



The Granny Healer was an integral member of the Scotch-Irish communities founded by the 1718 settlers in Maine who can rarely be found in the written records. This was a traditional healing practice from a time when doctors were few and far between and most childbirths were overseen by midwives. Girls learned traditional practices alongside their mothers and grandmothers, slowly, over time, until through experience, they too became Granny Healers.

In 1718 Maine, people had to be very self-reliant. A Granny Woman or Healing Granny knew exactly which plant, herb, root, or bark could be used to heal each malady or injury. When someone was sent to "fetch Granny", she would leave her own family, often for days, to care for her neighbors. She often stayed for days after a child was born or during an outbreak of disease.

The Granny Healer tradition, based upon scant evidence in the historical record, seems to have been brought to Maine by the women associated with the Jameson Family, who originally came from Argyle, Scotland. They had moved to Omagh, Ulster, in 1685 before migrating to Maine in 1718. We know that **Sarah McClellan Jameson James**, who ended up in Warren, Maine, was a Granny Healer because her work was not only remembered as oral history but got written down and was included as 'A Sketch of Granny James' in the 1877 edition of 'Annals of the Town of Warren' by Cyrus Eaton.

Sarah was born in 1727 on the farm owned by her father, Bryce McClellan, in what is modern day South Portland. Her mother was Jane Jameson. Although we don't know for sure, Jane may have been the woman who trained her daughter to be a healer, unless another named and unmentioned Granny healer relative lived in the same household. Here the trail runs cold because, even though she seems to have accompanied her husband to America, neither the Christian name nor the maiden surname of Sarah's Jameson Grandmother were recorded. However, the link in tradition with Ireland and Scotland comes across strongly.

Sarah was the second wife of the ship "Robert" passenger Samuel Jameson and married again after his death. It is worth reading the pages in Eaton's book. The description of her presents a vivid portrait of this Maine pioneer. It is interesting that the Scottish pronunciation of James as Jemes was noted by the author, indicating that the use of Ulster Scots or at least the "accent" may have lingered longer in Maine than is assumed by many historians.

Adapted from Oct. 4, 2018 article by Dr. Mary Drymon-DeRose, Scotch-Irish Historian, South Portland, Maine USA