

History of Thomas Miner

Thomas was born in Chew-Magna, Somerset, England. He was the son of Clement Miner.

He came to Charlestown, Massachusetts in 1629 on aboard the Lyon's Whelp. We have nothing of his crossing from anything he ever wrote. Searching elsewhere, we find what we are looking for, at least as close as we will come.

Reverend Higginson was a passenger aboard the Talbot, which was one of six ships to sail to America with the Lyon's Whelp. These latter two ships made the crossing nearly always in sight of each other. And we can be sure that when the passengers aboard the Talbot observed something on the high seas, something of interest of course, those upon the Lyon's Whelp saw the same thing. Here are a few excerpt from Higginson's journal, and I am going to relate them as if they were written in the first person. I should note for you that also aboard with the forty planters were four goats, much in the way of provisions, and what was termed as five "weigh" of salt.

The Talbot and the Lyon's Whelp sailed from Gravesend on Saturday, 25 April 1629 at 7:00 in the morning, with the wind so light that a progress of only twelve miles was made that day. We remained where we were that night and the next day keeping the Sabbath. On Monday we sailed as far as Goron Road where we anchored for the night. On Tuesday we proceeded a little further and anchored off Margaretown, waiting for the wind to carry us through the Downs, and remained there that night. For the next

three days, the southwest wind caused the water to be so rough that a number of passengers were seasick. Sunday, 3 May, was a cold windy day, and the vessels were still at the Downs. The next day a shallop from the Talbot was sent to take in those who had gone on shore the night before. The water was so rough that the women, at their request, had been put on shore, and they had walked to the town where they lodged for the night. The vessel remained at this place until; Monday, 11 May, and took on board some fresh provisions. On Monday, at 3:00 P.M., sail was again set, and about an hour later the vessels passed through the narrow needles and entered the sea. The next day they sailed as far as Lizardhead, and on the following day, Wednesday, 13 May, to Land's End. There, most of the company saw their native England for the last time. About ten leagues further on, the Reverend said, we passed the Sicily Islands, and the prows of our vessels were turned directly toward the New World. Seasickness followed our first experience with the rough Atlantic. The next Sunday, our religious services were disrupted by the approach of a man-o-war, but apparently concluding that an attack would be unsuccessful, it sailed away. On Wednesday, 27 May, there was a fearful gale and rain fell in torrents. The darkness was intense, and the waves poured over the ships, filling them with water. As the end of the voyage approached, some of the men became sick with the scurvy and others with smallpox. On Tuesday, 2 June, another fast was held. As the days passed and the American coast was approaching, many and various kinds of fish and whales were seen, and great icebergs

floated near.

A great deal of time during the voyage, the Talbot and the Lyon's Whelp were in sight of each other. June 15 and 16, when fog shut off the view, a drum was beaten on the Talbot to learn the position of the Lyon's Whelp, and response was made by a cannon. A week elapsed until the vessels were again in sight of each other. On Wednesday, 24 June, a clear sight of America was obtained, when the ships were seven or eight leagues to the south of Cape Sable. There on the water we saw flowers resembling yellow gillyflowers, and in the afternoon of the next day, we clearly saw many hills and islands by the shore. By noon of Friday, we were within three leagues of Cape Ann, Glouster, Massachusetts; and as we sailed along the coast, we saw every hill and every island full of gay woods and high trees. An increasing longing for the New World came upon us as we saw the woods and flowers. Saturday night, 27 June, we were at the old Fishing Station at Cape Ann. Some of the men went upon the little island in the harbor and brought back ripe strawberries and gooseberries and sweet single roses. This was the first taste of the fruit of the new land. Some of the planters ashore had seen the colors on the vessels, and so had apprised Governor Endicot, who thereby sent a shallop with two men to pilot our vessel into the harbor. The next day was the seventh Sunday we had spent on the voyage and the first in America. The two pilots spent the day with us. The next day we sailed for Normandie (now known as Salem).

These ships spent eighteen days traveling from Gravesent to Land's End, England, all within sight of the shore. They then spent an additional thirty-four days crossing the Atlantic Ocean from Land's End to Salem, a distance of over 3,000 miles.

No information really exists which would tell us something of Thomas' youth in Chew Magna or his education or training for a career. Judging from his ability to move so promptly and successfully into farming, we can assume he had a realistic background in that occupation in England.

When Thomas and the others aboard the six ships traveling together arrived at Salem, they found about ten houses already built. They saw corn fields planted, and horses, cattle and goats quietly grazing in wild pastures around that small plantation. Otherwise, newly arrived settlers lived at least for a time in tents and wigwams.

Land was available to the newcomers free, no strings attached whatsoever. If one plot of land did not seem to suit the immigrant, other settlers were quick to pass on the information regarding greener pastures, and Thomas moved fairly often as did so many others.

We know from various town and church records some information regarding Thomas' activities early on in America. Upon his arrival, for example, he remained briefly in Salem. His stay in Watertown, near Salem, was also brief. In Charlestown, he became a founder of the first church in 1632. Two years later, Thomas was granted four acres of land in the new town which is now Cambridge,

and by 1637, he owned a ten-acre plot. Thomas was made a freeman in March of 1633-1634, and on 23 April 1634, he married Grace, daughter of Walter Palmer.

From 1634 to 1645, he resided in Hingham, Massachusetts. His son, John, was baptized before the move to Hingham where Celement was born, as were his brothers, Thomas, Ephraim, and Joseph. WE know nothing of his occupation there, but it would be safe to assume he was farming.

