

The American Genealogist

Whole Number 327

Vol. 82, No. 3

July 2007
(published March 2008)

ORIGIN OF ACCUSED WITCH MARY¹ (WILLIAMS) (KING?) HALE OF BOSTON AND HER BROTHERS HUGH¹, JOHN¹, AND, POSSIBLY, NATHANIEL¹ WILLIAMS

By Michael J. Leclerc and D. Brenton Simons

Mary Hale's maiden name and origin, like those of most women accused of witchcraft in colonial Boston, have long been elusive. In March 1680/1, Mary was tried before the Court of Assistants for bewitching and killing a mariner who had unsuccessfully courted her granddaughter. Found not guilty, Mary afterwards drifted out of view. Research now shows that she was a member of the Williams family with connections in London, Southwark, and co. Surrey, England, that two or three of her brothers lived in Boston and on Block Island, and that she was the matriarch of a family plagued by subsequent witchcraft charges in Connecticut.

MARY HALE AND HUGH WILLIAMS

Mary "Hayle" first appears in Boston when a meeting of the selectmen on 28 June 1654 admitted her to reside in that town. Hugh¹ Williams provided security that she would not become a charge of the town.¹ The process of identifying Mary begins through the following real estate transaction. On 20 July 1664, Hugh Williams and his wife, Sarah, of Block Island in the colony of Rhode Island, in consideration of a debt of £195 owed by them to "our Brother Captaine John Willjams feltmaker of Barnaby streete London in the Kingdom of England," sold to John Williams their house and property in Boston, which they had mortgaged to him the year before.² Hugh and Sarah Williams had been granted the house by Richard Norton, cooper, of Boston through a controversial statement

¹ *Boston Records, 1634-1660*, Boston Record Commissioners' Report, 2(3rd ed.; Boston, 1902):120.

² *Suffolk Deeds*, 14 vols. (Boston, 1880-1906), 4:126 [mortgage], 216-17 [depositions] (hereafter cited as *Suffolk Deeds*).

that resulted in a lawsuit, but was eventually upheld by the court. In this case both Mary Hale and her daughter, Winifred, gave testimony—evidence that was also copied into the deed at the request of John Williams.

The relationship among Hugh Williams, Mary Hale, and Winifred [King?] is established in the depositions of Mary and Winifred concerning that property. Mary's deposition was taken on "5th of Sixth moneth [August] 1656" [*emphasis added*]:

Mary. Hayle. Aged about 50 yeares testifieth & Saith she heard Richard Norton. Say in *hir brother's* house that he Coming to recon. wth *hir brother* being bound to Berbadoes I the sajd Mary heard *my brother* aske him what he would give him vpon his going away his Answer was if he neuer Came to New England againe he would giue him his house At Another time I hard him say being in his owne house vpon what occasion I doe no^t well rememb^r but his Saying was to *my brother* that he would give him his house If he neuer came againe and further saith no^t.³

Winifred's testimony was given the same day:

The Testimony of Wenifrect Lyng [*sic*] Aged about 17 yeares Testifieth that she heard Richard Norton. in *hir vnckles* house. Promise in Case h^e neuer came againe to New England he would giue him his hosuse [*sic*] and further he sayd vnto hir Sweetheart this house *thy Vnckle* May hap to giue to thee at thy marriage & further Sajth no^t.⁴

These statements show that Hugh Williams of Boston was a brother of Mary Hale and uncle of Winifred.⁵ Mary Hale's connection to Winifred, as her mother, is established in the 1680/1 witchcraft case, discussed below, wherein she identifies Winifred's daughter, Joanna Benham (born 1662), as her granddaughter.

WITCHCRAFT CHARGES

Mary Hale has the unusual and possibly unique distinction of being the first in a three-generation string of New England witchcraft suspects brought to trial in at least three separate legal actions occurring over more than fifteen years. Accusations against Mary (Williams) (King?) Hale, her daughter Winifred (King?) Benham, and granddaughter Winifred Benham Jr. were played out in several court proceedings in two colonies between 1680/1 and 1697. In each case, the women were found not guilty. This previously unknown connection between Boston and Connecticut witchcraft suspects was first suggested, but not established, in 1987 by Carol F. Karlsen in *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman*,

³ *Suffolk Deeds*, 4:217.

⁴ *Suffolk Deeds*, 4:217.

