

In "A Brief Sketch of Caleb Greenland and his Wife, Christina Curfman with Some of their Ancestors and Part of their Descendants," Frank Roher stated that Ethan Chilcott married a woman named **Cora May Thomas**.¹ Roher provided no other information or clues except to say that "he lived in Spain." Ethan was never found on a census with her, nor were there any marriage records in places where Ethan was known to have lived. He left no probate records in Arkansas, the State where he died.² There are too many women named Cora Thomas, born about 1878 Pennsylvania in the 1900 and 1910 censuses to effectively study Cora without additional information. So who was she?

Were Cora Sweetman, Cora Thomas, Cora Chilcott and Cora Chilcott the same woman?

The short answer to this question is "Yes." The following evidence provides proof.

Information found on a Consular Registration Certificate supports the fact that Ethan Chilcott married a woman named "Cora", born about 1878 in Meadville, Pennsylvania, and had a son named William Thomas, born about 1904 in New York.³

On 8 September 1912, Cora Chilcott left Huevita, Cuba aboard ship S.S. Olinda with William Chilcott, Stephen Chilcott and Ralph Chilcott. They arrived at the Port of New York on 12 September.⁴ The ship's manifest providing dates and places of birth stated these passengers lived in Eden, New York.

- Cora Chilcott, 21 July 1878, Meadville, Penn
- Stephen Chilcott, 15 Dec 1900, Kanterville [Ransonville⁵], New York
- Ralph Chilcott, 10 February 1902, Kanterville [Ransonville], New York
- William Chilcott, 17 July 1904, Buffalo, New York

This was right at the time that Ethan claimed he, Cora and William were leaving for Barcelona.⁶

This family - Ethan, Cora and children - were never found together on any census, possibly because they may have been living in Cuba at the time of the census taking. Searches in the 1910 New York census for

¹ Frank W. Roher, "A Brief Sketch..." 8-9, no other details given but Roher likely received info from someone attending one of the family reunions provided this information.

² "Arkansas Probate Records, 1817-1979" (<https://familysearch.org> : accessed 7 Nov 2015), no records for Ethan Chilcott or variant.

³ Ethan Taylor Chilcott; "U.S., Consular Registration Certificates, 1907-1918, database, *Ancestry* (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 13 Apr 2014), citing Consular Registration Certificates, compiled 1907-1918; ARC ID: 1244186; General Records of the Department of State, 1763-2002, Record Group 59; National Archives at Washington, D.C.

⁴ Mrs. Cora Chilcott, 34, Stephen Chilcott, 11, Ralph Chilcott, 9, William Chilcott, 7, arriving 1912, New York, New York; "New York, Passenger Lists, 1820-1957," database and images, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 19 Apr 2014), citing Microfilm Serial: T715, 1897-1957; Microfilm Roll Roll 1933, Line 1, Page 101. All birthdates were stated.

⁵ Stephen J. Thomas, birthplace - Ransonville, New York, New York; "New York, Abstracts of World War I Military Service, 1917-1919," database and images, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 19 Apr 2014), citing Adjutant General's Office, Abstracts of World War I Military Service, 1917-1919; Series B0808, New York State Archives, Albany, New York.

⁶ Ethan Taylor Chilcott, "U.S., Consular Registration Certificates, 1907-1918." The departure date of 7 Sept 1912 provided by Ethan conflicts slightly with the date of the Cora Chilcott and children manifest of 8 Sept 1912 to 12 Sept 1912. The 7 Sept 1912 date, however, was provided 2 years later. It seems likely that Ethan inadvertently provided the incorrect date. No manifests were found on Ancestry.com for ships leaving New York and arriving in Barcelona, Spain in September 1912 that would confirm a correct date.

Cora Chilcott and variant spellings, Ethan Chilcott and variant spellings, just the name Cora with a child Stephen, Ralph or William, all produced negative results.⁷

The 1900 New York census provided one possibility for a Cora Thomas with a son Stephen. Living in Wilson were a Cora Thomas, 21, wife of Chas. Thomas, 25, with son Stephen Thomas, 5/12 years.⁸ Wilson is about 8 miles northeast of Ransonville and about 56 miles north of Eden by today's maps.

