

*"History of Thomas Blanchard Family"*

**THOMAS BLANCHARD (ca. 1590-1654)**

Thomas Blanchard is the original immigrant ancestor of this particular Blanchard pedigree line. Much research has been done on Thomas by several Blanchard researchers, and, in addition, there are accounts of his life in various local histories and in genealogies of other families who claim him as one of their ancestors by marriage. These are available on the Internet.

Thomas Blanchard's date and place of birth have not been precisely ascertained. He was probably born sometime around 1590. Most accounts say he was born in Hampshire, England, some say he was born in Normandy, France. Nothing is known about his early life.

Thomas's first wife was Elizabeth. Her surname is unknown. They were married in 1617 in England. Elizabeth Blanchard's name appeared in parish records for Goodworth Clatford, Hampshire, England. Goodworth Clatford is located about two miles south of Andover in Hampshire.

According to one Blanchard researcher, Thomas and Elizabeth had eight known children, and the baptisms of seven of those eight children (the names listed below) were found in the same parish records at Goodworth Clatford:

George, born ca. 1622

Thomas, born ca. October 1623

Mary, born ca. January 1625/26

Stephen, born ca. June 1628

\*Samuel, born August 6, 1629

Nathaniel, born ca. July 1632

David, born ca. February 1633/34.

It is unclear who the eighth child was, if there in fact was one. (The dates of birth of these children vary quite a bit in the different genealogical accounts.)

The burial of Thomas's wife, Elizabeth, on July 23, 1636, was entered in the Goodworth Clatford parish records, so it can probably be safely assumed that she died shortly before that date.

Within a year, on May 15, 1637, Thomas married Agnes Bent Barnes at St. Edmonds, Salisbury, Wilts (Wiltshire), England. (Wiltshire is the next county to the west of Hampshire, and Salisbury is about 20 miles southwest of Andover.)

Agnes was the widow of Richard Barnes. She had a son of her own, also named Richard. Agnes Bent had been baptized at Weyhill (aka Penton Grafton), Hants (aka Hampshire), on July 16, 1602. (Weyhill and Penton Grafton used to be separate parishes, but now the parish of Weyhill includes the hamlet of Penton Grafton. Penton Grafton and Penton Mewsey, which is referenced below, are neighboring villages. They are located about three miles northwest of Andover.)

Thomas was identified as a yeoman and widower on his marriage license. (According to Wikipedia, the historical term "yeoman" referred primarily to "a free man owning his own farm, especially from the Elizabethan era to the 17th century.")

So that's about all that is known about Thomas Blanchard before he emigrated.

In the late 1630s thousands of people headed west across the ocean to the New World. Thomas would have been around 40 years old then, and he was probably inspired to join his countrymen in the New World by the tales of his brother-in-law, John Bent, and his friend, Peter Noyes, who had already been to New England. Thomas was evidently living in London at the time, for it is known that in the late winter of 1639 Agnes's mother, the widow Anne (or Anie) Gosling Bent, came to London from Andover and stayed with Thomas's family for about a month. Then on April 12, 1639, Thomas and members of his family set sail from London on the ship "Jonathan." In those days, the fare for adults between Old and New England was £5. As far as is known, the family members who traveled with Thomas included his wife Agnes, Agnes's mother Anne Bent, Thomas's son Samuel by his first wife and Agnes's son Richard Barnes. One other source indicates that Thomas came over with his "wife, two children and his wife's mother." Those two children could have been Thomas's son Samuel and his stepson Richard Barnes. If that is indeed the case, then Thomas's other children had to have come over later.

In the early 20th century a man named Charles Edward Banks sought to reconstruct the passenger lists of the most prominent ships that brought the earliest settlers to New England. He did extensive research and he summarized his findings in a book entitled "Topographical Dictionary of 2,885 English Emigrants to New England 1620-1650." His book listed the following passenger on the ship "Jonathan": Blanchard, Thomas from Penton, Mewsey, Hampshire, bound for Braintree, Massachusetts. But no date is given.

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One source said that the "Jonathan" was 300 tons and its master was Captain John Whetstone. Another source speculated that the "Jonathan," like other transports used by the Bay colonists, would have been a ship of 200 tons or so with an overall length of 100 feet. There would have been two or three very small cabins for important passengers, sardine-like accommodations in the hold for a hundred more people, and the deck room for cows and other domestic animals. Whether it was 200 tons or 300 tons, the remaining description of the primitive conditions on board the "Jonathan" is probably fairly accurate.

The voyage should have taken not more than five or six weeks, but this trip over on the "Jonathan" was apparently a rough one, and it took ten weeks. The ship finally arrived in Boston on June 23, 1639.

On the voyage over Thomas's wife, his wife's mother, and the children all became sick. The party traveling with Thomas took up a collection for a maid to attend to Agnes and her mother, but Thomas reportedly personally attended to Agnes more than the maid did. Sadly, Thomas's wife Agnes died on the trip. One source says she died on April 28th, which would have been only a little over two weeks after they departed London. (Another account says she died "fifteen days out of port," which jives pretty well with the departure date of April 12th.) She may have died of childbirth complications, because the record states that an infant child of theirs also died on the ship. But it is unclear whether this child was one that was born on the voyage or whether it was a child of Thomas's and Agnes's that had reportedly been born in England the year before and was traveling with them on the ship. One source says the latter was a daughter named Agnes, another says it was a son named Brent and yet another said it might have been a son named Joseph.

