

Minnesota Ancestor Ruth Thompson Cathcart

Ruth Thompson was the daughter of Horace Egbert Thompson and Ida Schurmeier Thompson. She was born in St. Paul, Minnesota on 24 November 1893, her parents' eighth wedding anniversary. Ruth was the fourth of their five children. Her father Horace, born in Georgia, came to St. Paul as a child with his parents, Horace and Carrie Scarborough Thompson. Horace's father founded the First National Bank of St. Paul with his brother in the 1860s.

Horace E. Thompson, Ruth's father, worked for his family bank as a young man, and later for many years described himself as a "capitalist," working in the Merchant's Bank building in St. Paul. Horace died in 1919.

Ruth's mother Ida was born in St. Paul, MN of Prussian parents who came to America in the 1840s. Her father was Caspar Schurmeier (1815-1873). Her brother Theodore worked for James J Hill, worked as a teller in the First National Bank of St. Paul, and later became a prominent businessman with the wholesale dry goods firm Lindeke, Warner and Schurmeier. The Schurmeier and Thompson families were friends and owned property together long before Horace and Ida married in 1885.



Figure 1 Ruth Thompson photo courtesy of family



Figure 3 Ruth with older sister Dorothy (Dot), photo courtesy of family



Figure 2 Ida Schurmeier Thompson, photo courtesy of family

Horace and Ida's family initially lived in St. Paul's Lowertown, where Ruth and her siblings Horace S., Benjamin Caspar, Dorothy and James Scarborough were born. Horace and Benjamin went to St. Paul's school in Concord, NH in 1902. Dorothy later attended Spence School in Manhattan.

In 1903, when Ruth was 10, the family had a home built at 808 Summit Avenue. Ida traveled to Buffalo, NY to engage architect H. J. Wicks to build the Renaissance Revival style home where Ruth grew up. It was considered "the very last cry in luxury and comfort, and in point of sanitary appliances for bathrooms and kitchens is said to surpass anything in the West." (St. Paul Daily 5 December 1906, as cited by Meyer p. 52).



Figure 4 Thompson House at 808 Summit, St. Paul

Ruth's parents were part of St. Paul society, hosting dinners and teas and attending concerts. Ida participated in the annual St. Paul flower show. In 1906, Ida had responsibilities for the General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC), which held its national convention in Minnesota that year. She hosted delegates from several states and was listed alongside several founders of NSCDA-MN such as Marion Furness, Eliza Edgerton Newport, and Emily Gilman Noyes. The GFWC, still in existence today both nationally and in Minnesota, describes itself as "an international organization dedicated to community involvement by enhancing the lives of others through community service."

In 1908, when Ruth was 15 years old, Ida was admitted to Waukesha Springs Sanitarium in Wisconsin, where she remained for 25 years until her death in 1933.



Figure 5 Ruth as a girl. Photo courtesy of family.

Ruth followed her sister Dorothy to Spence School in Manhattan's fashionable Upper East Side. The school was unusual in its day for bringing in speakers such as Helen Keller and for taking its students on field trips throughout Manhattan. Ruth had ambitions of being a singer and had a strong interest in Art History. During her visits home to Minnesota, she enjoyed outdoor pursuits such as horseback riding and fishing.



Figure 6 Alexander H. Cathcart, photo courtesy of family

Ruth married Alexander Hayward Cathcart on 6 Oct 1916. Alexander was born in 1892, son of Alexander and Mabel Adams Cathcart. He attended the Saint Paul Academy and Williams College in Williamstown, MA. Alexander became President of Cathcart and Maxfield, the firm founded by his father. His father was prominent in St. Paul real estate development, including the Merchants Bank Building and Lowry developments. In later years, Cathcart and Maxfield's business expanded to include insurance.



Figure 7 Cathcart home at 773 Goodrich, Google Maps

After their marriage, Ruth and Alexander lived on Lincoln Avenue in St. Paul. By 1922, they had moved into their newly-built Colonial Revival-style home at 773 Goodrich, where the family made its home. It is now on the National Register of Historic Places as part of the historic Hill district. The Cathcarts had three children. The first, Alexandra Cathcart Boardman, was a Minnesota Colonial Dame who claimed descent from Captain Samuel Thompson of CT (1669-1749). Next came son Thompson, through whom current Minnesota Dame Ann H. Cathcart descends. Constance Cathcart Chambers, the youngest child, was born in 1927.