Cora with sons, Ralph and William Thomas and daughter, Mary E.

In 1914, Cora travels with her husband, Ethan Chilcott and son, William Thomas back to New York after living in Barcelona, Spain, for two (2) years.⁹ But by 1920 Cora M. Chilcott is married to Oliver S. Chilcott and is living in Township 3, Carbon, Montana. The household composition suggests an answer to the obvious question - is this the same Cora?¹⁰

- Oliver S. Chilcott, b. 1870 Penn
- Cora M. Chilcott, wife, b. about 1879, Penn
- Mary E., daughter, b. about 2 3/12, [approx. Oct 1917], Montana
- Martha J., daughter, b. 4/12, [about Sept-Nov 1919], Montana
- *Ralph S. Thomas*, b. about 1902, step-son, New York

Adding further evidence to confirm the relationship, the Montana Marriage license for Ralph S. Thomas, names his parents as **Chas. Thomas** and **Cora Sweetman**.¹¹

The 1930 census for Rockvale, Carbon, Montana, shows Oliver S. and Cora with daughter Mary E. living next door to Ralph S. Thomas who is now married with children.¹² By 1940, identified as "in-laws," Oliver and Cora were living in Pleasanton, Alameda, California, in the household of their married daughter, Mary Hodge.¹³

In addition, a California Death Certificate for William E. Thomas names his parents as **Charles Thomas** - NY and **Cora Swetman** [Sweetman] -PA.¹⁴ His birthdate of 12 July 1904 in New York agrees closely with the birthdate supplied on the 1912 manifest (17 July 1904) and is a perfect match for the birth date provided by Ethan Chilcott in 1914 Barcelona.

⁷ Searches performed on Ancestry.com (<http://www.ancestry.com>) and FamilySearch (<https://familysearch.org>)

⁸ 1900 U.S. census, pop. schedule, Niagara, New York, Wilson, enumeration district (ED) 93, sheet 2B, dwelling 40, family 42, Household of Chas. Thomas; digital images, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 19 Apr 2014); citing NARA microfilm T623, roll 1130.

⁹ E.T. "Chillett," 62, (Mrs.) Cora, 36, Wm, 9, arriving 1914, New York, New York; "New York, Passenger Lists, 1820-1957."

¹⁰ 1920 U.S. census, pop. schedule, Carbon, Montana, Township 3, enumeration district (ED) 6, sheet 10B, dwelling 211, family 213, Household of Oliver S Chilcott; digital images, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 19 Apr 2014); citing NARA microfilm T625, roll 967.

¹¹ Yellowstone, Montana, marriage certificate no. 9771 (1923), Thomas-Pettipiec; "Montana, County Marriages, 1865-1950," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org> : accessed 26 Aug 2015).

¹² 1930 U.S. census, pop. schedule, Carbon, Montana, Rockvale, enumeration district (ED) 0035, sheet 1A, dwelling 9, family 9, Household of Oliver Chilcott; digital images, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 19 Apr 2014); citing NARA microfilm T626, roll 1252.

¹³ 1940 U.S. census, population schedule, Alameda, California, Pleasanton, enumeration district (ED) 1-171, p. 4A, household 111, Oliver and Cora M. Chilcott in household of John and Mary Hodge; digital images, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 19 Apr 2014); citing NARA microfilm T627, roll 191.

¹⁴ State of California, County of Contra Costa, Death Certificate No. 0700 03182 (1983), William E. Thomas, Sr.; Office of Clerk-Recorder, Martinez.

Connecting Cora to her parents:

Cora May Chilcott's California Death Certificate provides the following information:¹⁵

- Birthdate and place: 20 Jul 1878 (this is just 1 day off of the date provided on the 1912 manifest) in Pennsylvania
- Death date and place: 28 Feb 1969, at home in Castro Valley
- Mother's name: **Hanna E. Harner**
- Father's name: **William C. Sweetman**

The 1912 manifest and the 1914 Foreign Consulate Certificates stated Cora was born in Meadville, Pennsylvania. The 1880 census for Meadville shows a Sweetman family with a little girl named Corra (*sic*), age 1.¹⁶ Parents were **William Sweetman**, b. about 1845, New York, R.R. Engineer and **Hannah**, b. about 1845, New York. Another female in the household, Sarah, was b. about 1869, New York.

