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Article Summary: This article presents the research into the grave marker at the Amanda Lamin [Amanda Lamme] burial site near Bridgeport, Nebraska. She died of cholera on June 23, 1850, along the Oregon Trail. The author concludes that there has been an error of identity at this pioneer grave.

Cataloging Information:

Names: Amanda Lamin, Robert Harvey, H C Walker, R H Willis, Paul Henderson, Merrill J Mattes, Mrs Marvin F Kivett, G J Hunt, James Muir, Professor Ferdinand V Hayden, Micajah Littleton, N Campbell, Samuel Hinch, Calvin Green, B E Davis, William Dalton, Amanda W Lamme, Laura Lamme, Alcis Lamme, Mrs May Jackson Lamme, Thomas C Maupin, R S Thomas, Charles W Bryan, Frances Anne Lamme, Dr Nye, Helen Henderson, R P Scott

Place Names: Bridgeport, Nebraska; Oregon Trail; Court House Rock, Nebraska; Big Blue River; Marysville, California; Fort Kearny, Nebraska; Devonshire, England

Photographs / Images: Paul Henderson, Merrill J Mattes, Mrs Marvin F Kivett, near Court House Rock; Present marker at Amanda Lamin grave

**AMANDA LAMIN—DEVONSHIRE, ENGLAND
OR
AMANDA LAMME—MARTHASVILLE, MISSOURI**

By Reg. P. Duffin

Eleven miles east of Bridgeport, Nebraska, 1/4 mile north of State Highway 92, a granite Nebraska Oregon Trail marker stands on a slight knoll. On the west face of the marker the inscription reads: "Oregon Trail, marked by State of Nebraska 1912, Trail passed 285 feet north of this point." On the east face an inscription reads: "Amanda, consort of M.J. Lamin of Devonshire, England, born February 22, 1822, died June 23, 1850, of cholera." I, the author of this article being English by nationality, became intrigued with this pioneer from the distant shires of England and determined to find more information about her. I have been disappointed in this quest and have concluded that there is an error of identity at this pioneer grave or at least a series of incredible coincidences.

The Nebraska State Historical Society in 1917 published Robert Harvey's report on historic sites given at a joint meeting of the Society and the Nebraska Territorial Pioneers Association in January of 1910. Harvey included an account of a 1909 visit to the Lamin grave:¹

On the first of November I arrived in Bridgeport, too late to catch the Scotts Bluff train, and had to lie over thirty-six hours. While there, I made inquiry about the grave reported by Mr. [H. C.] Walker. . . . Mr. R. H. Willis, formerly county surveyor, informed me that there was the grave of a woman on a beautiful knoll overlooking the Platte river, near the old Overland road, southeast of Bridgeport. Mr. Willis kindly loaned me one of his field books from which I found the location to be in section 26, township 19 north, range 49 west. The headstone of the grave is of marble, and the following inscription is beautifully carved upon it:

AMANDA
Consort of M.J. Lamin
of Devonshire, Eng.
Born Feb. 22, 1822.
Died June 23, 1850, of Cholera.



Paul Henderson of Bridgeport (right), local historian; Merrill J. Mattes, Littleton, Colorado retired National Park Service historian; and Mrs. Marvin F. Kivett, Lincoln, near Court House Rock.

The stone has been broken by vandals into many pieces which now lie scattered about.

From Mr. G. J. Hunt, a lawyer of Bridgeport, I learned that about fifteen years ago he represented the Belmont Irrigation Company, and his camp was located near the grave, and that a Mr. James Muir, correspondent of the *Omaha World Herald*, came to his camp and, hearing of the death and burial of the woman, wrote an account of it for his paper. The article attracted the attention of a nephew of the husband, Mr. Lamin, living in Pennsylvania, who made inquiry as to the authorship of the article. He said that in 1850 his uncle, accompanied by his young bride, started for California in a wagon; that at a point about 200 miles from Ft. Kearny cholera broke out in the train, whereupon Mrs. Lamin was stricken and died; that his uncle returned to Ft. Kearny, walking all the way, to procure a stone which he erected at his wife's grave; that Professor Hayden, the geologist, was in the wagon train, but when the cholera broke out he withdrew. In his report he mentions Mrs. Lamin's death and her burial on a beautiful knoll overlooking the Platte river. The emigrant road is at the foot of the knoll about ten rods distant.

In all the accounts of mournful deaths on the overland trails, I remember none more sad than this of Mrs. Lamin, and certainly no greater fidelity and constancy than was shown by Mr. Lamin in thus travelling 200 miles, alone and on foot, through a country infested by Indians to procure this stone to mark the burial place of his bride. Our advance guard of civilization has all but obliterated that work of loving hands, and I earnestly recommend that a suitable memorial, bearing the original inscription and a brief history of the husband's fidelity, be placed at the grave."