⁵ Research discussed in the following article shows that she was not the sister of Hugh's wife. There remains a chance that she might be the remarried wife of an unknown brother of Hugh Williams, but this would require three marriages for her (one to a Williams, one to a King, or Lyng and a third to a Hale), as well as the existence of the unknown Williams brother.

wherein she stated that Winifred Benham was “possibly the daughter of an earlier Boston [accused] witch, Mary Hale.”⁶

Witchcraft charges against Mary Hale in February and March 1680/1 stemmed from the suspicious death of Michael Smith, a mariner who had formerly lodged at Mary Hale’s house and who had attempted to court her granddaughter Joanna Benham. According to various depositions that leave tantalizing clues about the case, Smith claimed shortly before his death that Mary had bewitched him while he was at the Isles of Shoals and at Bilboa and, further, that in a separate incident, she “transported” him to Dorchester where he encountered a coven of witches. After his courtship with Joanna failed, Smith began seeing another young woman, Margaret Ellis, of Boston, who became one of the chief accusers against Mary Hale when the mariner died under strange circumstances. Among the unusual witchcraft “evidence” used against Mary was a “test” using a bottle containing Smith’s urine. When the bottle was stopped, Mary moved “to and fro” in an agitated manner throughout the house; when it was unstopped, her movements ceased. To some this was evidence of witchcraft.

In the case that ensued, Joanna Benham, aged “about 19 year,” provided a deposition in which she offered a different point of view of Smith’s death and, importantly, stated her relationship as granddaughter to Mary Hale. This document, therefore, not only sheds light upon one of Boston’s last witchcraft cases, but is genealogically significant as it establishes a link between Mary Hale and her daughter, Winifred, not given in any other known document: “Margaret Ellis told me that I & my Grandmother Hale was the cause of his death & she hoped in the Lord to see my Grandmother Hale burned before she went out of the country & I would not be long first.” For reasons that may never be known, Mary Hale escaped conviction and subsequently disappeared. Perhaps, as in the words of her granddaughter, she “went out of the country.”⁷

Mary Hale’s daughter, Winifred Benham, was also destined to endure witchcraft charges. She removed with husband, Joseph, in 1670 to Wallingford, Connecticut. Legal troubles for the family began in 1691 when Joseph Benham was tried for describing the selectmen of Wallingford as “noe more fit for townsmen than Doggs.” In the following year, he threatened a neighbor, Goody Parker, with his gun for casting aspersions of witchcraft upon Winifred.⁸ This incident likely alarmed the

⁶ Carol F. Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England* (New York, 1987), 44 (hereafter cited as Karlsen, *Devil in the Shape of a Woman*).

⁷ D. Brenton Simons, *Witches, Rakes, and Rogues: True Stories of Scam, Scandal, Murder, and Mayhem in Boston, 1630–1775* (Beverly, Mass., 2005), 16–19. It is unclear whether Margaret Ellis was stating her own intention to go “out of the country” or whether she was referring to a fear that Mary Hale would flee the jurisdiction.

⁸ Charles Bancroft Gillespie and George Munson Curtis, *A Century of Meriden, “The Silver City”: An Historic Record and Pictorial Description of the Town of Meriden, Connecticut . . .* (Meriden, Conn., 1906), 255–56.

community, and in November 1692 Winifred was charged at the New Haven County Court with suspicion of witchcraft. The court found insufficient grounds to convict her, and she was released with a warning that charges might be brought again if further evidence arose. Examinations of Winifred continued. In June 1693, she and Joseph were bound in a bond of £20 for "further examination about Witchcraft," an enquiry which evidently did not turn up evidence.⁹

In August 1697, a third generation of the family became embroiled in witchcraft controversy. According to Carol Karlsen, the Benhams, mother and daughter, were the last two individuals in New England sent by local officials to a higher court on charges of witchcraft.¹⁰ In brief, Winifred Benham and her 13-year-old daughter of the same name were tried when several individuals charged them with causing them to be "sorely afflicted in their bodies by the said Benhams . . . or their apparitions, and as they strongly suspect by their means or procurement by the Devil in their shapes." According to Robert Calef in *More Wonders of the Invisible World* (1700), Winifred Benham Sr. was subjected to body searches and to the water test, an "experiment of casting her into the water." Eventually acquitted of all charges, both mother and daughter, in Calef's words, "fled into New York Government."¹¹

MARY'S HUSBANDS

Neither of the husbands of Mary Hale has been identified. The surname of her first husband, possibly *King*, is problematic and may only be surmised by the name used by her daughter. In the above-discussed real estate case, Mary's daughter is identified as Winifred "Lyng,"¹² a name with multiple phonetic or spelling variations, including *Lynde*, *Ling*, *Lyde*, *King*, or *Tyng*.¹³ In another published source, the seventeenth-century vital records for Boston, Winifred is named *King* at the time of her marriage to Joseph Benham, as performed by Deputy Governor Richard Bellingham.¹⁴ An examination of the original book in the Boston City Hall

⁹ "Connecticut Witches, III: Winifred Benham, Mother and Daughter," in Donald Lines Jacobus, *Families of Ancient New Haven*, 9 vols. (Rome, N.Y., and New Haven, 1922-32), 4:956-58 (hereafter cited as Jacobus, *New Haven Families*).

