



A Detailed History
of the
Wemyss Clan
and their descendants
the
Wayne Family in America

Prepared for Dr. Thomas Wayne
at the birth of his son Bruce

Preface

“My City”

There are times the Fates give writers a gift. A legend like Batman evolves in such a way, takes a little turn at some point, a nugget or a phrase stumbled upon by chance *sticks*. There is a flavor to it, a cosmic rightness, it takes hold with readers because on some primal level we recognize it as true. The good storytellers give thanks for those gifts. They explore them. The bad ones ignore them, or worse contradict them.

I doubt Bob Kane had any thoughts of crafting mythos when he made Bruce Wayne a rich man; it was, most likely, a simple expedient. A certain element of *noblesse oblige*, a reflection of the times in which Depression-era readers sought escape in the exploits of fantasy figures who lived in splendor, and perhaps unconsciously, a nod to the tradition of noble knights. For whatever reason, Bruce started at the top of the tree, and wisely, the mythos managed to tweak his social position over the years in order to keep him there. He went from millionaire to billionaire to adjust for inflation. But social position is more than having money to live in a big house above a cave and buy fast cars and planes. The 60's TV series might have been the first to specify an old family. Old Money, that's important. Bruce is above the status-seeking machinations of social climbers. He is an aristocrat. And therein lies the gift.

For members of those old, founding families do indeed feel a sense of connection and obligation to *PLACE*. They can, as Stephen Birmingham points out in *America's Secret Aristocracy*¹, walk down the street of a city with quiet pleasure and a sense of belonging, saying “that corner is where my Great Grandfather's house once stood. That old building was where my great-uncles went to school. That park was once part of my ancestor's apple orchard. That statue is a relative of mine. My family helped build that hospital, and that museum, and over there was a reservoir before my family gave money to build that library.”

For Bruce, the connection between the Wayne Family and Gotham City is a very real one: the City besieged by crime is his family besieged, and in saving the one, he saves the other.

The rightness of Bruce's/Batman's possessive bond with his city is gift of the Fates – and only one of several Batman qualities that are curiously right in Bruce Wayne being a descended from such a family.



¹ Much of the first chapter of the Robert Wayne story in the Wayne Family History is based on Birmingham's account of the Livingston Family of New York and Livingston Manor.

The Origins of the Waynes of Gotham

The name of **Wemyss** is derived from the Gaelic 'uaimh', meaning 'cave', and is believed to be taken from the caves and cliffs of the Firth of Forth in that part of Fife and indeed below the ruins of the old castle at East Wemyss known as MacDuffs Castle can be found caves containing drawings dating from Pictish times. Wemyss in Fife has been the seat of the chiefs since the twelfth century. They are one of the few Lowland families directly descended from the Celtic nobility through the Macduff Earls of Fife.

In 1290, Sir Michael Wemyss and his brother, Sir David, were sent with Scott of Balwearie to Norway to bring back the infant Queen Margaret, the 'Maid of Norway'. In 1296, Sir Michael swore fealty to Edward I of England, but he changed his allegiance to Robert the Bruce, and Wemyss Castle was sacked by the English. In 1315 Wemyss witnessed the Act of Settlement of the Scottish Crown by Robert the Bruce at Ayr. Their allegiance to Robert the Bruce however ensured their prosperity and explains the many Roberts and Bruces in the many different branches of the Wemyss and later the Wayne families.

Sir John Wemyss was born in 1586. He was the second-born, but eldest-surviving son of Sir John Wemyss of that ilk by his second wife Mary Stewart. John was knighted in 1618 and created a Baronet of Nova Scotia in 1625, with a charter to the barony of New Wemyss in that province of Canada. Created a baron in 1628, he was later advanced to the title of Earl of Wemyss, the patent being presented to him personally by Charles I at Dunfermline. He was High Commissioner to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, a Privy Councillor and one of the Committee of the Estates. He took part with the Scottish parliament against Charles I, and died in 1649. Despite the grudge Charles II bore them, the main branch of Clan Wemyss continued to prosper and the present chief, Sir David Wemyss of Wemyss who married Lady Jean Bruce, daughter of the Earl of Elgin, still has his principal seat at Wemyss Castle in Fife.