Ruth was known to be generous to employees of the family's agricultural interests (Fairland Management Company in Windom), as well as to the Windom Library and United Fund, the Nature Conservancy, and others.



Figure 8 Ruth with son Thompson, 1940 at White Bear Yacht Club, photo courtesy of family



Figure 9 Ruth at age 90 with granddaughters Jane Thompson Cathcart and Ann Hayward Cathcart. Photo courtesy of family

A story from the company archives describes one instance: she had a manager take a farmer-operator into town upon the farmer's retirement to purchase a retirement gift. The farmer and his wife picked out a new color TV, something they had never had before.

Ruth traveled frequently, visiting Italy, France, Egypt, England, Bermuda, Cuba and Hawaii, and was a frequent visitor to New York, usually staying at the St. Regis Hotel. She wintered in the South, usually in Florida. She remained a lifetime member of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City.

Alexander died in 1952. Ruth died 30 October 1985 in St. Paul at the age of 91.

Founding Families

Ruth's grandfather Horace Q. Thompson was known as "the Old Gentleman" by family. He was born in 1827 in Vermont and went to work to support himself at an early age. Through hard work and a thrifty nature, he accumulated modest savings and moved to Georgia in 1846, joining his brothers in their mercantile business. Horace married Carrie Scarborough in 1854. They moved to Minnesota in 1860. He established the First National Bank of St. Paul with his brother James E. Thompson (1823-1870) in 1861 after dissolving a partnership with Parker Paine. Paine had established the firm in 1853 and weathered financial crises in 1857 and 1859, one of only a handful of banks to survive. The Thompson brothers renamed the business the First National Bank of St. Paul in 1863 with James as President until his sudden death in 1870. Horace became President and served until his death, also unexpected, in 1880 on a trip to New York.



Figure 10 Horace Q. Thompson, photo courtesy of family

Horace also had railroad interests and accumulated huge amounts of farmland, with over 25,000 acres under cultivation at the time of his death. A colorful story (Meyer, p. 14) was told about Horace: "An avid sportsman, he had a great adventure in 1876 while hunting in Minnesota. He stumbled on three members of the James gang after the Northfield bank robbery and held them at bay with a shotgun until help arrived. "

As Horace rose to prominence in the business world, Carrie became beloved for her philanthropic and church activities. She died suddenly at age fifty-seven in 1889 during a winter trip to her home in Georgia. The newspapers commented on her affiliation with the First Baptist Church of St. Paul, her service as President of the St. Paul Orphan Asylum for 18 years, and her wide circle of friends. Ruth, born in 1893, never had the chance to meet either of her Thompson grandparents.



*Figure 11 Carrie Scarborough Thompson
photo courtesy of family*

Colonial Ancestors

Both of Ruth's grandparents had colonial ancestry: Carrie Scarborough, a judge's daughter from Georgia, was a descendant of Edward Doty, a Mayflower passenger. Ruth's grandfather, Horace Thompson, was a descendant of Anthony Thompson from Lenham, England who settled in New Haven in 1641.

Edward Doty was born around 1599 and was a Mayflower passenger and signer of the Mayflower Compact. He arrived as a servant of fellow passenger Stephen Hopkins. He was a colorful character. Despite having signed the Mayflower Compact agreeing to rules of governance in the new colony, Edward was cited in 23 cases over the next 20 years, both as plaintiff and defendant. He participated in Plymouth Colony's first duel in June 1621, against fellow servant Edward Leister. Both men were slightly injured. Their punishment was to be bound together hand and foot for 24 hours, but both complained so loudly that they were set free after an hour. Edward married Faith Clarke and they had nine children. He died in 1655.

Anthony Thompson arrived in the new world during the summer of 1637 with his wife, two children, and two brothers. They came following the reverend Davenport after dissenting from the Church of England and settled in New Haven colony. Their arrival was noted in Winthrop's journal. Anthony signed the Colonial Constitution in 1639 as a founder of New Haven and took the oath of allegiance in 1644. He had five more children after arrival, one of whom was born months after Anthony's death in 1648.

