

Migration from England to Illinois

Name	Date	From	To
Peter Wright (1595-1675) (with brothers Anthony and Nicholas)	Aug 1635	Wendling, Norfolk, England	Saugus (now Lynn), Massachusetts
	1637	Saugus (now Lynn), Massachusetts	Sandwich, Plymouth, Massachusetts
	1663	Sandwich, Plymouth, Massachusetts	Oyster Bay, Long Island, New York
One of the men who purchased the land for Oyster Bay from the Indians. A copy of the deed is in Oyster Bay. Town records https://archive.org/details/oysterbaytownrec06oyst/page/348/mode/2up			
Solomon Wright, Sr. (1742-1823)	Before 1780	Oyster Bay, Nassau, New York	Carmel, Dutchess (now Putnam), New York
Solomon Wright, Jr. (1780-1858)	1836	Carmel, Putnam, New York	Burlington, Kane, Illinois

Peter Wright (1595-1675)

Peter Wright was born in 1595 in Wendling, a rural parish in Norfolk, England, where the Wright family had been established for generations. Their lineage can be traced with confidence to Anne de Beaupre, who married Nicholas Wright in the sixteenth century, firmly situating the family among the longstanding East Anglian population.

The Wrights of Norfolk appear to have been solidly placed within the yeoman or minor gentry class—families accustomed to landholding, local responsibility, and participation in parish governance. This background helps explain Peter Wright’s later ease in assuming civic leadership roles in the American colonies.

Migration to New England (1635)

In August 1635, Peter Wright emigrated to New England with his brothers, Anthony and Nicholas, first landing at Saugus (now Lynn), Massachusetts. Their arrival coincided with the height of the Great Puritan Migration, yet their subsequent movements suggest motivations that were both economic and communal rather than ideological.

By 1637, the brothers had relocated to Sandwich in Plymouth Colony. There, Peter Wright quickly became integrated into the town’s structure. He received land grants, participated in meadow divisions, took the oath of fidelity, and held offices such as surveyor of highways. These records portray him as a trusted and respected member of the community—an individual comfortable operating within emerging colonial institutions.

Sandwich, Plymouth Colony: Land and Civic Life

During their years in Sandwich, the Wright brothers were notably active in the acquisition and management of land. Town records consistently reference Peter and his brothers as among the able-bodied men, landholders, and officeholders responsible for shaping the settlement's physical and civic landscape.

Children were born to Peter and Nicholas during this period, suggesting that Sandwich served as a formative stage in the establishment of the Wright family in America. The brothers' prominence in local affairs foreshadowed the even greater influence they would later exert in their final place of settlement.

The Move to Oyster Bay, Long Island (1653)

In the spring of 1653, Peter Wright joined a company led by Rev. William Leverich to found a new settlement at Oyster Bay on Long Island. The group traveled by water aboard the sloop *Desire* and negotiated directly with the Matinecock people for a substantial tract of land.

The consideration paid—coats, kettles, wampum, tools, knives, and clothing—was later noted as reflecting the moral principles of the purchasers. Notably absent were firearms or alcohol, a fact praised by later historians as consistent with emerging Quaker values. At Oyster Bay, Peter Wright and his brothers became major landholders, civic leaders, and foundational figures in the new community.¹

Quaker Identity and Religious Life

Peter Wright and his brothers are clearly identified in Oyster Bay records as members of the Society of Friends (Quakers). Anthony Wright's home served for many years as a meeting place for worship and business, and land was later conveyed for a burial ground and meetinghouse. This places the Wright family at the heart of early Quaker institutional life in Oyster Bay.

It is unlikely, however, that Peter Wright was a Quaker while living in Wendling, Norfolk. The Religious Society of Friends did not formally emerge until the late 1640s, well after Peter's departure from England. That said, East Anglia was a center of religious nonconformity, and the Wrights may have been shaped by Puritan or separatist ideas that made them receptive to Quaker theology later in life.

From Puritan Massachusetts to Quaker Toleration

Massachusetts Bay Colony became increasingly hostile to Quakers in the 1650s, imposing fines, banishment, and corporal punishment. The Wright brothers' steady movement away from Massachusetts—first to Plymouth Colony, then decisively to Long Island—closely parallels the migration patterns of many settlers seeking greater religious and civic freedom.

