

# Pedigree Collapse Involving My Puritan Immigrant Ancestors

By Burks Oakley II  
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Since King Charles III visited the USA a short while ago, I have been looking more at some of my ancestral lines that go back to England. A large number of my ancestors on my ***Oakley-Miller*** ancestral lines immigrated from England in the 1600's, including a number of Puritans who came to America as part of the Great Migration (which began with the ***Winthrop*** fleet in 1630). As an aside, I recently learned that I am descended from John Winthrop (he is my 9<sup>th</sup>-great grandfather):

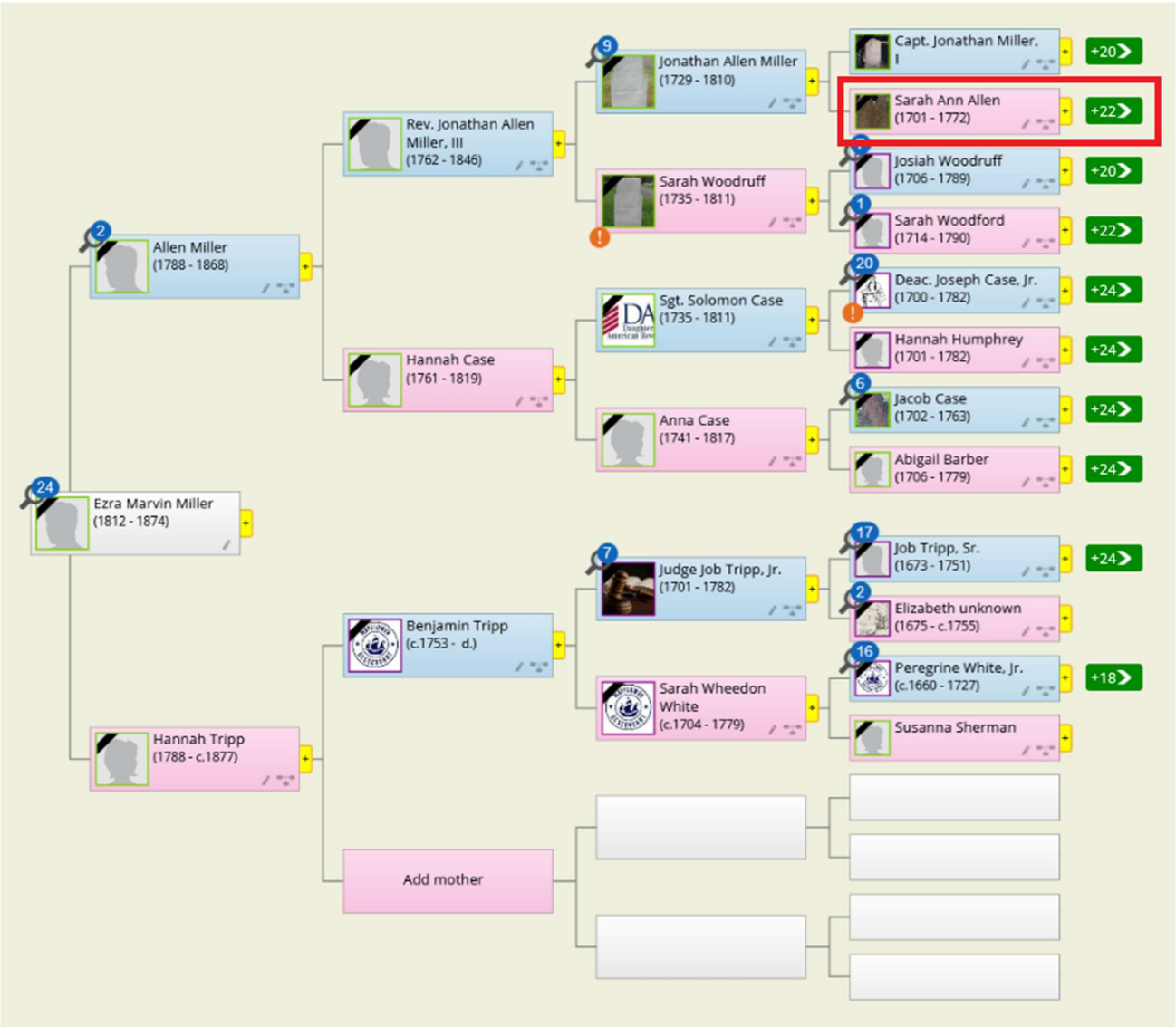
[http://www.burksoakley.com/QuincyOakleyGenealogy/LindaShoemaker-JohnWinthrop\\_19Apr26.pdf](http://www.burksoakley.com/QuincyOakleyGenealogy/LindaShoemaker-JohnWinthrop_19Apr26.pdf)

This narrative is about an interesting branch of the **Miller** family that goes back to these Puritan immigrants who settled in New England. This branch of my family tree exhibits what is known as “pedigree collapse”. Don’t know what this is? Well, then read on.