¹⁰ Karlsen, *Devil in the Shape of a Woman*, 43-44.

¹¹ Jacobus, *New Haven Families*, 4:956-58.

¹² We have not been able to compare the published Suffolk Deeds, 4:216-17, with the original recorded copy, since the location of the original early Suffolk Co. land records is unknown at this time. A search was made in the Suffolk Co. Courthouse, Mass. Archives, City of Boston Archives, and the Boston Public Library, and none of these repositories has the records. The Family History Library microfilm is the published version of the early records.

¹³ We have remained open to all of these possibilities because we cannot consult the original records in several key instances and capital letters can be especially difficult to interpret.

¹⁴ *Boston Births, Baptisms, Marriages, and Deaths, 1630-1699*, Boston Rec. Comm. Rep., 9(Boston, 1883):58 (hereafter cited as *Boston BMD*).

Archives does little to clarify the surname. The record clearly reads *King*, but this book is likely a transcription of an original list submitted by Bellingham.¹⁵ Thus, with no truly "original" record available, Winifred's maiden name may be *King*, but that has not been firmly established, and there still remains the possibility of a transcription error when either the marriage or land transaction was recorded.

The identification of Mary's second husband, — Hale, also has not been made. The 1674 will of her brother Hugh states that she had more than one child; therefore, records for other Hales in Boston have been examined. Mary makes one of her few appearances in civil records through the Boston tax list of 1674, wherein she is given as living in Ward 4, assessed at 2s. for both town and country [county], and named as the Widow Hale.¹⁶ Only two other Hales appear in subsequent Boston records. In 1686 "Nickholas Hale" appears in a Boston tax list of rateables with no identifying ward.¹⁷ The following year both "Arthor Hale" and "Nickolas Hale" appear in the tax list for Ward 4, each being taxed 1s. 10d.: 1 for head and 2 for housing.¹⁸ They appear again in the tax list of males over the age of 16 taken in 1688, each with one male.¹⁹ Arthur was the only Hale in "A List of Inhabitants in Boston 1695."²⁰ On 23 February 1679/80, John Bawden of Boston, bricklayer, gave a £40 bond for Arthur Hale, insuring that Arthur would not become a charge of the town.²¹ This indicates that Arthur probably arrived in Boston in 1679, many years after Mary. Arthur and Nicholas may be the children of Mary referred to in her brother Hugh's will (see below), but no evidence of such a relationship has been found.

HUGH, NATHANIEL, AND JOHN WILLIAMS

Two of Mary's brothers have been positively identified and a third is likely. Hugh¹ Williams, a hatter and feltmaker, was admitted to the church in Boston as a single man on 1 11th month [January] 1641[2]²² and was made a freeman on 18 May 1642.²³ In 1653 Richard Squire, a woolen draper of Southwark in Surrey as-

¹⁵ Boston Marriages 1651–1657; recorded by Jonathan Negus, Clerk of the Writs, Boston, at the Boston City Hall Archives.

¹⁶ *Boston Tax Lists, &c.*, Boston Rec. Comm. Rep., 1(2nd ed.; Boston, 1881):43, 48. The citation on p. 48 says "Ann Haile" but clearly refers to the entry for "Mary Haile" on the earlier page.

¹⁷ *Boston Tax Lists, &c.*, Boston Rec. Comm. Rep., 1:83.

¹⁸ *Boston Tax Lists, &c.*, Boston Rec. Comm. Rep., 1:109.

¹⁹ *Boston Tax Lists, &c.*, Boston Rec. Comm. Rep., 1:139.

²⁰ *Boston Tax Lists, &c.*, Boston Rec. Comm. Rep., 1:163.

²¹ *Miscellaneous Papers*, Boston Rec. Comm. Rep., 10(Boston, 1886):65.

²² Richard D. Pierce, ed., *The Records of the First Church in Boston, 1630–1868*, 3 vols., Col. Soc. of Mass. Pubs., 39–41 (Boston 1961), 1:35: "The 1st Day of the 11th Moneth 1641" (hereafter cited as Pierce, *Records of 1st Church Boston*).

