

Charles Towsey of Henley upon Thames in the County of Wexford Gentleman

Mary Harriet Sparks

H. B. Moorhouse

TOWSEY TALES

NAME: Sophia Clementina Dubois (nee Towsey)

BIRTH DETAILS: 1771, probably London, maybe Horton

DEATH DETAILS: probably 1830, Hackney (probably Stamford Hill)

CHART REF: Towsey Chart D1

MARRIAGE DETAILS: 26 July 1794, St. John, Hackney

SPOUSE: John Dubois (Du Bois)

Sophia Clementina Towsey's parents, Charles Towsey and Susanna Pearson, moved from Horton, Buckinghamshire, at about the time of her birth. As there is no record readily available, it is most likely that she was born in London.

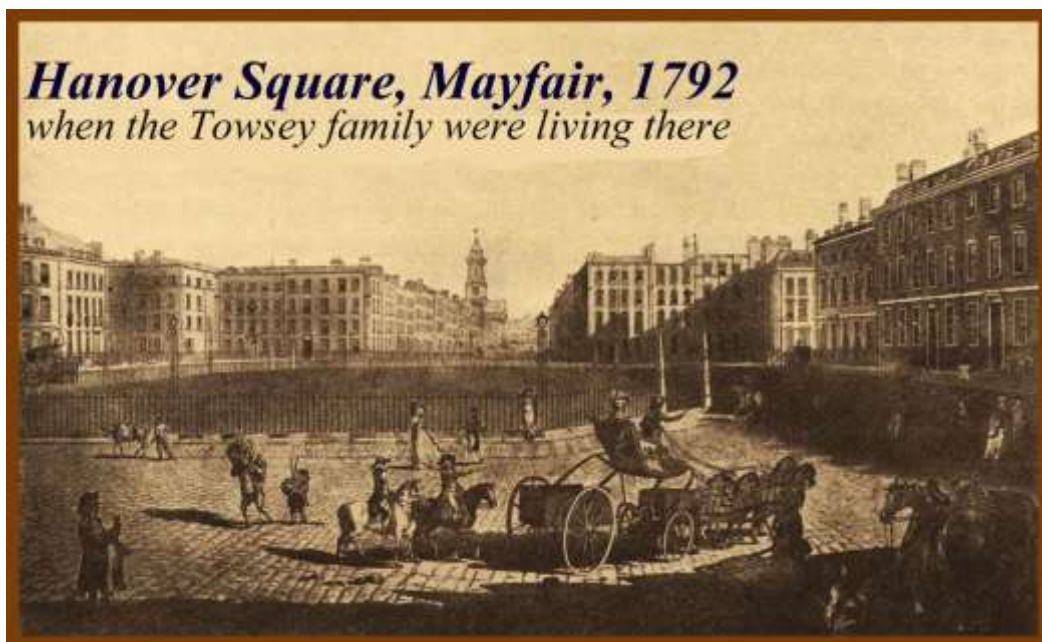
The Towsey family then moved to Henley when Sophia was about 6 years old but, when her mother died in 1781, after the birth of Sophia's younger sister, the family moved back again to London.

Sophia's father then died in 1789, leaving her brother, William Augustus Towsey: just one year older than Sophia, as head of the family. Of course he was still just 19 years old, so it would have been their eldest sister, Amelia Sarah Towsey, at 22 years of age, who was effectively in charge.

It is most likely that the family lived in various rented properties about London and we know that they were living in fashionable Hanover Square, in Mayfair, when Amelia Sarah Towsey married a wealthy merchant, Maren John Guillaume, in June 1792, one year after William had reached adulthood and legally taken control of the family, then consisting of himself, Sophia, who was about to turn 21 and their young sister, Louisa, who was just 10 years old.

Guillaume, born about 1761, was a coal merchant in the St. Pancras area. Amelia Sarah was still living in 1828, but she and Maren do not seem to have had any children.

By 1794, the Towsey family had moved out to Shacklewell, which was one of several small communities near Hackney; a green and quiet area just north of the city.



The first records that we have of Sophia are two reports of her marriage to John Dubois.

On July 26th, 1794, William witnessed the marriage of his sister, Sophia Clementina. The Gentleman's Magazine stated: "Marriage of Mr. John Dubois, of New Basinghall Street, Merchant, to Miss Sophia Towsey, daughter of the late Chas. Towsey Esq. of Wantage, Berks."

The notice in The Times on Tuesday July 29th stated: "On Saturday evening, by special licence, at his villa at Stamford Hill, John Bois Esq. to the elegant and accomplished Miss Sophia Clementina Towsey of Shacklewell."

The husbands of both Amelia and Sophia were Huguenots: French Protestants who had sought refuge in England from persecution in Catholic France. Large numbers of Huguenots settled in England, where many of them were successful in business, particularly as merchants.

John DuBois inherited the merchant business at 7 New Basinghall Street, London and at Brookes Warehouse, St. Atholins Churchyard, Watling Street, from his father, Abraham Dubois.

From trade directories, it seems that Abraham was at that same address from at least 1771 and that in 1790, John was in partnership with his brother, George Dubois.

There were many wealthy merchants by the name of Dubois, some of whom had prominent positions in The East India Company, trading mainly with China, early in the 18th Century, though I have not been able to find John Dubois's connection to those others.

We know that Sophia Clementina Dubois died in the borough of Hackney in 1830, but have not found any records of children born to John and Sophia. This is not to say that they did not have any, just that no records of such are apparent, which is not unusual.

It is most likely, that the Dubois family continued to live in their villa at Stamford Hill throughout her life.

When travelling north out of London, the road that passed by the villages of Dalston, Kingsland, Shacklewell (a quarter mile to the east of the main road), and then through the larger village of Stoke Newington, then came to Stamford Hill, which was where the road reached the crest of a hill. From Stamford Hill there was an expansive view across fields and hedgerows, sloping down to the marshy banks of the Lea River on the right, and straight ahead over the large parish of Tottenham.

Several villas at Stamford Hill, were gathered around the intersection of the main road, and another road that followed the ridgeline, overlooking the Lea Valley, coming up from Clapton, near Hackney.

It would have been soon after the death of Sophia, in 1830, that the unstoppable march of the metropolis reached Stamford Hill, where the Dubois villa would have been demolished to make way for row after row of terraced houses, which continued their expansion straight down the side of the hill and into the plains about Seven Sisters and Tottenham.

