

**Hannah Ellis Williams**  
**A simple woman doing extraordinary things**

Hannah Ellis was born on 12 February 1804 in Wales. There, she married Thomas Williams in 1835 and had 7 children. Thomas took his oldest son with him, boarded the ship *Princeton*, and came to America in 1851. Later that same year, Hannah and her remaining six children boarded the ship *Arcadia* and sailed from Cardiff.

They settled in the state of New York and then went on to Illinois, finally settling in Iowa. Between 1852 and 1855 Hannah's husband died of Asiatic cholera. After his death she bought two pieces of land for a total of 100.23 acres. In 1856 she sold the land, loaded a lumber wagon drawn by oxen with her 4 boys walking beside her, and headed to Olmsted County, Minnesota.



Hannah Ellis Williams (1804-1890)

She first purchased 120 acres of land at what is now Mayowood, a rural estate developed by Dr. Charles Mayo, one of the founders of the Mayo Clinic. Deeming it unsuitable for farming she sold it and by 1863 had purchased 160 acres southeast of Rochester. Thirty-three acres remain in the family today and it has been designated as a "Century Farm."

Hannah's oldest son Richard married a woman named Sarah and settled in Missouri while the rest of the family moved north.

William, at age 15, made his way through Iowa to the Minnesota Territory where Rochester now stands. He helped erect a building called "Heads Tavern," one of the first structures in Olmsted County. He worked there for 2 years and then located a homestead site. A document titled "History of Olmsted County" recounts the death of Hannah's son William in 1910 and includes the following information "...in the spring of 1855 (he) pre-empted a homestead south of the State Hospital site of which he was subsequently robbed by an unscrupulous claim-jumper, who on learning the Mr. Williams was a minor, filed claim in the land office...however, Mr. Williams (then) acquired government land now known as the C.H. Mayo farm..."

William enlisted in the Minnesota 9th and fought in the Indian War at Ft. Ridgeley and was then sent south to fight in the Civil War. He was captured but survived Andersonville Prison during the civil war. He married Lucy Bassett of New York. At the time of his death in 1910 he was the oldest inhabitant of Olmsted Co.



Hannah and the six children who traveled with her from Wales, many years later:  
William, John, David, Taliesin, Mary and Milcah.

Hannah's next son John served in the Minnesota First Cavalry. He was injured and both legs were paralyzed. He was discharged in 1865. He married Bertha Nellis/Nelles Pfeiffer. They are both buried at Lakewood Cemetery in Minneapolis.

David married Alice Ostrander. They were both members of the Universalist Church, which Alice's father helped build. David was a prosperous farmer, who farmed with his mother for a period of time. He was a member of the Rochester Lodge of Odd Fellows. He died at the young age of 48. There is a debate as to whether David served in the Civil War. David and Alice are both buried in Rochester.

David's grandson Carleton (1903-1972) was a bricklayer who worked on the iconic Plummer Building on the Mayo Clinic campus that is designated as a U. S. National Historic Landmark. Carleton married Nina Carver. Nina was born in Lynd, Minnesota in 1903, the fifth of five children. She arrived almost ten years after her next-oldest sibling, brother Wesley. Her family had lived in Wisconsin and Iowa, moving to Oregon after a series of misfortunes including locusts and a fire that destroyed their barn. The family returned to the Midwest in 1901 and farmed near Marshall, Minnesota.



Nina Carver Williams & Carleton Williams

Nina moved to Rochester and graduated from the Kahler School of Nursing in 1926. Her certificate was signed by the Mayo brothers and her graduation pin is still in the family. After she and Carleton married in 1928, they had three children. The family lived in Rochester until Carleton's death in 1972 and Nina's in 1988 at the age of 84. Their descendants, including a current Colonial Dame, can trace their ancestors through Nina back to John Webster, Governor of Connecticut.

Hannah's youngest son Taliesin enlisted with Company F of the Ninth Minnesota Volunteers. He became a farmer, railroad man and rural mail carrier. He was also a Justice of the Peace. He married Ada Smith of Wisconsin. Her family were members of the Wisconsin Phalanx, a commune of intellectuals and artisans from New York State. She was an excellent painter and very artistic. They are both buried in Oakwood Cemetery in Rochester.

Hannah's older daughter, Mary Williams Angus, stayed in Iowa for a while and later joined her family in Rochester. She married George Angus, who was born in Scotland. They later moved to Burt, Iowa. They spent winters in several different southern states, as George suffered from rheumatism.

Milcah Williams, the youngest child, who was only two years old when she came to America from Wales, married Adelbert Blanchard and lived in Burt, Iowa. She suffered from cancer for 15 years, but her obituary listed her as "a woman of a wonderful jovial and sunny disposition..." She was one of the six charter members who organized the Burt Presbyterian Church in 1883. Adelbert was from Quebec, Canada. They are both buried in Iowa.

Hannah died 25 June 1890 at her daughter Mary's house in Burt, Iowa, and is buried at Oakwood Cemetery in Rochester, along with at least 35 other members of the Williams Family. It was said she was a very capable and energetic woman dearly beloved by her children and grandchildren. Her descendants are very proud of all her accomplishments as a single parent and woman on the prairie.

## Colonial Ancestor:

John Webster (appx. 1590-1661), ancestor of the descendants of Nina Mae and David Williams, was born in Cossington, Leicestershire, England. He married Agnes Smith there in 1609. Agnes, John and their five children traveled to the Massachusetts Bay Colony in the early 1630s. They eventually had a total of nine children.

In 1636, the family moved to Hartford, CT. He was magistrate from 1639 to 1655, and in 1655 he was Deputy Governor of the Colony of Connecticut. In 1656 he was elected governor, and he served as first magistrate from 1657 to 1659.

A religious dispute over the successor to the Reverend Thomas Hooker led to the formation of a group who left the Connecticut colony and started a new town, Hadley, MA. Map at right shows the original plat of the town, with homesites in the bend of the Connecticut River. John's site is seventh from the bottom on the left. John was known as one of the leaders of the group. He died in Hadley in 1661. Hannah's Colonial Dames descendants trace their lineage from Robert Webster (1627–1676), John and Agnes' fifth child, and his wife Susannah Treat.



## Resources:

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