However, the descendants of Thomas of the Wemyss of Wintbank, the youngest son of the great-great-grandson of the first Sir Michael Wemyss, took a different path. Several branches settled in the Highlands where the name transmogrified to Wayne. It was from this branch whence Robert Wayne, son of Joseph the Uncompromising, emerged to become the first Wayne in America.



Robert Wayne and the Settlement of Gotham

What is now Gotham City, Batman's City, which Bruce Wayne calls home and the Dark Knight protects, was first called *Ganono* by the Mohawk. *Ganono* meaning "reeds," the name no doubt denoted the reedy marshes that encircled the great island. The Delaware Indians called it *Manados* or "hilly island."

When the Dutch arrived, they ignored these descriptive titles. They saw a natural site for a new colony – a large, defensible territory at the mouth of the most vital river on the North American coast, a way station for traffic from the fur-trading areas to the north – the ingredients for a great city, a capital city. They bought it, lock, stock and riverbed, from the Indians in exchange for "certain quantities of duffels, axes, knives, and wampum," and they called it Nieuw Nederland.

It would only become Gotham City when it became a British colony, and the first Wayne in America would be instrumental in that transformation.

Robert Wayne was born in the Scottish Highlands to a branch of the Clan Wemyss. The family had distinguished themselves as warriors, defending not just their own clan but also any of their neighbors, regardless of clan affiliations. They were rewarded with land and leadership positions. They were prosperous, until Joseph Wayne, called Joseph 'the Uncompromising'², took exception to the new English King. It was said Charles II was a Papist, and it was said further that he held a grudge for the lowland branch of the family's action against his father. Joseph the Uncompromising refused to sign the Oath of Allegiance to him, and the family was stripped of its wealth as a result. Some members remained in the highlands, some went into exile, and Robert went to America to seek his fortune.

Described as "tall, muscular, and rugged of countenance," Robert Wayne was an adventurer. Having seen what refusal to compromise did to his family, Robert made a resolution: he would adapt himself to suit whatever he encountered in the world, and he would cultivate a wealth that couldn't be taken at a monarch's whim: a wealth of abilities, knowledge, and cunning.

The business of the New World was the fur trade. American beaver fur was in great demand. The most fashionable European ladies modeled fur muffs & tippets while beaver trimmed & lined the coats of courtiers and kings. Over-hunting had nearly extinguished the little, dam-building mammal in the New England coloniesⁱ, so Wayne turned his attention to Nieuw Nederland, where the ponds, rivers, and streams were still teeming with the creatures and the Dutch grew rich buying pelts from the natives. The natives in question were the five Iroquois Nations, who refused to deal with the English or New Englanders. Wayne therefore did what no Englishmen had bothered to do: he learned the Dutch language. Then he did what no Dutchman bothered to do: he learned Iroquois.

Wayne befriended the Iroquois as no European ever had. He learned the Five Nations were represented by an elected Spokesman, at that time a Mohawk warrior. Whereas the Dutch always presented themselves to the Spokesman as *patroons*, lords of great

² Among other things

tracts of land given them by their king, Wayne introduced himself like an Indian warrior would. He recited the oral history of his fighting ancestors in the Highlands.

He further won the respect of the Spokesman when he exposed a criminal enterprise in the fur trade. The Iroquois traded pelts for wampum, small white or dark purple/black beads, meticulously fashioned from the shells found in abundance along the coast of Southern Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and the northern shore of Long Island. Making counterfeit wampum had become a cottage industry in Holland. By exposing this practice, Wayne knew he would make many enemies among the Dutch, so he concealed his face behind a mask. The Spokesman, of course, recognized his informant. There was only one white man who could speak the Iroquois tongue as this masked stranger did. But he was able to swear to the Dutch patroons that he had never seen the face of his informant, and in so doing, protected Wayne's standing in the colony.