So the trip over on the "Jonathan" was a disaster for poor Thomas. He lost his wife and a child. And to make matters worse, after the ship had already come to anchor in Boston harbor (at Nantaskith, now Nantasket), his mother-in-law, the widow Bent, also died. After arriving in Boston Thomas dutifully arranged to have her body carried ashore for burial.

Thomas's wife Agnes was probably also buried in Boston, but unknown where.

Thirteen years later Richard Barnes, Agnes's son from her previous marriage, brought a lawsuit against Thomas, seeking the £20 that Agnes had left him in her will. (One condition of Agnes's marriage to Thomas had been that he had to promise that he would pay the £20 to Richard when he became of age. Thomas consented, but he must not have followed through.) Richard had evidently been living with his maternal uncle, John Bent, on Long Island for seven years. John Bent had also evidently been holding the £20 for the minor Richard until he came of age. Sometime after these seven years on Long Island, Richard "was

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apprenticed to Thomas Blanchard." (It would be nice to know what that means.) And then when Richard did finally come of age, he went to Cambridge to get his money. On February (or April) 6, 1652, a jury ruled in favor of Richard, the plaintiff, and ordered Thomas to pay damages of £20 and court costs of thirty shillings.

There were multiple sworn testimonies taken that same year, 1652, from various people who came over on the "Jonathan" with Thomas and who, like character witnesses, attested to his devoted care of his ill mother-in-law on the voyage. The maid who was supposed to take care of Agnes evidently did very little. This maid was apparently some sort of relative ("a kinswoman") of Agnes.

Soon after coming to New England, Thomas married a third wife, Mary Shrimpton (or Mary Maverick). They had no known children.

In 1642 Thomas "took inventory of the estate of George Browne of Newbury, Massachusetts." This probably meant that he inventoried the belongings of one George Browne, deceased. But Newbury is quite a distance north of Boston.

The passenger list in Banks's book, mentioned above, indicated that Thomas's destination in the New World was Braintree, Massachusetts. But he may not have lived there initially after arriving in Boston. One source says he started out in Charlestown. Then, possibly around 1646, Thomas did settle in Braintree, but had no land granted to him there. Braintree is in Suffolk (now Norfolk) County and is located about 12 miles east southeast of Boston. Thomas remained there until 1651. On February 12th of that year (1650/51) he bought 200 acres of land in Charlestown, Middlesex (now Suffolk) County, Massachusetts, from one Rev. John Wilson. This was just three years before he died. The transaction was recorded in the Suffolk Deeds on August 4, 1652. As spelled out in the deed, the property included "houses, Outhouses, barnes, buildings, stables, cow houses, Orchardes, Gardens, fould yardes and Enclosures" (a fould yarde was a farmyard). The land was bounded on the south and west by the Mystic River and on the north and east by the North River and Nowell's Creek.

So Thomas, who was again identified as a yeoman in the above-mentioned deed, moved from Braintree to this farm in Charlestown. His land formed a promontory between the two bodies of water and was known then as Wilson's point, later as Blanchard's Point and still later as Wellington. (This land remained a part of Charlestown until 1726, when it was annexed to Malden and was later transferred to Medford in 1817.)

Most people who immigrated to America were middle class. The rich didn't want to expose themselves to the wilderness in New England and the poor couldn't afford to start a new life or have the means to do it. So, based on that

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premise, Thomas would have been fairly well off. He obviously had the wherewithal to pay for his and his family's transit across the Atlantic. He was able to purchase 200 acres of land ten or twelve years after he immigrated. And his son Samuel became a very wealthy landowner in Charlestown and Andover. It's interesting to note, however, that in a 1652 deposition by two fellow passengers on the "Jonathan" - Nicholas Noyes and Anthony Somerby - which dealt with the deaths of Samuel's wife and mother-in-law, these two gentlemen testified that Thomas evidently needed a little financial help: *"The testimonie of us Inhabitants of Newburie whose names are hereunder written, who about 13 years ago came over here in a ship called the Jonathan of London, with Thomas Blanchard now of Charlestown, at what time his wife dyed in the ship hee was conceived to be very poore and in greate necessity by reason of his wives and childrens sickness, that the passengers made a gathering for him in the shippe to help to put his child to nurse..."*

One source indicated that Thomas is believed to have owned and operated a dairy in or around Boston. (Presumably this was the farm in Charlestown that he bought in 1650/51.) This assertion seems plausible since the land he bought included "cow houses" and in his will (see below) he referenced his "dairy house" and he bequeathed eight cows to his wife, one to his friend, Rev. Mr. Mathews, and another one to the church of Malden.

