

Nancy Anne Finch Heeter: Minnesota Ancestor

Nancy Anne Finch (1916-2017) was the mother of Minnesota Dame Nancy Bergerson and grandmother of Minnesota Dame Kitty Bergerson. Born in Duluth in 1916, Nancy Anne is a descendant of Jeremiah Clarke (1605-1652) of Colonial Rhode Island and Providence Plantations. Her father James Boss Finch (1873-1959), was the first to move from Rhode Island to the Duluth area. James B. Finch was a young man of twenty when he arrived just before the height of the Duluth timber industry. He lived in a cabin on Park Point in Duluth, and he and his brother Benjamin formed the Finch Brothers Company of Duluth, which had timberlands along the Duluth, Winnipeg and Pacific Railway lines. Nancy Anne remembered stories of Grandfather Finch bringing a tall pine

pole to the Chicago World's Fair in 1933 to fly the American Flag from a rebuilt Fort Dearborn. A *Popular Mechanics* magazine article of the time described the lumber as obtained from a company outside Duluth and how planners had to search far and wide for workers skilled in the "lost art" of building log structures (*left*).



Reconstruction of Ft. Dearborn at 1933 Chicago World's Fair with flagpole from Finch Bros Co. Courtesy Chicago Historical Society

Nancy Anne traveled to Minneapolis with her father on business. Finch Brothers Company provided the pilings for the Calhoun Beach Hotel, which began construction in 1928, was delayed by The Great Depression, and was completed after WWII. One of the first of its kind in Minnesota, it is now on the National Register of Historic Places. Finch Brothers also provided pilings for the Mendota Bridge, the longest continuous concrete arch bridge in the world at the time of its construction (1926). In 1927, James Boss Finch made the news for being the first person to drive his automobile across the Arrowhead Bridge between Duluth and Superior, Wisconsin. His company helped to construct the bridge.

After growing up in the Chester Park neighborhood of Duluth,

Nancy Anne worked her way through college during the Great Depression and graduated in

1938 from St. Scholastica. She was an organizer of the Student Council, becoming its first President.

She participated in the Girl Scouts for 18 years and achieved the Golden Eaglet award (the highest rank of girl scouting). She took up gardening to help her mother, who had developed mobility issues, and grew award-winning irises.



Nancy Anne grew up living at No. 511 Woodlawn in Duluth, home to the Finch family for three decades



Nancy Anne Finch in 1938, College of St. Scholastica

She met her future husband, Robert Ellsworth Heeter, who was best man at her sister's wedding, in 1938 and married him a year later. After moving to Minneapolis, she became Executive Assistant of the Fairview Hospital System. Robert was an electrical engineer who worked at Honeywell in Minneapolis.

In 1979, after the death of her husband, she became active in genealogy, located many cousins, and organized a family reunion of the Munro family – from which she is descended from Jeremiah Clarke, her Colonial ancestor and eighth great grandfather, through her father's mother Rebecca Smith Munro (1840-1922).

*When we count our many blessings it isn't hard to see
That what we value most in life are the treasures that are free.
For it's not the things that we possess that signify our wealth,
But the blessings that are priceless like our family, friends and health!*
--- Nancy Anne Finch Heeter

Jeremiah Clarke & Frances Latham



Jeremy (Jeremiah) Clarke (1605-1652), the NSCDA qualifying Colonial Ancestor, was an early settler and President of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations. Born into a prominent family in England, he was a merchant who came to New England with his wife Frances Latham and her four children, later having seven more children together. They joined William Coddington and others in establishing the town of Newport, Rhode Island. Jeremy held civic positions such as constable, treasurer, and captain of the military, until 1648. That year, Coddington's election as President of the colony was disputed, and Clarke was chosen as President instead. It was during his administration that the town of Providence received its charter, granting its inhabitants full power and authority to govern themselves.

Frances Latham (1610-1677) was Nancy Anne's eighth great grandmother, known as the "mother of governors." She is the ancestor of at least ten governors, and is related by marriage to more. Born in Bedfordshire, England, she was the daughter of a falconer to King Charles I. Her first husband, with



Illustration of Frances Latham from [The True Story of Frances, the Falconer's Daughter](#)

whom she had four children, died and Frances married Jeremy Clarke and moved to New England. When Jeremy died in 1652, all seven of their children were still minors, and Frances married again. Her oldest child with Jeremy, William Clarke, served as governor of Rhode Island, as did her descendants, Samuel Cranston, William Greene, Ray Greene, John Coggeshall, and Nicholas Easton, among others.

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