

Chapter 2.10

ARTHUR & SOPHIA GOFFEY



Nova Scotia, Liverpool, in the early 20th century. Arthur and Sophia Goffey lived in this street on the Liverpool waterfront in the second half of the 18th century. In the background is the Port of Liverpool building.

Chapter 2.10 Arthur and Sophia Goffey.

The Goffeys are believed to have arrived in Liverpool from Ireland in the mid-eighteenth century. This information is contained in a document, held in the archives of the Merseyside Maritime Museum, written by an unnamed interviewer who recorded a conversation with William Goffey (1884 -1979) shortly before he died. William (a first cousin of Harry Goffey) estimated the Goffeys' arrival in Liverpool at about 1750. My own research has led me to a similar conclusion, having found no record of Goffeys in Liverpool earlier than the marriage of Arthur Goffey and Sophia Woodside in 1775.

Although Arthur and Sophia were Presbyterians, marriages at that time could only be performed by the Church of England or the Roman Catholic Church, so they were married in St. Peter's Church in Liverpool town centre in 1775. However they were accustomed to worshipping at the Benn's Garden Presbyterian Chapel which was situated in a now-vanished side street (Benn's Garden) in old Liverpool's dockside area. The chapel is identified on the 1795 map of Liverpool as a Dissenters' Meeting House:-



Part of the 1795 map of Liverpool. with Nova Scotia, Ben's Garden, Cornhill, Salthouse Dock, and other places associated with Arthur and Sophia Goffey, highlighted.

The records of the Benn's Garden Chapel, held in the National Archives, proclaim it as a '*Congregation of Protestant Dissenters*' and record births and deaths among the congregation. In the records for the period 1719 to 1811 there are records of several Goffey children having been baptised there. In each case the names of the parents, their address and the father's occupation are given. These are the earliest records we have of the Goffeys in Liverpool and show that around 1775 to 1777 there were three Goffey families in the congregation. They were the families of Arthur (a mariner) and Sophia who lived in Nova Scotia, James (a carpenter) and Margaret who lived in Dickenson Street and John (a joiner) and Alice who lived in Pemberton's Alley. These three couples all had their children baptised in the Benn's Garden Chapel :-

Sarah	Daughter of Arthur and Sophia Goffey	Born 23/5/1775	Baptised 27/5/1775
Andrew	Son of John and Alice Goffey	Born 19/3/1776	Baptised 9/4/1776
Ellen	Daughter of James and Margaret Goffey	Born 8/5/1776	Baptised 17/5/76
Thomas	Son of Arthur and Sophia Goffey	Born 30/6/1777	Baptised 15/7/1777

In 1777 Arthur and James and their families left the Benn's Garden Chapel congregation and joined the Independent Congregational Church when their new chapel, the Newington Chapel, opened in Renshaw Street, while John and Alice continued to baptise their children in the Benn's Garden Chapel. John and Alice changed their surname to McGoffey some time after their son Andrew's christening in 1776 and the Baptismal Register of the Benn's Garden Chapel shows the record for 9th April 1776 annotated in the margin by the Minister to the effect that the name *Goffey* had been "*wrong spelt*" and should have been *McGoffey*. The records of the Newington Chapel show a large number of Goffey children baptised there between 1777, when the Chapel opened, and 1811 when it moved to a new building in Great George Street :-

NAME	PARENTS	BORN	BAPTISED
William	James and Margaret Goffey	1711/1777	21/11/1777
Mary	Arthur and Sophia Goffey	13/7/1779	22/7/1779
Joseph	James and Margaret Goffey	16/3/1781	25/3/1781
Thomas	Arthur and Sophia Goffey	6/9/1783	7/10/1783
Joseph	James and Margaret Goffey		31/12/1786
James	Arthur and Sophia McGoffey	17/9/1787	4/10/1787
Arthur	James and Sophia Goffey		12/11/1788
John	Arthur and Sophia Goffey	8/8/1790	3/9/1790
James	James Goffey (& Margaret dec'd)	2/11/1790	28/11/1790
Ann	John and Mary Goffey		14/3/1792
Arthur	Arthur and Sophia Goffey	6/2/1795	13/2/1795
Ellen	John and Martha Goffey	13/3/1803	22/5/1803
James	John and Martha Goffey	17/9/1804	11/11/1804
Sophia	William and Mary Goffey	8/8/1805	22/9/1805
Arthur	William and Ann Goffey		27/4/1806
Arthur	William Goffey		11/5/1806
John	John and Martha Goffey	29/6/1806	17/8/1806
James	Thomas and Mary Goffey	20/2/1807	20/3/1807