I'll begin with my ancestral line back to my 2<sup>nd</sup>-great grandfather, Ezra Marvin Miller, as it appears on the Geni.com website:



And here are Ezra's lines back to his sixteen second-great grandparents (well, only twelve of them appear on the Geni.com website):



In my last narrative, I looked at the ancestors of Sarah Woodford. This time, I decided to go with the ancestors of Sarah Ann Allen (she appears inside the red rectangle in the pedigree chart shown above).

Here is Sarah Ann Allen’s pedigree:

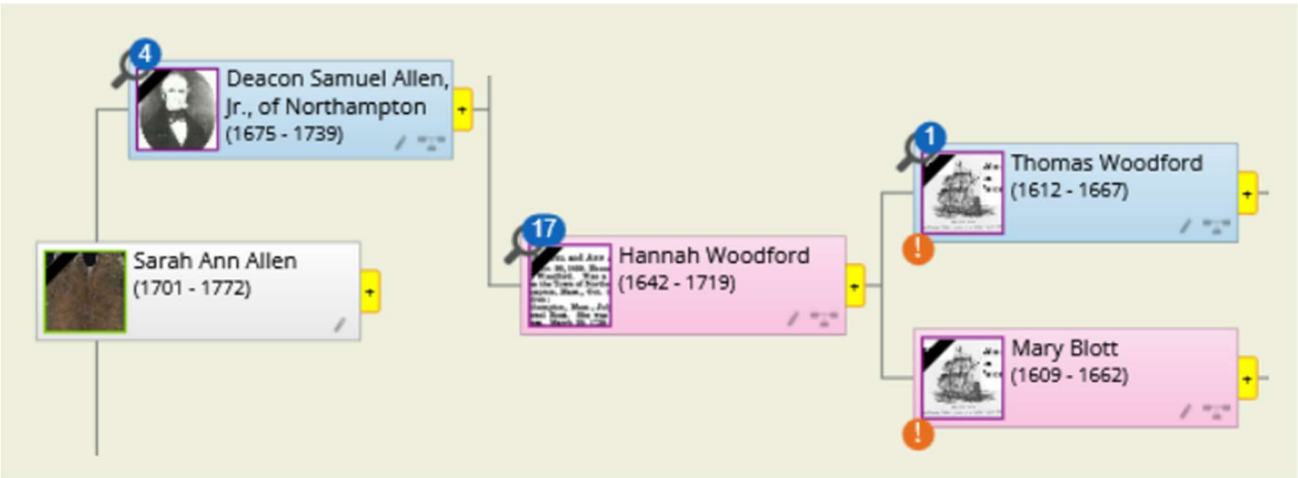


OMG – Sarah Ann Allen is descended from Mary Blott (and Mary’s father Robert Thomas Blott). They appeared in my last narrative as ancestors of Sarah Woodford (1701-1772). See:

