Maria (/Mariah) Benson (abt. 1804 – 1834?) married Chester’s brother Edmond (28 March 1804 – 13 March 1843) at Sharon. Maria/Mariah seems likely to have been a sister, or possibly cousin, of Abby’s, as follows.

There are five, seven, and nine Benson households listed for the towns of New Milford/Sharon/Kent in the 1790, 1800, and 1810 U. S. Censuses, respectively (there are none over that period in the surrounding Connecticut towns of Canaan, Cornwall, Warren, or Washington). Of these, only two Bensons that are present in the 1800 and 1810 censuses list an appropriate number of female children of the correct age range for our concerns at those times: Jacob III (1768 – ?) and Ebenezer (1767 – 1833). In

the 1810 census Jacob's household list included records for three females of ten years age or less. At least eight of Jacob's children are known by name; Susan (born 8 August 1802), and Hiram (1803), however, are the only ones from the period of the first five years of the 1800s. Unfortunately, only one of Ebenezer's children is reasonably certainly known by name, Isaac L. Benson (1789 – 1828). But the age-itemized U.S. Census data suggests there were several others, including two females of ten years age or less who are listed in the 1810 census. During the 1800 to 1810 period Jacob lived in Kent, and Ebenezer in Sharon.

Sometime between 1810 and 1820 the two households moved out of state: Jacob to Pennsylvania, and Ebenezer to upstate New York (both eventually died in these states, along with several of Jacob's children, and Ebenezer's son Isaac). But the census records for 1820 do not show either family with any household females in the range of ages that would have included teenagers Abby and Maria. I surmise they were probably left in Connecticut with relatives. Jesse Benson (1783 – 1844), Ebenezer's younger brother, was born in Stratford, died in Sharon, and married a woman, Lois Hunter (1781 – 1867) who was born in Sharon and died there as well. Census records put them in Sharon in 1830 and 1840, and their six known children were born in that town between the years 1806 and 1825. Did Ebenezer leave Abby and Maria behind to help with their upbringing?

Perhaps, but perhaps not. Ebenezer's older sister Anna/Ann (1764 – 1843) was also associated with Sharon. In 1785 she married Revolutionary War soldier Elijah Juckett (1760 – 1839) in Stratford (the same year and place of her brother's marriage). In 1790 Anna and Elijah were living in Stratford; in 1797, however, their daughter Alma was born in Sharon, and census records show them living there in 1800 as well. Both also died there. At least six other children were born to them over the period 1786 to 1803; most of these had probably left the house by the time Abby and Maria were teenagers in the mid- and late 1810s.

I believe that Ebenezer was probably Anna's and Maria's father (their mother thus being Jemima Bundy, 1766 – 1849). The information just presented is consistent with this interpretation, but there are additional facts to consider. First, it should be noted that Ebenezer and Jacob shared the same great great grandfather, John Benson II (1635 – 1711). Thus, their great grandfathers were brothers, and their grandfathers, first cousins. More importantly, Ebenezer's father, Benjamin (1736 – abt. 1804), had a sister named Thankfull (b. 1740) who married Elijah Juckett's father Peter (1735 – 1819) back in Massachusetts in about 1756. Further, one of the children of Elijah and Anna, Philo (1802 – 1883), who married Sharon resident Aurilla Canfield (1804 – 1872), had a son named Robert Newton Juckett (b. 1831) who married Lydia J. Fowler (1836 – 1907) in 1853. Lydia was the daughter of Chester Fowler and Abby Benson! Thus, intimate relations existed across four generations of the same branches of the Benson and Juckett families. And, importantly, the handwritten listings for the Juckett and Ebenezer Benson families in the 1810 census for Sharon appear on consecutive lines, a likely indicator of the families' geographical nearness in that town.

There is more. Rootsweb.com lists Jemima's mother Hannah Stewart (1740 – n.d.) as having died in Triangle, Broome County, New York, which is where Ebenezer and family went sometime between 1810 and 1820. Households for Ebenezer, Isaac, and another Benson, Roswell (abt. 1896 – 1878), are itemized in the 1820 census tabulations as being from 'Snow Hill', Broome Co., a location I cannot identify, but presumably is an old name that has changed, or a temporary census label. Roswell is identified as being male and '16 thru 25', which makes sense if he was in fact born about 1796. Isaac's household includes one listing for a '26 thru 44' male, which presumably is himself. He would have been about 31 at the time, so this fits. Roswell died in 1878 at Belden, Broome County, but Isaac died rather young, in 1828, and was buried in Barnes Cemetery, Greene, Chenango County, New York (a location only a couple of miles from Triangle, just across the county line). Ebenezer and Jemima were also buried there, some years later.

The 1800 and 1810 censuses contain age/sex itemizations for the Ebenezer Benson household in Sharon that are consistent with Isaac and Roswell being his sons.

It is perhaps significant that the *Find A Grave* website notes that Isaac joined the military in late 1812 and remained with them for five years. This event may have somehow triggered the move of the family out of Sharon between 1810 and 1820, leading to Abby (and Maria?) being left behind. I surmise that Abby (and possibly Maria) may have gone to live with her aging Aunt Anna (by 1815, in her fifties) when Ebenezer and Jemima and at least some of their children left Connecticut for upstate New York. Elijah Juckett seems not to have been around for periods of his married life, and Abby (and Maria) may have been helping out for some years before she married about 1823 (and Maria, in 1825).

It is also possible that Abby (and Maria) stayed with her Uncle Jesse, or both her aunt and uncle, or some other Benson. There is no 1820 census record for Jesse Benson in Sharon, though he turns up there in 1830 and 1840. Meanwhile, however, the census records for Elijah Juckett's household in 1810 and 1820 do not itemize female residents, beyond their own children, that could be Abby or Maria. If Maria is, alternately, Abby's cousin, she could possibly be Jesse's illegitimate daughter (Abby seems too old to be so as well, as Jesse and Lois Hunter married in late 1805).

Of course, and alternately, some other dimly identified figures might be involved in the story, but as of now it seems fairly likely that Abby Benson was the daughter of Ebenezer Benson. I have been advised that DNA evidence exists that would prove this outright (at considerable expense, unfortunately!). Success with this would make it possible for me to identify at least six further generations of Colonial direct-line great-grandparents, some one hundred or so individuals. I will go ahead and do so, adding in interim fashion names to my tree as recorded at website Ancestry.com, and perhaps at some point will put together a new edition of my online ancestry.

—Charles H. Smith, October/November 2021.

—Addendum, September 2023: As of this date, Ancestry.com has identified DNA links to me with descendants of four of Abby Benson's children, William, Horace, John, and Lydia. Perhaps more importantly, I am also DNA-linked to descendants of Abby's purported paternal grandfather, Benjamin Benson (b. 1736), both through the direct line of Abby's purported father Ebenezer (1767-1833), and through two other children of Benjamin's, Anna and Jesse. Anna and Jesse, it will be remembered, are mentioned above as Abby's possible aunt and uncle.