Among the things to note from this list are the spellings - Goffee, Goffey and McGoffey. Both Arthur and Sophia and James and Margaret had already had at least one child baptised in the name Goffey at the Benn's Garden Chapel and here we see the name being spelt Goffee. However the spelling is inconsistent, reverting to Goffey after 1790. The same inconsistency appears in the entries for John and Martha, their son James being baptised Goffee in 1804 and John being baptised Goffey in 1806. In an age when many people could not read or write, we can assume with reasonable confidence that the Minister of the Newington Chapel (clergy could all read and write) simply spelled the name as he heard it. Even more telling perhaps of a possibly confused Minister is the entry of 11th May 1806 for Arthur, the son of William Goffey, where the Minister has at a later date altered *Goffee* to *Goffey* with a different pen. Why James should be baptised McGoffey in 1787 is a mystery; perhaps the Minister had met the family of John and Alice McGoffey at the Benn's Garden Chapel, or perhaps Arthur was contemplating changing his surname to McGoffey. Whatever the explanation for these anomalies, it seems safe to conclude that the spelling may alter but the people to whom the names refer were the same and there were not two couples called Goffee and Goffey.



Liverpool Pierhead from Albert Dock Buildings, 2008. Nova Scotia, the little street where Arthur and Sophia Goffey were living in 1775, lay between the old black-hulled Liverpool Pilot boat and the Port of Liverpool Building.

Another thing to note from the Benn's Garden Chapel records is that Arthur and Sophia's first child, Sarah, was baptised on 27th May 1775, while Arthur and Sophia were married three months later on September 19th. Also their last child, Arthur, was born in 1795 twenty years after Sarah. None of this is beyond the bounds of possibility, particularly for a Victorian mariner! However, the bigger mystery to explain is how if Arthur and Sophia Goffey and Arthur and Sophia Goffee were the same people how could they have had two sons baptised Thomas, one in 1777 and one in 1783. It has been assumed that the first Thomas died in infancy; child mortality in Georgian times was such that it was by no means uncommon for parents to give a child the same name as an earlier deceased one. This is also seen in the two sons of James and Margaret Goffey; their second child was born and christened Joseph in 1781 and their next child, also a boy, was christened Joseph in 1786.

The records of the Newington Congregational Chapel end at 1808 and then re-start at 1811 to 1837 as the records of the Newington Presbyterian Chapel. The Presbyterian Chapel in Benn's Garden was closed in 1811 and the congregation moved to Renshaw Street when the Congregationalists moved to their new Independent Congregational Chapel in Great George Street. Several Goffey children can be found in the records of the Great George Street Chapel, but the gap between 1808 and 1811 remains, which possibly explains why we cannot find a record of the baptism of Martha Goffey, Arthur and Sophia's granddaughter, who was born in 1810. This may not be the only explanation; inspection of the list of Goffey children baptised at the Newington Chapel shows a preponderance of boys, suggesting that many girls may not have been baptised at all.

At the end of the Newington Chapel register the Minister has added his records of the members of his congregation commencing in 1777 when the chapel opened. Entitled "*Members of the Church of Christ meeting in Cropper Street, Liverpool*" it shows the date admitted, the name, a sequential number and date of leaving, where applicable. Both Renshaw Street and Cropper Street still exist in Liverpool city centre today; Cropper Street is a narrow back street that would presumably have given access to the back of the chapel in Renshaw Street. Some members of the meeting are annotated as "*removed*" meaning they had moved house and were now in another meeting, some are shown as "*set aside for bad conduct*", while one is shown as "*turned out*" - presumably for worse than bad conduct. Arthur and James Goffey (spelt Goffee) are shown as having joined in October 1782 and having membership numbers 90 and 91 respectively. Several members are listed as dead or deceased; since the chapel closed in 1811 this gives us a clue that Arthur and James, having not "*removed*" or been "*set aside for bad conduct*", were probably still alive in 1811.