Just as he'd made himself invaluable to the Iroquois, Robert Wayne made himself indispensable to the Dutch. The largest and richest land in Nieuw Nederland was Schuylerwyck, some 700,000 acres on the west bank of the great river. Its owner or patroon, Kiliaen Van Schuyler, was so far above his neighbors as to be something beyond a mere Colonial Governor. In Feudal terms, he was lord of the greatest patroonship of the Americas. He was, regrettably, ill equipped to manage a vast estate, govern tenants, or wield influence in a thriving colony. Wayne offered a helping hand and was soon managing all of Schuylerwyck. He also won the good opinion of old Kiliaen Van Schuyler's extremely young and pretty wife Catalyntie. In the harsh winter of 1678 Van Schuyler died childless, leaving all his property to Catalyntie. One year later, Robert Wayne married Catalyntie Van Schuyler, becoming legal master of the estate he already managed.

When Nieuw Nederland became a British Colony of Gotham, the English King continued the Dutch practice, granting titled land to colonists who had proven useful. Robert Wayne had certainly done so, rescuing the English fur trade from the Dutch monopoly. But the words patroon and patroonships had to go, rather an English term was substituted: manorships, along with the title Lord of the Manor thrown in if the recipient had been especially good.

Thus in 1686 James II declared Robert, son of Joseph the Uncompromising, to be the first lord of the great estate formerly called Schuylerwyck, henceforth to be known as Wayne Manor.



Wayne Coat of Arms



VIRTUTE ET CONSTANTIA

“In sable, a bar of gold, accompanied above by two keys of the same and under by one beaver of the same. Crowned with a helmet, crested by a cat in gold and coated in sable and gold. Supported on the right by an azure griffin, beaked, clawed and winged in gold. Supported on the left by an azure dragon, beaked, clawed and winged in gold.

Motto: Virtute et Constantia.”

When Robert Wayne was declared by James II to be lord of Wayne Manor, he was offered the chance to design his own family crest. Deciding that he would start anew, cutting all links with his past, he chose not to incorporate any references to Clan Wemyss. Instead his familial crest would proclaim his own mastery of Wayne Manor and his guardianship over the City of Gotham. Hence the choice of **gold** and **sable** as main colours, the first representing his generosity and the second the constancy of his family.

The **two keys** in the upper-part of the shield symbolize his guardianship and dominion over Wayne Manor and Gotham City.

The **golden bar** is a stylized military belt or fess, symbolizing his readiness to serve the public.

The **beaver** in gold is a symbol of his industry and a reference to the trade on which the manor’s wealth was built.

The supporters’ colouring is **gold** and **azure**, denoting generosity, truth, and loyalty as the family’s defining characteristics.

The **dragon** on the left is the valiant defender of the Wayne’s treasure, namely Wayne Manor. While the **griffin** on the right is the vigilant protector of Gotham City. (The position

on the right being the more important, indicating the Wayne's place their duty to Gotham even above that of their own house)

The crest of the helmet is a **cat** of gold, officially representing the liberty, vigilance, courage and forward thinking needed in the New World, although there was little doubt at the time that Robert included the cat as a sly allusion to his wife, Catalyntie (whose English may or may not have been sufficient to perceive the pun).

The motto is self-explanatory: virtue and constancy.



First Family of Gotham

By 1800 the term Wayne Manor no longer applied to the land grant itself, which had swollen to a million acres before being largely sold off throughout the 18th century, but to a house. Wayne Manor, the house, was built in 1771 on the choicest 200-acre parcel of the original manorship. It was the first house in the region built with large windows, seven feet tall and three feet wide, to command a view of the river and the growing city beyond. It was built with brick baked on the premises; the walls of the house are two feet thick. Large, formal rooms, the smallest twenty-six by twenty-four feet, extend off a wide central hallway.

It is over this hallway, dubbed "The Great Hall" since the days of Beatrice Wayne, the fourth mistress of the manor who was very fond of novels set in large castles, where the many family portraits are hung. There is a portrait of Robert Wayne, "the first Lord", hung above an ancient map of Nieuw Nederland, scrawled in Robert's own hand with the Indian name *Ganono*.

Next to Robert is a much larger oil painting depicting two women, young, beautiful, and undeniably twin sisters: Sarah and Marie Wayne.