I endeavored to trace James Muir's article for the *Omaha World-Herald*, but the clipping has been lost from the newspaper

files, and since the date of the article cannot be determined, it would be difficult to trace in the newspaper's microfilm library.² It would also be difficult to check the story of Lamin's Pennsylvania nephew, but it appears to be quite sincere and does well give credence to the Lamin grave. But if the nephew's reference to "Professor Hayden" refers to Professor Ferdinand V. Hayden, renowned for his geological surveys, it is incorrect. In the year 1850 Hayden was a student at Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio, and in late August of that year, attended college graduation ceremonies.³ Considering the distance and slowness of travel, it is most improbable that Hayden could have witnessed the June 23 Lamin burial. Hayden might have seen and noted the Lamin grave during his later journeys west, but I could find no references of this nature in his reports.⁴ This, regrettably, is the extent of my knowledge of the Lamin family. There is always the possibility that a yet-unread or unpublished trail diary might refer in more detail to the Lamins.⁵

On June 30, 1850, diarist Micajah Littleton camped opposite, or directly north of Court House Rock, reporting that in the course of a twenty-mile journey: "We have already passed six graves today, all west of Pumpkin Creek. Four of these were Missourians: N. Campbell June 16th age 21 of Mo. Saml. Hinch June 17th age 33 yrs & 4 days old of Saline Co. Mo. Calvin Green June 12 age 23. Howard Co. Mo. *Amanda Lamme June 23 age 28 Boon Co. Mo.* B. E. Davis June 17th age 26. Wm. Dalton June 17th age 24 Jones Co. Iowa."⁶

It could be supposed that diarist Littleton misread or misspelled the Lamin name as Lamme, but a subsequent check of Boone County, Missouri, census records based on Littleton's observations is most revealing. Taken on June 1, 1850, it includes names of many who were then enroute west. Family number 1,921 includes: May J. Lamme, 35, male, born Missouri; Amanda W. 26, born Missouri; Laura 6 and Alcis 4, both born in Missouri. Switzler's *History of Boone County*, published in 1882, has a fairly complete list of all families that went west in the gold rush. M. J. Lamme is among them.⁷ Deaths among the emigrants include Mrs. M. J. Lamme, daughter of Thomas C. Maupin,⁸ an early sheriff of Boone County. The Maupin and Lamme families were early settlers in Missouri, coming by way of Kentucky. An index to Boone County marriages shows that J. Lamme and Amanda Maupin were married in August, 1841, by R. S. Thomas.⁹

Thus Amanda Lamme of Missouri, wife of May J. Lamme (M. J.), becomes a well-documented, at least second-generation pioneer American, who died enroute to California in 1850. Her grave and its location were noted by at least one diarist, Littleton. An article based in part on letters of May Jackson Lamme, entitled "From Marthasville to Marysville in 1850" by Charles W. Bryan¹⁰ gives further information of the Lamme-Maupin family journey west.

In late 1850 May Jackson Lamme, his wife Amanda, and three young daughters, Laura, Alcis, and Frances Anne, together with some Maupin family relatives, left Marthasville, Missouri. Lamme's first letter to his mother dated May 28, 1850, is from east of the Big Blue River crossing in Kansas. In his second letter dated June 8, 1850, Lamme expresses concern about cholera, the road-graves, and an initial tragedy in the wagon train, the death of Dr. Nye from cholera.

About October, 1850, the Lamme-Maupin party reached Marysville, California. On January 10, 1851, three months after his arrival, Lamme wrote his first letter home relating how they had settled at the diggings, prices of commodities; then the sad news of the loss of his wife Amanda and his great concern for the welfare of his three daughters. Lacking any details of the date or place of Amanda's death, the author has concluded that this occurred along the Humbolt River.

May Jackson Lamme's second letter is significant, for it places the wagon train at Fort Kearny, Nebraska, on June 8, 1850. A check through trail diaries indicates that the average time required for a wagon train to travel between Fort Kearny and Court House Rock was between 12 and 14 days. This could well place the Lamme Maupin train in the Pumpkin Creek area just east of Court House Rock, about June 21-22, 1850. Here Amanda probably succumbed to cholera and was buried on June 23.

Mrs. Helen Henderson of Bridgeport, Nebraska, was kind enough to give me the story of Amanda Lamin according to local legend:¹¹

When the State erected Oregon Trail markers in 1912, this monument was placed by her grave, which had a stone marker on it. The inscription was transcribed to one side of the Oregon Trail marker. There were a number of graves of early settlers' children and no doubt other emigrant graves on this rise of ground south of the North Platte river. Range cattle trampling around the large monument broke the Lamin marker into several pieces. They were brought into town [and] one piece is in the local museum.