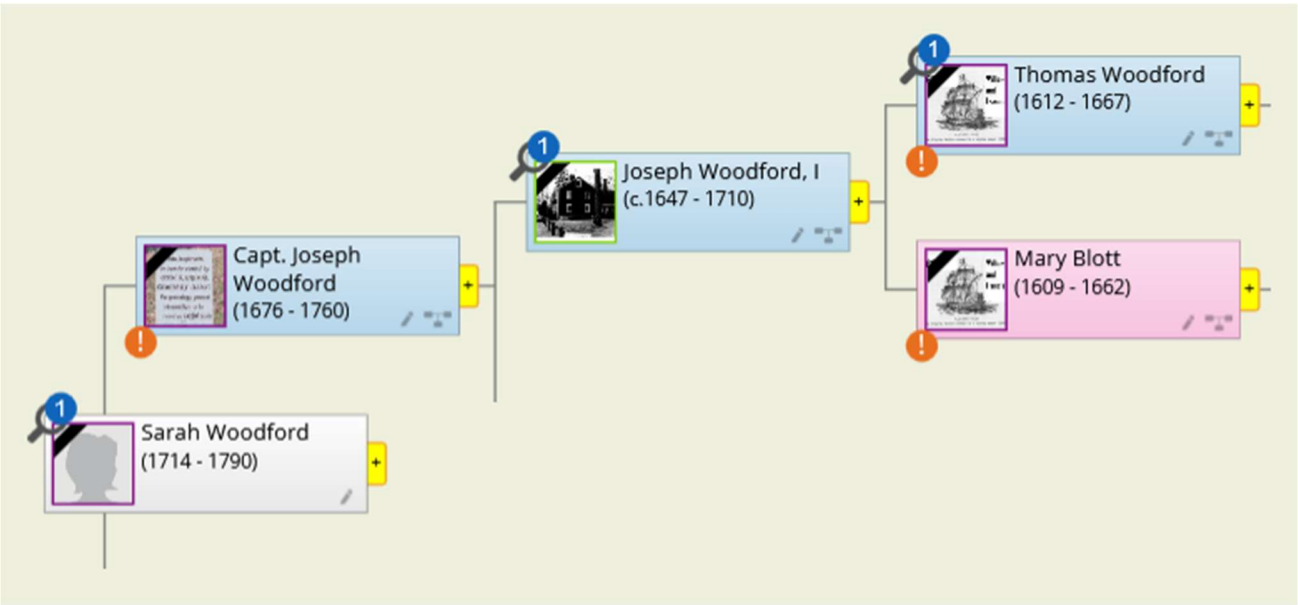
[http://www.burksoakley.com/QuincyOakleyGenealogy/EdmundCrouchback\\_3May26.pdf](http://www.burksoakley.com/QuincyOakleyGenealogy/EdmundCrouchback_3May26.pdf)

But now I find that they also are ancestors of Sarah Ann Allen.

Here is just the line from Sarah Ann Allen to Mary Blott and her husband Thomas Woodford (1612-1667):

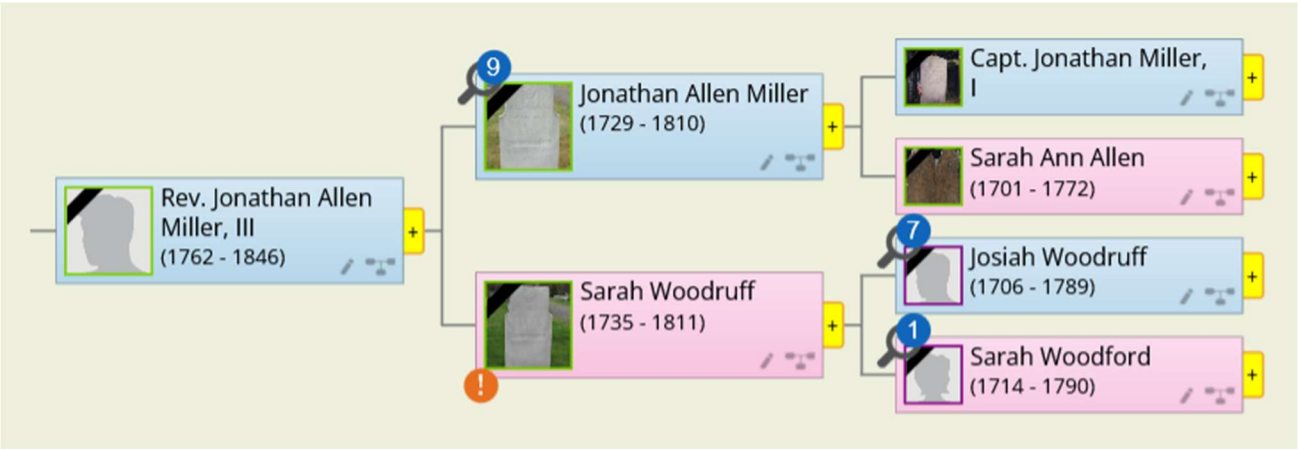


And here is just the line from Sarah Woodford back to Mary Blott and her husband Thomas Woodford:



I decided to combine these two ancestral lines into a single diagram – but how should I connect Sarah Woodford’s line to Sarah Ann Allen’s line? After all, each of these Sarahs is my sixth-great grandmother.

