

Pearen

The surname Pearen arose in Merton, Devon England on March 30 1757 with the marriage of “Mathew Pearen” and Jane Martin. Various versions including Pearne, Peryn, Pardon and Pearden were used interchangeably from the earliest Merton record of a Pearne in 1599. “Pearen” was not used consistently until the late 18th century. Even the parish clerk acknowledged the extreme variation in spelling and pronunciation, recording Matthew’s father’s death in 1772 as “John Pearen otherwise Pardon.” Similarly recorded were the burials of “John Pearen otherwise Pardon, an aged man” in 1788 and “Mathew Pardon or Pearen” in 1793.

Though the names Pearne and Pearn are found fairly regularly in Devon and Cornwall records, family lore suggests that the Pearen ancestors were French Huguenots who left France and changed the spelling of their name from Perrin or Perryn. This might account for Pearen invention as the pronunciation would have been similar to the latter French names, and different from British Pearn and Pardon.

The Pearen Family in England

The Pearen family resided in Merton, Devon, England, for at least 150 years, from 1689 through 1841. Merton is a village and 3,700 acre parish in North Devon about 12 miles from both Bideford and Okehampton. It is a neat village containing the 15th-century All Saints Church, some white-washed thatch-roofed cottages, and clusters of stone buildings.

The population had gradually increased from 689 in 1801 to 763 in 1845. Statistics available for 1808 record 77 houses for 87 families. There were 314 men, of whom 303 were employed in agriculture and eleven in manufacturing. In 1832, the year that Pearens started immigrating to Canada, the parish of Merton had a population of about 740 persons.

17th Century Merton: Peryn or Pearne or Peardon

The Merton parish records begin in 1597 but are incomplete for several decades. Joachim Pearne’s daughter Cheritie was baptized on March 8 1599. From 1599 through the 1640s “Pearne” was recorded. The actual spelling probably depended on the vicar or clerk who may not always have been familiar with the local accents.

The English Protestation Returns of 1641/42 required adult males to swear before church officials their loyalty to the king, parliament, and the Protestant faith. In Merton or “Martin,” on March 2, 1641, all 130 eligible adult males took the oath, including four Pearnes: Leonard, Philip, Mathew, and Francis. Each of the Merton four appears in the early Merton parish records, but these records are not complete enough to compile families. In the adjacent parish of Beaford, Elias, James, John, Leonard, and Robert Pearne took the oath.

Between 1668 and 1688 both “Peryn” and “Pearne” were recorded. From 1688 through 1694, 14 baptisms and burials for Elias, Mathew, and Thomas were all recorded “Peryn.” In 1695, “Peardon” appears twice for Mathew, but one year later “Pearn” comes into favour for all until the 1720s, when “Peardon” is popular. Over the next few decades “Pearne” and “Peardon” evolved to “Pardon” and “Pearen.”

The First Generation: Mathew Peryn, Pearden or Pearne

The first known ancestor of our Pearen family is **Mathew**, a carpenter in Merton. We do

not know when or where Mathew was born, however by the 1680s he was married to Joan ? and living in Merton. Mathew and Joan had eight children, of whom only **Joan**, **Sarah** (1691-?), and **John** (1696-1772) lived to adulthood. From 1689 to 1694 the family's name was recorded as Peryn in the parish records; from 1696 to 1720 it was usually Pearn or Pearne; and in 1695, 1705, 1721, and 1724 it was Pearden.

On September 10 1723 "Mathew Perin of Merton [*Marked "MP"*]" and "John Peardon (Pardon) of Merton" took the oath of loyalty at the George Inn, Hatherleigh, Devon. Anyone who refused to swear the oaths had to register their estates as Roman Catholics, though only about 1 in 5 eligible Devonians actually took the oaths.

Mathew "Pearn" was buried in Merton on December 12, 1727. The following March 2, 1727 (old calendar) his administration as Mathew "Perryn" of Merton, was proved in the Court of Archdeaconry of Barnstaple. Unfortunately the administration records were destroyed in the Second World War.

Other Late-17th Century Merton Peryn or Pearne Families

There were at least two other "Pearen" families in Merton in the late 17th century: Elias Pearne or Elyas Peryn, and Thomas Pearne or Peryn.

Elias, the son of Elyas and Margery Pearne or Peryn, was married twice and fathered at least five children, of whom one son, John Peardon or Pardon's (1689-1746) family line continues in Merton to 1799. This family is recorded as Pearne thrice in 1678, Peryn in six instances from 1679 through 1707, Pearen in 1718, and Pearn in 1722.

