

A PROBLEM IN SALEM GENEALOGICAL HISTORY

(THE PRINCE FAMILY)

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Probably no region in this country has been so completely worked over, genealogically speaking, as Essex County, Massachusetts. For over a century a long line of able local antiquaries, Farmer, Stanley Waters, Rantoul, Gooddale, Putnam, Perley, and last, but not least, the prince of American antiquaries, Henry F. Waters, have worked in the county and town records and have published in the Essex Institute Collections and elsewhere the results of their investigations into the history of the early families of that county. Nevertheless, some problems still remain unsolved and in the present article I propose to deal with one of these unanswered questions, which involves the early history of the Prince, Putnam, Hutchinson and Gedney families of Salem.

Among the early families of the town was that founded by Robert Prince, who first appears as a proprietor in 1649, some twenty-three years after the original settlement. He married on 5 (2) 1662 Sarah Warren and had issue: James, born and died in 1664; James, born 15 Aug. 1668; Elizabeth, born 19 (12) 1669; and Joseph. His will, proved 30 (4) 1674, names his wife and children, James, Joseph and Elizabeth (Pope's Pioneers, 374). From this it would appear that he was born about 1627 or 1628.

Joseph Hutchinson, son of Richard, the first settler, was born in England in or about 1633. He married 1st Bethia _____, prior to 29 Nov. 1660 (*cf.* Perley's History of Salem, I, 249; Essex Quarterly Court Files), and had issue by her, Abigail, Bethia, Joseph, John and Benjamin, who were all baptized at the First Church in Salem on 26 Sept. 1666. His second marriage to Lydia Small, a widow, on 28 Feb. 1677/8, does not concern us (*cf.* N.E.H.G. Reg. vol. xxii, p. 249).

John Putnam, Jr., son of the first John, was baptized at Aston Abbots, co. Bucks., on 27 May 1627. He married at Salem on 3: 7 mo: 1652 Rebecca Prince (Putnam Genealogy, by Eben Putnam).

- * John Gedney, the vintner, came to Salem from Norwich, England, in the "Rose of Yarmouth" on 11 May 1637. With him were his wife Sarah, aged 25 years, and their children, Lydia, Hannah, and John, aged 2 months (Hotten's Lists 294). Although he is described as a "weaver" in the Shipping List he was ordered to keep an inn at Salem on 11: 10: 1639 and is always described in the Salem records as a "vintner." His wife, Sarah, apparently died on the voyage over or soon after landing, as Mary Gedney, apparently his second wife, was admitted to the First Church in Salem in 1637. His third wife, whom he married after (5) 1647, was Catherine, widow of William Clarke of Salem, vintner (*cf.* Pope 103, 184). By Mary he had Bartholomew, bp. 14 (4) 1640; Eleazer, bp. 15 (3) 1642; Sarah bp. 23 (4) 1644; and Mary, born about 1638. John Gedney died on 5 Aug. 1688 aged 85 years and his will, dated 22 Sept. 1680, was proved 12 Dec. 1688. In it he mentions his "daughter-in-law, Rebecca Putnam," and leaves "to Bethia Hutchinson, who now liveth with me the debt owed me by her father Joseph Hutchinson." He leaves to the children of his daughter Mary Potter, to the children of his son Eleazer Gedney, to Susanna Gedney and her children by his son John Gedney, deceased, and to his son Bartholomew Gedney and his wife.

Bethia Hutchinson, daughter of Joseph, and Bethia, died in November, 1690, and in the inventory of her estate we find an item of £15:11:7 "given her by her grandfather Gidney" (Essex Probate).

William Clarke, the vintner, had issue by an unknown first wife, two sons and a daughter, who were living at his death in 1647, but of whom there is no further trace in the records. By his wife Catherine (afterwards the wife of John Gedney) he had issue Bethia, bp. 26 (6) 1638; Susanna, bp. 12 (1) 1642/3; Deborah, bp. 6 (6) 1645; and Hannah. He died prior to (5) 1647, when his wife Catherine was granted administration on his estate (Pope 103). Of these children, Bethia and Deborah clearly died young and without issue, while Susanna married 1st, John Gedney, Jr., and 2ndly, Deliverance Parkman; and Hannah married his brother, Col. Bartholomew Gedney, on 22 Dec. 1662. Upon his marriage with the widow Catherine Clarke, John Gedney acquired William Clarke's farm in Salem, which was later divided between Clarke's two daughters Susanna and Hannah, who had married Gedney's two sons as above stated (*cf.* "The Gedney & Clarke Families," by Henry F. Waters, Essex Institute Collections, xvi, 241).

Our problem is to discover, if possible, the parentage of Rebecca Prince, wife of John Putnam, Jr., and of Bethia, wife of Joseph Hutchinson. In the Essex Quarterly Court Files we find three entries regarding the disbursements of the Court, which was accustomed to meet at Gedney's tavern. At the June 1651 sitting 5/ was allowed for those, who attended in the house (*i.e.* Gedney's inn), "Robert Prince and the others" (Essex Quarterly Court Files I 230). At the Court of 30: 4: 1654 the Court allowed 5/ to "the servants in the house," to Robert Prince 2/4 and 18d "to Bethia and Lydia." At the December 1654 Court a similar allowance was made "to Robert Prince and the others" (*ib.*, vol. I; *cf.* Perley's Salem, vol. II, 31).

From the above I think it may be fairly inferred that John Gedney's second wife Mary was the widow of ——— Prince and that Robert and Rebecca (Prince) Putnam were her children, also that there was a third child, Bethia Prince, who was identical with Bethia ———, the first wife of Joseph Hutchinson. It seems probable that Mary Prince came as a young widow to Salem, prior to 1637, when she must have married Gedney. This would account for Robert and Bethia being in Gedney's household in 1651 and 1654 and also for his calling Rebecca (Prince) Putnam his daughter-in-law (*i.e.* his step-daughter) and for Bethia, daughter of Joseph Hutchinson, being called his "granddaughter" in 1690. The Lydia mentioned by the Court in 1654 was probably Lydia, daughter of John Gedney by his first wife Sarah. She evidently died childless before her father. In this connection the following from the Rate Books of Norfolk, England, Easter 1633-Easter 1634, is highly significant: St. Peter's Permontergate. John Gedney 1/2d. Lakenham: "poor" widow Prince and children allowed 3d. The

appearance of the name "James" among the children of both Robert Prince and Rebecca Putnam suggests that their father was a James Prince of Norwich, from which town John Gedney also came.

We should further note that the entry in the records of the First Church of Salem of the membership of Mary Gedney in 1637 may be an error for "Sarah," in which case John Gedney had but two wives Sarah and Catherine. This hypothesis is likely in view of the fact that both John Gedney and Rebecca Putnam had each a daughter Sarah; but until further information is obtained from the Norwich records, we must accept the record as it stands.

In closing, it may be of interest to note that Col. Bartholomew Gedney and his wife Hannah (Clarke) were ancestors of the Fairfax family of Virginia.