

The Daniel Defoe/Elizabeth Maxwell Story

Elizabeth Maxwell, my wife Sandy's 6th great grandmother was born in 1700 in England. Elizabeth's mother was Elizabeth Foe, the daughter of James and Alice Foe and the sister of Daniel Foe (he later changed his name from Foe to Defoe in circa 1695).

In 1705, Daniel Defoe, a political writer and dissenter, after being released (yet again) from prison, came to live with his widowed sister and niece (who was then five years old). It appears that Daniel Defoe was quite smitten with the little girl and became her teacher.

In 1718, Elizabeth Maxwell, now 18 years old contracted for marriage. However, upon hearing of it, Elizabeth mother's broke the arrangement. This clearly embarrassed, depressed, and alienated Elizabeth. So even though she had no money, she left home without a word to her mother or uncle, and arranged with a ship's captain to be sold as an indentured servant upon arrival in America. Upon arrival in Philadelphia, she was purchased by Andrew Job, a resident and tavern/Inn owner in Cecil County, Maryland. She would not write home until seven years later, after serving out her contract and marrying Job's son Thomas.

Of particular interest to this story however is Daniel Defoe. For it is clear Defoe was devastated by Elizabeth's disappearance, and could only imagine what fate would befall his niece, especially as time passed without word from her of safe passage. So, in 1719, just one year after his niece Elizabeth Maxwell fled to America, Daniel Defoe wrote his first novel, **Robinson Crusoe**.

For more detailed information, see **Cecil County, Maryland, A Study in Local History**, by Alice E. Miller, 1949, pages 150-153.

Also, the **History of Cecil County, Maryland, and the Early Settlements Around the Head of Chesapeake Bay and on the Delaware River, with Sketches of Some of the Old Families of Cecil County**, by George Johnston, 1967, pages 526-534.