

The Roots of the Ancient Congregational Church in London, Scituate, and Barnstable, Rev. John Lothrop, Minister

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The Reverend John Lothrop [note: his name has been spelled Lothrop in the American records, but Lothrop, by his own hand in the Egerton records], who fled London in 1634, was considered by Nathaniel Morton, in his New England Memorial [1], to be one of the five most important ministers to arrive in New England during the Great Migration. Numerous authors have commented on his arrest on 29 April, 1632, with 42 of his followers, but have lamented the lack of knowledge of their names. Similarly, as he arrived in Scituate, he made an entry in his diary in January 1634/5, "joined in covenant together, so many of us who had been in covenant before." The subsequent entry of several family names has left confusion as to which were members of his churches in London or Egerton, Kent, and which were not. Since several were called "men of Kent", it has been assumed that they were part of the Egerton church. However, the Egerton records do not support this.

This article will compare the record of the early settlers of Scituate and Barnstable, with the Records of the Court of the High Commission for 1632, in the case of Rev. Lothrop and his followers. [2], the records of Rev. Lothrop's Church of England parish in Egerton, Kent, [3] and the records of the Jacob/Lothrop/Jessey church in London, from 1616–1638] which have been found in a rather unlikely place [4].

From Alumni Cantabrigienses, [5] the record of the graduates of Cambridge University, we find "the Reverend John Lothrop was the son of Thomas Lothrop of Etton, Yorkshire, baptized there 20 December, 1584". He was awarded the degrees of BA, 1606, MA, 1609. He was ordained Deacon at Lincoln 20 December 1607, Curate at Bennington, 1608, Curate at Egerton, Kent from 1609 to 1622. From the Bishops Transcripts [Canterbury], we find further, that he was also licensed to be Curate at Little Chart, Kent in 1609, and that his last year as Curate of Egerton was late 1621 or early 1622 since a new curate, Edward Emptage, was issued a license for Egerton in 1622. He recorded and signed the record of baptisms, marriages and burials for every year from 1610 through 1621.

An examination of the Rev. Lothrop's Egerton records of 1610–1621 reveals no names that also appear in his London, Scituate, or Barnstable congregations. It is possible that some families were members of his Egerton congregation without making any vital record events, but it is unlikely. One would speculate that the "Men of Kent" that joined his church in Scituate, were not his followers previous to London or Scituate.

From Egerton, Rev. Lothrop moved his family to London, eventually taking residence in on the South side of the Thames in Lambeth Marsh, close to Southwark, and, ironically, close to the Archbishop's Palace, in Lambeth. At least by 1624, Lothrop had joined to the congregation founded by Henry Jacob, who resigned with an intention to move to Virginia. On 5 October, 1622, Jacob made his will in London, which was proved 5 May, 1624, also, in London. Rev. Lothrop was elected minister by 1625, in which position he remained until removing to America in 1634. After leaving for America, this church was taken over by Rev. Henry Jessey, probably by 1637. The records of this church, known to later historians as the Jacob/Lothrop/Jessey church, have been

discovered among the records of the English Baptists. Two offshoots of the Jacob/Lothrop/Jessey church, one in 1633 during Lothrop's time, and one in 1638 during Jessey's time, became foundational Baptist churches, as did Jessey's church, itself, in the 1640's. The irony is that the Jacob/Lothrop/Jessey church, which is recognized in America as the root of two ancient Congregational Churches in Scituate [1634] and Barnstable [1639], is also the root of many of the oldest Baptist churches in England. The Congregational Churches in Scituate and Barnstable, both lay claim to being the oldest continuous such congregations in the world, dating from 1616. The records of the Jacob/Lothrop/Jessey church survive in the Baptist collection at Regents College Library, Oxford. They are reprinted in "The Transactions of The Baptist Historical Society, Volume I, 1908-1909."

The Jacob/Lothrop/Jessey church begins with Henry Jacob, graduated Oxford, BA 1596. He was not licensed by the Church of England, probably for his outspoken, non-conformist views. He was a prolific writer, publishing numerous tracts and petitions to both Queen Elizabeth and King James, frequently critical of the Church of England. One such petition was entitled "To Abolish the Anti-Christian Prelacy" making reference to the Bishops of the Church of England itself. As King James famously remarked about such petitions "No Bishop, No King". Since the King was head of the Church of England, to abolish the Bishops was to deny Royal authority, an act both of Schism and of Treason. Jacob was imprisoned in 1609, and, on release, fled to Leiden, in Holland, where he took residence with the congregation of Rev. John Robinson, pastor of the Mayflower Pilgrims. He wrote later that he came to agree with Robinson that "a visible church was constituted by free mutual consent of believers joining and covenanting to live as members of a holy society, and that such a church should elect its ministers, elders, deacons, and the congregation should be governed by its officers. In short, a true church under the Gospel contains no more congregations but one." This made of Jacob and Lothrop to follow, a Separatist, on the Leiden model. In fact, the Jacob/Lothrop part of the church, was the closest sister church to Robinson's congregation, a plausible reason why John Robinson's son Isaac, moved from Plymouth to join Lothrop's congregation in Scituate in November 1636.