In 1645, Thomas was a founder of New London, Connecticut, then known as Pequett, with Governor John Winthrop, Jr., and he remained there seven years. It is presumed that he was a farmer. The year 1649 saw Thomas appointed military "sargeant in the towne of Pequell," with power to call out and train the male inhabitants. In 1650 he was made one of the first two deputies to the general court (Colonial Legislature). Manassah and two daughters were born in New London, with Manassah the first white male to be born there. In 1652 Thomas moved his family to Pawcatuck (now Stonington), becoming a co-founder with his father-in-law, Walter Palmer, William Chesebrough and Thomas Stanton. In 1653 he commenced the construction of his house. Over the next several weeks and months, his diary relates his progress.

In the original syntax and spelling Thomas writes: "thursday the .22. I had plowed two days crose the (1) and this same day I begun to (cut) timber at the mill broocke." A January 1654 entry states: "I made an end Cleaving of pal at the mill br[ooke] their was eleven hundred pals." The next month, February, Thomas states:

"wensday the .8. I had 9 peeces to hew .3. seventeen foot (lounge) 14 foot lounge 9 ynches and 6 the [same]." By March he had "made and End of hewing timber at the mill brooke." By 29 and 30 June he had completed "caring of timber," and by 15 October he "had newly raised my roofe of my house." Thomas was apparently not a mason, as we find an entry that describes a building contract: "and Wensday goodman redfild was making backe [brick] for our Chimbloy [chimney] was ended goodman Redfild had 22s & 6d for doing the stone walle." In December he "fetcht whome stones and made the hearth." It apparently took about nine months to mill the timber and construct the house. This was not a log cabin, as that type of construction was not used at that time. These people came to this land with great construction skills and were capable of making very good hand tools.

This was frontier country, however, inhabited by Indians, some friendly and helpful, other more hostile. Thomas' diary reports the many occasions when he was off to battle Indians well into the late years of his life. Most of the able-bodied males had to serve in the militia with out pay. Their tours of duty were kept to the minimum, as they were needed at home for the unrelenting task of providing for their families.

Land had to be cleared so that hay fields and produce areas, as well as orchards, could be planted, The Stonington area is just that, stony, and stone walls were and are today a common sight, as they are a natural method of making the land useful and fencing it at the same time. Much of Ireland is managed in the same way.

Thomas started to plow and fence a piece of land bought in 1652. He added what came to be his prize plot of 252 acres at Cueannba Cove in Stonington. He marked off his plots by "hueing" trees at the bounties. He weeded, built hedges, thrashed his grain, and became adept at thatching roofs.

Thomas hunted and killed bears and wolves to keep them from his livestock. These predators freely roamed the wooded areas about his property. In the winter the livestock were boated to Fisher's Island across from Stonington.

He served as doctor to his family. He made and sold butter and cheese, as well as apple cider, and kept beehives for the honey. Yet with all these activities, he found the time and energy to respond to the wishes of his fellow townsmen that he fill various town and colonial offices. In addition to those outlined above, he was the town treasurer, town recorder, the brander of horses, one of four people in charge of the whole county militia, and "sworne Commimissinor and one to assist in keeping the Countie Courtie."

His will prepared by himself and transcribed in his diary, indicates he was something of a lawyer. His will describes quite a few legal things in which he was involved. Once he stated that a couple had been sentenced to be whipped, so he must have been concerned with criminal as well as civil matters. His will is short and simple but complete:

The last will of Thomas Minor m[ade] the .8. of februarie 1653; if I die or com no more I doe bequeath and give all

that I have house and lands goods and cattell To my wife
grace minor and do leave the whole disposing of my children
to her for any debts that I ow to be paid by her and then the
rest to be hers for her own maintenance and our Childrens and
this do I witness by setting To my hand the .8. of februarie
1653.

Thomas Minor

The labor force on the Minor farm, besides the family members,
consisted of one hired hand, a Mr. Glinman, who was largely paid in
farm products. In addition, Thomas also hired Indians, one of whom
made a canoe for him, paid for with six pecks of beans. The Minors
paid their taxes in farm products, acquiring most manufactured
goods the same way. Thomas went all out, however, and bought a hat
which had to be paid for in the coin of the realm. There was so
little coin available that he had to make time payments. Once a
year Thomas, by the barter system, would acquire shoes for his
whole family.

Thomas died in Stonington, Connecticut, on 23 October 1690.
He is buried in Wequetequock Cemetery, his grave covered by a
"wolfstone," consisting of a large granite slab which it is said he
selected for the purpose from his own field. On one side of the
stone an inscription reads: "here lyeth the body of Lieutenant
Thomas Minor, aged 83 years. Departed 1690." His wife, Grace,
died two months later on 31 December 1690 and is buried beside him,
the opposite side of the stone being inscribed for her.

History of Thomas Miner

Thomas Miner occurs as a witness to the will of John Veale of Chew Magna, husbandman, on 16 January 1572 or 1573 and was buried at Chew on 15 November 1573. He married Joan, who was buried at Chew on 21 December 1592.

He was a tailor, and an abstract of his will, dated 20 October 1573 and proved 15 September 1574, survives, although most original Somerset wills were destroyed by German bombing at Exeter in 1942. Thomas asked to be buried at Chew and mentioned his wife, his children Clement, John, Edith and also Richard Kente, possibly his son-in-law.

The manor court rolls show Joan succeeding her husband Thomas in the same messuage on 19 July 1574 under a grant of 29 June 1554, probably the approximate date at which they were married.

History of William Miner

William Miner may possible be identified with William Mynard, who took a new grant of a messuage (house) and a fardel of land of old auster in Chew Magna on 29 June 1554, to be held on the lives of himself, his son Thomas and Thomas's wife, Joan. William is the earliest member of the family from whom a connected line of descent can be shown. He was the great-grandfather of the Thomas Myner baptized at Chew Magna on 23 April 1608.