

7: Making the Connection

Linking the structure of my DNA to an exiled Spanish community in the West Indies might seem somewhat tenuous but I believe there are connections. I found this 'on-line' from the famous DeBretts "Who's Who".

The family of Lopes derives its immediate origin from Morat Lopes, the Spanish name for the island of Jamaica.

Mordecai-Rodrigues Lopes, of Clapham, Co Surrey, son of **Abraham Lopes** of Jamaica

- Born 1751:
- Married Rebecca, daughter of Manasseh Perera of Jamaica (died 17th March 1796)
- Having had issue by her (died 29th April 1795) one son, Sir Manasseh, created a bart as above
- And two daughters, Rachel (married Isaac Perera of Jamaica)
- And Esther (married Abraham Franco 1785 merchant of London) and issue by him
 - Ralph-Franco born 10th September 1788 sometime MP for Westbury, Wilts on whom the baronacy is entailed
 - and who married (8th May 1817) Susannah Gibbs, the eldest daughter of A Ludlow of Heywood House, Wilts
 - *by whom he has a son, Masseh, born 14th June 1818*

I understand this to mean that Abraham Lopes of Jamaica had a son, Mordecai-Rodrigues who married Rebecca Perera in Jamaica before they left to start a new life in Clapham, London. Mordecai-Rodrigues was a merchant and the family were descended from the Sephardic Jews who fled to Jamaica following the Spanish Inquisition of 1492. They were sugar plantation owners, had slaves to work on the plantations and were extremely wealthy so presumably Mordecai-Rodrigues came to England to develop the sugar their business interests here.

They had a son Manasseh and two daughters, Rachel and Esther.

Esther married a London Merchant, Abraham Franco. We can deduce from his name that Abraham was also a Sephardic Jew maintaining the Spanish connection. Abraham and Esther had a son, Ralph-Franco, in 1788 who became MP for Westbury in Wiltshire and who married Susannah Gibbs, who was from the Westbury area, in 1817. They had a son, born on the 14th June 1818, who they named Masseh. Susannah does not appear from her name and heritage to be of Sephardic origin but the boy Masseh (later known as Massey) would have inherited 50% Sephardic/Nigerian (?) DNA from his father.

This is the same Massey Lopes for whom Henry Orchard's father worked as a footman and Henry went on to marry my great, great grandmother Hannah Musselwhite two years after my grandfather was born.