Here is the relevant part of my family tree – Sarah Ann Allen and Sarah Woodford appear at the right side of this pedigree chart:

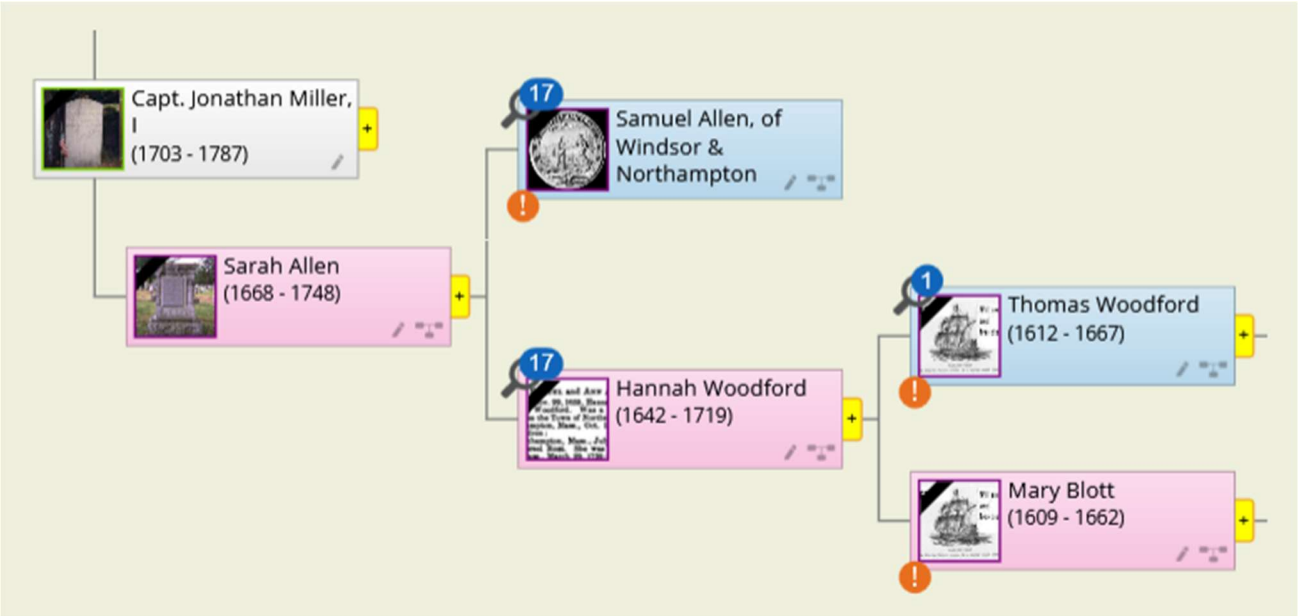


Rev. Jonathan Allen Miller III (1762-1846) was descended from both Sarah Ann Allen and Sarah Woodford – and he was my 4<sup>th</sup>-great grandfather. He is my connection to both of these women in my relationship chart.

