

Appendix B.**DENTON FAMILY HISTORY**

LINEAGE CHART

The children of William (1823-1883) and Elizabeth Denton (1826-1916):**Sherman-** (1856-1937)

Married Harriet Perkins; two children: Mildred (never married), Robert (died in 1918)

Shelley- (1859-1938)

Married Ella Mae de Rochemont; one child: Vanessa (never married)

William ("Willie")- (1865-1923)

Married May C. Hurd; no children

Robert Winsford ("Winsey")- (1866-1959)

Married Harriet (Hattie) Wiswall; no children

Carrie- (1869-1959)

Never married

Sources: Interview with Nancy Erne (whose aunt Hattie Wiswall, married Robert Winsford Denton) December 21, 2007; *The Dentons of Wellesley*, Wellesley Historical Society.

NARRATIVE

William Denton was a naturalist, explorer and freethinker. Many scientific breakthroughs occurred during his lifetime and William promoted the idea of scientific enlightenment, believing that science could be a catalyst for reforms in industry, the arts, and society as a whole.

His wife, **Elizabeth**, was also a progressive thinker. She had worked as a typesetter for a small journal before their marriage and "besides holding what was commonly considered to be a 'man's job', [she] also flaunted public convention by wearing bloomers and contributing radical writings to the journal." (1)

During the first 10 years of their marriage, the couple traveled throughout the United States and Canada, where William lectured on a number of topics such as abolition, temperance, evolution, and geology. Elizabeth used her typesetting skills to run a small press that published William's books and lectures, as well as her own writings.

The couple's five children- **Sherman, Shelley, Willie, Winsey and Carrie**- shared their parents' inquisitive nature and were often found in the woods and fields of Wellesley, exploring the natural world and its creatures.

The two oldest sons, Sherman and Shelley, often accompanied their father on his lecture tours. In 1883, William, Sherman and Shelley had completed a lecture series in Australia and planned to continue their travels around the world via India and Europe. However, tragedy struck when William contracted a fever and died during an expedition into the wilds of New Guinea.

Realizing that their father's death also meant a loss of financial support, the family pooled their talents and mobilized to become self-sufficient. Sherman, an artist, initially supplemented the family income by painting local landscapes and portraits. For several years, Willie and Winsey had collected and sold butterfly specimens to local collectors. In 1895, Sherman invented and patented a new way to mount and preserve the butterflies between a plate of glass and a plaster tablet.

Using the new technique, the brothers exhibited their butterfly collection at a popular artists' studio in Boston. Their collection was wildly successful and the Dentons subsequently exhibited and sold their work in New York, Philadelphia and other large cities east of the Mississippi. In 1897, Shelley and his young family moved to London, England where he opened a shop to sell more of the butterfly specimens. The mounted butterflies were so popular that Shelley was commissioned to create a collection of all the butterflies in England as a 13th birthday present for the Prince of Wales. Back in Wellesley, Willie and Winsford continued to exhibit and sell their collections to interested parties all over the world.

.....The Dentons' crowning achievement occurred at the 1900 Paris Exposition, where their butterfly collection received the gold and silver medals. After that, people from around the globe came to Wellesley to see the Denton family's own butterfly and moth museum, housed on the family property. A barn on the property (now #72) was used as a shop for the sale of mounted duplicates and butterfly wings for craft purposes. Willie and Winsey also created brooches, necklaces, earrings, pins and other accessories using their butterfly specimens. The process and design of the jewelry --- both invented by Willie --- were guaranteed not to leak or fade.

. Carrie, the youngest and only daughter, lived her whole life at #11 Denton Road. She assisted her family members with their various occupations and was a teaching assistant at Harvard University's Department of Geology. She also taught music and later worked with geology students who were known to the family as "Carrie's Rockhounds."