During the American Revolution, while the men were off fighting the war, women turned the house into a hospital to care for wounded soldiers and other refugees from Gotham proper. A niece of the household, young Sarah Wayne, fell in love with a wounded officer, Jason Monroe. He proposed, and though her family did not consider Monroe good enough for her, Sarah accepted. The women pieced together a wedding gown from what bits of silk they could scrap together in the wartime shortages... but alas, Monroe was killed in the Battle of Trenton and never made it to the altar. Sarah Wayne was not a silly young thing, she did not die within a year of a broken heart, or anything like it. She lived a long and fruitful life, but never married. Her ghost is thought to inhabit the North drawing room looking out on the garden where her wedding would have taken place.

Meanwhile, Sarah's sister, Marie Wayne married an ambitious young statesman, Charles St. John. St. John became the young Republic's ambassador to France, and his wife – following the family tradition of linguistic energy and brilliance, learned to speak perfect French before embarking. St. John and his charming wife, who spoke their beautiful language properly, were eagerly taken up by the French nobility, and when they returned three years later, they would be positioned to become the first family of Gotham society – indeed, as its first important hostess, Marie Wayne St. John would be the architect of Gotham High Society as it exists to this very day.

While in Paris, Marie, who already shared the name of the French queen, began sharing the court dressmakers and milliners as well. She began ordering dresses, hats, gloves and accessories in fanciful new styles, and shipping these home – where her relatives, reduced by wartime shortages to dresses of homespun cloth, gasped in astonishment. One ball gown was of Chinese silk, into which real peacock feathers had been sewn. Another contained so many layers of Alençon lace that it weighed nearly twenty pounds!

Arriving home in 1784, St. John built a large, glittering townhouse in the center of the city, which became the scene of glittering entertainments. Marie St. John's "Dinner and Supper List" was probably the first list of Who's Who in American Society.

Marie St. John may well be the first of Bruce's ancestors to have used the family's wealth and position to foil a crime:

Everyone knew Rodney Putnam from Boston was bitter that Isabelle Miller refused his proposal of marriage and wed the dashing Hamilton Ashton instead. He circulated rumors that Ashton was 'not quite a gentleman' and had secrets in his past too scandalous to mention in polite company. Marie St. John skirted the issue for several months by inviting the rivals to alternate parties, until word reached her ears of a sinister plot. Putnam's insults were becoming more and more daring, with the only possible intention of provoking a duel. He had a set of dueling pistols taken from a British officer during the war, and it was whispered they were gimmicked in a way only Putnam knew, so that Ashton's death was a certain result of firing either weapon.

Mrs. St. John used her Paris connections to engage a French chef and invited both men to dinner that surpassed anything seen before in Gotham City: fresh lobster, beef and leg of lamb, fowl with truffles, pies, custards, jellies, fresh fruits in season, pastries and petit fours from the fashionable *bonbonneries* on the high street. While both men were happily digesting this gastronomic delight, Mrs. St. John declared her intention to host such a dinner every week, and hoped all those present would become regular guests. She went on, as if changing the topic entirely, to say that her sister, Sarah Wayne, would be also be a guest at these occasions, beginning next week. Poor dear Sarah, whose young man was killed in the Battle of Trenton, so tragic... so they must all be very sensitive and not talk of guns and battles when dear Sarah was present. Mrs. St. John went on to speak at some length of the horrors of guns, certainly it was war and the men had done their duty. But surely, no man who fired a gun *in peacetime* would ever be welcome in her home.

And there it was. If Putnam and Ashton settled their differences amicably, a feast of unheard of delicacies was theirs every Tuesday. If they persisted in their quarrel, the survivor would be banned for life from the sumptuous table of Mrs. St. John.

While the men never became friends, no new slanders or whispers about duels were heard from that night on.



The Wayne Women

It should surprise no one that the Wayne women were fully as intelligent, confident, determined and resourceful as the Wayne men. The daughters of old families generally are, and sons of women with those qualities seldom marry insipid twits³.

For the record, women of this caste are a breed apart, ruling American society and our most cherished cultural institutions with flair, inventiveness, and a sure hand. In that spirit, let us review the following letters given to Martha Van Geisen by her father and mother, respectively, on the eve of her marriage to Thomas Wayne.