Thomas Peryn and his wife Elizabeth had at least two children: Prudence (buried 1668) and Thomas (1668-1706) who was a labourer with three children. The Thomas Peryn family was recorded as Peryn between 1668 and 1693, Pearn in 1703, Pearne in 1706, and possibly Peardon in 1721 and 1727.

The Second Generation: John Pearen otherwise Pardon, son of Mathew

Mathew and Joan's son **John** was baptized in Merton on January 29, 1696. He married **Ann Quance** (c1696-1786) in Dolton, Devon on October 16, 1720. John may be the "John Peardon (Pardon) of Merton [*Signed*]" who took the oath of loyalty at the George Inn, Hatherleigh, Devon on September 10 1723, or it may have been Elias's son John (1689-1746). John and Ann had at least seven children. All were baptized as Peardon. An Elizabeth baptized in 1742, the daughter of John Pardon may also belong to this family. John was probably a carpenter like his father and sons. When John died in 1772, he was recorded in the burial register as "John Pearen otherwise Pardon" age seventy-six buried 30 April. His widow's death in 1786 is recorded as "Ann Pearn", widow 89, 9 November. Church and land records provide information on John and Ann's sons **Mathew** (1728-1793) and **John** (1733-1787). Their third son **Thomas** (1736-?) appears to have been the father of a son John born to Elizabeth Martin in 1756.

The Third Generation: Mathew and John Pearen

John and Ann's eldest son **Mathew** (1728-93) married **Jane Martin**. On March 30, 1757, "Mathew Pearen, carpenter" married Jane Martin, the first recorded "Pearen" in the Merton parish register. In the Merton Land Tax Records, Mathew is listed as a tenant of Lord Oxford from 1780 (when the records commence) until his death in 1793. His widow is listed as a tenant until 1801. Mathew and Jane had four children: **Ann**, **John**, **Mary** and **Joanna**, all baptized as

Pearen. All four appear to have married, although John waited until the age of 54, exactly one year and one day after his mother's burial, to marry 52-year-old Joanna Grigg.

The second son of John and Ann was **John** (1733-1787). On May 14, 1772, "John Paren" married **Elizabeth Fowler** in Merton. John and Elizabeth had five children; baptized as Pearen in 1774, 1776, and 1778, and Pardon in 1780 and 1786. John died in 1787 (John Pardon, age 51). He left his widow and four children aged 1½ to 13: **Elizabeth** (1774-?), **Mathew** (1776-1834), **John** (1778-1828), and **Ann** (1786-1848).

The Fourth Generation: Mathew and John Pearen

The fourth generation of our Merton Pearens are the children of **John Pearen and Elizabeth Fowler**. When John died in 1787, Elizabeth and their children must have had to struggle to continue the land tenancy that upon Elizabeth's death in 1803 passed to their eldest son Mathew.

Mathew (1776-1834) was 11 when his father died. He became a carpenter and married **Elizabeth Nott** in Merton in 1802. Elizabeth was the daughter of John Nott and Mary Pardon, and mother of Rebecca Nott who was baptized in Merton on 20 Dec 1797. Mathew and Elizabeth had five sons and three daughters. Elizabeth died in 1819 leaving seven children between two and 14 years of age.

The second son of John Pearen and Elizabeth Fowler was **John** (1778-1828). John aged 9 when his father died, became a labourer and was working in southern Devon by 1804. He married **Susanna Fisher** in 1804 in Bere Ferrers (about 50 km south of Merton, near Plymouth). Three children, Edward, John, and Mary Ann, were born in Bere Ferrers. The family moved to nearby Bere Alston, where Joseph was born in 1816. By 1819 the family had returned to Merton, where John worked as a labourer. John died in 1828, leaving Susanna with seven children between one and 22 years of age.

John Pearen and Elizabeth Fowler had three other children, **Elizabeth** (1774-?), **Henry** (1780-82), and **Ann** (1786-1848). Ann, whose father had died when she was one and who lost her mother when she was seventeen, appears to have entered service. Ann bore a son **John** Pearen in 1815 in Merton. John became a shoemaker, married Ann Lane, and had a daughter Mary Jane Pearen (1839-?) who married Noah Silva Babbage and lived in Chumleigh, Devon.