In 1870, William Sweetman, a locomotive engineer, and Hannah are found in the **John and Sarah Harner** household in Sheridan, Chautauqua, New York, with a 1-year old Sarah.¹⁷

To summarize, the following timeline connects the pieces of evidence:

Date and name	Event
1870	Census shows William and Hannah Sweetman in household of John and Mary Harner in Sheridan, New York. Mr. and Mrs. Harner are Hannah's parents.
1880 as Cora Sweetman	Census shows "Corra" Sweetman, daughter, in household of William and Hannah Sweetman in Meadville, Pennsylvania.
1900 as Cora (Sweetman) Thomas	Census shows Cora with husband Chas. Thomas and son Stephen, born Dec. 1899, in Niagara, New York.
1912 as Cora (Sweetman) (Thomas) Chilcott	Manifest with Cora and children Stephen, Ralph and William (all with last name of Chilcott)
1914 as Cora (Sweetman) (Thomas) Chilcott	Consulate registration showing Ethan Chilcott with wife Cora May who has a son, William Thomas, born July 1904.
1920 as Cora (Sweetman) (Thomas) (Chilcott) Chilcott	Census of Oliver and Cora Chilcott with step-son Ralph Thomas.
1923 As mother, Cora Sweetman	Marriage license stating parents of Ralph Thomas were Cora Sweetman and Chas. Thomas.
1983 As mother, Cora Sweetman	California Death Certificate for William E. Thomas identifies parents as Charles Thomas and Cora Sweetman

¹⁵ State of California, County of Alameda, Death Certificate No. 1493 (1969), State File No. 69-031083, Cora May Chilcott; Office of Clerk-Recorder, Oakland.

¹⁶ 1880 U.S. census, population schedule, Crawford, Pennsylvania, Meadville, enumeration district (ED) 105, p. 20B, dwelling 168, family 179, Corra, daughter, in household of William and Hannah Sweetman; digital images, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 19 Apr 2014); citing NARA microfilm T9, roll 1120.

¹⁷ 1870 U.S. census, population schedule, Chautauqua, New York, Sheridan, p. 20 (penned), 655B (stamped), dwelling 165, family 162, William and Hannah Sweetman in the household of John and Sarah Harner; digital images, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 19 Apr 2014); citing NARA microfilm M593, roll 913.

1969 As Cora May Chilcott, daughter of Hannah Harner and William Sweetman	California Death Certificate identifies parents of Cora May Chilcott as Hannah Harner and William Sweetman
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Even though no birth or marriage records have been found for Cora,¹⁸ evidence stitched together from census, international, and death records as well as marriage records of others provide a rough sketch of Cora's life and prove that she married at least three times. That said, without the 1912 manifest showing Cora with her three sons, it would be very difficult to state that Cora Sweetman, Cora Thomas, Cora Chilcott and Cora Chilcott were all the same woman.

Incidentally, Ethan and Oliver Chilcott were 2nd cousins once removed. It seems highly unlikely that Cora would have met Oliver purely by chance. He had lived in Montana since at least 1900 and she in New York, Cuba (possibly), Spain and likely Arkansas. The implication is that they met through Ethan at some point and maintained a relationship, suggesting that Ethan, even though a traveler, stayed in touch with his family and extended family.

This brief sketch shows that Cora had a very interesting life with many different cultural experiences. Migrating from Pennsylvania and New York to Cuba and Barcelona, Spain and then on to rural Montana and finally settling in California is no small feat. But there is one huge, looming question that is screaming to be answered: How, when and where did Cora meet Ethan? For now, this is an unanswered question.

¹⁸ Extensive online searches performed on Ancestry.com, FamilySearch.org and FindMyPast.com in the states of Pennsylvania, New York and Montana for these records found nothing. Local GenWeb sites also revealed no digitized records for Cora. No marriage notices for any of the parties were found on Newspapers.com or GenealogyBank.com. Non-digitized, local records from places where Cora was known to have resided have not been sought.