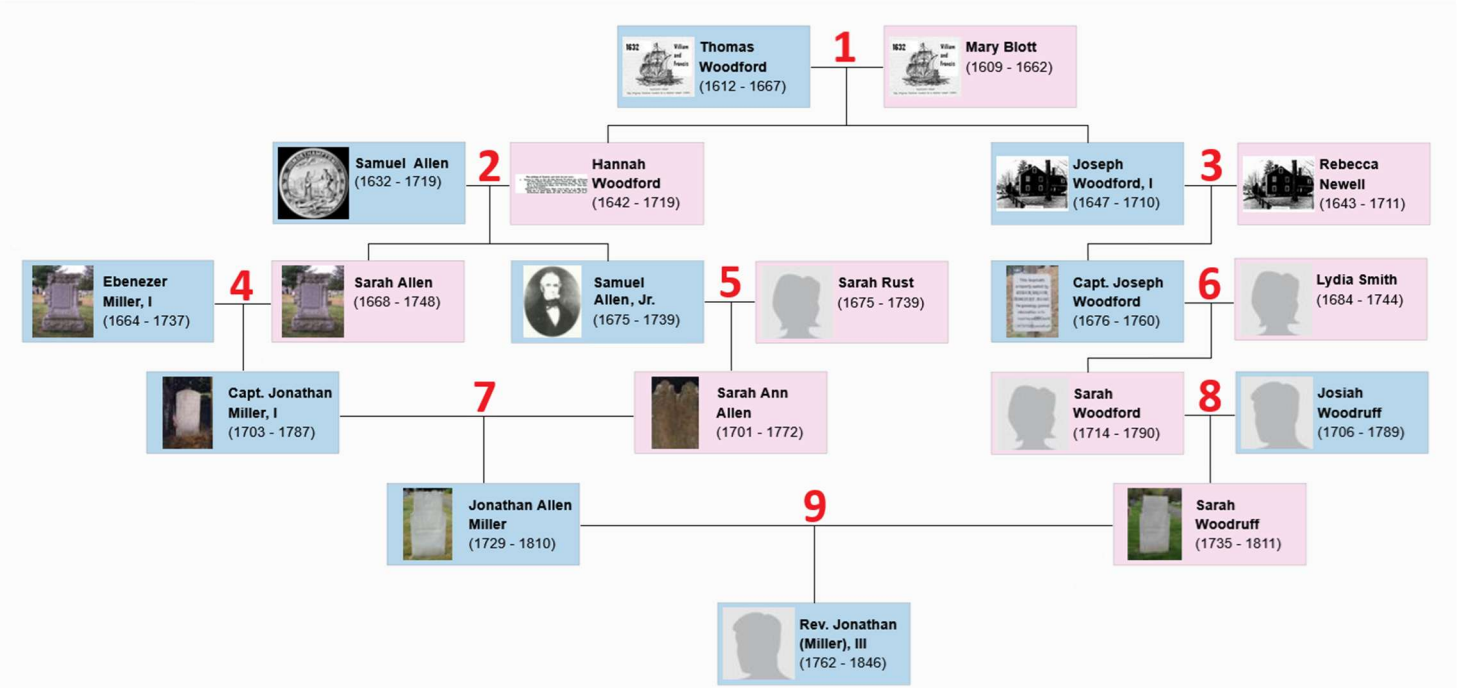
As an aside, note that all three women in the pedigree chart shown above were named Sarah. I’ll come back to this at the end of the narrative.

Fortunately, I didn’t jump in and attempt to create a relationship chart right away. I first looked a little more at this branch of my family tree.

I learned that Capt. Jonathan Allen Miller I (1703-1787) also was descended from the **Woodford-Blott** couple:



After a number of missteps, I finally created the following relationship chart (this chart is displayed in landscape view in the Appendix):



This chart begins with Mary Blott and her husband Thomas Woodford at the top (couple #1). They had two children, Hannah Woodford (1642-1719) and Joseph Woodford (1647-1710). Hannah Woodford married Samuel Allen (couple #2), while Joseph Woodford married Rebecca Newell (couple #3).

At the left of the chart, couple #2 (***Allen-Woodford***) had two children, Sarah Allen (1668-1748) and Samuel Allen Jr. (1675-1739).

Sarah Allen married Ebenezer Miller (1664-1737) – shown at the left of this chart as couple #4. They had a son, Capt. Jonathan Allen Miller (1703-1787).

The son of couple #2 (***Allen-Woodford***) was Samuel Allen Jr. (in blue under couple #2), and he married Sarah Rust (1675-1735). I have designated this couple as couple #5. They had a daughter Sarah Ann Allen (1701-1772).

Sarah Ann Allen married Capt. Jonathan Allen Miller (becoming couple #7), and they had a son Jonathan Allen Miller II (1729-1810).

On the right-side of this chart, the son of the ***Woodford-Blott*** couple at the top of the chart married Rebecca Newell (couple #3), and they had a son, Capt. Joseph Woodford (1676-1760). This latter individual married Lydia Smith (couple #6), and they had a daughter, Sarah Woodford (1714-1790).

Sarah Woodford married Josiah Woodruff (1706-1789) - becoming couple #8 in this chart. They had a daughter, Sarah Woodruff (1735-1811).<sup>1</sup>

Finally, Jonathan Allen Miller II married Sarah Woodruff, becoming couple #9. They had a son, Rev. Jonathan Allen Miller III (1762-1846).

It is clear from this chart that there are three distinct ancestral lines from Rev. Jonathan Allen Miller III back to Mary Blott and her husband Thomas Woodford.

The first of these lines is at the right side of the chart, and goes back from Rev. Jonathan Allen Miller III through Sarah Woodruff, Sarah Woodford, Capt. Joseph Woodford and Joseph Woodford.