In 1616, upon his return to London, Jacob formed a church, a covenant relationship, with the following initial members"

Sabine Staismore [Petitioned the Crown for Mayflower Pilgrims in 1617] [Mentioned by Bradford in his History of the Plymouth Plantation][6]

Richard Brown

David Prior

Andrew Almey

Wm. Throughton

Jon. Allen

Mr. Gibbs

Edw. Farre

Henry Goodall

Jacob's congregants [as well as Lothrop's and Jessey's] had no church building, as none of them were licensed to preach, so their church meetings, called Conventicles, under the law, were illegal. Conventicles were defined as secret meetings to hear unlicensed preaching, and were a particular target for William Laud, Bishop of London from 1627, and Archbishop of Canterbury from 1633. They met in the homes of members. When Lothrop's group was arrested in 1632, the Records of the Court of the High Commission, [Laud presiding, identify some of the locations of their meetings, as "Blackfriars, Queenhithe, Barnaby Street, and Tower Hill.

From the Records of the Court of the High Commission, the names of those congregants who were brought up before the Court are as follows [note, comments in brackets are those of the author]:

May 3, 1632

John Lothrop

Humphrey Barnard

Henry Dod [famous translator of Psalms]

Samuel Eaton

Mr. Granger

Sara Jones

Sara Jacob

Peninah Howes [sister-in-law to Rev. Lothrop]

Sara Barebone [wife of Praise God Barebone, later Member of Parliament in the time of Cromwell]

Susan Wilson

Wm. Pickering

Mabel Melbourne

William Atwood

Samuel Howes [brother-in-law to Rev. Lothrop]

Joan Ferne

Elizabeth Denne

Elizabeth Sargeant

John Egge

Henry Parker

John Woodwynne

Mabel Melbourne

Elizabeth Melbourne

Thomas Arundel of St. Olaves

William Granger of St. Margerets in Westminster

Robert Reignolds of Isleworth

May 8, 1632

Mark Lucar of St. Austines

John Ireland of St. Mary Magdelens in Surrey

Tony Talbot

Also listed in the court record as in prison with them, part of the same group

Mr. Sargeant

Mr. Wilson

John Milbourne

Mr. Grafton

Mr. Barebone

Mr. Lemar

The complete record of the members of the Jacob/Lothrop/Jessey church for the period 1616–1640 from the j/l/j records is as follows[with annotations from the record, typically, the year of

joining and/or residence]: [Note, the author has not included further editorial comments from the Jacob/Lothrop/Jessey records which were included at a later time by the compiler, a Baptist preacher named Joseph Stennet, and the first Baptist historian, Thomas Crosby. These later annotations are of interest to Baptist historians, as they trace the formation of early Baptist congregations. This article is only concerned with the names of members during the period 1616–1640]:

John Allen, of Southwark
Thomas Allen, 1633
Mrs. Allen, 1632
Brother Arnold, 1632,
Thomas Arundel, of St. Olaves
Mary Atkin 1633
William Atwood 1632
Praise God Barebone 1632 [Later Member of Parliament and the namesake of the
Parliament called Barebone's Parliament]
Sarah Barebone 1632
Mrs. Barnett 1632
Mr. Bates 1632 gone to Amsterdam
William Batty; 12 June 1634 to the Gatehouse
Humphrey Barnard 1632 joined church while in prison
Richard Blunt after 1633
Rice Boy 1630
Richard Browne 1616
Daniel Chidley, Elder of Colchester 1630
Mrs. Chitwood 1639
Brother Cradock 1638
James Cudworth
Abigail De Lamar 1632
Elizabeth Denne 1632
Mrs. Digeby 1636
Henry Dod 1632 Died in prison
Sister Dry 1637
Brother Dupper of Colchester 1630
Thomas Dyer of Colchester 1630
Samuel Eaton 1632, of St. Giles Without Cripplegate. Baptist 1633
John Egge 1632
Edward Farre 1616
Wwidow Joan Ferne 1630
John Fenner 1636
John Flower 1630
Mr. Gibbs 1616
Mr. Glover 1637
Henry Goodall 1616
Ralph Grafton, of Cornhill 1632 in prison again 1634, 1638, 1641
William Granger of St. Margerets 1632, Gatehouse 1634