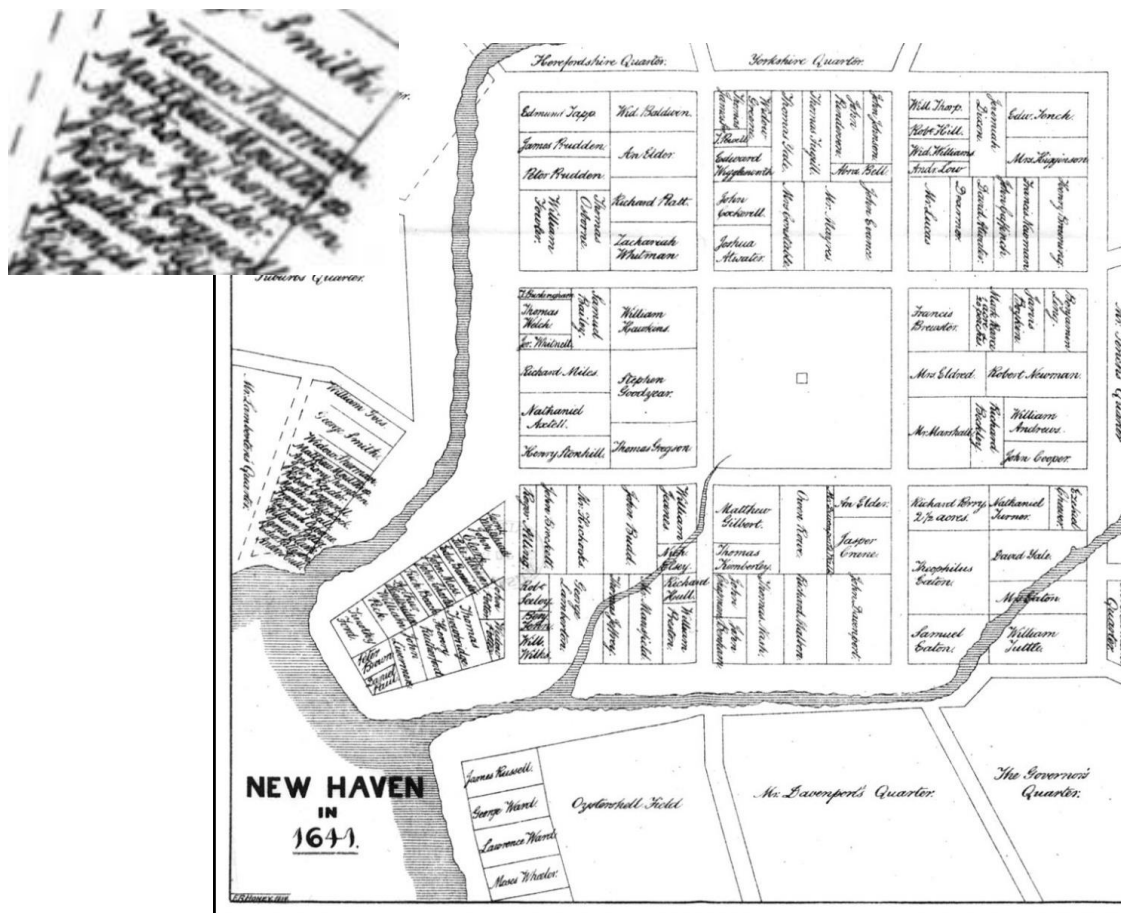


Figure 12 New Haven Map showing Anthony Thompson's land, left side above river, fifth from top. Wikimedia Commons accessed 13 Sep 2023.

Samuel Thompson (1669-1749) grandson of Anthony, was born in New Haven CT. He was a successful merchant and captain of the militia. He married Rebecca Bishop, (1674-1734) daughter of the Lt. Governor, and they had eight children. In his later years, he moved to Goshen in northwest Connecticut, joining his sons, whose families remained there for several generations. Samuel's son Gideon (Ruth's third great grandfather) served as a deacon in the church and represented Goshen in the General Assembly five times, beginning in 1757.

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