Mary Goffey, Arthur and Sophia's second daughter, was baptised at the Newington Chapel in 1779, three years before Arthur became a member of the meeting in 1782, so membership was not synonymous with being a member of the congregation. While the size of the congregation is not known, the number of members of the meeting was quite small, i.e. it took five years, from 1777 to 1782, to enrol 90 members and a number of those would have died, moved house or been ejected in that time. This brings us to the intriguing possibility that Arthur and James were related. By the late eighteenth century Liverpool would have had quite a large population and, bearing in mind the considerable rarity of the Goffey surname, it seems a very unlikely coincidence that two unrelated Goffeys should join the same Church of Christ meeting at the same time. Descendants of James and Margaret live in the Merseyside area to

this day; if Arthur and James were brothers, people of my generation would be sixth cousins. However probable a family relationship between Arthur and James would seem to be, nothing has yet been proved. The christening of James in 1787 as the son of Arthur and Sophia “McGoffey” suggests that Arthur and James Goffey and John McGoffey may even have all been related. A family tree of the Goffey line from 1775 to 1940 is included in Appendix ‘A’ after the maps at the end of this chapter. The Benn’s Garden Chapel records show Arthur and Sophia living in Nova Scotia in 1775 and Mans Island in 1777. Nova Scotia was a row of houses facing the waterway joining the “*Dry Bason*” to George’s Dock on the 1795 map, while Mans Island is shown running along the south side of George’s Dock towards Manchester Old Quay and some timber yards on the riverside – an area that is now the landing stage for the Wallasey ferries. George’s Dock was filled in in the late nineteenth century and is now the site of the prestigious buildings of the Liverpool waterfront known as the “Three Graces”.

On the 1848 Map of Liverpool, the Dry Bason has been renamed Canning Dock and on the 1885 map, Mans Island has been renamed Mann Island; Canning Dock and Mann Island are still there today. Nova Scotia has disappeared in the foundations of the as-yet unnamed building being constructed to join the three main buildings of Liverpool’s famous waterfront. The foundations of the little houses in Nova Scotia were exposed by archaeologists in 2007-8 during site preparation, at the same time as they were excavating the port’s original Wet Dock - itself filled in about 200 years previously.

The Manchester Old Quay was occupied by the Museum of Liverpool Life in 2005, but is now the site for the new Merseyside Maritime Museum building. Dickenson Street, the home of James and Margaret Goffey is also still there today although by 1790 James and Margaret had moved to 17, Gilbert Street, only a few hundred yards away from their previous house, and James is listed in Gore’s Liverpool Directory of that year.

In the 1796 issue of Gore’s Directory, Arthur is listed as a victualler so he had presumably retired from the sea by that time. His address in the directory is given as “*back of 41 Cornhill, South Dock*”. The 1795 and 1807 maps of Liverpool show Cornhill to be in exactly the location where Salthouse Quay is today, i.e. between the Albert Dock Buildings and the edge of Salthouse Dock. In 1795-1807 the Albert Dock had not been constructed and Cornhill was lined with buildings on one side facing directly over Salthouse Dock. Possibly these buildings were the premises of tradesmen, ship chandlers, victuallers and the like serving the shipping using the dock, in which case Arthur and Sophia Goffey probably lived “over the shop”. In any case their new home was only about 300 yards from their old home in Nova Scotia. James Goffey is also listed in the 1796 Gore’s Directory, still living in the same house in Gilbert Street that he was living in in 1790. Patrick Goffey, a boatman of 6, Ansdell Street, South Dock is also listed. No other record has been found of a Patrick Goffey.



Salthouse Quay, the site of Arthur and Sophia Goffey's home in 1796. Before the construction of the Albert Dock Buildings in the 1840s, houses and other buildings lined the edge of Salthouse Dock and the road along the quay was named Cornhill. Arthur and Sophia lived at the back of 41 Cornhill.

Born.	A. D. 1775.	No.	Baptized.
April 21.	William, Son of John Milligan, Lawyer, and Mary his Wife in Grosbie Street. Bap ^d by Rob ^t . Lewin.	350.	May 18.
May 23.	Sarah, Daughter of Arthur Goffey, Mariner, & Sophia his Wife in Nova Scotia. Bap ^d by Rob ^t . Lewin.	351.	May 27.
May 3.	Betty, Daughter of James McMill, Taylor, & Sarah his Wife in Sumast Street. Bap ^d by Rob ^t . Lewin.	352.	May 28.
May 11.	Joseph Son of Joseph Williams, Merchant, & Alice	353.	May 30.