<sup>1</sup> Sarah Woodford was the mother of Sarah Woodruff – no wonder I always get confused by this line!

The second line is at the left side of the chart, and goes back through Jonathan Allen Miller II, Capt. Jonathan Allen Miller, Sarah Allen, and Hannah Woodford.

The third line is in the middle of the chart and goes back from Rev. Jonathan Allen Miller III through Jonathan Allen Miller II, Sarah Ann Allen, Samuel Allen Jr., and Hannah Woodford.

Based on this chart, the **Woodford-Blott** couple at the top of the chart were Rev. Jonathan Allen Miller III's third-great grandparents. If you do the math, every person should have 1 set of parents, 2 sets of grandparents, 4 sets of great-grandparents, 8 set of 2<sup>nd</sup>-great grandparents, and 16 sets of 3<sup>rd</sup>-great grandparents.

But in the case of Rev. Jonathan Allen Miller III, three of his sets of 3<sup>rd</sup>-great grandparents were the same, meaning that he only had fourteen unique sets of 3<sup>rd</sup>-great grandparents.

This genealogical occurrence has a name – which is “pedigree collapse”. Here is an AI Overview from Google:



AI Mode

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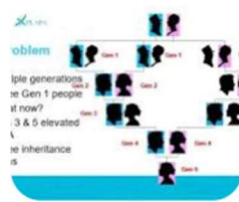
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 AI Overview

Pedigree collapse is a genealogical phenomenon where the same ancestor appears multiple times in a family tree, causing the total number of unique ancestors to be smaller than expected. This occurs due to intermarriage between related individuals. Rather than a rapidly expanding, "perfect" binary tree (e.g., 2 parents, 4 grandparents, 8 great-grandparents), the tree "collapses" because ancestor lines merge, often seen in small or isolated communities.



### Usage Examples and Scenarios in Genealogy

- **Marriage of Relatives:** When first or second cousins marry (e.g., John Hall and Kate Hall in 1879), their offspring have fewer unique ancestors.
- **Island/Isolated Populations:** Small communities with limited population influx, such as in Newfoundland, French Canada, or island nations, show high rates of, as reported in studies highlighted on [dnagenics](#).
- **Royal Family Trees:** Historically, European royalty frequently married within their close families to maintain dynastic power, resulting in famous examples of compressed, complex trees, notes a video from [FamilyHistory.lib.byu.edu](#).

Note that in the overall chart shown a few pages back, Jonathan Allen Miller and Sarah Woodruff (couple #9) were third-cousins.

Of more interest, Capt. Jonathan Miller I and his wife Sarah Ann Allen (couple #7) were first-cousins.

Whenever two people who are related get married and have children, there will be pedigree collapse. And the case of Rev. Jonathan Allen Miller III is a great example of this.

What could account for this? Why did people in this branch of my family tree intermarry? As I look at the people in the combined chart (the one that shows pedigree collapse), it appears to me that all of these people were Puritans who came to America during the Great Migration, or else they were the descendants of these immigrants.<sup>2</sup> They lived either near Hartford, Connecticut, or in Northampton, Massachusetts. And given how small the populations were at that time, it seems logical to me that they would intermarry.

I find it interesting that none of the people in the combined chart were recent immigrants from England. They all were descendants of the original wave of the Great Migration (well, with the exception of Ebenezer Miller).

Once again, Google AI to the rescue:



puritan great migration intermarriage among immigrant families 

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◆ AI Overview

Intermarriage during the Puritan Great Migration (1620–1640) was characterized by high levels of **regional and religious endogamy**, as **most immigrants arrived in family groups, often from the same English counties**. Because these families were driven by religious unity and a shared "City upon a Hill" mission, marriages frequently occurred between individuals who knew each other in England or who were closely aligned in their Puritan faith upon arrival in New England.