²³ Nathaniel B. Shurtleff, ed., *Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay in New England*, 5 vols. in 6 (Boston, 1853–54), 2:291 (hereafter cited as Shurtleff, *Mass. Bay Records*).

signed John Harwood of Boston his power of attorney to collect a £43 debt owed him by Hugh Williams.²⁴ On 12 March 1654/5, Hugh was appointed clerk of the market at the town meeting, with Theodore Atkinson.²⁵ In 1657 he gave £2 towards the construction of the first town house in Boston.²⁶ Atkinson was also a feltmaker. In the 1660s, he sued Robert Orchard, who worked for Hugh Williams, charging that Orchard had not served out his full indenture to Atkinson.²⁷

Hugh Williams died between 1 October 1674, when he signed his will, and 12 October, when it was entered into probate.²⁸ He mentioned neither wife nor children in his will. He left one third of his estate to his "Brother Hiltons children at Charleston" and two thirds to his "sister Haile & her Children." He appointed "my friend Jn^o Williams & my siste^r" executor and executrix. His wife was Increase Nowell's stepdaughter, Sarah Parker, but as she is not mentioned in the will, she likely predeceased him.²⁹

Mary Hale's second brother was John¹ Williams, a feltmaker and merchant who traveled between Boston, Block Island, and London on several occasions. A 1671 deed of feltmaker Theodore Atkinson of Boston refers to a judgment he received against "Captaine John Williams of Southwarke in the Kingdome of England."³⁰ On 19 January 1670/1, "Capⁿ: John Williams of Camberwell in Surry late of Barnaby Street in London in the Kingdome of England [& now Resident in Boston in the Massachusets Collony of New England]" sold his property in Boston to Edward Drinker, potter, of Boston.³¹ He eventually returned to England where he died between 20 September 1680, when he signed his will, and 8 November 1680, when it was entered into probate at the Prerogative Court of Canterbury.³²

A third likely brother of Mary Hale is Nathaniel¹ Williams. The John Williams who served as Hugh's executor was likely the son of Nathaniel, a glover and cloth merchant of Boston, and his wife, Mary. Nathaniel died between 2 April 1661, when he signed his will, and 2 November 1661, when it was entered into probate. The only named heir in his will was his "Daughter Belknap." He appointed his wife

²⁴ *Suffolk Deeds*, 2:192-93.

²⁵ *Boston Records, 1634-1660*, Boston Rec. Comm. Rep., 2:122.

²⁶ Walter Kendall Watkins, "Subscription List for Building the First Town House," *Bostonian Society Pubs.*, 3(Boston, 1906):108.

²⁷ For Theodore Atkinson, see Robert Charles Anderson, George F. Sanborn Jr., and Melinde Lutz Sanborn, *The Great Migration: Immigrants to New England, 1634-1635*, 1: A-B (Boston, 2005), 95-103; Anderson shows that Atkinson's claimed origin in Bury St. Edmunds, co. Suffolk, is unproven. See also Walter Kendall Watkins, "Robert Orchard, of the Art and Mystery of Feltmakers, of Boston in New England," *Bostonian Society Pubs.*, 4(Boston, 1907):85-86; this article also provides interesting background information on feltmakers in general, especially in Boston.

²⁸ Suffolk Co. Probate Records, 6:61 [Family History Library (FHL), Salt Lake City, film #584,128].

²⁹ See following article, which identifies Sarah Parker and the other persons named in the will.

³⁰ *Suffolk Deeds*, 7:299.

³¹ *Suffolk Deeds*, 7:74.

³² Prerogative Court of Canterbury [PCC], Prob/11/364.

executrix and, after her widow's third and the bequest to Belknap, the remainder of the estate was to be divided equally among the rest of his unnamed children.³³

John² Williams, "the sonn of Nathaniel Williams late of Boston," recorded a marriage contract with Anna Alcock, the daughter of John Alcock of Roxbury, on 20 January 1669/70.³⁴ John² served as agent for John¹ Williams, the brother of Hugh¹, when he sold his land on Block Island.³⁵

Nathaniel¹ Williams was admitted to the First Church of Boston on 26 3rd month [May] 1639³⁶ and made a freeman on 13 May 1640.³⁷ Nathaniel's wife, Mary, was admitted to the same church on 4 5th month [July] 1640.³⁸ They had six children, all baptized at the First Church of Boston.³⁹ Nathaniel became a member of the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company in 1644 with Hugh. He was second sergeant of the company in 1654, and a lieutenant in the militia. Nathaniel was appointed clerk of the market in 1651 and constable in 1656-57, and served as a selectman from 1659 until his death in 1661.⁴⁰