The story as told here says that after she died her husband returned to Fort Kearny or



*Present marker at
Amanda Lamin grave.*

someplace east. He had a stone inscribed for her and came out again on another wagon train and placed it at her grave. Some stories say he brought it in a wheelbarrow. There is the same [wheelbarrow] story about another grave in Nebraska. . . .

The stone as we saw it and placed the surviving pieces together was like the sketch. Apparently this stone had been prepared for someone else or was spoiled. The engraver had crossed out the former inscription—turned the stone upside down and put the Lamin inscription on it. It might have been that some error was made on the Lamin name—maybe it had been damaged and was hard to decipher. Maybe some day more can be found in some diary of the wagon train they were in.

My conclusion, based on information previously given, is that the grave is undoubtedly that of Amanda Lamme. Littleton and possibly others saw and recorded facts from a wooden type headboard placed on the burial by the Lamme-Maupin families. This grave marker survived the wagon train era to languish with others in weathered, neglected condition until the settlement period, when some unknown person, respectful of pioneers, erected a more permanent marble marker.¹²

Here the mistake in identity might have occurred, given the great similarity between the Lamme and Lamin names. Lamme was interpreted as Lamin. It is also possible that with the passage of time old headboards from other contemporary graves might have become confused and placed together. Perhaps a Devonshire, England, '49er was buried nearby. In this manner facts might have been taken from more than one headboard, thus initiating an error to be engraved on the marble marker.

Mrs. Henderson's statement that the marble headstone had "crossed out" engraving on the bottom end, thus indicating prior use, is significant. Possibly a mistake in this engraving rendered the stone unsuitable to the purchaser, but a headstone in this condition would have been suitable to mark an older pioneer

grave. Later this marble headstone was broken, either by cattle or vandals.¹³ In 1930 Paul Henderson fenced an area some 50 feet square around the old grave to include the graves of children of a family which operated a cattle ranch in the vicinity in the early 1900's. Cattle destroyed this fence about 1939-1940.¹⁴ The third and present marker to stand sentinel at the grave was placed there by the State of Nebraska and the Daughters of the American Revolution, but erected by the late R.P. Scott of Bridgeport.¹⁵

With the passage of time, the Nebraska Oregon Trail markers are thought of as memorials to all the pioneers, and while I do not claim to have satisfactorily determined all the facts in this matter, I feel this marker should read: "AMANDA, Consort of M.J. Lamme of Marthasville, Missouri, died June 23, 1850, of Cholera."

NOTES

1. Robert S. Harvey, *Publications of the Nebraska State Historical Society XVIII*, ed., Albert Watkins (Lincoln: Nebraska State Historical Society, 1917), 217-219.

2. Robert McMorris, *Omaha World Herald*, to Reg. P. Duffin, February 9, 1976.

3. W.E. Bigglestone, archivist, Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio, to Reg. P. Duffin, February 6, 1976.

4. Letters from the following institutions report no Hayden reference to the Lamin grave: University of Pennsylvania, November 26, 1975; Smithsonian Institution, May 21, 1976; Department of Interior, Reston, Virginia, June 22, 1976; General Services Administration, National Archives, July 13, 1976; New York University, November 3, 1976.

5. Charles W. Martin, Omaha, to Reg. P. Duffin, April 22, 1976. Mr. Martin's collection of over 40 trail diaries covering the year 1850 contains no mention of the Lamin family.

6. Merrill J. Mattes, *The Great Platte River Road* (Lincoln: Nebraska State Historical Society, 1969), 373. Littleton's statement that all six graves were west of Pumpkin Creek may be in error. The Amanda Lamin grave [perhaps that of Amanda Lamme] is east of Pumpkin Creek.

7. William F. Switzler, *History of Boone County, Missouri* (St. Louis: Western Historical Company, 1882), 362.

8. *Ibid.*, 363.

9. Mrs. Goldena Howard, State Historical Society of Missouri, to Reg. P. Duffin, October 10, 1975.

10. Charles W. Bryan, "From Marthasville to Marysville [California] in 1850," *The Bulletin*, XIX (St. Louis, January, 1963), 115-126.

11. Conversations among Paul and Helen Henderson and Reg. P. Duffin, July 14, 1975.

12. At the Rachel Patterson grave at Ash hollow near Leiwellen, "a stranger, Mr. Rittemer of North Platte, donated a marble slab forty-six inches long and fifteen inches wide and imbedded it in cement. On the upper surface of the slab is the following inscription: 'In Memory of Rachel Patterson who died and was buried here in 1849. She belonged to a California Emigrant Co. from Missouri. Aged 18 Yrs.'" Harvey, *Publications*, 109-110. A similar gesture could have been made at the Lamin grave.

13. A small fragment of this headstone is now on display at the Oregon Trail Museum, Highway 92, Bridgeport, Nebraska.

14. Conversation with Paul Henderson, July 14, 1975.

15. Paul Henderson to Reg. P. Duffin, January 8, 1977.