**Intermarriage and Family Structure Dynamics**

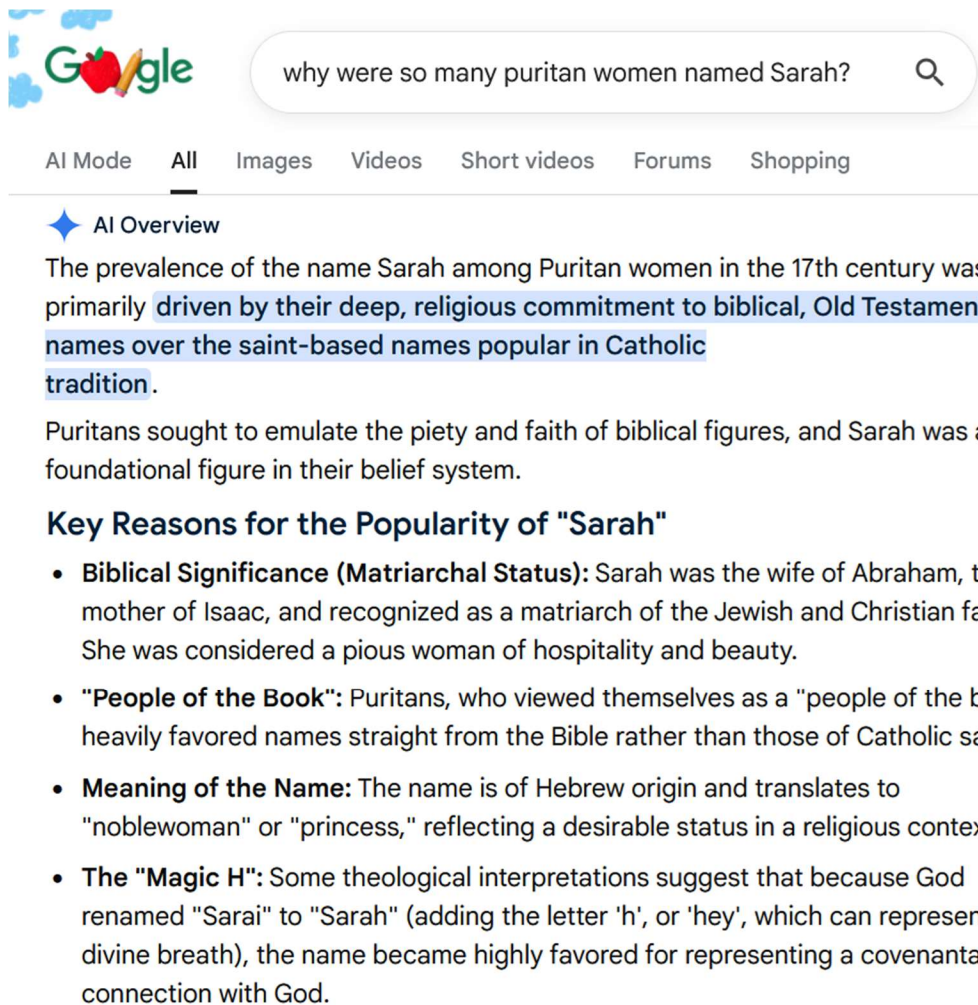
- **Family-Based Migration:** Unlike other colonies that drew single young men, the Puritan migration primarily consisted of entire families, which created a stable, multi-generational population with roughly equal numbers of men and women.
- **Geographic and Religious Selection:** Settlers were primarily from East Anglia and Lincolnshire, sharing similar cultural and religious beliefs, which facilitated marriage within the immigrant group.
- **"Step-by-Step" Networks:** Social networks in New England often replicated those in England. A small group of families would frequently travel together and settle in the same town, leading to intermarriage between children of those families shortly after arrival.
- **Tight-knit Communities:** Because the communities were ideologically strict, they frequently engaged in "purging" or refusing to settle with "unmeet" persons, further encouraging marriage within the orthodox Puritan community.

I think that the branch of my family tree that is described in this narrative is a great example of this.

<sup>2</sup> With the exception of Ebenezer Miller – I have no idea how he married into this “clan”.

While I have other lines of English immigrants who settled in New England, on first glance, it seems that they immigrated later and went to other places (Fairfield, New Haven, Rhode Island). Perhaps the branch I have described in this narrative is really my only branch containing Puritans associated with the Great Migration.

One last thing. I noted previously that so many women in this branch of the family were named Sarah. And all these women were descendants of Puritans who came to America during the Great Migration. So that got me to thinking about the name Sarah – was it something special for the Puritans? Of course, I Googled this, and here is an AI Overview:



There you have it! Now I know why so many of my Puritan ancestors in this branch of my family were named Sarah!

And with that, I'll bring this narrative to a close.

Appendix: Partial Pedigree for Rev. Jonathan Allen Miller III, Showing Pedigree Collapse