Nathaniel's son John² Williams became a merchant. He removed to Block Island in Rhode Island to live on the land of his late father-in-law, John Alcock. According to George Andrews Moriarty, he acted as the attorney for John¹ Williams of London when he sold the land he had received from [his brother] Hugh.⁴¹ John² is likely the John Williams who was the administrator of Hugh Williams' estate. This network of connections suggests that Nathaniel was another brother of Hugh, John, and Mary.

GENEALOGICAL SUMMARY

1 —^A WILLIAMS

Children of —^A Williams, b. in England:

- 2 i MARY¹ WILLIAMS, b. 1606-8; m. (1) — KING or LYNG, m. (2) — HALE.
- 3 ii (prob.) NATHANIEL¹ WILLIAMS, m. MARY —.
- 4 iii HUGH¹ WILLIAMS, m. SARAH PARKER.
- 5 iv JOHN¹ WILLIAMS, m. MARGERY —.

³³ Suffolk Co. Probate Records, 1:372 [FHL film #584,127].

³⁴ *Suffolk Deeds*, 6:165-66.

³⁵ G. Andrews Moriarty, "Some Notes on Block Islanders of the Seventeenth Century," *The New England Historical and Genealogical Register* [NEHGR] 105(1951):162-82, at 177-78.

³⁶ Pierce, *Records of 1st Church Boston*, 1:25; original record states "The 26th Day of the same 3d Moneth 1639."

³⁷ Shurtleff, *Mass. Bay Records*, 1:377.

³⁸ Pierce, *Records of 1st Church Boston*, 1:29; original record says "The 4th Day of the 5th Moneth 1640."

³⁹ Pierce, *Records of 1st Church Boston*, 1:284, 286, 296, 306, 313.

⁴⁰ Oliver Ayer Roberts, *History of the Military Company of the Massachusetts Now Called the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company of Massachusetts, 1637-1888*, 4 vols. (Boston, 1895-1901), 1:146 (hereafter cited as Roberts, *Ancient and Honorable Artillery Co.*).

⁴¹ Moriarty, "Block Islanders," NEHGR 105(1951):178.

2 MARY¹ WILLIAMS was born between 1606 and 1608 (age 50 at 1656 deposition).⁴² She was married twice. Her first marriage took place by 1639, but her husband's name is unknown. She married second — HALE, who died before 28 August 1654, when Mary "Hayle" was admitted to reside in Boston, with Hugh Williams providing security that she would not become a charge of the town. She died sometime after 1681 when she was accused of witchcraft. It is possible that she moved with her daughter to Connecticut and later to New York. According to her brother Hugh's will, she had more than one child, but only one has been identified.

Child of Mary¹ Williams and her 1st husband:

6 i WINIFRED² KING [or LYNG?], b. probably in England, ca. 1639;⁴³ m. JOSEPH BENHAM.

3 NATHANIEL¹ WILLIAMS was born in England. He was a glover who resided in Boston. He died between 2 April and 2 November 1661.⁴⁴ He married MARY —. She married second, Peter Brackett, and died between 7 May 1679, when she executed her will, and 26 November 1679, when it was proved.⁴⁵

Children of Nathaniel¹ and Mary (—) Williams, all b. Boston and bp. 1st Church of Boston:⁴⁶

i RUTH² WILLIAMS, b. 1638, bp. 2 4m [June] 1639, aged about one year;⁴⁷ m. JOSEPH² BELKNAP (Abraham¹).⁴⁸

ii ELIZABETH WILLIAMS, b. 21 8m [Oct.] 1640, bp. 18 8m [Oct.] 1640;⁴⁹ m. (1) THOMAS SANFORD,⁵⁰ m. (2) Dr. JOHN CLARKE.⁵¹

iii NATHANIEL WILLIAMS, b. 16 7m [Sept.] 1642, bp. 25 July 1642;⁵² m. (1) LYDIA —, m. (2) MARY³ (OLIVER) SHRIMPSON, daughter of Peter² Oliver (Thomas¹) and widow of

⁴² *Suffolk Deeds*, 4:217.

⁴³ *Suffolk Deeds*, 4:217.

⁴⁴ Suffolk Co. Probate Records, 1:372 [FHL film #584,127].