Born.	A. D. 1777.	No.	Baptized.
July 3.	Sarah, Daughter of Hugh Mulligan, Engraver, & Sarah his Wife in Charles Street. Bap ^d by Rob ^t . Lewin.	506.	July 7.
June 23.	Thomas, Son of William Burgess, Subouren, & Esther his Wife in Tyrone Street. Bap ^d by Rob ^t . Lewin.	507.	July 13.
June 30.	Thomas, Son of Arthur Goffey, Mariner, & Sophia his Wife in Mans Island. Bap ^d by Rob ^t . Lewin.	508.	July 15.
July 9.	John, Son of James Schurmer, Merchant, & Catharine	509.	July 20.

Pages from the records of the Benn's Garden Presbyterian Chapel, Liverpool, showing the baptism of Sarah Goffey on May 27th 1775 and of Thomas Goffey on July 15th 1777. Arthur and Sophia's address is shown as "Nova Scotia" in 1775 and "Mans Island" in 1777, in reality probably the same house.

Members of the Church of Christ meeting in Cropper Street, Liverpool

1774	Admitted	Mr & Mrs Holwood	2
	Remained	Mr & Mrs Jones	4
	Dead	Alex: Sloan	5
		Duncan M'Crany	6
		John Holwell - is from account of being	
		3 years absent, he being in the army of 40. after	
		Andrew Morrison, set aside	8
		Mr & Mrs John Mercer	10
	Remained	Mr Robert Mercer	11
		Mr Tho: Mercer	12
		Mr & Mrs Joseph Mercer	14
	Remained	Mr James Goffe	15
		Samuel Harkness & his wife	17
		Mr & Mrs Isaacson	19
	Remained	Mrs Jones	20
		Mr Robert Goffe	21
		Mary Dixon	27
	Remained	Miss Kitty Harker	28
		Mrs Broadway	29
		Tho: M' Munday	25
		John Phillips	26
	Dead	Mrs Greaves	27
24	Ad. 30	Mary Tunstall, with the same	28
	Do	John Miller	29
	Do	Elizabeth Boyers	30
	Do	Mrs Hall - Dead	31
	Do	Mr & Mrs Thurston	left - 32
	Do	Mrs Woodward	left - 33
	Do	Mrs Morris	34
	Do	Miss Thurston	35
		Mr & Mrs Lapsal	36
		Mrs Mitchell	39
1778		Mrs Simons	40
		Mrs Willshire	41
1779		Mr & Mrs Gore	43
	Dead	Mrs Bradbury	44
		Mr & Mrs Sailor	45
	Do	Mrs Goffe	46
	Remained	Miss Peggy Goffe	47
	Do	Miss Sarah Goffe	48
		Miss A. Wainwright	49
		Mr & Mrs Windsor	51
	Dead	Mr Goffe	52
	Do	Mrs Goffe	53
		Mr & Mrs Lapsal	54

1776	Jan	Mrs Menroe	55
	Do	Samuel Johnson set aside	56
	Do	Mr & Mrs Wright	57
	Do	Mrs Youhart - set aside	58
	May	William Ramsey	Dead 59
	Do	Tho: Lockhart	60
	June	Mr & Mrs removed to London	61
	Aug 21	William Mitchell	62
	Sept 7	Mr & Mrs Stanley	63
	10	Mr & Mrs Knowles	64
	10	Mr & Mrs Dunkey	65
		Mrs Better	Remained 66
		Mr & Mrs Mercer	67
	Jan 7	Mrs Lockhart	68
		Mr & Mrs Jones	69
		Mr & Mrs Dickford	70
		Mr & Mrs Goffe	71
		Mr Robert Mercer	Dead 72
		Miss Cunningham	73
		Mrs Cherry	74
		Mr & Mrs set aside	75
	Jan 1780	Mr James Crawford	76
		James Fisher & wife	77
		Samuel Richardson	left 78
		Tho: Denton	set aside 79
	End	Mr & Mrs Goffe	80
		Margaret Henson	81
	Jan 1801	Mr & Mrs	82
		Mrs Bruce	83
	End	Miss Harker	84
		Dead Mrs John Goffe	85
		Mrs Gifford	86
		Mr & Mrs	87
		Mr & Mrs	88
		Mr & Mrs	89
		Mr & Mrs	90
		Mr & Mrs	91
		Mr & Mrs	92
		Mr & Mrs	93
		Mr & Mrs	94
		Mr & Mrs	95
		Mr & Mrs	96
		Mr & Mrs	97
		Mr & Mrs	98
		Mr & Mrs	99
		Mr & Mrs	100

Membership records of the Church of Christ Meeting, Cropper Street, Liverpool, about the mid 1780s, showing, arrowed, Arthur and James Goffey (spelt Goffee) at membership numbers 91 and 92, having jo