The Fifth Generation: Emigration

The children of Matthew Pearen (1776-1834) and Elizabeth Nott Pearen (1781-1819) were all born in Merton. When Elizabeth died in 1819 leaving seven children between two and 14 years of age, her mother Mary Nott, a widow with several land tenancies, appears to have assisted the family. She took her granddaughter Elizabeth Pearen (1815-1833) on as apprentice at the age of 9 in 1825. When Mary Nott died in 1831, Matthew Pearen acted as one of her two executors, and his children, as well as her other grandchildren inherited her L300 estate. Son **John** (1805-1877) married **Mary Lyne** in her parish of Wembworthy, Devon, in 1829. John worked as a wheelwright in Merton until about 1842, when he moved his family to Wembworthy. They had 11 children. Two died as infants, six children or their families emigrated to Australia, and three remained in England. Second son **Matthew** (1807-1892) emigrated to Canada with his cousins in 1832. He settled in Chinguacousy Township, Peel County, Ontario. He married Mary Ann Modeland and was a wagon maker and farmer. They also had 11 children, of whom seven sons and one daughter survived. Third son **Henry** (1811-85) was a Merton shoemaker until 1871. He married twice and had six children, with two surviving

childhood. In 1872 his daughter Rachel was married in Clinton, Ontario, Canada, in the presence of her Canadian cousins. By 1881 Henry and his wife Ann were living in London, Ontario, Canada, where he died in 1885. Henry's son Henry is unaccounted for. Fourth son **Lawrence** (1813-93) married Rachel Copp of Merton and immigrated to Canada in 1836. He was a wagon maker and farmer who had one son. Daughter **Mary** (1809-1900) married Robert Johns on 23 March 1832 in Merton. They emigrated to Canada, settling near other family members in Huron County where they raised 5 children. Matthew and Elizabeth's two youngest children **Thomas** and **Elizabeth** died young; Thomas aged 1 and Elizabeth in 1833 aged 18.

John Pearen (1778-1828) and Susanna Fisher Pearen (1783-1863) and their children of Bere Ferres and Bere Alston returned to Merton about 1819. John died in 1828, leaving Susanna with seven children between one and 22 years of age. Perhaps this prompted the family to start anew. In 1832 this entire family plus several cousins emigrated to Canada. They stopped in Montreal, and then settled in Chinguacousy Township, Peel County, Ontario, near Brampton. Their skills in carpentry, wagon making, and blacksmithing were in demand and the family prospered. John and Susanna's eldest son **Edward** (1806-73), a farmer, raised five children near Guelph, Ontario. **John** (1809-1897) was a blacksmith and farmer who married Ann Modeland and had eight children. **Mary Ann** (1813-56) married Hezekiah Burbidge in Montreal, and raised 10 children. **Joseph** (1816-98) married Mary Modeland and had six children. Joseph had learned blacksmithing at age of 14 in Devon. The fate of **Elizabeth** (1819-?) is unknown at this time. **Henry** (1823-85) was a carriage builder and grist miller who married Elizabeth Stanley and had three daughters. **Thomas** (1827-1902) married Bethia Dunsmore and had one son. Thomas farmed in Huron County, Ontario, near his cousin Lawrence, and later moved west to Manitoba.

The Canada emigration was described in the bible of Joseph Pearen (1816-98):

“Joseph, the son of John and Susanna Pearen, his wife, was born in the parish of Beeralston, County of Devon, England, on the thirteenth day of March 1816. Emigrated to Canada, British North America, with the other members of the family in the spring of 1832, being the memorable year of the first cholera, from which pestilence God in mercy preserved us all. Praise the Lord, oh my soul and forget not all his benefits.”

Between 1832 and 1842 most of the Merton Pearens left Merton. In 1832 Matthew Pearene (1776-1834) was living with his step-daughter Rebecca Nott Marshall (1797-?) and her husband Thomas Marshall. Matthew died in Merton in 1834. His eldest son John Pearen (1805-1877) left Merton for Wembworthy Devon with his wife Mary Line Pearen and their family in 1841-2. Matthew's younger son Henry Pearen (1811-1885) the shoemaker remained in Merton until the 1870s when he, his wife and daughter immigrated to Canada to join the earlier Pearen emigrants.

Revised by Shelley J. Pearen, August 2011

Shelley is the daughter of Bayne, son of Joshua Herbert (1884-1973, son of Joshua (1849-1923), son of Mathew (1807-1892), son of Mathew (1776-1834), son of John (1733-1787), son of John (1696-1772), son of Mathew (?-1727)