⁴⁵ Gale Ion Harris, "Peter Brackett of Braintree and Boston, with Notes on His Daughter Sarah (Brackett) (Shaw) (Benjamin) Jimmerson," NEHGR 155(2001): 279–94, at 284.

⁴⁶ For more information on Nathaniel¹ Williams and his family, especially the descendants of son John, see George Andrews Moriarty, "John Williams of Newport, Merchant, and His Family," *The Genealogical Magazine*, new ser. 1(1915):4–12. Moriarty notes the possible connection to Hugh and John Williams, but fails to point out the relationship to the widow Mary Hale. See also Moriarty, "Additions and Corrections to Austin's Genealogical Dictionary of Rhode Island," TAG 24(1948):69–75, at 72–74 [John Williams], and Robert H. Montgomery, "Nathaniel Williams of Boston," TAG 28(1952):215–27.

⁴⁷ *Boston BMD*, Boston Rec. Comm. Rep., 9:6 [no month or day given]; Pierce, *Records of 1st Church Boston*, 1:284: "Ruth the Daughter of our Brother Nathaniell Willyams she being of the age of a yeare old or thereabouts."

⁴⁸ Montgomery, "Nathaniel Williams," TAG 28(1952):220; Henry Wyckoff Belknap, "The English Ancestry of the American Belknaps," NEHGR 68(1914):83–92, 190–98, at 196.

⁴⁹ *Boston BMD*, Boston Rec. Comm. Rep., 9:9; Pierce, *Records of 1st Church Boston*, 1:286: "Elizabeth the Daughter of our Brother Nathaniell Willyams." Clearly either the town record is incorrect or the date of baptism is off.

⁵⁰ Montgomery, "Nathaniel Williams," TAG 28(1952):220.

⁵¹ Carlton E. Sanford, *Thomas Sanford, the Emigrant to New England: Ancestry, Life and Descendants, 1632–4*, 2 vols. (Rutland, Vt., 1911), 2:1394.

⁵² *Boston BMD*, Boston Rec. Comm. Rep., 9:13; Pierce, *Records of 1st Church Boston*, 1:291.

- Jonathan Shrimpton,⁵³ m. (3) Boston, 21 Feb. 1700[1], SARAH² (WHEELWRIGHT) CRISP, daughter of Rev. John¹ Wheelwright and widow of Richard Crisp.⁵⁴
- iv JOHN WILLIAMS, b. 6m [Aug.] 1644, bp. 18 6m [Aug.] 1644, aged about 3 days,⁵⁵ d. 1687;⁵⁶ m. (1) after 25 Jan. 1669/70 [marriage agreement] ANNA² ALCOCKE (John¹).⁵⁷ Anna m. (2) Robert Guthrie and d. New Shoreham [Block Island], R.I., 1723.⁵⁸
- v MARY WILLIAMS, b. 30 9m [Nov.] 1646, bp. 6 10m [Dec.] 1646, aged about 1 day [sic];⁵⁹ m. JOHN VIALI² Jr.⁶⁰
- vi HANNAH WILLIAMS, b. 30 Dec. 1648 [calc.], bp. 7 11m [Jan.] 1648[9], aged about 9 days,⁶¹ living in 1679, unmarried.⁶²

4 HUGH¹ WILLIAMS was born say 1617 (estimating marriage at age 25) in England. He died between 21 October 1674, when he signed his will, and 12 November 1674, when it was entered into probate.⁶³ He married SARAH PARKER, between 1 11th month [January] 1641[2] when he was admitted to the First Church of Boston as "a singleman and an hatter," and 23 1st month [March] 164[3]/4, when his wife, Sarah, was admitted to the church.⁶⁴

Sarah was probably born around 1620–25 in Wapping, England.⁶⁵ She was the daughter of Parnell Gray and her first husband — Parker.⁶⁶ Sarah likely predeceased her husband as she is not mentioned in his will. Hugh was a hatter residing in Boston and Block Island, Rhode Island. He became a freeman on 18 May 1642.⁶⁷ He joined the Military Company of the Massachusetts Bay in 1644, and served as clerk of the market in 1655.⁶⁸ No known children.

⁵³ Montgomery, "Nathaniel Williams," TAG 28(1952):221; M. Halsey Thomas, ed., *The Diary of Samuel Sewall*, 2 vols. (New York, 1973), 2:1077 n.; Anderson, *Great Migration Begins*, 2:1354–57 [Thomas Oliver].

⁵⁴ *Boston Marriages from 1700 to 1750*, Boston Rec. Comm. Rep., 28(Boston, 1898):6; Montgomery, "Nathaniel Williams," TAG 28(1952):221.