My Darling Martha,

Tomorrow I will walk you down the aisle and give you away to another man. Thomas is a fine lad, and I have no doubt you'll be very happy together so long as you adhere to the principles that have kept his family and yours on course for generations. I enclose this letter that has been passed down in our family, from father to daughter, since the 18th century. It is my hope the wisdom of the past will guide you in these uncertain times of so many new fangled ideas:

From Solomon Van Geissen, Esq. to his daughter Elizabeth on the Eve of her marriage:

Daughter,

From the day you marry you must have no will of your own. The subordination of your sex to ours is enforced by nature, by reason, and by revelation. It must therefore produce the most happiness to both parties if you resolve to be completely obedient to your husband in all things. Mr. H [the intended husband], if he is like the others of his sex, will often require unreasonable sacrifices of your will to his. If this should be the case, still honor and obey him... The happiest marriages I have known have been those when the subordination I have recommended has been most complete.

Dearest Martha,

By now you will have received a letter passed down from Van Geisen father to Van Geisen daughter since the 18th century. Below is the letter passed down from mother to daughter, I'll let it speak for itself.

From Eleanor Van Geissen to her daughter Elizabeth on the Eve of her marriage:

Dearest Elizabeth,

Your father is certain, either today or tomorrow, to advise you in the most extraordinary terms to sacrifice your independent nature, your desires, your very personhood to the wishes of your husband. This, I need hardly say to a girl of your sense, is absolute twaddle.

Any woman of heart, sense, and understanding can influence a husband with a little careful application, and if she does so properly he will think it was all his idea.

The male sex, dear things, do not often know what they want. They think they do, they think a submissive wife who never contradicts them would be heaven on earth. In reality, they choose for themselves companions who can challenge them to be their best, who can be a worthy partner in life's work. Be his partner, Elizabeth, and give him sons that value women of spirit, because their mothers and sisters are so.

In tribute to such marvelous women, Martha hung a miniature of her ancestor, Elizabeth Van Geissen, in the portrait gallery next to Sarah and Marie Wayne.



³ One has to wonder at the author of a certain "Batman family" account portraying Martha as a naïve and clueless debutante, dating a mobster without even knowing it.

The Years of Change

The Waynes continued to prosper with the growing Gotham City. They continued to have their share of heroic military officers, among them Captain Forrester Wayne, who fought so bravely in the War of 1812 that he was offered command of the U.S.S. Constitution. He turned it down, having seen enough bloodshed during the war, and retired to civilian life. There he busied himself studying naval battles. He was a brilliant strategic thinker and, at the conclusion of his studies, wrote a small pamphlet entitled simply *A Dissertation on Tactics* that is still taught at Annapolis today.

There was a General Horatio Wayne who fought in the Civil War, but subsequent generations took more pride in Caleb and Annabelle Wayne, a husband and wife whose daring work with the Underground Railroad spirited hundreds of runaway slaves to safety in Canada before the likes of Horatio ever thought about going to war for them.

The country was changing, and leadership became more about industry and invention than war. In 1866, wanting to make a gesture after the Civil War and encourage the battered Southern economy, Bruce Andrew Wayne, an architect, purchased enormous quantities of Georgia pine, and put returning soldiers to work on a myriad of projects, including construction of the first Wayne Office Building in downtown Gotham, an observatory which is now the planetarium in Robinson Park, the Knickerbocker Keystone Club, and a renovation of Wayne Manor⁴.

Other Waynes distinguished themselves in various ways: there was a cabinet minister, two diplomats, a director of the National Gallery, and a frontier scout –although the family doesn't put much stock in those Waynes who ventured outside of Gotham to make their mark. Rather, they honored with portraits in the Great Hall ancestors like Lawrence Wayne, a gentleman inventor whose prolific catalog of gadgets and processes rivaled those of Edison's. Yet he remains unknown because his parents thought fame unseemly, and so forced him to patent his inventions under assumed names.

Lawrence was also good friends with another innovator, one Robert Fulton, and saw the potential in Fulton's steam-powered inventions while others, including the French British and US Governments, labeled them "Fulton's folly." Perfecting a design for a paddle-wheeled steamboat, Wayne obtained for himself an absolute monopoly to operate as-yet unheard of vessels called steamships in the waters surrounding Gotham.