Brother Green, dismissed 1633
Mary Greenway 1633
Mrs Hammond, to New England 1634
Jane, Thomas, and William Harris 1633
Widow Harvey 1633 Samuel Howes 1632 to New England
Peninah Howes 1632
John Ireland of St. Marys, Surrey
Henry Jacob 1616
Sara Jacob, his wife, 1632
Henry January of Colchester 1630
William Jennings 1633
John Jerrow 1633
Henry Jessey 164
Sarah and Thomas Jones of Water Lambeth 1632
Manasses Kenton of Colchester 1630
William Kiffin 1630
Mr. and Mrs Laberton, to New England 1634
John Lothrop 1625–1634 to New England
Robert Linnell and wife 1634, to New England
Mrs. Lovel 1638
Mark Lucar 1632 of St. Austins to Newport, RI 1644
John, Elizabeth, and Mabel Melbourne 1632
Brother and Sister Morton 1630
Widow Norton, 1634 to New England
Henry Parker 1633
Henry Pen 1638
William Pickering 1632
Mary Price, wife of Edward 1635
David Prior 1616
Stephen Puckle of Colchester 1630
John Ravenscroft 1633
Robert Reignolds 1632 of Islesworth
William Russell 1638 of Candlewick Street
Elizabeth Sergeant 1632
Thomas Sheppard 1633 of St Olaves Bermondsey
R. Smith 1637
John Spencer 1639, of Crutched Friars
Sabine Straismore 1616 In Feb 1617 negotiated for Robinsons Church
Mrs Swinerton 1634 to New England
Toby Talbot 1632
William Throughton 1616
John Trask 1636
Katherine and Richard Treadwell 1633
John Trimber 1633
Hugh Vessey 1630
Joshua Warren 1620 of Colchester

Widow White 1633
G. Wiffield 1633
Benjamin Wilkins 1630
Thomas, Phyllis, and Susan Wilson 1632
Alice, Rebecca, and Elizabeth Wincoop 1633
John Woodwin, 1632 with Woodwins elder and younger, to New England 1634

In comparing the above records with the early settlers and congregants in Scituate and Barnstable, we find several common names, but not a large number. Some members emigrated to other places in New England. Some names may have been lost in the transcriptions by Mr. Stennet.

From Rev Lothrop's diary in Scituate, in the order in which they appear in Scituate, we have these London congregants:

John Lothrop January 1634/5

Samuel Howes January 1634/5 [brother of Hannah Howes, John Lothrop's first wife]

James Cudworth January 1634/5

Jane Harris June 1635

Elizabeth Hammond, my sister having a letter of dismissal from the church in Watertown, April 1636 [This Elizabeth Hammond, married Samuel Howes, his brother-in-law]. [The Mrs. Hammond, in the church records above, may be the Elizabeth Paine Hammond who came with her children in 1634 to reunite with her husband, William Hammond of Watertown].

Thomas Lothrop, his son, May 1637

My brother Robert Linnell and his wife, having a letter of dismissal from the church in London. [Robert's wife, being Peninah Howes Linnell, sister to Hannah Howes Lothrop] Peninah was a member of the church in her own right, was one of those jailed in 1632, refusing, as did they all, to swear the oath of xxxxx. She was a second wife to Robert Linnell.

Summary: None of the family names in Rev. Lothrop's Church of England congregation in Egerton, Kent, also appear in his congregation records in London, Scituate, or Barnstable. Several families appear in London, then are seen to follow him to Scituate and Barnstable. On the other hand, other people who made a mark on later English history were members of the London congregation, such as Sabine Staismore, Praise God Barebone, Samuel Eaton, Henry Dod. In addition, the author would hope that some of the names in the London congregation would provide a clue as to the origins of other new England immigrants of the Great Migration.

1. Nathaniel Morton, "New England's Memorial"

2. Samuel Rawson Gardiner, "Cases in the Star Chamber, Easter 1631 to Trinity 1632, and High Commission, October 1631 to June 1632" Camden Series, Second Series, Volume 39, London 1886

3. Records of the Church of England Parish at Egerton, Kent, for 1610–1622, Bishops Transcripts, Canterbury, England

4. Transactions of The Baptist Historical Society, Volume I, 1908, England

5. Alumni Cantabrigienses, Cambridge University, Cambridge, England

6. William Bradford, "Bradford's History of the Plymouth Plantation, State Printers, Boston, 1901