⁵⁵ *Boston BMD*, Boston Rec. Comm. Rep., 9:17; Pierce, *Records of 1st Church Boston*, 1:295–96: "John Willyams the Sonne of our brother Nathaniell Willyams being about 3 days old."

⁵⁶ Moriarty, "Block Islanders," NEHGR 105(1951):177–78.

⁵⁷ Moriarty, "Block Islanders," NEHGR 105(1951):178.

⁵⁸ Moriarty, "Block Islanders," NEHGR 105(1951):177–78.

⁵⁹ *Boston BMD*, Boston Rec. Comm. Rep., 9:23; Pierce, *Records of 1st Church Boston*, 1:306: "Mary Williams the Daughter of our brother Nathaniell Willyams being about a day old."

⁶⁰ Montgomery, "Nathaniel Williams," TAG 28(1952):223.

⁶¹ Pierce, *Records of 1st Church Boston*, 1:313: "Hannah the Daughter of our brother Nathaniell Willyams about 9 Dayes old."

⁶² Will of Mrs. Mary Brackett, Suffolk Co. Probate Records, 6:317 [FHL film #584,128, item 2].

⁶³ Suffolk Co. Probate Records, 6:61–62 [FHL film #584,128].

⁶⁴ Pierce, *Records of 1st Church Boston*, 1:35, 40.

⁶⁵ Based on her mother's date of birth of 1603 and her father's death by 1626.

⁶⁶ See the following article for information about Sarah's identity.

⁶⁷ Shurtleff, *Mass. Bay Records*, 2:291.

⁶⁸ Roberts, *Ancient and Honorable Artillery Co.*, 1:146.

5 JOHN¹ WILLIAMS married MARGERY —, named in his will. John was in New England by 1664 when he purchased his brother Hugh's land in Boston.⁶⁹ He had a continued presence there for over a decade, but eventually returned to England. He died at Lambeth, Surrey, England, between 20 September and 9 November 1680, the dates that his will was executed and proved.⁷⁰

Children of John¹ and Margery (—) Williams, named in his will:

- i JAMES² WILLIAMS.
- ii EDWARD WILLIAMS.
- iii JEREMY WILLIAMS.

6 WINIFRED² [KING? or LYNG?] (*Mary¹ Williams*) was born² about 1639 (aged 17 at 1656 deposition), probably in England. Her father remains unidentified at this time. She married at Boston on 15 11th month [January] 1656[7], JOSEPH² BENHAM,⁷¹ son of John¹ Benham and his unknown first wife.⁷² Joseph died in Wallingford, Connecticut, in 1703.⁷³

Children of Joseph and Winifred² (King?) Benham, 1st 8 b. New Haven, Conn., the rest b. Wallingford, Conn.:⁷⁴

- i MARY³ BENHAM, b. 18 7m [Sept.] 1657,⁷⁵ probably d. young.
- ii JOSEPH BENHAM, b. 25 May 1659,⁷⁶ d. 1702;⁷⁷ m. Wallingford, 17 Aug. 1782, HANNAH² (MERRIMAN) IVES, daughter of Nathaniel¹ Merriman and widow of John Ives.⁷⁸
- iii MARY BENHAM, b. 10 April 1660.⁷⁹
- iv JOANNA BENHAM, b. 25 July 1662.⁸⁰
- v ELIZABETH BENHAM, b. 13 Sept. 1664,⁸¹ d. New Haven, 1 Aug. 1669.⁸²

⁶⁹ *Suffolk Deeds*, 4:217.

⁷⁰ PCC, Prob/11/364.

⁷¹ *Boston BMD*, Boston Rec. Comm. Rep., 9:58.

⁷² Robert Charles Anderson, *The Great Migration Begins* . . . 3 vols. (Boston, 1995), 1:156–60 (hereafter cited as Anderson, *Great Migration Begins*); Jacobus, *New Haven Families*, 1:186.

⁷³ Jacobus, *New Haven Families*, 1:186.

⁷⁴ For more details on the family of Joseph and Winifred (King?) Benham, see Winifred Lovering Holman Papers at the New England Historic Genealogical Society, MSS 920; Jacobus, *New Haven Families*, 1:187–91; and Charles Henry Stanley Davis, *Early Families of Wallingford, Connecticut* (Baltimore, 1979), 47–49, reprinted from Davis, *History of Wallingford, Conn.: from Its Settlement in 1670 to the Present Time* . . . (Meriden, Conn., 1870), 653–56.