On May 22, 1652, Thomas made out a last will and testament. The text of that document survives, and it is interesting reading:

*"I, Thomas Blanchard, of Charlestowne, being weake in body, but through mercy in Sound memory, do make this my last will & testament.*

*Vnto my wife, Mary Blanchard, and my sonne, Nathaniell, the Vse of the new End of my dwelling house, and the dairy house dureing the life of my wife;*

*also, vnto my wife, eight Cowes, whereof three or fower are called and knowne by the name of her Cowes, also I give vnto my wife, free Sumer feed and winter Stower or food for the said eight Cowes, or so many other Cowes to be kept and prvided for, by my Executors in all Respects in matter of food among their owne Cowes.*

*I give vnto my wife, fifty bushels of Corne a yeare, dureing her life, to be payd by my Executors yearely, at or before the first of the 2d mo. in wheate, Rie, pease, barly and Indian, in Equall prportions;*

*also, I give my wife one of the beds I now ly on, with all things apprteyning there vnto, as also one third part of all other my household stuffe (excepting the bedding) to be sett out, or apportioned by my overseers.*

I give my wife, my old mare, the aforesaid Cowes, househould stuffe & mare to her and vnto and her heyres for ever. I do dispose and betruest Biniaman Tompson, vnto and with my wife to prvide for, and bring vp in learning (at her owne pleasure) so as to fit him for the vniversity, in case his parents please to leave him with her, & shee live to that time.

I give vnto my Sonne, Samuel, besides all former giftes now in his hands, the Sume of four score poundes, whereof thirty pounds to be payd in cattle, vpon valluacon of my overseers, at or before the first of the 9th month next after my decease, and ten pounds in Corne, at or before the first of the second month following, and ten pounds a yeare, in cattle or Corne, at or before the first of the 10th month, for the space of fower yeares following.

I give vnto my Sonnes, George & Nathaniell, all my farme, houseing and appurtenances after my decease, vnto them & their heyres forever, excepting as before expressed to the Vse of my wife.

I give vnto my Grand Child, Joseph Blanchard, my two teate heiffer, to be kept for his vse by my Son, George, his father.

I give vnto my Reverend & welbeloved Friend, Mr Mathews, one Cow, and to the Church of Mauldon one Cow, and to Jno Barrit, 40s.

I give vnto my sonne, Nathaniell, my Colt to Run with the dame vntill the first of the 10th mo. next;

also, I Give vnto Nathaniell, my six workeing oxen, but Bucke & Sparke to be none of the six, & to George, my horse.

All other my estate of what kind soever not before disposed of, I give vnto my Sonnes, George and Nathaniell (my debts and Funrall Charges first discounted) who I do make Joint executors vnto this my last will & testament.

I appoynt my welbeloved Friends, Mr Edward Collines, & Mr Joseph Hills my overseers, to whom as a Remembrance of my love, I give 10s a peece, beside what my Executors shall allow for their paines on their occasions: who also I do appoynt & impower to appropotion the land and estate hereby disposed of an need shalbe, and to Settle all other things that may be of doubtful vnderstanding, as to them shall seem Just, and equall, for the establishment and prservacon of peace, love and vnity amoung all my relacons.

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Thomas died May 21, 1654, at Charlestown. One source claims his age at the time of his death was 54, so that would have made his birth year 1600. It is not known where he is buried. His third wife, Mary, survived him. She was living on Noddle's Island as of 1663. After Thomas's death, his house and lands were divided between two of his sons, George and Nathaniel. In 1657 Nathaniel sold one half of his land to his brother, Samuel.

#### Postscript:

For many years, Thomas Blanchard was the dead end of the Blanchard line. No one had been able to find out who his parents were or where he came from. His origin is still apparently a matter of dispute, but several researchers claim they have identified a father for Thomas Blanchard. They say the father was Pierre Jean Blanchard, born in Calentine, Penins, Normandy, France, in 1555, and died sometime after 1610 possibly in Yorkshire, England. However, another researcher said he had not seen a shred of evidence that the immigrant Thomas Blanchard was from France, son of a Pierre. A different source claims that Thomas was a descendant of Alain Blanchard of Rouen, France, 1418. Alain Blanchard was a brave patriot, and he was put to death after the surrender of Rouen to British.

So it's difficult to know who's right. Probably the wisest thing now is just to take this information with a grain of salt and hope that it all gets clarified someday.

Getting back to Pierre Jean Blanchard: one researcher said that Pierre Jean was a Huguenot who fled to Switzerland as early as 1573 and returned to Normandy before leaving for England in 1610. The name of Pierre Jean's wife is unknown. This researcher goes on to state that son Thomas was born ca. 1590 at Cape of Hague, Calentin Penins, Countances, Normandy, France. Pierre adopted the Huguenot philosophy along the way and took part in trying to place a Protestant king on the throne of France. In 1610 he was forced to leave for England in his own ship, the "Jonathan." He took four sons and others of his party and they landed in Yorkshire.

The same researcher listed Pierre Jean Blanchard's children as follows:

Thomas, born 1586, possibly in Penton Grafton, Hants, England [both the date and location contradict what the researcher wrote earlier].

John, born 1588.

Peter, born 1590.

Joseph, born 1592.

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