Wayne's boat was christened *The Flying Fox*. She made her maiden voyage out of Gotham Harbor before a great crowd of onlookers. They'd come to gawk at the vessel, amazed that such a contraption with a 16-foot paddlewheel would even stay upright in the water. They twittered with nervous anticipation once the craft set off, expecting a spectacular mid-river explosion once it built up a full head of steam. Instead, they saw her slide smoothly out of her dock, move upriver against the tide at a brisk pace, and disappear on the horizon. 32-hours later word arrived that *The Flying Fox* safely reached

⁴ While this renovation was not necessary from an architectural standpoint, there was a second, in the 1930s, which also provided jobs at a crucial time, but was needed from a practical standpoint. The previous decades brought electric light, central heating, and plumbing improvements to the manor, which had all been tacked on in an *ad hoc* fashion. The 1930s renovation integrated these modern conveniences seamlessly into the aesthetic of the house.

the state capital. Soon the boat was operating on a regular ferry service between the two cities.

As a profitable enterprise, the Wayne monopoly was soon challenged. One Commodore Cornelius Page, an ex-ferryboat captain, began operating a competing service on the Hudson and Gotham rivers, in flagrant defiance of the Wayne franchise, and failing to recognize the power of the Wayne connections. Wayne promptly appealed to the courts. The Mayor, a Wayne cousin, had appointed a former Revolutionary soldier named Jacob Hays Dent to the police force and given him the resounding title of high constable of the city of Gotham. Dent served Page with a restraining order, and when the ornery Commodore declared "If you want to arrest me, you'll have to carry me off my boat!" the high constable promptly jumped aboard, grabbed the huge man under the armpits, and threw him over the railing onto the dock.

And then there was the railroad. Even in such a brilliant family, Michael Wayne was a visionary. He recognized before anyone how large the country was becoming and the significance the railroads would have in bringing it together. He financed the great EGL (for East Gotham Line) Railroad, the board of which soon included the most successful barons of Gotham industry. In its heyday, the EGL was the best-run railroad in the U.S. Other railroad men of the time were prone to scandals—such as E.H. Harriman breaking a strike with hired thugs wielding machine guns or William H. Vanderbilt declaring "the public be damned!" — which made the stock of their companies unstable. There were no such outrages at EGL because of the "high moral character and sense of public duty" Wayne insisted on in his management. The stability and the public service mindset enabled the railroad to improve in startling ways. For instance: Passengers from the West coming into Gotham had traditionally had to disembark on the Bludhaven shore and journey into Gotham by ferry. Wayne ordered two tunnels built under the Hudson River, four more under the Gotham River, and the construction of the magnificent Central Station — now a famous Gotham Landmark.



Closing the Portrait Gallery

Michael Wayne, posed formally before the Gotham Central Train Station, was the last painting added to the portrait gallery. It was Bruce's great grandfather, Bruce Steven Wayne, who retired the practice. It was, he said publicly, too stodgy a practice for the new, democratic age.

In private he gave another reason: The gallery was full. To make room for a new portrait, he would have to remove an old one. And that he flatly refused to do, as his journal explains:

"I would want any son of mine to know from whence he came, to see that these men and women, though they lived their lives near a hundred years before, are a part of who and what he is. I would want any future Bruce Wayne to know that he is born into a people who stand for something, who have values, who know how to handle themselves, accept responsibility, meet life's challenges, and rise to the occasion whatever they may be.

"To take down the image of these great predecessors on whose shoulders I stand, pretend they never existed, and replace it with my own sad visage, what kind of a man would that make me? Who am I to say I am right and yesterday was wrong? That is the act of an inferior person. That is not what gave the Wayne name the distinction it has today."

Wayne's son respected these wishes, as did his son, and to this day there is a standing order not to ever replace or forget a portrait in the gallery. Bruce Steven Wayne is remembered, however, his journal is kept in the main library, beneath a small photograph in a silver frame. Across the room on the mantle, sat a similar photo of Bruce Steven's son Christopher Wayne, and above that the great oil painting of Christopher's son Thomas and his wife Martha.



ⁱ America's Secret Aristocracy, Stephen Birmingham