⁷⁵ *Vital Records of New Haven, 1649–1850*, 2 pts. (Hartford, 1917–24), 1:15 (hereafter cited as *New Haven VRs*): “18th of 7th month 1657.”

⁷⁶ *New Haven VRs*, 1:16.

⁷⁷ Jacobus, *New Haven Families*, 1:186.

⁷⁸ Jacobus, *New Haven Families*, 1:186; Donald Lines Jacobus, “A Merriman Genealogy for Five Generations, Commencing with Nathaniel,” *Reunion of Descendants of Nathaniel Merriman at Wallingford, Conn., June 4, 1913* . . . (New Haven, 1914), 129.

⁷⁹ *New Haven VRs*, 1:17.

⁸⁰ *New Haven VRs*, 1:19.

⁸¹ *New Haven VRs*, 1:22.

⁸² *New Haven VRs*, 1:31.

- vi JOHN BENHAM, b. 28 Dec. 1666,⁸³ d. New Haven, Nov. 1670.⁸⁴
- vii SARAH BENHAM, b. 1668,⁸⁵ d. New Haven, 1668.⁸⁶
- viii — BENHAM, b. 1669;⁸⁷ probably the ANN BENHAM who m. LAMBERT JOHNSON of Staten Island, New York.⁸⁸
- ix JOHN BENHAM, b. 3 Nov. 1671;⁸⁹ removed to Kings Co., N.Y.
- x MARY BENHAM, b. 18 May 1673.⁹⁰
- xi SAMUEL BENHAM, b. 12 May 1674.⁹¹
- xii SARAH BENHAM, b. 6 Sept. 1676.⁹²
- xiii JAMES BENHAM, b. 1679,⁹³ d. Wallingford, 10 May 1745;⁹⁴ m. there, 9 Dec. 1702, ESTHER³ PRESTON (*Eliasaph², William¹*).⁹⁵
- xiv WINIFRED BENHAM, b. 21 Aug. 1684;⁹⁶ m. EVERT VAN NAMAN of Staten Island, N.Y.⁹⁷

Michael J. Leclerc is Director of Special Projects at the New England Historic Genealogical Society and is most recently the coeditor of Genealogical Writing in the 21st Century: A Guide to Register Style and More (2002).

D. Brenton Simons is President and CEO of the New England Historic Genealogical Society and the author of Witches, Rakes, and Rogues (2005), winner of the 2006 Award of Merit from the American Association for State and Local History.

⁸³ *New Haven VRs*, 1:23.

⁸⁴ *New Haven VRs*, 1:32.

⁸⁵ *New Haven VRs*, 1:28.

⁸⁶ *New Haven VRs*, 1:26.

⁸⁷ Jacobus, *New Haven Families*, 1:187.

⁸⁸ Jacobus, *New Haven Families*, 1:187.

⁸⁹ "Connecticut Vital Records, Wallingford Births-Marriages-Deaths 1670-1850," typescript copy at New England Historic Genealogical Society, Boston, of the Barbour Collection, Conn. State Library (1924), Hartford, 37, citing original 1:48; another record states "John, s. of Joseph, b. Oct. [] 1671," citing "P[ri]vate R[ecord]: 15" (hereafter cited as Wallingford VRs typescript).

⁹⁰ Jacobus, *New Haven Families*, 1:187. Wallingford VRs typescript, 37, says "Mary, d. Joseph and Hannah, b. 18 May 1683."

⁹¹ Jacobus, *New Haven Families*, 1:187. No record in Wallingford VRs typescript.

⁹² Wallingford VRs typescript, 38.

⁹³ Jacobus, *New Haven Families*, 1:187; Wallingford VRs typescript, 37: "James b. []," citing original, 1:49.

⁹⁴ Jacobus, *New Haven Families*, 1:187; no record in Wallingford VRs typescript.

⁹⁵ Jacobus, *New Haven Families*, 1:187, 6:1479.

⁹⁶ Wallingford VRs typescript, 38.

⁹⁷ Jacobus, *New Haven Families*, 1:187.

DAMNING WITH (VERY) FAINT PRAISE

In his 1884 genealogy of the Howard family of Ipswich, Mass., Jarvis Cutler Howard states the following about the political affiliation of Elbridge Gerry Howard (b. 1813). Apparently, the author was determined to say something complimentary, even if it was begrudging:

In politics Mr. Howard was a firm but not a scheming Democrat.¹

¹ Jarvis Cutler Howard, *Howard Genealogy* . . . (n.p., 1884), 71.