Oyster Bay, under Dutch and later English jurisdiction, offered a comparatively tolerant environment. It became a magnet for Quakers and other dissenters who sought a place where religious conviction could coexist with economic opportunity and political participation.

¹ A copy of the deed granted by the Native people can be found in the Oyster Bay town records.

Legacy in Oyster Bay

Peter Wright spent his final years as a respected Quaker elder and landholder in Oyster Bay. He died in 1675, leaving behind a large family whose descendants continued to acquire land and exert influence in the region well into the eighteenth century. The Wright legacy in Oyster Bay is one of migration, adaptation, and leadership—rooted in English tradition but reshaped by the opportunities and challenges of colonial America.

Solomon Wright, Sr. (1742-1823)

Solomon Wright, Sr. was born in 1742 in Oyster Bay, the youngest of eight children in a Wright family that had been established there for three generations. By the mid-eighteenth century, the Wrights were no longer frontier settlers but members of a mature colonial community with deep land, kinship, and religious roots. Oyster Bay was home to one of the most important Quaker centers on Long Island, and earlier generations of Wrights were closely associated with that religious culture.

Marriage and Family Structure

On 26 August 1768, Solomon married Mary Hawxhurst in Oyster Bay, uniting two long-established local families. The Hawxhursts were likewise tied to early landholding and Quaker settlement in the region. Despite Solomon's position within a large sibling group, he and Mary are known to have had only one surviving child, Solomon Wright, Jr. This limited line of descent is significant when considering Solomon's later mobility: inheritance pressures were concentrated, not dispersed, and his decisions did not need to account for multiple sons remaining on ancestral land.

Revolutionary War Service and Its Consequences

Unlike the more strictly pacifist Quaker tradition associated with Oyster Bay, Solomon served in the Revolutionary War. Contemporary references identify a Solomon Wright as a sergeant in the Connecticut militia, present at the Battles of Saratoga and at the surrender of General Burgoyne. Later records describe him as a war pensioner, indicating recognized service and long-term consequences of his participation.

For a man raised within a Quaker cultural environment, military service would have placed Solomon in a morally and socially ambiguous position. Across Long Island, the Revolution fractured Quaker communities: some Friends remained strictly pacifist, others paid fines, some relocated, and a number quietly disengaged from formal Quaker discipline after the war. Solomon's service suggests that, whatever his upbringing, economic survival outweighed strict pacifist adherence.

Post-Revolution Migration: Leaving Oyster Bay

After the Revolutionary War, the Wright brothers began to disperse. Reuben, Thomas, and James Wright all migrated westward to Westchester County, while Solomon moved north into the Hudson Valley.

This migration fits a broader postwar pattern. Land on Long Island was increasingly subdivided, expensive, and legally entangled, while inland counties such as Dutchess, Putnam, and Westchester offered larger tracts, better agricultural prospects, and expanding Quaker-friendly communities. Importantly, eastern and northeastern Dutchess County had become one of the largest Quaker

settlement regions outside Philadelphia during the late eighteenth century. Thus, leaving Oyster Bay did not mean abandoning Quaker society, but rather re-embedding within it elsewhere.

Later Life and Death

Solomon Wright, Sr. died in 1823, with records noting his death in Seneca, suggesting either a final move or family connections further west as New York State continued to open to settlement. His identification as a war pensioner underscores that his Revolutionary service remained a defining element of his later life.

Solomon Wright, Jr. (1780-1858)

Solomon Wright, Jr. (1780–1858) was born in or near Carmel, Putnam County, New York the only known surviving child of Solomon Wright, Sr., and Mary. He grew up during a period of post–Revolutionary War transition in the Hudson Valley, where his family had recently resettled from Long Island. On 18 January 1801, Solomon married Zilpha Baldwin (1779–1836) in Carmel, and together they raised eight children between 1802 and 1822.

For most of his adult life, Solomon remained in Putnam County, part of a stable, multigenerational community rooted in New York. In the mid-1830s, however, his family began to join the broader westward movement of New England and New York families seeking new farmland and opportunity. In 1835, one of his daughters and her husband migrated to Burlington. The following year, after the death of his wife Zilpha, Solomon himself moved west with two of his sons, settling in Burlington, Kane County, Illinois.

[Solomon and Zilpha’s story is told more fully in the Biographical Sketches.]